

THE AGES DIGITAL LIBRARY  
**THEOLOGY**

**INSTITUTES OF THE  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION  
VOL. 3**

*Translated by Ford Lewis Battles*

*Used by permission from The Westminster Press  
All Rights Reserved*

**Books For The Ages**  
AGES Software • Albany, OR USA  
Version 1.0 © 1998

# BOOK 3

## THE WAY IN WHICH WE RECEIVE THE GRACE OF CHRIST: WHAT BENEFITS COME TO US FROM IT, AND WHAT EFFECTS FOLLOW

### CHAPTER 1.

#### THE THINGS SPOKEN CONCERNING CHRIST PROFIT US BY THE SECRET WORKING OF THE SPIRIT

##### 1. THE HOLY SPIRIT AS THE BOND THAT UNITES US TO CHRIST

<sup>e(a)</sup>We must now examine this question. How do we receive those benefits which the Father bestowed on his only-begotten Son — not for Christ’s own private use, but that he might enrich poor and needy men? First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us. For this reason, he is called “our Head” [<sup><490415></sup>Ephesians 4:15], and “the first-born among many brethren” [<sup><450829></sup>Romans 8:29]. We also, in turn, are said to be “engrafted into him” [<sup><451117></sup>Romans 11:17], and to “put on Christ” [<sup><480327></sup>Galatians 3:27]; for, as I have said, all that he possesses is nothing to us until we grow into one body with him. It is true that we obtain this by faith. Yet since we see that not all indiscriminately embrace that communion with Christ which is offered through the gospel, reason itself teaches us to climb higher and to examine into the secret energy of the Spirit, by which we come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits.

Earlier I discussed the eternal deity and essence of the Spirit.<sup>F1</sup> Now let us be content with this particular point: that Christ so “came by water and blood” in order that the Spirit may witness concerning him [<sup><620506></sup> 1 John 5:6-7], lest the salvation imparted, through him escape us. For, as three witnesses in heaven are named — the Father, the Word, and the Spirit — so there are three on earth: the water, the blood, and the Spirit [<sup><620507></sup> 1 John 5:7-8]. There is good reason for the repeated mention of the “testimony of the Spirit,” a testimony we feel engraved like a seal upon our hearts, with the result that it seals the cleansing and sacrifice of Christ. For this reason, also, Peter says that believers have been “chosen in the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ” [<sup><600102></sup> 1 Peter 1:2 p.]. By these words he explains that, in order that the shedding of his sacred blood may not be nullified, our souls are cleansed by the secret watering of the Spirit. For the same reason, also, Paul, in speaking of cleansing and justification, says that we come to possess both, “in the name of...Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” [<sup><460611></sup> 1 Corinthians 6:11]. To sum up, the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself. To this, also, pertains what we taught in the previous book concerning his anointing.<sup>F2</sup>

## 2. HOW AND WHY CHRIST WAS ENDOWED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

<sup>e(a)</sup>But, in order to get a clearer notion of this matter, so well worth investigating, we must bear in mind that Christ came endowed with the Holy Spirit in a special way: that is, to separate us from the world and to gather us unto the hope of the eternal inheritance. Hence he is called the “Spirit of sanctification” [cf. <sup><530213></sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:13; <sup><600102></sup> 1 Peter 1:2; <sup><450104></sup> Romans 1:4] because he not only quickens and nourishes us by a general power that is visible both in the human race and in the rest of the living creatures, but he is also the root and seed of heavenly life in us. To the Kingdom of Christ, then, the prophets give the lofty title of the time when there will be a richer outpouring of the Spirit. There is a passage in Joel notable above all others: “And in that day I shall pour forth of my spirit upon all flesh” [<sup><290228></sup> Joel 2:28 p.]. For even if the prophet seems to restrict the gifts of the Spirit to the prophetic office, under this figure he

signifies that, in manifesting his Spirit, God will make disciples of those who were previously destitute and empty of heavenly doctrine.

Further, God the Father gives us the Holy Spirit for his Son's sake, and yet has bestowed the whole fullness of the Spirit upon the Son to be minister and steward of his liberality. For this reason, the Spirit is sometimes called the "Spirit of the Father," sometimes the "Spirit of the Son."<sup>F3</sup> Paul says: "You are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his" [<sup><450809></sup>Romans 8:9, cf. Vg.]. Hence, he arouses hope of a full renewal "because he who raised Christ from the dead will quicken our mortal bodies, because of his Spirit that dwells in us" [<sup><450811></sup>Romans 8:11 p.]. For there is nothing absurd in ascribing to the Father praise for those gifts of which he is the Author, and yet in ascribing the same powers to Christ, with whom were laid up the gifts of the Spirit to bestow upon his people. For this reason he invites unto himself all who thirst, that they may drink [<sup><430737></sup>John 7:37]. And Paul teaches that the Spirit is given to each "according to the measure of Christ's gift" [<sup><490407></sup>Ephesians 4:7]. Also, we ought to know that he is called the "Spirit of Christ" not only because Christ, as eternal Word of God, is joined in the same Spirit with the Father, but also from his character as the Mediator. For he would have come to us in vain if he had not been furnished with this power. In this sense he is called the "Second Adam," given from heaven as "a life-giving spirit" [<sup><461545></sup>1 Corinthians 15:45]. This unique life which the Son of God inspires in his own<sup>F4</sup> so that they become one with him, Paul here contrasts with that natural life which is common also to the wicked. Likewise, he asks "the grace of... Christ and the love of God" for believers, at the same time coupling with it "participation in the...Spirit" [<sup><471314></sup>2 Corinthians 13:14], without which no one can taste either the fatherly favor of God or the beneficence of Christ; just as he also says in another passage, "The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" [<sup><450505></sup>Romans 5:5, cf. Vg.].

### 3. TITLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN SCRIPTURE

<sup>e(a)</sup>And here it is useful to note what titles are applied to the Holy Spirit in Scripture, when the beginning and the whole renewal of our salvation are under discussion.

First, he is called the “spirit of adoption” because he is the witness to us of the free benevolence of God with which God the Father has embraced us in his beloved only-begotten Son to become a Father to us; and he encourages us to have trust in prayer. In fact, he supplies the very words so that we may fearlessly cry, “Abba, Father!” [<sup><450815></sup>Romans 8:15; <sup><480406></sup>Galatians 4:6].

<sup>e(b)</sup>For the same reason he is called “the guarantee and seal” of our inheritance [<sup><470122></sup>2 Corinthians 1:22; cf. <sup><490114></sup>Ephesians 1:14] <sup>°</sup>because from heaven he so gives life to us, on pilgrimage in the world and resembling dead men, as to assure us that our salvation is safe in God’s unfailing care. He is also called “life” because of righteousness [cf. <sup><450810></sup>Romans 8:10].

<sup>e(b)</sup>By his secret watering the Spirit makes us fruitful to bring forth the buds of righteousness. Accordingly, he is frequently called “water,” as in Isaiah: <sup>b</sup>“Come, all ye who thirst, to the waters” [<sup><235501></sup>Isaiah 55:1]. Also, “I shall pour out my Spirit upon him who thirsts, and rivers upon the dry land.” [<sup><234403></sup>Isaiah 44:3.] <sup>e(b)</sup>To these verses Christ’s statement, quoted above, <sup>F5</sup> corresponds: “If anyone thirst, let him come to me” [<sup><430737></sup>John 7:37]. <sup>b</sup>Although sometimes he is so called because of his power to cleanse and purify, as in Ezekiel, where the Lord promises “clean water” in which he will “wash away the filth” of his people [<sup><263625></sup>Ezekiel 36:25].

From the fact that he restores and nourishes unto vigor of life those on whom he has poured the stream of his grace, he gets the names “oil” and “anointing” [<sup><620220></sup>1 John 2:20, 27].

<sup>b(a)</sup>On the other hand, persistently boiling away and burning up our vicious and inordinate desires, he enflames our hearts with the love of God <sup>F6</sup> and with zealous devotion. <sup>b</sup>From this effect upon us he is also justly called “fire” [<sup><420316></sup>Luke 3:16].

<sup>c</sup>In short, he is described as the “spring” [<sup><430414></sup> John 4:14] whence all heavenly riches flow forth to us; or as the “hand of God” [<sup><440511></sup> Acts 5:11,21], by which he exercises his might. <sup>b</sup>For by the inspiration of his power he so breathes divine life into us that we are no longer actuated by ourselves, but are ruled by his action and prompting. <sup>a</sup>Accordingly, whatever good things are in us are the fruits of his grace; and without him our gifts are darkness of mind and perversity of heart [cf. <sup><480519></sup> Galatians 5:19-21].

<sup>e(b)</sup>As has already been clearly explained, until our minds become intent upon the Spirit, Christ, so to speak, lies idle because we coldly contemplate him as outside ourselves — indeed, far from us. <sup>F7</sup> We know, moreover, that he benefits only those whose “Head” he is [<sup><490415></sup> Ephesians 4:15], for whom he is “the first-born among brethren” [<sup><450829></sup> Romans 8:29], and who, finally, “have put on him” [<sup><480327></sup> Galatians 3:27]. This union alone ensures that, as far as we are concerned, he has not unprofitably come with the name of Savior. The same purpose is served by that sacred wedlock through which we are made flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone [<sup><490530></sup> Ephesians 5:30], and thus one with him. But he unites himself to us by the Spirit alone. By the grace and power of the same Spirit we are made his members, to keep us under himself and in turn to possess him.

#### 4. FAITH AS THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

<sup>c</sup>But faith is the principal work of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the terms commonly employed to express his power and working are, in large measure, referred to it because by faith alone he leads us into the light of the gospel, as John teaches: to believers in Christ is given the privilege of becoming children of God, who are born not of flesh and blood, but of God [<sup><430112></sup> John 1:12-13]. Contrasting God with flesh and blood, he declares it to be a supernatural gift that those who would otherwise remain in unbelief receive Christ by faith. Similar to this is that reply of Christ’s: “Flesh and blood have not revealed it to you, but my Father, who is in heaven” [<sup><401617></sup> Matthew 16:17]. I am now touching briefly upon these things because I have already treated them at length elsewhere. <sup>F8</sup> Like this, too, is the saying of Paul’s that the Ephesians had been “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” [Ephesians 1:13]. Paul shows the Spirit to be the

inner teacher by whose effort the promise of salvation penetrates into our minds, a promise that would otherwise only strike the air or beat upon our ears. Similarly, where he says that the Thessalonians have been chosen by God “in sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth” [<sup><530213></sup>2 Thessalonians 2:13], he is briefly warning us that faith itself has no other source than the Spirit. John explains this more clearly: “We know that he abides in us from the Spirit whom he has given us” [<sup><620324></sup>1 John 3:24]. Likewise, “From this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.” [<sup><620413></sup>1 John 4:13.] Therefore, Christ promised to his disciples’ “the Spirit of truth that the world cannot receive” [<sup><431417></sup>John 14:17] that they might be capable of receiving heavenly wisdom. And, as the proper office of the Spirit, he assigned the task of bringing to mind what he had taught by mouth. For light would be given the sightless in vain had that Spirit of discernment [<sup><182003></sup>Job 20:3] not opened the eyes of the mind. <sup>b</sup>Consequently, he may rightly be called the key that unlocks for us the treasures of the Kingdom of Heaven [cf. <sup><660307></sup>Revelation 3:7]; and his illumination, the keenness of our insight. <sup>e(b)</sup>Paul so highly commends the “ministry of the Spirit” [<sup><470306></sup>2 Corinthians 3:6] for the reason that teachers would shout to no effect if Christ himself, inner Schoolmaster, <sup>F9</sup> did not by his Spirit draw to himself those given to him by the Father [cf. <sup><430644></sup>John 6:44; 12:32; 17:6]. We have said that perfect salvation is found in the person of Christ. Accordingly, that we may become partakers of it “he baptizes us in the Holy Spirit and fire” [<sup><420316></sup>Luke 3:16], bringing us into the light of faith in his gospel and so regenerating us that we become new creatures [cf. <sup><470517></sup>2 Corinthians 5:17]; and he consecrates us, purged of worldly uncleanness, as temples holy to God [cf. <sup><460316></sup>1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19; <sup><470616></sup>2 Corinthians 6:16; <sup><490221></sup>Ephesians 2:21].

## CHAPTER 2.

### FAITH: ITS DEFINITION SET FORTH, AND ITS PROPERTIES EXPLAINED

*(The object of faith is Christ, 1)*

**1.** <sup>e</sup>But it will be easy to understand all these matters after a clearer definition of faith has been presented, <sup>F10</sup> to enable our readers to grasp its force and nature. <sup>e(a)</sup>We may well recall here what was explained before. <sup>F11</sup> First, God lays down for us through the law what we should do; if we then fail in ally part of it, that dreadful sentence of eternal death which it pronounces will rest upon us. <sup>a</sup>Secondly, it is not only hard, but above our strength and beyond all our abilities, to fulfill the law to the letter; thus, if we look to ourselves only, <sup>e(a)</sup>and ponder what condition we deserve, no trace of good hope will remain; but cast away by God, we shall lie under eternal death. Thirdly, it has been explained that there is but one means of liberation that can rescue us from such miserable calamity: the appearance of Christ the Redeemer, through whose hand the Heavenly Father, pitying us out of his infinite goodness and mercy, willed to help us; <sup>b(a)</sup>if, indeed, with firm faith we embrace this mercy and rest in it with steadfast hope.

But now we ought to examine what this faith ought to be like, <sup>e(b)</sup>through which those adopted by God as his children come to possess the Heavenly Kingdom, <sup>b</sup>since it is certain that no mere opinion or even persuasion is capable of bringing so great a thing to pass. And we must scrutinize and investigate the true character of faith with greater care and zeal because many are dangerously deluded today in this respect. Indeed, most people, when they hear this term, understand nothing deeper than a common assent to the gospel history. <sup>F12</sup> <sup>e(b)</sup>In fact, when faith is discussed in the schools, they call God simply the object of faith, and by fleeting speculations, as we have elsewhere stated, <sup>F13</sup> lead miserable souls astray rather than direct them to a definite goal. For, since “God dwells in inaccessible light” [<sup><540616></sup> 1 Timothy 6:16], Christ must become our intermediary. Hence, he calls himself “the light of the world” [<sup><430812></sup> John

8:12], and elsewhere, “the way, the truth, and the life”; for no one comes to the Father, who is “the fountain of life” [<sup><193609></sup> Psalm 36:9], except through him [<sup><431406></sup> John 14:6] because he alone knows the Father, and afterward the believers to whom he wishes to reveal him [<sup><421022></sup> Luke 10:22]. On this ground, Paul declares that he considers nothing worth knowing save Christ [<sup><460202></sup> 1 Corinthians 2:2]. In the twentieth chapter of Acts he relates that he has preached “faith in...Christ” [<sup><442021></sup> Acts 20:21]. And in another passage he has Christ speak as follows: “I shall send you among the Gentiles...that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among the saints through faith that is in me” [<sup><442617></sup> Acts 26:17-18]. And Paul testifies that the glory of God is visible to us in His person, or — what amounts to the same thing — that the enlightening knowledge of the glory of God shines in His face [<sup><470406></sup> 2 Corinthians 4:6].

Indeed, it is true that faith looks to one God. But this must also be added, “To know Jesus Christ whom he has sent” [<sup><431703></sup> John 17:3]. For God would have remained hidden afar off if Christ’s splendor had not beamed upon us.<sup>F14</sup> For this purpose the Father laid up with his only-begotten Son all that he had to reveal himself in Christ so that Christ, by communicating his Father’s benefits, might express the true image of his glory [cf. <sup><580103></sup> Hebrews 1:3].<sup>b</sup> It has been said<sup>F15</sup> that we must be drawn by the Spirit to be aroused to seek Christ; so, in turn, we must be warned that the invisible Father is to be sought solely in this image.<sup>d</sup> Augustine has finely spoken of this matter: in discussing the goal of faith, he teaches that we must know our destination and the way to it. Then, immediately after, he infers that the way that is most fortified against all errors is he who was both God and man: namely, as God he is the destination to which we move; as man, the path by which we go. Both are found in Christ alone.<sup>F16</sup><sup>e</sup> But, while Paul proclaims faith in God, he does not have in mind to overturn what he so often emphasizes concerning faith: namely, that all its stability rests in Christ. Peter, indeed, most effectively connects both, saying that through him we believe in God [<sup><600121></sup> 1 Peter 1:21].

*(Faith involves knowledge; the true doctrine obscured by the Scholastic notion of implicit faith, 2-5)*

## **2. FAITH RESTS UPON KNOWLEDGE, NOT UPON PIOUS IGNORANCE**

<sup>b</sup>This evil, then, like innumerable others, must be attributed to the Schoolmen, who have, <sup>e</sup>as it were, drawn a veil over Christ to hide him. Unless we look straight toward him, we shall wander through endless labyrinths.

<sup>b</sup>But besides wearing down the whole force of faith <sup>e(c)</sup>and almost annihilating it by their obscure definition, they have fabricated the fiction of “implicit faith.” Bedecking the grossest ignorance with this term, they ruinously delude poor, miserable folk. <sup>F17</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Furthermore, to state truly and frankly the real fact of the matter, this fiction not only buries but utterly destroys true faith. Is this what believing means — to understand nothing, provided only that you submit your feeling obediently to the church? Faith rests not on ignorance, but on knowledge. And this is, indeed, knowledge not only of God but of the divine will. We do not obtain salvation either because we are prepared to embrace as true whatever the church has prescribed, or because we turn over to it the task of inquiring and knowing. But we do so when we know that God is our merciful Father, because of reconciliation effected through Christ [<sup><470518></sup> 2 Corinthians 5:18-19], and that Christ has been given to us as righteousness, sanctification, and life. By this knowledge, I say, not by submission of our feeling, do we obtain entry into the Kingdom of Heaven. For when the apostle says, “With the heart a man believes unto righteousness, with the mouth makes confession unto salvation” from. 10:10, Cf. Vg.], he indicates that it is not enough for a man implicitly to believe what he does not understand or even investigate. But he requires explicit recognition of the divine goodness upon which our righteousness rests.

### 3. THE ROMAN DOCTRINE OF “IMPLICIT” FAITH IS BASICALLY FALSE

<sup>b</sup>Indeed, I do not deny-such is the ignorance with which we are surrounded — that most things are now implicit for us, and will be so until, laying aside the weight of the flesh, we come nearer to the presence of God. In these matters we can do nothing better than suspend judgment, and hearten ourselves to hold unity with the church. But on this pretext it would be the height of absurdity to label ignorance tempered by humility “faith”! For faith consists in the knowledge of God and Christ [<sup><431703></sup>John 17:3], not in reverence for the church. We see the sort of labyrinth they have constructed with this “implication” of theirs! Anything at all, provided it be palmed off on them under the label “church” — sometimes even the most frightful errors — the untutored indiscriminately seize upon as an oracle. This heedless gullibility, although it is the very brink of ruin, yet is excused by them; only on condition that “such is the faith of the church” does it definitely believe anything.<sup>F18</sup> Thus they fancy that in error they possess truth; in darkness, light; in ignorance, right knowledge.

But let us not tarry longer over refuting them; we merely admonish the reader to compare these doctrines with ours. The very clarity of truth itself will of itself provide a sufficiently ready refutation. <sup>c</sup>For they do not ask whether faith is wrapped<sup>F19</sup> in, many remnants of ignorance, but define right believers as those who go numb in their own ignorance, and even brag about it, provided they give assent to the authority and judgment of the church in things unknown to them. As if Scripture does not regularly teach that understanding is joined with faith!

### 4. EVEN RIGHT FAITH IS ALWAYS SURROUNDED BY ERROR AND UNBELIEF

<sup>e</sup>We certainly admit that so long as we dwell as strangers in the world there is such a thing as implicit faith; not only because many things are as yet hidden from us, but because surrounded by many clouds of errors we do not comprehend everything. The height of wisdom for the most perfect is to go forward and, quietly and humbly, to strive still further.<sup>F20</sup> Therefore Paul exhorts believers that, if some disagree with others in any

matter, they should wait for revelation [<sup><500315></sup>Philippians 3:15]. Experience obviously teaches that until we put off the flesh we attain less than we should like. And in our daily reading of Scripture we come upon many obscure passages that convict us of ignorance. With this bridle God keeps us within bounds, assigning to each his “measure of faith” [<sup><451203></sup>Romans 12:3] so that even the best teacher may be ready to learn.

Remarkable examples of this implicit faith may be noted in Christ’s disciples before they attained full enlightenment. We see how with difficulty they taste even the first rudiments, halting over the slightest matters, and though hanging on their Master’s words, making but little progress. Indeed, when, warned by the women, they rush to the tomb, the resurrection of their Master seems to them like a dream [<sup><422411></sup>Luke 24:11-12; cf. <sup><432008></sup>John 20:8]. Since Christ previously bore witness to their faith, it is wrong to say that they were completely devoid of it. No, unless they had been persuaded that Christ would rise again, all zeal would have failed them. Nor was it superstition that prompted the women to anoint with spices the corpse of a dead man for whose life there could be no hope. But although they had faith in the words of him whom they knew to be truthful, the ignorance that as yet occupied their minds so enveloped their faith in darkness that they were almost dumfounded. Hence, also, it said that they finally believed after they themselves had discovered the truth of Christ’s words through the very fact of his resurrection. Not that they then began to believe, but because the seed of hidden faith — which had been dead, as it were, in their hearts — at that time burst through with renewed vigor! For there was in them a true but implicit faith because they had reverently embraced Christ as their sole teacher. Then, taught by him, they were convinced he was the author of their salvation. And finally, they believed he came from heaven that, through the Father’s grace, he might gather his disciples thither. We ought not to seek any more intimate proof of this than that unbelief is, in all men, always mixed with faith.

## 5. “IMPLICIT” FAITH AS PREREQUISITE OF FAITH

<sup>e</sup>We may also call that faith implicit which is still strictly nothing but the preparation of faith. The Evangelists relate that very many believed who, caught up into wonderment by the miracles only, did not advance farther

than to believe Christ the Messiah who had been promised, although they had not been imbued with even a trace of the gospel teaching. Such reverent attention, which disposed them to submit themselves willingly to Christ, is graced with the title “faith”; yet it was only the beginning of faith. Thus, the court official <sup>F21</sup> who believed Christ’s promise concerning the healing of his son [<sup><430450></sup> John 4:50], having returned to his house, as the Evangelist testifies, believed anew [<sup><430453></sup> John 4:53] because he first received as an oracle what he had heard from the mouth of Christ, and then submitted to Christ’s authority to receive the teaching. Yet we must know that he was so teachable and ready to learn that in the first passage his admission of belief signifies a particular faith, while in the second passage he is counted among the disciples who had enlisted with Christ. John sets forth a like example in the Samaritans who so believed the word of a woman that they eagerly rushed to Christ, but spoke to her, when they heard him, as follows: “Now we do not believe on account of your speaking, but we have heard him and we know that it is the Savior of the world” [<sup><430442></sup> John 4:42]. From these instances it is clear that even those who are not yet imbued with the first elements but are still inclined to hearken are called “believers”; not in an exact sense, indeed, but in so far as God in his kindness deigns to grace that pious affection with such great honor. But this teachableness, with the desire to learn, is far different from sheer ignorance in which those sluggishly rest who are content with the sort of “implicit faith” the papists invent. For if Paul severely condemns those who “are always learning but never arrive at a knowledge of the truth” [<sup><550307></sup> 2 Timothy 3:7], how much greater ignominy do those merit who deliberately affect complete ignorance!

*(Relation of faith to the Word and brief definition of faith, 6-7)*

## 6. FAITH RESTS UPON GOD’S WORD

<sup>b</sup>This, then, is the true knowledge of Christ, if we receive him as he is offered by the Father: namely, <sup>e(b)</sup>clothed with his gospel. For just as he has been appointed as the goal of our faith, so we cannot take the right road to him unless the gospel goes before us. And there, surely, the treasures of grace are opened to us; for if they had been closed, Christ would have benefited us little. <sup>c</sup>Thus Paul yokes faith to teaching, as an inseparable companion, with these words: “You did not so learn Christ if

indeed you were taught what is the truth in Christ” [<sup><490420></sup>Ephesians 4:20-21 p.].

Yet I do not so restrict faith to the gospel without confessing that what sufficed for building it up had been handed down by Moses and the prophets. But because a fuller manifestation of Christ has been revealed in the gospel, Paul justly calls it the “doctrine of faith” [cf. <sup><540406></sup>1 Timothy 4:6]. For this reason, he says in another passage that by the coming of faith the law was abolished [<sup><451004></sup>Romans 10:4; cf. <sup><480325></sup>Galatians 3:25]. He understands by this term the new and extraordinary kind of teaching by which Christ, after he became our teacher, has more clearly set forth the mercy of the Father, and has more surely testified to our salvation.

Yet it will be an easier and more suitable method if we descend by degrees from general to particular. <sup>e(b)</sup>First, we must be reminded that there is a permanent relationship between faith and the Word. He could not separate one from the other any more than we could separate the rays from the sun from which they come. <sup>e</sup>For this reason, God exclaims in The Book of Isaiah: “Hear me and your soul shall live” [<sup><235503></sup>Isaiah 55:3]. And John shows this same wellspring of faith in these words: “These things have been written that you may believe” [<sup><432031></sup>John 20:31]. The prophet, also, desiring to exhort the people to faith, says: “Today if you will hear his voice” [<sup><199507></sup>Psalms 95:7; 94:8, Vg.]. “To hear” is generally understood as meaning to believe. In short, it is not without reason that in The Book of Isaiah, God distinguishes the children of the church from outsiders by this mark: he will teach all

his children [<sup><235413></sup>Isaiah 54:13; <sup><430645></sup>John 6:45] that they may learn of him [cf. <sup><430645></sup>John 6:45]. For if benefits were indiscriminately given, why would he have directed his Word to a few? To this corresponds the fact that the Evangelists commonly use the words “believers” and “disciples” as synonyms. This is especially Luke’s usage in The Acts of the Apostles: indeed he extends this title even to a woman in <sup><440936></sup>Acts 9:36 [<sup><440601></sup>Acts 6:1-2,7; 9:1, 10, 19, 25-26, 38; 11:26, 29; 13:52; 14:20, 28; 15:10; also chs. 16 to 21].

<sup>e(b/a)</sup>Therefore if faith turns away even in the slightest degree from this goal toward which it should aim, it does not keep its own nature, <sup>b(a)</sup>but

becomes uncertain credulity and vague error of mind. The same Word is the basis whereby faith is supported and sustained; if it turns away from the Word, it falls. <sup>b</sup>Therefore, take away the Word and no faith will then remain.

We are not here discussing whether a human ministry is necessary for the sowing of God's Word, from which faith may be conceived. This we shall discuss in another place. <sup>F22</sup> But we say that the Word itself, however it be imparted to us, is like a mirror in which faith may contemplate God. Whether, therefore, God makes use of man's help in this or works by his own power alone, he always represents himself through his Word to those whom he wills to draw to himself. <sup>c</sup>And for this reason, Paul defines faith as that obedience which is given to the gospel [<sup><450105></sup>Romans 1:5], and elsewhere praises allegiance to faith in Philipians [<sup><500103></sup>Philipians 1:3-5; cf. <sup><520213></sup>1 Thessalonians 2:13]. <sup>b(a)</sup>In understanding faith it is not merely a question of knowing that God exists, but also — and this especially — of knowing what is his will toward us. <sup>23</sup> <sup>b</sup>For it is not so much our concern to know who he is in himself, as what he wills to be toward us.

Now, therefore, we hold faith to be a knowledge of God's will toward us, perceived from his Word. <sup>b(a)</sup>But the foundation of this is a preconceived conviction of God's truth. As for its certainty, so long as your mind is at war with itself, the Word will be of doubtful and weak authority, or rather of none. And it is not even enough to believe that God is trustworthy [cf. <sup><450303></sup>Romans 3:3], who can neither deceive nor lie [cf. <sup><560102></sup>Titus 1:2], unless you hold to be beyond doubt that whatever proceeds from him is sacred and inviolable truth? <sup>F24</sup>

## 7. FAITH ARISES FROM GOD'S PROMISE OF GRACE IN CHRIST

<sup>b</sup>But since man's heart is not aroused to faith at every word of God, we must find out at this point what, strictly speaking, faith looks to in the Word. God's word to Adam was, "You shall surely die" [<sup><010217></sup>Genesis 2:17]. God's word to Cain was, "The blood of your brother cries out to me from the earth" [<sup><010410></sup>Genesis 4:10]. But these words are so far from being capable of establishing faith that they can of themselves do nothing

but shake it. In the meantime, we do not deny that it is the function of faith to subscribe to God's truth whenever and whatever and however it speaks. But we ask only what faith finds in the Word of the Lord upon which to lean and rest.<sup>F25</sup> Where our conscience sees only indignation and vengeance, how can it fail to tremble and be afraid? or to shun the God whom it dreads? Yet faith ought to seek God, not to shun him.

It is plain, then, that we do not yet have a full definition of faith, inasmuch as merely to know something of God's will is not to be accounted faith. But what if we were to substitute his benevolence or his mercy in place of his will, <sup>c</sup>the tidings of which are often sad and the proclamation frightening? <sup>b</sup>Thus, surely, we shall more closely approach the nature of faith; for it is after we have learned that our salvation rests with God that we are attracted to seek him. This fact is confirmed for us when he declares that our salvation is his care and concern. Accordingly, we need the promise of grace, which can testify to us that the Father is merciful; since we can approach him in no other way, and upon grace alone the heart of man can rest.

<sup>c</sup>On this basis the psalms commonly yoke these two, mercy and truth, as if they were mutually connected [<sup><198914></sup> Psalm 89:14, 24; 92:2; 98:3; 100:5; 108:4; 115:1; etc.]; for it would not help us at all to know that God is true unless he mercifully attracted us to himself. Nor would it have been in our power to embrace his mercy if he had not offered it with his word: "I have declared thy truth and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy goodness and thy truth... Let thy goodness and thy truth... preserve me" [<sup><194010></sup> Psalm 40:10-11, Comm.]. Another passage: "Thy mercy... extends to the heavens, thy truth to the clouds." [<sup><193605></sup> Psalm 36:5, Comm.] Likewise: "All the ways of Jehovah are kindness and truth to those who keep his covenant." [<sup><192510></sup> Psalm 25:10, Comm.] "For his mercy is multiplied upon us, and the truth of the Lord endures forever." [<sup><19B702></sup> Psalm 117:2; 116:2, Vg.; cf. Comm.] Again, "I will sing thy name for thy mercy and thy truth." [<sup><19D802></sup> Psalm 138:2.] I pass over what we read in the Prophets along the same line, that God is kind and steadfast in his promises. For it will be rash for us to decide that God is well disposed toward us unless he give witness of himself, and anticipate us by his call, that his will may not be doubtful or obscure. But we have already seen

that the sole pledge of his love is Christ, without whom the signs of hatred and wrath are everywhere evident.

<sup>b</sup>Now, the knowledge of God's goodness will not be held very important unless it makes us rely on that goodness. Consequently, understanding mixed with doubt is to be excluded, as it is not in firm agreement, but in conflict, with itself. Yet far indeed is the mind of man, blind and darkened as it is, from penetrating and attaining even to perception of the will of God! And the heart, too, wavering as it is in perpetual hesitation, is far from resting secure in that conviction! Therefore our mind must be otherwise illumined and our heart strengthened, that the Word of God may obtain full faith among us. Now we shall possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

*(Various unacceptable significations of the term "faith," 8-13)*

## 8. "FORMED" AND "UNFORMED" FAITH

<sup>c</sup>But before we proceed farther, some preliminary remarks will be necessary to explain difficulties that could otherwise offer a stumbling block to our readers. First, we must refute <sup>e(b)</sup>that worthless distinction between formed and unformed faith which is tossed about the schools. <sup>F26</sup>

<sup>c</sup>For they imagine that people who are touched by no fear of God, no sense of piety, nevertheless believe whatever it is necessary to know for salvation. As if the Holy Spirit, by illumining our hearts unto faith, were not the witness to us of our adoption! And yet they presumptuously <sup>e(b)</sup>dignify that persuasion, devoid of the fear of God, with the name "faith" even though all Scripture cries out against it. <sup>b</sup>We need no longer contend with their definition; our task is simply to explain the nature of faith as it is set forth in the Word of God. From this it will be very clear how ignorantly and foolishly they shout rather than speak about it.

<sup>e(b)</sup>I have already touched upon part; <sup>F27</sup> I shall later insert the rest in its proper place. I now say that nothing more absurd than their fiction can be imagined. They would have faith to be an assent by which any despiser of God may receive what is offered from Scripture. <sup>F28</sup> But first they ought to have seen whether every man attains faith by his own effort, or whether

through it the Holy Spirit is witness of his adoption. Therefore they babble childishly in asking whether faith is the same faith when it has been formed by a superadded quality; or whether it be a new and different thing. From such chatter it certainly looks as if they never thought about the unique gift of the Spirit. For the beginning of believing already contains within itself the reconciliation whereby man approaches God. But if they weighed Paul's saying, "With the heart a man believes unto righteousness" <sup><451010></sup>Romans 10:10], they would cease to invent that cold quality of faith.

If we possessed only this one reason, it would have been sufficient to end the dispute: that very assent itself — as I have already partially suggested, and will reiterate more fully — is more of the heart than of the brain, and more of the disposition than of the understanding. <sup>F29</sup> <sup>b</sup>For this reason, it is called "obedience of faith" [<sup><450105></sup>Romans 1:5], and the Lord prefers no other obedience to it — and justly, since nothing is more precious to him than his truth. To this truth believers set their seal as if they have affixed their signatures, as John the Baptist testifies [<sup><430333></sup>John 3:33]. Since there is no doubt about the matter, we establish in one word that they are speaking foolishly when they say that faith is "formed" when pious inclination is added to assent. <sup>F30</sup> For even assent rests upon such pious inclination — at least such assent as is revealed in the Scriptures!

But another much clearer argument now offers itself. <sup>a</sup>Since faith embraces Christ, as offered to us by the Father [cf. <sup><430629></sup>John 6:29] — that is, since he is offered not <sup>b(a)</sup>only for righteousness, forgiveness of sins, and peace, but also for sanctification [cf. <sup><460130></sup>1 Corinthians 1:30] and the fountain of the water of life [<sup><430738></sup>John 7:38; cf. <sup><430414></sup>John 4:14] — without a doubt, no one can duly know him without at the same time apprehending the sanctification of the Spirit. <sup>b</sup>Or, if anyone desires some plainer statement, faith rests upon the knowledge of Christ. And Christ cannot be known apart from the sanctification of his Spirit. It follows that faith can in no wise be separated from a devout disposition.

## 9. I CORINTHIANS 13:2-A PROOF OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “FORMED” AND “UNFORMED” FAITH

<sup>a</sup>They are accustomed to urge Paul’s words: “If anyone has all faith so as to remove mountains, but has not love, he is nothing” [<sup><461302></sup> 1 Corinthians 13:2 p.]. By this they would de-form faith by depriving it of love. They do not consider what the apostle means by “faith” in this passage. <sup>F31</sup> For after he has discussed in the preceding chapter the various gifts of the Spirit — including the divers kinds of tongues, powers, and prophecy [<sup><461204></sup> 1 Corinthians 12:4-10] — and has exhorted the Corinthians to “seek after the better of these gifts,” thereby to render greater benefit and advantage to the whole body of the church, he adds that he will show “a still more excellent way” [<sup><461231></sup> 1 Corinthians 12:31]. All such gifts, however excellent they may be in themselves, are still to be considered as nothing unless they serve love. For they were given for the edification of the church, and unless they contribute to this they lose their grace. To prove this, Paul elaborates by repeating those same gifts which he had enumerated before, but under other names. Moreover, he uses the terms “powers” and “faith” for the same thing, that is, for the ability to work miracles. This power or faith, therefore, is a special gift of God, which any impious man can brag about and abuse, as the gift of tongues, as prophecy, as the other graces. No wonder, then, if it be separated from love! <sup>b</sup>But the whole error of these men lies in that, although the meanings of “faith” are diverse <sup>F32</sup> they do not observe the diversity of the thing signified therein, but dispute as if the acceptance of the word were everywhere the same. The passage of James [<sup><590221></sup> James 2:21] that they bring forward in support of the same error will be discussed elsewhere.

<sup>b(a)</sup>Although we concede, for the purpose of instruction, that there are divers forms of faith. But, while we wish to show what kind of knowledge of God can exist among the impious — we nevertheless recognize and proclaim that there is only one kind of faith among the pious — as Scripture teaches. Of course, most people believe that there is a God, and they consider that the gospel history and the remaining parts of the Scripture are true. Such a judgment is on a par with the judgments we ordinarily make concerning those things which are either narrated as having once taken place, or which we have seen as eyewitnesses. <sup>b</sup>There are, also, those who go beyond this, holding the Word of God to be an indisputable

oracle; they do not utterly neglect his precepts, and are somewhat moved by his threats and promises. To such persons an ascription of faith is made, but by misapplication, <sup>F33</sup> because they do not impugn the Word of God with open impiety, or refuse or despise it, but rather pretend a certain show of obedience.

## **10. WHAT IS CALLED “UNFORMED” FAITH IS ONLY AN ILLUSION OF FAITH**

<sup>a</sup>But this shadow or image of faith, as it is of no importance, does not deserve to be called faith, but will soon be seen more fully how far removed from the solid reality of faith it is, yet nothing prevents this from being briefly indicated now. It is said that even Simon Magus believed [<sup><440813></sup> Acts 8:13], who a little later nevertheless betrayed his unbelief [<sup><440818></sup> Acts 8:18]. When he is said to have had faith attributed to him, we do not understand the statement as do some, who hold that he pretended in words a faith that he did not have in his heart. Rather, we consider that, conquered by the majesty of the gospel, he showed a certain sort of faith, and thus recognized Christ to be the author of life and salvation, so that he willingly enlisted under him. In the same way, in the Gospel of Luke they are said to believe for a while [<sup><420813></sup> Luke 8:13], in whom the seed of the Word is choked before it bears fruit, or immediately withers and dies even before it takes any root [<sup><420806></sup> Luke 8:6-7].

We do not doubt that such persons, prompted by some taste of the Word, greedily seize upon it, and begin to feel its divine power; so that they impose a false show of faith not only upon the eyes of men but even upon their own minds. For they persuade themselves that the reverence that they show to the Word of God is very piety itself, because they count it no impiety unless there is open and admitted reproach or contempt of his Word. Whatever sort of assent that is, it does not at all penetrate to the heart itself, there to remain fixed. And although it seems sometimes to put down roots, they are not living roots. The human heart has so many crannies where vanity hides, so many holes where falsehood lurks, is so decked out with deceiving hypocrisy, that it often dupes itself. <sup>b(a)</sup>Yet let those who boast of such shadow-shapes of faith understand that in this respect they are no better than the devils! Surely those of the former class are far inferior to the devils, for they stupidly listen to and understand

things the knowledge of which makes even the devils shudder [<sup><590219></sup> James 2:19]. The others are like the devils in this respect, that whatever feeling touches them ends in dread and dismay.

## 11. ‘FAITH’ EVEN AMONG THE REPROBATE?

°I know that to attribute faith to the reprobate seems hard to some, when Paul declares it the result of election [cf. <sup><520104></sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5]. Yet this difficulty is easily solved. For though only those predestined to salvation receive the light of faith and truly feel the power of the gospel, yet experience shows that the reprobate are sometimes affected by almost the same feeling as the elect, so that even in their own judgment they do not in any way differ from the elect [cf. <sup><441348></sup> Acts 13:48]. Therefore it is not at all absurd that the apostle should attribute to them a taste of the heavenly gifts [<sup><580604></sup> Hebrews 6:4-6] — and Christ, faith for a time [<sup><420813></sup> Luke 8:13]; not because they firmly grasp the force of spiritual grace and the sure light of faith, but because the Lord, to render them more convicted and inexcusable, steals into their minds to the extent that his goodness may be tasted without the Spirit of adoption. <sup>F34</sup>

Suppose someone objects that then nothing more remains to believers to assure themselves of their adoption. I reply: although there is a great likeness and affinity between God’s elect and those who are given a transitory faith, yet only in the elect does that confidence flourish which Paul extols, that they loudly proclaim Abba, Father [<sup><480406></sup> Galatians 4:6; cf. <sup><450815></sup> Romans 8:15]. Therefore, as God regenerates only the elect with incorruptible seed forever [<sup><600123></sup> 1 Peter 1:23] so that the seed of life sown in their hearts may never perish, thus he firmly seals the gift of his adoption in them that it may be steady and sure.

But this does not at all hinder that lower working of the Spirit from taking its course even in the reprobate. In the meantime, believers are taught to examine themselves carefully and humbly, lest the confidence of the flesh creep in and replace assurance of faith. Besides this, the reprobate never receive anything but a confused awareness of grace, so that they grasp a shadow rather than the firm body of it. For the Spirit, strictly speaking, seals forgiveness of sins in the elect alone, so that they apply it by special faith to their own use. Yet the reprobate are justly said to believe that God

is merciful toward them, for they receive the gift of reconciliation, although confusedly and not distinctly enough. Not that they are partakers of the same faith or regeneration with the children of God, but because they seem, under a cloak of hypocrisy, to have a beginning of faith in common with the latter. And I do not deny that God illumines their minds enough for them to recognize his grace; but he so distinguishes that awareness from the exclusive testimony he gives to his elect that they do not attain the full effect and fruition thereof. He does not show himself merciful to them, to the extent of truly snatching them from death and receiving them into his keeping, but only manifests to them his mercy for the time being. Only his elect does he account worthy of receiving the living root of faith so that they may endure to the end [<sup><402413></sup> Matthew 24:13]. Thus is that objection answered: if God truly shows his grace, this fact is forever established. For nothing prevents God from illumining some with a momentary awareness of his grace, which afterward vanishes.

## 12. TRUE AND FALSE FAITH

°Also, although faith is a knowledge of the divine benevolence toward us and a sure persuasion of its truth, there is no wonder that the awareness of divine love vanishes in temporary things. Even if it is close to faith, it differs much from it. The will of God is unchangeable, I admit, and his truth ever remains in agreement with itself. Yet I deny that the reprobate proceed so far as to penetrate into that secret revelation which Scripture vouchsafes only to the elect. I deny, therefore, that they either grasp the will of God as it is immutable, or steadfastly embrace its truth, for they tarry in but a fleeting awareness. They are like a tree not planted deep enough to put down living roots. For some years it may put forth not only blossoms and leaves, but even fruits; nevertheless, it withers after the passage of time. To sum up, just as by the rebellion of the first man the image of God could be wiped out from his mind and soul, no wonder he illumines wicked persons with some rays of his grace, which he later allows to be quenched. Nor does anything prevent him from lightly touching some with a knowledge of his gospel, while deeply imbuing others. In the meantime we ought to grasp this: however deficient or weak faith may be in the elect, still, because the Spirit of God is for them the sure guarantee and seal of their adoption [<sup><490114></sup> Ephesians 1:14; cf.

<470122> 2 Corinthians 1:22], the mark he has engraved can never be erased from their hearts; but on the wicked such light is shed as may afterward pass away. Yet, because he does not give life to the seed that lies in their hearts to keep it ever incorruptible as in the elect, it must not be supposed that the Holy Spirit is false.

Furthermore, although it is evident from the teaching of Scripture and daily experience that the wicked are sometimes touched by the awareness of divine grace, a desire to love one another must be aroused in their hearts. Thus, for a time in Saul there flourished a pious impulse to love God. For he knew God was as a father to him, and he was attracted by something delightful about His goodness [1 Samuel, chs. 9 to 11]. But as a persuasion of God's fatherly love is not deeply rooted in the reprobate, so do they not perfectly reciprocate his love as sons, but behave like hirelings. For that Spirit of love was given to Christ alone on the condition that he instill it in his members. And surely that saying of Paul's is confined to the elect: "The love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" [<sup><450505></sup>Romans 5:5, cf. Vg.], that is, the love that generates the above-mentioned confidence that we can call upon him [cf. <sup><480406></sup>Galatians 4:6]. <sup>F35</sup>

From the other side we see that God, while not ceasing to love his children, is wondrously angry toward them; not because he is disposed of himself to hate them, but because he would frighten them by the feeling of his wrath in order to humble their fleshly pride, shake off their sluggishness, and arouse them to repentance. Therefore, at the same time they conceive him to be at once angry and merciful toward them, or toward their sins. For they unfeignedly pray that his wrath be averted, while with tranquil confidence they nevertheless flee to him for refuge. Indeed, this evidence discloses that some are not pretending a faith, who nevertheless lack true faith; but while they are carried away with a sudden impulse of zeal, they deceive themselves in a false opinion. There is no doubt that indolence so fills them that they do not rightly examine their hearts as they should. It is likely that such are those to whom, according to John, Christ "did not trust himself," although they believed in him, "because he knew all men and...knew what was in man" [<sup><430224></sup>John 2:24-25]. If many did not fall from the common faith (I call it "common" because there is a great likeness and affinity between transitory faith and

living and permanent faith), Christ would not have said to his disciples, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” [<sup><430831></sup>John 8:31-32]. For he is addressing those who had embraced his teaching and is urging them to advance in faith, lest by their sluggishness they extinguish the light given them. Therefore, Paul attributes faith exclusively to the elect [<sup><560101></sup>Titus 1:1], meaning that many vanish because they have not taken living root. Christ says the same thing in the Gospel of, Matthew: “Every tree that my Heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted” [<sup><401513></sup>Matthew 15:13].

There is a grosser kind of lying in others, who are not ashamed to mock God and men. James inveighs against this type of men, who impiously profane faith on this deceitful pretext [<sup><590214></sup>James 2:14-26]. And Paul would not require “a faith unfeigned” from the children of God [<sup><540105></sup>1 Timothy 1:5], except that many boldly boast of what they do not have, and deceive others or even sometimes themselves with vain pretense. Therefore, he compares a good conscience to a chest in which faith is kept. For many in falling from good conscience “have made shipwreck of their faith” [<sup><540119></sup>1 Timothy 1:19; cf. <sup><540309></sup>1 Timothy 3:9].

### **13. DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF THE WORD “FAITH” IN SCRIPTURE**

°We must understand that the meaning of the word “faith” is ambiguous. Often faith means only sound doctrine of godliness, <sup>F36</sup> as in the passage we have just cited; and in the same letter where Paul desires that deacons keep “the mystery of faith in a pure conscience” [<sup><540309></sup>1 Timothy 3:9]. Likewise, when he declares that some will fall away from faith [<sup><540401></sup>1 Timothy 4:1]. But on the other hand, he says that Timothy had been “nourished on the words of the faith” [<sup><540406></sup>1 Timothy 4:6]. Likewise, when he terms “godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge,” the cause why many fall from faith [<sup><540620></sup>1 Timothy 6:20-21; cf. <sup><550216></sup>2 Timothy 2:16]; elsewhere he calls these “reprobate” in regard to faith [<sup><550308></sup>2 Timothy 3:8]. Again, where he enjoins Titus, “Bid them” [<sup><560202></sup>Titus 2:2] “be sound in the faith” [Titus 1:13], by the word “soundness” Paul means simply purity of doctrine, easily rendered corrupt and degenerate by men’s fickleness. That is, because in Christ

whom faith possesses “are hidden all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom” [<sup><510203></sup>Colossians 2:3], faith is rightly extended to the whole sum of heavenly doctrine, from which it cannot be separated.

On the other hand, it is sometimes confined to a particular object, as when Matthew says that Christ saw the faith of those who let the paralytic down through the tile roof [<sup><400902></sup>Matthew 9:2]. And he exclaimed that even in Israel he had not found so great faith as the centurion manifested [<sup><400810></sup>Matthew 8:10]. Yet it is probable that the centurion was wholly intent upon the healing of his son [cf. <sup><430447></sup>John 4:47 ff.], whose cure occupied his entire mind, because, content with only the nod and answer of Christ, he does not demand his bodily presence. On account of this circumstance his faith is greatly commended.

A little while ago <sup>F37</sup> we taught that Paul takes “faith” as the gift of performing miracles, a gift that certain ones possess who have neither been regenerated by the Spirit of God nor zealously worship him. Also, in another passage, he identifies faith with the teaching whereby we are established in faith. For when he writes that faith will pass away [<sup><461310></sup>1 Corinthians 13:10; cf. <sup><450414></sup>Romans 4:14], he doubtless is referring to the ministry of the church, which today is useful for our weakness. Now, in these forms of speech there appears all analogy. When the term “faith” is improperly transferred to a false profession or a lying label, this misapplication of the term <sup>F38</sup> should seem no harsher than when vicious and perverted worship is termed “fear of God.” For example, it is often stated in the Sacred History that the foreign tribes that had been transplanted to Samaria and neighboring districts feared false gods and the God of Israel [<sup><121724></sup>2 Kings 17:24-41]. This means, in so many words, that they mixed heaven and earth.

But now we ask, of what sort is that faith which distinguishes the children of God from the unbelievers, by which we call upon God as Father, by which we cross over from death into life, and by which Christ, eternal salvation and life, dwells in us? I believe that I have briefly and clearly explained the force and nature of faith.

*(Detailed examination of what the definition of faith in paragraph 7 implies: the element of knowledge, 14-15)*

#### 14. FAITH AS HIGHER KNOWLEDGE

<sup>b</sup>Now let us examine anew the individual parts of the definition of faith. After we have diligently examined it no doubt, I believe, will remain. When we call faith “knowledge” we do not mean comprehension of the sort that is commonly concerned with those things which fall under human sense perception. For faith is so far above sense that man’s mind has to go beyond and rise above itself in order to attain it. Even where the mind has attained, it does not comprehend what it feels. But while it is persuaded of what it does not grasp, by the very certainty of its persuasion it understands more than if it perceived anything human by its own capacity. Paul, therefore, beautifully describes it as the power “to comprehend... what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge” [<sup><490318></sup> Ephesians 3:18-19]. He means that what our mind embraces by faith is in every way infinite, and that this kind of knowledge is far more lofty than all understanding. Nevertheless, the Lord has “made manifest to his saints” the secret of his will, which had been “hidden for ages and generations” [<sup><510126></sup> Colossians 1:26; cf. ch. 2:2]. For very good reason, then, faith is frequently called “recognition”<sup>F39</sup> [see Ephesians 1:17; 4:13; <sup><510109></sup> Colossians 1:9; 3:10; <sup><540204></sup> 1 Timothy 2:4; <sup><560101></sup> Titus 1:1; <sup><570106></sup> Philemon 1:6; <sup><610221></sup> 2 Peter 2:21], but by John, “knowledge.”<sup>F40</sup> For he declares that believers know themselves to be God’s children [<sup><430302></sup> John 3:2]. And obviously they surely know this. But they are more strengthened by the persuasion of divine truth than instructed by rational proof. Paul’s words also point this out: “While dwelling in this body, we wander from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight” [<sup><470506></sup> 2 Corinthians 5:6-7]. By these words he shows that those things which we know through faith are nonetheless absent from us and go unseen. From this we conclude that the knowledge of faith consists in assurance rather than in comprehension.

## 15. FAITH IMPLIES CERTAINTY

<sup>b</sup>We add the words “sure and firm” in order to express a more solid constancy of persuasion. For, as faith is not content with a doubtful and changeable opinion, so is it not content with an obscure and confused conception; but requires full and fixed certainty, such as men are wont to have from things experienced and proved. <sup>c</sup>For unbelief is so deeply rooted in our hearts, and we are so inclined to it, that not without hard struggle is each one able to persuade himself of what all confess with the mouth: namely, that God is faithful. Especially when it comes to reality itself, every man’s wavering uncovers hidden weakness. And not without cause the Holy Spirit with such notable titles ascribes authority to the Word of God. He wishes to cure the disease I have mentioned so that among us God may obtain full faith in his promises. “The words of Jehovah are pure words,” says David, “silver melted in an excellent crucible of earth, purified seven times.” [<sup><191206></sup> Psalm 12:6, cf. Comm. and <sup><191107></sup> Psalm 11:7, Vg.] Likewise, “The Word of Jehovah is purified; it is a shield to all those who trust in him.” [<sup><191830></sup> Psalm 18:30, cf. Comm.] Solomon, moreover, confirms this very idea in almost identical words, “Every word of God is purified” [<sup><203005></sup> Proverbs 30:5]. But because almost the entire 119th Psalm is taken up with this proof, it would be superfluous to list more. Surely, as often as God commends his Word to us, he indirectly rebukes us for our unbelief, for he has no other intention than to uproot perverse doubts from our hearts.

<sup>b</sup>Also, there are very many who so conceive God’s mercy that they receive almost no consolation from it. They are constrained with miserable anxiety at the same time as they are in doubt whether he will be merciful to them because they confine that very kindness of which they seem utterly persuaded within too narrow limits. For among themselves they ponder that it is indeed great and abundant, shed upon many, available and ready for all; but that it is uncertain whether it will even come to them, or rather, whether they will come to it. This reasoning, when it stops in mid-course, is only half. Therefore, it does not so much strengthen the spirit in secure tranquillity as trouble it with uneasy doubting. But there is a far different feeling of full assurance <sup>F41</sup> that in the Scriptures is always attributed to faith. It is this which puts beyond doubt God’s goodness clearly manifested for us [<sup><510202></sup> Colossians 2:2; <sup><520105></sup> 1 Thessalonians

1:5; cf. <sup><580611></sup>Hebrews 6:11 and 10:22]. But that cannot happen without our truly feeling its sweetness and experiencing it in ourselves. For this reason, the apostle derives confidence <sup>F42</sup> from faith, and from confidence, in turn, boldness. <sup>F43</sup> For he states: “Through Christ we have boldness and access with confidence which is through faith in him” [<sup><490312></sup>Ephesians 3:12 p., cf. Vg.]. <sup>c</sup>By these words he obviously shows that there is no right faith except when we dare with tranquil hearts to stand in God’s sight. This boldness arises only out of a sure confidence in divine benevolence and salvation. <sup>b</sup>This is so true that the word “faith” is very often used for confidence.

*(Certainty of faith in relation to fear, 16-28)*

## 16. CERTAINTY OF FAITH

<sup>b</sup>Here, indeed, is the chief hinge on which faith turns: that we do not regard the promises of mercy that God offers as true only outside ourselves, but not at all in us; rather that we make them ours by inwardly embracing them. Hence, at last is born that confidence which Paul elsewhere calls “peace” [<sup><450501></sup>Romans 5:1], unless someone may prefer to derive peace from it. Now it is an assurance that renders the conscience calm and peaceful before God’s judgment. Without it the conscience must be harried by disturbed alarm, and almost torn to pieces; unless perhaps, forgetting God and self, it for the moment sleeps. And truly for the moment, for it does not long enjoy that miserable forgetfulness without the memory of divine judgment repeatedly coming back and very violently rending it. Briefly, he alone is truly a believer who, convinced by a firm conviction that God is a kindly, and well-disposed Father toward him, promises himself all things on the basis of his generosity; who, relying upon the promises of divine benevolence toward him, lays hold on an undoubted expectation of salvation. As the apostle points out in these words: “If we hold our confidence and glorying in hope, firm even to the end” [<sup><580307></sup>Hebrews 3:7, cf. Vg.]. Thus, he considers that no one hopes well in the Lord except him who confidently glories in the inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom. No man is a believer, I say, except him who, leaning upon the assurance of his salvation, confidently triumphs over the devil and death; as we are taught from that masterly summation of Paul: I have confessed that “neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor

powers, nor things present, nor things to come...can separate us from the love of God which embraces us in Christ Jesus” from. 8:38-39 p.]. Thus, in the same manner, the apostle does not consider the eyes of our minds well illumined, except as we discern what the hope of the eternal inheritance is to which we have been called [<sup><490118></sup>Ephesians 1:18]. And everywhere he so teaches as to intimate that we cannot otherwise well comprehend the goodness of God unless we gather from it the fruit of great assurance.

## 17. FAITH IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TEMPTATION

<sup>b</sup>Still, someone will say: “Believers experience something far different: In recognizing the grace of God toward themselves they are not only tried by disquiet, which often comes upon them, but they are repeatedly shaken by gravest terrors. For so violent are the temptations that trouble their minds as not to seem quite compatible with that certainty of faith.” Accordingly, we shall have to solve this difficulty if we wish the above-stated doctrine to stand. Surely, while we teach that faith ought to be certain and assured, we cannot imagine any certainty that is not tinged with doubt, or any assurance that is not assailed by some anxiety. On the other hand, we say that believers are in perpetual conflict with their own unbelief. Far, indeed, are we from putting their consciences in any peaceful repose, undisturbed by any tumult at all. Yet, once again, we deny that, in whatever way they are afflicted, they fall away and depart from the certain assurance received from God’s mercy.

<sup>c</sup>Scripture sets forth no more illustrious or memorable example of faith than in David, especially if you look at the whole course of his life. Yet with innumerable complaints he declares how unquiet his mind always was. From these plaints it will be enough to choose a few examples. When he reproaches his own soul for its disturbed emotions, with what else is he angry than with his own unbelief? “Why do you tremble,” he says, “my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God.” [<sup><194205></sup>Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5] Surely, that very dismay was an open sign of unbelief, as if he thought himself forsaken by God. Elsewhere we read an even fuller confession: “I have said in my alarm, I am cast away from the sight of thine eyes” [<sup><193122></sup>Psalm 31:22, cf. Comm.]. In another passage he also argues with himself in anxious and miserable perplexity; indeed, he starts a

quarrel concerning the very nature of God: “Has God forgotten to be merciful?... Will he turn away forever?” [<sup><197709></sup> Psalm 77:9, 7; cf. Comm.]. Even harsher is what follows: “And I said, to slay is mine, the changes of the right hand of the Most High” [<sup><197710></sup> Psalm 77:10, Comm.]. In despair he condemns himself to death, and not only confesses himself to be troubled with doubt, but, as if he had fallen in the struggle, he feels that there is nothing left to him. For God has forsaken him, and has turned his hand, which was once his help, to his destruction. So, he justifiably urges his soul to return to its repose [<sup><19B607></sup> Psalm 116:7] because he had experienced what it was to be tossed among stormy waves.

And yet — and this is something marvelous — amidst all these assaults faith sustains the hearts of the godly and truly in its effect resembles a palm tree [cf. <sup><199212></sup> Psalm 92:12, Vg.]: for it strives against every burden and raises itself upward. So David, even when he might have seemed overwhelmed, in rebuking himself did not cease to rise up to God. He who, struggling with his own weakness, presses toward faith in his moments of anxiety is already in large part victorious. Thus we may infer from this statement and ones like it: “Wait for Jehovah, be strong; he will strengthen your heart. Wait for Jehovah!” [<sup><192714></sup> Psalm 27:14, cf. Comm.]. David shows himself guilty of timidity, and, in repeating the same thought twice, confesses himself to be repeatedly subject to many troublesome emotions. In the meantime, he is not only displeased with himself for these weaknesses, but earnestly strives to correct them.

Surely, if we would duly weigh him in a fair balance with Ahaz, we shall find a great difference. Isaiah is sent to bring a remedy for the anxiety of the wicked and hypocritical king. He addresses him in these words: “Be on your guard, be still, fear not” [<sup><230704></sup> Isaiah 7:4], etc. What does Ahaz do? It had previously been said that his heart was moved even as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind [<sup><230702></sup> Isaiah 7:2]; thus though he has heard the promise, he does not cease to tremble. Here, then, is the proper reward and penalty of unbelief: so to tremble as to turn aside from God when one does not open the door for himself by faith. But, on the other hand, believers whom the weight of temptation bends down and almost crushes constantly rise up, although not without difficulty and trouble. And because they are aware of their own weak-mindedness, they pray with the prophet, “Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth”

[<sup><19B943></sup>Psalm 119:43, cf. Comm., and <sup><19B804></sup>Psalm 118:43, Vg.]. By these words we are taught that they sometimes become dumb as if their faith had been laid low; yet they do not fail or turn their backs, but persevere in their struggle. And by prayer they spur on their sluggishness, lest, at least, out of self-indulgence they become benumbed.

## 18. THE CONFLICT IN THE HEART OF THE BELIEVER

<sup>b</sup>In order to understand this, it is necessary to return to that division of flesh and spirit which we have mentioned elsewhere. <sup>F44</sup> It most clearly reveals itself at this point. Therefore the godly heart feels in itself a division because it is partly imbued with sweetness from its recognition of the divine goodness, partly grieves in bitterness from an awareness of its calamity; partly rests upon the promise of the gospel, partly trembles at the evidence of its own iniquity; partly rejoices at the expectation of life, partly shudders at death. This variation arises from imperfection of faith, since in the course of the present life it never goes so well with us that we are wholly cured of the disease of unbelief and entirely filled and possessed by faith. Hence arise those conflicts; when unbelief, which reposes in the remains of the flesh, rises up to attack the faith that has been inwardly conceived.

But if in the believing mind certainty is mixed with doubt, do we not always come back to this, that faith does not rest in a certain and clear knowledge, but only in an obscure and confused knowledge of the divine will toward us? Not at all. For even if we are distracted by various thoughts, we are not on that account completely divorced from faith. Nor if we are troubled on all sides by the agitation of unbelief, are we for that reason immersed in its abyss. If we are struck, we are not for that reason cast down from our position. For the end of the conflict is always this: that faith ultimately triumphs over those difficulties which besiege and seem to imperil it.

## 19. EVEN WEAK FAITH IS REAL FAITH

<sup>b</sup>To sum up: When first even the least drop of faith is instilled in our minds, we begin to contemplate God's face, peaceful and calm and gracious toward us. We see him afar off, but so clearly as to know we are

not at all deceived. Then, the more we advance as we ought continually to advance, <sup>F45</sup> with steady progress, as it were, the nearer and thus surer sight of him we obtain; and by the very continuance he is made even more familiar to us. So we see that the mind, illumined by the knowledge of God, is at first wrapped up in much ignorance, which is gradually dispelled. Yet, by being ignorant of certain things, or by rather obscurely discerning what it does discern, the mind is not hindered from enjoying a clear knowledge of the divine will toward itself. For what it discerns comprises the first and principal parts in faith. It is like a man who, shut up in a prison into which the sun's rays shine obliquely and half obscured through a rather narrow window, is indeed deprived of the full sight of the sun. Yet his eyes dwell on its steadfast brightness, and he receives its benefits. Thus, bound with the fetters of an earthly body, however much we are shadowed on every side with great darkness, we are nevertheless illumined as much as need be for firm assurance when, to show forth his mercy, the light of God sheds even a little of its radiance.

## 20. THE WEAKNESS AND STRENGTH OF FAITH

<sup>b</sup>The apostle finely teaches both points in various passages. For when he teaches that “we know in part and prophesy in part” [<sup><461309></sup> 1 Corinthians 13:9,12], and “see in a mirror dimly” [<sup><461312></sup> 1 Corinthians 13:12], he indicates what a tiny portion of that truly divine wisdom is given us in the present life. <sup>c</sup>These words do not simply indicate that faith is imperfect so long as we groan under the burden of the flesh, but that, because of our own imperfection, we must constantly keep at learning. Nevertheless, he implies that the immeasurable cannot be comprehended by our inadequate measure and with our narrow capacities. Paul declares this also of the whole church: to each one of us his own ignorance is an obstacle and a hindrance, preventing him from coming as near as was to be desired.

<sup>b</sup>But in another passage the same apostle shows what a sure and genuine taste of itself even a small drop of faith gives us when he declares that through the gospel, with uncovered face and no veil intervening, we behold God's glory with such effect that we are transformed into his very likeness [<sup><470318></sup> 2 Corinthians 3:18]. The greatest doubt and trepidation must be mixed up with such wrappings of ignorance, since our heart

especially inclines by its own natural instinct toward unbelief. Besides this, there are innumerable and varied temptations that constantly assail us with great violence. But it is especially our conscience itself that, weighed down by a mass of sins, now complains and groans, now accuses itself, now murmurs secretly, now breaks out in open tumult. And so, whether adversities reveal God's wrath, or the conscience finds in itself the proof and ground thereof, thence unbelief obtains weapons and devices to overthrow faith. Yet these are always directed to this objective: that, thinking God to be against us and hostile to us, we should not hope for any help from him, and should fear him as if he were our deadly enemy.

## 21. THE WORD OF GOD AS THE SHIELD OF FAITH

<sup>b</sup>To bear these attacks faith arms and fortifies itself with the Word of the Lord. And when any sort of temptation assails us — suggesting that God is our enemy because he is unfavorable toward us — faith, on the other hand, replies that while he afflicts us he is also merciful because his chastisement arises out of love rather than wrath. When one is stricken by the thought that God is Avenger of iniquities, faith sets over against this the fact that his pardon is ready for all iniquities whenever the sinner betakes himself to the Lord's mercy. Thus the godly mind, however strange the ways in which it is vexed and troubled, finally surmounts all difficulties, and never allows itself to be deprived of assurance of divine mercy. Rather, all the contentions that try and weary it result in the certainty of this assurance. A proof of this is that while the saints seem to be very greatly pressed by God's vengeance, yet they lay their complaints before him; and when it seems that they will not at all be heard, they nonetheless call upon him. What point would there be in crying out to him if they hoped for no solace from him? Indeed, it would never enter their minds to call upon him if they did not believe that he had prepared help for them. Thus the disciples whom Christ rebuked for the smallness of their faith complained that they were perishing, and yet were imploring his help [<sup><400825></sup> Matthew 8:25-26]. <sup>c</sup>Indeed, while he reproves them for their little faith, he does not cast them out from the ranks of his disciples or count them among unbelievers, but urges them to shake off that fault.

<sup>b</sup>Therefore, we repeat what we have already stated: that the root of faith can never be torn from the godly breast, but clings so fast to the inmost

parts that, however faith seems to be shaken or to bend this way or that, its light is never so extinguished or snuffed out that it does not at least lurk as it were beneath the ashes. <sup>c</sup>And this example shows that the Word, which is an incorruptible seed, brings forth fruit like itself, whose fertility never wholly dries up and dies. <sup>b</sup>The ultimate cause of despair for the saints is to feel God's hand in their ruin, taking into account things present. And yet Job declares that his hope will extend so far that even if God should slay him he will not for that reason cease to hope in him [<sup><181315></sup> Job 13:15]. <sup>c</sup>The matter stands thus: Unbelief does not hold sway within believers' hearts, but assails them from without. It does not mortally wound them with its weapons, but merely harasses them, or at most so injures them that the wound is curable. Faith, then, as Paul teaches, serves as our shield [<sup><490616></sup> Ephesians 6:16]. When held up against weapons it so receives their force that it either completely turns them aside or at least weakens their thrust, so that they cannot penetrate to our vitals. When, therefore, faith is shaken it is like a strong soldier forced by the violent blow of a spear to move his foot and to give ground a little. When faith itself is wounded it is as if the soldier's shield were broken at some point from the thrust of the spear, but not in such a manner as to be pierced. For the godly mind will always rise up so as to say with David, "If I walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evils, for thou art with me" [<sup><192204></sup> Psalm 22:4, Vg.; 23:4, EV]. Surely it is terrifying to walk in the darkness of death; and believers, whatever their strength may be, cannot but be frightened by it. But since the thought prevails that they have God beside them, caring for their safety, fear at once yields to assurance. However great are the devices, as Augustine says, that the devil throws up against us, while he holds no lodgment in the heart, where faith dwells, he is cast out. <sup>F46</sup> <sup>e</sup>Thus, if we may judge from the outcome, believers not only emerge safely from every battle, so that, having received fresh strength, they are shortly after ready to descend again into the arena; but besides, what John says in his canonical letter is also fulfilled: "This is the victory that overcomes the world, your faith" [<sup><620504></sup> 1 John 5:4 p.]. And he affirms that our faith will be victor not only in one battle, or a few, or against any particular assault; but that, though it be assailed a thousand times, it will prevail over the entire world.

## 22. RIGHT FEAR

<sup>b</sup>There is another kind of “fear and trembling” [<sup><503512></sup>Philippians 2:12], one that, so far from diminishing the assurance of faith, the more firmly establishes it. This happens when believers, considering, that the examples of divine wrath executed upon the ungodly as warnings to them, take special care not to provoke God’s wrath against them by the same offenses; or, when inwardly contemplating their own misery, learn to depend wholly upon the Lord, without whom they see themselves more unstable and fleeting than any wind. For the apostle, by describing the chastisement with which the Lord of old punished the people of Israel, strikes terror into the Corinthians so that they should avoid entangling themselves in like misdeeds [<sup><461011></sup>1 Corinthians 10:11]. In that way he does not weaken their confidence, but only shakes the sluggishness of their flesh, by which faith is commonly more destroyed than strengthened. And while he takes from the fall of the Jews the basis for his exhortation that “he who stands take heed lest he fall” [<sup><461012></sup>1 Corinthians 10:12 p.; <sup><451120></sup>Romans 11:20], he is not bidding us to waver, as if we were unsure of our steadfastness. Rather, he is merely taking away arrogance and rash overconfidence in our own strength so that after the Jews have been rejected, the Gentiles, received into their place, may not exult more wildly.

<sup>c</sup>Yet, he there not only addresses believers but in his prayer includes also the hypocrites, who gloried only in outward show. And he does not admonish individual men, but makes a comparison between Jews and Gentiles; and he shows that the Jews in being rejected underwent the just punishments of their unbelief and ingratitude. He then also exhorts the Gentiles not to lose, through pride and self-display, the grace of adoption, recently transferred to them. Just as in that rejection of the Jews some of them remained who had not fallen away from the covenant of adoption, so from the Gentiles some might arise who, without true faith, would only be puffed up with stupid confidence of the flesh, and thus, to their own destruction, would abuse God’s generosity. But even if you take this statement to apply to the elect and believers, this will cause no discomfiture. For it is one thing to restrain presumption, which sometimes creeps upon the saints from the vestiges of the flesh, in order that it may not play the wanton in vain confidence. It is another thing so to dishearten

the conscience with fear that it cannot rest with full assurance in God's mercy.

### 23. "FEAR AND TREMBLING"

<sup>b</sup>Then, when the apostle teaches that we should "work out our own salvation in fear and trembling" [<sup><503512></sup>Philippians 2:12], he demands only that we become accustomed to honor the Lord's power, while greatly abasing ourselves. For nothing so moves us to repose our assurance and certainty of mind in the Lord as distrust of ourselves, and the anxiety occasioned by the awareness of our ruin. In this sense we must understand what is said by the prophet: "I, through the abundance of thy goodness, will enter thy temple; I will worship...in fear" [<sup><190507></sup>Psalm 5:7 p.]. Here he fitly joins the boldness of faith that rests upon God's mercy with the reverent fear that we must experience whenever we come into the presence of God's majesty, and by its splendor understand how great is our own filthiness. Solomon, also, speaks truly when he declares that man blessed who is always afraid in his own heart, since by hardening it falls into evil [<sup><202814></sup>Proverbs 28:14]. But he means that fear which renders us more cautious — not the kind that afflicts us and causes us to fall — while the mind confused in itself recovers itself in God, cast down in itself is raised up in him, despairing of itself is quickened anew through trust in him.

Accordingly, nothing prevents believers from being afraid and at the same time possessing the surest consolation; according as they turn their eyes now upon their own vanity, and then bring the thought of their minds to bear upon the truth of God. chow, someone will ask, can fear and faith dwell in the same mind? Indeed, in the same way that, conversely, sluggishness and worry so dwell. For while the impious seek freedom from pain for themselves that no fear of God may trouble them, yet the judgment of God so presses them that they cannot attain what they desire. Thus, nothing hinders God from training his own people in humility, that while fighting stoutly they may restrain themselves under the bridle of self-control. And from the context it is clear that this was the intention of the apostle where he assigns the cause of fear and trembling to God's good pleasure, whereby He gives to His people the capacity to will aright and to carry through valiantly [<sup><503512></sup>Philippians 2:12-13]. In this sense we may rightly understand the prophet's saying: "The children of Israel shall

fear the Lord and his goodness” [<sup><280305></sup>Hosea 3:5]. For not only does piety beget reverence toward God, but the very sweetness and delightfulness of grace so fills a man who is cast down in himself with fear, and at the same time with admiration, that he depends upon God and humbly submits himself to his power.

## **24. THE INDESTRUCTIBLE CERTAINTY OF FAITH RESTS UPON CHRIST’S ONENESS WITH US**

°Yet we do not thus accept that most pestilent philosophy which certain half-papists are furtively beginning to fashion today. For because they cannot defend that rude doubt which has been handed down in the schools, they take refuge in another fiction: that they may make an assurance mingled with unbelief. Whenever we look upon Christ, they confess that we find full occasion for good hope in him. But because we are always unworthy of all those benefits which are offered to us in Christ, they would have us waver and hesitate at the sight of our unworthiness. In brief, they so set conscience between hope and fear that it alternates from one to the other intermittently and by turns. They so relate hope and fear that when the former is rising up the latter is oppressed; when the latter rises again, the former falls once more. Thus, when Satan once sees that those open devices with which he formerly had been wont to destroy the certainty of faith are now of no avail, he tries to sap it by covert devices. But what kind of confidence will that be, which now and again yields to despair? If, they say, you contemplate Christ, there is sure salvation’ if you turn back to yourself, there is sure damnation. Therefore unbelief and good hope must alternately reign in your mind. As if we ought to think of Christ, standing afar off and not rather dwelling in us! For we await salvation from him not because he appears to us afar off, but because he makes us, ingrafted into his body, participants not only in all his benefits but also in himself. So I turn this argument of theirs back against them: if you contemplate yourself, that is sure damnation. But since Christ has been so imparted to you with all his benefits that all his things are made yours, that you are made a member of him, indeed one with him, his righteousness overwhelms your sins; his salvation wipes out your condemnation; with his worthiness he intercedes that your unworthiness may not come before God’s sight. Surely this is so: We ought not to

separate Christ from ourselves or ourselves from him. Rather we ought to hold fast bravely with both hands to that fellowship by which he has bound himself to us. So the apostle teaches us: “Now your body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit of Christ which dwells in you is life because of righteousness” [<sup><450810></sup>Romans 8:10 p.]. According to these men’s trifles, he ought to have said: “Christ indeed has life in himself; but you, as you are sinners, remain subject to death and condemnation.” But he speaks far otherwise, for he teaches that that condemnation which we of ourselves deserve has been swallowed up by the salvation that is in Christ. And to confirm this he uses the same reason I have brought forward: that Christ is not outside us but dwells within us. Not only does he cleave to us by an indivisible bond of fellowship, but with a wonderful communion, day by day, he grows more and more into one body with us, until he becomes completely one with us. °Yet I do not deny what I stated above: <sup>F47</sup> that certain interruptions of faith occasionally occur, according as its weakness is violently buffeted hither and thither; so in the thick darkness of temptations its light is snuffed out. Yet whatever happens, it ceases not its earnest quest for God.

## **25. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX ON THE TWO ASPECTS OF FAITH**

°Bernard of Clairvaux reasons similarly when he expressly discusses this question in his Fifth Sermon on the Dedication of a Church. “Now when I reflect upon my soul — which by the grace of God I sometimes do-it seems to me that I discover in it, so to speak, two opposite aspects. If I consider it in and of itself, I can say nothing more truly of it than that it is reduced to nothing [<sup><197202></sup>Psalm 72:22, Vg.]. What need is there now to enumerate the individual miseries of the soul; how it is burdened with sins, enveloped in darkness, enslaved to pleasure, itching with lusts, subject to passions, filled with delusions, always prone to evil, bent to every sort of vice — in a word, full of shame and confusion? To be sure, if all our acts of righteousness, scrutinized in the light of truth, are found to be like ‘the rag of a menstruous woman’ [<sup><236406></sup>Isaiah 64:6, Vg.], then to what will our unrighteous acts be compared? ‘If then the light in us is darkness, how great will be the darkness!’ [<sup><400623></sup>Matthew 6:23.] What then? Without doubt... ‘Man has been made like unto vanity’ [<sup><19E304></sup>Psalm 143:4, Vg.;

144:4, EV]. Man ‘has been reduced to nothing’ [<sup><197202></sup>Psalm 72:22, Vg.]. Man is nought. Yet how can he whom God magnifies be utterly nothing? How can he upon whom God has set his heart be nothing?

“Brethren, let us take heart again. Even if we are nothing in our own hearts, perchance something of us may be hidden in the heart of God. O ‘Father of mercies’ [<sup><470103></sup>2 Corinthians 1:31] O Father of the miserable! How canst thou set thy heart upon us... ‘For where thy treasure is, thine heart is also.’ [<sup><400621></sup>Matthew 6:21.] But how are we thy treasure if we are nothing? ‘All the nations are as nothing before thee, they will be accounted by thee as nothing.’ [<sup><234017></sup>Isaiah 40:17 p.] So, indeed, *before* thee, not *within* thee: so in the judgment of thy truth, but not so in the intention of thy faithfulness. So, indeed, thou ‘callest those things which are not as though they were’ [<sup><450417></sup>Romans 4:17]. And they *are not*, therefore, because it is the things that are not that thou callest, and they *are* at the same time because thou callest them. For although, as regards themselves, they are not, nevertheless with thee they are; but, as the apostle says, ‘Not of their works’ of righteousness, ‘but of him who calls’ [<sup><450911></sup>Romans 9:11]. Then he says that this connection between the two considerations is wonderful. Surely those things which are connected do not destroy one another!”

Also, in conclusion, he more openly declares this in these words: “Now if we diligently examine what we are, under these two considerations, or rather, if we examine how from the one point of view we are nothing, and from the other how magnified...I believe our glorying will appear moderate, yet will perchance be greater and better founded than before, so that we glory not in ourselves but in the Lord [<sup><471017></sup>2 Corinthians 10:17]. Surely if we think, ‘If he has decreed to save us, we shall be immediately freed’ [cf. <sup><241714></sup>Jeremiah 17:14]; in this, then, we may take heart.

“But climbing up to a higher watchtower, let us seek the City of God, let us seek his temple, let us seek his house, let us seek his bride. I have not forgotten...but with fear and reverence...I say: ‘We, I say, are, but in the heart of God. We are, but by his dignifying us, not by our own dignity.’”

## 26. FEAR OF GOD AND HONOR OF GOD

<sup>b</sup>Now, “the fear of the Lord” — to which all the saints give witness-and which is in some places called “the beginning of wisdom” [<sup><19B110></sup> Psalm 111:10; <sup><200107></sup> Proverbs 1:7], in other places “wisdom itself” [<sup><201533></sup> Proverbs 15:33; <sup><182828></sup> Job 28:28] — although one, yet derives from a double meaning. For God has in his own right the reverence of a father and of a lord. Therefore, he who would duly worship him will try to show himself both an obedient son to him and a dutiful servant. The Lord, through the prophet, calls “honor” that obedience which is rendered to him as Father. He calls “fear” the service that is done to him as Lord. “A son,” he says, “honors his father; a servant, his lord. If, then, I am a father, where is my honor? If I am a lord, where is my fear?” [<sup><390106></sup> Malachi 1:6]. However he may distinguish them, you see how he fuses together the two terms. Therefore, let the fear of the Lord be for us a reverence compounded of honor and fear. No wonder if the same mind embraces both dispositions! For he who ponders within himself what God the Father is like toward us <sup>F49</sup> has cause enough, even if there be no hell, to dread offending him more gravely than any death. But also — such is the wanton desire of our flesh to sin without restraint — in order to check it by every means we must at once seize upon this thought: that the Lord, under whose power we live, abhors all iniquity. And they who, by living wickedly, provoke his wrath against themselves will not escape his vengeance.

## 27. CHILDLIKE AND SERVILE FEAR

<sup>b</sup>John, moreover, says: “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, for fear has to do with punishment” [<sup><620418></sup> 1 John 4:18]. This does not clash with what we have said. For he is speaking of the dread arising from unbelief, far different from believers’ fear. For the wicked fear God not because they are afraid of incurring his displeasure, if only they could do so with impunity; but because they know him to be armed with the power to take vengeance, they shake with fright on hearing of his wrath. And they so fear his wrath because they think it hangs over them, because they expect that at any moment it will fall upon their heads. But believers, as has been said, both fear offending God more than punishment, and are not troubled by fear of punishment, as if it hung over their necks. But they

are rendered more cautious not to incur it. So speaks the apostle when he addresses believers: “Let no one deceive you,... for it is because of this that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of unbelief” <sup>F50</sup> [<sup><490506></sup> Ephesians 5:6, Vg.; cf. <sup><510306></sup> Colossians 3:6]. He does not threaten that God’s wrath will descend upon them, but he warns them to think on the wrath of the Lord, prepared for the impious, on account of those wicked deeds which he had recounted, lest they themselves also should wish to experience it. <sup>e</sup>Yet it rarely happens that the wicked are aroused by simple threats alone. Rather, whenever God thunders with words from heaven, slow and sluggish in their hardness they persist in their stubbornness. But once struck by his hand, they are compelled, whether they will or not, to fear. This fear men commonly call “servile” and contrast to it the free and voluntary fear that befits children. Others subtly interpolate an intermediate kind of fear because that servile and constrained feeling sometimes so subdues men’s minds that they accede willingly to a proper fear of God. <sup>F51</sup>

## **28. FAITH ASSURES US NOT OF EARTHLY PROSPERITY BUT OF GOD’S FAVOR**

<sup>b</sup>Now, in the divine benevolence, which faith is said to look to, we understand the possession of salvation and eternal life is obtained. For if, while God is favorable, no good can be lacking, when he assures us of his love we are abundantly and sufficiently assured of salvation. “Let him show his face,” says the prophet, “and we will be saved.” [<sup><198003></sup> Psalm 80:3 p.; cf. <sup><197904></sup> Psalm 79:4, Vg.] Hence Scripture establishes this as the sum of our salvation, that he has abolished all enmities and received us into grace [<sup><490214></sup> Ephesians 2:14]. By this they intimate that when God is reconciled to us no danger remains to prevent all things from prospering for us. Faith, therefore, having grasped the love of God, has promises of the present life and of that to come [<sup><540408></sup> 1 Timothy 4:8], and firm assurance of all good things, but of such sort as can be perceived from the Word. For faith does not certainly promise itself either length of years or honor or riches in this life, since the Lord willed that none of these things be appointed for us. But it is content with this certainty: that, however many things fail us that have to do with the maintenance of this life, God will never fail. Rather, the chief assurance of faith rests in the expectation

of the life to come, which has been placed beyond doubt through the Word of God. Yet whatever earthly miseries and calamities await those whom God has embraced in his love, these cannot hinder his benevolence from being their full happiness. Accordingly, when we would express the sum of blessedness, we have mentioned the grace of God; for from this fountain every sort of good thing flows unto us. And we may commonly observe in the Scriptures that we are recalled to the love of the Lord whenever mention is made not only of eternal salvation but of any good we may have. For this reason, David sings of that divine goodness which, when felt in the godly heart, is sweeter and more desirable than life itself [<sup><196303></sup> Psalm 63:3].

<sup>°</sup>In short, if all things flow unto us according to our wish, but we are uncertain of God's love or hatred, our happiness will be accursed and therefore miserable. But if in fatherly fashion God's countenance beams upon us, even our miseries will be blessed. For they will be turned into aids to salvation. So Paul heaps up all adverse things, but glories that we are not separated from God's love through them [<sup><450835></sup> Romans 8:35, cf. 5:39], and always begins his prayers with God's grace, whence flows all prosperity; in like manner, against all terrors that disturb us David sets God's favor alone: "If I walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evils, for thou art with me" [<sup><192204></sup> Psalm 22:4, Vg.; 23:4, EV]. And we always feel our minds wavering unless, content with God's grace, they seek their peace in it, and hold fixed deep within what is said in the psalm: "Blessed is the people whose God is Jehovah, and the nation he has chosen as his inheritance" [<sup><193312></sup> Psalm 33:12, cf. Comm.].

*(Basis of faith the free promise, given in the Word,  
of grace in Christ, 29-32)*

## 29. GOD'S PROMISE THE SUPPORT OF FAITH

<sup>b</sup>We make the freely given promise of God the foundation of faith because upon it faith properly rests. Faith is certain that God is true in all things whether he command or forbid, whether he promise or threaten; and it also obediently receives his commandments, observes his prohibitions, heeds his threats. Nevertheless, faith properly begins with the promise, rests in it, and ends in it. For in God faith seeks life: a life that is not found in

commandments or declarations of penalties, but in the promise of mercy, and only in a freely given promise. For a conditional promise that sends us back to our own works does not promise life unless we discern its presence in ourselves. Therefore, if we would not have our faith tremble and waver, we must buttress it with the promise of salvation, which is willingly and freely offered to us by the Lord in consideration of our misery rather than our deserts. The apostle, therefore, bears this witness to the gospel: that it is the word of faith [<sup><451008></sup>Romans 10:8]. He distinguishes the gospel both from the precepts of the law and from the promises, since there is nothing that can establish faith except that generous embassy by which God reconciles the world to himself [cf. <sup><470519></sup>2 Corinthians 5:19-20]. Thence, also, arises that frequent correlation of faith and gospel in the apostle, when he teaches that the ministry of the gospel is committed to him to further “obedience to the faith” [<sup><450105></sup>Romans 1:5], that “it is the power of God for salvation to every believer;...in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith” [<sup><450116></sup>Romans 1:16-17]. And no wonder! Indeed, since the gospel is the “ministry of reconciliation” [<sup><470518></sup>2 Corinthians 5:18], no other sufficiently firm testimony of God’s benevolence to us exists, the knowledge of which faith seeks. <sup>F52</sup>

Therefore, when we say that faith must rest upon a freely given promise, we do not delay that believers embrace and grasp the Word of God in every respect: but we point out the promise of mercy as the proper goal of faith. As on the one hand believers ought to recognize God to be Judge and Avenger of wicked deeds, yet on the other hand they properly contemplate his kindness, since he is so described to them as to be considered “one who is kind” [cf. <sup><198605></sup>Psalm 86:5, Comm.], “and merciful” [cf. <sup><19A308></sup>Psalm 103:8, Comm.; 102:8, Vg.], “far from anger and of great goodness” [cf. <sup><19A308></sup>Psalm 103:8, Comm.], “sweet to all” [<sup><19E409></sup>Psalm 144:9, Vg.], “pouring out his mercy upon all his works” [cf. <sup><19E509></sup>Psalm 145:9, Comm.].

### **30. WHY FAITH DEPENDS SOLELY ON THE PROMISE OF GRACE**

<sup>d</sup>And I do not tarry over the barkings of Pighius and dogs like him, when they attack this restriction, as if by tearing faith to pieces they might grab

up a single piece. <sup>F53</sup> I admit, as I have already said, that God's truth is, as they call it, the common object of faith, whether he threaten or hold out hope of grace. Therefore, the apostle attributes to faith the fact that Noah feared the world's destruction when it was not as yet visible [<sup><581107></sup> Hebrews 11:7]. If fear of imminent punishment was the product of faith, then threats ought not to be excluded from the definition of it. This is indeed true. But our slanderers unjustly charge us with denying, as it were, that faith has regard to all parts of the Word of God. It is our intention to make only these two points: first, that faith does not stand firm until a man attains to the freely given promise; second, that it does not reconcile us to God at all unless it joins us to Christ. Both points are worth noting. We seek a faith that distinguishes the children of God from the wicked, and believers from unbelievers. If someone believes that God both justly commands all that he commands and truly threatens, shall he therefore be called a believer? By no means! Therefore, there can be no firm condition of faith unless it rests upon God's mercy. Now, what is our purpose in discussing faith? Is it not that we may grasp the way of salvation. <sup>F54</sup> But how can there be saving faith except in so far as it engrafts us in the body of Christ? Accordingly, when we define it there is no absurdity in our thus emphasizing its particular effect and, as a distinction, subordinating to the class that special mark which separates believers from unbelievers. In short, in this doctrine the malicious have nothing to carp at without implicating Paul in the same censure with us, who rightly calls the gospel "the word of faith" [<sup><451008></sup> Romans 10:8].

### 31. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORD FOR FAITH

<sup>e</sup>Hence, we again infer what had been explained before? that faith needs the Word as much as fruit needs the living root of a tree. For no others, as David witnesses, can hope in God but those who know his name [<sup><190910></sup> Psalm 9:10]. But this knowledge does not arise out of anyone's imagination, but only so far as God himself is witness to his goodness. This the prophet confirms in another place: "Thy salvation according to thy word" [<sup><19B941></sup> Psalm 119:41]. Likewise, "I have hoped in thy word; make me safe." [<sup><191904></sup> Psalm 19:42, 40, 94.] Here we must first note the relation of faith to the Word, then its consequence, salvation.

Yet in the meantime we do not exclude God's power in respect to which, unless faith sustains itself, it can never render to God the honor due him. Paul seems to apply to Abraham a barren commonplace: that he believed God, who had promised him blessed offspring, to be mighty [<sup><450421></sup>Romans 4:21]. Likewise, he says elsewhere concerning himself: "I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is mighty to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me" [<sup><550112></sup>2 Timothy 1:12]. But if anyone considers in himself how many doubts concerning the power of God often creep in, he will sufficiently recognize that they who magnify it as it deserves have made no slight progress in faith. All of us will confess that God is able to do whatever he wills; but when the slightest temptation strikes us down in fear and stuns us with fright, from this it is plain that we detract from God's might, preferring to it the threatening of Satan against His promises. This is the reason why Isaiah, when he wishes to impress the certainty of salvation upon the hearts of the people, so grandly discusses God's boundless power [<sup><234025></sup>Isaiah 40:25 ff., and often in Isaiah, chs. 40 to 45]. It often seems that, when he begins to speak concerning the hope of pardon and reconciliation, he turns to something else and wanders through long and superfluous mazes, recalling how wonderfully God governs the frame of heaven and earth together with the whole order of nature. Yet there is nothing here that does not serve the present circumstance. For unless the power of God, by which he can do all things, confronts our eyes, our ears will barely receive the Word or not esteem it at its true value.

Besides this, his effectual might is here declared, since piety — as has appeared elsewhere <sup>F55</sup> — always adapts God's might to use and need; and especially sets before itself the works of God by which he has testified that he is the Father. Hence comes the very frequent mention of redemption in the Scriptures, from which the Israelites could learn that God, who had once for all been the Author of salvation, was to be its eternal guardian. By his example David, also, reminds us that those benefits which God bestows individually upon each man serve to confirm faith in him for the future. Indeed, when it seems that he has deserted us we must stretch our thoughts farther, that his former benefits may revive us, as is said in another psalm: "I remember the days of old, I have meditated on all thy deeds..." [<sup><19E305></sup>Psalms 143:5; 142:5, Vg.]. Likewise,

“I will remember the works of the Lord...and his wonders from the beginning.” [<sup><197711></sup> Psalm 77:11, Comm.]

But because whatever we conceive concerning God’s might and works is fleeting without the Word, we declare with good reason that there is no faith until God illumines it by the testimony of his grace.

Yet here it would be possible to raise the question What should we think of Sarah and Rebecca? both of whom, it seems, were fired with a zealous faith and went beyond the limits of the Word. Sarah, passionately desiring the promised offspring, yielded her maidservant to her husband [<sup><011602></sup> Genesis 16:2, 5]. We must not deny that she sinned in many ways; but I am now dealing with her failure, when carried away with zeal, to confine herself within the limits of God’s Word. Yet it is certain that that desire arose out of faith. Rebecca, assured by divine oracle of the choice of her son Jacob, obtains the blessing for him by a wicked subterfuge [<sup><012709></sup> Genesis 27:9]: She deceives her husband, the witness and minister of God’s grace. She compels her son to lie. She corrupts God’s truth by various guiles and deceits. In short, in scorning his promise, she destroys it as far as she can [Genesis 27].

Yet this act, although a failing and deserving of rebuke, was not devoid of faith. For it was necessary that she overcome many little obstacles that she might stoutly strive after something that offered no hope of earthly benefit, and was teeming with huge troubles and dangers. In the same way, we do not regard the patriarch Isaac as entirely devoid of faith for the reason that, admonished by the same oracle concerning the honor transferred to his younger son, he still did not cease to be inclined to his first-born son, Esau. These examples surely teach that errors are often mingled with faith, yet in such a way that when it is a true faith it always holds the upper hand. For just as Rebecca’s particular error did not render void the effect of the blessing, so it did not render void her faith, which generally held mastery in her mind and was the beginning and cause of that action. Nonetheless, Rebecca betrayed in this how slippery are the turnings of the human mind, as soon as it relaxes its control in the slightest degree. But even though man’s default and weakness obscure faith, they do not extinguish it. In the meantime, they warn us how carefully we ought to wait upon God’s voice; and at the same time they confirm what

we have taught: that faith vanishes unless it is supported by the Word. The minds of Sarah and Isaac and Rebecca would have vanished in their devious shiftings if they had not been kept in obedience to the Word by God's secret bridle.

### 32. THE PROMISE OF FAITH FULFILLED IN CHRIST

<sup>b</sup>Again, it is not without cause that we include all the promises in Christ, since the apostle includes the whole gospel under the knowledge of him [cf. <sup><450117></sup>Romans 1:17], and elsewhere teaches that "however many are the promises of God, in him they find their yea and amen" [<sup><470120></sup>2 Corinthians 1:20 p.]. The reason for this fact is at hand; for if God promises anything, by it he witnesses his benevolence, so that there is no promise of his which is not a testimony of his love. Nor does it make any difference that, while the wicked are plied with the huge and repeated benefits of God's bounty, they bring upon themselves a heavier judgment. For they neither think nor recognize that these benefits come to them from the Lord's hand; or if they do recognize it, they do not within themselves ponder his goodness. Hence, they cannot be apprised of his mercy any more than brute animals can, which, according to their condition, receive the same fruit of God's liberality, yet perceive it not. Nothing prevents them, in habitually rejecting the promises intended for them, from thereby bringing upon themselves a greater vengeance. For although the effectiveness of the promises only appears when they have aroused faith in us, yet the force and peculiar nature of the promises are never extinguished by our unfaithfulness and ingratitude. Therefore, since the Lord, by his promises, invites man not only to receive the fruits of his kindness but also to think about them, he at the same time declares his love to man. Hence we must return to the point: that any promise whatsoever is a testimony of God's love toward us.

But it is indisputable that no one is loved by God apart from Christ: <sup>F56</sup> "This is the beloved Son" [<sup><400317></sup>Matthew 3:17; 17:5 p.], <sup>e</sup>in whom dwells and rests the Father's love. And from him it then pours itself upon us, just as Paul teaches: "We receive grace in the beloved" [<sup><490106></sup>Ephesians 1:6 p.], but must therefore derive and reach us when he himself intercedes. Consequently, the apostle in one passage calls him "our peace" [<sup><490214></sup>Ephesians 2:14]; in another, Paul puts him forward as

the bond whereby God may be found to us in fatherly faithfulness [cf. <sup><450803></sup>Romans 8:3 ff.]. It follows that we should turn our eyes to him as often as any promise is offered to us. And Paul rightly teaches us that all God's promises are confirmed and fulfilled in him [<sup><451508></sup>Romans 15:8].

<sup>°</sup>Some instances disagree with this. When, for example, Naaman the Syrian inquired of the prophet as to the proper way of worshiping God, it is not likely that he was instructed concerning the Mediator. Still, his piety is praised [<sup><120501></sup>2 Kings 5:1-14; <sup><420427></sup>Luke 4:27]. Cornelius, a Gentile and a Roman, could scarcely grasp what was known only obscurely to the Jews, and not to all of them. Yet his alms and his prayers were acceptable to God [<sup><441031></sup>Acts 10:31]. And Naaman's sacrifice was approved by the prophet's response [<sup><120517></sup>2 Kings 5:17-19]. Neither could have occurred except by faith. The same reasoning applies to the eunuch to whom Philip was brought: unless he had been endowed with some faith, he would not have undertaken the labor and expense of a difficult journey in order to worship [<sup><440817></sup>Acts 8:17]. Yet we see that when asked by Philip, he showed his ignorance of the Mediator [<sup><440831></sup>Acts 8:31]. And I even confess that their faith was in some part implicit, not only with respect to the person of Christ, but also with respect to the power and office enjoined upon him by the Father. In the meantime, it is certain that they were instructed in principles such as might give them some taste, however small, of Christ. This ought not to seem strange, for the eunuch would not have hastened to Jerusalem from a far-off region to worship an unknown God; and certainly Cornelius, having once embraced the Jewish religion, did not spend much time without becoming acquainted with the rudiments of true doctrine. As far as Naaman was concerned, it would have been too absurd, when Elisha instructed him concerning small things, to have been silent on the principal point. Therefore, although the knowledge of Christ was obscure among them, it is inconceivable to suppose that there was none at all; because they practiced the sacrifices of the law, which by their very end — that is, Christ — should be distinguished from the false sacrifices of the Gentiles.

*(Faith revealed in our hearts by the Spirit, 33-37)*

### **33. THE WORD BECOMES EFFICACIOUS FOR OUR FAITH THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT**

<sup>b</sup>And this bare and external proof of the Word of God should have been amply sufficient to engender faith, did not our blindness and perversity prevent it. But our mind has such an inclination to vanity that it can never cleave fast to the truth of God; and it has such a dullness that it is always blind to the light of God's truth. Accordingly, without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the Word can do nothing. From this., also, it is clear that faith is much higher than human understanding. And it will not be enough for the mind to be illumined by the Spirit of God unless the heart is also strengthened and supported by his power. In this matter the Schoolmen go completely astray, who in considering faith identify it with a bare and simple assent arising out of knowledge, and leave out confidence and assurance of heart.<sup>F57</sup> In both ways, therefore, faith is a singular gift of God, both in that the mind of man is purged so as to be able to taste the truth of God and in that his heart is established therein, <sup>e</sup>For the Spirit is not only the initiator of faith, but increases it by degrees, until by it he leads us to the Kingdom of Heaven. "Let each one," says Paul, "guard the precious truth...entrusted by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us." [<sup><550114></sup>2 Timothy 1:14 p.] We can with no trouble explain how Paul teaches that the Spirit is given by the hearing of faith [Galatians 8:2]. If there had been only one gift of the Spirit, it would have been absurd of Paul to call the Spirit the "effect of faith," since he is its Author and cause. But because he proclaims the gifts with which God adorns his church and brings it to perfection by continual increase of faith, it is no wonder if he ascribes to faith those things which prepare us to receive them! <sup>b</sup>This, indeed, is considered most paradoxical: when it is said that no one, unless faith be granted to him, can believe in Christ [<sup><430665></sup> John 6:65]. But this is partly because men do not consider either how secret and lofty the heavenly wisdom is, or how very dull men are to perceive the mysteries of God; partly because they do not have regard to that firm and steadfast constancy of heart which is the chief part of faith.

