

STUDIES IN GOD'S  
EVANGEL

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## INTRODUCTION

For a long time past it has become increasingly evident that our understanding of the Evangel is far from satisfactory. Some insist that there are many evangels, entirely different in scope: the Evangel of the Kingdom, the Evangel of God, the Apostle Paul's Evangel, the Evangel of the uncircumcision and that of the circumcision (Gal. 2:7). Others insist that there is only one Evangel or Gospel which is incorporated in the four gospels, and ignore distinctions such as have just been quoted. Both parties will be found to hesitate when confronted with the plain question: "What precisely do you mean by 'the Evangel'?" Yet until a clear and rational answer can be given to it there is no possibility of ever attaining to a clear and rational understanding of the various evangels or the various aspects of "the Evangel" of which Scripture speaks.

My present aim is to reconsider this question and study it scientifically, first by examining the key-words connected with it to ascertain exactly their meaning and force. When this is accomplished, we shall at least have some idea of what we are talking about. It is impossible to talk intelligently about justification, sanctification and grace until we are certain, first, that these English words mean the same as the words in the Greek Scriptures to which translators have attached them; and, second, that we understand precisely what that meaning is.

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## Chapter 1

### "JUST" or "RIGHTEOUS"

Translation difficulties lie at the root of nearly all theological problems. If only we could have an exact translation of the Scriptures most of the puzzles and misunderstandings which trouble and divide us would never arise at all. The people who first read the Gospels and the Epistles had the enormous advantage in reading them in what was at that time the common language, of all civilized men. In one respect only were they at a relative disadvantage: some common words were by the Holy Spirit's action taken up; transformed and glorified out of almost all semblance to their usage in pagan society. We with centuries of some sort of Christian tradition behind us can far more readily understand such concepts as God, or spirit or love.

On the other hand, Christian tradition has stereotyped certain partial, misleading or even false interpretations of words. This is in part due to the way Christian thought quite soon forsook the channel of the Greek tongue in favor of the much rougher and less expressive Latin. Not only did there ensue the loss of meaning unavoidable in *all* translations, but in addition Latin's inherent defects blunted many of the fine distinctions in the Greek. When in due course the Scriptures were brought over into our own tongue they were unfortunately first translated from the Latin while our tongue was in course of being molded by Latin culture. Thus, all the Latin defects came over too, except here and there where providentially the translators had sufficient insight to make use of the inherent power of English to express the original Greek.

For from recent research we are beginning to discover the power of classical English in this respect. We are not, after all, going to be tied down to the limitations and consequent inaccuracies of the Authorized and Revised Versions; or even to the limitations of the first real attempt to overcome them, the Concordant Version. This attempt threw open many new vistas of thought. It showed that the tenses of the Greek verb can be translated intact, even though it failed to investigate the possibility of rendering the Greek Middle Voice. It carried us so far that it has enabled us to perceive plainly how far it has come short of the goal. This is a great achievement; for which we cannot be too thankful.

The truth is that those who took part in this work did not come anywhere near appreciating the magnitude of the problem they were trying to solve. It could not be entirely solved with the resources available to them, nor could it by the methods they devised. Now that some sort of standard of exactitude has been fixed by them, a kind of framework of thought; it becomes possible to examine scientifically every word in every one of its contexts, check and re-check; and thus, approach ever nearer and nearer, if not to perfection, at least to adequacy. Moreover, we have now in the C.V. a standard of comparison for the isolated efforts of others; scattered in notes, commentaries, articles and versions, old and new. Not one is free from error or inferior thinking; but not one either is devoid of some happy flashes of insight which we can examine and from which we can profit, now that we possess a framework, or at least a scaffolding, wherewith to place the idea in its proper setting. And this is only what we might and, indeed, ought to expect. We all are members of the Body of Christ, and as such interdependent one with the other. We despise the efforts of similar God-fearing students only at the price of ourselves losing the light from the special facets of the jewel of truth which have been allotted to them by our Head.

Presently it will be seen by the reader that these somewhat lengthy preliminaries are necessary for an understanding of the group of Greek words which is about to be examined. These are the words containing the root "dik."

That something is amiss with our understanding of these words can readily be seen from Young's concordance of the A.V. Only one is rendered concordantly, namely "dikaioSunE," for which "righteousness" is used in all its 94 occurrences. On the other hand, the corresponding verb "dikaioO" has "justify" in 37 out of 40 occurrences. "DikaioS" is rendered "meet" twice, "Just" 33 times, "right" 5 times and "righteous" 41 times. The translators seem to have had no idea whatever which of the two roots "just" or "right" really corresponded with the Greek; nor is there any sign of clear thinking in the choices they made. To be quite fair, we must remember that words change their meaning in course of time, sometimes only by almost imperceptible shades, sometimes so completely as to mislead the reader who is unaware of the facts. The old prayer which begins "Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings" makes no sense with the modern usage of "prevent."

However, that may be, we of these days are concerned with words as they are, not as they were. If we want to discover the true teaching of Scripture on this subject, we have got somehow to find out what the words mean in modern English. So far as I know, only one modern translation has deliberately linked with it a concordance of the Greek, the Concordant Version. Turning to this we find for the Greek "dikaioS" the rendering "just," for "dikaioO" acquit, vindicate and justify, for "dikaioSunE" righteousness. Leaving other words aside for the present, let us study these renderings.

Collectively, they are no more concordant than those of the A.V. Individually, the adjective and the abstract noun are completely concordant; but, we may well ask, why is it necessary to have a "just" word for the former and a "right" word for the latter? Moreover, the three words for the verb are far from being synonyms, though they agree in having a forensic or legal tinge, whereas the words from the root "right" are moral in tone. "Just," though not necessarily forensic, has a legal sense rather than a moral and is generally so understood. A judge can be most scrupulously just as a judge, while in his private life he might be anything but righteous or moral.

Is it not obvious from this that whoever fixed the various renderings of this group of words for the C. V. failed to pause first to ask himself two all-important questions: —First, what is the precise meaning of this Greek root, is it forensic or simply moral? Second, what English words best correspond to the Greek? Any readers whose power of discrimination of words is moderately trained can discover for themselves what the answer is likely to be by simply studying the contexts in the A.V. of "dikaioS." First, go through those rendered "just" and consider whether they would not be at least as well rendered by "righteous." Was not Joseph's attitude (Matt. 1:19) more that of a righteous or right-minded man than that of one whose attitude was correctly judicial? In Matt. 5:45 is not the idea one of righteous versus unrighteous, when we compare the parallel clause "wicked and good"? Is "justice" the ruling idea in Matt. 13:49 by contrast with "the wicked"? Surely Pilate and his wife were not thinking of Jesus Christ as a "judge" in any sense, but as One Who, even to them, was right, righteous, right-minded? Even in Luke 23:50 and John 5:30 it is questionable whether "righteous" does not give a truer ring than "just." In the former we may well doubt whether the justness of the counsel is in view so much as whether it was righteous and right; in the latter there is surely more of the grace which came through Jesus Christ in His righteous judging than in a judging that is rigidly just. In Acts 10:22 the justness of Cornelius seems rather beside the point, which is that he was already known to be a righteous and God-fearing man. The examples from the epistles are perhaps more open to question. All I would submit at this stage is that the substitution of "righteous" for "just" at least does not injure the sense.

Then go through the passages where the A.V. uses "righteous" and ask candidly whether it really makes an improvement to the sense to substitute "just." Though I am confident of the result; I would emphasize that this test cannot be regarded as more than a straw to show which way the wind is blowing. It will be necessary to examine all the words deriving from this "dik" root; whether they are forensic, firmly linked to law and the concept of justice; or whether they are moral, that is, relative to what is right or righteous:

and probably the main battleground will be over the verb "dikaioO." I admit that I am, in a way, going around the subject rather than straight at it; but there is a good reason for this procedure. The whole subject is one concerning which we are, all of us, apt to be extremely prejudiced. The great battles of the Reformation centered round this verb, and it is not easy to keep a cool and clear head when considering the subject. The investigation suggested above is emphatically not an appeal to prejudice. On the contrary, it is an invitation to the student to examine one section of the evidence dispassionately; a section, too, which is comparatively free from distracting side-issues. Nor is it in any sense an invitation to be discordant or an attempt to undermine the important principle of concordance; for, as a matter of fact, the C.V. could equally well, and with as complete concordance, have elected to employ "righteous" instead of "just" throughout. The only question at issue at this stage is: which word conforms the better to the various contexts?

However, we are not all built alike; and the mental make-up of different individuals is often extremely varied. Thus, some student may affirm with decision that "just" is the better rendering of the two. If so, how do we stand as regards "dikaiosunE," nearly always rendered by "righteousness?" If "just" is better than "righteous" for the one word, why should not "justness" or even "justice" be the better for the other? If we accept the principle of concordance for one form of the root throughout every occurrence of it, why not try to extend it throughout for every form of the root itself? With the former pair of contrasted renderings, the issue was in general suitability rather than whether one word was undoubtedly right or wrong. In the latter, however, the "just" words are not merely less suitable, they are often definitely inappropriate. "Justness" or "justice" simply will not do in Matt. 3:15; 5:6, 10, 20. The justness of the Kingdom of God is a far smaller thought than its righteousness (Matt. 5:33). "Concerning sin and concerning justness and concerning judgment" hardly goes appropriately in John 16:8-11. How God's "justness" can be manifested apart from law (Rom. 3:21) is far from clear, nor indeed can the passing-over of sins be appropriately described as a display of "justness" (3:25, 26), nor is it easy to see how justness can be out of faith.

This word is associated with judgment in John 16:8-11, Acts 17:31; 24:25; Rom. 3:5, 6; 2 Tim. 4:8; 2 Peter 2:4, 5; Rev. 19:11; and with condemnation in 2 Cor. 3:9; and three of these are crucial. In Rom. 3:5, 6 we have "injustice," "righteousness" and "unjust" all from the Greek root "dik"; and "judging" rendering an entirely different word "krinei." 2 Tim. 4:8 gives us "the just judge"; "just" being "dikaios" and "judge," "kritEs." Rev. 19:11 reads (C.V. again) "in justice He is judging" (en dikaiosunE krinei), another "kri" word, from which root we derive "critic," "crisis," "criterion" in English. The C.V. Concordance renders "krinO" primarily by "*judge*" which it defines as "set right, judge judicially, conclude, decide, sue at law, pass sentence." I do not think it can be called a carping criticism to say that the function of a judge is hardly to set things right, but rather to decide whether Others have set things wrong. The notion seems to me to be an unwarrantable intrusion of the basic idea inherent in the "dik-" words.

The Introduction to the Concordant Version rightly emphasizes the two governing features of the version. The essence of the Concordant Method is the ideal that every Greek word and grammatical element should be uniformly rendered in English. The complementary Vocabulary Method is the ideal that every English word and grammatical element should correspond to one, and one only, in the Greek. For example, the Introduction lists no less than 21 Greek words which are somewhere in the A.V. rendered (or rather, mis-rendered, all but one) by the English word "depart." It is well-known that these two principles are both ideals which cannot always be realized. This fact has been urged as an argument against the Concordant and Vocabulary Methods; yet nobody in their senses would in ordinary affairs reject ideal standards completely because they are sometimes found impracticable. The real case against the C.V., so far, is not that its principles are faulty; but that they are not realized so completely as they might be and ought to be.

I submit that it is contrary to the principle of the Concordant Method to have the Greek "dik-" words represented in English by both "right" and "just" roots, and also that it is contrary to the principle of the Vocabulary Method to have such similar English words as "judge" and "just," and their compounds, representing two dissimilar roots in Greek when the use of a different group of English words is equally satisfactory or even much better.

These two methods are no more than the application of Scientific Method to one aspect of the problem of the translation of Scripture. They form the foundation of adequate translation; and we should never permit ourselves to forget that without an adequate translation it is entirely impossible to build up an adequate understanding of Theology. Is it surprising that with this canker of confusion at the very root of the subject our Theology is so vague and uncertain?

What we have been discussing amounts to this, in fact; that we should avoid the words containing the "just" root in translating Greek words containing the "dik-" root; and instead use words containing "right." Putting it another way, we should maintain concordance by the employment of words such as "right," "righteous," "righteousness," and not by words such as "just," "justice," "justness," "justify"; and above all we should avoid the discordant use of words from both these roots for the one set of Greek words.

At first sight this may seem rather like a storm in a teacup; nevertheless, the issue is a far wider one than whether Joseph, for example, was a righteous man or simply a just man. Yet even this is by no means unimportant. On grounds of strict untempered justice, Joseph might without blame have thought the worst of his wife and acted accordingly. Appearances were against her. But Joseph was *righteous*, perhaps we could say, right-minded; so that he intended to save her from infamy. In that frame of mind he was open to receive a message from the Lord, and to obey it. As the C.V. note properly points out, the law was very strict in an ordinary case of this kind, and by strict law the woman would have to be stoned to death. No! Joseph was not only "just." He was righteous. And in consequence of his righteousness the virgin Mother was protected and, with her, her Son, and the full doctrine of the Incarnation and all it means. The fact that Joseph, son of David, was righteous is the very beginning of the Evangel of the Kingdom. Being righteous, he had faith in the Lord's messenger and obeyed. He "accepted his wife, and he knew her not till she brought forth a Son, and he calls His name Jesus." (Matt. 1:25). This clear statement that he became her husband in the fullest sense, confirmed as it is by the later mention of their other children, proves beyond any cavil that righteous Joseph was aware of the truth and willingly behaved in conformity with it.

Pilate cannot fairly be described as an unjust man. Considering his position and his heathen background, he behaved as well as could reasonably be expected. Few of us can fairly claim that in identical circumstances we would have done better. If Pilate had been righteous, he would not have found it difficult to be just. The trouble with him was that he was not righteous; yet even so, he recognized that the Lord Jesus was righteous (Matt. 27:24) and so did his wife (27:19). The question whether the Lord Jesus was "just" did not arise: He was given no opportunity to display *that* virtue!

Moreover, poor Pilate did at least make some sort of attempt to be righteous. He symbolically tried to wash the blood-guilt off his hands in front of the throng. In doing this, he was attempting the impossible, but at least it can be said in his favor that he made the attempt. On the other hand, his washing was in itself an admission that he had some inkling of the terrible sinfulness of what was happening, and this makes his conduct less excusable. Yet against that must be set the fact that he understood far less than the accusing Jews the real issue which was being decided. So far as he was concerned, the Man before him was simply a fanatic, and the nuisance to constituted authority which such fanatics always are. In spite of this, he was able to recognize that the judicial murder of a righteous man was being planned and to make

not only some effort to frustrate the plot but to lay the blame squarely where it belonged. That he could do so indicates a deeper moral, and even perhaps spiritual, insight than the leaders of the Jews possessed.

In the 1930 edition of the C.V. there is an accidental lapse, in the one occasion, Matt. 13:43, where it renders "dikaios" by "righteous." Evidently it was subconsciously realized how much more suitable this is than "just." Other places where the latter is obviously inappropriate are as follows. The blamelessness of Zachariah and his wife proved that they were righteous, not merely just (Luke 1:5, 6). No question of justice arises in Luke 12:57, nor in Luke 15:7, 18:9; 20:20; 23:47; Acts 3:14; Rom. 3:10; 7:12 (a precept can hardly be "just"); Phil. 1:7; 1 Peter 4:18; 2 Peter 1:13; 2:7, 8; 1 John 3:12. "Just" and "righteousness." (from the same "dik-" root) occur in the same context in Rom. 1:17, 1 John 2:29; 3:7; Rev. 22:11; all in the C.V.; where 1 John 3:7 reads: "He who is doing righteousness is just." What a pity to give the impression that there are two very different ideas in this sentence!

The case of Cornelius in Acts 10 brings another aspect of this matter to our attention. At the outset he is described as devout and fearing God, with his entire household; doing many alms to the people and beseeching God continually (v. 2). He even, apparently as in a vision, received instructions from a messenger of God to send after the Apostle Peter. Meanwhile Peter himself was granted a vision also. That such special treatment should be accorded to one of the Gentiles must have appeared extraordinary in the state of affairs then current. The' deputation sent by Cornelius presently described him as a man righteous and fearing God, besides being attested by the whole of the nation of the Jews (v. 22). On Peter's arrival Cornelius asked to hear all that he had been bidden by the Lord (v. 33). Now, instead of the Apostle beginning at once to give instruction to Cornelius, he announced instruction that he himself had received: "of a truth I am grasping that God is not partial, but in every nation, he who is fearing Him and working righteousness is acceptable to Him."

Unfortunately the significance of this is obscured by the misleading C.V. renderings "just" in v. 22 and "acting righteously" in v. 35. Cornelius actually was righteous and was working righteousness before ever he had any dealings with the Apostle Peter, before the Apostle Paul was even called and long before he proclaimed the doctrines set forth in Romans! I suggest that we are inclined to underrate the importance of Cornelius. He was undoubtedly a "believer" just as much as any Christian since, and he was specially selected for the high honor of being the occasion of the unlocking of the Kingdom to Gentiles. He was the forerunner of the Apostle Paul, the one appointed to prepare the way before him. For our present purpose the most significant aspect of the account is the fact that how Cornelius *became* righteous does not arise. He was *already* righteous before the narrative starts. The Evangel of the uncircumcision, so far as the first four chapters of Romans and the controversy surrounding it in Galatians are concerned, has no bearing whatever on the matters here dealt with, namely the unlocking of the Kingdom. This fact, properly understood, is of the greatest importance for a full comprehension of our present subject.

Peter's speech marks the completion of his Pentecostal work. In making it, he unlocks the Kingdom to the Gentiles. This is clear from Acts 11:16, 17. Noteworthy, too, is the fact that nothing is said, by Peter, about repentance; for Cornelius was already righteous and so had no need to repent. But those who heard these things perceived the truth that repentance unto life had been given by God to the Gentiles also.

This suggests that the relation of righteousness to salvation needs to be given a more thorough investigation than it has yet had. This we will do if God permit; but first the way must be cleared.

That the compilers of the C.V. were very hazy in mind about these matters is evident, not only from the unfortunate renderings referred to above, but from the very confusing notes in the 1930 edition. Perhaps some of the trouble came from an unconscious desire to protect the Apostle Paul's doctrine of "Justification by faith" from erosion. Yet our understanding of Scripture doctrine has got to stand on its

own feet. However strongly we may desire to preserve what we believe to be the truth, we have no sort of right to tamper with other truth, however good our intentions may be. Perhaps, too, we do not yet understand the Apostle Paul's doctrine in Romans?

One thing is quite certain: so long as we continue to render "dikaios" by "just" we can have only a partial and therefore misleading grasp of its significance. We are giving it a legalistic sense, which it has not; and neglecting what we can perhaps call (though rather inadequately) the religious sense which it certainly has in the Greek Scriptures, if not elsewhere. All the individuals we have been considering were people who had attained to a certain standard of rightness, not people who had managed somehow to secure acquittal from a charge of unjustness or wrongness. What that attained standard amounted to is not specified; all we are told is *that* it has been attained, not *how* it had been attained. The "how" is another matter, the key to which is to be found in connection with the verb dikaiō and the abstract noun, righteousness, dikaiosunē. The idea itself, that is, of a standard of righteousness, will be discussed in Chapter 3.

So far, we have been thinking of righteous persons; but in five places (Eph. 6:1; Phil. 1:7; 4:8; Col. 4:1; 2 Thess. 1:6) we get the neuter "to dikaion," "that which is righteous." Only in the last two is "just" even plausible as a rendering; but even in them it is a question of what is morally right, not legally only. As Dr. Irons points out in his book "Christianity as taught by St. Paul" (Bampton Lecture, 1870); "In all these places the meaning is purely moral. The term describes *the principle* which is at the foundation, morally, of all God's dealings with man, and man's with God, or with his fellow men."

In order to round off this section of the subject we ought to consider briefly whether certain alternative words, such as "right" and "right-minded" should be used instead of "righteous."

Probably it will be agreed that in general they are unsuitable because they cannot be used appropriately in all the occurrences of "dikaios," so the principle of concordance would be violated unnecessarily. On the other hand, in a freer version for devotional and public reading it is at least arguable that one or other might in places make the meaning clearer. This is a very large question; but in any case, the principle ought to be held firmly that such a free version is desirable only if printed alongside the most concordant and strictly accurate version attainable. Given that condition, a free version could be very valuable; otherwise, being necessarily the private interpretation of their compilers, they can prove most dangerously misleading. When using a free version, the important thing is to have always immediately available an authoritative check on it. The aim of a translation is, or should be, to do everything possible to eliminate all intermediaries between the reader and the Word of God.

In Matt. 1:19 we could say appropriately: "Now Joseph her, husband, being right-minded . . ."; but neither "right" nor "right-minded" would be at all suitable in the next occurrence, Matt. 5:45. On the other hand, in Matt. 9:13 and Luke 5:32 the true meaning of "metanoia," repentance or change of mind, is admirably brought out by the rendering: "I came not to call right-minded ones to change of mind, but sinners." Incidentally, the Greek text favored at Matt. 9:13 and Mark 2:17 by the C.V., which simply has: "I came not to call the just, but sinners," implies that the Lord Jesus had no message at all for the righteous—a curious doctrine which seems unlikely to command general assent. Compare Luke 15:7.

Matt. 20:4 is well expressed by: "whatever may be right I shall be giving you." Neither of the other two words does so well. These passages are, however, the only ones which are really satisfactory exceptions to the general rule that "righteous" is by far the best rendering of "dikaios."

When I first began to consider this subject, I imagined I knew what "Justification" was. Most theologians are laboring under the same delusion. Perhaps the demonstration here given that even the simplest of this

group of words, the adjective "dikaios," is only imperfectly understood by most, if not all, of the best translators and writers; and the fact that even a brief examination of its meaning fills several pages of print; may open our eyes to the obscurities and confusions which at present embarrass the whole subject. The extreme discordance to be found in the translations and ideas of the numerous expositors who have written at great length about these matters is simply astounding.

## Chapter 2

### RIGHTEOUSNESS

Difficulties multiply when we come to the verb "dikaioO." Not only is there the same problem of choosing between the roots "just" and "right," that is to say, between the legal and moral conceptions of its meaning; but also, there is the age-old conflict as to whether the idea behind the word is "make just or righteous" or "account or reckon just or righteous," or even the slightly different idea of "make a person or action out to be just or righteous." In common speech the verb "to justify" may be used in any of these senses.

Theologically the root cause of all the trouble is the extreme confusion with which the Roman Catholic Church invested its doctrine of Justification. So great is this confusion that it is impossible to state plainly what the Romish doctrine is; and the muddle is increased by talk of receiving, infusing and increasing grace in men's souls. In due course the doctrine of "Grace" will have to be examined in this set of studies. Meanwhile it is sufficient to say that the Romish doctrine appears to be that divine grace is a spiritual quality infused into the soul and capable of increase, so that as justifying grace is augmented by good works the soul may become more and more justified. By it a man from unjust becomes just. The Romish Tridentine Canon actually declares: —

"If anyone shall say that the righteousness received is not preserved, and even is not increased before God by good works, but that the works themselves are but fruits only and signs of the justification obtained, and not the causes of its increase—let him be accursed!"

Cardinal Bellarmine says also, "The Catholic Church pursues a middle course, teaching that our *chief* hope and confidence must be placed in God, yet *some* also in our own merits."

Only after long and earnest study is it possible to realize the extraordinary skill with which the Romish theologians have managed to confuse *all* the issues. So cunningly has it been done that it is hard to escape the conclusion that they knew the truth and set themselves deliberately to distort and destroy it.

Apparently—though it is difficult to say for certain—the Romish church rejects the forensic idea of Justification; yet it leaves open the door for it by using words from the "just" root. Even so, it is impossible to attach any meaning to the idea of "being more and more Justified." Nor need we make the attempt, for Scripture is silent on the subject. Yet, on the other hand, the Lord Jesus does speak in Matt. 5:20 of righteousness superabounding more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees; thus, we learn that it is possible for one person (or perhaps more accurately, one class of persons) to be more righteous than another. Yet this is the only hint of such a thing in all the Greek Scriptures; and the superlative terms in which it is cast suggest that it is a veiled way of saying that the Scribes and Pharisees had no real righteousness at all. That such is the truth about them is very evident from the part they play in the Gospels. However, this may be, in the face of all the other references to "righteousness" the deduction that the individual can increase his stock of righteousness, so to speak, is rash and temerarious in the extreme. The individual is either righteous or unrighteous, right or wrong, has righteousness or lacks it.

The confusion which exists in our English versions manifests itself in the continual dodging to and fro between "righteousness" and "justification" and between "righteous" and "just"; the latter pair, as we have already noted, being nearly balanced in the A.V. In the Latin version the ambiguity reflected in our English translations lies concealed in the words themselves and consequently is much more difficult to detect. In Chapter 1 we noted that "just" has a forensic, or legal, sense which is absent from "right" and "righteous," both moral concepts. Now we have to show that the difference goes further still.

To begin with, one point needs to be plainly understood. This is primarily a question of the meaning of English words, not of the Greek. The meaning of the original Greek has already been investigated for the English renderings "just" and "righteous," and other words will be examined later. At this stage we need to consider the precise meaning of our own tongue.

Suppose in some commercial deal the vendor through an oversight or a mistake in arithmetic makes an overcharge. Presently he discovers the error and puts right the wrong done by refunding the overcharge. The transaction is now closed. The wrong is now put right and nobody has any ground for complaint. Yet the injustice remains! It was not just to charge too much, and it still is not just, and it always will be not just. It is impossible for an unjust act to become just. No unjust act can ever be justified, because if it could be justified it would no longer be unjust.

On the other hand; humanity, frail as it is, can often right a wrong. It is true that some wrongs can never be righted by us: but the question is, are they by their very nature inherently incapable of being righted, or is the impossibility of our righting them due to our earthly limitations and our sinfulness? In other words; can God right them some day? At the moment we can do no more than pose the question. Before it can be answered adequately a good deal of clearing of the ground is necessary.

The rendering of the verb "dikaioO" by "justify" has, for those who are not greatly interested in probing deeply for the truth of these matters, the outstanding advantage of comfortable ambiguity. Like the well-known analogy of the wax nose, it can be molded into whatever shape best suits us at any moment. The practical convenience of this is enormous; and the Romish Tridentine Canon is not alone in taking advantage of it, for few Protestant writers have been able to resist the temptation to write page after page about these subjects in the sure knowledge that nobody can controvert what they say because nobody can properly understand it!

As we noticed in Chapter 1, the Abstract Noun "dikaiosunE" is almost invariably rendered "righteousness," and properly so. The really queer circumstance is that we all should have been able to use the words "righteousness" and "justification" in the same contexts without noticing that something was amiss. That we have managed to save and maintain anything at all of the truth of these matters is due to our having one of the words, at any rate, correctly and concordantly translated. Another strange thing is that though in general it is the Abstract Nouns that are liable to be vague in meaning in our minds-grace, sanctification, salvation, etc., are seldom clearly grasped yet an abstraction like "righteousness" is the one word of the whole "dik" group about which we are all at least partially clear and in general agreement.

Obviously, the sound thing to do is to proceed from the known to the unknown. Already we possess fairly general concordance over the word "righteousness" and what is more we have now ascertained that another of the group of words to which it belongs, "righteous," is the proper form for our purpose; so we cannot do better than examine "righteousness" next and then go on to the more difficult ones.

The first reference to this word is in Matt. 3:15. This chapter records the heralding of the Kingdom of the heavens by John the Baptist, the announcement of the Lord Jesus, the King, and His baptism by John, who with befitting humility disclaims any right to baptize Him. The Lord Jesus replies: "By your leave, at

present, for thus it is becoming to us to complete every righteousness" or "to fulfil every righteousness." The infinitive of the verb "pleroo" occurs also in Matt. 5:17, "I did not come to demolish" (the Law and the Prophets) "but to complete" and Col. 1:25, "to complete the Word of God." The C.V. Concordance gives "complete" as an alternative to "fulfil," but unfortunately "complete" is also used by it for "epiteleo"—perfect, perform an act, complete a task—according to its definition. It has "complete" for this verb at 2 Cor. 7:1; 8:6, 11; Gal. 3:3; Heb. 8:5; 1 Peter 5:9; though examination will show that "perfect" does just as well. Two of these are in the Middle Voice. Gal. 3:3 might well read, "Undertaking as to spirit, are you now perfecting as to flesh?" and 1 Peter 5:9, "having perceived the same suffering to be perfecting." Returning to Matt. 3:15: it is noticeable that the Lord Jesus uses the pronoun "us." He and John the Baptist, and perhaps too all those who partake of John's baptism with Him, were collectively completing every righteousness. Bearing in mind the later revelation that baptism implies death, we see how comprehensive "every righteousness" is. The point is underlined by what happened immediately afterwards:

"And lo! opened up to Him were the heavens and He perceived God's Spirit descending as a dove and coming on Him."

The next references (Matt. 5:6, 10) are in two of the Beatitudes and explain themselves; and then comes the passage we have already touched on, Matt. 5:20. Next is the exhortation in Matt. 6:33 to be seeking first the righteousness of the Kingdom; then to not doing righteousness in front of men (6:1) and finally. (21:32) the reminder, "For John came to you on the road of righteousness, and you do not believe him."

Now that we have come to realize that the Kingdom is not exclusively for Israel, as so many have thought, and is indeed at the present moment of little or no concern to them; we need no longer feel troubled over this close linkage of righteousness to it, but rather relief at the unification of God's revelation which is achieved. The righteousness which we learn from Romans to be ours by faith is the righteousness of the kingdom; and for us, as for Israel, it leads to peace. No John the Baptist little understood how far-reaching the completing of all righteousness was going to turn out to be; but the Lord Jesus did understand it at the very start of His ministry, in that foretaste of His death, resurrection and ascension, and of the coming of the Holy Spirit, which were to crown and complete it. The last of these is the theme of the only reference in John's Gospel (16:8-11), whereas Luke's only reference is to Abraham and Israel (1:75). Mark is silent.

The first reference in Romans opens the door to the whole subject as it specifically concerns ourselves. Rom. 1:16, 17 may be rendered as follows:—"For I am not ashamed of the evangel, for it is God's power unto salvation to everyone who is believing—to Jew first and to Greek as well. For in it God's righteousness out of faith is revealing (itself) unto faith, according as what is written (has stated): 'Yet the one (who is) righteous out of faith will be getting him life.'"

Then ensues a long gap until Rom. 3:21, given over to the wrongdoing (adikia) of mankind, during which "God's righteousness" appears once only, in Rom. 3:5. Four more times it appears in this section of the epistle (3:21 twice, 25, 26) making in all six, the number of mankind. It is not found again till Rom. 10:3. Next righteousness is associated with faith, which in some form or other, is associated with the next eight occurrences, all in Romans 4, centering round the faith of Abraham. Thereafter, the foundation being securely laid, it becomes linked to the further glories connected with God's power and with salvation. These four subjects are a four-square foundation for what follows.

By his preliminary summary the Apostle Paul has simplified the subject for us, otherwise its ramifications would tax us severely and the super added man-made complications would make any real understanding

impossible. They have put every possible difficulty in our path, so we avoid them only if We begin at the beginning.

The Apostle Paul starts his Epistle to the Romans with a salutation which begins with a statement of his mission. There are two parentheses, omitted for the moment: —

"Paul, servant of Christ Jesus, callable apostle, severed for God's evangel concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." The first two clauses define Paul's status, the second two his ministry in the Romans epistle; and the reference to the Son links it to the Evangel of the Kingdom. The point is emphasized by the second parenthesis: "Who comes to be out of David's seed according to flesh, Who is designated Son of God in power, according to spirit of holiness, out of resurrection of dead ones." As I hope to point out and study at length elsewhere, Matthew's Gospel begins with the words: "A scroll of lineage of Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of Abraham." This coincidence cannot be accidental, nor the point that Matthew puts David first. This latter is because for Matthew the Kingdom comes first. In Romans, however, God's evangel comes first, and Abraham's faith is its keystone.

So the reference to God's evangel is qualified by the first parenthesis: "Which He promises before through His prophets in Holy Scriptures." His prophets? Yes, for though His prophets were sent primarily to, and spoke primarily for, His people Israel; it is made very clear even in the Hebrew Scriptures and stated explicitly by Paul himself, that God never intended that His blessings should be confined to Israel. The quotation in Rom. 1:17, already noticed, comes from Habakkuk 2:4.

Years ago when I wrote my pamphlet "The Evangel" I was deeply Impressed by a point which I only then noticed, that God's evangel is written about by the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 4:17, in a reference to "those who are unyielding as to the evangel of God." This evangel is the revelation of the fact that through God's Son the fulfilment of the blessings of His covenant with Abraham has at last become possible. For the faithful Israelite its operation will be by and through the New Covenant. Individual Israelites who receive the evangel in this era ought to go on to maturity (Heb. 6:1), and should accept the truths revealed by Paul, as Peter broadly hints (2 Peter 3:15). The reason for this is that the evangel of God is also the starting point of a new unfolding of God's purposes which is revealed through the Apostle Paul, and while this is in operation, it is utterly incompatible with any covenant relationship with God. Hence, the development and explanation of the evangel of God, so far as Israel, as Israel, are concerned, is wholly precluded. For those who are not called to the special calling of Paul, there is naught left but patience (2 Peter 3:14, 15), because it is not possible *at present* to go further along the lines of covenant.

We must bear in mind, therefore, three aspects of the evangel of God.  
It is:

A fulfilment of prophecy.

The starting point of Paul's evangel in the present era.

The starting point of the New Covenant in an era yet to come.

Paul in his epistles was not concerned with that aspect of God's evangel which belongs to His New Covenant with Israel. This is twice made clear in his preface to Romans. At the very start he is named as "servant of Christ Jesus" the title which is firmly linked to his own evangel throughout. Then, after naming "Jesus Christ our Lord," he adds "through Whom we obtained grace and apostleship, for obedience of faith among *all* the Gentiles. . . among whom are *you* also. . . ."

We are never allowed in the epistles of Paul to forget that he was Apostle of the *Gentiles*. Nor are we allowed to forget that the standing of these Gentiles he addresses is in *faith*.

The evangel of God "is God's power unto salvation to everyone who is believing—to Jew first and to Greek as well." We have no reason to suppose that there is anything temporary (or what we used to call "dispensational") about this. Paul does not qualify it by "now" or "for the present." It was, and it is, God's power unto salvation unto "chosen expatriates of dispersion" of Israel; and, indeed, Peter explicitly warns them against being unyielding as to it. That they *are*, and have been, unyielding is a fact of history. Whether presently they will begin to yield is known to God alone. That they will in due course yield is a fact of prophecy, but *when* this will be is not for us to know. Nor was Paul as Apostle of the Gentiles concerned with such an enquiry. At the time he penned those words the Jew had priority. Not till he was commissioned to write Ephesians did a state of affairs exist in which he no longer had any message for the Jew, as Jew.

In the evangel of God, God's *righteousness* out of faith is revealing itself unto faith. In it there is no room at all for any other righteousness than God's. How it reveals itself, and the function of faith in its revelation, are themes which must await a further clearing of the ground.

By one of those strange coincidences which are, rather, manifestation of God's direct guidance; the very day the draft of the foregoing was first roughed out I received a criticism of "The Evangels" from the pen of Mr. D. Osgood of Wahroonga, Australia. This is a model of what such criticism ought to be, uncompromising in character, modest in form, kindly in spirit and obviously the fruit of a sincere desire to search into and believe the Scriptures and nothing but the Scriptures.

In my pamphlet there were immaturities and oversights which have been effectually brought to light by Mr. Osgood, who has convinced me that though its expression and emphasis vary according to circumstances, the evangel is *basically* one. By this, neither of us means to imply that there is no distinction between the various evangels written about in the Greek Scriptures. Where we find "the evangel" without any qualifying expression the natural and reasonable thing to do is to take the words as they are, in their context, and not try to read qualifying expressions into them. Where we find it qualified by a Genitive; of the Kingdom, of the circumcision, etc., we must accept the modification involved in it. The evangel of God is primarily *God's* evangel, and all that is implied thereby. The central Person of it is God in Christ: its central theme is righteousness. Divine righteousness through Jesus Christ's faith; and righteousness holds this place in every form of the evangel. The Kingdom of God and its righteousness is in view from the start; in uncircumcision righteousness is its theme and in circumcision too. In this respect there is no difference and the evangel is one. Where a difference comes is in the way that righteousness is attained, whether under the obligations and privileges of covenant, or in freedom from covenant. Paul's evangel is also the evangel of the uncircumcision! that is to say connected with uncircumcision and everything implied by it, and free from anything connected with covenant and circumcision, its sign. The evangel of the circumcision is, and must be a *circumcision* evangel; that is to say, an evangel connected with circumcision and conditioned by it. Both are based on the evangel of God. Paul's exposition of his evangel begins with the evangel of God; when he shows he is bringing it to Gentiles as distinct from the covenant People, and is able to vindicate his action in bringing it to them, he calls it the evangel of the uncircumcision.

At the risk of seeming to be laboring the point I must stress that God's righteousness is one, whether it is received in faith alone, or by faith conditioned by and in conjunction with covenant with its obligations and privileges. Both Paul and James lay down that:—"Now Abraham believes God, and it is accounted to him for righteousness"; so any system that tries to lay down that there are two kinds of righteousness must be condemned. Similarly there is but one kind of peace. Having explained how the Gentiles may receive God's righteousness in uncircumcision, as Abraham did; Paul goes on to say that the way is open for them to peace with God: and the Hebrews Epistle, again in connection with Abraham, lays down the Divine order exemplified by the meeting of Melchisedek and Abraham: first righteousness, thereupon peace. The

difference is the channel, circumcision or uncircumcision, covenant privileges or uncovenanted Blessings. Paul makes this plain enough in Romans 4; but, because he is expounding the evangel as it applies to the state of uncircumcision, he refers to circumcision only in order to make plain the contrast. I hope to examine this thoroughly later on.

Peace for all, whether in uncircumcision or in circumcision, rests on righteousness, not justice; In the first four chapters of Romans, the question of "justice" does not enter in directly, which is indeed a mercy for us, as by Rom. 2:12 there would be nothing on that basis for any of us but condemnation. There is an important practical lesson in this, not to demand strict justice as a basis for peace, but righteousness. We are to pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace (2 Tim. 2:22). Abstract "justice" is altogether separate from love. Thanks be that even in the utmost extremity of judgment, the Judge is judging and battling in righteousness, not merely in justice (Rev. 19:11). We can always know how to be righteous in our treatment of others; but to be just to them we need to know what God alone knows, the whole truth about them.

### Chapter 3

#### THE STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

One of the things I have come to realize ever more definitely through the years as they pass is that, grand though the whole conception of a concordant version of Scripture may be, even if we had one as nearly perfect as possible, we still would only be at the starting-point of a really scientific investigation of the teaching of Scripture. A defective version is like a fog; the more defective it is, the thicker the fog. Every approach to the ideal of a perfect version corresponds to some clearing of the fog. The ideal itself is unattainable; but already it is evident that we can, if we try, get near enough to be able to see tolerably clearly. Yet if such clearance were carried out we still would have the task before us of seeing and of studying what we see. And sometimes the indefiniteness of the outlines of some object we are looking at will warn us that a wisp of fog remains.

Study of the existing C.V. indicates that several such wisps of fog would remain even if the version were completely concordant and faultless in grammar; for our discussion of the words "righteous" and "just" has shown that concordance alone is not enough.

Of those words, as renderings of "dikaios," it can at least be said that they occur frequently. No such excuse is possible with the word "dikaiōma".

This the C.V. Concordance defines as follows:

"dikaiōma. JUST-effect, the results of a just standard, whether expressed in a just statute, a just award, or a just requirement."

These three renderings are distributed among ten occurrences, four each of the first and second and two of the third. Is this concordant?

However, it is an enormous improvement on the A.V., which has "judgment" twice, "justification" once, "ordinance" three times and "righteousness" four times, each one trespassing on the territory of other words. To add to the confusion it gives as a marginal alternative "ceremonies" for Heb. 9:1 and "rites" or "ceremonies" for Heb. 9:10.

The (English) R.V. uses "ordinances" six times, but against one of them gives a marginal alternative "requirement." For Rom. 5:16 it gives us "justification" and calmly adds the marginal note "Greek: an act

of righteousness." It did not seem to occur to the translators that they were contradicting themselves, yet their idea found its way into Rom. 5:18, and an echo, "righteous acts," is found in Rev. 15:4; 19:8.

Mr. Alexander Thomson has been kind enough to furnish me with a great deal of information on this subject, which I shall now use, placing direct quotations in inverted commas. To illustrate the extreme discordance of translators and commentators he gives a mass of evidence, some of which I reproduce.

"Cunnington uses in half of the occurrences 'ordinance-s.' In Romans 5:16, 18, he puts 'a sentence of acquittal' (or, a declaration of righteousness). In Revelation he puts 'righteous acts' or 'righteous deeds.' Rotherham (second edn.) puts 'righteous appointments' at Luke 1:6; Heb. 9:1, 10; 'righteous sentence' at Rom. 1:32; 'righteous-requirement-s' at Rom. 2:26; 8:4; Rev. 15:4; 'realization of righteousness' in Rom. 5:16, 18, changed in his 5th edn. to 'recovery of righteousness'; and at Rev. 19:8, 'righteousness-deeds.' Young uses 'righteousness-es' in Luke; Rom. 2:26; 8:4; 'ordinances' at Heb. 9:1, 10; 'righteous acts' in Revelation; 'righteous judgment' in Rom. 1:32; and in Rom. 5:16, 18; 'declaration of "Righteous".' It is therefore apparent that all the above versions lack the central idea of the word. Godwin says in Rom. 5 the word means 'a declaration of right' (any righteous judgment or action). He says Aristotle uses the word in the sense of 'the setting right what is wrong,' while Alford says Aristotle means 'the amendment of an evil deed.' Alford says here it must mean 'sentence of acquittal,' and Liddon: 'judicial sentence of acquittal'."

From 21 authorities Mr. Thomson culls the following renderings of "dikaiōma": —In Rom. 5:16: acquittal, a decree of righteousness, a general acquittal, a just award, justification, rectitude, righteousness, sentence of acquittal, sentence of justification, to set right what was wrong. In Rom. 5:18: a single decree of righteousness, one acquittal, one act of amendment, one act of righteousness, one collective sentence of justification, one just act, one just award, one justifying act, one man's act of redress, one righteous act, one righteousness, righteousness of the other, the meritorious act of one, the righteousness of one.

On this truly remarkable collection of variants Mr. Thomson comments: —

"Wordsworth (Greek N.T. 1861) says the word must bear the same sense in verse 18 as in verse 16, and this is the only position that we can accept. It must bear the same sense in *all* its occurrences. If words are like coins, they must always bear their own proper value. No Greek inspired word is the equivalent of its nearest neighbor—which ought to be *another* word. No N.T. Greek word has two meanings in English, although we may require two or more English terms to explain it."

He also notes that at least six out of the ten occurrences of the word are in relation to the Law; and that in the Papyri of the centuries before and after Paul's day the word is often found in connection with legal disputes and legal rights, in the sense of "what establishes one's rights." He therefore suggests that the word may mean "standard of right" or "standard of righteousness" or "righteous standard." He has pointed out to me elsewhere, regarding the C.V. definition set out above, that a statute is akin to a law; an award is something given, a kind of gift; while a requirement is something required or demanded. Now, these three ideas are widely different, and it is idle to pretend that they are not. On the other hand, his suggested rendering "righteous standard" does fit, even if it does not always give smooth English. I prefer to hyphenate it, to show that it represents one word, not two.

