

A SCHOLASTIC
MISCELLANY:
ANSELM TO OCKHAM

Edited and Translated

by

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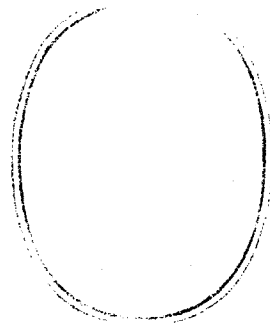
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Peter Abailard: Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans (An Excerpt from the Second Book)

THE TEXT

I

ON ROMANS 3:19-26

"Now we know . . ." ¹ The apostle returns to his attack upon the Jews so that, as he has removed their boasting about circumcision, he may also remove it with respect to the law or external observances of any kind; for he fears, perchance, that he may appear to have commended the law too highly by his words, "First indeed because the words of God were committed to them." ² So he first dismisses their boasting of the law by demonstrating that they have been censured rather than justified by the law. ³ Then he has marshaled evidences from the law—that is, from the Old Testament—through which he might build up a case that all are guilty, the Jews no less than the Gentiles.

But we know that the Jews are particularly censured by these evidences, for it is to them alone—though not about them only—that the law speaks, since it was to them alone that the law was given and charged. And this is what he says: "Now we know," etc., as if he were to declare: Although we have gathered out of the law very strong indictments of the Gentiles also, yet we know that the law was not spoken to them, for it had not been given to them, though it does concern them. "But to them only who are in the law." ⁴ That is, they are held chargeable to obey the law which they have received.

It should be noted that by the term "law" sometimes it is just the five books of Moses that are understood; at other times, the whole Old Testament, as in our present instance. So Saint Augustine, in the fifteenth book of his *On the Trinity*, says: "By the term 'law' sometimes all the oracles of God are referred

to, but at other times more accurately only the law which was given through Moses." ⁵ "That" so "every mouth may be stopped." ⁶ That the mouth may be restrained and quieted from any boasting of itself, and be opened only for the glorification of God, since we have learned, indeed, that even the very great glory of the particular people of God (which was theirs because of the law) is to be accounted as nothing—even though they thought themselves to be justified through the works of that law.

"And so [all the world may be] made subject." ⁷ That is, let it humble itself before God, assuming that it has nothing of itself to boast about, since any supposed reason for self-gratulation has been removed even from those who appeared to be in high favor with God.

"Because by the works of the law" ⁸—that is, by outward observances of the law to which that people gave studious attention, such as circumcision, sacrifices, keeping the Sabbath, and other symbolic ordinances of the same kind—"no flesh shall be justified in his sight"—that is, in God's sight. All such as fulfill the law merely according to the flesh and not according to the spirit will be accounted righteous in men's sight, perhaps—that is, according to human judgment which judges from outward and visible appearances—but not in God's.

"For by the law . . ." ⁹ He relates two points to the two that have already been made: To the one where he says, "That every mouth may be stopped and all the world brought under the judgment of God," he links, "For through the law cometh the knowledge of sin." To that other utterance, "Because by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified before him," he joins the words, "But now without [the law the justice of God is made manifest]." ¹⁰

So he connects his thoughts. It follows that men ought to be restrained from any self-gratulation by the law because through it they are rendered completely without excuse for their sins; by it their sins have become more recognizable rather than less—indeed, they have been increased—and farther on he is to declare the purpose of the law: "That sin . . . might become sinful above measure." ¹¹

⁵ Cf. Augustine, *De trin.*, XV, 18:30 (PL, 42, 1081).

⁶ Rom. 3:19.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Rom. 3:20.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Rom. 3:21.

¹¹ Rom. 7:13.

¹ Rom. 3:19.

² Rom. 3:2.

³ Cf. Rom. 2:13-25.

⁴ Cf. Rom. 3:19.

