

ARTICLE IV.

EXPOSITION OF ROMANS' V, 12.

"IN THAT ALL SINNED."

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THE Bible is the microcosm of the universe; the epistle to the Romans is the microcosm of the Bible. The Bible solves the problems of human history; the epistle to the Romans solves the problems of the Bible. In his elucidation of the central doctrine of justification by faith the apostle sweeps over the whole range of that wonderful book from Genesis to Revelation. Man unfallen and man fallen; man fallen and man restored; the condition of the Jewish world, and the condition of the Gentile; humanity without law, and humanity under law; the hopeless struggle of unaided reason and conscience against the tyranny of sin; the successful struggle of the emancipated soul, carried forward to complete victory and final glorification; every heavenly doctrine and every human duty—all are swept into the current of this matchless discussion, all are embraced in the comprehensive survey, and unfolded by the energetic eloquence, of this great Christian Demosthenes. He is a wise man who has fathomed the divine philosophy of the epistle to the Romans, for he knows at once man and God; humanity in its apostasy and wretchedness, and humanity in its restoration and glorious future.

We may well believe, therefore, that beyond any other equal portion of Scripture—the immediate discourses of our Lord scarcely excepted—the epistle to the Romans is important to the Biblical student. For into no other equally restricted portion are compassed so full a statement, and so profound a discussion of the great truths to whose practical

enforcement the apostle's life was devoted. To this character of the epistle several causes concur. In the 'fullness of his physical and mental energies, when his views had attained their utmost breadth and ripeness, with as yet no symptom' of the decay that was to come with advancing years and incessant toil, he set himself to address to a Church occupying a pre-eminently central and commanding position, a comprehensive and elaborate *résumé* of those great truths of the Gospel, alike speculative and practical, which experience, reflection, and the infallible teachings of the Spirit had caused to take full possession of his soul. Fortunately, too, the epistle was drawn out by no special exigencies of the Roman Church. No perplexities to be resolved, no strifes to be reconciled, no alarming defection to be arrested, turned aside (as in the epistles to the Corinthians and the Galatians) the natural current of his thoughts, and prevented him from giving, as a precious heritage to the Church, those general features and aspects of the Gospel which stamp it with its universal and world-wide character, and which his long Christian and apostolical experience had enshrined in his soul as pre-eminently precious and important. Hence this epistle has ever been the battleground of religious controversy. Original and imputed sin, and personal and imputed righteousness; universal and limited atonement; necessity and free will; election and reprobation—have all fought their battles over its profound and pregnant utterances; and around these, doubtless, the contest will continue to rage till "the battle-flags are furled," and the Sabbath of millennial harmony shall descend upon our distracted earth.

Among these utterances few have provoked more various and obstinate discussion than the paragraph containing the brief phrase which stands at the head of this article. I propose to discuss this passage specially in its bearing on the relation of the sin of the race to that of our great ancestor, and inquire into its teaching on the subject of imputation. Of course, some other topics will be incidentally

discussed, while on themes which have filled volumes of controversy much must be briefly noticed or passed over altogether.

We may best approach the discussion by glancing at the previous course of thought in the epistle. The opening chapter (at verse 17) announces, as its grand thesis, a justifying righteousness from God, provided for man through faith. Three successive chapters set forth the *necessity* of this righteousness by portraying that universal human wickedness which exposes the entire race to the wrath of God, and renders justification through law for Gentile and Jew alike impossible. The close of chapter third (verses 21-31) reintroduces with emphasis the remedy for the disease that has been so vividly portrayed, viz., redemption through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ; and the fourth chapter confirms this doctrine of faith from the Old Testament examples of Abraham and David. The necessity, nature, and harmony with the Scriptures of this justification having been shown, the apostle proceeds, in chapter five to develop its results under the two grand aspects; first of *peace* with God—an adjustment of the otherwise unappeasable strife between God and man—and, secondly, of a *hope*, assured by God's already manifested mercy (verses 5-8), of a future inheritance of bliss, and a consummation of grace in glory (verses 9, 11). Under the inspiration of his theme the apostle exclaims, "And not only so, but we triumph in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have *now*" (as against the coming *glory*) "received the reconciliation."

At this stage of the discussion, the reconciling to God of a race with whom he was before at enmity; the quenching of his fiery wrath; the breaking in through the rent and retreating clouds of the blessed beams of grace and glory; and all through the obedience and sacrifice of a *single* man who thus becomes a new head and starting point to the race—there naturally, and to one at home in Old Testament history, almost inevitably suggests itself a parallel between this uni-

versal deliverance and salvation (universal in potency and intrinsic adaptation) wrought by the obedience of one man, and the universal sin and wrath entailed by the disobedience of another. The two personages, Adam and Christ, stand, to the most superficial eye, in marked relation both of similarity and contrast; and their respective acts form the two great crises and turning points—the strophe and the anti-strophe—in the terribly real and significant drama of human destiny.

Here, then, the apostle pauses in his direct track of thought. For no purposes of nice theological distinction, but having his mind filled with the wrath delineated in the preceding pages, and the glorious reconciliation now opening through Jesus Christ, he starts spontaneously on a parallel, partly of resemblance, partly of contrast, between the two great heads of humanity, and their respective works of ruin and restoration. “For this cause just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death came through (or abroad) unto all men in that all sinned,” so—it is easy to fill out the parallel; the corresponding members of the comparison readily suggest themselves—“so through one man righteousness entered into the world, and life by righteousness,” or something to that effect. But the phrase, “in that all sinned,” suggesting (as at ii, 14) the seeming paradox of sin in the absence of law, led the apostle to leave his sentence unfinished, and turning away to certain illustrative ideas, to abandon the formal completion of his parallel, and return to it only in a modified form, first at verse 14 (“who is type of him that was to come,” the future Adam), and again (after introducing the points of *contrast*), more fully and formally at verse 18. I stop now at the brief clause on which I have undertaken to comment, and which becomes the pivot of my discussion—“in that all have sinned.”

First, briefly, in regard to the translation. Some have rendered it “in *whom* all sinned,” referring the relative “whom” back to *Adam* as its antecedent. But this con-