#### THE CORRECT RENDERING

Provisionally adopting Mr. Thomson's suggested rendering, we get: —

Luke 1:6. Now they both were righteous in front of God, going in all the precepts and righteous-standards of the Lord, unblameable.

Rom. 1:32 those who, recognizing the righteous-standards of God. ...

Rom. 2:26 If, then, the uncircumcision the righteous-standards of the Law should be maintaining. . .

Rom. 5: 16 And not as through one person sinning is the gratuity. For indeed the judgment is out of one unto condemnation, yet the grace-gift out of many lapses unto a righteous-standard.

Rom. 5:18 Consequently, then, as it was through one lapse unto all mankind unto condemnation; thus also it is through one righteousness-standard unto rectification of life.

Rom. 8: 4 that the righteous-standard of the Law may be completed in us.

Heb. 9:1 Indeed, then, the former also had righteous-standards of Divine service besides the holy worldly place.

Heb. 9:9, 10 . . . which is a parable for the present period; according to which oblations, and sacrifices as well, are offering; which cannot mature the renderer-of-Divine-service in accord with conscience, being only (in foods and drinks and baptisms excelling) righteous-standards of flesh, lying on them unto a season of reformation.

Rev. 15: 4 For Thy righteous-standards were made manifest.

Rev. 19: 8 For the cambric represents the righteous-standards of the holy.

There may well be disagreement over some details of these renderings, but even so, it will be conceded that they are sufficiently accurate to show that the translation "righteous-standard" can be used in all the passages concordantly. I would like to add a few comments by Mr. Thomson: —

"Righteousness (dikaiosunE) does not mean perfection or sinlessness. It does not mean (in the saint) that he always does what is right, and is never wrong. It would appear to mean that somehow or other he has attained what is in God's sight a standard of right; an attitude which God is free to accept.

"In the Wilderness all the standard required from the Israelites bitten by serpents was to look away at the serpent lifted up. There was life for them in a look. Faith obedience saved them from the bites, and constituted their standard for deliverance.

"With us, briefly, the standard is, that the first righteous act we can do is to admit we have no righteousness. That is the basis or standard upon which God is free to save us.

"Quite a number of commentators mention such a standard of righteousness, but none of them appear to have grasped that this is the DikaiOma.

"It ought to give us very great satisfaction that we have reached this simple and elementary standard of righteousness. All mankind must at some time or other reach this very simple basis of salvation. Just as

one aside-fall or offence brought condemnation to all mankind, so one simple righteous standard will come to all mankind for a making out to be righteous of life (Rom. 5:18).

"In fact, I think the adjective *Dikaios* is to be taken as a religious term, as expressing some standard attained."

All this is so well put that I cannot hope to improve on it; so I will simply add that it is extremely important for us to understand that being righteous is not the same thing as being sinless. If God were to demand that we should be sinless while in the state of mortality which is for us the primary cause of our sinning, no amount of faith would enable us to comply. Faith and works would be on a dead level of ineffectiveness. On the strength of Romans some have ventured to claim to have achieved sinlessness; but they have forgotten the Apostle John's first epistle; about which, incidentally, there is nothing in any way inapplicable to ourselves, as some dispensationalists have rashly insisted.

### LAW AND PRECEPT

We are not told that Zechariah and Elizabeth were sinless, or even of special sanctity. They were of the priestly caste of Israel, but so were Annas and Caiaphas; and it is not said that they had succeeded in doing what Rom. 3:20 declares no one could do. In fact, we are promptly told that Zechariah lacked faith to believe Gabriel (Luke 1:20). What they could do, and did do, was go in all the righteous-standards as well as the precepts of the Lord. But, someone will ask, what is the difference between going in the precepts of the Lord and keeping the Law?

Comparison of the occurrences of "law" and "precept" yields some interesting facts. Only in comparatively few places do they occur in the same context. There are Matt. 5:17-20; 22:36-40; Romans 7 (precept in vv. 8 and 13 only); Romans 13:9, 10; 1. Cor. 14:34-38; Eph.2:15; Hebrews 7 (precept in vv. 5, 16, 18). "Precept" is linked with the Ten Commandments in Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Romans 13:9; Eph. 6:2. Mark uses "precept" eight times, but "law" not at all. Romans and Galatians together have nearly as much to say about "law" as the whole of the rest of the Greek Scriptures, but "precept" only as above. James has something to say about "law" but nothing about "precept," whereas the reverse is the case in 1 and 2 John and 2 Peter.

The first passage above presented itself for our consideration in the previous chapter, and now it comes to our notice again. This is hardly surprising, for it is the first occurrence of "nomos," law, in the Greek Scriptures and also the first reference to righteousness in a personal sense (*your* righteousness). There has been a tendency among some students to ignore the Sermon on the Mount, a reaction against another tendency to treat it with disproportionate attention, but equally mistaken. It is the opening ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, the opening disclosure of the grace and the truth which came into being through Him; thus it is in essence new teaching, a new revelation of grace and truth, and not a mere re-hash of the Hebrew Scriptures as so many seem to think. "And the Word became flesh and tabernacles among us and we gaze at His glory, glory as of One only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . for the Law through Moses was given, the Grace and the Truth came into being through Jesus Christ." (John 1:14 and 17). And in Matt. 5:17-20 we learn the purpose of this grace and truth. It is to *complete* the Law and the Prophets. Nothing is superseded, nothing cancelled. Little, if any, of what God gives to mankind ever is. The idea that God ever wipes clean the slate and makes a fresh start with a wholly new dispensation, is a fallacy.

As a corollary to completing the Law, we are told two things; first that nothing whatever may be pruned away from it, second that not even the least of these precepts is to be annulled.

The word "entolē"—IN-FINISH, direction, precept" (C.V. Concordance) carries the idea of a final instruction. It has the force of finality, which does not inhere in "complete" or "fulfil" (plērō—fill full). The precepts of the Law stand; and by their very nature must do so and continue to do so. The doing and teaching of the precepts is an essential for greatness in the Kingdom of the heavens; and this means that our righteousness must be superabounding more than that of the scribes or the Pharisees, if we would enter into it. Therefore it is not surprising that we find the precepts and the righteous-standards of the Lord linked together in the very first occurrence of the latter word, dikaiōma.

But the precepts are here linked with the righteous-standards of the *Lord*, not of the Law. (This quite fortuitous pun should serve to impress the fact on our minds). As we see again and again in the Greek Scriptures, particularly in the writings of the Apostle John, the precepts are not confined within the barbed-wire fence of the Law, which itself is largely made up of prohibitions, stated or implied; but are tempered and conditioned by the grace and the truth which came through Jesus Christ. Like the group of "dik-" words which we are examining, "grace" is by no means as clearly understood in ordinary usage as it ought to be. And I suggest that there is a retrospective element in this account of Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:6), even as we are definitely told in Rom. 3:25, 26; a harking-back to something as old as Abraham: otherwise it would appear that "the Law" might just as well have been written by Luke instead of "the precepts." For what Paul tells us in the preceding passage in Romans (3:9-20) was quite as true in the day of Zechariah and Elizabeth, and generations before them, as it was a generation later. There is nothing novel in the truth Paul brings out here, in itself. The only novelty is in its plain blunt setting-out.

#### PRECEPTS OF LOVE

When we come to the second coincidence of "precept" and "law" (Matt. 22:36-40) the point made above becomes clearer. It turns out that the whole Law and the Prophets hang on two precepts of *love* and nothing more nor less. Preoccupation with ceremonial, scrupulous observances or particular sins does not come into them. They are on a higher plane than that! Yet we cannot escape these issues; and we find in Romans 7 the arena of the great clash between Sin and the Law. Here, however, Paul avoids generalities and concentrates on one precept.

Next, Rom. 13:9, 10. Many teachers have got into an unfortunate habit of dividing off what they call the "practical" sections of Paul's epistles from the "Doctrinal"; and then (naturally, according to the flesh) regarding them as of minor importance. This division, too, tends to create an impression that doctrine is not practical and can safely be ignored by those who imagine they can follow the Lord Jesus without bothering to learn His will through studying His Word. No wonder that people with antinomian habits of mind dislike this "Practical" exhortation to the point of ignoring it; for here Paul is actually commending the Ten Commandments! Very reprehensible of him—if "grace" means that we can safely ignore the precepts! Note how clearly this passage links up with Matt. 22:36-40.

In 1. Cor. 14:34-38 Paul enunciates another "precept of the Lord," and one which is very unwelcome in some quarters nowadays. I do think that those who resent this prohibition are overlooking that the particular ministry for any individual is a vocation, a matter of God's personal calling. In declaring that no woman has a vocation for speaking and teaching in the assembly, Paul is not saying that every man has one. In fact, a real vocation for this service is rare. Nor is he saying that women should refrain from other ministry—a written ministry, teaching other women and children, active Scripture research, personal evangelism. We all suffer *some* disability from service; and the fact that women are completely banned from one particular ministry becomes less distressing when it is seen that each one of us is temperamentally banned from one or more ministries also. Sooner or later we all have to put up with the

humiliation of learning that some activities are not for us. If we love God as we ought, we will accept it gladly, without complaint. We should be thankful for permission to serve God in the way He deems best.

Antinomianism—opposition to law—is rampant in the churches. Yet we ought to bear in mind that it is not so much a false doctrine as a perverted truth. This subject calls for study later on; meanwhile we have to bear in mind Eph. 2:13-18 and not forget that "the law of the precepts in decrees" is nullified for us. As Eph. 6:2 shows, it is not the precepts themselves that we have to fear. No; our enemy in this sphere is the idea of obtaining righteousness by works of law. This subject forms the theme of Galatians.

### THE TRUE PLACE OF LAW FOR US

It is in the passage of conflict, Romans 7, that we also find set out the great truth which both legalism and antinomianism so effectively pervert: —"For I am gratified with the Law of God as regards the inner man; yet I am observing a different law in my members, warring with the law of my mind and leading me into captivity to the law of the sin which is in my members." (Rom. 7:22, 23) The ultimate issue is between bondage to law as principle, which in the presence of sin can lead only to death, and freedom to rejoice in the Law of God, and to keep His precepts because we love Him. Legalism denies our freedom from bondage. Antinomianism denies our freedom to delight in God's holy Law.

The reference to Aaron in Luke 1:5 naturally turns our thoughts to Hebrews; for his name occurs midway between the two references to righteous-standards in that epistle. First, the Old Covenant had righteous-standards of divine service, but they were also righteous-standards for the flesh. The New Covenant as set forth in the previous chapter does not need to mention righteous-standards, for they are indeed implied beyond any possibility of dispute in its lofty terms. And what is said about Zechariah and Elizabeth also ignores what is specifically of the Old Covenant.

Rom. 1:32 speaks of the recognition of the righteous-standard of God even by the irreverent and unrighteous. That our God has always had a revealed righteous-standard for mankind is very important to realize. On that basis it has always been possible for God righteously to pay each according to his acts. Moreover, we learn from Rom. 2:26 that even in the state of uncircumcision it is possible to maintain the righteous-standard of the Law.

We cannot proceed further on these lines without anticipating the findings of a much later stage of this investigation; but it is in order to point out here that faith-righteousness does, in fact, provide for us a righteous-standard by which we also can go in all the precepts and righteous-standards of the Lord which are applicable to our standing as of the uncircumcision, in contrast with that other standing which is of covenant and the circumcision, its sign. So we come to the crown and summit of this particular theme, the revelation that in Christ Jesus the righteous-standards of the Law may be completed in us: and thus we meet again the glorious revelation of the Lord Jesus that He came not to demolish the Law and the Prophets, but to complete.

How any Christian can affect to despise the precepts and righteous-standards of the Lord on the plea that they are contrary to the grace and the truth which came with Jesus Christ, is indeed a mystery. Much of the trouble springs from the strange idea that we can set aside most of the Greek Scriptures as of no concern to ourselves. Those who support this theory do not seem to have paused to ask themselves the question: "Then why were those Scriptures written at all?" Assuming the idea to be the truth, there is an extraordinary disparity of bulk between the material really important to ourselves (for some teachers only four or five epistles!) and the rest of the Greek Scriptures which, on this supposition, might just as well have been reduced to a brief summary. Stated baldly in this way, the absurdity of writing off most of our material becomes evident. The epistles of James and Peter were written for their fellow Israelites, but it is

an impossibly big assumption that they were written solely on account of a very small minority from them, to confirm them in the covenant standing involved in their circumcision, and to serve as a substitute for the glorious unfoldings given to the Apostle Paul. If they were as individuals expected to retain their circumcision or even their covenant identity for the ensuing 1900 years or more; it is strange that what some queerly name "the Circumcision Epistles" do not give even the smallest hint of any such thing.

## Chapter 4

### RIGHTEOUSNESS IN ACTION

Righteous people and a righteous-standard for them are now set out for our contemplation. Such people must, somehow or other, have become righteous; otherwise Scripture could not call them that without falsification of the facts. We have learnt that some sort of righteous-standard exists whereby righteousness may be measured, or at any rate tested. If people are righteous, this state must imply their conformity to such righteous-standard. Such conformity is presumably implied in the verb "dikaioO," usually rendered "Justify." Three questions arise immediately. What does this verb mean in English? What does "dikaioO" mean in Greek? Are these meanings the same, and if not, what is the best English equivalent of the Greek verb?

What does "justify" mean in English?

Once again let us consult the C. V. Concordance. Even with a view to readers who are unacquainted with the C.V. this is the best procedure, as this concordance is the only one in existence which deliberately claims to be seeking to discover the best and most concordant rendering of each Greek word. Though it is far from successful in this group of words, the fact that it does make the attempt entitles it to be given prime consideration. Its definition is as follows: —

"dikaioO." JUSTIFY, *constitute just, not forgive or pardon as if unjust, but pronounce not guilty. acquit, vindicate, justify.*"

Here three definitions are presented, two positive and one negative, and the first point that attracts one's attention is that the two positive definitions are somewhat different in meaning. As for the second and third, the C.V. itself nowhere uses the words guilt or guilty. Even the A.V. uses them only a few times, and then very loosely. In other words, the idea of "guilt" is absent from the Greek Scriptures and therefore, even in a negative context, should not in any circumstances be injected into a definition of the word "justify." This circumstance enables us to write-off "acquit" and "vindicate" and the third definition without further consideration, because both imply a verdict of "not guilty"; and the second definition as implying a verdict of "guilty."

We are left, then, with the first definition, "constitute just." The word "constitute" is not to be found anywhere in the A.V.; but we do find "the many shall be constituted just" in the C.V. of Rom. 5:19. Thus the question at once arises, in view of the concordance definition: why does not the C.V. read instead, "the many shall be justified?" A glance at the Greek here gives the answer—there is a word in the text, *katastathEsonta*, which is rendered "will be constituted." We can therefore pronounce at once that whatever else "dikaioO" may mean, it cannot be "constitute just"; so the C.V. definition of "Justify" evaporates leaving the negative (though undoubtedly true) residue that it does *not* mean "forgive or pardon as if unjust." What, then, does it mean?

The meaning of "Constitute"

Before we investigate further it would be as well to get a distinct understanding of what the word translated "constitute" means. The C.V. Concordance defines "*kathistEmi*" as "DOWN-STAND, constitute, place." The version itself uses "place" several times, even though it is earmarked for a quite different Greek verb, so it would seem that the compiler was not very certain of the meaning himself. In fairness, however, one must admit that in Matt. 25:21 we can hardly say "I will constitute you over many," as we naturally constitute people something. Yet even if we could accept "place" it would not help us much, for it is difficult to speak of "being placed just" or "being placed as just." Suppose an evangelist talked to an unbeliever about being justified, and then another evangelist talked about being constituted just; would the poor fellow come away with any idea in his head that the two terms were not simply synonyms? Of course not! He would merely think the first evangelist rather muddle-headed and the second rather pompous—and he would be right! This coincidence of confused concepts indicates that here in Rom. 5:19 is one, at any rate, of the crucial points of this discussion, and that if we can clear it up the others will be easier to deal with. John H. Godwin, in his "The Epistle of the Apostle Paul to Romans"; London: Hodder and Stoughton; 1873; renders this verse as follows: "For even as through the disobedience of the one man, the many were set down as wicked; so also through the obedience of the One, the many will be set down as righteous."

This rendering is striking and attractive, but unfortunately it cannot be employed consistently, for in several places the Greek word is used with the preposition "over." English idiom permits remarkable freedom with prepositions; but the line has to be drawn somewhere, and such self-contradictory forms as "down over" and "up under" are forbidden. But we could say "set down in a position which is over. . .", and so avoid the clash of the contradictory prepositions; and this is what the Greek virtually does by fixing the "down" before "set." The brief and simple way of expressing this idea is to be frankly 'idiomatic' and write "set up" where "over" or an equivalent word, is in the context. The essential idea is placing in a settled, recognized, even official position, in a proper or fitting place. Thus the sense of Rom. 5:19 is: "Even as through the disobedience of the one man, the many were placed in the recognized condition of being wicked; so also through the obedience of the One, the many will be placed in the recognized condition of being righteous." Here we can, leave it for the present, secure in the realization. that our, research into the meaning of "dikaioO" has not been prejudiced.

#### Possible meanings of "Justify"

"Justify" thus becomes the C.V. equivalent of "dikaioO," which means that this version has left us without any precise idea of what the word means. Most versions are no better. Like so many fundamental problems, this one has usually been most carefully evaded; but some translators and commentators have, to their very great credit, refused to evade the issue. Some of them, I believe, have gone astray; yet they deserve some praise; for it is better to try and fail than merely run away from a difficulty. We can always learn something from a failure, but nothing from shirking a problem.

By now it should be generally acceptable, I think, to rule out "just" words as renderings of "dik-" words; yet even with this there remain five out of a possible ten meanings of "justify" which we have to examine as candidates for representing "dikaioO."

These are: —

- A.-To account righteous.
- B.-To show to be righteous.
- C.-To declare to be righteous.
- D.-To make righteous.
- E.-To make out to be righteous.

Two of the C.V. renderings noted above are "acquit" and "vindicate." These both have a forensic tinge, so strictly do not come under our five headings; but even so, the first inclines to (C.) and the second to (B.), which shows their want of precision. They give us no help.

Let us examine the five in turn. (A.) To account righteous, is open to objection at the outset in that it is question-begging. If I account a person righteous it is still legitimate for an objector to account me dishonest or mistaken and to deny that the person really is righteous. He can say, with justice: "I am not interested in your opinions; I want to know definitely whether the person to whom you refer is righteous or unrighteous." Frankly I dislike the idea in this definition offhand, just as I dislike the common notion that God has by some forensic dodge procured for us an acquittal in spite of the fact that we are, strictly speaking, supposed to be actually guilty. That amounts to a false verdict; and as we have already observed, the absence from Scripture itself of any expression which means being guilty indicates the impropriety of such an idea. To account a person righteous is no better than a sham unless that person actually is righteous. I see no case for (A.)

(B.) To show to be righteous. This is straightforward enough; but it is important to observe that it has no meaning unless the object shown actually *is* righteous.

(C.) To declare to be righteous. At first glance this is open to the same objection as (A.). We can certainly be dishonest or mistaken in our declaration. Yet there is one very important difference.

To *account* righteous does in fact *imply* that what is thus accounted is not really so; otherwise one would not account it to be righteous but definitely declare it to be. There would be no need to *account* persons righteous if they unmistakably and unchallengably *are* righteous. (B.) implies a demonstration, (C.) merely an affirmation and is very much weaker than (B.) unless—and this is most important—the righteousness of the person so declared is beyond dispute. It would be presumptuous to *account* God righteous. It would be an impossibility to *show* God to be righteous and presumptuous to make the attempt. It would be blasphemous to talk of *making* God righteous. It is, however, of faith, and faith at its highest, to *declare* God righteous; because only too often we are, even the best of us, tempted to cast doubt on this fact. Of the five, (C.) is the only one which the creature may properly apply to God.

(D.) To make righteous. If a person is *made* righteous, this very fact implies that beforehand he was *not* righteous; but the definition is free from any possibility of an imputation of disingenuousness or legal jugglery or even trickery. What is made righteous need not in any circumstances be accounted so, because it is so. Moreover, being righteous, it can be both shown to be and declared to be righteous.

(E.) To make out to be righteous. This again is dishonest unless the object so made out really *is* righteous. Suppose we declare ourselves righteous. Either we blatantly do so in the teeth of the obvious fact that apart from God's grace we are nothing of the kind or, more modestly, we try to convince those around us. We are making ourselves out to be righteous. If we really were righteous we would have no need to make ourselves out to be so; for our righteousness would be declared by God or would declare itself, and we would not desire to declare it. Thus "to make out to be righteous" is a very poor substitute for the real thing. Those who do it cannot make themselves righteous; so in order to cover up their poverty of soul they try to pretend they have succeeded and so make themselves out to be what they are not.

#### Applied to God

Here, then, are four alternatives; for I submit we can write off (A.) without further ado. Which are we to choose? As regards God this question is already settled. (C.) is the answer. As regards mankind we have yet to find the answer: and the only way is to investigate the passages in which "dikaioO" is found. Because (C.) is the only meaning which can properly be applied to God, it does not follow that it should

be applied to mankind. The circumstances are entirely different, so the case still has to be decided on its merits, and must not be prejudged. Perhaps before we proceed we had better examine the passages where this word is applied to God. They are Luke 7:29, Rom. 3:4 and probably 1 Tim. 3:16.

I suggest the following renderings: —

Luke 7:29. —And the entire people, when they hear, and the tribute collectors, declare God righteous, being baptized with the baptism of John.

Rom. 3:4. —Now let God turn out to be true, yet every man a liar, even as it is written.:

"So that Thou shouldest be declared righteous in Thy sayings, And should be conquering when Thou art being judged."

1 Tim. 3:16. And avowedly great is the secret of that devoutness. God was made manifest in flesh, declared righteous in spirit, made appear to messengers, heralded among Gentiles, believed in a world, taken up in glory.

As regards the third, it is necessary to observe that there are only two readings to choose from, namely, either "God" or "Who." The evidence for "which" is so scanty as to be negligible. The balance of evidence is decidedly in favor of "God." However, the point is of little moment for our present purpose, for "Who" must refer to either God or Christ, and "declare righteous" is the only appropriate rendering of the verb to apply to either. I suggest, by the way, that the devoutness in question applies to the previous verse; and I have retained the article accordingly.

In my rendering of the verb in these three passages I am supported by Rotherham; but the English A.V. and R.V. and the C.V. are unanimous in preferring "justify." Anyone who may feel overwhelmed by the weight of these Authorities should read one of them and query what they mean. If the answer is that they mean what I say, namely "declare righteous," why not join with me in following Rotherham in saying so plainly? If they mean something else; what, precisely, is it? I do not know, and I have yet to find someone who can tell me.

Before we start to consider the other occurrences of the verb a further observation needs to be made. Many readers, by the time they have got to this point, will be tempted to declare: "You have already found a rendering of this verb which in three of its occurrences you allege to be the only possible one. If you are right, you have yourself closed the discussion, for the Concordant Principle Will not allow two different renderings of one Greek word." At the risk of tediousness it must be repeated that this principle is an ideal which cannot always be realized and is not, even in the C.V. itself. We cannot circumscribe the Infinite by human notions and words; and in such contexts a pedantic concordance is apt to be more misleading than frank discordance.

#### Self—Applied

Apart from Luke 7:29, already considered, the verb occurs in the Active Voice in Luke 10:29; 16:15; Rom. 3:26, 30; 4:5; 8:30, 33; Gal. 3:8. In all but the first two God is the One who is operating. In the first two, the action is by man, and it is quite evident that (E.) "make out to be righteous," is best in accord with the sense. We thus read:

Luke 10:29. Yet he, wanting to make himself out to be righteous,.

Luke 16:15. You are those who are making yourselves out to be righteous in the sight of humanity; . . .

In these "declare righteous" is hardly strong enough. In the former, the lawyer did not want simply to announce himself as a righteous person irrespective of whether the Lord Jesus would concur in his good opinion of himself. He wanted to convince Him, to carry conviction and so force Him actually to acknowledge the validity of his claim. It was a carefully thought-out piece of propaganda and the parable with which the Lord Jesus answered him exposes its futility with devastating accuracy. In the second the Pharisees were not simply seeking to appear righteous, their aim was to create an illusion sufficiently strong to satisfy the standards of humanity. It was not only a bogus righteousness, but a bogus standard of righteousness, which they were seeking to put over. Again, a mere declaration would have been hopelessly inadequate.

For the rest it seems to me that "make righteous" is the only possible rendering.

The first, Rom. 3:26 on this assumption would read literally: "... unto Him to be righteous and One making righteous the one out-of-faith of Jesus."

Rom. 3:30 would read: "Or is He the God of Jews only, *not* of Gentiles also? Yes! of Gentiles also; if so be *One* is the God Who will be making righteous out-of-faith circumcision, and uncircumcision, through the faith."

There is nothing special, at this stage, to be said about the former; but the rendering of the latter is so unusual that an explanation is called for. The idea, indicated by the insertion of two commas in the last sentence, was pointed out to me by Mr. Thomson; but the interpretation is my own and I take entire responsibility for it. The C.V. reads: ". . . Who will be justifying the Circumcision out of faith and the Uncircumcision through faith." It inserts "the" twice and omits it once, thus completely distorting the sense. It leaves unanswered the question why it abruptly leaves Jews and Gentiles and substitutes for them what it presumably regards as synonymous designations. I am convinced that the interpretation involved in this C.V. rendering, with its capitalization of "C" and "U" is incorrect. The discussion here is not about the choice of one nation as contrasted with others, as we find in Romans 9 to 11, but with the individual human being (v. 28). The injection of "the nations" into this is wholly unwarrantable, as also is the queer idea that "By the figure of omission, *some of*, or *believers of* the nations are called *nations*." (Unsearchable Riches, March 1945, p. 90). This is just moonshine! It is an attempt to cover up the fact that "nations" is not suitable as a translation of the Greek; and such "howlers" as "of the nations" in 1 Cor. 12:2, where the word is not, as here, in the genitive case.

#### Law Made Righteous

The subject of the passage as a whole (Rom. 3:27-31) is *law*. Paul asks "Where, then, is the boasting? It is debarred! Through what law? Of the works?" (i.e. the works of law in v. 20) "Not so! But through faith's law." Then v. 31 reads: "Are we then nullifying law through the faith? May it not be coming to that! But we are sustaining law!" So in vv. 29, 30 Paul is forced to go deeper than he has yet done. The idea of "faith's law" raises the question whether law itself can be made righteous. Verse 31 supplies the answer, and the proof of it is in the previous verse. God will be making righteous circumcision which it out of faith, through the faith. "The faith!" Which faith? "Jesus' faith." (v. 26). Through Jesus' faith, circumcision which is out of faith will be made righteous. That being so, we are not nullifying law, but sustaining it; even though, through His faith, uncircumcision also will be made righteous.

Now perhaps we can understand better how it is that the Apostle Paul does not open Romans by describing it as his Evangel, but as God's Evangel. It is, in a sense, Paul's Evangel in that it was given to Paul alone to set out; but it is too wide to be *only* Paul's Evangel, to be confined in scope to what is simply the uncircumcision Evangel. In the first four chapters, even though they lead up to righteousness

for Gentiles and to reigning grace, we cannot leave out the Jew and the circumcision which was given to him by Moses. Basically God's Evangel is concerned with God's righteousness. "It is God's power unto salvation to everyone believing—to Jew first and to Greek as well—for in it God's righteousness is being revealed." (Rom. 1:16, 17). We simply *cannot* confine it to the Gentiles—or to the present era for that matter—for it is to *everyone* believing; and Paul clinches his statement not by some new revelation, but by a quotation from the Hebrew prophet Habakkuk. There is much in those first four chapters which is neither exclusively Jewish nor exclusively Gentile; neither God's judgment (2:5-10), nor sin now (2:11-13; 3:9-20), nor faith, for it is whether in circumcision or uncircumcision (4:1-12), nor Abraham's fatherhood. Nor does any question arise, at this stage, of the issues which are met from Romans 5 onwards, or in Galatians. If Jews are now all under sin, so also are Greeks (3:9). If God is the God of Jews, so also is He of Gentiles. If Abraham is father of all believing through uncircumcision, so also is he father of circumcision (4:9-12).

Yet if we were to leave the matter at that, we would leave it distorted and one-sided. We learn that God will be making righteous circumcision which is out of faith; but we learn it in a context which implicitly undermines and annuls circumcision and which, taken a stage further in Galatians, explicitly destroys it. "Yet now, apart from law, God's righteousness is manifest. . .yet God's righteousness through Jesus Christ's faith. . . for distinction there is not, for all sinned and are wanting of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:21-23).

Hitherto most of those who have perceived the difficulty have tried to get over it by the artificial expedient of making some of the awkward passages. in these chapters simply theoretical statements or even merely rhetorical statements. Examples are "the doers of law shall be justified" (provisionally I am leaving the word in its usual form), (Rom. 2:13); "for circumcision, indeed, is benefiting if law you should be practicing" (2:25); "what is the benefit of the circumcision? Much in every manner." (3:1, 2) ... In other words, they are shelving the problem by shutting their eyes to its reality. The truth is, these four chapters are incomplete, designedly in... complete. We are not permitted to go on with the thoughts, in those three quotations, because for the present they are merely theoretical. But we have not, in any circumstances, any right to assume that they will always remain so.

These four opening chapters of Romans are the basis of God's Evangel; although to a very large extent leading to one aspect of it only, the uncircumcision aspect. That the issue of uncircumcision versus circumcision arises in them is necessary for the proper setting-forth of this aspect; but if we neglect to keep in mind that the circumcision aspect exists also, and in the coming era must needs in turn become the important one, we shall properly understand neither. Accordingly this question will have to be studied in detail elsewhere.

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Already our attempt to investigate the meaning of the verb "dikaioO" has led us to an important forward step. The English verb "justify" lacks precision as a translation of the Greek. Where the thought originates in a mind which thinks in English, the context should give it the precision which it lacks in itself; but in a translation from another tongue the context is in that other tongue also; thus it provides the frame for the Greek word only, so the protection from ambiguity breaks down. So, if we had asked our question further back in the form: "How can law be justified?" we would hardly have known what we were asking! In fact the question would be unlikely to occur to us at all. In that form the meaning it would convey would probably be something like this idle speculation: "What was God's idea in giving law at all?" At any rate we might easily find ourselves switched over to an irrelevant discussion of God's ultimate purpose and whether that purpose was justified. The human mind has a strong tendency to leave the solid ground of hard facts and practical matters and to take wing into regions of thought purely speculative and often

unreal to the point of fantasy; and it will be found that its take-off is almost always from some vague or ambiguous idea. There are no such ideas in the originals of the Greek Scriptures. Clearness should therefore be our first aim; and it is all to the good that we should get so notable example early in our study. For one thing, the clarification already achieved indicates that we are on the right lines. Indeed, I believe we are on the way to the final solution of the whole group of problems described as "dispensational," but which Dispensationalism has only made more obscure.

To resume. In three more passages in Romans (4:5; 8:30, 33) the verb occurs in the Active Voice, and in one other place, Gal. 3:8. In none of these is "make righteous" out of place; in all of them the other suggested renderings are inadequate or even misleading. The literal rendering of the first is: "Yet to the one *not* working, yet believing on the One making righteous the irreverent—the faith of him unto righteousness is being reckoned." The immediate reference to David, and what follows it, are extremely important and enlightening, and we must examine their significance later. The others call for no special remark.

### THE PASSIVE VOICE

This must now be examined, and we will as before take each passage in turn.

Is an entity accounted righteous, shown to be righteous, declared to be righteous, made out to be righteous, or simply made righteous, when it is "justified?" Take the first, Matt. 11:19, using "justified": "And from the acts of her children wisdom was justified." Here the first, third and fourth alternatives are at best doubtful if examined in the light of the first half of this chapter, so we are left with two, shown to be righteous or made righteous. We can say that wisdom, being an attribute of God, is inherently righteous. Unrighteous wisdom would be a contradiction in terms. Since we cannot make righteous something which is by its very nature righteous, there is here really no alternative to "shown to be righteous." The same applies to the parallel passage: "and from all her children wisdom was shown to be righteous" (Luke 7:35).

Next comes Matt. 12:37, where we have parallelism. The C.V. reads: "For by your words shall you be justified, and by your words shall you be convicted." It would be difficult to find anywhere more inaccuracies in so small a space. In the previous verse the pronouns are plural, but here they are singular in the Greek. The preposition chosen to render "ek" (out of) is rather unfortunate. Not a hint is given that *both* verbs here contrasted come from the "dik-" root.

So we have first to consider the meaning of another of the family of words under examination, *katadikazo*. The C.V. Concordance gives for it "DOWN-JUST, show to be wrong, convict." Again we have two meanings which clash; for "convict" has definitely a forensic meaning absent from "show to be wrong." I prefer "make out to be wrong"; or perhaps better still and more idiomatically "put in the wrong." This gives in the three other passages where this verb occurs:

Matt. 12:7 "you would not put the faultless in the wrong."

Luke 6:37 "and do not put others in the wrong, and by no means may you be put in the wrong."

James 5:6 "you put in the wrong, you murder the righteous."

If this is acceptable, we get in Matt. 12:37: "For out of those words of thine wilt thou be shown to be righteous and out of those words of thine wilt thou be put in the wrong." It is a very important point that here the Lord Jesus turns from generalities to a direct personal admonition to the individual to guard his words. That so searching a saying should be blunted in translation is a misfortune, for the tendency towards antinomianism is strong enough without such help.

In every other passage except Rom. 3:4 and 1. Tim. 3:16, already dealt with, "made righteous" fits perfectly. In two the middle voice occurs also (Acts 13:39, Gal. 2:15-17): these will be examined later.

To sum up: I submit that in both the active and the passive, "make righteous" is indisputably the primary meaning, which should be departed from only when, as already discussed, the context makes it unsuitable.

The other occurrences of the passive voice will read as follow: Rom. 2:13. the doers of law will be made righteous.  
Rom.4:2. For if Abraham out of works was made righteous.  
Rom. 5:1. Being then made righteous out of faith.  
Rom. 5:9. being now made righteous in His blood (literally, the blood of Him).  
1. Cor. 6:11. you were made righteous in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.  
Gal. 3:24. that out of faith we may be made righteous.  
Tit. 3:7. being made righteous by the grace of *that* One.  
James 2:21, 25. made righteous out of works.

#### THE MIDDLE VOICE

We come now to the Middle Voice, and here we approach very delicate ground. The idea always is connected with something an individual does on his own account and primarily to or for his own self or for his own ends; so the question arises at once whether Scripture countenances the idea of an individual making himself righteous, To begin with, I suggest that we ought to avoid the reflexive form; that is to say, the use in any form of the word "self." Instead, I propose to accept tentatively the rendering "achieve righteousness" and see how it fits the five occurrences of this verb in the middle voice which are not in the present tense. The five in the present tense will be examined later, for reasons which will then appear.

The first passage is Luke 18:14, which will then read: "This man went down into his home, having achieved righteousness rather than that one." We are not told that "this man" had achieved righteousness, but that he had achieved it *rather than* "that one." There are several textual variants to the critical word "rather than" (para- besides, by comparison with) but they make little difference to the important point that here the achievement of righteousness is relative.

Next comes Rom. 3:21-24. I am indicating two parentheses by brackets. "Yet now, apart from law, righteousness of God has become manifest ( ), yet righteousness of God through Jesus Christ's faith, unto all and on all who are believing; ( ) achieving righteousness gratuitously by His grace, through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus."

Next, Rom. 3:28: "For we are reckoning a human being to be achieving righteousness by faith apart from works of law"; or, more accurately, "as to faith" or even "faith-wise," which is perhaps too old-fashioned. Again, achievement by the individual, entirely on his own account and by his own efforts, is excluded. This is the only occurrence of "works of law" without the preposition "ex," "out of." The others, with the preposition, will be examined later.

Rom. 6:7 reads: "for the one dying has achieved righteousness from the sin." This cannot be understood apart from its context, so it will have to be considered later. However, righteousness through death can hardly be regarded as an unaided personal achievement by the individual.

1. Cor. 4:3, 4 reads: "But neither am I examining myself. For of nothing am I conscious as to myself, but not in this have I achieved righteousness."

#### WHAT DOES THE MIDDLE VOICE MEAN HERE?

At this point I would ask the reader not to go on, but to pause, re-read the five foregoing passages, and then skip what follows to look at the five occurrences in the present tense set forth later. Then after getting a grasp of all ten, try substituting such alternative readings as "attain righteousness," "get" or "win righteousness for oneself," "make oneself righteous" and "justify oneself," and any others which may come to mind. Perhaps a better suggestion than mine may present itself to someone. If so, I shall be exceedingly grateful to learn of it. But on one point I must not yield an inch—I cannot consent to treat these middle forms as passives, as even the C.V. so often does. Whatever others may say or do, that road is marked for me "No Entry"; and I do not feel called upon to justify adopting this attitude, for it is the fundamental principle of the C.V. itself and the only possible basis of any scientific study of the Scriptures. (It should, by the way, be noticed that here I am using "justify" in the modern English manner and in a sense quite foreign to any of the Scripture contexts of *dikaioO*). On the other hand, unless it is plainly understood what these new ideas do, and do *not*, imply; they are bound to cause uneasiness and even distress.

First, they do not mean that anyone can achieve righteousness apart from faith and by his own unaided efforts or even by God's assistance. This is plain from the very first occurrence in Luke 18:14, where the achievement is relative, and in Acts 13:39 where it is "in this One," i.e. in the Lord Jesus. The occurrences in Paul's epistles lend no aid to any such idea, and James insists that Abraham's faith worked together with his works.

Second, they serve to correct the tendency to antinomianism, by insisting that nobody can acquire righteousness involuntarily, in the sense that one involuntarily catches influenza or a cold in the head. Yet this is not to declare that there is any human *merit* in achieving righteousness; that I am (as was once said about another writer) trying in the hymn which goes "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling," to change "nothing" into "something." After all, even in those words "I" have to do something—"cling"! To argue whether we do anything at all for "justification" is to raise an entirely false issue. We are not automata or puppets; for even believing is an act of volition which cannot be produced from any sort of automatic machine, not even the startling "electronic brains." The issue is not whether we do anything, but whether what we do is any avail at all for righteousness; and the answer is that it is *not*, apart from what the Lord Jesus has done on our behalf; and moreover that all required of us is the barest minimum, faith alone in the first instance, thereafter faith shown in works.

Third, they deal solely with *righteousness*, not with sanctification, holiness, sinlessness or any other idea; and certainly not with any absolutes. Here I must repeat Mr. Thomson's words, already quoted on p. 134: "With us, briefly, the standard is, that the first righteous act we can do is to admit we have no righteousness." That IS a righteous act; and by its very nature it is not a matter for self-congratulation. What I have written in this chapter must be understood in its own context and not explained (?) by an entirely alien set of ideas.

#### DIKAI00 IN THE MIDDLE VOICE, AND WORKS OF LAW

I come now to the five occurrences of the present tense of the middle voice. Two of them are found in the same context as four out of the nine occurrences of "works of law." One, Rom. 3:28, is in the form "apart from works of law"; the other eight read "ex ergOn nomou," "out of works of law." All this links them together, and I am convinced that the only way to understand them is to set them forth in order. This will

explain why I chose to break the sequence of occurrences in the middle voice. "Achieve righteousness" is printed in capitals, "works of law" in italics.

Acts 13:38, 39. "Let it be knowable then, men, brethren, that through this One is being announced to you pardon of sins; and from all which in Moses' law you could not be made righteous, in this One everyone who is believing is ACHIEVING RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Rom. 3:19, 20. "Now we are aware that, as much as the Law is saying, it is talking to the ones in the Law, that every mouth may be barred, and that the whole world may be becoming sub-standard as to God; because *out of works of law* no flesh will be made righteous in His sight; for through law is full knowledge of sin." (I cannot accept the C. V. rendering of "hupodikos," another of the dik-words. Its translation has always been a problem and I think "sub-standard" is best in ordinary English. I feel somewhat diffident over coining words on my own account, otherwise I would bring over the Greek literally and say outright "sub-righteous," which seems to me the exact meaning).

Rom. 3:28. "For we are reckoning a human being to be ACHIEVING RIGHTEOUSNESS by faith *apart from works of law*".

Rom. 9:31, 32. "Yet Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, do not overtake a law of righteousness. Why? Since it is not out of faith but *out of works of law*, they stumble on the stumbling stone."

Gal. 2:15, 16. "We, as to nature Jews and not sinners out of Gentiles, having yet perceived that a human being is not ACHIEVING RIGHTEOUSNESS *out of works of law*, if so be not through faith of Christ Jesus; *we* also believe unto Christ Jesus that we may be made righteous out of faith of Christ and *not out of works of law*, seeing that *out of works of law* no flesh shall be made righteous."

Gal. 3:2. "Did you get the spirit *out of works of law* or out of hearing of faith?"

Gal. 3:5, 6. "Did you get the spirit *out of works of law* or out of hearing of faith, according as Abraham believes as to God and it is accounted to him unto righteousness?"

Gal. 3:10-12. "For as many as are *out of works of law* are under curse; for it is written that 'Accursed everyone who is not remaining in all things which have been written in the scroll of the Law, to do them!' Now, that *in law*, not even one is ACHIEVING RIGHTEOUSNESS with God is evident, seeing that 'The righteous one by faith will be getting him life.' Now the Law is not out of faith, but 'Who does them shall be getting him life in them.'"

Gal. 5:4. "You were exempted from the Christ—any who in law are ACHIEVING RIGHTEOUSNESS. You fall out of the grace." (Here Paul is not saying that it is possible for anyone *in law* to achieve righteousness on his own account; but that if he *were* so doing, the Christ would have been unnecessary for him: a conclusion which is a self-evident absurdity. This is the *one* passage concerning this subject which is in any way to do with circumcision, and thus the only one which is in any sense "dispensational." This aspect of it cannot be properly understood until the whole question of the status of circumcision as the sign of covenant can be re-examined.)

James 2:22-24. You are observing that the faith worked together with his works, and out of the works the faith was perfected; and the scripture was fulfilled which is saying, 'Now Abraham believes as to God and it is accounted to him unto righteousness'; and 'Friend of God' he was called. You are seeing that out of works a human being is ACHIEVING RIGHTEOUSNESS, and not out of faith only."

## PAUL VERSES JAMES?

The juxtaposition of these interrelated passages is of extraordinary importance. Some of its consequences are drawn out below, but I do not suppose exhaustively.

The phrase "out of works of law" is used by Paul alone.

It is confined to Romans and Galatians.

It has to do with "law" as a general principle, not "the Law" of Moses.

It is absolutely and finally impossible to achieve righteousness "out of works of law."

But it is not impossible to achieve righteousness out of "works." The nature of the "works" is what matters, whether they are out of law or the faith.

Both in Gal. 3:5, 6 and James 2:22-24 is the quotation from Gen. 15:6, and the only difference in their context is *emphasis*, Paul referring to "hearing of faith" and James to faith working together with works.

There is no such thing as "faith" which is merely passive, see Rom. 10: 5-11.

James does refer to "law" (and to "faith") in the first half of his second chapter; but in the second half where he speaks of "the works," "law" is not mentioned.

The age-old conflict between James and Paul goes up in smoke once we see that James has *nothing* to say about "works of law."

In fact, the dispensational chasm which so many have been busy digging these many years past disappears too. I am sorry to have to say it, for many friends will be angered; but there is definitely nothing in these ten passages which is "undispensational" for us, or unsuitable and inapplicable in any way for members of the body of Christ. True, not one of these references comes from the Prison Epistles, but neither is there a single item which clashes with them or in particular Philippians 3.