### 34. ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS US TO CHRIST

<sup>b</sup>But if, as Paul preaches, no one “except the spirit of man which is in him” [<sup><460211></sup> 1 Corinthians 2:11] witnesses the human will, what man would be sure of God’s will? And if the truth of God be untrustworthy among us also in those things which we at present behold with our eyes, how could it be firm and steadfast when the Lord promises such things as neither eye can see nor understanding can grasp [cf. <sup><460109></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:9]? But here man’s discernment is so overwhelmed and so fails that the first degree of advancement in the school of the Lord is to renounce it. For, like a veil cast over us, it hinders us from attaining the mysteries of God, “revealed to babes alone” [<sup><401125></sup> Matthew 11:25; <sup><421021></sup> Luke 10:21]. “For flesh and blood does not reveal this” [<sup><401617></sup> Matthew 16:17], “but the natural man does not perceive the things that are of the Spirit”; rather, God’s teaching is “foolishness to him... because it must be spiritually discerned” [<sup><460214></sup> 1 Corinthians 2:14, cf. Vg.]. Therefore, the support of the Holy Spirit is necessary, or rather, his power alone thrives here. “There is no man who has known the mind of God, or has been his counselor.” [<sup><451134></sup> Romans 11:34 p.] But “the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.” [<sup><460210></sup> 1 Corinthians 2:10.] It is through the Spirit that we come to grasp “the mind of Christ” [<sup><460216></sup> 1 Corinthians 2:16]. “No one can come to me,” he says, “unless the Father who has sent me draw him.” [<sup><430644></sup> John 6:44.] “Everyone who has heard from the Father and has learned, comes.” [<sup><430645></sup> John 6:45.] Not that anyone has ever seen the Father but him who was sent by God [<sup><430118></sup> John 1:18 and <sup><430537></sup> John 5:37, conflated]. Therefore, as we cannot come to Christ unless we be drawn by the Spirit of God, so when we are drawn we are lifted up in mind and heart above our understanding. For the soul, illumined by him, takes on a new keenness, as it were, to contemplate the heavenly mysteries, whose splendor had previously blinded it. And man’s understanding, thus beamed by the light of the Holy Spirit, then at last truly begins to taste those things which belong to the Kingdom of God, having formerly been quite foolish and dull in tasting them. For this reason, Christ, in clearly interpreting the mysteries of his Kingdom to two disciples [<sup><422427></sup> Luke 24:27], still makes no headway until “he opens their minds to understand the Scriptures” [<sup><422445></sup> Luke 24:45]. Although the apostles were so taught by his divine mouth, the Spirit of truth must

nevertheless be sent to pour into their minds the same doctrine that they had perceived with their ears [<sup><431613></sup> John 16:13]. Indeed, the Word of God is like the sun, shining upon all those to whom it is proclaimed, but with no effect among the blind. Now, all of us are blind by nature in this respect. Accordingly, it cannot penetrate into our minds unless the Spirit, as the inner teacher, through his illumination makes entry for it.

### 35. WITHOUT THE SPIRIT MAN IS INCAPABLE OF FAITH

°In another place, when we had to discuss the corruption of nature, we showed more fully how unfit men are to believe.<sup>F58</sup> Accordingly, I shall not weary my readers with repeating the same thing. Let it suffice that Paul calls faith itself, which the Spirit gives us but which we do not have by nature, “the spirit of faith” [<sup><470413></sup> 2 Corinthians 4:13]. He therefore prays that in the Thessalonians “God...may fulfill with power all his good pleasure...and work of faith” [<sup><530111></sup> 2 Thessalonians 1:11, cf. Vg.]. Here Paul calls faith “the work of God,” and instead of distinguishing it by an adjective, appropriately calls it “good pleasure.”<sup>F59</sup> Thus he denies that man himself initiates faith, and not satisfied with this, he adds that it is a manifestation of God’s power. In the letter to the Corinthians he states that faith does not depend upon men’s wisdom, but is founded upon the might of the Spirit [<sup><460204></sup> 1 Corinthians 2:4-5]. He is speaking, indeed, of outward miracles; but because the wicked, being blind, cannot see these, he includes also that inner seal which he mentions elsewhere [<sup><490113></sup> Ephesians 1:13; 4:30]. And God, to show forth his liberality more fully in such a glorious gift, does not bestow it upon all indiscriminately, but by a singular privilege gives it to those to whom he will. We have above cited testimonies of this. Augustine, the faithful interpreter of them, exclaims: “Our Savior, to teach us that belief comes as a gift and not from merit, says: ‘No one comes to me, unless my Father...draw him’ [<sup><430644></sup> John 6:44 p.], and ‘...it be granted him by my Father’ [<sup><430665></sup> John 6:65 p.]. It is strange that two hear: one despises, the other rises up! Let him who despises impute it to himself; let him who rises up not arrogate it to himself.” In another passage he says: “Why is it given to one and not to another? I am not ashamed to say: ‘This is the depth of the cross.’ Out of some depth or other of God’s judgments, which we cannot fathom...comes forth all that we can do...I see what I can do; I do not see

whence I can do it — except that I see this far: that...it is of God. But why one and not the other? This means much to me. It is an abyss, the depth of the cross. I can exclaim in wonder; I cannot demonstrate it through disputation.”<sup>F60</sup> To sum up: Christ, when he illumines us into faith by the power of his Spirit, at the same time so engrafts us into his body that we become partakers of every good.

### 36. FAITH AS A MATTER OF THE HEART

<sup>b</sup>It now remains to pour into the heart itself what the mind has absorbed. For the Word of God is not received by faith if it flits about in the top of the brain, but when it takes root in the depth of the heart that it may be an invincible defense to withstand and drive off all the stratagems of temptation. But if it is true that the mind’s real understanding is illumination by the Spirit of God, then in such confirmation of the heart his power is much more clearly manifested, to the extent that the heart’s distrust is greater than the mind’s blindness.<sup>F61</sup> It is harder for the heart to be furnished with assurance than for the mind to be endowed with thought. The Spirit accordingly serves as a seal, to seal up in our hearts those very promises the certainty of which it has previously impressed upon our minds; and takes the place of a guarantee to confirm and establish them. After “you believed” (the apostle declares), “you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance” [<sup><490113></sup>Ephesians 1:13-14, Comm.]. Do you see how Paul teaches that the hearts of believers have, so to speak, been sealed with the Spirit; how, for this reason, Paul calls him the “Spirit of promise,” because he makes firm the gospel among us? In like manner, he says in the letter to the Corinthians: “He who...has anointed us, is God; who has also sealed us, and given the guarantee of the Spirit in our hearts” [<sup><470121></sup>2 Corinthians 1:21-22, KJV]. And, in another passage, when Paul speaks of confidence and boldness of hope, he lays as its foundation the guarantee of the Spirit [<sup><470505></sup>2 Corinthians 5:5].

### 37. DOUBT CANNOT SMOTHER FAITH

<sup>c</sup>And I have not forgotten what I have previously said,<sup>F62</sup> the memory of which is repeatedly renewed by experience: faith is tossed about by various doubts, so that the minds of the godly are rarely at peace — at

least they do not always enjoy a peaceful state. But whatever siege engines may shake them, they either rise up out of the very gulf of temptations, or stand fast upon their watch. Indeed, this assurance alone nourishes and protects faith — when we hold fast to what is said in the psalm: “The Lord is our protection, our help in tribulation. Therefore we will not fear while the earth shakes, and the mountains leap into the heart of the sea” [<sup><194602></sup> Psalm 46:2-3, cf. Comm.]. Another psalm, also, extols this very sweet repose: “I lay down and slept; I awoke again, for the Lord sustained me” [<sup><190305></sup> Psalm 3:5]. Not that David always dwelt in a tranquil and happy state! But to the extent that he tasted God’s grace, according to the measure of faith, he boasts that he fearlessly despises everything that could trouble his peace of mind. For this reason, Scripture, meaning to urge us to faith, bids us be quiet. In Isaiah: “In hope and in silence shall your strength be” [<sup><233015></sup> Isaiah 30:15, Vg.]. In the psalm: “Be still before Jehovah and wait...for him” [<sup><193707></sup> Psalm 37:7, Comm.]. To these verses corresponds the apostle’s statement in The Letter to the Hebrews: “For you have need of patience,” etc. [<sup><581036></sup> Hebrews 10:36].

*(Refutation of Scholastic objections to this, 38-40)*

### **38. SCHOLASTIC ERROR CONCERNING THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH**

<sup>b</sup>Hence we may judge how dangerous is the Scholastic dogma that we can discern the grace of God toward us only by moral conjecture, according as every man regards himself as not unworthy of it. <sup>F63</sup> Indeed, if we should have to judge from our works how the Lord feels toward us, for my part, I grant that we can in no way attain it by conjecture. But since faith ought to correspond to a simple and free promise, no place for doubting is left. For with what sort of confidence will we be armed, I pray, if we reason that God is favorable to us provided our purity of life so merit it? But because I have reserved a suitable place to treat these matters. <sup>F64</sup> I will not for the present pursue them any longer; especially since it is abundantly clear that there is nothing more averse to faith than either conjecture or anything else akin to doubt.

The Schoolmen most wickedly twist the testimony of Ecclesiastes, which they have continually on their lips: “No one knows whether he deserves

hate or love” [<sup><210901></sup>Ecclesiastes 9:1, Vg.]. <sup>F65</sup> For, to pass over how this passage is erroneously translated in the Vulgate, even children cannot miss what Solomon means by these words. That is, if anyone would judge by the present state of things, which men God pursues with hatred and which ones he embraces in love, he labors in vain and troubles himself to no profit, “since all things happen alike to righteous and impious to those who sacrifice victims and to those who do not sacrifice” [Ecclesiastes. 9:2, cf. Vg.]. From this it follows that God does not everlastingly witness his love to those for whom he causes all things to prosper, nor does he always manifest his hate to those whom he afflicts. And he does this to prove the innate folly of humanity, since among things so necessary to know it is grasped with such great stupidity. As Solomon had written a little before, one cannot discern how the soul of a man differs from the soul of a beast because both seem to die in the same way [<sup><210319></sup>Ecclesiastes 3:19]. If any man would infer from this that the opinion that we hold concerning the immortality of souls rests upon conjecture alone, should we not justly consider him insane? Are they sane men who infer — since we can comprehend nothing by the physical beholding of present things — that there is no certainty of God’s grace?

### **39. THE CHRISTIAN REJOICES IN THE INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT**

<sup>b</sup>But they contend that it is a matter of rash presumption for us to claim an undoubted knowledge of God’s will. Now I would concede that point to them only if we took upon ourselves to subject God’s incomprehensible plan to our slender understanding. But when we simply say with Paul: “We have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is from God...“by whose teaching “we know the gifts bestowed on us by God” [<sup><460212></sup> 1 Corinthians 2:12], how can they yelp against us without abusively assaulting the Holy Spirit? But if it is a dreadful sacrilege to accuse the revelation given by the Spirit either of falsehood or uncertainty or ambiguity, how do we transgress in declaring its certainty?

But they cry aloud that it is also great temerity on our part that we thus dare to glory in the Spirit of Christ. Who would credit such stupidity to those who wish to be regarded as the schoolmasters of the world, that

they so shamefully trip over the first rudiments of Christianity? Surely, it would not have been credible to me, if their extant writings did not attest it. Paul declares that those very ones “who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God...” [[450814](#) Romans 8:14]. And these men would have it that those who are the children of God are moved by their own spirit, but empty of God’s Spirit. Paul teaches that God is called “Father” by us at the bidding of the Spirit, who alone can “witness to our spirit that we are children of God” [[450816](#) Romans 8:16]. Even though these men do not keep us from calling upon God, they withdraw the Spirit, by whose leading he ought to have been duly called upon. Paul denies that those who are not moved by the Spirit of Christ are servants of Christ [cf. [450809](#) Romans 8:9]. These men devise a Christianity that does not require the Spirit of Christ. He holds out no hope of blessed resurrection unless we feel the Spirit dwelling in us [[450811](#) Romans 8:11]. These men invent a hope devoid of such a feeling.

Yet perchance they will answer that they do not deny we ought to be endowed with the Spirit; but that it is a matter of modesty and humility not to be sure of it. <sup>F66</sup> What, then, does he mean when he bids the Corinthians examine themselves whether they are in the faith, to prove themselves whether they have Christ? Unless one knows that Christ dwells in him, he is reprobate [[471305](#) 2 Corinthians 13:5]. “Now we know,” says John, “that he abides in us from the Spirit whom he has given us.” [[620324](#) 1 John 3:24; 4:13.] And what else do we do but call Christ’s promises into question when we wish to be accounted God’s servants apart from his Spirit, whom he has declared he would pour out upon all his own people? [[234403](#) Isaiah 44:3; cf. [290228](#) Joel 2:28.] What else is it, then, than to do injury to the Holy Spirit if we separate faith, which is his peculiar work, from him? Since these are the first beginnings of piety, it is a token of the most miserable blindness to charge with arrogance Christians who dare to glory in the presence of the Holy Spirit, without which glorying Christianity itself does not stand! But, actually, they declare by their own example how truly Christ spoke: “My Spirit was unknown to the world; he is recognized only by those among whom he abides” [[431417](#) John 14:17].

#### 40. THE ALLEGED UNCERTAINTY AS TO WHETHER WE WILL PERSEVERE TO THE END

<sup>b</sup>Not content with trying to undermine firmness of faith in one way alone, they assail it from another quarter. Thus, they say that even though according to our present state of righteousness we can judge concerning our possession of the grace of God, the knowledge of final perseverance remains in suspense. <sup>F67</sup> A fine confidence of salvation is left to us, if by moral conjecture we judge that at the present moment we are in grace, but we know not what will become of us tomorrow! The apostle speaks far otherwise: “I am surely convinced that neither angels, nor powers, nor principalities, nor death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come...will separate us from the love by which the Lord embraces us in Christ” [<sup><450838></sup> Romans 8:38-39 p.]. They try to escape with a trifling solution, prating that the apostle had his assurance from a special revelation. <sup>F68</sup> But they are held too tightly to escape. For there he is discussing those benefits which come to all believers in common from faith, not those things which he exclusively experiences. Now the same apostle, in another place, puts us in fear by speaking of our weak-mindedness and inconstancy: “Let him who stands well,” Paul says, “take heed lest he fall” [<sup><461012></sup> 1 Corinthians 10:12 p.]. It is true; but not such a fear as to put us to confusion, but such that we may learn to humble ourselves under God’s mighty hand, as Peter explains it [<sup><600506></sup> 1 Peter 5:6].

Then, how absurd it is that the certainty of faith be limited to some point of time, when by its very nature it looks to a future immortality after this life is over! Since, therefore, believers ascribe to God’s grace the fact that, illumined by his Spirit, they enjoy through faith the contemplation of heavenly life, such glorying is so far from arrogance that if any man is ashamed to confess it, in that very act he betrays his extreme ungratefulness by wickedly suppressing God’s goodness, more than he testifies to his modesty or submission.

**41. FAITH ACCORDING TO <sup><581101></sup> HEBREWS 11:1**

<sup>b</sup>The nature of faith could, seemingly, not be better or more plainly declared than by the substance of the promise upon which it rests as its proper foundation. Consequently, when that promise is removed, it will utterly fall, or rather vanish. Therefore, we have taken our definition from this fact. <sup>b(a)</sup>Yet this does not at all differ from the apostle's definition, or rather the description he applies to his discourse, where he teaches that "faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the indication of things not appearing" [Hebrews 11:1, cf. Vg.]. Now, by the word "hypostasis," which he uses, he means a sort of support upon which the godly mind may lean and rest. <sup>a</sup>It is as if he were to say that faith itself is a sure and secure possession of those things which God has promised us, <sup>d</sup>unless someone prefers to understand "hypostasis" as confidence! <sup>F69</sup> This does not displease me, although I accept what is more commonly received. <sup>a</sup>On the other hand, Paul intended to signify that even to the last day, when "the books shall be opened" [<sup><270710></sup> Daniel 7:10], the things pertaining to our salvation <sup>F70</sup> are too high to be perceived by our senses, or seen by our eyes, or handled by our hands; and that in the meantime we do not possess these things in any other way than if we transcend all the limits of our senses and direct our perception beyond all things of this world and, in short, surpass ourselves. Therefore he adds that this assurance of possession is of those things which lie in hope, and are therefore not seen. "Whatsoever," as Paul writes, "is visible, is not hope; nor do we hope for what we see." [<sup><450824></sup> Romans 8:24 p.] When he calls it an "indication" or "proof" — <sup>c(a)</sup>or, as Augustine has often translated it, <sup>F71</sup> "a conviction of things not present" (the word for "conviction" is *ἐλεγχος* in Greek [<sup><581101></sup> Hebrews 11:1]) — <sup>a</sup>Paul speaks as if to say that faith is an evidence of things not appearing, a seeing of things not seen, a clearness of things obscure, a presence of things absent, a showing forth of things hidden. The mysteries of God, and especially those which pertain to our salvation, cannot be discerned in themselves, or as it is said, in their own nature. But we contemplate them only in his Word, of the truth of which we ought to be so persuaded that we should count whatever he speaks as already done and fulfilled.

*(Faith and love)*

<sup>b</sup>But how can the mind be aroused to taste the divine goodness without at the same time being wholly kindled to love God in return? For truly, that abundant sweetness which God has stored up for those who fear him cannot be known without at the same time powerfully moving us. And once anyone has been moved by it, it utterly ravishes him and draws him to itself. Therefore, it is no wonder if a perverse and wicked heart never experiences that emotion by which, borne up to heaven itself, we are admitted to the most hidden treasures of God and to the most hallowed precincts of his Kingdom, which should not be defiled by the entrance of an impure heart.

For the teaching of the Schoolmen, <sup>b(a)</sup> that love is prior to faith and hope <sup>F72</sup> is mere madness; for it is faith alone that first engenders love in us. <sup>F73</sup>

<sup>c</sup>How much more rightly Bernard states: “I believe that the testimony of the conscience, which Paul calls ‘the glory of the pious,’ [<sup><470112></sup> 2 Corinthians 1:12] consists of three things. First of all, it is necessary to believe that you cannot have forgiveness of sins apart from God’s mercy. Second, you can have no good work at all unless he gives it. Finally, you cannot merit eternal life by any works unless that is also given free.” Shortly thereafter he adds that these things are not enough, but are a beginning of faith; because in believing that sins cannot be forgiven except by God, we ought at the same time to believe that they are forgiven, so long as we are persuaded also by the testimony of the Holy Spirit that salvation is stored up for us. And because God himself forgives sins, gives merits, and gives back rewards, we must also believe that we cannot take a firm stand in this beginning. <sup>F74</sup> <sup>b</sup>But these and other matters will have to be discussed in their place. <sup>F75</sup> Now, let us be content merely to grasp what faith itself is.

## 42. FAITH AND HOPE BELONG TOGETHER

<sup>b(a)</sup>Yet, wherever this faith is alive, it must have along with it the hope of eternal salvation as its inseparable companion. Or rather, it engenders and brings forth hope from itself. When this hope is taken away, however eloquently or elegantly we discourse concerning faith, we are convicted of having none. For if faith, as has been said above, <sup>F76</sup> is a sure persuasion of

the truth of God — that it can neither lie to us, nor deceive us, nor become void — then those who have grasped this certainty assuredly expect the time to come when God will fulfill his promises, which they are persuaded cannot but be true. Accordingly, in brief, hope is nothing else than the expectation of those things which faith has believed to have been truly promised by God. Thus, faith believes God to be true, hope awaits the time when his truth shall be manifested; faith believes that he is our Father, hope anticipates that he will ever show himself to be a Father toward us; faith believes that eternal life has been given to us, hope anticipates that it will some time be revealed; faith is the foundation upon which hope rests, hope nourishes and sustains faith. For as no one except him who already believes His promises can look for anything from God, so again the weakness of our faith must be sustained and nourished by patient hope and expectation, lest it fail and grow faint. <sup>b</sup>For this reason, Paul rightly sets our salvation in hope from. 8:24. <sup>b(a)</sup>For hope, while it awaits the Lord in silence, restrains faith that it may not fall headlong from too much haste. Hope strengthens faith, that it may not waver in God’s promises, or begin to doubt concerning their truth. <sup>b</sup>Hope refreshes faith, that it may not become weary. It sustains faith to the final goal, that it may not fail in mid-course, or even at the starting gate. In short, by unremitting renewing and restoring, it invigorates faith again and again with perseverance.

And we shall better see in how many ways the support of hope is necessary to establish faith if we ponder how many forms of temptation assail and strike those who have embraced the Word of God. First, the Lord by deferring his promises often holds our minds in suspense longer than we would wish. Here it is the function of hope to carry out what the prophet bids: “That, if they should tarry, we wait for them” [<sup><350203></sup>Habakkuk 2:3 p.]. Occasionally he not only allows us to faint but exhibits open indignation toward us. Here it is much more necessary for hope to help us, that, according to another prophet’s statement, we may “wait for the Lord who hid his face from...Jacob” [<sup><230817></sup>Isaiah 8:17]. Scoffers also rise up, as Peter says [<sup><610303></sup>2 Peter 3:3], asking: “Where is the promise of his coming? Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation” [<sup><610304></sup>2 Peter 3:4, Vg.]. Indeed, the flesh and the world whisper these same things to us. Here we

must keep our faith buttressed by patient hope, so fixed upon the contemplation of eternity as to reckon a thousand years as one day [<sup><199004></sup> Psalm 90:4; <sup><610308></sup> 2 Peter 3:8].

### 43. FAITH AND HOPE HAVE THE SAME FOUNDATION: GOD'S MERCY

<sup>b</sup>Because of this connection and kinship, Scripture sometimes uses the words “faith” and “hope” interchangeably. For when Peter teaches that we are “guarded by God’s power through faith until salvation is revealed” [<sup><600105></sup> 1 Peter 1:5 p.], he attributes to faith something that corresponds to hope. And not unjustly, since we have already taught that hope is nothing but the nourishment and strength of faith.

<sup>c</sup>Sometimes they are joined together, as in the same letter: “So that your faith and hope are in God” [<sup><600121></sup> 1 Peter 1:21]. But in the letter to the Philippians, Paul derives expectation from hope because by hoping patiently we suspend our own desires until God’s appointed time is revealed [<sup><500120></sup> Philippians 1:20]. This whole matter can be better understood from the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, which I have already cited [v. 1]. <sup>F77</sup> In another passage, although speaking inexactly, Paul means the same thing by these words: “Through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness” [<sup><480505></sup> Galatians 5:5]. That is, because, embracing the testimony of the gospel concerning freely given love, we look for the time when God will openly show that which is now hidden under hope.

<sup>b</sup>It is now clear how foolishly Peter Lombard lays two foundations of hope: grace of God and merit of works. <sup>F78</sup> Hope can have no other goal than faith has. But we have already explained very clearly that the single goal of faith is the mercy of God <sup>F79</sup> — to which it ought, so to speak, to look with both eyes. But it behooves us to hear what a cogent reason Lombard brings forward: “If,” he says, “you dare to hope for anything without merit, that ought not to be called ‘hope’ but rather ‘presumption.’” <sup>F80</sup> Who, dear reader, will not justly despise such beasts, who declare that a man is acting rashly and presumptuously if he trust that God is true? For, though the Lord wills that we await all things from his goodness, they say that it is presumption to lean and rest upon it. A

master indeed — worthy of such pupils as he found in the mad schools of wranglers!<sup>F81</sup> But for our part, when we as sinners see that we are commanded by the oracles of God to conceive of hope of salvation, let us so willingly presume upon his truth that, relying upon his mercy alone, abandoning reliance upon works, we dare to have good hope. °He will not deceive, who said, “According to your faith be it done to you” [<sup><400929></sup>Matthew 9:29].

## CHAPTER 3.

### OUR REGENERATION BY FAITH: REPENTANCE <sup>F82</sup>

*(Repentance the fruit of faith: review of some errors connected with this point, 1-4)*

#### 1. REPENTANCE AS A CONSEQUENCE OF FAITH

°Even though we have taught in part how faith possesses Christ, and how through it we enjoy his benefits, this would still remain obscure if we did not add an explanation of the effects we feel. With good reason, the sum of the gospel is held to consist in repentance and forgiveness of sins [<sup><422447></sup>Luke 24:47; <sup><440531></sup>Acts 5:31]. Any discussion of faith, therefore, that omitted these two topics would be barren and mutilated and well-nigh useless. Now, both repentance and forgiveness of sins — that is, newness of life and free reconciliation — are conferred on us by Christ, and both are attained by us through faith. As a consequence, reason and the order of teaching demand that I begin to discuss both at this point. <sup>e(b)</sup>However, our immediate transition will be from faith to repentance. <sup>F83</sup> °For when this topic is rightly understood it will better appear how man is justified by faith alone, and simple pardon; nevertheless actual holiness of life, so to speak, is not separated from free imputation of righteousness. <sup>e(b)</sup>Now it ought to be a fact beyond controversy that repentance not only constantly follows faith, but is also born of faith. <sup>F84</sup> °For since pardon and forgiveness are offered through the preaching of the gospel <sup>e(b)</sup>in order that the sinner, freed from the tyranny of Satan, the yoke of sin, and the miserable bondage of vices, may cross over into the Kingdom of God, surely <sup>b</sup>no one can embrace the grace of the gospel without betaking himself from the errors of his past life into the right way, and applying his whole effort to the practice of repentance. There are some, however, who suppose that repentance precedes faith, <sup>F85</sup> rather than flows from it, °or is produced by it as fruit from a tree. Such persons have never known the power of repentance, and are moved to feel this way by an unduly slight argument.

## 2. REPENTANCE HAS ITS FOUNDATION IN THE GOSPEL, WHICH FAITH EMBRACES

<sup>b</sup>Christ, they say, and John in their preaching first urge the people to repentance, <sup>F86</sup> then add that the Kingdom of Heaven has come near [<sup><400302></sup> Matthew 3:2; 4:17]. Such was the command the apostles received to preach; such was the order Paul followed, as Luke reports [<sup><442021></sup> Acts 20:21]. Yet while they superstitiously cling to the joining together of syllables, they disregard the meaning that binds these words together. For while Christ the Lord and John preach in this manner: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” [<sup><400302></sup> Matthew 3:2], do they not derive the reason for repenting from grace itself and the promise of salvation? Accordingly, therefore, their words mean the same thing as if they said, “Since the Kingdom of Heaven has come near, repent.” For Matthew, when he has related that John so preached, teaches that the prophecy of Isaiah had been fulfilled in him: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of our God” [<sup><400303></sup> Matthew 3:3; <sup><234003></sup> Isaiah 40:3]. But in the prophet that voice is bidden to begin with comfort and glad tidings [<sup><234001></sup> Isaiah 40:1-2]. Yet, when we refer the origin of repentance to faith we do not imagine some space of time during which it brings it to birth; but we mean to show that a man cannot apply himself seriously to repentance without knowing himself to belong to God. But no one is truly persuaded that he belongs to God unless he has first recognized God’s grace. These matters will be more clearly discussed in what follows. <sup>c</sup>Perhaps some have been deceived by the fact that many are overwhelmed by qualms of conscience or compelled to obedience before they are imbued with the knowledge of grace, nay, even taste it. And this is the initial fear that certain people reckon among the virtues, for they discern that it is close to true and just obedience. <sup>F87</sup> But here it is not a question of how variously Christ draws us to himself, or prepares us for the pursuit of godliness. I say only that no uprightness can be found except where that Spirit reigns that Christ received to communicate to his members. Secondly, I say that, according to the statement of the psalm: “There is propitiation with thee...that thou mayest be feared” [<sup><19D004></sup> Psalm 130:4, Comm.], no one will ever reverence God but him who trusts that God is propitious to him. No one will gird himself willingly to observe the law but him who will be

persuaded that God is pleased by his obedience. This tenderness in overlooking and tolerating vices is a sign of God's fatherly favor. Hosea's exhortation also shows this: "Come, let us return to Jehovah; for he has torn, and he will heal us; he has stricken, and he will cure us"

[<sup><280601></sup>Hosea 6:1, cf. Vg.]. For the hope of pardon is added like a goad, that men may not sluggishly lie in their sins. <sup>b</sup>But lacking any semblance of reason is the madness of those who, that they may begin from repentance, prescribe to their new converts certain days during which they must practice penance, and when these at length are over, admit them into communion of the grace of the gospel. I am speaking of very many of the Anabaptists, especially those who marvelously exult in being considered spiritual; <sup>F88</sup><sup>e</sup> and of their companions, the Jesuits, <sup>F89</sup> and like dregs, <sup>b</sup>Obviously, that giddy spirit brings forth such fruits that it limits to a paltry few days a repentance that for the Christian man ought to extend throughout his life.

### 3. MORTIFICATION AND VIVIFICATION

<sup>b</sup>But <sup>a</sup>certain men well versed in penance, even long before these times, meaning to speak simply and sincerely according to the rule of Scripture, said that it consists of two parts: mortification and vivification. <sup>F90</sup> Mortification they explain as sorrow of soul and dread conceived from the recognition of sin and the awareness of divine judgment. For when anyone has been brought into a true knowledge of sin, he then begins truly to hate and abhor sin; then he is heartily displeased with himself, he confesses himself miserable and lost and wishes to be another man. Furthermore, when he is touched by any sense of the judgment of God (for the one straightway follows the other) he then lies stricken and overthrown; humbled and cast down he trembles; he becomes discouraged and despairs. This is the first part of repentance, commonly called "contrition." "Vivification" they understand as the consolation that arises out of faith. That is, when a man is laid low by the consciousness of sin and stricken by the fear of God, and afterward looks to the goodness of God — to his mercy, grace, salvation, which is through Christ — he raises himself up, he takes heart, he recovers courage, and as it were, returns from death to life. <sup>c</sup>Now these words, if only they have a right interpretation, express well enough the force of repentance; but when they understand vivification as

the happiness that the mind receives after its perturbation and fear have been quieted,<sup>F91</sup> I do not agree. It means, rather, the desire to live in a holy and devoted manner, a desire arising from rebirth; as if it were said that man dies to himself that he may begin to live to God.

#### 4. PENANCE UNDER LAW AND UNDER GOSPEL

<sup>a</sup>Others, because they saw the various meanings of this word in Scripture, posited two forms of repentance. To distinguish them by some mark, they called one “repentance of the law.” Through it the sinner, wounded by the branding of sin and stricken by dread of God’s wrath, remains caught in that disturbed state and cannot extricate himself from it. The other they call “repentance of the gospel.” Through it the sinner is indeed sorely afflicted, but rises above it and lays hold of Christ as medicine for his wound, comfort for his dread, the haven of his misery.<sup>F92</sup> They offer as examples of “repentance of the law” Cain [<sup><010413></sup>Genesis 4:13], Saul [<sup><091530></sup>1 Samuel 15:30], and Judas [<sup><402704></sup>Matthew 27:4]. While Scripture recounts their repentance to us, it represents them as acknowledging the gravity of their sin, and afraid of God’s wrath; but since they conceived of God only as Avenger and Judge, that very thought overwhelmed them. Therefore their repentance was nothing but a sort of entryway of hell, which they had already entered in this life, and had begun to undergo punishment before the wrath of God’s majesty.<sup>F93</sup> We see “gospel repentance” in all those who, made sore by the sting of sin but aroused and refreshed by trust in God’s mercy, have turned to the Lord. When Hezekiah received the message of death, he was stricken with fear. But he wept and prayed, and looking to God’s goodness, he recovered confidence [<sup><122002></sup>2 Kings 20:2; <sup><233802></sup>Isaiah 38:2]. The Ninevites were troubled by a horrible threat of destruction; but putting on sackcloth and ashes, they prayed, hoping that the Lord might be turned toward them and be turned away from the fury of his wrath [<sup><320305></sup>Jonah 3:5, 9]. David confessed that he sinned greatly in taking a census of the people, but he added, “O Lord take away the iniquity of thy servant” [<sup><102410></sup>2 Samuel 24:10]. When he was rebuked by Nathan, David acknowledged his sin of adultery, and he fell down before the Lord, but at the same time he awaited pardon [<sup><101213></sup>2 Samuel 12:13, 16]. Such was the repentance of those who felt remorse of heart at Peter’s preaching; but, trusting in God’s

goodness, they added: “Brethren, what shall we do?” [<sup><440237></sup> Acts 2:37]. Such, also, was Peter’s own repentance; he wept bitterly indeed [<sup><402675></sup> Matthew 26:75; <sup><422262></sup> Luke 22:62], but he did not cease to hope.  
F94

*(Repentance defined: explanation of its elements, mortification of the flesh and vivification of the spirit, 5-9)*

## 5. DEFINITION

<sup>a</sup>Although all these things are true, yet the word “repentance” itself, so far as I can learn from Scripture, is to be understood otherwise. For their inclusion of faith under repentance disagrees with what Paul says in Acts: “Testifying both to Jews and Gentiles of repentance to God, and of faith...in Jesus Christ” [<sup><442021></sup> Acts 20:21]. There he reckons repentance and faith as two different things. What then? Can true repentance stand, apart from faith? Not at all. But even though they cannot be separated, they ought to be distinguished. As faith is not without hope, yet faith and hope are different things, so repentance and faith, although they are held together by a permanent bond, require to be joined rather than confused.

<sup>b</sup>Indeed, I am aware of the fact that the whole of conversion to God is understood under the term “repentance,” and faith is not the least part of conversion; but in what sense this is so will very readily appear when its force and nature are explained. The Hebrew word for “repentance” is derived from conversion <sup>c</sup>or return; <sup>b</sup>the Greek word, from change of mind or of intention. And the thing itself corresponds closely to the etymology of both words. The meaning is that, departing from ourselves, we turn to God, and having taken off our former mind, we put on a new. <sup>b(a)</sup>On this account, in my judgment, repentance can thus be well defined: it is the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of him; <sup>F95</sup> and it consists in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the Spirit.

<sup>a</sup>In that sense we must understand all those preachings by which either the prophets of old or the apostles later exhorted men of their time to repentance. For they were striving for this <sup>b(a)</sup>one thing: that, confused by their sins and pierced by the fear of divine judgment, they should fall down and humble themselves before him whom they had offended, and

with true repentance return into the right path. Therefore these words are used interchangeably in the same sense: “turn or return to the Lord,” “repent,” and “do penance” <sup>F96</sup> [<sup><400302></sup> Matthew 3:2]. <sup>e</sup>Whence even the Sacred History says that “penance is done after God,” where men who had lived wantonly in their own lusts, neglecting him, begin to obey his Word [<sup><090702></sup> 1 Samuel 7:2-3] and are ready to go where their leader calls them. <sup>b(a)</sup> And John and Paul use the expression “Producing fruits worthy of repentance” [<sup><420308></sup> Luke 3:8; <sup><442620></sup> Acts 26:20; cf. <sup><450604></sup> Romans 6:4] for leading a life that demonstrates and testifies in all its actions repentance of this sort.

## 6. REPENTANCE AS TURNING TO GOD

<sup>b</sup>But before we go farther, it will be useful to explain more clearly the definition that we have laid down. We must examine repentance mainly under three heads. First, when we call it a “turning of life to God,” we require a transformation, not only in outward works, but in the soul itself. Only when it puts off its old nature does it bring forth the fruits of works in harmony with its renewal. The prophet, wishing to express this change, bids whom he calls to repentance to get themselves a new heart [<sup><261831></sup> Ezekiel 18:31]. Moses, therefore, intending to show how the Israelites might repent and be duly turned to the Lord, often teaches that it be done with “all the heart” and “all the soul” [<sup><050605></sup> Deuteronomy 6:5; 10:12; 30:2, 6, 10]. This expression we see frequently repeated by the prophets [<sup><242407></sup> Jeremiah 24:7]. <sup>c</sup>Moses also, in calling it “circumcision of heart,” searches the inmost emotions [<sup><051016></sup> Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6]. <sup>b</sup>No passage, however, better reveals the true character of repentance than Jeremiah, ch. 4: “If you return, O Israel,” says the Lord, “return to me...Plow up your arable land and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and remove the foreskin of your hearts” [<sup><240401></sup> Jeremiah 4:1, 3-4]. See how he declares that they will achieve nothing in taking up the pursuit of righteousness unless wickedness be first of all cast out from their inmost heart. <sup>e</sup>And to move them thoroughly he warns them that it is with God that they have to deal, <sup>F97</sup> with whom shifts avail nothing, for He hates a double heart [cf. <sup><590108></sup> James 1:8]. <sup>b</sup>Isaiah for this reason satirizes the gauche efforts of hypocrites who were actively striving after outward repentance in

ceremonies while they made no effort to undo the burden of injustice with which they bound the poor [<sup><235806></sup>Isaiah 58:6]. There he also beautifully shows in what duties unfeigned repentance properly consists.

## 7. REPENTANCE AS INDUCED BY THE FEAR OF GOD?

<sup>b</sup>The second point was our statement that repentance proceeds from an earnest fear of God. For, before the mind of the sinner inclines to repentance, it must be aroused by thinking upon divine judgment. When this thought is deeply and thoroughly fixed in mind — that God will someday mount his judgment seat to demand a reckoning of all words and deeds — it will not permit the miserable man to rest nor to breathe freely even for a moment without stirring him continually to reflect upon another mode of life whereby he may be able to stand firm in that judgment. For this reason, Scripture often mentions judgment when it urges to repentance, as in the prophecy of Jeremiah: “Lest perchance my wrath go forth like fire and there be no one to quench it, because of the evil of your doings” [<sup><240404></sup>Jeremiah 4:4 p.]. In Paul’s sermon to the Athenians: “Although God has hitherto overlooked the times of this ignorance, he now calls upon all men everywhere to repent because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in equity” [<sup><441730></sup>Acts 17:30-31, cf. Vg.]. And in many other passages.

Sometimes by punishments already inflicted Scripture declares God to be judge in order that sinners may reflect on the greater punishments that threaten if they do not repent in time. You have an example of this in Deuteronomy, ch. 29 [<sup><052919></sup>Deuteronomy 29:19 ff.]. Inasmuch as conversion begins with dread and hatred of sin, the apostle makes “the sorrow...according to God” the cause of repentance [<sup><470710></sup>2 Corinthians 7:10, cf. Vg.]. He calls it “sorrow... according to God” when we not only abhor punishment but hate and abominate sin itself, because we know that it displeases God. <sup>c</sup>And no wonder! For if we were not sharply pricked, the slothfulness of our flesh could not be corrected. Indeed, these prickings would not have sufficed against its dullness and blockishness had God not penetrated more deeply in unsheathing his rods. There is, besides, an obstinacy that must be beaten down as if with hammers. Therefore, the depravity of our nature compels God to use severity in threatening us. For it would be vain for him gently to allure those who are asleep. I do not list

the texts that we repeatedly come upon. There is also another reason why fear of God is the beginning of repentance. For even though the life of man be replete with all the virtues, if it is not directed to the worship of God, it can indeed be praised by the world; but in heaven it will be sheer abomination, since the chief part of righteousness is to render to God his right and honor, of which he is impiously defrauded when we do not intend to subject ourselves to his control.

## **8. MORTIFICATION AND VIVIFICATION AS COMPONENT PARTS OF REPENTANCE**

<sup>b</sup>In the third place it remains for us to explain our statement that repentance consists of two parts: namely, mortification of the flesh and vivification of the spirit. The prophets express it clearly — although simply and rudely, in accordance with the capacity of the carnal folk — when they say: “Cease to do evil, and do good” [<sup><193608></sup> Psalm 36:8, 3, 27, conflated, Vg.]. Likewise, “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do good; seek judgment; help the oppressed.” [<sup><230116></sup> Isaiah 1:16-17, cf. Vg., etc.] For when they recall man from evil, they demand the destruction of the whole flesh, which is full of evil and of perversity. It is a very hard and difficult thing to put off ourselves and to depart from our inborn disposition. Nor can we think of the flesh as completely destroyed unless we have wiped out whatever we have from ourselves. But since all emotions of the flesh are hostility against God [cf. <sup><450807></sup> Romans 8:7], the first step toward obeying his law is to deny our own nature.

Afterward, they designate the renewal by the fruits that follow from it — namely, righteousness, judgment, and mercy. It would not be enough duly to discharge such duties unless the mind itself and the heart first put on the inclination to righteousness, judgment, and mercy. That comes to pass when the Spirit of God so imbues our souls, steeped in his holiness, with both new thoughts and feelings, that they can be rightly considered new.

<sup>c</sup>Surely, as we are naturally turned away from God, unless self-denial precedes, we shall never approach that which is right. Therefore, we are very often enjoined to put off the old man, to renounce the world and the flesh, to bid our evil desires farewell, to be renewed in the spirit of our mind [<sup><490422></sup> Ephesians 4:22-23]. Indeed, the very word “mortification”

warns us how difficult it is to forget our previous nature. For from “mortification” we infer that we are not conformed to the fear of God and do not learn the rudiments of piety, unless we are violently slain by the sword of the Spirit and brought to nought. As if God had declared that for us to be reckoned among his children our common nature must die!

## 9. REBIRTH IN CHRIST!

<sup>b(a)</sup>Both things happen to us by participation in Christ. For if we truly partake in his death, “our old man is crucified by his power, and the body of sin perishes” [<sup><450606></sup>Romans 6:6 p.], that the corruption of original nature may no longer thrive. <sup>b</sup>If we share in his resurrection, through it we are raised up into newness of life to correspond with the righteousness of God. Therefore, in a word, I interpret repentance as regeneration, whose sole end is to restore in us the image of God that had been disfigured and all but obliterated through Adam’s transgression. <sup>F98</sup> So the apostle teaches when he says: “Now we, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from glory to glory even as from the Spirit of the Lord” [<sup><470318></sup>2 Corinthians 3:18]. Likewise, another passage: “Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man which is after God created in righteousness and holiness of truth” [<sup><490423></sup>Ephesians 4:23, Vg.]. “Putting on the new man...who is being renewed into the knowledge and the image of him who created him.” [<sup><510310></sup>Colossians 3:10, cf. Vg.] Accordingly, we are restored by this regeneration through the benefit of Christ into the righteousness of God; from which we had fallen through Adam. In this way it pleases the Lord fully to restore whomsoever he adopts into the inheritance of life. <sup>c</sup>And indeed, this restoration does not take place in one moment or one day or one year; but through continual and sometimes even slow advances God wipes out in his elect the corruptions of the flesh, cleanses them of guilt, consecrates them to himself as temples renewing all their minds to true purity that they may practice repentance throughout their lives and know that this warfare will end only at death. All the greater is the depravity of that foul wrangler and apostate Staphylus, who babbles that I confuse the state of present life with heavenly glory when from Paul I interpret the image of God [<sup><470404></sup>2 Corinthians 4:4] as “true holiness and righteousness” [cf. <sup><490424></sup>Ephesians 4:24]. <sup>F99</sup> As if when anything is

defined we should not seek its very integrity and perfection. Now this is not to deny a place for growth; rather I say, the closer any man comes to the likeness of God, the more the image of God shines in him. In order that believers may reach this goal, God assigns to them a race of repentance, which they are to run throughout their lives.

*(Believers experience sanctification,  
but not sinless perfection in this life, 10-15)*

## 10. BELIEVERS ARE STILL SINNERS

Thus, then, are the children of God freed through regeneration from bondage to sin. Yet they do not obtain full possession of freedom so as to feel no more annoyance from their flesh, but there still remains in them a continuing occasion for struggle whereby they may be exercised; and not only be exercised, but also better learn their own weakness. In this matter all writers of sounder judgment agree that there remains in a regenerate man a smoldering cinder of evil,<sup>F100</sup> from which desires continually leap forth to allure and spur him to commit sin. They also admit that the saints are as yet so bound by that disease of concupiscence that they cannot withstand being at times tickled and incited either to lust or to avarice or to ambition, or to other vices. And we do not need to labor much over investigating what ancient writers thought about this; Augustine alone will suffice for this purpose, since he faithfully and diligently collected the opinions of all.<sup>F101</sup> Let my readers, therefore, obtain from him whatever certainty they desire concerning the opinion of antiquity.

But between Augustine and us we can see that there is this difference of opinion: while he concedes that believers, as long as they dwell in mortal bodies, are so bound by inordinate desires<sup>F102</sup> that they are unable not to desire inordinately, yet he dare not call this disease “sin.” Content to designate it with the term “weakness,” he teaches that it becomes sin only when either act or consent follows the conceiving or apprehension of it, that is, when the will yields to the first strong inclination. We, on the other hand, deem it sin when man is tickled by any desire at all against the law of God. Indeed, we label “sin” that very depravity which begets in us desires of this sort. We accordingly teach that in the saints, until they are divested of mortal bodies, there is always sin; for in their flesh there

resides that depravity of inordinate desiring which contends against righteousness. °And Augustine does not always refrain from using the term “sin,” as when he says: “Paul calls by the name ‘sin,’ the source from which all sins rise up into carnal desire. As far as this pertains to the saints, it loses its dominion on earth and perishes in heaven.” By these words he admits that in so far as believers are subject to the inordinate desires of the flesh they are guilty of sin.

## **11. IN BELIEVERS SIN HAS LOST ITS DOMINION; BUT IT STILL DWELLS IN THEM**

°God is said to purge his church of all sin, in that through baptism he promises that grace of deliverance, and fulfills it in his elect [<sup><490526></sup>Ephesians 5:26-27]. This statement we refer to the guilt of sin, rather than to the very substance of sin. God truly carries this out by regenerating his own people, so that the sway of sin is abolished in them. For the Spirit dispenses a power whereby they may gain the upper hand and become victors in the struggle. But sin ceases only to reign; it does not also cease to dwell in them. Accordingly, we say that the old man was so crucified [<sup><450606></sup>Romans 6:6], and the law of sin [cf. <sup><450802></sup>Romans 8:2] so abolished in the children of God, that some vestiges remain; not to rule over them, but to humble them by the consciousness of their own weakness. And we, indeed, admit that these traces are not imputed, as if they did not exist; but at the same time we contend that this comes to pass through the mercy of God, so that the saints — otherwise deservedly sinners and guilty before God — are freed from this guilt. And it will not be difficult for us to confirm this opinion, since there are clear testimonies to the fact in Scripture. What clearer testimony do we wish than what Paul exclaims in the seventh chapter of Romans? First, Paul speaks there as a man reborn [<sup><450706></sup>Romans 7:6]. This we have shown in another place, <sup>F103</sup> and Augustine proves it with unassailable reasoning. <sup>F104</sup> I have nothing to say about the fact that he uses the words “evil” and “sin,” so that they who wish to cry out against us can cavil at those words; yet who will deny that opposition to God’s law is evil? Who will deny that hindrance to righteousness is sin? Who, in short, will not grant that guilt is involved wherever there is spiritual misery? But Paul proclaims all these facts concerning this disease.

Then we have a reliable indication from the law by which we can briefly deal with this whole question. For we are bidden to “love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our faculties” [<sup><050605></sup>Deuteronomy 6:5; <sup><402237></sup>Matthew 22:37]. Since all the capacities of our soul ought to be so filled with the love of God, it is certain that this precept is not fulfilled by those who can either retain in the heart a slight inclination or admit to the mind any thought at all that would lead them away from the love of God into vanity. What then? To be stirred by sudden emotions, to grasp in sense perception, to conceive in the mind — are not these powers of the soul? Therefore, when these lay themselves open to vain and depraved thoughts, do they not show themselves to be in such degree empty of the love of God? For this reason, he who does not admit that all desires of the flesh are sins, but that that disease of inordinately desiring which they call “tinder” is a wellspring of sin,<sup>F105</sup> must of necessity deny that the transgression of the law is sin.

## 12. WHAT DOES “NATURAL CORRUPTION” MEAN?

It may seem absurd to some that all desires by which man is by nature affected are so completely condemned — although they have been bestowed by God himself, the author of nature.<sup>F106</sup> To this I reply that we do not condemn those inclinations which God so engraved upon the character of man at his first creation, that they were eradicable only with humanity itself, but only those bold and unbridled impulses which contend against God’s control. Now, all man’s faculties are, on account of the depravity of nature, so vitiated and corrupted that in all his actions persistent disorder<sup>F107</sup> and intemperance threaten because these inclinations cannot be separated from such lack of restraint. Accordingly, we contend that they are vicious. Or, if you would have the matter summed up in fewer words, we teach that all human desires are evil, and charge them with sin — not in that they are natural, but because they are inordinate. Moreover, we hold that they are inordinate because nothing pure or sincere can come forth from a corrupt and polluted nature.

Nor does this teaching disagree as much with that of Augustine as appears on the surface. While he is too much afraid of the odium that the Pelagians endeavored to saddle upon him, he sometimes refrains from using the word “*sin*.” Yet when he writes that, while the law of sin still remains in the

saints, guilt alone is removed, he indicates clearly enough that he does not disagree very much with our meaning. <sup>F108</sup>

### 13. AUGUSTINE AS WITNESS TO THE SINFULNESS OF BELIEVERS

°We shall bring forward some other statements from which it will better appear what he thought. In the second book of his treatise *Against Julian*, he says: “This law of sin is both remitted by spiritual regeneration and remains in mortal flesh. Remitted, namely, because guilt has been removed in the sacrament by which believers are regenerated. But it remains because it prompts the desires against which believers contend.” Another passage: “Therefore, the law of sin which was also in the members of the great apostle himself is remitted in baptism, not ended.” Another passage: “Ambrose called the law of sin ‘iniquity,’ the guilt of which was removed in baptism although it itself remains. For it is iniquitous that ‘the flesh inordinately desires against the Spirit’“ [<sup><480517></sup> Galatians 5:17]. Another passage: “Sin is dead in that guilt with which it held us; and until it be cured by the perfection of burial, though dead, it still rebels.” The passage in Book 5 is even clearer: “Blindness of heart is at once sin, punishment of sin, and the cause of sin — sin because by it a man does not believe in God; punishment of sin because by it a proud heart is punished with due punishment; the cause of sin when something is committed through the error of the blind heart. In the same way, inordinate desire of the flesh, against which the good spirit yearns, is at once sin, the punishment of sin, and the cause of sin: it is sin because there inheres in it disobedience against the mind’s dominion; the punishment of sin because it is in payment for the deserts of him who is disobedient; the cause of sin in him who consents by rebellion, or in him born by contagion.” <sup>F109</sup> Here he calls it sin without any ambiguity because when error is laid low and truth strengthened he fears slanders less. In like manner, in Homily 41 on John, where without contention he speaks according to his very own understanding: If you serve the law of sin with your flesh, do what the apostle himself, says: Let not sin...reign in your mortal body to obey its lusts [<sup><450612></sup> Romans 6:12]. He does not say: “Let it not be,” but “Let it not reign.” So long as you live, sin must needs be in your members. At least let it be deprived of mastery. Let not what it bids be done.

Those who claim that inordinate desire is no sin commonly quote James' saying by way of objection: "Desire after it has conceived, gives birth to sin" [<sup>590115</sup>James 1:15]. <sup>F110</sup> But this can be refuted without trouble. For unless we understand that he is speaking solely concerning evil works or actual sins, not even evil intention will be considered sin. But from the fact that he calls shameful acts and evil deeds the "offspring of inordinate desire" and applies the name "*sin*" to them, it straightway follows that inordinately desiring is an evil thing and damnable before God.

#### 14. AGAINST THE ILLUSION OF PERFECTION

<sup>b</sup>Certain Anabaptists of our day conjure up some sort of frenzied excess instead of spiritual regeneration. The children of God, they assert, restored to the state of innocence, now need not take care to bridle the lust of the flesh, but should rather follow the Spirit as their guide, under whose impulsion they can never go astray. It would be incredible that a man's mind should fall into such madness, if they did not openly and haughtily blab this dogma of theirs. The thing is indeed monstrous! But it is fitting that those who have persuaded their minds to turn God's truth into falsehood should suffer such punishments for their sacrilegious boldness. Shall all choice between dishonest and honest, righteous and unrighteous, good and evil, virtue and vice, be thus taken away? "Such difference arises," they say, "from the curse of old Adam, from which we have been freed through Christ." Therefore, there will now be no difference between fornication and chastity, integrity and cunning, truth and falsehood, fair dealing and extortion. "Take away," say the Anabaptists, "vain fear — the Spirit will command no evil of you if you but yield yourself, confidently and boldly, to his prompting." <sup>F111</sup> Who would not be astonished at these monstrosities? Yet it is a popular philosophy among those who are blinded by the madness of lusts and have put off common sense.

But what sort of Christ, I beseech you, do they devise for us? And what sort of Spirit do they belch forth? For we recognize one Christ and one Spirit of Christ, whom the prophets have commended, the gospel proclaims as revealed to us, and of whom we hear no such thing. That Spirit is no patron of murder, fornication, drunkenness, pride, contention, avarice, or fraud; but the author of love, modesty, sobriety, moderation, peace, temperance, truth. The Spirit is not giddy — to run headlong,

thoughtless, through right and wrong-but is full of wisdom and understanding rightly to discern between just and unjust. The Spirit does not stir up man to dissolute and unbridled license; but, according as it distinguishes between lawful and unlawful, it teaches man to keep measure and temperance. Yet why should we spend more effort in refuting this brutish madness? For Christians the Spirit of the Lord is not a disturbing apparition, which they have either brought forth in a dream or have received as fashioned by others. Rather, they earnestly seek a knowledge of him from the Scriptures, where these two things are taught concerning him.

First, he has been given to us for sanctification in order that he may bring us, purged of uncleanness and defilement, into obedience to God's righteousness. This obedience cannot stand except when the inordinate desires to which these men would slacken the reins have been tamed and subjugated. Second, we are purged by his sanctification in such a way that we are besieged by many vices and much weakness so long as we are encumbered with our body. Thus it comes about that, far removed from perfection, we must move steadily forward, and though entangled in vices, daily fight against them. From this it also follows that we must shake off sloth and carelessness, and watch with intent minds lest, unaware, we be overwhelmed by the stratagems of our flesh. Unless, perchance, we are confident that we have made greater progress than the apostle, who was still harassed by an angel of Satan [<sup><471207></sup> 2 Corinthians 12:7] "whereby his power was made perfect in weakness" [<sup><471209></sup> 2 Corinthians 12:9], and who in his own flesh unfeignedly represented that division between flesh and spirit [cf. <sup><450706></sup> Romans 7:6 ff.].

## 15. REPENTANCE ACCORDING TO <sup><470711></sup> 2 CORINTHIANS 7:11

¶ It is for a very good reason that the apostle enumerates seven causes, effects, or parts in his description of repentance. They are earnestness or carefulness, excuse, indignation, fear, longing, zeal, and avenging [<sup><470711></sup> 2 Corinthians 7:11]. It should not seem absurd that I dare not determine whether they ought to be accounted causes or effects, for either is debatable. And they can also be called inclinations joined with repentance. But because, leaving out those questions, we can understand what Paul means, we shall be content with a simple exposition.

Therefore, he says that from “sorrow...according to God” [<sup><470710></sup>2 Corinthians 7:10] carefulness arises. For he who is touched with a lively feeling of dissatisfaction with self because he has sinned against his God is at the same time aroused to diligence and attention, that he may escape from the devil’s snares, that he may better take precaution against his wiles, and that he may not afterward fall away from the governance of the Holy Spirit, nor be lulled into a sense of security.

Next is “excuse,” which in this passage does not signify a defense whereby the sinner, in order to escape God’s judgment, either denies that he has offended or extenuates his fault; but rather purification, which relies more on asking pardon than on confidence in one’s own cause. Just as children who are not froward, while they recognize and confess their errors, plead for pardon, and to obtain it, testify in whatever way they can that they have not at all abandoned that reverence which they owe their parents. In short, they so excuse themselves not to prove themselves righteous and innocent, but only to obtain pardon. There follows indignation, when the sinner moans inwardly with himself, finds fault with himself, and is angry with himself, while recognizing his own perversity and his own ungratefulness toward God.

By the word “fear” Paul means that trembling which is produced in our minds as often as we consider both what we deserve and how dreadful is the severity of God’s wrath toward sinners. We must then be troubled with an extraordinary disquiet, which both teaches us humility and renders us more cautious thereafter. But if that carefulness of which we have previously spoken arises from fear, we see the bond by which these two are joined together.

It seems to me that he has used the word “longing” to express that diligence in doing our duty and that readiness to obey to which recognition of our sins ought especially to summon us. To this also pertains the “zeal” that he joins directly to it, for it signifies an ardor by which we are aroused when those spurs are applied to us. What have I done? Whither had I plunged if God’s mercy had not succored me?

Lastly, there is “avenging.” For the more severe we are toward ourselves, and the more sharply we examine our own sins, the more we ought to hope that God is favorable and merciful toward us. And truly, it could not

happen otherwise than that the soul itself, stricken by dread of divine judgment, should act the part of an avenger in carrying out its own punishment. Those who are really religious experience what sort of punishments are shame, confusion, groaning, displeasure with self, and other emotions that arise out of a lively recognition of sin. Yet we must remember to exercise restraint, lest sorrow engulf us. For nothing more readily happens to fearful consciences than falling into despair. And also by this stratagem, whomever Satan sees overwhelmed by the fear of God he more and more submerges in that deep whirlpool of sorrow that they may never rise again. That fear cannot, indeed, be too great which ends in humility, and does not depart from the hope of pardon. Nevertheless, in accordance with the apostle's injunction the sinner ought always to beware lest, while he worries himself into dissatisfaction weighed down by excessive fear, he become faint [<sup><581203></sup> Hebrews 12:3]. For in this way we flee from God, who calls us to himself through repentance. On this matter Bernard's admonition is also useful: "Sorrow for sins is necessary if it be not unremitting. I beg you to turn your steps back sometimes from troubled and anxious remembering of your ways, and to go forth to the tableland of serene remembrance of God's benefits. Let us mingle honey with wormwood that its wholesome bitterness may bring health when it is drunk tempered with sweetness. If you take thought upon yourselves in your humility, take thought likewise upon the Lord in his goodness."<sup>F112</sup>

*(The fruits of repentance: holiness of life, confession and remission of sins; repentance is lifelong, 16-20)*

## 16. OUTWARD AND INWARD REPENTANCE

<sup>b</sup>Now we can understand the nature of the fruits of repentance: <sup>c</sup>the duties of piety toward God, of charity toward men, and in the whole of life, holiness and purity. <sup>c</sup>Briefly, the more earnestly any man measures his life by the standard of God's law, the surer are the signs of repentance that he shows. Therefore, the Spirit, while he urges us to repentance, often recalls us now to the individual precepts of the law, now to the duties of the Second Table. Yet in other passages the Spirit has first condemned uncleanness in the very wellspring of the heart, and then proceeded to the external evidences that mark sincere repentance. I will soon set before my readers' eyes a table of this matter in a description of the life of the

Christian.<sup>F113</sup> I will not gather evidences from the prophets, wherein they sometimes scorn the follies of those who strive to appease God with ceremonies and show them to be mere laughingstocks, and at other times teach that outward uprightness of life is not the chief point of repentance, for God looks into men's hearts. Whoever is moderately versed in Scripture will understand by himself, without the admonition of another, that when we have to deal with God<sup>F114</sup> nothing is achieved unless we begin from the inner disposition of the heart. And the passage from Joel will contribute no little to the understanding of the rest: "Rend your hearts and not your garments" [<sup><290213></sup> Joel 2:13]. Both of these exhortations also are briefly expressed in these words of James, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind" [<sup><590408></sup> James 4:8], where there is indeed an addition in the first clause; yet the source and origin is then shown: namely, that men must cleanse away secret filth in order that an altar may be erected to God in the heart itself.

<sup>c</sup>Besides, there are certain outward exercises that we use privately as remedies, either to humble ourselves or to tame our flesh, but publicly as testimony of repentance [<sup><470711></sup> 2 Corinthians 7:11]. Moreover, they arise from that "avenging" of which Paul speaks [<sup><470711></sup> 2 Corinthians 7:11]. For these are the characteristics of an afflicted mind: to be in squalor, groaning, and tears; to flee splendor and any sort of trappings; to depart from all delights. Then he who feels what a great evil rebellion of the flesh is seeks every remedy to restrain it. Moreover, he who well considers how serious it is to have run counter to God's justice cannot rest until, in his humility, he has given glory to God.

The old writers often mention exercises of this sort when they discuss the fruits of repentance.<sup>F115</sup> But although they do not place the force of repentance in them — my readers will pardon me if I say what I think — it seems to me that they depend too much upon such exercises. And if any man will wisely weigh this matter, he will agree with me, I trust, that they have in two respects gone beyond measure. For when they urged so much and commended with such immoderate praises that bodily discipline, they succeeded in making the people embrace it with greater zeal; but they somewhat obscured what ought to have been of far greater importance. Secondly, in inflicting punishments they were somewhat more rigid than

the gentleness of the church would call for, as we shall have occasion to show in another place. <sup>F116</sup>

## 17. THE OUTWARD PRACTICE OF PENANCE MUST NOT BECOME THE CHIEF THING

<sup>b</sup>Some persons, when they hear weeping, fasting, and ashes spoken of in various passages, and especially in Joel [<sup><290212></sup> Joel 2:12], consider that repentance consists chiefly of fasting and weeping. <sup>F117</sup> This delusion of theirs must be removed. What is there said concerning the conversion of the entire heart to the Lord, and concerning the rending not of garments but of the heart, belongs properly to repentance. But weeping and fasting are not subjoined as perpetual or necessary effects of this, but have their special occasion. Because he had prophesied that the Jews were threatened with a very great disaster, he counseled them to forestall the wrath of God; not only by repenting, but also by manifesting their sorrow. For just as an accused man is wont to present himself as a suppliant with long beard, uncombed hair, and mourner's clothing to move the judge to mercy; so it behooved them when arraigned before the judgment seat of God to beg, in their miserable condition, that his severity be averted. But although perhaps sackcloth and ashes better fitted those times, it is certain that there will be a very suitable use among us for weeping and fasting whenever the Lord seems to threaten us with any ruin or calamity. When he causes some danger to appear, he announces that he is ready and, after a manner, armed for revenge. Therefore, the prophet does well to exhort his people to weeping and fasting — that is, to the sorrow of accused persons, for he had just stated that their evil deeds were brought to trial.

In like manner, the pastors of the church would not be doing ill today if, when they see ruin hanging over the necks of their people, they were to cry out to them to hasten to fasting and weeping; provided — and this is the principal point — they always urge with greater and more intent care and effort that “they should rend their hearts and not their garments” [<sup><290213></sup> Joel 2:13]. There is no doubt whatsoever that fasting is not always closely connected with repentance, but is especially intended for times of calamity. Accordingly, Christ links it with mourning when he releases the apostles from need of it, until, deprived of his presence, they should be overwhelmed with grief [<sup><400915></sup> Matthew 9:15]. I am speaking concerning

a public fast, for the life of the godly ought to be tempered with frugality and sobriety that throughout its course a sort of perpetual fasting may appear. <sup>c</sup>But because that whole matter is to be investigated again where we discuss the discipline of the church, <sup>F118</sup> I now touch upon it rather sparingly.

## 18. CONFESSION OF SIN BEFORE GOD AND BEFORE MEN

Nevertheless, I shall insert this point here: when the term “repentance” is applied to this external profession, it is improperly diverted from its true meaning, which I have set forth. For it is not so much a turning to God as a confession of guilt, together with a beseeching of God to avert punishment and accusation.’ Thus, to “repent in sackcloth and ashes”

[<sup><401121></sup> Matthew 11:21; <sup><421013></sup> Luke 10:13] is only to evidence our self-displeasure when God is angry with us because of our grave offenses. Public, indeed, is this kind of confession, by which we, condemning ourselves before the angels and the world, anticipate the judgment of God. For Paul, rebuking the slothfulness of those who are indulgent toward their own sins, says: “If we judged ourselves...we should not be judged” by God [<sup><461131></sup> 1 Corinthians 11:31]. Now, while it is not always necessary to make men open and conscious witnesses of our repentance, yet to confess to God privately is a part of true repentance that cannot be omitted. For there is nothing less reasonable than that God should forgive those sins in which we flatter ourselves, and which we hypocritically disguise lest he bring them to light.

Not only is it fitting to confess those sins which we commit daily, but graver offenses ought to draw us further and recall to our minds those which seem long since buried. David teaches us this by his example. For, touched with shame for his recent crime, he examines himself even to the time when he was in his mother’s womb, and acknowledges that even then he was corrupted and infected with the filthiness of the flesh [<sup><195103></sup> Psalm 51:3-5]. And he does not do this to extenuate his guilt, as many hide themselves in a crowd and seek to go unpunished by involving others with them. David does far otherwise. He openly magnifies his guilt, confessing that, corrupted from his very infancy, he has not ceased to heap misdeeds upon misdeeds. Also, in another passage, he undertakes such an investigation of his past life as to implore God’s mercy for the

sins of his youth [Psalm 15:7]. Surely then, at last, we shall prove that our drowsiness has been shaken from us, if we seek from God a release by groaning under our burden, by bewailing our evil deeds.

Moreover, we ought to note that the repentance which we are enjoined constantly to practice differs from that repentance which, as it were, arouses from death those who have either shamefully fallen or with unbridled vices cast themselves into sinning, or have thrown off God's yoke by some sort of rebellion. For often Scripture, in exhorting to repentance, means by it a kind of passage and resurrection from death to life. And in referring to a people as having "repented," it means that they have been converted from idol worship and other gross offenses. For this reason, Paul declares that he will mourn for those sinners who "have not repented of lewdness, fornication, and licentiousness" [<sup><471221></sup>2 Corinthians 12:21 p.]. We ought carefully to observe this distinction, lest when we hear that few are called to repentance we become careless, as if mortification of the flesh no longer concerned us. For the base desires that always pester us, and the vices that repeatedly sprout in us, do not allow us to slacken our concern for mortification. Therefore, the special repentance that is required only of certain ones whom the devil has wrenched from fear of God and entangled in deadly snares does not do away with the ordinary repentance to which corruption of nature compels us to give attention throughout our lives.

## 19. REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS ARE INTERRELATED

<sup>b</sup>Now if it is true — a fact abundantly clear — <sup>b(a)</sup>that the whole of the gospel is contained under these two headings, repentance and forgiveness of sins, do we not see that the Lord freely justifies his own in order that he may at the same time restore them to true righteousness by sanctification of his Spirit? <sup>a</sup>John, a messenger sent before the face of Christ to prepare his ways [<sup><401110></sup>Matthew 11:10], proclaimed: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven has come near" [<sup><400302></sup>Matthew 3:2; 4:17, Vg.]. By inviting them to repentance, he admonished them to recognize that they were sinners, <sup>F119</sup> and their all was condemned before the Lord, that they might with all their hearts desire the mortification of their flesh, and a new rebirth in the Spirit. By proclaiming the Kingdom of God, he was calling them to faith, for by the Kingdom of God, which he taught was at hand, he

meant the forgiveness of sins, salvation, life, and utterly everything that we obtain in Christ. Hence we read in the other Evangelists: “John came preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” [<sup><410104></sup> Mark 1:4; <sup><420303></sup> Luke 3:3]. What else is this than that they, weighed down and wearied by the burden of sins, should turn to the Lord and conceive a hope of forgiveness and salvation? So, also, Christ entered upon his preaching: “The Kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the gospel” [<sup><410115></sup> Mark 1:15 p.]. First he declares that the treasures of God’s mercy have been opened in himself; then he requires repentance; finally, trust in God’s promises. Therefore, when he meant to summarize the whole gospel in brief, he said that he “should suffer rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name” [<sup><422426></sup> Luke 24:26, 46-47]. And after his resurrection the apostles preached this: “God raised Jesus...to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” [<sup><440530></sup> Acts 5:30-31]. Repentance is preached in the name of Christ when, through the teaching of the gospel, men hear that all their thoughts, all their inclinations, all their efforts, are corrupt and vicious. Accordingly, they must be reborn if they would enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Forgiveness of sins is preached when men are taught that for them Christ became redemption, righteousness, <sup>b(a)</sup>salvation, and life [<sup><460130></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:30], by whose name they are freely accounted righteous and innocent in God’s sight. <sup>b</sup>Since both kinds of grace are received by faith, as I have elsewhere proved, <sup>F120</sup> still, because the proper object of faith is God’s goodness, by which sins are forgiven, it was expedient that it should be carefully distinguished from repentance.

## 20. IN WHAT SENSE IS REPENTANCE THE PRIOR CONDITION OF FORGIVENESS?

<sup>a</sup>Now the hatred of sin, which is the beginning of repentance, first gives us access to the knowledge of Christ, who reveals himself to none but poor and afflicted sinners, who groan, toil, are heavy-laden, hunger, thirst, and pine away with sorrow and misery <sup>b(a)</sup>[<sup><236101></sup> Isaiah 61:1-3; <sup><401105></sup> Matthew 11:5, 28; <sup><420418></sup> Luke 4:18]. Accordingly, we must strive toward repentance itself, devote ourselves to it throughout life, and pursue it to the very end if we would abide in Christ. <sup>b</sup>For he came to call sinners, but it was to repentance [cf. <sup><400913></sup> Matthew 9:13]. He was sent to bless

the unworthy, but in order that every one may turn from his wickedness [<sup><440326></sup> Acts 3:26; cf. <sup><440531></sup> Acts 5:31]. Scripture is full of such testimonies. For this reason, when God offers forgiveness of sins, he usually requires repentance of us in turn, implying that his mercy ought to be a cause for men to repent. He says, “Do judgment and righteousness, for salvation has come near.” [<sup><235601></sup> Isaiah 56:1 p.] Again, “A redeemer will come to Zion, and to those in Jacob who repent of their sins.” [<sup><235920></sup> Isaiah 59:20.] Again, “Seek the Lord while he can be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked man forsake his way and the unrighteousness of his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him.” [<sup><235506></sup> Isaiah 55:6-7 p.] Likewise, “Turn again, and repent, that your sins may be blotted out.” [<sup><440319></sup> Acts 3:19.] Yet we must note that this condition is not so laid down as if our repentance were the basis of our deserving pardon, but rather, because the Lord has determined to have pity on men to the end that they may repent, he indicates in what direction men should proceed if they wish to obtain grace. Accordingly, so long as we dwell in the prison house of our body we must continually contend with the defects of our corrupt nature, indeed with our own natural soul. <sup>a</sup>Plato sometimes says that the life of a philosopher is a meditation upon death; <sup>F121</sup> but we may more truly say that the life of a Christian man is a continual effort and exercise in the mortification of the flesh, till it is utterly slain, and God’s Spirit reigns in us. Therefore, I think he has profited greatly who has learned to be very much displeased with himself, not so as to stick fast in this mire and progress no farther, but rather to hasten to God and yearn for him in order that, having been engrafted into the life and death of Christ, he may give attention to continual repentance. <sup>b</sup>Truly, they who are held by a real loathing of sin cannot do otherwise. For no one ever hates sin unless he has previously been seized with a love of righteousness. <sup>F122</sup> <sup>a</sup>This thought, as it was the simplest of all, so has it seemed to me to agree best with the truth of Scripture.

*(Sins for which there is no repentance or pardon, 21-25)*

## 21. REPENTANCE AS GOD’S FREE GIFT

<sup>c</sup>Further, that repentance is a singular gift of God I believe to be so clear from the above teaching that there is no need of a long discourse to explain

it. Accordingly, the church praises God's benefit, and marvels that he "granted repentance to the Gentiles unto salvation" [<sup><441118></sup> Acts 11:18, cf. <sup><470710></sup> 2 Corinthians 7:10]. And Paul bids Timothy be forbearing and gentle toward unbelievers: If at any time, he says, God may give them repentance to recover from the snares of the devil [<sup><50225></sup> 2 Timothy 2:25-26]. Indeed, God declares that he wills the conversion of all, and he directs exhortations to all in common. Yet the efficacy of this depends upon the Spirit of regeneration. For it would be easier for us to create men than for us of our own power to put on a more excellent nature. Accordingly, in the whole course of regeneration, we are with good reason called "God's handiwork, created... for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" [<sup><490210></sup> Ephesians 2:10, cf. Vg.].

Whomsoever God wills to snatch from death, he quickens by the Spirit of regeneration. Not that repentance, properly speaking, is the cause of salvation, but because it is already seen to be inseparable from faith and from God's mercy, when, as Isaiah testifies, "a redeemer will come to Zion, and to those in Jacob who turn back from iniquity" [<sup><235920></sup> Isaiah 59:20].

This fact indeed stands firm: wherever the fear of God flourishes, the Spirit has worked toward the salvation of man. Therefore, believers, according to Isaiah, while they complain and grieve that they have been forsaken by God, set this as a sort of sign of reprobation, that their hearts have been hardened by him [<sup><236317></sup> Isaiah 63:17]. The apostle, also wishing to exclude apostates from the hope of salvation, gives the reason that "it is impossible to restore them to repentance" [<sup><580604></sup> Hebrews 6:4-6 p.]. For obviously God, renewing those he wills not to perish, shows the sign of his fatherly favor and, so to speak, draws them to himself with the rays of his calm and joyous countenance. On the other hand, he hardens and he thunders against the reprobate, whose impiety is unforgivable.

With this sort of vengeance the apostle threatens willful apostates who, while they fall away from faith in the gospel, mock God, scornfully despise his grace, profane and trample Christ's blood [<sup><581029></sup> Hebrews 10:29], yea, as much as it lies in their power, crucify him again [<sup><580606></sup> Hebrews 6:6]. For Paul does not, as certain austere folk would preposterously have it, cut off hope of pardon from all voluntary sins. <sup>F123</sup> But he teaches that apostasy deserves no excuse, so that it is no wonder

God avenges such sacrilegious contempt of himself with inexorable rigor. <sup>b</sup>“For,” he teaches, “it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt.” [<sup><580604></sup> Hebrews 6:4-6.] Another passage: “If we sin willfully,” he says, “after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there remains no longer a sacrifice for sins, but a certain dreadful expectation of judgment,” etc. [<sup><581026></sup> Hebrews 10:26].

These are, also, the passages from the wrong understanding of which the Novatianists long ago found occasion for their ravings. Offended by the harshness in these passages, certain good men believed this to be a spurious letter, <sup>F124</sup> even though in every part it breathes an apostolic spirit. But since we are contending only against those who accept this letter, it is easy to show how these statements do not at all support their error. First, it is necessary for the apostle to agree with his Master, who declares that “every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven...but the sin against the Holy Spirit,” which is forgiven “neither in this age nor in the age to come” [<sup><401231></sup> Matthew 12:31-32; <sup><410328></sup> Mark 3:28-29; <sup><421210></sup> Luke 12:10]. It is certain, I say, that the apostle was content with this exception, unless we would make him an opponent of the grace of Christ. From this it follows <sup>e(c)</sup>that pardon is not denied to any individual sins except one, which, arising out of desperate madness, cannot be ascribed to weakness, and clearly demonstrates that a man is possessed by the devil.

## 22. UNPARDONABLE SIN

<sup>b</sup>But in order to settle this point it behooves us to inquire into the nature of this abominable crime which is never to be forgiven. Augustine somewhere defines it as persistent stubbornness even to death, with distrust of pardon; <sup>F125</sup> but this does not sufficiently agree with the very words of Christ, that it is not to be forgiven in this age [<sup><401231></sup> Matthew 12:31-32, etc.]. For either this is said in vain, or the unpardonable sin can be committed within the compass of this life. But if Augustine’s definition is true, it is not committed unless it continue even to death. Others say

that he who envies the grace bestowed upon his brother sins against the Holy Spirit. <sup>F126</sup> I do not see where they get this idea.

But let us set forth the true definition, which, when it is buttressed by firm testimonies, will of itself easily overcome all others. I say, therefore, that they sin against the Holy Spirit who, with evil intention, resist God's truth, although by its brightness they are so touched that they cannot claim ignorance. Such resistance alone constitutes this sin. For Christ, to explain what he had said, immediately adds: "He who speaks against the Son of man will have his sin forgiven; but he who blasphemes against the Spirit will not be forgiven" [<sup><401232></sup> Matthew 12:32, 31, Vg.; cf. <sup><421210></sup> Luke 12:10; <sup><410329></sup> Mark 3:29]. And Matthew writes in place of "blasphemy against the Spirit," the "spirit of blasphemy." <sup>F127</sup>

But how can anyone hurl a reproach against the Son without its being at the same time trained against the Spirit? Those can who unconsciously attack God's truth, it being unknown to them. Those can who ignorantly curse Christ, yet who would not consciously will to extinguish the truth of God if it were revealed to them, who would not wound with a single word him whom they know to be the Anointed of the Lord. Such men it is who sin against the Father and the Son. Thus, there are many today who most wickedly curse the gospel teaching, which, if they knew it to be of the gospel, they would be ready to revere wholeheartedly.

But they whose consciences, though convinced that what they repudiate and impugn is the Word of God, yet cease not to impugn it — these are said to blaspheme against the Spirit, since they strive against the illumination that is the work of the Holy Spirit. Such were certain of the Jews, who, even though they could not withstand the Spirit speaking through Stephen, yet strove to resist [<sup><440610></sup> Acts 6:10]. There is no doubt that many of them were impelled to it by zeal for the law, but it appears that there were others who raged against God himself with malicious impiety; that is to say, against the doctrine that they well knew came from God. Such, also, are the Pharisees themselves, against whom the Lord inveighs, who in order to enfeeble the power of the Holy Spirit slander him with the name "Beelzebub" [<sup><400934></sup> Matthew 9:34; 12:24]. This, therefore, is the spirit of blasphemy, when man's boldness deliberately leaps into reproach of the divine name. Paul hints at this when he asserts

that he obtained mercy because he had committed those things ignorantly in unbelief [<sup><540113></sup> 1 Timothy 1:13], by virtue of which he would otherwise have been unworthy of the Lord's favor. If ignorance joined with unbelief caused him to obtain pardon, it follows that there is no place for pardon where knowledge is linked with unbelief.

### **23. HOW THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF "SECOND REPENTANCE" IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD**

<sup>e(b)</sup>Now if you pay close attention, you will understand that the apostle is speaking not concerning one particular lapse or another, but concerning the universal rebellion by which the reprobate forsake salvation. <sup>e</sup>No wonder, then, God is implacable toward those of whom John, in his canonical letter, asserts that they were not of the elect, from whom they went out [1 John a:19]! <sup>b</sup>For he is directing his discourse against those who imagine that they can return to the Christian religion even though they had once departed from it. Calling them away from this false and pernicious opinion, he says something very true, that a return to the communion of Christ is not open to those who knowingly and willingly have rejected it. But those who reject it are not those who with dissolute and uncontrolled life simply transgress the Word of the Lord, but those who deliberately reject its entire teaching. Therefore the fallacy lies in the words "lapsing" and "sinning" [<sup><580606></sup> Hebrews 6:6; 10:26], since the Novatianists interpret "lapsing" to mean the act of a man who, taught by the law of the Lord not to steal or fornicate, does not abstain from theft or fornication. <sup>F128</sup>On the contrary, I affirm that here is an underlying tacit antithesis in which all things ought to be recapitulated that are contrary to those which had been stated before; <sup>d</sup>so that it is not any particular failing that is here expressed, but complete turning away from God and, so to speak, apostasy of the whole man. <sup>b</sup>When, therefore, he speaks of those who have lapsed after they have once been illumined, have tasted the heavenly gift, have been made sharers in the Holy Spirit, and also have tasted God's good Word and the powers of the age to come [<sup><580604></sup> Hebrews 6:4-5], it must be understood that they who choke the light of the Spirit with deliberate impiety, and spew out the taste of the heavenly gift, will cut themselves off from the sanctification of the Spirit, and trample upon God's Word and the powers of the age to come. And the better to express

an impiety deliberately intended, in another passage he afterward expressly adds the word “willfully.”<sup>F129</sup> For when he says that they who, willing, sin after having received knowledge of the truth have no sacrifice left for them [<sup><581026></sup> Hebrews 10:26], he does not deny that Christ is a continual sacrifice to atone for the iniquities of the saints. Almost the whole letter eloquently proclaims this, in explaining Christ’s priesthood. But he says that no other sacrifice remains when His has been rejected. Moreover, it is rejected when the truth of the gospel is expressly denied.

## 24. THOSE WHO CANNOT BE FORGIVEN ARE THOSE WHO CANNOT REPENT

<sup>b</sup>To some it seems too hard and alien to the mercy of God that any who flee for refuge in calling upon the Lord’s mercy are wholly deprived of forgiveness. This is easily answered. For the author of Hebrews does not say that pardon is refused if they turn to the Lord, but he utterly denies that they can rise to repentance, because they have been stricken by God’s just judgment with eternal blindness on account of their ungratefulness.

There is nothing that opposes this in the example of Esau, which he later applies to this point: Esau vainly tried to retrieve his lost birthright by tears and wailing [<sup><581216></sup> Hebrews 12:16-17]. This is no less true of that warning of the prophet: “When they cry, I shall not hear” [<sup><380713></sup> Zechariah 7:13]. For such expressions do not designate either true conversion or calling upon God, but that anxiety by which in extremity impious men are bound and compelled to have regard for what previously they complacently neglected, the fact that their every good depends upon the Lord’s help. But they do not so much implore it as groan that it has been taken from them. By “cry” the prophet [<sup><380713></sup> Zechariah 7:13], and by “tears” the apostle [<sup><581217></sup> Hebrews 12:17], signifies nothing but that dreadful torment which burns and tortures the wicked in their despair.

<sup>c</sup>This fact deserves careful note: that otherwise God, who by the prophet proclaims he will be merciful as soon as the sinner repents, would be at war with himself [<sup><261821></sup> Ezekiel 18:21-22]. And, as I have already said,<sup>F130</sup> it is certain that the mind of man is not changed for the better except by God’s prevenient grace. Also, his promise to those who call upon him will never deceive. But it is improper to designate as “conversion” and

“prayer” the blind torment that distracts the reprobate when they see that they must seek God in order to find a remedy for their misfortunes, and yet flee at his approach.

## 25. SHAM REPENTANCE AND HONEST REPENTANCE

°The question arises, however, inasmuch as the apostle denies that sham repentance appeases God, how Ahab obtained pardon and turned aside the punishment imposed upon him; since he appears, from the later conduct of his life, to have been stricken only by some sudden fear [<sup><112128></sup> 1 Kings 21:28-29]. He, indeed, put on sackcloth, cast ashes over himself, lay upon the ground [<sup><112127></sup> 1 Kings 21:27], and as is testified concerning him, humbled himself before God; but it meant little to rend his garments while his heart remained obstinate and swollen with malice. Yet we see how God is turned to mercy.

I reply: Hypocrites are sometimes spared thus for a while, yet the wrath of God ever lies upon them, and this is done not so much for their own sake as for an example to all. For even though Ahab had his punishment mitigated, what profit was this to him, but that while alive upon earth he should not feel it? Therefore God’s curse, although secret, had a fixed seat in his house, and he went to eternal destruction.

The same is to be seen in Esau; for, even though he suffered a repulse, a temporal blessing was granted to his tears [<sup><012740></sup> Genesis 27:40]. But because the spiritual inheritance from the oracle of God could rest in the possession of only one of the brothers, when Esau was passed over and Jacob chosen, the disinheriting of Esau excluded God’s mercy; yet this solace remained to him as an animal man: to become fat with the fatness of the earth and the dew of heaven [<sup><012728></sup> Genesis 27:28]. <sup>F131</sup>

And this which I have just said ought to be applied as an example for the others in order that we may learn more readily to apply our minds and our efforts to sincere repentance, because there must be no doubt that when we are truly and heartily converted, God, who extends his mercy even to the unworthy when they show any dissatisfaction with self, will readily forgive us. By this means, also, we are taught what dread judgment is in store for all the obstinate, who with shameless forehead no less than iron heart now make it a sport to spurn and set at nought the threats of God. In

this way he often stretched out his hand to the sons of Israel to relieve their calamity, even though their cries were reigned and their hearts were deceitful and false [cf. <sup><197836></sup>Psalm 78:36-37], as he complains in the psalm, that they forthwith reverted to their own character [v. 57]. And thus by such kindly gentleness he willed to bring them to earnest conversion or render them inexcusable. Yet in remitting punishments for a time, he does not bind himself by perpetual law, but rather sometimes rises up more severely against the hypocrites and doubles their punishment to show how much their pretense displeases him. But as I have said, he sets forth some examples of his readiness to give pardon, by which the godly may be encouraged to amend their lives, and the pride of those who stubbornly kick against the pricks may be more severely condemned.

## CHAPTER 4.

### HOW FAR FROM THE PURITY OF THE GOSPEL IS ALL THAT THE SOPHISTS IN THEIR SCHOOLS PRATE ABOUT REPENTANCE; DISCUSSION OF CONFESSION AND SATISFACTION

*(The Scholastic doctrine of confession and contrition, with its alleged Scriptural basis, examined, 1-6)*

#### 1. THE SCHOLASTIC DOCTRINE OF PENANCE

<sup>a</sup>Now I come to discuss what the Scholastic Sophists have taught concerning repentance. This I will run through in as few words as possible because it is not my intention to pursue everything, lest this book which I am anxious to prepare as a short textbook burst all bounds. They have involved this matter, otherwise not very complicated, in so many volumes that there would be no easy way out if you were to immerse yourself even slightly in their slime.

First, in their definition, they clearly disclose that they have never understood what repentance is. For they take certain cliches from the books of the ancient writers, which do not express the force of repentance at all. For example: to repent is to weep over former sins, and not to commit sins to be wept over; again, it is to bewail past evil deeds and not again to commit deeds to be bewailed; again, it is a certain sorrowing vengeance that punishes in oneself what one is sorry to have committed; again, it is sorrow of heart and bitterness of soul for the evil deeds that one has committed, or to which one has consented. <sup>F132</sup>

Let us grant that these things have been well said by the fathers, although a contentious man could without difficulty deny this. Yet they were not spoken with the intent to define repentance, but only to urge their hearers not to fall again into the same transgressions from which they had been rescued. <sup>b</sup>But if they would turn all statements of this sort into definitions,

others also ought with equal right to have been patched on. Such a one is this statement of Chrysostom: “Repentance is a medicine that wipes out sin, a gift given from heaven, a wondrous power, a grace surpassing the might of laws.”<sup>F133</sup>

<sup>c</sup>Besides, the doctrine taught by the Scholastics in later times is somewhat worse than these patristic definitions. For they are so doggedly set in outward exercises that you gather nothing else from their huge volumes than that repentance is a discipline and austerity that serves partly to tame the flesh, partly to chastise and punish faults. They are wonderfully silent concerning the inward renewal of the mind, which bears with it true correction of life. <sup>b</sup>Among them there is, indeed, much talk concerning contrition and attrition. They torture souls with many misgivings, and immerse them in a sea of trouble and anxiety. But where they seem to have wounded hearts deeply, they heal all the bitterness with a light sprinkling of ceremonies.

<sup>a</sup>They divide repentance, thus subtly defined, into contrition of heart, confession of mouth, and satisfaction of works.<sup>F134</sup> This division is no more logical than the definition — even though they wish to appear to have spent their whole life in framing syllogisms. Suppose someone reasons from their definition — a kind of argument prevalent among dialecticians — that anyone can weep for previously committed sins and not commit sins that ought to be wept over, can bewail past evil deeds and not commit evil deeds that ought to be bewailed, can punish what he is sorry to have committed, etc., even though he does not confess with his mouth. How, then, will they maintain their division? For if he does not confess though truly penitent, there can be repentance without confession. But if they reply that this division applies to penance only in so far as it is a sacrament, or is understood, concerning the whole perfection of repentance, which they do not include in their definitions, there is no reason to accuse me; let them blame themselves for not defining it more precisely and clearly. Now, for my part, when there is a dispute concerning anything, I am stupid enough to refer everything back to the definition itself, which is the hinge and foundation of the whole debate.

But let that be the teachers’ license. Now let us survey in order the various parts themselves. <sup>c</sup>I negligently leap over the trifles that they, with grave

mien, hawk as mysteries, and I am not doing this unwittingly. For it would not be very toilsome for me to investigate all that they think they are skillfully and subtly disputing. But it would be mere meticulousness for me to tire my readers with such trifles to no avail. Surely, it is easy to recognize from the questions that move and excite them, and which miserably encumber them, that they are chattering about unknown things. For example: whether repenting of one sin is pleasing to God when in others obstinacy remains. Or: whether divinely inflicted punishments are able to make satisfaction. Or: whether repentance may be frequently repeated for mortal sins, when they foully and impiously define that men daily practice penance for venial sins only. Similarly, on the basis of a saying of Jerome, they torment themselves greatly with a gross error, that repentance is the “second plank after shipwreck.”<sup>F135</sup> By this they show themselves never to have awakened from their brute stupor, to feel a thousandth part, or even less, of their faults.

## **2. THE SCHOLASTIC DOCTRINE OF PENANCE TORMENTS THE CONSCIENCE**

<sup>a</sup>But I would have my readers note that this is no contention over the shadow of an ass<sup>F136</sup> but that the most serious matter of all is under discussion: namely, forgiveness of sins. For while they require three things for repentance — compunction of heart, confession of mouth, and satisfaction of works — at the same time they teach that these things are necessary to attain forgiveness of sins. But if there is anything in the whole of religion that we should most certainly know, we ought most closely to grasp by what reason, with what law, under what condition, with what ease or difficulty, forgiveness of sins may be obtained! Unless this knowledge remains clear and sure, the conscience can have no rest at all, no peace with God, no assurance or security; but it continuously trembles, wavers, tosses, is tormented and vexed, shakes, hates, and flees the sight of God.

But if forgiveness of sins depends upon these conditions which they attach to it, nothing is more miserable or deplorable for us. They make contrition the first step in obtaining pardon, and they require it to be a due contrition, that is, just and full.<sup>F137</sup> But at the same time they do not

determine when a man can have assurance that he has in just measure carried out his contrition.

<sup>e</sup>We must, I admit, carefully and sharply urge every man, by weeping bitterly for his sins, to what his displeasure and hatred toward them, for we ought not to repent this sorrow which begets repentance unto salvation [<sup><470710></sup>2 Corinthians 7:10]. But when a bitterness of sorrow is demanded that corresponds to the magnitude of the offense, and which may balance in the scales with assurance of pardon, <sup>a</sup>here truly miserable consciences are tormented in strange ways, and troubled when they see due contrition for sins imposed upon them. And they do not grasp the measure of the debt so that they are able to discern within themselves that they have paid what they owed. If they say that we must do what is in us, we are always brought back to the same point. For when will anyone dare assure himself that he has applied all of his powers to lament his sins? Therefore, when consciences have for a long time wrestled with themselves, and exercised themselves in long struggles, they still do not find a haven in which to rest. Consequently, to calm themselves, at least in part, they wrest sorrow from themselves and squeeze out tears that they may thereby accomplish their contrition.

### **3. NOT THE SINNER'S CONTRITION, BUT THE LORD'S MERCY AWAITS**

<sup>a</sup>But if they say that I accuse them falsely, let them actually bring forward and exhibit anyone who, by a doctrine of contrition of this sort, either is not driven to desperation or has not met God's judgment with pretended rather than true sorrow. And we have said in some place that forgiveness of sins can never come to anyone without repentance, because only those afflicted and wounded by the awareness of sins can sincerely invoke God's mercy. But we added at the same time that repentance is not the cause of forgiveness of sins. Moreover, we have done away with those torments of souls which they would have us perform as a duty. We have taught that the sinner does not dwell upon his own compunction or tears, but fixes both eyes upon the Lord's mercy alone. <sup>F138</sup>We have merely reminded him that Christ called those who "labor and are heavy-laden" [<sup><401128></sup>Matthew 11:28], when he was sent to publish good news to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim release to the captives, to free

the prisoners, to comfort the mourners [<sup><236101></sup>Isaiah 61:1; <sup><420418></sup>Luke 4:18, conflated]. Hence are to be excluded both the Pharisees, who, sated with their own righteousness, do not recognize their poverty; and despisers, who, oblivious of God's wrath, do not seek a remedy for their own evil. For such do not labor, are not heavy-laden, are not brokenhearted, nor prisoners or captives. But it makes a great difference whether you teach forgiveness of sins as deserved by just and full contrition, which the sinner can never perform; or whether you enjoin him to hunger and thirst after God's mercy to show him — through the recognition of his misery, his vacillation, his weariness, and his captivity — where he ought to seek refreshment, rest, and freedom; in fine, to teach him in his humility to give glory to God.

#### **4. CONFESSION NOT ENJOINED: REFUTATION OF SCHOLASTIC ALLEGORICAL ARGUMENT FROM THE LEPERS THAT WERE CLEANSED**

<sup>a</sup>There has always been great strife between the canon lawyers and the Scholastic theologians concerning confession. The latter contend that confession is enjoined by divine precept; the former claim that it is commanded only by ecclesiastical constitutions. <sup>F139</sup>

Now in that quarrel the marked shamelessness of the theologians is evident, who corrupted and forcibly twisted all the passages of Scripture they cited for their purpose. And when they saw that what they wanted could not even in this way be obtained, those who wished to appear more astute than others resorted to the evasion that confession is derived from divine law with respect to its substance, but later took its form from positive law. Of course, the most incompetent among pettifogging lawyers thus relate the citation to the divine law because it is said: "Adam, where are you?" [<sup><010309></sup>Genesis 3:9]. The exception, <sup>F140</sup> too, because Adam answered as if taking exception: "The wife that thou gavest me," etc. [<sup><010312></sup>Genesis 3:12]. In both cases, however, the form is derived from the civil law. But let us see by what proofs they demonstrate this confession — formed or unformed — to be a command of God.

The Lord, they say, sent the lepers to the priests [<sup><400804></sup>Matthew 8:4; <sup><410144></sup>Mark 1:44; <sup><420514></sup>Luke 5:14; 17:14]. What? Did he send them to

confession? Who ever heard it said that the Levitical priests were appointed to hear confessions [<sup><051708></sup>Deuteronomy 17:8-9]? They therefore take refuge in allegories: it was laid down by the Mosaic law that priests should distinguish between stages of leprosy [<sup><031402></sup>Leviticus 14:2-3]. Sin is spiritual leprosy; it is the duty of priests to pronounce concerning this.

Before I answer, I ask in passing why, if this passage makes them judges of spiritual leprosy, do they assume cognizance of natural and carnal leprosy? As if this reasoning were not to mock Scripture: the law entrusts the recognition of leprosy to the Levitical priests, let us take this over for ourselves; sin is spiritual leprosy, let us also be judicial examiners of sin!

Now I reply: “When the priesthood is transferred, there is necessarily a transference of the law as well” [<sup><580712></sup>Hebrews 7:12]. All priestly offices have been transferred to Christ and are fulfilled and completed in him. The whole right and honor of the priesthood has therefore been transferred to him. If they are so fond of chasing after allegories, let them set before themselves Christ as their sole priest, and in his judgment seat concentrate unlimited jurisdiction over all things. We shall readily allow that. Moreover, their allegory, which reckons the merely civil law among the ceremonies, is unsuitable.

Why then does Christ send lepers to the priests? That the priests may not charge him with breaking the law, which bade that one cured of leprosy be shown to the priest, and atoned for by offering sacrifice. He bids cleansed lepers do what the law enjoins. “Go,” he says, “show yourselves to the priests” [<sup><421714></sup>Luke 17:14]; “and offer the gift that Moses prescribes in the law, for a proof to the people” [<sup><400804></sup>Matthew 8:4 p.]. Truly, this miracle was to be a proof for them. They had declared them lepers; now they declare them cured. Are they not, even against their will, compelled to become witnesses of Christ’s miracles? Christ permits them to investigate his miracles. They cannot deny it. But because they still try to evade, this work serves for them as a testimony. Thus, in another passage: “This gospel will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations” [<sup><402414></sup>Matthew 24:14 p.]. Likewise, “You will be dragged before kings and governors...to bear testimony before them.” [<sup><401018></sup>Matthew 10:18.] That is, that they may be more strongly

convicted by God's judgment. <sup>b</sup>But if they prefer to agree with Chrysostom, he also teaches that this was done by Christ on account of the Jews, that He might not be regarded as a transgressor of the law. <sup>F141</sup>  
<sup>c</sup>However, in such a clear matter one should be ashamed to seek the support of any man, when Christ declares that he relinquishes the whole legal right to the priests, even to professed enemies of the gospel who had always been intent upon shouting against it if their mouths were not stopped. Therefore, that the papal sacrificers may retain this possession, let them openly side with those whom it is necessary forcibly to restrain from cursing Christ. For this has nothing to do with his true ministers.

