

KARL BARTH

THE
EPISTLE
TO
THE
ROMANS

THE EPISTLE
TO THE
ROMANS

BY KARL BARTH

TRANSLATED FROM THE
SIXTH EDITION

BY

EDWYN C. HOSKYN

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THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

THE unselfish and laborious task of translating this book into English has been undertaken by Sir Edwyn Hoskyns. Partly owing to my insufficient familiarity with the English language, and partly because my time has been so fully occupied with other work, I have unfortunately not been able to go through the whole of the translation in detail. Sir Edwyn has, however, laid before me a fairly long section of his work, and, after comparing it with the original German, I am persuaded that he has performed his task with great skill. He has combined fidelity to the text with a considerable freedom of presentation; and that is, surely, the mark of a good translator. Though a translation, however skilfully made, must be in some degree a transformation of the original, yet I feel certain that those who think and speak in English will have before them what I wished to say. I should like therefore to take this opportunity of thanking him publicly.

In its English dress my book is now set in a new context; and I cannot refrain from asking those who propose to read it to bear with me whilst I make of them certain demands which seem to me to be important.

1. I beg my English readers to remember that this book was written eleven, or, to be precise, fourteen years ago. When I first wrote it—of the First Edition only the Preface now remains¹—it required only a little imagination for me to hear the sound of the guns booming away in the north. The man who sat writing his commentary was then just a young country pastor, only vaguely aware of what responsibility in ecclesiastical and scientific matters really means. Altogether ignorant both of the forces which were ranged against him and of those upon which he might call for help, he tumbled himself into a conflict, the inward and outward significance of which he could not foresee. Nor was the situation

¹ See p. 2.

materially different when in 1921 he rewrote the whole book, and let it go out in its second and present form. When, however, I look back at the book, it seems to have been written by another man to meet a situation belonging to a past epoch.¹ Those who now read it—and this applies, perhaps, even more to English than to German readers—ought therefore to remember that they have in their hands what is, in fact, the *beginning* of a development. They ought not to bind the Professor at Bonn too tightly to the Pastor of Safenwil, nor to assume that the present state of theological controversy in Germany can be directly gauged from this book. When they come across opinions expressed in it which seem to them to be open to very grave criticism and to raise very delicate problems, they must not assume too readily that the author is unaware of them. Indeed, it is most improbable that criticisms suggested by a first reading of the book will not already have been made by the author or by his friends or by his opponents, and will not already have been reconsidered and rediscussed in his later publications. For English readers the book is therefore an introduction. It invites them to take a part, according as they are best qualified, in the further work which has opened up as a consequence of the publication of this commentary.

2. It is both an honour and a pleasure to me to know that already many English theologians are not wholly unacquainted with my work. This translation has been preceded by the publication in English of a collection of addresses and of some of my more occasional writings. I have had in my hands a number of books and articles—some good, some less good—which have been written about me both in England and in America. I have also been kept in touch with the endeavours of Adolf Keller to make use of my theological work in order to further the cause of 'Oecumenical' Christianity.² Lastly, I know

¹ See the Preface to the Sixth Edition.

² Dr. Adolf Keller is one of the Pastors of the Reformed Church in the Canton of Zürich. He was for some time secretary of the Life and Work Movement. In 1924 he contributed two articles to the *Expositor* under the title 'A Theology of Crisis', and in 1931 his book *Der Weg der dialektischen*

something of the influence exercised in the English-speaking theological world by Emil Brunner's exposition in English of his theological work, work which is closely allied to mine. Am I wrong, therefore, in assuming that those who read this book will already have some notion or other of what is often called 'Dialectical Theology', or the 'Theology of Krisis', or 'Barthianism', or the like? Perhaps they will also already have some prejudices with regard to such things. If this be so, is it asking too much if I now beg them, while they read this book, to lay aside, so far as is possible, such 'notions' and such 'prejudices', and to read it as though they knew nothing of those well-known glosses and catch-phrases? Is it too much to ask them to read it as though they were for the first time confronted by what is the especial theme of the book? May I also ask my English readers—and I do this because of what has occurred in Germany and in Holland and in Switzerland—not to look at me simply through the spectacles of Emil Brunner, not to conform me to his pattern, and, above all, not to think of me as the representative of a particular 'Theological School'? I ask my readers to judge my work, at any rate to begin with, on its own merits. Only if this be done will it be possible to read the book as it was meant to be read in 1921, and as it evoked the discussions which have arisen as a result of it. If it be not thus approached, it will be impossible for those who read it to take their part independently in the task which has been opened up by it. Let me speak quite openly and honestly: I am sure that it will be to their interest, and in the interest of the theme of the book, if my English readers will be generous enough not to disregard the advice I have just given.

3. Sir Edwyn has asked me to say that the book should not be treated as a collection of fragments, but that it should be read as a whole. It may perhaps sound rather strange for an author to ask his readers to read the whole of his book. Obviously I cannot request my readers to be so delighted with my book, and to gain so

Theologie durch die kirchliche Welt was published by the Kaiser Verlag in Berlin. An English translation of the latter work is now being prepared by the Lutterworth Press. [Tr.]

great a benefit from it, that they will be compelled to go on reading it to the very end. But I know what Sir Edwyn means ; and he is quite right. There have been in Germany those who have read and reviewed the book after skimming through, I am quite certain, no more than the First Preface and a few other pages selected at random. They have then for years afterwards behaved as though they had read the book and knew what was in it. Some of them have approved of it, others have subjected it to severe criticism, but all of them have acted like bulls in a china shop. There are also those who have loudly asserted that there are very significant omissions in the book. They would, however, have discovered, had they taken the trouble to look for them in the right place, that these significant things were not in fact omitted. A great deal of tilting at windmills would have been avoided if reviewers in Germany had followed Sir Edwyn's acute and quite simple advice. The truth is that it is the Epistle itself which cannot be split up into fragments. Chs. I and II must not be read apart from Ch. III ; nor Ch. V apart from Ch. VI ; nor Ch. VIII apart from Ch. VII ; nor Ch. IX apart from Ch. XI : and above all, Chs. I-XI must not be separated from Chs. XII-XV. If this be so, is it really defensible for an interpreter of the Epistle to do otherwise than preserve with great care this interlocking of the whole ? Since the Epistle can be understood only as a whole, it must clearly follow that any proper interpretation of it must also form one whole. I cannot, of course, communicate to my readers the incentive to busy themselves with discovering this unity ; but I am bound to remind them that, if they are possessed of any sense of responsibility, they ought not to busy themselves with speaking *about* this book, unless it has first spoken *to* them as one whole. Indeed, the book would not be an interpretation of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans if it did not follow in detail the various stages through which Paul moves so impressively. There can therefore be no possible understanding of this book if the reader has not himself also followed through these stages.

4. Lastly: it may not be irrelevant if I now make it quite clear both to my future friends and to my future opponents in England that, in writing this book, I set out neither to compose a free fantasia upon the theme of religion, nor to evolve a philosophy of it. My sole aim was to interpret Scripture. I beg my readers not to assume from the outset—as many in Germany have assumed—that I am not interpreting Scripture at all, or rather, that I am interpreting it 'spiritually'. In this context the word 'spiritually' is used, of course, to convey a rebuke. It may be, however, that the rebuke turns back most heavily upon those who launch it so easily against me. The publication of this book in English may perhaps lead to a fresh formulation of the problem, 'What is exegesis?' No one can, of course, bring out the meaning of a text (*auslegen*) without at the same time adding something to it (*einlegen*). Moreover, no interpreter is rid of the danger of in fact adding more than he extracts. I neither was nor am free from this danger. And yet I should be altogether misunderstood if my readers refused to credit me with the honesty of, at any rate, *intending* to *ex-plain* the text. I must assure them that, in writing this book, I felt myself bound to the actual words of the text, and did not in any way propose to engage myself in free theologizing. It goes without saying that my interpretation is open to criticism; and I hope to hear as soon as possible of important and proper criticism of it at the hands of my English-speaking theological colleagues. But I do not want to hear of criticisms which proceed from some religious or philosophical or ethical 'point of view'. Proper criticism of my book can be concerned only with the interpretation of the text of the Epistle. In other words, criticism or approval should move strictly within the realm of Theology. I shall not be impressed in the least by general propositions concerning the value or lack of value of my 'spiritual outlook', or of my 'religious position', or of my 'general view of life'. My book deals with one issue, and with one issue only. Did Paul think and speak in general and in detail in the manner in which I have interpreted

him as thinking and speaking? Or did he think and speak altogether differently? The fourth and last request I have to make of my English readers is therefore quite direct. Of my friendly readers I ask that they should take nothing and believe nothing from me which they are not of themselves persuaded stands within the meaning of what Paul wrote. Of my unfriendly readers I ask that they should not reject as an unreasonable opinion of my own what, in fact, Paul himself propounded. The purpose of this book neither was nor is to delight or to annoy its readers by setting out a New Theology. The purpose was and is to direct them to Holy Scripture, to the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, in order that, whether they be delighted or annoyed, whether they are 'accepted' or 'rejected', they may at least be brought face to face with the subject-matter of the Scriptures. I wished, and still continue to wish, this book to be of definite service. But whom or what ought it to serve? No doubt it should be of service to those who read it. But, primarily and above all else, it must serve that *other* Book where Jesus Christ is present in His Church. Theology is *ministerium verbi divini*. It is nothing more nor less. The conflict in which we have been engaged in Germany during the past ten years revolves round the apprehension of this truth. My purpose in permitting this commentary upon the Epistle of Paul to the Romans to appear in English is to summon an ever increasing number of men to engage themselves in this conflict.

BONN

October, 1932.

THE TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

WHEN, in 1921, the author of this commentary on the Epistle to the Romans completely rewrote the earlier commentary which he had published in 1918, he stated in his preface that the First Edition, whatever its merits or failings, could now 'disappear from the scene'. It was therefore impossible for the translator to summon back the vanished volume even had he wished to do so. In consequence, it is not the original, but the revised edition of this modern attack upon the vigour of idolatry and upon the arrogance of that scepticism which holds itself aloof that is here presented in an English dress. Whether the translation will be adequate to explain the hubbub and commotion created by this commentary upon its first appearance is for its English readers to decide. Whether it reproduces the original with sufficient accuracy must be left to the judgement of those familiar with the author's works. But of one thing the translator is quite persuaded: to produce a translation worthy of the dignified language of English divinity has been beyond his power. The vehement and explosive character of the German lies intractably behind the English, and for his inability to be rid of it, or to transform it into properly explosive English, he offers his apologies to the readers, both patient and impatient, of this book. As Professor Maitland once said, an English translation is always a 'distorting medium'.

What Karl Barth had to say lies embedded in a wealth of allusions which must be largely unfamiliar to the English reader. Indeed, the disturbing effect of his book among German-speaking people was due in no small degree to his extremely critical sensitiveness to movements of thought of which we in England may perhaps have heard, but which do not hang heavily in the air we breathe. This sometimes delicate, sometimes rough, allusiveness has presented an almost insoluble problem to the translator. What was he to make of such a sentence as this?—'Warum nicht mit Marcion fortschreiten

zur Proklamierung eines neuen Gottes im Gegensatz zu dem alten des Gesetzes, oder mit Lhotzky zu einer recht handgreiflichen Anspielung von "Reich Gottes" gegen "Religion", oder mit Johannes Müller zur Aufweisung eines Weges aus der Mittelbarkeit zurück in das Land der zwar verlorenen, oder immerhin hier und jetzt auffindbaren Unmittelbarkeit, oder mit Ragaz zur Aufforderung, aus der hoffnungslos gewordenen Kirche und Theologie in die bessere Welt der Laien übersiedeln, oder mit manchen Seiten der 1. Auflage dieses Buches im Anschluss an Beck und altwürttembergischen Naturalismus zur Behauptung eines organisch wachsenden göttlichen Seins und Habens im Menschen im Gegensatz zu der Leerheit der idealistischen Forderung. . . . ?' Or of this?—'Er ist—nicht ich, mein existentielles Ich, ich, der ich in Gott, in der Freiheit Gottes bin'. Or even of this?—'Die Philosophen nennen diese Krisis des menschlichen Erkennens den Ursprung'. The introduction of a long series of footnotes would merely have disturbed the reader and distracted his attention from the movement of the book itself. And indeed they are for the most part unnecessary, for we are not so far detached from European civilization as to be untouched by its problems, unmoved by its hopes and fears. We may be ignorant of the theories which German theologians and philosophers have so laboriously constructed, but we are not ignorant of the ideas or notions which underlie their theories. We or our neighbours hold the same opinions, and the same notions buzz in our English heads. An allusion to some particular theory is more readily intelligible to us than the theory itself would be. Many of the unknown persons whose names are scattered about in the book can, therefore, be taken by the reader in his stride without bothering to find out precisely who or what they were or are, or how they worked out their systems. Those who desire more detailed information will usually be able to find it in the second edition of *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*.¹ There are, of

¹ *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart—Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*; 2nd edition edited by Hermann Gunkel and Leopold Zscharnack (J. C. B. Mohr, Tübingen), completed 1931.

course, passages which are wholly unintelligible without further explanation. In such cases a note has been added in order to avoid too great obscurity. There are also passages where the rich allusiveness of the author's language must escape the English reader, and yet not altogether escape him, for the Biblical background is common to the author and to all his readers. When, for example, he plays round the word 'High', we are not ignorant of the words, *Set not your mind on high things*, nor are we unfamiliar with the *High Places* of the Old Testament narrative or with their significance. It is, therefore, not difficult for us to catch a modern application of this Biblical language, even though we may not know that *Das Hochland* is the title of the most cultured Roman Catholic monthly journal in Germany, or even though we may not associate a wedding with the adjective 'high' (Hochzeit).

Quite apart, however, from this peculiar allusiveness, the task of translating a German theological work is never quite straightforward. Words pregnant with meaning often have no precise English equivalent. The words *Sachlichkeit* and *Dinglichkeit*, for example, are quite proper German words, but, though attempts have often been made to do so, we have never been able to build upon the foundation of the word 'Thing'. 'Thinginess', 'Thinghood', 'Thingal', 'Thingish', 'Thingness', 'Thingship', 'Thingsomeness' are, as the *New English Dictionary* shows, intolerable words. A German, moreover, is free, as we are not, to build up comprehensive phrases by the generous use of hyphens. 'Seelisch-geschichtlich' and 'Das Da-Sein und das Wie-Sein der Welt' are, no doubt, congruous with the genius of the German language, but, when turned into literal English, they make nonsense. With these and other such-like troublesome words and phrases the translator has done his best, being guided in each case by the context. English readers will undoubtedly find difficulty in attaching a precise meaning to important words round which the whole commentary tends to revolve. Such words as 'Dialectical', 'Krisis', 'Existential', are

stumbling-blocks upon the very threshold. They were, however, as difficult in German as they are in English, and only a steady concentration upon the actual commentary itself will enable the reader to grasp their meaning. The awkward words *Aufheben* and *Aufhebung* of which, because of their double meaning, Hegel was so proud, have been rendered by 'dissolve' and 'dissolution'. If their use to describe a chemical process be borne in mind, they have in English also a positive as well as a negative meaning.

The author intended his book to be read not only with the eyes but also with the ears. He therefore frequently printed particular words in a different type in order to lay emphasis upon them. The meaning of a difficult sentence often becomes clear when it is read aloud. This method of underlining words by the use of a different type is hardly legitimate in an English book, at least not to the extent to which it is allowable in German. The translator has endeavoured, wherever possible, to secure the appropriate emphasis by care in translation; but sometimes he has been compelled to fall back upon the use of a different type, and sometimes he has dared to introduce a hyphen into a word in order to ensure the proper stress (e.g. 'Purpose-full,' 'Pre-supposition').

Something needs to be said also about the translation of the Text of the Epistle. The author made his own translation. Luther's version formed, of course, the basis, but the modern translations of Weizsäcker, Stage, and Jülicher were also consulted and, at times, preferred. Sometimes the author paraphrased rather than translated the original Greek, and distinguished paraphrase from translation by using a different fount. It did not seem necessary or advisable to attempt to make an independent translation into English of the author's resultant Text. The translator has found it possible to reproduce his meaning by selecting the rendering sometimes of one, sometimes of another, of the authorized English Versions. Taken together, the A.V., R.V., A.V.mg., R.V.mg., offer a wide choice of translations. Where, however, the author has no support from the

English versions or where he has paraphrased the Greek, a different fount has been used, in order that the divergence may be at once apparent to the English reader.

A word as to the use of various types throughout the book. The Author bases his commentary upon shorter or longer sub-sections of the Epistle, which are first printed in full. Then, as he builds up his interpretation, he fastens upon sentences or phrases or even upon single words from the sub-section, for special discussion. In order to make this 'lay-out' of the commentary clear to the English reader, the sub-sections of the Epistle are printed in **bold** type. Sentences or phrases or single words are then, on their first appearance for special comment, picked out in a **less bold** type. All other Biblical quotations, including quotations from the Epistle to the Romans and even from the passage under comment, are printed in *italics*. Further, it has been thought advisable, for the sake of clarity, to use SMALL CAPITALS for certain transliterated Greek words, as well as for emphasis, and to space out quotations in other languages.

In conclusion, the translator cannot allow this book to be published without bearing witness to the unfailing kindness of Mr. Humphrey Milford and to the skill of the Printer to the University of Oxford, or without expressing his thanks to those who have helped him in tracking down allusions or in translating unfamiliar words. To Professor A. B. Cook, Dr. W. H. S. Jones, the Rev. C. J. Shebbeare, Canon J. K. Mozley, Professor G. Kraft of the University of Freiburg, and Professor Gerhard Kittel of the University of Tübingen, Frau Dr. E. Sommer, the Dean of York, Brig.-General W. Evans, C.M.G., D.S.O., and to the Rev. Charles Smyth, he is more particularly indebted. To the nice mathematical knowledge of his wife he owes the unravelling of the mathematical analogies which occur so frequently in the commentary. But it is to the author himself that his thanks are most especially due. Many questions have been asked, and these have been

answered, always by return of post, always graciously, and always strictly to the point. The Rev. Noel Davey and the Rev. Charles Smyth have not only given generously of their time to the correction of the proofs but have also helped to rid the translation of some of its more glaring literary absurdities. There are, no doubt, many mistakes in the translation, but for these the translator is himself wholly responsible.

NOTE TO SECOND IMPRESSION

THROUGH the kindness of the Rev. Noel Davey a few minor corrections which the translator had noted during his lifetime have been incorporated in this impression.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

A BIOGRAPHY of the author would be inappropriate, but the place-names at the conclusion of the various prefaces need some explanation. Karl Barth was:

Pfarrer in Safenwil (Canton Aargau, Switzerland), 1911-21.

Honorary Professor of Reformed Theology in Göttingen, 1921-5.

Professor of Dogmatics and New Testament Exegesis in Münster (Westphalia), 1925-30.

Professor of Systematic Theology in Bonn (1930-35).

OTHER WORKS BY KARL BARTH

IN addition to the Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Karl Barth is the author of the following works:

1. *Die Auferstehung der Toten*, 1924. Pp. v+129.
 2. *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie*, 1925. Pp. 212.
 3. *Vom christlichen Leben*, 1926. Pp. 39.
 4. *Die christliche Dogmatik: Band I, Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes*, 1927. Pp. xv+473.
 5. *Erklärung des Philipperbriefes*, 1928. Pp. iii+126.
 6. *Die Theologie und die Kirche*, 1928. Pp. iii+391.
 7. *Fides Quaerens Intellectum: Anselms Beweis der Existenz Gottes*, 1931. Pp. x+199.
 8. *Die kirchliche Dogmatik: Band I, Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes*, 1932. Pp. xiv+528.
- With Heinrich Barth:
9. *Zur Lehre vom Heiligen Geist*, 1930. Pp. iii+105.
- With Eduard Thurneysen.
10. *Zur inneren Lage des Christentums*, 1920. Pp. 39 (reprinted in No. 6 under the title: *Unerledigte Anfragen an die heutige Theologie*).
 11. *Komm Schöpfer Geist!* 1924. Pp. 266.
 12. *Suchet Gott, so werdet ihr Leben!* 1928. Pp. 191.

All these works were published by the Chr. Kaiser Verlag, Munich. In addition, the same firm publishes every two months the journal *Zwischen den Zeiten*, edited by Georg Merz, to which Karl Barth, Friedrich Gogarten, and Eduard Thurneysen are regular contributors.

Of the above-mentioned books, No. 1 has been translated into English by H. J. Stenning under the title: *The Resurrection of the Dead*, published by Hodder & Stoughton, 1933; No. 2 has been translated by Douglas Horton under the title: *The Word of God and the word of man*, published in 1928 by Hodder & Stoughton in England and by the Pilgrim Press in America; No. 3 has been translated by I. Strathearn McNab and published by the Student Christian Movement Press, 1930, under the title: *The Christian Life*. One of the addresses contained in No. 6 has been published by the Lutterworth Press, 1932, under the title, *Questions to Christendom*. A few isolated sermons have also been translated and published in America.

MODERN GERMAN COMMENTARIES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

IN the course of his exposition of the Epistle, Karl Barth refers more particularly to the following modern commentaries in German:

JOHANN CHRISTIAN KONRAD VON HOFMANN: *Die heilige Schrift des neuen Testaments zusammenhängend untersucht*, dritter Teil (Römerbrief), 1868.

JOHANN TOBIAS BECK: *Erklärung des Briefes Pauli an die Römer*, 1884.

HANS LIETZMANN: in vol. iii of the *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament*, 1906, 3rd ed. 1928.

ADOLF JÜLICHER: in *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, vol. ii, 1908, 3rd ed. 1917.

THEODOR ZAHN: *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer*, 1910.

ERNST KÜHL: *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer*, 1913.

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THE PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

PAUL, as a child of his age, addressed his contemporaries. It is, however, far more important that, as Prophet and Apostle of the Kingdom of God, he veritably speaks to all men of every age. The differences between then and now, there and here, no doubt require careful investigation and consideration. But the purpose of such investigation can only be to demonstrate that these differences are, in fact, purely trivial. The historical-critical method of Biblical investigation has its rightful place: it is concerned with the preparation of the intelligence—and this can never be superfluous. But, were I driven to choose between it and the venerable doctrine of Inspiration, I should without hesitation adopt the latter, which has a broader, deeper, more important justification. The doctrine of Inspiration is concerned with the labour of apprehending, without which no technical equipment, however complete, is of any use whatever. Fortunately, I am not compelled to choose between the two. Nevertheless, my whole energy of interpreting has been expended in an endeavour to see through and beyond history into the spirit of the Bible, which is the Eternal Spirit. What was once of grave importance, is so still. What is to-day of grave importance—and not merely crotchety and incidental—stands in direct connexion with that ancient gravity. If we rightly understand ourselves, our problems are the problems of Paul; and if we be enlightened by the brightness of his answers, those answers must be ours.

Long, long ago the Truth was found,
A company of men it bound.
Grasp firmly then—that ancient Truth!

The understanding of history is an uninterrupted conversation between the wisdom of yesterday and the wisdom of to-morrow. And it is a conversation always conducted honestly and with discernment. In this connexion I cannot fail to think with gratitude and respect of my father, Professor Fritz Barth. For such discernment he signally displayed throughout his whole active life.

It is certain that in the past men who hungered and thirsted after righteousness naturally recognized that they were bound to labour with Paul. They could not remain unmoved spectators in his presence. Perhaps we too are entering upon such a time. Should this be so, this book may even now be of some definite,

though limited, service. The reader will detect for himself that it has been written with a joyful sense of discovery. The mighty voice of Paul was new to me: and if to me, no doubt to many others also. And yet, now that my work is finished, I perceive that much remains which I have not yet heard and into which I have not as yet penetrated. My book is therefore no more than a preliminary undertaking. Further co-operation is necessary. If only many, better equipped than I, would appear on the scene and set to work to bore for water at the same source! However, should I be mistaken in this hope of a new, questioning investigation of the Biblical Message, well, this book must—wait. The Epistle to the Romans waits also.

SAFENWIL,

August, 1918.

THE PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

οὐδὲ ἀνήλθον εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα

. . . ἀλλὰ ἀπήλθον εἰς Ἀραβίαν.—Gal. i. 17.

THIS book was described in the preface to the first edition as a 'preliminary investigation'. If as great attention had been paid to this description as to the much-abused final sentence—'this book must wait . . .',—no justification would be necessary for presenting a new edition in which the original has been so completely rewritten that it may be claimed that no stone remains in its old place. What I hardly dared to hope has been fulfilled. The book brought Paul and the Bible to the notice of some who had thought little about them. That was indeed the 'definite, though limited', purpose for which it was written. Whatever its merits and failings, the first edition can now disappear from the scene. The work has been continued, and the reader is now offered further tentative results. New advance positions have been occupied, and, as a result, the original position has been completely reformed and consolidated. Consequently the position as a whole has an entirely different aspect. And yet identity of historical subject-matter as well as of the theme of which both editions treat, guarantees a definite continuity between the old and the new. In this second 'preliminary investigation' the co-operation of the serious reader is once again required, for the new edition also is concerned only with PROLEGOMENA. This does not mean that a third revision is promised, still less that the work may some day be completed. There can be no completed work. All human achievements are

no more than PROLEGOMENA ; and this is especially the case in the field of theology. I emphasize this, in order that those who saw in my previous commentary the appearance of the horrible spectre of a new orthodoxy may not so misunderstand the situation as to be led to blame me now for too great flexibility of opinion. Such contradictions of criticism are not impossible in certain quarters!

Of the relation between the two editions it is unnecessary for me to speak. The book provides its own evidence of the nature of the revision. Strangely enough, the chief weakness of the original edition seems to have passed altogether unnoticed by those who criticized it, at least in public. And it is surely not for me to provide my readers, and certainly not my reviewers, with the formula for the damaging criticism which might have, and indeed ought to have, been made upon it.¹ Some reference must, however, be made here to the circumstances which have led to an advance and to a change of front. First, and most important: the continued study of Paul himself. My manner of working has enabled me to deal only with portions of the rest of the Pauline literature, but each fresh piece of work has brought with it new light upon the Epistle to the Romans. Secondly: the man Overbeck. Elsewhere, Edward Thurneysen and I have drawn attention, at some length, to the warning addressed by Overbeck to all theologians.² This warning I have first applied to myself, and then directed upon the enemy. Whether I have dealt at all adequately with the questions raised by this eminent and pious man I must leave to the judgement of those who are able to perceive the nature of the riddle he has formulated so precisely, and are willing at least to attempt its

¹ On the eve of publication there has come into my hands an essay by Ph. Bachmann which appeared in the *Neue Kirchl. Zeitschrift* (Oct. 1921). The essay contains some friendly criticisms which I recognize to be justified and far-reaching. The author will notice that I too have recently been concerned with the same points.

² Franz Overbeck (1837-1905) was from 1872 to 1897 Professor of Critical Theology in the University of Basel. The reference is to two polemical pamphlets in which he launched an attack upon his theological contemporaries, conservative and liberal alike. The first pamphlet appeared in 1873 under the title *Über die Christlichkeit unserer heutigen Theologie*; the second—*Christentum und Kultur*—was published in 1919 from Overbeck's literary remains. According to Overbeck all Christian theology, from the Patriistic Age onward, is unchristian and satanic, for it draws Christianity into the sphere of civilization and culture, and thereby denies the essentially eschatological character of the Christian religion. In their brochure, *Zur inneren Lage des Christentums*, 1920, Barth and Thurneysen drew attention to Overbeck and especially to his pamphlet *Christentum und Kultur*, and asserted that the questions he had addressed to all theologians still remained unanswered. See *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd ed., vol. iv, pp. 183/4. [T.]

solution. To the judgement of men like Eberhart Vischer I cannot submit myself! He sees in the riddle no more than a biographical and psychological problem. Thirdly: closer acquaintance with Plato and Kant. The writings of my brother Heinrich Barth have led me to recognize the importance of these philosophers. I have also paid more attention to what may be culled from the writings of Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky that is of importance for the interpretation of the New Testament. The latter I owe more particularly to hints given me by Edward Thurneysen. Fourthly: a careful consideration of the manner in which the first edition of this book has been received. I am bound to say that the more favourable reviews have been most valuable in compelling me to criticize myself. Their praise has caused me such dismay that I have had sometimes to express the matter otherwise, sometimes even to adopt an entirely different position.—These four circumstances I have set out in order that those who are unhappy until they have exposed the immediate cause of this or that occurrence may at least be put upon the right road. Everything in this world has its immediate cause. How indeed could it be otherwise?

More important, however, are those fundamental matters which are common to both editions.

The book does not claim to be more than fragments of a conversation between theologians. It is quite irrelevant when Jülicher and Eberhard Vischer announce triumphantly that I am—a theologian! I have never pretended to be anything else. The point at issue is the kind of theology which is required. Those who urge us to shake ourselves free from theology and to think—and more particularly to speak and write—only what is immediately intelligible to the general public seem to me to be suffering from a kind of hysteria and to be entirely without discernment. Is it not preferable that those who venture to speak in public, or to write for the public, should first seek a better understanding of the theme they wish to propound? Ragaz and his friends reply hurriedly that this proceeds from callous theological pride. But this cannot be granted for one moment. Those who are genuinely convinced that the question is at present trivial must be permitted to go their way. Some of us, however, are persuaded that the question, What are we to say? is an important one, particularly when the majority are prepared at any moment to lift up their voices in the street. I do not want readers of this book to be under any illusions. They must expect nothing but theology. If, in spite of this warning, it should stray into the hands of some who are not

theologians, I shall be especially pleased. For I am altogether persuaded that the matters of which it treats and the questions which it raises do in fact concern every one. I could not make the book more easily intelligible than the subject itself allows. And I must beg my untheological readers to be indulgent when they are confronted with citations in a foreign language, which defy translation without loss of meaning; or when I have from time to time made use of philosophical or theological abracadabra. If I be not mistaken—and here I must contradict Arthur Bonus—we theologians serve the layman best when we refuse to have him especially in mind, and when we simply live of our own, as every honest labourer must do.