## TRUE DISPENSATIONALISM

I learnt the ideas of what is called "dispensational truth" when a young man, and, among other things, quickly grasped the notion of only one dispensation being in force at any given time. Recently I have been pointing out that the concept of dispensations as consisting of periods of time abruptly succeeding one another is a delusion; but I ought to say now that it is not quite so far wrong as my words may have seemed to convey. It is not so much an untruth as a distorted, truth. I see now that I might well have made the point plainer, that if dispensationalism had confined itself to showing that God deals with humanity through covenant (if at all) at certain periods of history, and that at other periods covenant is nonexistent or in abeyance, there would have been nothing unscriptural about it except its name. There *are* times, such as the present, when covenant is in eclipse or non-existent; there *are* times, past and yet to come, when God elects to deal only with His Covenant People; and the changeover is always marked by crisis. *This* sort of dispensationalism is a profound and anything but properly recognized truth; and it is far removed from the systems which make "a change of dispensation" at the birth of the Lord Jesus, another at Pentecost, perhaps another at the call of Paul, and yet another at Acts 28:28; and claims to be rightly dividing the Greek Scriptures by trying to fit each book into one of these dispensational compartments. This artificial system or group of systems which it soon became, was never self-consistent.

It separated Galatians from Philippians on chronological grounds. It separated Galatians from James on doctrinal grounds, without the smallest regard to what chronological compartment the latter belonged!

What now seems to me so extraordinary is that neither I nor apparently anyone else with whom I was associated in past years ever seemed to notice this inconsistency. If I had properly understood that God does *not* have two incompatible systems of government running at the same time, which I did not properly appreciate till very recently; I would have seen that covenant was eclipsed at Matt. 13:14, 15, and so remains; and that all the Scriptures since given to us belong to this present state of covenant eclipse.

Those ten interrelated passages have bound Acts, Paul's Epistles and James' Epistle into a consistent scheme of thought. This appears from the passages themselves, not from dispensational theory. What makes James different from Paul is that he writes to the Twelve Tribes in the dispersion; yet, even so, he directs them to Paul's writings by implication as Peter does explicitly.

### ARE MY RENDERINGS SOUND?

The various matters in this chapter have been occupying my thoughts for a long time. After repeated examination I can find no flaw in the proposed renderings of different forms of the verb *dikaioO*, so I have ventured to make them public. It is greatly to be hoped that they will evoke close study and keen discussion. They are not put out as a final pronouncement, but as tentative suggestions. Criticism is invited; but genuine, honest criticism, not unfair ill-informed abuse. Perhaps even worse than that is the extremely foolish comment from one correspondent, to the effect that the discussion of "Just" or "Righteous" was merely creating difficulty in what is perfectly plain. I have taken very great care at the opening of each chapter to show that the accepted renderings are anything but plain. I will listen with respectful attention to anyone who can produce a better explanation than I have managed to do of what *dikaioO* means in any particular passage; but not to those who lack the sense to see the folly of accepting "justify" without understanding its meaning.

One teacher has declared that he must refuse to notice any criticism of his renderings unless the critic can substitute something better in their place. In general this attitude is too arrogant, yet here I am tempted to take the same line, for my suggestions *are* an attempt to find something better than the generally received ideas. To say merely "I do not like this rendering" is futile! Such an opinion is utterly worthless unless accompanied by a reasoned statement why it has been reached. So I earnestly trust that I may be granted clear and candid and constructive criticism, something which will give us real help towards what should be our one aim—reaching the truth.

In concluding this chapter, I most earnestly desire to make it plain that I am not trying to propound a new system and saying, "Take it or leave it!" The whole aim is suggestive, to help and encourage others to think out these problems for themselves. I feel sure that the last word has yet to be said on these matters; so I entreat my readers to take this chapter in the spirit in which it is offered—as a sincere effort to elucidate a problem which has troubled many Christians from the beginning and has ceased to trouble the Church as a whole only because it has been shelved instead of solved.

## Chapter 5

### OTHER WORDS CONNECTED WITH "RIGHTEOUS"

To wind up this section of our study a number of other words has to be considered. Where my proposed renderings do not call for detailed discussion, I shall simply list their occurrences with such comments as

are necessary, and save space by leaving readers to check them for themselves. My first, *dikaiOs*, is a case in point.

It occurs in Luke 23:41; 1. Cor. 15:34; 1. Thess. 2:10; Tit. 2:12; 1 Peter 2:23. I suggest the rendering "righteously," for in these "justly" is never preferable and in the second, third and fourth definitely out of place. In the fifth "judges justly" gives the misleading impression that the two words are almost the same in the Greek.

*DikastEs* (Luke 12:14; Acts 7:27, 35 twice). For this the C.V. has "justice." From its contexts I think that it must mean by this what in England is called a Justice of the Peace, i.e. a magistrate; not the abstract quality, justice, which should be shown by a judge. This is used for the next word in the C. V. Concordance, *dikE*. For *dikastEs* I suggest "arbiter of right" or, if it be desired to be strictly concordant, "arbiter of righteousness."

The other word, *dikE*, is rather more difficult. The idea is a right principle of action, what is right or even what is befitting. Unfortunately the idiom of English diverges considerably from that of the Greek here and one is almost forced to paraphrase. 2 Thess. 1:9 seems to me to be best rendered thus: "any who will be incurring what is right—eonian extermination. . . ." Jude 7 will similarly read: "experiencing what is right of eonian fire." This leaves Acts 28:4, which would similarly be "what is right lets not live." This is so clumsy that we would have to substitute "rightness does not let live" or even "befittingness does not let live," or even more of a paraphrase than either. I do not think however that we ought to follow Rotherham and the C.V. by personifying the word and using "Justice" or "Rightness."

Next comes *dikaiOsis* (Rom. 4:25; 5:18) which is what results from making righteous. Here I think that the nearest equivalent is "rectifying" or "rectification." On this assumption, we can read: Rom 4:25: "Who was given up because of our fallings aside; and was roused because of our rectifying," or "of our rectification." I should add that I am not happy about the rendering "offences" for "paraptOmata" and have therefore used the literal "fallings aside" instead, though it is not idiomatic English. Similarly Rom. 5:18 would read: "Consequently, then, as it was through one falling aside unto all humanity unto condemnation; thus also it is through one righteous-standard unto all humanity unto rectification—of life."

Once only do we meet with *dikaiOkrisia*, in Rom. 2:5: "In a day of indignation and revelation of God's righteous—judgment."

## SUB-RIGHTEOUS

*Hupodikos* has already been discussed; but perhaps I ought to say more about my other suggestion, "sub-standard." I still think "sub-righteous" is the best possible rendering. "Sub-standard" is discordant and it is open to the objection that in ordinary life what is sub-standard is nevertheless sometimes permitted to pass as good enough, usually on the ground of expediency. We must remember, however, that God does *not* fail in that way. He will never accept what is sub-standard, nor will He stoop to trying to get around unrighteousness by using some forensic dodge, as I have already pointed out. Theories involving such expedients, wherever they may be, and no matter how earnestly they are expounded, only dishonor God and get us no further.

No! God's way is to set up some righteous-standard. which we *can* reach. It need be no more; indeed, it *is* no more, than simply believing God. . In a way, it is not so much as that may be stretched to mean; because the belief and trust for which God asks involves no subtlety, no reasoning nor argumentation, no more than simply turning the eyes of our mind from self to Him.

The great classic statement of this righteous-standard is in John 3:14-21; and it was based on one historical fact—Moses exalting the serpent in the wilderness. That was the type of the exalting of the Son of Humanity on the cross. The history which becomes this type is set forth in Numbers 21 and merits the most careful study. It began with the impatience of Israel due to want of faith (vv. 4, 5). Then came fiery serpents and the deaths inflicted by their bite, then repentance ("We have sinned" v. 7); then the remedy provided by Jehovah. There it was in its simplicity: all the bitten one had to do was look upon it!

Unfortunately, many thoughtless and hasty "Gospel preachers," in their anxiety to remove all trace of "works" or human merit, have tended to overstate their case and to insist that there is absolutely nothing for the sinner to do in order to be "justified." That is quite unscriptural. The Israelites bitten by serpents *did* have something to do of their own accord—look at the serpent lifted up. And "everyone" (John 3:15) must do one thing—believe on Him. BUT—just that, *and no more*. That, and that alone, is God's righteous standard for us, which we can reach; and by reaching it, thereby achieve righteousness.

But we have got to reach it ourselves! God's Spirit helps poor sinful humanity in countless ways, no doubt, to come to this point of decision, to turn from self to God; but *this* act of faith, itself, has to be ours alone. It is so little in itself, just the turn of a leaf in the wind so to speak (spirit is wind in Hebrew); yet its consequences, its scope and magnitude, are infinitely great. A child pulling over a switch which will start a gigantic power-station is doing a proportionally far greater deed with far lesser consequences.

That is God's righteous-standard—just simple faith in Him! No higher standard is possible without detracting from His deity, for attaining to it would mean having our own righteousness. No lower standard is possible, for nothing can be smaller than the smallest. If we decline to attain to it, we are sub-righteous as to God. And this fact really implies what is to me the greatest objection to the rendering "sub-standard" for "hupodikos," that no standard below God's righteous-standard is thinkable. I shall await the reactions of my readers to this discussion with deep interest, for I believe that the issue raised is of first-rate importance.

Anyhow, one point must be stressed: if no simpler righteous-standard than God's is possible, then the question whether God ever lowers His standard, as man often does on grounds of expediency, can never arise. Nothing less than faith is good enough for God.

#### THE REMAINING WORDS

We have already considered "katadikazO" (p. 230); but there remains the related word "katadikE" (Acts 25:15). It is obvious from the next verse that "conviction" is incorrect, because Festus' whole point is that surrender of an accused person without trial is contrary to Roman custom. The Jews wanted Paul to be sentenced, not to be tried, for they were aware that they could never secure a conviction. "Sentence" or perhaps "sentence without trial" is the sense here.

For "endikos" (Rom. 3:8; Heb. 2:2) the C.V. Concordance has the excellent rendering "fair."

Why not have "accuser" for "antidikos"? "Plaintiff," with its legal associations, goes best with "katEgOr," as an examination of the occurrences of the latter will show (Acts 23:30, 35; 25:16; 18: Rev. 12:10). In Acts 25:16 we find in juxtaposition the passive of the corresponding verb, but for this why not use idiomatic English and say "the defendant"? Admittedly some form of "accuse" has generally to be used with this verb; but the point is (as the C.V. Concordance rightly points out) that "katEgoreO" means "to be against in a court session"; so the other words which are not forensic should not be tarred with the same brush, as the C. V. tends to do. "Antidikos" occurs only four times. The first, Matt. 5:25, should read: "You be humoring your accuser quickly while you are with him on the way, lest at some time the

accuser may be giving you up to the judge. ..." Only after he did that would he become the plaintiff. The same applies to the similar injunction in Luke 12:58. In Luke 18:3 the widow surely was the plaintiff; and the one concerning whom she was appealing to the judge, her accuser? In 1 Peter 5:8 there is no indication in the context that the Adversary is seeking to drag anyone into the Courts. He is seeking for someone to swallow up!

I have no comment to make as to the forms with "ek."

The C.V. correctly defines "adikeO" as "do what is not right," but for the equivalent it chooses, "injure," I would prefer "wrong" in its many occurrences.

"Adikos" should be rendered "unrighteous" and "adikia," "unrighteousness." The student should study all the occurrences of these two words with a concordance, but not that of the C.V., for it seems to have mixed them somewhat, as a glance at Wigram's will show.

"AdikOs" occurs once, in 1 Peter 2:19. Here "unjustly" is correct by English idiom, "unrighteously" conveying the sense of "in an unrighteous manner." It is unfortunate that strict concordance is not possible here; but, even so, "unfairly" would be better than "unjustly;" for it would keep out the forensic tinge which colors the latter in some contexts.

"AdikEma," the effect of something unrighteously done, is well rendered by "injury" in the C.V. (Acts 18:14; 24:20; Rev. 18: 5).

#### GENERAL REMARKS

Much more could be said on this theme, but I do not propose to say it for the present. Whole chapters could be written on the errors of Christendom on the subject of "justification." Experience, however has been teaching :me that the presentation of truth is not only more important, but far more convincing, than the refutation of error. Unfortunately for myself, when I undertook to prepare the series on the Greek Scriptures, I had not only to refute a system or group of systems which had already got a start of 40 years, but I had to shake my own mind Clear of these systems, under which I was brought up in the Faith. This meant that much of what I wrote had necessarily to deal with established error; and even now I have not got so far as I would like with purely constructive research. The subject of "justification" is another one replete with contradictions and confusions; yet apparently some people still think that this discussion is a waste of time. This opinion is sometimes merely an excuse for indifference; but those who sincerely hold it, yet whose minds are open to reconsideration, would do well to read other writers' views on the subject. A small sample is given below.

As regards the words connected with "righteous" the position is better. I have contented myself with stating to start with the accepted or generally accepted teaching, showing where it is not good enough, and then rebuilding the whole subject. Yet even so I have been blamed for correcting renderings in the C.V. Why, I do not know! The C.V. is a public version (1930 Edition, p. 71) as is King James' A.V., which nobody blames anyone for correcting. It certainly seems that some of us do not want truth. Surely it is unreasonable to expect anyone to rebuild without first clearing the site and carting away all rubbish?

I did intend to leave it at that, but while I was typing. the foregoing, my attention was drawn to a glaring example of sheer confused thinking. The writer in question is remarkably good and sound when discussing "righteousness," thus, illustrating the point I have just made; yet when discussing, "justification" he is in a veritable quagmire of error. He insists that Abraham was the "actual possessor of righteousness" and reproves those who believe that "God was only 'whitewashing' Abraham with some

sort of subterfuge." Excellent! But what a fall is there when he comes to talk about "justification"! He tells us that "justification by faith is not the justification by the ransom." I do not know what this means, but certainly it has nothing to do with Scripture; Apparently, however, he uses some Hebrew or Greek text unknown to the rest of us, for he quotes Hab. 2:4, thus; "The just (by ransom) shall live (eternally) by faith." In spite of all his talk about justification he furnishes no justification of these two additions to God's Word. Again, he quotes thus from Acts 13:38, 39: "everyone that believes is freed (or justified) from everything from which you could not be freed (or justified) by the law of Moses." He declares it divinely inspired, but no Greek text in existence substitutes "freed" in this passage.

This man must be left to justify his strange statements if he can; for we all, I am sure, will prefer to read Scripture as it *is*. I quote them only as a solemn warning against injecting the imaginations of our sin-weakened minds into God's holy Word.

The idea of "Justification" as, in general, "making righteous" is very old and yet for many of us revolutionary. This is because in its old "orthodox" form it is inextricably mixed up with all sorts of attempts to make people righteous, or to help them to make themselves righteous, by an extraordinarily varied assortment of means; by asceticism and self-discipline often of so extreme a kind as to amount to torture; by prayer, fasting, innumerable church services, endless recitations of lives of saints, and numerous other things. The very reasonable and proper Protestant reaction against excesses and enormities has too often led to the opposite extreme: license, indifference and antinomianism of every kind. The simple truth lies between the extremes. It is not possible for us by our own efforts, however gigantic or prolonged, to attain to what "orthodoxy" reckons as sanctity; and even a casual perusal of the Scriptures will show that the chief lesson of its historical parts is that, in fact, such attainment has never occurred. The Lord Jesus Himself did not have to struggle to attain to righteousness. He *was* righteous; He did not *become* righteous. On the other hand, we have noted that many men and women named in the Greek Scriptures are stated to be righteous; quite simply, and without the smallest suggestion of vast effort on their part, and still less with any suggestion that they had reached this righteous-standard by means of some sort of forensic jugglery on God's part. Like Abraham they had believed God, and that faith of theirs was reckoned unto righteousness. Thus they had attained to His righteous-standard.

So with these thoughts I will take leave of this theme until we all have had time "to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" what has been discussed so far. By then it will have become clearer to us all what difficulties and problems remain for our consideration.

## Chapter 6

### PERITOME AND AKROBUSTIA

Right in our path lies another controversial subject, perhaps even more controversial than "Justification" by reason of the fact that hitherto there has been no public controversy about it, at least so far as I can discover. Yet a glance at the two Greek words, peritomE and akrobustia, and the universally accepted English rendering of them, circumcision and uncircumcision, will show that something is wrong with the latter. The English words are an idea and its negative, respectively; the Greek words are different in every respect from one another.

The word circumcision comes direct from the Latin, which in turn is a literal translation of the Greek word peritomE, and is quite sound. The trouble comes with the other word, akrobustia. To render it as if it were merely the negative of peritomE, circumcision, is to interpret when our business is to translate. I therefore propose to avoid the difficulty. by boldly transliterating the Greek words as a rule. This is

frequently done with other words. Indeed, it is surprising how many English words are simply foreign words in an English dress.

Furthermore, the two English words sometimes appear with a capital "C" and "U" respectively, and sometimes with a small "c" and "u". There is nothing in the Greek to correspond with this distinction, which must therefore be justified, if at all, on other grounds. By keeping to the Greek words we can avoid this distinction temporarily, and so find out whether it is actually necessary.

For many the points here emphasized may seem quite trivial. But is it all so trivial? From a large volume of air, Ramsay extracted all impurities, dust, water vapor, carbon dioxide; then all the oxygen and nitrogen. Yet, in spite of all his efforts, a small bubble remained. Quite trivial? Yes, but he was a real seeker of truth; the bubble turned out to be composed of the five inert gases, helium, neon, argon, krypton and xenon; and his fame as their discoverer is secure. No *real* scientific knowledge is trivial; and I shall proceed to show that this investigation is not trivial either.

The compiler of the C.V. did not find it trivial, otherwise he would have defined "akrobustia" more clearly, distinguishing it from "aperitmEtos," which has quite a different meaning, much more adequately than he does. Only when Mr. Alexander Thomson investigated the meaning of adjectives ending in -tos did the facts come out. For *aperitmEtos* the C.V. gives "uncircumcised," which it defines as "the special name given those who cannot claim physical descent from Abraham." For akrobustia it gives "uncircumcision" with no definition; but its notes to Rom. 3:30 and 4:8 show that the above definition is what the Compiler understood by "the Uncircumcision" in his version. Against *aperitmEtos* he lists Acts. 7:51, its only N.T. occurrence. This comes in a passage addressed to Israel and largely about Stephen's Jewish audience and their fathers. It begins with a reference to "our father Abraham" and v. 52 twice refers to "your fathers." In fact, the whole speech is specially addressed to those who *did* claim physical descent from Abraham!

In the Greek Scriptures the first reference to *peritomE* is in John's Gospel (John 7:22, 23), to Moses; so, to get to the beginning, we have to look back at least as far as that; and in Romans Paul points us even further back, to Abraham. So first we must turn to them.

#### THE OLD TESTAMENT USAGE

The original Hebrew of the Old Testament gives us little help. The Hebrew word "mul" signifies the rite of circumcision and "orl" its absence. Only when we come to the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew into Greek do we find some enlightenment.

The Hebrew "mul" is rendered by different tenses of the Greek verb "peritemnO" in a number of passages; but in Deut. 30:6 it is rendered by "perikathariei" (Bagster: shall purge) and in Josh. 5:4 by "periekatharen" (Bagster: purified). In Exod. 4:25, 26, alone, it is rendered by "peritomEs" (Bagster: the blood of the circumcision of my son), and it is noteworthy that here it is a purely abstract noun. Nowhere could it be rendered in English by "the circumcised." The usage of the verb itself is the same as in the New Testament.

The Hebrew "orl" is rendered by the Greek "akrobustia," in the singular number, in Gen. 17:14, 24, 25; 34:14; Exod. 4:25; Lev. 12:3; and in the plural number in Gen. 17:23; Josh. 5:3; 1. Sam. 18: 25, 27; 2 Sam. 3:14; Jer. 9:25. In all of these it is rendered by "foreskin," except Gen. 34:14 (uncircumcised) and Jer. 9:25 (A.V. the uncircumcised; Bagster LXX, their uncircumcision). Only in the last is "uncircumcision" a possible reading.

The Hebrew "orl" is rendered by "aperitmEtos" in a greater number of passages. The first is in the detailing of God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. 17:14. The point here is that the breach of the covenant makes the person not only outside the covenant but ineligible for it. The word "aperitmEtos" should be rendered by "uncircumcisable." The justification of this translation will be found in an important and intensely interesting paper by Mr. Thomson entitled "Beloved or Loveable?" in Vol. 14, No.2, pp. 86, 87.

The next occurrence, Exod. 12:48 again makes it plain that the person ineligible for peritomE is in view; so also Lev. 26:41; 1. Sam. 17:36; Isa. 52:1; Eze.44:9.

The word is found in the plural in Josh. 5:6, 7; Judg. 14:3, 15:18; 1. Sam. 14:6, 31:4; 2 Sam. 1:20; 1. Chron. 10:4; Jer. 6:10, 9:26; Eze. 28:10, 31:18; 32:20, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32; 44:7. A study of these passages will confirm what is found with the singular. Thus, "aperitmEtoi" is the special name given those who cannot claim covenant relationship with God. They are ineligible for it. No question of "physical descent from Abraham" comes into the usage of the word. Throughout, the governing idea is the lack, or the absence, of a *spiritual* relationship—that conferred by coming under covenant with God. PeritomE was a sign and seal in the flesh; but it was not only that, otherwise it would have had no meaning. It was a sign in the flesh of a special spiritual standing with God. One of the main lessons of the Hebrew Scriptures is that this outward sign was not, in actual fact, generally accompanied by what is sometimes called "an inward spiritual grace"; but such was God's intention in granting it; and in the promised New Covenant will be seen the covenant and the corresponding inward spiritual standing existing together in glorious perfection (Heb. 8:10).

That physical descent from Abraham did not come into this issue is shown beyond question by the existence of proselytes; and repeatedly the Hebrew Scriptures speak of the existence of strangers with the people of Israel and their incorporation into the covenant (e.g. Exod. 12:48, 49; Deut. 23:7). In Acts there was no difficulty in the Jews having dealings with Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch (6:5) or with the Ethiopian eunuch (8:29); neither of whom were *racially* of Israel if "Israel" may be properly regarded as a racial term at all, which is doubtful. That most of Israel were, in fact, physically descended from Abraham, is a secondary matter. The peritomE was a sign of *covenant*, not of race; and if we persist in thinking of it as simply and solely a distinction in flesh, confusion and error must result. A corollary of this error is another, a novel one which has recently made its appearance, that all references to "Abraham's seed" necessarily refer to those who are *physically* his descendants. Get rid of the former error, and the latter vanishes like a puff of smoke at once. Perhaps we do not realize the extent to which the ideas behind the words "Aryan" and "Non-Aryan" have penetrated into our minds. They would have been utterly meaningless to both Jews and Gentiles in Paul's day. It was of minor importance what *race* (in the modern sense) a man belonged to, provided that he was a Covenant man. Admission into the Covenant came with descent, as was only natural; but descent was not what mattered primarily, but peritomE, failing which the purest descent availed nothing at all. The very first occurrence of "orl," Gen. 17:14, makes this plain beyond any doubt.

We find "aperitmEtoi" once in the Greek Scriptures, in Acts 7:51, applied by Stephen to his murderers, the Sanhedrin of the Jews in Jerusalem. Here there is no definite article, so it is simply adjectival, and not a name given to them, in spite of the C.V. definition. It comes to this, then, that there is nothing in the Greek Scriptures corresponding to "hoi aperitmEtoi" unless "akrobustia" were figuratively used in that way. We shall examine this point later on.

Meanwhile, it is worth while noting that the only reference to "aperitmEtoi" is found in a speech which is based almost entirely on the Hebrew Scriptures, and historical rather than doctrinal at that. Apart from such a context, the word is united to the Greek Scriptures; belonging, as it does, to conditions largely irrelevant to them.

What Stephen said was the most terrible and provocative thing he could say to the Sanhedrin. The word "aperitmEtoi" meant that to Stephen they were outside the pale of Judaism, men as were the Philistines (Jud. 14:3), Pharaoh (Eze. 31:18), Egypt, Elam, Meshech, Tubal (Eze. 32); and the judgment of Jeremiah 6 and 9 lay on them. Stephen was not using abusive language at them. He was making a definite pronouncement to the Sanhedrin of the Jews itself, the very terms of which were an echo of Matt. 13:14, 15. It marked the culmination of his lengthy speech and precipitated the crisis which followed. No wonder they were cut to the heart! No deadlier insult could have been offered them, and what made it worse was that they could not answer his indictment, and they knew it. So they did what is always done when people are cornered but refuse to admit it even to themselves—they flew into a rage, they stopped their ears and they attacked him. And so it had always been, and is to this day, as some of us know to our cost!

#### SUMMING-UP

Let us now sum-up our findings. In the Hebrew Scriptures the verb, circumcise, is straightforward enough. The noun, circumcision, is abstract, the state which results from the verb. The word, akrobustia, is only once rendered by "uncircumcision" and is abstract also. The word, aperitmEtos, is according to context either the adjective "uncircumcisable," or the person who is ineligible for peritomE, circumcision. In the plural it is the collective name for such persons, and the only collective name for them. Nowhere are they described as "the Uncircumcision."

If, then, we were to approach the Greek Scriptures from the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures; as, be it remembered, every Jew did at the start; we would expect to find "peritomE" to be the rite of circumcision and the seal of covenant, "akrobustia" to be the absence of any such rite and seal and of all covenant standing, and "aperitmEtos" used for the person ineligible for covenant and circumcision. If we wanted to speak of such persons collectively we would call them "hoi aperitmEtoi"—the Uncircumcisables.

There is no word in the Greek Scriptures for "uncircumcised" or for "circumcised" either. Therefore, if we so read either "akrobustia" or "peritomE" respectively as if they meant those words; we are reading something into the words which strictly speaking is not there; and the onus is on us to justify our action.

#### THESE WORDS IN THE GREEK SCRIPTURES

We come now to the consideration of these words as used in the Greek Scriptures. It is, to say the least, unfortunate that two entirely different Greek words should be rendered by one English word and its opposite. We have already noticed that Bagster's version of the Septuagint uses "uncircumcision" only once for "akrobustia" (in Jer. 9:25) and the A.V. does not use it at all for the Hebrew "orl." This means that no English word can be used concordantly throughout for "akrobustia"; a further justification if such be needed for transliterating the Greek word.

First, I must say that I propose to leave the form "ek peritomEs" out of consideration, because I have already gone into it fairly thoroughly in the Differentiator Vol. 11, p. 174 and Vol. 13, p. 72.

Only recently have I discovered that Mr. A. E. Knoch himself suggested the rendering "Circumcisionists" in Unsearchable Riches, Vol. 31 (1940), p. 77. I am glad to have the opportunity to give him full credit for a fine discovery. What surprises me is that this great improvement was not incorporated in the revised Concordant Version of 1944, and even more that he explicitly rejected it in 1950 (Vol. 41, p. 63). The reasons given for this rejection are most unconvincing, and I disposed of them in a few lines in my second paper referred to above, which remains unanswered. The position is that Dr. Roberts's rendering "The Circumcisionists" has not been effectively criticized, and must therefore be regarded as established.

The first occurrence of "peritomE" in the New Testament occurs in John 7:22, 23, which reads:—"On this account Moses has given you the peritomE (not that it is of Moses, but that it is of the fathers) and on a sabbath you are circumcising a man. If the man is getting peritomE on a sabbath in order that the Law of Moses be not annulled, do I raise your bile, seeing that I make a whole man sound on a sabbath?"

While I cannot agree with the teaching that the first occurrence of a word fixes its force; there can be no doubt that, as a rule, its evidential value in that respect is specially high. It so happens that here is the only occurrence of this word apart from Acts and Paul's Epistles. Certain interesting and highly important conclusions emerge. Some have named the epistles other than Paul's "The Circumcision Epistles" and relegated the Gospels to "the Circumcision," blandly ignoring the fact that the former never mention the subject, and the latter only once, as above. If such a title can properly be given to any epistles, it would be to Romans and Galatians, which between them have most of the occurrences of both our words. "The peritomE" was something given TO Israel BY Moses and is connected with the Law. No support can be found here for calling Israel "the Circumcision" or using such a term as a sort of alternative name for Israel or the Jews. Israel were not merely given "peritomE," but "the peritomE." We can best understand this by observing that Israel were not given "law" but "the Law." Other nations had law of some kind, and still do; but Israel alone had the Law which was given by Moses (John 1:17) as they alone had the peritomE which was given by him.

It is necessary to emphasize that the peritomE was something given to Israel, not Israel itself. Israel could not be given to Israel! Those who write so freely of Israel as "the Circumcision" are victims of a strange mental confusion, for they are assuming that the sign and seal, and the people to whom it was given, are one and the same. Those who do this omit to tell us regarding the supposed two meanings of the word how they are able to distinguish which is which. Practically always in their literature they call the sign "circumcision" and the people "the Circumcision"; but this distinction is no more than a private device of their own. It has no counterpart whatever in the original Greek. For example, John 7:22 has "the circumcision," with plain reference to the sign; but as it would not do to render it "the Circumcision" here, most translators are careful to omit the "the." This speaks for itself.

No doubt the retort will be that my translation is not good English. Perhaps, but whose fault is that? King James' translators distinguished between "law" and "the Law," bringing over the Greek article accurately every time. If they had followed the same scrupulous accuracy in this passage, "Moses has given you the circumcision" *would* have been good English. Indeed, I deny that it is bad English. It breaks no grammatical rule. It is merely unusual; but it is accurate and it is concordant; and those who rate concordance so highly have no right to complain if others do likewise as I am doing. Frankly, some of us are getting rather tired of those who give lip service to concordance and microscopic accuracy—when it suits them.

Still, some may feel tempted to condone the omission of the article here. If so, I would draw their attention to the question the Apostle Paul asks in Rom. 3:1; "What the benefit of the peritomE?" Is it not abundantly plain that he is referring to the peritomE which was given by Moses?

"Even so," someone may retort, "does it matter; provided we leave out the definite article consistently and simply indicate it with a dot?" Perhaps not much, provided we are consistent. But are we? Turn to Rom. 4:9 (almost any version), and it will be found that the article in the Greek is here *retained* in the English; and, what is worse, in v. 12 the article which is *not* in the Greek is twice *added*! The same thing is also done in the very next passage where the word occurs, Rom. 15:8. Each time, this tampering seriously distorts the meaning. Even if some might argue that the latter passage is relatively unimportant, the former is certainly a vital part of the Evangel, and in some versions, it is just a mess! One which claims

the highest standards of accuracy has in Rom. 4:9-12 "circumcision" with a capital "C" three times and with a small "c" three times. The same looseness is found in rendering "akrobustia."

Some years ago we began to hope that, at last, it was about to become possible for the English-speaking reader who knew no Greek to study the Sacred Scriptures without any handicap on that account. The dream remains unfulfilled, and, indeed, bitter experience has shown that not only have we advanced much less towards its fulfilment than we thought, but that the difficulties in our path are more formidable than ever we imagined. If only this were generally realized there would be ground for hope that even now a supreme effort might be made to reach at least reasonably close to our goal. It is still not too late—if we all could be honest enough to agree to face the facts.

Before me as I write lies a printed article which is simply a mass of confusion in its references to "the Circumcision" again and again as if it were just another term for Israel. I confess that in the past I have myself offended in this respect. Yet two wrongs do not make a right; and it is high time we asked ourselves not only what we mean, but the really important question, what Scripture means by the word. I submit that the peritomE is simply and solely what John 7:22, 23; Acts 7:8 and Paul in Rom. 4:9-12 declare it is.

In maintaining this, I am not shutting my eyes to the fact that akrobustia is perhaps personified in Rom. 2:26 (1st occurrence) and that both words are used in a way as names in Eph. 2:11, 12; but the point which cannot be too strongly emphasized is that there is no obscurity whatever in these figurative usages. As *always* with figures of speech in Scripture, there is not the smallest shadow of difficulty in understanding them. They make for far greater clarity, and for brevity as well. They make for confusion only when we inject our own confused thinking into them. Treat them as they are, simple and lucid, and our understanding of them will be simple and lucid also. The obscurity of the passage comes, not from the personification, but from diverting our attention from the individual covenant sign and seal to the national standing of Israel and the Gentiles. I have been most intemperately abused for my recent paper on this subject; but so far, no correspondent has attempted to answer the case presented.

If it be said that the use of capital "C" and "U" in translating these words is no more than recognition of a figure, I must reply that it is a great deal more. It is the fixing of a *particular* interpretation, and one which is far from obvious in any of the passages in which various translators have elected to do it. Furthermore, the fixing of this interpretation involves not only tampering with "the," as I have shown, but with the grammar. For instance, King James' despised A.V. follows the grammar of the Greek accurately in rendering "ton nomon telousa" by "if it fulfil the law"; but modern improvement has corrected (?) this to "*are* discharging the law's demands" (my italics), thus concealing the highly important fact that both "akrobustia" (uncircumcision) and the verb it governs are singular, not plural.

In the next issue I hope to complete this chapter with a comprehensive survey of the occurrences of these two words; showing how plain, simple and straightforward they are if only we can bring ourselves to read them straightforwardly. The fact that I have had to use all available space in this issue for a preliminary discussion of the subject shows how complicated and confused we have managed to make it.

#### PERITOME AND AKROBUSTIA

Romans is the key to full understanding of these two words, as it is to most scriptural subjects to which it refers at all. The first and longest passage containing them is Rom. 2:25—3:1 which reads, very literally, as follows:—

"For peritomE, indeed, is of benefit, if law thou  
mayest be putting into practice; yet if thou mayest be

transgressor of law, the peritomE of thine akrobustia has become. If so be, then, the akrobustia the righteous-standards of the Law may be maintaining; will not the akrobustia of it unto peritomE be accounted? And these naturally akrobustia, the Law discharging, will be judging thee—the one who (through writing and peritomE) art transgressor of law. Far not in what appears is Jew, nor yet in what appears in flesh is peritomE; but in the hidden is Jew, and peritomE of heart—in spirit not writing—the applause of which is not of humanity, but of God. What, then, the super-abundance of the Jew? Or what the benefit of the peritamE? Much in every manner."

The main difficulty in explaining this is that once one has properly digested it, there is so little to explain!

### THE SCOPE OF GOD'S EVANGEL

What is the Apostle Paul doing in the first four chapters of Romans? He is setting out the Evangel in its broadest and most universal aspect. Not only the Evangel as it appears in present conditions while covenant with its sign and seal peritomE, and Israel with their hopes and promises and future earthly glories, are temporarily no longer of any account on earth. Not only the Evangel as it will be in days to come when covenant, and Israel, the Covenant People, once again are in the very forefront of God's purposes; with the fulfilment of God's promises to them dawning, the Church which is Christ's body no more than a memory, a very blessed memory, on earth. Not these, but *God's* Evangel in its fullest and broadest sense.

There are two sides of God's Evangel. One, the setting-forth of God in Christ in the four Gospels, wherein we learn what *He* is and the grace and the truth which came with Jesus Christ. The other the setting-forth first of what we are, second of what we are to become in Him. And "we" in Romans 1 and 2 means more than the Church which is His body; it means in Romans 1 and 2 all humanity, shown as sinners and wanting of the glory of God; it means ultimately all humanity reconciled to God, and God all in all. Neither is complete without the other. The Gospels by themselves leave us where we were, sinners convicted of sin and blinded by the vision of infinite love manifested in infinite sorrow and pain. And when Paul sets out the aspect of the Evangel which is specially entrusted to himself he begins by pointing back *to* the Gospels. Apart from them his Evangel is no better than a cloud castle, it lacks any solid foundation.

It is a most instructive, though most difficult, exercise to read the Gospels as they seemed to those who saw and heard the Lord Jesus or who heard His message at second-hand before meeting with Paul's Epistles. If we do this, examining most critically our own ideas and rejecting all that V{e derive from later revelations, we must find that our study leaves us with a mass of unanswered questions. Take the Pronouncement of Matt. 13:14, 15. The Lord Jesus followed it up by revealing secrets to the select few; but these disclosed only some aspect of the future; they left out that covered by the question of Acts 1:6. The final answer is in Romans 11, *but* that answer would tell us very little were it not for the ten chapters which precede it. And the question which governs that answer, and in fact the whole Evangel, is found in Chapters 2 to 4. It is: "What is the relation of the Evangel to akrobustia and peritomE (i.e. uncircumcision and circumcision), to faith and to law; in fact, to Abraham?" The answer to that question involves the answer to every other.

Not till I perceived this did I understand the tremendous importance of the pair of words we are studying.

## ROMANS 2:25 TO 3:1

Paul leads up to Rom. 2:25 by addressing himself to the Jew, the teacher of the Law who does not teach it, but transgresses it, and who thereby dishonors God and causes His name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles. Yet he is careful to refrain from any suggestion that there is therefore no point in being a Jew. PeritomE is indeed of benefit provided that law is being put into practice. But if not, if law is being transgressed, then the peritoniE becomes akrobustia. Although the sign and seal itself is permanent, the spiritual reality with which it corresponds can continue to exist only if it is a reality. If it is not a reality, then the sign loses its significance and a man is precisely as well off without it. Indeed, if he is without it, and yet shows that he nevertheless possesses the spiritual reality; then although he has not peritomE, yet maintains the righteous-standard of the Law which should be the accompaniment of peritomE, he is displaying the reality even though he lacks the sign. What matters is not the sign, but the spiritual reality of which it is supposed to be the sign.

Here we have to go carefully. Paul is not saying that the sign is nothing, but that it is nothing without the spiritual reality which it signifies. Nor is he saying, here, that a man is as well off without the sign as with it; and still less that he is better off. That question does not arise at this stage, and is left open. A man may be as well off or even better off. That is not the point. The point is that in the circumstances under consideration a man has the reality without the sign, and so is reckoned as having all that ultimately really matters.

The question left open is unimportant and even irrelevant here; but it should be borne in mind because of its importance later on. When in Phil. 3:2 Paul tells us that "We are the peritomE," he is not saying that we have acquired the sign of covenant. He is telling us that we have started off from precisely the position visualized in Rom. 2:26, that our akrobustia has been accounted unto peritomE. This is on the *spiritual* side and is wholly independent of the physical side. "For in Christ Jesus neither peritomE is anything, nor akrobustia, but a new creation" (Gal. 6:15). We have got beyond all fleshly distinction. The accounting unto peritomE is not a goal which makes us eligible for covenant blessings as they are in themselves, according to flesh and on earth; but a springboard whereby we leap upwards to all spiritual blessings among the celestials, a new creation.

The figure of speech here is a beautiful example of clearness and precision. In Acts 11:2, 3 we read:—"Now when Peter went up into Jerusalem, the Circumcisionists doubted him, saying that, You came in to men having akrobustia, and you ate with them." I suppose Paul could have said in Rom. 2:26, "If so be then, men having akrobustia may be maintaining the righteous-standards of the Law"; but how much neater and simpler and clearer is what he actually did say by quietly personifying "akrobustia" here, and incidentally here alone? There is not the slightest difficulty in understanding the meaning, and no justification for writing "the Uncircumcision," as if "the Gentiles" should have been written by Paul instead, thereby dragging in the irrelevant consideration of nationality and Israel's Kingdom promises. Moreover, such an intrusion spoils the delicate contrast embodied in the next clause. For if "the akrobustia" in v. 26 means "the Gentile," who is "the naturally akrobustia" in v. 27? Nothing is added to the term "Gentile" by specifying "by nature" or "by birth"; and Paul is most careful not to say that the law-breaking Jew becomes Gentile. He is keeping rigidly to his terms of reference. Even the question whether a Gentile can become peritomE does not properly arise in v. 26 itself. The state or condition of peritomE may become a state of akrobustia, which may in turn, by maintaining the righteous-standards of the Law, once more become a state of peritomE. Anything more than that, however justifiable, has to be read into v. 26. It is not there as it stands.

Neither is it in v. 27 except within a very limited context. The transgressor of law is still in view. What Paul is here rubbing in so hard is that maintaining and discharging law is what matters, and not the resting

in law (v. 17) or the teaching of law (v. 21) and still less (in this respect) the outward covenant seal to which the Law is linked in the first instance. The naturally akrobustia, the Law discharging, will be judging the Jew, because (as Paul pointed out at the start, in v. 15) he is displaying the action of the Law written in his heart.

And *this* is according to Paul's Evangel (v. 16).

Lest we should be in any doubt about it, Paul stresses the importance of the Law to himself, and therefore to us, in Rom. 7:22.

Make no mistake, unless the vital importance of having the action of the Law written in our hearts is an essential part of our Evangel, we are no true followers of Paul. *But*, this does not mean legalism or bondage to law. That is an altogether different matter, which must resolutely be kept in its proper context.

Yet we must not get our position in this passage out of proportion. The naturally akrobustia come in here only as a foil to the Jew who is dishonoring God. It is an indictment of the Jew; not, at this point, an evangel to the non-Jew as such. Whether he can ever get peritomE of heart is another question which does not arise in this passage. Taking Romans *as a whole*, the Jew as such comes in largely as a foil to those who are of Abraham's faith without any consideration of whether they are Jews or Gentiles by origin; but *at this point* the Jew holds the stage.

Lastly, it is significant that "writing" is the Greek word "gramma," and therefore does not refer to Scripture, but to human writing. When Paul turns to "the oracles of God" in Rom. 3:2 he has moved to a different subject.

#### ROMANS 4:9 to 12

The next passage, Rom. 3:29, 30 has been discussed in Vol. 14, No.4 pp. 161, 162, and there is not much more to be said about it at present, so we pass on to Rom. 4:9-12, which reads, very literally:—

"This happiness, then: on to the peritomE or also on to the akrobustia? For we are saying, 'To Abraham the faith is reckoned for righteousness.' How, then, is it reckoned? Being in peritomE or in akrobustia? Not in peritomE, but in akrobustia. And a sign he obtained: of peritomE—seal of the righteousness of the faith which was in the akrobustia—for him to be father of all those who are believing throughout akrobustia, for the righteousness to be reckoned also to them; and father of peritomE—not to the Circumcisionists only, but also to those who are observing the fundamentals by the footprints of the faith, in akrobustia, of our father Abraham."

The happiness is that of the human being to whom God is reckoning righteousness apart from works; and the question is; What is its scope? Is it governed in any way by whether the individual concerned is, or is not, under covenant? Is it something which comes on to the state of peritomE or on to the state of akrobustia?

That the answer is "Both" is implicit in Rom. 2:26; but as it is outside the scope of this passage, it is not dealt with until now. Paul develops his theme systematically and logically; there is a place for every relevant idea, but every idea is in its place. Until he has settled, first that by law-works no flesh at all shall be made righteous in God's sight, second that righteousness is through the faith, other questions do not arise. Once the two are settled it immediately becomes of major importance to settle *how* faith is reckoned for righteousness, and here is the answer. We go back before the Law, before Moses and Israel, back to

Abraham; and the answer is another severe shock to the Jew. To Abraham the faith is reckoned for righteousness, not in peritomE but in akrobustia! Immediately, the shock is mitigated by pointing out the place of peritomE in Abraham's call—a concise statement which defines once and for all its true significance. It is first the covenant sign; and it is a seal.

For the first, the covenant, aspect, we have to look back to Acts 7:1-8, to what Stephen also has to say about Abraham. This is purely Israel's side of it, so Paul has nothing to say of it in Romans until he comes in turn to Israel's side in 9:4 and 11 27. Stephen states that God " gives to him a covenant of peritomE." (Acts 7:8). The immediate interest for us is in the seal. It is seal of the righteousness of the faith. This is simply saying, from a different point of view, what we have been told already, that what matters is peritomE of heart, in spirit, not writing. By itself it annihilates the pretensions of the unbelieving Jew; but if we read the whole clause instead of the first half, which is all I quoted then, the effect is devastating. PeritomE is seal of the righteousness of the faith *which was in the akrobustia!* The akrobustia has not only priority in time, it has priority in order also! PeritomE means nothing unless it is seal of the righteousness of the faith which was *in akrobustia*.