## 5. THE UNBINDING OF LAZARUS MISAPPLIED

<sup>a</sup>They derive a second argument from the same source, that is from an allegory — as if allegories were of great value in confirming any dogma! But, let them be of value, unless I show that I can apply those very allegories more plausibly than they. Now they say that the Lord bade the disciples unbind the risen Lazarus and let him go [<sup><431144></sup> John 11:44]. <sup>F142</sup>  
 First, they falsely declare this, for nowhere does one read that the Lord said this to his disciples. It is much more probable that he said this to the Jews (who were present in order that his miracle might be demonstrated beyond any suspicion of fraud, and might display his greater power), in that he raised the dead by his voice alone, and not by his touch. So do I interpret the fact that the Lord, in order to relieve the Jews of all perverse suspicion, willed that they roll away the stone, smell the stench, look upon the sure signs of death, see him rising up by the power of his Word alone, and be the first to touch him, alive. <sup>c</sup>And this is the opinion of Chrysostom. <sup>F143</sup>

<sup>b</sup>But suppose we regard this statement as made to the disciples, what then will our opponents maintain? That the Lord gave the apostles the power of loosing? How much more aptly and skillfully this could be treated as allegory if we should say that by this figure God willed to instruct his believers; to loose those raised up by him, that is, so that they should not recall to memory their sins, which he himself had forgotten, nor damn as sinners those whom he himself had absolved, nor still upbraid them for those things that he himself had condoned, nor be harsh and captious to punish where he himself was merciful and ready to spare! <sup>c</sup>Certainly,

nothing ought to incline us more to pardon than the example of the judge, who warns that he will be implacable to those who are too severe and inhuman. <sup>a</sup>Now let them go and peddle their allegories.

## 6. SCRIPTURAL CONFESSION

<sup>a</sup>Now they come into closer combat when, as they suppose, they fight, armed with the plain testimonies of Scripture: those who came to the baptism of John confessed their sins [<sup><400306></sup> Matthew 3:6]; and James would have us “confess our sins to one another” [<sup><590516></sup> James 5:16]. <sup>F144</sup>

No wonder if those who wished to be baptized confessed their sins! For, as it was said before, “John...preached a baptism of repentance” [<sup><410104></sup> Mark 1:4]. He baptized with water unto repentance. Whom, therefore, would he have baptized except those who had confessed themselves sinners? Baptism is the symbol of forgiveness of sins. Who would have been admitted to this symbol but sinners and those who recognize themselves as such? Therefore, they confess their sins in order to be baptized.

It is with good reason that James enjoins us to “confess...to one another” [<sup><590516></sup> James 5:16]. But if they had paid attention to what follows immediately, they would have understood that this also gives them little support. “Confess,” he says, “your sins to one another, and pray for one another.” [<sup><590516></sup> James 5:16.] He combines mutual confession and mutual prayer. If we must confess to priestlings alone, then we must pray for them alone. What? Suppose it followed from the words of James that only priests could confess? Indeed, while he wants us to confess to one another, he addresses those alone who could hear one another’s confession; ἀλλήλοις is his word, “mutually,” “in turn,” “interchangeably,” or, if they prefer, “reciprocally.” <sup>b</sup>But only those qualified to hear confessions can confess to one another reciprocally. Since they assign this prerogative to priests alone, we also relegate the function of confessing to them alone. <sup>a</sup>Away, then, with trifles of this sort! Let us take the apostle’s view, which is simple and open: namely, that we should lay our infirmities on one another’s breasts, to receive among ourselves mutual counsel, mutual compassion, and mutual consolation. Then, as we are aware of our brothers’ infirmities, let us pray to God for these. Why,

then, do they quote James against us though we so strongly urge the confession of God's mercy? But no one can confess the mercy of God until he has previously confessed his own misery. Rather, we pronounce anathema upon everyone who has not confessed himself a sinner before God, before his angels, before the church, and in short, before all men. For the Lord has "shut up all things under sin" [<sup><480322></sup> Galatians 3:22] "that every mouth may be stopped" [<sup><450319></sup> Romans 3:19] and all flesh be humbled before God [cf. <sup><450320></sup> Romans 3:20; <sup><460129></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:29]. But let him alone be justified [cf. <sup><450304></sup> Romans 3:4] and exalted.

*(Evidence for late origin of auricular confession, 7-8)*

## 7. COMPULSORY CONFESSION UNKNOWN IN THE ANCIENT CHURCH

<sup>a</sup>But I marvel how shamelessly our opponents dare contend that the confession of which they speak is divinely ordained. Of course we admit its practice to have been very ancient, but we can easily prove that it was formerly free. Surely, even their records declare that no law or constitution concerning it had been set up before the time of Innocent 3. °Surely, if they had had a more ancient law than those, they would have seized upon it rather than, content with the decree of the Lateran Council, made themselves ridiculous even to children. In other matters they do not hesitate to invent fictitious decretals, which they ascribe to the most ancient councils, that by a veneration for antiquity they may hoodwink the simpleminded. On this point, it did not enter their heads to introduce such a falsehood. Therefore, as they themselves witness, not yet three hundred years have passed since Innocent 3 set that trap and imposed the necessity of confession. <sup>F145</sup>

But, to say nothing of the time, the barbarism of the words alone discredits that law! These good fathers enjoin everyone of both sexes <sup>F146</sup> once a year to confess all their sins before their own priest. Facetious men humorously take exception that this precept refers only to hermaphrodites, but applies to no one who is either male or female. Then, a grosser absurdity arises in their pupils when they are unable to explain what the expression "their own priests" means. <sup>F147</sup>

Whatever all these hired wranglers of the pope may prate, we maintain that Christ was not the author of this law which compels men to list their sins — indeed, that twelve hundred years went by after the resurrection of Christ before any such law was brought forth. And so this tyranny was at length introduced when, after piety and doctrine were extinguished, mere ghosts of pastors had taken all license, without distinction, upon themselves.

<sup>a</sup>Then, there are clear testimonies, both in histories and among other ancient writers, that teach that this was a discipline of polity, instituted by bishops, not a law laid down by Christ or the apostles. I shall bring forward only one of these many testimonies, which will provide clear proof of this matter. Sozomen relates that this constitution of the bishops was diligently observed in the Western churches, especially at Rome. This means that it was not a universal practice of all the churches. Moreover, he says that one of the presbyters was especially designated for this office. This thoroughly refutes what the papists falsely state concerning the keys given in common to the whole priestly order for this use. Indeed, it was not a function common to all priests, but the exclusive function of one priest who had been chosen for it by the bishop. <sup>c</sup>It is he whom even today they call in individual cathedral churches the “penitentiarius,” the examiner of serious crimes and of those to be censured as an example.

<sup>a</sup>Then he adds that this also had been the custom at Constantinople until a certain matron, pretending to confess, was found to have hidden under the guise of confession an affair which she was having with a certain deacon. On account of this crime, Nectarius, a man renowned for his holiness and learning, bishop of that church, abolished the rite of confession. <sup>F148</sup> Here, here, let these asses prick up their ears! If auricular confession were the law of God, why would Nectarius have dared to set it aside and uproot it? Will they accuse Nectarius — a holy man of God, approved by the consent of all the fathers — of heresy and schism? But with this same sentence they will condemn the Church of Constantinople in which, Sozomen declares, the practice of confession was not only neglected for a time, but allowed to fall into disuse within his memory. Indeed, let them accuse of defection not only the Church of Constantinople but all the Eastern churches — if they speak the truth — that neglected an inviolable law enjoined upon all Christians.

## 8. CHRYSOSTOM DOES NOT ENJOIN CONFESSION TO MEN

<sup>b</sup>Now in very many passages Chrysostom clearly attests this abolition of confession; and he was bishop of the Church of Constantinople, so that it is a wonder they dare mutter to the contrary. “Tell your sins,” he says, “that you may wipe them away. If you are embarrassed to tell anyone what sins you have committed, recite them daily to your own soul. I do not tell you to confess them to your fellow servant, who may upbraid you. Recite them to God who heals them. Confess your sins upon your bed that there your conscience may daily acknowledge its misdeeds.” Again: “Now, moreover, it is not necessary to confess in the presence of witnesses. Examine your sins in your own thought. Let this judgment be without witness: let God alone see you confessing.” Again: “I do not lead you onto the stage before your fellow servants. I do not compel you to uncover your sins to men. Betake your conscience to God’s presence and lay it open before him. Show your wounds to the Lord, the most excellent physician, and seek remedy from him. Show them to him, who does not reproach but most gently heals.” Again: “Surely, you should tell no man, lest he upbraid you; for you should confess nothing to a fellow servant, who may make it public. But show your wounds to the Lord, who takes care of you and is your kind physician.” Afterward he has God say: “I do not compel you to come on mid-stage before many witnesses. Tell your sin privately to me only that I may heal your sore.”<sup>F149</sup> Shall we say that Chrysostom acted rashly when he wrote these and like things to free the consciences of men from those bonds by which they were constrained by divine law? Not at all. But he dare not require as necessary what he understands never to have been prescribed by the Word of God.

*(Scriptural confession of sins, public and private, 9-13)*

## 9. CONFESSION BEFORE GOD

<sup>a</sup>But, to make the whole matter plainer and easier, we will first faithfully relate what kind of confession we are taught in the Word of God. Then we will add an account of their inventions — not indeed all, for who could empty such an immense sea — but only those with which they embrace the sum of their secret confession.

<sup>c(a)</sup>Here I am ashamed to recall how frequently the old translator renders the word “to praise” as “to confess” [<sup><190707></sup> Psalm 7:7:18; 9:2; 94(95, Hebrews):2; 99(100, Hebrews):4; 117(118, Hebrews):1, all Vg.], <sup>F150</sup> a commonplace to the most unlettered laymen. Still, it is well to lay bare their boldness, transferring as they do to their tyrannical law what had been written concerning the praises of God. To prove that confession has the power to cheer the mind, they drag in that statement of the psalm, “in the voice of rejoicing and confession” [<sup><194204></sup> Psalm 42:4; 41:5, Vg.]. Now if such a transformation be valid, we can derive anything from anything. But since they have become so shameless, let pious readers recall that they have been cast into a reprobate mind by God’s just vengeance in order that their boldness might be the more detestable. But if we are willing to rest upon simple Scriptural teaching, there will be no danger of anyone’s deceiving us with such false colors.

For in Scripture, one way of confession is prescribed to this effect: <sup>a</sup>since it is the Lord who forgives, forgets, and wipes our, sins, let us confess our sins to him in order to obtain pardon. He is the physician; therefore, let us lay bare our wounds to him. It is he who is hurt and offended; from him let us seek peace. He is the discerner of hearts, the one cognizant of all thoughts [cf. <sup><580412></sup> Hebrews 4:12]; <sup>F151</sup> let us hasten to pour out our hearts before him. He it is, finally, who calls sinners: let us not delay to come to God himself. “I acknowledged my sin to thee,” says David, “and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgression to the Lord’; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my heart.” [<sup><193205></sup> Psalm 32:5; 31:5, Vg.] Of similar nature is another confession of David himself: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy great loving-kindness” [<sup><195101></sup> Psalm 51:1; 50:3, Vg.]. Such, too, is Daniel’s statement: “We have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, O Lord, in turning aside from thy commandments” [<sup><270905></sup> Daniel 9:5]. And there are other confessions that often occur in Scripture, <sup>e</sup>the recital of which would almost fill a volume. “If we confess our sins,” says John, “the Lord is faithful...to forgive our sins.” [<sup><620109></sup> 1 John 1:9, cf. Vg.] To whom should we confess? Surely to him, that is, if we fall down before him with troubled and humbled heart; if wholeheartedly accusing and condemning ourselves before him, we seek to be acquitted by his goodness and mercy.

## 10. CONFESSION OF SINS BEFORE MEN

<sup>a</sup>He who will embrace this confession in his heart and before God will without doubt also have a tongue prepared for confession, whenever there is need to proclaim God's mercy among men; and not only to whisper the secret of his heart to one man and at one time, and in the ear, but often, publicly, with all the world hearing, unfeignedly to recount both his own disgrace and God's magnificence and honor. In this way, when David was rebuked by Nathan he was pricked by the sting of conscience, and confessed his sin before both God and men. "I have sinned," he said, "against the Lord." [<sup><101213></sup> 2 Samuel 12:13.] That is, I now make no excuse; I do not try to avoid being judged by all to be a sinner, nor to prevent what I tried to hide from the Lord being revealed also even to men. <sup>c</sup>Therefore, a willing confession among men follows that secret confession which is made to God, as often as either divine glory or our humiliation demands it. For this reason, the Lord ordained of old among the people of Israel that, after the priest recited the words, the people should confess their iniquities publicly in the temple [cf. <sup><031621></sup> Leviticus 16:21]. For he foresaw that this help was necessary for them in order that each one might better be led to a just estimation of himself. And it is fitting that, by the confession of our own wretchedness, we show forth the goodness and mercy of our God, among ourselves and before the whole world.

## 11. GENERAL CONFESSION OF SIN

<sup>e</sup>Now this sort of confession ought to be ordinary in the church and be used extraordinarily in a special way, whenever it happens that the people are guilty of some transgression in common. <sup>c(b)</sup>We have an example of this second sort in that public confession <sup>b</sup>which all the people performed under the guidance and direction of Ezra and Nehemiah [<sup><160107></sup> Nehemiah 1:7; 9:1-2]. 'For since the punishment for the common rebellion of all the people consisted in that long exile, that destruction of the city and the Temple, and that overthrow of religion, they could not rightly recognize the benefit of liberation, had they not previously accused themselves. Nor does it matter if sometimes a few in one congregation be innocent, for when they are members of a feeble and diseased body they ought not to boast of health. <sup>e</sup>Nay, they cannot but contract some contagion and also bear some part of the guilt.

<sup>c</sup>Therefore, every time we are afflicted either by pestilence or war, or barrenness, or any other sort of calamity, if it is our duty to take refuge in mourning, fasting, and other signs of our guilt, we must least of all neglect this very confession upon which all the rest depends.

Besides the fact that ordinary confession has been commended by the Lord's mouth, no one of sound mind, who weighs its usefulness, can dare disapprove it. For since in every sacred assembly we stand before the sight of God and the angels, what other beginning of our action will there be than the recognition of our own unworthiness? But that, you say, is done through every prayer; for whenever we pray for pardon, we confess our sin. Granted. But if you consider how great is our complacency, our drowsiness, or our sluggishness, you will agree with me that it would be a salutary regulation if the Christian people were to practice humbling themselves through some public rite of confession. For even though the ceremony that the Lord laid down for the Israelites was a part of the tutelage of the law,<sup>F152</sup> still the reality underlying it in some manner pertains also to us.<sup>c(b)</sup> And indeed, we see this custom observed with good result in well-regulated churches: that every Lord's Day the minister frames the formula of confession in his own and the people's name, and by it he accuses all of wickedness and implores pardon from the Lord.<sup>F153</sup>

<sup>e</sup>In short, with this key a gate to prayer is opened both to individuals in private and to all in public.

## 12. PRIVATE CONFESSION IN THE CURE OF SOULS

<sup>a</sup>Scripture, moreover, approves two forms of private confession: one made for our own sake, to which the statement of James refers that we should confess our sins to one another [<sup><590516></sup> James 5:16]. For he means that, disclosing our weaknesses to one another, we help one another with mutual counsel and consolation. The other form we are to use for our neighbor's sake, to appease him and to reconcile him to us if through fault of ours he has been in any way injured, band in the first kind of confession, even though James, by not expressly determining on whose bosom we should unburden ourselves, leaves us free choice to confess to that one of the flock of the church who seems most suitable. Yet we must also preferably choose pastors inasmuch as they should be judged especially qualified above the rest. Now I say that they are better fitted

than the others because the Lord has appointed them by the very calling of the ministry to instruct us by word of mouth to overcome and correct our sins, and also to give us consolation through assurance of pardon [<sup><401619></sup>Matthew 16:19; 18:18; <sup><432023></sup>John 20:23]. <sup>°</sup>For, while the duty of mutual admonition and rebuke is entrusted to all Christians, it is especially enjoined upon ministers. Thus, although all of us ought to console one another and confirm one another in assurance of divine mercy, we see that the ministers themselves have been ordained witnesses and sponsors of it to assure our consciences of forgiveness of sins, to the extent that they are said to forgive sins and to loose souls. When you hear that this is attributed to them, recognize that it is for your benefit. <sup>F154</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Therefore, let every believer remember that, if he be privately troubled and afflicted with a sense of sins, so that without outside help he is unable to free himself from them, it is a part of his duty not to neglect what the Lord has offered to him by way of remedy. Namely, that, for his relief, he should use private confession to his own pastor; and for his solace, he should beg the private help of him whose duty it is, both publicly and privately, to comfort the people of God by the gospel teaching. But he should always observe this rule: that where God prescribes nothing definite, consciences be not bound with a definite yoke. Hence, it follows that confession of this sort ought to be free so as not to be required of all, but to be commended only to those who know that they have need of it. Then, that those who use it according to their need neither be forced by any rule nor be induced by any trick to recount all their sins. But let them do this so far as they consider it expedient, that they may receive the perfect fruit of consolation. Faithful pastors ought not only to leave this freedom to the churches but also to protect it and stoutly defend it if they want to avoid tyranny in their ministry and superstition in the people.

### **13. PRIVATE CONFESSION FOR THE REMOVAL OF AN OFFENSE**

<sup>a</sup>Now Christ speaks of the other sort of confession in the Gospel of Matthew: “If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there...and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” [<sup><400523></sup>Matthew 5:23-24]. For the love, which was broken by our

offense, is thus repaired by our acknowledging the wrong we have committed, and asking pardon for it.

°In this class is included the confession of those who have sinned even to the point of offending against the whole church. For if Christ considers the private offense of one man so serious that he bars from the sacred rites all those who sin in any respect against their brothers until they become reconciled by a just satisfaction, how much greater is the reason that he who offends the church by any evil example should be reconciled to it by the acknowledgment of his offense.<sup>F155</sup> Thus was the Corinthian received again into communion when he had obediently yielded to correction [<sup><470206></sup> 2 Corinthians 2:6].

This was also the form of confession in the early church as Cyprian also recalls it. He says: “They do penance for a certain period; then they come to confession, and through the imposition of the hands of bishop and clergy receive the privilege of communion.”<sup>F156</sup> °Scripture does not know any other manner or form of confession at all, °and it is not our task to bind with new bonds consciences that Christ most sternly forbids to enslave.

In the meantime, I do not so much object to sheep presenting themselves to their shepherd as often as they wish to partake of the Sacred Supper; rather, I ardently wish this to be observed everywhere. For both those who have an encumbered conscience can thence receive a remarkable benefit and those who should be admonished may thus be prepared for admonitions, provided tyranny and superstition be always excluded!

*(The power of the keys, and absolution, 14-15)*

#### **14. NATURE AND VALUE OF THE POWER OF THE KEYS**

°The power of the keys has a place in these three kinds of confession: either when the entire church with solemn recognition of its faults implores pardon or when an individual, who has by some notable transgression committed a common offense, declares his repentance, or when one who needs a minister’s help on account of a troubled conscience discloses his weakness to him. °Where an offense is to be removed the method is different; for even though in that case peace of conscience is also

provided for, the chief end is to remove hatred and to unite men's minds with one another in the bond of peace [cf. <490403> Ephesians 4:3].

But the benefit of which I have spoken is not at all to be spurned, that we may more willingly confess our sins. <sup>c</sup>For when the whole church stands, as it were, before God's judgment seat, confesses itself guilty, and has its sole refuge in God's mercy, it is no common or light solace to have present there the ambassador of Christ, armed with the mandate of reconciliation, by whom it hears proclaimed its absolution [cf. <470520> 2 Corinthians 5:20]. Here the usefulness of the keys is deservedly commended, when this embassy is carried out justly, in due order, and in reverence. Similarly, when one who in some degree had estranged himself from the church receives pardon and is restored into brotherly unity, how great a benefit it is that he recognizes himself forgiven by those to whom Christ said, "To whomsoever you shall remit sins on earth, they shall be remitted in heaven" [<sup><432023></sup> John 20:23; conflated with <sup><401818></sup> Matthew 18:18]! And private absolution is of no less efficacy or benefit, when it is sought by those who need to remove their weakness by a singular remedy. For it often happens that one who hears general promises that are intended for the whole congregation of believers remains nonetheless in some doubt, and as if he had not yet attained forgiveness, still has a troubled mind. Likewise, if he lays open his heart's secret to his pastor, and from his pastor hears that message of the gospel specially directed to himself, "Your sins are forgiven, take heart" [<sup><400902></sup> Matthew 9:2 p.], he will be reassured in mind and be set free from the anxiety that formerly tormented him.

But when it is a question of the keys, we must always beware lest we dream up some power separate from the preaching of the gospel, <sup>e(c)</sup>I shall explain this matter again more fully in another place, where I shall deal with the government of the church. There we shall see that any right of binding or loosing which Christ conferred upon his church is bound to the Word. <sup>F157</sup> <sup>c</sup>This is especially true in the ministry of the keys, whose entire power rests in the fact that, through those whom the Lord had ordained, the grace of the gospel is publicly and privately sealed in the hearts of the believers. This can come about only through preaching.

## 15. SUMMARY OF THE ROMAN DOCTRINE OF CONFESSION

<sup>a</sup>What do the Roman theologians say? They decree that all persons of “both sexes,” as soon as they attain the age of discretion, should confess all their sins to their own priest at least once a year, and that their sin is not forgiven unless they have a firmly conceived intent to confess it. And if they do not carry out this intent when occasion is offered, the entrance to paradise is no longer open to them. Now, the theologians assert, the priest has the power of the keys with which to bind and loose the sinner because Christ’s word is not void: “Whatever you bind,” etc.

[<sup><401818></sup>Matthew 18:18]. <sup>F158</sup>

Yet they quarrel fiercely among themselves over this power. Some say that there is essentially only one key — namely, the power to bind and loose — that knowledge is indeed required for good use, but it is only like an accessory, not joined to the other in essence. <sup>F159</sup> Others, because they saw that this was excessively unbridled license, posited two keys: discretion and power. Still others, since they saw the depravity of the priests restrained by such moderation, forged other keys: the authority to discern, which they should use in passing sentence, and the power they should exercise in the execution of their sentence; and they add knowledge as counselor.

But they dare not interpret binding and loosing simply as remitting and blotting out sins, for they hear the Lord proclaiming, through the prophet: “I am, and no other but me; I am, I am he who blots out your transgressions, O Israel” [<sup><234311></sup>Isaiah 43:11, 25 p.]. But they say that it is the priest’s task to declare who are to be bound or loosed, and to state whose sins are to be remitted or retained; to declare this, moreover, either through confession when he absolves and retains sins or through sentence when he excommunicates or receives into the partaking of the sacraments.

<sup>F160</sup>

Finally, suppose they understand that they have not yet removed this difficulty, but that the objection can always be raised against them, that unworthy persons are often bound and loosed by their priests, who will not therefore be bound or loosed in heaven. Their last refuge is then to reply that the conferring of the keys is to be understood with this one limitation: Christ promised that the sentence of the priests would be

approved before his judgment seat, provided it was justly pronounced according as the deserts of the one bound or loosed required. <sup>F161</sup> Now, they say that these keys have been given by Christ to all priests and are conferred upon them by the bishops at the time of promotion, but their free use remains only in the possession of those who perform ecclesiastical functions; that the keys indeed remain in the possession of the excommunicated and suspended clergy, but rusted and bound. And those who say these things may rightly seem modest and sober in comparison with those who have forged new keys on a new anvil and who teach that the treasury of the church is locked under these keys. we shall discuss these matters afterward in their place. <sup>F162</sup>

*(Criticism of Romanist errors and injurious practices related to confession and satisfaction, 16-25)*

## 16. THE ENUMERATION OF ALL SINS IS IMPOSSIBLE

<sup>a</sup>I shall now reply to each point in a few words. But I shall remain silent for the present as to what right or lack of right they have to bind the souls of believers with their laws, since this will be dealt with in its place. <sup>F163</sup> But it is utterly unbearable that they lay down a law on the recounting of all sins, that they deny that sin is forgiven except upon the condition that an intent to confess has been firmly conceived, and that they prate that no entrance to paradise would remain if the office of confession were neglected.

Are all sins to be recounted? Now David, who in himself had, I believe, rightly pondered confession of sins, exclaimed: “Who will understand errors? Cleanse thou me from my secret errors, O Lord” [<sup><191912></sup> Psalm 19:12 p.]. And in another place: “My iniquities have gone over my head, and like a heavy burden they burden me beyond my strength” [<sup><193804></sup> Psalm 38:4; cf. <sup><193705></sup> Psalm 37:5, Vg.]. He understood only too well how deep is the pit of our sins, how many are the faces of crime, how many heads this hydra bore, and what a long tail it dragged along. Therefore, he did not catalogue them. But from the depths of his evil deeds he cried out to the Lord: I am overwhelmed, I am buried, I am choked, “the gates of hell have encompassed me” [<sup><191806></sup> Psalm 18:6; cf. <sup><191706></sup> Psalm 17:6, Vg.], I am sunk down into the deep pit [<sup><196902></sup> Psalm 69:2-3,15-16],

may thy hand draw me out, weak and dying. Who would now think of reckoning up his sins when he sees that David cannot begin to number his?

## **17. THE REQUIREMENT OF COMPLETE CONFESSION IS A MEASURELESS TORMENT**

<sup>a</sup>The souls of those who have been affected with some awareness of God are most cruelly torn by this butchery. <sup>F164</sup>First they called themselves to account, and divided sins into arms, branches, twigs, and leaves, according to their formulas. They then weighed the qualities, quantities, and circumstances; and so the matter pressed forward a bit. But when they had progressed farther, and sky and sea were on every side, <sup>F165</sup> there was no port or anchorage. The more they had crossed over, the greater was the mass ever looming before their eyes, indeed, it rose up like high mountains; nor did any hope of escape appear, even after long detours. And so they were stuck between the victim and the knife. <sup>F166</sup> And at last no other outcome but despair was found.

There these cruel butchers, to relieve the wounds that they had inflicted, applied certain remedies, asserting that each man should do what lay in his power. <sup>F167</sup> But again new anxieties crept in. Indeed, new tortures flayed helpless souls: “I have not spent enough time”; “I have not duly devoted myself to it”; “I have overlooked many things out of negligence, and the forgetfulness that has come about from my carelessness is inexcusable!”

Still, other medicines that alleviated this sort of pain were applied. Repent of your negligence; provided it is not utterly careless, it will be forgiven. But all these things cannot cover the wound, and are less an alleviation of the evil than poisons disguised with honey in order not to cause offense at the first taste because of their harshness, but to penetrate deep within before they are felt. Therefore, that dreadful voice always presses and resounds in the ears: “Confess all your sins.” And this terror cannot be allayed except by a sure consolation.

<sup>e</sup>Here let my readers consider how it is possible to reckon up all the acts of an entire year and to gather up what sins they have committed each day. For experience convinces each one that, when we have at evening to examine the transgressions of only a single day, the memory is confused; so great is the multitude and variety of them that press upon us! And I am

not speaking of brutish and stupid hypocrites who, paying attention to three or four of their more serious offenses, think they have fulfilled their obligation. But I speak of the true worshipers of God who, after they see themselves overwhelmed by the examination they have undergone, also add that saying of John's: "If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart" [<sup><620320></sup> 1 John 3:20]; thus they tremble at the sight of the Judge, whose knowledge is far beyond our understanding.

## **18. THE PERNICIOUS EFFECT OF DEMANDING COMPLETE CONFESSION**

<sup>a</sup>Moreover, the lulling of a good many people by the flatteries with which such deadly poison was tempered did not cause them to believe that these blandishments would satisfy God or even truly satisfy themselves. Rather, the effect was that of an anchor put down on the high seas, providing a brief respite from sailing, or the wayside rest of a traveler drooping with exhaustion. I do not labor to prove this point. Every man can be his own witness of this.

I shall sum up what sort of law this is. First, it is simply impossible; therefore it can only destroy, condemn, confound, and cast into ruin and despair. Then, depriving sinners of a true awareness of their sins, it makes them hypocrites, ignorant of God and of themselves. Indeed, while wholly occupied with the cataloguing of sins, they in the meantime forget that hidden slough of vices, their own secret transgressions and inner filth, the knowledge of which ought particularly to have brought home to them their own misery. But a very sure rule for making confession was to recognize and confess that the abyss of our evil is beyond our comprehension. We see that the publican's confession was composed according to this rule: "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner" [<sup><421813></sup> Luke 18:13]. It is as if he had said: "How great, how great a sinner I am; I am wholly a sinner, nor can my mind grasp or my tongue utter the very magnitude of my sins! May the abyss of thy mercy swallow up this abyss of sin."

What? you will ask. Is, then, not each single sin to be confessed? Is, then, no confession accepted by God unless it consists of these simple words: "I am a sinner"? Nay, we must rather take care as much as we are able to pour out our whole heart in the Lord's presence, not only to confess

ourselves sinners in one word, but to acknowledge ourselves as such, truly and sincerely; to recognize with all our thought how great and how varied is the stain of our sin; to acknowledge not only that we are unclean, but of what sort and how great and how manifold our uncleanness is; to recognize not only that we are debtors, but with what great debts we are burdened and with how many obligations we are bound; not only wounded, but with how many and how deadly stripes we are wounded. Yet when, with this acknowledgment, the sinner has poured out himself entirely before God, let him earnestly and sincerely consider that still more sins remain, and that the recesses of their evils are deep beyond fathoming. Consequently, let him exclaim with David: “Who can understand errors? Cleanse thou me from my secret errors, O Lord” [<sup><191912></sup> Psalm 19:12].

Let us by no means concede to them their assertion that sins are forgiven only when there is a firmly conceived will to confess, and that the gate to paradise is closed to one who has neglected an opportunity offered him to confess. For there is now no other forgiveness of sins than there always has been. Whenever we read that men have obtained forgiveness of sins from Christ, we do not read that they confessed into the ear of some priestling. Apparently, then they could not confess, where there was not a priestling confessor, nor even confession itself. And for many ages after, this confession was unheard of, yet all the while sins were being forgiven without this condition. But, that we may not too long dispute, as it were, over something doubtful, the word of God is clear and abides forever: “Whenever the sinner bewails his sins, I shall not recall all his iniquities” [<sup><261821></sup> Ezekiel 18:21-22 p.]. He who ventures to add anything to this word binds not sins but the Lord’s mercy.

°For there is a ready solution for their contention that judgment cannot be rendered unless the cause is heard, namely, that those who have made themselves judges have rashly taken this upon themselves. And it is wonderful how unconcernedly they fabricate principles that no one of sound mind will admit! They boast that the office of binding and loosing has been committed to them as though it were a certain jurisdiction, joined with in-vestigation! Furthermore, their whole doctrine proclaims that this right was unknown to the apostles. And to know for certain whether the sinner is absolved does not pertain to the priest but to him from whom absolution is sought, since he who hears can never know whether the list is

exact and integral. <sup>F168</sup> Thus, there would be no absolution unless it were restricted to the words of him who is to be judged. Besides, the whole reckoning of absolution depends upon faith and repentance. And these two things elude the knowledge of a man when he has to pass sentence upon another man. Therefore, it follows that certainty of binding and loosing does not lie within the competence of earthly judgment because the minister of the word, when he duly performs his functions, can absolve only conditionally. But this is said for the sake of sinners, “If you forgive the sins of any,” etc. [<sup><432023></sup> John 20:23], lest they should doubt whether the pardon promised in God’s commandment and Word will be ratified in heaven.

## 19. AGAINST AURICULAR CONFESSION

<sup>a</sup>No wonder, then, that we condemn this auricular confession and desire it to be banished from our midst — a thing so pestilent and in so many ways harmful to the church! Even if of itself this were something indifferent, still, since it is useless and fruitless, but has occasioned so many impieties, sacrileges, and errors, who would not consider that it should be abolished forthwith? They do, indeed, count on some uses that they peddle as very fruitful, but those are either false or utterly worthless. They especially esteem only one of these: that the confessant’s blush of shame is a heavy punishment by which the sinner both becomes more cautious afterward and, by punishing himself, turns aside God’s vengeance. As if we did not humble a man enough, with great shame, when we call him, I say, to that supreme heavenly judgment seat to be examined by God! What a remarkable gain it is if we cease to sin on account of the shame of one man, and are not ashamed to have God as witness of our evil conscience! <sup>F169</sup>

Nonetheless, that itself is also utterly false, for we can see that nothing gives us greater confidence or license to sin than when, having made confession to a priest, men think themselves able to wipe their mouths and say, “I have not done it” [<sup><203020></sup> Proverbs 30:20]. And not only are they emboldened throughout the year to sin; but, freed from the necessity of confession for the rest of the year, they never sigh unto God, they never return to their senses, but heap up sins upon sins until they vomit all of them up at once, as they suppose. When, moreover, they have disgorged them, they seem to themselves unburdened of their load, and feel that they

have transferred judgment from God and bestowed it upon the priest, and have made God forgetful when they have made the priest their confidant. Indeed, who happily looks forward to the day of confession? Who hastens to confession with an eager mind and does not, rather, come to it against his will, reluctantly, as one is dragged by the neck to prison? Except, perhaps, priestlings themselves, who delight in exchanging anecdotes of their misdeeds as if they were amusing stories. I will not defile many sheets of paper by relating those horrible abominations with which auricular confession swarms! I only say, if that holy man did not act unwisely who on account of one rumor of fornication removed confession from his church, or rather from the memory of his people,<sup>F170</sup> we are warned what must be done when, as today, there are infinite whoredoms, adulteries, incests, and panderings.

## 20. BASELESS APPEAL TO THE POWER OF THE KEYS

<sup>a</sup>The confessioners allege the power of the keys for this purpose, and in it place the whole ship of their kingdom —“prow and poop,” as the saying goes.<sup>F171</sup> We ought to see what all this adds up to. Were the keys, then, given to no purpose? they ask. Was this, then, groundlessly said, they ask: “Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven also” [<sup><401818></sup>Matthew 18:18].<sup>F172</sup> Do we, then, render void the word of Christ? I reply: It was for a weighty reason that the keys were given,<sup>e(c)</sup> as I have recently explained, and I shall treat it more specifically again when I deal with excommunication.<sup>F173</sup> <sup>a</sup>But what if I cut off the handle of their every demand of this kind, with one sword: their priestlings are not vicars or successors of the apostles? But this, also, will have to be treated in another place.<sup>F174</sup> Now, out of wishing to fortify themselves, they erect a siege engine, only to cast down thereby all their contrivances. For Christ did not give the power of binding and loosing to the apostles before he gave them the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I deny that the power of the keys belongs to any persons who have not first received the Holy Spirit. I deny that anyone can use the keys unless the Holy Spirit has first come to teach him and tell him what to do. They babble that they have the Holy Spirit, but in reality they deny it, unless perchance they fancy, as they surely do, that the Holy Spirit is something vain and of no account; but they will not be believed. And by this device, indeed, they are utterly overthrown; so

that, of whatever door they boast that they have the key, they must always be asked whether they have the Holy Spirit, who is the judge and keeper of the keys. If they reply that they have him, they must, on the other hand, be asked whether the Holy Spirit can err. This they will not dare to say forthrightly, even though they hint at it obliquely in their teaching. We must therefore infer that no priestlings have the power of the keys who without discrimination repeatedly loose what the Lord had willed to be bound, and bind what he had bidden to be loosed.

*The uncertainty of priestly binding and loosing* <sup>a</sup>When they see themselves convicted by very clear proofs of loosing and binding the worthy and the unworthy indiscriminately, they usurp power without knowledge. They dare not deny that knowledge is required for the good use of power, but they write that the power itself has been entrusted to evil ministrants. Yet this is the power: “Whatever you bind or loose on earth will be bound or loosed in heaven” [<sup><401619></sup> Matthew 16:19 or 18:18 p.]. Either Christ’s promise must be a lie, or those who have been endowed with this power bind and loose rightly. Nor can they evade the issue by saying that Christ’s statement is limited according to the merits of him who is bound or loosed. And we also admit that only those worthy of being bound or loosed can be bound or loosed; but the messengers of the gospel and the church have the Word to measure this worthiness. In this Word, the messengers of the gospel can through faith promise forgiveness of sins to all in Christ; they can proclaim damnation against all and upon all who do not embrace Christ. In this Word the church proclaims, “Neither whoremongers,...adulterers,...thieves, murderers, greedy, nor wicked will partake of the Kingdom of God” [<sup><460609></sup> 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 p.]. The church binds such persons with no uncertain bonds. And with the same Word the church looses and comforts those who are penitent. But what power will this be — not to know what is to be bound or loosed, yet not to be able to bind or loose unless you know? Why, then, do they say that they absolve by the authority given them, when their absolution is uncertain? What is this imaginary power to us if it is useless? Now I hold that it is either nothing or so uncertain that it ought to be considered as nothing. For since they admit that a good many priests do not use the keys rightly, and that the power is ineffective without lawful use, <sup>F175</sup> who will convince me that he by whom I am loosed is a good dispenser of the

keys? But if he is evil, what else does he have but this empty dispensing of them! “I do not know what ought to be bound or loosed in you, since I lack a just use of the keys; but if you deserve it, I absolve you.” I do not say, “A lay person,” since they cannot bear to hear this, but a Turk or the devil could do as much. For that is to say: I do not have the Word of God, the sure rule of loosing, but authority has been given to me to absolve you, provided your merits are such. We therefore see what they were aiming at when they explained that the keys are the authority to discern and the power to carry out; that knowledge is added as counselor, and like a counselor, for good use.<sup>F176</sup> That is to say, they wished to, rule lustfully, licentiously, without God and his Word.

## **22. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PERVERTED AND RIGHT USE OF THE POWER OF THE KEYS**

°If anyone objects that lawful ministers of Christ will be no less perplexed in their duties because that absolution which depends upon faith will always remain ambiguous, and further, that there will be no comfort, or cold comfort, for sinners because the minister himself who is not qualified to judge of their faith is not sure about their absolution — then there is a ready answer. For they say that sins are not remitted by the priest unless he is informed of them. Thus, according to them, forgiveness depends upon the judgment of the priest, and unless he wisely discerns who deserve pardon, his whole action is null and void. In a word, the power of which they speak is a jurisdiction connected with examination, to which pardon and absolution are confined. On this point one finds no firm ground. Indeed, there is a bottomless pit. For where confession is not complete,<sup>F177</sup> the hope of pardon is also impaired. Secondly, the priest must suspend judgment so long as he does not know whether the sinner recounts his transgressions in good faith. Finally, such is the consummate ignorance of priests that the greater part of them are no more fitted to exercise this office than a shoemaker to till fields. And almost all the others ought, by rights, to suspect themselves. Hence, therefore, the perplexity and hesitation concerning papal absolution, because they would have it founded upon the person of the priest; and not that only, but also upon his knowledge, that he may judge solely concerning matters reported, investigated, and proved.

Now if anyone asks these good doctors whether, after some sins have been forgiven, the sinner will be reconciled to God, I do not see what they can answer, unless they are obliged to confess that whatever the priest may pronounce concerning sins forgiven, the recital of which he has heard, is unfruitful so long as other sins remain open to accusation. On the part of the one confessing, the pernicious anxiety that holds his conscience bound is evident from the fact that while he depends upon the discretion of the priest, as they say, he can determine nothing from the Word of God.

The doctrine we teach is free and clear of all these absurdities. For absolution is conditional upon the sinner's trust that God is merciful to him, provided he sincerely seek expiation in Christ's sacrifice and be satisfied with the grace offered him. Thus, he who, functioning as a herald, publishes what has been dictated to him from the Word of God cannot err. The sinner can, indeed, embrace true and clear absolution when that simple condition is applied of embracing the grace of Christ according to the general rule of the Master himself, a rule wickedly spurned in the papacy: "According to your faith be it done to you" [[400929](#) Matthew 9:29; cf. ch.8:13].

### 23. PERVERSE CLAIMS EXPOSED

<sup>e</sup>I have promised to discuss in another place how absurdly they mix up what Scripture teaches about the power of the keys. A more appropriate occasion will be under the section dealing with the government of the church.<sup>F178</sup> Yet let my readers recall that Christ's utterances made partly concerning the preaching of the gospel, partly concerning excommunication, are preposterously twisted about to auricular and secret confession [[401619](#) Matthew 16:19; 18:15-18; [432023](#) John 20:23]. Therefore, while they object that the right of loosing exercised by the priests in forgiving sins recognized by them was given to the apostles, it is plain that this principle is to be considered false and foolish because the absolution that serves faith is nothing else than the testimony of a pardon taken from the freely given promise of the gospel. But the other kind of confession, which depends upon the discipline of the church, has nothing to do with secret sins, but rather with example, that it may remove public offense to the church.

But they rake together from here and there testimonies by which to prove that it is not enough to confess sins either to God alone or to the laity, unless a priest be examiner. Their diligence is loathsome and shameful. For if ever the ancient fathers advise sinners to unburden themselves before their pastors, this cannot be understood of a recital that was then not in use. Then, so perverse were Lombard and his like that they seem to have been willfully addicted to spurious books in order to deceive the simple-minded by their pretense. Indeed, they rightly admit that inasmuch as loosing always accompanies repentance, no bond really remains where a man has been touched by repentance, although he may not yet have confessed. And for this reason, the priest does not so much forgive sins as pronounce and declare them forgiven. Still, in the word “declare” they slyly introduce a crass error, supplanting doctrine by ceremonies. But they add that he who has already obtained pardon before God is absolved in the eyes of the church. Thus they unseasonably draw away to the private use of each what we have already said was intended for the common discipline, where the offense of a serious and known fault is to be removed. Shortly after, they pervert and corrupt their moderation, adding another way of forgiveness: namely, one enjoining penalty and satisfaction. <sup>F179</sup> In this they claim for their sacrifices the right to divide in half what God has everywhere promised to us undivided. Since he simply requires repentance and faith, this division or exception is an utter sacrilege. For this has the same force as though the priest, taking on the role of tribune, <sup>F180</sup> should make intercession to God, and should not suffer God of his mere generosity to receive into grace anyone who has not lain prostrate before the tribune’s seat, and been beaten there.

## 24. SUMMARY

<sup>e</sup>The whole matter adds up to this: if they want to make God the author of this fictitious confession, their vanity is refuted, just as I have shown them falsifiers in the few passages that they cite. But since it is clear that the law has been imposed by men, I say that it is both a tyrannous law and one promulgated in contempt of God, who, binding consciences to his Word, would have them loosed from the power of men. Now when that thing which God wished to be free is prescribed as necessary to obtain pardon, I call it an utterly intolerable sacrilege, because there is no function

more proper to God than the forgiveness of sins, wherein our salvation rests. Moreover, I have shown that this tyranny was introduced at the time when the world was oppressed by foul barbarity. Furthermore, I have taught that it is a pestilential law, which either, where the fear of God flourishes, dashes miserable souls into despair or, where there is unconcern, soothes them with empty blandishments and renders them more sluggish. Lastly, I have explained that whatever mitigations they bring forward tend only to entangle, obscure, and corrupt, pure doctrine, camouflaging their impious actions.

## **25. GENERAL PRESENTATION AND REFUTATION OF THE ROMAN DOCTRINE**

<sup>a</sup>They assign the third place in penance to satisfaction. With one word we can overthrow all their empty talk about this. They say that it is not enough for the penitent to abstain from past evils, and change his behavior for the better, unless he make satisfaction to God for those things which he has committed. But they say that there are many helps by which we may redeem sins: tears, fasting, offerings, and works of charity. With these we must propitiate the Lord. With these we must pay our debts to God's righteousness. With these we must compensate for our transgressions. With these we must merit his pardon. For although he has forgiven the guilt through the largeness of his mercy, yet by the discipline of his justice he retains punishment. It is this punishment which must be redeemed by satisfaction. <sup>F181</sup> <sup>b</sup>It all comes down to this: we indeed obtain pardon for our transgressions from God's kindness, but only through the intervening merit of works, by which the offense of our sins may be paid for, in order that due satisfaction may be made to God's justice.

<sup>a</sup>Over against such lies I put freely given remission of sins; nothing is more clearly set forth in Scripture [<sup><235203></sup> Isaiah 52:3; <sup><450314></sup> Romans 3:14-25; 5:8; <sup><510213></sup> Colossians 2:13-14; <sup><550109></sup> 2 Timothy 1:9; <sup><560305></sup> Titus 3:5]! First, what is forgiveness but a gift of sheer liberality? For the creditor who gives a receipt for money paid is not the one who is said to forgive, but he who, without any payment, willingly cancels the debt out of his own kindness. Why, then, is the word "freely" added but to take away all thought of satisfaction? With what confidence, then, do they still set up their satisfactions, which are laid low by so mighty a thunderbolt? <sup>b</sup>What

then? When the Lord proclaims through Isaiah: “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my sake, and I will not remember your sins” [<sup><234325></sup> Isaiah 43:25], does he not openly declare that the cause and foundation of forgiveness are to be sought in his goodness alone?

<sup>a</sup>Moreover, since all Scripture bears witness to Christ — that through his name we are to receive forgiveness of sins [<sup><441043></sup> Acts 10:43] — does it not exclude all other names? How, then, do they teach that forgiveness is to be understood under the term “satisfactions”? Nor can they deny that they ascribe this to satisfactions, even if they seem to introduce them as helps. When Scripture says, “by the name of Christ,” it means that we bring nothing, we claim nothing of our own, but rely solely upon the commendation of Christ, as Paul declares: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against men on his account” [<sup><470519></sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19 p.]. <sup>e</sup>And he immediately adds the how and the why: “For our sake he made him to be sin who was without sin” [<sup><470521></sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21 p.].

*(The grace of Christ alone provides true satisfaction for sin and peace to the conscience, 26-27)*

## 26. CHRIST HAS PROVIDED FULL SATISFACTION

<sup>a</sup>But such is their perversity, they say that both forgiveness of sins and reconciliation take place once for all when in Baptism we are received through Christ into the grace of God; that after Baptism we must rise up again through satisfactions; that the blood of Christ is of no avail, except in so far as it is dispensed through the keys of the church, and I am not speaking of a doubtful matter, since not one or another, but all the Schoolmen, have, in very clear writings, betrayed their own taint. For their master, <sup>F182</sup> after he confessed that Christ on the tree paid the penalty of our sins, according to Peter’s teaching [<sup><600224></sup> 1 Peter 2:24], corrected that statement by adding the exception that in Baptism all temporal penalties of sins are relaxed, but after Baptism they are lessened by the help of penance, so that the cross of Christ and our penance may work together.

<sup>F183</sup><sup>a</sup>But John speaks far differently: “If anyone has sinned, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ...;and he is the propitiation for our sins” [<sup><620212></sup> 1 John 2:12]. “I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven in his name.” [<sup><620212></sup> 1 John 2:12 p.] Surely he is

addressing believers, to whom, while he sets forth Christ as the propitiation of sins, he shows that there is no other satisfaction whereby offended God can be propitiated or appeased. He does not say: “God was once for all reconciled to you through Christ; now seek for yourselves another means.” But he makes him a perpetual advocate in order that by his intercession he may always restore us to the Father’s favor; an everlasting propitiation by which sins may be expiated. For what the other John said is ever true: “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!” [<sup><430129></sup> John 1:29; cf. ch. 1:36]. He, I say, not another, takes them away; that is, since he alone is the Lamb of God, he also is the sole offering for sins, the sole expiation, the sole satisfaction. <sup>c</sup>For while the right and power of forgiving sins properly belong to the Father, in which respect he is distinguished from the Son, as we have already seen, <sup>F184</sup> Christ is here placed on another level because, taking upon himself the penalty that we owe, he has wiped out our guilt before God’s judgment. From this it follows that we shall share in the expiation made by Christ only if that honor rest with him which those who try to appease God by their own recompense seize for themselves.

## **27. THE ROMAN DOCTRINE DEPRIVES CHRIST OF HONOR, AND THE CONSCIENCE OF EVERY ASSURANCE**

<sup>a</sup>And here we ought to consider two things: that Christ’s honor be kept whole and undiminished; that consciences assured of pardon for sin may have peace with God. <sup>F185</sup>

Isaiah says that the Father laid upon the Son the iniquity of us all [<sup><235306></sup> Isaiah 53:6] to heal us by his stripes [<sup><235306></sup> Isaiah 53:6,5]. Peter repeats this in other words: Christ in his body bore our sins upon the tree [<sup><600224></sup> 1 Peter 2:24]. Paul writes that sin was condemned in his flesh when he was made sin for us [<sup><480313></sup> Galatians 3:13 and <sup><450803></sup> Romans 8:3, conflated]; that is, the force and the curse of sin were slain in his flesh when he was given as a victim, upon whom the whole burden of our sins — with their curse and execration, with the dreadful judgment of God and the damnation of death — should be cast. <sup>b</sup>Here we never hear such falsehoods: as that after the initial purgation each one of us feels the efficacy of Christ’s suffering solely in proportion to the measure of

satisfying penance; but as often as we lapse we are recalled solely to the satisfaction of Christ.

Now set before yourself their pestilent absurdities: that in the first forgiveness of sins only the grace of God operates, but if we have fallen afterward, our works cooperate in obtaining the second pardon. <sup>F186 b(a)</sup>If these principles have a place, do those functions which have previously been attributed to Christ remain intact with him? <sup>a</sup>What a vast difference there is between saying that our iniquities have been lodged with Christ in order that they be expiated in him and saying that they are expiated by our works; that Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and that God must be propitiated by works!

But if it is a question of quieting the conscience, what will this quieting be if a man hears that sins are redeemed by satisfactions? When can he at length be certain of the measure of that satisfaction? Then he will always doubt whether he has a merciful God; he will always be troubled, and always tremble. For those who rely upon trifling satisfactions hold the judgment of God in contempt, and reckon of little account the great burden of sin, as we, shall state elsewhere. <sup>F187</sup> But even though we should grant that they redeem some sins by appropriate satisfaction, still, what will they do when they are overwhelmed by so many sins for the satisfaction of which a hundred lives, even if they were wholly devoted to this purpose, could not suffice? <sup>e</sup>Besides, all those passages which declare forgiveness of sins do not pertain to catechumens, but to the reborn children of God, who have long been nourished in the bosom of the church. That embassy which Paul so glowingly extols — "I beseech you in Christ's name, be reconciled to God" [<sup><470520></sup>2 Corinthians 5:20 p.] — is directed not to outsiders, but to those who have already been reborn. But having bidden farewell to satisfactions, he relegates them to the cross of Christ. So where Paul writes to the Colossians that Christ has "reconciled all things that are on heaven or earth...by the blood of the cross" [<sup><510120></sup>Colossians 1:20 p.], he does not confine this to the moment we are received into the church, but extends it throughout life. This is readily apparent from the context, where he says that believers have redemption through the blood of Christ, that is, the forgiveness of sins [<sup><510114></sup>Colossians 1:14]. Now it is superfluous to heap up more such passages, which repeatedly occur.

**28. VENIAL AND MORTAL SINS**

<sup>a</sup>At this point they take refuge in the foolish distinction that certain sins are venial, others mortal; for mortal sins a heavy satisfaction is required; venial sins can be purged by easier remedies — by the Lord’s Prayer, by the sprinkling of holy water, by the absolution afforded by the Mass. Thus they daily and play with God. Though they are always talking about venial and mortal sins, they still cannot distinguish one from the other, <sup>F188</sup>except that they make impiety and uncleanness of heart a venial sin. But we declare, as Scripture, the rule of righteous and unrighteous, teaches, “the wages of sin is death” [<sup><450623></sup>Romans 6:23]; and “the soul that sins is worthy of death” [<sup><261820></sup>Ezekiel 18:20 p.]; but that the sins of believers are venial, not because they do not deserve death, but because by God’s mercy “there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” [<sup><450801></sup>Romans 8:1], because they are not imputed, because they are wiped away by pardon [cf. <sup><193201></sup>Psalm 32:1-2].

I know how unjustly they slander this doctrine of ours, for they call it the paradox of the Stoics, concerning the equality of sins, <sup>F189</sup>but they will be easily refuted by their own mouth. For I ask whether among those very sins which they confess as mortal they recognize one as less than another. It does not therefore immediately follow that sins that are mortal are at the same time equal. Since the Scripture precisely states that “the wages of sin is death” [<sup><450623></sup>Romans 6:23], but obedience to the law is the way of life [cf. <sup><031805></sup>Leviticus 18:5; <sup><261809></sup>Ezekiel 18:9; 20:11,13; <sup><480312></sup>Galatians 3:12; <sup><451005></sup>Romans 10:5; <sup><421028></sup>Luke 10:28] — transgression of the law, death [cf. <sup><450623></sup>Romans 6:23; <sup><261804></sup>Ezekiel 18:4, 20] — they cannot evade this verdict. Amid such a great heap of sins, what outcome of satisfaction will they find? If it takes one day to make satisfaction for one sin, while they are contemplating it they implicate themselves in more. <sup>b(a)</sup>For not a day passes when the most righteous of men does not fall time and again [cf. <sup><202416></sup>Proverbs 24:16]. While they gird themselves to make satisfaction for their sins, they will heap up numerous — or rather, innumerable — others. <sup>a</sup>Now that the assurance of being able to make satisfaction for their sins is cut off, why do they tarry? How dare they still think of making satisfaction?

## 29. FORGIVENESS OF SINS INVOLVES REMISSION OF PENALTY

<sup>a</sup>Indeed, they try to extricate themselves, but “the water,” as the proverb goes, “clings to them.” <sup>F190</sup> They fashion a distinction between penalty and guilt. They admit that guilt is remitted by God’s mercy, but after guilt has been remitted there remains the penalty that God’s justice demands to be paid. Therefore, they hold that satisfactions properly are concerned with the remission of the penalty. <sup>F191</sup>

<sup>b(a)</sup>Good God, what flitting levity is this! They admit that forgiveness of guilt is freely available, yet repeatedly teach men to deserve it through prayers and tears, and all sorts of other preparations. <sup>a</sup>And yet all that we are taught in Scripture concerning forgiveness of sins directly opposes this distinction. <sup>b</sup>But even though I believe I have already more than fully confirmed this, I shall add certain other testimonies by which these wriggling snakes may be so held fast that after this they will be unable to coil up even the tip of their tail. <sup>a</sup>This is the new covenant that God in Christ has made with us, that he will remember our sins no more [<sup><243131></sup> Jeremiah 31:31,34]. What he meant by these words we learn from another prophet, where the Lord says: “If a righteous man turns away from his righteousness...I will not remember his righteous deeds” [<sup><261824></sup> Ezekiel 18:24 p.]; “if a wicked man turns away from his impiety, I will not remember all his sins” [<sup><261821></sup> Ezekiel 18:21-22 p.; cf. v.27]. His statement that he will not remember their righteous acts means virtually this: he will not keep an account of them to reward them. The statement that he will not remember their sins therefore means that he will not demand the penalty for them. The same thing is said elsewhere: <sup>b</sup>“Cast...behind my back” [<sup><233817></sup> Isaiah 38:17]; “swept away like a cloud” [<sup><234422></sup> Isaiah 44:22]; “cast...into the depths of the sea” [<sup><330719></sup> Micah 7:19]; <sup>a</sup>“not to reckon it to his account and to keep it hidden” [cf. <sup><193201></sup> Psalm 32:1-2]. By such expressions the Holy Spirit clearly would have explained his meaning to us, if we had listened to them attentively. Surely, if God punishes sins, he charges them to our account; if he takes vengeance, he remembers them; if he calls to judgment, he does not hide them; <sup>b</sup>if he weighs them, he has not cast them behind his back; if he scrutinizes them, he has not blotted them out like a cloud; if he airs them, he has not cast them into the depths of the sea. <sup>c</sup>And Augustine

explains it in clear words as follows: “If God has covered sins, he has willed not to look upon them; if he has willed not to pay attention to them, he has willed not to punish them; he has willed not to recognize them, and he has preferred to overlook them. Why, then, does he say, ‘Sins are covered’? That they may not be seen. Why was it that God saw sins, except to punish them?” <sup>F192</sup>

<sup>a</sup>But let us hear from another passage of the prophet by what laws the Lord forgives sins: “Though your sins,” he says, “are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool” [<sup><230118></sup> Isaiah 1:18], in Jeremiah we read as follows: “In that day iniquity shall be sought in Jacob, and it shall not be found; sin in Judah, and there shall be none; for I shall be propitiated by those whom I leave as a remnant” [<sup><235002></sup> Isaiah 50:20 p.]. Would you like briefly to understand what these words mean? Ponder what, on the other hand, he means by these expressions: the Lord “gathers up my iniquities in a bag” [<sup><181417></sup> Job 14:17 p.]; “binds them up and stores them in a bundle” [<sup><281312></sup> Hosea 13:12 p.]; “with a pen of iron engraves them upon a diamond” [cf. <sup><241701></sup> Jeremiah 17:1]. Now if these passages mean that vengeance shall be repaid — which is beyond doubt — we also must not doubt that by contrary statements the Lord affirms that he remits all penalty of vengeance. <sup>a</sup>Here I must adjure my readers not to heed my glosses, but only to yield some place to the Word of God. <sup>F193</sup>

### **30. CHRIST’S UNIQUE SACRIFICE CAN ALONE REMOVE BOTH PENALTY AND GUILT**

<sup>a</sup>What, I ask you, would Christ have bestowed upon us if the penalty for our sins were still required? For when we say that he bore all our sins in his body upon the tree [<sup><600224></sup> 1 Peter 2:24], we mean only that he bore the punishment and vengeance due for our sins. Isaiah has stated this more meaningfully when he says: “The chastisement (or correction) of our peace was upon him” [<sup><235305></sup> Isaiah 53:5]. What is this “correction of our peace” but the penalty due sins that we would have had to pay before we could become reconciled to God — if he had not taken our place? Lo, you see plainly that Christ bore the penalty of sins to deliver his own people from them, <sup>a</sup>and whenever Paul mentions that redemption was accomplished through Christ, he customarily calls it ἀπολύτρωσις <sup>F194</sup>

[<450324> Romans 3:24; see also <460203> 1 Corinthians 2:30; <490107> Ephesians 1:7; <510114> Colossians 1:14].

By this he does not simply signify redemption as it is commonly understood, but the very price and satisfaction of redemption. This is why Paul writes that Christ gave himself as a ransom <sup>F195</sup> for us [ <540206> 1 Timothy 2:6]. “What is propitiation before the Lord,” asks Augustine, “but sacrifice? What is the sacrifice, but what has been offered for us in the death of Christ? <sup>F196</sup>

<sup>b</sup>But what is prescribed in the law of Moses for the expiation of the harmful effects of sins furnishes us, first of all, with a stout battering-ram. For the Lord does not there establish this or that manner of making satisfaction, but he requires a complete payment in sacrifices. Yet in other respects he sets forth most minutely and in most rigid order all rites of atonement [ <023010> Exodus 30:10; Leviticus, chs. 4 to 7:16; <041522> Numbers 15:22 ff.]. How does it happen that he bids committed transgressions to be recompensed by no works at all, but requires sacrifices alone in expiation, unless he wills to testify that there is only one kind of satisfaction by which his judgment is appeased? For such sacrifices as the Israelites offered were not accounted works of men but were judged in their very reality, that is, by the unique sacrifice of Christ. Hosea has eloquently expressed in few words what sort of recompense the Lord requires of us: “Thou shalt take away,” O God, “all iniquity.” See, there is forgiveness of sins. “And we will render the calves of our lips.” [ <281402> Hosea 14:2.] See, indeed, there is satisfaction.

<sup>a</sup>I know, indeed, that they are still more subtly evasive when they distinguish between eternal and temporal penalties. But when they teach that temporal penalty is any sort of punishment that God inflicts either upon the body or upon the soul — apart from eternal death — this limitation helps them little. For the above passages that we have cited mean this explicitly: we are received by God into grace on the condition that whatever penalties we deserve he remits by pardoning our guilt. And whenever David or the other prophets seek pardon for sin, at the same time they pray the penalty be taken away. Indeed, awareness of divine judgment drives them to this. On the other hand, when they promise mercy from the Lord, they almost always avowedly preach about the

penalties and their remission. Surely, when the Lord declares through Ezekiel that he will bring the Babylonian exile to an end, and not for the Jews' sake, but for his own [<sup><263622></sup>Ezekiel 36:22,32], he shows sufficiently that both are free. Finally, if we are delivered from guilt through Christ, the penalties that arise from it must cease.

### 31. MISINTERPRETATIONS EXPOSED: GOD'S JUDGMENTS, PENAL AND CORRECTIVE

<sup>a</sup>But inasmuch as they arm themselves with testimonies from Scripture, let us see what sort of arguments they put forward. David, they say, rebuked by the prophet Nathan for adultery and murder, received pardon for his sin, and yet he was afterward punished by the death of his son born of adultery [<sup><101213></sup>2 Samuel 12:13-14]. We are taught to recompense with satisfaction such punishments as had to be inflicted even after remission of guilt. For Daniel enjoined Nebuchadnezzar to make recompense for his sins with alms [<sup><270427></sup>Daniel 4:27]. And Solomon writes: "On account of equity and godliness iniquities are remitted" [<sup><201606></sup>Proverbs 16:6 p.]. In another place, also: "Love covers a multitude of sins" [<sup><201012></sup>Proverbs 10:12]. <sup>b</sup>Peter, also, confirms this opinion [<sup><600408></sup>1 Peter 4:8]. <sup>a</sup>In Luke the Lord says the same thing about the sinning woman: that "her many sins are forgiven, for she loved much" [<sup><420747></sup>Luke 7:47 p.]. <sup>F197</sup>

How perversely and wrongheadedly do they always judge God's deeds! Yet if they had observed — and it is something they ought not at all to have overlooked — that there are two kinds of divine judgment, they would have seen a far different form of penalty in this rebuke of David than one that is to be thought of as directed to vengeance.

<sup>b</sup>But all of us are not a little concerned to understand the purpose of the chastisements by which God reproves our sins, and how different they are from the examples in which he pursues the impious and the reprobate with his indignation. Consequently, I think we can, with good reason, sum up the whole matter.

<sup>a</sup>One judgment we call, for the sake of teaching, that of vengeance; the other, of chastisement.

<sup>b(a)</sup>Now, by the judgment of vengeance, God should be understood as taking vengeance upon his enemies; so that he exercises his wrath against them, he confounds them, he scatters them, he brings them to nought. Therefore, let us consider this to be God's vengeance, properly speaking: when punishment is joined with his indignation.

In the judgment of chastisement he is not so harsh as to be angry, nor does he take vengeance so as to blast with destruction. Consequently, it is not, properly speaking, punishment <sup>a</sup>or vengeance, but correction and admonition.

The one is the act of a judge; the other, of a father. For when a judge punishes an evildoer, he weighs his transgression and applies the penalty to the crime itself. But when a father quite severely corrects his son, he does not do this to take vengeance on him or to maltreat him, but rather to teach him and to render him more cautious therefore. <sup>b</sup>Chrysostom somewhere uses a slightly different comparison, but it amounts to the same thing. "The son," he says, "is flogged; the slave is also flogged. But the latter, as a slave, is punished because he sins; the former is chastised as a freeman and son in need of discipline. Correction for the son serves as trial and amendment; for the slave, as scourge and punishment." <sup>F198</sup>

### **32. GOD'S JUDGMENT IN VENGEANCE HAS A WHOLLY DIFFERENT PURPOSE FROM THAT OF HIS JUDGMENT IN CHASTISEMENT: THE DISTINCTION**

<sup>b(a)</sup>In order that we may quickly summarize the whole matter, let this stand as the first of two distinctions: wherever punishment is for vengeance, there the curse and wrath of God manifest themselves, and these he always withholds from believers. On the other hand, chastisement is a blessing of God and also bears witness to his love, as Scripture teaches [<sup><180517></sup> Job 5:17; <sup><200311></sup> Proverbs 3:11-12; <sup><581205></sup> Hebrews 12:5-6].

<sup>b</sup>This distinction is sufficiently pointed out through all God's Word. For all the afflictions that the impious bear in the present life depict for us, as it were, a sort of entry way of hell, from which they already see afar off their eternal damnation. And yet they are so far from changing themselves on this account, or profiting by it at all, that by such preliminaries they are rather prepared for the dire Gehenna that at last awaits them.

The Lord chastens his servants sorely, but he does not give them over to death [<sup><19B818></sup>Psalm 118:18 p.]. Therefore, they confess that to be beaten with his rod has been good for them and has furthered their true instruction [<sup><19B971></sup>Psalm 119:71]. <sup>b(a)</sup>Just as we read everywhere that the saints took such punishments with a calm mind, so they have always prayed fervently to escape scourgings of the first sort. <sup>a</sup>“Correct me, O Lord,” says Jeremiah, “but in judgment, not in thine anger, lest perchance thou bring me to nothing. Pour out thy wrath <sup>b</sup>upon the nations that know thee not, and upon the kingdoms that call not on thy name” [<sup><241024></sup>Jeremiah 10:24-25]. Moreover, David says: “O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, nor chasten me in thy wrath.” [<sup><190601></sup>Psalm 6:1 or 38:2; 6:2 or 37:2, Vg.]

And there is no contradiction in the fact that the Lord is said quite often to be angry toward his saints, when he chastens them for their sins. As in Isaiah: “I shall confess unto thee, O Lord, although thou wert angry with me; thine anger turned away, and thou didst comfort me.” [<sup><231201></sup>Isaiah 12:1 p.] Likewise, Habakkuk: “When you are angry, you will remember mercy.” [<sup><350302></sup>Habakkuk 3:2 p.] <sup>e</sup>And Micah, too: “I will bear God’s wrath, for I have sinned against him.” [<sup><330709></sup>Micah 7:9 p.] There he teaches that he who is justly punished gains nothing by loudly complaining, but also that believers get relief from their sorrow by considering God’s purpose. <sup>b</sup>For the same reason, he is said to profane his heritage [<sup><234706></sup>Isaiah 47:6; cf. <sup><234224></sup>Isaiah 42:24], yet, as we know, he will not profane it forever. But that refers not to the purpose or disposition of God as one who punishes but to the acute sense of pain, which those experience who bear any of its rigors. Nevertheless, he not only pricks his believers with slight severity, but sometimes so wounds them that they seem to themselves to be not far distant from the damnation of hell. Thus, he testifies that they deserve his wrath, <sup>e</sup>and so it is fitting for them to be displeased with their own evil acts, and be touched with a greater care to appease God, and anxiously hasten to seek pardon, <sup>b</sup>But, in the meantime, in this very fact he shows a clearer testimony of his mercy than of his wrath. <sup>F199</sup> There is a covenant still in force that God made with us in our true Solomon [<sup><100712></sup>2 Samuel 7:12-13]. He who cannot deceive has declared that its force will never be voided. “If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my ordinances, if

they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments...I will punish their iniquities with the rod and their sins with scourges, but I will not remove from him my mercy.” [<sup><198930></sup> Psalm 89:30-33; 88:31-34, Vg.; but cf. Comm.] To render us more certain of his mercy, he says that the rod, whereby he will prove Solomon’s posterity, will be of man; the stripes, of the sons of man [<sup><100714></sup> 2 Samuel 7:14]. While by these phrases he signifies moderation and gentleness, at the same time he hints that those who feel the hand of God against them cannot but be confounded by extreme and deadly terror. In the prophet he shows how great a regard he has for this leniency in chastising his people Israel: “In fire I have refined you,” he says, “but not as silver” [<sup><234810></sup> Isaiah 48:10]. For then you would have been totally consumed [cf. <sup><234302></sup> Isaiah 43:2]. Although the Lord teaches that chastisements serve to cleanse his people, he adds that he tempers those chastisements so as not to wear down his people unduly. <sup>o</sup>And that is quite necessary. For the more any man reveres God and devotes himself to the cultivation of godliness, the more tender he is to bear God’s wrath. For although the wicked groan under his scourges, yet because they do not weigh the case, but rather turn their backs on both their own sins and the judgment of God, from this negligence they become hardened. Or because they murmur and kick against him and rant against their Judge, their violent fury stupefies them with madness and rage. But believers, admonished by God’s scourges, immediately descend into themselves to consider their sins, and struck with fear and dread, flee to prayer as suppliants for pardon. Unless God assuaged these sorrows with which miserable souls torture themselves, they would faint a hundred times even at slight signs of his wrath.

### **33. JUDGMENT OF VENGEANCE SERVES TO PUNISH; JUDGMENT OF CHASTISEMENT TO IMPROVE**

<sup>b</sup>Then let us note a second distinction, that while the wicked are beaten with God’s scourges they already begin, in a manner; to suffer punishments according to his judgment. And although they shall not escape unpunished because they have not heeded such evidences of God’s wrath, they nevertheless are not punished that they may come to a better mind; but only that in their great distress they may find God to be a Judge and Avenger. But the children are beaten with rods, not to pay the penalty

for their sins to God, but in order thereby to be led to repentance. Accordingly, we understand that these things have to do rather with the future than with the past. I would prefer to express this thought in the words of Chrysostom rather than my own: “On this account,” he says, “he imposes a penalty upon us — not to punish us for past sins, but to correct us against future ones.”<sup>F200</sup> <sup>c</sup>So also Augustine: “What you suffer, what you complain about, is your medicine, not your penalty; your chastisement, not your condemnation. Do not put away the scourge if you do not want to be put away from the inheritance,” etc. “Know, brethren, that all this misery of humankind in which the world groans is medicinal pain and not a penal sentence,”<sup>F201</sup> etc. I decided to quote these passages in order that the expression I have used may not seem new or unusual to anyone.

<sup>e</sup>And this is the purport of the complaints, charged with indignation, in which God often expostulates concerning the ungratefulness of his people, because they perversely hold all penalties in contempt. In Isaiah: “Why should I smite you further?...From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no health” [<sup><230105></sup> Isaiah 1:5-6 p.]. But, because the prophets abound in such statements, it will be sufficient to have indicated briefly that the sole purpose of God in punishing his church is that the church may be brought low and repent. <sup>a</sup>Therefore, when He deprived Saul of the kingdom. He was punishing for vengeance [<sup><091523></sup> 1 Samuel 15:23]. When he took away David’s little son from him [<sup><101218></sup> 2 Samuel 12:18] he was rebuking for amendment. Paul’s statement is to be understood in this sense: “When we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world” [<sup><461132></sup> 1 Corinthians 11:32]. That is, while we as children of God are afflicted by the hand of the Heavenly Father, this is not a penalty to confound us, but only a chastisement to instruct us.

<sup>b</sup>In this matter, Augustine is plainly on our side, for he teaches that the penalties by which men are equally chastised by God ought to be variously considered. For the saints these are, after forgiveness of sins, struggles and exercises; for the wicked, without forgiveness of sins, the punishments of iniquity. There he lists the penalties inflicted upon David and other godly persons and says that they are concerned with exercising or testing their godliness by this sort of humbling experience.<sup>F202</sup> And

Isaiah's statement that iniquity is forgiven the Jewish people because they have suffered a full chastisement at the Lord's hand [<sup><234002></sup> Isaiah 40:2] does not prove that pardon for our transgressions depends upon the payment of the penalty. But it is as if he had said: "You have already suffered enough punishments; on account of their weight and multitude, because you have already been consumed by long grief and sorrow, it is time for you to receive the tidings of full mercy that your hearts may rejoice and feel me as your Father." <sup>o</sup>For there God takes upon himself the person of Father, and repents even of his just severity when compelled to mete out a rather harsh punishment to his child.

### **34. THE BELIEVER UNDERGOING GOD'S CHASTISEMENT IS NOT TO LOSE HEART**

<sup>a</sup>In the bitterness of afflictions, the believer must be fortified by these thoughts. "The time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God" [<sup><600417></sup> 1 Peter 4:17] in which his name is called upon [cf. <sup><242529></sup> Jeremiah 25:29]. What would the children of God do if they believed the severity they feel is his vengeance? For he who, struck by the hand of God, thinks God a punishing Judge cannot conceive of him as other than wrathful and hostile; cannot but detest the very scourge of God as curse and damnation. In short, he who feels that God still intends to punish him can never be persuaded that he is loved by God. <sup>b</sup>But he who in the end profits by God's scourges is the man who considers God angry at his vices, but merciful and kindly toward himself. <sup>c</sup>For otherwise there must come to pass what the prophet complains of having experienced: "Thy furies have swept over me [<sup><198816></sup> Psalm 88:16, cf. Comm.], thy terrors have oppressed me" [cf. <sup><198701></sup> Psalm 87:17, Vg.]. Also, what Moses writes: "For we have fainted in thine anger; in thine indignation we have been troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thy sight, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days have passed away in thy wrath. Our years have been consumed as a word uttered by the mouth" [<sup><199007></sup> Psalm 90:7-9; cf. <sup><198907></sup> Psalm 89:7-9, Vg. and Comm.]. On the contrary, David, to teach that believers are more helped by God's fatherly chastisements than oppressed by them, sings of them thus: "Blessed is the man whom thou shalt chasten, O Lord, and shalt instruct in thy law; to give him rest from evil days, until a pit is dug for

the sinful one” [<sup><199412></sup>Psalm 94:12-13; Cf. 70 <sup><199301></sup>Psalm 93:12-13].  
<sup>c</sup>Surely, this is a hard trial when God, sparing the unbelievers and disregarding their crimes, appears more rigid against his own people. On this account, he adds a reason for comfort: the admonition of the law, by which they may learn that there is concern for their salvation when they are called back to the way; but that the impious are borne headlong into their own errors, the end of which is the pit. <sup>a</sup>Whether the penalty is everlasting or temporal makes no difference. For wars, famines, pestilence, diseases, are just as much curses of God as the very judgment of eternal death, <sup>b</sup>when they are inflicted to the end that they may be the instruments of the Lord’s wrath and vengeance against the wicked.

### 35. THE PUNISHMENT OF DAVID

<sup>a</sup>Now all see, unless I am deceived, the purpose of the Lord’s punishment against David. It is that it might be a proof that murder and adultery gravely displease God. He had declared himself so greatly offended against this in his beloved and faithful servant that David himself might be taught not to dare commit such a crime thereafter; but not that it might be a penalty by which he should make certain payment to God. So also should we judge concerning the other correction, whereby the Lord afflicted his people with a violent plague [<sup><102415></sup>2 Samuel 24:15], on account of David’s disobedience, into which he had fallen in taking a census of his people. For he freely forgave David the guilt of his sin, but because it was appropriate both for the public example of all ages and also for the humiliation of David that such a crime should not go unpunished, he very harshly chastised him with his scourge.

<sup>b</sup>This end we ought to hold in view with regard to the universal curse of the human race [cf. <sup><010316></sup>Genesis 3:16-19]. For when, after we have obtained grace, we nevertheless put up with all the miseries that were inflicted upon our first parent as a penalty for sin, we feel that we are warned by such trials how gravely God is displeased with our transgression of his law. Thus, dejected and humbled by the consciousness of our miserable lot, we aspire more eagerly to true blessedness. Anyone would be utterly foolish to think that calamities of the present life have been imposed upon us for the punishment of our sin. This is what Chrysostom seems to me to have meant when he wrote as follows: “If

God inflict punishments on this account — that he may call those who persevere in evil-doing to repentance — after penitence has been shown, penalties will already be superfluous.”<sup>F203</sup> Therefore, according as he knows it to be expedient for the nature of each man, he treats this one with greater harshness, that one with more kindly indulgence. <sup>c</sup>Consequently, when he would teach that he is not immoderate in meting out punishments, he reproaches a hard and stubborn people because, when smitten, they do not cease to sin [<sup><240503></sup>Jeremiah 5:3]. In this sense he complains that Ephraim is like a cake scorched on one side, uncooked on the other [<sup><280708></sup>Hosea 7:8], obviously because the corrections did not reach the hearts, so that, with vices cooked out, the people might become capable of pardon. Surely, he who speaks thus shows that, as soon as anyone repents, he will soon be placable; and that it is our stubbornness toward him that causes him to exercise rigor in chastising our transgressions — a rigor that voluntary correction may counteract. <sup>b</sup>Since all of us, however, have such hardness and ignorance as to need chastisement, our most wise Father saw fit to exercise all of us without exception throughout life with a common scourge.

<sup>a</sup>But it is strange why they thus cast their eyes upon the one example of David, and are not moved by so many other examples in which they could have contemplated the free forgiveness of sins. We read that the publican went down from the Temple justified; no punishment ensues [<sup><421814></sup>Luke 18:14]. Peter obtained pardon for transgression [<sup><421206></sup>Luke 12:61]; we read of his tears, says Ambrose, we do not read of satisfaction.<sup>F204</sup> And the paralytic heard: “Rise up, your sins are forgiven” [<sup><400902></sup>Matthew 9:2]; no punishment is imposed. All the absolutions that are mentioned in Scripture are described as free. The rule ought to have been sought from these frequent examples rather than from a single one that contained some special feature.

### 36. GOOD WORKS AS REDEMPTION OF PUNISHMENT

<sup>a</sup>Daniel, by the exhortation with which he persuaded Nebuchadnezzar to make recompense for his sins by righteousness and his iniquities by pity for the poor [<sup><270427></sup>Daniel 4:27], did not mean to imply that righteousness and mercy were the propitiation of God and the recompense of punishment. Banish the thought that there should be any other ransom

<sup>F205</sup> than the blood of Christ! But in the phrase “to make recompense,” he referred to men rather than to God. It was as if he said: “O King, you have exercised unjust and violent mastery, you have oppressed the humble, you have despoiled the poor, you have treated your people harshly and unjustly; now replace with mercy and righteousness your unjust exactions, your violence and oppression.”

Similarly, Solomon says that “love covers a multitude of sins” [<sup><201012></sup> Proverbs 10:12], not before God, but among men. The whole verse reads: “Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses” [<sup><201012></sup> Proverbs 10:12]. In this verse, as his habit is, through antithesis, he contrasts the evil things that arise out of hatreds with the fruits of love. His meaning is that those who hate one another bite, harry, reproach, injure, one another and make a fault of everything; but that those who love one another conceal many things among themselves, wink at many things, condone many things in one another — not that one man approves of another’s faults, but that he tolerates them, and heals them by admonishing instead of aggravating them by reproaches. Undoubtedly, Peter quotes this passage in the same sense, unless we would accuse him of debasing and craftily twisting Scripture [cf. <sup><600408></sup> 1 Peter 4:8].

<sup>b</sup>Where Solomon teaches that “by mercy and kindness sins are atoned for” [<sup><201606></sup> Proverbs 16:6 p.], he does not mean that they are paid for in the Lord’s sight, that God, appeased by such satisfaction, may remit the punishment that he otherwise was about to mete out. Rather, in the familiar manner of Scripture, he indicates that he will be found merciful to those who, having bidden farewell to past vices and evils, are in piety and truth turned to him. It is as if he said that the Lord’s wrath subsides and his judgment rests when our transgressions rest. <sup>c</sup>And he is not describing the cause of pardon, but rather the means of true conversion. Just as the prophets frequently denounce hypocrites for vainly forcing upon God false rites instead of repentance, when God is pleased, rather, with uprightness and the duties of love. In like manner the author of The Letter to the Hebrews, praising kindness and humaneness, reminds us that such sacrifices are pleasing to God [<sup><581316></sup> Hebrews 13:16]. When Christ, deriding the Pharisees for paying attention only to cleansing dishes but neglecting cleanness of heart, bids them give alms to make all things pure [<sup><421139></sup> Luke 11:39-41; Cf. <sup><402325></sup> Matthew 23:25], he surely does not

urge them to make satisfaction. Rather, he teaches only what sort of purity is approved of God. <sup>b</sup>We have discussed this expression in another place. <sup>F206</sup>

### 37. THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER

<sup>a</sup>As far as the passage in Luke is concerned [<sup><420736></sup>Luke 7:36-50], no one, who has read with sound judgment, the parable set forth there by the Lord will pick a quarrel with us over it. The Pharisee thought to himself that the Lord did not know the woman whom he had so readily received. For he felt that Christ would not have received her if he had known what sort of sinner she was. And he inferred from this that Christ was not a prophet, since he could be deceived to this extent. The Lord, to show that she was not a sinner whose sins he had already forgiven, set forth a parable. “A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed fifty denarii, the other five hundred. The debt of each was forgiven. Which one has the greater gratitude? The Pharisee answered, ‘The one, I suppose, to whom he forgave more.’ The Lord said: ‘From this know that this woman’s sins are forgiven, for she loved much’“ [<sup><420741></sup>Luke 7:41-43, 47 p.]. By these words, you see, he does not make her love the cause, but the proof, of forgiveness of sins. For they are taken from the comparison of that debtor who was forgiven five hundred denarii; to him he did not say that they were forgiven because he loved much, but that he loved much because they were forgiven. Hence, this comparison ought to be applied in this form: You think that this woman is a sinner, yet you ought to have recognized that she is not such, since her sins have been forgiven her. Her love, by which she gives thanks for his benefit, ought to have convinced you of the forgiveness of her sins. Now this is an argument a posteriori, by which something is proved from the evidences that follow. The Lord clearly testifies in what way she obtained forgiveness of sins: “Your faith,” he says, “has saved you” [<sup><420750></sup>Luke 7:50]. By faith, therefore, we gain forgiveness; by love we give thanks and testify to the Lord’s kindness.

### 38. THE ROMAN DOCTRINE CANNOT CLAIM THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH FATHERS

<sup>a</sup>The opinions widely expressed in the books of the ancient writers concerning satisfaction move me little. I see, indeed, that some of them —

I will simply say almost all whose books are extant — have either fallen down in this respect or have spoken too sharply and harshly. But I do not admit that they were so rude and untutored as to write those things in the sense in which they are understood by our new exponents of satisfaction, <sup>b</sup>Chrysostom in one place writes as follows: “Where mercy is importuned, investigation ceases; where mercy is implored, judgment does not rage; where mercy is sought, there is no place for penalty; where there is mercy, there is no inquisition; where there is mercy, the answer is pardoned.”<sup>F207</sup> However these words may be twisted, they cannot ever be made to agree with the tenets of the Schoolmen. But in a book, *The Dogmas of the Church*, ascribed to Augustine, one reads as follows: “The satisfaction of repentance is to cut off the causes of sin, not to grant entry to their suggestions.”<sup>F208</sup> From this it is clear that even in those times the doctrine of satisfaction, which was said to be in recompense for sins committed, was commonly laughed at, since they associated all satisfaction with caution in abstaining from sins thereafter. I shall not quote what the same Chrysostom teaches, that God requires nothing of us beyond our confessing our transgressions before him with tears,<sup>F209</sup> since statements of this sort occur frequently in his and others’ writings. It is true, Augustine somewhere calls the works of mercy “remedies to obtain forgiveness of sin”; but, lest anyone stumble over this word, he meets this objection in another place. “The flesh of Christ,” he says, “is the true and only sacrifice for sins, not only for those sins which are wholly blotted out in baptism, but for those which creep in afterward through weakness. For this reason, the whole church daily cries: ‘Forgive us our debts’ [<sup><400612></sup>Matthew 6:12]; and they are forgiven through that unique sacrifice.”<sup>F210</sup>

### 39. THE SCHOOLMEN CORRUPT THE TEACHING OF THE FATHERS

<sup>a</sup>Now they have largely called satisfaction not a payment that was rendered to God but a public testimony whereby those who had been sentenced with excommunication, when they wish to be received back into communion, assure the church of their repentance. For there were imposed upon those repentant ones certain fastings and other duties by which they might prove that they truly and heartily loathed their former life, or rather,

that they would wipe out the memory of their previous actions, and thus were said to have made satisfaction not to God but to the church.

<sup>c</sup>Augustine has expressed this in these very words in his *Enchiridion* to Laurentius. <sup>F211</sup> <sup>a</sup>From that ancient rite, the confessions and satisfactions that today are in use took their origin. Truly viperous offspring [cf. <sup><400307></sup> Matthew 3:7; 12:34], these, by which it comes to pass that not even a shadow of that better form remains!

I know that the old writers sometimes speak rather harshly; and, as I have just said, <sup>F212</sup> I do not deny that they perhaps erred; but those of their writings that were marred with a few spots here and there become utterly defiled when they are handled by these men's unwashed hands. And if we must contend by the authority of the fathers, what fathers, good God, do these men thrust upon us? A good part of those authors from whom Lombard, their leader, <sup>F213</sup> has sewn together his patchworks, were collected from the senseless ravings of certain monks, which pass under the names Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Chrysostom; as in the present argument almost all his evidence is taken from Augustine's book *On Repentance*, which was bunglingly patched together by some rhapsodist from good and bad authors indiscriminately. Indeed, it bears the name of Augustine, but nobody of even mediocre learning would deign to acknowledge it as his. <sup>F214</sup> <sup>e</sup>Let my readers pardon me if! do not expressly examine the Schoolmen's follies, for I would lighten their burden. It would surely not be very difficult for me, and a praiseworthy thing, to expose to ridicule, to their great shame, what they have heretofore boasted of as mysteries; but because my purpose is to teach profitably, I pass them over.

## CHAPTER 5.

### THE SUPPLEMENTS THAT THEY ADD TO SATISFACTIONS, NAMELY, INDULGENCES AND PURGATORY

*(The erroneous doctrine of indulgences and its evil consequences, 1-5)*

#### 1. INDULGENCES ACCORDING TO ROMANIST DOCTRINE, AND THE MISCHIEF CAUSED BY THEM

Now indulgences flow from this doctrine of satisfaction. For our opponents pretend that to make satisfaction those indulgences supply what our powers lack. <sup>e(a)</sup>And they go to the mad extreme of defining them as the distribution of the merits of Christ and the martyrs, which the pope distributes by his bulls. <sup>F215</sup> These men are fit to be treated by drugs for insanity <sup>F216</sup> rather than to be argued with. <sup>a</sup>For it is hardly worth-while to undertake to refute errors so foolish, which under the onslaught of many battering-rams are of themselves beginning to grow old and to show deterioration. <sup>c</sup>But because a brief refutation will be useful for certain uninstructed persons, I shall not omit it.

<sup>a</sup>The fact that indulgences have so long stood untouched, and in such unrestrained and furious license have retained such lasting impunity, can truly serve as a proof of how deeply men were immersed for centuries in a deep night of errors. Men saw themselves openly and undisguisedly held up to ridicule by the pope and his bull-bearers, their souls' salvation the object of lucrative trafficking, the price of salvation reckoned at a few coins, nothing offered free of charge. By this subterfuge they saw themselves cheated of their offerings, which were filthily spent on whores, pimps, and drunken revelries. But they also saw that the greatest trumpeters of indulgences hold them in most contempt; that this monster daily runs more riotously and lecherously abroad, and that there is no end; that new lead is daily put forward and new money taken away. <sup>F217</sup> Yet

with the highest veneration they received indulgences, worshiped them as pious frauds by which men could with some profit be deceived. Finally, when the world has ventured to become a little wise, indulgences grow cold and gradually freeze up, until they will altogether vanish.

## 2. INDULGENCES CONTRARY TO SCRIPTURE

Now very many persons see the base tricks, deceits, thefts, and greediness with which the indulgence traffickers have heretofore mocked and beguiled us, and yet they do not see the very fountain of the impiety itself. As a consequence, it behooves us to indicate not only the nature of indulgences but also what in general they would be, wiped clean of all spots. The merits of Christ and the holy apostles and martyrs our opponents call the “treasury of the church.” They pretend that the prime custody of this storehouse, as I have already hinted, <sup>F218</sup> has been entrusted to the Bishop of Rome, who controls the dispensing of these very great benefits, so that he can both distribute them by himself and delegate to others the management of their distribution. Consequently, plenary indulgences, as well as indulgences for certain years, stem from the pope; indulgences for a hundred days, from the cardinals; and of forty days, from the bishops! <sup>F219</sup>

Now these, to describe them rightly, are a profanation of the blood of Christ, a Satanic mockery, to lead the Christian people away from God’s grace, away from the life that is in Christ, and turn them aside from the true way of salvation. For how could the blood of Christ be more foully profaned than when they deny that it is sufficient for the forgiveness of sins, for reconciliation, for satisfaction—unless the lack of it, as of something dried up and exhausted, be otherwise supplied and filled? “To Christ, the Law and all the Prophets bear witness,” says Peter, that “through him we are to receive forgiveness of sins.” [<sup><441043></sup> Acts 10:43 p.] Indulgences bestow forgiveness of sins through Peter, Paul, and the martyrs. “The blood of Christ cleanses us from sin,” says John [<sup><620107></sup> 1 John 1:7 p.]. Indulgences make the blood of martyrs the cleansing of sins. “Christ,” says Paul, “who knew no sin, was made sin for us” (that is, satisfaction of sin) “so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” [<sup><470521></sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21 p., cf. Vg.]. Indulgences lodge satisfaction of sins in the blood of martyrs. Paul proclaimed and testified to the Corinthians that Christ alone was crucified and died for them [cf. <sup><460113></sup> 1

Corinthians 1:13]. Indulgences declare: “Paul and others died for us.” Elsewhere Paul says, “Christ acquired the church with his own blood.” [<sup><442028></sup> Acts 20:28 p.] Indulgences establish another purchase price in the blood of martyrs. “By a single offering Christ has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.” [<sup><581014></sup> Hebrews 10:14.] Indulgences proclaim: Sanctification, otherwise insufficient, is perfected by the martyrs. John says that “all the saints have washed their robes... in the blood of the Lamb.” [<sup><660714></sup> Revelation 7:14.] Indulgences teach that they wash their robes in the blood of the saints.

### **3. AUTHORITIES AGAINST INDULGENCES AND MERITS OF MARTYRS**

To the Palestinians, Leo, Bishop of Rome, writes very clearly against this sacrilege: “Although,” he says, “‘Precious in the sight of the Lord was the death of many saints’ [<sup><19B615></sup> Psalm 116:15; cf. <sup><19B515></sup> Psalm 115:15, Vg.], yet the slaying of no innocent person has been the propitiation of the world. The righteous have received, not given, crowns; and from believers’ fortitude have come examples of patience, not gifts of righteousness. Each one surely died his own death, not paying by his end the debt of another, since one Lord Christ exists, in whom all are crucified, all are dead, buried, raised.” As this idea was worth remembering, he repeated it in another place.<sup>F220</sup> Surely, nothing clearer could be desired to puncture this impious dogma. And Augustine, no less appropriately, expresses the same judgment: “Even though we as brethren,” he says, “die for our brethren, no martyr’s blood is shed for the forgiveness of sins. This Christ has done for us, and he has bestowed this upon us not for us to imitate him, but for us to rejoice.” The same idea occurs in another place: “Just as the only Son of God became the Son of Man that he might make us sons of God with him, so on our behalf he alone underwent punishment without deserving ill that we through him, without deserving good, might attain a grace not due us.”<sup>F221</sup>

Assuredly, while all their doctrine is patched together out of terrible sacrileges and blasphemies, this is a more astounding blasphemy than the rest. Let them recognize whether or not these are their judgments: that martyrs by their death have given more to God and deserved more than they needed for themselves, and that they had a great surplus of merits to

overflow to others. In order, therefore, that this great good should not be superfluous, they mingle their blood with the blood of Christ; and out of the blood of both, the treasury of the church is fabricated for the forgiveness and satisfaction of sins. And Paul's statement, "In my body I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" [<sup><510124></sup>Colossians 1:24], is to be understood in this sense.<sup>F222</sup>

What is this but to leave Christ only a name, to make him another common saintlet who can scarcely be distinguished in the throng? He, he alone, deserved to be preached; he alone set forth; he alone named; he alone looked to when there was a question of obtaining forgiveness of sins, expiation, sanctification. But let us listen to their notions. Lest the martyrs' blood be fruitlessly poured out, let it be conferred upon the common good of the church. Is this so? Was it unprofitable for them to glorify God through their death? to attest his truth by their blood? to bear witness by their contempt of the present life that they are seeking a better life? by their constancy, to strengthen the faith of the church but to break the stubbornness of its enemies? But the fact is that they recognize no fruit if Christ alone is the propitiator, if he alone has died for the sake of our sins, if he alone has been offered for our redemption. Peter and Paul, nonetheless, they say, would have received the crown of victory if they had died in their beds. But since they strove even unto death, it would not have squared with God's justice for their sacrifice to go barren and unfruitful. It is as if God did not know how to increase his glory in his servants according to the measure of his gifts. But the church in general receives benefit great enough, when by their triumphs it is kindled with a zeal to fight.

#### 4. REFUTATION OF OPPOSING SCRIPTURAL PROOFS

How maliciously they twist the passage in Paul wherein he says that in his own body he supplies what was lacking in Christ's sufferings [<sup><510124></sup>Colossians 1:24]!<sup>F223</sup> For he refers that lack or that supplement not to the work of redemption, satisfaction, and expiation but to those afflictions with which the members of Christ—namely, all believers—must be exercised so long as they live in this flesh. Therefore, Paul says that of the sufferings of Christ this remains: what once for all he suffered

in himself he daily suffers in his members. And Christ distinguishes us by this honor, that he accounts and makes our afflictions his own. Now, when Paul adds “for the church,” he does not mean for redemption, for reconciliation, or for satisfaction of the church, but for its upbuilding and advancement. As he says in another place: He endures everything for the sake of the elect, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus [<sup><550210></sup>2 Timothy 2:10]. And he wrote to the Corinthians that it was for their comfort and salvation that he endured whatever tribulations he was suffering [<sup><470106></sup>2 Corinthians 1:6].

He immediately explains himself by adding that he became a minister of the church not for redemption, but “according to the dispensation that had been given to him, to preach the gospel of Christ” [<sup><510125></sup>Colossians 1:25 p., cf. <sup><451519></sup>Romans 15:19].

But if my opponents require still another interpreter, let them hear Augustine: “The sufferings,” he said, “of Christ are in Christ alone, as in the head; in Christ and the church, as in the whole body. Consequently Paul, as one member, says: ‘I supply in my body what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ.’ If, then, you—whoever you are who hear this—are among Christ’s members, whatever you suffer from those who are not members of Christ was lacking in the sufferings of Christ.” But he explains elsewhere to what end the sufferings of the apostles, undergone for the church, tended. “Christ is for me the door [cf. <sup><431007></sup>John 10:7] unto you, because you are the sheep of Christ, made ready by his blood.

Acknowledge your price, which is not paid by me but preached through me.” Then he adds, “As he has laid down his life, so also ought we to lay down our lives for our brethren, for the upbuilding of peace and the strengthening of faith.”<sup>F224</sup> These are Augustine’s words. Away with the notion that Paul thought anything was lacking in Christ’s sufferings with regard to the whole fullness of righteousness, salvation, and life; or that he meant to add anything. For Paul clearly and grandly preaches that Christ so bountifully poured out the richness of grace that it far surpassed the whole power of sin [cf. <sup><450515></sup>Romans 5:15]. By this alone, not by the merit of their life or death, have all the saints been saved, as Peter eloquently witnesses [cf. <sup><441511></sup>Acts 15:11]. So, then, one who would rest the worthiness of any saint anywhere save in God’s mercy would be contemptuous of God and his Anointed. But why do I tarry here any

longer, as if this were still something obscure, when to lay bare such monstrous errors is to vanquish them?

## **5. INDULGENCES OPPOSE THE UNITY AND THE COMPREHENSIVE ACTIVITY OF THE GRACE OF CHRIST**

Now—to pass over such abominations—who taught the pope to inclose in lead and parchment the grace of Jesus Christ, which the Lord willed to be distributed by the word of the gospel? Obviously, either the gospel of God or indulgences must be false. Paul testifies that Christ is offered to us through the gospel, with every abundance of heavenly benefits, with all his merits, all his righteousness, wisdom, and grace, without exception. He states that the message of reconciliation was entrusted to ministers to act as ambassadors with Christ, as it were, appealing through them [<sup>470518</sup>>2 Corinthians 5:18-21]. “We beseech you, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” [<sup>470520</sup>> 2 Corinthians 5:20-21]. And believers know the value of the fellowship<sup>F225</sup> of Christ, which, as the same apostle testifies, is in the gospel offered us to enjoy. On the other hand, indulgences draw from the pope’s storehouse some modicum of grace. They attach it to lead, parchment, and a certain place—and tear it away from the Word of God!

If anyone would ask its origin, this abuse seems to have arisen from the fact that when satisfactions severer than all could bear were formerly enjoined upon the penitents, who felt weighed down beyond all measure by the penance imposed upon them, they sought relaxation from the church. The remission made to such persons was called “indulgence.” But when they transferred satisfactions to God and said that they were compensations by which men redeemed themselves from God’s judgment, at the same time also they converted those indulgences into expiatory remedies that were to free us from our deserved punishments.<sup>F226</sup> They have with such great shamelessness fashioned those blasphemies to which we have referred that they can have no excuse.

*(Refutation of the doctrine of purgatory by an exposition of the  
Scriptural passages adduced to support it, 6-10)*

## **6. REFUTATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF PURGATORY IS NECESSARY**

Now let them no longer trouble us with their “purgatory,” because with this ax it has already been broken, hewn down, and overturned from its very foundations. And I do not agree with certain persons who think that one ought to dissemble on this point, and make no mention of purgatory, from which, as they say, fierce conflicts arise but little edification can be obtained.<sup>F227</sup> Certainly, I myself would advise that such trifles be neglected if they did not have their serious consequences. But, since purgatory is constructed out of many blasphemies and is daily propped up with new ones, and since it incites to many grave offenses, it is certainly not to be winked at. One could for a time perhaps in a way conceal the fact that it was devised apart from God’s Word in curious and bold rashness; that men believed in it by some sort of “revelations” forged by Satan’s craft; and that some passages of Scripture were ignorantly distorted to confirm it. Still, the Lord does not allow man’s effrontery so to break in upon the secret places of his judgments; and he sternly forbade that men, to the neglect of his Word, should inquire after truth from the dead [<sup><051811></sup>Deuteronomy 18:11]. Neither does he allow his Word to be so irreligiously corrupted.

Let us, however, grant that all those things could have been tolerated for a time as something of no great importance; but when expiation of sins is sought elsewhere than in the blood of Christ, when satisfaction is transferred elsewhere, silence is very dangerous. Therefore, we must cry out with the shouting not only of our voices but of our throats and lungs that purgatory is a deadly fiction of Satan, which nullifies the cross of Christ inflicts unbearable contempt upon God’s mercy, and overturns and destroys our faith. For what means this purgatory of theirs but that satisfaction for sins is paid by the souls of the dead after their death? Hence, when the notion of satisfaction is destroyed, purgatory itself is straightway torn up by the very roots, but if it is perfectly clear from our preceding discourse that the blood of Christ is the sole satisfaction for the sins of believers, the sole expiation, the sole purgation,<sup>F228</sup> what remains

but to say that purgatory is simply a dreadful blasphemy against Christ? I pass over the sacrileges by which it is daily defended, the minor offenses that it breeds in religion, and innumerable other things that we see have come forth from such a fountain of impiety.