A friend of Ragaz has thought fit to dismiss me with one of the elder Blumhardt's aphorisms: 'Simplicity is the mark of divinity'. My answer is, that it has never entered my head to suppose that what I say or write is 'divine'. So far as I am aware, divinity is set out in no book. Not being the elder Blumhardt, we have undertaken rather to ask the question, 'What is divinity?' The simplicity which proceeds from the apprehension of God in the Bible and elsewhere, the simplicity with which God Himself speaks, stands not at the beginning of our journey but at its end. Thirty years hence we may perhaps speak of simplicity, but now let us speak the truth. For us neither the Epistle to the Romans, nor the present theological position, nor the present state of the world, nor the relation between God and the world, is simple. And he who is now concerned with truth must boldly acknowledge that he cannot be simple. In every direction human life is difficult and complicated. And, if gratitude be a consideration that is at all relevant, men will not be grateful to us if we provide them with short-lived pseudo-simplifications. Does the general demand for simplicity mean more than a desire—intelligible enough, and shared by most theologians—that truth should be expressed directly, without paradox, and in such a way that it can be received otherwise than by faith alone? I am thinking here of an experience in relation to that earnest and upright man, Wernle. As a modern man he is deeply hurt when I say, for example, plainly and simply—Christ is risen! He complains that I have made use of an eschatological phrase, and have ridden rough-shod over very, very difficult problems of thought. However, when I endeavour to say the same thing in the language of thought, that is, in dialectical fashion, he protests in the name of the simple believer that the doctrine of the Resurrection is wonderful, spiritual, and hard to understand.

How can I answer him? He would be satisfied only if I were to surrender the broken threads of faith, and to speak directly, concretely, and without paradox. This means that the wholly childlike and the wholly unchildlike belong within the realm of truth, but that everything between must be excluded. I earnestly desire to speak simply of those matters with which the Epistle to the Romans is concerned; and, were some one competent to do this to appear, my work would at once be superseded. I am in no way bound to my book and to my theology. As yet, however, those who claim to speak simply seem to me to be—simply speaking about something else. By such simplicity I remain unconvinced.

Turning now to another matter. I have been accused of being an 'enemy of historical criticism'. Such language seems to me nervous and high-strung. Would it not be better to discuss the point at issue quite calmly? I have, it is true, protested against recent commentaries upon the Epistle to the Romans. The protest was directed not only against those originating in the so-called 'critical' school but also, for example, against the commentaries of Zahn and Kühl. I have nothing whatever to say against historical criticism. I recognize it, and once more state quite definitely that it is both necessary and justified. My complaint is that recent commentators confine themselves to an interpretation of the text which seems to me to be no commentary at all, but merely the first step towards a commentary. Recent commentaries contain no more than a reconstruction of the text, a rendering of the Greek words and phrases by their precise equivalents, a number of additional notes in which archaeological and philological material is gathered together, and a more or less plausible arrangement of the subject-matter in such a manner that it may be made historically and psychologically intelligible from the standpoint of pure pragmatism. Jülicher and Lietzmann know far better than I do how insecure all this historical reconstruction is, and upon what doubtful assumptions it often rests. Even such an elementary attempt at interpretation is not an exact science. Exact scientific knowledge, so far as the Epistle to the Romans is concerned, is limited to the deciphering of the manuscripts and the making of a concordance. Historians do not wish, and rightly do not wish, to be confined within such narrow limits. Jülicher and Lietzmann, not to mention conservative scholars, intend quite clearly to press beyond this preliminary work to an understanding of Paul. Now, this involves more than a mere repetition in Greek or in German of what Paul says: it involves the recon-

sideration of what is set out in the Epistle, until the actual meaning of it is disclosed. It is at this point that the difference between us appears. There is no difference of opinion with regard to the need of applying historical criticism as a prolegomenon to the understanding of the Epistle. So long as the critic is occupied in this preliminary work I follow him carefully and gratefully. So long as it is simply a question of establishing what stands in the text, I have never dreamed of doing anything else than sit attentively at the feet of such learned men as Jülicher, Lietzmann, Zahn, and Kühl, and also at the feet of their predecessors, Tholuck, Meyer, B. Weiss, and Lipsius. When, however, I examine their attempts at genuine understanding and interpretation, I am again and again surprised how little they even claim for their work. By genuine understanding and interpretation I mean that creative energy which Luther exercised with intuitive certainty in his exegesis; which underlies the systematic interpretation of Calvin; and which is at least attempted by such modern writers as Hofmann, J. T. Beck, Godet, and Schlatter. For example, place the work of Jülicher side by side with that of Calvin: how energetically Calvin, having first established what stands in the text, sets himself to re-think the whole material and to wrestle with it, till the walls which separate the sixteenth century from the first become transparent! Paul speaks, and the man of the sixteenth century hears. The conversation between the original record and the reader moves round the subject-matter, until a distinction between yesterday and to-day becomes impossible. If a man persuades himself that Calvin's method can be dismissed with the old-fashioned motto, 'The Compulsion of Inspiration', he betrays himself as one who has never worked upon the interpretation of Scripture. Taking Jülicher's work as typical of much modern exegesis, we observe how closely he keeps to the mere deciphering of words as though they were runes. But, when all is done, they still remain largely unintelligible. How quick he is, without any real struggling with the raw material of the Epistle, to dismiss this or that difficult passage as simply a peculiar doctrine or opinion of Paul! How quick he is to treat a matter as explained, when it is said to belong to the religious thought, feeling, experience, conscience, or conviction,—of Paul! And, when this does not at once fit, or is manifestly impossible, how easily he leaps, like some bold William Tell, right out of the Pauline boat, and rescues himself by attributing what Paul has said, to his 'personality', to the experience on the road to Damascus (an episode which seems capable of providing at any moment an

explanation of every impossibility), to later Judaism, to Hellenism, or, in fact, to any exegetical semi-divinity of the ancient world! Orthodox commentators are, it is true, better placed than their more liberal colleagues. For orthodoxy, or any other form of Christianity which retains a sense for the importance of history, does at least offer a safer shore on which to alight after they have left the Pauline boat than does the cultured conscience of modern Protestantism. But, in the end, they have no greater advantage than this—that they are the better able to conceal their lack of any tenacious determination to understand and to interpret. The whole procedure assuredly achieves no more than the first draft of a paraphrase of the text and provides no more than a point of departure for genuine exegesis. The matter contained in the text cannot be released save by a creative straining of the sinews, by a relentless, elastic application of the 'dialectical' method. The critical historian needs to be more critical. The interpretation of what is written requires more than a disjointed series of notes on words and phrases. The commentator must be possessed of a wider intelligence than that which moves within the boundaries of his own natural appreciation. True apprehension can be achieved only by a strict determination to face, as far as possible without rigidity of mind, the tension displayed more or less clearly in the ideas written in the text. Criticism (*κρίνειν*) applied to historical documents means for me the measuring of words and phrases by the standard of that about which the documents are speaking—unless indeed the whole be nonsense. When documents contain answers to questions, the answers must be brought into relation with the questions which are presupposed, and not with some other questions. And moreover, proper concentration of exegesis presses behind the many questions to the one cardinal question by which all are embraced. Everything in the text ought to be interpreted only in the light of what can be said, and therefore only in the light of what is said. When an investigation is rightly conducted, boulders composed of fortuitous or incidental or merely historical conceptions ought to disappear almost entirely. The Word ought to be exposed in the words. Intelligent comment means that I am driven on till I stand with nothing before me but the enigma of the matter; till the document seems hardly to exist as a document; till I have almost forgotten that I am not its author; till I know the author so well that I allow him to speak in my name and am even able to speak in his name myself. What I have just said will, I know, be severely handled. But I cannot prevent myself asking what comment and inter-

pretation really mean. Have men like Lietzmann ever seriously put this question to themselves? Can scientific investigation ever really triumph so long as men refuse to busy themselves with this question, or so long as they are content to engage themselves with amazing energy upon the work of interpretation with the most superficial understanding of what interpretation really is? For me, at any rate, the question of the true nature of interpretation is the supreme question.—Or is it that these learned men, for whose learning and erudition I have such genuine respect, fail to recognize the existence of any real substance at all, of any underlying problem, of any Word in the words? Do they not perceive that there are documents, such as the books of the New Testament, which compel men to speak at whatever cost, because they find in them that which urgently and finally concerns the very marrow of human civilization?—let the last word stand for the moment. Do they not see that their students' future in the Church presents a problem which lies at the heart of the whole matter, and which cannot be dismissed as though it were merely a matter for 'Pastoral Theology'? I myself know what it means year in year out to mount the steps of the pulpit, conscious of the responsibility to understand and to interpret, and longing to fulfil it; and yet, utterly incapable, because at the University I had never been brought beyond that well-known 'Awe in the presence of History' which means in the end no more than that all hope of engaging in the dignity of understanding and interpretation has been surrendered. Do the historians really suppose that they have exhausted their responsibility towards their readers, when, *re bene gesta*, they permit Niebergall to speak—in the fifth volume? ¹ It was this miserable situation that compelled me as a pastor to undertake a more precise understanding and interpretation of the Bible. Is the whole learned society of New Testament scholars really satisfied that this work can be left to what is called 'Practical Theology', as Jülicher in attacking me has reasserted with intolerable and old-fashioned assurance? Jülicher calls me an 'esoteric personage', but I am not that, nor am I a 'bitter enemy of historical criticism'. I am quite

¹ The reference is to the critical commentary on the Books of the New Testament published in four volumes under the title, *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament*, and edited by Prof. Hans Lietzmann. Finally, a fifth volume with the title 'A Practical Commentary', was entrusted to Pastor Niebergall. Niebergall was killed in the War, and in the second edition of the commentary his work has been replaced by a volume containing an exegesis of the Lutheran Epistles and Gospels for the liturgical year, planned as an aid to preachers: *Die alten Pericopen für die Theologische Praxis, erläutert von Dr. L. Fendt*, 1931. [Tr.]

aware of the difficulty of the problem. But no agreement with regard to the difficulties and dangers inherent in what I understand by 'critical' theology is possible, nor can there be any discussion as to how they may be avoided, unless my opponents acknowledge that there is a problem, and show some signs of penitence. Otherwise, nothing can be done.

What, then, do I mean when I say that a perception of the 'inner dialectic of the matter' in the actual words of the text is a necessary and prime requirement for their understanding and interpretation? It has been asserted—a Swiss reviewer has said it peculiarly roughly—that I mean, of course, my own 'system'. I know that I have laid myself open to the charge of imposing a meaning upon the text rather than extracting its meaning from it, and that my method implies this. My reply is that, if I have a system, it is limited to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the 'infinite qualitative distinction' between time and eternity, and to my regarding this as possessing negative as well as positive significance: 'God is in heaven, and thou art on earth.' The relation between such a God and such a man, and the relation between such a man and such a God, is for me the theme of the Bible and the essence of philosophy. Philosophers name this KRISIS of human perception—the Prime Cause: the Bible beholds at the same cross-roads—the figure of Jesus Christ. When I am faced by such a document as the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, I embark on its interpretation on the assumption that he is confronted with the same unmistakable and unmeasurable significance of that relation as I myself am confronted with, and that it is this situation which moulds his thought and its expression. Nor am I unique in making an assumption at the outset. Other commentators do the same, though their assumptions are more pragmatic: as, for example, when they assume that the Epistle was written by Paul in the first century A.D. Whether these assumptions are justified or not becomes clear in the course of the investigation, when each verse comes to be examined and interpreted. That the assumptions are certainly justified is at the end only a relative certainty. They cannot be proven. In this uncertainty my fundamental assumption is, of course, included. For the present, however, I assume that in the Epistle to the Romans Paul did speak of Jesus Christ, and not of some one else. And this is as reputable an assumption as other assumptions that historians are wont to make. The actual exegesis will alone decide whether this assumption can be maintained. If Paul was not primarily concerned with the permanent KRISIS of the

relation between time and eternity, but was dealing with some other theme, the absurdity of a false assumption will become clear in the course of a detailed examination of the text. Questioned as to the ground of my assumption that this was, in fact, Paul's theme, I answer by asking quite simply whether, if the Epistle is to be treated seriously at all, it is reasonable to approach it with any other assumption than that God is God. If the complaint is made that I have done violence to the author, I shall maintain the counter-complaint that the real violence is done to him by those who suppose that, in speaking of Jesus Christ, he is referring to some anthroposophical chaos—to some relative-absolute, or to some absolute-relative. Surely it is precisely of this kind of chaos that Paul stands in such evident horror in all his Epistles. I do not, of course, for one moment claim to have provided an adequate interpretation of the Epistle. But, even so, I am persuaded that there is no reason whatever for me to abandon my prime assumption. Paul knows of God what most of us do not know; and his Epistles enable us to know what he knew. It is this conviction that Paul 'knows' that my critics choose to name my 'system', or my 'dogmatic presupposition', or my 'Alexandrianism', and so on and so forth. I have, however, found this assumption to be the best presupposition, even from the point of view of historical criticism. Modern pictures of Paul seem to me—and not to me only—simply incredible. It is true that their creators do frequently refer to modern problems in order to fill in the picture. But they do so only by way of illustration. I, however, wish to understand and to explain the Epistle to the Romans, not to provide it with a series of illustrations. Moreover, judged by what seems to me to be the fundamental principle of true exegesis, I entirely fail to see why parallels drawn from the ancient world—and with such parallels modern commentators are chiefly concerned—should be of more value for an understanding of the Epistle than the situation in which we ourselves actually are, and to which we can therefore bear witness.

The attitude that I have adopted towards the text has been called 'Biblicist'. For this some have blamed and some have praised me. The word is not mine, but I accept it, provided I am allowed to explain what I mean by 'Biblicism'. Wernle wrote of me with some bitterness: 'No single aspect of Paul's teaching seems to cause Barth discomfort. . . . There remain for him no survivals of the age in which Paul lived—not even trivial survivals.' Wernle then proceeds to enumerate what he finds to be 'uncomfortable points' or 'survivals' which should

be permitted to 'remain' relics of the past. They are: the Pauline 'depreciation' of the earthly life of Jesus—Christ the Son of God—Redemption by the blood of Christ—Adam and Christ—Paul's use of the Old Testament—his so-called 'Baptismal-Sacramentalism'—the Double Predestination—his attitude to secular authority. Now, imagine a commentary on the Epistle to the Romans which left these eight points unexplained; which allowed them to 'remain uncomfortable points'; and in which a maze of contemporary parallels did duty for an explanation of them. Could such a commentary really be called an interpretation? In contrast with this comfortable dismissal of uncomfortable points it has been my 'Biblicism' which has compelled me to wrestle with these 'scandals to modern thought' until I have found myself able to undertake the interpretation of them, because I have discovered precisely in these points the characteristic and veritable discernment of Paul. Whether I have interpreted them correctly is, of course, another matter. There are passages in the Epistle which I still find very hard to understand. But I concede much more to Wernle than this. Strictly speaking, no single verse seems to me capable of a smooth interpretation. There 'remains' everywhere, more or less in the background, that which subtly escapes both understanding and interpretation, or which, at least, awaits further investigation. But this cannot be thought of as a 'residuum' simply to be put on one side or disregarded. It is my so-called 'Biblicism' and 'Alexandrianism' which forbid me to allow the mark of competent scholarship to be that the critic discloses fragments of past history and then leaves them—unexplained. I have, moreover, no desire to conceal the fact that my 'Biblicist' method—which means in the end no more than 'consider well'—is applicable also to the study of Lao-Tse and of Goethe. Nor can I deny that I should find considerable difficulty in applying the method to certain of the books contained in the Bible itself. When I am named 'Biblicist', all that can rightly be proved against me is that I am prejudiced in supposing the Bible to be a good book, and that I hold it to be profitable for men to take its conceptions at least as seriously as they take their own.

Turning now to what is contained in my commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: I must confess that after all these years I am still concerned with the veritable rather than with the whole Gospel. This is because only by laying hold of the veritable Gospel does it seem to me to be possible to reach out towards the whole Gospel. No one has yet comprehended the whole in a single perspective. The normal practice of speaking or writing

fluently and comprehensively of the whole—of faith, hope, and love, of earth, heaven, and hell, each playing its noble and proper part in the balance of the whole—seems to me an unedifying procedure. I do not complain, however, if others, speaking in the name of Christianity, think differently. I only beg them not to pass by what is said here, as though it were totally irrelevant. Paulinism has stood always on the brink of heresy. This being so, it is strange how utterly harmless and unexceptionable most commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans and most books about Paul are. Why should this be so? Perhaps because the uncomfortable points are treated according to Wernle's recipe. May I be permitted, out of deference to Wernle, a word of warning to those who are babes in the study of theology, that is, to any undergraduates who may chance to read this book? Read it, please, carefully and not too quickly. Check it by referring to the Greek text and to other commentaries. Above all, do not be 'enthusiastic'. This is a critical work in the full and most serious meaning of the word 'critical'. K. Müller of Erlangen has rightly pointed out that the book may exercise a fatal influence upon immature minds. And yet, the man who makes this criticism ought seriously to reflect whether the persistent covering up of the dangerous element in Christianity is not to hide its light under a bushel. Perhaps Spengler was right when he told us that we were entering upon an 'iron age'. If this be so, theology and the theologians are bound to bear the marks of it.

Harnack's book on Marcion appeared whilst I was immersed in the writing of my commentary. Those who are familiar with both books will understand why I am bound to refer to it. I was puzzled, on reading the earlier reviews of Harnack's book, by the remarkable parallels between what Marcion had said and what I was actually writing. I wish to plead for a careful examination of these agreements before I be praised or blamed hastily as though I were a Marcionite. At the crucial points these agreements break down. Even before the appearance of Harnack's book, Jülicher had already bracketed my name with Marcion's. Harnack joined me to—Thomas Münzer; Walter Koepler, I think, to Kaspar Schwenckfeld. Before these learned theologians made up their minds to throw me to some ancient and venerable heresiarch they would have done better if they had agreed in their choice. As it is, I remain unscathed, and can only wonder at the varied selection the three theologians have made.

And now, a word concerning a matter of detail. A quite unforeseen importance has been attached to the translation of

πίστις by—the *faithfulness of God*. Jülicher selects this as an illustration of that ‘joyful sense of discovery’ of which I spoke—rather romantically it is true—in the preface to the first edition. As a matter of fact, Rudolf Liechtenhan was the spiritual father of this innovation. He had first drawn my attention in a private letter to the possibility of translating it thus. He has now put it into print. The protest has been so general that I have cut down the number of passages in which the rendering occurs. My critics will note, however, that I have retained it with uncomfortable frequency in Ch. III. My purpose in retaining the translation at certain points is to direct attention to a particular nuance of the word, which would be missed were it rendered monotonously by *faith*, just as it would were I sufficiently pedantic to translate it always by *faithfulness*. That the latter meaning is suggested can hardly be denied in view of Rom. iii. 3, of the well known variant in the LXX Version of Hab. ii. 4, and of similar nuances attached to such words as ἀγάπη, γνώσις, ἐλπίς, χάρις, δικαιοσύνη, εἰρήνη.

For various reasons I have omitted to provide a bibliography. I should like, however, to call attention to the verbal agreement, from Ch. III onwards, between the commentary on the Epistle by C. H. Rieger (1726–91) published in 1828 amongst his *Considerations upon the New Testament*, and the commentary by Fr. Chr. Steinhöfer (1706–61), edited for publication in 1851. The plagiarism cannot be charged to the worthy Rieger. Perhaps some Tübingen specialist can throw light upon this puzzling affair.—Jülicher has endeavoured to exclude me from the scholarly world and to set me firmly in the harmless world of practical theology by pointing out my aberrations in the field of textual criticism. It is true that I have sometimes ventured to disagree with Nestle’s text, which is the text used by most theological students. I had, however, no intention of claiming any authority in a field in which I am obviously incompetent. And yet, in spite of my incompetence, I could not avoid attempting to justify my adoption of certain variant readings in important passages. I only did this—pending further instruction.

May I, in conclusion, utter a warning to some of my reviewers? I wish to impress upon them that, in reviewing the second edition, it is even more dangerous than before to write about this book either with enthusiasm or with peevishness. I beg them to consider what is implied if the book be wholly accepted or wholly rejected. I beg them to consider what it means to mingle in friendly fashion praise and blame. Nevertheless, I

know that it is beyond my power to put this so that they will understand what I mean.

Nothing more remains except for me to thank my friends Eduard Thurneysen of St. Gall, Rudolf Pestalozzi of Zürich, and Georg Merz of Munich, for their loyal assistance in correcting the proofs. The first of these friends has read the whole manuscript with approval, and has suggested many additions. Some of these additions penetrated deeper than my original comment, others were explanatory and added greater precision of expression. I have adopted these additions for the most part without alteration, and they remain a silent testimony to his self-effacement. So close has been our co-operation that I doubt whether even the specialist could detect where the one leaves off and the other begins. The completion of the second edition coincides with the moment when I have to bid farewell to the people of Safenwil. During the past years they have had to put up with a pastor who lived in his study. They have also had to put up with much from his disturbing preoccupation with the Epistle to the Romans. On the whole they have borne this with real patience and sympathy, and I cannot forbear to put on record my gratitude to them. No pastor to whom this book is welcome will find it a light task to make it simple either for himself or for his parishioners.—And now, when I am compelled to leave one field of work behind me and to enter upon a new task, it is a peculiar privilege and pleasure to send a word of greeting to all those friends known and unknown, German and Swiss, who in different ways share the same tribulation.

SAFENWIL,

September, 1921.

THE PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

DETAILS apart, the third edition is a reprint of the second. A time may come when it will be necessary for me once again to rewrite the whole. I hardly know whether I ought to fear or to desire this. Our modern life is subject to strange and rapid changes. Whether this is a symptom of decay, or whether it is a sign that we are moving towards momentous spiritual decisions, who can say? At all events, the situation alters from day to day, conference succeeds conference, men instruct and are instructed, a man says something, and then, finding it echoed in the mouths of others, fears to say it again lest its meaning be altogether lost in the noise of its echo, and yet, side by side

with all this dangerous applause, fresh, valuable criticism makes itself heard, and requires most careful consideration. 'We can never plunge a second time into the same river, for now it narrows, now it broadens out, but always it flows on and on.' How then can such a living and responsible undertaking as a commentary on the Epistle to the Romans ever remain stationary? Nevertheless I do not at present feel myself obliged to rewrite the book. This being so, I have no alternative but to sanction the reprinting of what I wrote a year ago. I have caused the preface to the second edition to be reprinted, because otherwise this book would be incomplete. I do not, however, regard its repetition as of very great importance, certainly not the repetition of the polemic contained in it.

The strangest episode in the history of the book since the appearance of the second edition has been its friendly reception by Bultmann and its equally friendly rejection by Schlatter. From the one I conclude to my very great satisfaction that the original outcry against the book as being an incitement to a Diocletian persecution of historical, critical theology was not demanded; from the other that the course I have taken is independent of that positive theology to which I feel myself most nearly related. For the present I have simply noted carefully and gratefully the criticisms and questions put to me by Bultmann and Schlatter, and also by Kolfhaus. Some of their criticisms are new to me; of others I have been long aware.

I should like, however, to take this opportunity of adding something to what was said in the preface to the second edition about 'Historical Criticism', about the 'Dialectic of the Matter', and about 'Biblicism', because they affect the general method of approach. Bultmann complains that I am too conservative. He agrees with me that criticism must begin with the subject-matter, but thinks that this must lead on to the criticism of some of Paul's opinions, because even he fails at times to retain his grip upon what is, in fact, his subject. Bultmann writes: 'Other spirits make themselves heard, as well as the Spirit of Christ.' I do not wish to engage in a controversy with Bultmann as to which of us is the more radical. But I must go farther than he does and say that there are in the Epistle no words at all which are not words of those 'other spirits' which he calls Jewish or Popular Christian or Hellenistic or whatever else they may be. Is it really legitimate to extract a certain number of passages and claim that there the veritable Spirit of Christ has spoken? Or, to put it another way, can the Spirit of Christ be thought of as standing in the Epistle side by side with 'other'

spirits and in competition with them? It seems to me impossible to set the Spirit of Christ—the veritable subject-matter of the Epistle—over against other spirits, in such a manner as to deal out praise to some passages, and to depreciate others where Paul is not controlled by his true subject-matter. Rather, it is for us to perceive and to make clear that the whole is placed under the KRISIS of the Spirit of Christ. The whole is *litera*, that is, voices of those other spirits. The problem is whether the whole must not be understood in relation to the true subject-matter which is—The Spirit of Christ. This is the problem which provides aim and purpose to our study of the *litera*.

The commentator is thus presented with a clear 'Either—Or' The question is whether or no he is to place himself in a relation to his author of utter loyalty. Is he to read him, determined to follow him to the very last word, wholly aware of what he is doing, and assuming that the author also knew what he was doing? Loyalty surely cannot end at a particular point, and certainly cannot be exhausted by an exposure of the author's literary affinities. Anything short of utter loyalty means a commentary ON Paul's Epistle to the Romans, not a commentary so far as is possible WITH him—even to his last word. True exegesis involves, of course, much sweat and many groans. Even so, the extent to which the commentator will be able to disclose the Spirit of Christ in his reading of Paul will not be everywhere the same. But he will know that the responsibility rests on his shoulders; and he will not let himself be bewildered by the voices of those other spirits, which so often render inaudible the dominant tones of the Spirit of Christ. He will, moreover, always be willing to assume that, when he fails to understand, the blame is his and not Paul's. Nor will he rest content until paradoxically he has seen the whole in the fragments, and has displayed the fragments in the context of the veritable subject-matter, so that all the other spirits are seen in some way or other to serve the Spirit of Christ.

It may be, on the other hand, that the commentator is unable to accept the presupposition which such fidelity requires. This may be because he does not perceive, or at least does not perceive sufficiently clearly, what is the veritable subject-matter of such a document as the Epistle to the Romans. Or it may be because, so noisy are those other spirits which shriek at him from every verse, he despairs of ever being able to detect the dominant tones. If this be so, for whatever reason, he must content himself with writing a commentary ON Paul. He cannot speak WITH him, except perchance when Paul says something

which even he can understand. Such a commentator will only discover the Spirit of Christ 'here and there'; and he may not attribute to the Spirit of Christ even those fragments which he finds illuminating. He stands irresponsibly before the text, confronted, as a spectator, with a mixture of Spirit and spirits. Though he may here and there follow his author, he does not feel bound to wrestle with the understanding of him, for the simple reason that he has never made up his mind to stand or fall with him. I cannot, for my part, think it possible for an interpreter honestly to reproduce the meaning of any author unless he dares to accept the condition of utter loyalty. To make an oration over a man means to speak over his body, and that is to bury him finally, deeper and without hope, in his grave. No doubt despair leaves no other course open. Indeed, there are many historical personages whom it is possible only to speak ABOUT. Even so, it is still open to question whether the riddle they propound is really due to their obscurity or to our lack of apprehension. In any case, I am completely unable to understand Bultmann's demand that I should mingle fire and water. He asks me to think and write WITH Paul, to follow him into the vast unfamiliarity of his Jewish, Popular-Christian, Hellenistic conceptions; and then suddenly, when the whole becomes too hopelessly bizarre, I am to turn round and write 'critically' ABOUT him and against him—as though, when all is strange, this or that is to be regarded as especially outrageous. Is Bultmann incapable of understanding that, even were we concerned with an author's literary style, such a method of procedure would be illegitimate? His demands seem to me, therefore, to involve not merely a return to the older theory of 'relics of a bygone age' and 'uncomfortable points', but also an error in literary taste. Bultmann further goes on to hint that there lurks behind my whole method of exegesis a 'modern form of the dogma of Inspiration'. Schlatter also noticed the same tendency with disapproval. But, from the preface to the first edition onwards, I have never attempted to conceal the fact that my manner of interpretation has certain affinities with the old doctrine of Verbal Inspiration. As expounded by Calvin, the doctrine seems to me at least worthy of careful consideration as capable of leading to spiritual apprehension, and I have already made it clear how I have, in fact, made use of it. Is there any way of penetrating the heart of a document—of any document!—except on the assumption that its spirit will speak to our spirit through the actual written words? This does not exclude a criticism of the letter by the spirit, which is, indeed,

unavoidable. It is precisely a strict faithfulness which compels us to expand or to abbreviate the text, lest a too rigid attitude to the words should obscure that which is struggling to expression in them and which demands expression. This critical freedom of exegesis was used by Calvin in masterly fashion, without the slightest disregard for the discipline by which alone liberty is justified. The attentive reader will perceive that I have employed this method, believing it to be demanded by the text. I can only hope that I have not fallen into the snare of indiscipline which inevitably threatens those who employ it. I have resolutely determined not to make use of the method in order to criticize Paul; and it is my serious intention always to avoid this temptation. The Spirit of Christ is not a vantage-point from which a ceaseless correction of Paul—or of any one else—may be exercised schoolmaster-wise. We must be content if, despite other spirits, we are not wholly bereft of the Spirit; content if, standing by Paul's side, we are able to learn and to teach; content with a readiness to discern in spiritual fashion what is spiritually intended; and satisfied also to recognize that the voice with which we proclaim what we have received is primarily nothing but the voice of those other spirits. No human word, no word of Paul, is absolute truth. In this I agree with Bultmann—and surely with all intelligent people. But what does the relativity of all human speech mean? Does relativity mean ambiguity? Assuredly it does. But how can I demonstrate it better than by employing the whole of my energy to disclose the nature of this ambiguity? More than one reader of my book has learned from it to understand the uncertainty of Paulinism. I do not object to the book being so used. But nevertheless, we must learn to see beyond Paul. This can only be done, however, if, with utter loyalty and with a desperate earnestness, we endeavour to penetrate his meaning.

It may help those who find much that is contained in the second edition of my commentary strangely unfamiliar, if I quote, in passing, the opening sentences of Calvin's interpretation of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.—'Grace', he writes, 'has always the appearance of contradiction. The foundation is faith. For faith is the pillar and possession upon which we are able to plant our feet. But what, in fact, do we possess? Not things that are present, but what is set far distant under our feet—nay more, what is beyond the comprehension of our spirit. Faith is therefore named the *evidence of things not seen*. But *evidence* means that things emerge into appearance, and is applicable only to what concerns

our senses. In the realm of faith the two apparent opposites—evidence and things not seen—struggle with one another and are united. It is precisely the hidden things, inaccessible to sensible perception, that are displayed by the Spirit of God. He promises eternal life—to those who are dead. He speaks of the blessedness of resurrection—to those who are compassed about with corruption. He pronounces those in whom sin dwells—to be righteous. He calls those oppressed with ceaseless tribulation—blessed. He promises abundance of riches—to those abounding only in hunger and thirst. God cries out to us that He is coming quickly to our aid—and yet He seems deaf to every human cry for help. What, then, would be our fate, were we not powerful in hope, were we not hurrying through the darkness of the world along the road which is enlightened by the Spirit and by the Word of God?’