"But now . . ." ¹² I said that by particular works of the written law, that is, by those formal precepts of which natural law knows nothing, no one is justified in God's sight; but now, in this dispensation of grace, a righteousness ¹³ of God—something which God approves and by which we are justified in God's sight, namely love ¹⁴—has been manifested, through the teaching of the gospel, of course, apart from the law with its external and particular requirements. Still, this is a "righteousness witnessed by the law and the prophets," who also enjoin it.

Upon what this righteousness depends he adds immediately by saying, "The justice of God." ¹⁵ He means the faith of Christ which we hold concerning him—either by believing him or by believing in him. And when he continued, "Them that believe," he did not specify anyone in particular, that it might be impartially extended over all.

By the faith which we hold concerning Christ love is increased in us, by virtue of the conviction that God in Christ has united our human nature to himself and, by suffering in that same nature, has demonstrated to us that perfection of love of which he himself says: "Greater love than this no man hath," etc. ¹⁶ So we, through his grace, are joined to him as closely as to our neighbor by an indissoluble bond of affection. ¹⁷ For this reason it is written further on: "Who then shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation," etc. ¹⁸ And again, "For I am sure that neither death," etc. ¹⁹ A righteousness, I say, imparted to all the faithful in the higher part of their being—in the soul, where alone love ²⁰ can exist—and not a matter of the display of outward works.

"For there is no distinction." ²¹ I said rightly over all without distinction—on the Gentiles assuredly as on the Jews—because there is no difference between them in this righteousness of God through faith in Christ, as there once was in connection with the works of the law. Just as all have sinned, so they are impartially justified by this manifestation of God's grace toward us. And this is what he says: "For all have sinned and do need the grace of God." ²² That is, they need, as a matter of obligation, to glorify the Lord.

¹² Rom. 3:21.

¹⁴ *Caritas*.

¹⁶ John 15:13.

¹⁸ Rom. 8:35; Vulgate: "love of Christ."

²⁰ *Dilectio*.

²² Rom. 3:23; Vulgate reads "glory," not "grace."

¹³ *Iustitia*, as in the Vulgate.

¹⁵ Rom. 3:22.

¹⁷ *Amor*.

¹⁹ Rom. 8:38.

²¹ Rom. 3:22.

"Being justified freely." ²³ Freely, because they have been justified, not by any previous merits of their own, but by the grace of him—that is, God—who "first hath loved us." ²⁴ What that grace really is—namely, a free and spiritual gift of God—he adds when he says, "Through our redemption accomplished by Christ whom God the Father set forth to be our propitiator," ²⁵ that is, our reconciler.

"In his blood." This means by his death; and since this propitiation is set forth and established by God, not for all but only for those who believe, he adds, "Through faith"; for this reconciliation affects them only who have believed it and hoped for it.

"To the showing of his justice"—that is, his love—which, as has been said, justifies us in his sight. In other words, to show forth his love to us, or to convince us how much we ought to love him who "spared not even his own Son" ²⁶ for us.

"For the remission." That is to say that through this righteousness—which is love—we may gain remission of our sins, even as the Truth in person says concerning that blessed woman who was a sinner, "Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much." ²⁷ I say that remission is granted, yes, even for past sins, "through the forbearance of God" ²⁸—because of the long-suffering of God, who does not summarily punish the guilty and condemn sinners, but waits a long time for them to return in penitence, and cease from sin, and so obtain forgiveness.

"For the showing . . ." First he had said simply for the showing of his righteousness; now he adds, "in this time" of grace—that is, of love ²⁹ rather than of fear. And so when he speaks of his righteousness—that is, God's righteousness, in this time of grace, of course—he clearly intimates how he first understood this righteousness to be a love ³⁰ which perfectly meets the needs of men of our time, which is the time of grace.

It is possible that the words, "Through the forbearance of God," should be taken with what follows, that is, with the clause, "For the showing of his justice in this time." So the sense may be that the Lord in this matter delayed or postponed his action in times past so that he might show forth his righteousness of which we have spoken—that is, his love—in this present

²³ Rom. 3:24 f.