## 7. ALLEGED PROOFS OF PURGATORY FROM THE GOSPELS

But it behooves us to wrest from their hands those passages of Scripture which they falsely and wrongly are accustomed to seize upon.

When the Lord, they say, makes known that the “sin against the Holy Spirit is not to be forgiven either in this age or in the age to come” [<sup><401232></sup> Matthew 12:32; <sup><410328></sup> Mark 3:28-29; <sup><421210></sup> Luke 12:10], he hints at the same time that there is forgiveness of certain sins in the world to come? But who cannot see that the Lord is there speaking of the guilt of sin? But if this is so, what has it to do with their purgatory? Since, in their opinion, punishment of sins is undergone in purgatory, why do they not deny that their guilt is remitted in the present life? But to stop their railing against us, they shall have an even plainer refutation. When the Lord willed to cut off all hope of pardon for such shameful wickedness, he did not consider it enough to say that it would never be forgiven; but in order to emphasize it even more, he used a division by which he embraced the judgment that the conscience of every man experiences in this life and the final judgment that will be given openly at the resurrection. It is as if he said: “Beware of malicious rebellion as of present ruin. For he who would purposely try to extinguish the proffered light of the Spirit will attain pardon neither in this life, which is given to sinners for their conversion, nor in the Last Day, on which the lambs will be separated from the goats by the angels of God and the Kingdom of Heaven will be cleansed of all offenses” [cf. <sup><402532></sup> Matthew 25:32-33].

Then they bring forward that parable from Matthew: “Make friends with your adversary... lest sometime he hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the constable, and the constable to the prison... whence you cannot get out until you have paid the last penny” [<sup><400525></sup> Matthew 5:25-26 p.]. If in this passage the judge signifies God, the accuser the devil, the guard the angel, the prison purgatory, I shall willingly yield to them. But suppose it be clear to all that Christ, in order to urge his followers more

cogently to equity and concord, meant to show the many dangers and evils to which men expose themselves who obstinately prefer to demand the letter of the law <sup>F229</sup> rather than to act out of equity and goodness. Where, then, I ask, will purgatory be found?

## 8. FROM PHILIPPIANS, REVELATION, AND SECOND MACCABEES

They seek proof from Paul's statement wherein he declares that the knees of those in heaven, in earth, and in the nether regions <sup>F230</sup> bow to Christ [<sup><502910></sup>Philippians 2:10]. For they take it to be generally acknowledged that "nether regions" cannot be understood to mean those who have been bound over to eternal damnation; accordingly, it remains to apply the term to souls agonizing in purgatory. They would not be reasoning badly if by the bowing of the knee the apostle designated true and godly worship. But since he is simply teaching that dominion has been given to Christ with which to subject all creatures, what hinders us from understanding by the expression "nether regions" the devils, who will obviously be brought before God's judgment seat and who will recognize their judge with fear and trembling [cf. <sup><590219></sup>James 2:19; <sup><470715></sup>2 Corinthians 7:15]? So Paul himself elsewhere explains the same prophecy: "We shall all stand before Christ's judgment seat. For it is written: 'As I live... every knee shall bow to me,'" etc. [<sup><451410></sup>Romans 14:10-11, Vg.; <sup><234523></sup>Isaiah 45:23].

Yet what is said in Revelation must not be interpreted in that way: "I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying: 'To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and power forever and ever!'" [<sup><660513></sup>Revelation 5:13]. That, indeed, I readily concede, but what sorts of creatures do they think are here spoken of? For surely it is quite certain here that both creatures lacking in reason and inanimate ones are comprehended. This merely declares the fact that individual parts of the world, from the very peak of heaven even to the center of the earth, in their own way declare the glory of their Creator [cf. <sup><191901></sup>Psalms 19:1].

What they bring forward from the history of the Maccabees [2 Macc. 12:43] I deem unworthy of reply, lest I seem to include that work in the canon of the sacred books. But Augustine, they say, takes it as canonical.

First, with what assurance? “The Jews,” he says, “do not consider the writing of the Maccabees as the Law, Prophets, and Psalms, to which the Lord attests as to his witnesses, saying: ‘Everything written about me in the Law... and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled’ [<sup><422444></sup>Luke 24:44]. But it is not unprofitably received by the church if it be soberly read or hearkened to.”<sup>F231</sup> But Jerome teaches without hesitation that its

authority is of no value for the proving of doctrine.<sup>F232</sup> From that ancient work attributed to Cyprian, *On the Exposition of the Creed*, it is perfectly clear that this book had no place in the ancient church.<sup>F234</sup> And why do I here carry on this vain argument? As if the author himself does not well enough show what deference is due him, when at the end he implores pardon if he has said anything amiss [2 Macc. 15:39]! Surely, he who admits that his writings are in need of pardon does not claim to be the oracle of the Holy Spirit. Besides this, the piety of Judas is praised for no other distinction than that he had a firm hope of the final resurrection when he sent an offering for the dead to Jerusalem [2 Macc. 12:43]. Nor did the writer of that history set down Judas’ act to the price of redemption, but regarded it as done in order that they might share in eternal life with the remaining believers who had died for country and religion. This deed was not without superstition and wrongheaded zeal, but utterly foolish are those who extend the sacrifice of the law even down to us, when we know that by the advent of Christ what was then in use ceased.

### 9. THE CRUCIAL PASSAGE IN 1 CORINTHIANS CH. 3

But in Paul they claim to have an invincible phalanx, that cannot be so easily overwhelmed. “If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble—each man’s work, such as it is, will become manifest; for the Day of the Lord will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done... If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire” [<sup><460312></sup>1 Corinthians 3:12-13,15]. What fire, they ask, can this be but that of purgatory, by which the filth of sins is cleansed away that we may enter into the

Kingdom of God as pure men? Yet very many of the ancient writers understood this in another way, namely, as tribulation, or the cross, through which the Lord tests his own that they may not linger in the filth of the flesh. <sup>F235</sup> And that is much more probable than any fictitious purgatory. Notwithstanding, I do not agree with these men, for it seems to me that I have attained a much surer and clearer understanding of this passage.

Yet before I set it forth, I should like my opponents to answer me whether they think that all the apostles and the saints had to go through this purgatorial fire. They will deny it, I know, for it would be utterly absurd that purgation should be required of those whose merits they imagine to redound beyond measure to all the members of the church. But the apostle declares this, and he does not say that the works of certain ones will be proved, but of all. And this is not my argument but Augustine's, who thus opposes that interpretation. And, what is more absurd, he says not that they shall pass through the fire on account of any works whatsoever, but that if they have built up the church with the highest faithfulness, they will receive a reward when their work has been tested by fire. <sup>F236</sup>

First, we see that the apostle used a metaphor when he called the doctrines devised by men's own brains "wood, hay, and stubble." Besides, the metaphor is readily explained: namely, that just as wood when put on fire is at once consumed and lost, so those things cannot last when the hour comes for them to be tested. Now everyone knows that such a trial proceeds from the Spirit of God. Therefore, to follow the thread of his metaphor and put the parts in their proper relationships to one another, he calls the trial of the Holy Spirit "fire." For the nearer gold and silver are placed to the fire, the more certain proofs do they give of their genuineness and purity. So, too, the more carefully the truth of the Lord is tested in a spiritual examination, the more completely its authority is confirmed. As "hay, wood, and stubble" are set on fire, they are suddenly consumed. Thus the inventions of men, not grounded in the Word of the Lord, cannot bear testing by the Holy Spirit, but immediately fall and perish. In short, if forged doctrines are compared to "wood, hay, and stubble" because like "wood, hay, and stubble" they are burned in the fire and destroyed, it is, however, by the Spirit of the Lord only that they are destroyed and dissipated. It follows that the Spirit is that fire whereby they will be

tested, whose test Paul calls “the Day of the Lord” [<sup><460313></sup> 1 Corinthians 3:13, Vg.], according to the common usage of Scripture. For it is called “the Day of the Lord” whenever he reveals his presence to men in any way; then, indeed, does his face most of all shine, when his truth gleams forth. Now we have proved that Paul means by “the fire” nothing else but the testing by the Holy Spirit.

But how are those saved through that fire who suffer the loss of their works? [<sup><460315></sup> 1 Corinthians 3:15.] This will not be difficult to understand if we consider what kind of men he is speaking of. For he is referring to those builders of the church who, keeping a lawful foundation, build upon it with unsuitable materials. That is, those who do not fall away from the principal and necessary doctrines of the faith go astray in less important and less dangerous ones, mingling their own invention with the Word of God. Such persons, I say, must undergo the loss of their work with the annihilation of their inventions. “Yet they are saved, but as through fire.” [<sup><460315></sup> 1 Corinthians 3:15.] That is, not that their ignorance and delusion are acceptable to the Lord, but because they are cleansed from these by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, anyone who fouls the golden purity of God’s Word with this filth of purgatory must undergo the loss of his work.

### **10. THE APPEAL TO THE EARLY CHURCH CANNOT HELP THE ROMANISTS**

But, they say, this was a most ancient observance of the church. Paul answers this objection, while also embracing his own age in his judgment, when he declares that all must undergo loss of their work who in building the church lay any foundation unsuitable to it [<sup><460311></sup> 1 Corinthians 3:11-15].

When my adversaries, therefore, raise against me the objection that prayers for the dead have been a custom for thirteen hundred years, <sup>F237</sup> I ask them, in turn, by what word of God, by what revelation, by what example, is this done? Not only are testimonies of Scripture lacking on this point, but all examples of the saints that one may there read of show no such thing. Concerning mourning and the office of burial, one there finds many and sometimes detailed accounts; but concerning such prayers, you

can see not one tittle. Yet, the more important the matter is, the more it ought to have been expressly mentioned. And also, those ancient writers who poured out prayers for the dead saw that in this point they lacked both the command of God and lawful example. <sup>F238</sup> Why, then, did they dare do it? On this ground, I say, that they yielded something to human nature; and for that reason, I contend that what they did ought not to be made an example to imitate. For since believers ought to undertake no task, except with an assured conscience, as Paul teaches [<sup><451423></sup>Romans 14:23], this certainty is especially needed in prayer. Yet it is likely that they were impelled for another reason: namely, they were seeking comfort to relieve their sorrow, and it seemed inhuman to them not to show before God some evidence of their love toward the dead. All men know by experience how man's nature is inclined to this feeling.

There was, also, an accepted custom that, like a brand, set men's minds on fire. We know that among all the Gentiles and in all times rites have been held for the dead, and each year cleansing rites were held for their souls. But even though Satan deluded stupid mortals with these tricks, he took occasion to deceive them from a correct principle: that death is not destruction but a crossing over from this life to another. There is no doubt that this very superstition holds the Gentiles convicted before God's judgment seat because they neglected to give thought to the life to come in which they professed to believe. Now Christians, in order not to be worse than profane men, were ashamed not to devote some rite to the dead, as if they had quite ceased to be. From this arose that ill-advised diligence. For if they had hesitated to attend to funeral rites, banquets, and offerings, they thought they would be exposed to great reproach. But that which derived from perverse emulation was so constantly increased by new additions that to help the dead in distress became the papacy's principal mark of holiness. But Scripture supplies another far better and more perfect solace when it testifies: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" [<sup><661413></sup>Revelation 14:13]. And it adds the reason: "Henceforth they rest from their labors." Moreover, we ought not to indulge our affection to the extent of setting up a perverse mode of prayer in the church.

Surely, any man endowed with a modicum of wisdom easily recognizes that whatever he reads among the ancient writers concerning this matter was allowed because of public custom and common ignorance. I admit that

the fathers themselves were also carried off into error. For heedless credulity commonly deprives men's minds of judgment. And yet, the reading of those authors shows how hesitantly they commended prayers for the dead. Augustine relates in his *Confessions* that his mother, Monica, emphatically requested that she be remembered in the celebration of rites at the altar. This was obviously an old woman's request, which the son did not test by the norm of Scripture; but he wished to be approved by others for his natural affection.<sup>F239</sup> Moreover, the book *The Care to Be Taken for the Dead*, composed by him, contains so many doubts that by its coldness it ought rightly to extinguish the heat of foolish zeal on the part of anyone who desires to be an intercessor for the dead; with its cold conjectures, to be sure, this treatise will render careless those who previously were careful.<sup>F240</sup> Its only support for the practice is that this office of prayers for the dead is not to be despised, for the custom has been prevalent.

But, though I concede to the ancient writers of the church that it seemed a pious act to help the dead, we ought ever to keep the rule that cannot deceive: that it is not lawful to interject anything of our own in our prayers. But our requests ought to be subjected to the Word of God; for it is within his decision to prescribe what he wills to be asked. Now, since the entire law and gospel do not furnish so much as a single syllable of leave to pray for the dead, it is to profane the invocation of God to attempt more than he has bidden us.

But, lest our adversaries boast that the ancient church is, as it were, their partner in error, I say that there is a wide difference. The ancients did it in memory of the dead, lest they should seem to have cast away all concern for them. But at the same time they confessed that they were in doubt regarding the state of the dead. About purgatory they were so noncommittal that they considered it as a thing uncertain. Our present adversaries demand that what they have dreamed up concerning purgatory be held without question as an article of faith. The ancients rarely and only perfunctorily commended their dead to God in the communion of the Sacred Supper. The moderns zealously press the care of the dead, and with importunate preaching cause it to be preferred to all works of love.

Indeed, it would be not at all difficult for us to bring forth some testimonies of the ancient writers that clearly overthrow all those prayers for the dead then in use. Such a one is the statement of Augustine when he teaches that the resurrection of the flesh and everlasting glory are awaited by all, but that every man when he dies receives the rest that follows death if he is worthy of it. Therefore, he bears witness that all godly men, no less than prophets, apostles, and martyrs, immediately after death enjoy blessed repose.<sup>F242</sup> If such is their condition, what, I beg of you, will our prayers confer upon them?

I pass over those grosser superstitions with which they have bewitched the simple-minded; although these are innumerable, and for the most part so monstrous that no color of decency can be given to them. I am also silent upon those utterly base traffickings which, in view of the world's great ignorance, they have in their lust carried on. For there would never be an end; and without an enumeration of them my good readers will have enough to steady their consciences.

# CHAPTER 6

## THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN MAN; AND FIRST, BY WHAT ARGUMENTS SCRIPTURE URGES US TO IT

### 1. PLAN OF THE TREATISE

The object of regeneration, as we have said, <sup>F243</sup> is to manifest in the life of believers a harmony and agreement between God's righteousness and their obedience, and thus to confirm the adoption that they have received as sons [ <sup><480405></sup> Galatians 4:5; cf. <sup><610110></sup> 2 Peter 1:10].

The law of God contains in itself that newness by which his image can be restored in us. But because our slowness needs many goads and helps, it will be profitable to assemble from various passages of Scripture a pattern for the conduct of life <sup>F244</sup> in order that those who heartily repent may not err in their zeal.

Now, in setting forth how the life of a Christian man is to be ordered, I am not unaware that I am entering into a varied and diverse subject, which in magnitude would occupy a large volume, were I to try to treat it in full detail. In composing exhortations on but a single virtue, the ancient doctors, as we see, became very prolix. Yet in this they waste no words. For when a man sets out to commend any one virtue in his discourse, abundance of material drives him to a style of such fullness that he seems not to treat it properly unless he speaks at length. But I do not intend to develop, here, the instruction in living that I am now about to offer to the point of describing individual virtues at length, and of digressing into exhortations. Such may be sought from others' writings, especially from the homilies of the fathers. To show the godly man how he may be directed to a rightly ordered life, and briefly to set down some universal rule with which to determine his duties—this will be quite enough for me. Perhaps there will be opportunity for declamations, or I may turn over to others the tasks for which I am not so well suited. By nature I love

brevity; <sup>F245</sup> and perhaps if I wished to speak more amply it would not be successful. But though a more extended form of teaching were highly acceptable, I would nevertheless scarcely care to undertake it. Moreover, the plan of the present work demands that we give a simple outline of doctrine as briefly as possible.

As philosophers have fixed limits of the right and the honorable, whence they derive individual duties and the whole company of virtues, so Scripture is not without its own order in this matter, but holds to a most beautiful dispensation, and one much more certain than all the philosophical ones. The only difference is that they, as they were ambitious men, diligently strove to attain an exquisite clarity of order to show the nimbleness of their wit. But the Spirit of God, because he taught without affectation, did not adhere so exactly or continuously to a methodical plan; yet when he lays one down anywhere he hints enough that it is not to be neglected by us.

## 2. MOTIVES FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Now this Scriptural instruction of which we speak has two main aspects. The first is that the love of righteousness, to which we are otherwise not at all inclined by nature, may be instilled and established in our hearts; the second, that a rule be set forth for us that does not let us wander about in our zeal for righteousness.

There are in Scripture very many and excellent reasons for commending righteousness, not a few of which we have already noted in various places. And we shall briefly touch upon still others here. From what foundation may righteousness better arise than from the Scriptural warning that we must be made holy because our God is holy? [<sup><031902></sup> Leviticus 19:2; <sup><600115></sup> 1 Peter 1:15-16]. Indeed, though we had been dispersed like stray sheep and scattered through the labyrinth of the world, <sup>F246</sup> he has gathered us together again to join us with himself. When we hear mention of our union with God, let us remember that holiness must be its bond; not because we come into communion with him by virtue of our holiness! Rather, we ought first to cleave unto him so that, infused with his holiness, we may follow whither he calls. But since it is especially characteristic of his glory that he have no fellowship with wickedness and

uncleanness, Scripture accordingly teaches that this is the goal of our calling to which we must ever look if we would answer God when he calls [<sup><233508></sup>Isaiah 35:8, etc.]. For to what purpose are we rescued from the wickedness and pollution of the world in which we were submerged if we allow ourselves throughout life to wallow in these? Moreover, at the same time Scripture admonishes us that to be reckoned among the people of the Lord we must dwell in the holy city of Jerusalem [cf. <sup><19B619></sup>Psalm 116:19; 122:2-9]. As he has consecrated this city to himself, it is unlawful to profane it with the impurity of its inhabitants. Whence these declarations: there will be a place in God's Tabernacle for those who walk without blemish and strive after righteousness [<sup><191501></sup>Psalm 15:1-2; cf. <sup><191401></sup>Psalm 14:1-2, Vg.; cf. also <sup><192403></sup>Psalm 24:3-4]. For it is highly unfitting that the sanctuary in which he dwells should like a stable be crammed with filth.

### **3. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE RECEIVES ITS STRONGEST MOTIVE TO GOD'S WORK THROUGH THE PERSON AND REDEMPTIVE ACT OF CHRIST**

And to wake us more effectively, Scripture shows that God the Father, as he has reconciled us to himself in his Christ [cf. <sup><470518></sup>2 Corinthians 5:18], has in him stamped for us the likeness [cf. <sup><580103></sup>Hebrews 1:3] to which he would have us conform. Now, let these persons who think that moral philosophy is duly and systematically set forth solely among philosophers find me among the philosophers a more excellent dispensation. They, while they wish particularly to exhort us to virtue, announce merely that we should live in accordance with nature. <sup>F247</sup> But Scripture draws its exhortation from the true fountain. It not only enjoins us to refer our life to God, its author, to whom it is bound; but after it has taught that we have degenerated from the true origin and condition of our creation, it also adds that Christ, through whom we return into favor with God, has been set before us as an example, whose pattern we ought to express in our life. What more effective thing can you require than this one thing? Nay, what can you require beyond this one thing? For we have been adopted as sons by the Lord with this one condition: that our life express Christ, the bond of our adoption. Accordingly, unless we give and devote

ourselves to righteousness, we not only revolt from our Creator with wicked perfidy but we also abjure our Savior himself.

Then the Scripture finds occasion for exhortation in all the benefits of God that it lists for us, and in the individual parts of our salvation. Ever since God revealed himself Father to us, we must prove our ungratefulness to him if we did not in turn show ourselves his sons [<sup><390106></sup> Malachi 1:6; <sup><490501></sup> Ephesians 5:1; <sup><620301></sup> 1 John 3:1]. Ever since Christ cleansed us with the washing of his blood, and imparted this cleansing through baptism, it would be unfitting to befoul ourselves with new pollutions [<sup><490526></sup> Ephesians 5:26; <sup><581010></sup> Hebrews 10:10; <sup><460611></sup> 1 Corinthians 6:11; <sup><600115></sup> 1 Peter 1:15,19]. Ever since he engrafted us into his body, we must take especial care not to disfigure ourselves, who are his members, with any spot or blemish [<sup><490523></sup> Ephesians 5:23-33; <sup><460615></sup> 1 Corinthians 6:15; <sup><431503></sup> John 15:3-6]. Ever since Christ himself, who is our Head, ascended into heaven, it behooves us, having laid aside love of earthly things, wholeheartedly to aspire heavenward [<sup><510301></sup> Colossians 3:1 ff.]. Ever since the Holy Spirit dedicated us as temples to God, we must take care that God's glory shine through us, and must not commit anything to defile ourselves with the filthiness of sin [<sup><460316></sup> 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; <sup><470616></sup> 2 Corinthians 6:16]. Ever since both our souls and bodies were destined for heavenly incorruption and an unfading crown [<sup><600504></sup> 1 Peter 5:4], we ought to strive manfully to keep them pure and uncorrupted until the Day of the Lord [<sup><520523></sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:23; cf. <sup><500110></sup> Philippians 1:10]. These, I say, are the most auspicious foundations upon which to establish one's life. One would look in vain for the like of these among the philosophers, who, in their commendation of virtue, never rise above the natural dignity of man. <sup>F248</sup>

#### **4. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS NOT A MATTER OF THE TONGUE BUT OF THE INMOST HEART**

And this is the place to upbraid those who, having nothing but the name and badge of Christ, yet wish to call themselves "Christians." Yet, how shamelessly do they boast of his sacred name? Indeed, there is no intercourse with Christ save for those who have perceived the right understanding of Christ from the word of the gospel. Yet the apostle says that all those who were not taught that they must put on him have not

rightly learned Christ, as they have not put off the old man, who is corrupt through deceptive desires [<sup><490422></sup>Ephesians 4:22,24]. Therefore, it is proved that they have falsely, and also unjustly, pretended the knowledge of Christ, whatever they meanwhile learnedly and volubly prate about the gospel. For it is a doctrine not of the tongue but of life. It is not apprehended by the understanding and memory alone, as other disciplines are, but it is received only when it possesses the whole soul, and finds a seat and resting place in the inmost affection of the heart. <sup>F249</sup> Accordingly, either let them cease to boast of what they are not, in contempt of God; or let them show themselves disciples not unworthy of Christ their teacher. We have given the first place to the doctrine in which our religion is contained, since our salvation begins with it. But it must enter our heart and pass into our daily living, and so transform us into itself that it may not be unfruitful for us. The philosophers rightly burn with anger against, and reproachfully drive from their flock, those who when they profess an art that ought to be the mistress of life, turn it into sophistical chatter. <sup>F250</sup> With how much better reason, then, shall we detest these trifling Sophists who are content to roll the gospel on the tips of their tongues when its efficacy ought to penetrate the inmost affections of the heart, take its seat in the soul, and affect the whole man a hundred times more deeply than the cold exhortations of the philosophers!

## 5. IMPERFECTION AND ENDEAVOR OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

I do not insist that the moral life of a Christian man breathe nothing but the very gospel, yet this ought to be desired, and we must strive toward it. But I do not so strictly demand evangelical perfection that I would not acknowledge as a Christian one who has not yet attained it. For thus all would be excluded from the church, since no one is found who is not far removed from it, while many have advanced a little toward it whom it would nevertheless be unjust to cast away.

What then? Let that target be set before our eyes at which we are earnestly to aim. Let that goal be appointed toward which we should strive and struggle. For it is not lawful for you to divide things with God in such a manner that you undertake part of those things which are enjoined upon you by his Word but omit part, according to your own judgment. For in the first place, he everywhere commends integrity as the chief part of

worshipping him [<sup><011701></sup>Genesis 17:1; <sup><194112></sup>Psalms 41:12; etc.]. By this word he means a sincere simplicity of mind, free from guile and feigning, the opposite of a double heart, eIt is as if it were said that the beginning of right living is spiritual, where the inner feeling of the mind is unfeignedly dedicated to God for the cultivation of holiness and righteousness.

But no one in this earthly prison of the body <sup>F251</sup> has sufficient strength to press on with due eagerness, and weakness so weighs down the greater number that, with wavering and limping and even creeping along the ground, they move at a feeble rate. Let each one of us, then, proceed according to the measure of his puny capacity and set out upon the journey we have begun. No one shall set out so inauspiciously as not daily to make some headway, though it be slight. Therefore, let us not cease so to act that we may make some unceasing progress in the way of the Lord. And let us not despair at the slightness of our success; for even though attainment may not correspond to desire, when today outstrips yesterday the effort is not lost. Only let us look toward our mark with sincere simplicity and aspire to our goal; not fondly flattering ourselves, nor excusing our own evil deeds, but with continuous effort striving toward this end: that we may surpass ourselves in goodness until we attain to goodness itself. It is this, indeed, which through the whole course of life we seek and follow. But we shall attain it only when we have cast off the weakness of the body, and are received into full fellowship with him.

# CHAPTER 7

## THE SUM OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: THE DENIAL OF OURSELVES

*(The Christian philosophy of unworldliness and self-denial; we are not our own, we are God's, 1-3)*

### 1. WE ARE NOT OUR OWN MASTERS, BUT BELONG TO GOD

Even though the law of the Lord provides the finest and best-disposed method of ordering a man's life, it seemed good to the Heavenly Teacher to shape his people by an even more explicit plan to that rule which he had set forth in the law. Here, then, is the beginning of this plan: the duty of believers is "to present their bodies to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to him," and in this consists the lawful worship of him [<sup><451201></sup>Romans 12:1]. From this is derived the basis of the exhortation that "they be not conformed to the fashion of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of their minds, so that they may prove what is the will of God" [<sup><451202></sup>Romans 12:2]. Now the great thing is this: we are consecrated and dedicated to God in order that we may thereafter think, speak, meditate, and do, nothing except to his glory. For a sacred thing may not be applied to profane uses without marked injury to him.

If we, then, are not our own [cf. <sup><460619></sup>1 Corinthians 6:19] but the Lord's, it is clear what error we must flee, and whither we must direct all the acts of our life.

We are not our own: let not our reason nor our will, therefore, sway our plans and deeds. We are not our own: let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own: in so far as we can, let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours.

Conversely, we are God's: let us therefore live for him and die for him. We are God's: let his wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions. We are

God's: let all the parts of our life accordingly strive toward him as our only lawful goal [<sup><451408></sup>Romans 14:8; cf. <sup><460619></sup>1 Corinthians 6:19]. O, how much has that man profited who, having been taught that he is not his own, has taken away dominion and rule from his own reason that he may yield it to God! For, as consulting our self-interest is the pestilence that most effectively leads to our destruction, so the sole haven of salvation is to be wise in nothing and to will nothing through ourselves but to follow the leading of the Lord alone.

Let this therefore be the first step, that a man depart from himself in order that he may apply the whole force of his ability in the service of the Lord. I call "service" not only what lies in obedience to God's Word but what turns the mind of man, empty of its own carnal sense, wholly to the bidding of God's Spirit. While it is the first entrance to life, all philosophers were ignorant of this transformation, which Paul calls "renewal of the mind" [<sup><490423></sup>Ephesians 4:23]. For they set up reason alone as the ruling principle in man, and think that it alone should be listened to; to it alone, in short, they entrust the conduct of life. But the Christian philosophy <sup>F252</sup> bids reason give way to, submit and subject itself to, the Holy Spirit so that the man himself may no longer live but hear Christ living and reigning within him [<sup><480220></sup>Galatians 2:20].

## 2. SELF-DENIAL THROUGH DEVOTION TO GOD

From this also follows this second point: that we seek not the things that are ours but those which are of the Lord's will and will serve to advance his glory. This is also evidence of great progress: that, almost forgetful of ourselves, surely subordinating our self-concern, we try faithfully to devote our zeal to God and his commandments. For when Scripture bids us leave off self-concern, it not only erases from our minds the yearning to possess, the desire for power, and the favor of men, but it also uproots ambition and all craving for human glory and other more secret plagues. Accordingly, the Christian must surely be so disposed and minded that he feels within himself it is with God he has to deal throughout his life. <sup>F253</sup> In this way, as he will refer all he has to God's decision and judgment, so will he refer his whole intention of mind scrupulously to Him. For he who has learned to look to God in all things that he must do, at the same time avoids all vain thoughts. This, then, is that denial of self which Christ

enjoins with such great earnestness upon his disciples at the outset of their service [cf. <sup><401624></sup> Matthew 16:24]. When it has once taken possession of their hearts, it leaves no place at all first either to pride, or arrogance, or ostentation; then either to avarice, or desire, or lasciviousness, or effeminacy, or to other evils that our self-love spawns [cf. <sup><550302></sup> 2 Timothy 3:2-5]. On the other hand, wherever denial of ourselves does not reign, there either the foulest vices rage without shame or if there is any semblance of virtue, it is vitiated by depraved lusting after glory. Show me a man, if you can, who, unless he has according to the commandment of the Lord renounced himself, would freely exercise goodness among men. For all who have not been possessed with this feeling have at least followed virtue for the sake of praise. Now those of the philosophers who at any time most strongly contended that virtue should be pursued for its own sake <sup>F254</sup> were puffed up with such great arrogance as to show they sought after virtue for no other reason than to have occasion for pride. Yet God is so displeased, both with those who court the popular breeze <sup>F255</sup> and with such swollen souls, as to declare that they have received their reward in this world [<sup><400602></sup> Matthew 6:2,5,16], and to make harlots and publicans nearer to the Kingdom of Heaven than are they [<sup><402131></sup> Matthew 21:31]. Yet we have still not clearly explained how many and how great are the obstacles that hinder man from a right course so long as he has not denied himself. For it was once truly said: “A world of vices is hidden in the soul of man.” <sup>F256</sup> And you can find no other remedy than in denying yourself and giving up concern for yourself, and in turning your mind wholly to seek after those things which the Lord requires of you, and to seek them only because they are pleasing to him.

### **3. SELF-RENUNCIATION ACCORDING TO TITUS, CHAPTER 2**

In another place, Paul more clearly, although briefly, delineates the individual parts of a well-ordered life. “The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions and to live sober, upright, and godly lives, in the present age; awaiting our blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of our great God and of our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.” [<sup><560211></sup> Titus 2:11-14.] For, after he proffered the grace

of God to hearten us, in order to pave the way for us to worship God truly he removed the two obstacles that chiefly hinder us: namely, ungodliness, to which by nature we are too much inclined; and second, worldly desires, which extend more widely. And by ungodliness, indeed, he not only means superstition but includes also whatever contends against the earnest fear of God. Worldly lusts are also equivalent to the passions of the flesh [cf. <620216> 1 John 2:16; <490203> Ephesians 2:3; <610218> 2 Peter 2:18; <480516> Galatians 5:16; etc.]. Thus, with reference to both Tables of the Law, he commands us to put off our own nature and to deny whatever our reason and will dictate. Now he limits all actions of life to three parts: soberness, righteousness, and godliness. Of these, soberness doubtless denotes chastity and temperance as well as a pure and frugal use of temporal goods, and patience in poverty. Now righteousness embraces all the duties of equity in order that to each one be rendered what is his own [cf. <451307> Romans 13:7].<sup>F257</sup> There follows godliness, which joins us in true holiness with God when we are separated from the iniquities of the world. When these things are joined together by an inseparable bond, they bring about complete perfection. But, nothing is more difficult than, having bidden farewell to the reason of the flesh and having bridled our desires—nay, having put them away—to devote ourselves to God and our brethren, and to meditate, amid earth's filth, upon the life of the angels. Consequently, Paul, in order to extricate our minds from all snares, recalls us to the hope of blessed immortality, reminding us that we strive not in vain [cf. <520305> 1 Thessalonians 3:5]. For, as Christ our Redeemer once appeared, so in his final coming he will show the fruit of the salvation brought forth by him. In this way he scatters all the allurements that becloud us and prevent us from aspiring as we ought to heavenly glory. Nay, he teaches us to travel as pilgrims in this world<sup>F258</sup> that our celestial heritage may not perish or pass away.

*(The principle of self-denial in our relations with  
our fellow men, 4-7)*

#### **4. SELF-DENIAL GIVES US THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD OUR FELLOW MEN**

Now in these words we perceive that denial of self has regard partly to men, partly, and chiefly, to God.

For when Scripture bids us act toward men so as to esteem them above ourselves [<sup><500803></sup>Philippians 2:3], and in good faith to apply ourselves wholly to doing them good [cf. <sup><451210></sup>Romans 12:10], it gives us commandments of which our mind is quite incapable unless our mind be previously emptied of its natural feeling. For, such is the blindness with which we all rush into self-love that each one of us seems to himself to have just cause to be proud of himself and to despise all others in comparison. If God has conferred upon us anything of which we need not repent, relying upon it we immediately lift up our minds, and are not only puffed up but almost burst with pride. The very vices that infest us we take pains to hide from others, while we flatter ourselves with the pretense that they are slight and insignificant, and even sometimes embrace them as virtues. If others manifest the same endowments we admire in ourselves, or even superior ones, we spitefully belittle and revile these gifts in order to avoid yielding place to such persons. If there are any faults in others, not content with noting them with severe and sharp reproach, we hatefully exaggerate them. Hence arises such insolence that each one of us, as if exempt from the common lot, wishes to tower above the rest, and loftily and savagely abuses every mortal man, or at least looks down upon him as an inferior. The poor yield to the rich; the common folk, to the nobles; the servants, to their masters; the unlearned, to the educated. But there is no one who does not cherish within himself some opinion of his own pre-eminence.

Thus, each individual, by flattering himself, bears a kind of kingdom in his breast. <sup>F259</sup> For claiming as his own what pleases him, he censures the character and morals of others. But if this comes to the point of conflict, his venom bursts forth. For many obviously display some gentleness so long as they find everything sweet and pleasant. But just how many are there who will preserve this even tenor of modesty when they are pricked and irritated? There is no other remedy than to tear out from our inward parts this most deadly pestilence of love of strife and love of self, <sup>F260</sup> even as it is plucked out by Scriptural teaching. For thus we are instructed to remember that those talents which God has bestowed upon us are not our own goods but the free gifts of God; and any persons who become proud of them show their ungratefulness. “Who causes you to excel?” Paul asks.

“If you have received all things, why do you boast as if they were not given to you?” [<sup><460407></sup> 1 Corinthians 4:7].

Let us, then, unremittingly examining our faults, call ourselves back to humility. Thus nothing will remain in us to puff us up; but there will be much occasion to be cast down. On the other hand, we are bidden so to esteem and regard whatever gifts of God we see in other men that we may honor those men in whom they reside. For it would be great depravity on our part to deprive them of that honor which the Lord has bestowed upon them. But we are taught to overlook their faults, certainly not flatteringly to cherish them; but not on account of such faults to revile men whom we ought to cherish with good will and honor. Thus it will come about that, whatever man we deal with, we shall treat him not only moderately and modestly but also cordially and as a friend. You will never attain true gentleness except by one path: a heart imbued with lowliness and with reverence for others.

## **5. SELF-RENUNCIATION LEADS TO PROPER HELPFULNESS TOWARD OUR NEIGHBORS**

Now, in seeking to benefit one’s neighbor, how difficult it is to do one’s duty! Unless you give up all thought of self and, so to speak, get out of yourself, you will accomplish nothing here. For how can you perform those works which Paul teaches to be the works of love, unless you renounce yourself, and give yourself wholly to others? “Love,” he says, “is patient and kind, not jealous or boastful, is not envious or puffed up, does not seek its own, is not irritable,” etc. [<sup><461304></sup> 1 Corinthians 13:4-5 p.] If this is the one thing required—that we seek not what is our own—still we shall do no little violence to nature, which so inclines us to love of ourselves alone that it does not easily allow us to neglect ourselves and our possessions in order to look after another’s good, nay, to yield willingly what is ours by right and resign it to another. But Scripture, to lead us by the hand to this, warns that whatever benefits we obtain from the Lord have been entrusted to us on this condition: that they be applied to the common good of the church. And therefore the lawful use of all benefits consists in a liberal and kindly sharing of them with others. No surer rule and no more valid exhortation to keep it could be devised than when we are taught that all the gifts we possess have been bestowed by God and

entrusted to us on condition that they be distributed for our neighbors' benefit [cf. <sup><600410></sup> 1 Peter 4:10].

But Scripture goes even farther by comparing them to the powers with which the members of the human body are endowed [<sup><461212></sup> 1 Corinthians 12:12 ff.]. No member has this power for itself nor applies it to its own private use; but each pours it out to the fellow members. Nor does it take any profit from its power except what proceeds from the common advantage of the whole body. So, too, whatever a godly man can do he ought to be able to do for his brothers, providing for himself in no way other than to have his mind intent upon the common upbuilding of the church. Let this, therefore, be our rule for generosity and beneficence: We are the stewards of everything God has conferred on us by which we are able to help our neighbor, and are required to render account of our stewardship. Moreover, the only right stewardship is that which is tested by the rule of love. Thus it will come about that we shall not only join zeal for another's benefit with care for our own advantage, but shall subordinate the latter to the former.

And lest perhaps we should not realize that this is the rule for the proper management of all gifts we have received from God, he also in early times applied it to the least gifts of his generosity. For he commanded that the first fruits be brought to him by which the people were to testify that it was unlawful to accept for themselves any enjoyment of benefits not previously consecrated to him [<sup><022319></sup> Exodus 23:19; cf. ch. 22:29, Vg.]. But if the gifts of God are only thus sanctified to us when we have dedicated them by our hand to the Author himself, that which does not savor of such dedication is clearly a corrupt abuse. Yet you wish to strive in vain to enrich the Lord by sharing your possessions; since, then, your generosity cannot extend to him, you must, as the prophet says, practice it toward the saints on earth [<sup><191602></sup> Psalm 16:2-3]. And alms are compared to holy sacrifices so as to correspond now to those requirements of the law [<sup><581316></sup> Hebrews 13:16].

## 6. LOVE OF NEIGHBOR IS NOT DEPENDENT UPON MANNER OF MEN BUT LOOKS TO GOD

Furthermore, not to grow weary in well-doing [<sup><480609></sup> Galatians 6:9], which otherwise must happen immediately, we ought to add that other idea which the apostle mentions: “Love is patient... and is not irritable” [<sup><461304></sup> 1 Corinthians 13:4-5]. The Lord commands all men without exception “to do good” [<sup><581316></sup> Hebrews 13:16]. Yet the great part of them are most unworthy if they be judged by their own merit. But here Scripture helps in the best way when it teaches that we are not to consider that men merit of themselves but to look upon the image of God in all men, to which we owe all honor and love. However, it is among members of the household of faith that this same image is more carefully to be noted [<sup><480610></sup> Galatians 6:10], in so far as it has been renewed and restored through the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, whatever man you meet who needs your aid, you have no reason to refuse to help him. Say, “He is a stranger”; but the Lord has given him a mark that ought to be familiar to you, by virtue of the fact that he forbids you to despise your own flesh [<sup><235807></sup> Isaiah 58:7, Vg.]. Say, “He is contemptible and worthless”; but the Lord shows him to be one to whom he has deigned to give the beauty of his image. Say that you owe nothing for any service of his; but God, as it were, has put him in his own place in order that you may recognize toward him the many and great benefits with which God has bound you to himself. Say that he does not deserve even your least effort for his sake; but the image of God, which recommends him to you, is worthy of your giving yourself and all your possessions. Now if he has not only deserved no good at your hand, but has also provoked you by unjust acts and curses, not even this is just reason why you should cease to embrace him in love and to perform the duties of love on his behalf [<sup><400614></sup> Matthew 6:14; 18:35; <sup><421703></sup> Luke 17:3]. You will say, “He has deserved something far different of me.” Yet what has the Lord deserved? While he bids you forgive this man for all sins he has committed against you, he would truly have them charged against himself. Assuredly there is but one way in which to achieve what is not merely difficult but utterly against human nature: to love those who hate us, to repay their evil deeds with benefits, to return blessings for reproaches [<sup><400544></sup> Matthew 5:44]. It is that we remember not to consider men’s evil intention but to look upon the image

of God in them, <sup>F261</sup> which cancels and effaces their transgressions, and with its beauty and dignity allures us to love and embrace them.

## **7. THE OUTWARD WORK OF LOVE IS NOT SUFFICIENT, BUT IT IS INTENTION THAT COUNTS!**

This mortification, then, will take place in us only if we fulfill the duties of love. Now he who merely performs all the duties of love does not fulfill them, even though he overlooks none; but he, rather, fulfills them who does this from a sincere feeling of love: For it can happen that one who indeed discharges to the full all his obligations as far as outward duties are concerned is still all the while far away from the true way of discharging them. For you may see some who wish to seem very liberal and yet bestow nothing that they do not make reprehensible with a proud countenance or even insolent words. And in this tragic and unhappy age it has come to this pass, that most men give their alms contemptuously. Such depravity ought not to have been tolerable even among the pagans; of Christians something even more is required than to show a cheerful countenance and to render their duties pleasing with friendly words. First, they must put themselves in the place of him whom they see in need of their assistance, and pity his ill fortune as if they themselves experienced and bore it, so that they may be impelled by a feeling of mercy and humaneness to go to his aid just as to their own.

He who, thus disposed, proceeds to give help to his brethren will not corrupt his own duties by either arrogance or upbraiding. Furthermore, in giving benefits he will not despise his needy brother or enslave him as one indebted to himself. This would no more be reasonable than that we should either chide a sick member that the rest of the body labors to revive or consider it especially obligated to the remaining members because it has drawn more help to itself than it can repay. Now the sharing of tasks among members is believed to have nothing gratuitous about it but, rather, to be a payment of that which, due by the law of nature, <sup>F262</sup> it would be monstrous to refuse. Also, in this way it will come about that he who has discharged one kind of task will not think himself free, as commonly happens when a rich man, after he has given up something of his own, delegates to other men other burdens as having nothing at all to do with him. Rather, each man will so consider with himself that in all his greatness

he is a debtor to his neighbors, and that he ought in exercising kindness toward them to set no other limit than the end of his resources; these, as widely as they are extended, ought to have their limits set according to the rule of love.

*(The principle of self-denial in our relation to God, 8-10)*

## **8. SELF-DENIAL TOWARD GOD: DEVOTION TO HIS WILL!**

Let us reiterate in fuller form the chief part of self-denial, which, as we have said, looks to God. And indeed, many things have been said about this already that it would be superfluous to repeat. It will be enough to show how it forms us to fair-mindedness and tolerance.

To begin with, then, in seeking either the convenience or the tranquillity of the present life, Scripture calls us to resign ourselves and all our possessions to the Lord's will, and to yield to him the desires of our hearts to be tamed and subjugated. To covet wealth and honors, to strive for authority, to heap up riches, to gather together all those follies which seem to make for magnificence and pomp, our lust is mad, our desire boundless. On the other hand, wonderful is our fear, wonderful our hatred, of poverty, lowly birth, and humble condition! And we are spurred to rid ourselves of them by every means. Hence we can see how uneasy in mind all those persons are who order their lives according to their own plan. We can see how artfully they strive—to the point of weariness—to obtain the goal of their ambition or avarice, while, on the other hand, avoiding poverty and a lowly condition.

In order not to be caught in such snares, godly men must hold to this path. First of all, let them neither desire nor hope for, nor contemplate, any other way of prospering than by the Lord's blessing.<sup>F263</sup> Upon this, then, let them safely and confidently throw themselves and rest. For however beautifully the flesh may seem to suffice unto itself, while it either strives by its own effort for honors and riches or relies upon its diligence, or is aided by the favor of men, yet it is certain that all these things are nothing; nor will we benefit at all, either by skill or by labor, except in so far as the Lord prospers them both. On the contrary, however, his blessing alone finds a way, even through all hindrances, to bring all things to a happy and favorable outcome for us; again, though entirely without it, to enable us to

obtain some glory and opulence for ourselves (as we daily see impious men amassing great honors and riches),<sup>F264</sup> yet, inasmuch as those upon whom the curse of God rests taste not even the least particle of happiness, without this blessing we shall obtain nothing but what turns to our misfortune. For we ought by no means to desire what makes men more miserable.

## 9. TRUST IN GOD'S BLESSING ONLY

Therefore, suppose we believe that every means toward a prosperous and desirable outcome rests upon the blessing of God alone; and that, when this is absent, all sorts of misery and calamity dog us. It remains for us not greedily to strive after riches and honors—whether relying upon our own dexterity of wit or our own diligence, or depending upon the favor of men, or having confidence in vainly imagined fortune—but for us always to look to the Lord so that by his guidance we may be led to whatever lot he has provided for us. Thus it will first come to pass that we shall not dash out to seize upon riches and usurp honors through wickedness and by stratagems and evil arts, or greed, to the injury of our neighbors; but pursue only those enterprises which do not lead us away from innocence.

Who can hope for the help of a divine blessing amidst frauds, robberies, and other wicked arts? For as that blessing follows only him who thinks purely and acts rightly, thus it calls back from crooked thoughts and wicked actions all those who seek it. Then will a bridle be put on us that we may not burn with an immoderate desire to grow rich or ambitiously pant after honors. For with what shamelessness does a man trust that he will be helped by God to obtain those things which he desires contrary to God's Word? Away with the thought that God would abet with his blessing what he curses with his mouth! Lastly, if things do not go according to our wish and hope, we will still be restrained from impatience and loathing of our condition, whatever it may be. For we shall know that this is to murmur against God, by whose will riches and poverty, contempt and honor, are dispensed. To sum up, he who rests solely upon the blessing of God, as it has been here expressed, will neither strive with evil arts after those things which men customarily madly seek after, which he realizes will not profit him, nor will he, if things go well, give credit to himself or even to his diligence, or industry, or fortune. Rather, he will give

God the credit as its Author. But if, while other men's affairs flourish, he makes but slight advancement, or even slips back, he will still bear his low estate with greater equanimity and moderation of mind than some profane person would bear a moderate success which merely does not correspond with his wish. For he indeed possesses a solace in which he may repose more peacefully than in the highest degree of wealth or power. Since this leads to his salvation, he considers that his affairs are ordained by the Lord. We see that David was so minded; while he follows God and gives himself over to his leading, he attests that he is like a child weaned from his mother's breast, and that he does not occupy himself with things too deep and wonderful for him [<sup><19D101></sup>Psalm 131:1-2].

### 10. SELF-DENIAL HELPS US BEAR ADVERSITY

And for godly minds the peace and forbearance we have spoken of ought not to rest solely in this point; but it must also be extended to every occurrence to which the present life is subject. Therefore, he alone has duly denied himself who has so totally resigned himself to the Lord that he permits every part of his life to be governed by God's will. He who will be thus composed in mind, whatever happens, will not consider himself miserable nor complain of his lot with ill will toward God. How necessary this disposition is will appear if you weigh the many chance happenings to which we are subject. Various diseases repeatedly trouble us: now plague rages; now we are cruelly beset by the calamities of war; now ice and hail, consuming the year's expectation, lead to barrenness, which reduces us to poverty; wife, parents, children, neighbors, are snatched away by death; our house is burned by fire. It is on account of these occurrences that men curse their life, loathe the day of their birth, abominate heaven and the light of day, rail against God, and as they are eloquent in blasphemy, accuse him of injustice and cruelty. But in these matters the believer must also look to God's kindness and truly fatherly indulgence. Accordingly, if he sees his house reduced to solitude by the removal of his kinsfolk, he will not indeed even then cease to bless the Lord, but rather will turn his attention to this thought: nevertheless, the grace of the Lord, which dwells in my house, will not leave it desolate. Or, if his crops are blasted by frost, or destroyed by ice, or beaten down with hail, and he sees famine threatening, yet he will not despair or bear a

grudge against God, but will remain firm in this trust [cf. <sup><197847></sup>Psalm 78:47]: “Nevertheless we are in the Lord’s protection, sheep brought up in his pastures” [<sup><197913></sup>Psalm 79:13]. The Lord will therefore supply food to us even in extreme barrenness. If he shall be afflicted by disease, he will not even then be so unmanned by the harshness of pain as to break forth into impatience and expostulate with God; but, by considering the righteousness and gentleness of God’s chastening, he will recall himself to forbearance. In short, whatever happens, because he will know it ordained of God, he will undergo it with a peaceful and grateful mind so as not obstinately to resist the command of him into whose power he once for all surrendered himself and his every possession.

Especially let that foolish and most miserable consolation of the pagans be far away from the breast of the Christian man; to strengthen their minds against adversities, they charged these to fortune. <sup>F265</sup> Against fortune they considered it foolish to be angry because she was blind <sup>F266</sup> and unthinking, with unseeing eyes wounding the deserving and the undeserving at the same time. <sup>F267</sup> On the contrary, the rule of piety is that God’s hand alone is the judge and governor of fortune, good or bad, and that it does not rush about with heedless force, but with most orderly justice deals out good as well as ill to us.

# CHAPTER 8

## BEARING THE CROSS, A PART OF SELF-DENIAL

*(We are to take up our cross, as followers of Christ, 1-2)*

### 1. CHRIST'S CROSS AND OURS

But it behooves the godly mind to climb still higher, to the height to which Christ calls his disciples: that each must bear his own cross [<sup><401624></sup>Matthew 16:24]. For whomever the Lord has adopted and deemed worthy of his fellowship ought to prepare themselves for a hard, toilsome, and unquiet life, crammed with very many and various kinds of evil. It is the Heavenly Father's will thus to exercise them so as to put his own children to a definite test. Beginning with Christ, his first-born, he follows this plan with all his children. For even though that Son was beloved above the rest, and in him the Father's mind was well pleased [<sup><400317></sup>Matthew 3:17 and 17:5], yet we see that far from being treated indulgently or softly, to speak the truth, while he dwelt on earth he was not only tried by a perpetual cross but his whole life was nothing but a sort of perpetual cross. The apostle notes the reason: that it behooved him to "learn obedience through what he suffered" [<sup><580508></sup>Hebrews 5:8].

Why should we exempt ourselves, therefore, from the condition to which Christ our Head had to submit, especially since he submitted to it for our sake to show us an example of patience in himself? Therefore, the apostle teaches that God has destined all his children to the end that they be conformed to Christ [<sup><450829></sup>Romans 8:29]. Hence also in harsh and difficult conditions, regarded as adverse and evil, a great comfort comes to us: we share Christ's sufferings in order that as he has passed from a labyrinth of all evils into heavenly glory, we may in like manner be led through various tribulations to the same glory [<sup><441422></sup>Acts 14:22]. So Paul himself elsewhere states: when we come to know the sharing of his sufferings, we at the same time grasp the power of his resurrection; and when we become like him in his death, we are thus made ready to share his

glorious resurrection [<sup><500310></sup>Philippians 3:10-11]. How much can it do to soften all the bitterness of the cross, that the more we are afflicted with adversities, the more surely our fellowship with Christ is confirmed! By communion with him the very sufferings themselves not only become blessed to us but also help much in promoting our salvation.

## **2. THE CROSS LEADS US TO PERFECT TRUST IN GOD'S POWER**

Besides this, our Lord had no need to undertake the bearing of the cross except to attest and prove his obedience to the Father. But as for us, there are many reasons why we must pass our lives under a continual cross. First, as we are by nature too inclined to attribute everything to our flesh—unless our feebleness be shown, as it were, to our eyes—we readily esteem our virtue above its due measure. And we do not doubt, whatever happens, that against all difficulties it will remain unbroken and unconquered. Hence we are lifted up into stupid and empty confidence in the flesh; and relying on it, we are then insolently proud against God himself, as if our own powers were sufficient without his grace.

He can best restrain this arrogance when he proves to us by experience not only the great incapacity but also the frailty under which we labor. Therefore, he afflicts us either with disgrace or poverty, or bereavement, or disease, or other calamities. Utterly unequal to bearing these, in so far as they touch us, we soon succumb to them. Thus humbled, we learn to call upon his power, which alone makes us stand fast under the weight of afflictions. But even the most holy persons, however much they may recognize that they stand not through their own strength but through God's grace, are too sure of their own fortitude and constancy unless by the testing of the cross he bring them into a deeper knowledge of himself. This complacency even stole upon David: "In my tranquillity I said, 'I shall never be moved.' O Jehovah, by thy favor thou hadst established strength for my mountain; thou didst hide thy face, I was dismayed" [<sup><193006></sup>Psalm 30:6-7]. <sup>F268</sup> For he confesses that in prosperity his senses had been so benumbed with sluggishness that, neglecting God's grace, upon which he ought to have depended, he so relied upon himself as to promise himself he could ever stand fast. If this happened to so great a prophet, what one of us should not be afraid and take care?

In peaceful times, then, they preened themselves on their great constancy and patience, only to learn when humbled by adversity that all this was hypocrisy. Believers, warned, I say, by such proofs of their diseases, advance toward humility and so, sloughing off perverse confidence in the flesh, betake themselves to God's grace. Now when they have betaken themselves there they experience the presence of a divine power in which they have protection enough and to spare.

*(This is needful to teach us patience and obedience, 3-6)*

### **3. THE CROSS PERMITS US TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AND GIVES US HOPE FOR THE FUTURE**

And this is what Paul teaches: "Tribulations produce patience; and patience, tried character" [<sup><450503></sup>Romans 5:3-4, cf. Vg.]. That God has promised to be with believers in tribulation [cf. <sup><470104></sup>2 Corinthians 1:4] they experience to be true, while, supported by his hand, they patiently endure—an endurance quite unattainable by their own effort. The saints, therefore, through forbearance experience the fact that God, when there is need, provides the assistance that he has promised. Thence, also, is their hope strengthened, inasmuch as it would be the height of ingratitude not to expect that in time to come God's truthfulness will be as constant and firm as they have already experienced it to be. Now we see how many good things, interwoven, spring from the cross. For, overturning that good opinion which we falsely entertain concerning our own strength, and unmasking our hypocrisy, which affords us delight, the cross strikes at our perilous confidence in the flesh. It teaches us, thus humbled, to rest upon God alone, with the result that we do not faint or yield. Hope, moreover, follows victory in so far as the Lord, by performing what he has promised, establishes his truth for the time to come. Even if these were the only reasons, it plainly appears how much we need the practice of bearing the cross. <sup>F269</sup>

And it is of no slight importance for you to be cleansed of your blind love of self that you may be made more nearly aware of your incapacity; to feel your own incapacity that you may learn to distrust yourself; to distrust yourself that you may transfer your trust to God; to rest with a trustful heart in God that, relying upon his help, you may persevere unconquered

to the end; to take your stand in his grace that you may comprehend the truth of his promises; to have unquestioned certainty of his promises that your hope may thereby be strengthened.

#### 4. THE CROSS TRAINS US TO PATIENCE AND OBEDIENCE

The Lord also has another purpose for afflicting his people: to test their patience and to instruct them to obedience. Not that they can manifest any other obedience to him save what he has given them. But it so pleases him by unmistakable proofs to make manifest and clear the graces which he has conferred upon the saints, that these may not lie idle, hidden within.

Therefore, by bringing into the open the power and constancy to forbear, with which he has endowed his servants, he is said to test their patience. From this arise those expressions: that God tried Abraham, and proved his piety from the fact that he did not refuse to sacrifice his one and only son [<sup><012201></sup>Genesis 22:1,12]. Therefore, Peter likewise teaches that our faith is proved by tribulations as gold is tested in a fiery furnace [<sup><600107></sup>1 Peter 1:7]. For who would say it is not expedient that the most excellent gift of patience, which the believer has received from his God, be put to use that it may be certain and manifest? Nor will men otherwise ever esteem it as it deserves.

But if God himself does right in providing occasion to stir up those virtues which he has conferred upon his believers in order that they may not be hidden in obscurity—nay, lie useless and pass away—the afflictions of the saints, without which they would have no forbearance, are amply justified. They are also, I assert, instructed by the cross to obey, because thus they are taught to live not according to their own whim but according to God's will. Obviously, if everything went according to their own liking, they would not know what it is to follow God. And Seneca recalls that it was an old proverb, in exhorting any man to endure adversities, to say, "Follow God."<sup>F270</sup> By this the ancients hinted, obviously, that a man truly submitted to God's yoke only when he yielded his hand and back to His rod. But if it is most proper that we should prove ourselves obedient to our Heavenly Father in all things, we must surely not refuse to have him accustom us in every way to render obedience to him.

## 5. THE CROSS AS MEDICINE

Still we do not see how necessary this obedience is to us unless we consider at the same time how great is the wanton impulse of our flesh to shake off God's yoke if we even for a moment softly and indulgently treat that impulse. For the same thing happens to it that happens to mettlesome horses. If they are fattened in idleness for some days, they cannot afterward be tamed for their high spirits; nor do they recognize their rider, whose command they previously obeyed. And what God complains of in the Israelites is continually in us: fattened and made flabby, we kick against him who has fed and nourished us [<sup><053215></sup> Deuteronomy 32:15]. Indeed, God's beneficence ought to have allured us to esteem and love his goodness. But inasmuch as our ill will is such that we are, instead, repeatedly corrupted by his indulgence, it is most necessary that we be restrained by some discipline in order that we may not jump into such wantonness. Thus, lest in the unmeasured abundance of our riches we go wild; lest, puffed up with honors, we become proud; lest, swollen with other good things—either of the soul or of the body, or of fortune—we grow haughty, the Lord himself, according as he sees it expedient, confronts us and subjects and restrains our unrestrained flesh with the remedy of the cross. And this he does in various ways in accordance with what is healthful for each man. For not all of us suffer in equal degree from the same diseases or, on that account, need the same harsh cure. From this it is to be seen that some are tried by one kind of cross, others by another. But since the heavenly physician treats some more gently but cleanses others by harsher remedies, while he wills to provide for the health of all, he yet leaves no one free and untouched, because he knows that all, to a man, are diseased.

## 6. THE CROSS AS FATHERLY CHASTISEMENT

Besides this, it is needful that our most merciful Father should not only anticipate our weakness but also often correct past transgressions so that he may keep us in lawful obedience to himself. Accordingly, whenever we are afflicted, remembrance of our past life ought immediately to come to mind; so we shall doubtless find that we have committed something deserving this sort of chastisement. And yet, exhortation to forbearance is not to be based principally upon the recognition of sin. For Scripture

furnishes a far better conception when it says that the Lord chastens us by adversities “so that we may not be condemned along with the world” [<sup><461132></sup>1 Corinthians 11:32]. Therefore, also, in the very harshness of tribulations we must recognize the kindness and generosity of our Father toward us, since he does not even then cease to promote our salvation. For he afflicts us not to ruin or destroy us but, rather, to free us from the condemnation of the world. That thought will lead us to what Scripture teaches in another place: “My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline, or grow weary when he reproveth you. For whom God loves, he rebukes, and embraces as a father his son” [<sup><200311></sup>Proverbs 3:11-12 p.]. When we recognize the Father’s rod, is it not our duty to show ourselves obedient and teachable children rather than, in arrogance, to imitate desperate men who have become hardened in their evil deeds? When we have fallen away from him, God destroys us unless by reproof he recalls us. Thus he rightly says that if we are without discipline we are illegitimate children, not sons [<sup><581208></sup>Hebrews 12:8]. We are, then, most perverse if when he declares his benevolence to us and the care that he takes for our salvation, we cannot bear him. Scripture teaches that this is the difference between unbelievers and believers: the former, like slaves of inveterate and double-dyed wickedness, with chastisement become only worse and more obstinate. But the latter, like freeborn sons, attain repentance. Now you must choose in which group you would prefer to be numbered. But since we have spoken concerning this matter elsewhere,<sup>F271</sup> content with a brief reference, I shall stop here.

*(Bearing the cross in persecution and other calamities, 7-8)*

## **7. SUFFERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS’ SAKE**

Now, to suffer persecution for righteousness’ sake is a singular comfort. For it ought to occur to us how much honor God bestows upon us in thus furnishing us with the special badge of his soldiery. I say that not only they who labor for the defense of the gospel but they who in any way maintain the cause of righteousness suffer persecution for righteousness. Therefore, whether in declaring God’s truth against Satan’s falsehoods or in taking up the protection of the good and the innocent against the wrongs of the wicked, we must undergo the offenses and hatred of the world, which may imperil either our life, our fortunes, or our honor. Let us not

grieve or be troubled in thus far devoting our efforts to God, or count ourselves miserable in those matters in which he has with his own lips declared us blessed [<sup><400510></sup> Matthew 5:10]. Even poverty, if it be judged in itself, is misery; likewise exile, contempt, prison, disgrace; finally, death itself is the ultimate of all calamities. But when the favor of our God breathes upon us, every one of these things turns into happiness for us. We ought accordingly to be content with the testimony of Christ rather than with the false estimation of the flesh. So it will come about that we shall rejoice after the apostle's example, "whenever he will count us worthy to suffer dishonor for his name" [<sup><440541></sup> Acts 5:41 p.]. What then? If, being innocent and of good conscience, we are stripped of our possessions by the wickedness of impious folk, we are indeed reduced to penury among men. But in God's presence in heaven our true riches are thus increased. If we are cast out of our own house, <sup>F272</sup> then we will be the more intimately received into God's family. If we are vexed and despised, we but take all the firmer root in Christ. If we are branded with disgrace and ignominy, we but have a fuller place in the Kingdom of God. If we are slain, entrance into the blessed life will thus be open to us. Let us be ashamed to esteem less than the shadowy and fleeting allurements of the present life, those things on which the Lord has set so great a value.

## **8. SUFFERING UNDER THE CROSS, THE CHRISTIAN FINDS CONSOLATION IN GOD**

Scripture, then, by these and like warnings gives us abundant comfort in either the disgrace or the calamity we bear for the sake of defending righteousness. Consequently, we are too ungrateful if we do not willingly and cheerfully undergo these things at the Lord's hand; especially since this sort of cross most properly belongs to believers, and by it Christ wills to be glorified in us, just as Peter teaches [<sup><600412></sup> 1 Peter 4:12 ff.]. But since for honorable natures to suffer disgrace is harsher than a hundred deaths, Paul specifically warns us we shall suffer not only persecutions but also reproaches because we hope in the living God [<sup><540410></sup> 1 Timothy 4:10]. Thus, in another passage he bids us walk after his example through ill repute and good repute [<sup><470608></sup> 2 Corinthians 6:8].

Yet such a cheerfulness is not required of us as to remove all feeling of bitterness and pain. Otherwise, in the cross there would be no forbearance

of the saints unless they were tormented by pain and anguished by trouble. If there were no harshness in poverty, no torment in diseases, no sting in disgrace, no dread in death—what fortitude or moderation would there be in bearing them with indifference? But since each of these, with an inborn bitterness, by its very nature bites the hearts of us all, the fortitude of the believing man is brought to light if—tried by the feeling of such bitterness—however grievously he is troubled with it, yet valiantly resisting, he surmounts it. Here his forbearance reveals itself: if sharply pricked he is still restrained by the fear of God from breaking into any intemperate act. Here his cheerfulness shines if, wounded by sorrow and grief, he rests in the spiritual consolation of God.

*(The Christian meets suffering as sent by God, but with no Stoic insensibility, 9-10)*

## **9. THE CHRISTIAN, UNLIKE THE STOIC, GIVES EXPRESSION TO HIS PAIN AND SORROW**

This struggle which believers when they strive for patience and moderation maintain against the natural feeling of sorrow is fittingly described by Paul in these words: “We are pressed in every way but not rendered anxious; we are afflicted but not left destitute; we endure persecution but in it are not deserted; we are cast down but do not perish” [<sup><470408></sup>2 Corinthians 4:8-9 p.]. You see that patiently to bear the cross is not to be utterly stupefied and to be deprived of all feeling of pain. It is not as the Stoics of old foolishly described “the great-souled man”: one who, having cast off all human qualities, was affected equally by adversity and prosperity, by sad times and happy ones—nay, who like a stone was not affected at all.<sup>F273</sup> And what did this sublime wisdom profit them? They painted a likeness of forbearance that has never been found among men, and can never be realized. Rather, while they want to possess a forbearance too exact and precise, they have banished its power from human life.

Now, among the Christians there are also new Stoics,<sup>F274</sup> who count it depraved not only to groan and weep but also to be sad and care ridden. These paradoxes proceed, for the most part, from idle men who, exercising themselves more in speculation than in action, can do nothing but invent

such paradoxes for us. Yet we have nothing to do with this iron philosophy which our Lord and Master has condemned not only by his word, but also by his example. For he groaned and wept both over his own and others' misfortunes. And he taught his disciples in the same way: "The world," he says, "will rejoice; but you will be sorrowful and will weep" [<sup><431620></sup> John 16:20 p.]. And that no one might turn it into a vice, he openly proclaimed, "Blessed are those who mourn" [<sup><400504></sup> Matthew 5:4]. No wonder! For if all weeping is condemned, what shall we judge concerning the Lord himself, from whose body tears of blood trickled down [<sup><422244></sup> Luke 22:44]? If all fear is branded as unbelief, how shall we account for that dread with which, we read, he was heavily stricken [<sup><402637></sup> Matthew 26:37; <sup><411433></sup> Mark 14:33]? If all sadness displeases us, how will it please us that he confesses his soul "sorrowful even to death" [<sup><402638></sup> Matthew 26:38]?

## **10. REAL SORROW AND REAL PATIENCE IN CONFLICT WITH EACH OTHER**

I decided to say this in order to recall godly minds from despair, lest, because they cannot cast off the natural feeling of sorrow, they forthwith renounce the pursuit of patience. This must necessarily happen to those who make patience into insensibility, and a valiant and constant man into a stock. For Scripture praises the saints for their forbearance when, so afflicted with harsh misfortune, they do not break or fall; so stabbed with bitterness, they are at the same time flooded with spiritual joy; so pressed by apprehension, they recover their breath, revived by God's consolation. In the meantime, their hearts still harbor a contradiction between their natural sense, which flees and dreads what it feels adverse to itself, and their disposition to godliness, which even through these difficulties presses toward obedience to the divine will. The Lord expresses this contradiction when he speaks to Peter as follows: "When you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would. But when you become old... another will gird you and lead you where you do not wish to go" [John 21:18 p.]. It is unlikely that Peter, when it became necessary to glorify God through death, was drawn to it, unwilling and resisting. Otherwise, there would have been little praise for his martyrdom. But, even though he obeyed the divine command with the utmost fervor of

heart, yet, because he had not put off his human nature, he was pulled apart by a double will. For while he contemplated that bloody death which he was to die, stricken with dread of it, he would gladly have escaped. On the other hand, when it came to his mind that he was called to it by God's command, having overcome and trampled his fear, he willingly and even cheerfully undertook it. This, therefore, we must try to do if we would be disciples of Christ, in order that our minds may be steeped in such reverence and obedience toward God as to be able to tame and subjugate to his command all contrary affections. Thus it will come to pass that, by whatever kind of cross we may be troubled, even in the greatest tribulations of mind, we shall firmly keep our patience. For the adversities themselves will have their own bitterness to gnaw at us; thus afflicted by disease, we shall both groan and be uneasy and pant after health; thus pressed by poverty, we shall be pricked by the arrows of care and sorrow; thus we shall be smitten by the pain of disgrace, contempt, injustice; thus at the funerals of our dear ones we shall weep the tears that are owed to our nature. But the conclusion will always be: the Lord so willed, therefore let us follow his will. Indeed, amid the very pricks of pain, amid groaning and tears, this thought must intervene: to incline our heart to bear cheerfully those things which have so moved it.

## **11. PATIENCE ACCORDING TO PHILOSOPHIC AND CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING**

Now, since we have taken the prime reason for bearing the cross from the contemplation of the divine will, we must define in a few words the difference between philosophic and Christian patience. Certainly, very few philosophers have climbed to such a height of reason as to understand that through afflictions we are tested by the hand of God, and to reckon that in this respect we must obey God. But they also advance no other reason than that it must be so.<sup>F275</sup> What else is this but to say that you must yield to God because it is vain for you to try to resist him? For if we obey God only because it is necessary, if we should be allowed to escape, we will cease to obey him. But Scripture bids us contemplate in the will of God something far different: namely, first righteousness and equity, then concern for our own salvation. Of this sort, then, are Christian exhortations to patience. Whether poverty or exile, or prison, or insult, or

disease, or bereavement, or anything like them torture us, we must think that none of these things happens except by the will and providence of God, that he does nothing except with a well-ordered justice. <sup>F276</sup> What then? Do not our innumerable and daily offenses deserve to be chastised more severely and with heavier rods than the afflictions he lays upon us out of his kindness? Is it not perfectly fair that our flesh be tamed and made accustomed, as it were, to the yoke, lest it lustfully rage according to its own inward nature? Are not God's right and truth worth our trouble? But if God's undoubted equity appears in afflictions, we cannot either murmur or wrestle against it without iniquity. Now we do not hear that barren incantation, "We must yield because it is necessary," but a living and fully effective precept, "We must obey because it is unlawful to resist; we must bear patiently, since impatience would be insolence against God's righteousness."

Now, because that only is pleasing to us which we recognize to be for our salvation and good, our most merciful Father consoles us also in this respect when he asserts that in the very act of afflicting us with the cross he is providing for our salvation. But if it be clear that our afflictions are for our benefit, why should we not undergo them with a thankful and quiet mind?

Therefore, in patiently suffering these tribulations, we do not yield to necessity but we consent for our own good. These thoughts, I say, bring it to pass that, however much in bearing the cross our minds are constrained by the natural feeling of bitterness, they are as much diffused with spiritual joy. From this, thanksgiving also follows, which cannot exist without joy; but if the praise of the Lord and thanksgiving can come forth only from a cheerful and happy heart—and there is nothing that ought to interrupt this in us—it thus is clear how necessary it is that the bitterness of the cross be tempered with spiritual joy.

# CHAPTER 9

## MEDITATION ON THE FUTURE LIFE <sup>F277</sup>

*(By our tribulations God weans us from excessive love  
of this present life, 1-2)*

### 1. THE VANITY OF THIS LIFE

Whatever kind of tribulation presses upon us, we must ever look to this end: to accustom ourselves to contempt for the present life and to be aroused thereby to meditate upon the future life. For since God knows best how much we are inclined by nature to a brutish love of this world, he uses the fittest means to draw us back and to shake off our sluggishness, lest we cleave too tenaciously to that love. There is not one of us, indeed, who does not wish to seem throughout his life to aspire and strive after heavenly immortality. For it is a shame for us to be no better than brute beasts, whose condition would be no whit inferior to our own if there were not left to us hope of eternity after death. But if you examine the plans, the efforts, the deeds, of anyone, there you will find nothing else but earth. Now our blockishness arises from the fact that our minds, stunned by the empty dazzlement of riches, power, and honors, become so deadened that they can see no farther. The heart also, occupied with avarice, ambition, and lust, is so weighed down that it cannot rise up higher. In fine, the whole soul, enmeshed in the allurements of the flesh, seeks its happiness on earth. To counter this evil the Lord instructs his followers in the vanity of the present life by continual proof of its miseries. Therefore, that they may not promise themselves a deep and secure peace in it, he permits them often to be troubled and plagued either with wars or tumults, or robberies, or other injuries. That they may not pant with too great eagerness after fleeting and transient riches, or repose in those which they possess, he sometimes by exile, sometimes by barrenness of the earth, sometimes by fire, sometimes by other means, reduces them to poverty, or at least confines them to a moderate station. That they may not too complacently take delight in the goods of marriage, <sup>F278</sup> he either causes

them to be troubled by the depravity of their wives or humbles them by evil offspring, or afflicts them with bereavement. But if, in all these matters, he is more indulgent toward them, yet, that they may not either be puffed up with vainglory or exult in self-assurance, he sets before their eyes, through diseases and perils, how unstable and fleeting are all the goods that are subject to mortality.

Then only do we rightly advance by the discipline of the cross,<sup>F279</sup> when we learn that this life, judged in itself, is troubled, turbulent, unhappy in countless ways, and in no respect clearly happy; that all those things which are judged to be its goods are uncertain, fleeting, vain, and vitiated by many intermingled evils. From this, at the same time, we conclude that in this life we are to seek and hope for nothing but struggle; when we think of our crown, we are to raise our eyes to heaven. For this we must believe: that the mind is never seriously aroused to desire and ponder the life to come unless it be previously imbued with contempt for the present life.

## **2. OUR TENDENCY TO LEAVE UNNOTICED THE VANITY OF THIS LIFE**

Indeed, there is no middle ground between these two: either the world must become worthless to us or hold us bound by intemperate love of it. Accordingly, if we have any concern for eternity, we must strive diligently to strike off these evil fetters. Now, since the present life has very many allurements with which to entice us, and much show of pleasantness, grace, and sweetness wherewith to wheedle us, it is very much in our interest to be called away now and again so as not to be captivated by such ponderings. What, then, I beg of you, would happen if we enjoyed here an enduring round of wealth and happiness, since we cannot, even with evil continually goading us, be sufficiently awakened to weigh the misery of this life?

That human life is like smoke [cf. <19A203>Psalm 102:3] or shadow [cf. <19A211>Psalm 102:11] is not only obvious to the learned, but even ordinary folk have no proverb more commonplace than this. And since they counted this something very profitable to know, they have couched it in many striking sayings. But there is almost nothing that we regard more negligently or remember less. For we undertake all things as if we were

establishing immortality for ourselves on earth. If some corpse is being buried, or we walk among graves, because the likeness of death then meets our eyes, we, I confess, philosophize brilliantly concerning the vanity of this life. Yet even this we do not do consistently, for often all these things affect us not one bit. But when it happens, our philosophy is for the moment; it vanishes as soon as we turn our backs, and leaves not a trace of remembrance behind it. In the end, like applause in the theater for some pleasing spectacle, it evaporates. Forgetful not only of death but also of mortality itself, as if no inkling of it had ever reached us, we return to our thoughtless assurance of earthly immortality. If anyone in the meantime croaks the proverb: “Man is the creature of a day,”<sup>F280</sup> we indeed admit it; but with no attention, so that the thought of perpetuity nonetheless remains fixed in our minds. Who, then, can deny that it is very much worthwhile for all of us, I do not say to be admonished with words, but by all the experiences that can happen, to be convinced of the miserable condition of earthly life; inasmuch as, even when convinced, we scarcely cease to be stunned with a base and foolish admiration of it, as if it contained in itself the ultimate goal of good things. But if God has to instruct us, it is our duty, in turn, to listen to him calling us, shaking us out of our sluggishness, that, holding the world in contempt, we may strive with all our heart to meditate upon the life to come.

*(A right estimate of the present life, which is transient and unsatisfying, leads us to meditate on the life to come, 3-6)*

### **3. GRATITUDE FOR EARTHLY LIFE!**

But let believers accustom themselves to a contempt of the present life that engenders no hatred of it or ingratitude against God. Indeed, this life, however crammed with infinite miseries it may be, is still rightly to be counted among those blessings of God which are not to be spurned. Therefore, if we recognize in it no divine benefit, we are already guilty of grave ingratitude toward God himself. For believers especially, this ought to be a testimony of divine benevolence, wholly destined, as it is, to promote their salvation. For before he shows us openly the inheritance of eternal glory, God wills by lesser proofs to show himself to be our Father. These are the benefits that are daily conferred on us by him. Since, therefore, this life serves us in understanding God’s goodness, should we

despise it as if it had no grain of good in itself? We must, then, become so disposed and minded that we count it among those gifts of divine generosity which are not at all to be rejected. For if testimonies of Scripture were lacking, and they are very many and very clear, nature itself also exhorts us to give thanks to the Lord because he has brought us into its light, granted us the use of it, and provided all the necessary means to preserve it.

And this is a much greater reason if in it we reflect that we are in preparation, so to speak, for the glory of the Heavenly Kingdom. For the Lord has ordained that those who are one day to be crowned in heaven should first undergo struggles on earth in order that they may not triumph until they have overcome the difficulties of war, and attained victory.

Then there is another reason: we begin in the present life, through various benefits, to taste the sweetness of the divine generosity in order to whet our hope and desire to seek after the full revelation of this. When we are certain that the earthly life we live is a gift of God's kindness, as we are beholden to him for it we ought to remember it and be thankful. Then we shall come in good time to consider its most unhappy condition in order that we may, indeed, be freed from too much desire of it, to which, as has been said, we are of ourselves inclined by nature.

#### **4. THE RIGHT LONGING FOR ETERNAL LIFE**

Now whatever is taken away from the perverse love of this life ought to be added to the desire for a better one. I confess that those showed a very sound judgment who thought it the best thing not to be born, and the next best thing to die as quickly as possible [cf. <sup><210402></sup>Ecclesiastes 4:2-3]. <sup>F281</sup> Since they were deprived of the light of God and true religion, what could they see in it that was not unhappy and repulsive? And they did not act without reason who celebrated the birthdays of their kindred with sorrow and tears, but their funeral rites with solemn joy. <sup>F282</sup> But they did this without profit because, bereft of the right teaching of faith, they did not see how something that is neither blessed nor desirable of itself can turn into something good for the devout. Thus in despair they brought their judgment to a close.

Let the aim of believers in judging mortal life, then, be that while they understand it to be of itself nothing but misery, they may with greater eagerness and dispatch betake themselves wholly to meditate upon that eternal life to come. When it comes to a comparison with the life to come, the present life can not only be safely neglected but, compared to the former, must be utterly despised and loathed. For, if heaven is our homeland, what else is the earth but our place of exile? If departure from the world is entry into life, what else is the world but a sepulcher? And what else is it for us to remain in life but to be immersed in death? If to be freed from the body is to be released into perfect freedom, what else is the body but a prison? <sup>F283</sup> If to enjoy the presence of God is the summit of happiness, is not to be without this, misery? But until we leave the world “we are away from the Lord” [<sup><470506></sup>2 Corinthians 5:6]. Therefore, if the earthly life be compared with the heavenly, it is doubtless to be at once despised and trampled under foot. Of course it is never to be hated except in so far as it holds us subject to sin; although not even hatred of that condition may ever properly be turned against life itself. In any case, it is still fitting for us to be so affected either by weariness or hatred of it that, desiring its end, we may also be prepared to abide in it at the Lord’s pleasure, so that our weariness may be far from all murmuring and impatience. For it is like a sentry post <sup>F284</sup> at which the Lord has posted us, which we must hold until he recalls us. Paul, indeed, held too long in the bonds of the body, laments his lot and sighs with fervent desire for redemption [<sup><450724></sup>Romans 7:24]. Nonetheless, that he may obey God’s command he professes himself ready for either [<sup><500123></sup>Philippians 1:23-24]. For he acknowledges that he owes it to God to glorify his name whether through death or through life [<sup><451408></sup>Romans 14:8]. But it is for God to determine what best conduces to his glory. Therefore, if it befits us to live and die to the Lord, let us leave to his decision the hour of our death and life, but in such a way that we may both burn with the zeal for death and be constant in meditation. But in comparison with the immortality to come, let us despise this life and long to renounce it, on account of bondage of sin, whenever it shall please the Lord.

## 5. AGAINST THE FEAR OF DEATH!

But monstrous it is that many who boast themselves Christians are gripped by such a great fear of death, rather than a desire for it, that they tremble at the least mention of it, as of something utterly dire and disastrous. Surely, it is no wonder if the natural awareness in us bristles with dread at the mention of our dissolution. But it is wholly unbearable that there is not in Christian hearts any light of piety to overcome and suppress that fear, whatever it is, by a greater consolation. For if we deem this unstable, defective, corruptible, fleeting, wasting, rotting tabernacle of our body to be so dissolved that it is soon renewed unto a firm, perfect, incorruptible, and finally, heavenly glory, will not faith compel us ardently to seek what nature dreads? If we should think that through death we are recalled from exile to dwell in the fatherland, in the heavenly fatherland, would we get no comfort from this fact?

But, someone will object, there is nothing that does not crave to endure. <sup>F285</sup>To be sure, I agree; and so I maintain that we must have regard for the immortality to come, where a firm condition will be ours which nowhere appears on earth. For Paul very well teaches that believers eagerly hasten to death not because they want to be unclothed but because they long to be more fully clothed [<sup><470502></sup> 2 Corinthians 5:2-3]. Shall the brute animals, and even inanimate creatures—even trees and stones—conscious of the emptiness of their present existence, long for the final day of resurrection, to be released from emptiness with the children of God [<sup><450819></sup> Romans 8:19 ff.]; and shall we, endowed with the light of understanding, and above understanding illumined with the Spirit of God, when our very being is at stake, not lift our minds beyond this earthly decay?

But it is not my present purpose, nor is it the proper place, to dispute against this very great perversity. At the very beginning I stated that I had no intention of undertaking a detailed treatment of commonplaces. I would advise such timid minds to read Cyprian's treatise *On the Mortality*, <sup>F286</sup> unless they deserved to be sent off to the philosophers, that they may begin to blush when they see the contempt of death that the latter display.

Let us, however, consider this settled: that no one has made progress in the school of Christ who does not joyfully await the day of death and final resurrection. Paul, too, distinguishes all believers by this mark

[<560213> Titus 2:13; cf. <550408> 2 Timothy 4:8], and Scripture habitually recalls us to it whenever it would set forth proof of perfect happiness. “Rejoice,” says the Lord, “and raise your heads; for your redemption is drawing near.” [<422128> Luke 21:28 p.] Is it reasonable, I ask you, that what our Lord meant to be sufficient to arouse us to rejoicing and good cheer should engender nothing but sorrow and dismay? If this is so, why do we still boast of him as our Master? Let us, then, take hold of a sounder view, and even though the blind and stupid desire of the flesh resists, let us not hesitate to await the Lord’s coming, not only with longing, but also with groaning and sighs, as the happiest thing of all. He will come to us as Redeemer, and rescuing us from this boundless abyss of all evils and miseries, he will lead us into that blessed inheritance of his life and glory.

## **6. THE COMFORT PREPARED FOR BELIEVERS BY ASPIRATION FOR THE LIFE TO COME**

This is obvious: the entire company of believers, so long as they dwell on earth, must be “as sheep destined for the slaughter” [<450836> Romans 8:36] to be conformed to Christ their Head. They would therefore have been desperately unhappy unless, with mind intent upon heaven, they had surmounted whatever is in this world, and passed beyond the present aspect of affairs [cf. <461519> 1 Corinthians 15:19]. On the contrary, when they have once lifted their heads above everything earthly, even though they may see wicked men flourishing in wealth and honors, even though they may observe the latter enjoying deep peace, taking pride in the splendor and luxury of all their possessions, abounding with every delight <sup>F287</sup>—if, moreover, believers are troubled by the wickedness of these men, bear their arrogant insults, are robbed through their greed, or harried by any other sort of inordinate desire on their part—they will without difficulty bear up under such evils also. For before their eyes will be that day when the Lord will receive his faithful people into the peace of his Kingdom, “will wipe away every tear from their eyes” [<660717> Revelation 7:17; cf. <232508> Isaiah 25:8], will clothe them with “a robe of glory... and rejoicing” [Ecclus. 6:31, EV], will feed them with the unspeakable sweetness of his delights, will elevate them to his sublime fellowship—in fine, will deign to make them sharers in his happiness. But those impious ones who have flourished on earth he will cast into utter disgrace; he will

turn their delights into tortures, their laughter and mirth into weeping and gnashing of teeth; he will trouble their peace with the dire torment of conscience; he will punish their wantonness with unquenchable fire [cf. <236624> Isaiah 66:24; <402541> Matthew 25:41; <410943> Mark 9:43,46; <662108> Revelation 21:8]; <sup>F288</sup> he will also make them bow their heads in subjection to the godly, whose patience they have abused. For, as Paul testifies, this is righteousness: to grant rest to the unhappy and unjustly afflicted, to repay with affliction the wicked who afflict the godly, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven [<sup><530106></sup> 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7].

This truly is our sole comfort. If it be taken away, either our minds must become despondent or, to our destruction, be captivated with the empty solace of this world. Even the prophet confesses that his steps had well-nigh wavered when he stopped too long to dwell upon the present prosperity of the wicked [<sup><197302></sup> Psalm 73:2-3], and he could not understand it until he entered God's sanctuary and gazed upon the ultimate end of the pious and the wicked [<sup><197317></sup> Psalm 73:17]. To conclude in a word: if believers' eyes are turned to the power of the resurrection, in their hearts the cross of Christ will at last triumph over the devil, flesh, sin, and wicked men.

# CHAPTER 10

## HOW WE MUST USE THE PRESENT LIFE AND ITS HELPS

*(The good things of this life are to be enjoyed as gifts of God, 1-2)*

### 1. DOUBLE DANGER: MISTAKEN STRICTNESS AND MISTAKEN LAXITY

By such elementary instruction, Scripture at the same time duly informs us what is the right use of earthly benefits—a matter not to be neglected in the ordering of our life. For if we are to live, we have also to use those helps necessary for living. And we also cannot avoid those things which seem to serve delight more than necessity. Therefore we must hold to a measure so as to use them with a clear conscience, whether for necessity or for delight. By his word the Lord lays down this measure when he teaches that the present life is for his people as a pilgrimage<sup>F289</sup> on which they are hastening toward the Heavenly Kingdom [<sup><032523></sup> Leviticus 25:23; <sup><132915></sup> 1 Chronicles 29:15; <sup><193913></sup> Psalm 39:13; <sup><19B919></sup> Psalm 119:19; <sup><581108></sup> Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16; 13:14; <sup><600211></sup> 1 Peter 2:11]. If we must simply pass through this world, there is no doubt we ought to use its good things in so far as they help rather than hinder our course. Thus Paul rightly persuades us to use this world as if not using it; and to buy goods with the same attitude as one sells them [<sup><460731></sup> 1 Corinthians 7:31-30].

But because this topic is a slippery one and slopes on both sides into error, let us try to plant our feet where we may safely stand. There were some otherwise good and holy men who when they saw intemperance and wantonness, when not severely restrained, ever raging with unbridled excess, desired to correct this dangerous evil. This one plan occurred to them: they allowed man to use physical goods in so far as necessity required.<sup>F290</sup> A godly counsel indeed, but they were far too severe. For they would fetter consciences more tightly than does the Word of the Lord—a very dangerous thing. Now, to them necessity means to abstain

from all things that they could do without; thus, according to them, it would scarcely be permitted to add any food at all to plain bread and water. And others are even more severe. We are told of Crates the Theban, that he cast all his goods into the sea; for he thought that unless they were destroyed, they would destroy him.<sup>F291</sup>

But many today, while they seek an excuse for the intemperance of the flesh in its use of external things, and while they would meanwhile pave the road to licentious indulgence, take for granted what I do not at all concede to them: that this freedom is not to be restrained by any limitation but to be left to every man's conscience to use as far as seems lawful to him. Certainly I admit that consciences neither ought to nor can be bound here to definite and precise legal formulas; but inasmuch as Scripture gives general rules for lawful use, we ought surely to limit our use in accordance with them.

## 2. THE MAIN PRINCIPLE

Let this be our principle: that the use of God's gifts is not wrongly directed when it is referred to that end to which the Author himself created and destined them for us, since he created them for our good, not for our ruin. Accordingly, no one will hold to a straighter path than he who diligently looks to this end. Now if we ponder to what end God created food, we shall find that he meant not only to provide for necessity but also for delight and good cheer. Thus the purpose of clothing, apart from necessity, was comeliness and decency. In grasses, trees, and fruits, apart from their various uses, there is beauty of appearance and pleasantness of odor [cf. <sup><010209></sup>Genesis 2:9]. For if this were not true, the prophet would not have reckoned them among the benefits of God, "that wine gladdens the heart of man, that oil makes his face shine" [<sup><19A415></sup>Psalm 104:15 p.]. Scripture would not have reminded us repeatedly, in commending his kindness, that he gave all such things to men. And the natural qualities themselves of things demonstrate sufficiently to what end and extent we may enjoy them. Has the Lord clothed the flowers with the great beauty that greets our eyes, the sweetness of smell that is wafted upon our nostrils, and yet will it be unlawful for our eyes to be affected by that beauty, or our sense of smell by the sweetness of that odor? What? Did he not so distinguish colors as to make some more lovely than others? What?

Did he not endow gold and silver, ivory and marble, with a loveliness that renders them more precious than other metals or stones? Did he not, in short, render many things attractive to us, apart from their necessary use?  
F292

*(We are not to use these blessings indulgently, or to seek wealth greedily, but to serve dutifully in our calling, 3-6)*

### **3. A LOOK AT THE GIVER OF THE GIFT PREVENTS NARROW-MINDEDNESS AND IMMODERATION**

Away, then, with that inhuman philosophy which, while conceding only a necessary use of creatures, not only malignantly deprives us of the lawful fruit of God's beneficence but cannot be practiced unless it robs a man of all his senses and degrades him to a block.

But no less diligently, on the other hand, we must resist the lust of the flesh, which, unless it is kept in order, overflows without measure. And it has, as I have said, <sup>F293</sup> its own advocates, who, under the pretext of the freedom conceded, permit everything to it. First, one bridle is put upon it if it be determined that all things were created for us that we might recognize the Author and give thanks for his kindness toward us. Where is your thanksgiving if you so gorge yourself with banqueting or wine that you either become stupid or are rendered useless for the duties of piety and of your calling? Where is your recognition of God if your flesh boiling over with excessive abundance into vile lust infects the mind with its impurity so that you cannot discern anything that is right and honorable? Where is our gratefulness toward God for our clothing if in the sumptuousness of our apparel we both admire ourselves and despise others, if with its elegance and glitter we prepare ourselves for shameless conduct? Where is our recognition of God if our minds be fixed upon the splendor of our apparel? For many so enslave all their senses to delights that the mind lies overwhelmed. Many are so delighted with marble, gold, and pictures that they become marble, they turn, as it were, into metals and are like painted figures. The smell of the kitchen or the sweetness of its odors so stupefies others that they are unable to smell anything spiritual. The same thing is also to be seen in other matters. Therefore, clearly, leave to abuse God's gifts <sup>F294</sup> must be somewhat curbed, °and

Paul's rule is confirmed: that we should "make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires" [<sup><451314></sup>Romans 13:14], for if we yield too much to these, they boil up without measure or control.

#### **4. ASPIRATION TO ETERNAL LIFE ALSO DETERMINES A RIGHT OUR OUTWARD CONDUCT OF LIFE**

But there is no surer or more direct course than that which we receive from contempt of the present life and meditation upon heavenly immortality. For from this two rules follow: those who use this world should be so affected as if they did not use it; those who marry, as if they did not marry; those who buy, as if they did not buy, just as Paul enjoins [<sup><460729></sup>1 Corinthians 7:29-31]. The other rule is that they should know how to bear poverty peaceably and patiently, as well as to bear abundance moderately. He who bids you use this world as if you used it not destroys not only the intemperance of gluttony in food and drink, and excessive indulgence at table, in buildings and clothing, ambition, pride, arrogance, and overfastidiousness, but also all care and inclination that either diverts or hinders you from thought of the heavenly life and zeal to cultivate the soul. Long ago Cato truly said: "There is great care about dress, but great carelessness about virtue." To use the old proverb: those who are much occupied with the care of the body are for the most part careless about their own souls. <sup>F295</sup>

Therefore, even though the freedom of believers in external matters is not to be restricted to a fixed formula, yet it is surely subject to this law: to indulge oneself as little as possible; but, on the contrary, with unflagging effort of mind to insist upon cutting off all show of superfluous wealth, not to mention licentiousness, and diligently to guard against turning helps into hindrances.

#### **5. FRUGALITY, EARTHLY POSSESSIONS HELD IN TRUST**

The second rule will be: they who have narrow and slender resources should know how to go without things patiently, lest they be troubled by an immoderate desire for them. If they keep this rule of moderation, they will make considerable progress in the Lord's school. So, too, they who have not progressed, in some degree at least, in this respect have scarcely

anything to prove them disciples of Christ. For besides the fact that most other vices accompany the desire for earthly things, he who bears poverty impatiently also when in prosperity commonly betrays the contrary disease. This is my point: he who is ashamed of mean clothing will boast of costly clothing; he who, not content with a slender meal, is troubled by the desire for a more elegant one, will also intemperately abuse those elegances if they fall to his lot. He who will bear reluctantly, and with a troubled mind, his deprivation and humble condition if he be advanced to honors will by no means abstain from arrogance. To this end, then, let all those for whom the pursuit of piety is not a pretense strive to learn, by the Apostle's example, how to be filled and to hunger, to abound and to suffer want [<sup><500412></sup>Philippians 4:12].

Besides, Scripture has a third rule with which to regulate the use of earthly things. Of it we said something when we discussed the precepts of love.

<sup>F296</sup> It decrees that all those things were so given to us by the kindness of God, and so destined for our benefit, that they are, as it were, entrusted to us, and we must one day render account of them. Thus, therefore, we must so arrange it that this saying may continually resound in our ears: "Render account of your stewardship" [<sup><421602></sup>Luke 16:2]. At the same time let us remember by whom such reckoning is required: namely, him who has greatly commended abstinence, sobriety, frugality, and moderation, and has also abominated excess, pride, ostentation, and vanity; who approves no other distribution of good things than one joined with love; who has already condemned with his own lips all delights that draw man's spirit away from chastity and purity, or befog his mind.

## 6. THE LORD'S CALLING A BASIS OF OUR WAY OF LIFE

Finally, this point is to be noted: the Lord bids each one of us in all life's actions to look to his calling. <sup>F297</sup> For he knows with what great restlessness human nature flames, with what fickleness it is borne hither and thither, how its ambition longs to embrace various things at once. Therefore, lest through our stupidity and rashness everything be turned topsy-turvy, he has appointed duties for every man in his particular way of life. And that no one may thoughtlessly transgress his limits, he has named these various kinds of living "callings." Therefore each individual has his own kind of living assigned to him by the Lord as a sort of sentry

post <sup>F298</sup> so that he may not heedlessly wander about throughout life. Now, so necessary is this distinction that all our actions are judged in his sight by it, often indeed far otherwise than in the judgment of human and philosophical reason. No deed is considered more noble, even among philosophers, than to free one's country from tyranny. Yet a private citizen who lays his hand upon a tyrant is openly condemned by the heavenly judge [<sup><092407></sup> 1 Samuel 24:7, 11; 26:9]. <sup>F299</sup>

But I will not delay to list examples. It is enough if we know that the Lord's calling is in everything the beginning and foundation of well-doing. And if there is anyone who will not direct himself to it, he will never hold to the straight path in his duties.

Perhaps, sometimes, he could contrive something laudable in appearance; but whatever it may be in the eyes of men, it will be rejected before God's throne. Besides, there will be no harmony among the several parts of his life. Accordingly, your life will then be best ordered when it is directed to this goal. For no one, impelled by his own rashness, will attempt more than his calling will permit, because he will know that it is not lawful to exceed its bounds. A man of obscure station will lead a private life ungrudgingly so as not to leave the rank in which he has been placed by God. Again, it will be no slight relief from cares, labors, troubles, and other burdens for a man to know that God is his guide in all these things. The magistrate will discharge his functions more willingly; the head of the household will confine himself to his duty; each man will bear and swallow the discomforts, vexations, weariness, and anxieties in his way of life, when he has been persuaded that the burden was laid upon him by God. From this will arise also a singular consolation: that no task will be so sordid and base, provided you obey your calling in it, that it will not shine and be reckoned very precious in God's sight. <sup>F300</sup>

# CHAPTER 11

## JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH: FIRST THE DEFINITION OF THE WORD AND OF THE MATTER

*(Justification and regeneration, the terms defined, 1-4)*

### 1. PLACE AND MEANING OF THE DOCTRINE OF “JUSTIFICATION”

I believe I have already explained above, with sufficient care, how for men cursed under the law there remains, in faith, one sole means of recovering salvation. I believe I have also explained what faith itself is, and those benefits of God which it confers upon man, and the fruits it brings forth in him.<sup>F301</sup> Let us sum these up. Christ was given to us by God’s generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ’s blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ’s spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life. Of regeneration, indeed, the second of these gifts, I have said what seemed sufficient. The theme of justification was therefore more lightly touched upon because it was more to the point to understand first how little devoid of good works is the faith, through which alone we obtain free righteousness by the mercy of God; and what is the nature of the good works of the saints, with which part of this question is concerned.<sup>F302</sup> Therefore we must now discuss these matters thoroughly. And we must so discuss them as to bear in mind that this is the main hinge on which religion turns,<sup>F303</sup> so that we devote the greater attention and care to it. For unless you first of all grasp what your relationship to God is, and the nature of his judgment concerning you, you have neither a foundation on which to establish your salvation nor one on which to build piety toward God. But the need to know this will better appear from the knowledge itself.

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF JUSTIFICATION

But that we may not stumble on the very threshold—and this would happen if we should enter upon a discussion of a thing unknown—first let us explain what these expressions mean: that man is justified in God's sight, and that he is justified by faith or works. He is said to be justified in God's sight who is both reckoned righteous in God's judgment and has been accepted on account of his righteousness. Indeed, as iniquity is abominable to God, so no sinner can find favor in his eyes in so far as he is a sinner and so long as he is reckoned as such. Accordingly, wherever there is sin, there also the wrath and vengeance of God show themselves. Now he is justified who is reckoned in the condition not of a sinner, but of a righteous man; and for that reason, he stands firm before God's judgment seat while all sinners fall. If an innocent accused person be summoned before the judgment seat of a fair judge, where he will be judged according to his innocence, he is said to be "justified" before the judge. Thus, justified before God is the man who, freed from the company of sinners, has God to witness and affirm his righteousness. In the same way, therefore, he in whose life that purity and holiness will be found which deserves a testimony of righteousness before God's throne will be said to be justified by works, or else he who, by the wholeness of his works, can meet and satisfy God's judgment. On the contrary, justified by faith is he who, excluded from the righteousness of works, grasps the righteousness of Christ through faith, and clothed in it, appears in God's sight not as a sinner but as a righteous man.