I must again thank those who have assisted me so loyally. Georg Merz corrected the proofs and compiled the index. Lukas Christ of Pratteln has smoothed out the roughness of my style in many passages—a very necessary piece of work.

GÖTTINGEN,

July, 1922.

THE PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

SINCE the appearance of the last edition, further work and further reflection have made it obvious that the book needs to be rewritten. It requires clarification; and other improvements are necessary also. But it is no use patching it up, and for a long time to come I shall have no opportunity of recasting the whole. Further, I do not, as yet, see my way through those difficult passages which ought to be the starting-point of a new revision. Could I see my way clearly, I should have to find time to rewrite the whole book. I must therefore send the book out once more unaltered. This, however, need not inconvenience those familiar with current theological discussions. They tend, in one form or another, to revolve round the Epistle to the Romans. The reader will therefore be in a position to make for himself the necessary reservations and amplifications.

As regards the external history of the book: it should be noted that Jülicher has reviewed it for a second time. He pronounces it to have proceeded from the ‘arrogance of a spiritual enthusiast’; and this, he says, is his ‘final word’. On the other hand, the literary organ of the Dutch Reformed Church is outraged

by the 'negative' character of the book, and its readers are warned to 'exercise great care in using it', since it is 'foreign to their piety'. Of greater interest to me personally are the appreciations which have reached me from the Catholic side. Catholic reviewers have, for the most part, displayed a genuine understanding of the point at issue. They have, moreover, conducted the discussion in a proper atmosphere of theological controversy—an atmosphere seemingly foreign to most of my reviewers on the other side of the great gulf. Now, what is the meaning of this fundamental, and to me quite unexpected, understanding? Erich Przywara, S.J., contrasts our 'school'! with that of Otto and Heiler, judging it to be a 'genuine rebirth of Protestantism', a reappearance of the 'passionate fervour of the old Reformers'. Joseph Engert, on the other hand, brings forward evidence to show that, apart from the doctrine of the Church elaborated in Chs. IX–XI, my commentary does not differ from the teaching of Thomas Aquinas, of the Council of Trent, and of the Roman Catechism; only my formulation of it is far more obscure and complicated. The two reviewers are clearly not saying quite the same thing. Should they agree together as to what it is precisely they wish to say to us, we should be bound to answer them. Meanwhile, I cannot help saying that I regard it as a most hopeful sign for both sides that an opportunity should now be provided of entering into genuine theological, as opposed to merely historical, discussion with theologians of the Old Church. Those, like ourselves, who are moving in the world of the theology of the Reformation, for this very reason, ought not—and indeed do not—cast in the teeth of others that they are moving with conviction in the world of medieval theology. When that is said, we must, however, own to a horror of mystical, High-Church, Evangelical-Catholic, dilettantism.

GÖTTINGEN,
February, 1924.

THE PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION

THIS book continues to be read and to exert influence, but its very 'success' is such as to compel its author to pause and consider. In his thoughts about his 'success' it is right that his readers should share. Two reflections jostle one another in my mind. When I wrote the book, did I simply put into words what was everywhere in the air—especially in Germany after the War? Did I say what was readily acceptable to the 'rulers of the

world' in our generation, and what men's ears itched to hear? And, in becoming fashionable and in the appearance of 'proper Barthians', like the 'Ritschlians' of the Bismarck era!—am I suffering an inevitable punishment? Every word I wrote against human—too human—vapourings, everything I wrote especially against religious vapourings, everything I said about their various causes and effects, seems now to be turned back upon myself. I had set out to please none but the very few, to swim against the current, to beat upon doors which I thought were firmly bolted. Was I altogether deceived? Perhaps I was. For who is able to know even himself accurately, or to gauge his contemporaries? Who knows whether we are not being moved, just when we imagine that we are moving others? My readers can well understand how startling it was for me to note the kind of theological books which at the present time have made a like impression. Was I deceived about the world and about myself? Am I after all merely one of those bad theologians who are no more than servants of public opinion? And are my readers also deceived in supposing a thing to be relevant to-day which was, in fact, relevant only for Paul and for Luther and Calvin? Have they been presented with what is really no more than a rehash, resurrected out of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard and Cohen? If this be what has actually occurred I must accept judgement and recognize that I am just the author of—a best-seller. But why should not this be the truth? And even if it were not true, no credit would be due to me or to my book. When I wrote in the Preface to the first edition that this book could 'wait', it was treated as a piece of arrogance. If this were pride on my part, perhaps I have had to be punished for it, since, unlike so many other better books, it did not have to wait. In common with much else that is empty show, it has gained the applause by which it is condemned. *All flesh is as grass—the truth of these words is exhibited in this world far more surely by precarious success than by a correspondingly precarious failure.*—This is the first of my reflections; and I beg my friendly readers to perceive that it is directed against them as well as against myself. They must bear its weight with me. They will then be no more surprised than I shall be, should it one day become apparent that here too—*the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth.*

The second reflection is more serious. It may be that every criticism implied in the former reflection is justified, and yet that nevertheless, in spite of much arrogance and wrong-headedness, aye, even in the midst of it, something has been brought

out into the open through what has been observed and said in this book—as it were by forensic justification (*justificatio forensis*). And this applies to what others have also observed and said who are in no way dependent upon my book. It is to this whole situation that the Church and the theologians of to-day are bound to pay attention. But what then is my personal responsibility in all this? And what is the responsibility of my friendly readers? If, perhaps quite apart from me and even in opposition to me, there has emerged something true and right, what am I to say, when, because at the critical moment I sounded the alarm, I am now supposed—to my horror I must acknowledge it—to be in some special way responsible for continuing and deepening and carrying through what has been begun? I can only say that, when I was working at this book in my peaceful parsonage in the distant valley of the Aar, I was convinced, like any other vigorous and keen author, that I was producing something good and valuable. But it never crossed my mind to think that the apostle Paul, as I seemed to hear him, would awaken such an echo that with the publication of this book I should give many earnest men the right to drive me into a corner by asking me questions concerning further implications, consequences, and applications, or even by asking me to repeat what had been brought to light. As though I were competent for all this! In his 'Reminiscences' Admiral Tirpitz says that, whereas it is easy to hoist your flag, it is difficult to strike it honourably. I would add that it is even more difficult—at any rate when there is no question of hauling it down—to continue to fly it honourably. And this is my situation. As it becomes more and more clear how much there remained to be done after the book was written, I often wish that I had never written it. And I feel this even more acutely now that I have been suddenly appointed, in spite of my light equipment, to the responsible position of professor at a university. It is now demanded of me that I should definitely put my hand to the plough every day; and every day I am reminded how difficult it is to plough the field of Christian doctrine, remembering that each furrow is—of bitter necessity—a new furrow.

Should this more favourable explanation of the 'success' of my book also be justified, then, whatever can be rightly said to the contrary, it does mark the moment when a breach, however small, has been made in the inner and outer afflictions of Protestantism. It is, however, oppressively humiliating both for me and for my readers—at least, for my friendly,

understanding, and sympathetic readers—to reflect that, when quick speech and action is necessary to do justice both to the misery and to the hope of the Church, we should remain so incompetent—unless indeed the whole present situation be merely a *Fata Morgana*. I have just come across the following lines written by a pastor in Hessen, who is personally unknown to me.¹ They fit my position so well, that they might have been addressed to me:

God needs MEN, not creatures
Full of noisy, catchy phrases.
Dogs he asks for, who their noses
Deeply thrust into—To-day,
And there scent Eternity.

Should it lie too deeply buried,
Then go on, and fiercely burrow,
Excavate until—To-morrow.

Yes, God needs . . . ! I wish I could be such a Hound of God—*Domini canis*—and could persuade all my readers to enter the Order. Understood thus, these lines make the best review of my book that has yet appeared. And no review could be more critical. No man can add a cubit to his stature, and so the 'success' of the book, even according to the second reflection, is a judgement under which we stand.

It is necessary therefore to keep in mind both reflections upon the uncertainty of our position. For I wish my understanding reader—I am not now speaking of or to the others—to apprehend with me the severity and the goodness which together press upon our memory the fact that we have a Master. We must not expect to escape some equivalent of the concrete threatenings and tribulations which Protestant Christians and theologians were compelled to endure for their faith in the sixteenth century. We of the twentieth century must not shrink from being the Church Militant. I am able to understand something of what this equivalent is, when I think of the paradox or dialectic which is contained in the word 'success'.

That is what I wished to say. And now I can send forth this book once more.

MÜNSTER IN WESTPHALIA,

February, 1926.

¹ Printed in *Kirche und Welt*, January 1926.

THE PREFACE TO THE SIXTH EDITION

THE two years and a half which have passed since the publication of the fifth edition of this book have increased the distance separating me from what I had originally written. Not that, in expounding the Pauline Epistles, or indeed any part of Holy Scripture, I should now wish to say anything materially different from what I then said. I should still retain that which gave so serious and so severe offence; and so long as it still remains unrecognized that such offence had to be given and that the giving of it was justifiable, or until I am myself persuaded that I was wrong in giving it, there seems no reason why I should cease giving offence, and if so, why I should not continue to do so in its original form. However, I do not wish the book to go forth once more without saying that, were I to set to work again upon the exposition of the Epistle, and were I determined to repeat the same thing, I should certainly have to express it quite differently. I have, in the meantime, learnt that in Paul there is on the one hand a far greater variety and on the other hand a far greater monotony than I had then attributed to him. Much would therefore have to be drastically curtailed, and much expanded. Much would have to be expressed more carefully and with greater reserve; much, however, with greater clarity and more emphatically. A great deal of the scaffolding of the book was due to my own particular situation at the time and also to the general situation. This would have to be pulled down. Many threads, on the other hand, which I had not then noticed in the Epistle, would now have to be brought to light. Those who read the book must also bear in mind the quite simple fact that I am now seven years older, and that all our exercise books obviously require correcting. Moreover, since the appearance of the fifth edition, I have embarked upon the publication of my *Prolegomena to Christian Dogmatics*. This means that a certain weight has been lifted from the earlier book, inasmuch as any serious criticism of it has at least to take also into consideration what is said in the second and more comprehensive book, where I have attempted a greater breadth of treatment and also greater precision. Similarly, those who, after reading the earlier book, still retain confidence in me and desire further treatment of the questions which it raises, should also take into account both the later book and other writings of mine, which are, in fact, continuations of the original work. At Neuendettelsau¹

¹ Neuendettelsau is a small village in Bavaria, lying south-west of Nuremberg. It was the scene of the pastorate of Wilhelm Löhe (1808-72. See

the following statement appeared the other day: 'Of Karl Barth it may now be said that he is already slipping into the position of a man of yesterday.' (The *Freimund* of 8 Nov. 1928.) Yes, no doubt! Dead men ride fast, but successful theologians ride faster (*cf.* the Preface to the fifth edition). How could I have written this book at all, had I not been both in theory and in practice pre-*par*-ed before I became a 'man of to-day'? Do I—as I am accused of doing—treat 'time' and 'history' so lightly as to be hurt when I am told that my day has an evening and will, indeed, become a past yesterday? Warned of this, I am, however, glad of the opportunity of still making some corrections and of adding some explanations; glad to be able to beg my friendly readers, even if they think (perhaps rightly) that it would be better for me to make no corrections, not to write my obituary notice until what I have said is proved to have been exhausted and the 'yesterday' which exists *sub specie aeterni* has also been manifested in time.

MÜNSTER IN WESTPHALIA,

The First Sunday in Advent, 1928.

Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 2nd ed., vol. iii, p. 1707). Since then it has become the active centre of the home and foreign missionary work of the Lutheran Church. The mother-house of the Lutheran Deaconesses is located there. The Movement has at Neuendettelsau its own press, and from it is issued a weekly paper entitled *Freimund. Kirchlich-Politisches Wochenblatt für Stadt und Land*, with the sub-title 'Organ einer öffentlichen Mission vom Standpunkt ev.-luth. Christentums. [Tr.]

The First Chapter

INTRODUCTION

THE AUTHOR TO HIS READERS

I. I-7

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, which he promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Holy Spirit, through his resurrection from the dead—even Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we received grace and apostleship to bring into being obedience to the faithfulness of God which is confirmed in the gospel among all nations, for his name's sake: among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle. Here is no 'genius rejoicing in his own creative ability' (Zündel). The man who is now speaking is an emissary, bound to perform his duty; the minister of his King; a servant, not a master. However great and important a man Paul may have been, the essential theme of his mission is not within him but above him—unapproachably distant and unutterably strange. His call to apostleship is not a familiar episode in his own personal history: 'The call to be an apostle is a paradoxical occurrence, lying always beyond his personal self-identity' (Kierkegaard). Paul, it is true, is always himself, and moves essentially on the same plane as all other men. But, in contradiction to himself and in distinction from all others, he is—called by God and sent forth. Are we then to name him a Pharisee? Yes, a Pharisee—'separated', isolated, and distinct. But he is a Pharisee of a higher order. Fashioned of the same stuff as all other men, a stone differing in no way from other stones, yet in his relation to God—and in this only—he is unique. As an apostle—and only as an apostle—he stands in no organic relationship with human society as it exists in history: seen from the point of view of human society, he can be regarded only as an exception,

nay, rather, as an impossibility. Paul's position can be justified only as resting in God, and so only can his words be regarded as at all credible, for they are as incapable of direct apprehension as is God Himself. For this reason he dares to approach others and to demand a hearing without fear either of exalting himself or of approximating too closely to his audience. He appeals only to the authority of God. This is the ground of his authority. There is no other.

Paul is authorized to deliver—the **Gospel of God**. He is commissioned to hand over to men something quite new and unprecedented, joyful and good,—the truth of God. Yes, precisely—*of God!* The Gospel is not a religious message to inform mankind of their divinity or to tell them how they may become divine. The Gospel proclaims a God utterly distinct from men. Salvation comes to them from Him, because they are, as men, incapable of knowing Him, and because they have no right to claim anything from Him. The Gospel is not one thing in the midst of other things, to be directly apprehended and comprehended. The Gospel is the Word of the Primal Origin of all things, the Word which, since it is ever new, must ever be received with renewed fear and trembling. The Gospel is therefore not an event, nor an experience, nor an emotion—however delicate! Rather, it is the clear and objective perception of what eye hath not seen nor ear heard. Moreover, what it demands of men is more than notice, or understanding, or sympathy. It demands participation, comprehension, co-operation; for it is a communication which presumes faith in the living God, and which creates that which it presumes.

Being the Gospel of God it was—**promised afore**. The Gospel is no intrusion of to-day. As the seed of eternity it is the fruit of time, the meaning and maturity of history—the fulfilment of prophecy. The Gospel is the word spoken by the prophets from time immemorial, the word which can now be received and has now been accepted. Such is the Gospel with which the apostle has been entrusted. By it his speech is authorized, but by it also that which he says is judged. The words of the prophets, long fastened under lock and key, are now set free. Now it is possible to hear what Jeremiah and Job and the preacher Solomon had proclaimed long ago. Now we can see and understand what is written, for we have an 'entrance into the Old Testament' (Luther). Therefore the man who now speaks, stands firmly upon a history which has been expounded and veritably understood: 'From the outset he disclaims the honour due to an innovator' (Schlatter).

Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the Gospel and the meaning of history. In this name two worlds meet and go apart, two planes intersect, the one known and the other unknown. The known plane is God's creation, fallen out of its union with Him, and therefore the world of the 'flesh' needing redemption, the world of men, and of time, and of things—our world. This known plane is intersected by another plane that is unknown—the world of the Father, of the Primal Creation, and of the final Redemption. The relation between us and God, between this world and His world, presses for recognition, but the line of intersection is not self-evident. The point on the line of intersection at which the relation becomes observable and observed is Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, the historical Jesus,—**born of the seed of David according to the flesh.** The name Jesus defines an historical occurrence and marks the point where the unknown world cuts the known world. This does not mean that, at this point, time and things and men are in themselves exalted above other times and other things and other men, but that they are exalted inasmuch as they serve to define the neighbourhood of the point at which the hidden line, intersecting time and eternity, concrete occurrence and primal origin, men and God, becomes visible. The years A.D. 1-30 are the era of revelation and disclosure; the era which, as is shown by the reference to David, sets forth the new and strange and divine definition of all time. The particularity of the years A.D. 1-30 is dissolved by this divine definition, because it makes every epoch a potential field of revelation and disclosure. The point on the line of intersection is no more extended onto the known plane than is the unknown plane of which it proclaims the existence. The effulgence, or, rather, the crater made at the percussion point of an exploding shell, the void by which the point on the line of intersection makes itself known in the concrete world of history, is not—even though it be named the Life of Jesus—that other world which touches our world in Him. In so far as our world is touched in Jesus by the other world, it ceases to be capable of direct observation as history, time, or thing. Jesus has been—**declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Holy Spirit, through his resurrection from the dead.** In this declaration and appointment—which are beyond historical definition—lies the true significance of Jesus. Jesus as the Christ, as the Messiah, is the End of History; and He can be comprehended only as Paradox (Kierkegaard), as Victor (Blumhardt), as Primal History (Overbeck). As Christ, Jesus is the plane which lies beyond our

comprehension. The plane which is known to us, He intersects vertically, from above. Within history, Jesus as the Christ can be understood only as Problem or Myth. As the Christ, He brings the world of the Father. But we who stand in this concrete world know nothing, and are incapable of knowing anything, of that other world. The Resurrection from the dead is, however, the transformation: the establishing or *declaration* of that point from above, and the corresponding discerning of it from below. The Resurrection is the revelation: the disclosing of Jesus as the Christ, the appearing of God, and the apprehending of God in Jesus. The Resurrection is the emergence of the necessity of giving glory to God: the reckoning with what is unknown and unobservable in Jesus, the recognition of Him as Paradox, Victor, and Primal History. In the Resurrection the new world of the Holy Spirit touches the old world of the flesh, but touches it as a tangent touches a circle, that is, without touching it. And, precisely because it does not touch it, it touches it as its frontier—as the new world. The Resurrection is therefore an occurrence in history, which took place outside the gates of Jerusalem in the year A.D. 30, inasmuch as it there 'came to pass', was discovered and recognized. But inasmuch as the occurrence was conditioned by the Resurrection, in so far, that is, as it was not the 'coming to pass', or the discovery, or the recognition, which conditioned its necessity and appearance and revelation, the Resurrection is not an event in history at all. Jesus is *declared to be the Son of God* wherever He reveals Himself and is recognized as the Messiah, before the first Easter Day and, most assuredly, after it. This declaration of the Son of man to be the Son of God is the significance of Jesus, and, apart from this, Jesus has no more significance or insignificance than may be attached to any man or thing or period of history in itself.—*Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no longer.* What He was, He is. But what He is underlies what He was. There is here no merging or fusion of God and man, no exaltation of humanity to divinity, no overflowing of God into human nature. What touches us—and yet does not touch us—in Jesus the Christ, is the Kingdom of God who is both Creator and Redeemer. The Kingdom of God has become actual, is nigh at hand (iii. 21, 22). And this Jesus Christ is—our Lord. Through His presence in the world and in our life we have been dissolved as men and established in God. By directing our eyes to Him our advance is stopped—and we are set in motion. We tarry and—hurry. Because Jesus is Lord

over Paul and over the Roman Christians, the word 'God' is no empty word in the Epistle to the Romans.

From Jesus Christ Paul has received—**grace and apostleship**. Grace is the incomprehensible fact that God is well pleased with a man, and that a man can rejoice in God. Only when grace is recognized to be incomprehensible is it grace. Grace exists, therefore, only where the Resurrection is reflected. Grace is the gift of Christ, who exposes the gulf which separates God and man, and, by exposing it, bridges it. But inasmuch as God knows men from afar and is known by them in His undiscoverable majesty, the man of God must inevitably approach his fellow men as an 'emissary': *Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel* (1 Cor. ix. 16). And yet the distinction between Paul and other Christians can be a matter of degree only. For, where the grace of God is, men participate in proclaiming the transformation of time and of things, the Resurrection—however reservedly and with whatever scepticism they proclaim it. Where the grace of God is, the very existence of the world and the very existence of God become a question and a hope with which and for which men must wrestle. For we are not now concerned with the propaganda of a conviction or with its imposition on others; grace means bearing witness to the faithfulness of God which a man has encountered in Christ, and which, when it is encountered and recognized, requires a corresponding fidelity towards God. The fidelity of a man to the faithfulness of God—the faith, that is, which accepts grace—is itself the demand for obedience and itself demands obedience from others. Hence the demand is a call which enlightens and rouses to action; it carries with it mission, beside which no other mission is possible. For the name of Him in whom the two worlds meet and are separated must be honoured, and for this mission grace provides full authority, since men are shattered by it (v. 2).

The same God who had made Paul the apostle of the Gentiles (i. 1) had also pressed the Roman Christians into the service of His imminent and coming Kingdom. As men called unto holiness, they belong no longer to themselves or to the old world which is passing to corruption. They belong to Him who has called them. Not for Paul only, but for them also, has the Son of man been appointed Son of God through the power of the Resurrection. They too are here and now imprisoned in the knowledge of great tribulation and of great hope. They too after their fashion are separated and isolated for God. They too are constituted anew by the—**grace and peace from God our**

Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. May this presupposition occur ever afresh! May their peace be their disquiet, and their disquiet be their peace! This is beginning, theme, and end, of the Epistle to the Romans.

PERSONAL MATTERS

I. 8-15

v. 8. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ, because your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

The Resurrection has proved its power: there are Christians—even in Rome. And this has come about apart from any personal action of Paul. They have been called, whoever it was that brought the call of Christ (i. 6). This is a sufficient ground for thanksgiving. The stone has been rolled away from the door of the tomb. The Word has free course. Jesus lives; and He is in the metropolis of the world. Everywhere Christians have heard of it (xvi. 19). This may be only a parable, but a parable it is. Paul does not thank God for the piety of the Roman Christians, or for any other observable human advantages they may possess. He simply gives thanks for the fact that there are Christians in Rome. Special gifts or remarkable deeds are less important than the fact that the flag has been planted, that the name of the Lord is announced and received, that the Kingdom of God is being awaited and proclaimed. This then is faith: the fidelity of men encountering the faithfulness of God. Now, when this occurs, the KRISIS introduced by the resurrection of Jesus is set in motion, His appointment as Son of God (i. 4) is made manifest, and the servant of God has reason to give thanks. The doors of Rome have been opened for the Lord, and for His servant also.

vv. 9, 10. More than a casual or merely external relationship has long existed between Paul and the Roman Christians: For God is my witness whom I serve in my spirit by proclaiming the gospel of his Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers, if by any means now at length I may be prospered by the will of God to come unto you.

The apostle belongs to them—indeed he belongs to many! (i. 14)—as certainly as he belongs to God. The spirit of one who has received and bears witness to the grace of God, and who is consumed with zeal for the honour of his Lord (i. 5), cannot remain estranged from the spirits of those who have been

moved by the same revelation and disclosure. His prayer is as much a work for them as for himself. When he prays, he prays for them as they too pray for him—unless indeed they have grown weary of striving (xv. 30). Those who have never seen one another and whose paths have never crossed possess in their attention to the Gospel of salvation a ground of solidarity. And yet, sharing this solidarity, knowing themselves to be in God, they not unnaturally desire to see one another, if that be permitted. But ought there to be such meeting? Is it necessary? Surely not. The desire has no direct connexion with the Kingdom of God; and the will of God has complete precedence. He may comply with human desires, but also He may not. In any case, that alone is right which complies with His will. Meanwhile, those who have never met must have confidence in each other, but, beyond that, they must seek only to know the will of God. And the will of God is perceived when the inner and outer situation genuinely correspond with the Christian's perception of what is right (xii. 2). Apart from this moment of perception the fulfilment of human desires is unthinkable.

vv. 11, 12. For I long to see you that I may impart unto you the grace of the Spirit, to the end ye may be established; or better, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith, both yours and mine.

There is good reason for Paul's longing. When pilgrims on the road of God meet one another, they have something to say. A man may be of value to another man, not because he wishes to be important, not because he possesses some inner wealth of soul, not because of something he is, but because of what he is—not. His importance may consist in his poverty, in his hopes and fears, in his waiting and hurrying, in the direction of his whole being towards what lies beyond his horizon and beyond his power. The importance of an apostle is negative rather than positive. In him a void becomes visible. And for this reason he is something to others: he is able to share grace with them, to focus their attention, and to establish them in waiting and in adoration. The Spirit gives grace through him. Possessing nothing, he has nothing of his own to offer, and so, the more he imparts, the more he receives; and the more he receives, the more he imparts. There is therefore no question of Christians saying to one another—'Did you receive from me?' or 'Did I receive from you?' Since neither is, or possesses, anything, nothing passes from the one to the other. It is sufficient that what is, is—above us and behind us and beyond us. Faith it is—the

gospel of faith, the content of faith, the faithfulness of God—that, in all the human frailty and tribulation with which we are surrounded, provides comfort alike to the beginner and to him that hath the pre-eminence. Though fellowship is assuredly in itself an empty and a trivial thing, we cry out for it, because we long to join hands in knocking at the doors of the Kingdom of God and to be moved together by His Spirit.

v. 13. And I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you—and was hindered hitherto—that I might celebrate a harvest among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

Many times Paul had planned a visit to Rome to satisfy his own longing and the well-known longing of the Christians who lived there. But there were still places where no beginning had been made. And since his life's work was to plant in virgin soil (xv. 20-2), he had never been allowed to choose the road which led to Rome. Nevertheless, it remained his desire and intention to reap where he had not sown, and to cultivate ground which others had already ploughed. By the will of God (i. 10), however, this had not yet been possible.

vv. 14, 15. I am debtor—yes, with my whole being—both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. It is therefore my great desire to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome.

Paul was bound under discipline (i. 1), a discipline which limited his personal wishes, and in so doing provided an opportunity for their fulfilment. Should the proper occasion arise, he would be able to perform his ministry with as little trepidation in the cultured and religious cosmopolitan society of Rome as when he had been faced by the crass stupidity of Iconium and Lystra. He is confined by no cultural or geographical frontier. And, moreover, his guiding principle of speaking only where the gospel had not been heard already is not a law of the Medes and Persians—indeed, no one can claim to have heard the Gospel already. Even the Christians in Rome are included in the forces of the Gentiles, to whose service he has admittedly been consecrated. He proposes to speak to them things old and new; and what is old and familiar is still unknown, for it can never sufficiently be brought to remembrance (xv. 15). Meanwhile, however, only the written word is available. He must therefore use it as best he can to promote a common knocking at the doors of the Kingdom and a united movement towards it.

THE THEME OF THE EPISTLE

I. 16, 17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faithfulness unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live from my faithfulness.

I am not ashamed. The Gospel neither requires men to engage in the conflict of religions or the conflict of philosophies, nor does it compel them to hold themselves aloof from these controversies. In announcing the limitation of the known world by another that is unknown, the Gospel does not enter into competition with the many attempts to disclose within the known world some more or less unknown and higher form of existence and to make it accessible to men. The Gospel is not a truth among other truths. Rather, it sets a question-mark against all truths. The Gospel is not the door but the hinge. The man who apprehends its meaning is removed from all strife, because he is engaged in a strife with the whole, even with existence itself. Anxiety concerning the victory of the Gospel—that is, Christian Apologetics—is meaningless, because the Gospel is the victory by which the world is overcome. By the Gospel the whole concrete world is dissolved and established. It does not require representatives with a sense of responsibility, for it is as responsible for those who proclaim it as it is for those to whom it is proclaimed. It is the advocate of both. Nor is it necessary for the Gospel that Paul should take his stand in the midst of the spiritual cosmopolitanism of Rome; though he can, of course, enter the city without shame, and will enter it as a man who has been consoled by the Gospel. God does not need us. Indeed, if He were not God, He would be ashamed of us. We, at any rate, cannot be ashamed of Him.

The Gospel of the Resurrection is the—**power of God**, His *virtus* (Vulgate), the disclosing and apprehending of His meaning, His effective pre-eminence over all gods. The Gospel of the Resurrection is the action, the supreme miracle, by which God, the unknown God dwelling in light unapproachable, the Holy One, Creator, and Redeemer, makes Himself known: *What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this set I forth unto you* (Acts xvii. 23). No divinity remaining on this side the line of resurrection; no divinity which dwells in temples made with hands or which is

served by the hand of man ; no divinity which NEEDS ANYTHING, any human propaganda (Acts xvii. 24, 25),—can be God. God is the unknown God, and, precisely because He is unknown, He bestows life and breath and all things. Therefore the power of God can be detected neither in the world of nature nor in the souls of men. It must not be confounded with any high, exalted force, known or knowable. The power of God is not the most exalted of observable forces, nor is it either their sum or their fount. Being completely different, it is the KRISIS of all power, that by which all power is measured, and by which it is pronounced to be both something and—nothing, nothing and—something. It is that which sets all these powers in motion and fashions their eternal rest. It is the Primal Origin by which they all are dissolved, the consummation by which they all are established. The power of God stands neither at the side of nor above—supernatural!—these limited and limiting powers. It is pure and pre-eminent and—beyond them all. It can neither be substituted for them nor ranged with them, and, save with the greatest caution, it cannot even be compared with them. The assumption that Jesus is the Christ (i. 4) is, in the strictest sense of the word, an assumption, void of any content that can be comprehended by us. The appointment of Jesus to be the Christ takes place in the Spirit and must be apprehended in the Spirit. It is self-sufficient, unlimited, and in itself true. And moreover, it is what is altogether new, the decisive factor and turning-point in man's consideration of God. This it is which is communicated between Paul and his hearers. To the proclamation and receiving of this Gospel the whole activity of the Christian community—its teaching, ethics, and worship—is strictly related. But the activity of the community is related to the Gospel only in so far as it is no more than a crater formed by the explosion of a shell and seeks to be no more than a void in which the Gospel reveals itself. The people of Christ, His community, know that no sacred word or work or thing exists in its own right: they know only those words and works and things which by their negation are sign-posts to the Holy One. If anything Christian(!) be unrelated to the Gospel, it is a human by-product, a dangerous religious survival, a regrettable misunderstanding. For in this case content would be substituted for a void, convex for concave, positive for negative, and the characteristic marks of Christianity would be possession and self-sufficiency rather than deprivation and hope. If this be persisted in, there emerges, instead of the community of Christ, Christendom, an ineffective peace-pact or compromise with that existence

which, moving with its own momentum, lies on this side resurrection. Christianity would then have lost all relation to the power of God. Now, whenever this occurs, the Gospel, so far from being removed from all rivalry, stands hard pressed in the midst of other religions and philosophies of this world. Hard pressed, because, if men must have their religious needs satisfied, if they must surround themselves with comfortable illusions about their knowledge of God and particularly about their union with Him,—well, the world penetrates far deeper into such matters than does a Christianity which misunderstands itself, and of such a 'gospel' we have good cause to be ashamed. Paul, however, is speaking of the power of the UNKNOWN God, of—*Things which eye saw not and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man*. Of such a Gospel he has no cause to be ashamed.