²⁴ I John 4:19.

²⁵ The reading *propitiatorem* (rather than *propitiationem*) appears in the "Sixtine" Vulgate of 1590, but not in the "Clementine" editions.

²⁶ Rom. 8:32.

²⁷ Luke 7:47.

²⁸ Rom. 3:26.

²⁹ *Amor*.

³⁰ *Caritas*.

time. "That he himself may be just" in will, and "the justifier" by his mighty act; that is, that he may both will to fulfill in Christ what he had promised concerning our redemption or justification, and as he has willed it, may complete it in deed. "Of him who is of the faith of Jesus Christ." Namely, of him who believes him to be Jesus, that is, Saviour, by virtue of what Christ actually is—God and man.

II

A QUESTION

A most pressing problem obtrudes itself at this point, as to what that redemption of ours through the death of Christ may be, and in what way the apostle declares that we are justified by his blood—we who appear to be worthy of still greater punishment, seeing that we are the wicked servants who have committed the very things for which our innocent Lord was slain. And so it seems that we must first investigate why it was necessary for God to take human nature upon him so that he might redeem us by dying in the flesh;³¹ and from what person holding us captive, either justly or by fraud, he has redeemed us; and by what standard of justice he has liberated us from the dominion of that person who has given commands to which he willingly submitted in order to set us free.³²

Indeed, it is said that he has redeemed us from the dominion of Satan; that it was Satan who (because the first man had sinned and had yielded himself by voluntary obedience to him) was exercising a total dominion over man; and that he would always exercise the same unless a deliverer came. But since he has delivered his elect only, when, either in this age or in the age to come, did Satan or will Satan possess them more than he does now? Did the devil torment that beggar who rested on Abraham's bosom as he did Dives who is damned, although he may have tortured him less? Or had he power even over Abraham and the rest of the elect? When did that wicked torturer have power over him who is described as being carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom—concerning whom Abraham himself pays testimony in the words, "But now he is comforted and thou art tormented"?³³ Moreover, he declares that a great gulf has been fixed between the elect and the wicked so that the latter can never cross over to the former.

³¹ Cf. Anselm, *Cur deus homo*, I, 1.

³² Cf. *ibid.*, I, 6.

³³ Luke 16:25.

Still less may the devil, who is more evil than all, acquire any power in that place where no wicked person has a place or even entry.

And what right to possess mankind could the devil possibly have unless perhaps he had received man for purposes of torture through the express permission, or even the assignment, of the Lord? For if any slave wanted to forsake his lord and put himself under the authority of another master, would he be allowed to act in such a way that his lord could not lawfully seek him out and bring him back, if he wanted to? Who indeed doubts that, if a slave of any master seduces his fellow slave by subtle suggestions and makes him depart from obedience to his true master, the seducer is looked upon by the slave's master as much more guilty than the seduced? And how unjust it would be that he who seduced the other should deserve, as a result, to have any special right or authority over him! And even if such a fellow had previously had any right over him, would he not deserve to lose that right? It is written, forsooth, "He who abuses authority committed to him deserves to lose any special rights."³⁴ Where one slave was about to be set over the other and receive authority over him, it would never do for the more evil one who had absolutely no justification for preferment to be promoted; but it would be much more reasonable that the person who was seduced should possess a full claim for redress over the man who had caused the harm by his act of seduction. Furthermore, the devil could not grant that immortality which he promised man as a reward of transgression in the hope that in this way he might hold him fast by some sort of right.

And so from these reasonings it seems proved that the devil acquired no right against man whom he seduced simply by seducing him, except perhaps (as we said before) in so far as it was a case of the Lord's permitting it—by handing man over to the wretch who was to act as his jailer or torturer for punishment. For man had not sinned except against his own Lord, whose obedience he had forsaken. If, then, his Lord wanted to remit the sin, as was done to the Virgin Mary,³⁵ and as Christ also did for many others before he underwent his Passion—as it is reported of Mary Magdalene,³⁶ and as it is

³⁴ I have not been able to identify this quotation.