Therefore, we explain justification simply as the acceptance with which God receives us into his favor as righteous men. And we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

## 3. SCRIPTURAL USAGE

There are many clear testimonies of Scripture to confirm this fact. First, it cannot be denied that this is a proper and most customary meaning of the word. But because it would take too long to collect all the passages and to compare them, let it suffice to have called them to our readers' attention, for they will readily observe such of themselves. I shall bring forward only

a few, where this justification of which we are speaking is expressly treated.

First, when Luke relates that the people, having heard Christ, justified God [<sup><420729></sup>Luke 7:29], and when Christ declares that “wisdom is justified by... her children” [<sup><420735></sup>Luke 7:35], Luke in the former passage (verse 29) does not mean that they confer righteousness. For righteousness always remains undivided with God, although the whole world tries to snatch it away from him. Nor does he, in 5:35, intend to justify the doctrine of salvation, which is righteous of itself. Rather, both expressions have the same force—to render to God and his teaching the praise they deserve. On the other hand, when Christ upbraids the Pharisees for justifying themselves [<sup><421615></sup>Luke 16:15], he does not mean that they acquire righteousness by well-doing but that they ambitiously seize upon a reputation for righteousness of which they are devoid. Those skilled in the Hebrew language better understand this sense: where not only those who are conscious of their crime but those who undergo the judgment of damnation are called “wicked.” For when Bathsheba says that she and Solomon will be wicked [<sup><110121></sup>1 Kings 1:21], she does not acknowledge any offense. But she complains that she and her son are going to be put to shame, to be counted among the wicked and condemned. Yet from the context it readily appears that this word, even when it is read in Latin, cannot otherwise be understood than relatively, but not so as to signify any quality. <sup>F304</sup>

But, because it pertains to the present case, when Paul says that Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith [<sup><480308></sup>Galatians 3:8], what else may you understand but that God imputes righteousness by faith? Again, when he says that God justifies the impious person who has faith in Christ [<sup><450326></sup>Romans 3:26 p.], what can his meaning be except that men are freed by the benefit of faith from that condemnation which their impiety deserved? This appears even more clearly in his conclusion, when he exclaims: “Who will accuse God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who will condemn? It is Christ who died, yes, who rose again... and now intercedes for us” [<sup><450833></sup>Romans 8:33-34 p.]. For it is as if he had said: “Who will accuse those whom God has absolved? Who will condemn those whom Christ defends with his protection?” Therefore, “to justify” means nothing else than to acquit of guilt him who was accused, as

if his innocence were confirmed. Therefore, since God justifies us by the intercession of Christ, he absolves us not by the confirmation of our own innocence but by the imputation of righteousness, so that we who are not righteous in ourselves may be reckoned as such in Christ. Thus it is said in Paul's sermon in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts: Through Christ is forgiveness of sins announced to you, and everyone who believes in him is justified of all things from which the law of Moses could not justify him [<sup><441338></sup> Acts 13:38-39]. You see that, after forgiveness of sins, this justification is set down, as it were, by way of interpretation. You see that it is plainly understood as absolution, you see that it is separated from the works of the law. You see it as the mere benefit of Christ, and you see that it is received by faith. You see finally that a satisfaction is introduced where he says that we are justified from our sins through Christ. Thus, when the publican is said to have gone down from the Temple justified [<sup><421814></sup> Luke 18:14], we cannot say that he achieved righteousness by any merit of works. This, therefore, is what is said: after pardon of sins has been obtained, the sinner is considered as a just man in God's sight. Therefore, he was righteous not by approval of works but by God's free absolution. Ambrose has, accordingly, fitly expressed it when he calls the confession of sins a lawful justification. <sup>F305</sup>

#### **4. JUSTIFICATION AS GRACIOUS ACCEPTANCE BY GOD AND AS FORGIVENESS OF SINS**

And to avoid contention over a word, if we look upon the thing itself as described to us, no misgiving will remain. For Paul surely refers to justification by the word "acceptance" when in <sup><490105></sup> Ephesians 1:5-6 he says: "We are destined for adoption through Christ according to God's good pleasure, to the praise of his glorious grace by which he has accounted us acceptable and beloved" [<sup><490105></sup> Ephesians 1:5-6 p.]. That means the very thing that he commonly says elsewhere, that "God justifies us freely" [<sup><450324></sup> Romans 3:24].

Moreover, in the fourth chapter of Romans he first calls justification "imputation of righteousness." And he does not hesitate to include it within forgiveness of sins. Paul says: "That man is declared blessed by David whom God renders acceptable or to whom he imputes righteousness apart from works, as it is written: 'Blessed are they whose

transgressions have been forgiven” [<sup><450406></sup>Romans 4:6-7 p.; <sup><193201></sup>Psalms 32:1]. There he is obviously discussing not a part of justification but the whole of it. Further, he approves the definition of it set forth by David when he declares those men blessed to whom free pardon of sins is given [<sup><193201></sup>Psalms 32:1-2]. From this it is clear that the righteousness of which he speaks is simply set in opposition to guilt. But the best passage of all on this matter is the one in which he teaches that the sum of the gospel embassy is to reconcile us to God, since God is willing to receive us into grace through Christ, not counting our sins against us [<sup><470518></sup>2 Corinthians 5:18-20]. Let my readers carefully ponder the whole passage. For a little later Paul adds by way of explanation: “Christ, who was without sin, was made sin for us” [<sup><470521></sup>2 Corinthians 5:21], to designate the means of reconciliation [cf. verses 18-19]. Doubtless, he means by the word “reconciled” nothing but “justified.” And surely, what he teaches elsewhere—that “we are made righteous by Christ’s obedience” [<sup><450519></sup>Romans 5:19 p.]—could not stand unless we are reckoned righteous before God in Christ and apart from ourselves.

*(Refutation of Osiander’s doctrine of  
“essential righteousness,” 5-22)*

## 5. OSIANDER’S DOCTRINE OF ESSENTIAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

But Osiander has introduced some strange monster of “essential” righteousness<sup>F306</sup> by which, although not intending to abolish freely given righteousness, he has still enveloped it in such a fog as to darken pious minds and deprive them of a lively experience of Christ’s grace. Consequently, before I pass on to other matters, it behooves me to refute this wild dream.

First, this speculation arises out of mere feeble curiosity. Indeed, he accumulates many testimonies of Scripture by which to prove that Christ is one with us, and we, in turn, with him<sup>F307</sup>—a fact that needs no proof. But because he does not observe the bond of this unity, he deceives himself. Now it is easy for us to resolve all his difficulties. For we hold ourselves to be united with Christ by the secret power of his Spirit.

That gentleman had conceived something bordering on Manichaeism, in his desire to transfuse the essence of God into men.<sup>F308</sup> From this arises

another fiction of his, that Adam was formed to the image of God because Christ had already been destined as the prototype of human nature before the Fall. <sup>F309</sup> But because I am striving after brevity, I must concentrate on the present matter.

He says that we are one with Christ. We agree. But we deny that Christ's essence is mixed with our own. Then we say that this principle is wrongly applied to these deceptions of his: that Christ is our righteousness because he is God eternal, the source of righteousness, and the very righteousness of God. My readers will pardon me if I now only touch upon what my teaching plan demands that I defer to another place. Although he may make the excuse that by the term "essential righteousness" he means nothing else but to meet the opinion that we are considered righteous for Christ's sake, yet he has clearly expressed himself as not content with that righteousness which has been acquired for us by Christ's obedience and sacrificial death, but pretends that we are substantially righteous in God by the infusion both of his essence and of his quality. For this is the reason why he contends so vehemently that not only Christ but also the Father and the Holy Spirit, dwell in us. Although I admit this to be true, yet I say that it has been perversely twisted by Osiander; for he ought to have considered the manner of the indwelling—namely, that the Father and Spirit are in Christ, and even as the fullness of deity dwells in him [<sup><510209></sup>Colossians 2:9], so in him we possess the whole of deity. Therefore, all that he has put forward separately concerning the Father and the Spirit tends solely to seduce the simple-minded from Christ.

Then he throws in a mixture of substances by which God—transfusing himself into us, as it were—makes us part of himself. For the fact that it comes about through the power of the Holy Spirit that we grow together with Christ, and he becomes our Head and we his members, he reckons of almost no importance unless Christ's essence be mingled with ours. But in his treatment of the Father and the Holy Spirit he more openly, as I have said, brings out what he means: namely, that we are not justified by the grace of the Mediator alone, nor is righteousness simply or completely offered to us in his person, but that we are made partakers in God's righteousness when God is united to us in essence. <sup>F310</sup>

## 6. OSIANDER ERRONEOUSLY MIXES FORGIVENESS OF SINS WITH REBIRTH

Suppose he had only said that Christ, in justifying us, by conjunction of essence becomes ours, not only in that in so far as he is man is he our Head, but also in that the essence of the divine nature is poured into us. Then he would have fed on these delights with less harm, and perhaps such a great quarrel on account of this delusion would not have had to arise. But inasmuch as this principle is like the cuttlefish,<sup>F311</sup> which by voiding its black and turbid blood hides its many tails, unless we would knowingly and willingly allow that righteousness to be snatched from us which alone gives us the confidence to glory in our salvation, we must bitterly resist. For in this whole disputation the noun “righteousness” and the verb “to justify”<sup>F312</sup> are extended in two directions; so that to be justified is not only to be reconciled to God through free pardon but also to be made righteous, and righteousness is not a free imputation but the holiness and uprightness that the essence of God, dwelling in us, inspires. Secondly, he sharply states that Christ is himself our righteousness, not in so far as he, by expiating sins as Priest, appeased the Father on our behalf, but as he is eternal God and life.

To prove the first point—that God justifies not only by pardoning but by regenerating—he asks whether God leaves as they were by nature those whom he justifies, changing none of their vices. This is exceedingly easy to answer: as Christ cannot be tom into parts, so these two which we perceive in him together and conjointly are inseparable—namely, righteousness and sanctification. Whomever, therefore, God receives into grace, on them he at the same time bestows the spirit of adoption [<sup><450815></sup>Romans 8:15], by whose power he remakes them to his own image. But if the brightness of the sun cannot be separated from its heat, shall we therefore say that the earth is warmed by its light, or lighted by its heat? Is there anything more applicable to the present matter than this comparison? The sun, by its heat, quickens and fructifies the earth, by its beams brightens and illumines it. Here is a mutual and indivisible connection. Yet reason itself forbids us to transfer the peculiar qualities of the one to the other. In this confusion of the two kinds of grace that Osiander forces upon us there is a like absurdity. For since God, for the preservation of righteousness, renews those whom he freely reckons as

righteous, Osiander mixes that gift of regeneration with this free acceptance and contends that they are one and the same. Yet Scripture, even though it joins them, still lists them separately in order that God's manifold grace may better appear to us. For Paul's statement is not redundant: that Christ was given to us for our righteousness and sanctification [<sup><460130></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:30].<sup>F313</sup> And whenever he reasons—from the salvation purchased for us, from God's fatherly love, and from Christ's grace—that we are called to holiness and cleanness, he clearly indicates that to be justified means something different from being made new creatures.

When it comes to Scripture, Osiander completely corrupts every passage he cites. In Paul's statement that "faith is reckoned as righteousness" not for the "one who works" but for the "one who believes in him who justifies the ungodly" [<sup><450404></sup> Romans 4:4-5 p.], Osiander explains "justify" as "to make righteous." With the same rashness he corrupts that whole fourth chapter of Romans. And he does not hesitate to tinge with the same deceit a passage that we have recently cited:<sup>F314</sup> "Who will accuse God's elect? It is God who justifies" [<sup><450833></sup> Romans 8:33]. There it is plain that the question is simply one of guilt and acquittal, and the meaning of the apostle depends on this antithesis. Therefore, both in that reason and in citing Scriptural evidence, Osiander proves himself an incompetent interpreter.

Also, he discusses the term "righteousness" no more correctly, holding that the faith of Abraham was imputed to him as righteousness after he, having embraced Christ—who is the righteousness of God and God himself—had excelled in singular virtues.<sup>F315</sup> From this it appears that he has incorrectly made one corrupt statement out of two sound ones. For righteousness, of which mention is there made, does not extend throughout the whole course of Abraham's calling. Rather, the Spirit testifies—although the excellence of the virtues of Abraham was outstanding, and by persevering in them for a long time he at length increased them—that he pleased God only when he received in faith the grace offered in the promise. From this it follows that, as Paul skillfully contends, there is in justification no place for works.

## 7. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FAITH FOR JUSTIFICATION

I willingly concede Osiander's objection that faith of itself does not possess the power of justifying, but only in so far as it receives Christ. For if faith justified of itself or through some intrinsic power, so to speak, as it is always weak and imperfect it would effect this only in part; thus the righteousness that conferred a fragment of salvation upon us would be defective. Now we imagine no such thing, but we say that, properly speaking, God alone justifies; then we transfer this same function to Christ because he was given to us for righteousness. We compare faith to a kind of vessel; for unless we come empty and with the mouth of our soul open to seek Christ's grace, we are not capable of receiving Christ. From this it is to be inferred that, in teaching that before his righteousness is received Christ is received in faith, we do not take the power of justifying away from Christ.

Yet, in the meantime, I do not admit the distorted figures of this Sophist when he says that "faith is Christ"<sup>F316</sup>—as if an earthen pot were a treasure because gold is hidden in it. For the reasoning is similar: namely, that faith, even though of itself it is of no worth or price, can justify us by bringing Christ, just as a pot crammed with money makes a man rich. Therefore, I say that faith, which is only the instrument for receiving righteousness, is ignorantly confused with Christ, who is the material cause and at the same time the Author and Minister of this great benefit. Now we have disposed of the problem as to how the term "faith" ought to be understood when justification is under consideration.

## 8. OSIANDER'S DOCTRINE THAT CHRIST IS, ACCORDING TO HIS DIVINE NATURE, OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

In the receiving of Christ, Osiander goes farther: that the inner word is received by the ministry of the outer word. By this he would lead us away from the priesthood of Christ and the person of the Mediator to his outward deity. Now we do not divide Christ but confess that he, who, reconciling us to the Father in his flesh, gave us righteousness, is the eternal Word of God, and that the duties of the Mediator could not otherwise have been discharged by him, or righteousness acquired for us, had he not been eternal God. But Osiander's opinion is that, since Christ

is God and man, he is made righteousness for us with respect to his divine nature, not his human nature. Yet if this properly applies to divinity, it will not be peculiar to Christ but common with the Father and the Spirit, inasmuch as the righteousness of one differs not from the righteousness of the other. Then, because he was by nature from eternity, it would not be consistent to say that he was “made for us.” But even though we should grant that God was made righteousness for us, how will this harmonize with what Paul interposes: that Christ was made righteousness by God [<sup><460130></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:30]? This is surely peculiar to the person of the Mediator, which, even though it contains in it the divine nature, still has its own proper designation by which the Mediator is distinguished from the Father and the Spirit.

Osiander absurdly gloats over one word of Jeremiah, where he promises that Jehovah will be our righteousness [<sup><245110></sup> Jeremiah 51:10; cf. <sup><242306></sup> Jeremiah 23:6; <sup><243316></sup> Jeremiah 33:16]. But from this he shall deduce nothing but the fact that Christ, who is our righteousness, is God manifested in flesh [cf. <sup><540316></sup> 1 Timothy 3:16]. Elsewhere we have quoted from Paul’s sermon:<sup>F317</sup> “With his blood God purchased the church for himself” [<sup><442028></sup> Acts 20:28 p.]. If anyone should infer from this that the blood whereby sins have been expiated is divine and of the divine nature, who could bear such a foul error? Yet Osiander thinks that he has obtained all things by this very childish cavil; he swells up, exults, stuffs many pages with his bombast<sup>F318</sup>—while there is a simple and ready explanation of the words that Jehovah, when he should become the offspring of David, would be the righteousness of the godly. But Isaiah teaches in what sense this is so: “By knowledge of himself shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous” [<sup><235311></sup> Isaiah 53:11].

Let us note that it is the Father who is speaking; that he assigns to the Son the office of justifying; that he adds the reason—that he is righteous; and that he has lodged the mode and means, as they say, in the teaching whereby Christ becomes known. For it is more fitting to take the word דעת as a passive.<sup>F319</sup> Hence I gather that Christ was made righteousness when “he took upon him the form of a servant” [<sup><502007></sup> Philippians 2:7]; secondly, that he justifies us in that he has shown himself obedient to the Father [<sup><502308></sup> Philippians 2:8]. Therefore he does this for us not according to his divine nature but in accordance with the dispensation

enjoined upon him. For even though God alone is the source of righteousness, and we are righteous only by participation in him, yet, because we have been estranged from his righteousness by unhappy disagreement, we must have recourse to this lower remedy that Christ may justify us by the power of his death and resurrection.

## 9. JUSTIFICATION AS THE WORK OF THE MEDIATOR

If Osiander should object that this work, by its very excellence, surpasses human nature, and for this reason can be ascribed only to divine nature, I grant the first point; in the second I say that he is grossly deluded. For even though Christ if he had not been true God could not cleanse our souls by his blood, nor appease his Father by his sacrifice, nor absolve us from guilt, nor, in sum, fulfill the office of priest, because the power of the flesh is unequal to so great a burden, yet it is certain that he carried out all these acts according to his human nature. For if we ask how we have been justified, Paul answers, “By Christ’s obedience” [<sup><450519></sup>Romans 5:19 p.]. But did he obey in any other way than when he took upon himself the form of a servant [<sup><502007></sup>Philippians 2:7]? From this we conclude that in his flesh, righteousness has been manifested to us. Similarly in other words—I am surprised that Osiander is not ashamed to cite that so often—Paul has established the source of righteousness in the flesh of Christ alone. “Him who knew no sin he made to be sin for us that we might be the righteousness of God in him.” [<sup><470521></sup>2 Corinthians 5:21 p.] At the top of his lungs Osiander extols God’s righteousness, and sings a song of triumph as if he had confirmed that ghost of his of “essential righteousness.” Yet the words express something far different, that we are made righteous through the atonement wrought by Christ. Every schoolboy should know that God’s righteousness is to be understood as that righteousness which is approved of God, as in the Gospel of John where God’s glory is compared with men’s glory [<sup><431243></sup>John 12:43, RV; 5:44].<sup>F320</sup> I know that it is sometimes called the righteousness of God because God is its author and bestows it upon us. But discerning readers will recognize without my saying anything that this expression means only that we stand, supported by the sacrifice of Christ’s death, before God’s judgment seat.

And the word is not very important, provided Osiander agrees with us, that we are justified in Christ, in so far as he was made an atoning sacrifice for us: something that does not comport with his divine nature. For this reason also, when Christ would seal the righteousness and salvation that he has brought us, he sets forth a sure pledge of it in his own flesh. Now he calls himself “the bread of life” [<sup><430648></sup> John 6:48], but, in explaining how, he adds that “his flesh is truly meat, and his blood truly drink” [<sup><430655></sup> John 6:55]. This method of teaching is perceived in the sacraments;<sup>F321</sup> even though they direct our faith to the whole Christ and not to a half-Christ, they teach that the matter both of righteousness and of salvation resides in his flesh; not that as mere man he justifies or quickens by himself, but because it pleased God to reveal in the Mediator what was hidden and incomprehensible in himself. Accordingly, I usually say that Christ is, as it were, a fountain, open to us, from which we may draw what otherwise would lie unprofitably hidden in that deep and secret spring, which comes forth to us in the person of the Mediator. In this way and sense, I do not deny that Christ, as he is God and man, justifies us; and also that this work is the common task of the Father and the Holy Spirit; finally, that righteousness of which Christ makes us partakers with himself is the eternal righteousness of the eternal God—provided Osiander accept the firm and clear reasons that I have brought forward.

## 10. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF OUR UNION WITH CHRIST?

Now, lest Osiander deceive the unlearned by his cavils, I confess that we are deprived of this utterly incomparable good until Christ is made ours. Therefore, that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts—in short, that mystical union<sup>F322</sup>—are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body—in short, because he deigns to make us one with him. For this reason, we glory that we have fellowship of righteousness with him. Thus is Osiander’s slander refuted, that by us faith is reckoned righteousness. As if we were to deprive Christ of his right when we say that by faith we come empty to him to make room for

his grace in order that he alone may fill us! But Osiander, by spurning this spiritual bond, forces a gross mingling of Christ with believers. And for this reason, he maliciously calls “Zwinglian” all those who do not subscribe to his mad error of “essential righteousness” because they do not hold the view that Christ is eaten in substance in the Lord’s Supper. I consider it the highest glory to be thus insulted by a proud man, and one entangled in his own deceits; albeit he attacks not only me but world-renowned writers whom he ought modestly to have respected. It makes no difference to me, for I am not pleading my own private cause. I am the more sincerely pleading this case for the reason that I am free from all perverted motives.

The fact, then, that he insists so violently upon essential righteousness and essential indwelling of Christ in us has this result: first, he holds that God pours himself into us as a gross mixture, just as he fancies a physical eating in the Lord’s Supper; secondly, that he breathes his righteousness upon us, by which we may be really righteous with him, since according to Osiander this righteousness is both God himself and the goodness or holiness or integrity of God.

I shall not labor much in refuting the Scriptural proofs that he brings forward, which he wrongly twists from the heavenly life to the present state. “Through Christ,” says Peter, “were granted to us precious and very great promises... that we might become partakers of the divine nature.” [<sup><610104></sup> 2 Peter 1:4 p.] As if we now were what the gospel promises that we shall be at the final coming of Christ! Indeed, John then reminds us we are going to see God as he is because we shall be like him [<sup><620302></sup> 1 John 3:2]. <sup>F323</sup> I only wanted to give a small sample to my readers. Consequently, I purposely pass over these trifles. Not that it would be difficult to refute them, but I do not want to elaborate tediously and superfluously.

## **11. OSIANDER’S DOCTRINE OF THE ESSENTIAL RIGHTEOUSNESS NULLIFIES THE CERTAINTY OF SALVATION**

But more poison lurks in the second phase, where Osiander teaches that we are righteous together with God. I have already sufficiently proved, I think, that this doctrine—even though it were not so pestilent, yet because

it is cold and barren and is dissipated in its own vanity—ought rightly to be unsavory for intelligent and pious readers. To enfeeble our assurance of salvation, to waft us above the clouds in order to prevent our calling upon God with quiet hearts after we, assured of expiation, have laid hold upon grace—to do all this under pretense of a twofold righteousness<sup>F324</sup> is an utterly intolerable impiety.

Osiander laughs at those men who teach that “to be justified” is a legal term; because we must actually be righteous. Also, he despises nothing more than that we are justified by free imputation. Well then, if God does not justify us by acquittal and pardon, what does Paul’s statement mean: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing men’s trespasses against them” [<sup><470519></sup>2 Corinthians 5:19]? “For our sake he made him to be sin who had done no sin so that we might be the righteousness of God in him.” [verse 21 p.] First, I conclude that they are accounted righteous who are reconciled to God. Included is the means: that God justifies by pardoning, just as in another passage justification is contrasted with accusation. This antithesis clearly shows that the expression was taken from legal usage. Anyone moderately versed in the Hebrew language, provided he has a sober brain,<sup>F325</sup> is not ignorant of the fact that the phrase arose from this source, and drew from it its tendency and implication. Where Paul says that righteousness without works is described by David in these words, “Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven” [<sup><193201></sup>Psalm 32:1; 31:1, Vg.; <sup><450407></sup>Romans 4:7], let Osiander answer me whether this be a full or half definition. Surely, Paul does not make the prophet bear witness to the doctrine that pardon of sins is part of righteousness, or merely a concomitant toward the justifying of man; on the contrary, he includes the whole of righteousness in free remission, declaring that man blessed whose sins are covered, whose iniquities God has forgiven, and whose transgressions God does not charge to his account. Thence, he judges and reckons his happiness because in this way he is righteous, not intrinsically but by imputation.

Osiander objects that it would be insulting to God and contrary to his nature that he should justify those who actually remain wicked. Yet we must bear in mind what I have already said, that the grace of justification is not separated from regeneration, although they are things distinct. But

because it is very well known by experience that the traces of sin always remain in the righteous, their justification must be very different from reformation into newness of life [cf. <sup><450604></sup>Romans 6:4]. For God so begins this second point in his elect, and progresses in it gradually, and sometimes slowly, throughout life, that they are always liable to the judgment of death before his tribunal. But he does not justify in part but liberally, so that they may appear in heaven as if endowed with the purity of Christ. No portion of righteousness sets our consciences at peace until it has been determined that we are pleasing to God, because we are entirely righteous before him. From this it follows that the doctrine of justification is perverted and utterly overthrown when doubt is thrust into men's minds, when the assurance of salvation is shaken and the free and fearless calling upon God suffers hindrance—nay, when peace and tranquillity with spiritual joy are not established. Thence Paul argues from contraries that the inheritance does not come from the law [<sup><480318></sup>Galatians 3:18], for in this way “faith would be nullified” [<sup><450414></sup>Romans 4:14, cf. Vg.]. For faith totters if it pays attention to works, since no one, even of the most holy, will find there anything on which to rely.

This distinction between justification and regeneration, which two things Osiander confuses under the term “double righteousness,” is beautifully expressed by Paul. Speaking of his own real righteousness, or of the uprighteous that had been given him, which Osiander labels “essential righteousness,” he mournfully exclaims: “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?” [<sup><450724></sup>Romans 7:24]. But fleeing to that righteousness which is founded solely upon God's mercy he gloriously triumphs over both life and death, reproaches and hunger, the sword and all other adverse things. “Who will make accusation against God's elect,” whom he justifies [<sup><450833></sup>Romans 8:33 p.]? For I am surely convinced that nothing “will separate us from his love in Christ” [<sup><450838></sup>Romans 8:38-39 p.]. He clearly proclaims that he has a righteousness which alone entirely suffices for salvation before God, so that he does not diminish his confidence in glorying, and no hindrance arises from the miserable bondage, consciousness of which had a moment before caused him to bemoan his lot. This diversity is sufficiently known, and so familiar to all the saints who groan under the burden of iniquities and yet with victorious confidence surmount all fears.

But Osiander's objection that this is out of accord with God's nature topples back upon him. For, even though he clothed the saints with this "double righteousness," like a furred garment, he is still compelled to confess that no one can please God without forgiveness of sins. But if this is true, let him at least grant that those who are not intrinsically righteous are reckoned righteous according to the fixed proportion: <sup>F326</sup> of imputation, as they say. But how far will a sinner parcel out this free acceptance which stands in place of righteousness? By the pound or by the ounce? Assuredly, he will hang uncertainly, wavering to this side and to that, for he will not be allowed to assume in himself as much righteousness as he needs for assurance. It is well that he who would lay down a law for God is not the judge of this case. But this saying will stand fast: "So that thou mayest be justified in thy words and mayest overcome when thou art judged" [<sup><195006></sup> Psalm 50:6, Vg.; cf. <sup><195104></sup> Psalm 51:4, EV].

How great presumption is it to condemn the supreme Judge when he freely absolves, so that this answer may not have full force: "I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy"? [<sup><023319></sup> Exodus 33:19.] And yet Moses' intercession, which God restrains in these words, was not to the effect that he should spare no one but that he should wipe away the charge against them even though they were guilty, and absolve them all equally. And on this account, indeed, we say that those who were lost have their sins buried and are justified before God because, as he hates sin, he can love only those whom he has justified. This is a wonderful plan of justification that, covered by the righteousness of Christ, they should not tremble at the judgment they deserve, and that while they rightly condemn themselves, they should be accounted righteous outside themselves.

## 12. REFUTATION OF OSIANDER

Yet my readers ought to be warned to pay careful attention to that mystery which Osiander boasts he does not wish to hide from them. For first he contends long and verbosely that we attain favor with God not by imputation of Christ's righteousness alone, because it would be impossible (I use his words) for him to regard as just those who are not just. In the end, he concludes that Christ has been given to us as righteousness, not in respect to his human but to his divine nature. And although this can be found only in the person of the Mediator, still it is not a righteousness of

man but of God. Now he does not weave his rope from the two kinds of righteousness but obviously deprives Christ's human nature of the price of justifying. Moreover, it behooves us to understand how he fights. In the same place it is said that Christ has become wisdom for us [<sup><460130></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:30], but this applies only to the eternal word. Therefore Christ the man is not righteousness. I reply: the only-begotten Son of God was indeed his eternal wisdom, but in a different way this name is applied to him in Paul's letters, for in him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" [<sup><510203></sup> Colossians 2:3]. What he had with the Father [cf. <sup><431705></sup> John 17:5] he revealed to us. Hence what Paul says applies not to the essence of the Son of God but to our use, and rightly fits Christ's human nature. For even though the light shone in the darkness before he assumed flesh [<sup><430105></sup> John 1:5], yet the light was hidden until Christ came forth in the nature of man, the Sun of Righteousness, and he therefore calls himself "the light of the world" [<sup><430812></sup> John 8:12].

Osiander also stupidly objects that the power of justifying is far above both angels and men, inasmuch as this depends not upon the dignity of any creature but upon God's appointment. If the angels should wish to make satisfaction to God, they would achieve nothing, for they are not destined for this end. But this especially belonged to the man Christ, as he submitted to the law to redeem us from its curse [<sup><480313></sup> Galatians 3:13; cf. <sup><480404></sup> Galatians 4:4].

Also, those who deny that Christ is our righteousness according to his divine nature are by Osiander very basely accused of leaving only one part of Christ and—what is worse—making two Gods. For even though they confess that God dwells in us, they still claim that we are not righteous by the righteousness of God. For if we call Christ the author of life, seeing that he underwent death "that... he might destroy him who had the power of death" [<sup><580214></sup> Hebrews 2:14 p.], we do not thereby deprive the whole Christ of this honor, as he is God manifested in the flesh. Rather, we are only making clear how God's righteousness comes to us that we may enjoy it. On this point Osiander has fallen into abominable error. We do not deny that what has been plainly revealed to us in Christ derives from God's secret grace and power, nor do we contend over the fact that the righteousness Christ bestows upon us is the righteousness of God, which proceeds from him. But we steadfastly hold that in Christ's death and

resurrection there is righteousness and life for us. I leave out that shameful heap of passages with which, without discrimination and even without common sense, he burdened his readers, to the effect that whenever righteousness is mentioned one ought to understand it as “essential righteousness.” For example, when David calls upon God’s righteousness to help him, even though he does so more than a hundred times, Osiander does not hesitate to corrupt as many passages.

The other objection is not a whit stronger: that righteousness is properly and correctly defined as that by which we are moved to act rightly, but that “God alone is at work in us both to will and to perfect” [<sup>503813</sup>Philippians 2:13 p.]. I do not deny that God reforms us by his Spirit into holiness and righteousness of life. First, however, it must be seen whether he does this of himself and directly or through the hand of his Son, to whom he has entrusted the whole fullness of the Holy Spirit in order that by his abundance he may supply what is lacking in his members. Then, although righteousness comes forth to us from the secret wellspring of his divinity, it does not follow that Christ, who in the flesh sanctified himself for our sake [<sup>431719</sup>John 17:19], is righteousness for us according to his divine nature.

What he adds is no less absurd: that Christ himself was righteous by divine righteousness; for unless the will of the Father had impelled him not even he would have fulfilled the tasks enjoined upon him. <sup>F327</sup> For even though it was elsewhere said that all the merits of Christ himself flow solely from God’s good pleasure, <sup>F328</sup> this adds nothing to the fantasy wherewith Osiander bewitches his own eyes and those of the simple-minded. For who allows anyone to infer that because God is the source and beginning of our righteousness we are righteous in essence, and the essence of God’s righteousness dwells in us? In redeeming the church, says Isaiah, God “put on his own righteousness as a breastplate” [<sup>235917</sup>Isaiah 59:17]. Did he do this to deprive Christ of the armor that he had given him so that Christ might not be the perfect Redeemer? But the prophet only meant that God borrowed nothing outside himself, nor had he any help to redeem us. Paul has briefly indicated this in other words, saying, that he gave us salvation to show his righteousness [<sup>450325</sup>Romans 3:25]. But this in no way contradicts what he teaches elsewhere: that “we are righteous by the obedience of one man”

[<450519> Romans 5:19 p.]. In short, whoever wraps up two kinds of righteousness in order that miserable souls may not repose wholly in God's mere mercy, crowns Christ in mockery with a wreath of thorns [<411517> Mark 15:17, etc.].

*(Refutation of Scholastic doctrines of good works as effective for justification, 13-20)*

### 13. RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS BY WORKS

But a great part of mankind<sup>F329</sup> imagine that righteousness is composed of faith and works.<sup>F330</sup> Let us also, to begin with, show that faith righteousness so differs from works righteousness that when one is established the other has to be overthrown. The apostle says that he "counts everything as dross" that he "may gain Christ and be found in him... not having a righteousness of [his] own, based on law, but one that is through faith in Jesus Christ, the righteousness from God through faith" [<500308> Philippians 3:8-9 p.]. You see here both a comparison of opposites and an indication that a man who wishes to obtain Christ's righteousness must abandon his own righteousness. Therefore, he states elsewhere that this was the cause of the Jews' downfall: "Wishing to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to God's righteousness" [<451003> Romans 10:3 p.]. If by establishing our own righteousness we shake off the righteousness of God, to attain the latter we must indeed completely do away with the former. He also shows this very thing when he states that our boasting is not excluded by law but by faith [<450327> Romans 3:27]. From this it follows that so long as any particle of works righteousness remains some occasion for boasting remains with us. Now, if faith excludes all boasting, works righteousness can in no way be associated with faith righteousness. In this sense he speaks so clearly in the fourth chapter of Romans that no place is left for cavils or shifts: "If Abraham," says Paul, "was justified by works, he has something to boast about." He adds, "Yet he has no reason to boast before God" [<450402> Romans 4:2]. It follows, therefore, that he was not justified by works. Then Paul sets forth another argument from contraries. When reward is made for works it is done out of debt, not of grace [<450404> Romans 4:4]. But righteousness according to grace is owed to

faith. Therefore it does not arise from the merits of works. Farewell, then, to the dream of those who think up a righteousness flowing together out of faith and works.

#### **14. LIKEWISE, THE WORKS OF THE REGENERATED CAN PROCURE NO JUSTIFICATION**

The Sophists, who make game and sport in their corrupting of Scripture and their empty caviling, think they have a subtle evasion. For they explain “works” as meaning those which men not yet reborn do only according to the letter by the effort of their own free will, apart from Christ’s grace. But they deny that these refer to spiritual works. For, according to them, man is justified by both faith and works provided they are not his own works but the gifts of Christ and the fruit of regeneration. For they say that Paul so spoke for no other reason than to convince the Jews, who were relying upon their own strength, that they were foolish to arrogate righteousness to themselves, since the Spirit of Christ alone bestows it upon us not through any effort arising from our own nature. Still they do not observe that in the contrast between the righteousness of the law and of the gospel, which Paul elsewhere introduces, all works are excluded, whatever title may grace them [<sup><480311></sup>Galatians 3:11-12]. For he teaches that this is the righteousness of the law, that he who has fulfilled what the law commands should obtain salvation; but this is the righteousness of faith, to believe that Christ died and rose again [<sup><451005></sup>Romans 10:5,9].

Moreover, we shall see afterward, in its proper place, that the benefits of Christ—sanctification and righteousness—<sup>F331</sup> are different. From this it follows that not even spiritual works come into account when the power of justifying is ascribed to faith. The statement of Paul where he denies that Abraham had any reason to boast before God—a passage that we have just cited <sup>F332</sup>—because he was not righteous by his works, ought not to be restricted to a literal and outward appearance of virtues or to the effort of free will. But even though the life of the patriarch was spiritual and well-nigh angelic, he did not have sufficient merit of works to acquire righteousness before God.

## 15. THE ROMAN DOCTRINE OF GRACE AND GOOD WORKS

Somewhat too gross are the Schoolmen, who mingle their concoctions. Yet these men infect the simple-minded and unwary with a doctrine no less depraved, cloaking under the disguise of “spirit” and “grace” even the mercy of God, which alone can set fearful souls at rest.<sup>F333</sup> Now we confess with Paul that the doers of the law are justified before God; but, because we are all far from observing the law, we infer from this that those works which ought especially to avail for righteousness give us no help because we are destitute of them.

As regards the rank and the of the papists or Schoolmen, they are doubly deceived here both because they call faith an assurance of conscience in awaiting from God their reward for merits and because they interpret the grace of God not as the imputation of free righteousness but as the Spirit helping in the pursuit of holiness. They read in the apostle: “Whoever would draw near to God must first believe that he exists and then that he rewards those who seek him” [<sup><581106></sup> Hebrews 11:6]. But they pay no attention to the way in which he is to be sought. It is clear from their own writings that in using the term “grace” they are deluded. For Lombard explains that justification is given to us through Christ in two ways. First, he says, Christ’s death justifies us, while love is aroused through it in our hearts and makes us righteous. Second, because through the same love, sin is extinguished by which the devil held us captive, so that he no longer has the wherewithal to condemn us.<sup>F334</sup> You see how he views God’s grace especially in justification, in so far as we are directed through the grace of the Holy Spirit to good works. Obviously, he intended to follow Augustine’s opinion, but he follows it at a distance and even departs considerably from the right imitation of it. For when Augustine says anything clearly, Lombard obscures it, and if there was anything slightly contaminated in Augustine, he corrupts it. The schools have gone continually from bad to worse until, in headlong ruin, they have plunged into a sort of Pelagianism. For that matter, Augustine’s view, or at any rate his manner of stating it, we must not entirely accept. For even though he admirably deprives man of all credit for righteousness and transfers it to God’s grace, he still subsumes grace under sanctification, by which we are reborn in newness of life through the Spirit.<sup>F335</sup>

## **16. OUR JUSTIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE JUDGMENT OF SCRIPTURE**

But Scripture, when it speaks of faith righteousness, leads us to something far different: namely, to turn aside from the contemplation of our own works and look solely upon God's mercy and Christ's perfection. Indeed, it presents this order of justification: to begin with, God deigns to embrace the sinner with his pure and freely given goodness, finding nothing in him except his miserable condition to prompt Him to mercy, since he sees man utterly void and bare of good works; and so he seeks in himself the reason to benefit man. Then God touches the sinner with a sense of his goodness in order that he, despairing of his own works, may ground the whole of his salvation in God's mercy. This is the experience of faith through which the sinner comes into possession of his salvation when from the teaching of the gospel he acknowledges that he has been reconciled to God: that with Christ's righteousness interceding and forgiveness of sins accomplished he is justified. And although regenerated by the Spirit of God, he ponders the everlasting righteousness laid up for him not in the good works to which he inclines but in the sole righteousness of Christ. When these things are pondered one by one, they will give a clear explanation of our opinion. However, they might be arranged in another order, better than the one in which they have been set forth. But it makes little difference, provided they so agree among themselves that we may have the whole matter rightly explained and surely confirmed.

## **17. FAITH RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LAW RIGHTEOUSNESS ACCORDING TO PAUL**

Here we should recall to mind the relation that we have previously established between faith and the gospel. For faith is said to justify because it receives and embraces the righteousness offered in the gospel. Moreover, because righteousness is said to be offered through the gospel, all consideration of works is excluded. Paul often shows this elsewhere but most clearly in two passages. For in comparing the law and the gospel in the letter to the Romans he says: "the righteousness that is of the law" is such that "the man who practices these things will live by them" [<sup>451005</sup>Romans 10:5]. But the "righteousness that is of faith" [<sup>451006</sup>Romans 10:6] announces salvation "if you believe in your heart

and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and that the Father raised him from the dead” [<sup><451009></sup>Romans 10:9 p.]. Do you see how he makes this the distinction between law and gospel: that the former attributes righteousness to works, the latter bestows free righteousness apart from the help of works? This is an important passage, and one that can extricate us from many difficulties if we understand that that righteousness which is given us through the gospel has been freed of all conditions of the law. Here is the reason why he so often opposes the promise to the law, as things mutually contradictory: “If the inheritance is by the law, it is no longer by promise” [<sup><480318></sup>Galatians 3:18]; and passages in the same chapter that express this idea.

Now, to be sure, the law itself has its own promises. Therefore, in the promises of the gospel there must be something distinct and different unless we would admit that the comparison is inept. But what sort of difference will this be, other than that the gospel promises are free and dependent solely upon God’s mercy, while the promises of the law depend upon the condition of works? And let no one here snarl at me that it is the righteousness which men, of their own strength and free will, would obtrude upon God that is rejected—<sup>F336</sup> inasmuch as Paul unequivocally teaches that the law, in commanding, profits nothing [cf. <sup><450803></sup>Romans 8:3]. For there is no one, not only of the common folk, but of the most perfect persons, who can fulfill it. To be sure, love is the capstone of the law. When the Spirit of God forms us to such love, why is it not for us a cause of righteousness, except that even in the saints it is imperfect, and for that reason merits no reward of itself?

## **18. JUSTIFICATION NOT THE WAGES OF WORKS, BUT A FREE GIFT**

The second passage is this: “It is evident that no man is justified before God by the law. For the righteous shall live by faith [cf. <sup><350204></sup>Habakkuk 2:4]. But the law is not of faith; rather, the man who does these things shall live in them” [<sup><480311></sup>Galatians 3:11-12, Comm., cf. Vg.]. How would this argument be maintained otherwise than by agreeing that works do not enter the account of faith but must be utterly separated? The law, he says, is different from faith. Why? Because works are required for law

righteousness. Therefore it follows that they are not required for faith righteousness.

From this relation it is clear that those who are justified by faith are justified apart from the merit of works—in fact, without the merit of works. For faith receives that righteousness which the gospel bestows. Now the gospel differs from the law in that it does not link righteousness to works but lodges it solely in God’s mercy. Paul’s contention in Romans is similar to this: that Abraham had no occasion to boast, for faith was reckoned as righteousness for him [<sup><450402></sup>Romans 4:2-3]; and he adds as confirmation that the righteousness of faith has a place in circumstances where there are no works for which a reward is due. “Where,” he says, “there are works, wages are paid as a debt; what is given to faith is free.” [<sup><450404></sup>Romans 4:4-5 p.] Indeed, the meaning of the words he uses there applies also to this passage. He adds a little later that we on this account obtain the inheritance from faith, as according to grace. Hence he infers that this inheritance is free, for it is received by faith [cf. <sup><450416></sup>Romans 4:16]. How is this so except that faith rests entirely upon God’s mercy without the assistance of works? And in another passage he teaches, doubtless in the same sense, that “the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although it is attested by the Law and the Prophets” [<sup><450321></sup>Romans 3:21 p.]. For, excluding the law, he denies that we are aided by works and that we attain righteousness by working; instead, we come empty to receive it.

### 19. THROUGH “FAITH ALONE”

Now the reader sees how fairly the Sophists today cavil against our doctrine when we say that man is justified by faith alone [<sup><450328></sup>Romans 3:28].<sup>F337</sup> They dare not deny that man is justified by faith because it recurs so often in Scripture. But since the word “alone” is nowhere expressed, they do not allow this addition to be made. Is it so? But what will they reply to these words of Paul where he contends that righteousness cannot be of faith unless it be free [<sup><450402></sup>Romans 4:2 ff.]? How will a free gift agree with works? With what chicaneries will they elude what he says in another passage, that God’s righteousness is revealed in the gospel [<sup><450117></sup>Romans 1:17]? If righteousness is revealed in the gospel, surely no mutilated or half righteousness but a full and

perfect righteousness is contained there. The law therefore has no place in it. Not only by a false but by an obviously ridiculous shift they insist upon excluding this adjective. Does not he who takes everything from works firmly enough ascribe everything to faith alone? What, I pray, do these expressions mean: “His righteousness has been manifested apart from the law” from. 3:21 p.]; and, “Man is freely justified” [[450324](#)> Romans 3:24 p.]; and, “Apart from the works of the law” [[450328](#)> Romans 3:28]?

Here they have an ingenious subterfuge: even though they have not devised it themselves but have borrowed it from Origen and certain other ancient writers, it is still utterly silly. They prate that the ceremonial works of the law are excluded, not the moral works. <sup>F338</sup> They become so proficient by continual wrangling that they do not even grasp the first elements of logic. Do they think that the apostle was raving when he brought forward these passages to prove his opinion? “The man who does these things will live in them” [[480312](#)> Galatians 3:12], and, “Cursed be every one who does not fulfill all things written in the book of the law” [[480310](#)> Galatians 3:10 p.]. Unless they have gone mad they will not say that life was promised to keepers of ceremonies or the curse announced only to those who transgress the ceremonies. If these passages are to be understood of the moral law, there is no doubt that moral works are also excluded from the power of justifying. These arguments which Paul uses look to the same end: “Since through the law comes knowledge of sin” [[450320](#)> Romans 3:20], therefore not righteousness. Because “the law works wrath” [[450415](#)> Romans 4:15], hence not righteousness. Because the law does not make conscience certain, it cannot confer righteousness either. Because faith is imputed as righteousness, righteousness is therefore not the reward of works but is given unearned [[450404](#)> Romans 4:4-5]. Because we are justified by faith, our boasting is cut off [[450327](#)> Romans 3:27 p.]. “If a law had been given that could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But God consigned all things to sin that the promise might be given to those who believe.” [[480321](#)> Galatians 3:21-22 p.] Let them now babble, if they dare, that these statements apply to ceremonies, not to morals. Even schoolboys would hoot at such impudence. Therefore, let us hold as certain that when the ability to justify is denied to the law, these words refer to the whole law.

## 20. “WORKS OF THE LAW”

If anyone should wonder why the apostle, not content with naming works, uses such a qualification, there is a ready explanation. Though works are highly esteemed, they have their value from God’s approval rather than from their own worth. For who would dare recommend works righteousness to God unless God himself approved? Who would dare demand a reward due unless he promised it? Therefore, it is from God’s beneficence that they are considered worthy both of the name of righteousness and of the reward thereof. And so, for this one reason, works have value, because through them man intends to show obedience to God. Therefore, to prove that Abraham could not be justified by works, the apostle declares in another place that the law was given fully four hundred and thirty years after the covenant was made [<sup><480317></sup>Galatians 3:17]. The ignorant would laugh at this sort of argument, on the ground that before the promulgation of the law there could have been righteous works. But because he knew that works could have such great value only by the testimony and vouchsafing of God, he took as a fact that previous to the law they had no power to justify. We have the reason why he expressly mentions the works of the law when he wants to take justification away from them, for it is clearly because a controversy can be raised only over them.

Yet he sometimes excepts all works without any qualification, as when on David’s testimony he states that blessedness is imparted to that man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works [<sup><450406></sup>Romans 4:6; <sup><193201></sup>Psalms 32:1-2]. Therefore no cavils of theirs can prevent us from holding to the exclusive expression <sup>F339</sup> as a general principle.

Also, they pointlessly strive after the foolish subtlety that we are justified by faith alone, which acts through love, so that righteousness depends upon love. <sup>F340</sup> Indeed, we confess with Paul that no other faith justifies “but faith working through love” [<sup><480506></sup>Galatians 5:6]. But it does not take its power to justify from that working of love. Indeed, it justifies in no other way but in that it leads us into fellowship with the righteousness of Christ. Otherwise, everything that the apostle insists upon so vigorously would fall. “Now to him who works the pay is not considered a gift but his due,” says he. [<sup><450404></sup>Romans 4:4.] “But to one who does

not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.” [<sup><450405></sup>Romans 4:5.] Could he have spoken more clearly than in contending thus: that there is no righteousness of faith except where there are no works for which a reward is due? And then that faith is reckoned as righteousness only where righteousness is bestowed through a grace not owed?

*(Sins are remitted only through the righteousness of Christ, 21-23)*

## **21. JUSTIFICATION, RECONCILIATION, FORGIVENESS OF SINS**

Now let us examine how true that statement is which is spoken in the definition, that the righteousness of faith is reconciliation with God, which consists solely in the forgiveness of sins. <sup>F341</sup> We must always return to this axiom: the wrath of God rests upon all so long as they continue to be sinners. Isaiah has very well expressed it in these words: “The Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you lest he hear” [<sup><235901></sup>Isaiah 59:1-2]. We are told that sin is division between man and God, the turning of God’s face away from the sinner; and it cannot happen otherwise, seeing that it is foreign to his righteousness to have any dealings with sin. For this reason, the apostle teaches that man is God’s enemy until he is restored to grace through Christ [<sup><450508></sup>Romans 5:8-10]. Thus, him whom he receives into union with himself the Lord is said to justify, because he cannot receive him into grace nor join him to himself unless he turns him from a sinner into a righteous man. We add that this is done through forgiveness of sins; for if those whom the Lord has reconciled to himself be judged by works, they will indeed still be found sinners, though they ought, nevertheless, to be freed and cleansed from sin. It is obvious, therefore, that those whom God embraces are made righteous solely by the fact that they are purified when their spots are washed away by forgiveness of sins. Consequently, such righteousness can be called, in a word, “remission of sins.”

## 22. SCRIPTURAL PROOF FOR THE CLOSE RELATION BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Paul's words, which I have already quoted, <sup>F342</sup> express both of these points very beautifully: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting men's trespasses against them, and has entrusted to us the word of reconciliation" [<sup><470519></sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19, cf. Comm. and Vg.]. Then Paul adds the summation of Christ's embassy: "Him who knew not sin he made to be sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" [<sup><470521></sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21]. Here he mentions righteousness and reconciliation indiscriminately, to have us understand that each one is reciprocally contained in the other. Moreover, he teaches the way in which this righteousness is to be obtained: namely, when our sins are not counted against us. Therefore, doubt no longer how God may justify us when you hear that he reconciles us to himself by not counting our sins against us. Thus, by David's testimony Paul proves to the Romans that righteousness is imputed to man apart from works, for David declares that man "blessed whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered, to whom the Lord has not imputed iniquity" [<sup><450406></sup> Romans 4:6-8; <sup><193201></sup> Psalm 32:1-2]. Undoubtedly, he there substitutes blessedness for righteousness; since he declares that it consists in forgiveness of sins, there is no reason to define it differently.

Accordingly, Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, sings that the knowledge of salvation rests in the forgiveness of sins [<sup><420177></sup> Luke 1:77]. Paul followed this rule in the sermon on the sum of salvation that he delivered to the people of Antioch. As Luke reports it, he concluded in this way: "Through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and every one that believes in him is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" [<sup><441338></sup> Acts 13:38-39 p.]. The apostle so connects forgiveness of sins with righteousness that he shows them to be exactly the same. From this he duly reasons that the righteousness that we obtain through God's kindness is free to us.

And this ought not to seem an unusual expression, that believers are made righteous before God not by works but by free acceptance, since it occurs so often in Scripture, and ancient writers also sometimes speak thus. So says Augustine in one place: "The righteousness of the saints in this world consists more in the forgiveness of sins than in perfection of virtues." <sup>F343</sup>

Bernard's famous sentences correspond to this: "Not to sin is the righteousness of God; but the righteousness of man is the grace of God." <sup>F344</sup> And he had previously declared: "Christ is our righteousness in absolution, and therefore those alone are righteous who obtain pardon from his mercy." <sup>F345</sup>

### 23. RIGHTEOUS—NOT IN OURSELVES BUT IN CHRIST

From this it is also evident that we are justified before God solely by the intercession of Christ's righteousness. This is equivalent to saying that man is not righteous in himself but because the righteousness of Christ is communicated to him by imputation—something worth carefully noting. Indeed, that frivolous notion disappears, that man is justified by faith because by Christ's righteousness he shares the Spirit of God, by whom he is rendered righteous. <sup>F346</sup> This is too contrary to the above doctrine ever to be reconciled to it. And there is no doubt that he who is taught to seek righteousness outside himself is destitute of righteousness in himself. Moreover, the apostle most clearly asserts this when he writes: "He who knew not sin was made the atoning sacrifice of sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" [<sup><470521></sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21 p.]. <sup>F347</sup>

You see that our righteousness is not in us but in Christ, that we possess it only because we are partakers in Christ; indeed, with him we possess all its riches. And this does not contradict what he teaches elsewhere, that sin has been condemned for sin in Christ's flesh that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us [<sup><450803></sup> Romans 8:3-4]. The only fulfillment he alludes to is that which we obtain through imputation. For in such a way does the Lord Christ share his righteousness with us that, in some wonderful manner, he pours into us enough of his power to meet the judgment of God. It is quite clear that Paul means exactly the same thing in another statement, which he had put a little before: "As we were made sinners by one man's disobedience, so we have been justified by one man's obedience" [<sup><450519></sup> Romans 5:19 p.]. To declare that by him alone we are accounted righteous, <sup>F348</sup> what else is this but to lodge our righteousness in Christ's obedience, because the obedience of Christ is reckoned to us as if it were our own?

For this reason, it seems to me that Ambrose beautifully stated an example of this righteousness in the blessing of Jacob: noting that, as he did not of himself deserve the right of the first-born, concealed in his brother's clothing and wearing his brother's coat, which gave out an agreeable odor [<sup><012727></sup>Genesis 27:27], he ingratiated himself with his father, so that to his own benefit he received the blessing while impersonating another. And we in like manner hide under the precious purity of our first-born brother, Christ, so that we may be attested righteous in God's sight. <sup>F349</sup> Here are the words of Ambrose: "That Isaac smelled the odor of the garments perhaps means that we are justified not by works but by faith, since the weakness of the flesh is a hindrance to works, but the brightness of faith, which merits the pardon of sins, overshadows the error of deeds." <sup>F350</sup>

And this is indeed the truth, for in order that we may appear before God's face unto salvation we must smell sweetly with his odor, and our vices must be covered and buried by his perfection.

## CHAPTER 12

### WE MUST LIFT UP OUR MINDS TO GOD'S JUDGMENT SEAT THAT WE MAY BE FIRMLY CONVINCED OF HIS FREE JUSTIFICATION

*(Justification in the light of the majesty and perfection of God 1-3),*

#### 1. NO ONE IS RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD'S JUDGMENT SEAT

Even though all these things are by shining testimonies shown to be perfectly true, still, how necessary they are will not be clear to us until we set before our eyes what ought to be the basis of this whole discussion. First, therefore, this fact should occur to us: that our discourse is concerned with the justice not of a human court but of a heavenly tribunal, lest we measure by our own small measure the integrity of works needed to satisfy the divine judgment. Yet it is amazing with what great rashness and boldness this is commonly defined. Indeed, one can see how there are none who more confidently, and as people say, boisterously chatter over the righteousness of works than they who are monstrously plagued with manifest diseases, or creak with defects beneath the skin. That happens because they do not think about God's justice, which they would never hold in such derision if they were affected even by the slightest feeling of it. Yet surely it is held of precious little value if it is not recognized as God's justice and so perfect that nothing can be admitted except what is in every part whole and complete and undefiled by any corruption. Such was never found in man and never will be. In the shady cloisters of the schools anyone can easily and readily prattle about the value of works in justifying men. But when we come before the presence of God we must put away such amusements! For there we deal with a serious matter, and do not engage in frivolous word battles.<sup>F351</sup> To this question, I insist, we must apply our mind if we would profitably inquire concerning true righteousness: How shall we reply to the Heavenly Judge when he calls us to account?<sup>F352</sup> Let us envisage for ourselves that Judge, not as our minds

naturally imagine him, but as he is depicted for us in Scripture: by whose brightness the stars are darkened [<sup><180309></sup> Job 3:9]; by whose strength the mountains are melted; by whose wrath the earth is shaken [cf. <sup><180905></sup> Job 9:5-6]; whose wisdom catches the wise in their craftiness [<sup><180513></sup> Job 5:13]; beside whose purity all things are defiled [cf. <sup><182505></sup> Job 25:5]; whose righteousness not even the angels can bear [cf. <sup><180418></sup> Job 4:18]; who makes not the guilty man innocent [cf. <sup><180920></sup> Job 9:20]; whose vengeance when once kindled penetrates to the depths of hell [<sup><053222></sup> Deuteronomy 32:22; cf. <sup><182606></sup> Job 26:6]. Let us behold him, I say, sitting in judgment to examine the deeds of men: Who will stand confident before his throne? “Who... can dwell with the devouring fire?” asks the prophet. “Who... can dwell with everlasting burnings? He who walks righteously and speaks the truth” [<sup><233314></sup> Isaiah 33:14-15 p.], etc. But let such a one, whoever he is, come forward. Nay, that response causes no one to come forward. For, on the contrary, a terrible voice resounds: “If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand?” [<sup><19D003></sup> Psalm 130:3; 129:3, Vg.]. Indeed, all must soon perish, as it is written in another place: “Shall a man be justified in comparison with God, or shall he be purer than his maker? Behold, they that serve him are not faithful, and in his angels he found wickedness. How much more shall those who dwell in houses of clay, who have an earthly foundation, be consumed before the moth. From morn to eve they shall be cut down” [<sup><180417></sup> Job 4:17-20]. Likewise: “Behold, among his saints none is faithful, and the heavens are not pure in his sight. How much more abominable and unprofitable is man, who drinks iniquity like water?” [<sup><181515></sup> Job 15:15-16, cf. Vg.].

Indeed, I admit that in The Book of Job mention is made of a righteousness higher than the observance of the law, and it is worthwhile to maintain this distinction. For even if someone satisfied the law, not even then could he stand the test of that righteousness which surpasses all understanding. Therefore, even though Job has a good conscience, he is stricken dumb with astonishment, for he sees that not even the holiness of angels can please God if he should weigh their works in his heavenly scales. Therefore, I now pass over that righteousness which I have mentioned, for it is incomprehensible. I only say that if our life is examined according to the standard of the written law, we are sluggish

indeed if we are not tormented with horrid fear at those many maledictions with which God willed to cleanse us—among others this general curse: “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by everything written in this book” [<sup><480310></sup>Galatians 3:10, Vg.; cf. <sup><052726></sup>Deuteronomy 27:26]. In short, this whole discussion will be foolish and weak unless every man admit his guilt before the Heavenly Judge, and concerned about his own acquittal, willingly cast himself down and confess his nothingness.

## **2. RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE MEN AND RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE GOD**

Hither, hither we ought to have raised up our eyes to learn how to tremble rather than vainly to exult. Indeed, it is easy, so long as the comparison stops with men, for anyone to think of himself as having something that his fellows ought not to despise. But when we rise up toward God, that assurance of ours vanishes in a flash and dies. And exactly the same thing happens to our souls with respect to God as happens to our bodies with respect to the visible heavens. For keenness of sight, so long as it confines itself to examining nearby objects, is convinced of its discernment. But directed toward the sun, stricken and numbed by excessive brightness, our vision feels as weak as it did strong in gazing at objects below. <sup>F353</sup> Let us, then, not be deceived by empty confidence. Even though we consider ourselves either equal or superior to other men, that is nothing to God, to whose judgment the decision of the matter must be brought. But if our wildness cannot be tamed by these warnings, he will answer us as he spoke to the Pharisees: “Ye are they that justify yourselves before men; but... what is exalted among men is an abomination to God” [<sup><421615></sup>Luke 16:15, cf. Vg.]. Go now and haughtily boast of your righteousness among men, while God from heaven abominates it!

But what say God’s servants, truly instructed by his Spirit? “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for no man living is righteous in thy sight.” [<sup><19E302></sup>Psalms 143:2; cf. Comm. and <sup><19E202></sup>Psalms 142:2, Vg.] Another servant speaks, although in a slightly different sense: “A man cannot be righteous before God. If he wished to contend with him, he could not answer him once in a thousand times” [<sup><180902></sup>Job 9:2-3; cf. 5:3, Vg.]. Here, then, we are clearly told the nature of God’s righteousness, which will indeed not be satisfied by any works of man. When it examines

our thousand sins, we cannot be cleansed of even one. Surely that chosen instrument of God, Paul, had sincerely conceived such a righteousness when he confessed that he was not aware of anything against himself but that he was not thereby justified [<sup><460404></sup> 1 Corinthians 4:4].

### 3. AUGUSTINE AND BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX AS WITNESSES OF TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS

‘Such examples are found not only in Holy Scripture but all devout writers show that this was their view. So Augustine says: “All the pious who groan under this burden of corruptible flesh and in this weakness of life have one hope: that we have one Mediator, Jesus Christ the righteous one, and he is the appeasement for our sins” [cf. <sup><540205></sup> 1 Timothy 2:5-6]. <sup>F354</sup> What do we hear? If this is their only hope, where is confidence in works? For when he says “only,” he leaves no other hope. Now Bernard says: “Where, in fact, are safe and firm rest and security for the weak but in the Savior’s wounds? The mightier he is to save, the more securely I dwell there. The world menaces, the body weighs us down, the devil sets his snares. I fall not, for I am grounded upon firm rock. I have sinned a grave sin. My conscience is disturbed, but it will not be perturbed <sup>F355</sup> because I shall remember the Lord’s wounds.” From these thoughts he afterward concludes: “Accordingly, the Lord’s compassion is my merit. Obviously, I am not devoid of merit so long as he is not devoid of compassion. But if the mercies of the Lord abound, then equally do I abound in merits. Shall I sing my own righteous acts? O Lord, I shall remember thy righteousness only, for it is also mine. Namely, he was made righteousness for me by God.” Also, in another place, “This is man’s whole merit if he put his whole hope in him who makes safe the whole man.” Similarly, where keeping peace to himself, he leaves the glory to God. “To Thee,” he says, “may glory remain undiminished. It will go well with me if I shall have peace. I utterly abjure glory, lest, if I usurp what is not mine, I shall also lose what has been offered to me.” He speaks even more openly in another passage: “Why should the church be concerned about merits, since it has in God’s purpose a surer reason for glorying? Thus there is no reason why you should ask by what merits we may hope for benefits, especially since you hear in the prophet: ‘It is not for your sake.., that I am about to act, but for mine... says the Lord’ [<sup><263622></sup> Ezekiel 36:22, 32 p.]. Merit enough

it is to know that merits are not enough; but as it is merit enough not to presume upon merits, so to be without merits is enough for judgment.” The fact that he uses the term “merits” freely for good works, we must excuse as the custom of the time. But essentially his intention was to strike fear in hypocrites, who in their unbridled sinning act shamelessly against God’s grace. This he presently explains: “Happy is the church that lacks neither merits without presumption nor presumption without merits. It has cause for presumption but not merits. It has merits, but to make it deserving, not to make it presumptuous. Is not to refrain from presuming really to merit? It then presumes the more boldly in that it presumes not, having ample occasion to glory in the Lord’s abundant mercies.” <sup>F356</sup>

*(Conscience and self-criticism before God deprive us of all claim to good works and lead us to embrace God’s mercy, 4-8)*

#### **4. THE GRAVITY OF GOD’S JUDGMENT PUTS AN END TO ALL SELF-DECEPTION**

This is the truth. Awakened consciences, when they have to do with God’s judgment, recognize this as the only safe haven in which they can securely breathe. For if the stars, which seem so very bright at night, lose their brilliance in the sight of the sun, what do we think will happen even to the rarest innocence of man when it is compared with God’s purity? For it will be a very severe test, which will penetrate to the most hidden thoughts of the heart; and, as Paul says, “he will bring to light the things hidden in darkness, and will uncover the hidden purposes of hearts” [<sup>460405</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:5 p.]. This will compel the lurking and lagging conscience to utter all things that have now even been forgotten. Our accuser the devil, mindful of all the transgressions that he has impelled us to perpetrate, will press us. Outward parade of good works, which alone we now esteem, will be of no benefit there; purity of will alone will be demanded of us. And therefore hypocrisy shall fall down confounded, even as it now vaunts itself with drunken boldness. This applies not only to that hypocrisy by which a man, knowing himself guilty before God, strives to show himself off among men but also to that by which every man deceives himself before God, prone as we are to pamper and flatter ourselves. They who do not direct their attention to such a spectacle can,

indeed, for the moment pleasantly and peacefully construct a righteousness for themselves, but one that will soon in God's judgment be shaken from them, just as great riches heaped up in a dream vanish upon awakening. But they who seriously, and as in God's sight, will seek after the true rule of righteousness, will certainly find that all human works, if judged according to their own worth, are nothing but filth and defilement. And what is commonly reckoned righteousness is before God sheer iniquity; what is adjudged uprightness, pollution; what is accounted glory, ignominy.

### 5. AWAY WITH ALL SELF-ADMIRATION!

Let us not be ashamed to descend from this contemplation of divine perfection to look upon ourselves,<sup>F357</sup> without flattery and without being affected by blind self-love. For it is no wonder if we be so blind in this respect, since none of us guards against that pestilent self-indulgence which, as Scripture proclaims, inheres in all of us by nature. "To every man," says Solomon, "his way is right in his own eyes." [<202102> Proverbs 21:2 p.] Again, "All the ways of a man seem pure in his own eyes." [<201602> Proverbs 16:2.] What then? Is he acquitted by this delusion? No indeed, but, as is added in the same passage, "the Lord weighs men's hearts" [<201602> Proverbs 16:2 p.]. That is, while man flatters himself on account of the outward mask of righteousness that he wears, the Lord meanwhile weighs in his scales the secret impurity of the heart. Since, therefore, a man is far from being benefited by such flatteries, let us not, to our ruin, willingly delude ourselves. In order that we may rightly examine ourselves, our consciences must necessarily be called before God's judgment seat. For there is need to strip entirely bare in its light the secret places of our depravity, which otherwise are too deeply hidden. Then only will we clearly see the value of these words: "Man is far from being justified before God, man who is rottenness and a worm" [<182506> Job 25:6, cf. Vg.], "abominable and empty, who drinks iniquity like water" [<181516> Job 15:16]. "For who could make clean what has been conceived of unclean seed? Not one." [<181404> Job 14:4, cf. Vg.] Then we shall also experience what Job said of himself: "If I would show myself innocent, my own mouth will condemn me; if righteous, it will prove me perverse" [<180920> Job 9:20, cf. Vg.]. For the complaint that the prophet of old made

concerning Israel does not apply to one age but to all ages: “All... like sheep have gone astray; everyone has turned to his own way” [<sup><235306></sup> Isaiah 53:6 p.]. Indeed, he there includes all those to whom the grace of redemption was to come. And the rigor of this examination ought to proceed to the extent of casting us down into complete consternation, and in this way preparing us to receive Christ’s grace. For he who considers himself capable of enjoying it is deceived unless he has first humbled all haughtiness of mind. This is a well-known passage: “God confounds the proud, but gives grace to the humble” [<sup><600505></sup> 1 Peter 5:5; <sup><590406></sup> James 4:6; cf. <sup><200334></sup> Proverbs 3:34].

## 6. WHAT HUMILITY BEFORE GOD IS

But what way do we have to humble ourselves except that, wholly poor and destitute, we yield to God’s mercy? For if we think that we have anything left to ourselves, I do not call it humility. And those who have hitherto joined these two things together—namely, that we must think humbly concerning ourselves before God and must reckon our righteousness to be of some value—have taught a pernicious hypocrisy. <sup>F358</sup> For if we confess before God contrary to what we feel, we wickedly lie to him. But we cannot feel as we ought without immediately trampling upon whatever seems glorious in us. Therefore, when you hear in the prophet that salvation has been prepared for the humble people, and abasement for the eyes of the proud [<sup><191827></sup> Psalm 18:27; cf. <sup><191702></sup> Psalm 17:28, Vg.], first consider that the gateway to salvation does not lie open unless we have laid aside all pride and taken upon ourselves perfect humility; secondly, that this humility is not some seemly behavior whereby you yield a hair of your right to the Lord, as those who do not act haughtily or insult others are called humble in the sight of men, although they rely upon some consciousness of excellence. Rather, this humility is an unfeigned submission of our heart, stricken down in earnest with an awareness of its own misery and want. For so it is everywhere described by the Word of God.

When the Lord speaks thus in Zephaniah, “I will remove from you the proudly exultant... and leave in the midst of your people the afflicted and poor, and they shall hope in the Lord,” does he not clearly point out who the humble are? [<sup><360311></sup> Zephaniah 3:11-12]. They are those who lie

afflicted with the knowledge of their own poverty. On the other hand, Scripture calls the proud ones “exultant” because men happy in their prosperity usually leap for joy. But to the humble, whom he plans to save, he leaves nothing but to hope in the Lord. So also in Isaiah: “But to whom will I look, save to him who is lowly and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my words” [<sup><236602></sup>Isaiah 66:2, Vg.]? Likewise: “The high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy, dwelling in the high and holy place, and with a contrite and humble spirit, to quicken the spirit of the humble and... the heart of the contrite.” [<sup><235715></sup>Isaiah 57:15, Vg.]

Whenever you hear the word “contrition,” understand a wound of the heart that does not permit a man cast to the ground to be raised up. If you would, according to God’s judgment, be exalted with the humble,<sup>F359</sup> your heart ought to be wounded with such contrition. If that does not happen, you will be humbled by God’s powerful hand to your shame and disgrace.

## 7. CHRIST CALLS SINNERS, NOT THE RIGHTEOUS

And our most excellent Master, not content with words, in a parable represents to us, as in a picture, the image of proper humility. For he brings forward a “publican, standing afar off, and not daring to lift his eyes to heaven, who prays with much weeping, ‘Lord, be merciful to me a sinner’” [<sup><421813></sup>Luke 18:13 p.]. Let us not think these signs of reigned modesty: that he does not dare to look up to heaven or to come nearer, and that, beating his breast, he confesses himself a sinner. But let us know these to be testimonies of an inner feeling. On the other side he puts the Pharisee, who thanks God because he is not a common man, either an extortioner or unjust, or an adulterer, and since he fasts twice in the week and gives tithes of all that he has [<sup><421811></sup>Luke 18:11-12]. In his open confession he acknowledges that the righteousness he has is a gift of God; but because he is confident that he is righteous, displeasing and hateful, he departs from God’s face. The publican is justified by the acknowledgment of his iniquity [<sup><421814></sup>Luke 18:14]. Hence, we may see how much favor our abasement has before the Lord, so that the heart cannot be opened to receive his mercy unless it be utterly empty of all opinion of its own worth. When it has been occupied with these things it closes the entry to him. That no one should doubt concerning this. Christ was sent to the earth by the Father with this commission: “To publish good tidings to the

poor, to heal the contrite of heart, to preach liberty to the captives, deliverance to the imprisoned,... to console the sorrowing... to give them glory instead of ashes, oil... instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of grief” [<sup><236101></sup>Isaiah 61:1-3 p.]. According to this commandment, he invites to share his beneficence only those who labor and are heavy-laden [<sup><401109></sup>Matthew 11:98]. And in another passage: “I have come not to call the righteous but sinners” [<sup><400913></sup>Matthew 9:13].

## **8. ARROGANCE AND COMPLACENCY BEFORE GOD BLOCK OUR WAY TO CHRIST**

Therefore, if we would give ear to Christ's call, away with all arrogance and complacency! Arrogance arises from a foolish persuasion of our own righteousness, when man thinks that he has something meritorious to commend him before God. Complacency can exist even without any belief in works. For many sinners are so drunk with the sweetness of their vices that they think not upon God's judgment but lie dazed, as it were, in a sort of drowsiness, and do not aspire to the mercy offered to them. Such sloth is no less to be shaken off than any confidence in ourselves is to be cast away in order that we may without hindrance hasten to Christ, and empty and hungering, may be filled with his good things. For we will never have enough confidence in him unless we become deeply distrustful of ourselves; we will never lift up our hearts enough in him unless they be previously cast down in us; we will never have consolation enough in him unless we have already experienced desolation in ourselves.

Therefore we are ready to seize and grasp God's grace when we have utterly cast out confidence in ourselves and rely only on the assurance of his goodness—“when,” as Augustine says, “forgetting our own merits, we embrace Christ's gifts.”<sup>F360</sup> For if he sought merits in us, we would not come to his gifts. Bernard is in agreement with this when he neatly compares to faithless servants the proud, who claim even the slightest thing for their own merits because they wrongfully retain the credit for grace that passes through them, as if a wall should say that it gave birth to a sunbeam that it received through a window.<sup>F361</sup> Not to halt any longer with this, let us hold it as a brief but general and sure rule that prepared to share the fruit of God's mercy is he who has emptied himself, I do not say of righteousness, which exists not, but of a vain and airy semblance of

righteousness. For to the extent that a man rests satisfied with himself, he impedes the beneficence of God.

# CHAPTER 13

## TWO THINGS TO BE NOTED IN FREE JUSTIFICATION

### 1. JUSTIFICATION SERVES GOD'S HONOR; AND REVELATION, HIS JUSTICE

Here, indeed, we are especially to note two things: namely, that the Lord's glory should stand undiminished and, so to speak, in good repair, <sup>F362</sup> and that our consciences in the presence of his judgment should have peaceful rest and serene tranquillity.

We see how often and how earnestly Scripture urges us, wherever righteousness is concerned, to give thanks <sup>F363</sup> to God alone. And the apostle even testifies that the Lord's purpose in bestowing righteousness upon us in Christ was "to show us his own righteousness" [<sup><450325></sup>Romans 3:25]. But he immediately adds what the nature of this showing of his righteousness is, in the words: "If he alone is recognized as righteous, and justifying him who has faith in Jesus Christ" [<sup><450326></sup>Romans 3:26 p., cf. Vg.]. Do you see that the righteousness of God is not sufficiently set forth unless he alone be esteemed righteous, and communicate the free gift of righteousness to the undeserving? For this reason he wills that "every mouth be stopped and all the world be rendered accountable to him" [<sup><450319></sup>Romans 3:19 p.]. For, so long as man has anything to say in his own defense, he detracts somewhat from God's glory. Thus in Ezekiel, God teaches how much we glorify his name by recognizing our iniquity. "You shall remember," he says, "your ways and all the crimes with which you have polluted yourselves, and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evils you have committed." [<sup><262043></sup>Ezekiel 20:43, Vg.] "And you shall know that I am the Lord when I shall have bestowed benefits upon you for my name's sake, and not... according to your wicked offenses." [<sup><262044></sup>Ezekiel 20:44, Vg.]

If these things are parts of the true knowledge of God—to be stricken by the awareness of our own iniquity and to reflect that he benefits us, unworthy as we are—why do we attempt, to our great harm, to filch from the Lord even a particle of the thanks we owe his free kindness? Likewise, when Jeremiah proclaims, “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, or the rich man in his riches, or the mighty man in his might”

[<sup><240923></sup>Jeremiah 9:23, order changed, cf. Vg.], but “let him who glories, glory in the Lord” [1 Corinthians 1:31, Vg.; cf. <sup><240924></sup>Jeremiah 9:24], does he not imply that God’s glory is somewhat diminished if man glories in himself? Surely Paul accommodates those words to this use when he teaches that every part of our salvation rests with Christ that we may glory in the Lord alone [<sup><460130></sup>1 Corinthians 1:30-31]. His meaning is this: whoever thinks that he has anything at all of his own rises up against God and casts a shadow upon his glory.

## **2. HE WHO GLORIES IN HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS ROBS GOD OF HIS HONOR**

Thus the matter stands: we never truly glory in him unless we have utterly put off our own glory. On the other hand, we must hold this as a universal principle: whoever glories in himself, glories against God. Indeed, Paul considers that the world only becomes subject to God [cf.

<sup><450319></sup>Romans 3:19] when men are utterly deprived of any occasion for glorying. Accordingly, Isaiah, when he announces that the justification of Israel will rest in God, adds at the same time “and praise” [<sup><234502></sup>Isaiah 45:26, Vg.; cf. ch. 45:25, EV]. It is as if he were to say that the elect are justified by the Lord to the end that they may glory in him and in no other. But he had taught in the preceding verse how we ought to glory in the Lord: namely, that we should swear that our righteous acts and our strength are in the Lord [<sup><234524></sup>Isaiah 45:24]. Note that not a simple confession is required but one confirmed by an oath, lest you should think it something to be discharged by any kind of feigned humility. And let no man here allege that he does not glory in himself at all when without arrogance he recognizes his own righteousness. For there can be no such estimation without engendering confidence, and no confidence without giving birth to glorying.

Therefore, let us remember in all discussion of righteousness to keep this end in view: that the praise of righteousness remain perfect and whole in the Lord's possession, since it was to manifest his own righteousness that—as the apostle attests—he poured out his grace upon us “so that he himself may be righteous, and the justifier of him who has faith in Christ” [<sup><450326></sup>Romans 3:26, Vg.]. Accordingly, in another passage, having stated that the Lord conferred salvation upon us in order to show forth the glory of his name [<sup><490106></sup>Ephesians 1:6], so to speak, repeating the same thing, he afterward adds: “By grace you have been saved... and... by the gift of God, not by works, lest any man should boast” [<sup><490208></sup>Ephesians 2:8-9 p.]. And Peter, when he points out that we have been called to the hope of salvation so “that we may declare the excellences of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light” [<sup><600209></sup>1 Peter 2:9 p.], doubtless intends that the sole praises of God may so resound in the ears of believers as to overwhelm in deep silence all arrogance of the flesh. To sum up, man cannot without sacrilege claim for himself even a crumb of righteousness, for just so much is plucked and taken away from the glory of God's righteousness.

### 3. A GLANCE AT ONE'S OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS PROVIDES NO PEACE FOR THE CONSCIENCE

Now if we ask in what way the conscience can be made quiet before God, we shall find the only way to be that unmerited righteousness be conferred upon us as a gift of God. Let us ever bear in mind Solomon's question: “Who will say, ‘I have made my heart clean; I am pure from my sin’?” [<sup><202009></sup>Proverbs 20:9]. Surely there is no one who is not sunken in infinite filth! Let even the most perfect man descend into his conscience<sup>F364</sup> and call his deeds to account, what then will be the outcome for him? Will he sweetly rest as if all things were well composed between him and God and not, rather, be torn by dire torments, since if he be judged by works, he will feel grounds for condemnation within himself? The conscience, if it looks to God, must either have sure peace with his judgment or be besieged by the terrors of hell. Therefore we profit nothing in discussing righteousness unless we establish a righteousness so steadfast that it can support our soul in the judgment of God. When our souls possess that by which they may present themselves fearless before God's face and receive

his judgment undismayed, then only may we know that we have found no counterfeit righteousness. The apostle, then, with good reason strongly insists on this point. I prefer to express it in his words rather than mine. “If the promise of the inheritance comes from the law, faith is nullified and the promise is void.” [<sup><450414></sup>Romans 4:14, cf. Vg.] He first infers that faith has been nullified and canceled if the promise of righteousness looks to the merits of our works, or depends upon the observance of the law. For no one can ever confidently trust in it because no one will ever come to be really convinced in his own mind that he has satisfied the law, as surely no one ever fully satisfies it through works. Not to seek the proof of this too far afield, every man willing to look upon himself with an honest eye can be his own witness.

And this shows in what deep and gloomy recesses hypocrisy buries men’s minds when they so confidently coddle themselves that they do not hesitate to set their self-flatteries against God’s judgment as if to compel the suspension of his legal proceedings. But a far different concern troubles and torments believers who sincerely examine themselves. First, then, doubt would enter the minds of all men, and at length despair, while each one reckoned for himself how great a weight of debt still pressed upon him, and how far away he was from the condition laid down for him. See faith already oppressed and extinguished! For to have faith is not to waver, to vary, to be borne up and down, to hesitate, to be held in suspense, to vacillate—finally, to despair! Rather, to have faith is to strengthen the mind with constant assurance and perfect confidence, to have a place to rest and plant your foot [cf. <sup><460205></sup>1 Corinthians 2:5; <sup><471304></sup>2 Corinthians 13:4].

#### **4. ATTENTION TO ONE’S OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS ALSO NULLIFIES THE PROMISES**

Paul also adds another point: that the promise will be void and without force. For if the fulfillment of it depends upon our merit, when will we at last have reached a place to deserve God’s blessing? Of a truth, this second point follows from the first: the promise will be fulfilled only to those who have faith in him. When, therefore, faith fails, the promise will not remain in force. Consequently, the inheritance arises from faith in order to establish the promise according to grace. For it is abundantly confirmed

when it rests solely upon God's mercy, since mercy and truth are joined together by an everlasting bond. That is, whatever God mercifully promises, he also faithfully performs. Thus David, before he asks salvation for himself according to God's word, first states that its cause lies in God's mercy. "Let thy mercies come," he says, "to me, thy salvation according to thy word." [<sup><19B976></sup> Psalm 119:76; cf. <sup><19B807></sup> Psalm 118:76, Vg.] And rightly, because it is by his mere mercy alone that God is led to promise. Therefore, on this point we must establish, and as it were, deeply fix all our hope, paying no regard to our works, to seek any help from them.

Augustine also teaches us to act thus—lest you suppose we are saying something new. "Christ," he says, "will reign forever in his servants. God has promised this; God has said this; if that is not enough, God has sworn it. Therefore, since the promise is firm not according to our merits but according to his mercy, no one ought to proclaim with misgiving what he cannot doubt." <sup>F365</sup> Also Bernard: "'Who... can be saved?' the disciples of Christ ask. But Jesus replies: 'With men this is impossible, but not with God' [<sup><401925></sup> Matthew 19:25-26 p.]. This is our whole confidence; this, our sole comfort; this, the whole reason for our hope. But, sure of Christ's ability, what do we say of his will? 'Who knows whether he deserves hate or love?' [<sup><210901></sup> Ecclesiastes 9:1, Vg.] 'Who knows the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?' [<sup><451134></sup> Romans 11:34; cf. <sup><234013></sup> Isaiah 40:13.] Here, now, plainly there is need of faith to help us; here truth must succor us, that what is hidden from us in the Father's heart may be revealed through the Spirit, and his Spirit testifying may persuade our hearts that we are the children of God [<sup><450816></sup> Romans 8:16]. It is needful, moreover, that he persuade by freely calling and justifying us through faith. In these things, surely, there is a certain intermediate passage from eternal predestination to future glory." <sup>F366</sup>

Let us conclude briefly as follows: Scripture shows that God's promises are not established unless they are grasped with the full assurance of conscience. Wherever there is doubt or uncertainty, it pronounces them void. Again, it declares that these promises do nothing but vacillate and waver if they rest upon our own works. Therefore, righteousness must either depart from us or works must not be brought into account, but faith alone must have place, whose nature it is to prick up the ears and close the

eyes—that is, to be intent upon the promise alone and to turn thought away from all worth or merit of man. Thus Zechariah’s famous prophecy is fulfilled: when the iniquity of this land will be removed, each man “will invite his friend under his vine and under his fig tree” [<sup><380309></sup>Zechariah 3:9-10]. There the prophet implies that believers will not enjoy true peace until they have obtained forgiveness of sins. For we must grasp this analogy in the prophets: when they discuss Christ’s Kingdom, they set forth God’s outward blessings as figures of spiritual goods. Hence Christ is called “King of peace” [<sup><230906></sup>Isaiah 9:6] and “our peace” [<sup><490214></sup>Ephesians 2:14] because he quiets all agitations of conscience. If we ask the means, we must come to the sacrifice by which God has been appeased. For anyone unconvinced that God is appeased by that one atonement in which Christ endured his wrath will never cease to tremble. In short, we must seek peace for ourselves solely in the anguish of Christ our Redeemer. <sup>F367</sup>

## 5. FAITH IN GOD’S FREE GRACE ALONE GIVES US PEACE OF CONSCIENCE AND GLADNESS IN PRAYER

But why do I use a rather obscure testimony? Paul consistently denies that peace or quiet joy are retained in consciences unless we are convinced that we are “justified by faith” [<sup><450501></sup>Romans 5:1]. At the same time he declares the source of this assurance: it is when “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” [<sup><450505></sup>Romans 5:5]. It is as if he had said that our souls cannot be quieted unless we are surely persuaded that we are pleasing to God. Hence also in another passage he exclaims on behalf of all the godly, “Who will separate us from the love of God which is in Christ?” [<sup><450835></sup>Romans 8:35,39, conflated]. For we shall tremble even at the slightest breath until we arrive at that haven, but we shall be secure even in the darkness of death so long as the Lord shows himself our shepherd [cf. <sup><192301></sup>Psalms 23:1,4]. Therefore, those who prate that we are justified by faith because, being reborn, we are righteous by living spiritually <sup>F368</sup> have never tasted the sweetness of grace, <sup>F369</sup> so as to consider that God will be favorable to them. Hence, it also follows that they no more know the right way to pray than do the Turks and other profane nations. For, as Paul attests, faith is not true unless it asserts and brings to mind that sweetest name of Father <sup>F370</sup>—nay, unless it opens our

mouth freely to cry, “Abba, Father” [<sup><480406></sup> Galatians 4:6; <sup><450815></sup> Romans 8:15]. He expresses this more clearly elsewhere: “In Christ we have boldness and access with confidence through... faith in him” [<sup><490312></sup> Ephesians 3:12 p.]. This surely does not take place through the gift of regeneration, which, as it is always imperfect in this flesh, so contains in itself manifold grounds for doubt. Therefore, we must come to this remedy: that believers should be convinced that their only ground of hope for the inheritance of a Heavenly Kingdom lies in the fact that, being engrafted in the body of Christ, they are freely accounted righteous. For, as regards justification, faith is something merely passive, bringing nothing of ours to the recovering of God’s favor but receiving from Christ that which we lack.

# CHAPTER 14

## THE BEGINNING OF JUSTIFICATION AND ITS CONTINUAL PROGRESS

*(Man in his natural state dead in sins and in need of redemption, 1-6)*

### 1. FOUR CLASSES OF MEN WITH REGARD TO JUSTIFICATION

To make this matter clearer, let us examine what kind of righteousness is possible to man through the whole course of his life; let us, indeed, make a fourfold classification of it. For men are either **(1)** endowed with no knowledge of God and immersed in idolatry, or **(2)** initiated into the sacraments, yet by impurity of life denying God in their actions while they confess him with their lips, they belong to Christ only in name; or **(3)** they are hypocrites who conceal with empty pretenses their wickedness of heart, or **(4)** regenerated by God's Spirit, they make true holiness their concern.

In the first instance, when they are to be judged according to their natural gifts, not one spark of good will be found in them from the top of their heads to the soles of their feet, unless perhaps we would accuse Scripture of falsehood when it sets off all the sons of Adam with these titles: that they are wicked and inflexible of heart [<sup><241709></sup> Jeremiah 17:9]; that the whole imagination of men's hearts is evil from their first years [<sup><010821></sup> Genesis 8:21]; "that their thoughts are vain" [<sup><199411></sup> Psalm 94:11, cf. Comm.]; that they have not the fear of God before their eyes [cf. <sup><022020></sup> Exodus 20:20]; that "no one of them understands or seeks after God" [<sup><191402></sup> Psalm 14:2]. In short, that they are flesh [<sup><010603></sup> Genesis 6:3]. By this word are meant all those works which Paul lists: "fornication, impurity, immodesty, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, quarreling, dissension, party spirit, envy, murder," and everything foul and abominable that can be imagined [<sup><480519></sup> Galatians 5:19-21, cf. Vg.]. This, then, is the worth on which they should be proud to rely!

But if anyone among them excels in that decency of morals which has some appearance of holiness among men, still, because we know that God cares nothing for outward splendor, we must penetrate to the very source of the works if we should wish these to have any value for righteousness. We must investigate deeply, I say, from what disposition of the heart these works come forth. Now, although here a vast field for discussion lies open, still, because the matter can be disposed of in a very few words, I will be as brief as possible in what I teach.

## **2. THE VIRTUES OF UNBELIEVERS ARE GOD-GIVEN**

To begin with, I do not deny that all the notable endowments that manifest themselves among unbelievers are gifts of God.<sup>F371</sup> And I do not so dissent from the common judgment as to contend that there is no difference between the justice, moderation, and equity of Titus and Trajan and the madness, intemperance, and savagery of Caligula or Nero or Domitian, or between the obscene lusts of Tiberius and the continence of Vespasian, in this respect, and—not to tarry over individual virtues and vices—between observance and contempt of right and of laws. For there is such a great difference between the righteous and the unrighteous that it appears even in the dead image thereof. For if we confuse these things, what order will remain in the world? Therefore, the Lord has not only engraved such a distinction between honorable and wicked deeds in the minds of individual men but often confirms it also, by the dispensation of his providence. For we see that he bestows many blessings of the present life upon those who cultivate virtue among men. Not because that outward image of virtue deserves the least benefit of him; but it pleases him so to prove how much he esteems true righteousness, when he does not allow even external and reigned righteousness to go without a temporal reward. Hence, there follows what we just now acknowledged: that all these virtues—or rather, images of virtues—are gifts of God, since nothing is in any way praiseworthy that does not come from him.

## **3. NO TRUE VIRTUE WITHOUT TRUE FAITH**

Yet what Augustine writes is nonetheless true: that all who are estranged from the religion of the one God, however admirable they may be regarded on account of their reputation for virtue, not only deserve no reward but

rather punishment, because by the pollution of their hearts they defile God's good works. For even though they are God's instruments for the preservation of human society in righteousness, continence, friendship, temperance, fortitude, and prudence, yet they carry out these good works of God very badly. For they are restrained from evil-doing not by genuine zeal for good but either by mere ambition or by self-love, or some other perverse motive. Therefore, since by the very impurity of men's hearts these good works have been corrupted as from their source, they ought no more to be reckoned among virtues than the vices that commonly deceive on account of their affinity and likeness to virtue. In short, when we remember the constant end of that which is right—namely, to serve God—whatever strives to another end already deservedly loses the name “right.” Therefore, because they do not look to the goal that God's wisdom prescribes, what they do, though it seems good in the doing, yet by its perverse intention is sin. He therefore concludes that all Fabriciuses, Scipios, and Catos in their excellent deeds have sinned in that, since they lacked the light of faith, they did not apply their deeds to the end to which they ought to have applied them. Therefore, true righteousness was not in them, because duties are weighed not by deeds but by ends. <sup>F372</sup>

#### 4. WITHOUT CHRIST THERE IS NO TRUE HOLINESS

Moreover, if what John says is true, that there is no life apart from the Son of God [<sup><620512></sup> 1 John 5:12], those who have no part in Christ, whatever they may be, whatever they may do or undertake, yet hasten all their lives to destruction and to the judgment of eternal death, tin agreement with this idea is the statement of Augustine's: “Our religion distinguishes the just from the unjust not by the law of works but by that of faith, without which what seemed good works are turned into sins.” <sup>F373</sup> He also beautifully expresses the same thought in another passage when he compares the zeal of such men to a runner off his course. For the more strenuously anyone runs who is off the path, the farther he gets from his goal, and the more pitiable he therefore becomes. Consequently, Augustine contends that it is better to limp on the path than to run outside it. <sup>F374</sup> Finally, since there is no sanctification apart from communion with Christ, it is evident that they are evil trees; they can bear fruits beautiful and comely to the sight, and even sweet to the taste, but not at all good. From

this we easily discern that whatever a man thinks, plans, or carries out before he is reconciled to God through faith is accursed, not only of no value for righteousness, but surely deserving condemnation. Yet why do we argue over this as if it were something doubtful, when it has already been proved by the apostle's testimony that "without faith it is impossible for anyone to please God" [<sup><581106></sup> Hebrews 11:6]?

## **5. RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE GOD COMES NOT FROM WORKS, THOUGH EVER SO GOOD, BUT FROM GRACE**

But the proof will shine even clearer if we set the grace of God directly against the natural condition of man. For Scripture everywhere proclaims that God finds nothing in man to arouse him to do good to him but that he comes first to man in his free generosity. For what can a dead man do to attain life? Yet when he illumines us with knowledge of himself, he is said to revive us from death [<sup><430525></sup> John 5:25], to make us a new creature [<sup><470517></sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17]. In this metaphor we see that God's generosity toward us is often commended, especially by the apostle. "God," he says, "who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our sins, made us alive together with Christ," etc. [<sup><490204></sup> Ephesians 2:4-5.] Elsewhere, in discussing under Abraham as type the general calling of believers, he says: "It is God who brings the dead to life and calls things that are not as though they were" [<sup><450417></sup> Romans 4:17, cf. Vg.]. If we are nothing, what, I ask, can we do? In the history of Job, therefore, the Lord strongly restrains this arrogance, in the words: "Who anticipates me, that I should repay him? For all things are mine" [<sup><184111></sup> Job 41:11 p.; cf. <sup><184102></sup> Job 41:2, Vg.]. Paul, explaining this statement from. 11:35], draws the inference: let us not suppose that we bring anything to the Lord but the sheer disgrace of need and emptiness.

Therefore, in the passage cited above, <sup>F375</sup> to prove that we have attained the hope of salvation by his grace alone, not by works [cf. <sup><490208></sup> Ephesians 2:8-9], he states that "we are his creatures, since we have been reborn in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" [<sup><490210></sup> Ephesians 2:10, cf. Vg.]. It is as if he said: Who of us can boast that he has appealed to God by his own righteousness when our first capacity for well-doing flows from regeneration? For, as we have by nature been created, oil will sooner be

pressed from a stone than any good work from us. It is truly wonderful that man, condemned to such disgrace, dares still assume that he has anything left. Let us therefore admit, with this very great instrument of God, that the Lord “called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and... grace” [<sup><550109></sup>2 Timothy 1:9 p.], and that “the generosity and love of God our Savior was manifested toward us, for he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but on account of his own mercy,... that we might be justified by his grace and be made heirs of eternal life” [<sup><560304></sup>Titus 3:4-5,7 p.]. By this confession we deprive man of all righteousness, even to the slightest particle, until, by mercy alone, he is reborn into the hope of eternal life, since if the righteousness of works brings anything to justify us, we are falsely said to be justified by grace. Obviously, the apostle was not forgetful when he declared justification free, since he proves in another passage that grace would no longer be grace if works availed [<sup><451106></sup>Romans 11:6]. And what else does the Lord mean when he says that he “came not to call the righteous but sinners” [<sup><400913></sup>Matthew 9:13]? If only sinners are admitted, why do we seek entry through reigned righteousness?

## **6. MAN CAN CONTRIBUTE NOTHING TO HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS**

The thought repeatedly returns to my mind that there is danger of my being unjust to God’s mercy when I labor with such great concern to assert it, as if it were doubtful or obscure. But since our ill will is such that it never yields to God that which is his, unless it is powerfully compelled, I am obliged to dwell on this a little longer. Now as Scripture is sufficiently clear on this matter, I shall contend by means of its words rather than my own. Isaiah, when he has described the universal destruction of mankind, beautifully adds the order of restoration: “The Lord saw it, and it appeared evil in his sight... He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intervene; and he entrusted salvation to his own arm, and with his own righteousness strengthened himself” [<sup><235915></sup>Isaiah 59:15-16 p.]. Where are our righteous acts if what the prophet says is true: that there is no one who helps the Lord to recover his salvation? Thus another prophet, when he represents the Lord

as acting to reconcile sinners to himself, says: “I will betroth you to me forever... in righteousness, judgment, grace, and mercy... I will say to her who has not obtained mercy, you have attained mercy” [<sup><280219></sup>Hosea 2:19,23 p.]. If a covenant<sup>F376</sup> of this sort, which is clearly the first union of us with God, depends upon God’s mercy, no basis is left for our righteousness. And I should like to learn from those who pretend that man goes to meet God with some work righteousness whether they think there can be any other righteousness at all than that which is accepted by God. If it is mad to think so, what acceptable thing can come to God from his enemies, all of whom he spurns with all their doings? Truth testifies that all of us, I say, are mortal and open enemies of our God [cf.

<sup><450510></sup>Romans 5:10; <sup><510121></sup>Colossians 1:21] until we are justified and received into friendship. If justification is the beginning of love, what righteousness of works will precede it? To turn aside that pestilent arrogance, John faithfully reminds us how we did not first love Him [<sup><620410></sup>1 John 4:10]. And the Lord had at an earlier time taught this very thing through his prophet. “I will love them with a willing love,” he says, “for my anger has turned from them.” [<sup><281404></sup>Hosea 14:4 p.] If his love has willingly inclined itself to us, surely it is not aroused by works.

But the ignorant mass of men suppose this to mean only that no one has deserved Christ’s completion of our redemption but that in entering into possession of redemption we are aided by our own works.<sup>F377</sup> Nay, rather, however we may have been redeemed by Christ, until we are engrafted into his fellowship by the calling of the Father, we are both the heirs of darkness and death and the enemies of God. For Paul teaches that we are not cleansed and washed of our uncleanness by Christ’s blood except when the Spirit works that cleansing in us [<sup><460611></sup>1 Corinthians 6:11]. Peter, meaning to say the same thing, asserts that the sanctification of the Spirit is effectual “for obedience and for sprinkling with the blood of Christ” [<sup><600102></sup>1 Peter 1:2]. If we are sprinkled through the Spirit with the blood of Christ for purification, let us not think that before this cleansing we were anything other than is a sinner without Christ. Therefore let this be regarded as a fact: the beginning of our salvation is a sort of resurrection from death into life, because when it has been granted to us to believe in Christ for his sake [<sup><500129></sup>Philippians 1:29], then at last we begin to pass over from death into life.

## 7. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS A THING OF THE HEART

Under this condition are included those who are listed as the second and third classes in the above-mentioned division. <sup>F378</sup> For impurity of conscience proves that both classes have not yet been regenerated by the Spirit of God. On the other hand, the absence of regeneration in them shows their lack of faith. From this it is clear that they have not yet been reconciled to God, not yet been justified in his sight, inasmuch as men attain these benefits only by faith. What can sinners, estranged from God, bring forth except what is hateful to his judgment? All ungodly men, and especially all hypocrites, are puffed up with this stupid assurance because, however much they recognize that their hearts teem with impurities, still if they bring forth any well-seeming works, they think these worthy not to be despised by God. Hence arises the pernicious error that, convicted of a wicked and evil mind, they still cannot be compelled to confess themselves empty of righteousness. Even when they acknowledge themselves unrighteous because they cannot deny it, they still claim for themselves some righteousness.