The power of God is power—unto salvation. In this world men find themselves to be imprisoned. In fact the more profoundly we become aware of the limited character of the possibilities which are open to us here and now, the more clear it is that we are farther from God, that our desertion of Him is more complete (i. 18, v. 12), and the consequences of that desertion more vast (i. 24, v. 12), than we had ever dreamed. Men are their own masters. Their union with God is shattered so completely that they cannot even conceive of its restoration. Their sin is their guilt; their death is their destiny; their world is formless and tumultuous chaos, a chaos of the forces of nature and of the human soul; their life is illusion. This is the situation in which we find ourselves. The question 'Is there then a God?' is therefore entirely relevant and indeed inevitable! But the answer to this question, that is to say, our desire to comprehend the world in its relation to God, must proceed either from the criminal arrogance of religion or from that final apprehension of truth which lies beyond birth and death—the perception, in other words, which proceeds from God outwards. When the problem is formulated thus, it is evident that, just as genuine coins are open to suspicion so long as false coins are in circulation, so the perception which proceeds outwards from God cannot have free course until the arrogance of religion be done away. Now, it is the Gospel that opens up the possibility of this final perception, and, if this possibility is to be realized, all penultimate perceptions must be withdrawn from circulation. The Gospel speaks of God as He is: it is concerned with Him Himself and with Him only. It speaks of the Creator who shall be our Redeemer and of the Redeemer who is our Creator. It is pregnant

with our complete conversion ; for it announces the transformation of our creatureliness into freedom. It proclaims the forgiveness of our sins, the victory of life over death, in fact, the restoration of everything that has been lost. It is the signal, the fire-alarm of a coming, new world. But what does all this mean? Bound to the world as it is, we cannot here and now apprehend. We can only receive the Gospel, for it is the recollection of God which is created by the Gospel that comprehends its meaning. The world remains the world and men remain men even whilst the Gospel is being received. The whole burden of sin and the whole curse of death still press heavily upon us. We must be under no illusion : the reality of our present existence continues as it is ! The Resurrection, which is the place of exit, also bars us in, for it is both barrier and exit. Nevertheless, the 'No' which we encounter is the 'No'—of God. And therefore our veritable deprivation is our veritable comfort in distress. The barrier marks the frontier of a new country, and what dissolves the whole wisdom of the world also establishes it. Precisely because the 'No' of God is all-embracing, it is also His 'Yes'. We have therefore, in the power of God, a look-out, a door, a hope ; and even in this world we have the possibility of following the narrow path and of taking each simple little step with a 'despair which has its own consolation' (Luther). The prisoner becomes a watchman. Bound to his post as firmly as a prisoner in his cell, he watches for the dawning of the day : *I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will look forth to see what he will speak with me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay* (Hab. ii. 1-3).

The Gospel requires—*faith*. Only for those who believe is it the *power of God unto salvation*. It can therefore be neither directly communicated nor directly apprehended. Christ hath been appointed to be the Son of God—*according to the Spirit* (i. 4). 'Now, Spirit is the denial of direct immediacy. If Christ be very God, He must be unknown, for to be known directly is the characteristic mark of an idol' (Kierkegaard). So new, so unheard of, so unexpected in this world is the power of God unto salvation, that it can appear among us, be received and understood by us, only as contradiction. The Gospel does not expound or recommend itself. It does not negotiate or plead, threaten,

or make promises. It withdraws itself always when it is not listened to for its own sake. 'Faith directs itself towards the things that are invisible. Indeed, only when that which is believed on is hidden, can it provide an opportunity for faith. And moreover, those things are most deeply hidden which most clearly contradict the obvious experience of the senses. Therefore, when God makes alive, He kills; when He justifies, He imposes guilt; when He leads us to heaven, He thrusts us down into hell' (Luther). The Gospel of salvation can only be believed in; it is a matter for faith only. It demands choice. This is its seriousness. To him that is not sufficiently mature to accept a contradiction and to rest in it, it becomes a scandal—to him that is unable to escape the necessity of contradiction, it becomes a matter for faith. Faith is awe in the presence of the divine incognito; it is the love of God that is aware of the qualitative distinction between God and man and God and the world; it is the affirmation of resurrection as the turning-point of the world; and therefore it is the affirmation of the divine 'No' in Christ, of the shattering halt in the presence of God. He who knows the world to be bounded by a truth that contradicts it; he who knows himself to be bounded by a will that contradicts him; he who, knowing too well that he must be satisfied to live with this contradiction and not attempt to escape from it, finds it hard to kick against the pricks (Overbeck); he who finally makes open confession of the contradiction and determines to base his life upon it—he it is that believes. The believer is the man who puts his trust in God, in God Himself, and in God alone; that is to say, the man who, perceiving the faithfulness of God in the very fact that He has set us within the realm of that which contradicts the course of this world, meets the faithfulness of God with a corresponding fidelity, and with God says 'Nevertheless' and 'In spite of this'. The believer discovers in the Gospel the power of God unto salvation, the rays which mark the coming of eternal blessedness, and the courage to stand and watch. This discovery is, however, a free choice between scandal and faith, a choice presented to him always and everywhere and at every moment. Depth of feeling, strength of conviction, advance in perception and in moral behaviour, are no more than things which accompany the birth of faith. Being of this world, they are in themselves no more than unimportant signs of the occurrence of faith. And moreover, as signs of the occurrence of faith they are not positive factors, but negations of other positive factors, stages in the work of clearance by which room is made in this world for that

which is beyond it. Faith, therefore, is never identical with 'piety', however pure and however delicate. In so far as 'piety' is a sign of the occurrence of faith, it is so as the dissolution of all other concrete things and supremely as the dissolution of itself. Faith lives of its own, because it lives of God. This is the *Centrum Paulinum* (Bengel).

There is no man who ought not to believe or who cannot believe. Neither the **Jew** nor the **Greek** is disenfranchised from the Gospel. By setting a question-mark against the whole course of this world and its inevitability, the Gospel directly concerns every man. As surely as no one is removed from the universal questionableness of human life, so surely is no one excluded from the divine contradiction that is in Christ, by which this questionableness seeks to make itself known to men. The Jew, the religious and ecclesiastical man, is, it is true, **FIRST** summoned to make the choice; this is because he stands quite normally on the frontier of this world and at the point where the line of intersection by the new dimensional plane (i. 4) must be veritably seen (ii. 17-20; iii. 1, 2; ix. 4, 5; x. 14, 15). But the advantage of the Jew provides him with no precedence. The problem 'Religion or Irreligion'—not to speak of the problem 'Church or World'—is no longer a fundamental problem. The possibility of hearing the Gospel is as universal as is the responsibility to hear it, and as is the promise vouchsafed to them who do hear it.

In the Gospel is revealed the great, universal secret of the **righteousness of God** which presses upon every man of every rank. In Christ the consistency of God with Himself—so grievously questioned throughout the whole world, among both Jews and Greeks—is brought to light and honoured. What men on this side resurrection name 'God' is most characteristically not God. Their 'God' does not redeem his creation, but allows free course to the unrighteousness of men; does not declare himself to be God, but is the complete affirmation of the course of the world and of men as it is. This is intolerable, for, in spite of the highest honours we offer him for his adornment, he is, in fact, 'No-God'. The cry of revolt against such a god is nearer the truth than is the sophistry with which men attempt to justify him. Only because they have nothing better, only because they lack the courage of despair, do the generality of men on this side resurrection avoid falling into blatant atheism. But in Christ God speaks as He is, and punishes the 'No-God' of all these falsehoods. He affirms Himself by denying us as we are and the world as it is. In Christ God offers Himself

to be known as God beyond our trespass, beyond time and things and men; to be known as the Redeemer of the prisoners, and consequently, as the meaning of all that is—in fact, as the Creator. He acknowledges Himself to be our God by creating and maintaining the distance by which we are separated from Him; He displays His mercy by inaugurating His KRISIS and bringing us under judgement. He guarantees our salvation by willing to be God and to be known as God—in Christ; He justifies us by justifying Himself.

From faithfulness the righteousness of God reveals itself, that is to say, from His faithfulness to us. The very God has not forgotten men; the Creator has not abandoned the creation. Though the secret has been *kept in silence through times eternal* and shall be kept in silence (xvi. 25); though men shall continue to prefer their 'No-God' to the divine paradox; though the manifestation of what cannot be made known be the impossibility before which only the thoughtless are not terrified; yet, the faithfulness of God to men still abides; there still abides too that profound agreement between the will of God and that which men, longing to be freed from themselves, also secretly desire; there abides the divine answer which is given to us when the final human question awakes in us.—*We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.* And because we have been appointed to this awaiting, we perceive the faithfulness of God.

Unto faith is revealed that which God reveals from His faithfulness. To those who have abandoned direct communication, the communication is made. To those willing to venture with God, He speaks. Those who take upon them the divine 'No' shall themselves be borne by the greater divine 'Yes'. Those who labour and are heavy laden shall be refreshed. Those who do not shun the contradiction have been hidden in God. Those who honestly allow themselves to be set to wait know thereby that they ought, must, and can, await the faithfulness of God. Those who stand in awe in the presence of God and keep themselves from revolt live with God.

In them is fulfilled the prophecy—**The righteous shall live from faithfulness!** (Hab. ii. 4). The righteous man is the prisoner become watchman. He is the guard at the threshold of divine reality. There is no other righteousness save that of the man who sets himself under judgement, of the man who is terrified and hopes. He shall live. He has the expectation of true life, for, recognizing that this life is naught, he is never without the reflection of the true life in this life, never without the prospect of incorruption in that which is passing to corruption.

The GREAT impossibility has announced to him the end and goal of every trivial impossibility. He shall live of the faithfulness of God. Whether we say *of the faithfulness of God* or 'of the faith of men', both are the same. The form in which the prophet's words have been handed down already points in both directions. It is the faithfulness of God which we encounter so unescapably in the prophet's 'No': God the Holy One, the altogether Other. It is the faith of men which we meet in the awe of those who affirm the 'No' and are ready to accept the void and to move and tarry in negation. Where the faithfulness of God encounters the fidelity of men, there is manifested His righteousness. There shall the righteous man live.

This is the theme of the Epistle to the Romans.

THE NIGHT

ITS CAUSE

I. 18-21

v. 18. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth imprisoned in the chains of their unrighteousness.

In the name of God! We know not what we should say to this. The believer knows our ignorance. With Job, he loves the God who in His unsearchable eminence is only to be feared: with Luther, he loves the *deus absconditus*. To him is manifested the righteousness of God. He shall be saved, and he alone. 'Only the prisoner shall be free, only the poor shall be rich, only the weak strong, only the humble exalted, only the empty filled, only nothing shall be something' (Luther). But against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men there is revealed the wrath of God.

The wrath of God is the judgement under which we stand in so far as we do not love the Judge; it is the 'No' which meets us when we do not affirm it; it is the protest pronounced always and everywhere against the course of the world in so far as we do not accept the protest as our own; it is the questionableness of life in so far as we do not apprehend it; it is our boundedness and corruptibility in so far as we do not acknowledge their necessity. The judgement under which we stand is a fact, quite apart from our attitude to it. Indeed, it is the fact most characteristic of our life. Whether it enters within the light of salvation and of the coming world depends upon the answer we

give to the problem of faith. But it is a fact, even should we choose the scandal rather than faith (i. 16). That time is nothing when measured by the standard of eternity, that all things are semblance when measured by their origin and by their end, that we are sinners, and that we must die—all these things ARE, even though the barrier be not for us the place of exit. Life moves on its course in its vast uncertainty and we move with it, even though we do not see the great question-mark that is set against us. Men are lost, even though they know nothing of salvation. Then the barrier remains a barrier and does not become a place of exit. The prisoner remains a prisoner and does not become the watchman. Then is waiting not joyful but a bitter-sweet surrender to what is inevitable. Then is the contradiction not hope, but a sorrowful opposition. The fruitful paradox of our existence is then that which consumes it like a worm. And Negation is then—what is normally meant by the word. In the place of the Holy God there then appear Fate, Matter, the Universe, Chance, ANANKE. Indeed, a certain perception is betrayed when we begin to avoid giving the name 'God' to the 'No-God' of unbelief (i. 17). That which we, apart from faith in the resurrection, name 'God', is also a final consequence of the divine wrath. But the God who, contradicting His own name, affirms the course of this world, is God—God in His wrath, God who sorrows on our behalf, God who can only turn Himself from us and say only 'No'. And yet, for this very reason, no upright man can unreservedly name Him 'God'. For the wrath of God cannot be His last word, the true revelation of Him! 'Not-God' cannot seriously be named 'God'. Nevertheless, it is, in fact, always God against whom we are thrust. Even the unbeliever encounters God, but he does not penetrate through to the truth of God that is hidden from him, and so he is broken to pieces on God, as Pharaoh was (ix. 15-18). 'Everything that thwarts and damages the life that has been made by God, all the frailty and bondage of the creaturely life, including the sentence of death under which it lies, is a reaction of the power of God' (Zündel). Yes, but we must add that, if we do not make the apprehension of this divine reaction our own, we must perish at its hands. The whole world is the footprint of God; yes, but, in so far as we choose scandal rather than faith, the footprint in the vast riddle of the world is the footprint of His wrath. The wrath of God is to unbelief the discovery of His righteousness, for God is not mocked. The wrath of God is the righteousness of God—apart from and without Christ.

But what does 'apart from and without Christ' mean? **The wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.** These are the characteristic features of our relation to God, as it takes shape on this side resurrection. Our relation to God is *ungodly*. We suppose that we know what we are saying when we say 'God'. We assign to Him the highest place in our world: and in so doing we place Him fundamentally on one line with ourselves and with things. We assume that He *needs something*: and so we assume that we are able to arrange our relation to Him as we arrange our other relationships. We press ourselves into proximity with Him: and so, all unthinking, we make Him nigh unto ourselves. We allow ourselves an ordinary communication with Him, we permit ourselves to reckon with Him as though this were not extraordinary behaviour on our part. We dare to deck ourselves out as His companions, patrons, advisers, and commissioners. We confound time with eternity. This is the *ungodliness* of our relation to God. And our relation to God is *unrighteous*. Secretly we are ourselves the masters in this relationship. We are not concerned with God, but with our own requirements, to which God must adjust Himself. Our arrogance demands that, in addition to everything else, some super-world should also be known and accessible to us. Our conduct calls for some deeper sanction, some approbation and remuneration from another world. Our well-regulated, pleasurable life longs for some hours of devotion, some prolongation into infinity. And so, when we set God upon the throne of the world, we mean by God ourselves. In 'believing' on Him, we justify, enjoy, and adore ourselves. Our devotion consists in a solemn affirmation of ourselves and of the world and in a pious setting aside of the contradiction. Under the banners of humility and emotion we rise in rebellion against God. We confound time with eternity. That is our *unrighteousness*.—Such is our relation to God apart from and without Christ, on this side resurrection, and before we are called to order. God Himself is not acknowledged as God and what is called 'God' is in fact Man. By living to ourselves, we serve the 'No-God'.

Who hold the truth imprisoned in unrighteousness. This second characteristic is in point of time the first. Men fall a prey first to themselves and then to the 'No-God'. First is heard the promise—*ye shall be as God!*—and then men lose the sense for eternity. First mankind is exalted, and then men obscure the distance between God and man. The nodal point in the relation between God and man apart from and without

Christ is the unrighteousness of slaves. Thinking of ourselves what can be thought only of God, we are unable to think of Him more highly than we think of ourselves. Being to ourselves what God ought to be to us, He is no more to us than we are to ourselves. This secret identification of ourselves with God carries with it our isolation from Him. The little god must, quite appropriately, dispossess the great God. Men have *imprisoned* and encased the *truth*—the righteousness of God; they have trimmed it to their own measure, and thereby robbed it both of its earnestness and of its significance. They have made it ordinary, harmless, and useless; and thereby transformed it into untruth. This has all been brought to light by their ungodliness, and this ungodliness will not fail to thrust them into ever new forms of unrighteousness. If mankind be itself God, the appearance of the idol is then inevitable. And whenever the idol is honoured, it is inevitable that men, feeling themselves to be the true God, should also feel that they have themselves fashioned the idol. This is the rebellion which makes it impossible for us to see the new dimensional plane which is the boundary of our world and the meaning of our salvation. Against such rebellion there can be revealed only the wrath of God.

vv. 19–21. Because that which may be known of God is manifest to them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; so that they are without excuse: because that, in spite of knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened.

That which may be known of God is manifest unto them. The truth concerning the limiting and dissolving of men by the unknown God, which breaks forth in the resurrection, is a known truth: this is the tragic factor in the story of the passion of the truth. When our limitation is apprehended, and when He is perceived who, in bounding us, is also the dissolution of our limitation, the most primitive as well as the most highly developed forms of human self-consciousness become repeatedly involved in a 'despairing humiliation', in the 'irony of intelligence' (H. Cohen). We know that God is He whom we do not know, and that our ignorance is precisely the problem and the source of our knowledge. We know that God

is the Personality which we are not, and that this lack of Personality is precisely what dissolves and establishes our personality. The recognition of the absolute heteronomy under which we stand is itself an autonomous recognition; and this is precisely *that which may be known of God*. When we rebel, we are in rebellion not against what is foreign to us but against that which is most intimately ours, not against what is removed from us but against that which lies at our hands. Our memory of God accompanies us always as problem and as warning. He is the hidden abyss; but He is also the hidden home at the beginning and end of all our journeyings. Disloyalty to Him is disloyalty to ourselves.

For the invisible things of God are clearly seen. This we have forgotten, and we must allow it to be brought once more to our minds. Our lack of humility, our lack of recollection, our lack of fear in the presence of God, are not in our present condition inevitable, however natural they may seem to us. Plato in his wisdom recognized long ago that behind the visible there lies the invisible universe which is the Origin of all concrete things. And moreover, the solid good sense of the men of the world had long ago perceived that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The clear, honest eyes of the poet in the book of Job and of the Preacher Solomon had long ago rediscovered, mirrored in the world of appearance, the archetypal, unobservable, undiscoverable Majesty of God. The speech of God can always be heard out of the whirlwind. Always it requires of us that we should perceive how unwisely we speak of that which is too high for us, too far beyond our understanding, when, in praising God or in complaining of Him, we plead with Him as with One who is like unto us. The insecurity of our whole existence, the vanity and utter questionableness of all that is and of what we are, lie as in a text-book open before us. What are all those enigmatic creatures of God—a zoological garden, for example—but so many problems to which we have no answer? But God only, God Himself, He is the Answer. And so the boundary which bars us in and which, nevertheless, points beyond itself, can **since the creation of the world be clearly seen through the things that are made by God**. By calm, veritable, unprejudiced religious contemplation the divine 'No' can be established and apprehended. If we do not ourselves hinder it, nothing can prevent our being translated into a most wholesome KRISIS by that which *may be known of God*. And indeed, we stand already in this KRISIS if we would but *see clearly*. And what is clearly seen to be indisputable reality is the invisibility of God, which is precisely and in strict

agreement with the gospel of the resurrection—**His everlasting power and divinity**. And what does this mean but that we can know nothing of God, that we are not God, that the Lord is to be feared? Herein lies His pre-eminence over all gods; and here is that which marks Him out as God, as Creator, and as Redeemer (i. 16). And so through all history there runs the line of intersection between time and eternity, between the present and the future world (i. 4). Long ago it was proclaimed (i. 2); always it was visible. The wrath of God needed not to be revealed to those who stood already under His judgement, for they could have known and loved the Judge. **So that**, when they fail to see and fail to hear, **they are without excuse**. Having eyes to see and ears to hear they are doing what they are doing. Inexcusable is their godlessness, for the *clearly seen* works of God speak of His *everlasting power* and they have already risen up in protest against the service of the 'No-God', by which God is ranged in the midst of the natural and 'spiritual' and other forces of this world. Inexcusable also is their unrighteousness, for the *clearly seen* facts bear witness to the *everlasting divinity* of God, and have already risen up in protest against the arrogance of religion, by which men, speaking of God from the welter of their experiences, mean in fact themselves. We have, therefore, encased the truth of God and evoked His wrath. But this was not because no alternative was open to us. God is not far from each one of us: *for in him we live, and move, and have our being* (Acts xvii. 27, 28). The situation might, therefore, have been very different.

But—in spite of knowing God. The knowledge of God attainable through a simple observation of the incomprehensibility, the imperfection, the triviality of human life, was not taken advantage of. The invisibility of God seems to us less tolerable than the questionable visibility of what we like to call 'God'. We make of the eternal and ultimate presupposition of the Creator a 'thing in itself' above and in the midst of other things, of that which is living and abstracted from all concreteness a concrete thing—no doubt the highest—in the midst of other concrete things, of the Spirit a spirit, of what is inaccessible and therefore so nigh at hand an endlessly uncertain object of our experiences. Rather than see in His Light—eternal and which no man can approach unto—the Light, we allow Him to become a light—no doubt the most brilliant and, indeed, immaterial and supernatural—at which we kindle our own lights and then, quite consistently, seek to find in concrete things their own light. If, then, God is to us no longer the

Unknown, what has become of the **glory** we owe Him? If God is to us no longer what we are not, what has become of the **thanks** which are due to Him? The revolt of Prometheus is wholly justified when once Zeus—the 'No-God'—has been exalted to the throne of God.

And so the light has become in us darkness, and the wrath of God is inevitable—**They became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened.** The barrier is now indeed a barrier, and the 'No' of God is now indeed negation. Bereft of understanding and left to themselves, men are at the mercy of the dominion of the meaningless powers of the world; for our life in this world has meaning only in its relation to the true God. But this relation can be re-established only through the—*clearly seen*—memory of eternity breaking in upon our minds and hearts. There is no other relation to God save that which appears upon the road along which Job travelled. If this 'breaking in' does not occur, our thought remains merely empty, formal, critical and unproductive, incapable of mastering the rich world of appearance and of apprehending each particular thing in the context of the whole. Unbroken thought thereby divests itself of any true relation to the concrete world, and, contrariwise, the unbroken heart, that is to say, that sensitiveness to things which is guarded by no final insight, divests itself of the control of thought. Dark, blind, uncritical, capricious, mankind becomes a thing in itself. Heartless, perceiving without observing and therefore empty, is our thought: thoughtless, observing without perceiving and therefore blind, is our heart. Fugitive is the soul in this world and soulless is the world, when men do not find themselves within the sphere of the knowledge of the unknown God, when they avoid the true God in whom they and the world must lose themselves in order that both may find themselves again.

This is the Cause of the Night in which we are wandering: this also is the Cause of the Wrath of God which has been manifested over our heads.

ITS OPERATION

I. 22-32

v. 22. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

The picture of a world without paradox and without eternity, of knowing without the background of not-knowing, of a religion without the unknown God, of a view of life without the memory

of the 'No' by which we are encountered, has much to be said in its favour. It evokes confidence, for it is simple and straightforward and uncramped; it provides considerable security and has few ragged edges; it corresponds, generally speaking, with what is required by the practical experiences of life; its standards and general principles are conveniently vague and flexible; and it possesses, moreover, a liberal prospect of vast future possibilities. Once the possibility that things can be *clearly seen* (i. 20) is abandoned, men are able against this background to profess that they are wise. The Night, too, has its wisdom. But, nevertheless, the vanity of the mind and the darkness of the heart still remain facts to be reckoned with. The brilliance of this unbroken wisdom cannot be maintained in the actual course of events, for they have passed inevitably under the wrath of God. That God is not known as God is due, not merely to some error of thought or to some gap in experience, but to a fundamentally wrong attitude to life. Vanity of mind and blindness of heart inevitably bring into being corrupt conduct. The more the unbroken man marches along his road secure of himself, the more surely does he make a fool of himself, the more certainly do that morality and that manner of life which are built up upon a forgetting of the abyss, upon a forgetting of men's true home, turn out to be a lie. It is indeed not difficult to show that this is so.

vv. 23, 24. And changed the glory of the incorruptible God for an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonoured among themselves.

They changed the glory of the incorruptible—for an image of the corruptible. That is to say, the understanding of what is characteristic of God was lost. They had lost their knowledge of the crevasse, the polar zone, the desert barrier, which must be crossed if men are really to advance from corruption to incorruption. The distance between God and man had no longer its essential, sharp, acid, and disintegrating ultimate significance. The difference between the incorruption, the pre-eminence and originality of God, and the corruption, the boundedness and relativity of men had been confused. Once the eye, which can perceive this distinction, has been blinded, there arises in the midst, between here and there, between us and the 'Wholly Other', a mist or concoction of religion in which, by a whole

series of skilful assimilations and mixings more or less strongly flavoured with sexuality, sometimes the behaviour of men or of animals is exalted to be an experience of God, sometimes the Being and Existence of God is 'enjoyed' as a human or animal experience. In all this mist the prime factor is provided by the illusion that it is possible for men to hold communication with God or, at least, to enter into a covenant relationship with Him without miracle—vertical from above, without the dissolution of all concrete things, and apart from **THE** truth which lies beyond birth and death. But, on whatever level it occurs, if the experience of religion is more than a void, or claims to contain or to possess or to 'enjoy' God, it is a shameless and abortive anticipation of that which can proceed from the unknown God alone. In all this busy concern with concrete things there is always a revolt against God. For in it we assist at the birth of the 'No-God', at the making of idols. Enveloped in mist, we forget not merely that all that passes to corruption is a parable, but also that it is **ONLY** a parable. The glory of the incorruptible God has been confused with the image (Ps. cvi. 20) of corruptible things. Some one of the relationships of men to the objects of their fear or of their desire, to some means of their subsistence, to some product of their own thought or action, to some impressive occurrence in nature or in history, is taken to be in itself significant and of supreme importance, as though even this selected relationship were not broken by the witness it bears to the unknown Creator whose glory cannot be confused with the known glory of an image, however pure and delicate. From such supposed direct communion with God—genuine only when it is not genuine, when it is not romanticized into an 'experience', when it is at once dissolved and claims to be merely an open space, a sign-post, an occasion, and an opportunity—there emerge precisely all those intermediary, collateral, lawless divinities and powers and authorities and principalities (viii. 38) that obscure and discolour the light of the true God. In the realm of romantic direct communion—in India, for example—these divinities are thrown up in the most extravagant numbers. Wherever the qualitative distinction between men and the final Omega is overlooked or misunderstood, that fetishism is bound to appear in which God is experienced in **birds and fourfooted things**, and finally, or rather primarily, in the **likeness of corruptible man**—Personality, the Child, the Woman—and in the half-spiritual, half-material creations, exhibitions, and representations of His creative ability—Family, Nation, State, Church, Fatherland. And so the 'No-God' is

set up, idols are erected, and God, who dwells beyond all this and that, is 'given up'.

Wherefore God gave them up. The confusion avenges itself and becomes its own punishment. The forgetting of the true God is already itself the breaking loose of His wrath against those who forget Him (i. 18). The enterprise of setting up the 'No-God' is avenged by its success. Deified nature and deified spirits of men are, in truth, very gods; like Jupiter and Mars, Isis and Osiris, Cybele and Attis, they come to be the very breath of our life. Our conduct becomes governed precisely by what we desire. By a strict inevitability we reach the goal we have set before us. The images and likenesses, whose meaning we have failed to perceive, become themselves purpose and content and end. And now men have really become slaves and puppets of things, of 'Nature' and of 'Civilization', whose dissolution and establishing by God they have overlooked. And now there is no higher power to protect them from what they have set on high. And, moreover, the uncleanness of their relation to God submerges their lives also in uncleanness. When God has been deprived of His glory, men are also deprived of theirs. Desecrated within in their souls, they are desecrated also without in their bodies, for men are one. The concreteness of the creatureliness of their lives becomes now dishonour; and lust—sexuality both in the narrower and in the wider sense of the word—becomes, as the primary motive-power of their whole desire and striving, altogether questionable and open to suspicion. The whole ignominy of the course of the world they must now bear and bemoan and curse as ignominy; and further, in their separation from God they must continue to give it ever new birth. They have wished to experience the known god of this world: well! they have experienced him.

vv. 25-7. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural relation of the sexes into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in their own body that recompense of their error which was due.