³⁵ This does not necessarily imply (but may seem rather to exclude) the immaculate conception of Mary.

³⁶ Cf. Luke 7:47; according to the tradition of the Western Church, Abailard identifies the sinful woman with Mary Magdalene.

recorded that the Lord said to the paralytic, "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee"³⁷—if, I say, the Lord was willing to pardon sinful man apart from his Passion, and to say to his tormentor, "Do not punish him any further," how could the tormentor justly continue to torment him? For, as has been shown, he had received no absolute right of torture, but only such as came from express permission of the Lord.

So, if the Lord should cease to grant this permission, no right whatever would be left to the tormentor, and, if he should complain or murmur against the Lord, it would be quite appropriate for the Lord to reply, "Is thine eye evil because I am good?"³⁸ The Lord inflicted no loss upon the devil when, from sinning humanity,³⁹ he took upon himself pure flesh, and manhood free from all sin. Indeed, as man, he did not by his own merits ensure that he should be conceived, be born, and continue throughout his life without sin, but received this through the grace of the Lord upholding him. If, by the same grace, he wished to forgive sins to other men, could he not have delivered them from punishment? Assuredly, once the sins for which they were undergoing punishment have been forgiven, there appears to remain no reason why they should be any longer punished for them. Could not he, who showed such loving-kindness to man that he united him to his very self, extend to him a lesser boon by forgiving his sins?

So what compulsion, or reason, or need was there—seeing that by its very appearing alone the divine pity could deliver man from Satan—what need was there, I say, that the Son of God, for our redemption, should take upon him our flesh and endure such numerous fastings, insults, scourgings and spittings, and finally that most bitter and disgraceful death upon the cross, enduring even the cross of punishment with the wicked? In what way does the apostle declare that we are justified or reconciled to God through the death of his Son,⁴⁰ when God ought to have been the more angered against man, inasmuch as men acted more criminally by crucifying his Son than they ever did by transgressing his first command in paradise through the tasting of a single apple? For the more men's sins were multiplied, the more just it would have been for God to be angry with men. And if that sin of Adam was so great that it could be expiated only by the death of Christ, what expiation will avail for that act of murder committed against Christ, and for the

³⁷ Matt. 9:2.

³⁹ *De massa peccatrice*; cf. p. 106, n. 13.

³⁸ Matt. 20:15.

⁴⁰ Cf. Rom. 5:10.

many great crimes committed against him or his followers? How did the death of his innocent Son so please God the Father that through it he should be reconciled to us—to us who by our sinful acts have done the very things for which our innocent Lord was put to death? Had not this very great sin been committed, could he not have pardoned the former much lighter sin? Had not evil deeds been multiplied, could he not have done such a good thing for man?

In what manner have we been made more righteous through the death of the Son of God that we were before, so that we ought to be delivered from punishment? And to whom was the price of blood paid for our redemption but to him in whose power we were—that is, to God himself, who (as we have said) handed us over to his torturer? For it is not the torturers but the masters of those who are held captive who arrange or receive such ransoms. Again, how did he release these captives for a price if he himself exacted or settled the price for release of the same? Indeed, how cruel and wicked it seems that anyone should demand the blood of an innocent person as the price for anything, or that it should in any way please him that an innocent man should be slain—still less that God should consider the death of his Son so agreeable that by it he should be reconciled to the whole world!

These, and like queries, appear to us to pose a considerable problem concerning our redemption or justification through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III

SOLUTION

Now it seems to us that we have been justified by the blood of Christ and reconciled to God in this way: through this unique act of grace manifested to us—in that his Son has taken upon himself our nature and perserved therein in teaching us by word and example even unto death—he has more fully bound us to himself by love; with the result that our hearts should be enkindled by such a gift of divine grace, and true charity should not now shrink from enduring anything for him.