The Lord eloquently refutes this vanity through the prophet: “Ask,” he says, “the priests to decide this question, ‘If one carries holy flesh in the skirt of his garment... and touches... bread... or any other food, does it become holy?’ The priests answered, ‘No.’ Then Haggai said, ‘If one polluted in soul touches anything of these, does it not become unclean?’ The priests replied, ‘It will become unclean.’ Haggai said, ‘So it is with this people... before me, says the Lord, and so with every work of their hands, and everything that they offer me will be unclean’” [<sup><370211></sup>Haggai 2:11-14 p.]. Would that this utterance could obtain credit with us, or duly lodge in our memory! For there is no one, howsoever wicked in his whole life, who can let himself be persuaded of what the Lord here clearly declares. As soon as any very wicked person has performed one or another of the duties of the law, he does not doubt that it will be accounted to him as righteousness; but the Lord proclaims that no sanctification can be acquired from this action unless the heart has first been well cleansed. And not content with this, he declares that all the works that come forth from sinners are contaminated with impurity of

heart. Take, then, the name of righteousness from those works which are condemned as works of pollution by the Lord's mouth! And with what a fitting comparison does he demonstrate this! For the objection could have been raised that what the Lord had commanded is inviolably holy. But he takes the opposite position, that it is no wonder things sanctified in the law of the Lord are contaminated by the filth of the wicked. For by handling something sacred, the unclean hand profanes it.

## 8. PERSON AND WORK

He beautifully treats the same matter also in Isaiah, saying: "Bring no more vain offering; incense is an abomination to me... My soul hates your new moons and solemn feasts; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you multiply prayer, I will not listen; for your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean, remove the evil of your thoughts..." [<sup><230103></sup> Isaiah 1:13-16 p.; cf. ch. <sup><235801></sup> 58:1-5]. What does this mean, that the Lord abominates the observance of his law? Surely, he despises nothing that is of the genuine observance of the law, the beginning of which he everywhere teaches to be a true fear of his name. Once that is taken away not only are all the things offered to him trifles but loathsome and abominable filth.

Now let the hypocrites go, and keeping wickedness wrapped up in their hearts, let them try to win God's favor by works! In this way they will more and more anger him. For "the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to him, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him" [<sup><201508></sup> Proverbs 15:8 p.]. We therefore hold to be beyond doubt what ought to be a mere commonplace even to one indifferently versed in the Scriptures, that in men not yet truly sanctified works manifesting even the highest splendor are so far away from righteousness before the Lord that they are reckoned sins.

Accordingly, they have spoken very truly who have taught that favor with God is not obtained by anyone through works, but on the contrary works please him only when the person has previously found favor in his sight. <sup>F379</sup> And here we must faithfully keep the order to which Scripture leads us by the hand. Moses writes: "The Lord had regard for Abel and his

works” [<sup><010404></sup> Genesis 4:4 p.]. Do you see that he points out how the Lord is favorable to men before he has regard for their works? Therefore, purification of heart must precede, in order that those works which come forth from us may be favorably received by God. For the statement of Jeremiah is always in force, that the eyes of God have regard for truth [<sup><240503></sup> Jeremiah 5:3]. That it is faith alone, moreover, by which men’s hearts are purified, the Holy Spirit has declared through the mouth of Peter [<sup><441509></sup> Acts 15:9]. From this it is evident that the first foundation lies in true and living faith.

*(Those who are regenerated, justified by faith alone, 9-11)*

## **9. ALSO, TRUE BELIEVERS DO NO GOOD WORKS OF THEMSELVES**

Now let us examine what righteousness is possessed by those whom we have placed in the fourth class. We confess that while through the intercession of Christ’s righteousness God reconciles us to himself, and by free remission of sins accounts us righteous, his beneficence is at the same time joined with such a mercy that through his Holy Spirit he dwells in us and by his power the lusts of our flesh are each day more and more mortified; we are indeed sanctified<sup>F380</sup>, to that is, consecrated to the Lord in true purity of life, with our hearts formed to obedience to the law. The end is that our especial will may be to serve his will and by every means to advance his glory alone.<sup>F381</sup>

But even while by the leading of the Holy Spirit we walk in the ways of the Lord, to keep us from forgetting ourselves and becoming puffed up, traces of our imperfection remain to give us occasion for humility. Scripture says: There is no righteous man, no man who will do good and not sin [<sup><210721></sup> Ecclesiastes 7:21, Vg.; cf. <sup><110846></sup> 1 Kings 8:46]. What sort of righteousness will they obtain, then, from their works? First, I say that the best work that can be brought forward from them is still always spotted and corrupted with some impurity of the flesh, and has, so to speak, some dregs mixed with it. Let a holy servant of God, I say, choose from the whole course of his life what of an especially noteworthy character he thinks he has done. Let him well turn over in his mind its several parts. Undoubtedly he will somewhere perceive that it savors of

the rottenness of the flesh, since our eagerness for well-doing is never what it ought to be but our great weakness slows down our running in the race. Although we see that the stains that bespatter the works of the saints are plainly visible, though we admit that they are only the slightest spots, will they not offend God's eyes, before which not even the stars are pure [<sup><182505></sup> Job 25:5]? We have not a single work going forth from the saints that if it be judged in itself deserves not shame as its just reward.

## **10. HE WHO THINKS HE HAS HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS MISUNDERSTANDS THE SEVERITY OF THE LAW**

Next, even if it were possible for us to have some wholly pure and perfect works, yet, as the prophet says, one sin is enough to wipe out and extinguish every memory of that previous righteousness [<sup><261824></sup> Ezekiel 18:24]. James agrees with him: "Whoever," he says, "fails in one point, has become guilty of all" [<sup><590210></sup> James 2:10 p.]. Now since this mortal life is never pure or devoid of sin, whatever righteousness we might attain, when it is corrupted, oppressed, and destroyed, by the sins that repeatedly follow, could not come into God's sight or be reckoned to us as righteousness.

In short, when it is a question of the righteousness of works, we must have regard not for the work of the law but for the commandment. Therefore, if righteousness is sought from the law we will in vain bring forward one work or another, but unceasing obedience to the law is necessary. Therefore, God does not, as many stupidly believe, once for all reckon to us as righteousness that forgiveness of sins concerning which we have spoken in order that, having obtained pardon for our past life, we may afterward seek righteousness in the law;<sup>F382</sup> this would be only to lead us into false hope, to laugh at us, and mock us. For since no perfection can come to us so long as we are clothed in this flesh, and the law moreover announces death and judgment to all who do not maintain perfect righteousness in works, it will always have grounds for accusing and condemning us unless, on the contrary, God's mercy counters it, and by continual forgiveness of sins repeatedly acquits us. Therefore, what I said at the beginning always holds good:<sup>F383</sup> if we are judged by our own worth, whatever we plan or undertake, with all our efforts and labors we still deserve death and destruction.

## 11. BELIEVERS' RIGHTEOUSNESS IS ALWAYS FAITH RIGHTEOUSNESS

We must strongly insist upon these two points: first, that there never existed any work of a godly man which, if examined by God's stern judgment, would not deserve condemnation; secondly, if such a work were found (something not possible for man), it would still lose favor— weakened and stained as it is by the sins with which its author himself is surely burdened.

This is the pivotal point of our disputation. <sup>F384</sup> For on the beginning of justification there is no quarrel between us and the sounder Schoolmen: <sup>F385</sup> that a sinner freely liberated from condemnation may obtain righteousness, and that through the forgiveness of sins; except that they include under the term "justification" a renewal, by which through the Spirit of God we are remade to obedience to the law. Indeed, they so describe the righteousness of the regenerated man that a man once for all reconciled to God through faith in Christ may be reckoned righteous before God by good works and be accepted by the merit of them. <sup>F386</sup> But on the contrary, the Lord declares that for Abraham he reckoned faith as righteousness [<sup><450403></sup>Romans 4:3], not at the time when Abraham was as yet serving idols but after he had for many years excelled in holiness of life. Therefore, Abraham had long worshiped God with a pure heart, and kept such obedience to the law as can be kept by mortal man. Yet he still had a righteousness set in faith. From this we infer, according to Paul's reasoning, that it was not of works [<sup><490209></sup>Ephesians 2:9]. Similarly, when a prophet says, "The just shall live by faith" [<sup><350204></sup>Habakkuk 2:4], the statement does not apply to impious and profane persons, whom the Lord by turning them to faith may justify, but the utterance is directed to believers, and to them life is promised by faith. Paul also removes all doubt when, to confirm that idea, he takes this verse of David's: "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven" [<sup><193201></sup>Psalm 32:1; 31:1, Vg.; cf. <sup><450407></sup>Romans 4:7]. It is certain that David is not speaking concerning the ungodly but of believers, such as he himself was. For he spoke from the prompting of his own conscience. Therefore, we must have this blessedness not just once but must hold to it throughout life. Finally, he testifies that the embassy of free reconciliation with God is published not for one day or another but is attested as perpetual in the church [cf.

<470518> 2 Corinthians 5:18-19]. Accordingly, to the very end of life, believers have no other righteousness than that which is there described. For Christ ever remains the Mediator to reconcile the Father to us; and his death has everlasting efficacy: namely, cleansing, satisfaction, atonement, and finally perfect obedience, with which all our iniquities are covered. And Paul does not say to the Ephesians that we have the beginning of salvation from grace but that we have been saved through grace, “not by works, lest any man should boast” [<sup><490208></sup> Ephesians 2:8-9].

*(Scholastic objections to justification by faith, and doctrine of the supererogatory merits of the saints examined and refuted, 12-21)*

## 12. EVASIONS OF OPPONENTS

The evasions that the Schoolmen seek here in order to escape do not help them out. They say: Good works are not as important in their intrinsic worth as to be sufficient to obtain righteousness, but their great value lies in “accepting grace.”<sup>F387</sup> Accordingly, because they are compelled to admit that here works righteousness is always imperfect, they concede that as long as we live we need forgiveness of sins to supply the defect of works; but that the transgressions committed are compensated by works of supererogation.<sup>F388</sup>

I reply that “accepting grace,” as they call it, is nothing else than his free goodness, with which the Father embraces us in Christ when he clothes us with the innocence of Christ and accepts it as ours that by the benefit of it he may hold us as holy, pure, and innocent. For Christ’s righteousness, which as it alone is perfect alone can bear the sight of God, must appear in court on our behalf, and stand surety in judgment, Furnished with this righteousness, we obtain continual forgiveness of sins in faith. Covered with this purity, the sordidness and uncleanness of our imperfections are not ascribed to us but are hidden as if buried that they may not come into God’s judgment, until the hour arrives when, the old man slain and clearly destroyed in us, the divine goodness will receive us into blessed peace with the new Adam. There let us await the Day of the Lord in which, having received incorruptible bodies, we will be carried into the glory of the Heavenly Kingdom [cf. <sup><461545></sup> 1 Corinthians 15:45 ff.].

### 13. ONE WHO SPEAKS OF “SUPEREROGATORY” WORKS MISUNDERSTANDS THE SHARPNESS OF GOD’S DEMAND AND THE GRAVITY OF SIN

If these things are true, surely no works of ours can of themselves render us acceptable and pleasing to God; nor can even the works themselves please him, except to the extent that a man, covered by the righteousness of Christ, pleases God and obtains forgiveness of his sins. For God has not promised the reward of life for particular works but he only declares that the man who does them shall live [<sup><031805></sup>Leviticus 18:5], leveling that well-known curse against all those who do not persevere in all things [<sup><052726></sup>Deuteronomy 27:26; <sup><480310></sup>Galatians 3:10]. The fiction of partial righteousness is abundantly refuted by these statements, where no other righteousness than the complete observance of the law is allowed in heaven.

Their usual loose talk about “works of supererogation” providing sufficient compensation is no sounder. <sup>F389</sup> Why? Do they not always return to the position from which they have already been driven, that he who partly keeps the law is to that extent righteous by works? What no one of sound judgment will concede to them they too shamelessly assume as a fact. The Lord often testifies that he recognizes no righteousness of works except in the perfect observance of his law. What perversity is it for us, when we lack righteousness, in order not to seem deprived of all glory—that is, utterly to have yielded to God—to boast of some little bits of a few works and try through other satisfactions to pay for what is lacking?

Satisfactions have already been effectively demolished, <sup>F390</sup> so that they ought not even to come to our minds in a dream. I say that those who talk such nonsense do not realize what an execrable thing sin is in God’s sight. Truly, they should have understood that men’s whole righteousness, gathered together in one heap, could not make compensation for a single sin. For we see that man was so cast away and abandoned by God for one transgression that he lost at the same time all capacity to recover his salvation [<sup><010317></sup>Genesis 3:17]. Therefore, the capacity to make satisfaction was taken away. Those who preen themselves on it surely will never satisfy God, to whom nothing is pleasing or acceptable that

comes forth from his enemies. Now God's enemies are all those to whom he determines to impute sins. Therefore, our sins must be covered and forgiven before the Lord recognizes any work of ours. From this it follows that forgiveness of sins is free, and those who thrust in any satisfactions wickedly blaspheme it. Let us therefore, after the apostle's example, "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies before us," run our race, pressing "on toward... the prize of the upward call" [<sup>500313</sup>Philippians 3:13-14 p.].

#### **14. EVEN THE PERFECT FULFILLMENT OF OUR OBLIGATION WOULD BRING US NO GLORY; BUT THIS ALSO IS NOT AT ALL POSSIBLE!**

To boast about works of supererogation—how does this square with the injunction laid upon us that, when we have done whatever is commanded us, we call ourselves "unworthy servants," and say that "we have done no more than we ought to have done" [<sup>421710</sup>Luke 17:10 p.]? To speak before God is not to pretend or lie but to determine within yourself what you hold for certain. Therefore, the Lord bids us sincerely perceive and consider within ourselves that we perform no unrequired duties for him but render him our due service. And rightly! For we are servants obligated to render so many services that we cannot perform them, even though all our thoughts and all our members were turned to the duties of the law. Consequently, his statement, "When you have done whatever is commanded you," is as much as to say that all the righteous acts of men—and more—belonged to one alone. How dare we, then, since we, every one, are very far away from this goal, boast that we have accumulated something beyond the measure due?

Now there is no reason for any man to object that, though he partly fails in the necessary duties, nothing prevents him from extending his endeavor beyond them. <sup>F391</sup> This fact we must accept completely: that there is nothing that can come to mind which contributes to the honoring of God or the love of neighbor <sup>F392</sup> that is not comprised within God's law. But if it is a part of the law, let us not boast of voluntary liberality when we are constrained by necessity.

## 15. GOD IS ENTITLED TO ALL THAT WE ARE AND HAVE; HENCE THERE CAN BE NO SUPEREROGATORY WORKS

Now they improperly apply to this matter Paul's boasting that among the Corinthians he voluntarily yielded his right, which he could otherwise have used if he had wished; and he devoted to them not only what he owed out of duty but bestowed a free service beyond the bounds of duty [<sup><460901></sup> 1 Corinthians 9:1 ff.]. But they should have paid attention to the reason there indicated, that his action might not become an offense to the weak [<sup><460912></sup> 1 Corinthians 9:12]. For evil and deceitful workmen recommended themselves by this false show of kindness in order to gain favor for their dangerous doctrines and to breathe hatred upon the gospel, so that it was necessary for Paul either to imperil the doctrine of Christ or to oppose such devices. Well then, if for a Christian man it is a matter of indifference to give offense when he can abstain from it, I admit the apostle performed some work of supererogation for the Lord. But if this was duly required of a prudent steward of the gospel, I say that he did what he ought. Finally, even if such a reason is not apparent, this statement of Chrysostom is always true: all our belongings have the same status as the possessions of slaves, which by right belong to their master himself. <sup>F393</sup> And Christ did not conceal this in his parable, for he asks what thanks we shall give our servant when after a whole day of various tasks he returns to us at evening [<sup><421707></sup> Luke 17:7-9]. Yet it can happen that he labored with greater industry than we would have dared demand. Granted. Still, he did nothing that was not required of the condition of servitude. For he with his whole capacity is ours.

I am not speaking of the sort of supererogations that such persons wish to display before God, for they are trifles that he never either commanded or approves, nor will he accept them when account of them is to be rendered before him. In this sense only, we agree that there are works of supererogation—namely, those of which it is said in the prophet: “Who has required this of your hands?” [<sup><230112></sup> Isaiah 1:12, cf. Vg.]. But let them remember what is said of them in another place: “Why do you spend your money, and not for bread; why do you use up your labor, and not for repletion?” [<sup><235502></sup> Isaiah 55:2 p.]. Indeed, it is not very laborious for these leisured rabbis to dispute these matters under the shade in easy chairs. But when that supreme Judge sits in his judgment seat such windy

opinions will have to vanish, all is this that we had to seek: what confidence we can bring to his judgment seat in our defense, not what we can talk about in the schools and corners. <sup>F394</sup>

## 16. NO TRUST IN WORKS AND NO GLORY IN WORKS

In this respect there are two plagues that we must especially banish from our minds: we must not put any confidence in the righteousness of works, and we must not ascribe to works any glory. In teaching that all our righteous deeds are foul in God's sight unless these derive a good odor from Christ's innocence, Scripture consistently dissuades us from confidence. Works can only arouse God's vengeance unless they be sustained by his merciful pardon. Thus they leave us nothing but to implore our Judge for mercy with that confession of David's: that no one will be justified before him if he demands a reckoning from his servants [<sup><19E302></sup>Psalm 143:2 p.]. But when Job says: "If I have acted wickedly, woe to me! but if justly, I will not lift up my head" [<sup><181015></sup>Job 10:15 p.], although he is concerned with that highest righteousness of God, to which not even the angels answer, he at the same time shows that when it comes to God's judgment, nothing remains to all mortals but to keep silence. For it not only concerns the fact that Job prefers to yield willingly rather than to struggle perilously against God's severity but signifies that he did not experience any other righteousness in himself than what at the first moment would wither before God's face.

When confidence is banished, all glorying also must necessarily depart. For who would accord credit for righteousness to works, trust in which trembles at God's sight? We must therefore come whither Isaiah calls us: "In God all the seed of Israel shall triumph and glory" [<sup><234525></sup>Isaiah 45:25 P.]; for what he says elsewhere is very true, that we are "the planting of the glory of God" [<sup><236103></sup>Isaiah 61:3 p.]. <sup>b</sup>The mind will then be duly cleansed when it does not in any respect settle back in the confidence, or exult in the glory, of works. But this error disposes stupid men to be puffed up with false and lying confidence because they always lodge in works the cause of their salvation.

## 17. IN NO RESPECT CAN WORKS SERVE AS THE CAUSE OF OUR HOLINESS

The philosophers postulate four kinds of causes to be observed in the outworking of things. If we look at these, however, we will find that, as far as the establishment of our salvation is concerned, none of them has anything to do with works. For Scripture everywhere proclaims that the efficient cause <sup>F395</sup> of our obtaining eternal life is the mercy of the Heavenly Father and his freely given love toward us. Surely the material cause is Christ, with his obedience, through which he acquired righteousness for us. What shall we say is the formal or instrumental cause but faith? And John includes these three in one sentence when he says: “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life” [<sup><430316></sup> John 3:16]. As for the final cause, the apostle testifies that it consists both in the proof of divine justice and in the praise of God’s goodness, and in the same place he expressly mentions three others. For so he speaks to the Romans: “All have sinned and lack the glory of God; moreover, they are justified freely by his grace” [<sup><450323></sup> Romans 3:23-24; cf. <sup><490106></sup> Ephesians 1:6, cf. Vg.]. Here you have the head and primal source: that God embraced us with his free mercy. There follows: “Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” [<sup><450324></sup> Romans 3:24]. Here you have, as it were, the material cause by which righteousness is brought about for us. In the words “through faith in his blood” [<sup><450325></sup> Romans 3:25 p.], is shown the instrumental cause whereby the righteousness of Christ is applied to us. Lastly, he adds the final cause when, to demonstrate his righteousness, he says, “In order that he himself may be righteous, and the justifier of him who has faith in Christ” [<sup><450326></sup> Romans 3:26, Vg.]. And to note also, by the way, that this righteousness stands upon reconciliation, he expressly states that Christ was given as reconciliation. Thus also in the first chapter of Ephesians he teaches that we are received into grace by God out of sheer mercy, that this comes about by Christ’s intercession and is apprehended by faith, and that all things exist to the end that the glory of divine goodness may fully shine forth [<sup><490103></sup> Ephesians 1:3-14]. bSince we see that every particle of our salvation stands thus outside of us, why is it that we still trust or glory in works? The most avowed enemies of divine grace cannot stir up any controversy with us concerning either the

efficient or the final cause, unless they would deny the whole of Scripture. They falsely represent the material and the formal cause, as if our works held half the place along with faith and Christ's righteousness.<sup>F396</sup> But Scripture cries out against this also, simply affirming that Christ is for us both righteousness and life, and that this benefit of righteousness is possessed by faith alone.

## **18. THE SIGHT OF GOOD WORKS, HOWEVER, CAN STRENGTHEN FAITH**

Now the saints quite often strengthen themselves and are comforted by remembering their own innocence and uprightness, and they do not even refrain at times from proclaiming it. This is done in two ways: either comparing their good cause with the evil cause of the wicked, they thence derive confidence of victory, not so much by the commendation of their own righteousness as by the just and deserved condemnation of their adversaries. Or, without comparison with others, while they examine themselves before God, the purity of their own conscience brings them some comfort and confidence.

We shall look at the first reason later.<sup>F397</sup> Now concerning the second, let us briefly explain how what we said above<sup>F398</sup> agrees with it: that under God's judgment we must not put any trust in works, or glory in any esteem of them. The agreement lies in this: that the saints, when it is a question of the founding and establishing of their own salvation, without regard for works turn their eyes solely to God's goodness. Not only do they betake themselves to it before all things as to the beginning of blessedness but they repose in it as in the fulfillment of this. A conscience so founded, erected, and established is established also in the consideration of works, so far, that is, as these are testimonies of God dwelling and ruling in us. Inasmuch, therefore, as this reliance upon works has no place unless you first cast the whole confidence of your mind upon God's mercy, it ought not to seem contrary to that upon which it depends. Therefore, when we rule out reliance upon works, we mean only this: that the Christian mind may not be turned back to the merit of works as to a help toward salvation but should rely wholly on the free promise of righteousness. But we do not forbid him from undergirding and strengthening this faith by signs of the divine benevolence toward him. For

if, when all the gifts God has bestowed upon us are called to mind, they are like rays of the divine countenance by which we are illumined to contemplate that supreme light of goodness; much more is this true of the grace of good works, which shows that the Spirit of adoption has been given to us [cf. <sup><450815></sup>Romans 8:15].

## 19. WORKS AS FRUITS OF THE CALL

When, therefore, the saints by innocence of conscience strengthen their faith and take from it occasion to exult, from the fruits of their calling they merely regard themselves as having been chosen as sons by the Lord. Accordingly, the statement of Solomon: “In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence” [<sup><201426></sup>Proverbs 14:26], and the fact that in order to be heard by him the saints sometimes use this calling of God to witness that they have walked before him in uprightness and simplicity [cf. <sup><012440></sup>Genesis 24:40; <sup><122003></sup>2 Kings 20:3] are matters that have no place in laying a foundation to strengthen the conscience but are of value only when taken a posteriori. For there is nowhere that fear which is able to establish full assurance. And the saints are conscious of possessing only such an integrity as intermingled with many vestiges of the flesh. But since they take the fruits of regeneration as proof of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, from this they are greatly strengthened to wait for God’s help in all their necessities, seeing that in this very great matter they experience him as Father. And they cannot do even this unless they first apprehend God’s goodness, sealed by nothing else than the certainty of the promise. For if they begin to judge it by good works, nothing will be more uncertain or more feeble; for indeed, if works be judged of themselves, by their imperfection they will no less declare God’s wrath than by their incomplete purity they testify to his benevolence.

In sum, they so proclaim God’s benefits as not to turn away from God’s freely given favor, in which, as Paul testifies, there is set “length, breadth, depth, and height” [<sup><490318></sup>Ephesians 3:18]. It is as if he said: “Wherever the minds of the godly turn, however high they mount up, however far and wide they extend, still they ought not to depart from the love of Christ but should apply themselves wholly to meditating upon it. For in itself it embraces all dimensions.” Therefore, he says that it excels and overtops all knowledge, and that when we acknowledge how much Christ loved us we

are “filled with all the fullness of God” [<sup><490319></sup>Ephesians 3:19]. As elsewhere, while Paul boasts that the godly are victors in every contest, he soon adds the reason: “on account of him who loved us” [<sup><450837></sup>Romans 8:37 p.].

## **20. WORKS ARE GOD’S GIFT AND CANNOT BECOME THE FOUNDATION OF SELF-CONFIDENCE FOR BELIEVERS**

We now see that the saints have not a confidence in works that either attributes anything to their merit, since they regard them solely as gifts of God from which they may recognize his goodness and as signs of the calling by which they realize their election, <sup>F399</sup> or in any degree diminishes the free righteousness that we attain in Christ, since it depends upon this and does not subsist without it. Augustine expresses this idea in few words but elegantly when he writes: “I do not say to the Lord, ‘Despise not the works of my hands.’” [<sup><19D808></sup>Psalm 138:8; cf. <sup><19D708></sup>Psalm 137:8, Vg.] ‘I have sought the Lord with my hands and am not deceived.’ [<sup><197702></sup>Psalm 77:2; cf. <sup><197603></sup>Psalm 76:3, Vg.] But I do not commend the works of my hands, for I fear lest, when Thou lookest upon them, thou mayest find more sins than merits. This only I say, this I ask, this I desire: despise not the works of thy hands; see in me thy work, not mine. For if thou seest mine, thou wilt condemn it. If thou seest thine own, thou wilt crown it. For whatever good works are mine are from thee.” <sup>F400</sup> He gives two reasons why he dared not vaunt his works before God: because if he has anything of good works, he sees in them nothing of his own; and secondly, because these are also overwhelmed by a multitude of sins. From this it comes about that his conscience feels more fear and consternation than assurance. Therefore, he would like God to look upon his good deeds only that, recognizing the grace of his own call in them, he may finish the work he has begun.

## **21. SENSE IN WHICH GOOD WORKS ARE SOMETIMES SPOKEN OF AS A REASON FOR DIVINE BENEFITS**

The fact that Scripture shows that the good works of believers are reasons why the Lord benefits them is to be so understood as to allow what we have set forth before to stand unshaken: <sup>F401</sup> that the efficient cause of our salvation consists in God the Father’s love; the material cause in God the

Son's obedience; the instrumental cause in the Spirit's illumination, that is, faith; the final cause, in the glory of God's great generosity.<sup>F402</sup> These do not prevent the Lord from embracing works as inferior causes. But how does this come about? Those whom the Lord has destined by his mercy for the inheritance of eternal life he leads into possession of it, according to his ordinary dispensation, by means of good works. What goes before in the order of dispensation he calls the cause of what comes after. In this way he sometimes derives eternal life from works, not intending it to be ascribed to them; but because he justifies those whom he has chosen in order at last to glorify them [<sup><450830></sup>Romans 8:30], he makes the prior grace, which is a step to that which follows, as it were the cause. But whenever the true cause is to be assigned, he does not enjoin us to take refuge in works but keeps us solely to the contemplation of his mercy. What sort of thing is this teaching of the apostle: "The wages of sin is death; the grace of the Lord, eternal life" [<sup><450623></sup>Romans 6:23]? Why does he not contrast righteousness with sin, as he contrasts life with death? Why does he not make righteousness the cause of life, as he does sin that of death? For thus an antithesis would duly have been set up that is somewhat broken by this variation. But the apostle intended by this comparison to express what was true: namely, that death is owing to men's deserts but life rests solely upon God's mercy. In short, by these expressions sequence more than cause is denoted. For God, by heaping grace upon grace, from the former grace takes the cause for adding those which follow that he may overlook nothing for the enrichment of his servants. And he so extends his liberality as to have us always look to his freely given election, which is the source and beginning. For, although he loves the gifts which he daily confers upon us, seeing that they proceed from that source, still it is our part to hold to that free acceptance, which alone can support our souls; and so to subordinate to the first cause the gifts of the Holy Spirit he then bestows, that they may nowise detract from it.

# CHAPTER 15

## BOASTING ABOUT THE MERITS OF WORKS DESTROYS OUR PRAISE OF GOD FOR HAVING BESTOWED RIGHTEOUSNESS, AS WELL AS OUR ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

*(Doctrine of human merit in justification opposed by Augustine and Bernard as well as by Scripture, 1-4)*

### 1. FALSE AND TRUE QUESTIONING

Now we have disposed of the main issue in this discussion: If righteousness is supported by works, in God's sight it must entirely collapse; and it is confined solely to God's mercy, solely to communion with Christ, and therefore solely to faith. But let us carefully note that this is the chief turning point <sup>F403</sup> of the matter in order to avoid becoming entangled in the common delusion, not of the common folk only, but also of the learned. For as soon as there is a question concerning justification of faith or of works, they rush off to those passages which seem to attribute to works some merit in God's sight. As if justification of works would be fully proved by showing that they have some value with God!

To be sure, we have clearly shown above <sup>F404</sup> that works righteousness consists solely in perfect and complete observance of the law. From this it follows that no man is justified by works unless, having been raised to the highest peak of perfection, he cannot be accused even of the least transgression. There is consequently another separate question: Though works may by no means suffice for justification, should they not yet deserve favor with God?

### 2. "MERIT," AN UNSCRIPTURAL AND DANGEROUS WORD!

I must first make these prefatory remarks concerning the term "merit": whoever first applied it to men's works over against God's judgment <sup>F405</sup>

provided very badly for sincere faith. Of course, I would like to avoid verbal battles, but I wish that Christian writers had always exercised such restraint as not to take it into their heads needlessly to use terms foreign to Scripture that would produce great offense and very little fruit. Why, I ask, was there need to drag in the term “merit” when the value of good works could without offense have been meaningfully explained by another term? How much offense this term contains is clear from the great damage it has done to the world. Surely, as it is a most prideful term, it can do nothing but obscure God’s favor and imbue men with perverse haughtiness.

I admit that the ancient writers of the church commonly used it, and would that they had not given posterity occasion for error by their misuse of one little word! Nevertheless, in some passages they also testify that they did not intend to prejudice the truth. For in one place Augustine speaks thus: “Let human merits, which perished through Adam, here keep silence, and let God’s grace reign through Jesus Christ.” Again: “The saints attribute nothing to their merits; they will attribute all to thy mercy alone, O God.” Again: “And when man sees that all the good that he has, he has not from himself but from his God, he sees that all that is praiseworthy in himself arises not from his own merits but from God’s mercy.”<sup>F406</sup> You see that Augustine, when he has denied to man the power of well-doing, also overthrows any worth of merit. Moreover, Chrysostom says: “Our works, if there are any that follow the freely given call of God, are repayment and debt, but God’s gifts are grace and beneficence and great generosity.”<sup>F407</sup>

But laying aside the term, let us rather look at the thing itself. Previously, indeed, I cited a statement from Bernard: “As it is sufficient for merit not to presume concerning merit, so to lack merits is sufficient for judgment.” But he immediately adds his interpretation, in which he sufficiently softens the harshness of the utterance by saying: “Accordingly, take care to have merits. When you have them, know that they have been given. Hope for fruit, the mercy of God, and you have escaped all peril of poverty, ungratefulness, and presumption. Happy is the church that lacks neither merits without presumption nor presumption without merits.” And a little before, he had abundantly shown the godly sense in which he had used the word. “For why,” he asks, “should the church concern itself

with merits when it has a firmer and more secure reason to glory in God's purpose? God cannot deny himself; he will do what he has promised [cf. <sup><550213></sup>2 Timothy 2:13]. Thus you have no reason to ask, 'By what merits may we hope for benefits?' Especially since you hear: 'It is not for your sake... but for mine' [<sup><263622></sup>Ezekiel 36:22,32 p.]. For merit, it suffices to know that merits do not suffice."<sup>F408</sup>

### 3. THE WHOLE VALUE OF GOOD WORKS COMES FROM GOD'S GRACE

Scripture shows what all our works deserve when it states that they cannot bear God's gaze because they are full of uncleanness. What, then, will the perfect observance of the law deserve, if any such can be found, when Scripture enjoins us to consider ourselves unprofitable servants even when we do everything required of us [<sup><421710></sup>Luke 17:10]? For to the Lord we have given nothing unrequired but have only carried out services owed, for which no thanks are due.

Yet those good works which he has bestowed upon us the Lord calls "ours," and testifies they not only are acceptable to him but also will have their reward. It is our duty in return to be aroused by so great a promise, to take courage not to weary in well-doing [cf. <sup><480609></sup>Galatians 6:9; <sup><530313></sup>2 Thessalonians 3:13], and to receive God's great kindness with true gratefulness. There is no doubt that whatever is praiseworthy in works is God's grace; there is not a drop that we ought by rights to ascribe to ourselves. If we truly and earnestly recognize this, not only will all confidence in merit vanish, but the very notion, we are not dividing the credit for good works between God and man, as the Sophists do,<sup>F409</sup> but we are preserving it whole, complete, and unimpaired for the Lord. To man we assign only this: that he pollutes and contaminates by his impurity those very things which were good. For nothing proceeds from a man, however perfect he be, that is not defiled by some spot. Let the Lord, then, call to judgment the best in human works: he will indeed recognize in them his own righteousness but man's dishonor and shame! Good works, then, are pleasing to God and are not unfruitful for their doers. But they receive by way of reward the most ample benefits of God, not because they so deserve but because God's kindness has of itself set this value on them. What unkindness it is that men are not content with

that generosity of God which bestows unearned rewards upon works that merit no such thing, and with profane ambition strive that what comes entirely from God's munificence may seem to be credited to the merit of works!

Here I appeal to every man's common sense. If anyone who holds the usufruct of a field by another's liberality also claims the title to the property for himself, does he not by such ungratefulness deserve to lose the very possession that he has held? Similarly, if a slave, liberated by his master, hides his base freed man's condition and claims to be freeborn, does he not deserve to be reduced to his former servitude? For the only lawful way of enjoying a benefit is neither to claim for ourselves more than was given nor to defraud of his praise the author of the good, but so to behave that what he has transferred to us may still seem in a way to reside with him. If we must maintain such restraint toward men, let each of us see and ponder what sort of restraint God requires.

#### 4. DEFENSE AGAINST COUNTEREVIDENCE

I know that these sophisters misuse certain passages to prove that the term "merit toward God" is found in Scripture. They cite a sentence from Ecclesiasticus: "Mercy will make room for every man according to the merit of his works" [Ecclesiasticus 16:15, Vg.]. And another from the Letter to the Hebrews: "Do not forget to do good and to share, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God" [<sup>581316</sup> Hebrews 13:16 p.]. <sup>F410</sup>

I now forgo my right to reject the authority of Ecclesiasticus. Nevertheless, I say that they do not faithfully quote what Ecclesiasticus has written, whoever that writer was, for the original Greek text has the following: *πάση ἐλεημοσύνη ποιήσει τόπον ἕκαστος γὰρ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ εὐρήσει* "He will make room for every work of mercy; each man shall find according to his works." [Ecclesiasticus 16:14, tr. RV.] And that this is the genuine reading, which is corrupted in the Latin version, appears both from the construction of these words alone and from the larger context of the previous sentence.

There is no reason why, in the Letter to the Hebrews, they should try to ensnare us in one little word when in the Greek words of the apostle

nothing else is meant than that such sacrifices are pleasing and acceptable to God.

To restrain and check the insolence of our pride it ought to be quite enough that we attribute no importance to works beyond the measure of Scripture. Now it is the teaching of Scripture that our good works are always spattered with much uncleanness, by which God is rightly offended and is angry against us. So far are they from being able to appease him or arouse his kindness toward us! Yet because he examines our works according to his tenderness, not his supreme right, he therefore accepts them as if they were perfectly pure; and for that reason, although unmerited, they are rewarded with infinite benefits, both of the present life and also of the life to come. For I do not accept the distinction made by learned and otherwise godly men that good works deserve the graces that are conferred upon us in this life, while everlasting salvation is the reward of faith alone.<sup>F411</sup> For the Lord almost always lodges in heaven the reward of toil and the crown of battle. On the other hand, so to attribute to the merit of works the fact that we are showered with grace upon grace as to take it away from grace is contrary to the teaching of Scripture. For even though Christ says, “To him who has will be given” [<sup><402529></sup> Matthew 25:29; <sup><420818></sup> Luke 8:18], and the faithful and upright servant who has been faithful over a few things will be set over many things [<sup><402521></sup> Matthew 25:21], at the same time he shows elsewhere that the increases of the believers are the gifts of his freely given kindness [cf. <sup><430116></sup> John 1:16]. “All who thirst,” he says, “come ye to the waters; and ye who have no money, come, buy without money, and buy wine and milk without price.” [<sup><235501></sup> Isaiah 55:1 p.] Whatever, therefore, is now given to the godly as an aid to salvation, even blessedness itself, is purely God’s beneficence. Yet both in this blessedness and in those godly persons, he testifies that he takes works into account. For in order to testify to the greatness of his love toward us, he makes not only us but the gift that he has given us worthy of such honor.

## **5. CHRIST AS THE SOLE FOUNDATION, AS BEGINNER AND PERFECTER**

If these matters had in bygone ages been treated and dealt with in proper order, so many tumults and dissensions would never have arisen. Paul says that in the upbuilding of Christian teaching we must keep the foundation that he had laid among the Corinthians [cf. <sup><460310></sup> 1 Corinthians 3:10], “beside which no other can be laid, which is Jesus Christ” [<sup><460311></sup> 1 Corinthians 3:11]. What sort of foundation have we in Christ? Was he the beginning of our salvation in order that its fulfillment might follow from ourselves? Did he only open the way by which we might proceed under our own power? Certainly not. But, as Paul had set forth a little before, Christ, when we acknowledge him, is given us to be our righteousness [<sup><460130></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:30]. He alone is well founded in Christ who has perfect righteousness in himself: since the apostle does not say that He was sent to help us attain righteousness but himself to be our righteousness [<sup><460130></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:30]. Indeed, he states that he has chosen us in him” from eternity “before the foundation of the world,” through no merit of our own “but according to the purpose of divine good pleasure” [<sup><490104></sup> Ephesians 1:4-5, cf. Vg.]; that by his death we are redeemed from the condemnation of death and freed from ruin [cf. <sup><510114></sup> Colossians 1:14,20]; that we have been adopted unto him as sons and heirs by our Heavenly Father [cf. <sup><450817></sup> Romans 8:17; <sup><480405></sup> Galatians 4:5-7]; that we have been reconciled through his blood [<sup><450509></sup> Romans 5:9-10]; that, given into his protection, we are released from the danger of perishing and falling [<sup><431028></sup> John 10:28]; that thus ingrafted into him [cf. <sup><451119></sup> Romans 11:19] we are already, in a manner, partakers of eternal life, having entered in the Kingdom of God through hope. Yet more: we experience such participation in him that, although we are still foolish in ourselves, he is our wisdom before God; while we are sinners, he is our righteousness; while we are unclean, he is our purity; while we are weak, while we are unarmed and exposed to Satan, yet ours is that power which has been given him in heaven and on earth [<sup><402818></sup> Matthew 28:18], by which to crush Satan for us and shatter the gates of hell; while we still bear about with us the body of death, he is yet

our life. In brief, because all his things are ours and we have all things in him, in us there is nothing. Upon this foundation, I say, we must be built if we would grow into a holy temple to the Lord [cf. <sup><490221></sup> Ephesians 2:21].

## 6. ROMAN THEOLOGY CURTAILS CHRIST'S MIGHT AND HONOR

But for a long time the world has been taught otherwise. So all sorts of “moral” good works have been discovered whereby men are rendered pleasing to God before they are engrafted into Christ. As if Scripture were lying when it says that all who have not the Son are in death [<sup><620512></sup> 1 John 5:12]! If they are in death, how can they beget the substance of life? As if it were meaningless that “whatsoever is done outside faith is sin” [<sup><451423></sup> Romans 14:23]! As if good fruits could come from an evil tree! [Cf. <sup><400718></sup> Matthew 7:18; <sup><420643></sup> Luke 6:43.] What place have these most pestilent Sophists left to Christ to exert his power? They say that he deserved for us the first grace, that is, the occasion of deserving, but that it is now our part not to fail the occasion offered. <sup>F412</sup> O overweening and shameless impiety! Who would have thought that those who professed the name of Christ would dare so strip him of his power and virtually trample him underfoot? The testimony commonly rendered to him is that whoever believes in him has been justified. These Sophists teach that no other benefit comes from him except that the way has been opened for individuals to justify themselves. Would that they had tasted what these sentences mean: “Whoever have the Son of God have life” [<sup><620512></sup> 1 John 5:12 p.]; “Whoever believes... has passed out of death into life” [<sup><430524></sup> John 5:24; cf. ch. 6:40]; We have been justified by his grace that we might be made heirs of eternal life [<sup><560307></sup> Titus 3:7; cf. <sup><450501></sup> Romans 5:1-2]; Believers have Christ abiding in them [<sup><620324></sup> 1 John 3:24], through whom they may cleave to God; Sharers in his life, they sit with him in the heavenly places [<sup><490206></sup> Ephesians 2:6]; “They are translated into the Kingdom of God” [<sup><510113></sup> Colossians 1:13 p.], and attain salvation—and innumerable like passages. For they do not mean that by faith in Christ there comes to us the capacity either to procure righteousness or only to acquire salvation, but that both are given to us. Therefore, as soon as you become engrafted into Christ through faith, you are made a son of God, an

heir of heaven, a partaker in righteousness, a possessor of life; and (by this their falsehood may be better refuted) you obtain not the opportunity to gain merit but all the merits of Christ, for they are communicated to you.

## **7. ROMAN THEOLOGY UNDERSTANDS NEITHER AUGUSTINE NOR SCRIPTURE**

Thus the schools of the Sorbonne, mothers of all errors, have taken away from us justification by faith, which is the sum of all piety. Indeed, they confess by word that man is justified by “formed faith,” but this they afterward explain on the ground that good works derive from faith the capacity to justify; <sup>F413</sup> they seem to mention faith almost in mockery, because it could not be passed over in silence without great embarrassment, since it is frequently repeated by Scripture.

Still not content, in praise of good works they filch something from God and turn it over to man. Because they see that good works are of little avail to exalt man and that these are not even called merits, properly speaking, if they be accounted fruits of God’s grace, they derive them from the power of free will, as oil from a stone. And they do not deny that the principal cause, indeed, lies in grace. But they still contend that in this, free will is not ruled out, through which all merit exists. <sup>F414</sup> Not only the later Sophists teach this, but their Pythagoras, Peter Lombard, whom, if you were to compare him with them, you would call sane and sober. It was truly remarkable blindness, when he had Augustine constantly on his lips, <sup>F415</sup> not to see how much care that father took not to convey to man even the least particle of glory arising from good works. Above, when we were discussing free will, we related some of his testimonies on this matter, <sup>F416</sup> and similar ones repeatedly occur in his writings; for example: when he forbids us ever to boast of our own merits, for even they are gifts of God; and when he writes that all our merit is but of grace and not obtained through our sufficiency but wholly comes to be through grace, etc. <sup>F417</sup>

Little wonder that Lombard was blind to the light of Scripture, in which it appears that he was not so happily trained. Yet nothing clearer against him and his disciples could be desired than this word of the apostle, for having forbidden all glorying to Christians, he adds why glorying is wrong: “We are God’s workmanship, created for good works, which he prepared

beforehand that we should walk in them” [<sup><490210></sup>Ephesians 2:10, cf. Vg.]. Since, therefore, no good comes forth from us except in so far as we have been regenerated, but our regeneration is entirely and without exception from God, there is no reason why we should claim an ounce of good works for ourselves.

Finally, while they repeatedly inculcate good works, they in the meantime so instruct consciences as to discourage all their confidence that God remains kindly disposed and favorable to their works.<sup>F418</sup> But we, on the other hand, without reference to merit, still remarkably cheer and comfort the hearts of believers by our teaching, when we tell them that they please God in their works and are without doubt acceptable to him. But here too awe require that no man attempt or go about any work without faith, that is, unless with firm assurance of mind he first determines that it will please God.

## **8. ADMONITION AND COMFORT ON THE BASIS OF RIGHT DOCTRINE**

Therefore, let us not allow ourselves to be drawn even a finger's breadth from this sole foundation. For once it is laid, wise master builders build rightly and in order upon it.

For if there is need of teaching and exhortation, they inform us that “the Son of God manifested himself in order to destroy the works of the devil”; that those who are of God may not sin [<sup><620308></sup>1 John 3:8-9]; that the time past suffices for carrying out the Gentiles' wishes [<sup><600403></sup>1 Peter 4:3]; that God's elect are vessels of mercy chosen to honor and ought to be purged of uncleanness [<sup><550220></sup>2 Timothy 2:20-21]. But everything is said once for all when it is shown that Christ wants disciples who deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him [<sup><401624></sup>Matthew 16:24; <sup><420923></sup>Luke 9:23]. He who has denied himself has cut off the root of all evils so as to seek no longer the things that are his own. He who has taken up his cross has readied himself for all patience and gentleness. But the example of Christ embraces both this and all other duties of piety and holiness. He presented himself to the Father as obedient even to death. [<sup><502308></sup>Philippians 2:8.] He entered completely into the accomplishing of God's works. [Cf. <sup><430434></sup>John 4:34; also <sup><420249></sup>Luke 2:49.] He breathed

heart and soul the glory of the Father. [Cf. <sup><430850></sup>John 8:50; also <sup><430716></sup>John 7:16-18.] He laid down his life for his brothers. [<sup><431015></sup>John 10:15; cf. <sup><431513></sup>John 15:13.] He did good to his enemies and prayed for them. [Cf. <sup><420627></sup>Luke 6:27,35; also <sup><422334></sup>Luke 23:34.]

But if there is need of consolation, the following passages will bring a wonderful consolation: “We are afflicted yet not made anxious, we fail but are not deserted, are humbled but not confounded, we are cast down but have not perished, ever bearing the mortification of Jesus Christ about in our bodies that Jesus’ life may be manifested in us” [<sup><470408></sup>2 Corinthians 4:8-10 p.]; “If we died with him, we shall also live with him; if we endure, we shall also reign with him” [<sup><550211></sup>2 Timothy 2:11-12]; thus we are conformed to his sufferings, until we attain to the likeness of his resurrection [<sup><500310></sup>Philippians 3:10-11], since “the Father has predestined those whom he has chosen in himself to conform to the image of his Son that Christ may be the first-born among all the brethren” [<sup><450829></sup>Romans 8:29 p.]. Therefore, “neither death,... nor things present, nor things to come,... will separate us from the love of God which is in Christ” [<sup><450838></sup>Romans 8:38-39 p.]; but rather all things will turn to our good and salvation [cf. <sup><450828></sup>Romans 8:28]. Take note that we do not justify man by works before God, but all who are of God we speak of as being “reborn” [cf. <sup><600103></sup>1 Peter 1:3], and as becoming “a new creation” [<sup><470517></sup>2 Corinthians 5:17], so that they pass from the realm of sin into the realm of righteousness; and we say that by this testimony they confirm their calling [<sup><610110></sup>2 Peter 1:10], and, like trees, are judged by their fruits [<sup><400710></sup>Matthew 7:10; 12:33; <sup><420644></sup>Luke 6:44]. <sup>F419</sup>

# CHAPTER 16

## REFUTATION OF THE FALSE ACCUSATIONS BY WHICH THE PAPISTS TRY TO CAST ODIUM UPON THIS DOCTRINE

### 1. DOES THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION DO AWAY WITH GOOD WORKS?

This, in one word, is enough to refute the shamelessness of certain impious persons who slanderously charge us with abolishing good works, and with seducing men from the pursuit of them, when we say that men are not justified by works and do not merit salvation by them; and again, charge us with making the path to righteousness too easy when we teach that justification lies in free remission of sins; and, by this enticement, with luring into sin men who are already too much inclined to it of their own accord.<sup>F420</sup> These false charges, I say, are sufficiently refuted by that simple statement. Still, I shall briefly reply to each. They contend that through the justification of faith, good works are destroyed.

I forbear to say what sort of zealots for good works they are who thus carp at us. Let them rail with impunity even as they wantonly infect the whole world with their own foul lives! They pretend to be grieved that, when faith is so gloriously extolled, works are degraded. What if, rather, these were encouraged and strengthened? For we dream neither of a faith devoid of good works nor of a justification that stands without them. This alone is of importance: having admitted that faith and good works must cleave together, we still lodge justification in faith, not in works. We have a ready explanation for doing this, provided we turn to Christ to whom our faith is directed and from whom it receives its full strength.

Why, then, are we justified by faith? Because by faith we grasp Christ's righteousness, by which alone we are reconciled to God. Yet you could not grasp this without at the same time grasping sanctification also.<sup>F421</sup> For he "is given unto us for righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and

redemption” [<sup><460130></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:30]. Therefore Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify. These benefits are joined together by an everlasting and indissoluble bond, so that those whom he illumines by his wisdom, he redeems; those whom he redeems, he justifies; those whom he justifies, he sanctifies.

But, since the question concerns only righteousness and sanctification, let us dwell upon these. Although we may distinguish them, Christ contains both of them inseparably in himself. Do you wish, then, to attain righteousness in Christ? You must first possess Christ; but you cannot possess him without being made partaker in his sanctification, because he cannot be divided into pieces [<sup><460113></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:13]. Since, therefore, it is solely by expending himself that the Lord gives us these benefits to enjoy, he bestows both of them at the same time, the one never without the other. Thus it is clear how true it is that we are justified not without works yet not through works, since in our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness.

## **2. DOES THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION STIFLE ZEAL FOR GOOD WORKS?**

This charge is also very false: that men’s hearts are seduced from desiring to do good when we take from them their regard for merit. Here, in passing, my readers must be warned that our opponents stupidly reason from reward to merit, as I shall afterward explain more clearly. <sup>F422</sup> For they obviously do not know the principle that God is no less generous when he assigns a reward for works than when he bestows the capacity to act rightly. But I prefer to postpone this to its proper place.

Now it will be enough to touch upon how weak their objection is. This will be done in two ways. For first, in saying men will take no care to regulate their lives aright unless hope of reward is held out to them, they are completely in error. <sup>F423</sup> For if it is only a matter of men looking for reward when they serve God, and hiring or selling their labor to him, it is of little profit. God wills to be freely worshiped, freely loved. That worshiper, I say, he approves who, when all hope of receiving reward has been cut off, still ceases not to serve him.

Indeed, if men have to be aroused, no one can put sharper spurs to them than those derived from the end of our redemption and calling. Such spurs the Word of the Lord employs when it teaches that it would bespeak our too impious ingratitude for us not to reciprocate the love of him “who first loved us” [<sup><620419></sup> 1 John 4:19; cf. 5:10]; that by Christ’s blood our consciences are cleansed from dead works, that we should serve the living God [<sup><580914></sup> Hebrews 9:14]; <sup>e</sup>that it is an unworthy, unholy act for us, once cleansed, to contaminate ourselves with new filth, and to profane that sacred blood [<sup><581029></sup> Hebrews 10:29]; that “we have been delivered from the hand of our enemies in order that we may serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days” [<sup><420174></sup> Luke 1:74-75 p.]; that we have been freed from sin to cultivate righteousness with a free spirit [<sup><450618></sup> Romans 6:18]; that “our old man was crucified” [<sup><450606></sup> Romans 6:6], that “we... may arise to newness of life” [<sup><450604></sup> Romans 6:4 p.]. Likewise, if we be dead with Christ, as befits his members, we must seek the things that are above, and be pilgrims on earth, so that we may aspire to heaven where our treasure is [cf. <sup><510301></sup> Colossians 3:1-3; also <sup><400620></sup> Matthew 6:20]. In this “the grace of the Lord has appeared, that, having renounced all irreligion and worldly desires, we may live sober, holy, and godly lives in this age, awaiting our blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior.” [<sup><560211></sup> Titus 2:11-13 p.] Therefore we were not appointed to rouse wrath against ourselves but to obtain salvation through Christ [<sup><520509></sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:9]. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, which it is unlawful to profane [<sup><460316></sup> 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; <sup><470616></sup> 2 Corinthians 6:16; <sup><490221></sup> Ephesians 2:21]. We are not darkness but light in the Lord, and must walk as children of light [<sup><490508></sup> Ephesians 5:8-9; cf. <sup><520504></sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5]. We have not been called to uncleanness but to holiness [<sup><520407></sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:7], for this is the will of God, our sanctification, that we abstain from unlawful desires [<sup><520403></sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:3]. Ours is a holy calling [<sup><550109></sup> 2 Timothy 1:9]. It demands purity of life and nothing less; we have been freed from sin to this end, that we may obey righteousness [<sup><450618></sup> Romans 6:18]. Could we be aroused to love by any livelier argument than that of John’s: that “we love one another as God has loved us” [<sup><620411></sup> 1 John 4:11; cf. <sup><431334></sup> John 13:34]? that herein his children differ from the devil’s children as children of light from children of darkness, because they abide in love [<sup><620310></sup> 1

John 3:10; 2:10-11]? Again, with that argument of Paul's: that we, if we cleave to Christ, are members of one body [<sup><460615></sup> 1 Corinthians 6:15,17; 12:12], who must help one another in our mutual tasks [cf. <sup><461225></sup> 1 Corinthians 12:25]? Can we be more forcefully summoned to holiness than when we hear again from John that "all who have this hope... sanctify themselves" because their God is holy [<sup><620303></sup> 1 John 3:3]? Likewise, from Paul's lips: since we rely on the promise of adoption, "let us cleanse ourselves of all defilement of flesh and spirit" [<sup><470701></sup> 2 Corinthians 7:1, Vg.]? Or again, than when we hear Christ putting himself forward as our example in order that we may follow his footsteps [<sup><600221></sup> 1 Peter 2:21; cf. <sup><431510></sup> John 15:10; 13:15]?

### 3. GOD'S HONOR AND GOD'S MERCY AS MOTIVES FOR ACTION: SUBORDINATION OF WORKS

These few Scriptural proofs, indeed, I have set forth as a mere taste. For if it were my purpose to go through every one, a large volume would have to be compiled. All the apostles are full of exhortations, urgings, and reproofs with which to instruct the man of God in every good work [cf. <sup><550316></sup> 2 Timothy 3:16-17], and that without mention of merit. Rather, they derive their most powerful exhortations from the thought that our salvation stands upon no merit of ours but solely upon God's mercy. Accordingly, Paul, when he devoted an entire letter to showing that we have no hope of life save in Christ's righteousness, when he gets down to exhortations, implores us by that mercy of God which He has deigned to give us [<sup><451201></sup> Romans 12:1]. And surely this one reason ought to have been enough: that God may be glorified in us [<sup><400516></sup> Matthew 5:16]. But if anyone is still not so forcibly affected by the glory of God, the remembrance of his benefits will, nevertheless, amply suffice to arouse such persons to well-doing. <sup>F424</sup> But these men, since, by stressing merits, they perchance force out some slavish and coerced observances of the law, say falsely that we have no basis for exhorting men to good works because we do not enter upon the same road. <sup>F425</sup> As if such obedience were highly pleasing to God, who declares that he "loves a cheerful giver" and forbids anything to be given as if "grudgingly or of necessity" [<sup><470907></sup> 2 Corinthians 9:7]!

And I do not say this because I either despise or neglect the kind of exhortation that Scripture very often uses in order not to overlook any means of arousing us. For it recalls how “God will render to every man according to his works” [<sup><450206></sup>Romans 2:6-7; <sup><401627></sup>Matthew 16:27; <sup><460308></sup>1 Corinthians 3:8, 14-15; <sup><470510></sup>2 Corinthians 5:10; etc.]. But I deny that this is the only thing, and even the principal thing among many. Again, I do not concede that we should take our beginning from that point. Furthermore, I contend that it does nothing to support the kind of merits they preach, as we shall afterward see.<sup>F426</sup> Finally, I say that it is of no use unless we give prior place to the doctrine that we are justified by Christ’s merit alone, which is grasped through faith, but by no merits of our own works, because no men can be fit for the pursuit of holiness save those who have first imbibed this doctrine.

And the prophet beautifully suggests this when he addresses God thus: “There is propitiation with thee, O Lord, that thou mayest be feared” [<sup><19D004></sup>Psalms 130:4, cf. Comm.]. For he shows that there is no honoring of God unless his mercy be acknowledged, upon which alone it is founded and established. This is especially worthy of note: that we may know not only that the beginning of honoring God aright is trust in his mercy but that the fear of God, which the papists would have meritorious,<sup>F427</sup> cannot be reckoned under the term “merit” because that fear is founded upon the pardon and forgiveness of sins.

#### **4. THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION AS INCITEMENT TO THE SINFUL**

But it is the most worthless of slanders to say men are invited to sin, when we affirm the free forgiveness of sins in which we assert righteousness consists.<sup>F428</sup> For we say that it is of such great value that it cannot be paid for by any good of ours. Therefore, it can never be obtained except as a free gift. Now for us indeed it is free, but not so for Christ, who dearly bought it at the cost of his most sacred blood, apart from which there was no ransom of sufficient worth to satisfy God’s judgment. When men are taught this, they are made aware that they cannot do anything to prevent the shedding of his most sacred blood as often as they sin. Furthermore, we say that our foulness is such that it can never be cleansed except by the fountain of this purest blood, bought not they who

hear these things to conceive a greater dread of sin than if it were said that they are cleansed by the sprinkling of good works? And if they have any sense of God, how can they but dread, once purified, to wallow once more in the mire, so as to disturb and poison, as much as they can, the purity of this fountain? “I have washed my feet,” says the believing soul according to Solomon, “how shall I defile them anew?” [Cant. 5:3].

Now it is plain which persons prefer to cheapen the forgiveness of sins, and which ones to prostitute the dignity of righteousness. They make believe that God is appeased by their wretched satisfactions, which are but dung [<sup><500308></sup>Philippians 3:8]. <sup>F429</sup> We affirm that the guilt of sin is too heavy to be atoned for by such light trifles, that it is too grave an offense against God to be remitted by these worthless satisfactions, that this, then, is the prerogative of Christ’s blood alone. They say that righteousness, if ever it fails, is restored and repaired by works of satisfaction. <sup>F430</sup> We count it too precious to be matched by any compensation of works; and therefore, to recover it, we must take refuge in God’s mercy alone. The remaining matters that pertain to forgiveness of sins belong in the next chapter. <sup>F431</sup>

# CHAPTER 17

## THE AGREEMENT OF THE PROMISES OF THE LAW AND OF THE GOSPEL

*(Works as related to the law: the instance of Cornelius, 1-5)*

### 1. SCHOLASTIC ARGUMENTS STATED AND CONFUTED

Now let us pursue the other arguments with which Satan, through his minions, tries to overthrow or weaken justification of faith. This, I think, we have already hammered out for the slanderers, so they may not charge us with being hostile to good works. For justification is withdrawn from works, not that no good works may be done, or that what is done may be denied to be good, but that we may not rely upon them, glory in them, or ascribe salvation to them. For our assurance, our glory, and the sole anchor of our salvation are that Christ the Son of God is ours, and we in turn are in him sons of God and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven, called to the hope of eternal blessedness by God's grace, not by our worth. But because, as we said, they assail us with still other devices, come, let us keep beating them back! First, they return to the promises of the law that the Lord has made to the keepers of his law, and they ask us whether we wish them completely nullified or effective. Since it would be ridiculous and absurd to say "nullified," they take it as a fact that they are effective. From this they reason that it is not by faith alone that we are justified.<sup>F432</sup> For the Lord speaks as follows: "And it shall come to pass, if you hearken to these precepts and judgments, and keep and do them, the Lord shall keep with you the covenant and the mercy that he swore unto your fathers; and he will love you and increase you and bless you," etc. [<sup><050712></sup>Deuteronomy 7:12-13 p.]. Likewise: "If you direct your ways and your efforts aright... not walk after strange gods, execute judgment between man and man, and not slip back into wickedness" [<sup><240705></sup>Jeremiah 7:5-7, cf. Vg.; cf. also <sup><240723></sup>Jeremiah 7:23], I shall walk in your midst. I do not wish to recite a thousand passages of the same type, which, since they do not differ in meaning, will be explained by the exposition of those I have cited. To sum

up, Moses testifies that in the law a blessing and a curse [<sup><051126></sup>Deuteronomy 11:26], death and life [<sup><053015></sup>Deuteronomy 30:15], are set before us. So, then, they maintain either that this blessing becomes idle and unfruitful or that justification is not of faith alone.

We have already shown above <sup>F433</sup> how, if we cleave to the law, we are bereft of all blessing and a curse hangs over us, one ordained for all transgressors [cf. <sup><052726></sup>Deuteronomy 27:26]. For the Lord promises nothing except to perfect keepers of his law, and no one of the kind is to be found. The fact, then, remains that through the law the whole human race is proved subject to God's curse and wrath, and in order to be freed from these, it is necessary to depart from the power of the law and, as it were, to be released from its bondage into freedom. This is no carnal freedom, which would draw us away from the observance of the law, incite us to license in all things, and let our concupiscence play the wanton as if locks were broken or reins slackened. Rather, it is spiritual freedom, which would comfort and raise up the stricken and prostrate conscience, showing it to be free from the curse and condemnation with which the law pressed it down, bound and fettered. When through faith we lay hold on the mercy of God in Christ, we attain this liberation and, so to speak, manumission from subjection to the law, for it is by faith we are made sure and certain of forgiveness of sins, the law having pricked and stung our conscience to the awareness of them.

## **2. WE CANNOT BRING THE PROMISES OF THE LAW TO FULFILLMENT THROUGH OUR WORKS**

In this way, the promises also that are offered us in the law would all be ineffectual and void, had God's goodness not helped us through the gospel. For this condition, that we should carry out the law—upon which the promises depend and by which alone they are to be performed—will never be fulfilled. Thus the Lord helps us, not by leaving us a part of righteousness in our works, and by supplying part out of his loving-kindness, but by appointing Christ alone as the fulfillment of righteousness. For the apostle, having previously said that he and the other Jews, “knowing that man is not justified by the works of the law... have believed in Jesus Christ,” adds the reason: not that they might be helped to perfect righteousness by faith in Christ but that they might be

justified by that faith and not by works of the law [<sup><480216></sup> Galatians 2:16]. If believers pass from the law to faith in order to find righteousness in faith, which they see to be far from the law, surely they renounce the righteousness of the law. Let him, therefore, who so wishes enlarge upon the recompense said to await the keeper of the law, provided he at the same time ponder that our depravity makes us experience no benefit therefrom until we have obtained another righteousness from faith. So David, when he recalls the recompense that the Lord has prepared for his servants, immediately descends to the recognition of sins, which nullify it. Also, in <sup><190912></sup> Psalm 9:12, he nobly extols the benefits of the law but immediately exclaims: “Who can understand his faults? Cleanse thou me from my secret faults, O Lord” [<sup><191813></sup> Psalm 18:13, Vg.; 19:12, EV]. This passage completely agrees with a preceding one, where, after he had said, “All the ways of the Lord are goodness and truth” [<sup><192510></sup> Psalm 25:10] to those who fear him [cf. <sup><192512></sup> Psalm 25:12], he adds, “For thy name’s sake, O Lord, thou wilt pardon my depravity, for it is great” [<sup><192511></sup> Psalm 25:11; cf. 24:11, Vg.]. So also ought we to recognize that God’s benevolence has been set forth for us in the law, if we could merit it by works, but that it never comes to us by this merit.

### **3. THE PROMISES OF THE LAW ARE PUT INTO EFFECT THROUGH THE GOSPEL**

What then? Have the promises been given only to vanish without bearing fruit? I declared just above that this was not my meaning. I say, indeed, that the promises have no beneficent effect upon us so long as they have reference to the merits of works, and consequently, if considered in themselves, they are in a sense abolished. Thus that renowned promise: “I have given you good precepts” [cf. <sup><261011></sup> Ezekiel 10:11], and he who does them, shall live in them [<sup><031805></sup> Leviticus 18:5]. The apostle teaches that this promise is of no importance [cf. <sup><451005></sup> Romans 10:5; <sup><480312></sup> Galatians 3:12]; if we stop there, it will benefit not a whit more than if it had not been given. For it does not apply even to God’s most holy servants, who are far from fulfilling the law, hemmed in as they are by many transgressions. But when the promises of the gospel are substituted, which proclaim the free forgiveness of sins, these not only make us acceptable to God but also render our works pleasing to him. And

not only does the Lord adjudge them pleasing; he also extends to them the blessings which under the covenant were owed to the observance of his law. I therefore admit that what the Lord has promised in his law to the keepers of righteousness and holiness is paid to the works of believers, but in this repayment we must always consider the reason that wins favor for these works.

Now we see that there are three reasons. The first is: God, having turned his gaze from his servants' works, which always deserve reproof rather than praise, embraces his servants in Christ, and with faith alone intervening, reconciles them to himself without the help of works. The second is: of his own fatherly generosity and loving-kindness, and without considering their worth, he raises works to this place of honor, so that he attributes some value to them. The third is: He receives these very works with pardon, not imputing the imperfection with which they are all so corrupted that they would otherwise be reckoned as sins rather than virtues.

And this shows how deluded the Sophists are, who thought they had neatly got around all these absurdities by saying that works of their own intrinsic goodness are of no avail for meriting salvation but by reason of the covenant, <sup>F434</sup> because the Lord of his own liberality esteemed them so highly. Meanwhile they did not observe how far those works, which they meant to be meritorious, were from fulfilling the condition of the promises unless preceded by justification resting on faith alone, and by forgiveness of sins, through which even good works must be cleansed of spots. Of the three causes of God's liberality, then, which make the works of believers acceptable, they noted only one, and suppressed two—and the chief ones at that!

#### 4. THE TWOFOLD ACCEPTANCE OF MAN BEFORE GOD

They cite Peter's statement, which Luke quotes in the Acts: "In truth I find that God accepts no one person over another" [<sup><441034></sup> Acts 10:34-35, Comm.]. <sup>F435</sup> But in every nation he who does righteousness is acceptable to him. And from this passage, which seems quite clear, they infer that if by right efforts a man may gain God's favor for himself, it is not the gift of

God alone that gains him salvation; nay, rather that God of his own mercy so helps the sinner that by works He is inclined to mercy.

But you can in no way make the Scriptural passages agree unless you recognize a double acceptance of man before God.

For God finds nothing in man's nature but his miserable condition to dispose Him to mercy. If, therefore, when he is first received by God, it is certain that man is naked and bereft of all good, and on the other hand, stuffed and laden with all kinds of evils—on the basis of what endowment, I ask, shall we say he is worthy of a heavenly calling [cf. <sup><580301></sup> Hebrews 3:1]? Away, then, with this empty dreaming about merits, where God so clearly sets off his free mercy! For they most wickedly twist what the angel's voice said to Cornelius—that his prayers and alms mounted up unto God's presence [<sup><441031></sup> Acts 10:31]—to mean that by zeal for good works man is prepared to receive God's grace. <sup>F436</sup> Indeed, Cornelius must have been already illumined by the Spirit of wisdom, for he was endowed with true wisdom, that is, the fear of God; and he was sanctified by the same Spirit, for he was a keeper of righteousness, which the apostle taught to be the Spirit's surest fruit [<sup><480505></sup> Galatians 5:5]. All those things in him which are said to have pleased God he received from God's grace—so far is he from preparing himself to receive grace by means of them through his own effort. Truly, not one syllable of Scripture can be cited contrary to this doctrine: God's sole reason to receive man unto himself is that he sees him utterly lost if left to himself, but because he does not will him to be lost, he exercises his mercy in freeing him. Now we see how it is that this acceptance has nothing to do with man's righteousness but is pure proof of divine goodness toward miserable sinners, utterly unworthy of so great a benefit.

## **5. IN WHAT SENSE THE LORD IS PLEASED WITH THE GOOD WORKS OF THE REGENERATE**

The Lord, having rescued man from the pit of perdition, has through the grace of adoption set him apart for his own. Thereupon, because he has begotten him anew and conformed him to a new life, he now embraces him as a new creature [cf. <sup><470517></sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17] endowed with the gifts of his Spirit. This is that "acceptance" which Peter mentions [<sup><441034></sup> Acts

10:34; cf. <sup><600117></sup> 1 Peter 1:17] whereby believers are, after their call, approved of God also in respect of works [cf. <sup><600205></sup> 1 Peter 2:5]. For the Lord cannot fail to love and embrace the good things that he works in them through his Spirit. But we must always remember that God “accepts” believers by reason of works only because he is their source and graciously, by way of adding to his liberality, deigns also to show “acceptance” toward the good works he has himself bestowed. For whence come their good works, save that the Lord, having chosen them as vessels unto honor [<sup><450921></sup> Romans 9:21], thus is pleased to adorn them with true purity? Whence, also, are these works reckoned good as if they lacked nothing, save that the kindly Father grants pardon for those blemishes and spots which cleave to them? To sum up, by this passage he means nothing else but that God’s children are pleasing and lovable to him, since he sees in them the marks and features of his own countenance. For we have elsewhere taught that regeneration is a renewal of the divine image in us. <sup>F437</sup> Since, therefore, wherever God contemplates his own face, he both rightly loves it and holds it in honor, it is said with good reason that the lives of believers, framed to holiness and righteousness, are pleasing to him.

But because the godly, encompassed with mortal flesh, are still sinners, and their good works are as yet incomplete and redolent of the vices of the flesh, he can be propitious neither to the former nor to the latter unless he embrace them in Christ rather than in themselves. In this sense we are to understand those passages which attest that God is kind and merciful to the keepers of righteousness. Moses said to the Israelites, “The Lord your God, keeping covenant and mercy with those who love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations” [<sup><050709></sup> Deuteronomy 7:9 p.]. This sentence was afterward used as a common expression by the people. Thus Solomon solemnly prays, “O Lord God of Israel... who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants who walk before thee with all their heart” [<sup><110809></sup> 1 Kings 8:93]. And Nehemiah repeats the same words [<sup><160105></sup> Nehemiah 1:5].

Indeed, in all covenants of his mercy the Lord requires of his servants in return uprightness and sanctity of life, lest his goodness be mocked or someone, puffed up with empty exultation on that account, bless his own soul, walking meanwhile in the wickedness of his own heart

[<052919> Deuteronomy 29:19]. Consequently, in this way he wills to keep in their duty those admitted to the fellowship of the covenant; nonetheless the covenant is at the outset drawn up as a free agreement, and perpetually remains such. According to this reason, David, although he proclaims that he had been rewarded for the cleanness of his hands; cf. <191809> Psalm 18:90], still did not omit that source to which I referred: that he was drawn from the womb “because God loved him” There he commends the goodness of his cause in such a way that he withdraws nothing of the free mercy that anticipates all gifts whose source it is.

*(Passages that relate justification to works examined, 6-15)*

## **6. THE PROMISES OF GRACE OF THE OLD COVENANT AS DISTINCT FROM THE PROMISES OF THE LAW**

And here it is useful to note in passing how these expressions differ from the promises of the law. I call “promises of the law” not those sprinkled everywhere in the books of Moses, since in them many evangelical promises also occur, but those properly pertaining to the ministry of the law. Promises of this sort, by whatever name you wish to call them, declare that there is recompense ready for you if you do what they enjoin.

But when it is said that “the Lord keeps covenant of mercy with those who love him” [cf. <050709> Deuteronomy 7:9; <110809> 1 Kings 8:93; <160105> Nehemiah 1:5], this indicates what kind of servants they are who have undertaken his covenant <sup>F438</sup> in good faith rather than expresses the reason why the Lord benefits them. Now this is the way it is indicated: as God deigns to give us the grace of eternal life to the end that he may be loved, feared, and honored by us, so whatever promises of mercy are contained in Scripture are justly directed to the end that we may reverence and honor the Author of these benefits. Whenever, therefore, we hear that he does good to those who keep his law, let us remember that the children of God are there designated by the duty that ought in them to be perpetual, and that we have been adopted for this reason: to reverence him as our Father. Accordingly, not to renounce our right of adoption, we must ever strive in the direction of our call.

But again, let us keep in mind that the fulfillment of the Lord’s mercy does not depend upon believers’ works but that he fulfills the promise of

salvation for those who respond to his call with upright life, because in those who are directed to the good by his Spirit he recognizes the only genuine insignia of his children. What is said in <sup><191501></sup>Psalm 15:1 concerning citizens of the church should he referred to this: “O Lord, who shall sojourn in thy Tabernacle? Who shall dwell on thy holy hill?” [<sup><191401></sup>Psalm 14:1, Vg.; 15:1, EV]. “The innocent of hands and clean of heart,” etc. [<sup><192304></sup>Psalm 23:4, Vg.; 24:4, EV.] Likewise, in Isaiah: “Who... shall dwell with the devouring fire?” [<sup><233314></sup>Isaiah 33:14.] He who does righteousness, who speaks uprightly [<sup><233315></sup>Isaiah 33:15], etc. It is not the foundation by which believers stand firm before God that is described but the means whereby our most merciful Father introduces them into his fellowship, and protects and strengthens them therein. For because he abhors sin, and loves righteousness, in order to conform them to himself and to his Kingdom he purifies by his Spirit those whom he has joined to himself. Therefore if one seeks the first cause that opens for the saints the door to God’s Kingdom, and hence gives them a permanent standing-ground in it, at once we answer: Because the Lord by his own mercy has adopted them once for all, and keeps them continually. But if the question is of the manner, we must proceed to regeneration and its fruits as recounted in this psalm [cf. <sup><191502></sup>Psalm 15:2 ff.].

## **7. DOES NOT SCRIPTURE SPEAK OF THE “RIGHTEOUSNESS” OF THE WORKS OF THE LAW?**

But there seems to be far greater difficulty in those passages which grace good works with the title of “righteousness,” and declare that man is justified by them. Most are of the former type, where observances of commandments are called “justifications” or “righteousnesses.” An example of the latter type is what we find in Moses: “It shall be our righteousness if we... keep all these precepts” [<sup><050625></sup>Deuteronomy 6:25 p.]. And if you raise the objection that this is a legal promise, which, joined to an impossible condition, proves nothing, there are other objections to which you cannot make the same answer, such as this: “And it will be righteousness to you before the Lord to return to the poor man his pledge,” etc. [<sup><052413></sup>Deuteronomy 24:13 p.]. What the prophet says is the same thing: the zeal in revenging the shame of Israel was imputed to Phinehas as righteousness [<sup><19A630></sup>Psalm 106:30-31].

Therefore the Pharisees of our day think that they have here ample ground for exultation. For when we say that after faith righteousness has been established justification of works ceases, they argue on this same basis: if righteousness is of works, then it is untrue that we are justified by faith alone.

My admission that the precepts of the law are called “righteousnesses” is nothing strange, for they are truly such. Still I must warn my readers that the Greeks inadequately rendered the Hebrew word “HUCIM,” substituting for “edicts,” “righteousnesses.”<sup>F439</sup> Yet on this word I readily yield the point at issue.

Indeed, we do not deny that the law of God contains perfect righteousness. For even though, because we are bound to perform everything it requires, we should have yielded full obedience to it, still “we are unprofitable servants” [<sup><421710></sup>Luke 17:10]. Yet because the Lord deigns to accord to it the honor of righteousness, we do not take away what he has given. We therefore willingly confess that perfect obedience to the law is righteousness, and that the keeping of each commandment is a part of righteousness; provided that in the remaining parts the whole sum of righteousness is contained. But we deny that such a form of righteousness exists anywhere. And we cast off law righteousness, not because it is defective and mutilated of itself, but because, due to the weakness of our flesh, it is nowhere visible.

Still, not only does Scripture call the Lord’s precepts simply “righteousnesses” but it also applies this term to the works of the saints. For example, when it reports that Zechariah and his wife “walked in the righteousnesses of the Lord” [<sup><420106></sup>Luke 1:6], obviously in so speaking it estimates the works more from the nature of the law than from their own character. Yet here again what I have just said must be noted, that a rule is not to be established upon the carelessness of the Greek translator. But because Luke had no wish to change anything in the received version [cf. <sup><420103></sup>Luke 1:3], I shall not contend over it. For those things which are contained in the law, God commended as righteousness; but we do not attain that righteousness save by observing the whole law, and it is broken by every transgression. Since the law enjoins only righteousness, therefore, if we have regard to it, all its commandments are

righteousnesses; if we have in view the men by whom they are kept, they win no praise for righteousness from one work, as they are transgressors in many—that one work being always in some part faulty because of its imperfection.

## 8. TWOFOLD VALUE OF WORK BEFORE GOD

But I now come to the second type, in which there is especial difficulty. Paul advances no firmer proof of faith righteousness than what he writes of Abraham, that “his faith was reckoned to him for righteousness” [<sup><450403></sup>Romans 4:3; <sup><480306></sup>Galatians 3:6]. Since, therefore, it is said that the deed committed by Phinehas “was reckoned to him as righteousness” [<sup><19A631></sup>Psalm 106:31], Paul’s contention concerning faith permits us to infer the same concerning works. Accordingly, our opponents, as if having victory in hand, decide that without faith we are indeed not justified but that we are also not justified by it alone—that it is works that complete our righteousness.<sup>F440</sup> Here I beseech the godly, if they know the true rule of righteousness is to be sought from Scripture alone, religiously and earnestly to ponder with me how Scripture may, without quibbling, be duly brought into agreement with itself.

Since Paul knew that justification of faith is a refuge for those who lack righteousness of their own [cf. Romans chapter 5], he boldly infers that all who are justified by faith are excluded from works righteousness. But since it is certain that this is common to all believers, from this fact Paul with equal assurance determines that no one is justified by works [cf. <sup><450320></sup>Romans 3:20]—on the contrary, that men are justified without any help from our works. But it is one thing to discuss what value works have of themselves, another, to weigh in what place they are to be held after faith righteousness has been established.

If we are to determine a price for works according to their worth, we say that they are unworthy to come before God’s sight; that man, accordingly, has no works in which to glory before God; that hence, stripped of all help from works, he is justified by faith alone. But we define justification as follows: the sinner, received into communion with Christ, is reconciled to God by his grace, while, cleansed by Christ’s blood, he obtains forgiveness

of sins, and clothed with Christ's righteousness as if it were his own, he stands confident before the heavenly judgment seat.

After forgiveness of sins is set forth, the good works that now follow are appraised otherwise than on their own merit. For everything imperfect in them is covered by Christ's perfection, every blemish or spot is cleansed away by his purity in order not to be brought in question at the divine judgment. Therefore, after the guilt of all transgressions that hinder man from bringing forth anything pleasing to God has been blotted out, and after the fault of imperfection, which habitually defiles even good works, is buried, the good works done by believers are accounted righteous, or, what is the same thing, are reckoned as righteousness [<sup><450422></sup>Romans 4:22].

## **9. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IS THE BASIS OF WORKS RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Now if anyone raises this objection against me to impugn faith righteous, I shall first ask whether a man is reckoned righteous because of one or two holy works, while he is a transgressor in the remaining works of his life. This is indeed more than absurd. Then I shall inquire whether he is reckoned righteous even on account of many good works if he is in some part indeed found guilty of transgression. He will not dare put forward this contention when the sanction of the law cries out and proclaims accursed all who have not completely fulfilled all the commandments of the law [<sup><052726></sup>Deuteronomy 27:26]. I shall inquire still further—whether there be any work that does not deserve to be censured for some impurity or imperfection. And how could there be such work before those eyes, to which not even the stars are clean enough [<sup><182505></sup>Job 25:5], nor the angels righteous enough [<sup><180418></sup>Job 4:18]? Thus he shall be compelled to admit that no good work exists which is not so defiled both with attendant transgressions and with its own corruption that it cannot bear the honorable name of righteousness. But if, of a certainty, it follows from justification of faith that works otherwise impure, unclean, half done, unworthy of God's sight, not to mention his love, are accounted righteousness, why do they by boasting of works righteousness try to destroy justification of faith, without whose existence they would boast of such righteousness in vain?

Do they wish to spawn a viper's brood? <sup>F441</sup> The statements of the impious tend in this direction. They cannot deny that justification of faith is the beginning, foundation, cause, proof, and substance of works righteousness. Nevertheless, they conclude that man is not justified by faith, because good works are also accounted righteousness.

Let us, then, pass over these absurdities and confess the fact of the matter: if works righteousness, whatever its character be finally reckoned, depends upon the justification of faith, the latter is by this not only not diminished but actually strengthened, while thereby its power shines forth even stronger. And also let us not consider works to be so commended after free justification that they afterward take over the function of justifying man, or share this office with faith. For unless the justification of faith remains whole and unbroken, the uncleanness of works will be uncovered. Moreover, it is no absurdity that man is so justified by faith that not only is he himself righteous but his works are also accounted righteous above their worth.

## **10. WORKS ACCEPTABLE ONLY WHEN SINS HAVE BEEN PARDONED**

In this sense we shall concede not only a partial righteousness in works, as our adversaries themselves hold, <sup>F442</sup> but also that it is approved by God as if it were whole and perfect. But if we recall the foundation that supports it, every difficulty will be solved. A work begins to be acceptable only when it is undertaken with pardon. Now whence does this pardon arise, save that God contemplates us and our all in Christ? Therefore, as we ourselves, when we have been engrafted in Christ, are righteous in God's sight because our iniquities are covered by Christ's sinlessness, so our works are righteous and are thus regarded because whatever fault is otherwise in them is buried in Christ's purity, and is not charged to our account. Accordingly, we can deservedly say that by faith alone not only we ourselves but our works as well are justified. Now if this works righteousness—whatever its character—depends upon faith and free justification, and is effected by this, it ought to be included under faith and be subordinated to it, so to speak, as effect to cause, so far is it from having any right to be raised up either to destroy or becloud justification of faith.

Thus Paul, to convince us that our blessedness consists in God's mercy, not in our works, particularly presses David's statement upon us: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord has not imputed sin" [<sup><193201></sup>Psalm 32:1-2; 31:2, Vg.; cf. <sup><450407></sup>Romans 4:7-8]. Suppose someone thrusts in countless sayings in which blessedness seems to be attributed to works, such as: "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord" [<sup><19B201></sup>Psalm 112:1; 111:1, Vg.], "who has pity on the poor" [<sup><201421></sup>Proverbs 14:21], "who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly" [<sup><190101></sup>Psalm 1:1], "who endures temptation" [<sup><590112></sup>James 1:12]; "Blessed are they who keep judgment" [<sup><19A603></sup>Psalm 106:3, KJV], "the unstained" [<sup><19B901></sup>Psalm 119:1; cf. Vg. 118:1, Knox tr.], "the poor in spirit," "the meek," "the merciful" [<sup><400503></sup>Matthew 5:3,5,7]—these statements do not gainsay the truth of what Paul says. For inasmuch as all those qualities there commended never so exist in man that he should therefore be approved by God, it follows that man ever remains miserable unless he is released from misery by the pardon of his sins. Since, therefore, all the kinds of blessedness extolled in Scripture become void, so that man receives no profit from any of them until by forgiveness of sins he acquires blessedness, which may then make a place for them, it follows that this is not only the highest and chief, but also the only, blessedness; unless perhaps you insist that it is sapped by those very kinds of blessedness which are grounded in it alone.

Now there is much less reason why we should be troubled by the title "righteous," which is customarily applied to believers. Of course, I admit that the righteous are so called from holiness of life; but since they rather lean to the pursuit of righteousness than actually fulfill righteousness itself, it is meet that this righteousness, such as it is, should yield to the justification of faith, whence it has what it is.

## 11. JAMES AGAINST PAUL?

But they say that we still have trouble with James, as one who forthrightly contends against us.<sup>F443</sup> For he teaches that even "Abraham was justified by works" [<sup><590221></sup>James 2:21], and that all of us also are "justified... by works, not by faith alone" [<sup><590224></sup>James 2:24]. What then? Will they drag Paul into conflict with James? If they consider James a minister of Christ, his statement must be so understood as not to disagree

with Christ speaking through Paul's lips. The Spirit declares through Paul's mouth that Abraham attained righteousness through faith, not through works [<sup><450403></sup>Romans 4:3; <sup><480306></sup>Galatians 3:6]. We also teach that by faith all are justified apart from the works of the law. The same Spirit teaches through James that the faith both of Abraham and of ourselves consists in works, not only in faith. It is sure that the Spirit is not in conflict with himself. What, then, will be the agreement of these passages?

Our adversaries would be content if they could uproot faith righteousness, which we wish to see established with the deepest of roots, but they do not much care about imparting their peace to consciences. From this you may see that they indeed gnaw at justification of faith but meantime set no standard of righteousness upon which consciences may rely. Let them triumph, then, as they please, provided they could boast of no other victory than to have taken away all certainty of righteousness. And they will indeed obtain this miserable victory when they have snuffed out the light of truth, and the Lord permits them to shed the darkness of their falsehoods. But wherever the truth of God stands firm, they will achieve nothing.

I therefore deny that the statement of James, which they persistently thrust at us like Achilles' shield, <sup>F444</sup> affords them the slightest support. To make that plain, we shall first have to look at the apostle's intention, and then note wherein they are deluded.

At that time there were many—and this tends to be a perpetual evil in the church—who openly disclosed their unbelief by neglecting and overlooking all the proper works of believers, yet did not cease to boast of the false name of faith. James here makes fun of the stupid assurance of such men. It is not therefore his intention to weaken in any respect the force of true faith, but rather to show how ineptly these triflers arrogated so much to the empty image of it that, content therewith, they unconcernedly abandoned themselves to a wholly licentious life.

Understanding this condition, it will be easy to note where our opponents are at fault. For they fall into a double fallacy: one in the word "faith," the other in the word "justify."

When the apostle labels “faith” an empty opinion far removed from true faith, he is making a concession that in no way detracts from the argument. This he sets forth at the outset in these words: “What does it profit, my brethren, if a man say he has faith but have not works?” [<sup><590214></sup> James 2:14]. He does not say “if anyone have faith without works” but “if he boast.” He states it even more clearly a little later where in derision he makes it worse than devils’ knowledge [<sup><590219></sup> James 2:19], and finally, where he calls it “dead” [<sup><590220></sup> James 2:20]. But from the definition you may understand sufficiently what he means. “You believe,” he says, “that there is a God.” [<sup><590219></sup> James 2:19.] Obviously, if this faith contains nothing but a belief that there is a God, it is not strange if it does not justify! And when this is taken away from it, let us not think that anything is removed from Christian faith, whose nature is far otherwise. For in what way does true faith justify save when it binds us to Christ so that, made one with him, we may enjoy participation in his righteousness? It therefore justifies not because it grasps a knowledge of God’s essence but because it rests upon the assurance of his mercy.

## **12. THE WORD “JUSTIFY” USED BY JAMES IN A SENSE DIFFERENT FROM PAUL’S**

We have not yet reached the end unless we discuss the other fallacy as well: namely, that James puts part of justification in works. <sup>F445</sup> If you would make James agree with the rest of Scripture and with himself, you must understand the word “justify” in another sense than Paul takes it. For we are said by Paul to be justified when the memory of our unrighteousness has been wiped out and we are accounted righteous. If James had taken that view, it would have been preposterous for him to quote Moses’ statement: “Abraham believed God” [<sup><011506></sup> Genesis 15:6; <sup><590223></sup> James 2:23], etc. For this is the context: Abraham attained righteousness by works because at God’s command he did not hesitate to sacrifice his son [<sup><590221></sup> James 2:21]. Thus is the Scripture fulfilled that says: “He believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness” [<sup><590223></sup> James 2:23]. If it is absurd that an effect precedes its cause, either Moses testifies falsely in that place that faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness or, from that obedience which he manifested by offering Isaac, he did not merit righteousness. Abraham had been justified by his

faith when Ishmael was as yet not conceived, who had already reached adolescence before Isaac was born. How, then, shall we say that he obtained righteousness by an obedience that followed long after? Therefore, either James wrongly inverted the order—unlawful even to imagine!—or he did not mean to call him justified, as if he deserved to be reckoned righteous. What then? Surely it is clear that he himself is speaking of the declaration, not the imputation, of righteousness. It is as if he said: “Those who by true faith are righteous prove their righteousness by obedience and good works, not by a bare and imaginary mask of faith.” To sum up, he is not discussing in what manner we are justified but demanding of believers a righteousness fruitful in good works. And as Paul contends that we are justified apart from the help of works, so James does not allow those who lack good works to be reckoned righteous.

The consideration of this intention will free us from all difficulty. For our opponents are chiefly deceived in thinking that James is defining the manner of justification when he is attempting only to shatter the evil confidence of those who vainly pretended faith as an excuse for their contempt of good works. Therefore, in whatever ways they may twist James’s words, they will express but two ideas: an empty show of faith does not justify, and a believer, not content with such an image, declares his righteousness by good works.

### 13. <sup><450213></sup>ROMANS 2:13

That they indeed quote Paul in the same sense does them very little good: “The doers of the law, not the hearers, are justified” [<sup><450223></sup>Romans 2:23 p.]. I do not intend to evade the question through Ambrose’s solution: that this was said because fulfillment of the law is faith in Christ. <sup>F446</sup> For I see this as a mere evasion, quite needless where the way lies open. Here the apostle is casting down the foolish confidence of the Jews, who claimed for themselves the sole knowledge of the law, even while they were its greatest despisers. Lest, then, mere skill in the law should please them so much, he warns that if righteousness be sought from the law, not knowledge but observance of it is sought. We assuredly do not question that the righteousness of the law consists in works, and not even that righteousness consists in the worth and merits of works. But it has not yet

been proved that we are justified by works unless they produce some one man who has fulfilled the law.

That Paul meant precisely this is sufficiently attested by the context of his utterance. After having condemned Gentiles and Jews together for their unrighteousness, he then gets down to details and says: “Those who have sinned without law will perish without law,” which has reference to the Gentiles; and “those who have sinned in the law will be judged by the law” [<sup><450212></sup>Romans 2:12], which concerns the Jews. Now, since they, winking at their own shortcomings, plumed themselves on the law alone, Paul adds something especially fitting: the law was not laid down merely that men might be made righteous by hearing its voice; but only if and when they obeyed it. It is as if he said: “Do you seek righteousness in the law? Do not claim to have heard it, something of little weight in itself, but bring works whereby you may declare that the law was not laid down for you in vain.” Since they were all lacking in these works, it followed that they were bereft of boasting about the law. Paul’s meaning, then, requires us, rather, to frame the opposite argument: the righteousness of the law lies in perfection of works; no one can boast that he has fulfilled the law through works; consequently, there is no righteousness arising from the law.

#### **14. WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN BEFORE GOD BELIEVERS APPEAL TO THEIR WORKS?**

Now they make their contention from these passages in which believers boldly offer their righteousness to be examined by God’s judgment; and they wish to be judged on that basis. Such passages are these: “Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and according to my innocence that are in me” [<sup><190708></sup>Psalm 7:8 p.]. Likewise: “Hear, O God, my righteousness” [<sup><191701></sup>Psalm 17:1]. “Thou hast tried my heart and hast visited me by night... thou hast found no wickedness in me.” [<sup><191703></sup>Psalm 17:3; cf. 16:3, Vg.] Likewise: “The Lord will recompense me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands he will repay me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God... And, I shall be spotless... and shall keep myself from my iniquity. [<sup><191820></sup>Psalm 18:20,21,23; 17:21,22,24, Vg.] Again: “Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in my innocence” [<sup><192601></sup>Psalm 26:1; 25:1, Vg.]. “I have not sat with lying men, and I will

not consort with evildoers.” [<sup><192604></sup>Psalm 26:4; 25:4, Vg.] Also: “Lose not my soul, O God, with the wicked, nor my life with bloodthirsty men” [<sup><192609></sup>Psalm 26:9; 25:9, Vg.]. “In their hands are iniquities; their right hand is filled with gifts. But as for me, I have walked innocently.” [<sup><192610></sup>Psalm 26:10-11; cf. 25:10-11, Vg.]

I spoke above concerning the assurance the saints seem to derive simply from works. <sup>F447</sup> As for the testimonies we have adduced at this point, they will not hinder us much if they are understood according to their context [*περίστασιν complexum*], or, in common parlance, circumstances. Now this is twofold. For neither would they have a full investigation of themselves so as to be either condemned or acquitted according to the character of their entire lives—rather they bring to judgment a special cause to be decided—nor do they claim righteousness for themselves with reference to divine perfection but in comparison with evil and wicked men.

First, when it is a question of justifying man, it is not only required that he have a good cause in some particular matter but a certain harmony of righteousness, lasting throughout life. Yet the saints, while they appeal to God’s judgment to approve their innocence, do not present themselves as free from all guilt and faultless in every respect; but while they have fixed their assurance of salvation in his goodness alone, they still, trusting in him as avenger of the poor afflicted beyond right and equity, assuredly commend to him the cause in which the innocent are oppressed.

On the other hand, when they hale their opponents with them before God’s judgment seat, they do not boast of an innocence that under strict test would correspond to God’s own purity; but because, in comparison with their adversaries’ malice, dishonesty, craft, and wickedness, they know that their sincerity, righteousness, simplicity, and purity are known and pleasing to God, they are not afraid to call upon him to act as judge between themselves and their adversaries. Thus, when David said to Saul: “May the Lord render to every man according to his righteousness and truthfulness” [<sup><092623></sup>1 Samuel 26:23 p.], he did not mean that the Lord should by himself examine and reward each according to his merits, but he declared to the Lord how great his innocence was compared to Saul’s wickedness. And even Paul, when he in this glorying that he has a good testimony of conscience boasts he has behaved with sincerity and

uprightness in the church of God [<sup><470112></sup>2 Corinthians 1:12; Cf. <sup><442301></sup>Acts 23:1], does not propose to rely upon such boasting before God. Rather, compelled by ungodly men's slanders, he defends his faithfulness and probity, which he knew to be acceptable to divine compassion, against the evilspeaking of the wicked. For we see what he says in another place, that he is not aware of anything evil against himself but is not thereby justified [<sup><460404></sup>1 Corinthians 4:4]. For he obviously knew God's judgment far transcends men's bleared vision. However, therefore, the godly may, with God as witness and judge, defend their innocence against the hypocrisy of the ungodly, still, when they are dealing with God alone, all cry out with one voice: "If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, Lord, who shall stand?" [<sup><19D003></sup>Psalms 130:3; 129:3, Vg.]. Again: "Enter not into judgment with thy servants, for no man living is righteous before thee" [<sup><19E302></sup>Psalms 143:2 p.]; and, distrusting their own works, they gladly sing: "Thy goodness is better than life" [<sup><196303></sup>Psalms 63:3 p.].

## 15. PERFECTION OF BELIEVERS?

There are also other passages not unlike those above, upon which someone may still take a stand. Solomon says that he who walks in his own uprightness is righteous [<sup><202007></sup>Proverbs 20:7]. Likewise: "In the path of righteousness is life, and in that indeed... is no death." [<sup><201228></sup>Proverbs 12:28.] In this manner, Ezekiel asserts that "he shall surely live who has kept judgment and done justice" [<sup><261809></sup>Ezekiel 18:9,21; cf. <sup><263315></sup>Ezekiel 33:15]. We neither deny nor obscure anything of these. But let one of Adam's children come forward with such uprightness. If there is no one, they must either perish out of God's sight or flee to the shelter of his mercy.

Moreover, we do not deny that for believers uprightness, albeit partial and imperfect, is a step toward immortality. But what is its source except that the Lord does not examine for merits the works of those whom he has received into the covenant of grace but embraces them with fatherly affection? By this we understand not only what the Schoolmen teach—that works have their value from "accepting grace." For they mean that works, otherwise insufficient to obtain salvation in accordance with the covenant of the law, still, by God's acceptance of them, are advanced to a

value adequate for this.<sup>F448</sup> But I say that those works, defiled as well with other transgressions as with their own spots, have no other value except that the Lord extends pardon to both, that is, to bestow free righteousness upon man.

And not here untimely thrust upon us are those prayers of the apostle in which he desires so much perfection of believers that they may be blameless and irreproachable [<sup><510122></sup> Colossians 1:22; cf. <sup><490104></sup> Ephesians 1:4] in the Day of the Lord [<sup><460108></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:8; cf. <sup><520313></sup> 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23]. In the past the followers of Coelestius indeed vigorously urged these words in order to assert perfection of righteousness in this life.<sup>F449</sup> But we briefly reply according to Augustine what we consider sufficient: all the godly ought to aspire to this goal, that they may one day appear spotless and blameless before God's face [cf. <sup><510122></sup> Colossians 1:22, cf. Vg.]. But because even the best and most excellent plan of the present life is only a progression, we shall arrive at that goal only when, having put off this sinful flesh, we cleave wholly to the Lord.<sup>F450</sup> And yet I shall not stubbornly contend with him who would apply the label "perfection" to the saints, provided he also defines it in the words of Augustine himself. "When we," he says, "call the virtue of the saints perfect, to this very perfection also belongs the recognition of imperfection, both in truth and in humility."<sup>F451</sup>

# CHAPTER 18

## WORKS RIGHTEOUSNESS IS WRONGLY INFERRED FROM REWARD

*(Passages referring to reward do not make works  
the cause of salvation, 1-4)*

### 1. WHAT DOES “RECOMPENSE ACCORDING TO WORKS” MEAN?

Let us now proceed to those statements which affirm that God will repay every man according to his works [<sup><401627></sup>Matthew 16:27]. <sup>F452</sup> Of this sort are these: “Everyone will receive the things done in his body... whether... good or bad” [<sup><470510></sup>2 Corinthians 5:10]. “Glory and honor... to the doer of good; hardship and tribulation upon every evildoer’s soul” [<sup><450210></sup>Romans 2:10, 9]. And: “They who have done good shall come forth into the resurrection of life; they who have done ill, into the resurrection of judgment” [<sup><430529></sup>John 5:29, order changed]. “Come, blessed of my Father,... I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink,” etc. [<sup><402534></sup>Matthew 25:34-35, conflated with 5:42, cf. Comm. and Vg.].