They exchanged the truth for a lie. Complete rebellion from God soon takes to itself more pronounced forms. It would not

be unexpected were direct experience of God to have occasioned some occasional and rather humorous changes, some superficial errors, some dissolution of the Truth of God into a number of worldly-wise maxims. But though this is, no doubt, possible, it is not long before the Truth is quite seriously exchanged for a lie. The tiny mist between God and man, by which the far distance is obscured, soon becomes a veritable sea of clouds. Some half-conscious resentment at the unknown God very soon becomes fully conscious. The dazzled eye is soon damaged. Principalities and powers, formerly but seldom exalted to the throne, are soon established there, encircled with a halo of *everlasting power and divinity* (i. 20). The Creator, the eternal Archetype, meanwhile grows ever more and more 'abstract', 'theoretical', insignificant, and unloved. The completely concrete 'No-God' has won his victory, even though there may, perhaps, remain some bleak survival of the Unknown behind what is thought to be genuinely significant and magnificent, some occasional reference to a final secret in the midst of so much busy service of him whom we name 'God'. The only reality, the unknown, living God, appears nebulous, problematical, and unreal, whereas the world, separated from Him, and men, unbroken by any memory of Him, appear in a nimbus of security, necessity, and reality. The world is **worshipped and served**—if it be necessary, quite apart from its Creator. In their general view of the world scientists and historians are in far closer agreement with philosophers and theologians than is normally recognized. It is not merely that the world exists side by side with God: it has taken His place, and has itself become God, and demands 'the same devotion which the old-fashioned believer offered to His God' (Dr. F. Strauss). Contradictions within the deified world—Nature and Civilization, Materialism and Idealism, Capitalism and Socialism, Secularism and Ecclesiasticism, Imperialism and Democracy—are not so serious as they give themselves out to be. Such contradictions are contradictions within the world, and there is for them no paradox, no negation, no eternity.

For this cause God gave them up. Unbroken naturalness is not pure. Nor are matters improved when 'naturalness' is penetrated by piety. In 'naturalness' there is always secreted that which is non-natural, and, indeed, that which actually contradicts nature. This contradictory factor awaits the hour when it will break forth. When, by allowing nature to run its course freely and uncontradicted, God and the world have become confused with one another, there comes into

prominence a further confusion: what cannot be avoided or escaped from becomes confused with some necessity of nature, and this is in very truth a demonic caricature of the necessity of God. These two confusions stand altogether on one line, they belong together and cohere together. What is at first merely open to suspicion moves inexorably on to what is positively absurd. Everything then becomes Libido: life becomes totally erotic. When the frontier between God and man, the last inexorable barrier and obstacle, is not closed, the barrier between what is normal and what is perverse is opened.

vv. 28-31. A final and even sharper pointing of the whole situation is not only conceivable but actually takes place. In the perversity of this relation to God there still, however, remains a relic of clarity of sight, a last, warning recollection of the secret of God that withstands the arrogance of religion. A reflection of this secret lies even in the deified forces of the world, even in the deified universe itself. From time to time this bare relic of the Unknown reasserts itself in the presentiment of awe. But even this can cease. The damaged eye may become blind. Defective knowledge can become ignorance of God; it may become AGNOSIA (I Cor. xv. 34). **Even as they refused to have God in their knowledge.**—That is to say, they became no longer capable of serious awe and amazement. They become unable to reckon with anything except feelings and experiences and events. They think only in terms of more or less spiritual sophistry, without light from above or from behind.—**God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful.** Here is the final vacuity and disintegration. Chaos has found itself, and anything may happen. The atoms whirl, the struggle for existence rages. Even reason itself becomes irrational. Ideas of duty and of fellowship become wholly unstable. The world is full of personal caprice and social unrighteousness—this is not a picture merely of Rome under the Caesars! The true nature of our unbroken existence is here unrolled before us. Our ungodliness and unrighteousness stand under the wrath of God. His judgement now becomes judgement and nothing more;

and we experience the impossibility of men as the real and final impossibility of God.

v. 32. It ought not to be difficult for us to perceive this sequence, but—**Knowing the ordinance of God, that they which practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them.** This is the wisdom of the Night issuing in folly (i. 22): folly, because it holds firmly to a two-dimensional plane, a plane persistently contradicted by actual occurrence. The wisdom of the Night knows whither the unbroken road is leading. It understands quite clearly the meaning of its direction and of its goal. It knows the Cause; it sees the Operation; but it dare not give the command to halt. The road of those who forget their Creator is accompanied always by a strange complaint against the frailty of human existence, and by indictments against human sinfulness. But in spite of all this, with their eyes fixed upon the earth, they affirm the edifice which is erected on it, concentrate their desire upon it, approve it, hope for its continued existence, and, regardless of every protest, constitute themselves its guardians. But why is it so difficult to remember what has been forgotten, though it is quite clear that the operation of this forgetfulness and the end of our wandering in the Night is—Death?

The Second Chapter

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF MEN

THE JUDGE

II. I-13

To whom, then, *is the wrath of God revealed* (i. 18)? And what is the situation which can be seen only in the light of His wrath? Who are these men who have adopted the known God of this world, the No-God, as their God? Who are the ungodly and the unrighteous whom God has given up? Can every single man, all humanity, be meant? Must it be assumed that we all stand before the barrier and that, unless we are aware of our position, we must remain barred up and our lives but vanity and darkness? Or may not some perhaps, even though they be few, be able to avoid this situation? May not the wrath of God be just one possibility, peculiar to a certain type of men and women and characteristic of certain periods of history? Are there in the army of light no heroes who have broken through and escaped from the darkness? Is there not marching side by side with ungodliness and unrighteousness a veritable righteousness of men? Can we not imagine, and does there not actually exist, a humble godliness by which men achieve a higher order of existence and become thereby no longer worthy of death (i. 32)? Is not their faith an obvious psychological and historical fact? Does not this very faith enable them to escape from the ungodliness of this world and free themselves from the bars behind which we all are confined? Have they—*But we*—not scaled a height that is inaccessible to the generality of men, whence, as men apart, they look virtuously down upon those beneath them, incapable, as yet, of the perception to which they have attained? Does not an island of the blest rise from the ocean of the unfortunate: an island of men able to hear the long-promised Gospel of God? If we are able to conceive the possibility of honouring the unknown God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, does not this carry with it the possibility of escape from the burden of His wrath? Has none held himself upright at the bar of the divine judgement of the world as it is, and, after his removal from the darkness, sat down by the side of God as His assessor in judgement? Or must we take it that the circle is closed and that no one has eluded the inevitability of cause and effect, of downfall and apostasy, which is the mark of men as men and of the world as the world?

vv. 1, 2. Wherefore thou art without excuse, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest dost practise the same things. But we know that the judgement of God is according to the standard of the truth against them that practise such things.

Without excuse. Those who do not know the unknown God (i. 18-21) have neither occasion nor possibility of lifting themselves up. So is it also with those who know Him; for they too are men; they too belong to the world of time. There is no human righteousness by which men can escape the wrath of God! There is no magnificent temporality of this world which can justify men before God. There is no arrangement of affairs or deportment of behaviour, no disposition of mind or depth of feeling, no intuition or understanding, which is, by its own virtue, pleasing to God. Men are men, and they belong to the world of men: *that which is born of the flesh is flesh*. Every concrete and tangible thing belongs within the order of time. Everything which emerges in men and which owes its form and expansion to them is always and everywhere, and as such, ungodly and unclean. The kingdom of men is, without exception, never the Kingdom of God; and since there are no men so fortunate as to be incumbents in the Kingdom of God, no man can exonerate or excuse himself.

Wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself. Whenever thou dost erect thyself upon a pedestal, thou dost wrong; whensoever thou sayest 'I' or 'we' or 'it is so', thou dost exchange the glory of the incorruptible for the image of the corruptible (i. 23); wherein thou dost undertake to give glory to the unknown God, as though it were a possible undertaking, thou dost imprison and encyst the truth, for thou dost assert godliness and humility to be thine, and thou art thereby marked as ungodly and unrighteous. The removal of thyself from the burden of the world by some pretended insight or vision does but press the burden of the world more heavily upon thee than upon any other. By striding ahead of others, even though it be for their assistance, as though the secret of God were known to thee, thou dost manifest thyself ignorant of His secret; for by thy removal from thy brethren thou dost render thyself incapable of assisting even the most helpless among them. By beholding folly as the folly of others, thine own folly cries out to heaven. Even negation of this world and perception of the paradox of life; even submission to the judgement of God and waiting upon Him; even 'brokenness'; even the behaviour of the 'Biblical Man'—

if these proceed from the adoption of a point of view, of a method, of a system, or of a particular kind of behaviour, by which men distinguish themselves from other men—are no more than the righteousness of men. And even faith, if it proceeds from anything but a void, is unbelief; for it is then once again the appearance of the slavery of unrighteousness seeking to suppress the dawning truth of God, the disturbance of all disturbings. Here again is that contempt and presumption which fails to perceive the distance between God and man, and which inevitably exalts and enthrones the no-God of this world. Here again is that assimilation of God and man, by which God is withdrawn from His isolation. Here again is that 'romance of the infinite' and its venerable shibboleth: *The temple of the Lord are these!* (Jer. vii. 4). Thy present action, then, is human rebellion; and it evokes the wrath of God.

For thou that judgest doest the same things. What is true of the generality of men is true also of the men of God. As men they do not differ from other men (i. 1). There is no fragment or epoch of history which can be pronounced divine. The whole history of the Church and of all religion takes place in this world. What is called the 'history of our salvation' is not an event in the midst of other events, but is nothing less than the KRISIS of all history. There are no saints in the midst of a company of sinners; for where men have claimed to be saints, they are thereby marked as not-saints. Their criticism and invective and indictment of the world inevitably place them—unless they be themselves its object—within the course of this world and betray that they too are of it. Their indictment springs not from their capacity to help but from their own distress; it is of this world; it is a talking about life, not life itself; its illumination is artificial; it marks no rising of the sun nor breaking of the dawn. This is as true of Paul, the prophet and apostle of the Kingdom of God, and of Jeremiah, as it is of Luther, Kierkegaard, and Blumhardt! It applies both to St. Francis, who far surpassed Jesus in 'love', childishness, and austerity, and to the distinctive sanctity of Tolstoy. Everything human swims with the stream either with vehement protest or with easy accommodation, even when it appears to hover above it or to engage in conflict with it. Christ is not one of the righteous. Since power belongs only to God, it is the tragic story of every man of God that he has to contend for the right of God by placing himself in the wrong. This must be so if the men of God are not to usurp the place of God.

We know that the judgement of God is according to the

standard of the truth. The man of God is aware of the true and tragic and paradoxical state of affairs. He knows what he is about when he adopts a point of view which is no point of view, and when he in nowise regards himself as excused by his vocation. The men of God know that belief is faith only when it is the product of no historical or spiritual achievement. They know that faith is the ineffable reality of God, that clarity of sight (i. 20) is no system, no discovery of research, but the eternal ground of perception. They know also that in itself faith can be no more justified than any other human achievement. They do not escape from the paradox by making it another fragment of the concrete world. They do not evacuate the divine negation by too nearly accommodating it to their own human negation. They do not blunt the austerity of judgement by supposing it to be a temporal station through which they have passed in their spiritual pilgrimage (*ordo salutis*) and which they have left behind. They do not make of the dawning righteousness of the Gospel of salvation a hole into which they can creep or a fortress in which they can resist the attacks of others. They know the judgement of God to be *according to the standard of truth*; and if men are measured by the standard of the truth of God, who can withstand it? Can stability be attained anywhere or at any time?

vv. 3-5. And reckonest thou this, O man, who judgest them that practise such things, and doest the same, that thou in particular shalt escape the judgement of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, and dost thou not perceive that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? but with thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up for thyself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God.

And reckonest thou that thou in particular shalt escape the judgement of God? The reckoning of the righteousness of men is false; it contains, moreover, a false entry. Thou hast credited to thine own account that which belongs to God. What God has given thee, thou hast accounted a human possibility and achievement. What has been bestowed upon thee in eternity, thou hast counted as possessing temporal validity. Thou dost overlook of what slight importance is the eminence upon which thou art standing. Thou failest to perceive that even now a question is being asked of thee to which thou canst give no answer. Thou dost not understand that the course of history

does not in itself constitute the judgement upon history. In laying violent and foolish hands upon the visible and temporal things of this world, thou lovest the things that are invisible and eternal. When thou boastest of faith as of some achievement of men, the divine operation in faith is ended, and it is degraded to a worthless and transitory thing of this world. The more thou dost attempt to escape from the judgement of God according to the standard of truth, the more completely is thy way barred.

Dost thou not perceive that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? How does it, then, come about that there are any such stalwarts in the army of light? How is it that there exist any far-seeing and intelligent men—real men, living in the real world—who, like the Jews of the time of Jesus, have caught a glimpse of the Last Things, and to whom waiting upon God, upon God alone, is well known? In such men a miracle has occurred above, behind, and in them. They have encountered the grace of God; have met the incomprehensibility of God, as Job did—*out of the whirlwind*. They were terrified in their ungodliness and unrighteousness and were shaken out of their dreaming. It was as though the veil of the mist of religion was dispersed and the cloud of divine wrath was rent asunder; and they heard the undiscoverable, saw the negation of God! felt the barrier of the judgement, the paradox of existence, and, hopeful in their distress, divined the meaning of life. They came to themselves in fear and awe and trembling and in—‘clarity of sight’. In the presence of God they were compelled to stand still. What, then, is all this? Is it mysticism, or intuition, or ecstasy, or a miraculous occurrence granted to peculiarly gifted men or to men who have been especially guided? Can it be described as an experience of certain pure souls, or as a discovery of the intelligence; as an achievement of will, or as a response to peculiarly intense prayer? No, assuredly not. There have been purer souls and wiser heads; there have been men of greater energy of life and of greater spiritual perception; but God has not spoken to them. There are mystics and ecstasies who have never *seen clearly*. The encounter of grace depends upon no human possession: for achievement—even awe and awakening—is of no value and has no independent validity in the Presence of God. When God speaks and is recognized, we are unable to speak of human existence or possessions or enjoyment. He who has been chosen by God cannot say that he has chosen God. When room is found for awe and humility in the presence of God, that is, when there arises the possibility of faith, this is intelligible only as impossibility,—**as the riches of his goodness**. Whereas I was

blind, now I see; How have I deserved this?—simply as **forbearance** of the wrath of God: How is it that I have been chosen out of the great multitude?—simply as the inexplicable **long-suffering** of God towards me. What can He expect of me, that He has granted this unprecedented possibility TO ME? Nothing can be put forward to account for and explain this emphatic 'TO' and 'ME'; absolutely nothing. It all hangs in the air: it is a pure, absolute, vertical miracle. Every phrase descriptive of human experience is here irrelevant; for we cannot claim even to exist. We are once again faced by the undimensional line of intersection. The dialectic of the miracle of God is expressed in the words: *The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.* What is demanded of men by God can be demanded only by God, can be only a new call to God, a new call to conversion, awe, humility, a new requirement to abandon every security and to resign every honour, to give glory to God, to the unknown God, as something always new, as something that has never been done before. Every claim to be a proprietor, which might be deduced from such surrender, is a misunderstanding of election, a misunderstanding of the call which has been given, a misunderstanding of God. Every positive claim to be an exception renders the man who has some perception of God like unto him who has no perception whatever: *Dost thou not perceive that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?* Dost thou not know that there is no other possibility of correct perception?

If thou dost not perceive this—**with thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up for thyself wrath.** Misunderstanding such as this immediately condenses, solidifies, hardens, into a solid mass of misunderstanding. For the initial misunderstanding causes every human thought and word and action, however pure and delicate, to unite as elements in the composition of one hard and solid lump. There comes into being what is known as the 'religious' life, which is regarded as something peculiar, which is contrasted with the life of the generality of men, and which, because it is nothing more than romantic unbelief, has no protection against the enmity of those who despise it. There emerges from the *righteousness of God* of the Prophets the human righteousness of the Pharisees, which is as such ungodliness and unrighteousness. The righteousness of God, when misunderstood, remains hidden. Each concrete and tangible disposition of human affairs so that they may conform to the will of God marks the presence of the prophet turned pharisee: he who engages in dispositions of this sort stands under the authority of him who is No-God, and round him gather the threatening clouds of the wrath

of God. He has falsified his accounts by failing to disclose how serious his position is. Though he piles up higher and higher his divine claims, his divine assurance, and his divine delights, he does but build a Tower of Babel. Behind the screen of his daily disposing waits the eternal day of wrath and of the just judgment of God. Standing upon his eminence, he HAS already BEEN cast down; the friend of God, he IS His declared and most bitter enemy; the righteous man, he HAS already BEEN judged. He must not be surprised if what he is be suddenly manifested and made known.

vv. 6-11. The standard by which men are measured is not of this world. It is eternal, as God is; it is itself God. God seeks continually that men should be open to Him and to Him only. By dissolving us, He establishes us; by killing us, He gives us life. We shall be redeemed, because we shall all be changed—at the sound of the last trump. The righteous man, so the passage continues—yes, precisely, the righteous man, the believer—stands upright before this God, **who will render to every man according to his works: to them that by patient continuing, which is the mark of well-doing, seek the glory and honour and incorruption of God, with eternal life: but unto them that have the minds of slaves and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there waits wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek; but glory and honour and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for there is no respect of persons with God.**

Who will render to every man according to his works. Who is it that will thus *render*? He it is in whose presence men are deceitful and of no worth; He, whom men, abounding with ill-gotten riches, ought never to have forgotten; He, whose last word is that to HIM belongeth power and mercy (Ps. lxii. 9-12; LXX); He, before whom men are bound to acknowledge, 'I know Him not', in order that they may perceive that they are known by Him (Prov. xxiv. 12; LXX). He—God—it is who *renders* unto men according to their works and by the valuation which He puts upon them creates their value or their worthlessness; His is the decision between good and evil; in Him we discover our intelligence or our folly, our heaven or our hell. *Works*—our doing and our not-doing, our inner disposition and the outward ordering of our lives—are significant only within the inner and outer course of our temporal existence. Notable our *works*

may be; but we must not over-estimate them, we must not raise them to the order of infinity. God alone is the merchant who can pay in the currency of eternity. He alone can make a valuation which is eternally valid.

The miracle therefore can take place whereby—to **them that seek his glory and honour and incorruption** He renders **eternal life**. That is to say, it is possible that to the awe and lowliness with which men, within the limitations of human experience, seek after God and after Him only, there corresponds a real finding of Him. It can be that the earlier vessel of faith, despite its manifest uncomeliness, does contain eternal life; it may be that the **patient continuing** of human waiting and hurrying does mark the presence and operation of a real **well-doing**; it may be that what a man does is **good**, in spite of the weakness of the flesh and in spite of all the marks of his inadequacy; it may be that his actions already indicate the **glory and honour and peace** of the Coming World. But this possibility can be neither embodied in human conduct nor conceived of by human thought. When it exists, it exists as the possibility of God and as His possibility only. Confronted by it, the man of the world and the man of God, the Greek and the Jew, are assembled together upon one line. They all share in the promise of God and in His promise only. The possibility of God can never be embodied in one form of human righteousness which may be compared and contrasted with other forms of human righteousness or unrighteousness. The believer—who does the *good work*—can never behave as though this work of his were his possession to be played off against another's lack of possession. The believer will never say 'I act', but 'God acts'; he will never say 'God has rendered', but '*God will render*'! (ii. 13, iii. 30, v. 17, 19.) Awe and lowliness before God will wish to be nought but void and deprivation and hope.

There can, however, also take place that other terrible miracle whereby—**Unto them that obey unrighteousness, there waits wrath and indignation**. It is possible that to what appears to human eyes to be undeniably awe and lowliness there corresponds no finding of the true God, but only a finding of him who is No-God (i. 23, ii. 1, 2). It can be that there awaits it the manifestation of divine displeasure (ii. 5); it may be that God renders to the work of men wrath and indignation; it may be that those who plainly conduct themselves as prophets have in His sight but—the **minds of slaves**; it may be that they are 'workmen, who, regardless of their employer, labour only for the reward which is due to them' (Zahn). A brilliant devotion or obedience

to truth may turn out to be utter disobedience, and an all-pervading humility may be nothing but unrighteousness. Those who 'mean well' may be evil and ripe unto judgement. Yet this possibility also cannot be grasped by human intelligence. It too comes from God and from Him only. No man is secure before it. Here again the Jew and the Greek, the men of God and the men of the world, are assembled together on one line under the threat of judgement. There is no form of human righteousness to which the divine Merchant will assign so high a value that He will certainly purchase it for Himself. Godlessness and unrighteousness can never be other than they are, even though they take on the most noble and delicate forms, even though they become that thing of soul and sense which we call faith. The Judge will never deprive Himself of his right to judge even the righteous. He judges; He himself and He only.

For there is no respect of persons with God. The observable superiority which one man has over another is only his *person*, his mask, his form, the part he takes in the play. To their fellow men it is only this mask which distinguishes one man from another. They can see no more than this. It has, of course, its value. But this distinction of character does not reach beyond the KRISIS of everything that passes to corruption: it does not reach into the realm of incorruption. The standard by which God measures is, however, not of this world. God does not regard the mask. Before Him even the righteous man does not play the role of a righteous man, but is what he veritably is: perhaps he is received as one who seeketh after incorruption; perhaps he is condemned as a rebellious servant. In either case, he, the man himself, is searched out and known. Men are men, and God is God. There is now no vestige left of the alluring security of the Pharisees.

vv. 12, 13. For as many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without the law; and as many as have sinned in the presence of the law shall be judged by the law: for not the hearers of the law are righteous before God, but the doers of the law shall be accounted righteous.

Once again the question presses upon us (ii. 4): Whence then, comes the righteousness of men? And the answer is, it comes by the revelation of God; by the setting forth and communication of the divine law; by divine proximity and election through which men now here, now there, are enabled to have faith in God and to obey Him in awe and in humility (ii. 14). But what proceeds from God is in our eyes a miracle, and by it men

are entitled to claim neither pre-eminence nor security. Sinners they are, and sinners they remain. Rebellion is rebellion; and who has not rebelled? No doubt we can make a superficial distinction between grades of sin. There are those who have sinned in opposition to the known law; and there are those who have sinned whilst far from the law and in ignorance of it. There is an obvious and important distinction between human unbelief and that faith which is also human. But these are superficial distinctions, which belong within the framework of this world. The veritable distinction between men and men, between the saved and the damned, between those who remain under the judgement of God and those who have been released from it, cannot be made according to a human standard. There is both here and there a passing to perdition. The final distinction is made by the *doing* of the law, that is to say, by the actual realization by men of the demands of God, by the whole content, meaning, direction, and disposition, of a man's behaviour. But when it is said that it is by the whole significance of a man's behaviour and action that he is approved or disapproved, this whole significance is the significance which it has FOR GOD and not for men. It is God's approval or disapproval; and it is indifferent whether a man lives, as he does live, without or with law. For it is not—the hearers of the law, that is, those who take notice of it, who have understanding and experience of it, even though they understand and experience the highest revelation of God, who thereby secure His approval. What proceeds from men can neither effect salvation nor itself be—**righteous before God**. It is—the doers of the law who truly hear it, the *Jew which is one inwardly* (ii. 29). The righteousness of these just men is defined by the words—**They shall be accounted (declared) righteous**. There must be no misunderstanding here! It is not said that they ARE righteous, nor that they HAVE BEEN declared righteous; but that they SHALL BE (ii. 6) accounted (declared) righteous. The future is used in order that the last trace of human righteousness, the last vestige of any concrete form of this righteousness, might disappear. Men have in this world of unrighteousness the prospect of the righteousness of the Coming World; they have received here and now, in time, the impetus to an eternal movement. Their righteousness consists in their surrender of the righteousness of men to God, to whom it rightly belongs, and in their complete renunciation of their own righteousness. Where such doers are disclosed by the law, and where such faith is discovered by revelation, there is Christ—the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth

(x. 4, 5); and there, too, is the knowledge of Him who has first known us. Nevertheless, the Judge remains the Judge, until there be a new heaven and a new earth.

THE JUDGEMENT

II. 14-29

vv. 14-16. For when it happens that Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things of the law, these, having no law, are a law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts (their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them); in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men (according to my gospel) by Jesus Christ.

A strangely obscure and provocative piece of information, proceeding, however, from the clear recognition that God is the Judge. Those possessing no revelation stand before God as though they were fully possessed of it; awake in their sleep, righteous in their unrighteousness, they believe whilst they do not believe! This strange occurrence, this firm fragility, must be carefully considered by those who trust in human righteousness.

Gentiles, which have not the law, do the things of the law. The law is the revelation once given by God, given in its completeness. The law is the impression of divine revelation left behind in time, in history, and in the lives of men; it is a heap of clinkers marking a fiery miracle which has taken place, a burnt-out crater disclosing the place where God has spoken, a solemn reminder of the humiliation through which some men had been compelled to pass, a dry canal which in a past generation and under different conditions had been filled with the living water of faith and of clear perception, a canal formed out of ideas and conceptions and commandments, all of which call to mind the behaviour of certain other men, and demand that their conduct should be maintained. The men who *have the law* are the men who inhabit this empty canal. They are stamped with the impress of the true and unknown God, because they possess the form of traditional and inherited religion, or even the form of an experience which once had been theirs. Consequently, they have in their midst the sign-post which points them to God, to the KRISIS of human existence, to the new world which is set at the barrier of this world. Thus directed, the stamp of revelation

appears to them of such supreme importance that they are busily engaged in preserving its impress. *Gentiles which have not the law* are they who lack this direction altogether. Their individual lives and their experiences of history are not stamped by revelation; and they have no impress of it to guard. They may be named sleepers, for they are disturbed by no memory of some incomprehensible occurrence in their experience or in the experience of others. They may be named unbelievers, for they do not seem to be moved either to awe or to amazement at that which is above them: they are marked by no visible brokenness. They may be named unrighteous, for they accept the course of the world without question and are unconscious of the barrier which hems them in. In no sense can they be described as inhabiting the empty canal of revelation. But it can happen that the *Gentiles, which have not the law, do the things of the law*. Because God is the Judge, the doing of the law is a thing distinct from its possession or its hearing (ii. 13). To *do the law* means that revelation occurs, that God speaks. When a man stands before God, awe and humility are inevitable, and this is the righteousness which is valid with God. But revelation is from God; it cannot be compelled to flow between the banks of an empty canal. It can flow there; but it also fashions for itself a new bed in which to run its course, for it is not bound to the impress which it once had made, but is free. It is therefore a mistake to abide by the description of the Gentiles as asleep in unrighteousness and unbelief. They can become God-fearers; without it being evident to others, they can become His elect, for faith is always in itself hidden and unrecognized. Among the Gentiles there is, moreover, a shattering and disturbing awe which those who inhabit the empty canal neither perceive nor understand; but God beholds it and knows its meaning. Whenever the Gentiles grow sceptical of the righteousness of men, there is exposed to them the righteousness of God. By nature and in the natural order they *do the law*. In their merry and worldly dependence upon the creation, in their simple, unpretentious, matter-of-fact behaviour, they are known of God and esteem Him in return. They are not lacking in perception of the corruptibility of all things human; they do not fail to recognize that the dark cloud which bounds our existence is edged by the silver lining of salvation and redemption; they are not without respect for the negation by which the creation is distinguished from the Creator, or for the affirmation which makes them His creatures. Their lives are assuredly only a parable; but perhaps so perfect a parable that they are thereby

justified. The Gentile world no doubt lies in wickedness; but it may be a world so disintegrated, so disorganized, and so undermined, that the mercy of God seems closer and more credible than where the 'Kingdom of God' is displayed in full bloom. Finally, is it not just where nothing noble can find an entrance; just where men are incapable of being impressed by anything at all; just in the midst of the last and deepest scepticism, that there may perhaps exist that brokenness which is the recollection of God, aye, of God Himself? Disturbance of soul, restless murmuring, cavil, and protest: such may be sign-posts to the peace of God which passeth all understanding. What then are *the things of the law*? What does it require and call to remembrance in those who possess it? Surely, exactly what is so strangely presented to us in the children of the world. Can it be, then, that they veritably *do the law*? Can it be that they stand at the source of the river? Why should it not be so? Can the man who has himself known the riches of the goodness of God (ii. 4), and has himself perceived His revelation to be wholly undeserved, incomprehensible, and independent of human worth, dare to limit the sphere of God's operation?

They are a law unto themselves. If there be men who do the law without possessing it, and who receive it by doing it, they are then law unto themselves. The living water fashions its own course, and the visible pre-eminence of the inhabitants of the canal is destroyed. There has been exposed to view a new rough river-bed, a very unfamiliar and strange impress of revelation, a disturbing form of faith. But who will deny what God alone can deny? The religion and the experiences of the characters in the novels of Dostoevsky have presumably their counterparts in many other forms of religion and of experience; but those who *have the law*—even if it be the Gospel!—have no occasion to regard such men merely as objects of missionary enterprise, or to speak of them in superior fashion as people possessed of 'elementary forms of religion'. Such men may long have been in possession of impressions of God quite different from those which we ever have had or shall have. And if it were a matter of religion and of experience, these—which are in any case trivial—God can, and does, give to the Gentiles.

They show the work of the law, written in their hearts. They come under the judgement of God; they are even now under judgement; and that by which men are justified by God is discovered in them. How, we ask, is this so? *The work* which is displayed before God by the Gentile who has been justified, and by which he is found pleasing to God, has no positive content or

'extent', for this would be irrelevant. Were he to be judged by the righteousness of men, he would undoubtedly be lost. Even if a righteousness of men were possibly discovered in him, he would not thereby be justified. What is pleasing to God comes into being when all human righteousness is gone, irretrievably gone, when men are uncertain and lost, when they have abandoned all ethical and religious illusions, and when they have renounced every hope in this world and in this heaven. Beyond every concrete visible thing, beyond everything in the law of which those who possess it approve—the 'ethical kernel', the 'idealistic background', the 'religious feeling'—beyond all that is valued in western European culture—'conduct', 'poise', 'race', 'personality', 'delicacy of taste', 'spirituality', 'force of character'—beyond all these things is set that which men have to lay before God, and which He will *render* (ii. 6) with eternal life. There may perhaps be no more than a quite unconscious feeling for religion in no way derived from the Church; perhaps no more than the last stage of human nakedness (Dostoevsky!); perhaps no more than confusion, misery, and destitution; perhaps no more than some last terror before the mystery of death, some final disgusted rejection of the inevitability of the world by a man when he leaves his busy life protesting against its futility. But more than any of these, and better and more beautiful, is that the *rendering* of God—depends upon—nothing at all! There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. But what is Repentance? Not the last and noblest and most refined achievement of the righteousness of men in the service of God, but the first elemental act of the righteousness of God in the service of men; the work that God has written in their hearts, and which, because it is from God and not from men, occasions joy in heaven; that looking forward to God, and to Him only, which is recognized only by God and by God Himself.