I mentioned elsewhere that I have been criticized for pointing out that only as a Gentile can. one Come into the Secret of Eph. 3 and be a member of the joint-body; but here I am going much further: only as a Gentile, that is, in the akrobustia, can the Jew come into the peritomE!

This is shown, not only by the words I have italicized but by what follows; the faith, *in akrobustia*, of our father Abraham.

Startling as this seems at first glance, it is no more than another aspect of what Paul is saying in Rom. 3:9-11. There is nothing temporary in this demonstration of Paul's. It is a permanent truth for all humanity until, at last, God concludes His New Covenant upon the houses of Israel and Judah, when, this statement will no longer be true of them. All through the Old Testament we find God insisting that His covenants and blessings for Israel are conditional on faith-obedience. But Israel did not obey, and therefore did not receive the blessings. They wanted the covenant and the blessings without the faith; in fact they wanted to have what Abraham received, but without the faith which enabled him to receive it. PeritomE is a seal, but it has to be seal of something, the righteousness of the faith which is in akrobustia. No righteousness, no seal; and therefore no real peritomE.

I am the last to wish to minimize the distinction between peritomE and akrobustia, but no service is done to truth by some of the unreal distinctions which have been added. God required faith and obedience from His Covenant People; and He requires them from *us*. Any so-called gospel which fails to make this plain is false.

This deflation of the antinomianism which is rampant among us will not be popular, but that cannot be helped. Our God is holy, and He would have us be holy too. It is appalling that so many who call themselves Christians should care little for truth and righteousness and holiness.

Abraham's fatherhood is not of two classes, Israelites and Gentiles, who are not mentioned in this context at all; but of three. This is the only point where Paul explicitly recognizes a legitimate classification of the Christians of his time; that in 1 Corinthians 3 was not legitimate. First are "all those who are believing throughout akrobustia"; and these were in origin both Jews and Gentiles, for belief throughout akrobustia is not concerned with national covenant distinctions (Gal. 5:6; 6:15 and the Prison Epistles). The second and third: are those to whom Abraham is peritomE father, that is, those of whom his fatherhood is in peritomE. These are by definition Jews and proselytes; and by the fact that to them Abraham was peritomE father, it is plain that whatever else they had done, they had not followed Paul into a new

creation, in akrobustia. In the state of affairs which had then come into being, for which covenant had lost all significance; those whose whole position was based on covenant and peritomE were virtually cast adrift; and even Peter had little to say to them beyond the exhortation in his epistles to faithful endurance. Of the first of these two classes we become aware in Acts and Galatians; the Circumcisionists, who specially stressed peritomE. The Circumcisionists opposed Peter, who was afraid of them. The other, the third class, include Peter and the rest of the Twelve. Practically nothing is said of them, but certainly some did observe the fundamentals, for it is incredible that there were none who followed Peter, maintaining their peritomE and the righteous-standards of the Law, but at least recognizing and tolerating the Christians who followed Paul, which is what the Circumcisionists refused to do. I suggest that Paul when writing of "the Israel of God" in Gal. 6:16 had this third class primarily in mind His definition of the third class in Rom. 4:12 is somewhat elliptical, but much of the obscurity of the subject comes from our own confusions; and fuller consideration of it must wait until we come to study Gal. 2:6-9; concerning which I would say now that, as it raised no translation difficulties and as its investigation belongs properly to my series On the Greek Scriptures, it had best be deferred to its logical place there.

### THE OTHER OCCURRENCES

Rom 15:8, 9 ought to be plain enough, yet translators and expositors have somehow managed to distort it. That Christ has become the servant of Israel is certainly no part of God's truth; and it is a shame that anyone should so twist this passage by capitalizing "Circumcision," adding "the" no less than three times, omitting it once, then tagging on an irrelevant reference to the lost sheep of Israel's house in Matt 15:24, and finally separating v. 9 by a full stop. The sense is:—"For I am terming Christ servant to have become of peritomE on behalf of God's truth, unto the confirming the promises of the fathers, yet the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy."

The sense of 1 Cor 7:18 is:—

"Was anyone called, having got circumcised? Let him not seek to undo it. Has anyone been called in akrobustia? Let him not get circumcised. The peritomE is nothing and the akrobustia is nothing, but a keeping of God's precepts (is everything)."

Gal.5:6, 11; 6:15 are quite clear, and harmonize with this. Eph 2:11, 12 has a subtle distinction between "the ones" and "the one" which suggests to my mind that this attitude of contemptuous superiority was adopted by snobbish individuals here and there only, and not by decent folk of Israel who sought to live righteously. It reads:—

"Wherefore, be remembering that once *you*, the Gentiles, in flesh—the ones being termed akrobustia by the one being termed peritomE, in flesh, hand-makeable—that you were, as to that era, apart from Christ, alienate from the citizenship of Israel. . . ."

Phil. 3:2-5 is an affirmation that our peritomE is wholly spiritual and not in flesh, and it certainly does not make us out to be of Israel, as some seem to think. It reads:—

"Beware the maimcision, for *we* are the peritomE the ones as to God's spirit offering divine service and glorying in Christ Jesus and not in flesh having confidence! And am even I having confidence also in flesh? If any other one is presuming to have confidence in flesh, I rather: 8-day peritomE, out of race of Israel, tribe of Benjamin."

Col. 2:11, 13; 3:11 must be left for the present to speak for themselves, with the observation that there are profound depths of meaning in this epistle which few expositors have attempted to sound. Indeed, without a fuller, understanding of these two words, and others no such attempt can hope to be adequate.

### SUMMING-UP

To sum up. Akrobusia (uncircumcision) is the state or condition of *absence* of covenant obligations, but also the absence of covenant rights and privileges, PeritomE (circumcision) is the state of the presence of covenant rights, obligations and privileges.

Akrobusia necessarily has the priority, as it had with Abraham. It is the essential primary condition for the faith which to Abraham was reckoned for righteousness. Only those who recognize that they possess no rights and privileges of their own can possess the faith and all which proceeds from it; and only such can go on (if called to do so) to receive the sign and seal of peritomE.

The akrobusia in and by itself avails nothing, any more than does the peritomE; but *the faith*, in akrobusia, leads to a new creation for those called to it.

The faith does not abrogate law. It sustains it. Through the faith, God will be making peritomE out of faith righteous, and also akrobusia.

The peritomE is a sign which was given to Abraham, sign of a covenant of peritomE which God gave to Abraham. It was also given to Moses. It is, in fact, the badge of covenant. The peritomE and covenant exist inseparably together.

The peritomE is seal of the righteousness of the faith which was in akrobusia. Without peritomE there is no visible seal in flesh; but I would suggest that in its stead there ought to be the twofold seal of 2 Tim. 2:19. For us there is no seal in flesh. All the more, then, is it necessary for us who are naming the name of the Lord to withdraw from unrighteousness.

## Chapter 7

### ISRAEL

Difference of opinion as to the meaning and application of the term "Israel" is a modern phenomenon. At the time of the Reformation there was no doubt about its meaning in the Hebrew Scriptures. It was recognized as the collective name of the Twelve Tribes at first and, after the schism with Judah and Benjamin, the Ten Tribes. As regards the Hebrew Scriptures there never has been any doubt about this.

There ought not to be any doubt either as regards the Greek Scriptures; and perhaps there never would have been any had not the Roman Church deliberately ignored Romans 9, 10 and 11 and declared itself to be the "New Israel." Since this term is wholly unscriptural we can, in turn, ignore it and the claim which goes with it; but unfortunately, we cannot ignore its implications and the claims which have resulted from them, including even the name which by common consent has been given to the Greek Scriptures, namely "The New Testament." As confusion always breeds fresh confusion, even this name is ambiguous; for so-called Orthodoxy has been unable to decide whether "covenant" or "testament" is meant. Therefore it is best to avoid the generally accepted name and to speak always of the "Greek Scriptures."

Directly the concept of a supposed "New Israel" is accepted by the mind, it displaces as something permanently finished and discarded the "Old Israel," another unscriptural term. There is no trace of such a happening anywhere, not even temporarily, let alone permanently.

Here I must confess that hitherto I have been following others in a serious mistake by writing of "Israel's casting away" as if it applied to *all* Israel.

Rom. 11:15 reads literally—

"For if the casting-away of them is world-conciliation, what their taking-back if not life out of dead ones?" To whom does "their" apply? The statement refers back to *their* offence in vv. 11, 12, *their* eyes in v. 10, *their* table in v. 9, back to "the rest" (v. 7) who were calloused: that is to say, Israel *except* for the chosen or elect (*eclogue*) who (v. 5) are a remnant according-to-choice (*Kat eKlogEn*) of grace. From Rom. 11:25 we learn that callousing in part has come about to Israel. Those of Israel who have suffered this callousing are cast-away; they are the bulk of Israel, but we must never allow ourselves to forget that there remains the remnant. The very existence of the remnant is a standing witness against the idea that Israel has been superseded by any sort of new Israel. There is no break of continuity. The callousing, the casting-away, are vitally important realities which dominate the scene. For all practical purposes Israel has at the present time vanished from God's plans; but their eclipse is only temporary, and there still remains a remnant. Lest there should be any doubt about this, the olive tree allegory says "Now if some of the boughs are broken out. . ." (Rom. 11:17). *Some*, not all.

### THE CALLOUSED

Nevertheless the calloused form the great majority at present; the remnant is very small and is spoken of as the remnant here alone in the Greek Scriptures. We are given a necessary, a vitally important, glimpse of them, but no more; just enough to remind us that continuity has not been lost. The history of the remnant is not defined. But instead we are given a broad hint in the quotation from Ps. 69:22, 23 in Rom. 11:9, 10. This is not the same as the passage (Isa. 6:9, 10) quoted in Matt. 13:14, 15 and Acts 28:26, 27, but it is quite near it. A special feature of Romans 11 is the idea "callous." Its verb, *pOroO*, is found in the Active in John 12: 40, in the Middle in Mark 6:52; 8:17 and its Passive in 2 Cor. 3:14 and Rom. 11 : 7; the noun, *pOrOsis*, callousing, in Mark 3:5; Rom. 11:25 and Eph. 4:18. On the other hand, the two quotations of Isa. 6:9, 10 use the verb, *pachunO*, make stout, in the Passive; as does the original Septuagint. Evidently there is intentionally some distinction here, and we must digress to discuss it.

To begin with, it is very curious that the idea of "callous" should occur, as to the Gospels, in Mark and John alone, and not where one might at first thought expect it, in connection with Matt. 13:14, 15. Furthermore, very little of Mark's Gospel is peculiar to him, though there is a good deal more than the critics allow; and these three occurrences are notable examples. Mark 3:1-6 is parallel to Matt. 12:9-13 and Luke 6:6-11, and the three repay careful analysis. Mark 6:49-52 is parallel to Matt. 14:26-33, and Mark 8:16-21 to Matt. 16:7-12. In these alone the verb *pOroO* is in the Middle Voice; and to bring this over into English I suggest that the first should read "but their heart was callous" and the second "Is your heart still callous?" In each, their state is something which proceeds from themselves, not something inflicted on them as in the other occurrences. Mark takes no account of any judicial callousing.

John 12:40 occurs in a section of this Gospel which is peculiar to it and which follows in order after Matt 21:22, Mark 11:17 and Luke 19:47. It is not, as some have assumed, parallel to Matt. 13:14, 15. The second half certainly echoes it, but the first is closer to Rom. 11:8 and the quotation in John 12:38 is repeated in part in Rom. 10:16. So the passage is really related to Romans 9-11 rather than to Matthew 13; and in a sense this section of Romans is a commentary on it.

As a partial explanation of all this, I suggest that the "pachunO" passages belong to where the sentence of Isa. 6:9, 10 is pronounced to Israel and that the "pOroO" passages to where the announcement is for general information. Why this should be so is not yet plain; but it may be that the intention was to warn us against the very error into which so many have fallen. namely, placing the crisis for Israel anywhere but at Matt. 13:14, 15. This and Acts 28:26, 27 present the matter from Israel's point of view, the rest from a non-Israel point of view.

I regret having to make this lengthy digression, but there has been so much confusion about the matter in the past that we simply cannot afford any more. It is unsafe to leave any loose ends.

To return to the "broad hint" above mentioned; Rom, 11:5-7 shows us an elect remnant and the rest calloused. Matt. 13:1-17 shows us the disciples chosen to know the secrets of the Kingdom of the heavens and the rest (vast throngs) cut off from them by stoutened hearts, heavy ears and shut eyes. And who were the disciples? The Twelve and a few who followed them—*the remnant of Israel*, the faithful Israelites. Israel and Israel alone is in view throughout. And there is one thing which stands out in the Gospels—the remnant was never very large after Matt. 13:14, 15. At the Cross it dwindled almost to nothingness. Though at Pentecost it seemingly flared up into a great throng, there evidently was only a relatively small number whose enthusiasm went deeper than surface appearances.

Now perhaps the point of this lengthy preface emerges for the reader. *There is always Israel*, throughout this era, from start to finish. Matt. 13:14, 15 signalizes the extinction of the status of the bulk of Israel, the vanishing of Israel's hopes till the day of their taking back (Rom. 11:15) but, *though hidden*, there remains a remnant throughout. Though hidden? Yes, surely; for is not that, the whole point of the reference to Elijah in Rom. 11:2-5? To Paul it must have seemed that he only was left, had he not remembered that once it seemed the same to Elijah. Israel counts for nothing now; the Old Covenant is vanishing, but the living germ of Israel's future glory and of the New Covenant is not extinguished, it is only dormant.

It is perfectly right to speak of "the casting-away of those who were calloused" or "the casting-away of all Israel except the remnant"; but the former way of putting it will be misleading unless we keep in mind that "the calloused" were and are, in fact, all Israel except a remnant, and a hidden remnant at that. To turn the whole notion upside down and talk as if it were the remnant that is in full view now and the calloused hidden from sight—that is simply to embrace error with both arms.

This point is much more important than is apparent at first sight, for there exists a whole series of systems which depend on this upside-down notion. The Roman Catholic Church regard themselves as the New Israel, that is to say, the remnant; for they contend that what they speak of as the Old Israel is permanently calloused and cast-away. Others think of the British with other nations racially similar as the true Israel and apparently, yet others vary this theme somewhat. Others teach that the Church is the remnant. I do not propose to discuss these ideas, partly because experience has shown that positive constructive teaching is not only the most useful but also the least likely to evoke hostility, and partly because I have not yet succeeded in understanding the cases (so far as they have been presented to me) for any of these systems. It appears that when one gets really down to the point that, one and all, they require the seeker to accept their basic suppositions blindly, as something which has to be received by an act of faith. In actual fact, an initial act of faith is required for every creed; but there is a world of difference between submission to the dogma of some particular teacher and submission to the authority of the Sacred Scriptures as they are in the originals, free from all human tampering.

Part of the trouble in some quarters springs from a modern theory still held by some that Romans 9, 10 and 11 is a description of a temporary state of affairs now superseded by a new dispensation based on the fuller revelation of the Prison Epistles, a revelation made possible by the pronouncement of Acts 28:26-28. Those who hold this do not seem to have realized how self-contradictory their theory is. Romans 9-11 deals with the period of the callousing of all Israel except the remnant, which period is (according to their teaching) inaugurated by Acts 28:28 and apparently also terminated with the supersession by Acts 28:28 of Paul's earlier epistles, including the so-called dispensational section of Romans, that is, these very three chapters. At least, that is how I understand the teaching after many years study of it. Needless to say, it is not so stated; but that is what it amounts to, the two views of the callousing always being kept well apart.

## WHAT IS ISRAEL?

The foregoing discussion has been confined to the stoutening and the callousing of Israel; for apparently there is little difference of opinion regarding Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures, which ground has been so well covered by others that there is nothing fresh to say. So far, we have virtually been discussing the question "What Israel is not?" in an effort to disperse some of the fog which enshrouds the subject. Having thus cleared the issue we can now examine the question "What is Israel?" in a context free from traditional confusions.

Israel is the collective name of the people who are in covenant with God. Where covenant with a part of humanity exists, there is Israel also. Those who come into covenant with God become a part of Israel in this collective sense: Though in general such people were descendants of Abraham; yet all who sought the privilege could conditionally enter into it and become part of Israel. In other words, the essential requirement for being one of Israel was, and is, God's covenant. Once that position of privilege is achieved, it can be forfeited by unbelief; yet because God is what He is, there is no end to His mercy and grace; and He has declared that such forfeiture will not be permanent. That is the truth set out in Romans 9,10 and 11.

When the twelve tribes split into ten and two, the divisions were described as Israel and Judah respectively, the latter being the name of the chief tribe of the two. Yet, so far as their covenant position was concerned, the latter remained "Israel." What they had in common outweighed their differences.

The crux is "Covenant." Where covenant is repudiated, so far "Israel" ceases to exist—but only so far. The individual of Israel according to flesh may break the covenant and lose in some measure the covenant blessings; but he cannot break away from covenant and become as if there were no covenant unless God permits him to do so.

If it were true that covenant had now ceased to exist, there would now be no "Israel" at all. But it is not true. For some 1900 years the Old Covenant has been near to vanishing. Yes, near: but it has not vanished, and it will not, until it vanishes into the glory of the New Covenant. There will always be something of Covenant, even if only in the back ground, as at present, until the great Reconciliation is consummated; so till then there will always be the Covenant People, Israel.

If it were true that Covenant had become universal among all God's people, then all would be "Israel." But it is not true. Paul's Evangel is the Evangel of the akrobustia, the uncircumcision; of something which in its very essence is incompatible with peritomE: circumcision the badge of Israel's covenant standing.

These are the governing facts about Israel. Their covenant standing permeates nearly all Scripture; its temporary forfeiture was the subject of prophecy, but the meaning of it was a secret which God reserved for His saints from among the Gentiles, as they alone could be made to understand it (Rom. 11:25-32). The revelation which leads up to this secret begins with the 9th chapter of Romans and is the least understood section of the epistle.

Many devout, sincere and well-meaning people have nevertheless managed to get into a state of great confusion over this subject. This is entirely the result of wildly irrational speculation in certain quarters. The results are invariably one-sided; some writers seizing on one aspect of the truth and some on another, each party ignoring what is not convenient to their theories.

Since the essential requirement of being one of Israel is covenant relationship with God, it follows that those who are not in covenant with Him are not Israel. That automatically excludes the Gentiles. It also

excludes, in some sense at least, those who have broken their covenant. Do such then become Gentiles? No; because the covenant is *not* broken on God's side, and He has made it fully clear that in due time those who are cast away will be taken back (Rom. 11:12-15). Nevertheless the fact remains that "not all those out of Israel, these are Israel" (Rom. 9:6-8). How are we to clear up the dilemma?

It is not a real dilemma at all. The problem arises entirely out of our own stupidity and ignorance. The Apostle Paul is really perfectly clear in Rom. 9:6-8. Israel is the sum total of the children of the promise; that is to say, they are the Covenant People. What Paul is pointing out is that, in fact, only those of that company who are actually children of God are truly Israel. Later he tells us that the others are at present cast away, though some day they will be received back and all Israel shall be saved.

God is reckoning the children of the promise unto seed (Rom. 9:8); and as if to forestall the very heresies we are examining, Paul adds the explanation that the purpose of God may be remaining according to choice; not out of acts, but out of Him Who is calling (Rom. 9:11). Those of Israel who now are the children only of the flesh are not children of God; but His choice is not to be thwarted by temporary failure. This failure, indeed, is in order that God's choice shall be completely fulfilled. So we are told that the casting-away is world-conciliation; and, this being so, "what their taking-back if not life out of dead ones?" This leads up to the revelation of the secret behind God's choice, in Rom. 11:25, 26. All Israel shall be saved, according to prophecy (vv. 26, 27). Paul is here pointing to the New Covenant as set out in Heb. 8:8-12. When the New Covenant is concluded, there will no longer be any of Israel who are not children of God and it will therefore no longer be true that "not all those out of Israel, these are Israel" (Rom. 9:6). The circumstances in view in Romans 9—11 will no longer exist.

The plain fact is that "Israel" in the fullest sense consists not of those who are Israelites according to flesh only, but of those who are Israelites according to promise, that is, Israelites in spirit as well. We need, however, to be clear in our minds that this is only an approximation to the truth. Scripture is silent about "spiritual Israel," and therefore we should be too.

We are not told so much about this matter as many confident teachers seem to imagine; and the reason is that it is only indirectly any business of ours. The discussion of Israel's affairs is not carried out to satisfy our curiosity or to give our minds food for speculation and wild guesses; but to furnish the necessary background for our own expectation and blessings. What is not revealed to us is no business of ours. All that Paul says in Romans and Galatians on the subject is one-sided; it relates to the matter from our own standpoint and that of Paul's Evangel, that is to say, from the Evangel of the akrobustia point of view. From the Evangel of the peritomE standpoint, so far as it is open to our investigation, we have to approach the matter from consideration of the covenants; that is, we must go to the Hebrew Scriptures and to the Epistle to Hebrews.

As we have already seen, the statement of Isa. 6:9, 10 was made to Israel; first to the vast throngs in Matt. 13:14, 15, and a generation afterwards to the Jews of the world-metropolis as something which had been proclaimed to their fathers. The consequence of the former was the betrayal and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus; that of the latter was the departure of the Jews from Paul and their state of confused disputation ever since. Although all it conveyed to them was that the saving-work of God had been dispatched to the Gentiles and that they Would hear on their own account; yet that told them plainly enough that Israel's position of privilege had become in abeyance. Exasperation and rage was the natural consequence of the pronouncement of Matthew 13; but Paul's reminder of it in Acts 28 brought no such reaction. The Roman Jews had seen for themselves the turn of events; and they could not shut their eyes to the actual facts, but only to the significance of them.

So instead of a non-existent "Spiritual Israel" the Apostle Paul speaks of "the seed"; and we shall presently find that this is not a term which can be confined to Israel according to flesh.

### "ISRAEL" IS ACCORDING TO FLESH

The way old errors which have been repeatedly refuted keep on cropping-up in new guises can be extremely exasperating. Some errorists are unalterably determined that the casting-away of all but the remnant of Israel shall be permanent; so to get round the insuperable obstacle presented by the plain teaching of Romans 11, they set up the claim that those of "Israel" who are cast away are "Israel according to flesh" and that the "Israel" which is received back is "the Israel of God." They also remove the receiving back from the future return of Messiah to the present time. They avoid stating their position bluntly; in fact, they seem unable to state anything plainly to start with: only when error has established itself does it come right out into the open—but that is their teaching in plain terms.

Often the best way to deal with such teachers is to point to matters of fact which cannot be gainsaid. They themselves often unwittingly give us a hint of how best to do so. Since it is a key doctrine of the exponents of the error under discussion that Israel according to flesh is displaced by "Spiritual Israel" (which of course is, for them, "the Church"); the claim of the Jewish people to be Israel must necessarily be rejected. This gives a valuable test of their doctrine.

In the first place, it is most important to note that Scripture does not claim to instruct us in matters which we can discover for ourselves. It does not mention the multiplication table, or the law of gravitation, or radio activity. Al though it prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem, it leaves us to learn of the fulfilment from secular sources. Nearly nineteen centuries have passed since the ink dried on the last pen strokes of the Greek Scriptures and, this being so, it is irrational to suppose that we can discover whether those who now call themselves Israel are entitled so to do by making far-fetched deductions from Paul's epistles. The question is a matter of fact and of secular history, and admits of only one answer there from, that Israel's claims are entirely sound. Not only are true Christians true Rationalists as well, we are the *only* ones who are entitled to that much-abused name! Let us shun irrationalism. Where we find it, we invariably also find false doctrine, heresy and schism.

Any doctrine which asserts or even merely implies that "Israel" does not mean Israel but something else, stands self-condemned. It may seem plausible at first, but soon the cloven hoof shows itself in such terms as "Spiritual Israel," "a new Israel," "Israel of the New Testament," "New Testament saints," "Anglo-Israelism" and the rest.

"But," it may be retorted, "you have not yet proved that Israel and the Jews are the same people."

This theme must be left for another chapter; so it is sufficient meantime to point to the Apostle Peter's speech in Acts 2. He begins by exclaiming "Men! Jews!" (v. 14). Later, he exclaims "Men! Israelites!" (v. 22). Later "Men! Brethren!" (v. 29). His final peroration begins "Let all Israel's house know certainly. . . ." To forestall a possible objection that the 1930 C.V. does not say "Jews" but "Judeans" in v. 14, the Greek here is exactly the same as in v. 5 and the mistake has been corrected in the later edition. I will not venture to declare that this settles the question finally, for someone's ingenuity may discover a way to get round it; but I do contend that it is for the objector to show that Peter was addressing two separate groups and that when he addressed "all Israel's house," he did not, in fact, mean anything of the sort. I hope it will not give offence to declare a preference for believing Peter.

The plain fact of the matter is that actually we have three courses open to us. We can identify Israel with "the calloused." This is the Catholic error and in practice means writing off "the old Israel" permanently.

Or we can follow the novel idea which identifies Israel with "the remnant" and fills the gap with an election of Gentiles. This odd notion is as if one had met with a street accident and lost all one's overcoat but a torn piece of cloth and a button. "Never mind," says a friend, "you can make it up with other material and fresh buttons." Or we can accept Scripture as it stands and take the middle course, which is the inclusive way and the only logical way. We can acknowledge *both* the calloused and the remnant as Israel, and believe God in accepting what Paul tells us in Rom. 11:5-7 at its face value.

The extraordinary doctrine that the remnant is the real Israel and the deficiency left by the calloused has to be made up with Gentiles to comprise a new Israel or the Israel of God, is the very opposite of the truth and, indeed, a complete negation of it. As to this, what Paul writes of himself is quite decisive. He declares that his kin according to flesh are Israelites (Rom. 9:3, 4), that he himself is of Israel's race of Benjamin's tribe, Hebrew of Hebrews (Phil. 3:5, 6); yet he adds that he has deemed these a *forfeit*, that because of the superiority of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord he has forfeited them all, and deemed it all refuse. "But no!" say some teachers in effect, "Ephesians 2 tells us that the remnant and the Gentiles in flesh have become a new Israel": though actually it says nothing of the kind. In fact, they are really telling us that Paul did not know what he was talking about when he wrote the things quoted above; and that he not only remained one of Israel but that the Gentiles who received his Evangel became of Israel too, or else were without knowing it lost Israelites themselves. This is sheer unbelief.

## Chapter 8

### THE JEWS AND ISRAEL

"Men! 'Jews! . . . Men! Israelites!... Men! Brethren! . . . Let all the house of Israel know certainly, then, that God made Him Lord and Christ—this Jesus Whom *you* crucify."

The Apostle Peter in his first Pentecostal speech, Jerusalem.

"I cannot state too strongly that the man who has not yet seen that the Israel of the Scripture is totally distinct from the Jewish people, is yet in the very infancy, the mere alphabet, of Biblical study, and that to this day the meaning of seven-eighths of the Bible is shut to his understanding."

One who thinks he knows better than the Apostle.

Somebody once suggested compiling a list of apostolic "mistakes." Such a work would throw a most instructive light on the follies of expositors! It could begin with the supposed mistake of electing Matthias as the twelfth apostle. Then would come the Apostle Peter's words quoted above, which *must* have been a sheer blunder if our modern confusionists are correct in their teaching also quoted above. Then another choice specimen would be the idea that the Apostle Paul was quite mistaken in imagining that what he called "secrets" were anything of the sort—and so on. If such folk are to be believed, God's apostles must have been a pretty poor lot. Nevertheless, most of us will prefer to follow these humble and holy men of God with humble and holy minds; but it is as well for us to be fully aware that others have a different outlook and no humility or modesty in expressing it.

Peter's first Pentecostal speech really settles the matter for anyone who is willing to bow to the authority of God's Word. He considered the Jews and Israelites he was addressing to be representative of all the house of Israel. Nobody ventured to contradict him at the time—such an extreme of irreverent folly has been left to our enlightened days. However, we cannot have too much evidence; so a tolerably complete survey of the subject is in order and will occupy this chapter.

One effective way of insinuating error is to ask some question which seems straightforward enough and then to append a number of statements or questions which suggest the erroneous answer desired. Let us keep in mind that the Apostle Paul warned the Apostle Timothy and through him ourselves to refuse stupid and crude questions, being aware that they are generating fighting. Indeed they are! Yet they are a favorite exercise among those who are victims of error about Israel. One such writer asks "Was Abraham a Jew?" and properly replies that of course he was not. Then why ask so silly a question? Presently we learn the reason for this apparently pointless waste of time—it is an attempt to show somehow that the Jews are not the seed of Abraham to whom belong the promises, and not Israel. This is one of the oldest of controversial dodges, stating something so obvious as to be undeniably true in the hope of slipping in another idea which is highly questionable. To discover the meaning of Jews and Israel and Gentiles, Hebrews and Greeks and Hellenists, *in the Greek Scriptures*, we must consult the Greek Scriptures, and not the Hebrew Scriptures, which were completed centuries before. Otherwise we are like people trying to understand the mind and organization of the United States of America, now, by studying English history before the Wars of the Roses. Such study is by no means unimportant, but at the best it is only ancillary.

Just before the British left Palestine, one newspaper wrote with foreboding about "the deplorable increase of anti-Semitism among the Arabs"! Such an absurd contradiction in terms displays the confusion of thought which exists. Such confusion among us also, as Christians, is inexcusable and even more deadly. That a distinction of some kind exists between "Israel" and "the Jews" is undeniably true; that it is in any way comparable with the distinction between these two terms and "the Gentiles" is not only quite untrue, but a dangerously misleading idea, since it also is based on hopelessly confused thinking. This we will presently proceed to show.

A writer contributing to "The Roundtable" (March-April 1948) quoted no less than thirteen Jewish authorities denying that they were Israel. This was very interesting; but equally unconvincing when one reflects that there are vast numbers of Jews who think otherwise. What is somewhat surprising is that anyone should expect to derive enlightenment from these Jewish disputations. Acts 28:29 taken with the records of subsequent history should be sufficient to warn us against such an idea. Perhaps reflection on this may shake the confidence of those who have so readily dismissed this verse as spurious in the teeth of the preponderating evidence in its favor. With eyes blinded and hearts calloused, what Jewish rabbis believe is more likely to be wrong than right.

#### THE SCRIPTURE USAGE OF "ISRAEL"

There are other reasons than the one already given why very little need be said of the usage in the Hebrew Scriptures. First, the existing translations, and even the actual Hebrew text, are too uncertain for use by us as an unassailable doctrinal basis. Perhaps some may feel that this thought is rather shattering, but there is actually no need for dismay. The Hebrew Scriptures were written for the people who spoke Hebrew, that is, Israel. Only here and there do they, after Gen. 32:28, envisage anything outside Israel; as, for example, in Daniel, part of which was written in Chaldee. They are essentially Israel's; and if it should turn out that their complete elucidation is to be reserved for Israel, that would be only what we might expect in view of Rom. 3:2 and 9:3-5. This brings up the second point, which is that *we* are essentially outside Israel. We are permitted to share to a limited extent the oracles of God which were given to Israel; but for what is particularly intended for *our* learning, we have primarily to consult those Scriptures which were given in Greek.

In the days on earth of the Lord Jesus and His apostles, Greek was the universal language of the known civilized world. There can be no reasonable doubt that He and they used Greek. The few occasions when Aramaic, the then current dialect of Hebrew, was used, were quite evidently exceptional. Even those writings which were primarily addressed to Israelites, Hebrews and the epistles of Peter, James and Jude,

were almost certainly written in Greek. No direct evidence exists of a Hebrew or Aramaic original of any of the Greek Scriptures, nor is there evidence that any of them were translations. These facts can mean only one thing, that these Scriptures were meant for *all* to read. Even Peter, writing to a limited audience primarily Hebrew, and plainly referring to the Hebrews Epistle (2 Peter 3:15), in the very next verse commends all the epistles to his readers.

Thus we need offer no apology for putting most of our study into the Greek Scriptures. Moreover, we must always bear in mind that much of the Hebrew Scriptures consists of a revelation developing from a rudimentary stage. The Old Covenant was made with Abraham, yet quite a time elapsed before "Israel" appeared and still further time before the link between Israel and covenant was made completely plain. What was developing up to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ became explicit only after His ascension; and only in the Scriptures then written can we find the truth in its fully developed form.

One point needs to be guarded. Israel, Jews, chosen expatriates of dispersion (1 Peter 1:1), the twelve tribes, those in the dispersion (James 1:1), Hebrews, Israelites, are *not* interchangeable terms. Each has its own special shade of meaning or usage, and we ought to take the utmost care to ensure that our usage of them is the same as in Scripture. Yet they are all names belonging to the same class of people, those who have the peritomE; and they need to be explicitly distinguished from the Gentiles, who have the akrobustia and who are therefore an entirely different class of person.

The first reference to Israel in the Greek Scriptures, in Matt. 2:6, is also the first of the three passages in which Israel occurs in the same context as Judah, the others being Heb. 8: 8 and Rev. 7 : 4, 5. This is very significant, inasmuch as it shows that we are not considering a hypothetical "new Israel" made out of a remnant of the "old Israel" reinforced with Gentiles in the Apostle Paul's day, but something going back at the latest to the time of the separation of Judah from Israel. It is significant too that the next passage referring to Israel is about the return of Joseph, the little Boy, and His mother to the land of Israel—the only occurrence of that expression in the Greek Scriptures (Matt. 2:20, 21). There is no element of "spiritualizing" in this. They actually did return to Palestine, and it was literally to Israel land that they returned; which is a very remarkable fact if the Jews who inhabited the country were not Israel at all.

The conjunction in Heb. 8:8 refers back to Jer. 31:31-34 and forward to the future conclusion of the New Covenant. Thus it adds its testimony to the foregoing by maintaining the continuity of Israel and Judah through the intervening period of well over two thousand years, and this is confirmed by the last enumeration of the twelve tribes in Rev. 7:4-8.

#### ISRAEL AND THE GENTILES CONTRASTED

Israel and the Gentiles are explicitly contrasted in no less than nine passages. The first of these (Matt. 10:5, 6) is extremely plain. The Twelve were commissioned to avoid Gentiles and Samaritans and to go rather to the lost sheep of Israel's house. This disposes of the strange idea that these same lost sheep were lapsed Israelites who had become Gentiles and ceased to be of Israel at all. If they had been Gentiles in any sense, the Twelve would have had to avoid them. I put it this way because there is another strange idea going round that some Gentiles are really Gentiles and some lost Israelites. How to distinguish one sort from the other is a mystery which is discreetly left unexplained, but fortunately we need not bother ourselves about the problem, for it is pure fantasy. The second passage (Matt. 10:18-23) reinforces the commission of the Twelve. They were to be led before governors and kings for testimony to them and to the Gentiles; but their voluntary course would be those cities of Israel. The third passage (Luke 2:32) is very different, but still a contrast. God's saving-work was to be "a light unto revelation of Gentiles and glory of Thy people Israel." The fourth passage (Luke 22:25-30) displays the contrast between the kings of the Gentiles and the disciples on their future thrones. The fifth (Rom. 9:30, 31) is another very sharp

contrast, this time to do with the Gentiles overtaking righteousness out of faith while Israel fails to outstrip a law of righteousness. The sixth (Rom. 11:7-15), already discussed, contrasts the discomfiture of the calloused of Israel with the consequent riches of the Gentiles, while the seventh (Rom. 11:25, 26) amplifies this in revealing the secret of the duration of their callousing. The eighth (1. Cor. 10:18-20) contrasts the sacrifices of Israel with those of the Gentiles. The ninth is Eph. 2:11, 12 where the Gentiles are labelled also as "akrobusia" (uncircumcision) and spoken of as "alienate from the citizenship of Israel." This last ought to be plain enough for anyone; and it is hard to imagine how the Apostle Paul could have stated more clearly the fact that Gentiles are altogether separate from Israel! It should be noted also that Eph. 2:15 does *not* speak of Gentiles becoming Israel or of Israelites becoming Gentiles, but of *the two* being changed into something else, namely, created into one new humanity.

This concept of one new humanity is what Galatians is leading up to in its closing words. In Christ Jesus (the title particularly associated with the church which is His body) "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation" (Gal. 6:15). No wonder Paul was able to write as he did in Philippians 3! These three passages are Paul's last references to Israel; and it is again, very significant that after his great declaration in Gal. 3:15, he invokes peace and mercy on his fellow-members of the new creation and, true to his unchanging love for his kinsmen according to flesh, on Israel also. And note as well, that, lest we might be tempted to deduce that God's declared purposes for His People Israel have become obsolete, Paul reminds us that Israel are "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16).

On the strength of the single occurrence of this expression, some are attempting to make out that Paul's ministry was devoted to creating a new Israel, which they suppose the Israel of God to be. Really the whole thing is too absurd to be worth a moment's consideration! It will be profitable however to point out that if this idea were the truth it would mean that Paul was busy bringing Gentiles under covenant in circumcision and therefore under law—the very thing against which his Epistle to the Galatians is one sustained protest!

Let us get this clear. The Evangel of the akrobusia (uncircumcision) is concerned only with the state of akrobusia, that is, with Gentiles. It is not applicable to Israel as such, and concerns the individual Israelite only if he be willing to follow Paul's example and to regard his peritome and all the other privileges of his according to flesh as refuse (Phil. 3:8). It brings neither of them into the states of peritome or akrobusia; it leaves *both* concepts behind, creating the two kinds of people, in Christ Jesus, into one new humanity.

Perhaps someone may try to make out that this new humanity is precisely what Israel is to be. The answer to that is complete and final: "If so, why call it *Israel*?"

In the days when soldiers wore scarlet in battle they were glaringly apparent to ordinary eyes even at long distances; but placed against a field of fresh green they would have been totally invisible to a color-blind man. Something like this is the trouble with the confusionists. To the normal mind, the notions "Israel" and "Gentiles" are intensely contrasted, as are scarlet cloth and green grass; but to a small minority the contrast is invisible. To them the Greek Scriptures are a closed book and Paul could be deleted without making any noticeable difference to their theology; for it is Paul more than any other writer who stresses the fundamental difference between the two concepts and whose whole evangel falls to the ground if that difference is not in view from start to finish.

As regards Eph. 2:12, it is necessary to point out that "alienate" is in the Middle Voice. This particular example is difficult to make plain in English; but the idea is that this alienate state is something which the Gentiles have brought about on their own account. We might almost say that they have held aloof from the citizenship of Israel. Even though individuals became proselytes from time to time, the Gentiles as a

whole held aloof. The passage thus rules out, finally and completely, any idea that the Gentiles could ever have been lapsed Israelites.

Some of the confusion which has arisen is due to the unfortunate choice by some versions of "nations" for every occurrence of "ethnē," instead of "Gentiles." In English we can speak of Israel as being One of the nations, but never as one of the Gentiles. This ambiguity in the Greek word is extremely helpful to the framers of new heresies concerning Israel. I have examined this point in Vol. 14, No. 1.

In two other passages, Acts 4:27; 9:15, Israel and the Gentiles are also in juxtaposition; but this time, side by side in the dock—in the first with Herod and Pontius Pilate also; in the second in connection with the ministry and testimony of Paul and what he was to have to suffer. Surely it is highly significant that such should be the only points of contact while the other nine are as divergent as possible?

The twelve tribes of Israel are spoken of in Matt. 19:8 and Luke 22:30. These in themselves kill the idea that the Lord Jesus was dealing with anything but the whole of Israel.

#### ISRAEL ACCORDING TO FLESH

Another passage to consider is 1. Cor. 10:18, which to a casual glance might be taken to imply a contrast between "Israel according to flesh" and "Israel according to spirit." Unfortunately for such a notion, the latter term is absent from Scripture; so if we entertain such an idea we are obviously on the wrong track. We have, however, two clues to the understanding of this. The previous reference to Israel is the Secret of Israel's callousing (Rom. 11:25, 26), which is followed by an appeal to the Roman saints to present their bodies a sacrifice, living, holy, well-pleasing to God, their logical divine service; and the first disclosure of the doctrine of the one body. The other clue is the teaching of the Hebrews Epistle which was probably published at about the same time as 1. Corinthians, and in which the faithful Hebrews are informed that the Levitical sacrifices are for the present obsolete. Plainly, then, the words "Israel according to flesh" are a reminder or perhaps a broad hint to the Corinthians that those of Israel who were still eating the sacrifices were the calloused ones. This is one of the beautifully neat little touches which dovetail the Greek Scriptures together and give them their perfect harmony.

An interesting feature of 1. Corinthians is that more than any other it is linked up to matters outside Paul's epistles. It alone refers directly to the fathers in the wilderness (10:1), to Israel according to flesh (10:18), to the Lord's Supper (11:20-26), to the historical aspect of the Evangel recorded in the Gospels (15:3-7) and, most important from our present point of view, to the existence of sects or parties within the church (1:12). The reference to a party "of Cephas," has been held by some to mean that Peter was one of those who evangelized the Corinthians. This does not follow at all! Indeed, one party is named as "of Christ," and certainly Christ in person did not visit the Corinthians to evangelize them. The church at Corinth appeared to be wide open to every sort of influence except God's Spirit; that of Thessalonica appeared to be open to practically no influence except His. Our tragedy is that most, if not all, churches of the present day are Corinthian rather than Thessalonian.

#### "JEWS" AND "ISRAEL" IN THE SAME CONTEXT

We now go on to consider the passages where "Jews" and "Israel" are found in the same context. The first is Matt. 2:2-6. It is evident from it that the magi, Herod and all the chief priests and scribes of the people were unitedly of the opinion that the Christ, the King of the Jews and the One Who "shall be shepherding My People Israel," were one and the same Person; and Matthew does not attempt to correct them. Nor does he make any correction in Matt. 27:9, 11 or in Matt. 27:37, 42; and if he was wrong in letting that pass, Mark was equally remiss in Mark 15:26, 32. Those modern teachers who insist "that the Israel of

Scripture is totally distinct from the Jewish people" now have Peter, Matthew and Mark against them; but worse is to come, for even John appears by their standard to have been "in the very infancy, the mere alphabet, of Biblical study." He tells us that Nicodemus was "a chief of the Jews" (John 3:1) and then, 9 verses on, that the Lord Jesus referred to him as "a teacher of Israel." Are we then to conclude that "seven-eighths of the Bible" was shut to John's understanding also? Moreover, John offends again, in John 12:11, 13 against this strange new teaching Luke records in Acts 10:36, 39 that Peter offends against this supposed truth once more; yet he in turn makes no attempt to correct the supposed error, and right at the end (Acts 28:19, 20) he implicates Paul also. Yet in this he does Paul no injustice, for in Rom. 9:24, 27 Paul confirms Luke by writing in the same way himself! Finally, in Rev. 2:9, 14 "Jews" and "Israel" appear in fairly close juxtaposition. Evidently, they were all, even our Lord Himself, in the very infancy of Biblical study—or else the confusionists are!

These ten passages repay a thorough examination. Taken together they shatter the figment that Israel and Jews are "totally distinct" ideas. These points of conjunction occur at some of the key points of the Greek Scriptures. To deny that Israel and the Jews are the same people is not only to make nonsense of the whole ten, it is to approach perilously close to blasphemy in attempting to correct not only Peter, John and Paul, but the Lord Jesus Himself.

## Chapter 9

### JEWES AND GENTILES

"Strange as it may seem, many Christians have been misleading Jews into believing that they are God's chosen people. Shrewd as they are in, their business transactions; many have fallen for this flattery, so that to-day millions of dollars are being contributed to establish a homeland in Palestine. The Lord is not going to turn His kingdom over to shysters because they claim to be Abraham's children."