Let us join to them those statements which call eternal life the reward of works. Of this sort are these: “The recompense of a man’s hands will be paid to him” [<sup><201214></sup>Proverbs 12:14, conflated with <sup><230311></sup>Isaiah 3:11, Vg.]. “He who fears the commandment... shall be rewarded” [<sup><201313></sup>Proverbs 13:13]. “Rejoice and be exceeding glad” [<sup><400512></sup>Matthew 5:12]; “behold your reward is great in heaven” [<sup><420623></sup>Luke 6:23]. “Each shall receive a reward according to his labor” [<sup><460308></sup>1 Corinthians 3:8].

The statement that “God will render to every man according to his works” [<sup><450206></sup>Romans 2:6] is explained with little difficulty. For the expression indicates an order of sequence rather than the cause. But, beyond any doubt, it is by these stages of his mercy that the Lord completes our salvation when “he calls those chosen to himself; those called he justifies;

those justified he glorifies” [<sup><450830></sup>Romans 8:30 p.]. That is to say, he receives his own into life by his mercy alone. Yet, since he leads them into possession of it through the race of good works in order to fulfill his own work in them according to the order that he has laid down, it is no wonder if they are said to be crowned according to their own works, by which they are doubtless prepared to receive the crown of immortality. But they are fitly said to “work out their own salvation” [<sup><503512></sup>Philippians 2:12 p.], for the reason that, while devoting themselves to good works, they meditate upon eternal life. This corresponds to another passage in which they are enjoined to “work for the food that does not perish” [<sup><430627></sup>John 6:27], while by believing in Christ they receive life for themselves. And yet the clause is immediately added: “which the Son of Man will give to you” [<sup><430627></sup>John 6:27]. From this it appears that the word “to work” is not opposed to grace but refers to endeavor. Accordingly, it does not follow that believers are themselves the authors of their own salvation, or that salvation stems from their own works. What then? Once they are, by knowledge of the gospel and illumination of the Holy Spirit, called into the fellowship of Christ, eternal life begins in them. Now that God has begun a good work in them, it must also be made perfect until the Day of the Lord Jesus [<sup><500106></sup>Philippians 1:6]. It is, however, made perfect when, resembling their Heavenly Father in righteousness and holiness, they prove themselves sons true to their nature.

## 2. REWARD AS “INHERITANCE”

The use of the term “reward” is no reason for us to suppose that our works are the cause of our salvation. First, let us be heartily convinced that the Kingdom of Heaven is not servants’ wages but sons’ inheritance [<sup><490118></sup>Ephesians 1:18], which only they who have been adopted as sons by the Lord shall enjoy [cf. <sup><480407></sup>Galatians 4:7], and that for no other reason than this adoption [cf. <sup><490105></sup>Ephesians 1:5-6]. “For the son of the bondwoman shall not be the heir, but the son of the free woman.” [<sup><480430></sup>Galatians 4:30 p.] Even in these very passages where the Holy Spirit promises everlasting glory as a reward for works, by expressly terming it an “inheritance” he is showing that it comes to us from another source. So Christ enumerates the works, which he repays with the reward of heaven [<sup><402535></sup>Matthew 25:35-37], in calling the elect into possession

of it; but at the same time he adds that they must possess it by right of inheritance [<sup><402534></sup>Matthew 25:34]. Thus Paul enjoins servants, faithfully doing what is of their duty, to hope for recompense from the Lord, but he adds “of the inheritance” [<sup><510324></sup>Colossians 3:24]. We see how, as it were, in prescribed terms, they carefully warn us not to credit everlasting blessedness to works but to our adoption by God.

Why, then, do they make mention of works at the same time? This question is cleared up by one example of Scripture. Before the birth of Isaac, Abraham was promised seed in whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The increase of his seed was to equal the stars of heaven, the sands of the sea, and other things like these [<sup><011505></sup>Genesis 15:5; 17:1 ff.; cf. chapter 18:18]. Many years later, as he had been commanded by the oracle, Abraham girds himself to sacrifice his son [<sup><012203></sup>Genesis 22:3]. Having performed this act of obedience, he receives the promise. “By myself have I sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not spared... your only son, I will bless you,... and I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven and the sands of the sea, and your seed shall possess the gates of his enemies, and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” [<sup><012216></sup>Genesis 22:16-18 p.] What is it that we hear? Did Abraham merit by his obedience the blessing whose promise he had received before the commandment was given? Here, surely, we have shown without ambiguity that the Lord rewards the works of believers with the same benefits as he had given them before they contemplated any works, as he does not yet have any reason to benefit them except his own mercy.

### 3. REWARD AS GRACE

Still, the Lord does not trick or mock us when he says that he will reward works with what he had given free before works. He wills that we be trained through good works to meditate upon the presentation or fruition, so to speak, of those things which he has promised, and to hasten through them to seek the blessed hope held out to us in heaven. Hence the fruit of the promises is duly assigned to works, which bring us to the ripeness of that fruit. The apostle beautifully expressed both thoughts when he said that the Colossians occupied themselves with the duties of love, for the

sake of the hope laid up for them in heaven, of which they had previously heard through the word of the truth-telling gospel [<sup><510104></sup>Colossians 1:4-5]. For in saying that they knew from the gospel that their hope was laid up in heaven, he declares that it was supported by Christ alone, not by works: With this, Peter's statement agrees, that the godly are "guarded by God's power through faith, unto the salvation that has been prepared to be manifested in" its "time" [<sup><600105></sup>1 Peter 1:5 p.]. In saying that they labor on this account, Paul means that to attain it believers are to run the whole course of their life.

But lest we should think that the reward the Lord promises us is reduced to a matter of merit he has set forth a parable, in which he has made himself a householder who sends whomever he meets to cultivate his vineyard. Some are sent, indeed, at the first hour, others at the second, still others at the third, and some even at the eleventh; and at evening he pays them all equally [<sup><402001></sup>Matthew 20:1 ff.]. That ancient writer—whoever he was—whose book *The Call of the Gentiles* goes under the name of Ambrose, briefly and truly interprets this parable. I shall use his words rather than my own. "The Lord has by this comparison illustrated the diversity of his manifold calling, pertaining to the one and only grace... where it is clear that those sent to the vineyard at the eleventh hour and put on an equal footing with those who had labored the whole day represent the destiny of those... whom God's mercy rewards at the decline of the day, that is, at the end of their lives, in order to reveal the excellence of his grace. For he does not pay the price of their labor but showers the riches of his goodness upon those whom he has chosen apart from works. Thus they also,... who sweated in much labor, and did not receive more than the latecomers, should understand that they received a gift of grace, not the reward for their works." <sup>F453</sup>

Finally, this also is worth noting: in those passages where eternal life is called the reward of works, it is not understood simply as that communion we have with God until the blessed immortality when his fatherly benevolence embraces us in Christ but as the possession or "fruition," as they call it, of blessedness. So also Christ's very own words declare: "In the world to come eternal life" [<sup><411030></sup>Mark 10:30]. And in another passage: "Come... take possession... of the Kingdom," etc. [<sup><402534></sup>Matthew 25:34, Vg.]. For this reason, Paul terms "adoption" the

revealing of adoption that will be made at the resurrection [cf. <sup><450818></sup>Romans 8:18 ff.]; and afterward he interprets it as the “redemption of our body” [<sup><450823></sup>Romans 8:23]. But otherwise, just as estrangement from God is eternal death, <sup>F454</sup> so when man is received into grace by God to enjoy communion with him and be made one with him, he is transported from death to life—something done by the benefit of adoption alone. And if, as is their wont, they stubbornly urge the reward of works, we can throw back at them that statement of Peter that the reward of faith is eternal life [<sup><600109></sup>1 Peter 1:9].

#### 4. THE PURPOSE OF THE PROMISE OF REWARD

Therefore, let us not consider that the Holy Spirit approves the worthiness of our works by this sort of promise, as if they merited such a reward. For Scripture leaves us no reason to be exalted in God’s sight. Rather, its whole end is to restrain our pride, to humble us, cast us down, and utterly crush us. But our weakness, which would immediately collapse and fall if it did not sustain itself by this expectation and allay its own weariness by this comfort, is relieved in this way.

First, let everyone consider with himself how hard it would be for him to leave and renounce not only all his possessions but himself as well. Still, it is with this first lesson that Christ initiates his pupils, that is, all the godly. Then he so trains them throughout life under the discipline of the cross that they may not set their hearts upon desire of, or reliance on, present benefits. In short, he usually so deals with them that wherever they turn their eyes, as far as this world extends, they are confronted solely with despair. Thus Paul says, “We are of all men most to be pitied if we hope only in this world.” [<sup><461519></sup>1 Corinthians 15:19 p.] Lest they fail amidst these great tribulations, the Lord is with them, warning them to hold their heads higher, to direct their eyes farther so as to find in him that blessedness which they do not see in the world. He calls this blessedness “prize,” “reward,” “recompense” [cf. <sup><400512></sup>Matthew 5:12; 6:1 ff., etc.], not weighing the merit of works, but signifying that it is a compensation for their miseries, tribulations, slanders, etc. For this reason, nothing prevents us, with Scriptural precedent (cf. <sup><470613></sup>2 Corinthians 6:13; <sup><581035></sup>Hebrews 10:35; 11:26], from calling eternal life a “recompense,” because in it the Lord receives his own people from toil into repose, from

affliction into a prosperous and desirable state, from sorrow into joy, from poverty into affluence, from disgrace into glory. To sum up, he changes into greater goods all the evil things that they have suffered. Thus also it will be nothing amiss if we regard holiness of life to be the way, not indeed that gives access to the glory of the Heavenly Kingdom, but by which those chosen by their God are led to its disclosure. For it is God's good pleasure to glorify those whom he has sanctified [<sup><450830></sup>Romans 8:30].

Only let us not imagine the correlation between merit and reward on which the Sophists rudely insist because they do not consider the end that we have set forth. <sup>F455</sup> How absurd is it, when God calls us to one end, for us to look in the other direction? Nothing is clearer than that a reward is promised for good works to relieve the weakness of our flesh by some comfort but not to puff up our hearts with vainglory. Whoever, then, deduces merit of works from this, or weighs works and reward together, wanders very far from God's own plan.

*(Answers to objections against this view, 5-10)*

## 5. REWARD RESTS UPON FORGIVENESS

Accordingly, when Scripture says, "The Lord, the righteous Judge, will one day give to his own the crown of righteousness" [<sup><550408></sup>2 Timothy 4:8 p.], I begin by replying with Augustine: "To whom should the righteous Judge have awarded the crown if the merciful Father had not bestowed grace? And how could there be righteousness unless the grace that 'justifies the ungodly' had gone before? And how could these things now be awarded as due unless things not due had previously been given?" <sup>F456</sup> But I also add something else: How could he impute righteousness to our works unless his compassion covered over whatever unrighteousness was in them? And how could he judge them worthy of reward save that he wiped out by his boundless kindness what in them deserves punishment? For Augustine is accustomed to call eternal life "grace," because, while it is rendered to works, it is given for God's free gifts. But Scripture humbles us more and at the same time lifts us up. For besides forbidding us to glory in works, because they are God's free gifts, it teaches us at the same time that they are ever defiled with some foul dregs so that if they are weighed according to the standard of his judgment they cannot satisfy God; but lest

we become discouraged, Scripture teaches that our works are pleasing only through pardon. But even though Augustine elsewhere speaks somewhat differently from us, his words in the Third Book to Boniface will show that he does not substantially disagree with these words. There he has compared two men: the one of marvelously holy and perfect life; the other upright indeed and of wholesome habits, but still so imperfect as to leave much to be desired. Finally he concludes: “Certainly the latter man, who seems so inferior in morals to the former, on account of the right faith that he has in God, by which he lives, and according to which in all his wrongdoings he accuses himself and in all his good works praises God, giving shame to himself, glory to God, and receiving from him both forgiveness of sins and love of right deeds—this man shall be delivered from this life and depart... into the fellowship... of Christ. Why does he so live if not on account of faith? Although without works it saves no man, for it is not a reprobate faith, since it works through love [cf. <480506> Galatians 5:6], yet through it sins are also remitted, for ‘the just lives by faith’ [<sup><350204></sup> Habakkuk 2:4]; for without it what seem to be good works are turned into sins.” <sup>F457</sup> Here, surely, he clearly confesses what we strongly contend: that the righteousness of good works depends upon the fact that God by pardon approves them.

## 6. ON “TREASURES IN HEAVEN”

The following passages are close in meaning to those cited above: “Make yourselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness that when you fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles” [<sup><421609></sup> Luke 16:9]. “Admonish the rich of this world not to be proudly wise, nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches but on the living God... that they do good, that they be rich in good works... and treasure for themselves a good foundation for the coming age, that they may lay hold on eternal life” [<sup><540617></sup> 1 Timothy 6:17-19]. <sup>F458</sup> For good works are likened to the riches we shall enjoy in the blessedness of eternal life. I reply, we shall never gain access to a true understanding of them unless we turn our eyes to the purpose to which the Spirit addresses his words. If what Christ says is true—“Where our treasure is, there resides our heart” [<sup><400621></sup> Matthew 6:21 p.]—as the children of this age are wont to be intent upon getting things that make for delight in the present life, so believers ought to see to

it that, after they have learned that this life will soon vanish like a dream, they transfer the things they want truly to enjoy to a place where they will have life unceasing.

We ought, then, to imitate what people do who determine to migrate to another place, where they have chosen a lasting abode. They send before them all their resources and do not grieve over lacking them for a time, for they deem themselves the happier the more goods they have where they will be for a long time. But if we believe heaven is our country, it is better to transmit our possessions thither than to keep them here where upon our sudden migration they would be lost to us. But how shall we transmit them? Surely, by providing for the needs of the poor; whatever is paid out to them, the Lord reckons as given to himself [cf. <sup><402504></sup>Matthew 25:40]. From this comes that notable promise: “He who gives to the poor lends to the Lord” [Proverbs 19.17]. Likewise, “He who sows bountifully shall reap bountifully.” [<sup><470906></sup>2 Corinthians 9:6.] For what is devoted to our brothers out of the duty of love is deposited in the Lord’s hand. He, as he is a faithful custodian, will one day repay it with plentiful interest. Are our duties, then, of such importance in God’s sight that they are like riches hidden for us in his hand? And who would shrink from saying this, when Scripture so often and so openly attests it?

But if anyone wishes to jump from God’s pure kindness to the value of works, by these testimonies he will not be helped to build up his error. For from these you can duly infer nothing except the pure inclining of God’s mercy toward us. To quicken us to well-doing, although the services we offer him are unworthy even of his glance, he permits none of them to be lost.

## **7. REWARD FOR TRIBULATION ENDURED?**

But the apostle’s words press us all the more. While comforting the Thessalonians in their tribulations, he teaches that such tribulations are sent to them in order that they may be counted worthy of God’s Kingdom, for which they suffer [<sup><530105></sup>2 Thessalonians 1:5]. Indeed, he says, “God deems it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you... and to grant rest with us to you... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven.” [<sup><530106></sup>2 Thessalonians 1:6-7.] And the author of the Letter to

the Hebrews says: “God is not so unjust as to forget your work and the love that you showed in his name, in that you ministered to the saints.” [<sup><580610></sup>Hebrews 6:10.] <sup>F459</sup>

To the first passage I reply: “No worth of merit is there meant, but because God the Father wills that we, whom he has chosen as sons, be conformed to Christ, his first-born [<sup><450829></sup>Romans 8:29], as he had first to suffer, and then at last enter into his appointed glory [<sup><422426></sup>Luke 24:26], so also “through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of Heaven” [<sup><441422></sup>Acts 14:22 p.]. Therefore, while we suffer tribulations for Christ’s name, certain marks, as it were, are branded upon us by which God commonly designates the sheep of his flock. In this way, then, we are accounted worthy of God’s Kingdom, for “we bear in our body the marks of our Lord and Master” [<sup><480617></sup>Galatians 6:17 p.], which are the signs of God’s children. The following statements also belong here: We carry about the mortification of Jesus Christ in our bodies so that his life may be manifested in us [<sup><470410></sup>2 Corinthians 4:10]. We are conformed to his sufferings to attain to the likeness of resurrection from the dead [<sup><500310></sup>Philippians 3:10-11].

And the reason appended by Paul is not to prove that works have any worth but to strengthen hope in God’s Kingdom. It is as if he said, “As it agrees with God’s righteous judgment to take vengeance upon your enemies for those troubles which they have inflicted upon you, it also agrees with his judgment for you to be granted rest and peace from your troubles.” The second passage [<sup><580610></sup>Hebrews 6:10] teaches that it so befits God’s justice not to relegate to oblivion his children’s service so as to hint that it would be well-nigh unjust for him to forget. This means that God, to prick our sloth, has given us the assurance that the trouble we have borne to the glory of his name will not be in vain. Let us always remember that this promise, like all others, would not bear fruit for us if the free covenant of his mercy had not gone before, upon which the whole assurance of our salvation depended. Now, relying on this, we ought to have firm confidence that, however unworthy our services, a reward will not be lacking from God’s generosity. To confirm us in this expectation the apostle declares that God is not unjust but that he will keep his pledge once given. This justice, then, refers more to the truth of the divine promise than to the equity of rendering what is due. In this sense,

Augustine's saying is well known, and as this holy man did not hesitate to repeat it often as worth remembering, I judge it not unworthy of being constantly impressed upon our memory. "The Lord," he says, "is faithful, who made himself our debtor—not by accepting anything from us, but by promising us all things."<sup>F460</sup>

## 8. JUSTIFICATION THROUGH LOVE

They also bring up the following statements of Paul in their own support: "If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing" [<sup><461302></sup> 1 Corinthians 13:2]. Again, "Now hope, faith, love abide... but the greatest of these is love" [<sup><461313></sup> 1 Corinthians 13:13 p.]. Likewise, "Above all these put on love, which is the bond of perfection" [<sup><510314></sup> Colossians 3:14 p.]. From these two passages our Pharisees contend that we are justified by love rather than faith, doubtless by a stronger power, as they say.<sup>F461</sup> Yet this subtlety is refuted without difficulty. For we have elsewhere explained that what is said in the first passage has nothing to do with true faith."<sup>F462</sup> The second we also explain in terms of true faith. Paul says love is greater than faith, not as being more meritorious, but because it is more fruitful, because it extends farther, because it serves more, because it flourishes forever, while the use of faith continues only for a time [cf. <sup><461302></sup> 1 Corinthians 13:2 ff.]. If we regard excellence, love of God should rightly take first place, but with this Paul's statement is not concerned. Indeed, he stresses this one point: that we should edify one another in the Lord with mutual love. But let us imagine that love excels faith in all respects: what man of sound judgment—indeed, what man of wholly sound mind—would reason from this that it justifies more? The power of justifying, which faith possesses, does not lie in any worth of works. Our justification rests upon God's mercy alone and Christ's merit, and faith, when it lays hold of justification, is said to justify.

Now if you ask our adversaries in what sense they attribute justification to love, they will answer: Because the duty is pleasing to God, by its merit from the acceptance by divine goodness, righteousness is imputed to us. From this point you see how beautifully their argument proceeds. We say that faith justifies, not because it merits righteousness for us by its own worth, but because it is an instrument whereby we obtain free the

righteousness of Christ. They, overlooking God's mercy and passing over Christ, in whom lies the sum of righteousness, contend that we are justified by the benefit of love because it excels faith. It is as if someone argued that a king is more capable of making a shoe than a shoemaker is because he is infinitely more eminent. This one syllogism gives us ample proof that none of the schools of the Sorbonne has even slightly tasted what justification of faith is.

But if at this point some wrangler should interrupt and ask why in such a short space we variously understand the term "faith" as used by Paul, I have very good and sound reason for this interpretation. For inasmuch as these gifts which Paul enumerates are in a way subsumed under faith and hope, because they have to do with the knowledge of God, he includes them all by way of recapitulation <sup>F463</sup> under the terms "faith" and "hope." It is as if he said: "Prophecy and tongues, the gift of interpretation, and knowledge alike have the purpose of leading us to know God, but in this life we know God only through hope and faith. When, therefore, I mention faith and hope, I at the same time include all these." "So faith, hope, love abide, these three" [<sup><461313></sup> 1 Corinthians 13:13a]—that is, however great the variety of gifts, all are referred thereto—"the chief among these is love" [<sup><461313></sup> 1 Corinthians 13:13b p.], etc.

From the third passage they infer: If love is the "bond of perfection" [<sup><510314></sup> Colossians 3:14], it is therefore that of righteousness, which is nothing else but perfection. <sup>F464</sup> First, to pass over the fact that Paul calls it perfection when the members of a duly constituted church cleave together well, and to admit that love perfects us in God's sight, still, what new notion do they bring forward? For I shall always reply to the contrary: we shall never attain this perfection unless we fulfill all the duties of love. From this I shall conclude that, since all men are very far away from fulfilling love, all hope of perfection is cut off from them.

## 9. <sup><401917></sup> MATTHEW 19:17

I do not want to pursue the individual testimonies that the stupid Sorbonnists of today have groundlessly torn from Scripture—whatever first came to hand—to fling at us. For some are so ridiculous that I could not mention them unless I wished to be justly accounted foolish. I shall

terminate this matter after I have explained a statement of Christ's, in which they take marvelous pleasure. For he answers the lawyer who asks him what is needed for salvation, "If you would enter into life, keep the commandments" [<sup>401917</sup>Matthew 19:17]. What more do we want, they ask, when we are bidden by the Author of grace to attain God's Kingdom by observing the commandments?<sup>F465</sup> As if it were not evident that Christ did not accommodate his replies to those with whom he saw that he had to deal! Here a doctor of law asks about the manner of obtaining blessedness—and not simply that but by what deeds men may arrive at it. And the person of the speaker and the question itself prompted the Lord to answer thus. The lawyer, accustomed to the persuasion of law righteousness, blinded himself with confidence in works. Then he sought only what were works of righteousness whereby salvation is acquired. Therefore he is rightly sent back to the law wherein there is a perfect mirror of righteousness.

With a clear voice we too proclaim that these commandments are to be kept if one seeks life in works. And Christians must know this doctrine, for how could they flee to Christ unless they recognized that they had plunged from the way of life over the brink of death? How could they realize how far they had wandered from the way of life unless they first understood what that way is like? Only, therefore, when they distinguish how great is the difference between their life and divine righteousness that consists in accepting the law are they made aware that, in order to recover salvation, their refuge is in Christ.

To sum up, if we seek salvation in works, we must keep the commandments by which we are instructed unto perfect righteousness. But we must not stop here unless we wish to fail in mid-course, for none of us is capable of keeping the commandments. Therefore, since we are barred from law righteousness, we must betake ourselves to another help, that is, to faith in Christ. For this reason, as the Lord in this passage recalls to the law a teacher of the law whom he knew to be puffed up with empty confidence in works, in order that he may learn he is a sinner, subject to the dreadful judgment of eternal death, so elsewhere he comforts with the promise of grace without any mention of the law others who have already been humbled by this sort of knowledge: "Come to me all who

labor and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you... and you will find rest for your souls” [<sup><401128></sup>Matthew 11:28-29].<sup>F466</sup>

## 10. RIGHTEOUSNESS AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS ARE NOT COMPARABLE WITH EACH OTHER BY THE SAME RULE

At last, after they tire of misapplying Scripture, they resort to subtleties and sophistries. They cavil over the fact that faith is in some places called a “work” [<sup><430629></sup>John 6:29]. From this they infer that we wrongly oppose faith to works.<sup>F467</sup> As if faith, in so far as it is obedience to the divine will, obtains righteousness for us on its own merits and not, rather, in embracing God’s mercy, seals upon our hearts Christ’s righteousness, by that mercy offered to us in the preaching of the gospel. My readers will pardon me if I do not tarry to demolish such fooleries, for by their own weakness they are, without outside force, sufficiently shattered.

I should like, however, in passing to dispose of one objection that has some semblance of truth, lest it trouble some who are inexperienced. Since common sense teaches that the same rule applies to contraries, and each sin is imputed to us as unrighteousness, they say that it is appropriate also that each good work be credited as righteousness. Those who answer that men’s condemnation properly arises from unbelief alone, not from particular sins,<sup>F468</sup> do not satisfy me. I certainly agree with them that unbelief is the wellspring and root of all evils. For it is the first defection from God, and it is followed by individual transgressions against the law. But because in weighing righteousness and unrighteousness, they seem to apply the same reckoning to good and evil works, in this I am constrained to disagree with them. For works righteousness is perfect obedience to the law. Therefore, you cannot be righteous according to works unless you unfailingly follow this straight line, so to speak, throughout life. The minute you turn aside from it, you slip into unrighteousness. From this it is apparent that righteousness does not come about from one or a few works but from an unwavering and unwearying observance of the divine will. But very different is the rule for judging unrighteousness. For a fornicator or thief is by one offense guilty of death because he has offended against God’s majesty. These Sophists of ours stumble because they do not pay attention to James’s statement, “Whoever sins in one point is already made guilty of all, for he who forbade killing also forbade

stealing” [<sup><590210></sup>James 2:10-11 p.], etc. Accordingly, it ought not to seem absurd when we say that death is the just payment for each several sin, for each one deserves God’s just wrath and vengeance. But you would be a foolish reasoner if you concluded, on the contrary, that man can be reconciled to God by a single good work when by his many sins he deserves God’s wrath.

# CHAPTER 19

## CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

*(Necessity of a doctrine of Christian freedom, which has three parts, the first seen in Galatians chapters 1 to 3)*

### 1. NEED FOR A RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF FREEDOM

We must now discuss Christian freedom. He who proposes to summarize gospel teaching ought by no means to omit an explanation of this topic. For it is a thing of prime necessity, and apart from a knowledge of it consciences dare undertake almost nothing without doubting; they hesitate and recoil from many things; they constantly waver and are afraid. But freedom is especially an appendage of justification and is of no little avail in understanding its power. Indeed, those who seriously fear God will enjoy the incomparable benefit of this doctrine, one that impious and Lucianic men <sup>F469</sup> humorously satirize with their witticisms. For in the spiritual drunkenness that has laid hold upon them every sort of impudence is lawful. Accordingly, here is the right place to introduce this topic. It was profitable to put off a fuller discussion of it to this place, although we have lightly touched upon it several times before. <sup>F470</sup>

For, as soon as Christian freedom is mentioned, either passions boil or wild tumults rise unless these wanton spirits are opposed in time, who otherwise most wickedly corrupt the best things. Some, on the pretext of this freedom, shake off all obedience toward God and break out into unbridled license. Others disdain it, thinking that it takes away all moderation, order, and choice of things. What should we do here, hedged about with such perplexities? Shall we say goodbye to Christian freedom, thus cutting off occasion for such dangers? But, as we have said, unless this freedom be comprehended, neither Christ nor gospel truth, nor inner peace of soul, can be rightly known. Rather, we must take care that so

necessary a part of doctrine be not suppressed, yet at the same time that those absurd objections which are wont to arise be met.

## 2. FREEDOM FROM THE LAW

Christian freedom, in my opinion, consists of three parts. <sup>F471</sup> The first: that the consciences of believers, in seeking assurance of their justification before God, should rise above and advance beyond the law, forgetting all law righteousness. For since, as we have elsewhere shown, the law leaves no one righteous, either it excludes us from all hope of justification or we ought to be freed from it, and in such a way, indeed, that no account is taken of works. For he who thinks that in order to obtain righteousness he ought to bring some trifle of works is incapable of determining their measure and limit but makes himself debtor to the whole law. Removing, then, mention of law, and laying aside all consideration of works, we should, when justification is being discussed, embrace God's mercy alone, turn our attention from ourselves, and look only to Christ. For there the question is not how we may become righteous but how, being unrighteous and unworthy, we may be reckoned righteous. If consciences wish to attain any certainty in this matter, they ought to give no place to the law.

Nor can any man rightly infer from this that the law is superfluous for believers, <sup>F472</sup> since it does not stop teaching and exhorting and urging them to good, even though before God's judgment seat it has no place in their consciences. For, inasmuch as these two things are very different, we must rightly and conscientiously distinguish them. The whole life of Christians ought to be a sort of practice of godliness, for we have been called to sanctification [<sup><520407></sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:7; cf. <sup><490104></sup> Ephesians 1:4; <sup><520403></sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:3]. Here it is the function of the law, by warning men of their duty, to arouse them to a zeal for holiness and innocence. But where consciences are worried how to render God favorable, what they will reply, and with what assurance they will stand should they be called to his judgment, there we are not to reckon what the law requires, but Christ alone, who surpasses all perfection of the law, must be set forth as righteousness.

### 3. THE ARGUMENT OF GALATIANS

Almost the entire argument of the letter to the Galatians hinges upon this point. For those who teach that Paul in this contends for freedom of ceremonies alone are absurd interpreters, as can be proved from the passages adduced in the argument. Such passages are these: That Christ “became a curse for us” to “redeem us from the curse of the law” [<sup><480313></sup> Galatians 3:13]. Likewise: “Stand fast in the freedom wherewith Christ has set you free, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. Now I, Paul, say... that if you receive circumcision, Christ will become of no advantage to you... And every man who receives circumcision is a debtor to the whole law. For any of you who are justified by the law, Christ has become of no advantage; you have fallen away from grace” [<sup><480501></sup> Galatians 5:1-4p.]. These passages surely contain something loftier than freedom of ceremonies! Of course I admit that Paul is there discussing ceremonies, for his quarrel is with false apostles who were trying to reintroduce into the Christian church the old shadows of the law that had been abolished by Christ’s coming. But for the discussion of this question, the higher topics upon which the whole controversy rested had to be considered. First, because the clarity of the gospel was obscured by those Jewish shadows, Paul showed that we have in Christ a perfect disclosure of all those things which were foreshadowed in the Mosaic ceremonies. Further, because those impostors imbued the common people with the very wicked notion that this obedience obviously availed to deserve God’s grace, Paul here strongly insists that believers should not suppose they can obtain righteousness before God by any works of the law, still less by those paltry rudiments! And at the same time he teaches that through the cross of Christ they are free from the condemnation of the law, which otherwise hangs over all men [<sup><480405></sup> Galatians 4:5], so that they may rest with full assurance in Christ alone. This topic properly pertains to our argument. Finally, he claims for the consciences of believers their freedom, that they may not be obligated in things unnecessary. <sup>F473</sup>

*(The second, freedom of conscience willingly obeying without compulsion of the law, 4-6)*

#### **4. FREEDOM FROM THE CONSTRAINT OF THE LAW ESTABLISHES THE TRUE OBEDIENCE OF BELIEVERS**

The second part, dependent upon the first, is that consciences observe the law, not as if constrained by the necessity of the law, but that freed from the law's yoke they willingly obey God's will.<sup>F474</sup> For since they dwell in perpetual dread so long as they remain under the sway of the law, they will never be disposed with eager readiness to obey God unless they have already been given this sort of freedom. By an example we shall more briefly and clearly arrive at the meaning of this. The precept of the law is that "we love our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength" [<sup><050605></sup>Deuteronomy 6:5]. To bring this about, our soul must first be emptied of all other feeling and thought, our heart cleansed of all desires, and our powers gathered and concentrated upon this one point. They who have progressed farther than all others on the Lord's way are yet far distant from that goal. For even though they love God deeply and with sincere affection of heart, they have a great part of their heart and soul still occupied with fleshly desires, by which they are drawn back and prevented from hastening forward to God. Indeed, they struggle with much effort, but the flesh partly weakens their powers, partly draws them to itself. What are they to do here, while they feel that there is nothing they are less able to do than to fulfill the law? They will, they aspire, they try, but they do nothing with the required perfection. If they look upon the law, whatever work they attempt or intend they see to be accursed. And there is no reason for any man to deceive himself by concluding that his work is not entirely evil because it is imperfect, and that God nonetheless finds acceptable what is good in it.<sup>F475</sup> For unless its rigor be mitigated, the law in requiring perfect love condemns all imperfection. Let him therefore ponder his own work, which he wished to be adjudged in part good, and by that very act he will find it, just because it is imperfect, to be a transgression of the law.

## **5. FREEDOM FROM CONSTRAINT MAKES US CAPABLE OF JOYOUS OBEDIENCE**

See how all our works are under the curse of the law if they are measured by the standard of the law! But how, then, would unhappy souls gird themselves eagerly for a work for which they might expect to receive only a curse? But if, freed from this severe requirement of the law, or rather from the entire rigor of the law, they hear themselves called with fatherly gentleness by God, they will cheerfully and with great eagerness answer, and follow his leading. To sum up: Those bound by the yoke of the law are like servants assigned certain tasks for each day by their masters. These servants think they have accomplished nothing, and dare not appear before their masters unless they have fulfilled the exact measure of their tasks. But sons, who are more generously and candidly treated by their fathers, do not hesitate to offer them incomplete and half-done and even defective works, trusting that their obedience and readiness of mind will be accepted by their fathers, even though they have not quite achieved what their fathers intended. Such children ought we to be, firmly trusting that our services will be approved by our most merciful Father, however small, rude, and imperfect these may be. Thus also he assures us through the prophet: “I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him” [<sup><390317></sup>Malachi 3:17]. The word “spare” is clearly here used in the sense of “to be indulgent or compassionately to overlook faults,”<sup>F476</sup> while also mention is made of “service.” And we need this assurance in no slight degree, for without it we attempt everything in vain. For God considers that he is revered by no work of ours unless we truly do it in reverence toward him. But how can this be done amidst all this dread, where one doubts whether God is offended or honored by our works?

## **6. EMANCIPATED BY GRACE, BELIEVERS NEED NOT FEAR THE REMNANTS OF SIN**

And this is the reason why the author of the Letter to the Hebrews refers to faith all the good works of which we read as being done among the holy fathers, and judges them by faith alone [<sup><581102></sup>Hebrews 11:2 ff.; 11:17; etc.]. In the letter to the Romans, there is a famous passage on this freedom, wherein Paul reasons that sin ought not to rule us [<sup><450612></sup>Romans 6:12 and 6:14, conflated], for we are not under the law but

under grace [<sup><450614></sup>Romans 6:14]. For he had exhorted believers not to let “sin reign in” their “mortal bodies” [<sup><450612></sup>Romans 6:12], nor to “yield” their “members to sin as weapons of iniquity,” but to “give” themselves “to God as those who have come to life from the dead, and” their “members to God as weapons of righteousness” [<sup><450613></sup>Romans 6:13]. On the other hand, they might object that they still bore with them their flesh, full of lusts, and that sin dwelt in them. Paul adds this consolation, in freedom from the law. It is as if he said: “Even though they do not yet clearly feel that sin has been destroyed or that righteousness dwells in them, there is still no reason to be afraid and cast down in mind as if God were continually offended by the remnants of sin, seeing that they have been emancipated from the law by grace, so that their works are not to be measured according to its rules. Let those who infer that we ought to sin because we are not under the law understand that this freedom has nothing to do with them. For its purpose is to encourage us to good.

*Freedom in “things indifferent” with proofs from Romans, 7-9*

7. The third part of Christian freedom lies in this: regarding outward things that are of themselves “indifferent,”<sup>F477</sup> we are not bound before God by any religious obligation preventing us from sometimes using them and other times not using them, indifferently. And the knowledge of this freedom is very necessary for us, for if it is lacking, our consciences will have no repose and there will be no end to superstitions. Today we seem to many to be unreasonable because we stir up discussion over the unrestricted eating of meat, use of holidays and of vestments, and such things, which seem to them vain frivolities.

But these matters are more important than is commonly believed. For when consciences once ensnare themselves, they enter a long and inextricable maze, not easy to get out of. If a man begins to doubt whether he may use linen for sheets, shirts, handkerchiefs, and napkins, he will afterward be uncertain also about hemp; finally, doubt will even arise over tow. For he will turn over in his mind whether he can sup without napkins, or go without a handkerchief. If any man should consider daintier food unlawful, in the end he will not be at peace before God, when he eats either black bread or common victuals, while it occurs to him that he could sustain his body on even coarser foods. If he boggles at sweet wine, he will

not with clear conscience drink even flat wine, and finally he will not dare touch water if sweeter and cleaner than other water. To sum up, he will come to the point of considering it wrong to step upon a straw across his path, as the saying goes. <sup>F478</sup>

Here begins a weighty controversy, for what is in debate is whether God, whose will ought to precede all our plans and actions, wishes us to use these things or those. As a consequence, some, in despair, are of necessity cast into a pit of confusion; others, despising God and abandoning fear of him, must make their own way in destruction, where they have none ready-made. For all those entangled in such doubts, wherever they turn, see offense of conscience everywhere present.

## **8. FREEDOM IN THE USE OF GOD'S GIFTS FOR HIS PURPOSES**

“I know,” says Paul, “that nothing is common” (taking “common” in the sense of “profane”), “but it is common for anyone who thinks it common” [<sup><451414></sup>Romans 14:14 p.]. With these words Paul subjects all outward things to our freedom, <sup>F479</sup> provided our minds are assured that the basis for such freedom stands before God.

But if any superstitious opinion poses a stumbling block for us, things of their own nature pure are for us corrupt. For this reason, he adds: “Happy is he who does not judge himself in what he approves. But he who judges, if he eats, is condemned, because he does not eat of faith. For whatever is not of faith is sin” [<sup><451422></sup>Romans 14:22-23 p.].

Amidst such perplexities, do not those who show themselves rather bold by daring all things confidently, nonetheless to this extent turn away from God? But they who are deeply moved in any fear of God, when they are compelled to commit many things against their conscience, are overwhelmed and fall down with fright. All such persons receive none of God's gifts with thanksgiving, yet Paul testifies that by this alone all things are sanctified for our use [<sup><540404></sup>1 Timothy 4:4-5]. Now I mean that thanksgiving which proceeds from a mind that recognizes in his gifts the kindness and goodness of God. For many of them, indeed, understand them as good things of God which they use, and praise God in his works;

but inasmuch as they have not been persuaded that these good things have been given to them, how can they thank God as the giver?

To sum up, we see whither this freedom tends: namely, that we should use God's gifts for the purpose for which he gave them to us, with no scruple of conscience, no trouble of mind. With such confidence our minds will be at peace with him, and will recognize his liberality toward us. For here are included all ceremonies whose observance is optional, that our consciences may not be constrained by any necessity to observe them but may remember that by God's beneficence their use is for edification made subject to him.

### **9. AGAINST THE ABUSE OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM FOR GLUTTONY AND LUXURY!**

But we must carefully note that Christian freedom is, in all its parts, a spiritual thing. Its whole force consists in quieting frightened consciences before God—that are perhaps disturbed and troubled over forgiveness of sins, or anxious whether unfinished works, corrupted by the faults of our flesh, are pleasing to God, or tormented about the use of things indifferent. Accordingly, it is perversely interpreted both by those who allege it as an excuse for their desires that they may abuse God's good gifts to their own lust and by those who think that freedom does not exist unless it is used before men, and consequently, in using it have no regard for weaker brethren.

Today men sin to a greater degree in the first way. There is almost no one whose resources permit him to be extravagant who does not delight in lavish and ostentatious banquets, bodily apparel, and domestic architecture; who does not wish to outstrip his neighbors in all sorts of elegance; who does not wonderfully flatter himself in his opulence. And all these things are defended under the pretext of Christian freedom. They say that these are things indifferent. I admit it, provided they are used indifferently. But when they are coveted too greedily, when they are proudly boasted of, when they are lavishly squandered, things that were of themselves otherwise lawful are certainly defiled by these vices.

Paul's statement best distinguishes among things indifferent: "to the clean all things are clean, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is clean,

inasmuch as their minds and consciences are corrupted” [<sup><560115></sup>Titus 1:15, cf. Vg.]. For why are the rich cursed, who have their consolation, who are full, who laugh now [<sup><420624></sup>Luke 6:24-25], who sleep on ivory couches [<sup><300604></sup>Amos 6:4], “who join field to field” [<sup><230508></sup>Isaiah 5:8], whose feasts have harp, lyre, timbrel, and wine [<sup><230512></sup>Isaiah 5:12]? Surely ivory and gold and riches are good creations of God, permitted, indeed appointed, for men’s use by God’s providence. And we have never been forbidden to laugh, or to be filled, or to join new possessions to old or ancestral ones, or to delight in musical harmony, or to drink wine. True indeed. But where there is plenty, to wallow in delights, to gorge oneself, to intoxicate mind and heart with present pleasures and be always panting after new ones—such are very far removed from a lawful use of God’s gifts.

Away, then, with uncontrolled desire, away with immoderate prodigality, away with vanity and arrogance—in order that men may with a clean conscience cleanly use God’s gifts. Where the heart is tempered to this soberness they will have a rule for lawful use of such blessings. But should this moderation be lacking, even base and common pleasures are too much. It is a true saying that under coarse and rude attire there often dwells a heart of purple, <sup>F480</sup> while sometimes under silk and purple is hid a simple humility. Thus let every man live in his station, whether slenderly, or moderately, or plentifully, so that all may remember God nourishes them to live, not to luxuriate. And let them regard this as the law of Christian freedom; to have learned with Paul, in whatever state they are, to be content; to know how to be humble and exalted; to have been taught, in any and all circumstances, to be filled and to hunger, to abound and to suffer want [<sup><500411></sup>Philippians 4:11-19].

*(Relation of Christian freedom to the weak and to the question of offenses, 10-13)*

## **10. AGAINST THE ABUSE OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM TO THE INJURY OF THE WEAK!**

In this respect also many err; they use their freedom indiscriminately and unwisely, as though it were not sound and safe if men did not witness it. By this heedless use, they very often offend weak brothers. You can see

some persons today who reckon their freedom does not exist unless they take possession of it by eating meat on Fridays.<sup>F481</sup> I do not blame them for eating meat, but this false notion must be driven from their minds. For they ought to think that from their freedom they obtain nothing new in men's sight but before God, and that it consists as much in abstaining as in using. If they understand that it makes no difference in God's sight whether they eat meat or eggs, wear red or black clothes, this is enough and more. The conscience, to which the benefit of such freedom was due, is now set free. Consequently, even if men thereafter abstain from meat throughout life, and ever wear clothes of one color, they are not less free. Indeed, because they are free, they abstain with a free conscience. But in having no regard for their brothers' weakness they slip most disastrously, for we ought so to bear with it that we do not heedlessly allow what would do them the slightest harm.

But it is sometimes important for our freedom to be declared before men. This I admit. Yet we must with the greatest caution hold to this limitation, that we do not abandon the care of the weak, whom the Lord has so strongly commended to us.

## 11. ON OFFENSES

Here, then, I shall say something about offenses<sup>F482</sup>—how they are to be distinguished, which ones avoided, which overlooked. From this we may afterward be able to determine what place there is for our freedom among men. Now I like that common distinction between an offense given and one received, inasmuch as it has the clear support of Scripture and properly expresses what is meant.

If you do anything with unseemly levity, or wantonness, or rashness, out of its proper order or place, so as to cause the ignorant and the simple to stumble, such will be called an offense given by you, since by your fault it came about that this sort of offense arose. And, to be sure, one speaks of an offense as given in some matter when its fault arises from the doer of the thing itself.

An offense is spoken of as received when something, otherwise not wickedly or unseasonably committed, is by ill will or malicious intent of mind wrenched into occasion for offense.<sup>F483</sup> Here is no "given" offense,

but those wicked interpreters baselessly so understand it. None but the weak is made to stumble by the first kind of offense, but the second gives offense to persons of bitter disposition and pharisaical pride. Accordingly, we shall call the one the offense of the weak, the other that of the Pharisees. Thus we shall so temper the use of our freedom as to allow for the ignorance of our weak brothers, but for the rigor of the Pharisees, not at all!

For Paul fully shows us in many passages what must be yielded to weakness. “Receive,” he says, “those weak in faith.” [<sup><451401></sup>Romans 14:1 p.] Also: “Let us no more pass judgment upon one another, but rather not put a stumbling block or occasion to fall in the way of our brother” [<sup><451413></sup>Romans 14:13 p.], and many passages with the same meaning, which are more suitably sought in their place than referred to here. The sum is: “We who are strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves; but let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him” [<sup><451501></sup>Romans 15:1-2 p.; for 5:2, cf. Vg.]. In another place: “But take care lest your freedom in any way cause offense to those who are weak.” [<sup><460809></sup>1 Corinthians 8:9 p.] Likewise: “Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience.” [<sup><461025></sup>1 Corinthians 10:25.] “Now I say your conscience, not another’s. <sup>F484</sup>... In short, be so that you may give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God.” [<sup><461029></sup>1 Corinthians 10:29,32 p.] Also, in another passage: “You were called to freedom, brothers, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh but through love be servants of one another.” [<sup><480513></sup>Galatians 5:13.] So indeed it is. Our freedom is not given against our feeble neighbors, for love makes us their servants in all things; rather it is given that, having peace with God in our hearts, we may also live at peace with men.

We learn from the Lord’s words how much we ought to regard the offense of the Pharisees: He bids us let them alone because they are blind leaders of the blind. [<sup><401514></sup>Matthew 15:14.] His disciples had warned him that the Pharisees had been offended by his talk. [<sup><401512></sup>Matthew 15:12.] He answered that they were to be ignored and their offense disregarded.

## 12. ON THE RIGHT USE OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM AND THE RIGHT RENUNCIATION OF IT

Still the matter will remain in doubt unless we grasp whom we are to consider weak, whom Pharisees. If this distinction is removed, I do not see what use for freedom really remains in relation to offenses, for it will always be in the greatest danger. But Paul seems to me most clearly to have defined, both by teaching and by example, how far our freedom must either be moderated or purchased at the cost of offenses.<sup>F485</sup> When Paul took Timothy into his company, he circumcised him. [<sup><441603></sup> Acts 16:3.] But he could not be brought to circumcise Titus. [<sup><480203></sup> Galatians 2:3.] Here was a diversity of acts but no change of purpose or mind. That is, in circumcising Timothy, although he was “free from all,” he made himself “a slave to all”; and “to the Jews” he “became as a Jew” in order to win Jews; to those under the law he “became as one under the law... that” he “might win those under the law” [<sup><460919></sup> 1 Corinthians 9:19-20 p.]; “all things to all men that” he “might save many” [<sup><460922></sup> 1 Corinthians 9:22 p.], as he elsewhere writes. We have due control over our freedom if it makes no difference to us to restrict it when it is fruitful to do so.

What he had in view when he strongly refused to circumcise Titus he testifies when he thus writes: “But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek, but because of false brethren surreptitiously brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage—to them we did not yield submission, even for a moment, that the truth of the gospel might be preserved among you” [<sup><480203></sup> Galatians 2:3-5 p.]. We have need also to assert our freedom if through the unjust demands of false apostles it be endangered in weak consciences.

We must at all times seek after love and look toward the edification of our neighbor. “All things,” he says elsewhere, “are lawful to me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful, but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good but another’s.” [<sup><461023></sup> 1 Corinthians 10:23-24 p.] Nothing is plainer than this rule: that we should use our freedom if it results in the edification of our neighbor, but if it does not help our neighbor, then we should forgo it. There are those who pretend a Pauline prudence in abstaining from freedom, while there is nothing to which they

apply it less than to the duties of love. To protect their own repose, they wish all mention of freedom to be buried; when it is no less important sometimes to use our neighbors' freedom for their good and edification than on occasion to restrain it for their own benefit. But it is the part of a godly man to realize that free power in outward matters has been given him in order that he may be the more ready for all the duties of love.

### **13. WE MUST NOT ON PRETEXT OF LOVE OF NEIGHBOR OFFEND AGAINST GOD**

All that I have taught about avoiding offenses I mean to be referred to things intermediate and indifferent. For the things necessary to be done must not be omitted for fear of any offense. For as our freedom must be subordinated to love, so in turn ought love itself to abide under purity of faith. Surely, it is fitting here also to take love into consideration, even as far as to the altar [cf. <sup><400523></sup> Matthew 5:23-24]; that is, that for our neighbor's sake we may not offend God. We must not approve the intemperance of those who do nothing without raising a tumult and who prefer to tear into everything rather than open a matter gently. But those people also are not to be listened to who, after making themselves leaders in a thousand sorts of wickedness, pretend that they must act so as not to cause offense to their neighbors [cf. <sup><460809></sup> 1 Corinthians 8:9]; as if they were not in the meantime building up their neighbors' consciences into evil, especially when they ever stick fast in the same mud without hope of getting out. And suave fellows are they who, whether their neighbor is to be instructed in doctrine or in example of life, say he must be fed with milk while they steep him in the worst and deadliest opinions. Paul recalls that he fed the Corinthians with milk. [<sup><460302></sup> 1 Corinthians 3:2.] But if the papal Mass had then been among them, would he have performed sacrifice to furnish them with milk? No, for milk is not poison. They are therefore lying when they claim to be feeding those whom they are cruelly killing under the guise of blandishments. Granted that this sort of dissimulation is to be approved for the moment—how long will they feed their children with this same milk? For if these never grow up sufficiently to be able to bear even some light food at least, it is certain that they were never brought up on milk.

Two reasons prevent me from contending with them more sharply: first, their banalities are scarcely worth refuting, since they are deservedly despised among all sane men; secondly, I do not want to do again what I have already abundantly demonstrated in special treatises.<sup>F486</sup> Only let my readers remember this: with whatever obstacles Satan and the world strive to turn us away from God's commands or delay us from following what he appoints, we must nonetheless vigorously go forward. Then, whatever dangers threaten, we are not free to turn aside even a fingernail's breadth from this same God's authority, and it is not lawful under any pretext for us to attempt anything but what he allows.

*(Freedom and conscience in relation to traditions,  
and to civil government, 14-16)*

#### 14. FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE FROM ALL HUMAN LAW

Now, since believers' consciences, having received the privilege of their freedom, which we previously described, have, by Christ's gift, attained to this, that they should not be entangled with any snares of observances in those matters in which the Lord has willed them to be free, we conclude that they are released from the power of all men. For Christ does not deserve to forfeit our gratitude for his great generosity—nor consciences, their profit. And we should not put a light value upon something that we see cost Christ so dear, since he valued it not with gold or silver but with his own blood [<sup><600118></sup> 1 Peter 1:18-19]. Paul does not hesitate to say that Christ's death is nullified if we put our souls under men's subjection [cf. <sup><480221></sup> Galatians 2:21]. For in certain chapters of the letter to the Galatians, Paul is solely trying to show how to us Christ is obscured, or rather extinguished, unless our consciences stand firm in their freedom. They have surely fallen away from it if they can, at men's good pleasure, be ensnared by the bonds of laws and constitutions<sup>F487</sup> [cf. <sup><480501></sup> Galatians 5:1,4]. But as this is something very much worth knowing, so it needs a longer and clearer explanation. For immediately a word is uttered concerning the abrogating of human constitutions, huge troubles are stirred up, partly by the seditious, partly by slanderers—as if all human obedience were at the same time removed and cast down.

## 15. THE TWO KINGDOMS

Therefore, in order that none of us may stumble on that stone, let us first consider that there is a twofold government in man: one aspect is spiritual, whereby the conscience is instructed in piety and in reverencing God; the second is political, whereby man is educated for the duties of humanity and citizenship that must be maintained among men. These are usually called the “spiritual” and the “temporal” jurisdiction<sup>F488</sup> (not improper terms) by which is meant that the former sort of government pertains to the life of the soul, while the latter has to do with the concerns of the present life—not only with food and clothing but with laying down laws whereby a man may live his life among other men holily, honorably, and temperately. For the former resides in the inner mind, while the latter regulates only outward behavior. The one we may call the spiritual kingdom, the other, the political kingdom. Now these two, as we have divided them, must always be examined separately; and while one is being considered, we must call away and turn aside the mind from thinking about the other. There are in man, so to speak, two worlds, over which different kings and different laws have authority.

Through this distinction it comes about that we are not to misapply to the political order the gospel teaching on spiritual freedom, as if Christians were less subject, as concerns outward government, to human laws, because their consciences have been set free in God’s sight; as if they were released from all bodily servitude because they are free according to the spirit.

Then, because there can be some delusion in the constitutions that seem to apply to the spiritual kingdom, among these also we should discern what must be considered lawful, as consonant with God’s word, and on the other hand what ought to have no place among the godly. Of civil government we shall speak in another place.<sup>F489</sup> Concerning church laws also I forbear to speak for the present, for a fuller treatment will more appropriately come in the fourth book, where the power of the church will be discussed.<sup>F490</sup>

Let this be the conclusion of the present discussion. The question, as I have said, is not of itself very obscure or involved. However, it troubles many because they do not sharply enough distinguish the outer forum, as

it is called, and the forum of conscience.<sup>F491</sup> Moreover, the difficulty is increased by the fact that Paul enjoins obedience toward the magistrate, not only for fear of punishment, but for conscience' sake [<sup><451301></sup>Romans 13:1,5]. From this it follows that consciences are also bound by civil laws. But if this were so, all that we said a little while ago and are now going to say about spiritual government would fall.

To resolve this difficulty it first behooves us to comprehend what conscience is; we must seek the definition from the derivation of the word. For just as when through the mind and understanding men grasp a knowledge of things, and from this are said "to know," this is the source of the word "knowledge," so also when they have a sense of divine judgment, as a witness joined to them, which does not allow them to hide their sins from being accused before the Judge's tribunal, this sense is called "conscience."<sup>F492</sup> For it is a certain mean between God and man, because it does not allow man to suppress within himself what he knows, but pursues him to the point of convicting him. This is what Paul understands when he teaches that conscience also testifies to men, where their thought either accuses or excuses them in God's judgment [<sup><450215></sup>Romans 2:15-16]. A simple knowledge could re. side, so to speak, closed up in man. Therefore this awareness which hales man before God's judgment is a sort of guardian appointed for man to note and spy out all his secrets that nothing may remain buried in darkness. Whence that ancient proverb: "Conscience is a thousand witnesses."<sup>F493</sup> For the same reason, Peter also put "the response of a good conscience to God" [<sup><600321></sup>1 Peter 3:21] as equivalent to peace of mind, when, convinced of Christ's grace, we fearlessly present ourselves before God. And when the author of the Letter to the Hebrews states that we "no longer have any consciousness of sin" [<sup><581002></sup>Hebrews 10:2], he means that we are held to be freed or acquitted, so that sin may no longer accuse us.

## 16. BONDAGE AND FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

Therefore, as works have regard to men, so conscience refers to God. A good conscience, then, is nothing but inward integrity of heart. In this sense, Paul writes that the fulfillment of the law is love from a clear conscience and sincere faith [cf. <sup><540105></sup>1 Timothy 1:5]. Afterward, also, in the same chapter, he shows how much it differs from understanding,

stating that “certain persons made shipwreck of their faith” [<sup><540119></sup> 1 Timothy 1:19] because they had forsaken good conscience. By these words he signifies a lively inclination to serve God and a sincere effort to live piously and holily.

Sometimes, indeed, it is also extended to men, as when the same Paul, according to Luke, declares that he “took pains” to walk “with a clear conscience toward God and men” [<sup><442416></sup> Acts 24:16]. But this was said because the fruit of a good conscience flows forth and comes even to men. But properly speaking, as I have already said, it has respect to God alone.

Hence it comes about that a law is said to bind the conscience when it simply binds a man without regard to other men, or without taking them into account. For example: God not only bids us keep our minds pure and undefiled from all lust but also forbids all obscenity of speech and outward licentiousness. My conscience is subject to the observance of this law, even if no man lived on earth. So he who conducts himself intemperately not only sins because he gives a bad example to his brothers but has a conscience bound by guilt before God.

In things of themselves indifferent there is another consideration. For we ought to abstain from anything that might cause offense, but with a free conscience. Thus Paul speaks concerning meat consecrated to idols. “If anyone,” he says, “raises a scruple, do not touch it, for conscience’ sake. Now I mean the other man’s conscience—not yours.” [<sup><461028></sup> 1 Corinthians 10:28-29 p.] <sup>F494</sup> A believer who, though previously warned, nonetheless ate meat of this sort would sin. But however necessary it may be with respect to his brother for him to abstain from it, as God enjoins, he still does not cease to keep freedom of conscience. We see how this law, while binding outward actions, leaves the conscience free.

## CHAPTER 20

### PRAYER, WHICH IS THE CHIEF EXERCISE OF FAITH, AND BY WHICH WE DAILY RECEIVE GOD'S BENEFITS <sup>F495</sup>

*(The nature and value of prayer, 1-3)*

#### 1. FAITH AND PRAYER

From those matters so far discussed, we clearly see how destitute and devoid of all good things man is, and how he lacks all aids to salvation. Therefore, if he seeks resources to succor him in his need, he must go outside himself and get them elsewhere. It was afterward explained to us that the Lord willingly and freely reveals himself in his Christ. For in Christ he offers all happiness in place of our misery, all wealth in place of our neediness; in him he opens to us the heavenly treasures that our whole faith may contemplate his beloved Son, our whole expectation depend upon him, and our whole hope cleave to and rest in him. This, indeed, is that secret and hidden philosophy <sup>F496</sup> which cannot be wrested from syllogisms. But they whose eyes God has opened surely learn it by heart, that in his light they may see light [<sup><193609></sup> Psalm 36:9].

But after we have been instructed by faith to recognize that whatever we need and whatever we lack is in God, and in our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the Father willed all the fullness of his bounty to abide [cf. <sup><510119></sup> Colossians 1:19; <sup><430116></sup> John 1:16] so that we may all draw from it as from an overflowing spring, it remains for us to seek in him, and in prayers to ask of him, what we have learned to be in him. Otherwise, to know God as the master and bestower of all good things, who invites us to request them of him, and still not go to him and not ask of him—this would be of as little profit as for a man to neglect a treasure, buried and hidden in the earth, after it had been pointed out to him. Accordingly, the apostle, in order to show that true faith cannot be indifferent about calling upon God, has laid down this order: just as faith is born from the gospel,

so through it our hearts are trained to call upon God's name [<sup><451014></sup>Romans 10:14-17]. And this is precisely what he had said a little before: the Spirit of adoption, who seals the witness of the gospel in our hearts [<sup><450816></sup>Romans 8:16], raises up our spirits to dare show forth to God their desires, to stir up unspeakable groanings [<sup><450826></sup>Romans 8:26], and confidently cry, "Abba! Father!" [<sup><450815></sup>Romans 8:15].

Now we must more fully discuss this last point, since it was previously only mentioned in passing and, as it were, cursorily touched upon. <sup>F497</sup>

## 2. THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER

It is, therefore, by the benefit of prayer that we reach those riches which are laid up for us with the Heavenly Father. For there is a communion of men with God by which, having entered the heavenly sanctuary, they appeal to him in person concerning his promises in order to experience, where necessity so demands, that what they believed was not vain, although he had promised it in word alone. Therefore we see that to us nothing is promised to be expected from the Lord, which we are not also bidden to ask of him in prayers. So true is it that we dig up by prayer the treasures that were pointed out by the Lord's gospel, and which our faith has gazed upon.

Words fail to explain how necessary prayer is, and in how many ways the exercise of prayer is profitable. Surely, with good reason the Heavenly Father affirms that the only stronghold of safety is in calling upon his name [cf. <sup><290232></sup>Joel 2:32]. By so doing we invoke the presence both of his providence, through which he watches over and guards our affairs, and of his power, through which he sustains us, weak as we are and well-nigh overcome, and of his goodness, through which he receives us, miserably burdened with sins, unto grace; and, in short, it is by prayer that we call him to reveal himself as wholly present to us. Hence comes an extraordinary peace and repose to our consciences. For having disclosed to the Lord the necessity that was pressing upon us, we even rest fully in the thought that none of our ills is hid from him who, we are convinced, has both the will and the power to take the best care of us.

### 3. OBJECTION: IS PRAYER NOT SUPERFLUOUS? SIX REASONS FOR IT

But, someone will say, does God not know, even without being reminded, both in what respect we are troubled and what is expedient for us, so that it may seem in a sense superfluous that he should be stirred up by our prayers—as if he were drowsily blinking or even sleeping until he is aroused by our voice? But they who thus reason do not observe to what end the Lord instructed his people to pray, for he ordained it not so much for his own sake as for ours. Now he wills—as is right—that his due be rendered to him, in the recognition that everything men desire and account conducive to their own profit comes from him, and in the attestation of this by prayers. But the profit of this sacrifice also, by which he is worshiped, returns to us. Accordingly, the holy fathers, the more confidently they extolled God’s benefits among themselves and others, were the more keenly aroused to pray. It will be enough for us to note the single example of Elijah, who, sure of God’s purpose, after he has deliberately promised rain to King Ahab, still anxiously prays with his head between his knees, and sends his servant seven times to look [<sup><111842></sup> 1 Kings 18:42], not because he would discredit his prophecy, but because he knew it was his duty, lest his faith be sleepy or sluggish, to lay his desires before God.

Therefore, even though, while we grow dull and stupid toward our miseries, he watches and keeps guard on our behalf, and sometimes even helps us unasked, still it is very important for us to call upon him: First, that our hearts may be fired with a zealous and burning desire ever to seek, love, and serve him, while we become accustomed in every need to flee to him as to a sacred anchor. Secondly, that there may enter our hearts no desire and no wish at all of which we should be ashamed to make him a witness, while we learn to set all our wishes before his eyes, and even to pour out our whole hearts. Thirdly, that we be prepared to receive his benefits with true gratitude of heart and thanksgiving, benefits that our prayer reminds us come from his hand [cf. <sup><19E515></sup> Psalm 145:15-16]. Fourthly, moreover, that, having obtained what we were seeking, and being convinced that he has answered our prayers, we should be led to meditate upon his kindness more ardently. And fifthly, that at the same time we embrace with greater delight those things which we acknowledge to have

been obtained by prayers. Finally, that use and experience may, according to the measure of our feebleness, confirm his providence, while we understand not only that he promises never to fail us, and of his own will opens the way to call upon him at the very point of necessity, but also that he ever extends his hand to help his own, not wet-nursing them with words <sup>F498</sup> but defending them with present help.

On account of these things, our most merciful Father, although he never either sleeps or idles, still very often gives the impression of one sleeping or idling in order that he may thus train us, otherwise idle and lazy, to seek, ask, and entreat him to our great good.

Therefore they act with excessive foolishness who, to call men's minds away from prayer, babble that God's providence, standing guard over all things, is vainly importuned with our entreaties, <sup>F499</sup> inasmuch as the Lord has not, on the contrary, vainly attested that "he is near... to all who call upon his name in truth" [<sup><19E518></sup> Psalm 145:18, cf. Comm. and Vg.]. Quite like this is what others prate: that it is superfluous for them to petition for things that the Lord is gladly ready to bestow, while those very things which flow to us from his voluntary liberality he would have us recognize as granted to our prayers. That memorable saying of the psalm attests this, and to it many similar passages correspond: "For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears toward their prayers" [<sup><600312></sup> 1 Peter 3:12; <sup><193415></sup> Psalm 34:15; cf. 33:16, Vg.]. This sentence so commends the providence of God—intent of his own accord upon caring for the salvation of the godly—as yet not to omit the exercise of faith, by which men's minds are cleansed of indolence. The eyes of God are therefore watchful to assist the blind in their necessity, but he is willing in turn to hear our groanings that he may the better prove his love toward us. And so both are true: "that the keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps" [<sup><19C104></sup> Psalm 121:4, cf. Comm.], and yet that he is inactive, as if forgetting us, when he sees us idle and mute.

*(The rules of right prayer, 4-16)*

### **First Rule: reverence, 4-5**

#### **4. DEVOUT DETACHMENT REQUIRED FOR CONVERSATION WITH GOD**

Now for framing prayer duly and properly, let this be the first rule: that we be disposed in mind and heart as befits those who enter conversation with God. <sup>F500</sup> This we shall indeed attain with respect to the mind if it is freed from carnal cares and thoughts by which it can be called or led away from right and pure contemplation of God, and then not only devotes itself completely to prayer but also, in so far as this is possible, is lifted and carried beyond itself. Now I do not here require the mind to be so detached as never to be pricked or gnawed by vexations, since, on the contrary, great anxiety should kindle in us the desire to pray. Thus we see that God's saintly servants give proof of huge torments, not to say vexations, when they speak of uttering their plaintive cry to the Lord from the deep abyss, and from the very jaws of death [cf. <sup><19D001></sup>Psalm 130:1]. But I say that we are to rid ourselves of all alien and outside cares, by which the mind, itself a wanderer, is borne about hither and thither, drawn away from heaven, and pressed down to earth. I mean that it ought to be raised above itself that it may not bring into God's sight anything our blind and stupid reason is wont to devise, nor hold itself within the limits of its own vanity, but rise to a purity worthy of God.

#### **5. AGAINST UNDISCIPLINED AND IRREVERENT PRAYER**

These two matters are well worth attention: first, whoever engages in prayer should apply to it his faculties and efforts, and not, as commonly happens, be distracted by wandering thoughts. For nothing is more contrary to reverence for God than the levity that marks an excess of frivolity utterly devoid of awe. In this matter, the harder we find concentration to be, the more strenuously we ought to labor after it. For no one is so intent on praying that he does not feel many irrelevant thoughts stealing upon him, which either break the course of prayer or delay it by some winding bypath. But here let us recall how unworthy it is, when God admits us to intimate conversation, to abuse his great kindness by mixing sacred and profane; but just as if the discourse were between us and an ordinary man, amidst our prayers we neglect him and flit about hither and thither.

Let us therefore realize that the only persons who duly and properly gird themselves to pray are those who are so moved by God's majesty that freed from earthly cares and affections they come to it. And the rite of raising the hands means that men remember they are far removed from God unless they raise their thoughts on high. As it is also said in the psalm: "To thee... I have lifted up my soul" [<sup><192501></sup>Psalm 25:1; cf. 24:1, Vg.]. And Scripture quite often uses this expression, "to lift up prayer" [e.g., <sup><233704></sup>Isaiah 37:4], in order that those who wish God to hear them may not settle down "on their lees" [cf. <sup><244811></sup>Jeremiah 48:11; <sup><360112></sup>Zephaniah 1:12]. In short, the more generously God deals with us, gently summoning us to unburden our cares into his bosom, the less excusable are we if his splendid and incomparable benefit does not outweigh all else with us and draw us to him, so that we apply our minds and efforts zealously to prayer. This cannot happen unless the mind, stoutly wrestling with these hindrances, rises above them.

We have noted another point: not to ask any more than God allows. For even though he bids us pour out our hearts before him [<sup><196208></sup>Psalm 62:8; cf. <sup><19E519></sup>Psalm 145:19], he still does not indiscriminately slacken the reins to stupid and wicked emotions; and while he promises that he will act according to the will of the godly, his gentleness does not go so far that he yields to their willfulness. Yet in both, men commonly sin gravely; for many rashly, shamelessly, and irreverently dare importune God with their improprieties and impudently present before his throne whatever in dreams has struck their fancy. But such great dullness or stupidity grips them that they dare thrust upon God all their vilest desires, which they would be deeply ashamed to acknowledge to men. Certain profane authors <sup>F501</sup> made fun of and even detested this effrontery, but the vice itself has always held sway; and hence it came to pass that ambitious men chose Jupiter as their patron; the miserly, Mercury; those greedy for knowledge, Apollo and Minerva; the warlike, Mars; the lecherous, Venus. Even so today, as I have just suggested, men in their prayers grant more license to their unlawful desires than if equals were jestingly to gossip with equals. Yet, God does not allow his gentle dealing to be thus mocked but, claiming his own right, he subjects our wishes to his power and bridles them. For this reason, we must hold fast to John's statement: "This is the confidence

we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” [<sup><620514></sup> 1 John 5:14].

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AIDS RIGHT PRAYER

But because our abilities are far from able to match such perfection, we must seek a remedy to help us. As we must turn keenness of mind toward God, so affection of heart has to follow. Both, indeed, stand far beneath; nay, more truly, they faint and fail, or are carried in the opposite direction. Therefore, in order to minister to this weakness, God gives us the Spirit as our teacher in prayer, to tell us what is right and temper our emotions. For, “because we do not know how to pray as we ought, the Spirit comes to our help,” and “intercedes for us with unspeakable groans” [<sup><450826></sup> Romans 8:26]; not that he actually prays or groans but arouses in us assurance, desires, and sighs, to conceive which our natural powers would scarcely suffice. And Paul, with good reason, calls “unspeakable” these groans which believers give forth under the guidance of the Spirit; <sup>F502</sup> for they who are truly trained in prayers are not unmindful that, perplexed by blind anxieties, they are so constrained as scarcely to find out what it is expedient for them to utter. Indeed, when they try to stammer, they are confused and hesitate. Clearly, then, to pray rightly is a rare gift. These things are not said in order that we, favoring our own slothfulness, may give over the function of prayer to the Spirit of God, and vegetate in that carelessness to which we are all too prone, in this strain we hear the impious voices of certain persons, saying that we should drowsily wait until he overtake our preoccupied minds. But rather our intention is that, loathing our inertia and dullness, we should seek such aid of the Spirit. And indeed, Paul, when he enjoins us to pray in the Spirit [<sup><461415></sup> 1 Corinthians 14:15], does not stop urging us to watchfulness. He means that the prompting of the Spirit empowers us so to compose prayers as by no means to hinder or hold back our own effort, since in this matter God’s will is to test how effectually faith moves our hearts.

**Second Rule: We pray from a sincere sense of want, and with penitence, 6-7**

## 6. THE SENSE OF NEED THAT EXCLUDES ALL UNREALITY.

Let this be the second rule: that in our petitions we ever sense our own insufficiency, and earnestly pondering how we need all that we seek, join with this prayer an earnest—nay, burning—desire to attain it. <sup>F503</sup> For many perfunctorily intone prayers after a set form, as if discharging a duty to God. And although they admit it to be a necessary remedy for their ills, because it would be fatal to lack the help of God which they are beseeching, still it appears that they perform this duty from habit, because their hearts are meanwhile cold, and they do not ponder what they ask. Indeed, a general and confused feeling of their need leads them to prayer, but it does not arouse them, as it were in present reality, to seek the relief of their poverty. Now what do we account more hateful or even execrable to God than the fiction of someone asking pardon for his sins, all the while either thinking he is not a sinner or at least not thinking he is a sinner? Unquestionably something in which God himself is mocked! Yet, as I have just said, mankind is so stuffed with such depravity that for the sake of mere performance men often beseech God for many things that they are dead sure will, apart from his kindness, come to them from some other source, or already lie in their possession.

A fault that seems less serious but is also not tolerable is that of others who, having been imbued with this one principle—that God must be appeased by devotions—mumble prayers without meditation. Now the godly must particularly beware of presenting themselves before God to request anything unless they yearn for it with sincere affection of heart, and at the same time desire to obtain it from him. Indeed, even though in those things which we seek only to God's glory we do not seem at first glance to be providing for our own need, yet it is fitting that they be sought with no less ardor and eagerness. When, for example, we pray that "his name be sanctified" [<sup><400609></sup>Matthew 6:9; <sup><421102></sup>Luke 11:2], we should, so to speak, eagerly hunger and thirst after that sanctification.

## 7. IS PRAYER AT TIMES DEPENDENT UPON OUR PASSING MOOD?

If anyone should object that we are not always urged with equal necessity to pray, I admit it. And to our benefit James gives us this distinction: "Is

anyone among you sad? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing” [<sup><590513></sup>James 5:13 p.]. Therefore common sense itself dictates that, because we are too lazy, God pricks us the more sharply, as occasion demands, to pray earnestly. David calls this a “seasonable time” [<sup><193206></sup>Psalm 32:6; 31:6, Vg.] because, as he teaches in many other passages [e.g., <sup><199419></sup>Psalm 94:19], the more harshly troubles, discomforts, fears, and trials of other sorts press us, the freer is our access to him, as if God were summoning us to himself.

At the same time Paul’s statement is no less true, that we must “pray at all times” [<sup><490618></sup>Ephesians 6:18; <sup><520517></sup>1 Thessalonians 5:17]. For however much after our heart’s desire affairs may prosperously flow and occasion for happiness surround us on all sides, still there is no point of time when our need does not urge us to pray. A certain man has abundant wine and grain. Since he cannot enjoy a single morsel of bread apart from God’s continuing favor, his wine cellars and granaries will not hinder him from praying for his daily bread. Now if we should consider how many dangers at every moment threaten, fear itself will teach us that we at no single time may leave off praying.

Still, we can better recognize this fact in spiritual matters. For when should the many sins of which we are conscious allow us nonchalantly to stop praying as suppliants for pardon of our guilt and penalty? When do temptations yield us a truce from hastening after help? Moreover, zeal for the Kingdom of God and his glory ought so to lay hold on us, not intermittently but constantly, that the same opportunity may ever remain ours. It is therefore not in vain that constancy in prayer is enjoined upon us. I am not yet speaking of perseverance, of which mention will be made later,<sup>F504</sup> but Scripture, admonishing us to “pray constantly” [<sup><520517></sup>1 Thessalonians 5:17], accuses us of sloth, for we do not realize how much we need this attentiveness and constancy. By this rule, hypocrisy and wily falsehoods toward God are debarred from prayer—indeed, are banished far away! God promises that “he will be near to all who call upon him bin truth” [<sup><19E518></sup>Psalm 145:18, cf. Comm.], and states that those who seek him with all their heart will find him [<sup><242913></sup>Jeremiah 29:13-14]. For this reason, they who delight in their own foulness aspire not at all. Lawful prayer, therefore, demands repentance. Hence arises the commonplace in Scripture that God does not hearken to the wicked

[<sup><430931></sup>John 9:31], and that their prayers [cf. <sup><202809></sup>Proverbs 28:9; <sup><230115></sup>Isaiah 1:15]—just as their sacrifices [cf. <sup><201508></sup>Proverbs 15:8; 21:27]—are abominable to him. For it is right that they who bar their hearts should find God’s ears closed, and that they who by their hardheartedness provoke his severity should not feel him conciliatory. In Isaiah he threatens in this way: “Even though you multiply your prayers, I will not listen; for your hands are full of blood” [<sup><230115></sup>Isaiah 1:15, cf. Vg.]. Again, in Jeremiah: “I cried out... and they refused to listen;... they will cry out in return, and I will not listen” [<sup><241107></sup>Jeremiah 11:7,8,11.] For he counts it the height of dishonor for wicked men, who all their lives besmirch his sacred name, to boast of his covenant. Consequently, in Isaiah he complains, when the Jews “draw near to him with their lips... their hearts are far from him” [<sup><232913></sup>Isaiah 29:13 p.]. He does not, indeed, restrict this to prayers alone but declares that falsity in any part of his worship is abhorrent to him. That statement of James applies here. “You seek, and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions” [<sup><590403></sup>James 4:3]. It is indeed true, as we shall again see a little later, <sup>F505</sup> that the prayers poured out by the godly do not depend upon their worthiness; yet John’s warning is not superfluous: “We receive from him whatever we ask because we keep his commandments” [<sup><620322></sup>1 John 3:22], while a bad conscience closes the door to us. From this it follows that only sincere worshipers of God pray aright and are heard. Let each one, therefore, as he prepares to pray be displeased with his own evil deeds, and (something that cannot happen without repentance) let him take the person and disposition of a beggar.

### **Third Rule: We yield all confidence in ourselves and humbly plead for pardon, 8-10**

#### **8. WE COME AS HUMBLE SUPPLIANTS FOR MERCY**

To this let us join a third rule: that anyone who stands before God to pray, in his humility giving glory completely to God, abandon all thought of his own glory, cast off all notion of his own worth, in fine, put away all self-assurance—blest if we claim for ourselves anything, even the least bit, we should become vainly puffed up, and perish at his presence. We have repeated examples of this submission, which levels all haughtiness, in God’s servants; each one of whom, the holier he is, the more he is cast

down when he presents himself before the Lord. Thus spoke Daniel, whom the Lord himself commended with so great a title: “We do not pour forth our prayers unto thee on the ground of our righteousnesses but on the ground of thy great mercy. O Lord, hear us; O Lord, be kindly unto us. Hear us, and do what we ask... for thine own sake... because thy name is called upon over thy people, and over thine holy place” [<sup><270918></sup>Daniel 9:18-19, cf. Vg.]. Nor does he, by a devious figure of speech, as some men do, mingle with the crowd as one of the people. Rather he confesses his guilt as an individual, and as a suppliant takes refuge in God’s pardon, as he eloquently declares: “When I had... confessed my sin and the sin of my people” [<sup><270920></sup>Daniel 9:20 p.]. David also enjoins this humility by his own example: “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for no man living is righteous before thee” [<sup><19E302></sup>Psalms 143:2; cf. Comm. and <sup><19E202></sup>Psalms 142:2, Vg.]. In such a form, Isaiah prays: “Behold, thou wert wroth, for we sinned... The world is founded upon thy ways, therefore we shall be saved... And all of us have been full of uncleanness, and all our righteousnesses like a filthy rag; we all have faded like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, scatter us. There is no one who calls upon thy name, who bestirs himself to take hold of thee. For thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast made us to melt away in the hand of our iniquities. Yet, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, thou art our potter and we are the work of thy hand. Be not angry, O Lord, and remember not iniquity forever. Behold now, consider, we are all thy people” [<sup><236405></sup>Isaiah 64:5-9, cf. Comm.].

Observe that they depend on no assurance whatever but this alone: that, reckoning themselves to be of God, they do not despair that he will take care of them. Likewise, Jeremiah: “Though our iniquities testify against us, act... for thy name’s sake” [<sup><241407></sup>Jeremiah 14:7]. For some unknown author, whoever he may be, has written these very true and holy words attributed to the prophet Baruch: “The soul that is sorrowful and desolate for the greatness of her evil, bowed down and feeble,... the hungry soul, and the eyes that fail give glory... to thee, O Lord. It is not for the righteousnesses of the fathers that we pour out our prayers before thee, and beg mercy in thy sight, O Lord our God” [Baruch 2:18-19 p., cf. Vg.]; but because thou art merciful, “be merciful unto us, for we have sinned before thee” [Baruch 3:2].

## 9. THE PLEA FOR FORGIVENESS OF SINS AS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF PRAYER

To sum up: the beginning, and even the preparation, of proper prayer is the plea for pardon with a humble and sincere confession of guilt. Nor should anyone, however holy he may be, hope that he will obtain anything from God until he is freely reconciled to him; nor can God chance to be propitious to any but those whom he has pardoned. Accordingly, it is no wonder if believers open for themselves the door to prayer with this key, as we learn from numerous passages of the Psalms. For David, asking for something else than remission of his sins, says: “Remember not the sins of my youth, and my transgressions; according to thy mercy remember me, for thy goodness’ sake, O Lord” [<sup><192507></sup> Psalm 25:7]. Again: “See my affliction and my toil, and forgive all my sins.” [<sup><192518></sup> Psalm 25:18 p.] Also, in this we see that it is not enough for us to call ourselves to account each day for recent sins if we do not remember those sins which might seem to have been long forgotten.

For the same prophet, elsewhere having confessed one grave offense, on this occasion even turns back to his mother’s womb, in which he had contracted the infection [<sup><195105></sup> Psalm 51:5], not to extenuate the guilt on the ground of corruption of nature but that, in gathering up the sins of his whole life, the more rigorously he condemns himself, the more easily entreated he may find God. But even though the saints do not always beg forgiveness of sins in so many words, if we diligently ponder their prayers that Scripture relates, we shall readily come upon what I speak of: that they have received their intention to pray from God’s mercy alone, and thus always have begun with appeasing him. For if anyone should question his own conscience, he would be so far from daring intimately to lay aside his cares before God that, unless he relied upon mercy and pardon, he would tremble at every approach.

There is also another special confession when suppliants ask release from punishments. It is that at the same time they may pray for the pardon of their sins. For it would be absurd to wish the effect to be removed while the cause remained. We must guard against imitating foolish sick folk, who, concerned solely with the treatment of symptoms, neglect the very root of the disease. We must make it our first concern that God be favorable

toward us, rather than that he attest his favor by outward signs, because he wills to maintain this order, and it would have been of small profit to us to have him do us good unless our conscience, feeling him wholly appeased, rendered him altogether lovely [Cant. 5:16]. Christ's reply also reminds us of this; for after he had decided to heal the paralytic, "Your sins," he said, "are forgiven you" [<sup><400902></sup>Matthew 9:2]. He thus arouses our minds to that which we ought especially to desire: that God may receive us into grace; then, that in aiding us he may set forth the fruit of reconciliation.

But besides that special confession of present guilt, with which believers plead for the remission of every sin and penalty, the general preface that gains favor for prayers must never be passed over, for unless they are founded in free mercy, prayers never reach God. John's statement can be applied to this: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive... and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" [<sup><620109></sup>1 John 1:9, Vg.]. For this reason, under the law prayers had to be consecrated with blood atonement [cf. <sup><011208></sup>Genesis 12:8; 26:25; 33:20; <sup><090709></sup>1 Samuel 7:9] in order that they should be accepted, and that the people should thus be warned that they were unworthy of so great a privilege of honor until, purged of their defilement, they derived confidence in prayer solely from God's mercy.

## 10. REFERENCE TO ONE'S OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS?

Now the saints sometimes seem to shout approval of their own righteousness in calling upon God for help. For example, David says: "Keep my life, for I am good" [<sup><198602></sup>Psalms 86:2 p.]; and similarly, Hezekiah: "Remember... O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth... and have done what is good in thy sight" [<sup><122003></sup>2 Kings 20:3 p.; cf. <sup><233803></sup>Isaiah 38:3]. By such expressions they mean nothing else but that by their regeneration itself they are attested as servants and children of God to whom he promises that he will be gracious. He teaches through the prophet, as we have already seen <sup>F506</sup> that his eyes "are upon the righteous, his ears toward their prayers" [<sup><193415></sup>Psalms 34:15; cf. 33:16, Vg.]. Again, through the apostle John: "We shall receive... whatever we ask if we keep his commandments" [<sup><620322></sup>1 John 3:22 p.]. In these statements he does not set the value of prayer according to the merits of works, but he is pleased to establish the assurance of those who are duly

aware of guileless uprightness and innocence, as all believers ought to be. Indeed, what the blind man whose sight was restored says in John's gospel—that God does not listen to sinners [<sup><430931></sup> John 9:31]—has been drawn from the very truth of God, provided we understand “sinners” in the customary usage of Scripture, as all persons who slumber and repose in their own sins without any desire for righteousness. For no heart can ever break into sincere calling upon God that does not at the same time aspire to godliness. To such promises, then, correspond the saints' attestations, in which they mention their purity or innocence in order that they may feel, what all God's servants should hope for, made manifest to themselves.

Again, while they are before the Lord comparing themselves with their enemies, from whose iniquity they long to be delivered by his hand, they are commonly found using this sort of prayer. Now it is no wonder if in this comparison they put forward their own righteousness and simplicity of heart in order that, from the equity of the cause itself, they might the more move the Lord to provide them with assistance. The godly man enjoys a pure conscience before the Lord, thus confirming himself in the promises with which the Lord comforts and supports his true worshipers. It is not our intent to snatch this blessing from his breast; rather, we would assert that his assurance his prayers will be answered rests solely upon God's clemency, apart from all consideration of personal merit.

#### **Fourth rule: We pray with confident hope, 11-14**

### **11. HOPE AND FAITH OVERCOME FEAR**

The fourth rule is that, thus cast down and overcome by true humility, we should be nonetheless encouraged to pray by a sure hope that our prayer will be answered. These are indeed things apparently contrary: to join the firm assurance of God's favor to a sense of his just vengeance; yet, on the ground that God's goodness alone raises up those oppressed by their own evil deeds, they very well agree together. For, in accordance with our previous teaching that repentance and faith are companions joined together by an indissoluble bond, although one of these terrifies us while the other gladdens us, <sup>F507</sup> so also these two ought to be present together in prayers. And David briefly expresses this agreement when he says: “I through the

abundance of thy goodness will enter thy house, I will worship toward the temple of thy holiness with fear” [<sup><190507></sup>Psalm 5:7]. Under God’s goodness he includes faith, meantime not excluding fear. For not only does his majesty constrain us to reverence but through our own unworthiness, forgetting all pride and self-confidence, we are held in fear.

But “assurance” I do not understand to mean that which soothes our mind with sweet and perfect repose, releasing it from every anxiety. For to repose so peacefully is the part of those who, when all affairs are flowing to their liking, are touched by no care, burn with no desire, toss with no fear. But for the saints the occasion that best stimulates them to call upon God is when, distressed by their own need, they are troubled by the greatest unrest, and are almost driven out of their senses, until faith opportunely comes to their relief. For among such tribulations God’s goodness so shines upon them that even when they groan with weariness under the weight of present ills, and also are troubled and tormented by the fear of greater ones, yet, relying upon his goodness, they are relieved of the difficulty of bearing them, and are solaced and hope for escape and deliverance. It is fitting therefore that the godly man’s prayer arise from these two emotions, that it also contain and represent both. That is, that he groan under present ills and anxiously fear those to come, yet at the same time take refuge in God, not at all doubting he is ready to extend his helping hand. It is amazing how much our lack of trust provokes God if we request of him a boon that we do not expect.

### PRAYER AND FAITH

Therefore nothing is more in harmony with the nature of prayers than that this rule be laid down and established for them: that they not break forth by chance but follow faith as guide. Christ calls this principle to the attention of all of us with this saying: “I say unto you, whatever you seek... , believe that you will receive it, and it will come to you” [<sup><411124></sup>Mark 11:24 p.] <sup>F508</sup> He confirms the same statement in another place: “Whatever you ask in prayer, believing” etc. [<sup><402122></sup>Matthew 21:22]. James is in accord with this: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men simply and without reproaching... Let him ask in faith, with no wavering” [<sup><590105></sup>James 1:5-6 p.]. There, opposing faith to wavering, he most appropriately expresses the force of faith.

Nonetheless, what he adds must also be noted: that they who in doubt and perplexity call upon God, uncertain in their minds whether they will be heard or not, will gain nothing [cf. <sup><590107></sup>James 1:7]. He even compares these persons to waves that are driven and tossed hither and thither by the wind [<sup><590106></sup>James 1:6].<sup>F509</sup> Hence, in another passage, James calls what is right and proper “the prayer of faith” [<sup><590515></sup>James 5:15]. Then, since God so often affirms that he will give to each one according to his faith [<sup><400813></sup>Matthew 8:13; 9:29; <sup><411124></sup>Mark 11:24], he implies that we can obtain nothing apart from faith.

To sum up, it is faith that obtains whatever is granted to prayer. Such is the meaning of Paul’s famous statement, which the unwise too little regard: “How will anyone call upon him in whom he has not believed? And who will believe unless he has heard?” [<sup><451014></sup>Romans 10:14 p.]. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing from the Word of God.” [<sup><451017></sup>Romans 10:17.] For, deducing step by step the beginning of prayer from faith, he plainly asserts that God cannot be sincerely called upon by others than those to whom, through the preaching of the gospel, his kindness and gentle dealing have become known—indeed, have been intimately revealed.

## **12. AGAINST THE DENIAL OF CERTAINTY THAT PRAYER IS GRANTED**

Our opponents do not at all ponder this requirement. Therefore, when we enjoin believers to be convinced with firm assurance of mind that God is favorable and benevolent to them, they think we are saying the most absurd thing of all. Still, if they made any use of true prayer, they would really understand that without that firm sense of the divine benevolence God could not be rightly called upon. Since no one can well perceive the power of faith unless he feels it by experience in his heart, what point is there in arguing with men of this stripe, who clearly show that they have never had anything but an empty imagination? For the value and need of that assurance, which we require, is chiefly learned from calling upon him. He who does not see this shows that he has a very insensate conscience. Let us, then, pass over this class of blind persons, and cleave firmly to the statement of Paul’s: God cannot be called upon by any except those who

have learned of his mercy from the gospel [<sup><451014></sup>Romans 10:14], and have surely been persuaded that it has been prepared for them.

Now what sort of prayer will this be? “O Lord, I am in doubt whether thou wilt hear me, but because I am pressed by anxiety, I flee to thee, that, if I am worthy, thou mayest help me.” This is not the way of all the saints whose prayers we read in Scripture. And the Holy Spirit did not so instruct us through the apostle, who enjoins us to “draw near to the heavenly throne... with confidence, that we may receive... grace” [<sup><580416></sup>Hebrews 4:16 p.]; and when he teaches elsewhere that we have boldness and access in confidence through faith in Christ [<sup><490312></sup>Ephesians 3:12]. If we would pray fruitfully, we ought therefore to grasp with both hands this assurance of obtaining what we ask, which the Lord enjoins with his own voice, and all the saints teach by their example. For only that prayer is acceptable to God which is born, if I may so express it, out of such presumption of faith, and is grounded in unshaken assurance of hope. He could have been content with the simple mention of faith, yet he not only added confidence but also fortified it with freedom or boldness, that by this mark he might distinguish from us the unbelievers, who indeed indiscriminately mingle with us in our prayers to God, but by chance. The whole church prays in this way in the psalm: “Let thy mercy be upon us, even as we have hoped in thee” [<sup><193322></sup>Psalm 33:22, Comm.]. Elsewhere the prophet lays down the same condition: “In the day when I call, this I know, that God is with me” [<sup><195609></sup>Psalm 56:9, Comm.]. Likewise: “In the morning I will make ready for thee, and watch.” [<sup><190503></sup>Psalm 5:3, see Comm.] From these words we conclude that prayers are vainly cast upon the air unless hope be added, from which we quietly watch for God as from a watchtower. Paul’s order of exhortation agrees with these: for before he urges believers “to pray at all times in the Spirit” with watchfulness and perseverance [<sup><490618></sup>Ephesians 6:18], he bids them first take up “the shield of faith,... the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” [<sup><490616></sup>Ephesians 6:16-17].

Here let my readers recall what I said before: that faith is not at all overthrown when it is joined with the acknowledgment of our misery, destitution, and uncleanness. <sup>F510</sup> For however much believers may feel pressed down or troubled by a heavy weight of sins, not only bereft of all

things that might obtain favor with God, but laden with many offenses that justly render him terrifying, nevertheless they do not cease to present themselves; and this feeling does not frighten them from betaking themselves to him, since there is no other access to him. For prayer was not ordained that we should be haughtily puffed up before God, or greatly esteem anything of ours, but that, having confessed our guilt, we should deplore our distresses before him, as children unburden their troubles to their parents. Moreover, the boundless mass of our sins should amply furnish us with spurs or goads to arouse us to pray, as the prophet also teaches us by his example: “Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee [<sup><194104></sup>Psalm 41:4]. I, indeed, confess that in these darts there would be deadly stings if God did not help us. But according to his incomparable compassion, our most gracious Father has added a timely remedy, by which, calming all perturbation, assuaging cares, casting out fears, he may draw us gently to himself—nay, removing all rough spots, not to mention hindrances, he may pave the way.

### **13. GOD’S COMMAND AND PROMISE AS MOTIVE FOR PRAYER**

First, bidding us pray, by the precept itself he convicts us of impious obstinacy unless we obey. <sup>F511</sup> Nothing could be commanded more precisely than what is stated in the psalm: “Call upon me in the day of tribulation” [<sup><195015></sup>Psalm 50:15; 49:15, Vg.]. But because among the duties of godliness the Scriptures commend none more frequently, I need not dwell longer on this point. “Seek,” says the Master, “and you will receive; knock, and it will be opened unto you.” [<sup><400707></sup>Matthew 7:7.] However, a promise is here also added to the precept, as is necessary; for even though all admit that the precept ought to be obeyed, still the majority would flee from God when he calls if he did not promise to be easily entreated and readily accessible.

When these two things have been established, it is certain that those who try to wriggle out of coming directly to God are not only rebellious and stubborn but are also convicted of unbelief because they distrust the promises. This is all the more noteworthy, since hypocrites on the pretense of humility and modesty haughtily despise God’s precept and discredit as well his kindly invitation—even defraud him of the chief part

of his worship. For having rejected sacrifices in which all holiness then seemed to rest [<sup><195007></sup> Psalm 50:7-13], he declares that to be called upon in the day of need is highest and precious above all else [<sup><195015></sup> Psalm 50:15]. Therefore, when he requires what is his, and spurs us to eager obedience, there are no colors of doubt, however alluring, that can excuse us. So then, all the passages that keep occurring in the Scriptures, in which calling upon God is enjoined upon us, are as so many banners set up before our eyes to inspire us with confidence. It would be rashness itself to burst into God's sight if he himself had not anticipated our coming by calling us. Therefore he opens a way for us in his own words: "I will say to them, 'You are my people'; they will say to me, 'Thou art our God'" [<sup><381309></sup> Zechariah 13:9 p.]. We see how he precedes those who worship him, and would have them follow him, and thus not to fear for the sweetness of the melody that he himself dictates. Especially let that noble title of God come to our minds, relying upon which we shall without trouble overcome all obstacles. "O god... thou who hearest prayer! To thee shall all flesh come." [<sup><196501></sup> Psalm 65:1-2.] For what is more lovely or agreeable than for God to bear this title, which assures us that nothing is more to his nature than to assent to the prayers of suppliants? From this the prophet infers that the door is open not to a few but to all mortals, for he addresses all in these words: "Call upon me in the day of affliction; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me" [<sup><195015></sup> Psalm 50:15]. According to this rule, David claims for himself the promise given him, that he may obtain what he seeks. "Thou,... O God, hast revealed to the ear of thy servant... ; therefore thy servant has found courage to pray." [<sup><100727></sup> 2 Samuel 7:27, cf. Vg.] From this we conclude that he was fearful except in so far as the promise had encouraged him. So elsewhere he arms himself with this general doctrine: "He will do the will of those who fear him" [<sup><19E519></sup> Psalm 145:19; 144:19, Vg.]. Indeed, we may note this in the Psalms: that if the thread of prayer were broken, transition is sometimes made to God's power, sometimes to his goodness, sometimes to the faithfulness of his promises. It might seem that David, by inserting these statements inopportunistically, mutilates his prayers, but believers know by use and experience that ardor burns low unless they supply new fuel. Accordingly, among our prayers, meditation both on God's nature and on his Word is by no means superfluous. And so by David's example, let us

not disdain to insert something that may refresh our languishing spirits with new vigor.

#### **14. MEN SHOULD PRAY CONFIDENTLY, WITHOUT TERROR BUT WITH REVERENTIAL FEAR**

It is strange that by promises of such great sweetness we are affected either so coldly or hardly at all, so that many of us prefer to wander through mazes and, forsaking the fountain of living waters, to dig out for ourselves dry cisterns [<sup><240213></sup>Jeremiah 2:13], rather than to embrace God's generosity, freely given to us. "The name of the Lord is an impregnable citadel," says Solomon; "the righteous man will flee to it and be saved." [<sup><201810></sup>Proverbs 18:10 p.] But Joel, after he has prophesied the frightful ruin that threatens, adds this memorable sentence: "All that call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered" [<sup><290232></sup>Joel 2:32; <sup><451013></sup>Romans 10:13]. This we know actually refers to the course of the gospel [<sup><440221></sup>Acts 2:21]. Scarcely one man in a hundred <sup>F512</sup> is moved to approach God. He himself proclaims through Isaiah: "You will call upon me and I shall hear you. Nay, before you call, I will answer you" [<sup><236524></sup>Isaiah 65:24 p.]. Elsewhere he also vouchsafes this same honor to the whole church in common, as it applies to all the members of Christ. "He has called to me and I shall hearken to him; I am with him in tribulation to rescue him." [<sup><199115></sup>Psalm 91:15.] <sup>F513</sup> Still, it is not my purpose, as I have already said, <sup>F514</sup> to list every passage but to choose certain pre-eminent ones, from which we may taste how gently God attracts us to himself, and with what tight bonds our ungratefulness is bound when, amidst such sharp pricks, our sluggishness still delays. Accordingly, let these words ever resound in our ears: "The Lord is near to all who call upon him, who call upon him in truth" [<sup><19E518></sup>Psalm 145:18; cf. 144:18, Vg.]. It is the same with the words we have quoted from Isaiah and Joel, with which God assures us that he is attentive to our prayers, and is even pleased as by a sacrifice of sweet savor when we "cast our cares upon him" [cf. <sup><600507></sup>1 Peter 5:7; also <sup><195522></sup>Psalm 55:22; 54:23, Vg.]. We receive this singular fruit of God's promises when we frame our prayers without hesitation or trepidation; but, relying upon the word of him whose majesty would otherwise terrify us, we dare call upon him as Father, while he deigns to suggest this sweetest of names to us.

It remains for us, provided with such inducements, to know that we have from this enough evidence that he will hearken to us, inasmuch as our prayers depend upon no merit of ours, but their whole worth and hope of fulfillment are grounded in God's promises, and depend upon them, <sup>F515</sup> so that they need no other support, nor do they look about up and down, hither and thither. We must therefore make up our minds that, even though we do not excel in a holiness like that which is praised in the holy patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, yet because we and they have a common command to pray and a common faith, if we rely upon God's Word, in this we are rightly their fellows. For God, as has been seen above, <sup>F516</sup> declaring that he will be gentle and kind to all, gives to the utterly miserable, hope that they will get what they have sought. Accordingly, we must note the general forms, by which no one from first to last (as people say) is excluded, provided sincerity of heart, dissatisfaction with ourselves, humility, and faith are present in order that our hypocrisy may not profane God's name by calling upon him deceitfully. Our most gracious Father will not cast out those whom he not only urges, but stirs up with every possible means, to come to him. Hence arises David's way of praying, to which I have recently referred: "Behold, Lord, thou hast promised thy servant therefore thy servant has today taken heart and found what he might pray before thee. And now, O Lord God, thou art God, and thy words will be true. Thou hast spoken of these benefits to thy servant. Now begin and do it" [<sup><100727></sup> 2 Samuel 7:27-29, cf. Vg.]. As also elsewhere: "Grant unto thy servant according to thy word." [<sup><19B976></sup> Psalm 119:76 p.] And all the Israelites together, whenever they arm themselves by remembering the covenant, sufficiently assert that since God so enjoins, one is not to pray fearfully. In this they followed the examples of the patriarchs, especially Jacob, who, after he confessed himself to be less than the many mercies he had received at God's hand [<sup><013210></sup> Genesis 32:10], says that he is nevertheless encouraged to ask greater things because God had promised that he would do them [cf. <sup><013212></sup> Genesis 32:12-13].