Their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them. Who is there among the lawless and ungodly that hears even the sound of the voice of conscience? Who among them can penetrate the dialectical paradox by which they are enveloped: the paradox of God and destiny, destiny and guilt, guilt and atonement, atonement and—God? God hears and knows. What is muffled and secret and concealed, what is hardly conscious, what Gellert named 'the divine ordering in the context', to Him is eloquent and full of speech. To Him there rises up a testimony on behalf of men which can be uttered before no human judge. God knows

what we do not know. Hence emerges the incomprehensible possibility that lawless men are brought to judgement, and yet pass through it into freedom.

For—in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ the *Gentiles* will show their *work* and shall discover the good pleasure of God. Whence, then, comes this possibility of perceiving that the ungodly are comprehended in God? Whence, then, comes the possibility of the erasure of that transverse section by which men are separated according to the law, the religious from the irreligious, the moral from the immoral? How can there be substituted for it that longitudinal section which reveals to all, even to those most deeply submerged, the possibility of access to God? The new Day which has dawned for men in the resurrection, the Day of Jesus Christ, this—according to my gospel—is the Day that ushers in the transformation of all time into eternity. This is the Day when the *secrets of men* are laid bare and it is revealed that men are known by God. *Through Jesus Christ* men are judged by God. This is their KRISIS, but it is both negation and affirmation, both death and life. In Christ there has appeared an end, but also a beginning, a passing to corruption, but also a becoming new; and both are for the whole world and for all men. For the Redeemer who has been manifested in Christ is the Creator of all things. There is no residue. In Christ, high and low, the just and the unjust, after they have received the same command to halt before the unknown God, have the same access to the Father. ALL flesh is as grass; and it is the will of God that ALL should be saved (i. 16, iii. 29, x. 2). For this reason God judgeth the *secrets of men*. The condemnation under which we stand, the mercy, the power of forgiveness by which we are supported and carried, these concern us all and embrace the whole world, but are unobservable, and are directed towards the *secrets of men*. There alone they exist and are true. So long as some stand in the light and others in the shade, visibly confronting one another, they are not true. But at midnight, when there is no light, and at midday when there is no shadow, the distinction between light and shade ceases to have meaning. Christ is both midnight and midday. Then is perceived above all human distinctions the vast comprehensiveness of God. God Himself propounds the problem of God—and answers it. He sets all men of all ranks always under one threat and under one promise. The line of intersection drawn by Him can neither be seen nor approached, and is always unbridgeable and disturbing, but it points us always to the *secret* where God

Himself is the Judge. But it is precisely this sternness of the Gospel of Christ which constitutes its tenderness and gentleness and its power unto liberty. In His utter strangeness God wills to make Himself known and can make Himself known. He, whom none of us is able to comprehend, does not deprive any single human being of witness to Himself. The hidden God is not far from *the secrets of men*; and we recognize this the more clearly when we perceive that in secret He pronounces His judgement upon the secrets of men. Since God takes no cognizance of the impressions which men have about Him, He is the hope of the Gentiles at the judgement, for He is God Himself.

Since God is the Judge, every righteousness of men is thrust into obscurity, every criticism which men exercise upon the ungodly and every busy attempt to convert them become of trivial importance. Beyond human good and evil the arm of God is extended in power; and men are advised to beware of too great daring.

vv. 17-25. But if thou bearest the name of a Jew, and retest upon the law, and gloriest in God, and knowest his will and dost apprehend the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law—but art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having before thee in the law the perfect form of knowledge and of the truth; thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou rob temples? thou who gloriest in the law, through thy transgression of the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, even as it is written. For circumcision indeed profiteth, if thou be a doer of the law: but if thou be a transgressor of the law, thy circumcision is become uncircumcision.

A disturbing and surprising piece of information from the invisibility of the OTHER side. God pronounces those who are awake to be asleep, believers to be unbelievers, the righteous to be unrighteous. Men who bear upon them the stamp of the impress of revelation remain still men of the world. Men must note carefully this possibility of the judgement of God upon their righteousness.

Thou bearest the name of a Jew. Yet thou art not therefore the first and the best. Thou art, it is true, heir to a past history, and thou awaitest a future history to correspond thereto. Thy life is set in a context which leads to the supposition that thou art in this world of the flesh a peculiar person. Thou hast a name; and it is widely supposed that thou dost live a life different from the many who possess not the advantage of this name. Thou—**restest upon the law.** Thou art stamped with the marks of the living God; and thou art busily engaged in preserving these marks. Thou dost take pleasure in the exercise of that authority which belongs to thee because thou dost live under the authority of the knowledge of God, which is denied to those outside, who live in the midst of a chaos of notions and whose judgements are guided by no fixed standard of truth. **Thou gloriest in God.** How canst thou do otherwise? for thou hast a veritable impression and memory of Him; and by continuous prayer thy gaze is directed to the place where He does assuredly stand. How different are the doubters and the atheists who consider the place whither thy gaze is directed to be naught but emptiness! **Thou knowest the will of God.** Thou knowest that the recollection of God involves obedience, and that from the place whither thy gaze is continually fixed there comes an active intervention in thy life, an aggressive incursion into the world; and thou knowest the direction along which this attack must develop. Thou art not lacking in the disturbing knowledge that something must be done, or in the zeal to arise and accomplish it. How different are those thoughtless ones who are driven onwards by the rumbling power of fate! **Thou dost apprehend the things that are excellent.** Thou hast an inherited and developed sense for things as they really are, a delicate perception of the meaning of history and of the significance of the impulses of the human heart; and thou art especially sensitive to the things which are untrustworthy and fraught with peril. Thou art possessed of spiritual insight and art able to pronounce acute and penetrating judgements. Thou knowest well how to stake out thy position so that none can confuse thy property with the land which belongs to others, and thou hast good reason to mark thy boundaries clearly. Thou seest deep, for thou art deep. How different are they who live their lives as mere amateurs, immersed in a thousand superficialities! In short, thou hast much. What dost thou desire more? What could any man have which is not thine? Great is the opportunity which has been given thee; great are the riches of the goodness of God which have been showered upon thee; great is the forbearance of the wrath of God towards

thee, and great His patience (ii. 4, iii. 2, iv. 11, ix. 4, 5). Great, assuredly, is that which is expected of thee.

And now—**thou art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind.** Not without reason dost thou feel thyself entrusted with a mission. The contrast between thyself with all thy marks of revelation and those who can display no such marks provides thee with the sense of vocation. Thy imagination is filled with the picture of a divine plan of God's purpose, in the working out of which the chief role has been assigned to thee. Conscious of this sacred task, and confident of ability to perform it, thou dost undertake the part of mediator of the impress of revelation which thou hast—**having in the law the perfect form of knowledge and of the truth**—and art willing, with passionate earnestness and conviction, to guide the blind who walk in darkness, to instruct the foolish, and to teach babes. Thou hast the intention of spreading the revelation, of extending its influence, of propagating it, of expounding it, in order that many others may possess it; and by the power of what thou art and hast, thou feelest thyself compelled to action and appointed to co-operate with God.

But—thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? The missionary must, however, be sent, the instructor must have been taught, and the distributor must have been provided with something to distribute. What comes of the possession of the law, if it be not done, if those who possess it be not authorized by God? What comes of the impress of revelation, if revelation be not continuous? What is the use of fixing attention upon the place where God should be, if He is no longer there? What does it avail at the judgement that thou dost dwell on the banks of the canal, if the canal be empty? Can the possibility that the water has been cut off be ruled out? And if this possibility may not be excluded, who then art thou? What dost thou possess? With what dost thou propose to irrigate the surrounding country? What is the new spirit which thou wouldest pour out over others? No, thy impress of revelation, thy emotion, thy experience and enthusiasm, are of this world, are flesh. With all thy pious worldliness is there any reason to suppose that thou hast less occasion to fear the wrath of God than others have? Hast thou been less occupied than they in imprisoning the truth and in changing the incorruptible into the image of the corruptible? What art thou, if God come not to thy assistance, if He does not discover in the secret of thine heart the *work*, the prayer of the Publican, the appeal of the Prodigal Son, the entreaty of the widow to the Unjust

Judge? Apart from this, thy labour is but **THY** labour: thy righteousness is robbery, for who does not steal? thy purity is adultery, for who is rid of sexuality? thy piety is arrogance, for where is the piety which does not approach God too nearly? Is there any advantage in distinguishing before the judgement seat of God a higher and a lower form of worldliness? If thy life be without that justification which God alone can give, it is utterly devoid of any justification at all. If thou hast no more to boast of than thy impress of revelation, thou hast no ground of boasting whatsoever. If thou appealest to anything more than thy faith, and thy faith only, thou canst have no ground of appeal. If God be not for thee, all is against thee.

But there is more:—Thou gloriest in the law, and through thy transgression of the law thou dishonourest God. If God be not on thy side, thou canst not be on His side, but only against Him. The world possesses deep and penetrating insight. It refuses to admit thy supposed superiority. It recognizes at once that thou art flesh of its flesh, bone of its bone. Thy corruption renders thee unfit to work for God and to take the lead in advancing His cause. Thou dost act in precise contradiction to the profession which thou hast not unreasonably adopted; for thou dost undertake a mission without being sent. Where law is, the 'world' expects a doing of the law; where the impress of revelation is, it expects actual revelation. With inexhaustible patience it believes the exalted claims of the sons of God in their midst to be a genuine claim. It is not unsusceptible to reality, but it harbours no illusions. When, therefore, it finds that it has been deceived by those who say that they have been called and enlightened, it sees in them no more than another example of 'Potemkin's Villages'.¹ The children of God present nothing peculiar, nothing new, nothing that exercises a compelling power. And so, after standing for a moment in amazement before the comedy of an unreal communion with God, the children of the world turn away supported and confirmed in their knowledge that, after all, the world is the world. With proper instinct for the truth, they do not permit themselves to be imposed upon, and they are thus protected against any turning towards the 'God' of the pious man. Whenever men 'adopt the point of view of God';

¹ When, in 1787, Catherine II wished to display to the Austrian, English, and French ambassadors the rapid development of wealth and prosperity in Southern Russia under her rule, her favourite, Prince Gregori Alexandrovich Potemkin, organized the famous 'Tauric' journey, and staged the display. Villages were improvised and inhabited by temporary villagers and other 'property' villages of painted canvas were erected on the horizon. Hence the phrase 'Potemkin's villages' became proverbial for sham splendour. [Tr.]

whenever He is not everything and they nothing; whenever they desire to be and to do something in co-operation with Him; then, however stimulating their ideas, however noble their actions, God becomes—a notion. When only the empty canals of God are visible, objections and protests against 'God' are wholly justified. How then does it stand with God's fellow-workers?—**For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you** (Isa. lii. 5). Are *these* then the elect children of God by whom the Kingdom of God is sustained? Surely this blasphemous possibility—a possibility realized, alas, everywhere and in all ages—ought to restrain us whenever we are tempted to construct a supreme and final human righteousness out of the prophetic energy of those who wait and hurry!

But if thou be a transgressor of the law, thy circumcision is become uncircumcision. Here bursts upon us the unavoidable relativism. The impress of revelation possessed by the children of God becomes a human worldly factor side by side with other factors. Their claim to absolute superiority over others falls therefore to the ground. The piety of the children of God, their morality and their ideas, ebbs and flows: the history of the Church is a secular history written under the title, 'How the ring was—lost'. For when God does not find the worth which He values and for which He *renders* (ii. 6), mere human advantages have no particular significance. The uncleanness and ungodliness which He discovers in *the secrets of men* necessarily obscure the impress of revelation which men might discover in themselves or which others might find in them. The heroes of God without God may be compared to a traveller who remains standing under the sign-post, instead of moving in the direction to which it directs him. The sign-post has become meaningless; and their faith and prayers and Biblical outlook are meaningless also. The Jewish sacrament of circumcision—and this is true of every other sacrament—is no longer fellowship with God: it remains still—and here, surely, under the wrath of God, Zwingli and the liberals are right—only SIGNIFICANT of fellowship with God. For the crater, by which the holy men sit and wait, is burnt out. The form of holiness is holy only in its form; and no attempt to spiritualize it can protect such holiness from ever-increasing vacuity. Circumcision is, then, equal to uncircumcision, faith to unbelief, and blessedness to godlessness.

Thus the righteousness of men is vulnerable even in its own home. It is mistaken not only in its attitude to those outside, to the Gentiles (ii. 14-16), but also in its attitude to itself. Before the judgement seat of God it is shaken at its roots. There

is no claim which can rest upon what men have achieved in this world or upon what might emerge in them from this world.

vv. 26-9. If therefore the uncircumcision keep the ordinances of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned in fact for circumcision? and shall not the uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who with the letter and circumcision art a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

A final possibility has now appeared. The ring of cause and effect, of decline and fall, is completely closed. The ring may, however, be both closed up and sustained by the incomprehensible mercy of God. Human righteousness is, as we have seen, in itself an illusion: there is in this world no observable righteousness. There may, however, be a righteousness before God, a righteousness that comes from Him. There is no visible company of saints and exceptional people and heroes and righteous supermen who are what they are because of their possession of the law, the impress of revelation, or because of some inner spiritual capacity of theirs, or because of some ethical and sacramental system to which they have devoted themselves. There may be, however, beyond all these distinctions—a new man, created by God for God. If that were so, would not—**his uncircumcision be reckoned for circumcision?** would not then ungodliness before God be *rendered* with eternal life, as though it were piety? would not then rebellion and absence of awe be entered in God's ledger as godliness and humility? might not then the fact that God has not recognized any human faith as such, but has *shut it up under unbelief*, be—in order that he might have mercy upon all (xi. 32)? Apart from any merit or visible occasion or human possibility, apart from any human attempt to bring it about or to prevent its occurrence, there would then have broken in upon the known context of things the impossible possibility of the New World, of God Himself, of the Unknown God! With men this is impossible: with God it is possible. God reckons according to His standard. In the light of His fellowship God leads the unbeliever to the *end* (goal) of the law. In a world lying in wickedness, He sets the believer upon his feet. God passes by all that is concrete, visible, and *outward*, for He judges in secret according to His justice. God is the Spirit who dwells, or does not dwell, in the hearts of men, and who is

wholly independent of what is written, or not written, in letters inscribed on human 'Tables'. The rewards of God are presented only according to His will.—Have we anything to say against this? Is God unjust?—But if we think that He is, what superior justice have we to set against His justice? Is not God the eternal truth of our lives? and does not His truth condition His judgement? Of what use are our truths here? The honour of God will enlighten, and the righteousness of God shall be revealed. Consequently, His action must be exercised invisibly and in a manner wholly contrary to our expectation. God does not live by the idea of justice with which we provide Him. He is His own justice. He is not one cause among many; He is not the final solution which we propound to the problem of life. Therefore His appearance is incomprehensible and without known occasion, and His judgement is according to His own justice. And yet, there is a claim to salvation from the wrath of God: the claim is where every claim is surrendered and broken down by God Himself; where His negation is final and His wrath unavoidable; when God is recognized as God. The claim is where the history of the relation between God and man begins; where there is no history to record, because it only occurs, and occurs eternally. The claim is when men dare—but even this is no recipe for blessedness but only the eternal ground of its perception—to go forth into the fresh air and to love the undiscoverable God. And this occurrence is—in Jesus Christ.

The Third Chapter

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

THE LAW

III. I-20

HISTORY is the display of the supposed advantages of power and intelligence which some men possess over others, of the struggle for existence hypocritically described by ideologists as a struggle for justice and freedom, of the ebb and flow of old and new forms of human righteousness, each vying with the rest in solemnity and triviality. Yet one drop of eternity is of greater weight than a vast ocean of finite things. Measured by the standard of God the dignitaries of men forfeit their excellence and their serious importance—they become relative; and even the noblest of human moral and spiritual attainments are seen to be what they really are—natural, of this world, profane, and 'materialistic'. The valleys are exalted and the high hills made low. Ended is the conflict of good and evil, for men are ranged upon one line, and their *secrets* (ii. 16) are judged before God and before Him only.

The judgement of God is the end of history, not the beginning of a new, a second, epoch. By it history is not prolonged, but done away with. The difference between that which lies beyond the judgement and that which lies on this side of it is not relative but absolute: the two are separated absolutely. God speaks: and He is recognized as the Judge. By His speech and by His judgement a transformation is effected so radical that time and eternity, here and there, the righteousness of men and the righteousness of God, are indissolubly linked together. The end is also the goal; the Redeemer is also the Creator; He that judgeth is also He that restoreth all things. The disclosure of non-sense is the revelation of sense. What is new is also the deepest truth of what was old. The most radical ending of history, the negation under which all flesh stands, the absolute judgement, which is the meaning of God for the world of men and time and things, is also the crimson thread which runs through the whole course of the world in its inevitability. But when the corruptible is recognized as such, it becomes the parable of incorruption. The final subjection to the wrath of God is faith in His righteousness: and then God is known as the Unknown God. As such, He is precisely no 'thing-in-itself', no metaphysical substance in the

midst of other substances, no second, other Stranger, side by side with those whose existence is independent of Him. On the contrary, He is the eternal, pure Origin of all things. As their non-existence, He is their true being. God is love.

And so it follows that every impress of revelation in history, however little cause there may be in it for boasting of human righteousness, however little peace and security it affords, is not extinguished and destroyed as it passes through the judgement, but is thereby authorized, established, and confirmed. For in the radical dissolution of all physical, intellectual, and spiritual achievements of men, in the all-embracing 'relativization' of all human distinctions and human dignities, their true and eternal meaning is made known.

vv. 1-4. What advantage then hath the Jew? or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way: first of all, that they were intrusted with the oracles of God. For what if some were without faith? shall their want of faith make of none effect the faithfulness of God? God forbid: yea, let God be found true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy words, and mightest prevail when thou comest into judgement.

What advantage then hath the Jew? If everything be under the judgement of God, is there, seriously considered; any *advantage*? Are not all the advantages of particular salvation or peace simply obliterated? Are there in history any high points which are more than large waves upon the stream of transitoriness, thick shadows where all is shadow? Is there any connexion between those impressions of revelation which may be discovered in the events of history or in the spiritual experiences of men, and the actual revelation of the Unknown God Himself? Is there any relation between the steadfastness of those who move across the pages of history as the elect or the illuminated, as the men of goodwill, as prophets and heroes, and the coming Kingdom of God where all things will be New? Behind these particular questions there lies the larger question concerning the general relation between occurrences and experiences and the eternal content of all occurrence, between the world as it is and the veritable existence of the world, between striving and knowing. May it not be that the perception of God as the Judge involves the denial of all connexion and relation between here and there? —**What is the profit of circumcision?**

We answer:—**Much in every way.** Strangely great and strangely powerful are the connexion and relation between God

and the world, between there and here. For when we have clearly perceived that, if divinity be so concreted and humanized in a particular department of history—the history of religion or the history of salvation—God has ceased to be God, and there can be there no relation with him, then we are able to see that the whole occurrence of the known world derives its content and significance from the Unknown God; then, too, we are able to see in every impress of revelation a sign-post to Revelation; then, too, we are able to recognize that all experience bears within it an understanding by which it is itself condemned, and that all time bears within it that eternity by which it is dissolved. Judgement is not annihilation; by it all things are established. Cleansing is not a process of emptying; it is an act of fulfilment. God has not forsaken men; but God is—true (iii. 31).

They were entrusted with the oracles of God. However ambiguous and questionable the position of the righteous man who searches and waits for God may be as a human position (ii. 17–25), he, nevertheless, performs a distinct and necessary function as a symptom of the will and action of God. Set in the midst of human life, righteous men bear witness to reliance upon God and to the advent of His Kingdom; and, compelled to be still, by their own 'experiences' or by the experiences of others they direct their attention to the possibility that the unknown can as such become an object of knowledge. By their recollection of the impossible they are themselves the proof that God stands within the realm of possibility, not as one possibility among others, but—and this is precisely what is made clear in their case—as the impossible possibility. The *oracles of God*, of which they are the possessors and guardians, are the comprehensible signs of the incomprehensible truth that, though the world is incapable of redemption, yet there is a redemption for the world. It is irrelevant whether they possess and are concerned to guard Moses or John the Baptist, Plato or Socialism, or that moral perception which dwells in all its simplicity in the midst of the rough and tumble of human life. In each case there is vocation, promise, a parabolic possibility, something which is offered to men as an open road to their deepest perception. If they have been veritably entrusted with the oracles of God, their claim to peculiarity and to special attention is not necessarily presumptuous.

For what if some were without faith? shall their want of faith make of none effect the faithfulness of God? Submerged and hidden is the true ground of our existence; unrecognized is the Unknown God, fruitless the traces of His faithfulness, unused His promises and gifts. The recognition of this is, however,

irrelevant for the moment. That His confidence is misused is but a trivial truth, when it is seen from God's side. The action of *some*, even if it were the action of all, would neither hinder His will and action, nor render them of none effect. The faithfulness of God may be obscured, but we cannot be rid of it; His gifts may evoke no gratitude, but they will not be withdrawn; His goodness will bring under judgement those who withstand it, but it is His goodness none the less. The utter godlessness of the course of history does not alter the fact that it is marked everywhere by peculiar impressions of revelation, by opportunities and open doors, which, when seen from God's side, can summon men to recollection and to knowledge. Whenever men wait upon God, they possess a mission and a character indelebilis, even though God be shrouded from their eyes and from the eyes of all in utter incomprehensibility, and even though they themselves be overwhelmed by catastrophes which affect their inner as well as their outer lives. God never reveals Himself to no purpose. Where there is *law* (ii. 14), even if it be nought but burnt-out cinders, there is a word of the faithfulness of God.

Yea, let God be found true, but every man a liar. Of what importance is the infidelity of those who have received the grace of God? It preserves and makes known the 'presupposition of the whole Christian philosophy' (Calvin). GOD is true: HE is the Answer, the Helper, the Judge, and the Redeemer; not man, whether from the East or from the West, whether of Nordic stock or of Biblical outlook; not the pious nor the hero nor the sage; not the pacifist, nor the man of action; not even the Superman—but God alone, and God Himself! If this be forgotten, we must again and again be reminded of the inadequacy of all who bear revelation, and of the gulf which separates them from what they bear, in order that we may be referred once again to the Beginning and the Origin. The bearer of revelation himself lives of the recognition that God is declared to be God by his inadequacy. This is his confession (Ps. cxvi. 10–14): *I believed, and therefore have I spoken, but I was sore troubled: and it proceeds—I said in my alarm (in my ecstasy, LXX), all men are liars.* All men! Yes, precisely. Only when the all-embracing contrast between God and men is perceived can there emerge the knowledge of God, a new communion with Him, and a new worship: *What reward shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits that he hath done unto me? I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows now in the presence of all his people.*

That thou mightest be justified in thy words, and mightest prevail when thou comest into judgement (Ps. li. 4). We are

wholly unjustified in doubting the vocation of the saints or in criticizing Him who called them, because the theme of despair constantly recurs in the story of their lives. The oracles of God are fraught with a significance wholly independent of the course of human history; indeed, it is the theme of despair and inadequacy which marks the visible operation of the oracles of God in the course of history. This human situation is described in the 51st Psalm, where the Psalmist, illuminated by the light of God, finds himself to be utterly impure, conceives himself competent to offer no sacrifice but his own troubled spirit and his own broken and contrite heart, and recognizes precisely here the triumphant victory of God. Above the rise and fall of the waves of history, in spite of human infidelity—aye, in this very infidelity itself—there remains the faithfulness of God. And there remains also the *advantage* (iii. 1) which the Jew has RECEIVED but does not POSSESS.

vv. 5-8. But if our unrighteousness commendeth the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is not God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak according to human logic) God forbid: for then how does¹ God judge the world? But if the truth of God through my lie abounded unto his glory, what explanation is there of the obvious fact that I am still judged as a sinner? and why not (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), Let us do evil, that good may come from it? Those who speak thus confirm their own condemnation.

If our unrighteousness commendeth the righteousness of God, is not God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? A strange light would seem to be thrown upon the nature of God by the insight which has just been provided (iii. 1-4) into the manner in which His pre-eminence is displayed in the despair of His elect. Their despair is occasioned by the *unrighteousness* of the arbitrary and tyrannical egotism of men (i. 18), an egotism by which even they are themselves affected and by which even they imprison truth. If, then, human unrighteousness testifies to the righteousness of God, must not His righteousness also be arbitrary and tyrannical, even a dreadful and terrible and cruel egotism? Does not His wrath at our submission to the dominion of the No-God (i. 22-32) bear witness also against Him? Does not the actual condition of the world and of men declare His nature to be unfathomable,

¹ I take it that Bengel was right in reading, in agreement with κρίνομαι in v. 7, κρίνει (cf. ii. 16) in place of κρινεῖ. *Judge the world* occurs in the present tense also in 1 Cor. vi. 2.

capricious, and tyrannical? If the meaninglessness of history be the revelation of its hidden meaning, must it not follow of necessity that its meaning is also meaningless?

The words—**according to human logic**—suggest, however, that a quite different conclusion lies near at hand and must be substituted for a deduction which, though it appears inevitable, is nevertheless wholly uncritical, far too straightforward, and, when applied to God, simply the result of a wild and illegitimate method of thought. In spite of innumerable warnings, human logic always tends to arrange its propositions in a series and to leave out of account what is not proposed, which is in fact the pre-supposition of all propositions. In speaking of God, human logic characteristically ignores both His nature and the fact that, when the reference is to Him, the argument from operation to cause is inapplicable, since He is not a known thing in a series of things.

For then how does God judge the world? If God, as the final Cause, could, as is implied by the previous indictment, be placed within the succession of other things in this world, and if conclusions could be drawn about Him from the other things of the world, what are we then to make of the fact that the whole concrete world is ambiguous and under KRISIS? There is no object apart from our thinking of it; nor has an object any clear characteristics save when we are able to recognize them by some quick-moving previous knowledge. Therefore if God be an object in the world, we can make no statement about Him—for example, that He is capricious and tyrannical—which does not proceed from some previous superior knowledge. If, therefore, God were, as the objection in iii. 5 implies, an object among other objects, if He were Himself subject to the KRISIS, He would then obviously not be God, and the true God would have to be sought in the Origin of the KRISIS. And this is clearly the case: the objection in iii. 5 refers not to God at all, but to the No-God, who is the god of this world. The true God, Himself removed from all concretion, is the Origin of the KRISIS of every concrete thing, the Judge, the negation of this world in which is included also the god of human logic. It is of this true God we speak—of the Judge of the world of which He forms no part. Tempting, therefore, as the argument directly from ourselves to Him may be, it fails to reach the goal. It is a blind alley. The true God is not unrighteous, not capricious, not arbitrary. Where He sits in judgement the all-embracing unrighteousness, caprice, and arbitrariness of our world meet their contradiction, and in this contradiction their nature is disclosed.

If the truth of God through my lie abounded unto his glory, what explanation is there of the obvious fact that I am still judged as a sinner? This objection is caused evidently by a shrinking from the irresponsibility which seems to follow from a recognition by men of the pre-eminence of God—or it springs also from the desire to be assured of such irresponsibility. If the faithfulness of God persists, or even triumphs, through the infidelity of His elect, men can, at any rate, console themselves with the reflection that the truth of God abounds in their lie. This conclusion is, however, illegitimate, for it assumes that men are in a position to further the truth of God by their action. That assumption is false. God is assuredly not the world, and it is impossible for men, either by their lies or by their obedience, to add anything to, or subtract anything from, His truth and glory. These God Himself assigns. The decision as to whether our actions are lies or obedience is wholly His; He renders to every man according to his works (ii. 6); He triumphs whether He receives or rejects us, whether He condemns us or has mercy upon us. In either case I am in possession of no justification, no excuse, no confirmation either of my being or of my behaviour. I can only bow to His decision as an object either of His mercy or of His condemnation. Whatever my fate may be, I can only give honour to Him. This is uprightness before God, and it contradicts all our petty, sophistical questionings concerning why God is God. The man who fears lest the divine sovereignty may remove human responsibility, or desires that it should do so, must be reminded quite plainly that he stands before the judgement of God as a sinner. Is this a fact or not? Human responsibility consists in answering this question honestly, and in the fear of the Lord which emerges when the question has been so answered. As surely as he who perceives God to be the Judge knows that the dishonour of the world does not bring God into dishonour (iii. 5-7), so surely does the man who knows himself to be under judgement recognize that the action of God—whether for him or against him—redounds in no way to his credit but to God's alone. To shrink from a clear recognition that the human will is 'enslaved' is profitless; vain also is the secret desire to profit by this recognition. In it, since it is the acknowledgement by men of the glory of God precisely where they have been rejected, lies the free and joyful subjection to God and the rejection of every impure sophistry.

Why not, Let us do evil that good may come from it? Those who speak thus confirm their own condemnation. Straightforward speaking about God and man, as though they were two

equal parties, is a complete deflection. It would seem clear enough that, if God permits good to come, even when we do evil, we must obviously deduce—*Let us do evil that good may come of it*. This clarity of reasoning is, however, utter darkness. Those who speak thus do but—*confirm their own condemnation*. For God and man are not interchangeable terms; and we are permitted neither to attribute evil to God's account nor to place to our own account the good which may come out of evil. Our action is never God's action; nor does the consequence of our action lie within our competence. Mistakenness here does but occasion a fresh obscuring of the distance between God and man as a consequence of our supposed insight into His sovereignty. But we are not God: the sovereignty is His not ours. Evil remains evil, in spite of the good which God may bring out of it; the non-sense of history remains non-sense, in spite of the sense which is in it from God; infidelity is infidelity, in spite of the faithfulness of God by which it is not permitted to wander out of the way. The world is the world, in spite of the mercy of God by which it is enveloped and established. When we tolerate, accept, and affirm ourselves, we affirm the existing course of the world; and in so doing we do not glorify the omnipotent God, but confirm the condemnation which has already been pronounced over us, and establish the justice of the divine wrath. The arrogance with which we set ourselves by the side of God, with the intention of doing something for Him, deprives us of the only possible ground of salvation, which is to cast ourselves upon His favour or disfavour. Should we attempt to escape judgement by appealing to fatalism, we fall under condemnation precisely because of this appeal, for any plea which we offer to God on the supposition that He will support our past, present, and future, is idolatry and godlessness, is in fact simply that *ungodliness and unrighteousness* (i. 18) which make inevitable the wrath of God.

vv. 9–18. What then? do we excuse ourselves? No, in no wise: for we have before charged both Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none that understandeth, There is none that seeketh after God; They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable; There is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one: Their throat is an open sepulchre; With their tongues they have used deceit: The poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are

in their ways; And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Do we excuse ourselves when we perceive that the faithfulness of God persists even in the apostasy of men? The answer, as we have already seen (iii. 5-8), is—*No, in no wise*. Just as surely as the recognition of the sovereignty of God overthrows all confidence in human righteousness, it sets erect no other ground of confidence. Men are not deprived of one security, in order that they may immediately discover for themselves another. No man can shelter himself behind the triumphant will of God; rather, when it is once perceived, he comes under judgement and enters into a condition of shattering confusion—from which he can never escape.

