

Upon the whole, I cannot but observe, how extremely difficult it is, even for men who have an upright intention, and are not wanting either in natural or acquired abilities, to understand one another: And how hard it is to do even justice to those whom we do not thoroughly understand; much more to treat them with that gentleness, tenderness, and brotherly kindness, with which, upon a change of circumstances, we might reasonably desire to be treated ourselves. O when shall men know whose disciples we are, by our "loving one another, as He hath loved us!" The God of love hasten the time!

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate servant,

JOHN WESLEY.

THOUGHTS

ON

THE IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

1. A TRACT has lately been published in my name, concerning the imputed righteousness of Christ. This calls me to explain myself upon that head; which I will do with all the clearness I can. But I quarrel with no man for thinking or speaking otherwise than I do: I blame none for using those expressions which he believes to be scriptural. If he quarrels with me for not using them, at least not so frequently as himself, I can only pity him, and wish him more of "the mind which was in Christ."

2. "The righteousness of Christ" is an expression which I do not find in the Bible. "The righteousness of God" is an expression which I do find there. I believe this means, First, the mercy of God; as 2 Peter i. 1: "Them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God." How does it appear that "the righteousness

of God" here, means either more or less than his mercy? "My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation;" thy mercy in delivering me. "I will make mention of thy righteousness only. Thy righteousness, O God, is very high." (Psalm lxxi. 15, &c.) Here the "righteousness of God" is expressly mentioned; but I will not take upon me to say, that it means the righteousness or mercy of the Son, any more than of the Holy Ghost.

3. I believe this expression means, Secondly, God's method of justifying sinners. So Rom. i. 17: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for therein is the righteousness of God," his way of justifying sinners, "revealed." "Now the righteousness of God is manifested; even the righteousness of God which is by faith;" (unless righteousness here also means mercy;) "Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of the sins that are past; that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." (iii. 21, &c.) "They being ignorant of God's righteousness," (method of justifying sinners,) "and going about to establish their own righteousness," (a method of their own opposite to his,) "have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." (x. 3.)

4. Perhaps it has a peculiar meaning in 2 Cor. v. 21: "He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in" (or through) "him;" that we might be justified and sanctified, might receive the whole blessing of God, through him.

5. And is not this the natural meaning of Phil. iii. 8, 9: "That I may win Christ, and be found in him," grafted into the true vine, "not having my own righteousness,"—the method of justification which I so long chose for myself, "which is of the law; but the righteousness which is of God"—the method of justification which God hath chosen—"by faith?"

6. "But is not Christ termed 'our righteousness?'" He is: "This is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." (Jer. xxiii. 6.) And is not the plain, indisputable meaning of this scripture, He shall be what he is called, the sole Purchaser, the sole meritorious Cause, both of our justification and sanctification?

7. Nearly related to this is the following text: "Jesus Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and

sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. i. 30.) And what does this prove, but that he is made unto us righteousness, or justification, just as he is made unto us sanctification? In what sense? He is the sole Author of one, as well as of the other, the Author of our whole salvation.

8. There seems to be something more implied in Romans x. 3. Does it not imply thus much? "Christ is the end of the law"—not only of the Mosaic dispensation, but of the law of works, which was given to Adam in his original perfection—"for righteousness to every one that believeth;" to the end that "every one who believeth" in him, though he have not kept, and cannot keep, that law, may be both accounted and made righteous.

9. Accordingly, frequent mention is made, in Scripture, of "faith counted for righteousness." So Genesis xv. 6: "He" (Abraham) "believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness." A text repeated, with but little variation, over and over in the New Testament: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Rom. iv. 5.) Thus it was that "Noah became heir of the righteousness," the justification, "which is by faith." (Heb. xi. 7.) Thus also "the Gentiles," when the Jews fell short, "attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith." (Rom. ix. 30.) But that expression, "the righteousness of Christ," does not occur in any of these texts.

10. It seems, righteousness in the following texts means neither more nor less than justification: "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." (Gal. ii. 21.) "If there had been a law which could have given life," spiritual life, or a title to life eternal, "then righteousness should have been by the law;" (iii. 21;) though some may think it here includes sanctification also; which it appears to do, Rev. xix. 8: "The fine linen is the righteousness of the saints."

11. "But when St. Paul says, (Rom. v. 18,) 'By the righteousness of one,' (called in the following verse, 'the obedience of one,' even his 'obedience unto death,' his dying for us,) 'the free gift came,' does he not mean the righteousness of Christ?" Undoubtedly he does. But this is not the question. We are not inquiring what he means, but what he says. We are all agreed as to the meaning, but not as to the expression, "the imputing the righteousness of Christ;" which I still say,

I dare not insist upon, neither require any one to use, because I cannot find it in the Bible. If any one can, he has better eyes than me; and I wish he would show me where it is.

12. Now, if by "the righteousness of Christ" we mean anything which the Scripture does not mean, it is certain we put darkness for light. If we mean the same which the Scripture means by different expressions, why do we prefer this expression to the scriptural? Is not this correcting the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, and opposing our own to the perfect knowledge of God?

13. I am myself the more sparing in the use of it, because it has been so frequently and so dreadfully abused; and because the Antinomians use it at this day to justify the grossest abominations. And it is great pity that those who love, who preach, and follow after, holiness, should, under the notion of honouring Christ, give any countenance to those who continually make him "the minister of sin," and so build on his righteousness as to live in such ungodliness and unrighteousness as is scarce named even among the Heathens.

14. And doth not this way of speaking naturally tend to make Christ the minister of sin? For if the very personal obedience of Christ (as those expressions directly lead me to think) be mine the moment I believe, can anything be added thereto? Does my obeying God add any value to the perfect obedience of Christ? On this scheme, then, are not the holy and unholy on the very same footing?

15. Upon the whole, I cannot express my thoughts better than in the words of that good man, Mr. Hervey: "If people may be safe and their inheritance secure without any knowledge of these particularities, why should you offer to puzzle their heads with a few unnecessary terms? We are not very solicitous as to the credit or the use of any particular set of phrases. Only let men be humbled as repenting criminals at the Redeemer's feet; let them rely as devoted pensioners on his precious merits; and they are undoubtedly in the way to a blissful immortality." (*Dialogues*, vol. i., p. 43. Dublin edition.)

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