All truths are interlocked, so that if we deny or ignore one particular truth our apprehension of related truths will be maimed at the best and totally destroyed at the worst. The passage quoted at the head of this chapter affords a striking example of this fact. Its author was convinced that the Jews are not Israel; so, with a candor which is wholly admirable, he did not shrink from honestly stating the inescapable consequences of this strange theory. Although I am convinced that he was hopelessly mistaken I honor him for his candor, while I quote his words in order to set forth plainly the issues at stake.

My chief fear is that some readers will regard the idea as utterly ridiculous and possibly will want to dismiss me with contempt for even discussing it at all. I beg them to read this paragraph first; for I solemnly assure them that other readers do seriously believe it. For my part, I believe these others to be sincere and earnest, so, in my view they are entitled to be taken seriously. Therefore, I feel it is a plain, duty to examine their teaching carefully comparing it with Scripture; and I assure the others that in this examination they will find matter profitable to themselves.

Just as a truth is complete in itself and not only can stand on its own, feet without any propping-up from external sources but support all other truth with which it comes in contact; so an error is incomplete in itself and needs other errors to maintain it, and these still other errors, till it corrupts the whole of our thinking. To employ another figure, it is like a stone thrown into a pond as it were, the place where the stone struck not only being itself agitated but spreading its agitation in widening circles till every part of the pond is affected. So with the truth about Israel and the Jews, it fits in with all other Scripture truth; but the false separation, of the two ideas making them as poles asunder wrecks history and prophecy and the whole of our understanding of Scripture.

During the preparation, of the last two chapters, I have had an uneasy feeling that some readers may be inclined to turn, away from the subject as merely academic and therefore unpractical; so it is time to make it plain that this is by no means the case. It is of the utmost practical importance to know for instance, whether Israel's promised Land is being improperly occupied by shysters who have no right to be regarded as Abraham's children, or whether the stage is rapidly being set there for the tremendous drama of the end time with Israel in its center. If the former, then even with the rapid changes of scene so characteristic of our terrible age of universal restlessness, much time and many world-shaking events must supervene before the Land can be cleared for the true Israel to enter and start to take their inheritance. If the latter, then not only is all in readiness for our glorious receiving-up in accordance with 1. Thess. 4:16, 17; but, unless some delay altogether outside human anticipation is in waiting our glorification *must* soon take place. Our business is to be continually listening for the shout which will raise our dead and transfigure our bodies; not to be watching for times and seasons; but if such events in time forcibly obtrude themselves on our attention so that we cannot help noticing them that fact in itself underlines the nearness of our great moment and our listening should become ever more intent.

Nothing which can be imagined could be more practical than this! A true listening attitude cannot but utterly transform our life. The realization in practice that each moment may be our last moment of mortality, so that its successor would be the first of immortal life and power and glory, invests each act of our lives with infinitely solemn meaning. We go forward with the glow of that glorious dawn shining in our faces and filling our days, sanctifying our every thought and act.

On this account, a final settlement of the vexed question of what Israel is and whether the Jews are really Israel becomes of vital importance to us all; and this chapter is devoted to cleaning up the remaining problems connected directly therewith.

Moreover, if the ingathering of the Jews which is now proceeding is not the ingathering of Israel but a counterfeit of the real thing, how comes it that Scripture prophecy is silent about such a spurious fulfilment of its forecasts? A counterfeit ingathering would involve something far more serious than merely a false dawn; it would mean a false dawn which could *necessarily* postpone the true dawn for some years and possibly decades or even centuries. It would involve disaster not only for the true Israel, but for us who are called out of Gentiles, in akrobustia, as well. For Israel it would mean an indefinite postponement of their hopes; for us it would mean that and more. Far more, infinitely more indeed; for our hopes would not simply be postponed but completely frustrated and even destroyed. We are expecting something which not only may occur at any moment but will set in motion the train of prophetic events which will eventuate in the fulfilment of Israel's own expectation. But if the Land is firmly in the possession partly of a spurious Israel and partly of Arabs and Egyptians, of which at least the former will have to be ejected forcibly before the first steps towards the ingathering of the true Israel can even begin; it means that a considerable series of events *outside* prophecy must supervene. I would not dare to assume that there will be no delay whatever between our calling-away to meet the Lord in the air and the resumption of God's earthly program according to Prophecy; I would only point out that there is no trace either in History or Prophecy of such a hiatus, however brief; and still less of one of substantial duration, for the indications are all the other way. For instance, immediately after the pronouncement of Matt. 13:14, 15 the Lord Jesus began to instruct His disciples about the new order which had abruptly come into existence; and God made no delay after the call of Abraham. We would naturally expect then, that immediately after the fulfilment of 1. Thess. 4:16, 17 and the removal of all obstacles to the resumption of God's earthly plans for His earthly People Israel, He would promptly set the machinery in motion for it. Such promptitude would hardly be possible if meanwhile a large-scale counterfeit had established itself.

In writing the foregoing I wish to guard one point. I do not mean that the fulfilment of the prophecy of 1. Thess. 4:16, 17 will necessarily be followed at once by the fulfilment of other prophecies; but simply that

the beginning of their fulfilment will supervene, i.e. the preliminary groupings of events and nations which will lead up to that fulfilment. What I am objecting to is the idea of a mass of irrelevant events having to occur before the fulfilment of prophecy.

#### JEW AND GREEK IN THE SAME CONTEXT

The strange teaching quoted at the opening of this chapter really amounts to stating that the Jews are simply a section of the Gentiles, just one of the nations which collectively are regarded as "the Gentiles" as distinct from the chosen nation Israel. For if the Jews are not Israel, then they must be Gentiles, because every nation must be one *or* the other. However, there is no need to express opinions or weave theories. The Jews and the Gentiles are found in the same context in the Greek Scriptures, so presently we shall have to examine these contexts and thus put our conclusions upon an unassailable footing.

First, however, there is another name, "Greek," which several times comes in the same context as "Jew"; and this pair is best examined first.

"Greek" does not occur nearly so frequently as "Gentiles." Out of fourteen occurrences of the former in Paul's Epistles no less than twelve are in juxtaposition with "Jew" or "Jews"; the two exceptions being Rom. 1:14 and Gal. 2:3. The former is of special interest, as "Gentiles" occurs in the immediate context; and the Gentiles are, by implication, divided into Greeks and barbarians: the barbarians being those who did not speak Greek, the then universal language among civilized peoples. Incidentally, the weight of evidence is very heavily against the popular belief that the Lord Jesus and the Twelve carried on their ministries in any language but Greek, except perhaps on a very few isolated occasions, the very few examples of Aramaic being specially mentioned *because* they were so exceptional. The Jews were not to be classed as "barbarians."

Even the latter occurrence, Gal. 2:3, is not really an exception; for there is an implied contrast, in that the Jews had compelled the Greek Titus to submit to circumcision and thereby come under the yoke of Judaism.

Of the ten occurrences of "Greek" in Acts, five read "Jews as well as Greeks." Of the rest, Acts 16:1 implies a sharp distinction, as also does Acts 16:3; 17:4, 5; 21:27, 28. There remains Acts 18:14-17. There is good textual evidence that Acts 18:17 should read: "Yet all the Greeks, getting hold of Sosthenes. . ."; but we can waive the point here, as the case is amply strong enough without it.

The last two occurrences of "Greek" are in John 7:35, and 12:20. The latter once more implies a contrast with the Jews. The former, the first occurrence of all, is perfectly clear; yet among some there seems to be an extraordinary confusion about it. This is partly due to the serious mistranslation in the A.V. and the irrelevant note in the 1930, C.V. Here, the Lord Jesus declared He was going where the Pharisees could not be coming; and the Jews, in their completely unspiritual state, jumped to the conclusion that He was "about to go to the dispersion of the Greeks and teach the Greeks." The Greeks were at that time dispersed throughout the known world. How else, in point of fact, could their civilization have been so universal otherwise? This passage alone is quite sufficient to prove that the Greeks were not Jews.

#### ISRAELITE AND JEW

In the Differentiator Vol. 13, p. 127 and Vol. 14, p. 38 and in Chapter 8 of this series we have seen that the terms "Israel" and "Gentiles" are national names relating to the existence or non-existence of covenant and its sign *peritome* (circumcision). That relationship should be always in the foreground of the mind when these words are read or used.

Where this relationship is not emphatically in view, another pair of contrasted words is used: Jew and Greek. Their force when so used has just been discussed. Israel and Gentiles are always used collectively or plurally. As shown in the second reference, above, "Gentile" in the singular can never be used for either "goi" or "ethnos" in the singular; and even "ethnikos" is only once used in the singular, namely in Matt. 18:17. The individual of Israel is an Israelite (*IsraEleitEs*). This word occurs nine times of which only two are in the singular, John 1:47 and Rom. 11:1. These two are significant; for though both refer to sons of Israel according to flesh, only true and faithful sons of Israel are in view. Of the plural instances, five are exclamatory appeals to the true men of Israel, the last being a false appeal by apostate Jews (Acts 2:22; 3:12; 5:35; 13:10; 21:28) and two are by Paul (Rom. 9:4 and 2 Cor. 11:22). The word is unsuitable for use when special emphasis on being "of Israel" is lacking.

Where the special title of honor "Israelite" is inappropriate, the Covenant People themselves used the word "Jew" to express their distinctive national status. This name at first was applied to members of the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin (2 Kings 16:6, the first occurrence) but later it became the description of all Israelites, when regarded as distinct from other people, and was used by all to distinguish the Israelite's national status. This is plainly seen in the passage where Paul proclaims himself an Israelite (Rom. 11:1, 2) and the one where he describes his brethren according to flesh as Israelites (Rom. 9:3), as contrasted with the two places in between where he refers to Jews (Rom. 9:24; 10:12). In 2 Corinthians 11, where also he declares himself an Israelite, we find the only mention of Jews in the immediate context of this word—in describing the blows inflicted on him by them!

To restrict "Jew" to the two tribes and "Israelite" to the ten, is a tempting simplification; but the simplicity so won is only apparent, and insuperable difficulties are introduced. The plain fact is that the Greek Scriptures do not conform to any such distinction. Take, for example, Acts 2, already referred to; and note that vv. 5 and 15 refer to Jews and v. 22 to Israelites. This appeal is to "all the house of Israel," and in Acts 4:10 it is to "the entire people of Israel." Finally, in Acts 13:24, Paul clearly states that John proclaimed "a baptism of repentance to the entire people of Israel." The "sons of Israel" are spoken of in Acts 5:21; 7:23, 37; 9:15; 10:36; Rom. 9:27; 2 Cor. 3:7; Heb. 11:22; Rev. 2:14; 7:4; 21:12. The last six, at least, certainly refer to all the twelve tribes, and it is hard to see why the same should not apply to the rest. Moreover, "Judah" occurs seven times, only, in the Greek Scriptures. The first two, in Matt. 2:6, have "Thy people Israel" in the same context. This is strong confirmation. If the Jews were and are of the two tribes alone, the rarity of occurrence of "Judah" calls imperatively for an explanation; and Paul, being of Benjamin's tribe, should not have called himself an Israelite, but a Jew. No! This device will not do.

The statement of the Lord Jesus to the Canaanitish woman in Matt. 15:23 is in itself really conclusive as to this matter. If "Israel" means "Israel as distinct from Judah," then Judah was outside the Lord's commission. If, too, as some teach, all Israel was dispersed outside the Land, and the Lord Jesus Himself never left the Land, His commission could never have been carried out.

There is nothing novel in all this. Dr. Bullinger himself drew attention to it in *Things to Come*, 1908, p. 23. He stated that in the Hebrew Scriptures, after the separation of the two kingdoms, "Judah was constantly reinforced by the godly among the ten Tribes who would not conform to their idolatrous practices. In 2 Chron. 30:25, we are told how they 'came out of the land of Israel and dwelt in Judah.' Compare verse 21 and ch. 11:16, 17 where we read how they 'strengthened the kingdom of Judah.' In chs. 15:9; 19:8; 23:2; 31:6, we have further and abundant evidence on this point. All these passages are worth attentive reading." He also pointed out that in Luke 2:36 Hannah was out of the tribe of Asher; and Zacharias and Barnabas were Levites.

In Acts 26:6 Paul speaks of the twelve-tribed people. The quotation from Micah 5:2 in Matt. 2:6 implies all the twelve tribes; who are referred to in Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30; Jas. 1:1; Rev. 21:12; but not even

once in the Greek Scriptures is there any reference to the Ten Tribes or the Two Tribes. This alone should have sufficed to warn those who write so freely about "the lost ten tribes" that something is amiss with their theories.

### JEWES AND GENTILES IN THE SAME CONTEXT

"Jews" and "Gentiles" occur in close juxtaposition in three passages. The first is Rom. 3:29, "Or is He the God of Jews only? Is He not of Gentiles also?" Here numbers of individuals are in view and "Israelite" would be unsuitable, because the question is not of faithful versus ignorant but of one kind of person rather than another. The same applies to the second, Rom. 9:24, ". . . us, whom He calls also, not only out of Jews, but out of Gentiles also" And the third is likewise, "If *you*, being all along Jew, are living Gentilely, not Jewishly; how are you compelling the Gentiles to be Judaizing? We, Jews by nature, and not sinners out of Gentiles, . . ." (Gal. 2:14, 15). This last rendering is very, perhaps excessively, literal in order to bring out the sense; and it certainly could not be used in a proper translation. There can be no doubt whatever from these three that Jews and Gentiles are most sharply contrasted as altogether different kinds of people. They bear out what has already been proved to be true without exception in this and the previous chapter.

In these three short quotations the C.V. inserts an unnecessary definite article no less than seven times! Such discordance tends to hide the fact that of all the occurrences of "Jew" in Paul's epistles, only four have the definite article, namely, Rom. 2:28; 3:1; 1 Cor. 9:20; (first occurrence) and 1 Thess. 2:14. The reader would do well to ponder these and to note that in all the rest, 22 in all, the definite article can well be omitted in accordance with the Greek. The A.V. too is wrong no less than eleven times. It is difficult to see any reason or excuse for such looseness.

"Jews" and "Gentiles" occur less closely in the same context in a number of other passages. The first, Acts 11:18, 19, shows very significantly that the Jews regarded themselves as an altogether separate people. Even though the Circumcisionists (Acts 11:2) admitted that "God gives repentance unto life to the Gentiles also"; they still spoke "the word to no one except to Jews only." Incidentally, this passage displays the glaring unsuitability of the word "nations." No nation has ever repented unto life and none ever will until Israel does. Acts 21:25 affords another example.

The remaining passages are Acts 13:45, 46; 14:2-5; 18:5, 6; 21:11; 21:19-25; 26:20, 21; 28:28, 29 and Rom. 2:14-24.

### OTHER CONTRASTS

Another interesting line of study is the comparison of the occurrences of "Israel" and "the Israel." Outside the Gospels the two can be found in the same context in three passages, Acts 13:23, 24; Rom. 9:27; 11:25, 26. The effect of the definite article is to define, to demonstrate and to limit. In the first of these three, the point is that it was to those who are Israel, not to other people, that a Savior, Jesus, was led. Similarly, it is to those who are Israel that Isaiah is crying; and that callousing, in part, has come. Where the article is absent, the emphasis is different. It was to *the entire people* of Israel that a baptism of repentance was proclaimed. *The number of the sons* of Israel is the essential point in the second passage. In the third, the first part is particular and limited—callousing, in part, on those who are Israel; but the second part has no limitations—"all Israel shall be saved."

Finally, we have to consider another contrasted pair of words, "hebraios" and "hellenists," "Hebrews" and "Hellenists." Both occur together in Acts 6:1; the former also in 2 Cor. 11:22; Phil. 3:5 and the inscription of the Hebrews Epistle (*pros hebraious*); the latter in Acts: 9:29. From Acts 6:1 we learn that

these constituted two parties among the disciples, but from Acts 9:29 we learn that some Hellenists were definitely unbelievers. Acts 11:20 presents some difficulty, for the best textual evidence favors "Hellenists" here, though there is a fair case for "Greeks" also and the C.V. adopts the latter. After the Apostle Peter's speech in Acts 11:4-17, evangelism of Greeks by some disciples would certainly not have been out of order. But if these Cyprian men and Cyrenians had evangelized Hellenists, the contrast with v. 19 might seem to imply that the Hellenists were not Jews, which is certainly untrue. Perhaps, however, v. 20 was not intended to be in contrast with v. 19; but, if so, it is difficult to see why such special point should be made of evangelizing one section of the Jewish community; so on balance I would reject the reading "Hellenists" here in favor of Greeks.

Returning to Acts 6:1, I wish particularly to commend the admirable note in the 1930 C.V., the writer of which deserves special credit for having emancipated himself from the generally held tradition that the ministries of the Lord Jesus and of the Twelve were carried on in the Aramaic dialect of Hebrew. One statement in it I must reproduce: "The usual definition of a Hellenist, 'a Greek-speaking Jew' is not adequate, for all Jews spoke Greek." This statement is enlarged on also in the preface to the Hebrews Epistle. Personally, I conceive the difference as pretty much like the modern distinction between "Orthodox" and "Liberal" Jews.

So long as the Apostle Paul remained a Jew he was a "Hebrew," and even when he abandoned his peritomE he could still remind all that he had been zealous for the Law, that as regards flesh he was Hebrew of Hebrews. The Epistle to Hebrews is addressed to this party. It has no message for Hellenists as such; as indeed is obvious when we study it, for it is a sealed book to those who are not in some sense Hebrews. In a way this is applicable even to ourselves; for we are spiritual Sons of Abraham and, like him, strangers and pilgrims in this world.

Some have suggested that the "hebraios" and the "ek peritomEs," the Hebrews and the Circumcisionists, are one and the same. That is not so. The latter were a sect of the Hebrews, and in so far as they overstressed circumcision, a heretical sect. Here, again, we must refrain from blurring and confusing the very real distinctions which God has made in His Word.

Now that the matter has cropped up again I would like to correct the note on pp. 72-74 in the Differentiator, Vol. 13, No.2. On p. 72, 10 lines from bottom, I should have written "proof (?)." There is no evidence whatever that Luke was a Gentile; and readers who have this issue are asked to correct accordingly. As to p. 73 the paragraph beginning "Perhaps, too, . . ." should be deleted; as my studies under "PeritomE and akrobustia" have shown that I was somewhat in error. Please read in its place:

"Why should 'Circumcisionists' not mean 'those who practice or promote' circumcision (peritomE)? I can discover no reason; and I now suggest that this is the very thing they did! If the idea is an error, will someone refute it from Scripture? The whole point of the complaint by the Circumcisionists in Acts 11:1-3 was that Peter was associating with men having akrobustia (uncircumcision). It would have been futile if peritomE had not been the vital matter in their eyes."

I have since been asked how would I like to receive such criticisms as those in the note? That is easily answered. If I could not refute them I would acknowledge my error as frankly as I have just done. Only the spiritually immature pretend to be above criticism.

#### PERITOME AND AKROBUSTIA—A CORRECTION

So long as we retain the humility to keep constantly in mind that "Not one of us is infallible, not even the youngest," as the wit once put it; our mistakes may easily do more good than harm, for their disclosure will always point us to unrealized truths.

On pp. 16, 17 of *The Differentiator* for February 1953, I discussed the use of the term 'The Circumcision' as a supposed synonym for "Israel." I do not think that my case will prove easy to refute; but correspondence with my colleague, Mr. Alexander Thomson, has indicated that some modification is called for. I realized at the time that the crucial passage might prove to be Gal. 2:6-9. It seemed to me quite clear then, and so I postponed discussing it till it came up naturally in my series on the Greek Scriptures (see April 1953, p. 62).

This consideration was given in the June 1953 issue (pp. 103-106), and two of the points made have now been shown to be erroneous. First there is a translation error (top of p. 104). I ought to have noticed that the Greek word for "operates" contains the word "en" (in) and would naturally be followed by the Dative Case. So will readers please correct "as to" in lines 1 and 2 to "in." It is not a big matter, but we cannot be too accurate.

The most important point comes on p. 105. Mr. Thomson insists that here "tEn peritomE" would be read by any Greek as meaning a people or a company of people. His knowledge of Greek is so vastly greater than mine that I cannot attempt to dispute the point. I must gratefully accept the ruling that here "the circumcision" is figuratively used to mean "the people who have the circumcision," or if we keep to the Greek word, as before, "the people who have the peritomE."

But we must not jump to the conclusion that this is necessarily the case elsewhere, for a figurative usage is always a secondary one; or that the expression here means "Israel," just Israel without any qualification. What I have said as to that still stands.

For the question at once arises: Were Israel then, and are they now, a people who have the peritomE?

Will readers please turn back to p. 57-59 of the April 1953, issue, when they will see that "people who have the peritomE" must mean people who put law into practice and not merely bear the physical sign of covenant privilege. How can we possibly declare that the bulk of Israel then and now, namely those of Israel who have transgressed the Law and whose peritomE has become akrobustia, are entitled to be called "the people who have the peritomE?" Obviously, we cannot.

From this arises another point, which I discussed, but not quite adequately, on pp. 104, 105 above mentioned. We must now take it that the division in Gal. 2:9 was between "unto the Gentiles" and "unto the people who have the peritomE." The former, then, was essentially the sphere of Paul, the latter the sphere of Peter.

But, as a matter of historical fact, Paul ministered to Jews as well as Gentiles (to the Jew first); Peter unlocked the Kingdom to Gentiles as well as Jews (Acts 2 and 10). The problem thus presented is far easier to solve than appears at first glance. We are here dealing with a subject strictly within the context of this epistle, Galatians. Peter had had the Kingdom Keys commission, to unlock the Kingdom. This was completed before the meeting in Jerusalem here recorded, and, apart from matters arising out of it, Acts has no more to say about Peter. His contacts with the Gentiles were, so far as the Acts history relates, strictly limited to this theme. So when, seventeen years after Paul's return to Damascus from Arabia, he visited Jerusalem a second time as recorded in Galatians, the subject under discussion was Paul's Evangel, "the Evangel which I am heralding among the Gentiles" to use his own words. It was THIS which became the dominating theme here (Gal. 2:2, 5, 7, 14), and the governing question was:

What was to be, by agreement, Peter's attitude to it? The answer is in the last part of Gal. 2:9. Paul and the apostles with him were to be "for the Gentiles"; James, Cephas and John "for the people who have the peritomE.". These three representatives of the Twelve here recognized finally two things: the validity of the evangel which Paul was heralding among the Gentiles, and the fact that their own ministry was for the people who have the peritomE.

Four times in Galatians 2 is the evangel entrusted to Paul referred to: yet not once specifically is that entrusted to Peter, but only by implication (in Paul's words, "perceiving that I have accepted in trust the Evangel of the akrobustia according as Peter of the peritomE"). Paul simply went out of his way to say as little as he could about Peter's evangel. He does not even call him "Peter" except this once, but sticks to Peter's old Hebrew name Cephas, and reminds him that he is "all along a Jew" (2:14). It is truly remarkable how the one reference to him as Peter is where his evangel is referred to. Is it going too far to deduce that we ought to regard the evangel of Peter as something to be thought of apart from the ministry of Cephas under consideration in the rest of this chapter?

The part where Paul sums-up the agreement is written in what is, for him, unusually obscure language. No doubt he felt embarrassed at having to discuss the ministry of the Twelve and particularly that of Cephas whom, presently, he is forced to disclose that he had to reprove. Indeed, he slides away from the words of this reproof into a general exhortation which sums-up in a wonderfully concise way the main teaching of Romans. With his instinctive good taste he spoke about the sphere allotted to Cephas and the rest of the Twelve as little as he possibly could. From our point of view he said too little, but, in fact, Peter's commission "unto the peritomE" is none of our business and we have no right to complain if that aspect seems obscure to us. What concerns us is the agreement that each side should have clearly defined separate spheres. The whole matter is somewhat hard to clarify; but that should not trouble us if we school ourselves to leave peritomE, covenant and the Millennial Kingdom to the people to whom they belong, the people who have the peritomE.

The truth of the matter is that Peter's evangel is not the subject under discussion at all. It comes in only to emphasize this fact and that it was something altogether separate from Paul's. I still contend that Gal. 2:9 has no bearing on the question of whether and when the Evangel of the peritomE was or is to be proclaimed.

Far from weakening my case, as I thought at first, I believe that this correction actually confirms it. The chiefest of the Twelve were to concern themselves with the people who have the peritomE. No wonder the Twelve thereafter vanished from view; for Paul's Evangel made the continued existence of such people the anachronism which it still continues to be. The "Christian Jew" who imagines he can follow Paul and still keep his peritomE is a contradiction in terms. That, someday, there will again be people who have the peritomE, and that they will be God's Elect, is a most important truth. Their guide, the extant writings of James, Cephas and John, will lead to the proclamation of the Evangel of the peritomE to all Israel.

## **Chapter 10**

### **RIGHTEOUSNESS OUT OF FAITH**

Righteousness and faith are linked together, not only in Paul's epistles, but also in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Apostle Paul's first reference to righteousness (Rom. 1:17) is supported by a quotation from the latter, Hab. 2:4: "Now the one (who is) righteous out of faith will be getting him life."

The Note here in the 1930 C.V. reads as follows:—"When the law failed utterly, and Israel was far gone in apostasy, the prophet fell back upon God's unconditional promises and made the memorable statement 'The just by faith shall live' (Hab. 2:4). Now that Israel is again apostate, this rule once more supersedes the law."

Is this true?

This short passage from Habakkuk is quoted three times: here in Romans, in Gal. 3:11, and in Heb. 10:38; and it has been acutely pointed out that these three in order emphasize the three key words in it: the emphasis in Romans being righteousness, in Galatians faith and in Hebrews getting life.

What I am suggesting is that the above-quoted Note takes an altogether too narrow view of this announcement. It thereby becomes a half-truth, and its last seven words a positively misleading one. I suggest, indeed, that the rule has always been true from the time of Abraham onwards, that it sums-up Acts 13:38, 39 and the first four chapters of Romans, that in Hebrews 10 it has hardly any direct connection with the Law, and that only from the special point of view of Galatians is its relationship with the Law such that it can properly be described as superseding it.

The Note suggests that the rule came into force only when Israel reached a certain degree of apostasy, that sometime after Habakkuk wrote it was again relaxed; and then, by the time Paul wrote Romans and, even earlier, when he made his first recorded speech, in Acts 13, it had come into force again. As we go on critically examining it, such a view begins to raise difficulty after difficulty; and all because it arbitrarily confines Habakkuk's words to certain limited, but unspecified, periods. If its author had tried at the start to ascertain just what those periods were, he might have convinced himself that he was mistaken.

Suppose, instead, that we provisionally assume that this rule states a permanent truth; and let us see what the consequences will be. Anyone who may cavil at this is reminded that the C.V. Note is no more than an assumption either and that the test of any assumption is simply whether it fits all the facts. We can do nothing at all without making some assumptions. We can hardly even think, unless we assume first of all that we and the world around us exist and are not a figment of imagination; and even with the latter assumption we have to make the exceedingly unlikely further assumption that a figment of imagination can think or even exist when there is no real person to imagine it.

For the present, let us confine our attention to the Apostle Paul's teaching on the subject. When we have mastered that, it will be possible to turn with profit to other Scripture writers. Now that the so-called 'dispensational' position of Acts is cleared up, we no longer need have any inhibitions over studying Paul's output as a whole. It is quite true that his first recorded speech was addressed primarily to Israelites, his brethren, sons of Abraham's race; but it is also, secondarily, to those fearing God (Acts 13:16, 26). There is therefore nothing in it which is unsuitable for others beside Israel to hear or contrary to the evangel which Paul proclaimed. It is simply at this point his manifesto to Israel, to the Jew first; and v. 43 tells us that after it many of the Jews followed Paul. The crowning point of this speech is in vv. 38, 39, which read:—"Let it then be knowable to you, men, brethren, that through this One is being announced to you pardon of sins; and from all which, in Moses' law you could not be made righteous, in this One everyone who is believing is achieving righteousness." This statement sums-up Paul's Evangel as set out in Romans and re-stated, in the face of apostasy from it, in Galatians. There are two sides to it, what the Law *cannot do*; what in Jesus, Savior and Son of God, everyone who is believing *can do*. The first four chapters of Romans develop and extend this theme, but they add to it nothing fundamentally novel. Even when Paul sums-up in Phil. 3:4-9 his doctrine of righteousness, he says nothing on this subject which differs in essentials from what he said in Acts 13:38, 39. And, note, his first statement, that in Acts, was primarily to Israelites. In Philippians Paul puts the matter into a wholly spiritual context,

conformably with the Secret of Ephesians 3; but even so he begins with an Israelite, himself, beginning in fleshly standing which he then has to repudiate.

The C.V. Note describes Hab. 2:4 as God's unconditional promise, and rightly. The question therefore arises: Is this promise subject to the flux of time, or is it a permanent as well as an unconditional promise?

The fourfold statement of the promise plainly indicates the answer to be the latter; for two, the first and the last, are addressed to Israel, to Hebrews; and the other two to all the saints of the world-metropolis Rome and to the Galatians, largely Gentiles, who are in danger of apostatizing to Judaism, respectively. *So far as Hab. 2:4 by itself goes* there is no distinction in practice between individuals of Israel and of the Gentiles.

This point will be developed at length presently: mean while we should observe the corollary of it, namely that the unconditional promise of Hab. 2:4 must therefore be wholly independent of the distinction between circumcision and uncircumcision (peritomE and akrobustia), and therefore that the difference between the evangels characterized by these two concepts is irrelevant to the promise of Hab. 2:4. When, therefore, I have deplored the intrusion of matters relating to the attainment of righteousness into the study of the contrasts between the Evangels of the peritomE and of the akrobustia, I have had in mind this promise of Hab. 2:4 in general and Romans 4 in particular. I am, in fact, contending that the attainment of righteousness, on the one hand, and matters relating exclusively to these two aspects of the Evangel, on the other, are wholly distinct, and should be kept distinct in our minds. Much of our confusion over God's Evangel comes from unnecessary confusion of these issues.

Such confusion over the very nature of the Evangel, not simply over details of it, is practically universal. Some might, perhaps, be inclined to blame the Apostle Paul for not setting out the Evangel more explicitly. Indeed, it is arguable, from the purely human and fleshly point of view, that he ought to have set out his message neatly in tabular form with headings, sub-headings and cross references. Nevertheless, the fact remains that neither he, nor the Lord Jesus Himself, nor anyone else in Scripture, ever attempted such a feat. Except for the author of Hebrews, who may perhaps have been Paul himself, no Scripture writer is more systematic than Paul; yet no one can deny that if a thoroughly systematic lay-out be regarded as the perfect way, even Paul falls far short of perfection. But let us pause first to consider what such a systematic lay-out implies. First, it would save us the trouble of thinking and searching for ourselves. Second, and much the more important; the Bible, however extended in bulk (and it would have to be enormously comprehensive) would still be finite in scope. Like the best human writings, it would be good enough so far as it went, but it would only go so far: once its contents were memorized, there would be nothing more left to learn. The Roman Church has produced such a neat Theology. Given sufficient time and attention, it is theoretically possible to master the lot; in practice the Roman Catholic theologians are continually endeavoring to fill up the gaps with fresh decisions and new dogmas, an endless task. It was not God's intention that we should be in any way automata; doing right without knowledge or effort, learning His mind without thought; like certain lowly marine organisms absorbing without will or struggle or discrimination whatever happens to drift within reach.

Recently we have had an outstanding example in our study of 1. Thess. 4:13-18. Paul could have settled all our problems in one short sentence. Paul did nothing of the sort. So we have been forced to make the effort ourselves; and in a way, it is a supreme effort, for the issue itself is extraordinarily simple: just when must the fulfilment be, before or after that of certain other prophecies? Here we are forced to examine all the implications of the alternatives. Accepting one of them leads inevitably to certain conclusions. These conclusions can be tested against Scripture, thus enabling us to judge which of those alternatives is the truth. We are, in fact, compelled to use the spiritual insight and the intelligence and

reason with which God has endowed us. It is for those who object to 'reasoning' to say what else we can do with the problem.

Over God's Evangel the issue is not so plain at first sight. In fact, it does not become apparent till we have to seek an answer to the question: What precisely is the Evangel? Only when we try to give a clear answer does our mental confusion become apparent.

The first step to clear understanding is to appreciate the fact, with all it implies, that the attainment of righteousness is our initial problem before we have any evangel at all and the initial requirement as well of the Evangel itself—the evangel in its broadest sense and without any reference to any question relating to the standing of Jews or Gentiles; to covenant and its sign, or the absence of covenant obligations, limitations and privileges.

Here, however, a point arises which ought to be clarified at once, lest a fresh source of confusion be introduced.

In Chapter 31 of "The Greek Scriptures Historically Considered" I wrote:

"Whether repentance and what it implies is in fact open at all to any particular sinner depends on . . . whether the said sinner is to be called upon to repent as a Jew or as a Gentile: in *peritomE* (that is, circumcision) or in *akrobustia* (uncircumcision)."

The contradiction between this and what is earlier written in this present chapter is purely on the surface; it vanishes as soon as we achieve more than a superficial notion of the subject. Righteousness is attained by faith only, whether in circumcision or in uncircumcision; but whether at any point of time such faith is in practice open to any particular sinner is an altogether different matter. At present nobody is, or can be, called upon to repent and believe the Evangel *as a Jew*; for so long as he tries to do so, that is as a Jew, he is at cross purposes with the Evangel *as it exists at present*, he is unaware that the Old Covenant is being nullified and the New Covenant has not yet been concluded; and therefore his attempt to act as if the opposite condition were in force is self-stultifying. To put it slightly differently, for the sake of clearness, the *attainment* of righteousness, as a thing in itself, is permanently a matter of faith and of faith alone; the *conditions* in which that faith can operate effectively vary according to whether covenant or reigning grace is in operation. Under the conditions which hold good at present, any Jew may believe the Evangel and is invited to do so; but if he is *genuinely* to believe the Evangel, he absolutely *must* believe as a sinner, and as a sinner in equality of condemnation with the Gentiles who do not believe, and not as a man holding special rights by reason of his covenant standing. Such an equality of condemnation cancels his special standing as a Jew; so, in believing, he now has to surrender it, ceasing to be a Jew. In fact, he must believe, if at all, as an individual human being, he cannot believe as a Jew. But this does not mean that it will be impossible in days to come for the Jew, the covenant man, to repent *as a covenant man* who has broken his covenant, to believe *as a covenant man* who acknowledges his failure and sin but has become of faith as Abraham was and thus receives God's righteousness through faith, and who therefore in and through this faith can renew his covenant with God and receive all the promised blessings of the New Covenant. There is all the difference in the world between coming to God as a sinner without any claim at all and as a sinner who has broken his covenant and forfeited his rights, yet humbly seeks to renew them in repentance and faith.

Those who deny that there is any validity at all in 'dispensational' distinctions and who insist that there is but one evangel and one righteousness are, as often with heretics, right in what they affirm and wrong in what they deny. They would have us suppose that the evangel for us is exactly the same as that proclaimed by John the Baptist and our Lord. Yet if anyone were to address a Jew on the assumption that

his position is much the same now as it was then, he would provoke incredulity if not scorn. No doubt it would be claimed that the Evangel has changed the situation. Indeed it has; and this is the essence of our case: but the change is not in the nature of the fundamentals of the Evangel, but in the circumstances of its proclamation. The wrath of the Jews against Paul was not on account of his proclaiming the Evangel to Gentiles, but in proclaiming the Evangel to Gentiles *as Gentiles*. And I venture to declare my conviction that after the fulfilment of 1. Thess. 4:13-18 corresponding conditions will exist for a while. Many will continue to give out the superficial religion which passes for Christianity in the churches, some will even become 'believers.' The shock of the sudden resumption of God's direct dealings with the world will ensure this. But, being ignorant of God's plan for the world, of 'dispensational' matters, they will not properly understand what has taken place, and they will be highly indignant over the proclamation of the Evangel to Jews *as Jews*. They will declare that a purely Jewish evangel has been superseded permanently; whereas the truth will *then* be that it is the purely Gentile evangel which has been superseded. In short, the operation of Paul's Evangel, our present condition, is *temporary*; and not permanent up to the end of the world as Catholic theology insists.

It is of the essence of Paul's Evangel that it is a temporary phase of God's earthly purposes. Throughout, it proclaims that Israel's privileges and expectations are in abeyance; but, throughout, it makes perfectly plain that they are no worse than this, that the day will come when they will exist again and be triumphantly vindicated and fulfilled. There is hardly any greater heresy than daring to write "Finis" to the literal fulfilment of Hebrew Prophecy.

There should be no need to explain again that the Evangel of God has two aspects, one relating to Paul's Evangel now in force, the other to the proclamation of the covenant aspect of the Evangel after the fulfilment of 1. Thess. 4:13-18. Nor should there be any need to point out that what is peculiarly God's Evangel is based on the promises through God's prophets and is concerning His Son; so we can now go on to examine it in more detail.

First, after the introductory matter in Romans 1, comes an indictment of human beings who effect evil. Then at Rom. 2:11 arises the question of the place of law, and Paul writes: "For there is no partiality with God; for whosoever sinned without law, without law also will perish, and whosoever sinned in law, through law will be judged." This is plain enough. Sin brings its consequences, whether with or without law; so the question of the presence or absence of law is not strictly relevant to the problem of sin and righteousness.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to show that with or without law the whole world is sub-righteous as to God (Rom. 3:19), that is to say, does not and cannot attain to the standard of righteousness which God requires; and this Paul proceeds to do here as regards the Jew, having already indicted the Gentiles. He sums up in Rom. 3:9-18 and the vital part of his statement is concealed in most versions. His words should read: "Not one goes on being righteous, not even one: Not one goes on understanding. Not one goes on seeking out God. All deviate—at the same time they are reduced to uselessness—not one goes on doing kindness. . . ." It is quite untrue and unfair to say that no one is righteous *at all* or seeks out God *at all*. Many people are frequently and even predominantly righteous in their living and kindly in their actions; but what is here stated is that not one of them can do these good things *continuously and consistently*. In other words, they cannot *of themselves* attain to the standard of righteousness required by God. Their righteousness, such as it is, fails to come up to God's standard and is therefore of itself wholly insufficient. There is only one remedy for this—the manifestation of Divine righteousness, "yet Divine righteousness through Jesus Christ's faith unto all and on all ones having faith" (3:22). It is unfortunate that English idiom forces us to render the Greek by "who are believing" instead of the literal "ones having faith," for this obscures the fact that *faith* is the key word of the statement. And it is *faith* which rings like a great bell again and again through what follows.

So Paul, in Romans 4, leads his argument back to what is historically the root of the matter—Abraham's righteousness.

The climax of the previous argument is the statement (3:30) that God will be making righteous, through the faith, two things:—peritomE (circumcision) out of faith, and akrobustia (uncircumcision). Chapter 4 is the explanation of this cryptic statement.

It begins as follows:—

"What, then, shall we assert Abraham, our forefather according to flesh, to have found? For if Abraham was made righteous out of works, he has a boast, but not toward God. For what is the scripture saying? 'Now Abraham believes God, and to him it is reckoned unto righteousness.'"

The fatherhood of Abraham which Paul has in mind here is according to flesh. This fact is a reminder that we are still studying God's Evangel and that we are not yet in the part of Paul's writings addressed solely to those whose standing is in spirit, not in flesh at all. Yet even so, although flesh has not yet lost its place, Paul suppresses firmly all thought of anyone, even Abraham, being made righteous out of works and this immediately after the question and answer of Rom. 3:31: "Are we, then, nullifying law through the faith? . . . . Nay, we are sustaining law.

Paul goes on to confirm the blessedness of righteousness apart from works, as follows:—"Now to him who is working, the wages are not reckoning by way of favor but by way of debt. Yet to him who is not working, yet believing on Him making righteous the irreverent one, his faith is reckoning unto righteousness. Even as David also is declaring the happiness of the man to whom God is reckoning righteousness apart from works:

Happy they the lawlessnesses of whom were pardoned,  
and the sins of whom were covered over.  
Happy man, to whom the Lord  
by no means should be reckoning sin." (Rom. 4:4-8)

A very delicate shade of meaning is indicated in the changes over from passive to middle voice in the foregoing.

This leads us to the crucial passage concerning Abraham's fatherhood; for here the issue has to be made plain regarding the relationship of the covenant state to the non-covenant state, the peritomE (circumcision) or the akrobustiai (uncircumcision), to faith. It reads:—

"This happiness, then: (comes it) on to the peritomE or also on to the akrobustia?  
For we are saying, 'To Abraham the faith is reckoned for righteousness.' How, then,  
is it reckoned? To him being in peritomE or in akrobustia? Not in peritomE,  
but in akrobustia. And a sign he obtained: of peritomE—seal of the righteousness of the faith  
which was in the akrobustia—for him to be father of all those who are believing throughout  
akrobustia, for the righteousness to be reckoned to them; and father of peritomE—not to the  
Circumcisionists only, but also to those who are observing the fundamentals by the footprints  
of the faith, in akrobustia, of our father Abraham." (vv. 9-12).

The first question is not directly answered at once. First, the fact that to Abraham the faith is reckoned for righteousness is repeated. It has got to be kept at the very forefront of our thinking as regards this matter. Indeed, actually it is the answer! For immediately Paul asks how it is reckoned, and the answer is "in akrobustia"—as it *must* be. Obviously, peritomE cannot in any circumstances be a seal of something which does not yet exist. PeritomE, the covenant state, the privileged state, thinks of itself, as it were, in the prior position; but that is not God's view. The priority is with akrobustia, with the condition which

knows and freely admits that it has no claim on God. PeritomE does not come in at all except as sign and seal of the righteousness of the faith which was, and could only be, in the akrobustia.

So Abraham is father *first* in connection with akrobustia, and only second in connection with peritomE.

But Paul does not say "in connection with," and I have done so at this point only as a first approximation to the truth, to make it a little easier to grasp. He does say "father of peritome," but even then has to qualify his statement. He does not say "father of akrobustia" because there is no fatherhood in akrobustia in itself—it has to be qualified also—but, "father of all those who are believing throughout akrobustia." The non-covenant state has to be fertilized by faith, as it were brought into union with Divine life by faith, by "Jesus faith." So has the covenant state also. It is the nature of what I have for want of a better term provisionally called "fertilized by faith" which is crucial.

Abraham is father of peritomE to two classes. I have already discussed the term "Circumcisionists" pretty fully (Vols. 11, p. 174; 13, p. 72; 15, pp. 14, 62, 211, 285); here they are plainly those who are faithful to the Evangel of the circumcision, the peritomE, or what they imagined it to be when Acts was in progress. In days to come they will be the New Covenant People. The second class are stated, in a somewhat roundabout way, to be followers of Abraham. Why in this roundabout way? The answer is in Gal. 6:15-16: "For in Christ Jesus neither peritomE nor akrobustia is anything, but new creation; and as many as, regarding this rule, will be observing the fundamentals—peace on them and mercy, and on the Israel of God." Abraham is, then, father of peritomE to two classes; to the New Covenant People, the Israel of God; and to those who, beginning in the covenant state, follow Paul in renouncing their covenant position, and in the non-covenant state of akrobustia following Abraham in pure faith. If there were not this class, there would have been no place for the Apostle Paul himself who, though he never forgot he was an Israelite, chose "Jesus faith" in akrobustia.

This is, or should be, plain enough; but why "believing *throughout* akrobustia" in Rom. 4:11?