We have before charged that . . . all are under sin. The charge (i. 18—ii. 29) holds. Both Jews and Greeks, the sons of God and the natural children of the world, are, as men, children of wrath. They are, without exception, in subjection to the foreign power of sin (v. 12-14). To us God is, and remains, unknown; we are, and remain, homeless in this world; sinners we are and sinners we remain. The word 'humanity' means unredeemed men and women; the word 'history' implies limitation and corruption; the pronoun 'I' spells judgement. Neither forwards nor backwards can we escape from this narrow gorge. There is therefore no alternative for us but to remain under the indictment; and only he who remains here without making any attempt to escape, even by spinning sophistries of human logic (iii. 5-8), is able to praise God in His faithfulness (iii. 1-4).

As it is written. Is there in all this something new and surprising? Is it resignation following upon disillusionment, or enthusiasm born of pessimism? Is it violence offered to the riches of human life, a revolt against history, or the arrogance of some form of Gnostic radicalism? No, the indictment of which we disapprove so strongly—*is written*; it has been *proclaimed long ago* (i. 2). The whole course of history pronounces this indictment against itself. How can a man be called 'historically minded', if he persistently overlooks it? If all the great outstanding figures in history, whose judgements are worthy of serious consideration, if all the prophets, Psalmists, philosophers, Fathers of the Church, Reformers, poets, artists, were asked their opinion, would one of them assert that men were good, or even capable of good? Is the doctrine of original sin merely one doctrine among many? Is it not rather, according to its fundamental meaning (see, however, v. 12), **THE Doctrine which**

emerges from all honest study of history? Is it not the doctrine which, in the last resort, underlies the whole teaching of history? Is it possible for us to adopt a 'different point of view' from that of the Bible, Augustine, and the Reformers? What then does history teach about the things which men do or do not do?

Does it teach that some men, at least, are like God? No, but that—**There is none righteous, no, not one.**

Does it teach that men possess a deep perception of the nature of things? or that they have experienced the essence of life? No, but that—**There is none that understandeth.**

Does it provide a moving picture of quiet piety or of fiery search after God? Do the great witnesses to the truth furnish a splendid picture, for example, of 'Prayer'? No:—**There is none that seeketh after God.**

Can it describe this or that individual and his actions as natural, healthy, genuine, original, right-minded, ideal, full of character, affectionate, attractive, intelligent, forceful, ingenuous, of sterling worth? No:—**They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable; There is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one.**

Can it not unearth, perhaps, some secular or spiritual human characteristics more beautiful even than these—whether in the inner realm of intelligence or in the outer realm of conduct—conscious or unconscious—active or passive—theoretical or practical? No:—**Their throat is an open sepulchre; With their tongues they have used deceit: The poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. And in final judgement upon the thoughts and words of men—Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace have they not known.** This is the final judgement upon the deeds and works of men.

There is no fear of God before their eyes. In history we see and are taught that in this world the fear of God is never, in its true character, visible, or comprehended, or directly 'realized'. The fear of God can be perceived neither in the external course of history nor in the hearts of men. What is everywhere visible is precisely not—fear of God. So it is written in Job xiv. 4; Ps. xiv. 1-3, v. 10, cxl. 4, x. 7; Isa. lix. 7, 8; Ps. xxxvi. 2. Are the men who wrote this, and those who agree with them and quote their words, blind to the nobility of human history? Of course they are not, for they deny it nowhere. They could have gratefully acknowledged the greatness of men and sung its praises, had that been their subject. They could have spoken of the value of religion and ethics and civilization and of their significance in

the world. But this was not their theme. Their theme—and it is the proper theme of history—is not concerned with denying or affirming what men are *IN THEMSELVES*; it is concerned with the perception of the uncertainty of men in relation to what they are not, that is to say, in their relation to God who is their eternal Origin. Thence comes their radical attack! It has nothing to do with that relative criticism which must, of course, be exercised upon all religion, ethics, and civilization. For the same reason, it cannot remain satisfied with that relative approval which must be awarded to every human achievement when placed in its own context. The disturbance lies far deeper and is infinitely more than mere unrest, for it reaches out to a peace which is beyond the experience of normal human life. Its negation is all-embracing, since it proceeds from an all-embracing affirmation. Those who lead this attack are moved neither by pessimism, nor by the desire of tormenting themselves, nor by any pleasure in mere negation; they are moved by a grim horror of illusion; by a determination to bow before no empty tabernacle; by a single-minded and earnest striving after what is real and essential; by a firm rejection of every attempt to escape from the veritable relation between God and man; by a genuine refusal to be deceived by those penultimate and antepenultimate truths with which human research has to be content both at the beginning and at the end of its investigation. They allow full right to the materialistic, secular, 'sceptical' view of the world; and then, assuming this final scepticism, they set forth upon the road which leads to the knowledge of God and thereby to the knowledge of the eternal significance of the world and of history. No road to the eternal meaning of the created world has ever existed, save the road of negation. This is the lesson of history.

vv. 19, 20. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

What the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law. The possessors of the law are the idealists, the especially favoured, those who have an experience of God or, at least, a remembrance of such experience (ii. 14, iii. 2). Their impress of revelation, their religion and their piety, demonstrate and bear witness to God. Such men are directed to God; but for that very

reason they are not directed by Him. They cannot, however, fail to perceive the true relation between God and man; nor can they be guilty of supposing that some men—they themselves, for example—are, in consequence of their spiritual and historical advantages, in a position of security with regard to God or in possession of any excuse for their actions (ii. 1). They cannot by means of *human logic* (iii. 5) proceed to reverse the truth that God is God, or escape from the disturbance and tension, the insecurity and questionableness, of the position in which God has placed them. Genuine faith is a void, an obeisance before that which we can never be, or do, or possess; it is devotion to Him who can never become the world or man, save in the dissolution and redemption and resurrection of everything which we here and now call world and man. We have just (iii. 10-18) heard the voice of the law, of religion and piety. The empty canal speaks of the water which does not flow through it. The sign-post points to a destination which is precisely where the sign-post is not. The impress (*form*, ii. 20) speaks of the genuine signet-ring which is not where the impress is, but which has left upon it its—negative. And so it is history as a chronicle of the nobility of men, not history as a chronique scandaleuse, which contains the accusation of history against history.

That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. And yet the Jew has an advantage (iii. 1). He is in a position to know our ignorance of God; he is able to halt before that which no eye hath seen, nor ear heard, which hath not entered into the heart of men. He can fear God. Religion is the possibility of the removal of every ground of confidence except confidence in God alone. Piety is the possibility of the removal of the last traces of a firm foundation upon which we can erect a system of thought. The judgement of history is that those devoted to its investigation are driven to a final deprivation: they become dumb before God. When this possibility is realized; when men who exercise themselves in the law hear the voice of the law pronouncing that God alone is just; when their religion dissolves religion, and their piety dissolves piety; when this historical and spiritual pre-eminence depresses every eminence; when every confident, arrogant mouth, every mouth that thinks that it can give forth even one single truth, is stopped; when men, as men, have scaled the world's highest peaks, and there discover that *all the world is guilty before God*—then it is that their peculiar advantage is established, maintained, and confirmed; then it is that there is manifested the eternal meaning of history; then it is that God asserts His

faithfulness, and reveals that it has not been deflected by the unfaithfulness of men.

By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight—*Enter not into judgement with thy servant ; For in thy sight shall no man living be justified* (Ps. cxliii. 2): *Of a truth I know that it is so : For how can man be just before God? If he should desire to contend with him, he could not answer him one of a thousand* (Job ix. 2, 3, see LXX version). *Long ago* (i. 2) these men uttered the witness of history against history, of which we have been reminded (iii. 10–18). *Long ago* they assigned to it the same clear significance as we have done. The *living* (Ps. cxliii) may be as truly named the *dead* (Job ix). Caught up in the struggle for existence—eating, drinking, sleeping, yes, above all, sleeping! marrying and giving in marriage—men stand midway between life and death. Immersed in the flux of time and history, fleshly, they are not righteous before God. What, indeed, does *flesh* mean, but the complete inadequacy of the creature when he stands before the Creator? What does it mean, but unqualified and, when measured by human standards, unqualifiable worldliness? What does it mean, but everything that is unrighteous before God? The *works of the law* that are written by God in the hearts of men (ii. 15) do not bear witness for them but against them; they provide them with no security or rest or excuse; they demolish their righteousness, they do not build it up. Seen from within the sphere of human fleshliness—in fact, as we see them—the works of the law negate, they do not affirm. Only God sees them as positive factors, to be treasured up and valued. Men, as we know them, have no resting-place, no peace, no stronghold, not even in the hidden depths or superficialities of their nature. It is God who judgeth the *secrets of men* (ii. 16), and they are, and can be, known only by Him. In all their works men possess nothing which they can put forth on their behalf; but God renders to every man *according to his works* (ii. 6). What men account righteous and valuable is, as such, *flesh*, which, in God's sight, is unrighteous and valueless. That which He pronounces righteous, and for which He *renders*, is not flesh as such, not something we possess nor something which the world accounts weighty and important. God alone is the answer to the question; He alone is our helper in the misery which is the consequence of the separation of the Creator from the creature. Well-grounded, therefore, is the cry—*Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate. I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works. I spread forth my hands unto thee: My soul thirsteth after thee, as a weary*

land (Ps. cxliii. 4-6). Justified also is the complaint: *Lo, he goeth by me and I see him not: He passeth on also, but I perceive him not. Behold, he seizeth the prey, who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, What doest thou? God will not withdraw his anger; the helpers of arrogancy do stoop under him. How much less shall I answer him, and choose out my words to reason with him? Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer; I would make supplication to my judge. If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he harkened unto my voice. For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause. He will not suffer me to take my breath, but filleth me with bitterness. If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong: and if of judgement, who shall set me a time to plead? Though I be righteous, mine own mouth shall condemn me: Though I be perfect, he shall prove me perverse. Though I be perfect, I will not regard myself; I despise my life* (Job ix. 11-21; see LXX version). The man of genuine religion and piety, the man who accepts the law, must play his part in the midst of this crying and complaining. He knows that it is precisely the *doing of the law*—in other words, what a man veritably does in God—that is his perpetual coming under judgement.

By the law is the knowledge of sin. The answer is now given to our question (iii. 1), *What advantage then hath the Jew?* He has an advantage. He possesses law—the impress of revelation—experience, religion, piety, perception, vision; in fact, he has a Biblical outlook. The men who possess the law are removed from all romantic sentimentality, for they are moving along the chasm which divides the Creator from the creature, spirit from flesh. By the law they are placed under indictment, and are pronounced to be sinners in God's sight; by it they are deprived of every possession, and handed over to the favour or disfavour of God. When this occurs, men hear the decision of the law, and understand themselves in the peculiarity of their experience and of their piety. Then it is that they hear the final truth, the truth of redemption and of atonement. Once this is heard and understood, it is possible for us to say that there ARE eminences in history. When history points beyond itself and discovers in itself its own inadequacy, when there emerges in history a horror at history, then its high places are made known. When an impress of revelation is nothing but a sign-post to Revelation, the impress is itself eternal reality; when the waiting of the pious is veritably only an expectancy which drives out all memory of piety, this waiting is a waiting in the Kingdom of God; when a solid sense of possession is known to be itself

wholly questionable, the possession is eternally solid. The whole course of this world participates in true existence when its non-existence is recognized. Through the law, therefore, attention is directed towards God, and by it He is displayed as the Judge. This is the positive relation between God and men, which is disclosed to men when they perceive the utter separation between here and there, and become aware of the only possible presence of God in the world. In the light of ultimate and all-embracing KRISIS God is known to be God, and His sovereignty is seen. Here is the peculiarity of the Jew and the meaning of circumcision. God is known as the Unknown God, who *justifieth the ungodly* (iv. 5), who *quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things that are not, as though they were* (iv. 17), on whom men can only *in hope believe against hope* (iv. 18). When the 'Jew' realizes this peculiar possibility, when he recognizes that he has been set at the barrier between two worlds, he is able to rejoice in his peculiarity. Such realization and perception lie beyond the possibility of our knowledge, and are the becoming possible of that which is impossible.

JESUS

III. 21-6

vv. 21, 22 a. But now apart from the law the righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through his faithfulness in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe.

But now. We stand here before an irresistible and all-embracing dissolution of the world of time and things and men, before a penetrating and ultimate KRISIS, before the supremacy of a negation by which all existence is rolled up. The world is the world; and we now know what that means (i. 18—iii. 20). But whence comes this KRISIS? Whence comes our recognition of it and our ability to comprehend it? Whence comes the possibility of our perceiving that the world is the world, and of our thus limiting it as such by contrasting it with another world which is unknown to us? Whence comes the possibility of our describing time only as time, and things only as things, and men only as men? and whence the possibility of our assigning a value to history and existence by sternly recognizing that they are concrete, limited, and relative? From what lofty eminence do all these critical opinions descend? And out of what abyss arises our knowledge of these last, unknown things, by which

everything is measured, this shattering knowledge of the invisible Judge in whose hands lies our condemnation? All these questions revolve round one point, which is our origin, and sound one presupposition, from which our existence has emerged. From this presupposition we have come, and, regarded from this point, the world and we ourselves are seen to be bounded, dissolved, rolled up, and judged. But this one point is not a point among other points, and this one presupposition is not one among many presuppositions. Our origin evokes in us a memory of our habitation with the Lord of heaven and earth; and at this reminiscence the heavens are rent asunder, the graves are opened, the sun stands still upon Gibeon, and the moon stays in the valley of Ajalon. *But now* directs our attention to time which is beyond time, to space which has no locality, to impossible possibility, to the gospel of transformation, to the imminent Coming of the Kingdom of God, to affirmation in negation, to salvation in the world, to acquittal in condemnation, to eternity in time, to life in death—*I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away.* This is the Word of God.

Apart from the law. That God speaks, that we, known by Him, see ourselves and the world in His light, is something strange, peculiar, new; and this 'otherness' runs through all religions, all experience, and every disposition of men, when these are directed towards God. This 'otherness' cuts sharply through all human sense of possession and semi-possession, even through all sense of not-possessing. It is the meaning of all ecclesiastical and religious history, nay, of all history; meaning which, for this reason, cannot be identified with any period or epoch of history or even with any underlying experience in history—for even such experience itself shares in the general ambiguity of all history. It is the confirmation of all these concrete and spiritual factors in the history of religion which we have named the impress of revelation, of all forms of worship, and, in the broadest sense of the word, of all 'beliefs'; confirmation which, for this reason, must not be identified with the things which are confirmed, as though it were a visible thing in the midst of other visible things, and not, on the contrary, visible only in its invisibility. The voice of God which is His *power* (i. 16) is and remains the voice OF GOD; were it not so, and did it not remain beyond all other voices, it would not be the POWER of God. God speaks where there is *law*; but He speaks also where there is no law. He speaks where law is, not because law is there, but because He willeth to speak. God is free.

The righteousness of God. The word of God declares that He is what He is. By committing Himself to men and to the world which has been created by Him, and by His unceasingly accepting them and it, He justifies Himself to Himself. Even the wrath of God is His righteousness (i. 18). To unbelief, His righteousness is necessarily manifested as divine negation. God makes Himself known as Creator and Lord of all things through His anger against unbelief, through the compulsion by which He drives men helplessly on to the barrier which hems them in, and hands them over to the god of this world (i. 20, 21). In this negation God affirms Himself and pronounces His claim upon men to be decisive, permanent, and final. Beyond the barrier at which we stand is—God. This is the theme of the Word of God. The more we become aware of the piercing irresistibility of this Word, the more powerfully and clearly will God speak to us of His justice and of His Kingdom; the more everything human—our good and evil, our belief and unbelief—becomes transparent as glass, the more pronouncedly do we—as we are seen and known by God—stand under His sovereignty and under the operation of His power. The righteousness of God is that ‘nevertheless’ by which He associates us with Himself and declares Himself to be our God. This ‘nevertheless’ contradicts every human logical ‘consequently’, and is itself incomprehensible and without cause or occasion, because it is the ‘nevertheless!’ of God. The will of God brooks no questioning: because He is God, He wills. The righteousness of God is His forgiveness, the radical alteration of the relation between God and man which explains why, though human unrighteousness and ungodliness have brought the world to its present condition and are intolerable to Him, He nevertheless continues to name us His people in order that we may BE His people. The righteousness of God is righteousness from outside—*justitia forensis*, *justitia aliena*; for the Judge pronounces His verdict according to the standard of His righteousness only. Unlike any other verdict, His verdict is creative: He pronounces us, His enemies, to be His friends. ‘Here therefore is the sermon of sermons and the wisdom of heaven; in order that we may believe that our righteousness and salvation and comfort come to us from outside; in order that we may believe that, though in us dwells naught but sin and unrighteousness and folly, we are, nevertheless, acceptable before God, righteous and holy and wise’ (Luther). The righteousness of God is the action which sets free the truth that we have imprisoned (i. 18), and which is wholly independent of every attempt, or imaginable attempt,

that we could make to achieve liberty. The righteousness of God is therefore the sovereign and regal display of the power of God: it is the miracle of resurrection. The righteousness of God is our standing-place in the air—that is to say, where there is no human possibility of standing—whose foundations are laid by God Himself and supported always by Him only; the place where we are wholly in His hands for favour or disfavour. This is the righteousness of God; and it is a positive relation between God and man. 'We can neither doubt nor surrender this article of faith—though heaven and earth and every corruptible thing fall in ruins about us' (Luther). In the light of some 150,000 years of human insecurity, can we even consider any other positive relation? Can we even for one moment conceive of the emergence of some concrete or direct, historical or spiritual, relation? European history apart, can Asiatic or African or American history provide any other answer than God alone, God Himself, and the mercy of God?

That God is righteous—**hath been manifested**. This is the answer to our question 'whence?', the meaning of our 'thence', our *But now*. The mercy of God triumphs! It has been given to us. The positive relation between God and man, which is the absolute paradox, veritably exists. This is the theme of the Gospel (i. 1, 16), proclaimed in fear and trembling, but under pressure of a necessity from which there is no escape. It proclaims eternity as an event. We declare the knowledge of the Unknown God, the Lord of heaven and earth, who dwelleth not in temples made with hands, who needeth not anything, seeing that He himself giveth to all life and breath and all things. We set forth everything given by God to men, as given in order that they may seek Him who is not far from each one of us, in whom we live and move and have our being, who is beyond all our life and movement and existence, and whose nature is to remain faithful, in spite of human depravity. We proclaim that, because it is His nature to remain faithful, the Godhead cannot be graven into any likeness by the skill and device of men; that God has overlooked the times of ignorance, *but that now* He commandeth men everywhere to repent. We announce the dawning of the day in which He will judge the world of men in righteousness—in His righteousness! (Acts xvii. 23-31). The righteousness of God *hath been manifested*. We can no longer omit to reckon with it; we can no longer see what has been given otherwise than in the light of this previous giving. We can come from nowhere except from this pre-supposition. Henceforward the negation in which we stand can be understood only

in the light of the divine affirmation from which it proceeds. This means that the marks of human unrighteousness and ungodliness are crossed by the deeper marks of the divine forgiveness; that the discord of human defiance is penetrated by the undertones of the divine melody 'Nevertheless'. Once the revelation is given, our situation can never be otherwise; if, that is to say, we believe what has been revealed, and if we perceive that men have been dissolved by God, and therefore exalted to be with Him. By faith in the revelation of God we see men bounded, confined, and barred in, but even this is the operation of God. We see men under judgement, yet nevertheless thereby set aright. We see sense in the non-sense of history. We see that truth has burst its bonds. We see in men more than *flesh*. We see salvation breaking through. We see the faithfulness of God remaining firm; even though the noblest human hopes and expectations are dashed to the ground. And so, now that we have beheld what has appeared, been manifested, and displayed, we advance to meet the world, our conversation is of this revelation, and we are occupied in bringing the revelation of God to the notice of those who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

The revelation of the righteousness of God is—**witnessed by the law and the prophets**: it has been *proclaimed long ago* (i. 2). Abraham saw the day when God would judge the world in righteousness; Moses saw it also; the Prophets saw it; Job and the Psalmists saw it. We are encompassed by a cloud of witnesses who stood, all of them, in the light of this day; for the meaning of every epoch in history is directly related to God. In His righteousness every promise is fulfilled. The righteousness of God is the meaning of all religion, the answer to every human hope and desire and striving and waiting, and it is especially the answer to all that human activity which is concentrated upon hope. The righteousness of God is that upon which the whole existence and inevitability of the world is founded, and it is peculiarly visible when the world stands under the negation of judgement. It is the meaning of history, and especially of the complaint of history against its own inadequacy. It is the redemption of all creation, and most particularly when the creature knows itself to be no more than a creature, and so points beyond itself. Wherever there is an impress of revelation—and does anything whatsoever lack this mark?—there is a witness to the Unknown God, even if it be no more than an ignorant and superstitious worship of the most terrible kind (Acts xvii. 22, 23). Where have there not been *certain of your own poets who also* have said it (Acts xvii. 28)? Where there is experience,

there is also the possibility of understanding. We proclaim no new thing; we proclaim the essential truth in everything that is old; we proclaim the incorruptible of which all corruptible is a parable. Our theme, therefore, is the theme concerning which the parables speak and to which they bear witness; the theme which eyes have seen and ears heard, and in which men have veritably believed; we proclaim the theme of the Church, which has been believed by all men, everywhere, and at all times.

The righteousness of God is manifested—**through his faithfulness in Jesus Christ.** The faithfulness of God is the divine patience according to which He provides, at sundry times and at many divers points in human history, occasions and possibilities and witnesses of the knowledge of His righteousness. Jesus of Nazareth is the point at which it can be seen that all the other points form one line of supreme significance. He is the point at which is perceived the crimson thread which runs through all history. Christ—the righteousness of God Himself—is the theme of this perception. The faithfulness of God and Jesus the Christ confirm one another. The faithfulness of God is established when we meet the Christ in Jesus. Consequently, in spite of all our inadequacy, we are able to recognize the veritable possibility of the action of God in all His divers witnesses in history; consequently also, we are able to discover in the traces of the righteousness of God in the world more than mere chance occurrences, and are in a position to see that our own position in time is pregnant with eternal promise, if—nay, because!—we meet truth of another order at one point in time, at one place in that time which is illuminated throughout by reality and by the answer of God. The Day of Jesus Christ is the Day of all days; the brilliant and visible light of this one point is the hidden invisible light of all points; to perceive the righteousness of God once and for all here is the *hope of righteousness* (Gal. v. 5) everywhere and at all times. By the knowledge of Jesus Christ all human waiting is guaranteed, authorized, and established; for He makes it known that it is not men who wait, but God—in His faithfulness. Our discovery of the Christ in Jesus of Nazareth is authorized by the fact that every manifestation of the faithfulness of God points and bears witness to what we have actually encountered in Jesus. The hidden authority of the Law and the Prophets is the Christ who meets us in Jesus. Redemption and resurrection, the invisibility of God and a new order, constitute the meaning of every religion; and it is precisely this that compels us to stand still in the presence of Jesus. All human activity is a cry for forgiveness;

and it is precisely this that is proclaimed by Jesus and that appears concretely in Him. The objection that this hidden power of forgiveness and, in fact, the whole subject-matter of religion, is found elsewhere, is wholly wide of the mark, since it is precisely we who have been enabled to make this claim. In Jesus we have discovered and recognized the truth that God is found everywhere and that, both before and after Jesus, men have been discovered by Him. In Him we have found the standard by which all discovery of God and all being discovered by Him is made known as such; in Him we recognize that this finding and being found is the truth of the order of eternity. Many live their lives in the light of redemption and forgiveness and resurrection; but that we have eyes to see their manner of life we owe to the One. In His light we see light. That it is the Christ whom we have encountered in Jesus is guaranteed by our finding in Him the sharply defined, final interpretation of the Word of the faithfulness of God to which the Law and the Prophets bore witness. His entering within the deepest darkness of human ambiguity and abiding within it is THE faithfulness. The life of Jesus is perfected obedience to the will of the faithful God. Jesus stands among sinners as a sinner; He sets Himself wholly under the judgement under which the world is set; He takes His place where God can be present only in questioning about Him; He takes the form of a slave; He moves to the cross and to death; His greatest achievement is a negative achievement. He is not a genius, endowed with manifest or even with occult powers; He is not a hero or leader of men; He is neither poet nor thinker:—*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Nevertheless, precisely in this negation, He is the fulfilment of every possibility of human progress, as the Prophets and the Law conceive of progress and evolution, because He sacrifices to the incomparably Greater and to the invisibly Other every claim to genius and every human heroic or aesthetic or psychic possibility, because there is no conceivable human possibility of which He did not rid Himself. Herein He is recognized as the Christ; for this reason God hath exalted Him; and consequently He is the light of the Last Things by which all men and all things are illuminated. In Him we behold the faithfulness of God in the depths of Hell. The Messiah is the end of mankind, and here also God is found faithful. On the day when mankind is dissolved the new era of the righteousness of God will be inaugurated.

Unto all them that believe. Here is the necessary qualification. The vision of the New Day remains an indirect vision; in Jesus

revelation is a paradox, however objective and universal it may be. That the promises of the faithfulness of God have been fulfilled in Jesus the Christ is not, and never will be, a self-evident truth, since in Him it appears in its final hiddenness and its most profound secrecy. The truth, in fact, can never be self-evident, because it is a matter neither of historical nor of psychological experience, and because it is neither a cosmic happening within the natural order, nor even the most supreme event of our imaginings. Therefore it is not accessible to our perception: it can neither be dug out of what is unconsciously within us, nor apprehended by devout contemplation, nor made known by the manipulation of occult psychic powers. These exercises, indeed, render it the more inaccessible. It can neither be taught nor handed down by tradition, nor is it a subject of research. Were it capable of such treatment, it would not be universally significant, it would not be the righteousness of God for the whole world, salvation for all men. Faith is conversion: it is the radically new disposition of the man who stands naked before God and has been wholly impoverished that he may procure the one pearl of great price; it is the attitude of the man who for the sake of Jesus has lost his own soul. Faith is the faithfulness of God, ever secreted in and beyond all human ideas and affirmations about Him, and beyond every positive religious achievement. There is no such thing as mature and assured possession of faith: regarded psychologically, it is always a leap into the darkness of the unknown, a flight into empty air. Faith is not revealed to us by *flesh and blood* (Matt. xvi. 17): no one can communicate it to himself or to any one else. What I heard yesterday I must hear again to-day; and if I am to hear it afresh to-morrow, it must be revealed by the Father of Jesus, who is in heaven, and by Him only. The revelation which is in Jesus, because it is the revelation of the righteousness of God, must be the most complete veiling of His incomprehensibility. In Jesus, God becomes veritably a secret: He is made known as the Unknown, speaking in eternal silence; He protects himself from every intimate companionship and from all the impertinence of religion. He becomes a scandal to the Jews and to the Greeks foolishness. In Jesus the communication of God begins with a rebuff, with the exposure of a vast chasm, with the clear revelation of a great stumbling-block. 'Remove from the Christian Religion, as Christendom has done, its ability to shock, and Christianity, by becoming a direct communication, is altogether destroyed. It then becomes a tiny superficial thing, capable neither of inflicting deep wounds

nor of healing them; by discovering an unreal and merely human compassion, it forgets the qualitative distinction between man and God' (Kierkegaard). Faith in Jesus, like its theme, the righteousness of God, is the radical 'Nevertheless'. Faith in Jesus is to feel and comprehend the unheard of 'love-less' love of God, to do the ever scandalous and outrageous will of God, to call upon God in His incomprehensibility and hiddenness. To believe in Jesus is the most hazardous of all hazards. This 'Nevertheless', this unheard of action, this hazard, is the road to which we direct men. We demand faith, no more and no less; and we make this demand, not in our own name, but in the name of Jesus, in whom we have encountered it irresistibly. We do not demand belief in our faith; for we are aware that, in so far as faith originates in us, it is unbelievable. We do not demand from others our faith; if others are to believe, they must do so, as we do, entirely at their own risk and because of the promise. We demand faith in Jesus; and we make this demand here and now upon all, whatever may be the condition of life in which they find themselves. There are, however, no preliminaries necessary to faith, no required standard of education or intelligence, no peculiar temper of mind or heart, no special economic status. There are no human avenues of approach, no 'way of salvation'; to faith there is no ladder which must be first scaled. Faith is its own initiation, its own presupposition. Upon whatever rung of the ladder of human life men may happen to be standing—whether they be Jews or Greeks, old or young, educated or uneducated, complex or simple—in tribulation or in repose they are capable of faith. The demand of faith passes diagonally across every type of religious or moral temperament, across every experience of life, through every department of intellectual activity, and through every social class. For all faith is both simple and difficult; for all alike it is a scandal, a hazard, a 'Nevertheless'; to all it presents the same embarrassment and the same promise; for all it is a leap into the void. And it is possible for all, only because for all it is equally impossible.

vv. 22b-24. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

'Note that here is the very centre and kernel of the Epistle and of all Scripture' (Luther).