And we do not doubt that the ancient Fathers, waiting in faith for this same gift, were aroused to very great love of God in the same way as men of this dispensation of grace, since it is written: "And they that went before and they that followed

cried, saying: 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' " etc.⁴¹ Yet everyone becomes more righteous—by which we mean a greater lover of the Lord—after the Passion of Christ than before, since a realized gift inspires greater love than one which is only hoped for. Wherefore, our redemption through Christ's suffering is that deeper affection⁴² in us which not only frees us from slavery to sin, but also wins for us the true liberty of sons of God,⁴³ so that we do all things out of love rather than fear—love to him who has shown us such grace that no greater can be found, as he himself asserts, saying, "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."⁴⁴ Of this love the Lord says elsewhere, "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I, but that it blaze forth?"⁴⁵ So does he bear witness that he came for the express purpose of spreading this true liberty of love amongst men.

The apostle, closely examining this great fact, exclaims further on: "Because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us. For why did Christ . . ."⁴⁶ And a few verses later, "God commendeth his charity toward us; because when as yet . . ."⁴⁷ But these utterances we shall expound more fully when we come to them. Now, as befits brevity of exposition, let the foregoing suffice as a summary of our understanding of the manner of our redemption. But inasmuch as our explanations are wanting in completeness, let us keep further elaboration for our treatise *Theology*.⁴⁸

IV

ON ROMANS 3:27

"Where is then thy boasting?"⁴⁹ I have said that righteousness apart from the law is now manifested through the faith of Christ unto all alike who believe. So where, O Jew, is now thy

⁴¹ Mark 11:9; the words *filius David* do not appear here in the Vulgate, but are imported from Matt. 21:9.

⁴² *Dilectio*.

⁴³ Cf. Rom. 8:21.

⁴⁴ John 15:13.

⁴⁵ Luke 12:49; *ardeat* for Vulgate *accendatur*.

⁴⁶ Rom. 5:5 f.

⁴⁷ Rom. 5:8.

⁴⁸ This refers, not to the *Theologia christiana*, but to the *Introductio ad theologiam*, whose third book (part of which is now lost) was written after the *Expositio ad Romanos*; cf. J. G. Sikes, *Peter Abailard*, 259-267.

⁴⁹ Rom. 3:27.

glorying, that extraordinary boasting in which thou usest to indulge concerning the law and its outward observances? It has been excluded, that is, taken away from thee, and made void. "By what law?" Has it perhaps been excluded by a law of works, that is, of some external deeds? "No, but by the law of faith"—as we have said, faith in Jesus Christ, meaning the love which comes from faith in our salvation through Christ.

If anyone believes and loves before he is baptized—like Abraham, about whom it is written, "Abraham believed God and it was reputed to him unto justice,"⁵⁰ and Cornelius, whose alms were accepted by God while he was yet unbaptized,⁵¹ and anyone who is truly penitent about past sins, as the publican who went down from the Temple justified⁵²—I do not hesitate to call such a person righteous, or to say that the man who restores to anyone what belongs to him possesses justice.⁵³ Likewise, also, we consider Jeremiah and John to have been sanctified from the womb, because, being wondrously enlightened, they already knew the Lord and loved him, though it was still necessary for them to undergo circumcision, which in those days took the place of baptism.⁵⁴ Why, then, you will ask, was it necessary for such individuals later to be circumcized or baptized, seeing they were already justified beforehand—by the faith and love that was in them, of course—and would inevitably be saved if they died at that time?