Here I believe we have got down to bedrock, to the ultimate fundamental difference between the covenant evangel and the non-covenant evangel. Both need to be received in "Jesus faith," which is essentially for us the faith of Abraham which is reckoned for righteousness. But the former leads at once, by the very nature of covenant, to law-works; and when the New Covenant is concluded with the houses of Israel and Judah such law-works will be perfect and complete because God's Law will be engraved on the hearts of His Covenant People Israel. The latter, the non-covenant evangel, leads to nothing even remotely like that. It never leads out of the domain of unadulterated faith. It does lead to work, to work of faith (1. Thess. 1:3) and toil of love and endurance of expectation; but it never leads to law-works, to covenant, to the seal and obligations of covenant. Our faith involves believing *throughout* akrobustia, a continual steady unwavering walk of faith, and never at all of sight as it would be under New Covenant glory. In the present conditions with Paul's Evangel in force such walk of sight is wholly out of the question; and well it is for us that it should be so; for though our walk is a continual series of stumbles and staggers and falls, it is ever and always of FAITH pure and unadulterated. The falls are in flesh, the faith is in spirit.

## Chapter 11

### LAW AND WORKS

Under this heading four distinct concepts are associated in; the first four chapters of Romans: work, law, the Law, law-works. These We will now discuss.

The Greek word 'ergon' is rendered in the C. V. by both 'work' and 'act.' This is rather unfortunate, because only a student who is careful enough to check against the Greek in, say, Rom. 3:20 and 4:2 will discover that only one word, not two, in the original is under discussion. There is a Greek word for 'act,' though not in the Greek Scriptures, and as the rendering 'work' is plainly the basic meaning, it seems unnecessary to use 'act' at all.

Not very much is said about this word in Romans, by itself. The first reference is to the righteous judgment of God, "Who will be paying to each according to the works of his; to those indeed, according to endurance in good work, seeking glory and honor and incorruption, eonian life. . . ." (Rom. 2:6, 7) This is rendered very literally in order to stress the point that its second occurrence of the word is singular; and therefore the forms 'good acts' or 'good works' are definitely misleading. The next occurrence (2:15) is the only place where 'the work of the Law' is to be found; but the words come into the same context in James 1:25, and the two passages may instructively be placed side by side. The next (3:27) clearly means 'law-works,' as discussed later on in this chapter.

Not till we reach Rom. 4:2 and 6 do we find righteousness and works in juxtaposition. This passage was re-translated in our previous chapter. It is to be noticed that Paul does not say here what is said in 3:20. He does not say that it is impossible to be made righteous by works, but rather that nobody ought to wish to be. If Abraham had managed to be, he would have something to boast in, but not toward God. Such a boast would have been a bad work; thus good works would have led to a bad work, which is self-contradictory. And the second occurrence implies that the attainment of righteousness by works would not bring happiness, which itself implies too that it would be a bad work. Nevertheless, Paul here puts the point very mildly. He is, as it were, guarding himself (and us) against any suggestion that works in themselves are anything but good, unless they are evil, which is outside this context. The point is that it is better, enormously better, to be righteous out of faith than to be righteous out of works, even if the latter were practicable. What he is condemning without any qualification whatsoever, is any attempt to be righteous out of *law-works*.

Presently we propose to study the relation between works and law. Meanwhile we should observe that for Abraham the question of law did not arise, since the Law, law in its perfect form, had yet to appear. So no question arose for him of becoming righteous through law-works; and for Paul's purpose it is sufficient to make the point that he was not made righteous by works at all, in any form. Evidently Paul had no illusions about the readiness of people to go astray on the slightest excuse. Yet, even so, it is equally evident that very few people have taken his hint here; for this passage has been widely and successfully perverted into a proof-text in support of antinomianism. The 1930 C.V. Notes on Rom. 4:1 and 4 are excellent so far as they go, and I would not have thought that I oppose their general view; yet it is a pity that they do not make the point fully clear that Rom. 4:5 must be interpreted strictly within its context, which is the attaining of righteousness, not the maintaining of righteousness. We are told that God's "present gifts are absolutely spoiled the moment we connect them with any suspicion of merit or work." Entirely true, and a vitally important truth, so long as we are quite clear in our minds it is the *giving* of the gifts which must not be tainted with any suspicion of merit or work. For they can also be absolutely spoiled in practice the moment we connect them with any idea that receiving His gifts immediately excuses us from any requirement to do good work thereafter. On the contrary, the moment we receive God's righteousness we have undertaken an obligation to *continue* to be righteous. The great truth enunciated in Eph. 2:9 is to be balanced by the equally great truth in Eph. 2:10.

We find no further reference to work in Romans until we reach Rom. 9:11. Here the word is set against 'choice' or 'election.' Again God has refused to be in any sense under obligation to any of His creatures. In Rom. 11:5, 6 this point is developed further. The choice is declared to be the choice *of grace*, works and grace being shown to be incompatibles.

## LAW AND THE LAW

Before we can examine what Paul has to tell us about law works we have to consider the word 'law.' There can be little doubt that here is a case where the presence or absence of the definite article is of crucial importance. With the article the reference cannot be other than to the Law of Moses; so we are therefore justified in capitalizing the word and writing 'the Law.' Without the article, law or the principle of law is what we must have in mind. The first occurrence in Romans is four times in 2 : 12, 13; not six as would appear from the English versions, as there is no single English word corresponding to 'anomos' (unlaw-ly in the C. V. sublinear) rendered by 'without law.' Read:—"As many as sinned in law will be judged through law; for the listeners to the Law are not righteous with God, but the doers of the Law will be made righteous." It is only right to say here that there is doubt as to the correct text in the third and fourth occurrences. The A.V., following the Received Text (T.R.), has the definite article. Although the weight of textual evidence is against it, there can be little doubt that it is correct; otherwise Paul would be telling us here that righteousness can be obtained by carrying out *any* sort of law, such as that of the Koran for instance. Alford says that "it is on that very undeniable assumption, 'that all who have had a law given shall be judged by that law,' that the Apostle constructs his argument, asserting it with regard to the Mosaic Law in the case of the Jews, and proving that the Gentiles have had a law given to them in the testimony of their consciences." He goes on to say: "As to the omission of the article, no inference can be drawn, as the word follows a preposition: see ver. 23, where *en nomos* unquestionably means 'in the law of Moses.'" This is true so far as it goes; but I consider he is creating a rather greater difficulty than what exists. Take v. 14, for instance. There can be no doubt about Paul's meaning. Indeed, Alford explains the third occurrence of the word here as follows: "'are to themselves (so far) the law,' not 'a law,' for *a law* may be just or unjust, God's law or man's law, &c." But we ought, I think, automatically to exclude the idea of a *bad* or *unjust* law; for it is perverse to bring it into any of these contexts; and, anyhow, we can avoid the problems raised by Alford if we think of the Law as the Law of Moses in the fullest sense.

Personally, having read what a number of commentators have to say about Rom. 2:14, 15, I have concluded that the almost universal human tendency to complicate everything has been at work. "For whenever the Gentiles, having no law, may be doing by nature what the Law demands; these, having no law, are to themselves law, who are displaying the work of the Law written in their hearts. ..." Any difficulty found in the words 'are to themselves law' is destroyed when we read them in the light of what immediately follows. The rendering 'a law to themselves' is very unfortunate, in that it is so often used as meaning 'a law of their own making' or 'a law designed to suit their own purposes,' in Great Britain at any rate. This is a good example of the importance of the translator having a very full understanding of English idiom, and also of the principle that, in translating from the Greek, the article 'a' should be avoided so far as possible.

The occurrences in Romans 2 are plain enough; but the last, at the end of v. 27, should be noted. It means something more than 'a transgressor of the Law' though that is bad enough; the Jew here is 'transgressor of law': he is denying and destroying the whole principle of law. Again, the 'a,' though it makes smoother reading, is best avoided. At the end of Rom. 3:20 the C.V. correctly avoids 'a' but instead inserts 'the' which is not in the Greek. Read, simply, "for through law is recognition of sin." In v. 19 it should be "in the Law," no more difficult to understand than "in circumcision," &c. in Rom. 4:10. In 3:27 and 31 there is no 'the' before 'law' in any of its four occurrences: again, it is the principle of law which we are to have in mind. The same applies in 4:13-15. In v. 13 'the Law' could not possibly be meant, since it was not given till long after Abraham's day.

## LAW-WORKS

The expression 'works of law' or 'law-works' occurs nine times: in Rom. 3:20, 28; 9:32; Gal. 2:16 (three times); 3:2, 5, 10; and is also plainly implied in Rom. 3:27. In the first Paul declares that out of law-works no flesh shall be made righteous in God's sight, for through law is full knowledge or recognition of sin. In the next, Paul repeats this in reversed form: "For we are reckoning a human being to be achieving righteousness faith-wise (or, as regards faith) apart from law-works." This is preceded by a pair of questions and answers: "Where, then, is the boasting? It is debarred. Through what law: of the works? Not at all! but through faith's law. Here again for accuracy's sake I have abandoned English usage and twice conformed to the Greek by inserting 'the.' 'The boasting' refers to Rom. 2:17, 23; 'the works' to 'works of law' in Rom. 3:20. This is not a matter of any sort of boasting or any sort of law, but of those already mentioned; and it is important to make, this point in order to show how closely the whole discussion is knit together.

Paul's declaration in these two passages *is as much a truth for the Jews as it is for the Gentiles*. In Romans 2 and in the first half of the third chapter the Jews are in the foreground; but the second half covers both Jews and Gentiles; and in Romans 4 Abraham is in view as essentially a Gentile. There is no sign that the declaration has ever been abrogated, or ever will be. Never was it God's intention that righteousness should be achieved by works of law. That was not the function of the Law; and we shall never understand what is until we appreciate the fact. And it should be observed that in Romans 3 Paul speaks of "Jesus Christ's faith" (v. 22) and of "the one out of faith of Jesus" ; that is, the one who is marked out as having "Jesus faith," the same sort of faith as Jesus Himself had. Our attention is not directed to any law-works done by the Lord Jesus, and with that fact we must bear in mind that in this same epistle we are told that Christ has become circumcision-Servant for the sake of God's truth to confirm the promises of the fathers (Rom. 15:8) who are fathers of Paul's own relatives according to flesh (Rom. 9:5).

"Jesus faith" is the right faith as much for Israel as for ourselves. Righteousness by law-works is as impracticable for them as it is for us. These are not special truths applicable only for those called out of Gentiles, in uncircumcision. With the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus they became universal and permanent revealed truths.

Now I wonder if it is going too far to suggest that the Lord Jesus never attempted righteousness by law-works? Certainly there was nothing in Him, no taint of sin and weakness, which precluded Him from succeeding in such an endeavor. That He did not carry out such an attempt seems fairly evident, apart from any other considerations, from the several accounts of where strenuous efforts were made to judge Him for supposed breaches of the Law. Not that He did actually break the Law, but He certainly transcended it. For Him to have achieved righteousness by law-works would have meant giving a standing to the Law which does not belong to it and for which it was never intended. The Pharisees were pre-eminently those of the Jews who were concentrating all their efforts on gaining righteousness by law-works ; and if the Lord Jesus had done likewise He, succeeding, would surely have been the greatest Pharisee of them all. This does not mean that they would have hated Him any the less; but they would have been without even their shadow of excuse for hating the grace which He displayed instead of their unadulterated legalism. In Him grace reigned. Because it reigned in Him, it now reigns through righteousness, for eonian life, in Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21). Through Jesus Christ; not Christ Jesus—a title which is not found at all in Romans 5.

Moreover, if He had achieved righteousness by law-works instead of by faith, He would have done what is declared to be beyond the power of anyone else. This deed would have put a barrier between Him and the whole of humanity which could be surmounted only at the cost of making it impossible for Paul to have written Rom. 3:20.

For God's Son came out of woman, came under law (Gal. 4:4). He was peritome Servant, circumcision Servant. In some unique way which is probably beyond understanding in our present state, He was all that, He was the perfect prototype of what Israel will be under the New Covenant; and yet, because of "Jesus faith," He was also the perfect prototype of the Church which is His body, of which He was to be Head. That latter side, our own side, is led up to by Paul in Romans, defended in Galatians, and displayed in full glory in the Prison Epistles. True 'Dispensational Truth' is concerned to clarify our minds as regards the distinction between these three lines of revelation in the Greek Scriptures, namely: first, the grace and the truth which came through Jesus Christ for all, whether Jews or Gentiles, of which "Jesus faith" is the starting point; second, the truth concerning the circumcision, which is only outlined in Romans and serves chiefly as a foil for the third; the truth concerning the uncircumcision, opened up in Romans, crowned and completed in the Prison Epistles.

At this point I would remind my readers of what I wrote in Vol. 14, No.5, pp. 234-239, particularly about the occurrences of the verb 'dikaioO' in the present tense of the middle voice, and the summary under the heading "Paul versus James?" on p. 236; of which this present chapter is really an expansion. It is very noticeable how these particular occurrences of 'dikaioO' and the term 'law-works' go together: between them they cover the context of the latter except Rom. 9:31, 32; and in this last it is really implied, because Israel in pursuing a law of righteousness were really endeavoring by means of law-works to achieve righteousness. So complete is the set of quotations in those pages that little is left to say except with regard to Gal. 5:4.

I made the point then that Gal. 5:1-6 is the one and only passage concerning the verb 'dikaioO' in the present tense of the middle voice which is in any way to do with circumcision, and thus the only one which is in any sense "dispensational." This is true, in spite of the fact that Gal. 2:16 follows a passage which has to do with circumcision; for in Gal. 2:14 there is a change of subject. Previously Paul and Cephas had come to an agreement. There is no suggestion whatever that any question subsequently came about of breaking or annulling this agreement. But, subsequently at Antioch, Paul with stood Cephas to the face. Why? The word 'gar' (for) supplies the answer. First he ate with the Gentiles. Then, when some came from James, he drew back. The offence of Cephas, and those who transgressed with him including Barnabas, was hypocrisy. It is true that the matter of circumcision lay in the background, but no more than that. The issue at this point was not whether Gentiles should become proselytes to Judaism; but whether those who had not become proselytes ought in any circumstances to be ostracized by Cephas and his friends and associates.

In Gal. 5:1-6 the issue is genuinely "dispensational"; it is whether flesh circumcision itself has any point or meaning at the present time, let alone validity; and the answer is definitely negative.

To understand fully just why; we need to go back, not only to the immediately preceding context in Galatians 4, but first to Romans 4 again.

This we will attempt in the next chapter; but meanwhile we ought to examine James' Epistle. Although at first sight this carries us a little off our theme; it is nevertheless desirable for completeness sake and because of the need to witness against the bad practice of neglecting this epistle. Yet we must ever bear in mind that there is some truth behind this practice, which arose mainly as a protest against appropriating to ourselves what belongs exclusively to Israel.

The preface to James lays down plainly that it is addressed to "the Twelve Tribes, the ones in the dispersion." It is therefore not part of Paul's Evangel; but neither is it part of the Evangel of the circumcision. It is present truth; but truth for and concerning the twelve Tribes: and only in a secondary sense is it applicable to others. So we might expect to find, as we do find, that the way the words 'works'

and 'law' are used is different from what occurs in Paul's Epistles. One thing, however, is unexpected and, at first sight, surprising: no reference to law-works is to be found anywhere and only two to 'the Law,' and it may well be that these two are really only referring to the first occurrence, in James 2:8: "If, howbeit, royal law you are discharging, according to the scriptures: 'You shall be loving your neighbor as yourself; ideally you are doing. Now if you are showing partiality, you are working sin, convicting yourselves by this law as transgressors. For anyone who should be keeping whole this law, yet be tripping in one thing, has become liable for all." Although this last statement is certainly true of the Law, there is no good reason why we should go outside the context, outside 'royal law' in the opening words. James 2:11 reads "transgressor of law"; 2:12 reads "freedom's law." In 4:11 the C.V. correctly renders the word without 'the.'

James 1:25 poses a problem: "Now he who peers into mature law: that of the liberty. . . ." (Greek: of the freedom). What liberty? This is the first occurrence of the word outside Paul's Epistles, the only others being, without the article James 2:12; 2 Peter 2:19, with the article 1. Peter 2:16. This last should read "as free and not having this freedom for cover of evil." So it is hard to avoid the conclusion that James is really referring to the previous occurrences of the word (in the canonical order) Rom. 8:21; 1. Cor. 10:29; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 2:4; 5:1, 13; particularly the last two.

To my mind, this makes it very hard to resist the conclusion that James, as Peter openly in 2 Peter 3: 15, is tacitly pointing his readers to Paul. He does not discuss law-works, because Paul already says all that needs to be said. He does not discuss the Law, because Hebrews on the one hand. and Paul's Epistles on the other, say all that needs to be said about that. But, on the other hand, he has much more than Paul to say about work and works (15 occurrences) as regards Abraham, because the Jews were naturally more interested in his works than Paul's converts from the Gentiles. Yet in all that James says there is nothing to conflict with anything taught by Paul.

## Chapter 12

### ABRAHAM AND FAITH

Resuming our re-translation of Romans 4, we read verses 13 to 15 as follows:

"For not through law was the promise to Abraham or to his seed, for him to be world-heir; but through faith-righteousness. For if those out of law are heirs, the faith has become void and the promise has vanished; for the Law is producing indignation. Now where law is not, neither is transgression."

In these three verses we find 'law' three times and 'the Law' once. In the first, 'the Law' would be an impossible reading, if only because the Law was not given until long after Abraham's death. It had to wait till Moses. Obviously, too, there was some difference between the circumcision given to Abraham and that by Moses. The former usage of the word links it to covenant, the latter to the Law. This does not mean that there were two different kinds, but simply two different aspects of it. The important thing is to keep in mind that the prior linkage is to covenant. Law comes in only afterwards. First, then, we have the assurance that the promise to Abraham is not through law. It exists in its own right through faith-righteousness and is independent of the law principle.

But why has the faith become void if those out of law are heirs? For two reasons. First, that given in Rom. 3:21-26: in brief, the fact that faith-righteousness is apart from law, so that any attempt to have it through law merely makes it void. Second, that given in Rom. 3:19, 20: through law is the recognition of sin. But here Paul goes further. The Law is producing indignation. Where law is not, neither is transgression. There he leaves the matter for the present, and turns his attention to the crucial point: faith. So we read (v.

16) regarding the promise to Abraham: "Therefore it is out of faith that it may be in accord with grace, for the promise to be firm to the entire seed; not only to those out of law, but to those out of faith of Abraham."

In Romans 2 to 4 inclusive the word 'charis' (grace, favor) occurs only three times, as follows:

3:24. achieving righteousness gratuitously by His grace

4:4. the wage is not reckoning by way of grace but by way of debt

4:16. therefore it is out of faith that it may be in accord with grace.

From this point of view everything between the first and third of these may be regarded as a parenthesis, since the second is negative in form. We may, then, read as follows: "Yet now, apart from law, righteousness of God has become manifest through Jesus Christ's faith unto all and on all who are believing, achieving righteousness gratuitously by His grace. It is out of faith that it may be in accord with grace, for the promise to be firm to the entire seed: not only to those out of law, but to those out of faith of Abraham."

With everything thus taken out which is not relevant to this particular aspect of the argument, the idea becomes luminously clear. Law in any form has nothing to do with faith, nor is it of the smallest avail as a substitute for faith. Furthermore, it is in direct conflict with grace (we get that from 3:19, 20; 4:4, 13-14). The promise to Abraham has to be in accord with grace; so it cannot be out of law, but must be out of faith. BUT, when it is out of faith, the promise is firm to the *entire* seed: not only to those out of law, but to those out of Abraham faith. This places the Law in its proper position. Where faith has the priority, the Law can take its proper place as regards those to whom it is given, but, needless 'to say, to nobody else; yet the promise is firm to the entire seed, *and to both classes of the entire seed*. One side belongs to those out of the Law, the other to those out of Abraham faith apart from law.

This is a repetition in other terms of verses 11, 12, only relating to promise as well as fatherhood. On one side, those who are of Abraham faith throughout uncircumcision, on the other those out of the Law and circumcision. It should be noticed here that I have deliberately ignored the C.V. rendering of v. 16 and placed 'only' after 'not' instead of after 'the Law'; going back, in fact, to the A.V. ("not to that only which is of the law"). We will seldom go astray if we follow the A.V. usage with 'only.' Here its misplacing in the C.V. seriously weakens the contrast.

Paul then reinforces the case for the double fatherhood of Abraham by a quotation, going on thus: "Who (according as it stands written: 'Father of many nations I have appointed you') is father of all of us in the sight of One Whom he believes—God—the One vivifying the dead and calling the things not in being as if they were; who, beyond expectation, believes upon expectation, for him to become father of many nations, according to the assertion, 'Thus will thy seed be.' And not becoming infirm as to the faith he considers his own body as already become deadened (being somewhere about a hundred years old) and the deadening of Sarah's womb; yet with regard to the promise of God was not made to doubt by unbelief, but was invigorated by faith, giving glory to God, being fully assured also that what He has promised He is also able to do. Wherefore, also, it is accounted to him for righteousness."

It is most noteworthy how Paul presses home repeatedly the paramount importance of faith. How anyone, after this, can suppose that righteousness might exist in any way except through faith, is a mystery.

Lastly, Paul sums-up as follows: "Now it was not written because of him only, that it is reckoned to him; but because of us also (to whom it is about to be reckoning) who are believing on Him Who roused Jesus our Lord from among dead ones: Who was given up because of our fallings-aside and was aroused because of the making of us righteous."

There the matters stand until it has to be taken up again in Galatians to cope with the problems produced by the actions of the Jerusalem Church and the Circumcisionist Party. Galatians was probably written a considerable time before Romans, yet much of it is a protest against departure from the teaching summed up in Rom. 4:13-15. This fact by itself is sufficient to explode the teaching that there is any general significance in the chronological order of Paul's Epistles.

#### THE "DISPENSATIONAL" ASPECTS OF THIS MATTER

The passage in Galatians (4:21-31) relating to Abraham reads as follows:

"Tell me, those willing to be under law: are you not hearing the Law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one out of the bond-maid and one out of the free-woman. But the one, indeed, out of the bond-maid, according to flesh has been begotten; yet the one out of the free-woman, through the promise. Which is allegorizing; **(a)** For these women are the **(b)** two covenants; one, indeed, from Mount Sinai, generating into slavery, which indeed is Hagar. For **(c)** this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, yet is in line with the Jerusalem which now is, for she is in slavery with her children. Yet the Jerusalem above is free, which is mother of all of us. For it is written: **(d)** Be gladdened, sterile one; who art not bringing forth; burst forth and implore, thou who art not travailing; seeing that many are the children of the desolate, rather than of the one who has the husband. Now YOU, brethren, as Isaac, are children of promise. But, even as then, the one who according to flesh is begotten kept persecuting the one according to spirit; thus also now. But what is the Scripture saying? "Cast out this bond-maid and her son, for by no means shall the son of the bond-maid inherit along with the son of the free-woman." Wherefore, brethren, we are not the bond-maid's children, but the free-woman's."

Notes: **(a)** Or, suggestive of another meaning. **(b)** Some texts omit "the." **(c)** Some texts read 'de,' yet. **(d)** Isaiah 54:1.

Placed side by side the two passages about Abraham are illuminating, and are remarkable for their unlikeness. Romans 4 regards Abraham as the prototype of God's Evangel: everything centers round his faith, his righteousness, fatherhood, uncircumcision and circumcision. Law and promise come in" but in relation to these only. Galatians 4:21-39 does not mention the first four, above; but freedom, motherhood, children, covenant; and law and promise in relation to them only. Surely the reason for this should be evident? In Galatians Paul is writing to those who have believed, in part at least, his teaching in Rom. 3:19-26; yet have failed to understand and believe its context. And not only its context in Romans 1-4, but in time—its "dispensational" position in fact. The word "dispensational" has long been a trouble to me. For reasons already explained at length (Vols. 12, p. 219 ; 14 p. 237; 15 p. 255) such expressions as "the Dispensation of Acts," "the Church Dispensation," "the Kingdom dispensation," etc., must be rejected totally. Moreover, the word "dispensation" is strictly speaking itself unscriptural as the description of period of time characterized by some special feature. Yet there *are* such periods of time, and there *is* no other word which according to current usage can be employed to express the fact. Recently I have put the word in inverted commas whenever I have been unable to avoid using it, and for the present this seems to be the best solution, even though unsatisfactory and open to misunderstanding. So at this point I would like to re-state what I believe to be the truth of the matter in this context.

At the call of Abraham God introduced a new principle to humanity, faith-righteousness. This established his fatherhood of all out of his faith.

After calling Abraham God introduced another new principle—covenant with Abraham and with those to whom Abraham was father according to flesh. With this covenant was eventually given the Law through Moses, starting a period of time characterized by God having special dealing with His Covenant People.

This "dispensation" was not strictly continuous. Sometimes Israel were reckoned as God's People; at others they were 'lo ammi,' not His People; but it was continuous in the sense that no alternative arrangement of any kind was made.

Then came the Incarnation and the appearance of Israel's promised Messiah, His rejection and the great crisis of Matt. 13:14, 15; though, throughout since Abraham, the principle of faith-righteousness still remained. A new "dispensation" had begun. Although the bulk of Israel was apostate, the Remnant was faithful and recognized by God; for Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth, had come, and the grace and the truth remained in force ever since. Yet, so far, still nobody but Israel, even though only their Remnant, was thus recognized. Still no real provision existed for those to whom Abraham is father, but *not* according to flesh. In *that*, respect there was no "dispensational" boundary-line in the accepted sense; neither is there at Acts 28:28, for this refers only to Israel. All it tells us about the Gentiles is that the saving-work of God *was* sent to them at some past time, not at that very moment.

The events narrated after Matt. 13:14, 15 took their course. Eventually Paul was given his special commission. *Its full implications are not disclosed until we get to Romans*. Then, and then *only*, do we find detailed God's special dealings with *non-covenant* people, with those having the akrobustia, the uncircumcision. Romans 1 to 4 is unique in Scripture in that it sets out God's Evangel, the Evangel as it embraces *both* sides: for those under covenant and for those not under covenant, the Gentiles. Only here do we find the universal aspects of the Evangel set out from the "dispensational" angle, the others being found in John's Gospel and Epistles.

Having laid the general foundation thus, Paul goes on in Rom. 5-8 to build up the non-covenant, Gentile, aspect of the Evangel as far as it concerns primarily the individual; in Rom. 9-11 its impact on Israel and the world, in the remaining chapters its relation to corporate life, and finally in the great doxology at the very end, a pre-view of the glories of the Prison Epistles.

So the period between Matt. 13:14, 15 and the close of Paul's ministry is one of transition. As soon as it started, no reason existed why the Evangel should not be proclaimed to Gentiles as such, as Paul did, except the fact that no person was yet so commissioned. For the question whether the Evangel is to be proclaimed to any particular kind of person, and whether it is for that person and at that moment linked to or severed from covenant, depends solely on God's will at that moment as shown in His declared calling at that moment.

At this moment of writing, it is impossible for anyone whatever to proclaim *validly* a circumcision, covenant evangel.

#### THE REFERENCE TO ABRAHAM IN GALATIANS

We see, then, that between Galatians and Romans 1-4 is a great gulf of thought. Romans 1-4, as it stands, is applicable to any and all who hear God's Evangel, whether under covenant or not, whether now or in days to come. But in Romans 5 Paul turns away from this universal aspect. He develops the non-covenant side. His commission to the Gentiles takes the helm—what he calls "My Evangel"—and thereafter he has no more to say about covenant, flesh circumcision and privilege, save by way of contrast or reproof. What is according to flesh is repudiated. And the same is true of Galatians.

Now we may understand why Gal. 4:21-31 differs so much from Romans 4. In Galatians Paul is addressing people who come under his Evangel, or claim to, but who are trying to apostatize to legalism. In v. 21 he does not say: "Tell me, those willing to be under the Law," but "under law." No doubt most, if not all, of these errant Galatians were trying to come under the Law through the influence of the

Circumcisionists; but, as in the Thessalonian Epistles, Paul had in mind a far wider audience than that. Most of those who need now to listen to his words are in no danger of succumbing to the lure of Judaism. The snare now is legalism, whether of the Roman Catholic type, or that of the many Protestants. who proclaim what are in essence various systems of law-works. All these people are wanting to come in some way under law.

To them Paul asks: "Are you not hearing the Law"? Seen in this light, what follows the question ought to be easy to grasp. Those who want to come under law may be sons, but they are sons *out of the bond-maid*, according to flesh begotten. This is the position under present conditions where what is according to flesh counts for nothing. So, now, such sonship means bondage. Also it means ineligibility for any inheritance; for Gentiles, having no standing according to flesh and therefore no heir-ship either, cannot inherit the promises which are according to flesh.

This is a hard saying, but it is inescapable.

In the allegory the two women are the two covenants; and the question arises: Which two covenants?

One, indeed, from Mount Sinai. That is plainly the Mosaic Covenant, and this is explicitly represented as the covenant "from Mount Sinai, generating into slavery, which, indeed is Hagar." The other one, then, corresponds to the free-woman, defined as the Jerusalem above, mother of us all. The only covenant which corresponds to that is the New Covenant, which has yet to be concluded with the houses of Israel and Judah. No other covenant exists which will fit into the allegory. But here a problem arises. We have two women and two covenants; but Mount Sinai, the Jerusalem which now is, and the Jerusalem above—three entities; not two.

The rendering: "yet is in line with Jerusalem which now is" has been retained in the foregoing translation, but with some misgiving; for the word 'sunstoichei' (occurring here only in the Greek Scriptures) is related to others carrying the ideas of 'fundamentals' and 'elements,' and it seems to me that the passage may well contain the idea that Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, yet fundamentally the same as Jerusalem which now is. Both are in slavery with their children, so, logically, both represent the bond-maid.

What, then, is meant by the statement that the Jerusalem above is mother of all of us? I suggest that Heb. 11:8-10 supplies the answer. All God's people, by faith, on earth, are sons of Abraham and therefore figuratively sons of his expectation as well. What our actual relation to that city is, we are not told except in the figure; but we must always bear in mind that our own expectation is above and among the celestials, and so cannot be completely severed from anything else so situated, even though no part of it.

All that belongs to covenant, what is according to flesh, is now in slavery: the covenant of Sinai because it is utterly broken; the covenant of Jerusalem because, for the present, it is sterile. The Jerusalem which now is, is in slavery with her children, and must so remain till her Lord and Messiah can return to Mount Olive to Covenant itself is now sterile. To attempt to carry on along the lines of the covenant of Sinai means being cast out as in bondage to legalism; and the New Covenant has yet to be concluded with the houses of Israel and Judah; so *as yet* has no validity at all. Neither of the two is of any use now. Both are in bondage. Only the Jerusalem above is free; so only one whose mind is set on what is above can have freedom now.

This does not mean that we have any part in the Jerusalem above as such, whatever our present and eventual relation to it may be. Any idea along this line must be finally shut out. The passage is not addressed to those willing to be under grace, but to those willing to be under law; and our interpretation of it must be kept within that context.

In fact, Galatians can be very misleading if in reading it we fail to keep wholly within its context. It is the one epistle which explicitly, and in its historical setting, clears up the relations between the Apostle Paul and the Twelve. Even the predominantly historical book, Acts, does not do so finally as Galatians does. Romans relates circumcision and uncircumcision to the Evangel and to Abraham; it makes perfectly plain that the former pair of ideas are two entirely divergent concepts and lead to two fundamentally different aspects of the Evangel: but when in Chapter 5 Romans develops Paul's Evangel it leaves Peter's Evangel entirely out of sight, below its horizon, as it were. The occasion for writing Galatians was an attempt by some to reject Paul's Evangel in favor of what they conceived to be Peter's. But already (indeed, long before) matters had passed beyond the stage where such an attempt would have been even plausible, let alone proper. Anything purporting to be an evangel of law is, under present conditions, an evangel of slavery. But an evangel is good news, and a prospect of coming under the yoke of slavery is bad news; so an evangel of slavery is a contradiction in terms, a thing by its very nature an impossibility.

### **Chapter 13**

#### **THE EVANGEL AND THE FOUR GOSPELS**

In spite of all that has been written about the Evangel there still seems to be a great deal of confusion among us, as the letter which evoked the set of answers in our April 1955, issue plainly shows. Items 2 and 4 of it, in particular, call for further examination, which we will undertake now.

Before the event narrated in Matt. 13:14, 15, salvation was of the Jews. Everything centered around Israel. Outside of Israel there was no evangel of any sort. Men who believed God could approach Him only through Israel. Those who desired to adore the infant Jesus had to travel to Him, to the Land of Israel. If they desired to go further along the pathway of faith, the only line of approach for them was through the Temple, the offerings, the Law, the Levitical priesthood, and then only as proselytes.

Yet, even so, at the very start there was a hint, in some measure a type, of a different state of affairs. The very first event to happen after the birth of the Lord Jesus was the arrival of the shepherds of Israel followed by the coming of the magi from the East to Jerusalem and thence to worship Him at Bethlehem. In these two events, Israelites were first, then the magi from the Gentiles. This intervention by Gentiles instantly aroused the enmity concealed behind a false appearance of faith in the ruler of Israel; and this forced the departure of Joseph and Mary with Him to Egypt. This surely is a type of what was to come: the rejection of the Lord Jesus and His saving work being sent to the Gentiles. Eventually Herod's decease occurred and then the return of the Lord Jesus to the 'Land of Israel, "for those who are seeking the little Boy's soul have died." Such is the eventual doom of His enemies.

We must not, however, press this very far, for the spirit of Egypt is as hostile to the Lord Jesus as Herod was. This comes out in the last reference to Egypt, in Rev. 11:8; where the great city Jerusalem is being, spiritually, called Sodom and Egypt. The spiritual state of sinful mankind, apart from grace, is the same throughout. What makes the great city and its people worse than the others is that they have added to their sins the further sin of turning against the greater light which was given them. So Joseph was able to find relative security in Egypt from the danger which Jerusalem threatened; and so also had the Apostle Paul to turn from Israel to the Gentiles.

Throughout our Lord's earthly life the line of approach to God for Gentiles was through Israel and through the Law; and, as was later revealed in Romans, the Law is producing indignation; and in Galatians; the Law was added on behalf of the transgressions (3:19) until the Seed should come. Thus, the Gentiles were throughout in an inferior position to Israel, since they had to approach through Israel; and in no way a superior position, seeing that they too had to come under the dominion of the Law or not at

all. The Law was a disability; and continually so, because it was inescapable and its effect was always to produce indignation.

### THE NATURE OF THE CHANGE AT MATTHEW 13

What happened at Matt. 13:14, 15 was not that salvation ceased to be of the Jews then, but that it ceased to be of all the Jews. At one stroke it came to be of one small company of them, the disciples. But at this one stroke the requirement for approach to God was altered too. As soon as the possibility of the Covenant People losing their privileged position became an accomplished fact for some of them; that position ceased automatically to depend on *covenant* alone or even at all, and came openly to depend on faith; and this brought mankind back, in effect, to the state of affairs which existed when God made His covenant with Abraham.

Always was it true that covenant standing and privilege really depended on faith, though Israel never appreciated the fact; and always was it true that righteousness was out of faith, as Abraham's righteousness was: but in the period between Abraham's covenant and the pronouncement of Matt. 13:14, 15 the door of faith was in practice open only to those who sought it along the lines of covenant and the Law. God was merciful to the individual of the Gentile! who was of faith" but He had bound Himself to admit nobody to the full privileges of faith except through covenant and the Law. Any of the Covenant People who wished to could enter into these full privileges—though, needless to say, they could take advantage of them only in and through faith.

But at Matt. 13:14, 15 the situation changed abruptly. Those who were of faith remained as they were before; but for those who were not of faith the door to privilege and to salvation was barred. They were automatically set back to exact equality with the Gentiles who were not of faith.

So matters continued until after the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus, Pentecost, and the unlocking of the Kingdom, first to Jews, then to Gentiles. These events prepared the way for something new, a repetition and expansion on an enormous scale of what Abraham found (Rom. 4:1). Abraham's faith and its effects could now operate for *all* who were of faith, whether Jews or Gentiles; because covenant and the Law had ceased to be the complete barrier they had been. To the Jew they had been a barrier because, unless he saw that faith came first and that they were no substitute for faith, they had become for him in practice an impediment. To the Gentile they had been a barrier because they imposed prior conditions of approach to God which Gentiles (by the very fact that they *were* Gentiles) could not fulfil except by the long and tedious process of becoming proselytes, if so be that an opportunity presented itself.

### TEMPORARY VERSUS PERMANENT ASPECTS OF THE EVANGEL

This is why the statement of the Evangel in Romans 1-4 has so much to say about Jews and Gentiles, circumcision and uncircumcision, Abraham, faith and works. The Apostle Paul is concerned to demonstrate therein three main points:—

- (1) That in practice Jews are no better than Gentiles because all are equally under sin.
- (2) That righteousness is by Jesus-faith alone.
- (3) That the circumstances under which it is achieved are governed solely by whether it is to be sought within the limits imposed by covenant and its sign circumcision (peritomE), or whether it is to be sought altogether

apart from covenant, that is, in uncircumcision  
(akrobustia).

In these three I have set out as simply, briefly and accurately as I can the "dispensational" foundation of the Evangel of God, the Evangel as a whole so far as it is concerned with and affected by changed conditions and historical circumstances in God's purposes.

Perhaps those who have previously found themselves unable to understand the relevance of Romans 1-4 to the Evangel will now have a better appreciation of its meaning. The great aim of these chapters so far has been to explain the relation between faith and righteousness, whatever the circumstances of those who are of faith. For us, their main importance is to show how those who have no claim on God may yet have access to Him, and achieve His righteousness, in faith. But it is necessary also for us to know how others, under covenant and the Law, may approach Him, because only thus .can we fully understand our own case.

There is, however, an important corollary to these facts. Scripture does not deal with theoretical questions unless corresponding practical questions exist and require their elucidation. If it Was worth Paul's while to write about how God's Evangel concerns those under covenant and the Law, it must be because either there are, or else there will be, people who will receive the Evangel under covenant and the Law. But we find in several places in his epistles that Paul's own Evangel is incompatible with such, conditions, that the Old Covenant is vanishing away, that the New Covenant is yet to be concluded and, when it is, will be with the houses of Israel and Judah (Heb. 8:8-12). The state of affairs envisaged by Paul and the writer of Hebrews regarding such people *did not exist then and does not, and even cannot, exist now*. Therefore, it must be the case that the present form and conditions of the Evangel are only temporary and that, someday, they will be superseded by covenant and the Law, and with the Covenant People once more pre-eminent. So we may deduce with *absolute* certainty that the present conditions will end and, what is more, the conditions set out in Matt. 13:14, 15 will end also. This deduction is amply confirmed by Scripture; but I need not, I trust, set out the passages, of which Rom. 11:12-32 is the chief, and the numerous prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures which cannot possibly be fulfilled unless this is true.

As regards the *time* of this change, no century, year, day or hour is disclosed. *That* the fullness of the Gentiles will be gathered in is foretold in Romans 11; *how* in 1. Thess. 4:13-17. That someday the Temple will be rebuilt is implied in 2. Thess. 2:4 and the Revelation. Daniel shows the sacrifices and the offerings will take place once more, for their cessation in the midst of the 70th heptad is foretold. Dr. Bullinger demonstrated in his book on the Apokalypse that there is no room for the church which is Christ's Body among these events. All this places our departure before they can begin. This, however, is not the place to go into the question, which I have already discussed elsewhere.

## THE STATUS OF THE GOSPELS

Here a further point must be discussed which surely will have presented itself to many readers who have been following this series: Why not seek for the Evangel in the four Gospels and discuss it in relation to them?

Recently, in an influential ecclesiastical newspaper, a clergyman of the Anglican Church has objected to a rule of his church that Rom. 4:8-14 should be read from January 1st to the 5th. He claims that it is entirely irrelevant to the life of those to whom he has to read it. He also claims that it is unintelligible to them as well; but that is *his* fault for not understanding his job. What he contends amounts to this-that what the Apostle Paul teaches about the Evangel in Rom. 1-4 is irrelevant and unimportant. If he is correct, what I am writing in this series is worthless also, and we might as well scrap it, with Romans and Galatians as well; and indeed everything that Paul wrote, for those chapters are the foundation of the whole lot.

Such men are blind leaders of the blind. They presume to claim to be preaching the Evangel while they do not know even what the Evangel is! For one thing; the word "righteousness" is found ten times altogether in the four Gospels (Matt. 3:15; 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33; 21:32; Luke 1:75; John 16:8, 10); and not even one of them gives the slightest clue to how righteousness is to be attained or achieved. If a man desire righteousness, he can search the Gospels from end to end in vain: he *must* turn to Paul or abandon the quest.

Perhaps some may likewise search the Gospels for the references in them to the word "evangel" or "gospel" ; but they will not find anything in them to match what the Apostle Paul tells us about it. The reason for this is perfectly plain: it is not there. The Gospels are written to tell us about the Lord Jesus, not how to grasp that for which we were grasped by Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:4-16).

Let us get this point quite clear. I am not trying to make out that the way of righteousness cannot be deduced from or squared with what is taught in the Gospels; but simply that it is not set out in them, and that it is set out in Paul's Epistles. To work out for oneself the material of the first four chapters of Romans, solely from the data supplied in the Gospels plus the Hebrew Scriptures, would require transcendent spiritual insight; and it is a matter of experience that those who base their whole teaching on the Gospels and virtually ignore the Epistles *never* attain to what is revealed in Romans or use it and the other Epistles in any other way than as a collection of isolated texts.

Moreover, it is impossible to achieve a full understanding of the Gospels without first achieving a very considerable, if not a full, understanding of the Epistles as a whole.

Few realize this, yet the fact stares us in the face from the pages of the Gospels themselves that the oral teaching of the Lord Jesus did not produce even one convert to stand beside Him in the last terrible hours. Some loved Him enough to come to His cross; none had sufficient faith, THEN, to endure the cross as well. The reason is, as He tells US Himself, that many things remained to be taught which He *could* not tell them then. Where are these to be found but in the Epistles?

Although He was the Way, no man could follow until He had opened it Himself. To go back to the Gospels *alone* is to go back to the start of a Way which had not been opened up. This is plainly set out in the 9th, 10th and 11th chapters of Hebrews, an Epistle which, like Romans, is obsolete in the eyes of our very clever modern teachers who control the preponderating churches in our days.

## THE ONLY WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

I said earlier in this chapter that in the times of our Lord's earthly life the line of approach for Gentiles to God was through Israel and through the Law. And the line of approach for Israel was through the Law. There was no other way; and it was a matter of fact then, and still is, that the Law is producing indignation (God's indignation or wrath). So there was no way for anyone except the way which produced indignation. This was simply because the Law could not and did not produce righteousness. That fact is what Paul so clearly states in Rom. 9:31-33:—"Yet Israel, pursuing righteousness law, unto righteousness-law does not outstrip. Wherefore? In that it is not out of faith, but out of law-works, they stumble on the stumbling-stone, according as is written, 'Lo ! I am laying in Zion stumbling-stone and snare-rock, and the one believing on Him shall not be disgraced.'" But this statement is clear only if we observe the operative words "in Zion." It is in Zion that the Law has its seat, so it is in Zion that the Lord Jesus is stumbling-stone and snare-rock. To unbelieving Gentiles His claims are a nuisance, an obstacle to their apparent freedom to do their evil will, but He is not a stumbling-stone. To the unbelieving Jew, however, He is. As a ghost which can never be laid, the memory of Jesus of Nazareth perpetually haunts the Jew. The further behind him he attempts to thrust his supreme sin, the greater its influence on the

whole of his thinking. He is too insensitive to be conscious of this; but to the Christian observer it stands out and manifests itself in all the Jew writes and does. His efforts to hammer out for himself the homeland which God is waiting to *give* him in days to come, heroic as they are in many ways, are but another manifestation of the haunting sense of guilt which ever drives him on and whichever thwarts him as he stumbles against it, for it is guilt of the blood of the Christ. And it is a double guilt—the Law broken, and the persistent act of seeking to do by the Law that which, can be accomplished by faith only.