There is no distinction. The reality of the righteousness of

God is attested by its universality. It is not irrelevant that it is precisely Paul, who, daring, in Jesus, to put his trust boldly in grace alone, is able, in Jesus, also to perceive the divine breaking down of all human distinctions. Indeed, Paul's courage proceeds from his insight. Because he is the Apostle of the Gentiles, he is the Prophet of the Kingdom of God. Once this interdependence was obscured, there came into being what was afterwards known as 'missionary work'. But this is something quite different from the mission of Paul. His mission did not erect barriers; it tore them down. God can be known only when men of all ranks are grouped together upon one single step; when those of the highest rank regard 'suffering with the whole social order of their age and bearing its heavy burden' (S. Preisker) as the noblest achievement of which they are capable; when the rich in spirit think nothing of their wealth—not even in order to share it—but themselves become poor and the brothers of the poor. The Pharisee who prays can indeed become a missionary, but not a missionary of the Kingdom of God. The strange UNION—of men one with another—must assert and expose the strange, and yet saving, SEPARATION—between God and man. In this separation is displayed the righteousness of God. The paradox must be maintained absolutely, in order that the scandal may not be obscured, and in order that Christianity may be disclosed in its true nature as 'a problem which is itself essentially a riddle, and which sets a question-mark against every human achievement in history' (Overbeck). Nothing must be allowed to disturb this paradox; nothing must be retained of that illusion which permits a supposed religious or moral or intellectual experience to remove the only sure ground of salvation, which is the mercy of God. The illusion that some men have an advantage over others must be completely discarded. The words *there is no distinction* need to be repeated and listened to again and again. The demand to believe is laid upon all. All must proceed along the road of faith, and must proceed only along that road; yet it is a road along which no man can go. All flesh must be silent before the inconspicuousness of God, in order that all flesh may see His salvation.

All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God. Here is exposed the cause of the dissolution of every distinction. The remarkable union is attested by a remarkable separation. There is no positive possession of men which is sufficient to provide a foundation for human solidarity; for every positive possession—religious temperament, moral consciousness, humanitarianism—already contains within itself the seed of the disruption of society.

These positive factors are productive of difference, since they distinguish men from one another. Genuine fellowship is grounded upon a negative: it is grounded upon what men lack. Precisely when we recognize that we are sinners do we perceive that we are brothers. Our solidarity with other men is alone adequately grounded, when with others—or apart from them, since we may not wait for them!—we stretch out beyond everything that we are and have, and behold the wholly problematical character of our present condition. Men *fall short of the glory of God*. The glory of God is his conspicuousness (*Gloria divinitas conspicua*—Bengel). For us this conspicuousness is lacking; and herein we are united. Consequently, all that is exalted must become abased; and blessed are they who already stand far below. The problem of faith appears where the conspicuousness of God is lacking—*they that have not seen, and yet have believed*; and forgiveness of sins, which is the only relevant salvation, then emerges as a highly significant possibility. The recognition of the need of the forgiveness of sin has nothing in common with pessimism, with contrition and the sense of sin, or with the 'heavy depression' of the 'preachers of death' (Nietzsche); it has no relation to eastern asceticism contrasted with the merriment of the Greeks. The need of the forgiveness of sin might in fact be regarded as a Dionysiac enthusiasm, were it not that it can be placed in no such human category. True negation is directed as much against the denial of this life as it is against the acceptance of it. Both Jew and Greek are set under one condemnation. Our deepest and final deprivation—a deprivation just as real whether we accept or deny the world as it is!—is recognized when we perceive the true and original humanity which lies beyond this world. In his PURITY man is set within the domain of the mercy of God.

Being justified (declared righteous) **freely by his grace**. When we are enabled to hear nothing except the word of the Judge, by which he asserts Himself and by which He upholdeth all things (Heb. i. 3), we know that we stand assuredly and genuinely before God. Our hearing can then be nothing more than faith in God, faith that He is because He is. So long as we are swayed by any other motive except faith, we do not stand before God. Thus all distinctions between men are seen to be trivial. *God declares*: He declares His Righteousness to be the Truth behind and beyond all human righteousness and unrighteousness. He declares that He has espoused our cause, and that we belong to Him. He declares that we, His enemies, are His beloved children. He declares His decision to erect His justice by the complete

renewal of heaven and of earth. This declaration is *creatio ex nihilo*, creation out of nothing. Uttered by God from His tribunal, it is grounded in Him alone, and is without occasion or condition. Such creation is assuredly genuine creation, the creation of the divine righteousness in us and in the world. When God speaks, it is done. But the creation is a new creation; it is not a mere new eruption, or extension, or unfolding, of that old 'creative evolution' of which we form a part, and shall remain a part, till our lives' end. Between the old and the new creation is set always the end of this man and of this world. The 'Something' which the Word of God creates is of an eternal order, wholly distinct from every 'something' which we know otherwise. It neither emerges from what we know, nor is it a development of it. Compared with our 'something' it is and remains always—nothing. However true it is that—THIS mortal must put on immortality, and THIS corruptible must put on incorruption; nevertheless—*Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*—inasmuch as the *putting on* is an act of God, and not a human action, this mortal remains mortal and subject to corruption: he awaits a radical and qualitative change, a transformation; he awaits, in fact, the Resurrection of the Dead (1 Cor. xv. 50-7). *We await a new heaven and a new earth.* The Righteousness of God in us and in the world is not a particular form of human righteousness competing with other forms; rather, *your life is hid with Christ in God* (Col. iii. 3). If it be not hidden, it is not Life! The Kingdom of God has not 'broken forth' upon the earth, not even the tiniest fragment of it; and yet, it has been *proclaimed*: it has not come, not even in its most sublime form; and yet, it is *nigh at hand*. The Kingdom of God remains a matter of faith, and most of all is the revelation of it in Christ Jesus a matter of faith. It is heralded and it is nigh at hand as a new world, not as the continuation of the old. 'Our' righteousness can be genuine and permanent only as the Righteousness of God. By *new* must always be understood the eternal world in the reflection of which we stand here and now. The mercy of God which is directed towards us can be true, and can remain true, only as a miracle—'vertical from above'. When the mercy of God is thought of as an element in history or as a factor in human spiritual experience, its untruth is emphasized. We stand really before God, inasmuch as we await in faith the realization of His Word, and inasmuch as we perpetually recognize that the declaration that we are justified by God in His Presence takes place *freely by his grace*, and only by His grace. Grace is the generous and free will of God, His will to accept us; its

necessity proceeds from Him and from Him only. The necessity of the promise of God that those who in a pure heart lack His glory shall see Him face to face; the necessity that the imprisoned Truth of God shall break its chains; the necessity that God shall maintain and show forth His faithfulness, without any provision by us of an occasion for its display—but simply because He is God; all this necessity is the majestic pre-eminence of grace. Grace is, then, no spiritual power residing in the man of this world; no physical energy residing in Nature; no cosmic power in this earth. Grace is and remains always the Power of God (i. 16), the promise of a new man, of a new nature, of a new world: it is the promise of the Kingdom of God. Grace is and remains always in this world negative, invisible, and hidden; the mark of its operation is the declaration of the passing of this world and of the end of all things. Restless, and terribly shattering, grace completely overthrows the foundations of this world; and yet, on the Day of days, the creative Word of God veritably declares the operation of grace to be no mere negation. Grace is altogether 'Yes'; it is salvation, comfort, and edification. Through the dissolution of the outer man the inner man is renewed day by day. But all this is true on the Day of all days through the creating Word; and it must be believed on, because the creative Word of God has promised it; and we can believe in it, if our eyes be fixed upon the Day of fulfilment which has been announced in Jesus.

This creative word is spoken—**through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**

What is there, then, in Christ Jesus? There is that which horrifies: the dissolution of history in history, the destruction of the structure of events within their known structure, the end of time in the order of time. *Hallowed be Thy name! Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven!* The Son of man proclaims the death of the son of man, He proclaims God as First and Last; and the echo answers: *He taught them as one that had authority—He is beside himself—He deceiveth the people—A friend of publicans and sinners.* The answer bears unmistakable witness to the truth of what has been proclaimed. Jesus of Nazareth, *Christ after the flesh*, is one amongst other possibilities of history; but He is THE possibility which possesses all the marks of impossibility. His life is a history within the framework of history, a concrete event in the midst of other concrete events, an occasion in time and limited by the boundaries of time; it belongs to the texture of human life. But it is history pregnant with meaning; it is concreteness which displays the

Beginning and the Ending; it is time awakened to the memory of Eternity; it is humanity filled with the Voice of God. In this fragment of the world there is detached from this world—before the very eyes of men and in their actual hearing!—something which gleams in the darkness and gives to the world a new brilliance; and this 'something' is—Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased!—God Himself, who willeth to draw the whole world unto Himself, and to fashion a new heaven and a new earth. As yet we see but the image of this world and of its dominion. Mighty it is, and lifted up, and very magnificent, terrible to behold, an image of gold and silver, of iron and clay and brass. But in the hidden Life of Jesus we see also the stone fashioned and detached, which smites the image upon its feet and, without any aid from human hands, breaks it in pieces. The whole image is crushed, and the wind carries it away like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors. *But the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth* (Dan. ii. 24-35). Satan as lightning is fallen from heaven, his dominion is ended; the Kingdom of God is at hand, and the heralds of His Kingdom are assuredly present: *The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them; and—blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.* He that gazes upon this earthly fragment of the world, and perceives in the life of Jesus, and beyond it, the redemption which shall come; he it is that hears the creative Voice of God, and looks henceforward for no other, but awaits all from this redemption and from this Voice of God (Matt. xi. 1-4). Blessed is he who believes what can only be BELIEVED, and what CAN only be believed because of that which is—in Christ Jesus.

vv. 25, 26. Whom God set forth to be a covering of propitiation, through his faithfulness, by his blood, to shew his righteousness, because of the remission of sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the shewing, I say, of his righteousness at this present time: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that is grounded upon the faithfulness which abides in Jesus.

Whom God set forth to be a covering of propitiation, through his faithfulness, by his blood. In the Old Testament cultus the covering of propitiation (EV. *mercy seat*; Hebr. *Kapporeth*; LXX *Hilasterion*) was the sheet of gold, overshadowed by the wings of the two angel-figures (cherubim), which covered and marked

the place where the contents of the ark, the oracles of God, were deposited (Exod. xxv. 17-21). In 1 Sam. iv. 4, 2 Sam. vi. 2, Ps. lxxx. 1, it is the place above which God Himself dwells; in Exod. xxv. 22, Num. vii. 89, it is the place from which God speaks to Moses; it is pre-eminently, however, the place where, on the great day of Atonement, the people were reconciled to God by the sprinkling of blood (Lev. xvi. 14, 15). The analogy with Jesus is especially appropriate, because the mercy seat is no more than a particular, though very significant, place. By the express counsel of God, Jesus has been appointed from eternity as the place of propitiation above which God dwells and from which He speaks; now, however, He occupies a position in time, in history, and in the presence of men. The life of Jesus is the place in history fitted by God for propitiation and fraught with eternity—*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself* (2 Cor. v. 19). At this place the Kingdom of God is come nigh: so near is it, that here His coming and His redeeming power are recognized; so near, that here God dwells with men and His communing is unmistakable; so near, that here the pressure of faith is a commanding necessity. But, just as in the Old Testament the *Kapporeth* covered the testimonies of God as well as marked their presence among men, so here the Kingdom of God, His atoning activity, and the dawning of the day of redemption (iii. 24), are in Jesus covered as well as displayed. Jesus is presented to us unmistakably as the Christ, but His Messiahship is also presented to us as a sharply defined paradox. It is a matter for faith only. The propitiation occurs at the place of propitiation—only by blood, whereby we are solemnly reminded that God gives life only through death. Consequently, in Jesus also atonement occurs only through the faithfulness of God, *by his blood*: only, that is to say, in the inferno of His complete solidarity with all the sin and weakness and misery of the flesh; in the secret of an occurrence which seems to us wholly negative; in the extinguishing of all the lights—hero, prophet, wonder-worker—which mark the brilliance of human life, a brilliance which shone also in His life, whilst He lived a man amongst men; and finally, in the absolute scandal of His death upon the Cross. By His blood, then, Jesus is proved to be the Christ, the first and last word to men of the faithfulness of God. By His death He declares the impossible possibility of our redemption, and shows Himself as the light from light uncreated, as the Herald of the Kingdom of God. 'In the picture of the Redeemer the dominant colour is blood' (Ph. Fr. Hiller), because, in the way of the Cross, in the offering of His life, and in His death, the radical nature of

the redemption which He brings and the utter novelty of the world which He proclaims are first brought to light. Brought to light—nay, rather, put in the shade, when once we recognize that to comprehend either the radicalism or the novelty of God's world or the necessary transformation of the hearts of men, lies beyond our competence—*Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising up of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against—yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed* (Luke ii. 34, 35). The secret of redemption by the blood of Jesus is, and remains, the secret of God. Its manifestation also, which is the invisibility of God becoming visible, is always the action of God, an act of His faithfulness, or, what is the same thing, an act of faith. In so far as this occurs and His faithfulness persists, in so far as the hazard of faith is ventured, the dawn of the new world, the reality of the mercy of God and of our salvation, of our future being-clothed-upon with our habitation not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens (2 Cor. v. 1 ff.), is displayed and announced, secured and guaranteed to us, in the blood of Jesus. We stand already, here and now, in the reflection of the things which are to come; we are perplexed, but not hopeless; smitten by God, but nevertheless, in this KRISIS, under His healing power. 'Therefore we must nestle under the wings of this mother-hen, and not rashly fly away trusting in the powers of our own faith, lest the hawk speedily tear us in pieces and devour us' (Luther).

For the showing of his righteousness. Everywhere there has been forgiveness of sins, the miraculous outpouring upon men of the wealth of the divine mercy, signs of the forbearance and longsuffering of God (ii. 4). Everywhere men are being healed of the divine wounds. But it is through Jesus that we have been enabled to see that this is so; through Him the righteousness of God has been exposed and presented to us; through Him we have been placed so that we can apprehend history—**sins done aforetime**—as God sees it, that is to say, in the light of His dissolving mercy; through Him we know the mercy of God to be the end of all things and the new beginning, and we know what this means for us—it means that we must be led unto repentance (ii. 4, vi. 2, 3). Only through Him is the righteousness of God clearly seen to be the unmistakable governance of men and the real power in history. By the pre-supposition which has been given us in Jesus we now see always and everywhere not only the flesh and the sin, as the law sees (iii. 20), but the Judge who, in His condemnation, speaks the word of forgiveness wherever He finds in the *secrets of men* (ii. 16) faithful recognition of His

faithfulness. God is just; and He is the justifier of those who dare to leap into the void. Believing in Jesus, we believe in the universal reality of the faithfulness of God. Believing in Jesus, to us the righteousness and justification of God are manifested and displayed. This is the pre-supposition by which we can see ourselves as we are and advance to meet men as they are. In the light of this pre-supposition we can dare to do what otherwise we could never do—to believe in ourselves and in all men. For this reason and with this pre-supposition we demand courageously of all men (iii. 22) faith—faith in the pre-supposition. We have peace with God (v. 1), because He is just, and because He justifies.

BY FAITH ONLY

III. 27-30

vv. 27, 28. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? Nay: but by the law of the faithfulness of God! For we reckon that a man is justified by the faithfulness of God apart from the works of the law.

Where then is boasting? It is excluded. To us Jesus has announced the truth which proceeds from beyond the grave. God is righteous; and He Himself, and He only, declares men to be righteous. Men are righteous only when their righteousness proceeds from God, and from Him continuously. From this pre-supposition it is possible to adopt a critical attitude to the law, to religion, to human experience, to history, to the inevitability of the world as it is, in fact, to every concrete human position. In Jesus everything which emerges from men and which occurs through their agency is subjected to the measurement of God and by Him pronounced valuable or worthless according to His pleasure. All existence must be tested, must be disturbed and weighed in the balance. This critical point of view involves the apprehension that the world and human history are moving in a secular and relative context, which is in itself ultimately meaningless; but it involves also the apprehension that they have meaning as a parable of a wholly other world; that they bear witness (iii. 21) to a wholly other history; that they are reminiscent of a wholly other mankind; that they are, in fact, a parable, a witness, and a reminiscence, of God. When subjected to this criticism there is but one aspect of human life which is seen to be altogether meaningless and incomprehensible. Incomprehensible and meaningless is the view that things—men and their

experiences—are in themselves, apart from their subjection to the judgement of God and apart from their awaiting His justification, great and important, or are in themselves sufficient to be, or to desire to be, divine: incomprehensible and meaningless is all confusing of time and eternity, every intrusion into the world or appearance in it of the sovereignty of God as a concrete, tangible thing—and we must include here every 'substratum of divinity', every 'higher world': unintelligible and meaningless is all other-worldliness, if other-worldliness is thought of merely as improved worldliness, all improper notions of immanence, every non-radical idea of transcendence, every kind of relative relation between God and man, every divinity which presents itself as being or having or doing what men are or have or do, every human figure which calls itself in any way divine. When all this middle-realm between God and man is clearly recognized, it must be discarded. Confronted by Jesus, men must die, they must die daily, save in so far as they stand under the 'No' and the 'Yes' of God, and are passing from atonement—*by blood* (iii. 25)—to redemption, from the cross to resurrection. That is to say: so long as men claim to see and know and have and do what is real, ultimate, and divine, or even conceive of such a possibility; so long as, failing to recognize that they have nothing which they have not received and nothing which they must not continue to receive, they remain unbroken; so long as men have never been made aware or have ceased to be aware of the paradox of faith; so long as they have not surrendered or have ceased to surrender all security and certainty and every concrete ground of comfort, in order that they may be saved by grace only—they must be mortified. Men are bereft of every ground of *boasting* except hope (iv. 18, v. 2, xv. 17). They are bereft of the possibility of standing upright in the presence of God by appealing to what, as men, they suppose to be of great importance; just as they are also bereft of the possibility of standing upright in the presence of their fellow men by appealing to the one thing which God regards as of supreme importance. We are deprived of the possibility either of projecting a temporal thing into infinity or of confining eternity within the sphere of time. Similarly, it is impossible for us to detach a fragment of our behaviour from its human context and to pronounce it to be justified before the judgement seat of God, just as it is impossible for us to detach one element from the righteousness of God and to regard it, in its detachment, as capable of being comfortably inserted within the structure of human behaviour as it is. Such possibilities are all *excluded*, and must be cut off. The righteousness of God is a

vast impossibility ; and as such it forms an absolute obstacle to the claim of any human righteousness to be either an anticipation of what will finally be or a relic of what once has been. We have nothing of which to boast, nothing past or future, nothing before or after the 'Moment'—which is no moment in time—when the last trumpet shall sound and men stand naked before God, and when, in their nakedness, they shall be clothed upon with the righteousness of God. And so, in the presence of Jesus, all that men are and have and do is perceived to be complete unreality, unless, bowed under the negation of God, they await His divine affirmation. All that men are and have and do is in itself naught but the righteousness of men, and, in the sight of God and men, remains illusion, unless, under the judgement of God, it ceases to be the righteousness of men.

By what manner of law? of works? Nay : but by the law of the faithfulness of God. What is the ground of this pronouncement of impossibility? Why is this pronouncement true, and by what governance is the righteousness of men dethroned? How can we speak of a mortification which neither provides nor desires an opportunity of boasting? And what is the meaning of this dying of men? Is there any law or any religion which can demand this of us? In what piety, or in what experience, or according to what morality, can this death occur? Surely the words 'law', 'religion', 'experience', denote some positive human knowledge or feeling or action or experience—or *work*. Can there, in fact, be any other law except the *law of works*? What can we know of the actions and the works of God? In all this questioning we are threatened by a grave misunderstanding. We may think of knowledge of the Last Things as the supreme achievement of human intelligence ; or we may think of silence before God as the final leap of human piety—as, for example, when we read the mystical sayings of Angelus Silesius as so many psychological recipes ; or we may suppose that a supreme human experience will be ours, if we take up our position at the eschatological 'Moment'—which is, however, no moment ; or we may perhaps imagine the 'wisdom of death' (Overbeck) to be the most up-to-date wisdom of life. But this is the triumph of Pharisaism appearing in a new and far more terrible form ; for it is the Pharisaism of humility taking the place of the Pharisaism of self-righteousness. There is no limit to the possibilities of the righteousness of men : it may run not only to self-glorification, but also to self-annihilation, as it does in Buddhism and mysticism and pietism. The latter is a more terrible misunderstanding than the former, because it lies so near to the righteousness of God, and it too is

excluded—at the last moment. To bow before the negation of God and to await His affirmation is not the last and most courageous achievement of men who are capable of combining perception of God's transcendence with a desire for His immanence. This is still a *boasting* in the *law of works*, which, so long as it is retained, makes even a beginning of the disclosure of the righteousness of God impossible. The man who boasts that he possesses something which justifies him before God and man, even if that something be his own insecurity and brokenness, still retains confidence in human self-justification. No, the solid ground upon which the law of works stands must be completely broken up. No work, be it most delicately spiritual, or be it even a work of self-negation, is worthy of serious attention. In fact, our experience is that which we have not experienced; our religion consists in the dissolution of religion; our law is the complete disestablishment of all human experience and knowledge and action and possession. Nothing human which desires to be more than a void and a deprivation, a possibility and a sign-post, more than the most trivial thing in the midst of the phenomena of this world, survives; nothing which is not, like everything else in this world, dust and ashes—before God. Only faith survives: faith which is not a work, not even a negative work; not an achievement, not even the achievement of humility; not a thing which exists before God and man in its own right. Faith is the ground, the new order, the light, where *boasting* ends and the true righteousness of God begins. Faith is not a foundation upon which men can emplace themselves; not an atmosphere in which they can breathe; not a system under which they can arrange their lives. Regarded from our human point of view, what was once religion and law and a method of life becomes anarchy and a void and an abyss. But the *law of the faithfulness of God*, or, what is the same thing, the *law of faith*, is the place where we are established by God. There there is nothing but God Himself, God only; and there the place is no place; for it is the 'Moment' when men are moved by God, by the true God, the Creator and Redeemer of men and of all human things; the 'Moment' when men surrender themselves and all that they are to God. The 'Moment' of the movement of men by God is beyond men, it cannot be enclosed in a system or a method or a 'way'. It rests in the good pleasure of God, and its occasion is to be sought and found only in Him. *The law of the spirit of life* (viii. 2) is the point of view—which is no point of view!—by which all human boasting is *excluded*.

For we reckon that a man is justified by the faithfulness of God apart from the works of the law. Our transference from the point of view of religion to the point of view of Jesus involves the transference from a well-established attitude towards the relation between God and man to a wholly different method of *reckoning*. All religions either *reckon* that human achievements in this world—some concrete human behaviour or disposition—constitute a claim to the favour of God and must be rewarded by Him (ii. 6); or else they *reckon* that human achievements are themselves the reward of God, since they are the tangible and recognizable products of a transformation of human behaviour that has been wrought by God. So all religions assume either that God will act or that He has acted; making the assumption quite apart from any consideration of the 'Moment' when men stand naked before God and are clothed upon by Him. They do not consider before and after to be before and after the 'Moment' when men are moved by God; or they suppose either that the 'Moment' depends upon some previous behaviour or that it carries with it some subsequent behaviour: that is to say, they conceive of the 'Moment' as in some way comparable and commensurable with human behaviour. Consequently, all religions admit the possibility of boasting of what men are and do and have, as though they were divine. In all religions it is therefore possible to disregard or to escape from the paradox of faith. From the point of view of Jesus, however, we must *reckon* otherwise: fundamentally there are no human *works* sufficiently significant to excite the favour of God; nor are there works so well-pleasing to Him that they become significant in the world. In Jesus everything that occurs in the world is bent under the judgement of God and awaits His affirmation. The words *apart from* cover everything both before and after the 'Moment' when men stand before God and are moved by Him; for no comparison between the 'Moment' and works which are done either before or after it is possible. The Being and Action of God are and remain wholly different from the being and action of men. The line which separates here from there cannot be crossed: it is the line of death, which is, nevertheless, the line of life; it is the end, which is, nevertheless, the beginning; it is the 'No', which is, nevertheless, the 'Yes'. It is God who pronounces and speaks and renders, who selects and values according to His pleasure. And the word which He utters is verily creative, for it brings reality into being. To God belongs what He *renders*: it belongs no longer to men. What God treats as valuable is valuable indeed—but, for this reason, it is not valuable in this

world. When the new man arises and the new world appears; when, in the power of the faithfulness of God, the new day dawns; then is His faithfulness glorified by His justification of men. Yet this does not mean that in the light of this new day the man of this world either is glorified or will be glorified, for—*This mortal must put on immortality and this corruptible must put on incorruption*. In so far as the *putting on* occurs by the creative act of God, mortality is taken away from mortality and corruption is removed from corruption. This world is thereby no whit exalted, or established, or transformed. With reference to before and after, the 'Moment' is and remains strange and different; it neither has its roots in the past, nor can it be transmitted to the future. The 'Moment' does not belong in any causal or temporal or logical sequence: it is always and everywhere wholly new: it is what God—who only is immortal—is and has and does. *Credo, quia absurdum*. Men are forgiven by God only when He condemns them; life rises only from death; the beginning stands at the end, and 'Yes' proceeds from 'No'. Righteousness by *the blood of Jesus* (iii. 25) is always righteousness *apart from the works of law*; apart, that is, from everything human which may, before God and man, be declared righteous. Concerning this righteousness men can boast only in hope—that is, in God. The cross stands, and must always stand, between us and God. The cross is the bridge which creates a chasm and the promise which sounds a warning. We can never escape the paradox of faith, nor can it ever be removed. By faith only—*sola fide*—does mankind stand before God and is moved by Him. The faithfulness of God can be believed in only, because it is the faithfulness of God. Were it more, it would be less. This is the new *reckoning*.

vv. 29, 30. Or is God the God of the Jews only? is he not the God of the Gentiles also? Yea, of the Gentiles also: seeing that there is one God, and he shall justify the circumcision by faithfulness, and the uncircumcision through faithfulness.

Is God the God of the Jews only? is he not the God of the Gentiles also? yea, of the Gentiles also. To have spoken of the truth of the divine word with more assurance would have been less impressive; to have presented in more concrete form what is here perceived would have obscured it; a claim to human certainty would have betrayed ignorance of what is known. God can be apprehended only through Himself and His faithfulness. He is intelligible only by faith. The supposition that He is and has and acts in human fashion robs Him of His divinity; and

any claim to direct relationship with Him depresses Him to the level of time and things and men, and deprives Him of His true meaning. The reality of divinity depends upon its universality. Its universality depends upon every mouth being stopped and the whole world being guilty before Him (iii. 19); it depends upon the firm recognition that all men have fallen short of the glory of God (iii. 23). If relationship with God were to produce an enhancement of human being and having and doing in this world, rather than a weakening, or even a deprivation, of these things, God would become visibly and concretely a spiritual or historical element in the midst of other elements, differing only relatively from these other notable spiritual or historical powers with which men have been endowed. God would then be *the God of the Jews only*, the God only of certain privileged and well-disposed people; He would become, like 'religion', a speciality of certain special circles and epochs and temperaments; He would be comparatively easy to attain, and to be without Him would be no very serious deprivation. In that case much use would be made of the word 'God', but the theme would not be concerned with righteousness, or redemption, or resurrection, it would not be concerned with all things, or with the Last Things, or with Eternity. And therefore what is less—that is, less positively certain and less surely guaranteed—is, in fact, more. 'God' is the eternal, the last word, if we mean 'by faith only', if we mean the impossible possibility of 'the faithfulness of God. In the paradox of faith the faithfulness of God is sufficient, for through it we stand on firm ground and move forward with assurance. In this world no union with God is possible. It then becomes clear that God is the God of all men, the God of the Gentiles and of the Jews; He is not an element in spiritual experience or in the course of history; He is, rather, the ground of all elements, by whom they are measured and in whom they are contained. He differs absolutely from all our lights and properties and abilities. This being so, the *everlasting power and divinity* (i. 20) of God shines forth ever more clearly. When therefore we use the word 'God', we do not say something but everything, not the last truth but one, but the last truth of all. It is the word of judgement, of challenge, of hope; it is directed to all, and is significant—of supreme significance—for all.

Seeing that there is one God, and he shall justify the circumcision by faithfulness and the uncircumcision through faithfulness. In place of the plurality of things which seek to be important in themselves, in place of all the derived divinities which usurp authority in this world, there is manifested in Jesus the One-ness

of God. In the righteousness of God, which is known only by faith, is the reality and life and personality of the one Creator and Redeemer. In Jesus is to be found the frame of reference for the co-ordinates of eternal truth, by which, on the one hand, things which normally repel one another (men and men) are held together; and by which, on the other hand, things which normally are mutually attracted (God and men) are distinguished. In the light of this KRISIS God is known and honoured and loved. Here a true understanding of the meaning of the religious phrase 'binding and loosing' is regained. The vast distinction between God and man is their veritable union. Because time and eternity, the righteousness of men and the righteousness of God, here and there, are completely dissociated in Jesus, they are also in Him comprehended and united—in God. All 'law', all human being and having and doing, the whole course of this world and its inevitability, are a sign-post, a parable, a possibility, an expectation. For this reason they are always deprivation and dissatisfaction, a void and a longing. But once this is recognized there appears above them all the faithfulness of God, who forgives by condemning, gives life by killing, and utters His 'Yes' when nothing but His 'No' is audible. In Jesus God is known to be the unknown God. In the light of this KRISIS also the deepest unity of men with men is apprehended, and we regain a true understanding of the individuality, of the historical and personal peculiarity, of the real *advantage* (iii. 1), of each single man. The especial abilities of each individual are not destroyed but realized when he is related to his true purport, which is impossibility. The personality of each man is not destroyed but established by the deep disturbance of this 'Not yet' and this 'No further'. The universal challenge of faith is the creative word which calls men into existence out of the chaos of independent personality. It deprives the circumcised and the uncircumcised of their several boasts: it raises the sinner from his depth and dethrones the righteous from his height. If they stand before God by faith only, they both SHALL—for their present condition is not yet their future rest in God—be justified. The faithfulness of God is where faith is. The *advantage* (iii. 1) begins where *boasting* ceases. This is forgiveness, redemption, and the new creation.

But we know, when we pronounce this, that we are speaking of a possibility of which we are ignorant; a possibility which—and we must repeat it again and again!—can only be believed in.