Nobody, to be sure, who is damned can die in a state of righteousness, even if he possesses charity. On the other hand, no one can be saved apart from baptism or martyrdom, once the meaning and purpose of baptism has been taught him. Yet a person could die in a state of charity before baptism or martyrdom; if he should die at that moment, you will say, he would have to be both saved and damned. But we claim that everyone who now honestly and purely loves the Lord for his own sake is predestined to life, and will never be overtaken by death until the Lord shows him what is of obligation concerning the sacraments, and also gives him the ability to understand it.

Indeed, what is being argued here—that the man who was already righteous before baptism, by believing and loving God, was in such a condition that, should he then die, he ought to be both saved and damned—can also be argued with respect

⁵⁰ Rom. 4:3; cf. Gen. 15:6.

⁵¹ Cf. Acts 10:31.

⁵² Cf. Luke 18:13 f.

⁵³ Cf. p. 250, n. 27.

⁵⁴ Cf. Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacram.*, I, p. 12, c. 2 (*PL*, 176, 349 f.); Peter Lombard, *Sententiae*, I, d. 1, 7-10, below.

to anyone who sins grievously, although predestined to life, for example, David when he committed adultery.⁵⁵ For as that man who was righteous ought to be saved, so should any righteous person who is predestinated; as the unbaptized should be damned, so should that adulterer. So it was with David at one time of his life, when, if he had died, he ought to have been both damned and saved.

Again, if it was a fact that he was in no condition to die well, and never in a condition in which he *could* not die badly (as long as he had free power of choice), nonetheless it is not true to say in the case of anyone at all that he must die both badly and well. Nay, rather, there is no condition in which a man *must* die well or *must* die badly; but at the particular times in which a man can die well, he can also in those same times die badly. Yet in no instance is it true to say that a man can die both well and badly at the same time. So with respect to the man who possesses charity before baptism, and is consequently righteous, we are of the opinion that he would never find himself in such a state that he would have to be simultaneously saved and damned, if he died.

Undoubtedly anyone who possesses charity before baptism might be without charity at the moment of death, and so die and be damned only. It would also be possible for a man to die "in a state of baptism"⁵⁶ before he was yet baptized, and so be saved. But if you were to say that a man can at the same time both be possessed of charity and yet not be "in a state of baptism," I no more accept your argument than if you should say that anyone could die committing adultery and at the same time be predestinated. However, it behooves the man who is predestinated to live well so that he may be saved, just as he who is already righteous through faith and love ought to be baptized because of the definite command of the Lord about baptism, or even to ensure the very continuance of righteousness. For if the man who possesses charity before he is baptized should end his life before being baptized, he would by no means continue in that same charity, with the result that, deep within, he would despair of eternal blessedness, and would have a presentiment that at his death he would immediately be damned forever.

⁵⁵ Cf. II Kings, ch. 11 (A.V. II Sam., ch. 11).

⁵⁶ *Baptizatus*, a term that must be taken in both a technical and a broader sense (hence, "in a state of baptism") if the argument is to be intelligible (G.E.M.).

But just as, before baptism, we already call a person righteous by faith—that is, by election, although his sins have not yet been remitted in the font, that is, their penalty has not yet been entirely forgiven—so also, after baptism, we do not yet call infants and those who are not of years of discretion righteous, even though they have received remission of sins and are clean in God's sight. For they cannot yet be capable of charity or righteousness, or possess any merits. Nevertheless, if they die in this childish state, when they begin to leave the body and see the glory prepared for them by God's mercy, at that moment, along with discernment, the love of God is born in them.

Yet so that no Jew may bring a charge against us—or, more important still, against the apostle—that we also are justified by a law of works, that is, of external acts such as baptism,⁵⁷ let this be our sufficient refutation on the subject of our justification, and the justification of all people, that it consists in love even before sacraments are received, whether we are talking about our sacraments or theirs. For the prophet also says in this connection, "Whosoever a sinner shall mourn for his sins, he shall be saved."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Abailard's general outlook keeps him from understanding the full significance of the sacraments as means of grace.

⁵⁸ Cf. Ezek. 18:27.