Always Paul stands pointing to faith as the only effective way to righteousness. Gentiles, pursuing righteousness, overtook righteousness—yet righteousness out of faith (Rom. 9:30). But the only declared way (in a sense, official, way) for any of mankind was through the Law and the offerings of the Law; and that was never an effective way, as it led to indignation, because the Law had to be kept in full, else the consequences were even worse than if it had not been kept at all. So those following the Law who did attain to righteousness did not do so by their following of it. but in a sense as a by-product of their unavailing efforts to pursue righteousness-law: in fact, they achieved righteousness not because of the Law but because of their faith. But the Gospels *never* say this. They do commend faith and declare its effectiveness; but they do not commend it as the key to righteousness.

Where we are—some of us—better off than any of faith in those early days, whether Gentiles or Israel, is that we possess what Paul revealed in Romans. Those people happened Upon righteousness because they had happened upon faith. They, as it were, groped in the dark, and found; but we need not be in the dark, that is, unless we have been grossly deceived by the false teachers of Christendom and thus prevented from having effective access to Paul's Epistles. If we fail to achieve righteousness, it is not because we cannot find the way of faith, but because we prefer to pursue law-works, to pursue an idea which by its very nature must continually outstrip us even more effectively than it outstripped Israel.

Yet this is the way which the false teachers repeatedly present to us. They give us exhortations from the Gospels, which by their very nature cannot be complied with directly, except sometimes by those who have already achieved righteousness out of faith; and as it were whip their hearers on to a pursuit of righteousness-law similar to Israel's futile efforts. No wonder people get "Gospel hardened," even as Israel did.

Those who are familiar with the ripe wisdom of that great classic among children's books: "Through the Looking glass," will remember Alice's attempts to get away from the house and right into the garden. Each time she turned her back on it she immediately found herself approaching it. Then she wanted to talk to the Red Queen, but was advised to walk the other way. This sounded nonsense to her so she "set off at once towards the Red Queen. To her surprise, she lost sight of her in a moment, and found herself walking in at the front door again." So "she thought she would try the plan, this time, of walking in the opposite direction. It succeeded beautifully. She had not been walking a minute before she found herself face to face with the Red Queen, and in full sight of the hill she had been so long aiming at."

This is a wonderful parable of the Christian life. Only when we cease to bother about self, our own way, our own works, our own gladness and holiness, our own legalism and law-keeping, and turn our backs on our *own* things, can we reach our hearts' desire which is truly our own. Once we turn our backs on our search for our own righteousness, and abandon our aims, to seek instead for God's righteousness through Jesus-faith; we have at once, not what we think we want, but what we *really* want and need: righteousness which is truly our very own because it is first and last and all the time *God's* righteousness.

## Chapter 14

### ISRAEL ACCORDING TO FLESH

Some confusion exists about the Seed in Gal. 3:16. This passage has been a matter of controversy from the first; yet it is not very difficult to perceive what it aims at. The promises were declared to Abraham and to the seed of Abraham. In saying this to Abraham, God is not saying "And to the seeds" (the promises being on many, as it were) but as on One, "and to your Seed," which is Christ. The promises focus down on One, Christ; they are not the individual property of each Israelite in himself, but only in and through Him, Christ.

This helps to explain, and is in turn explained by, the opening words of Romans 9. At the start is set out the standing of the Israelite; and, lest any should be so foolish as to assume that this refers to some sort of supposed 'Spiritual Israel,' the declaration is sandwiched in between the phrases 'my kin according to flesh' and 'Christ according to flesh.' That which is according to flesh is what is in view here. There *are* no Israelites who are not so *according to flesh*. Let us get this fact perfectly clear in our minds at the start, and we shall not then go astray.

Having securely laid the foundation, the Apostle Paul can immediately build the superstructure which is so vital to the understanding of Israel's present position. He is explaining his sorrow and the fact that it is not as though the word of God has lapsed. The vital point is that it is not flesh which is the key thought, but *promise*. "The children of the promise He is accounting unto seed." Physical descent is indeed contemplated here, but *also* descent according to promise. Ishmael was Abraham's son as well as Isaac; but Isaac had something which Ishmael had not—he was born according to the promise.

All that follows, for three whole chapters, is concerned with the relation between Israel and the Gentiles while the Evangel of the uncircumcision is in force. Part of some people's trouble over appreciating this lies in a fundamental misunderstanding. They are inclined either to think that the individual of the Gentiles who receives salvation enters into Israel's heritage, or to think that Gentiles and Israelites are perpetually different in, every respect. This 'either-or' position is untenable. Righteousness which is out of faith is equally needed by the individual whether of the Gentiles or of Israel. So far, there is no difference whatever. Abraham's seed are not all children of the flesh, but the children of the promise are the seed; whether of Israel or Gentiles, and again there is no difference. Yet this does not confuse in any way the distinction between Gentiles and Israel; even though the righteousness is equally needed by both and is equally out of faith for both.

Where, then, is there any difference? The answer is simple. For the Gentiles the righteousness is conditional on faith and on nothing else whatever. It is an uncovenanted blessing, incompatible with law-works, tied to no conditions or observances and to no explicit obligations. For Israel it is bound to covenant, to the covenant sign circumcision (the peritomE), to obligation to know and to observe the whole law; it is still with these ties conditional on faith, but on faith which is inseparably bound up with law-works and which -can operate effectually only when law-works are carried out effectually. Those Gentiles who by faith, in reigning grace, become children of the promise do so in spirit only. They have no standing and no place according to flesh, except in the negative sense that their standing depends on the fact that they possess *no* fleshly standing.

The children of the promise who are also the seed according to flesh are Israel, even though now they exist as the chosen remnant only. The promises to them and the Law have not lapsed; they have simply ceased to operate because, as things are at the present time, there exists no standing which is according to flesh, for all such has been cancelled out at the Cross. But there is not a word in Scripture to say or even

to suggest that this cancellation is permanent. If there were, it would mean that Israel also is permanently cancelled and reduced to nothingness. Many who call themselves Catholics do actually believe this; but with sound worldly wisdom they refrain from offering any precise Scripture references as proof of their view, for none exist.

In due course I hope to consider Romans 4 in detail. Mean-while the important point to observe is that it envisages two kinds of fatherhood of Abraham—that which is spiritual and not according to flesh in any way, that belonging to Israel which is according to flesh and spiritual as well. For us what is according to flesh and what is according to spirit are incompatible; for Israel in days to come they will be inseparable and will be gloriously sealed in the New Covenant.

That righteousness is out of faith, that the children of the promise God is accounting unto seed, that according to flesh certain things belong irrevocably to Israel—these are universal truths set forth in Romans and permanent in this present eon and the eon to come.

Whether righteousness is linked to covenant and its sign peritomE, circumcision, or free from all covenant obligation; whether that which is according to flesh has a standing and assured place, or whether it is cancelled utterly and completely; whether blessing is in flesh and spirit inseparably linked together or purely spiritual, terrestrial in scope and promise or wholly celestial—these wholly contrasted pairs of ideas are in polarity, so that one *or* the other is in force at any given time, but *never* both.

Failure to perceive this vital distinction is the cause of all the various aberrations which so distress and divide us. Instead of holding *both* sets of truths in polarity, people swing over erratically from one to the other, trying to match a fragment from one pole to another fragment from the other without discrimination or any attempt to see truth as a whole, so that a host of different and conflicting sects appears. Since the Apostle Paul alone discusses these themes, either Paul is in practice scrapped entirely, or the parts of his teaching which do not happen to suit the sect are ignored or openly denied, or Israel is relegated to permanent setting-aside. Only by regarding Paul's Epistles as a *unity* can the truth be understood and enjoyed in full.

The saving work of God is unchanging and unchangeable; but when it was sent to the Gentiles it began to operate in totally different conditions from the covenant relation which governs all God's dealing with His covenant People, Israel. First it came to Israel. Then it was sent to the Gentiles. It did not when sent to Israel turn them into something else, nor did it when sent to the Gentiles turn them into Israel. Gentiles can receive the saving-work only *as* Gentiles. Israel as a covenant nation is temporarily cast away, so the individual of Israel, the Jew, can for the present receive the saving-work only *as* one of the Gentiles, in ceasing to be a Jew; but it is not the saving-work itself which makes him of the Gentiles, but the present non-entity of covenant and circumcision. He can and should receive the Evangel of the uncircumcision as the Apostle Paul did and become as he was in Phil. 3:7-14.

This brings us to the heart of the matter. We are apt to look on all these ideas as if they centered around two notions, 'flesh' and 'spirit,' and as if these two were by their very nature opposed to one another owing to their incompatibility. What makes the whole thing difficult to get perfectly clear is that our point of view is the truth—for ourselves at this present time. The mistake comes in the deduction that it is true for other people at other times.

There are not two notions to be held in view, but THREE: flesh alone, spirit alone, and flesh and spirit in complete and permanent harmony. For Israel, as God intended Israel to be and as Israel one day will be, flesh and spirit are not in conflict but in perfect harmony. For the present, Israel's standing is solely in flesh, which has failed; and our standing is solely in spirit; but present conditions, as regards terrestrial

things, are abnormal. For the present, what there is of covenant itself is being nullified and in practice has ceased to exist, because covenant has been completely broken by Israel; that evangel which is based on covenant, the Evangel of the circumcision, is overshadowed by an Evangel wholly incompatible with it, that of the uncircumcision. For the Apostle Paul and those who receive his Evangel, owing to the failure of the flesh all fleshly standing is to be deemed a forfeit (Phil. 3:4-6), being superseded by what is in spirit.

That Israel's standing is to be a complete concord of flesh and spirit is no mere deduction. It permeates Scripture from -God's covenant with Abraham to the closing chapters of Revelation. It is summed up in the terms of the future New Covenant (Heb. 8:8-12); and, immediately after he reveals the secret of Israel's insensitiveness, it is summed up by the Apostle Paul, first in Isaiah's words (Rom. 11:26, 27) and then from the standpoint of Paul's Evangel: "According to the Evangel, indeed, they are enemies because of you; yet according to the choice, beloved because of the fathers. For *unregrettable* are the graces and the calling of God." (Rom. 11:28, 29).

This final sentence of the quotation is the final and conclusive answer to all who teach that the state of affairs which forms the background of Romans 9-11 is a permanency. Those expositors who hold that this section of the epistle is what they call 'dispensational' are not far from the truth, for it deals with the relationship between Israel and the Gentiles during this period of reigning grace. In particular, Rom. 9:6, 7, though it will still be true afterwards, will no longer have any point; for when the New Covenant is concluded ALL Israel will be saved, *none* will be merely children of the flesh, for all will be children of the promise also. On this passage a doctrine of 'the Seed' has recently been built which seems in practice to restrict it to the seed according to flesh only. I do want to bring home here the point that it is not enough to found a doctrine on a single passage of Scripture without defining the limits of time and circumstances within which it holds good. Always we are in danger of flying to extremes. Faulty though it was in some ways, 'dispensationalism' did us one service beyond price: it taught us not to assume that because something is true or in existence at one point of time and in one set of conditions, it must necessarily be true or in existence at other times and in other conditions. Because it over-emphasized time boundaries and thus went to excess, some are now tempted to the other extreme and are going back to the old error that there is nothing in Scripture corresponding to what we called 'dispensational' changes. For truth's sake, for our own sakes, let us keep to that middle path which is the only way of truth and sanity. By all means let us reject without hesitation what is faulty in 'dispensationalism'; but do not let us be so foolish as to reject what is sound and true. Such extremism is, and always has been, the bane of Scripture research. New truth does not destroy old truth.

It is as well here to study the occurrences of the expression 'according to flesh.' It is found 21 times in Paul's epistles. and perhaps also in Acts 2:30. Unfortunately there is some doubt about this latter, as two readings exist. In English the longer form reads as follows, the doubtful words being enclosed in brackets: "Having perceived that God swears to him with an oath, out of the fruit of his loins, (according to flesh, to raise the Christ) to be seated on His throne: perceiving this before, he speaks concerning the resurrection of the Christ." In order to make sense with the bracketed words omitted, the C.V. substitutes "to seat One" for "to be seated." The wording of Ps. 132:11, of which this is a free quotation from the LXX., is equally indefinite, though it is hard to see how it could have been otherwise. Bagster's translation of the LXX. reads: "of the fruit of thy body will I set a *king* upon thy throne." There is no "One" in the Greek, and even with it the clumsiness of the sentence should be a danger signal.

The longer reading consists of six words: "to kata sarka anastEsein ton christon." Note that "anastEsein" is future infinitive active, so "to be seated" must be understood as future also. Many modern critics reject the bracketed words, regarding them as an ancient marginal note which slipped into some texts. Even so, it is undeniable that the longer reading makes good sense while the shorter is so elliptical that it has to be

manipulated in translation. And even then, the net result implies the longer reading, which certainly guards two points, that it is *the Christ* Who is in view, and furthermore that it is the Christ *according to flesh*. One objection is that the six Greek words are tautological; but "according to flesh" certainly is not, and of the undisputed words "perceive" occurs twice and "with an oath" does not seem to add much except emphasis to "swear"; whereas "according to flesh" does definitely add something to "loin"; and if it can fairly be objected to here, would not such an objection be even more valid against its double appearance in Rom. 9:3-5? If it is necessary to add something anyhow, why should it be tautological to read "the Christ," which reading is "what is obviously meant? The Companion Bible tells us that "the texts" have the short reading. This is a very biased comment; for, as Bloomfield points out, only a very few MSS have the short reading and the quotations in the Fathers about cancel one another out. To say more here would be to raise a very large question, but to those who follow the modern preference for the generally briefer readings of the oldest extant uncials I would commend the sound rule of the C.V. "Introduction" (p. 36), which accords with the experience of all who have to call upon the services of shorthand-typists: "Omissions are easily made: restore them. Additions are rare: weigh them." Here the weight of evidence, and common sense too, suggests that the six Greek words are an omission, not an addition, and ought to be kept.

If I may add a personal comment here, I would like to say that I have had extensive experience with shorthand typists both for ordinary and also highly technical matters, and I have found that, even with the best (and very good they are) omissions are far more common than additions, and that their additions are almost invariably repetition of words or phrases or whole lines, and seldom make sense, and never add anything material to the matter drafted for them or dictated to them. Additions to be meaningful have to be deliberate. Perhaps the outstanding instance of this is 1. John 5:7.

The fuller reading of Acts 2:30 links up with Rom. 9:3-5, where "kata sarka" occurs twice and very significantly, and also with the first occurrence in Paul's epistles, Rom. 1:3. "God's Son comes of the seed of David according to flesh. Rom. 4:1 refers to Abraham "our forefather according to flesh," and the question arises: Who are the persons designated by "our"? I suggest that from Rom. 3 : 1 to this point, "we" and "our" refer to the Jew, primarily at any rate where general matters are in view and exclusively in Rom. 3:31 and 4:1, as indeed the context indicates.

In 1. Cor. 1:26 we are told that there are not many wise according to flesh. In 1. Cor. 10 : 18 the Corinthians are referred to Israel according to flesh in order to illustrate Paul's argument. In 2. Cor. 1:17 he asks if his plans are according to flesh; in 10:2, 3 he speaks of those who reckon us as walking according to flesh and says that "walking in flesh, we, are not warring according to flesh"; and in 11:18 he speaks of the many who are boasting according to flesh. In Gal. 4:23 he contrasts the maid begotten according to flesh with the free woman through promise; in 4:28, 29 he refers to Isaac and his persecution by one generated according to flesh. In Eph. 6:5 he exhorts slaves to be obeying their masters according to flesh, and this exhortation is repeated in Col. 3:22.

By contrast, the expression occurs in Rom, 8:1, 4, 5, 12, 13 in a very different sort of context, and in the third of these it is expressly contrasted with those who are according to spirit. Also these five are in harmony with the two remaining occurrences, in 2. Cor. 5:16. We no longer know Christ according to flesh now; we belong, in fact, to a new creation.

If those who are so anxious to make out that in Christ we have come to be of Israel, or in some way never clearly explained a "spiritual Israel," would only study all these passages they would surely see their error and definitely and decisively turn away from a doctrine which bears all over it the brand marks of being "according to flesh."

Mr. N. J. Weins, in *The Roundtable* for March-April 1947, pp, 21,22, has attacked the Compiler of the Concordant Version for his notes on 1. Peter 2:10 and Rom. 9:25, 26. Both passages contain a quotation from the Prophet Hosea, and comparison of the ways of the two apostles in dealing with it is most instructive. This distinction is subtle and delicate, but Mr. Weins manages in a heavy-handed way to ruin it and in so doing to contradict himself. The C.V. Note to the former reads (the emphasis on "But" is my own to point the contrast):—

"The phrases 'not a people' and who 'have not been shown mercy' are usually referred to the gentile nations, in contrast with Israel. This passage is then adduced in favor of applying Peter's epistles indiscriminately to all men at all times, especially to the present ecclesia which is Christ's body; *But* a closer consideration will show that this passage proves the very opposite, for it quotes from the prophecy of Hosea who speaks of the sons of Israel, and cannot possibly be interpreted of any other people."

Mr. Weins's comment is:—"Correct, except for the injected 'but,' because both titles refer to the same people, the one recognizing their covenant standing, the other their *lo ammi* status during the era of their alienation." In other words, the C.V. Note is correct, for both descriptions, 'not a people' and 'Israel' refer to the same people; but according to Mr. Weins incorrect for the same reason. At least, that is what he seems to mean, for the 'gentile nations' certainly are not and never have been Israel, as the Scriptures testify throughout. Nevertheless, it is only right to say that Mr. Weins elsewhere seems to identify them; for on the same page he writes of "the two factions of the race of Israel during 'that era' (Eph. 2:12) of their division." Of course no proof is offered: we are expected to "see" that the statement is true, in defiance of the plainly visible fact that the passage says nothing of the sort. However, it is for Mr. Weins or those who follow him to explain and justify his words—if they can.

As it stands, his statement is wholly irrational; yet he does not scruple to launch a further attack:—"Had the editor seen this he would not have had the trouble revealed in his Note on the same quotation in Rom. 9:25, 26, where Paul uses it to identify the called residue out of the nations. But since such an admission would have ruined his divisionist Abeyance Parenthesis theory he had no alternative but to call it a mere 'illustration.'" But Paul says *nothing* in Rom. 9:24 about any "called residue out of the nations." His actual words are:—"us, whom He calls also, not only out of Jews. but out of Gentiles also"; that is, himself and the Romans, both of Jewish and Gentile origin. Then from Hosea he makes a quotation which (as Peter shows) refers to *Israel* alone, and extends it illustratively to cover all God's people ("AS He is saying in Hosea also"). But this extension is *not* in Hosea's words themselves: there is not a trace of any such thing. *Paul was writing Scripture*, so he could with propriety *add to* existing Scripture. But you and I are not writing Scripture, so in no circumstances ought we dare to add to it, as so many expositors do, and as Mr. Weins in effect does. There are two reasons why you and I must never attempt such a thing. First, we are neither apostles nor prophets. Second, even if we were, we would need a special commission to write Scripture. This is obvious when we ask ourselves how many of the known apostles appear as the authors of the Scripture books. Third, the canon was completed some 1900 years ago. To make any sort of attempt to add to God's Word is the extreme of presumptuousness.

It is interesting to note that the call here is "not only out of Jews but out of Gentiles also." This effectively answers those who foolishly claim that the Jews are not Israel.

Mr. Weins then goes On to write:—"That Paul's Old Testament quotations are not intended for illustration but to show their fulfilment is clearly established in the second Corinthian epistle, chapters three to seven. The saints, being participants in the blood of the new covenant (1. Cor. 11:23-26) are here shown the manifold blessings accruing to them from the dispensation of that covenant, including the mercy and grace of God so long denied them (Hos. 1:6; 2. Cor. 4:1; 6:1, 2). Then follows a condensed list of

promised blessings (6:14-18), concluding with the statement (7:1): "Having" then, these promises, beloved. . ." Note that these people were 'of the nations' (1. Cor. 12:2)."

This is a typical example of the kind of exposition which makes extremely positive statements buttressed by textual references which have nothing whatever to do with them. The reader should examine the passages quoted for himself. What Paul actually states is: "For you are temple of God living, according as God said. . . ." Here is a plain *application* to them of something that was promised to others, namely, *to Israel*. Mr. Weins virtually admits the fact in his closing "Note," only he seeks to conceal it by quoting the C.V. mistranslation of 1. Cor. 12:2, which properly reads: "when you were Gentiles." Some of God's promises to Israel can and do, through His grace and in spirit, though not according to flesh, flow out to God's people from the Gentiles; but such an application is *emphatically not* their fulfilment. Why, indeed, *should* Israel be robbed of them? If we wish to see fulfilment of prophecy stated, we can turn to Matthew's Gospel, where "that it might be fulfilled" occurs nine times.

Mr. Weins does not conceal his real aim. He writes:—"There are those who speak of a national as distinct from individual salvation. But the aim of God's present salvation is the creation of a nation, that holy nation which fleshly Israel vainly dreamt of being but which the gospel has shown. to be formed of all the saints whom it has brought individually out of darkness into His marvelous light (1. Peter 2:9). God recognizes no other nation as His than the one now being created by His spirit, in truth and in righteousness." Further on he tells us of God's calling in Rom. 11:29:—"That calling is one of the seven unities listed (Eph. 4:3-6). Its members are the sole heirs of God, being joint heirs with Christ. Their realm is the world. . . ."

This deliberate and audacious attempt to twist Scripture into teaching that members of the body of Christ are really Israel condemns itself. The passages already quoted in which the words "according to flesh" are found with reference to Israel apply to Israel according to flesh only, and will be consummated in the terrestrial glory of Israel according to flesh and truly according to spirit as well. Mr. Weins's system is a double robbery; for not only does it deprive Israel according to flesh of the promises which definitely and unalterably belong to them according to flesh; but it robs us, who once were Gentiles in flesh, of the promises which exclusively belong to us in spirit.

No apology need be made for dwelling on these wrong-headed ideas at such length, for they afford a valuable illustration of the follies to which departure from the strict words of Scripture can lead and thus are important for our present discussion. Nowhere does Scripture speak of Israelites becoming Gentiles in flesh or according to flesh, but it does speak of an individual's circumcision becoming uncircumcision. So far as covenant rights and standing are concerned, that amounts to the same. thing—but *only* so far. Israel never becomes Gentile *in flesh*. By breaking their covenant completely they become as if they were Gentiles in losing their circumcision, but not actually Gentiles. This cuts both ways. While it destroys the Jew's covenant standing it also removes the obstacle to his salvation as a sinner without claim on God. As Paul did, by repudiating what is according to flesh he can receive what, in spirit, belongs to Gentiles alone. While this is Pauline truth, it is by no means exclusively so, for it is stated in part in Acts 15:11. It is important also to bear in mind that although Paul repudiated his circumcision in flesh and his Jewish standing according to flesh, he never became a Gentile; but passed into a state in which there are neither Jews nor Gentiles, circumcision nor uncircumcision, but instead new creation.

Sometimes in these papers Israel has been treated as non-existent in the present period; elsewhere in this chapter "the relationship between Israel and the Gentiles during this period of reigning grace" is referred to. The contradiction is only apparent. So far as God's dealings with humanity are concerned, no Israel exists during the present time. They do not exist *as Israel*, as the Covenant People, as a Nation which has a claim on God and on whom God has the claim that they continue to keep His covenant "as a going

concern," so to speak. But they DO exist *as Israel according to flesh*, as people who have abandoned their God and crucified their Messiah, on whom the words of Isa. 6:9, 10 have been pronounced, on whom insensitiveness in part has come to be until the complement of the Gentiles may be entering. Unless we clearly keep this distinction in mind, we cannot escape confusion. Yet it is not difficult to produce some sort of analogy. A Frenchman or Spaniard by birth, or any other national, may betray his nation and be branded as traitor and outcast and forced to live in a foreign country. He has lost his nationality with its rights and privileges; but that cannot alter his ancestry and the characteristics it has implanted in him, and there is always a possibility that he may be pardoned and brought in again. Where the analogy breaks down is that, now, all Israel are "not My People," instead of merely isolated individual exiles; but the general idea is the same. Now they are cast away. Some day they will be received back.

But does all this necessarily mean that righteousness essentially linked to covenant and righteousness essentially severed from covenant cannot both exist together at the same time? That is to say, why should not one person receive righteousness as a Gentile and another receive righteousness under covenant as an Israelite?

This cannot happen at present because in rejecting Messiah Israel have repudiated their covenant standing. Nevertheless, this state of theirs is not permanent; for in days to come God will conclude the New Covenant with the houses of Israel and Judah. For that to be possible all Israel will have to be converted. So the saving-work of God will have already returned to them and the Evangel of the circumcision pro-claimed to them. When this begins to happen, does it *necessarily* follow that present conditions will have ceased?

Hitherto all "dispensationalists" have until recently unhesitatingly answered "Yes," and I agree with them; but this answer is now under attack. Although the subject is not, strictly speaking, part of the Evangel of the uncircumcision, on our understanding of it depends whether such an evangel exists at all. One peculiarity of the attack is that it is by suggestion rather than by direct argument, by inference from certain passages from Scripture rather than by what Scripture actually states in plain words. This makes it exceedingly difficult to meet, as all attacks by infiltration must be. It is arguable that we should therefore ignore the attacker until he chooses to come out into the open; but such a course is unsafe and unwise; so in due course it is hoped to deal with the problem in a separate paper.

## Chapter 15

### BLESSED WITH FAITHFUL ABRAHAM

Often it proves helpful to begin an article by illustrating its theme with a quotation from another source. This procedure has the distinct advantage of displaying to the reader at the very outset, and in plain terms, the issue which is about to be discussed. Here, to begin with, is a most definite and startling quotation:—

"No longer 'blessed with faithful Abraham'; we must, if blessed at all, be 'blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.' (Eph. 1:3, 4).

"I, as a saved Gentile, have no more to do with the Abrahamic covenant and the kingdom unalterably promised to Israel, than I have to do with the law of Moses and with circumcision."

So declares a well-known and much-admired expositor. His statement affords a most striking example of the technique of conveying error by the half-truth, the false antithesis, and the association of quite different ideas as if they were but varying presentations of the same idea.

"As a saved Gentile" the member of the church which is Christ's body has nothing directly to do with the Abrahamic covenant, Israel's kingdom, the Law of Moses or circumcision. He requires to know about these matters in order to understand that with which he actually *has* directly to do. Otherwise they certainly are no concern of his. But it equally certainly does not follow that he has nothing to do with *Abraham*. This is obvious when we reflect that *Abraham was 'a saved Gentile.'*

This matter was discussed at some length in Chapter 10 (Vol. 16, No.5, p. 227, October 1954). For our present purpose the important Scripture is Rom. 4:9-12:—

"For we are saying, 'To Abraham the faith is reckoned for righteousness.' How, then, is it reckoned? To him, being in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And a sign he obtained: of circumcision—seal of the righteousness of the faith which was in the uncircumcision—for him to be father of all those who are believing throughout uncircumcision, for the righteousness to be reckoned also to them; and father of circumcision—not to the Circumcisionists only, but also to those who are observing the fundamentals by the footprints of the faith, in uncircumcision, of our father Abraham."

If, then, we are no longer blessed with faithful Abraham, we are, as this passage shows, no longer blessed in either of the ways indicated, either in circumcision or in uncircumcision. Thus, then, the quotation at the beginning of this chapter should have ended ". . . and with circumcision or uncircumcision"; for the essence of Abraham's blessing was that it was in uncircumcision. This is stated twice in the Romans passage, lest by any chance the point might be missed. Thus also, if this writer is correct, besides these two ways there must be some third way of being blessed which is ours. His answer in the quotation is:—

". . . we must, if blessed at all, be 'blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.' (Eph. 1:3, 4)."

Let us therefore turn to Ephesians 1 and find out—if we can—just how else this blessing comes to us.

We find the first intimation in vv. 13, 14. It comes on "hearing the word of truth, the evangel of your salvation" in the Christ. And we are told that in Him on believing also we "are sealed to the Spirit of the promise, the Holy (Spirit), which is earnest of our inheritance, unto deliverance of the acquisition (or procuring), unto praise of His glory" (very literally). So we have, first, to believe the Evangel of our salvation; then we are sealed.

So far, so good. Eph. 1:15-23 goes on to Paul's prayer of thanksgiving for all this: their faith, and his desire that they should have wisdom's spirit and revelation in His realization, for them to perceive the expectation of His calling and other transcendent glories connected with it.

So far, so good; but still no clue as to *how* this (supposed) third way of blessing comes. Ephesians 2 goes on to tell what we once were. Then we come to a further item of these glorious revelations:—"Yet now, in Christ Jesus, you who once were far, were become near in the blood of the Christ. For He is our Peace. . . ." (Eph. 2:13, 14).

So far, so good; but *still* no clue as to *how* we are so blessed, or what we hear and believe. So we pass on to Ephesians 3 and the statement of the Secret in vv. 6-12. Here it comes—at last:—"through the Evangel of which I became dispenser." (Eph. 3:6).

So, after all, it turns out that we are back to where we started—the word of truth, the evangel of our salvation; the Evangel of which the Apostle Paul became dispenser. And, what is more, nothing further is to be found along these lines in Ephesians. We must, in fact, take it or leave it as thus summed-up.

However, to ensure that there can be no misunderstanding by any reasonable person, in Philippians we get a most clear and plain statement of Paul's past: "according to righteousness (that which is in law) becoming unblameable." (Phil. 3:6). Then comes what he did: "But what were to me gain, these I have deemed forfeit because of the Christ" (v. 7). Then why he did it: "that I should be gaining Christ, and may be found in Him; not having my righteousness (that out of law) but that through faith of Christ, the righteousness out of God, on the faith. . ." (vv. 8, 9).

Therefore: blessed with all spiritual blessings among the celestials means that we are blessed through Paul's Evangel.

Where is Paul's Evangel set out but in Romans, 1. Corinthians and Galatians in particular; in fact, in Paul's earlier epistles?

Where do we find righteousness through faith of Christ but in the first four chapters of Romans?

Where are we sealed as in Eph. 1:13 but in 2. Cor. 1:22; 5:5?

Where is our inheritance but in Rom. 8:17 and Gal. 3:29? The reader should go through the occurrences of *klEronomia*, inheritance, and *klEronomos*, heir, in Paul's epistles. He will find that the whole teaching about our inheritance rests firmly on Rom. 4:13-25—the very matter with which we are supposed to "have no more to do." There is no escaping this fact. The first reference to these words is in Rom. 4:13: "For not through law was the promise to Abraham or to his seed for him to be world-heir, but through faith-righteousness." Those with this faith-righteousness are heirs with him. Thus it is that we are God's heirs, joint-heirs of Christ (Rom. 8:17). Gal. 3:18, 28, 29 carry on the same theme, which leads straight into Eph. 1:14, 18. Col. 3:24 confirms this, and Titus 3:7 clinches the whole matter: "In order that, being made righteous by that One's grace, we should be becoming heirs, according to expectation of eonian life." One thing is absolutely certain: in all this it is impossible rightly to insert a wedge between Paul's earlier and later epistles.

Where do we find the expectation of Christ's calling but in Paul's earlier epistles? In the Prison Epistles we have, it is true, Phil. 3:20. We are awaiting a Savior. Yes, indeed; but not very precise unless it is a reference to 1. Thess. 4:13-17 and to 1. Corinthians 15. And the citizenship is not in a void, so to speak, for in the same epistle (Phil. 1:27) Paul urges his readers to be citizens worthy of the evangel of Christ, which he does not define in the Prison Epistles.

Where do we find wisdom's spirit but in 1. Corinthians 1 and 2? The word "wisdom" occurs fifteen times in these two chapters against thirteen in the whole of the rest of Paul's epistles. Here again an examination of the word with the aid of a concordance will show how impossible it is to sever one set of his epistles from the other with reference to it.

Where do we find the idea of becoming near in the blood of Christ and of Him as our Peace save in Romans 5, which sets out the consequences of becoming righteous in precisely the same manner as Abraham became righteous? The word *prosagOgE*, access, occurs three times only: in Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12. It *binds* Romans to Ephesians, not severs them.

Lastly, there remains the awkward fact that Paul's Evangel is referred to seven times in his earlier epistles, four times in the Prison Epistles, and once in 1. Timothy, which is of unknown date. However unwelcome this circumstance may be to those who want to sever the later from the earlier epistles, the fact remains that none of them have ever yet attempted to explain it away. So serious a stumbling-block is it that it is most carefully ignored.

In the face of all this, what can be said of those who presume to make such statements as that quoted at the start of this chapter? One hesitates to impute or even suggest any lack of candor on their part; but surely it is not unreasonable to demand a very clear and definite proof of anything so sweeping? Yet no attempt is made to prove that our spiritual blessings are not given either in circumcision or in uncircumcision. This is not surprising, for it is an impossible task; since all men *must* come under one heading *or* the other until they come to be in Christ Jesus (Gal. 6:15). Moreover any objection that this passage does, in fact, show that the blessing of those in Christ Jesus is neither in circumcision nor in uncircumcision, cannot be sustained. This is because it refers to those who are *in Christ Jesus*; but those who have not yet received the Evangel are not yet in Christ Jesus; so, while they are in that state, that is, while they have not received the Evangel, they must either be in circumcision or in uncircumcision. Furthermore, those who follow the teaching quoted at the beginning of this paper separate Ephesians "dispensationally" from Galatians, so they have no right to expect to be allowed to have it both ways and bring in Gal. 6:15 to support their case. Galatians either applies to "Ephesians believers" or it does not. If it does, then these "believers" are "blessed with faithful Abraham." (Gal. 3:9).

So, also, Romans either applies to "Ephesians believers" or it does not. If it does, then Romans 4 applies to them, and they have believed through the same faith as Abraham had and became righteous with the same righteousness as Abraham received. The way to Ephesians is ultimately via Romans. There is no other way; and even the extreme exponents of "dispensationalism" recognize this, though they minimize it as much as possible. Later on, we shall see that the direct way from Romans to Ephesians is via Galatians.

Do let us all refrain from minimizing the importance of Abraham for us, for *all* of us; whether Gentiles who have believed God in uncircumcision or people of Israel who in days to come will believe God. For those of Israel Romans 4 will still be true. Like him they will believe God in uncircumcision, and a sign will obtain: "of circumcision—seal of the righteousness of the faith which was in uncircumcision"; for to all these he is "father of circumcision," that the New Covenant may be concluded with them.

This is *the* place in Scripture wherein is set out the fundamental unity between the diverse ways of God with mankind—the fatherhood of Abraham of all who are believing throughout uncircumcision, who have, no flesh sonship of him, but solely in spirit. and whose blessings are solely in spirit among the celestials—and the fatherhood of Abraham of all who, like him, will receive also the sign which he obtained, of circumcision and all which it implies. These means are utterly diverse in operation, but they both proceed from Abraham's faith and their ultimate basis is the same—faith-righteousness.

We cannot understand Romans 4 until we understand Romans 1 to 3; and we simply cannot understand the true meaning and inwardness of Paul's Evangel until we have a complete grasp of Romans 4. For what follows it in the epistle is rigidly and unalterably linked to it: "Being made righteous by faith. . . ." (Rom. 5:1). Those who are not made righteous by faith have no part in any of it, and those who claim that they have no part in Abraham cannot really understand how or why they have been made righteous, even though, in God's mercy they have been.

The foolish craving to cut adrift from Abraham, the first Gentile to receive faith-righteousness, leads to even worse folly when Galatians is under discussion. To avoid contentiousness, a very mild example

which certainly cannot be set aside as foolish, may now be mentioned. It is a pamphlet recently received, which, though it contains interesting features, is largely spoilt by an underlying assumption that Galatians was written to Israel. Yet surely the outstanding fact about the Galatians was that they were essentially a *Gentile* assembly which, however, had come under the influence of Judaism? How this happened, we do not know and have no means of finding out; but we learn from Acts that, the party called Circumcisionist was very active and had a strong proselytizing zeal; and it may well be (to say the least) that the circumstances in Galatia were very specially favorable for their activities.

Those influenced by Dispensationalism all tend to overlook the fact that the epistles of Paul were written *to* only a few hundred people, or at most a few thousand; whereas the facts of history and experience demonstrate that they were written *for* a vast company, among which we ourselves are numbered. A proportion of that company have, through temperament or through circumstances, a bias towards the sort of legalism against which Galatians was directed. *They* need to know the functions of the Law and the snares of legalism; we need to know these things as an integral part of our education in God's service. Without it we would be left defenseless, or largely so, against the legalists of every sort.

The author of the pamphlet, for instance, says of the Galatians' inheritance of the promises made to Abraham:—

"This must be willingly *given up*, and renounced by Israelites before they could be identified with Christ and taught the deeper truths of Romans 5 and 8."

If this does not mean that Romans 4 must be given up before anyone can learn the deeper truths which immediately follow it, words do not mean anything. In this respect Israel was not in any way in a different position from Gentiles.

The author of this strange statement almost certainly means by the promises, the special *covenant* promises; but he fails to perceive this point because he is apparently still bemused in mind with ideas of which the quotation at the start of this chapter is a sample. He has failed to ask first which of the promises must be given up, and why by Israelites and, presumably, not by Gentiles? Romans 4 demonstrates that one of them, righteousness out of faith, is for us all. Strange ideas, which like the quotation deny this, are like dry-rot in wood. They spread their filaments everywhere beneath the surface of the thinking of those who have been influenced by them. Such writings again and again reveal that their authors have failed to grasp the vital fact that *Paul had no evangel for Israel as Israel* and that he appealed to the individual Jew only in so far as that Jew was prepared to become a Gentile as Paul himself had done. The Evangel now is exclusively to sinners, to those who have no claim on God; and this automatically cuts out Israel; for the essence of the idea "Israel" is claim on God. It just is not possible for one who claims covenant rights to receive Paul's Evangel.

There is one text in Galatians which is sufficient to destroy finally any idea that the epistle is addressed to Israel: Gal. 6:12—"They are wanting you to accept circumcision. . . ." But no male of Israel at that time could accept circumcision, for the simple reason that he had already been circumcised as an infant. The same thing is true of Gal. 5:3. These two passages can be applied only to Christians of Gentile origin.

Then we have Gal. 4:21, "Tell me, those wanting to be under law. . . ." No Jew would ever *want* to be under law, for he already was under law. The fact that some of the Galatians did want this proves that they could not have been Jews.

Yet it is Galatians 3 which is relied on for building their case by those who desire to make the epistle "Jewish." They fasten on "we were garrisoned under law" (3:23); "the Law has been our escort to lead us

to Christ" (3:24); "we are no longer under escort" (3:25): carefully ignoring the antecedent "we" in Gal. 2:15, 16—"We, by nature Jews and not sinners out of Gentiles. . . we also believe unto Christ Jesus that we may be made righteous out of faith of Christ and not out of law-works." The first two occurrences of "we" are very emphatic, the third is included in the verb. There is also an unemphatic "we" in Gal. 3:14. It is very plain that the emphatic "we" refers to Peter and Paul themselves.

As already pointed out, Galatians is in one aspect a commentary on Romans 4 forced on the Apostle Paul by departure of some from the truth he there sets out. Those who write as if the Galatians were Jews are departing even further from the truth than did the Galatians themselves.

To speak of reaching "Ephesians via Romans" direct is to exhibit dangerous confusion of thought. The path to Ephesians is *via Galatians*; and, indeed, if Galatians had never been written there would be far more excuse for severing Paul's Epistles into two groups than there is now. Those who strive for this severance shut their eyes to the fact that Galatians definitely bridges whatever gap there is between the two sets. For instance, Romans and Galatians each name Abraham nine times, but the Prison Epistles not at all. But Romans refer to "circumcision" fifteen times, Galatians seven times and Ephesians only once; though the Prison Epistles together use the word seven times.

Nevertheless, we do not need to perform any word counting to demonstrate this characteristic of Galatians; and, anyhow, such enumeration without regard to the way words are used in the writings concerned can be very misleading. All we have to do is examine Galatians itself; and it speaks plainly enough. It starts with Paul on the defensive against Judaizers; going up to Jerusalem to justify his commission and explain the evangel he had received, and accepting the somewhat condescending approval from James with one token condition, obviously made just to emphasize the physical predominance of Jerusalem at the time, a condition so pointless and feeble as to be virtually a dead letter in that it is in any case a part of the duty of all Christians. Yet, without a pause in the narrative, Paul's spiritual predominance at once asserts itself, and continues to do so with steadily increasing splendor right through the epistle up to its crowning display in Gal. 6:14, 15.

These two verses are the twin foundations of the doctrine of the Prison Epistles. On the second is erected Ephesians 1, On the first Ephesians 2, on the two together the rest of the epistle. As Galatians 1 is embedded firmly in Acts and Romans, so Galatians 6 is embedded in Romans and Ephesians.

## Chapter 16

### PEACE TOWARD GOD

"Being made righteous, then, out of faith; we may be having peace toward God, through our Lord, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

There are several places where righteousness and peace are associated together, and we shall discuss them presently; but this is the only one in which peace is directly associated with the verb *dikaioO* itself—not that this has a great deal of significance, for it is the basic idea of the word, not its particular form, which matters. Yet it has sufficient to draw our special attention to the passage; and it is particularly unfortunate that here there should be some doubt as to the true text. The MSS authority for the reading here given (*echOmen*) and the A.V. reading (*echomen*, present indicative, *we are having*) is fairly well balanced; so we are placed in the difficult position of having to determine on other grounds what the original reading probably was.

Some Commentators have introduced further difficulty by insisting that *echOmen* must be hortatory: *let us be having*; but it is far from clear that there is any "must" about it. The verb is in the Subjunctive Mood; and no clear reason appears in any commentary available to me for supposing that the ordinary force of this Mood is inadmissible.

The Companion Bible prefers to cut the knot rather than attempt to untie it, by asserting:

"The R.V. 'let us have peace' is not warranted. The apostle's teaching is plain. Having been justified, *therefore* we have peace with God."

No doubt, it is very nice to be so certain; but such a pronouncement tells us no more than that the writer of it "knows his own mind"; and we may well take leave to doubt whether he knows *God's* mind in the matter. So we are left with the question: Does peace toward God follow automatically upon righteousness, or is it something further which has to be achieved? The only way to answer this is to examine the conjunction of the two ideas in the Greek Scriptures and see what they tell us; and this we will proceed to do.

The first is in Luke 1:75&79, in the prophecy of Zacharias: "To be offering divine service to Him in benignity and righteousness before Him all our days. . . ." and "In which He visits us—an uprising from on high—to shine forth to those sitting in darkness and death's shadow, to direct our feet into a way of peace." Very evident is it here that the peace does not follow immediately, still less automatically, from the righteousness. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that this is *Israel's* prophecy and that what is true for Israel is not necessarily true for those outside covenant; so we cannot with safety build anything on this passage by itself.

Second: John 16:8-10&33. This is all one speech, and again righteousness comes first, thereupon peace; but there is no immediate connection between them.

Third: Acts 10:35&36—Peter's speech when unlocking the Kingdom to the Gentiles: "Of a truth I am grasping that God is not partial; but, in every nation *the one fearing Him and working righteousness* is acceptable to Him. Of the word He dispatches to the sons of Israel, evangelizing peace through Jesus Christ (*this One* is Lord of all!) ye know..." Again no immediate sequence.

Fourth: Rom. 3:21&17. "Yet now, *apart from law*, righteousness of God has become manifest, testifying by the Law and the Prophets" and "And a path of peace they know not." Here the order is reversed and there is a contrast between conditions with God's righteousness manifest and those with law-works, proving that those seeking righteousness with them cannot reach God's standards.

Fifth: Rom. 5:1, the passage under consideration.

Sixth: Rom. 10:3-10&15, 16. Here we are back on ground similar to Peter's speech: first, a discussion of righteousness, then: "'How beautiful the feet of those evangelizing peace.' But not all obey as regards the evangel." There is some doubt here over the correct Greek text, as some read "good" instead of "peace"; but neither reading helps us on our quest.

Seventh: Rom. 14:17. "For the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in holy spirit." The Kingdom of God is all these equally, and for those who are truly of His Kingdom there is no separation between the three. But still the question remains: Does the peace come immediately upon the righteousness?

Eighth: Eph. 6:14-16. "Stand, then, girding about your loins with truth, and putting on the cuirass of righteousness, and sandaling the feet in readiness of the evangel of peace." Here again, righteousness comes first; but the peace is clearly seen to be a separate element of the outfit essential for withstanding. It is very plainly not an appendage, so to speak, of the righteousness.

Ninth: 2. Tim. 2:22. "Be pursuing righteousness, faith, love, peace."

Tenth: Heb. 7:2. About Melchisedek: "first, indeed, translated 'King of Righteousness; yet, *after that*, King of Salem also, which is 'King of Peace.'" Personally, I regard this as decisive. Apart from the rather emphatic "after that," it would be possible to read it as meaning that being King of Salem was necessarily involved in being King of Righteousness, as a direct consequence. But *epeita, after that, or thereafter*, invariably involves a space of time, sometimes short, sometimes long, but always appreciable.

Eleventh: Heb. 12:11&14. "Now *all* discipline, for the present, is *not* seeming to be of joy, but of sorrow; yet, *subsequently*, to the Ones exercised through it, it is yielding peaceable fruit of righteousness. . . *Peace* be pursuing with all; and that holiness, apart from which no one will see the Lord." This adds its testimony to the other relevant passages.

Twelfth: James 3:17. "Now *fruit of righteousness* in peace is being sown, by those making peace."

Thirteenth: 2. Peter 1:1, 2. "Simeon Peter, slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those chancing upon *equally precious* faith with us, in righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: May *grace to you and peace* be multiplied. . . ." Here again the peace does not necessarily follow on the righteousness.

Fourteenth: 2. Peter 3:13, 14. "Yet new heavens and new earth, according to His promises, are we hoping for, in which righteousness is dwelling. Wherefore, beloved, hoping for *these things*, endeavor, unspotted and unflawed, in relation to Him, to be found in peace."

I think these sum-up pretty well all that the Greek Scriptures have to say On the relationship between righteousness and peace. Though some shed no light on it, the others leave no room for doubt that, although peace is unattainable apart from righteousness, it does not necessarily follow from it, but needs to be sought and won by the working-out of God's righteousness in our lives. We may, then, safely conclude that the reading of Rom. 5 : 1 best in agreement with the rest of Scripture is as at the start of this paper, " we may be having peace toward God." So the first two verses may be rendered:

"Being, then, made righteous out of faith, peace we may be having toward God through our Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom also the access we have had, by the faith, into this grace in which we have been standing and we may be glorying in expectation of the glory of God."

The undoubtedly correct "we may be glorying" strongly supports, by parallelism, the view that "we may be having peace" is correct.

"Toward God" (pros ton theon) occurs 20 times, in John 1:1, 2; 13:3; Acts 4:24; 12:5; 24:16; Rom. 4:2; 5:1; 10:1; 15:17, 30; 2. Cor. 3:4; 13:7; 1. Thess. 1:8, 9; Heb. 2:17; 5:1; 1. John 3:21; Rev. 12:5; 13:6; but the reading of Rom. 4:2 is a little doubtful. It will be seen from these that the idea "peace towards God" is unique. The only things at all like it are "confidence towards God" (2. Cor. 3:4) "faith towards God" (1. Thess. 1:8) and "boldness towards God" (1. John 3:21).

"Peace" occurs 11 times in Romans, and the reader who cares to look into the matter will see that they form an Introversion, the first corresponding with the eleventh, the second with the tenth, and so on. Corresponding to Rom. 5:1 is 14:19, which reads: "Consequently, then, the things of that peace let us be pursuing, and the things of mutual edifying." Corresponding to 8:6 is 14:17; which read respectively: "For the disposition of the flesh is death, yet the disposition of the spirit is life and peace" and "For the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in holy spirit." It will be noticed that in 14:19 I have read "let us be pursuing" as Rotherham, Bloomfield, Alford and the New World Translation, and against the C.V.

The whole world desires peace, or says it does; but few there are who are willing to seek it in the only way it can be found, through righteousness. In Rom. 3:9 Paul is charging Jew and Greek to be all under sin: "Not one is righteous, not even, one"; and he finishes his argument by declaring, "Bruises and wretchedness are in their paths, and a path of peace they know not" (3:16, 17); and then he goes on to tell how righteousness of God has been manifested (3:21-26). Correspondingly, having spoken of the expectation of Israel, he says (Rom. 15:13), "Now may the God of that expectation be filling you with all joy and peace in believing. ..." Peace is not a purely Pauline truth, for less than half of the references to it are in Paul's epistles. Like all Kingdom truth, it has a general aspect for Israel and the world and also a purely Pauline aspect; and although Romans deals largely with the former, it does not ignore the latter. "The expectation in power of holy spirit" (Rom. 15:13) looks forward to both the Prison Epistles and 1. Thessalonians.

It cannot be said that the word "expect" is an altogether happy rendering of the verb "elpizo," especially as in certain contexts "rely" has to be used instead of it if the word "hope" is to be avoided, as the C.V. Concordance argues. The consequent discordance in the C.V. of Rom. 15:12 is unfortunate. This verse is a distinct echo of Matt. 12:21 which is the prelude to the great change in Matt. 13:14, 15. So far from showing (as some would have it) that Rom. 15:9-13 is "Jewish," this fact points the opposite way. It is not that our expectation depends on Israel's, but that the fulfilment of Israel's now depends on ours! Matthew 13 narrowed down the Lord's ministry as it applied to Israel; but it opened the way to something else, on the fruition of which hangs the whole fulfilment of Israel's own hopes. The Gentiles' *ultimate* hope on earth will depend on Israel's earthly glory; but both of these hopes now await the completion of God's present purposes for the Gentiles.

We misunderstand Romans when we fail to grasp that it is two-sided. Primarily, it is the setting-out of the new state of affairs brought about by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It tells those who would be God's people, at last, the way to righteousness—which way had to be trodden thenceforth by all who are to be of God's people, whether along the line of covenant or the line of uncovenanted blessing. In this, it is based firmly on the Law and the Prophets; being, in fact, essential to the completion of both. Hence it contains such quotations and references as are found in Chapters 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 and 15. But these fundamentals are equally so for *all* of God's people. Although the "peace" of Rom. 5:1 is the starting-point of new and glorious revelations, before it can be sought and approached and apprehended the righteousness of God must first be attained; and that righteousness is wider than the channel which opens out in Rom. 5:1. And, indeed, the expectation of the Gentiles in Matt. 12:21 is wider than the channel which opens out in Matt. 13:14, 15. Wider; but not deeper. Man often works from the general to the particular, but God from the particular to the general. The Lord Jesus had to turn from the whole nation of Israel to the little band of disciples in Matt. 13:14, 15 in order that ultimately in the glory to come He might win the whole nation to something far more fundamental than healing those who came to Him for help. So, righteousness eventually will dwell in the new heavens and earth (2. Peter 3:13), but first it has to make its home, in spirit, in God's celestial people whom He is now calling out from among the Gentiles.

Having then been made righteous by faith—something done to and for us by God in Christ—there comes something to be done which we ourselves have to do on our own account: be having peace towards God. This peace, as are all our blessings, is through our Lord, Jesus Christ. Presently the Apostle Paul develops this theme, but first there are other matters to be dealt with.

Peace we may be having; but access we have had. What does this involve?

This question carries us at Once into the sphere of Ephesians; for the word "access," *prosagOgE*, occurs only here and in Eph. 2:18; 3:12. In the former we read: "And coming He evangelizes peace to you, those afar, and peace to those near; seeing that, through Him, we both have had the access, in one spirit, toward the Father." Eph. 3:12 reads: "In Whom we have the boldness and the access in confidence, through the faith of Him." Both refer to Christ Jesus, and the second is the concluding portion of the statement of the Secret of Eph. 3:6-12.

A good deal was written about this context in the paper "One Body" in Vol. 18, No. 5. In Christ Jesus, the one termed "Uncircumcision" who once was afar off, and the one termed "Circumcision, in flesh, hand-made" (I suggest that all five English words comprise the term), are now, in Christ Jesus, created "into one new humanity, making peace." This is in complete harmony with the closing words of Galatians: "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything—but new creation." The seed here sown blossoms in the Prison Epistles, where we see both circumcision, in flesh, hand-made, and uncircumcision, left behind; those who had them being created in Christ Jesus into one new humanity, both being reconciled in one body to God through the cross. The joint-body is the ruling theme of Ephesians, the cross of Philipians and the reconciliation of Colossians.

"We both have had the access" (Eph. 2:18). This points backwards, and can point only to the first occurrence of the word, in Rom. 5:2.

What is this "access, as to the faith" or "faith-wise" which we have had through our Lord, Jesus Christ? What have we been reading about in the four previous chapters and, in particular, Rom. 4? It is, literally, "access into this, the grace in which we have stood." In other words, the making of us righteous through faith in accord with grace. That faith gave Abraham access to God, faith which enabled God to bless him in unfettered grace altogether apart from law-works, and which enabled him, and does enable us, to stand. The glory of this grace is the subject of what follows Rom. 5:1, 2; but before we go on to investigate this, in another paper, we ought to consider the verb "stand."

This verb *histEmi* is much less common in the epistles than in the rest of the Greek Scriptures. In the Revelation its Occurrences number only one less than in the whole of the epistles. The first occurrence in the latter is: "Are we then abrogating law through this faith? But no, that may not be: law we are causing to stand!" (Rom. 3:31). The next (after Rom. 5:2) is Rom. 10:3: "For they, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and their own righteousness seeking to stand up, were not subject to the righteousness of God." Next, Rom. 11:20: "By unbelief they are broken off, yet *thou*, by the faith, hast been standing." Last, Rom. 14:4: "He shall be made to stand, however; for the Lord is powerful to make him stand."

The basic idea of the Greek verb is stopping and placing oneself, the notion being the assumption of the position a person or thing ought to occupy or hold as an active entity, or, in a material thing such as a jar or building, to carry out the function for which it was designed. By faith, then, we are causing or enabling law to carry out its proper functions. In "this grace" (Rom. 5:2) we are enabled to be what we ought to be and act as we ought to act. In Rom. 10:3, Israel were represented as trying to carry out with their own righteousness the functions which God's righteousness alone could perform. In Rom. 11:20 the figurative

wild olive branches have, in the faith discussed in the earlier chapters, been able to function as branches, and thus avoid having to be broken off. Rom. 14:4 explains itself.

In his definition of his Evangel, in 1. Cor. 15:1, 2; the Apostle Paul writes: "the evangel which I evangelize to you, which I accepted also, in which also you have been standing, through which also you are getting saved, if you are retaining what I said in evangelizing you—outside and except you believe feignedly." It is Paul's Evangel in which we, any and all of us, have stood; in which is our ability to get saved and to keep safe. So, earlier, in 1. Cor. 10:12, he warns anyone who is supposing himself to have stood to beware lest he should be falling.

In Paul's Epistles, the great passage concerning our duty to stand is Eph. 6:10-17. We need to put on the panoply of God to enable us "to stand in spite of the stratagems of the Slanderer. . . . and having effected all, to stand." Then Paul details the items of our armory, in which, as we have already noted, are righteousness and peace. And that cuirass of the righteousness (of God) has to be put on, not merely received and put away safely for some future day's wear. Then the feet have to be sandaled with readiness of the evangel of that peace which is now for us if we will but take it. Sandals are not just slipped on ; their fixing has to be a purposeful operation. None of this equipment grows on one as do the coat and claws of an animal. It has to be put on or taken up.

All this is intensely practical. We have far, far too many Christians among us who do not stand, but lie down and sleep, content to leave others to do the standing for them. The only warring these people accomplish is against the few who dare to stand against the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials, which forces are growing stronger every day, largely because we are so few, and so weak, and so handicapped by the quislings within our ranks. For, make no mistake about it, those who raise a chorus of protest whenever a public stand is made against false doctrines are quislings—in plain terms, open traitors to Christ Jesus our Lord. Their one desire is to be left to their comfortable slumber, their one resentment is against those who battle in their stead. It matters not at all to them that others are fighting with all their strength to defend the ramparts while they interrupt their slumbers only to hinder and frustrate them. Hardly any term of abuse is too strong for such people to apply to those who make an uncompromising stand against doctrines which cannot face the test of Scripture and must therefore be false. Personally, I care not at all what is said against me. Whatever others, even those who claim to be Christians, may assert; I intend to go on wrestling with the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials, until the time may come, if it does, when I am to be silenced. That does not matter either; for when one falls out of the battle, God raises up another to take his place, and the end of that one's struggle is peace without end. What *does* matter is that some should wrestle on, for *that* is the only path to peace; and only those who follow that path can have peace *towards God*.

## Chapter 17

### LIFE EONIAN

The expression *Life Eonian* or *Eonian Life* is found forty=four times in the Greek Scriptures, of which seventeen occur in John's Gospel, six in his first epistle and ten in Paul's Epistles. Thus, it cannot be regarded as referring exclusively to anyone set of people.

The first occurrences, in Matt. 19:16 and 29, definitely associate the getting of Life Eonian with works: in the first, keeping the precepts; in the second, leaving property or relatives on account of Christ's Name. The Apostle Paul's first reference to it, in Rom. 2:7, is also linked to good works. Nevertheless, lest we should suppose that this is solely an "evangel of works," Matthew's next and remaining reference is in connection with the gathering of all the Gentiles before the throne of the glory of the Son of Mankind

whenever He may be coming in His glory, at the final point where sentence is pronounced: for the unrighteous, chastening eonian; for the righteous, life eonian (Matt. 25:46).

Marks' two references (Mark 10:17 and 30) are in a passage parallel to Matt. 19:16-30, and so also are those in Luke 18:18 and 30. But the other, Luke 10:25, occurs at an earlier point in the Lord's ministry than any; yet it is still connected with good works and leads up to the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Acts 13:46 and 48 link life eonian with believing, and lead up to what Paul has to teach on the subject. His first mention of the term, Rom. 2:7, though associated with good works, or, rather, endurance in them, leaves open for the moment the question of how it is possible to carry them out. In fact, his statement here is the introduction to all that follows in the epistle. Neither can be properly understood without taking account of the other.

The next occurrence comes at the climax and conclusion of what Paul has to say about reigning-grace. Though works are totally eclipsed by grace here as a means of attaining righteousness, they have their place in maintaining it. The reigning of grace unto life eonian is *through righteousness*.

We have made so much—and rightly—of the absolutely vital truth that righteousness is through faith and not through law-works, and that any attempt to mix works with that faith merely stultifies it and renders it impotent; that we are perpetually in danger of failing to appreciate that righteousness is *not* itself faith *nor* faith itself righteousness, however strongly they are linked together. Righteousness without faith is an impossibility; as also is righteousness through faith mixed with works; for such "faith" is no real faith at all. That is why the Apostle Paul begins his argument in Romans by demonstrating throughout the bulk of the first three chapters that no one has produced or can produce works adequate to produce righteousness, either by works apart from law or by law-works. Even further, after this demonstration he points out something else which seems to have escaped general notice—that it is not *our* faith in and by itself that creates righteousness in the first place.

This is startling, but true, for see again Rom. 3:21-23: "Yet now, apart from law, God's righteousness is manifested." Although the main emphasis of the Greek is on "apart from law," yet the context, by its actual lay-out, gives special emphasis to the point that it is *God's* righteousness and not ours which holds the center of the stage here. There is no need to demonstrate this other than by suggesting to the reader to look at the references to "God" from Rom. 1:1 to 4:3. In no passage of comparable length does the Name occur so often—51 times in 95 verses. Not only so, but the emphasis is strongly on God as God absolute; for the Name of Christ is found only 9 times in that passage. This is not to say that He is comparatively ignored; for at this crowning point He takes His rightful place: "yet God's righteousness through Jesus Christ's faith." Only then does faith as it applies to ourselves come into view: "unto all and on all believing." And, even so, the point that it is still *God's* righteousness that is in view is clinched by what follows: "for there is no distinction, for all sinned and are wanting of the glory of God." In short, true righteousness is God's righteousness and it is through Jesus Christ's faith. Only so is it unto all and on all believing. If the faith is not Jesus Christ's faith, it is no true faith at all; just as if the righteousness is not God's it is no true righteousness at all. There is no room for anyone but God to be first in this.

So Paul works up to his climax: "For we are reckoning a human being to be achieving righteousness faith-wise (or, as to faith) apart from law-works." (Rom. 3:28). Note well that even here it is not actually *by* faith, but simply the Dative of the word faith—as to faith, faith-wise, characterized by faith or associated with faith. We, who truly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, come to share His faith and so to be associated with His faith and its consequences. Faith, just simply faith in and by itself, is of no avail. To be saving faith it must be "Jesus faith" (Rom. 3:26), that is to say, Jehovah-Savior-faith; not just belief in

God, not just "belief in Jesus" as the nominal Christian so often has it, but the belief that in the Lord Jesus, Jehovah is Savior.

The notion that "faith," faith in a void, so to speak, is good enough, is one of the most subtle and dangerous of heresies. It comes about partly through reading Romans without due care and discrimination and partly through failing to hold the balance of truth and to use James' Epistle as a corrective against misunderstanding Romans. Here it was that Luther failed. Because he saw that Paul was greater in this he disparaged James, not perceiving that all God's saints are great in some way and that star differeth from star in glory. His sin was, perhaps, less than that of those moderns who despise James because of their own artificial dispensational theories. James' words are frank, even blunt:

"But someone will be declaring: '*THOU* hast faith, and *I* have *works*!' Show me thy faith apart from these works, and *I*, to thee, shall be showing, by my works, my faith! *Thou* believest that God is one. Ideally art thou doing! The demons also are believing, *and are shuddering*! Now art thou willing to understand, O empty man! that the faith apart from the works is dead? *Abraham our father*, was he not out of works made righteous, when offering up his son Isaac on the altar? You are observing that the faith worked together with his works, and out of the works the faith was perfected; and the scripture was fulfilled which is saying: 'Now Abraham believes as to God and it is accounted to him unto righteousness'; and 'Friend of God' he was called. You are seeing that out of works a human being *is achieving righteousness*, and not out of faith only." (James 2:18-24).

All this was gone into very thoroughly in our Vol. 14, p. 236; and one comment made I would like to quote:

"The age-old conflict between James and Paul goes up in smoke once we see that James has *nothing* to say about 'works of law.'"

This is nothing like so far a digression as it must appear at first sight. On the contrary, it establishes the connection between righteousness and life eonian and between good works and both of them. It is in reigning grace that we are to attain righteousness unto life eonian through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amplification of this fact that life eonian is an attainment is found in Rom. 6:22, 23, which reads:

"Yet *now*, being freed from the sin, yet enslaved to God, you have your fruit unto holiness. Now the consummation is life eonian. For the ration of the sin is death, yet God's gracious gift is life eonian, in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Throughout, "the sin" is plainly the "sin" referred to in Rom. 3:19, 20 and 4:8, for the intervening occurrences are all prefixed by the Definite Article. Life eonian is the result of the holiness which is the fruit of God's gracious gift of freedom from that sin. It is not an automatic consequence of salvation.

Not till near the close of Galatians do we come across *life eonian* again, and we find there the same sort of idea in a different context (Gal. 6:7, 8):

"Be not self-deceived: God is not to be sneered at; for whatsoever a man may be sowing, this also shall he be reaping; seeing that *he who is sowing unto his own flesh*, out of the flesh shall be

reaping corruption; yet *he who is sowing unto the spirit*, out of the spirit shall be reaping life eonian."

Do we always appreciate the solemn force of this prelude to the revelations of the Prison Epistles?

The next occurs toward the close of the preface to the first of Paul's Personal Epistles; and beyond saying that it is in line with the rest, it calls for no special comment here (1. Tim. 1:16). Next is the exhortation to Timothy to "get hold of that *eonian* life" into which he was called (1. Tim. 6:12). Note the emphasis given by the change in the order of the words. The last in this epistle (1. Tim. 6:19) is doubtful. Some texts read "life eonian," others "life indeed." The fact that this word *ontOs* occurs in this epistle more frequently than in any other book of the Greek Scriptures favors its authenticity, and it certainly reads extremely well in the context; though we should bear in mind that each of the three other occurrences (5:3, 5, 16) refers to widows. To decide which reading to accept is a puzzle. It is hard to see how either one could inadvertently have been changed to the other in copying, yet there is quite respectable authority for each. I would not be surprised if some very early manuscript were to turn up one day showing *both*, thus: "treasuring up for themselves an ideal foundation for the future, that they may be getting hold of the real life, eonian life." For the present this solution must be dismissed, as no direct evidence exists, which is a pity; for if that were the true original reading, the variants would be much easier to explain. It is, on the face of it, much more likely that one or other were dropped out in transcription by scribes; for it would have been so easy for the eye to leave one *aiOniou* during writing and alight on the other. This mistake, technically known as *haplography*, that is, writing only once what appears twice in the original being copied, is extremely easy to make, as I well know from experience.

Paul's other two references (Titus 1:1, 3:7) accord with what we have found already. So does the remaining one outside John's writings, in Jude 21.

#### LIFE EONIAN IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

We now come to John's Gospel, which speaks of *life eonian* in the following passages: John 3:15, 16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 39; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; 17:2, 3. Our readers are earnestly recommended to study these for themselves. John's First Epistle speaks of it in 1. John 1:2; 2:25; 3:15; 5:11, 13, 20, which also call for study.

In most of the references in John's Gospel, including the first six, life eonian is associated with faith. Indeed, even the seventh implies some measure of faith in that the Jews were supposing that in the Hebrew Scriptures they had life eonian; but, as in James' Epistle, it was not a sufficient faith, for it was not faith on Jehovah-Savior. The Jews search the Scriptures, they were, in fact conspicuously searchers of the Scriptures, and still are; and there are plenty of Gentiles who follow their example—but all in vain, for they were searching for the wrong thing and in the wrong way. Only as *We search for the Lord Jesus Christ* in the Scriptures are we using them as they were meant to be used. Any other sort of "Bible study" is a chasing of a will-o'-the-wisp; yet these false trails are all that the bulk of Christendom knows. I once attended an "Oxford Group" "House Party" (Now, apparently, "Moral Re-armament") and was impressed by finding that the only use for the Bible those who ran the Party seemed to have was for getting "guidance" in every sort of problem of conduct. Others use it for "proof texts" to support the tenets of a teacher or of a sect or of "the Church." Yet others, as the Jews, to find, as they suppose, life eonian. The only true way, to come to the Lord Jesus that they may have life, is ignored.

This idea is reinforced in John 6:27, 40 and right through the Gospel, summed-up in the last reference (John 17:3):

"Yet *this* is that *eonian* life: that they may be knowing Thee, the only true God, and Him Whom Thou dost commission, Jesus Christ."

John's First Epistle is to a large extent an expansion of this, as the opening words indicate. The closing words (1. John 5:20) clinch the point:

"Yet we are aware that *the Son of God* is arriving, and has given to us insight, that we are knowing the True One, and we are in the True One, in His Son, Jesus Christ. *This One* is the True God and life eonian."

And as a final warning we are urged (v. 21): "Little children, guard yourselves from the idols." Not just some idol or idols, but the idols as a whole. For it is possible to turn life eonian into an idol, as the Jews themselves did when they searched the Scriptures for the life eonian which *they* supposed themselves to be having in them. Yet they were not willing to come to the Lord Jesus that they might have life (John 5:39, 40).

So here we have the definition of what life eonian actually is: *KNOWLEDGE of the only True God in Jesus Christ His Son*. For we read (1. John 5:11, 12):

"And this is the testimony: That life eonian God gives to us, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life. He who has not the Son of God has not the life."

Thus we are confronted with one of the sharp contrasts of Scripture: the fact that righteousness depends on faith alone and calls for only the very minimum of knowledge, whereas life eonian not merely depends on, but actually IS, knowledge of the only True God in Jesus Christ, His Son. And this last is *not a Pauline doctrine, but Johannine*.

One of the truths that our former preoccupation with "Dispensationalism" during the past fifty years or so has hidden, is the importance of John's Gospel. Some even of the most extreme dispensationalists have displayed their uneasiness over writing it off as "Jewish," and very properly. We are indebted to them for this candor, in striking contrast to their lack of it over "dispensational" boundaries vital to their theories. The purpose of John's Gospel is plain (John 20:30, 31):

"*Many and other* signs, then, indeed, does Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this scroll; yet *these* are written that you should be believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, you may have life eonian in His Name."

Remarkable is it that this comes incidentally, almost casually, in the midst of the tale of the Resurrection appearances of our Lord. There is an echo of the first part of it at the close of the Gospel. Two features come out plainly: that the "signs" are only a selection, as we know already from the other three Gospels, and that they were written with a view to the reader believing. But this is not the extensive range of believing that Paul is concerned with: the vast vistas of righteousness and all that springs from it. The word "righteous" occurs only thrice (John 5:30; 7:24; 17:25), "righteousness" only twice (John 16:8, 10). Life eonian is John's ultimate objective.

Furthermore, perusal of John's Gospel suggests that, apart from this declared purpose, its intended audience is the persons who *already* believe. This is, it is hardly necessary to say, true of all Scripture; but it is much more noticeably so in John's Gospel and Epistles. These have always been a main source of strength and comfort to the humble Christian, and rightly so, since their aim is "that, believing, *you* may have life in His Name." The fact is, John leaves the fight for present truth to Paul. The panoply of our

warfare is Paul's concern, the food on which we graze and build up our strength is to a large extent John's. It is altogether mistaken and wrong to disparage one for the sake of the other.

For this cause one must deplore the Note to this passage in the 1930 C.V., for it is a sad mixture of important truth and potent error. It reads:

"It is evident that the signs in this account are a selection, chosen to give a complete picture of Israel's failure and Israel's Savior. They are intended to signify to all who have ears to hear that the One Who speaks and acts is no other than the Messiah foretold by the prophets of old, and the further fact that He is also the Son of God. Eonian life is for all who receive this testimony. As we have seen, His present exaltation, while Israel is apostate, is carefully overlooked. Hence we must not expect to find present truth in John's account. He never had a commission for the nations, not even for proselytes, as Peter had. Because his ministry seems especially intended for millennial days, when the nations will be blessed *through* Israel, his allusions to world-wide blessing are often mistaken for that which has come to us while Israel is apostate."

If instead of "present truth" the annotator had written "what is exclusively true for the present era," he would have shed great light on the subject and transformed his Note. And for "seems especially" he should have written "is also." He has failed to take in the great truth that John's Gospel and Epistles are not exclusive to anyone era, either to the present period or to the days which are to come. They belong to us all.

## Chapter 18

### FIRST, RIGHTEOUSNESS

Salvation is the most prominent idea in the minds of many Christians when they consider what should be their proper personal aim as believers. They may not consciously be aware of this; yet it comes out in their words and behavior, not always directly but all too often implied.

Scripture does not take this line. The verb *sOzO*, *save*, and the nouns *sOtEr*, *savior*, as well as *sOtEria*, *salvation* and *sOtErion*, *saving-work*, together take up less than a third of the space taken in the concordance by the words connected with righteousness. This does not necessarily mean that they are less important; but it is a pointer, and should be tested. The words *salvation* and righteousness occur together in Rom. 1:16, 17; 10:10; 2. Tim. 3:15, 16; Heb. 11:7 only. The first of these reads: "For I am not ashamed of the Evangel, for it is God's power into salvation to everyone who is believing—to Jew first and to Greek as well. For in it God's righteousness is unveiling out of faith into faith, according as it is written, 'Now the righteous out of faith will be getting him life,'" or "getting life for himself," as the verb is in the Middle Voice. There can be no doubt that here righteousness out of faith has the priority. Life results from getting this righteousness, and the Evangel embodying it is God's power into salvation. Salvation is highly important, but righteousness comes first in order.

This point is taken up with reference to Israel in Romans 10. Here Paul starts with his heart's delight and petition to God for their salvation, yet God's righteousness has to come first; and faith, the only way to achieve it. So in the first eleven verses *righteousness* occurs seven times, and *faith* and *believe* six times altogether, but *save* and *salvation* no more than twice each. 2. Tim. 3:15, 16 dwells on the supreme importance of the Scriptures. They "are able to make you wise into salvation through faith in Christ

Jesus." The verb *able* is Middle in form. The Sacred Scriptures have the power *in themselves* to give this wisdom which brings right into salvation and to "discipline in righteousness that the man of God may be equipped, fitted out for every good work." This passage has long been under attack from various sorts of unbeliever on account of its unequivocal testimony to the Scriptures. Not long ago, one of these objected to the practice of distributing Bibles in pagan lands, on the ground that they were worthless and even harmful except when read under guidance of "the Church." Naturally, those who refuse to believe the Scriptures are opposed to their circulation, and particularly opposed to this particular passage from them. Lastly, in Heb. 11:7 we find faith and righteousness linked together into salvation for Noah and his house. Thus, righteousness out of faith is seen as the pre-requisite of salvation for all sorts of mankind, for Noah, for Israel, and for those who receive God's Evangel.

There is nothing wrong or evil, there is nothing even mistaken, about seeking salvation; provided that it is sought in the right way, that is, in God's way. This means that it definitely is wrong to seek salvation as an end in itself, to seek it apart from faith, apart from God's righteousness which comes from faith alone. Thus, those who talk so much about salvation as an end in itself are "putting the cart before the horse," they are getting their priorities all wrong. They are substituting what concerns self and appeals to self for what belongs to God first and, more than that, to God alone. To seek for salvation apart from faith-righteousness is to chase a shadow.

That was the reason for Israel's failure, as Paul shows in Romans 10: "For they, being ignorant of the righteousness which is of God, and their *own* righteousness seeking to establish, to the righteousness of God they were not subject" (10:3). Yet zeal for God they had—but not according to full knowledge (10:2). This is, in essence; precisely the same position as that assumed by those who want salvation but do not particularly desire righteousness. We do not have to look very far to find out why this should be so: such people lack faith. In Rom. 10:4-15 the words *faith* and *believe* occur no less than eight times altogether. There is no salvation apart from righteousness. There is no righteousness apart from faith.

The righteousness of God is first referred to in Matt. 6:33. Users of the C.V. and some other versions might question this, for its Greek text here reads *tEn basileiankai tEn dikaiosunEn autou*, literally, *the kingdom and the righteousness of it*. This provides a pitfall into which the English-speaking translator may easily tumble and the translator of the 1930 C.V. did. This literal translation sounds perfectly reasonable in English; but it is inadmissible all the same, because *basileia* is feminine and *autou* masculine or neuter, so the latter cannot possibly refer to the former. Therefore, if this Greek text is followed, there is nothing to which "of it" can refer. It is left hanging in the air, so to speak. The 1944 revision has: "Yet seek first His kingdom and righteousness," thus making *autou* (which can also mean "of him") refer back to "your heavenly Father" in v. 32, an expedient which is not only grammatically questionable but introduces a new idea: "the kingdom of the heavenly Father." Fortunately other, and fuller, texts read "the kingdom of God." This enables us to take *autou* as masculine and render the passage "the kingdom of God and His righteousness" as, indeed, King James' translators did.

So the Lord Jesus told His hearers to be seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness-but He left it to His Apostle Paul to indicate just how the two were to be sought. God's righteousness is not referred to again till Rom. 1:17, except in connection with His judgment of the world (Acts 17:31). Nevertheless, as Paul most plainly shows, there is no way for anyone at all to righteousness, or to salvation, except through faith.

None of this is to be taken as any sort of disparagement of the idea of salvation. On the contrary, we do not disparage anything by getting it into proper perspective. The divine order is faith—righteousness—salvation. We attempt to alter it only at our peril.

We may profitably list the other passages where "the righteousness of God" or "of Him" with reference to God are found. First, however, we should examine the form "God's righteousness," that is, the form without the Definite Article "the." As we have noted already (p. 160), without the, the character of the object is what is in view; and so it is here in the first occurrence, in Rom. 1:17, for we are told that the Evangel "is God's power into salvation to everyone who is believing, for in it God's righteousness is unveiling, out of faith into faith." This defines the character of God's Evangel and the character of what is unveiling in it. Righteousness in it is *God's* righteousness.

The next occurrence is Rom. 3:5: "Now if the unrighteousness of us God's righteousness is recommending, what shall we assert?" (very literally). The verb *sunistemi* has the idea of *standing together*, and *recommending* is hardly apt. In Col. 1:17 the Greek reads, literally, "and the all in Him has stood together," or more freely, "and the universe in Him has cohered." So in this verse we have the remarkable idea of the unrighteousness that is ours standing together with the character of God's righteousness. They are in no way inconsistent with one another. It is to be observed that, in trying to get the idea into readily comprehensible English, I have found myself using the word "inconsistent" which, through the Latin, itself contains the notion of *standing with*. In Rom. 3:21, 22 "God's righteousness" occurs twice. That which has the character of divine righteousness has now, apart from law, been manifested. Yet it is divine righteousness through Jesus Christ's faith, into all and on all who are believing. This brings us right into the heart of the matter. The character of divine righteousness is inseparably linked to faith and to nothing else whatsoever except one, which we now come to in 2. Cor. 5:21. Yet this is not actually a different link, but the same one viewed from the opposite direction: "For the One knowing no sin He makes sin for our sakes, that *we* may be becoming God's righteousness in Him." Actually, the whole of this chapter is by no means so clearly understood as it ought to be, and much remains to be learnt about it.

Twice more is this character of divine righteousness referred to. James 1:20 tells us that "man's wrath is not working God's righteousness." In 2. Peter 1:1 we find the Apostle addressing "those whose lot is to have equally precious faith with us in righteousness—of the God of us and of Savior Jesus Christ" to render it very literally. This sets out wonderfully the lot of those to whom Peter is addressing himself. The character of that equally precious faith is in righteousness, and it is righteousness of One Who is our God and our Savior. And unless that faith of *ours* is equally precious, it is not real faith enjoined by the Apostle Paul. In this respect there is complete harmony between the two Apostles; but further discussion of this most precious epistle must await some future occasion.

Apart from Matt. 6:33 there is no reference to "the righteousness of God" anywhere in the Greek Scriptures outside Paul's Epistles. This isolation gives very special point to the Lord's words, particularly as with Paul the expression itself occurs only in Rom. 10:3, though "the righteousness of Him" with direct reference to God occurs elsewhere. In translating this verse a while back, an attempt was made to indicate the slight difference in the Greek. The first occurrence is literally "the of the God righteousness," the second "the righteousness of the God." The emphasis in the former is on the fact that it is of God, in the latter that it was of a particular kind of righteousness, that of God, by contrast with what Israel supposed was their own righteousness. Read in association with Matt. 6:33, on which Romans 9-11 is really an extended commentary as regards Israel, we perceive why it is that the nation as a whole rejected the kingdom of God. Further illumination is given by yet another expression which occurs once only, literally: "the out of God righteousness" (Phil. 3:9). Here we have: "... not having my (own) righteousness, that out of law, but that which is through Christ's faith, the righteousness which is out of God on that faith. ..." Those who are infected with the virus of Coles' theory do not like this passage because it flatly contradicts the notion that Romans and Philippians belong to different "dispensations"; and even the more rational expositors too often fail to see the point as well as they might. For it would be difficult to devise a more comprehensive reference to Romans in so few words. "Jesus Christ's faith"

occurs in Rom. 3:22 and "Jesus faith" in 3:26. Galatians, that bridge between Romans and Ephesians, refers to "Jesus Christ's faith" in Gal. 2:16, 3:22. In the former of these there is no sufficient evidence for adopting the C.V. reading "Christ Jesus."

"His righteousness," the reference being plainly to God, occurs in three places. The first two, in Rom. 3:25, 26, supply part of the answer to the question tacitly raised by Matt. 6:33: "How can we find God's righteousness?" Paul has just told (vv. 21, 22) that it has been manifested apart from law, that it is "through Jesus Christ's faith, into and on all who are believing." Then comes the second part of the answer: "for there is no distinction, for all sinned and are wanting of the glory of God; achieving righteousness gratuitously by His grace, through the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus. . . towards the display of His righteousness in the current era, for Him to be righteous and One putting right the one out of faith of Jesus." The other occurrence is in the parenthetical v. 25: "\Thorn God proposed for propitiatory through the faith in His blood, into display of His righteousness, because of the passing over of the penalty-of-sins which occurred before in the forbearance of God." There is a very delicate difference here. In the parenthesis of v. 25, God's action itself displayed His righteousness. In the main argument of vv. 24 and 26, God's action was proceeding and it still is; so Paul sets out its aim, its objective, which is *towards* the display of His righteousness in the *current* era. He could not say "into display" as in the parenthesis, because it has not yet *completely* penetrated into, and filled up, the display, as is the sense of *eis, into*. The current era is still in progress. The other reference, 2. Cor. 9:9, is an assurance that His righteousness remains for the eon.

However unwelcome it may be to those who are tied to "dispensationalism," Abraham's righteousness is the key doctrine of the Greek Scriptures. All other doctrine is related to it, because until a person is put right, is righteous before God, it is impossible for him to make even one single step forward. This righteousness of Abraham is linked to faith in the two chapters that specially refer to it: Romans 4 and Galatians 3; and the former is preceded by a lengthy treatise in which the word *faith* occurs no less than fifteen times. James in his epistle quietly confirms Paul (James 2:20-23). Yet none of this truth is to be found directly stated in the Gospels, in spite of the fact that collectively they refer to Abraham more frequently than Paul does (34 times to 19). Once only is any clue given: in John 8:39, in the lengthy argument between the Lord Jesus and the Pharisees: "They answered and said to Him, 'Our father is Abraham.' Jesus answered them: 'If you were children of Abraham, the works of Abraham you would be doing.'" The other associations of *children* and *Abraham* repay study too. The first is Matt. 3:9 (paralleled by Luke 3:8); and this is also not only the first reference to the Pharisees but the first encounter with them, that of the Lord's forerunner, John the Baptist. Naturally, the Pharisees failed to get the point of this; but for us it should not be very difficult to see the reference to it in 1. Peter 2:1-10 and Romans 9. Indeed, in the latter is the next association of the two words (vv. 6-8).

Here Paul was restating the words of the Lord Jesus in John 8:39-40 in an expanded form. He begins with a declaration that he is saying truth in Christ, as the Lord Jesus Himself declares to the Pharisees. And we should bear in mind that although the Lord Jesus and His Apostle Paul are both addressing themselves to Israel, what they say is for our learning, very much so, and for ourselves so far as they are applicable to those who are not specifically of Israel. For, once again, the vital point must ever be kept in mind that Abraham believed God *as a Gentile*. From this flowed out all that became Israel and the eight blessings of Israel recorded in Rom. 9:4; yet if there had been no Abraham the Gentile who believed God in uncircumcision (Rom. 4:10-12); there could never have been anyone to become father of circumcision. It is a fact, and a most significant fact, that nowhere does Scripture have one single word of any sort to say about *believing God in circumcision*. For covenant to have any meaning at all, let alone any efficacy, it must *follow* faith. Never does faith follow *from* it. True, many of the Covenant People were of faith; but nowhere is it suggested or implied, let alone stated, that their faith depended on their covenant standing. Always their works show that they had believed God even as Abraham did.

It is the measure of the apostasy of Christendom that most of the churches deny this in their deeds. For circumcision of infants they substitute a spurious "baptism" in which they presume to declare a so-called covenant between the child and God. That this "baptism" does not procure faith or righteousness is a fact of experience. But for "Catholic" dogma nobody would ever suppose that it did. In theory, this ceremony involves an obligation on the parents and sponsors of the child to bring it up to be a Christian, and to their credit many earnestly endeavor so to do; yet there is no reason to suppose that the so-called baptismal grace supposedly imparted to the child in this way affords the smallest help towards their success. The whole thing is quite unreal, a conventional fiction, and no more.

Last of all is 1. Peter 3:6. The general subject here is the way the holy women of the past adorned themselves; and, in particular, their subjection to their own husbands. Peter's illustration is: "as Sarah obeys Abraham, calling him 'lord,' whose children you became." This admirable precept has been slightly contrasted with Paul's exhortation in Eph. 5:22-24; but this is unfair and somewhat unreasonable as well. Peter's precept applies to all women who, by faith, have become children of Abraham. This notion is entirely befitting in a "general" epistle; that is to say, one applying to *all* God's people (except where the context makes some particular precept applicable only to those directly addressed), and not simply one section of them, as Paul's are. The circumstance that the general exhortation is replaced in Eph. 5:22-24 by another, and particular, one ceases to matter when we reflect that Paul would have had no revelation of Christ as Head of the church and Savior of the body if there had never been any "body" of those who believe and are one in Christ Jesus; for all such believers had in believing become children of Abraham. If ever there were a case of the greater including the lesser, this is it.

Disparagement of Abraham is one of the outward visible signs of that poisoning of the spirit and therefore of the mind brought about by substituting man-made "dispensational" theories for God's Word as it is. This appears in its most extreme form in the writings of the followers of the most extreme of these theorists, J. J. B. Coles. A characteristic example is to be found in Mr. C. H. Welch's book "Dispensational Truth," p. 178:

"No longer 'blessed with faithful Abraham'; we must, if blessed at all, be 'blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.'"

This is a characteristic example of the false antithesis, the erroneous setting in opposition of ideas that are in no way opposed. Can it really be true that a man who has been writing for years about the Scriptures can yet be unaware of the teaching of the first four chapters of Romans and of Galatians 3, and of Phil. 3:9 as well, unaware that there is no other blessing but that which comes from the righteousness set out in God's Evangel? The only way to answer such a man effectively is to ask him to state plainly how we are to obtain any spiritual blessings in Christ *at all* by any other means than faith such as Abraham had, that is, in uncircumcision (Rom. 4:10)?

The willful blindness of such teachers is well illustrated by what follows the assertion by Mr. Welch, quoted above:

"I, as a saved Gentile, have no more to do with the Abrahamic covenant and the kingdom unalterably promised to Israel, than I have to do with the law of Moses and with circumcision."

So he says; but why should this be used to distort and deny the truth set out in Romans 4 and Galatians 3? To confuse Abraham's faith (Gen. 15:6) with the covenant of circumcision which God afterwards made with him (Gen. 17:10) is deliberately and inexcusably to introduce error and confusion. Until God gave him a covenant of circumcision, Abraham had no more to do with circumcision than we have! Rom. 4:10 stands, whatever these blind teachers of the blind may say.

For the name of Abraham, coupled with that of David, stands securely on the threshold of the Greek Scriptures and permeates them. It appears nine times in Romans, nine in Galatians and in 2. Cor. 11:22; ten times in Hebrews, twice in James, and in 1. Peter 3:6 referred to above. More than half the references to him are in the Gospels and Acts. However, even if we give full weight to the references outside Paul's Epistles; the fact remains that in them are nineteen references to Abraham, most of which are intimately concerned with Paul's Evangel and therefore with ourselves. Much as some extremists apparently desire to, we cannot get rid of Abraham any more than we can do without Abraham's faith.

**THE END**