But whatever pretenses unbelievers present, when they do not flee to God whenever necessity presses, do not seek him, and do not implore his help, they defraud him just as much of his due honor as if they made new gods and idols, since in this way they deny God is the author of every good

thing. On the other hand, nothing is more effective to free the godly from every misgiving than to be fortified with this thought: there is no reason why any delay should hinder them while they obey the commandment of God, who declares that nothing pleases him more than obedience.

Hence what I have previously said is shown again in clearer light: that a dauntless spirit of praying rightly accords with fear, reverence, and solicitude, and it is not absurd if God raises those who lie prostrate. In this way expressions seemingly discordant beautifully agree. Jeremiah and Daniel say that they lay their prayers before God [<sup><244209></sup>Jeremiah 42:9; <sup><270918></sup>Daniel 9:18]. Elsewhere Jeremiah says: “Let our supplication fall before thee that the remnant of thy people may be pitied” [<sup><244202></sup>Jeremiah 42:2 p.]. On the other hand, believers are often said to “lift up prayer.” So speaks Hezekiah, when he asks the prophet to intercede on his behalf [<sup><121904></sup>2 Kings 19:4]. And David longs to have his prayer rise up “as incense” [<sup><19E102></sup>Psalms 141:2]. That is, although, persuaded of God’s fatherly love, they gladly commit themselves to his safekeeping and do not hesitate to implore the assistance that he freely promises, still they are not elated by heedless confidence, as if they had cast away shame, but they so climb upward by the steps of the promises that they still remain supplicants in their self-abasement.

*(God hearkens even to defective prayers, 15-16)*

## 15. HEARKENING TO PERVERTED PRAYER

Here more than one question is raised: for Scripture relates that God has granted fulfillment of certain prayers, despite the fact that they have burst forth from a heart not at all peaceful or composed. For due cause, yet aroused by passionate wrath and vengeance, Jotham had vowed the inhabitants of Shechem to the destruction that later overtook them [<sup><070920></sup>Judges 9:20]; God in allowing the curse seems to approve ill-controlled outbreaks. Such passion also seized Samson, when he said: “Strengthen me, O God, that I may take vengeance on the uncircumcised” [<sup><071628></sup>Judges 16:28 p.]. For even though there was some righteous zeal mixed in, still a burning and hence vicious longing for vengeance was in control. God granted the petition. From this, it seems, we may infer that,

although prayers are not framed to the rule of the Word, they obtain their effect.

I reply that a universal law is not abrogated by individual examples; further, that special impulses have sometimes been imparted to a few men, by which it came about that a different consideration applied to them than to the common folk. For we must note Christ's answer when his disciples heedlessly desired him to emulate the example of Elijah, that they did not know with what sort of spirit they were endowed [<sup><420955></sup>Luke 9:55].

But we must go farther: the prayers that God grants are not always pleasing to him. But in so far as example is concerned, what Scripture teaches is revealed by clear proofs: that he helps the miserable and hearkens to the groans of those who, unjustly afflicted, implore his aid; therefore, that he executes his judgments while complaints of the poor rise up to him, although they are unworthy to receive even a trifle. For how often did he, punishing the cruelty, robberies, violence, lust, and other crimes of the ungodly, silencing their boldness and rage, also overturning their tyrannical power, attest that he helps those wrongly oppressed, who yet beat the air with praying to an unknown god? And one psalm clearly teaches that prayers which do not reach heaven by faith still are not without effect. The psalm lumps together those prayers which, out of natural feeling, necessity wrings from unbelievers just as much as from believers, yet from the outcome it proves that God is gracious toward them [<sup><19A706></sup>Psalm 107:6,13,19]. Is it because he with such gentleness attests the prayers to be acceptable to him? Nay, it is by this circumstance to emphasize or illumine his mercy whenever the prayers of unbelievers are not denied to them; and again to incite his true worshipers to pray the more, when they see that even ungodly wailings sometimes do some good.

Yet there is no reason why believers should turn aside from a law divinely imposed upon them, or should envy unbelievers, as if from having gotten what they wished they had made great gain. We said that in this way God was moved by Ahab's reigned penitence [<sup><112129></sup>1 Kings 21:29]<sup>F517</sup> in order to prove by this evidence how easily entreated he is toward his elect when they come with true conversion to appease him. Therefore, in Psalm 106, he blames the Jews because, having found him receptive to their pleas [<sup><19A608></sup>Psalm 106:8-12], they shortly after reverted to the stubbornness

of their nature [<sup><19A643></sup>Psalm 106:43; cf. <sup><19A613></sup>Psalm 106:13 ff.]. This is also perfectly clear from the history of the Judges: whenever the Israelites wept, even though their tears were false, yet they were rescued from their enemies' hands [cf. <sup><070309></sup>Judges 3:9]. Just as God causes his sun to shine alike upon the good and the evil [<sup><400545></sup>Matthew 5:45], so he does not despise the weeping of those whose cause is just and whose distresses deserve to be relieved. Meanwhile, in listening to the prayers of the evil, he no more grants them salvation than he supplies food to those who despise his goodness.

In the cases of Abraham and Samuel, more difficult questions seem to arise—the one, instructed by no word of God, prayed for the people of Sodom [<sup><011823></sup>Genesis 18:23]; the other prayed for Saul, even against a downright interdiction [<sup><091511></sup>1 Samuel 15:11]. Jeremiah acted similarly when he prayed that the destruction of the city be averted [<sup><243216></sup>Jeremiah 32:16 ff.]. For although they suffered a refusal, it seems hard to judge them as not having faith. But this solution, I trust, will satisfy moderate readers: relying upon the general principles by which God bids us bestow mercy even upon the unworthy, they did not utterly lack faith, although in this particular instance their opinion deceived them. Augustine somewhere wisely states: “How do the saints pray in faith when they seek from God what is against his decree? They pray according to his will, not that hidden and unchangeable will but the will that he inspires in them, that he may hearken to them in another way, as he wisely decides.”<sup>F518</sup> Rightly said. For he so tempers the outcome of events according to his incomprehensible plan that the prayers of the saints, which are a mixture of faith and error, are not nullified. But this ought no more to be held as a valid example for imitation than as excusing the saints themselves; that they exceeded due measure, I do not deny. Therefore, where no certain promise shows itself, we must ask of God conditionally. Here that statement of David is apposite: “Awake... unto the judgment which thou hast commanded” [<sup><190706></sup>Psalm 7:6 p.]. For he shows that he was instructed by a special oracle to seek a temporal benefit.

## 16. OUR PRAYERS CAN OBTAIN AN ANSWER ONLY THROUGH GOD'S FORGIVENESS

This also is worth noting: what I have set forth on the four rules of right praying is not so rigorously required that God will reject those prayers in which he finds neither perfect faith nor repentance, together with a warmth of zeal and petitions rightly conceived.

I have said<sup>F519</sup> that, although prayer is an intimate conversation of the pious with God, yet reverence and moderation must be kept, lest we give loose rein to miscellaneous requests, and lest we crave more than God allows; further, that we should lift up our minds to a pure and chaste veneration of him, lest God's majesty become worthless for us.

No one has ever carried this out with the uprightness that was due; for, not to mention the rank and file, how many complaints of David savor of intemperance! Not that he would either deliberately expostulate with God or clamor against his judgments, but that, fainting with weakness, he finds no other solace better than to cast his own sorrows into the bosom of God. But God tolerates even our stammering and pardons our ignorance whenever something inadvertently escapes us; as indeed without this mercy there would be no freedom to pray. But although David intended to submit completely to God's will, and prayed with no less patience than zeal to obtain his request, yet there come forth—sometimes, rather, boil up—turbulent emotions, quite out of harmony with the first rule that we laid down.

We can especially see from the ending of the Thirty-ninth Psalm with what violent sorrow this holy man is carried away, so that he cannot control himself. "Let me alone," he says, "before I depart, and be no more." [<sup><193913></sup>Psalm 39:13, Comm.] One might say that this desperate man seeks nothing except to rot in his evils, with God's hand withdrawn. Not that he deliberately rushes into that intemperance, or, as the wicked are wont, wishes to be far from God, but he only complains that God's wrath is unbearable. In those trials also there are often uttered petitions not sufficiently consonant with the rule of God's Word, and in which the saints do not sufficiently weigh what is lawful and expedient. All prayers marred by these defects deserve to be repudiated; nevertheless, provided

the saints bemoan their sins, chastise themselves, and immediately return to themselves, God pardons them.

They likewise sin with regard to the second rule;<sup>F520</sup> for they must repeatedly wrestle with their own coldness, and their need and misery do not sharply enough urge them to pray earnestly. Now it often happens that their minds slip away and well-nigh vanish; accordingly, in this respect there is also need for pardon, lest our languid or mutilated, or interrupted and vague, prayers suffer a refusal. God has planted in men's minds by nature the principle that their prayers are lawful only when their minds are uplifted. Hence the rite of lifting up the hands, to which we have previously referred<sup>F521</sup>—one common to all ages and peoples, and still in force. But how rarely is there one who, in raising up his hands, is not aware of his own apathy, since his heart stays on the ground?

With regard to seeking forgiveness of sins, although no believers neglect this topic, yet those truly versed in prayers know that they do not offer the tenth part of that sacrifice of which David speaks: "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" [<sup><195117></sup> Psalm 51:17, cf. Vg. and Comm.].

Accordingly, men should always seek a twofold pardon because they are aware of many offenses, the feeling of which still does not so touch them that they are as much displeased with themselves as they ought to be, but also because, in so far as it has been granted them to benefit by repentance and fear of God, stricken down with a just sorrow on account of their offenses, they pray that the wrath of the judge be averted.

Most of all it is weakness or imperfection of faith that vitiates believers' prayers, unless God's mercy succor them; but no wonder God pardons this defect, since he often tests his own with sharp trials, as if he deliberately willed to snuff out their faith. Hardest of all is this trial, where believers are compelled to cry out, "How long wilt thou be angry with the prayer of thy servant?" [<sup><198004></sup> Psalm 80:4: cf. 79:5, Vg.], as if prayers themselves annoyed God. So when Jeremiah says, "God has shut out my prayer" [<sup><250308></sup> Lamentations 3:8], there is no doubt that he was stricken with violent perturbation. Innumerable examples of this kind occur in Scripture, from which it is clear the faith of the saints was often so mixed and troubled with doubts that in believing and hoping they yet betrayed

some want of faith. But because they do not reach the goal desired, they ought the more to endeavor to correct their faults, and each day come nearer to the perfect rule of prayer. Meanwhile they should feel too the depths of evil in which those have been plunged who bring new diseases upon themselves in their very remedies, seeing that there is no prayer which in justice God would not loathe if he did not overlook the spots with which all are sprinkled. I do not recount these matters in order that believers may confidently pardon themselves for anything but that by severely chastising themselves they may strive to overcome these obstacles; and although Satan tries to block all paths to prevent them from praying, they should nonetheless break through, surely persuaded that, although not freed of all hindrances, their efforts still please God and their petitions are approved, provided they endeavor and strive toward a goal not immediately attainable.

*(The intercession of Christ, 17-20)*

## 17. PRAYER IN THE NAME OF JESUS

Since no man is worthy to present himself to God and come into his sight, the Heavenly Father himself, to free us at once from shame and fear, which might well have thrown our hearts into despair, has given us his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, to be our advocate [<sup><620201></sup> 1 John 2:1] and mediator with him [<sup><540205></sup> 1 Timothy 2:5; cf. <sup><580806></sup> Hebrews 8:6 and 9:15], by whose guidance we may confidently come to him, and with such an intercessor, trusting nothing we ask in his name will be denied us, as nothing can be denied to him by the Father. And to this must be referred all that we previously taught about faith. For just as the promise commends Christ the Mediator to us, so, unless the hope of obtaining our requests depends upon him, it cuts itself off from the benefit of prayer.

For as soon as God's dread majesty <sup>F522</sup> comes to mind, we cannot but tremble and be driven far away by the recognition of our own unworthiness, until Christ comes forward as intermediary, to change the throne of dreadful glory into the throne of grace. As the apostle also teaches how awe should dare with all confidence to appear, to receive mercy, and to find grace in timely help [<sup><580416></sup> Hebrews 4:16]. And as a rule has been established to call upon God, and a promise given that those

who call upon him shall be heard, so too we are particularly bidden to call upon him in Christ's name; and we have the promise made that we shall obtain what we have asked in his name. "Hitherto," he says, "you have asked nothing in my name; ask and you will receive." [<sup><431624></sup> John 16:24, Comm.] "In that day you will ask in my name" [<sup><431626></sup> John 16:26, Vg.], and "whatever you ask... I will do it that the Father may be glorified in the Son" [<sup><431413></sup> John 14:13, cf. Comm. and Vg.].

Hence it is incontrovertibly clear that those who call upon God in another name than that of Christ obstinately flout his commands and count his will as nought—indeed, have no promise of obtaining anything. Indeed, as Paul says, "all God's promises find their yea and amen in him" [<sup><470120></sup> 2 Corinthians 1:20]. That is, they are confirmed and fulfilled.

## 18. THE RISEN CHRIST AS OUR INTERCESSOR

And we ought carefully to note the circumstance of the time when Christ enjoins his disciples to take refuge in his intercession, after he shall have ascended into heaven. "In that hour," he says, "you will ask in my name." [<sup><431626></sup> John 16:26.]

It is certain that, from the beginning, those who prayed were not heard save by the Mediator's grace. For this reason, God had taught in the law that the priest alone entering the sanctuary should bear the names of the tribes of Israel upon his shoulders and the same number of precious stones on his breastplate [<sup><022809></sup> Exodus 28:9-21], but the people should stand afar off in the court, and there join their petitions with the priest. Nay, the sacrifice even had value in ratifying and strengthening the prayers. Therefore, that foreshadowing <sup>F523</sup> ceremony of the law taught us that we are all barred from God's presence, and consequently need a Mediator, who should appear in our name and bear us upon his shoulders and hold us bound upon his breast so that we are heard in his person; <sup>F524</sup> further, that our prayers are cleansed by sprinkled blood—prayers that, as has been stated, are otherwise never free of uncleanness. And we see that the saints, when they desired to obtain something, based their hope on sacrifices, for they knew them to be the sanctions of all petitions. "May he remember your offering," says David, "and make your burnt sacrifice fat!" [<sup><192003></sup> Psalm 20:3 p., cf. Comm.] Hence we infer that God was from

the beginning appeased by Christ's intercession, so that he received the petitions of the godly.

Why, then, does Christ assign a new hour wherein his disciples shall begin to pray in his name unless it is that this grace, as it is more resplendent today, so deserves more approval among us? And he had said a little before in the same sense: "Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask" [<sup><431624></sup> John 16:24]. Not that they understand absolutely nothing about the office of Mediator, since all the Jews were steeped in these rudiments, but because they did not yet clearly understand that Christ by his very ascension into heaven would be a surer advocate of the church than he had been before. Therefore, to console their grief at his absence with some uncommon benefit, he takes upon himself the office of advocate, and teaches that they had hitherto lacked the peculiar blessing that will be given them to enjoy when, relying upon his protection, they more freely call upon God. Thus the apostle says that the new way is consecrated by his blood [<sup><581020></sup> Hebrews 10:20]. The less excusable is our frowardness unless we embrace with both arms, as the saying is, this truly inestimable benefit, which is destined for us alone.

## **19. CHRIST IS THE ONLY MEDIATOR, EVEN FOR THE MUTUAL INTERCESSION OF BELIEVERS**

Now, since he is the only way, and the one access, by which it is granted us to come to God [cf. <sup><431406></sup> John 14:6], to those who turn aside from this way and forsake this access, no way and no access to God remain; nothing is left in his throne but wrath, judgment, and terror. Moreover, since the Father has sealed him [cf. <sup><430627></sup> John 6:27] as our Head [<sup><400206></sup> Matthew 2:6] and Leader [<sup><461103></sup> 1 Corinthians 11:3; <sup><490122></sup> Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; <sup><510118></sup> Colossians 1:18], those who in any way turn aside or incline away from him are trying their level best to destroy and disfigure the mark imprinted by God. Thus Christ is constituted the only Mediator, by whose intercession the Father is for us rendered gracious and easily entreated.

Meanwhile, notwithstanding, the saints still retain their intercessions, whereby they commend one another's salvation to God. The apostle mentions these [<sup><540201></sup> 1 Timothy 2:1], but all depend solely upon

Christ's intercession, so far are they from detracting from his in any way. For as they gush forth from the emotion of love, in which we willingly and freely embrace one another as members of one body, so also are they related to the unity of the Head. When, therefore, those intercessions are also made in Christ's name, what else do they attest but that no one can be helped by any prayers at all save when Christ intercedes? Christ does not by his intercession hinder us from pleading for one another by prayers in the church. So, then, let it remain an established principle that we should direct all intercessions of the whole church to that sole intercession, and indeed, especially for this reason should we beware of ungratefulness, because God, pardoning our unworthiness, not only allows individuals to pray for themselves but also permits men to plead for one another. For when God has appointed advocates of his church who deserve to be duly rejected if each one prays exclusively for himself, what sheer presumption is it to abuse this generosity so as to dim Christ's honor?

## 20. CHRIST IS THE ETERNAL AND ABIDING MEDIATOR

This babbling of the Sophists is mere nonsense: that Christ is the Mediator of redemption, but believers are mediators of intercession. <sup>F525</sup> As if Christ had performed a mediation in time only to lay upon his servants the eternal and undying mediation! They who cut off so slight a portion of honor from him are, of course, treating him gently! Yet Scripture speaks far differently, disregarding these deceivers, and with a simplicity that ought to satisfy a godly man. For when John says, "If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Christ Jesus" [<sup><620201></sup> 1 John 2:1], does he mean that Christ was an advocate for us once for all, or does he not rather ascribe to him a constant intercession? Why does Paul affirm that he "sits at the right hand of the Father and also intercedes for us" [<sup><450834></sup> Romans 8:34 p.]? But when, in another passage, Paul calls him "the sole mediator between God and man" [<sup><540205></sup> 1 Timothy 2:5], is he not referring to prayers, which were mentioned shortly before [<sup><540201></sup> 1 Timothy 2:1-2]? For, after previously saying that intercession is to be made for all men, Paul, to prove this statement, soon adds that "there is one God, and... one mediator" [<sup><540205></sup> 1 Timothy 2:5].

Augustine similarly explains it when he says: "Christian men mutually commend one another by their prayers. However, it is he for whom no one

intercedes, while he intercedes for all, who is the one true Mediator.” The apostle Paul, although an eminent member under the Head, yet because he was a member of Christ’s body, and knew that the greatest and truest priest of the church had not figuratively entered the inner precincts of the veil to the Holy of Holies but through express and steadfast truth had entered the inner precincts of heaven to a holiness real and eternal, also commends himself to the prayers of believers [<sup><451530></sup>Romans 15:30; <sup><490619></sup>Ephesians 6:19; <sup><510403></sup>Colossians 4:3]. And he does not make himself mediator between the people and God, but he asks that all members of Christ’s body mutually pray for one another, “since the members are concerned for one another, and if one member suffers, the rest suffer with it” [<sup><461225></sup>1 Corinthians 12:25-26, Cf. Vg.]. And thus the mutual prayers for one another of all members yet laboring on earth rise to the Head, who has gone before them into heaven, in whom “is propitiation for our sins” [<sup><620202></sup>1 John 2:2, Vg.]. For if Paul were mediator, so also would the rest of the apostles be; and if there were many mediators, Paul’s own statement would not stand, in which he had said: “One God, one mediator between God and men, the man Christ” [I Tim. 2:5], “in whom we also are one” [<sup><451205></sup>Romans 12:5], “if we maintain unity of faith in the bond of peace” [<sup><490403></sup>Ephesians 4:3]. Likewise, in another passage Augustine says: “But if you seek a priest, he is above the heavens, where he is making intercession for you, who died for you on earth.” [Cf. <sup><580726></sup>Hebrews 7:26 ff.] <sup>F526</sup>

But we do not imagine that he, kneeling before God, pleads as a suppliant for us; rather, with the apostle we understand he so appears before God’s presence that the power of his death avails as an everlasting intercession in our behalf [cf. <sup><450834></sup>Romans 8:34], yet in such a way that, having entered the heavenly sanctuary, even to the consummation of the ages [cf. <sup><580924></sup>Hebrews 9:24 ff.], he alone bears to God the petitions of the people, who stay far off in the outer court.

*(Rejection of erroneous doctrines of the intercession of saints, 21-27)***21. ONE WHO TAKES REFUGE IN THE INTERCESSION OF SAINTS ROBS CHRIST OF THE HONOR OF MEDIATION**

Regarding the saints who, having died in the flesh, live in Christ, if we attribute any prayer to them, let us not even dream that they have any other way to petition God than through Christ, who alone is the way [<sup><431406></sup>John 14:6], or that their prayers are accepted by God in any other name. Now Scripture recalls us from all to Christ alone, and our Heavenly Father wills that all things be gathered together in him [<sup><510120></sup>Colossians 1:20; <sup><490110></sup>Ephesians 1:10]. Therefore, it was the height of stupidity, not to say madness, to be so intention gaining access through the saints as to be led away from him, apart from whom no entry lies open to them.

But who will deny that this was commonly done in some periods, and is done even today wherever popery flourishes? To obtain God's benevolence they repeatedly thrust forward the merits of the saints, and for the most part overlooking Christ, entreat God in their names. Is this not, I ask you, to transfer to the saints that office of sole intercession which, as we affirmed above, belongs to Christ?

Then who, whether angel or demon, ever revealed to any man even a syllable of the kind of saints' intercession they invent? For there is nothing about it in Scripture. What reason, then, did they have to invent it? Surely, when human wit is always seeking after assistance for which we have no support in God's Word, it clearly reveals its own faithlessness. But if we appeal to the consciences of all those who delight in the intercession of the saints, we shall find that this arises solely from the fact that they are burdened by anxiety, just as if Christ were insufficient or too severe. First, by this perplexity they dishonor Christ and strip him of the title of sole Mediator, which, as it has been given to him by the Father as a unique privilege, ought not to be transferred to another. Also, by this very thing they obscure the glory of his birth, and make void the cross; in fine, they strip and deprive of its praise all that he has done or suffered! For all these things lead to the conclusion that he alone is, and is to be deemed, the Mediator. At the same time they cast out the kindness of God, who manifests himself to them as the Father. For he

is not Father to them unless they recognize Christ to be their brother. <sup>F527</sup> This they plainly deny unless they reflect that he has brotherly affection toward themselves, than which nothing can be gentler or more tender. Therefore Scripture offers him alone to us, sends us to him, and establishes us in him. “He,” says Ambrose, “is our mouth, through which we speak to the Father; he is our eye, through which we see the Father; he is our right hand, through which we offer ourselves to the Father. Unless he intercedes, there is no intercourse with God either for us or for all saints.” <sup>F528</sup> If they object that the public prayers they offer in churches conclude with the appended phrase “through Christ our Lord,” this is a trivial evasion. <sup>F529</sup> For Christ’s intercession is no less profaned when mingled with prayers and merits of the dead than if it were completely omitted and dead men alone were mentioned. Then, in all their litanies, hymns, and proses, <sup>F530</sup> where they leave no honor unapplied to dead saints, Christ goes unmentioned.

## 22. VENERATION OF SAINTS

But stupidity has progressed to the point that we have here a manifest disposition to superstition, which, once it has cast off the bridle, never ceases to play the wanton. For after men began to concern themselves with the intercession of saints, gradually they attributed to each a particular function, so that for a diversity of business sometimes one intercessor would be called upon, sometimes another. Then each man adopted a particular saint as a tutelary deity, in whose keeping he put his trust, Not only were gods set up according to the number of cities, something for which the prophet long ago upbraided Israel [<sup><240228></sup> Jeremiah 2:28; 11:13], but even according to the population.

But, since the saints relate all their desires to the will of God alone, contemplate it, and abide in it, he who attributes to them any other prayer than that by which they pray for the coming of God’s Kingdom is thinking of them stupidly and carnally and even contemptuously. Very far indeed from this is what they invent for the saints: that each one in his private affection is partial to his own worshipers. <sup>F531</sup>

And finally, there are very many who do not refrain from the horrid sacrilege of calling upon the saints now not as helpers but as determiners

of their salvation. Here is where wretched men fall, when they stray from their lawful position, that is, the Word of God.

I pass over the grosser portents of ungodliness, which—although they are detestable to God, angels, and men—still do not cause these men to feel shame or disgust. Prostrate before a statue or picture of Barbara, Catherine, and such saints, they mutter, “Our Father.” So far are the pastors from concerning themselves with curing or restraining this madness that, attracted by the odor of gain, they approve and applaud it, But while they turn aside blame from themselves for so foul a transgression, yet under what pretext will they defend calling upon Eligius or Medard <sup>F532</sup> to look down from heaven upon and help their servants, or the holy virgin to bid her Son do what they request? It was forbidden in the ancient Council of Carthage to direct prayers at the altar to saints; <sup>F533</sup> and it is likely that, while the holy men there could not entirely silence the force of wicked custom, they at least imposed moderation so that public prayers might not be vitiated by this form: “Saint Peter, pray for us.” How much farther has this devilish insolence spread when men do not hesitate to transfer to the dead what properly belonged to God and Christ?

### **23. CONFUSED INTERPRETATIONS OF SCRIPTURE USED TO SUPPORT INTERCESSION OF SAINTS**

Now those who maintain that this sort of intercession is based upon Scriptural authority labor in vain on this point.

One often reads, they say, of angels’ prayers—and not only that, but one speaks of believers’ prayers borne up to God’s presence through their hands. <sup>F534</sup> But if they want to compare with angels saints departed from the present life, they must prove they are ministering spirits to whom is appointed the task of looking after our salvation [<sup><580114></sup>Hebrews 1:14], to whom was assigned the task of guarding us in all our ways [<sup><199111></sup>Psalm 91:11], “who surround us” [<sup><193407></sup>Psalm 34:7], who warn us and cheer us, who stand watch for us. All these tasks are assigned to angels but not to saints. How preposterously they confuse dead saints with angels is amply clear from the very diverse functions whereby Scripture distinguishes one from the other. No one will dare perform the office of an advocate before an earthly judge unless admitted to the bar. Whence,

therefore, have worms such great license as to force upon God pleaders to whom we do not find the office assigned in Scripture? God willed to appoint the angels to care for our salvation. Consequently, they attend sacred assemblies, and the church is for them a theater in which they marvel at the varied and manifold wisdom of God [<sup><490310></sup>Ephesians 3:10]. Those who transfer to others what is peculiar to the angels assuredly confound and pervert the order laid down by God, which ought to have been inviolable.

They proceed with the same nimbleness in quoting other testimonies. God said to Jeremiah: “Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people.” [<sup><241501></sup>Jeremiah 15:1.] How would he thus speak of the dead, they ask, if he did not know that they intercede for the living? <sup>F535</sup> I infer, on the contrary, that since, as appears from this, neither Moses nor Samuel interceded for the Israelites, then it follows directly that there was no intercession by the dead. For who of the saints should be believed to be working for the salvation of the people when Moses ceased, who while he lived surpassed all others in this task by a wide margin? If, therefore, they pursue these trifling subtleties—namely, that the dead do intercede for the living, since the Lord says, “If they interceded” [cf. Jeremiah 15:1, cf. VG 1560]—then I shall argue far more plausibly in this way: In the extreme need of the people Moses was not interceding, since it was said of him, “If he interceded.” Therefore, it is likely that no one else intercedes, since all are far beneath Moses in gentleness, goodness, and fatherly concern. Obviously, by their scoffing these men get to the point of wounding themselves with the very weapons wherewith they thought themselves handsomely accoutered.

But it is absurd so to twist a simple statement, for the Lord is only declaring that he will not spare the offenses of the people, even though some Moses or Samuel happened to be their advocate, to whose prayers he had shown himself so well disposed. From a similar passage in Ezekiel this very clear meaning is derived: “Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job,” says the Lord, “were in the city,” they would not deliver their sons and daughters by their righteousness, “but they would deliver only their own lives” [<sup><261414></sup>Ezekiel 14:14 p.]. Here there is no doubt that he meant, “if two of them happened to come alive again,” for the third then survived—that is, Daniel—who, as is well established, when in the flower

of youth had furnished an incomparable proof of godliness.<sup>F536</sup> Let us, then, pass over those whom Scripture clearly shows to have fulfilled their course. For this reason, Paul, when he speaks of David, does not teach that he aided his posterity by prayers but only that he served his own generation [<sup><441336></sup> Acts 13:36].

## 24. THE DEPARTED SAINTS NOT ENGAGED IN EARTHLY CARES

Again they object: “Shall we then deprive them of every desire for godliness who breathed nothing but godliness and mercy their whole life long?”<sup>F537</sup> Certainly, as I have no desire to examine too curiously what they were doing or contemplating, so it is by no means likely that they are borne about hither and thither by various and particular desires but rather that they yearn for God’s Kingdom with a set and immovable will; and this consists no less in the destruction of the wicked than in the salvation of believers. But if this is true, no doubt their love is also contained within the communion of the body of Christ, and is not open wider than the nature of that communion allows. Now even though I grant they pray for us in this way, still they do not abandon their own repose so as to be drawn into earthly cares; and much less must we on this account be always calling upon them!

And it does not follow that this is to be done because men who live on earth can commend one another in their prayers [cf. <sup><540201></sup> 1 Timothy 2:1-2; <sup><590515></sup> James 5:15-16]. For this activity serves to foster love among them, while they, as it were, share one another’s needs and bear their burdens mutually, band this, indeed, they do because of the Lord’s precepts, and are not destitute of his promise—two things that always hold the chief place in prayer. All reasons of this sort are lacking in the case of the dead; when the Lord withdrew them from our company, he left us no contact with them [<sup><210905></sup> Ecclesiastes 9:5-6], and as far as we can conjecture, not even left them any with us.

But if any man contend that, since they have been bound with us in one faith, it is impossible for them to cease to keep the same love toward us, who, then, has disclosed that they have ears long enough to reach our voices, or that they have eyes so keen as to watch over our needs? Our

adversaries, indeed, babble in their own shadows something or other about the radiance of God's face shining upon the saints, in which, as in a mirror, they may gaze upon the affairs of men from on high.<sup>F538</sup> Yet what is it to affirm this, especially with such boldness as they dare to do, about to wish through a drunken dream of our brain to break into and penetrate God's secret judgments apart from his Word, and to trample upon Scripture? For Scripture often declares that the prudence of our flesh is at enmity with God's wisdom [<sup><450806></sup>Romans 8:6-7, Vg.]. Scripture wholly condemns the vanity of our mind [<sup><490417></sup>Ephesians 4:17]; laying low our whole reason, it bids us look to God's will alone [cf. <sup><051232></sup>Deuteronomy 12:32].

## 25. INVOCATION OF THE NAMES OF THE PATRIARCHS NOT RELEVANT

They most wickedly distort the other testimonies of Scripture that they adopt to defend their falsehood. But Jacob, they say, asks that his name and the name of his fathers Abraham and Isaac be invoked over his posterity [<sup><014816></sup>Genesis 48:16].<sup>F539</sup> First, let us see what this form of invocation is among the Israelites. For they do not call upon their fathers to help them but they entreat God to remember his servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore, their example lends not the least support to those who address the saints themselves. But since these blockheads in their stupidity grasp neither what it is to call upon the name of Jacob nor why they should call upon it, we need not wonder if they childishly falter over even the form itself! This expression occurs more than once in Scripture. For Isaiah says that the women are called by the men's name [<sup><230401></sup>Isaiah 4:1] when they have them as husbands and live under their care and protection. Therefore, calling upon the name of Abraham over the Israelites occurs when they refer the origin of their race to him, and honor him in solemn remembrance as their author and parent. Now Jacob does this not because he is concerned about spreading the renown of his own name but because he knows that the complete blessedness of his posterity consists in the inheritance of the covenant that God had made with him. Because he sees that they will have the highest good of all, he prays that they may be reckoned among his kindred. For that is only transmitting to them the inheritance of the covenant. They in turn, by introducing a

remembrance of this sort into their prayers, do not have recourse to the intercessions of the dead but remind the Lord of his covenant, in which our most merciful Father has promised that he will be favorable and beneficent toward them for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

How little the saints otherwise leaned upon the merits of their fathers is attested by the common voice of the church in the prophet: “For thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us. Thou, O Lord, art our Father, and our Redeemer” [<sup><236316></sup> Isaiah 63:16]. And while, indeed, they so speak, they add at the same time: “Return, O Lord, for the sake of thy servants” [<sup><236317></sup> Isaiah 63:17 p.], yet not thinking about any intercession but paying attention to the benefit of the covenant. But now, since we have the Lord Jesus, in whose hand the everlasting covenant of mercy is not only made but confirmed to us, then whose name should we rather put forward in our prayers?

And since these good teachers hold that the patriarchs were by these words established as intercessors, I should like to know from them why, in so large a throng, Abraham, the father of the church, holds not even the meanest place among them. It is well known from what dregs they derive their advocates. Let them answer me how fitting it is that Abraham, whom God put before all the rest, and whom he raised to the highest degree of honor, should be forsaken and suppressed! Indeed, since it was plain that such usage was unknown to the ancient church, it pleased them, in order to hide its novelty, to be silent concerning the ancient patriarchs, as if diversity of names would excuse a recent and corrupted custom.

But the objection of some, that God is asked “for... David’s sake” to have mercy on the people [cf. <sup><19D210></sup> Psalm 132:10], does not support their error but is rather an especially strong refutation of it. For if we consider what a character David bore, he is separated from the whole assembly of the saints to establish the covenant made in his hand by God. So also is the covenant considered, rather than the man, and under a figure the sole intercession of Christ is declared. For what was peculiar to David, in so far as he was a type of Christ, surely does not apply to others.

## 26. THE SAINTS HAVE PRAYED AS WE OUGHT TO PRAY

But some are obviously influenced by the fact that we often read of the prayers of the saints being heard. <sup>F540</sup> Why? Because they prayed, of course. “In thee they trusted,” says the prophet, “and were saved... they cried... and were not confounded.” [<sup><192204></sup> Psalm 22:4-5; cf. 21:5-6, Vg., slightly modified.] Let us also, therefore, pray after their example that, like them, we may be heard. But our opponents unbecomingly and absurdly reason that only those who were once heard will be heard. How much better does James say it! “Elijah,” he says, “was a man like ourselves, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again and the heavens gave rain, and the earth gave its fruit.” [<sup><590517></sup> James 5:17-18 p.] Why? Does he infer some singular privilege of Elijah with which we should take refuge? Not at all! But he teaches the unending power of godly and pure prayer to exhort us to pray likewise. For with ill will we interpret God’s readiness and good will in hearing prayers unless we are by such proofs confirmed in a greater trust in his promises, in which he declares that he will incline his ear not to one or another, nor to a few, but to all who shall call upon his name.

All the less excusable is this ignorance because they seem, as if deliberately, to despise so many Scriptural warnings. Time and again David was rescued by God’s power. Was this that he might appropriate this power to himself so that we might be rescued at his request? He himself affirms far otherwise: “The righteous shall wait for me, until thou recompense me” [Psalm 142:7; cf. 142:8, Vg. and LXX]. Likewise: “The righteous shall see, and rejoice, and hope on the Lord [<sup><195206></sup> Psalm 52:6; 64:10]. Behold, “this poor man cried to God,” and he “answered him” [<sup><193406></sup> Psalm 34:6]. <sup>F541</sup> There are many prayers of this sort in the Psalms, by which, in this way, he calls upon God to hearken duly to what he asks, that the righteous be not put to shame but, by his example, be encouraged to good hope. Let us now be satisfied with one example: “Therefore every holy one will pray to thee in a seasonable time” [<sup><193206></sup> Psalm 32:6; 31:6, Vg.]. This passage I have the more willingly cited because these wranglers who are not ashamed to lend a hireling tongue to defend the papacy pretend that it proves intercession of the

dead.<sup>F542</sup> As if David meant something other than to show the fruit that will come forth from God's kindness and gentleness when he is heard!

And we ought to note this in general: that the experience of God's grace, both toward us and toward others, is no common aid in confirming faith in his promises. I do not recount the many passages wherein David sets before himself God's benefits as occasion for confidence because they will readily occur to the readers of the Psalms. By his own example, Jacob had previously taught the same thing: "I am unworthy of all thy mercies and of... the truth that thou hast showed unto thy servant. With my staff I passed over this Jordan and now I go forth with two companies" [<sup><013210></sup>Genesis 32:10]. He, indeed, claims the promise but not the promise alone; rather, he adds the effect, that he may more courageously in the future trust that God will be the same toward him. For he is not like mortals, who weary of their own generosity, or whose resources are spent, but is to be esteemed for his own nature, as David wisely does. "Thou hast redeemed me," he says, "O true God." [<sup><193105></sup>Psalm 31:5 p.] After praising God for his salvation, he adds that He is trustworthy. For if he were not forever like himself, from his benefits a sufficiently firm reckoning could not be adduced to trust him and call upon him. But when we know that as often as he helps us he gives us an example and proof of his goodness and good faith toward us, we need not fear lest our hope put us to shame or deceive us.

## **27. CONCLUDING REFUTATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF INTERCESSION OF SAINTS**

Here is the sum total: Scripture, in the worship of God, sets the chief matter before us: how we should call upon him in prayer. Consequently, as he requires of us this duty of piety, holding all sacrifices secondary to it, to direct prayer to others involves manifest sacrilege. Consequently, it is also said in the psalm: "If we have stretched out our hands to a strange god, shall not God search this out?" [<sup><194420></sup>Psalm 44:20-21; 43:21-22, Vg.]. Again, only out of faith is God pleased to be called upon, and he expressly bids that prayers be conformed to the measure of his Word. Finally, faith grounded upon the Word is the mother of right prayer; hence, as soon as it is deflected from the Word, prayer must needs be corrupted. But it has already been shown that<sup>F543</sup> if one takes the whole of

Scripture into account, this honor is there claimed for God alone. What pertains to the office of intercession we also see is peculiar to Christ, <sup>F544</sup> and no prayer is pleasing to God unless this Mediator sanctifies it. Yet even if believers reciprocally offer prayers before God for the brethren, we have shown that this detracts nothing from Christ's unique intercession. <sup>F545</sup> For all together, relying upon this, commend both themselves and others to God. We have, moreover, taught <sup>F546</sup> that it is inappropriately applied to the dead, of whom we nowhere read that they have been bidden to pray for us. Scripture often urges us to do our duty by one another but has not one syllable of the dead. Indeed, James by joining these two exhortations—to confess our sins to one another, and to pray for one another [<sup><590516></sup> James 5:16]—tacitly excludes the dead.

Therefore this one reason is enough to condemn this error: prayer rightly begun springs from faith, and faith, from hearing God's Word [<sup><451014></sup> Romans 10:14,17], where no mention is made of fictitious intercession; for superstition has rashly taken to itself advocates who had not been given by God. For, while Scripture is replete with many forms of prayer, no example is found of this advocacy, without which in the papacy they believe no prayer to exist. Furthermore, it is obvious that this superstition has arisen from lack of faith. For either they were not content with Christ as pleader or they entirely deprived him of this credit. And this latter point is easily proved from their shamelessness, because, in contending that we need the advocacy of the saints, they have no stronger argument than to object that we are unworthy to approach God intimately. <sup>F547</sup> This we admit to be very true indeed, but we conclude from it that those who account Christ's intercession worthless unless George and Hippolytus and such specters come forward <sup>F548</sup> leave nothing for Christ to do.

*(Kinds of prayer: private and public, 28-30)*

## 28. PRIVATE PRAYER

But even though prayer is properly confined to entreaties and supplications, there is such a close connection between petition and thanksgiving that they may conveniently be included under one name. For those kinds which Paul lists fall under the first part of this division [cf.

<540201> 1 Timothy 2:1]. In asking and beseeching, we pour out our desires before God, seeking both those things which make for the extension of his glory and the setting forth of his name, and those benefits which conduce to our own advantage. In giving thanks, we celebrate with due praise his benefits toward us, and credit to his generosity every good that comes to us. David, therefore, has combined these two functions: “Call upon me in the day of need; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me” [<sup><195015></sup> Psalm 50:15]. <sup>F549</sup> Scripture with good reason enjoins us to use both constantly. For as we have stated elsewhere, the weight of our poverty and the facts of experience proclaim that the tribulations which drive and press us from all sides are so many and so great that there is reason enough for us all continually to groan and sigh to God, and to beseech him as suppliants, For even if they be free of adversities, the guilt of their transgressions and the innumerable assaults of temptations ought still to goad even the holiest to seek a remedy. But in the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving there can be no interruption without sin, since God does not cease to heap benefits upon benefits in order to impel us, though slow and lazy, to gratefulness, short, we are well-nigh overwhelmed by so great and so plenteous an outpouring of benefactions, by so many and mighty miracles discerned wherever one looks, that we never lack reason and occasion for praise and thanksgiving.

And to explain these things somewhat more clearly, since, as has already been sufficiently proved, <sup>F550</sup> all our hope and wealth so reside in God that neither we nor our possessions prosper unless we can have his blessing, we ought constantly to commit ourselves and all that we have to him [cf. <sup><590414></sup> James 4:14-15]. Then whatever we determine, speak, do, let us determine, speak, and do under his hand and will—in a word, under the hope of his help. For all are declared accursed by God who, placing confidence in themselves or someone else, conceive and carry out their plans; who undertake or try to begin anything apart from his will, and without calling upon him [cf. <sup><233001></sup> Isaiah 30:1; 31:1]. And since, as we have said several times, <sup>F551</sup> he is honored in the manner due him when he is acknowledged the author of all blessings, it follows that we ought so to receive all those things from his hand as to accompany them with continual thanksgiving; and that there is no just reason for us to make use of his benefits, which flow and come to us from his generosity, with no

other end, if we do not continually utter his praise and render him thanks. For Paul, when he testifies that they “are sanctified by the word... and prayer” [<sup><540405></sup>1 Timothy 4:5], at the same time hints that without the word and prayer they are not at all holy and pure for us. (“Word” he evidently understands, by metonymy, as “faith.”) Accordingly, David, when he has perceived the Lord’s generosity, beautifully declares a “new song” has been put into his mouth [<sup><194003></sup>Psalm 40:3]. By this he naturally hints that if we fail to offer him praise for his blessing, our silence is spiteful, since as often as he blesses us he provides us with occasion to bless him. So Isaiah also, proclaiming God’s singular grace, urges believers to a new and uncommon song [<sup><234210></sup>Isaiah 42:10]. In this sense, David elsewhere speaks: “O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise” [<sup><195115></sup>Psalm 51:15; 50:17, Vg.]. In like manner, Hezekiah and Jonah testify that this will be the outcome of their deliverance: that they may sing the praises of God’s goodness in the Temple [<sup><233820></sup>Isaiah 38:20; <sup><320209></sup>Jonah 2:9]. David prescribes the same rule to all the godly in common. “What shall I render to the Lord,” he says, “for all his bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.” [<sup><19B612></sup>Psalm 116:12-13; cf. Comm. and 115:12-13, Vg.] And the church follows this rule in another psalm: “Make us safe, O our God... that we may confess <sup>F552</sup> thy. . . name, and glory in thy praise” [<sup><19A647></sup>Psalm 106:47; 105:47, Vg.]. Again: He has had regard for the prayer of the solitary, and has not despised their prayers. This will be written for a later generation, and the people created shall praise the Lord... to proclaim his name in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem [<sup><19A217></sup>Psalm 102:17,18 (Comm.), 21; cf. <sup><19A102></sup>Psalm 101:21, Vg. and LXX]. Indeed, whenever believers entreat God to do something for his name’s sake, as they profess themselves unworthy to obtain anything in their own name, so they obligate themselves to give thanks; and they promise that they will rightly use God’s benefit, to be the heralds of it. So Hosea, speaking of the coming redemption of the church: “Take away,” he says, “iniquity, O God, and accept that which is good, and we will render the bullocks of our lips” [<sup><281403></sup>Hosea 14:3, Vg., see Comm.].

Not only do God’s benefits claim for themselves the extolling by the tongue, but also they naturally win love for themselves. “I loved the Lord,” says David, “because he heard the voice of my supplication.”

[<19B601> Psalm 116:1; cf. Comm. and <19B515> Psalm 115:15, Vg.] Also, elsewhere recounting what help he had experienced: “I shall love thee, O God, my strength” [<191801> Psalm 18:1 p.]. But praises that do not flow from this sweetness of love <sup>F553</sup> will never please God. Even more, we must understand Paul’s statement that all entreaties not joined with thanksgiving are wicked and vicious. For he speaks thus: “In all prayer,” he says, “and supplication with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God” [<500406> Philippians 4:6 p.]. For since many by peevishness, boredom, impatience, bitter grief, and fear are impelled to mumble when praying, he bids believers so to temper their emotions that while still waiting to obtain what they desire, they nonetheless cheerfully bless God. But if this connection ought to be in full force in things almost contrary, by a still holier bond God obligates us to sing his praises whenever he causes us to obtain our wishes.

Now even as we have taught that by Christ’s intercession are consecrated our prayers, which would otherwise have been unclean, so the apostle, enjoining us to offer a sacrifice of praise through Christ [<581315> Hebrews 13:15], warns us that our mouths are not clean enough to sing the praises of God’s name until Christ’s priesthood intercedes for us. We infer from this that in the papacy men have been strangely bewitched, since the majority of them wonder why Christ is called “the Advocate.”

The reason why Paul enjoins us both to pray and to give thanks without ceasing [<520517> 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18; Cf. <540201> 1 Timothy 2:1,8] is, of course, that he wishes all men to lift up their desires to God, with all possible constancy, at all times, in all places, and in all affairs and transactions, to expect all things from him, and give him praise for all things, since he offers us unfailing reasons to praise and pray.

## 29. NECESSITY AND DANGER OF PUBLIC PRAYER

This constancy in prayer, even though it has especially to do with one’s own private prayers, still is also concerned somewhat with the public prayers of the church. Yet these can neither be constant nor ought they even to take place otherwise than according to the polity agreed upon by common consent among all. This I grant you. For this reason, certain hours, indifferent to God but necessary for men’s convenience, are agreed

upon and appointed to provide for the accommodation of all, and for everything to be done “decently and in order” in the church, according to Paul’s statement [<sup><461440></sup> 1 Corinthians 14:40]. But this does not preclude each church from being both repeatedly stirred up to more frequent use of prayer and fired by a sharper zeal if it is alerted by some major need. There will be, moreover, toward the end, a place to speak of perseverance, which has close affinity with constancy.<sup>F554</sup>

Now these matters have nothing to do with the vain repetition<sup>F555</sup> that Christ willed to be forbidden to us [<sup><400607></sup> Matthew 6:7]. For Christ does not forbid us to persist in prayers, long, often, or with much feeling, but requires that we should not be confident in our ability to wrest something from God by beating upon his ears with a garrulous flow of talk, as if he could be persuaded as men are. For we know that hypocrites, because they do not reflect that they have to do with God,<sup>F556</sup> make the same pompous show in prayers as they would in a triumph. For that Pharisee who thanked God that he was not like other men [<sup><421811></sup> Luke 18:11] doubtless praised himself in men’s eyes, as if he would from praying latch on to renown for holiness. Hence that vain repetition which for a similar reason is in vogue today in the papacy. While some pass the time in saying over and over the same little prayers, others vaunt themselves before the crowd with a great mass of words. Since this talkativeness childishly mocks God, it is no wonder that it is forbidden by the church in order that nothing shall resound there except what is earnest and comes forth from the depths of the heart.

Near and similar to this corrupt element is another, which Christ condemns at the same time: hypocrites, for the sake of show, pant after many witnesses, and would rather frequent the market place to pray than have their prayers miss the world’s applause [<sup><400605></sup> Matthew 6:5]. Inasmuch as this goal of prayer has already been stated<sup>F557</sup>—namely, that hearts may be aroused and borne to God, whether to praise him or to beseech his help—from this we may understand that the essentials of prayer are set in the mind and heart, or rather that prayer itself is properly an emotion of the heart within,<sup>F558</sup> which is poured out and laid open before God, the searcher of hearts [cf. <sup><450827></sup> Romans 8:27]. Accordingly, as has already been said, the Heavenly Teacher, when he willed to lay down the best rule for prayer, bade us enter into our bedroom and there,

with door closed, pray to our Father in secret, that our Father, who is in secret, may hear us [<sup><400606></sup>Matthew 6:6]. For, when he has drawn us away from the example of hypocrites, who grasped after the favor of men by vain and ostentatious prayers, he at the same time adds something better: that is, to enter into our bedroom and there, with door closed, pray. By these words, as I understand them, he taught us to seek a retreat that would help us to descend into our heart with our whole thought and enter deeply within. He promises that God, whose temples our bodies ought to be, will be near to us in the affections of our hearts [cf. <sup><470616></sup>2 Corinthians 6:16].

For he did not mean to deny that it is fitting to pray in other places, but he shows that prayer is something secret, which is both principally lodged in the heart and requires a tranquillity far from all our teeming cares. The Lord himself also, therefore, with good reason, when he determined to devote himself more intensely to prayers, habitually withdrew to a quiet spot far away from the tumult of men; but he did so to impress us with his example that we must not neglect these helps, whereby our mind, too unsteady by itself, more inclines to earnest application to prayer. In the meantime, as he did not abstain from praying even in the midst of a crowd if the occasion so presented itself, so we should lift up clean hands in all places, where there is need [<sup><540208></sup>1 Timothy 2:8]. <sup>F559</sup> Finally, we must consider that whoever refused to pray in the holy assembly of the godly knows not what it is to pray individually, or in a secret spot, or at home. Again, he who neglects to pray alone and in private, however unremittingly he may frequent public assemblies, there contrives only windy prayers, for he defers more to the opinion of men than to the secret judgment of God.

Moreover, that the common prayers of the church may not be held in contempt, God of old adorned them with shining titles, especially when he called the temple the “house of prayer” [<sup><235607></sup>Isaiah 56:7; <sup><402113></sup>Matthew 21:13]. For he taught by this term that the chief part of his worship lies in the office of prayer, and that the temple was set up like a banner for believers so that they might, with one consent, participate in it. A distinctive promise was also added: “Praise waits for thee, O God, in Zion, and to thee shall the vow be performed” [<sup><196501></sup>Psalm 65:1, Comm.]. By these words the prophet intimates that the prayers of the

church are never ineffectual, for God always furnishes his people occasion for singing with joy. But even though the shadows of the law have ceased, still there is no doubt that the same promise pertains to us, since God was pleased by this ceremony to foster the unity of the faith among us. For not only has Christ sanctioned this promise by his own mouth, but Paul holds it to be universally in force.

### **30. NOT CHURCH BUILDINGS BUT WE OURSELVES ARE TEMPLES OF GOD**

Now as God by his word ordains common prayers for believers, so also ought there to be public temples wherein these may be performed, in which those who spurn fellowship with God's people in prayer have no occasion to give the false excuse that they enter their bedroom to obey the Lord's command. For he, who promises that he will do whatever two or three gathered together in his name may ask [<sup><401819></sup> Matthew 18:19-20], testifies that he does not despise prayers publicly made, provided ostentation and chasing after paltry human glory are banished, and there is present a sincere and true affection that dwells in the secret place of the heart.

If this is the lawful use of church buildings, <sup>F560</sup> as it certainly is, we in turn must guard against either taking them to be God's proper dwelling places, whence he may more nearly incline his ear to us—as they began to be regarded some centuries ago—or feigning for them some secret holiness or other, which would render prayer more sacred before God. For since we ourselves are God's true temples, if we would call upon God in his holy temple, we must pray within ourselves. Now let us leave this stupidity to Jews or pagans, for we have the commandment to call upon the Lord, without distinction of place, “in spirit and in truth” [<sup><430423></sup> John 4:23]. At God's command the Temple had indeed been dedicated of old for offering prayers and sacrificial victims, but at that time the truth lay hidden, figuratively represented under such shadows; now, having been expressed to us in living reality, it does not allow us to cleave to any material temple. And not even to the Jews was the Temple committed on the condition that they might shut up God's presence within its walls but in order that they might be trained to contemplate the likeness of the true temple. Therefore Isaiah and Stephen gravely rebuked those who thought God in

any way dwells in temples made with hands [<sup><236601></sup>Isaiah 66:1; <sup><440748></sup>Acts 7:48-49].

*(The use of singing, and of the spoken language, 31-33)*

### 31. ON SPEAKING AND SINGING IN PRAYER

From this, moreover, it is fully evident that unless voice and song, if interposed in prayer, spring from deep feeling of heart, neither has any value or profit in the least with God.<sup>F561</sup> But they arouse his wrath against us if they come only from the tip of the lips and from the throat, seeing that this is to abuse his most holy name and to hold his majesty in derision. This is what we gather from Isaiah's words, which, although they extend farther, also are concerned with reproofing this fault, "The people," he says, "draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, and they have feared me by the command and teaching of men." [<sup><232913></sup>Isaiah 29:13; cf. <sup><401508></sup>Matthew 15:8-9.] "Therefore, behold, I will... do a great and marvelous miracle among this people; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the prudence of their elders shall vanish." [<sup><232914></sup>Isaiah 29:14 p., cf. Vg.]

Yet we do not here condemn speaking and singing but rather strongly commend them, provided they are associated with the heart's affection. For thus do they exercise the mind in thinking of God and keep it attentive—unstable and variable as it is, and readily relaxed and diverted in different directions, unless it be supported by various helps. Moreover, since the glory of God ought, in a measure, to shine in the several parts of our bodies, it is especially fitting that the tongue has been assigned and destined for this task, both through singing and through speaking. For it was peculiarly created to tell and proclaim the praise of God. But the chief use of the tongue is in public prayers, which are offered in the assembly of believers, by which it comes about that with one common voice, and as it were, with the same mouth, we all glorify God together, worshiping him with one spirit and the same faith. And we do this openly, that all men mutually, each one from his brother, may receive the confession of faith and be invited and prompted by his example.

## 32. CHURCH SINGING

It is evident that the practice of singing in church, to speak also of this in passing, is not only a very ancient one but also was in use among the apostles. This we may infer from Paul's words: "I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind" [<sup><461415></sup> 1 Corinthians 14:15]. Likewise, Paul speaks to the Colossians: "Teaching and admonishing one another... in hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to the Lord." [<sup><510316></sup> Colossians 3:16 p.] For in the first passage he teaches that we should sing with voice and heart; in the second he commends spiritual songs, by which the godly may mutually edify one another. Yet Augustine testifies that this practice was not universal when he states that the church of Milan first began to sing only under Ambrose; the occasion being that when Justina, the mother of Valentinian, was raging against the orthodox faith, the people were more constant in vigils than usual. Then the remaining Western churches followed Milan. For a little before he had said that this custom had come from the Eastern churches. <sup>F562</sup> He also indicates in the second book of his *Retractions* that the practice was taken up in Africa in his day. "A certain Hilary," he says, "an ex-tribune, attacked with malicious reproof, wherever he could, the custom, then just begun at Carthage, of singing hymns from the book of Psalms at the altar, either before the offering or when what had been offered was being distributed to the people. At the bidding of my brethren, I answered him." <sup>F563</sup> And surely, if the singing be tempered to that gravity which is fitting in the sight of God and the angels, it both lends dignity and grace to sacred actions and has the greatest value in kindling our hearts to a true zeal and eagerness to pray. Yet we should be very careful that our ears be not more attentive to the melody than our minds to the spiritual meaning of the words. Augustine also admits in another place that he was so disturbed by this danger that he sometimes wished to see established the custom observed by Athanasius, who ordered the reader to use so little inflection of the voice that he would sound more like a speaker than a singer. But when he recalled how much benefit singing had brought him, he inclined to the other side. <sup>F564</sup> Therefore, when this moderation is maintained, it is without any doubt a most holy and salutary practice. On the other hand, such songs as have been composed only for sweetness and

delight of the ear are unbecoming to the majesty of the church and cannot but displease God in the highest degree.

### 33. PRAYER SHOULD BE IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE PEOPLE

From this also it plainly appears that public prayers must be couched not in Greek among the Latins, nor in Latin among the French or English, as has heretofore been the custom, but in the language of the people, which can be generally understood by the whole assembly. For this ought to be done for the edification of the whole church, which receives no benefit whatever from a sound not understood. Those who have no regard for either love or kindness ought at least to have been moved a little by the authority of Paul, whose words are perfectly clear. “If you bless with the spirit,” he says, “how can he who occupies the place of the unlearned respond to your blessing with ‘Amen,’ since he is ignorant of what you are saying? For you indeed give thanks, but the other is not edified.” [<sup><461416></sup> 1 Corinthians 14:16-17 p.] Who can marvel enough, then, at the unbridled license of the papists, who, after the apostle thus openly decries it, are not afraid to make their wordy prayers resound in a foreign language, of which they themselves often understand not one syllable, and do not wish others to understand either?

But for us Paul prescribes otherwise what is to be done. “What am I to do?” he says. “I will pray with the spirit, I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.” [<sup><460415></sup> 1 Corinthians 4:15.] By the word “spirit” he means the singular gift of tongues, which some, though endowed therewith, abused, since they cut it off from the mind, that is, the understanding<sup>F565</sup> however, we must unquestionably feel that, either in public prayer or in private, the tongue without the mind must be highly displeasing to God. Besides, the mind ought to be kindled with an ardor of thought so as far to surpass all that the tongue can express by speaking.

Lastly, we should hold that the tongue is not even necessary for private prayer, except in so far as either the inner feeling has insufficient power to arouse itself or as it is so vehemently aroused that it carries with it the action of the tongue. For even though the best prayers are sometimes unspoken, it often happens in practice that, when feelings of mind are

aroused, unostentatiously the tongue breaks forth into speech, and the other members into gesture. From this obviously arose that uncertain murmur of Hannah's [<sup><090113></sup> 1 Samuel 1:13], something similar to which all the saints continually experience when they burst forth into broken and fragmentary speech.

As for the bodily gestures customarily observed in praying, such as kneeling and uncovering the head, they are exercises whereby we try to rise to a greater reverence for God.

*(The Lord's Prayer: exposition of the first three petitions, 34-42)*

### **34. THE LORD'S PRAYER AS NECESSARY HELP FOR US**

Now we must learn not only a more certain way of praying but also the form itself: namely, that which the Heavenly Father has taught us through his beloved Son [<sup><400609></sup> Matthew 6:9 ff.; <sup><421102></sup> Luke 11:2 ff.], in which we may acknowledge his boundless goodness and clemency. For he warns us and urges us to seek him in our every need, as children are wont to take refuge in the protection of the parents whenever they are troubled with any anxiety. Besides this, since he saw that we did not even sufficiently perceive how straitened our poverty was, what it was fair to request, and what was profitable for us, he also provided for this ignorance of ours; and what had been lacking to our capacity he himself supplied and made sufficient from his own. For he prescribed a form for us in which he set forth as in a table all that he allows us to seek of him, all that is of benefit to us, all that we need ask. From this kindness of his we receive great fruit of consolation: that we know we are requesting nothing absurd, nothing strange or unseemly—in short, nothing unacceptable to him—since we are asking almost in his own words, Plato, on seeing men's want of skill in making requests to God, which, if granted, would often have been disadvantageous to them, declares this, taken from an ancient poet, to be the best prayer: "King Jupiter, bestow the best things upon us whether we wish for them or not, but command that evil things be far from us even when we request them." <sup>F566</sup> And, indeed, the heathen man is wise in that he judges how dangerous it is to seek from the Lord what our greed dictates; at the same time he discloses our unhappiness, in that we cannot even open our mouths before God without danger unless the Spirit

instructs us in the right pattern for prayer [<sup><450816></sup>Romans 8:16]. This privilege deserves to be more highly esteemed among us, since the only-begotten Son of God supplies words to our lips that free our minds from all wavering.

### 35. DIVISION AND MAIN CONTENT

This form or rule of prayer consists of six petitions. The reason why I do not agree with those who distinguish seven headings <sup>F567</sup> is that by inserting the adversative “but” the Evangelist seems to have meant to join those two members together. It is as if he had said: “Do not allow us to be oppressed by temptation but rather bring help for our weakness, and deliver us from falling.” Ancient writers of the church also agree with us, <sup>F568</sup> so that what has been added in seventh place in Matthew exegetically ought to be referred to the sixth petition.

But even though the whole prayer is such that throughout it God’s glory is to be given chief place, still the first three petitions have been particularly assigned to God’s glory, and this alone we ought to look to in them, without consideration of what is called our own advantage. The three others are concerned with the care of ourselves, and are especially assigned to those things which we should ask for our own benefit. So, when we ask that God’s name be hallowed, because God wills to test us whether we love and worship him freely or for hope of reward, we must then have no consideration for our own benefit but must set before ourselves his glory, to gaze with eyes intent upon this one thing. And in the remaining petitions of this sort, it is meet to be affected in precisely the same way.

And, indeed, this yields a great benefit to us, because when his name is hallowed as we ask, our own hallowing in turn also comes about. But our eyes ought, as it were, to be closed and in a sense blinded to this sort of advantage, so that they have no regard for it at all, and so that, if all hope of our own private good were cut off, still we should not cease to desire and entreat this hallowing and the other things that pertain to God’s glory. In the examples of Moses and Paul, we see that it was not grievous for them to turn their minds and eyes away from themselves and to long for their own destruction with fierce and burning zeal in order that, despite

their own loss, they might advance God's glory and Kingdom [<sup><023232></sup>Exodus 32:32; <sup><450903></sup>Romans 9:3]. On the other hand, when we ask to be given our daily bread, even though we desire what is to our benefit, here also we ought especially to seek God's glory so as not to ask it unless it redound to his glory. <sup>F569</sup> Now let us turn to the interpretation of the prayer.

*(“Our Father, who art in heaven”)*

### 36. “OUR FATHER”

First, at the very threshold we meet what I previously mentioned: <sup>F570</sup> we ought to offer all prayer to God only in Christ's name, as it cannot be agreeable to him in any other name. For in calling God “Father,” we put forward the name “Christ.” With what confidence would anyone address God as “Father”? Who would break forth into such rashness as to claim for himself the honor of a son of God unless we had been adopted as children of grace in Christ? He, while he is the true Son, has of himself been given us as a brother <sup>F571</sup> that what he has of his own by nature may become ours by benefit of adoption if we embrace this great blessing with sure faith. Accordingly, John says that power has been given to those who believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God, that they too may become children of God [<sup><430112></sup>John 1:12].

Therefore God both calls himself our Father and would have us so address him. By the great sweetness of this name he frees us from all distrust, since no greater feeling of love can be found elsewhere than in the Father. Therefore he could not attest his own boundless love toward us with any surer proof than the fact that we are called “children of God” [<sup><620301></sup>1 John 3:1]. But just as he surpasses all men in goodness and mercy, so is his love greater and more excellent than all our parents' love. Hence, though all earthly fathers should divest themselves of all feeling of fatherhood and forsake their children, he will never fail us [cf. <sup><192710></sup>Psalms 27:10; <sup><236316></sup>Isaiah 63:16], since he cannot deny himself [<sup><550213></sup>2 Timothy 2:13]. For we have his promise: “If you, although you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven” [<sup><400711></sup>Matthew 7:11 p.].? Similarly, in the prophet: “Can a woman forget her... children?... Even if she forgets,

yet I shall not forget you.” [<sup><234915></sup>Isaiah 49:15 p.] But a son cannot give himself over to the safekeeping of a stranger and an alien without at the same time complaining either of his father’s cruelty or want. Thus, if we are his sons, we cannot seek help anywhere else than from him without reproaching him for poverty, or want of means, or cruelty and excessive rigor.

### **37. “OUR FATHER”: A FORM OF ADDRESS THAT SHOULD ENCOURAGE US**

And let us not pretend that we are justly rendered timid by the consciousness of sins, since sins daily make our Father, although kind and gentle, displeased with us. For if among men, a son can have no better advocate to plead his cause before his father, can have no better intermediary to conciliate and recover his lost favor, than if he himself, suppliant and humble, acknowledging his guilt, implores his father’s mercy—for then his father’s heart cannot pretend to be moved by such entrearies—what will he do who is the Father of mercies and God of all comfort [cf. <sup><470103></sup>2 Corinthians 1:3]? Will he not rather heed the tears and groans of his children entreating for themselves, since he particularly invites and exhorts us to this, than any pleas of others, to whose help they in terror have recourse, not without some signs of despair, since they are distrustful of their Father’s compassion and kindness? He depicts and represents for us in a parable [<sup><421511></sup>Luke 15:11-32] this abundance of fatherly compassion: a son had estranged himself from his father, had dissolutely wasted his substance [verse 13], had grievously offended against him in every way [verse 18]; but the father embraces him with open arms, and does not wait for him to ask for pardon but anticipates him, recognizes him returning afar off, willingly runs to meet him [verse 20], comforts him, receives him into favor [verses 22-24]. For in setting forth this example of great compassion to be seen in man, he willed to teach us how much more abundantly we ought to expect it of him. For he is not only a father but by far the best and kindest of all fathers, provided we still cast ourselves upon his mercy, although we are ungrateful, rebellious, and froward children. And to strengthen our assurance that he is this sort of father to us if we are Christians, he willed that we call him not only “Father” but explicitly “our Father.” It is as if we addressed him: “O

Father, who dost abound with great devotion toward thy children, and with great readiness to forgive, we thy children call upon thee and make our prayer, assured and clearly persuaded that thou bearest toward us only the affection of a father, although we are unworthy of such a father.”

But because the narrowness of our hearts cannot comprehend God’s boundless favor, not only is Christ the pledge and guarantee of our adoption, but he gives the Spirit as witness to us of the same adoption, through whom with free and full voice we may cry, “Abba, Father” [<sup><480406></sup> Galatians 4:6; <sup><450815></sup> Romans 8:15]. Therefore, whenever any hesitation shall hinder us, let us remember to ask him to correct our fearfulness, and to set before us that Spirit that he may guide us to pray boldly.

### **38. “OUR FATHER”: A FORM OF ADDRESS THAT SETS US IN THE FELLOWSHIP WITH THE BRETHREN**

However, we are not so instructed that each one of us should individually call him *his Father*, but rather that all of us in common should call him *our Father*. From this fact we are warned how great a feeling of brotherly love ought to be among us, since by the same right of mercy and free liberality we are equally children of such a father. For if one father is common to us all [<sup><402309></sup> Matthew 23:9], and every good thing that can fall to our lot comes from him, there ought not to be anything separate among us that we are not prepared gladly and wholeheartedly to share with one another, as far as occasion requires.

Now if we so desire, as is fitting, to extend our hand to one another and to help one another, there is nothing in which we can benefit our brethren more than in commending them to the providential care of the best of fathers; for if he is kind and favorable, nothing at all else can be desired. Indeed, we owe even this very thing to our Father. Just as one who truly and deeply loves any father of a family at the same time embraces his whole household with love and good will, so it becomes us in like measure to show to his people, to his family, and lastly, to his inheritance, the same zeal and affection that we have toward this Heavenly Father. For he so honored these as to call them the fullness of his only-begotten Son [<sup><490123></sup> Ephesians 1:23]. Let the Christian man, then, conform his prayers

to this rule in order that they may be in common and embrace all who are his brothers in Christ, not only those whom he at present sees and recognizes as such but all men who dwell on earth. For what God has determined concerning them is beyond our knowing except that it is no less godly than humane to wish and hope the best for them. Yet we ought to be drawn with a special affection to those, above others, of the household of faith, whom the apostle has particularly commended to us in everything [<sup><480610></sup> Galatians 6:10]. To sum up, all prayers ought to be such as to look to that community which our Lord has established in his Kingdom and his household.

### **39. COMPARISON OF PRAYER AND ALMSGIVING**

Nevertheless, this does not prevent us from praying especially for ourselves and for certain others, provided, however, our minds do not withdraw their attention from this community or turn aside from it but refer all things to it. For although prayers are individually framed, since they are directed to this end, they do not cease to be common. All this can easily be understood by a comparison. There is a general command of God's to relieve the need of all the poor, and yet those obey it who to this end succor the indigence of those whom they know or see to be suffering, even though they overlook many who are pressed by no lighter need because either they cannot know all or cannot provide for all. In this way they who, viewing and pondering this common society of the church, frame particular prayers of this sort do not resist the will of God when in their prayers, with God's people at heart, in particular terms, they commend to God themselves or others whose needs he has been pleased to make intimately known to them.

However, not all aspects of prayer and almsgiving are indeed alike. For liberality of giving can be practiced only toward those whose poverty is visible to us. But we are free to help by prayer even utterly foreign and unknown persons, however great the distance that separates them from us. This, too, is clone through that general form of prayer wherein all children of God are included, among whom they also are. To this may be referred the fact that Paul urges the believers of his time to lift pure hands in every place without quarreling [<sup><540208></sup> 1 Timothy 2:8]. In warning them that

strife shuts the gate to prayers, his intention is that they offer their petitions in common with one accord.

#### 40. “OUR FATHER... IN HEAVEN”

That he is in heaven [<sup><400609></sup>Matthew 6:9] is added. From this we are not immediately to reason that he is bound, shut up, and surrounded, by the circumference of heaven, as by a barred enclosure. For Solomon confesses that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him [<sup><110827></sup>1 Kings 8:27]. And he himself says through the prophet that heaven is his seat, and the earth, his footstool [<sup><236601></sup>Isaiah 66:1; <sup><440749></sup>Acts 7:49; cf. ch. 17:24]. By this he obviously means that he is not confined to any particular region but is diffused <sup>F572</sup> through all things. But our minds, so crass are they, could not have conceived his unspeakable glory otherwise. Consequently, it has been signified to us by “heaven,” for we can behold nothing more sublime or majestic than this. While, therefore, wherever our senses comprehend anything they commonly attach it to that place, God is set beyond all place, so that when we would seek him we must rise above all perception of body and soul. Secondly, by this expression he is lifted above all chance of either corruption or change. Finally, it signifies that he embraces and holds together the entire universe and controls it by his might. Therefore it is as if he had been said to be of infinite greatness or loftiness, of incomprehensible essence, of boundless might, and of everlasting immortality. But while we hear this, our thought must be raised higher when God is spoken of, lest we dream up anything earthly or physical about him, lest we measure him by our small measure, or conform his will to our emotions. At the same time our confidence in him must be aroused, since we understand that heaven and earth are ruled by his providence and power.

To sum up: under the name “Father” is set before us that God who appeared to us in his own image that we should call upon him with assured faith. And not only does the intimate name “Father” engender trust but it is effective also to keep our minds from being drawn away to doubtful and false gods, permitting them to rise up from the only-begotten Son to the sole Father of angels and of the church. Secondly, because his throne is established in heaven, from his governing of the universe we are forcibly reminded that we do not come to him in vain, for he willingly

meets us with present help. “Those who draw near to God,” says the apostle, “must first believe that God exists, then that he rewards all who seek him.” [<sup><581106></sup>Hebrews 11:6 p.] Here Christ declares both of these things to his Father: that our faith rests in himself, then that we should surely be persuaded that our salvation is not overlooked by him. For he deigns to extend his providence even to us. By this elementary instruction Paul prepares us to pray properly. For before enjoining us to make our petitions known to God [<sup><500406></sup>Philippians 4:6], he thus prefaces the injunction: “Have no anxiety about anything” [<sup><500406></sup>Philippians 4:6]; “the Lord is at hand” [<sup><500405></sup>Philippians 4:5]. From this it is clear that those who do not feel assured that “God’s eye is upon the righteous” [<sup><193415></sup>Psalms 34:15; cf. <sup><600312></sup>1 Peter 3:12] in doubt and perplexity turn ever their prayers within their minds.

#### 41. THE FIRST PETITION

The first petition is that God’s name be hallowed [<sup><400609></sup>Matthew 6:9]; the need for it is associated with our great shame. For what is more unworthy than for God’s glory to be obscured partly by our ungratefulness, partly by our ill will, and so far as lies in our power, destroyed by our presumption and insane impudence? Though all ungodly men should break out with their sacrilegious license, the holiness of God’s name still shines. The prophet justifiably proclaims: “As thy name, O God, so thy praise unto all the ends of the earth” [<sup><194810></sup>Psalms 48:10]. For wherever God becomes known, his powers cannot fail to be manifested; might, goodness, wisdom, righteousness, mercy, truth—these should captivate us with wonderment for him, and impel us to celebrate his praise. Because, therefore, God’s holiness is so unworthily snatched from him on earth, if it is not in our power to assert it, at least we are bidden to be concerned for it in our prayers.

To summarize: we should wish God to have the honor he deserves; men should never speak or think of him without the highest reverence. To this is opposed the profanity that has always been too common and even today is abroad in the world. Hence the need of this petition, which ought to have been superfluous if even a little godliness existed among us. But if holiness is associated with God’s name where separated from all other names it breathes pure glory, here we are bidden to request not only that

God vindicate his sacred name of all contempt and dishonor but also that he subdue the whole race of mankind to reverence for it. <sup>F573</sup>

Now since God reveals himself to us partly in teaching, partly in works, we can hallow him only if we render to him what is his in both respects, and so embrace all that proceeds from him. And his sternness no less than his leniency should lead us to praise him, seeing that he has engraved marks of his glory upon a manifold diversity of works, and this rightly calls forth praises from every tongue. Thus it will come about that Scripture will obtain a just authority among us, nor will anything happen to hinder us from blessing God, as in the whole course of his governance of the universe he deserves. But the petition is directed also to this end: that all impiety which has besmirched this holy name may perish and be wiped out; that all detractions and mockeries which dim this hallowing or diminish it may be banished; and that in silencing all sacrileges, God may shine forth more and more in his majesty.

## 42. THE SECOND PETITION

The second petition is: that God's Kingdom come [<sup><400610></sup> Matthew 6:10]. Even though it contains nothing new, it is with good reason kept separate from the first petition; for if we consider our languor in the greatest matters of all, it behooves us to extend our discussion in order to drive home something that ought to have been thoroughly known of itself. Therefore, after we have been bidden to ask God to subject and finally completely destroy everything that casts a stain upon his holy name, there is now added another similar and almost identical entreaty: that "his Kingdom come" [<sup><400610></sup> Matthew 6:10].

But even though the definition of this Kingdom was put before us previously? I now briefly repeat it: God reigns where men, both by denial of themselves and by contempt of the world and of earthly life, pledge themselves to his righteousness in order to aspire to a heavenly life. Thus there are two parts to this Kingdom: first, that God by the power of his Spirit correct all the desires of the flesh which by squadrons war against him; second, that he shape all our thoughts in obedience to his rule,

Therefore, no others keep a lawful order in this petition but those who begin with themselves, that is, to be cleansed of all corruptions that

disturb the peaceful state of God's Kingdom and sully its purity. Now, because the word of God is like a royal scepter, we are bidden here to entreat him to bring all men's minds and hearts into voluntary obedience to it. This happens when he manifests the working of his word through the secret inspiration of his Spirit in order that it may stand forth in the degree of honor that it deserves. Afterward we should descend to the impious, who stubbornly and with desperate madness resist his authority. Therefore God sets up his Kingdom by humbling the whole world, but in different ways. For he tames the wantonness of some, breaks the untamable pride of others. We must daily desire that God gather churches unto himself from all parts of the earth; that he spread and increase them in number; that he adorn them with gifts; that he establish a lawful order among them; on the other hand, that he cast down all enemies of pure teaching and religion; that he scatter their counsels and crush their efforts. From this it appears that zeal for daily progress is not enjoined upon us in vain, for it never goes so well with human affairs that the filthiness of vices is shaken and washed away, and full integrity flowers and grows, But its fullness is delayed to the final coming of Christ when, as Paul teaches, "God will be all in all" [<sup><461528></sup> 1 Corinthians 15:28]. <sup>F574</sup>

Thus this prayer ought to draw us back from worldly corruptions, which so separate us from God that his Kingdom does not thrive within us. At the same time it ought to kindle zeal for mortification of the flesh; finally, it ought to instruct us in bearing the cross. For it is in this way that God wills to spread his Kingdom. But we should not take it ill that the outward man is in decay, provided the inner man is renewed [<sup><470416></sup> 2 Corinthians 4:16]! For this is the condition of God's Kingdom: that while we submit to his righteousness, he makes us sharers in his glory. This comes to pass when, with ever-increasing splendor, he displays his light and truth, by which the darkness and falsehoods of Satan's kingdom vanish, are extinguished, and pass away. Meanwhile, he protects his own, guides them by the help of his Spirit into uprightness, and strengthens them to perseverance. But he overthrows the wicked conspiracies of enemies, unravels their stratagems and deceits, opposes their malice, represses their obstinacy, until at last he slays Antichrist with the Spirit of his mouth, and destroys all ungodliness by the brightness of his coming [<sup><530208></sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:8].

### 43. THE THIRD PETITION

The third petition is: that God's will may be done on earth as in heaven [<sup><400610></sup>Matthew 6:10 p.]. Even though it depends upon his Kingdom and cannot be separated from it, still it is with reason added separately on account of our ignorance, which does not easily or immediately comprehend what it means that "God reigns in the world." It will therefore not be absurd to take it as an explanation that God will be King in the world when all submit to his will.

Here it is not a question of his secret will, by which he controls all things and directs them to their end. <sup>F575</sup> For even though Satan and men violently inveigh against him, he knows that by his incomprehensible plan he not only turns aside their attacks but so orders it that he may do through them what he has decreed.

But here God's other will is to be noted—namely, that to which voluntary obedience corresponds—and for that reason, heaven is by name compared to earth, for the angels, as is said in the psalm, willingly obey God, and are intent upon carrying out his commands [<sup><19A320></sup>Psalm 103:20]. We are therefore bidden to desire that, just as in heaven nothing is done apart from God's good pleasure, and the angels dwell together in all peace and uprightness, the earth be in like manner subject to such a rule, with all arrogance and wickedness brought to an end.

And in asking this we renounce the desires of our flesh; for whoever does not resign and submit his feelings to God opposes as much as he can God's will, since only what is corrupt comes forth from us. And again by this prayer we are formed to self-denial so God may rule us according to his decision. And not this alone but also so he may create new minds and hearts in us [cf. <sup><195102></sup>Psalm 51:20], ours having been reduced to nothing in order for us to feel in ourselves no prompting of desire but pure agreement with his will. In sum, so we may wish nothing from ourselves but his Spirit may govern our hearts; and while the Spirit is inwardly teaching us we may learn to love the things that please him and to hate those which displease him. In consequence, our wish is that he may render futile and of no account whatever feelings are incompatible with his will.

Conclusion of the first part Here, then, are the first three sections of the prayer. In making these requests we are to keep God's glory alone before our eyes, while leaving ourselves out of consideration and not looking to any advantage for ourselves; for such advantage, even though it amply accrues from such a prayer, must not be sought by us here. But even though all these things must nonetheless come to pass in their time, without any thought or desire or petition of ours, still we ought to desire and request them. And it is of no slight value for us to do this. Thus, we may testify and profess ourselves servants and children of God, zealously, truly, and deeply committed, to the best of our ability, to his honor. This we owe our Lord and Father. Therefore, men who do not, with this desire and zeal to further God's glory, pray that "God's name be hallowed," that "his Kingdom come," that "his will be done," should not be reckoned among God's children and servants; and inasmuch as all these things will come to pass even against such men's consent, the result will be their confusion and destruction.

*(Exposition of the last three petitions, 44-47)*

#### **44. THE FOURTH PETITION**

The second part of the prayer follows, in which we descend to our own affairs. We do not, indeed, bid farewell to God's glory, which as Paul testifies is to be seen even in food and drink [<sup><461031></sup> 1 Corinthians 10:31], and ask only what is expedient for us. But we have pointed out <sup>F576</sup> that there is this difference: God specifically claims the first three petitions and draws us wholly to himself to prove our piety in this way. Then he allows us to look after our own interests, yet under this limitation: that we seek nothing for ourselves without the intention that whatever benefits he confers upon us may show forth his glory, for nothing is more fitting than that we live and die to him [<sup><451407></sup> Romans 14:7-9].

But by this petition we ask of God all things in general that our bodies have need to use under the elements of this world [<sup><480403></sup> Galatians 4:3], not only for food and clothing but also for everything God perceives to be beneficial to us, that we may eat our daily bread in peace. Briefly, by this we give ourselves over to his care, and entrust ourselves to his providence, that he may feed, nourish, and preserve us. For our most gracious Father

does not disdain to take even our bodies under his safekeeping and guardianship in order to exercise our faith in these small matters, while we expect everything from him, even to a crumb of bread and a drop of water. For since it has come about in some way or other through our wickedness that we are affected and tormented with greater concern for body than for soul, many who venture to entrust the soul to God are still troubled about the flesh, still worry about what they shall eat, what they shall wear, and unless they have on hand abundance of wine, grain, and oil, tremble with apprehension. So much more does the shadow of this fleeting life mean to us than that everlasting immortality. Those who, relying upon God, have once for all cast out that anxiety about the care of the flesh, immediately expect from him greater things, even salvation and eternal life. It is, then, no light exercise of faith for us to hope for those things from God which otherwise cause us such anxiety. And we benefit greatly when we put off this faithlessness, which clings to the very bones of almost all men.

What certain writers say in philosophizing about “supersubstantial bread”<sup>F577</sup> [<sup><400611></sup> Matthew 6:11, Vg.] seems to me to agree very little with Christ’s meaning; indeed, if we did not even in this fleeting life accord to God the office of nourisher, this would be an imperfect prayer [<sup><400611></sup> Matthew 6:11]. The reason they give is too profane: that it is not fitting that children of God, who ought to be spiritual, not only give their attention to earthly cares but also involve God in these with themselves.<sup>F578</sup> As if his blessing and fatherly favor are not shown even in food, or it were written to no purpose that “godliness holds promise not only for the life to come but also for the present life” [<sup><540408></sup> 1 Timothy 4:8 p.]! Now even though forgiveness of sins is far more important than bodily nourishment, Christ placed the inferior thing first that he might bring us gradually to the two remaining petitions, which properly belong to the heavenly life. In this he has taken account of our slowness.

But we are bidden to ask our daily bread that we may be content with the measure that our Heavenly Father has deigned to distribute to us, and not get gain by unlawful devices. Meanwhile, we must hold that it is made ours by title of gift; for, as is said in Moses, neither effort nor toil, nor our hands, acquire anything for us by themselves but by God’s blessing [<sup><032620></sup> Leviticus 26:20; cf. <sup><050817></sup> Deuteronomy 8:17-18]. Indeed, not even an abundance of bread would benefit us in the slightest unless it were

divinely turned into nourishment. Accordingly, this generosity of God is necessary no less for the rich than for the poor; for with full cellars and storehouses, men would faint with thirst and hunger unless they enjoyed their bread through his grace.<sup>F579</sup> The word “today,” or “day by day,” as it is in the other Evangelist, as well as the adjective “daily,” bridle the uncontrolled desire for fleeting things, with which we commonly burn without measure, and to which other evils are added. For if a greater abundance is at hand, we vainly pour it out upon pleasure, delights, ostentation, and other sorts of excess. Therefore we are bidden to ask only as much as is sufficient for our need from day to day, with this assurance: that as our Heavenly Father nourishes us today, he will not fail us tomorrow. Thus, however abundantly goods may flow to us, even when our storehouses are stuffed and our cellars full, we ought always to ask for our daily bread, for we must surely count all possessions nothing except in so far as the Lord, having poured out his blessing, makes it fruitful with continuing increase. Also, what is in our hand is not even ours except in so far as he bestows each little portion upon us hour by hour, and allows us to use it. Because the pride of man only most grudgingly allows itself to be persuaded, the Lord declares that he provided a singular proof for every age when he fed his people in the desert with manna in order to impress upon us that man does not live by bread alone but rather by the word that proceeds out of his mouth [<sup><050803></sup>Deuteronomy 8:3; <sup><400404></sup>Matthew 4:4]. By this he shows it is by his power alone that life and strength are sustained, even though he administers it to us by physical means. So he commonly teaches us by the opposite example when he breaks, as often as he pleases, the strength of bread (and as he himself says, the staff) that those who eat may waste away with hunger [<sup><032626></sup>Leviticus 26:26] and those who drink may be parched with thirst [cf. <sup><260416></sup>Ezekiel 4:16-17; 14:13].

Yet those who, not content with daily bread but panting after countless things with unbridled desire, or sated with their abundance, or carefree in their piled-up riches, supplicate God with this prayer are but mocking him. For the first ones ask him what they do not wish to receive, indeed, what they utterly abominate—namely, mere daily bread—and as much as possible cover up before God their propensity to greed, while true prayer ought to pour out before him the whole mind itself and whatever lies

hidden within. But others ask of him what they least expect, that is, what they think they have within themselves.

In calling the bread “ours,” God’s generosity, as we have said, stands forth the more, for it makes ours what is by no right owed to us [cf.

<050818> Deuteronomy 8:18]. Yet the point I also have touched upon must not be rejected: that what has been obtained by just and harmless toil is so designated, not what is got by frauds or robberies; for all that we acquire through harming another belongs to another.

The fact that we ask that it be given us signifies that it is a simple and free gift of God, however it may come to us, even when it would seem to have been obtained from our own skill and diligence, and supplied by our own hands. For it is by his blessing alone that our labors truly prosper.

#### 45. THE FIFTH PETITION

Next follows: “Forgive us our debts” [<sup><400612></sup> Matthew 6:12]. With this and the following petition, Christ briefly embraces all that makes for the heavenly life, as the spiritual covenant that God has made for the salvation of his church rests on these two members alone: “I shall write my laws upon their hearts,” and, “I shall be merciful toward their iniquity” [<sup><243133></sup> Jeremiah 31:33 p.; cf. ch. 33:8]. Here Christ begins with forgiveness of sins, then presently adds the second grace: that God protect us by the power of his Spirit and sustain us by his aid so we may stand unvanquished against all temptations.

He calls sins “debts” because we owe penalty for them, and we could in no way satisfy it unless we were released by this forgiveness. This pardon comes of his free mercy, by which he himself generously wipes out these debts, exacting no payment from us but making satisfaction to himself by his own mercy in Christ, who once for all gave himself as a ransom [cf. <sup><450324></sup> Romans 3:24]. Therefore those who trust that God is satisfied with their own or others’ merits, and that by such satisfaction forgiveness of sins is paid for and purchased, <sup>F580</sup> share not at all in this free gift. And while they call upon God according to this form, they do nothing but subscribe to their own accusation, and even seal their condemnation by their own testimony. For they confess they are debtors unless they are released by the benefit of forgiveness, which they still do not accept but

rather spurn, while they thrust their merits and satisfactions upon God. For thus they do not entreat his mercy but call his judgment.

Let those who imagine such perfection for themselves as would make it unnecessary to seek pardon <sup>F581</sup> have disciples whose itching ears mislead them into errors, provided it be understood that all the disciples they acquire have been snatched away from Christ, seeing that in instructing all to confess their guilt, he admits none but sinners; not that he would foster sins by flattery, but because he knew that believers are never divested of the vices of their flesh without always remaining liable to God's judgment. We must, indeed, wish and also zealously labor that, having discharged every detail of our duty, we may truly congratulate ourselves before God as being pure from every stain. But because it pleases God gradually to restore his image in us, in such a manner that some taint always remains in our flesh, it was most necessary to provide a remedy. But if Christ, according to the authority given him by his Father, commands us throughout life to resort to prayer for the pardon of our guilt, who will tolerate these new doctors, who try to dazzle the eyes of the simple-minded with the specter of perfect innocence so as to assure them that they can rid themselves of all blame? This, according to John, is nothing else than to make God a liar [<sup><620110></sup> 1 John 1:10]!

Also, with the same effort these rascals, by canceling one section of it, tear apart God's covenant, in which we see our salvation contained, and topple it from its foundation. Not only are they guilty of sacrilege in separating things till now joined, but also they are impious and cruel in overwhelming miserable souls with despair. Indeed, they are faithless to themselves and those like them because they induce a state of indolence diametrically opposed to God's mercy. But their objection, that in longing for the coming of God's Kingdom we at the same time seek the abolition of sin, is very childish. For in the first section of the prayer, the highest perfection is set before us, but in the latter, our weakness. Thus these two admirably accord with each other, so that, in aspiring toward the goal, we may not neglect the remedies that our necessity requires.

## “AS WE FORGIVE...”

Finally, we petition that forgiveness come to us, “as we forgive our debtors” [<sup><400612></sup>Matthew 6:12]: namely, as we spare and pardon all who have in any way injured us, either treating us unjustly in deed or insulting us in word. Not that it is ours to forgive the guilt of transgression or offense, for this belongs to God alone [cf. <sup><234325></sup>Isaiah 43:25]! This, rather, is our forgiveness: willingly to cast from the mind wrath, hatred, desire for revenge, and willingly to banish to oblivion the remembrance of injustice. For this reason, we ought not to seek forgiveness of sins from God unless we ourselves also forgive the offenses against us of all those who do or have done us ill. If we retain feelings of hatred in our hearts, if we plot revenge and ponder any occasion to cause harm, and even if we do not try to get back into our enemies’ good graces, by every sort of good office deserve well of them, and commend ourselves to them, by this prayer we entreat God not to forgive our sins. For we ask that he do to us as we do to others [cf. <sup><400712></sup>Matthew 7:12]. This, indeed, is to petition him not to do it to us unless we ourselves do it. What do people of this sort gain from their petition but a heavier judgment?

Finally, we must note that this condition—that he “forgive us as we forgive our debtors” [<sup><400612></sup>Matthew 6:12]—is not added because by the forgiveness we grant to others we deserve his forgiveness, as if this indicated the cause of it. Rather, by this word the Lord intended partly to comfort the weakness of our faith. For he has added this as a sign to assure us he has granted forgiveness of sins to us just as surely as we are aware of having forgiven others, provided our hearts have been emptied and purged of all hatred, envy, and vengeance. Also, it is partly by this mark that the Lord excludes from the number of his children those persons who, being eager for revenge and slow to forgive, practice persistent enmity and foment against others the very indignation that they pray to be averted from themselves. This the Lord does that such men dare not call upon him as Father. This is also eloquently expressed in Luke, in Christ’s words [<sup><421104></sup>Luke 11:4].

## 46. THE SIXTH PETITION

The sixth petition [<sup><400613></sup>Matthew 6:13], as we have said, corresponds to the promise that the law is to be engraved upon our hearts [<sup><200303></sup>Proverbs 3:3; <sup><470303></sup>2 Corinthians 3:3], but because we obey God not without continual warfare and hard and trying struggles, here we seek to be equipped with such armor and defended with such protection that we may be able to win the victory. By this we are instructed that we need not only the grace of the Spirit, to soften our hearts within and to bend and direct them to obey God, but also his aid, to render us invincible against both all the stratagems and all the violent assaults of Satan. Now the forms of temptations are indeed many and varied. For wicked conceptions of the mind, provoking us to transgress the law, which either our own inordinate desire suggests to us or the devil prompts, are temptations, as are things not evil of their own nature yet which become temptations through the devil's devices, when they are so thrust before our eyes that by their appearance we are drawn away or turn aside from God [<sup><590102></sup>James 1:2,14; cf. <sup><400401></sup>Matthew 4:1,3; <sup><520305></sup>1 Thessalonians 3:5]. And these temptations are either from the right or from the left. From the right are, for example, riches, power, honors, which often dull men's keenness of sight by the glitter and seeming goodness they display, and allure with their blandishments, so that, captivated by such tricks and drunk with such sweetness, men forget their God. From the left are, for example, poverty, disgrace, contempt, afflictions, and the like. Thwarted by the hardship and difficulty of these, they become despondent in mind, cast away assurance and hope, and are at last completely estranged from God.

We pray God, our Father, not to let us yield to the two sorts of temptations which, either aroused in us by our inordinate desire or proposed to us by the devil's guile, war against us. We pray, rather, that he sustain and encourage us by his hand so that, strengthened by his power, we may stand firm against all the assaults of our malign enemy, whatever thoughts he may introduce into our minds. Then we pray that whatever is presented to us tending either way we may turn to good—namely, that we may not be puffed up in prosperity or yet cast down in adversity.

Nevertheless, we do not here ask that we feel no temptations at all, for we need, rather, to be aroused, pricked, and urged by them, lest, with too much inactivity, we grow sluggish. For it is not beside the point that David wished to be tempted [cf. <sup><192602></sup>Psalm 26:2], and it is not without cause that the Lord daily tests his elect [<sup><012201></sup>Genesis 22:1; <sup><050802></sup>Deuteronomy 8:2; 13:3, Vg.], chastising them by disgrace, poverty, tribulation, and other sorts of affliction. But God tries in one way, Satan in another. Satan tempts that he may destroy, condemn, confound, cast down, but God, that by proving his own children he may make trial of their sincerity, and establish their strength by exercising it; that he may mortify, purify, and cauterize their flesh, which unless it were forced under this restraint would play the wanton and vaunt itself beyond measure. Besides, Satan attacks those who are unarmed and unprepared that he may crush them unaware. God, along with the temptation, makes a way of escape, that his own may be able patiently to bear all that he imposes upon them [<sup><461013></sup>1 Corinthians 10:13; <sup><610209></sup>2 Peter 2:9].

It makes very little difference whether we understand by the word “evil” the devil or sin. Indeed, Satan himself is the enemy who lies in wait for our life [<sup><600508></sup>1 Peter 5:8]; moreover, he is armed with sin to destroy us. This, then, is our plea: that we may not be vanquished or overwhelmed by any temptations but may stand fast by the Lord’s power against all hostile powers that attack us. This is not to succumb to temptations that, received into his care and safekeeping and secure in his protection, we may victoriously endure sin, death, the gates of hell [<sup><401628></sup>Matthew 16:28], and the devil’s whole kingdom. This is to be freed from evil.

Here we must carefully note that it is not in our power to engage that great warrior the devil in combat, or to bear his force and onslaught. Otherwise it would be pointless or a mockery to ask of God what we already have in ourselves. Obviously those who prepare for such a combat with self-assurance do not sufficiently understand with what a ferocious and well-equipped enemy they have to deal. <sup>F582</sup> Now we seek to be freed from his power, as from the jaws of a mad and raging lion [<sup><600508></sup>1 Peter 5:8]; if the Lord did not snatch us from the midst of death, we could not help being immediately torn to pieces by his fangs and claws, and swallowed down his throat. Yet we know that if the Lord be with us, and fight for us while we keep still, “in his might we shall do mightily” [<sup><196012></sup>Psalm

60:12; cf. <sup><19A714></sup>Psalm 107:14 and Comm.]. Let others trust as they will in their own capacities and powers of free choice, which they seem to themselves to possess. For us let it be enough that we stand and are strong in God's power alone.

But this prayer involves more than at first sight it presents. For if God's Spirit is our power to battle with Satan, we shall never be able to win victory until, filled with the Spirit, we cast off all weakness of our flesh. While we petition, then, to be freed from Satan and sin, we anticipate that new increases of God's grace will continually be showered upon us, until, completely filled therewith, we triumph over all evil.

To some it seems rough and harsh to ask God not to lead us into temptation, seeing that to tempt us is against his nature, as James so testifies [<sup><590113></sup>James 1:13]. But the question has already been partly solved, because our lust is properly the cause of all temptations that vanquish us [<sup><590114></sup>James 1:14], and therefore bears the blame. And James means only that it is futile and unjust to transfer to God those vices which we are compelled to impute to ourselves because we know ourselves to be guilty of them. But this does not prevent God, when it seems good to him, from turning us over to Satan, from casting us into a reprobate mind and foul desires, and from leading us into temptations, by a just but often secret judgment. For the cause has often been hidden from men, while it is certain with him. From this we gather it is not an improper expression, if we are convinced that with good reason he threatens so many times to give sure proofs of his vengeance, when he strikes the reprobate with blindness and hardness of heart.

## 47. THE CONCLUSION

These three petitions, in which we especially commend to God ourselves and all our possessions, clearly show what we have previously said: <sup>F583</sup> that the prayers of Christians ought to be public, and to look to the public edification of the church and the advancement of the believers' fellowship. For each man does not pray that something be given to him privately, but all of us in common ask our bread, forgiveness of sins, not to be led into temptation, and to be freed from evil.

Moreover, there is added the reason why we should be so bold to ask and so confident of receiving. Even though this is not extant in the Latin versions, <sup>F584</sup> it is so appropriate to this place that it ought not to be omitted—namely, that his “is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever” [<sup><400613></sup>Matthew 6:13, marg.]. This is firm and tranquil repose for our faith. For if our prayers were to be commended to God by our worth, who would dare even mutter in his presence? Now, however miserable we may be, though unworthiest of all, however devoid of all commendation, we will yet never lack a reason to pray, never be shorn of assurance, since his Kingdom, power, and glory can never be snatched away from our Father.

At the end is added, “Amen” [<sup><400613></sup>Matthew 6:13, marg.]. By it is expressed the warmth of desire to obtain what we have asked of God. And our hope is strengthened that all things of this sort have already been brought to pass, and will surely be granted to us, since they have been promised by God, who cannot deceive. <sup>F585</sup> And this agrees with the form of prayer we previously set forth: “Do, O Lord, for thy name’s sake, not on account of us or our righteousness” [cf. <sup><270918></sup>Daniel 9:18-19]. <sup>F586</sup> By this the saints not only express the end of their prayers but confess themselves unworthy to obtain it unless God seeks the reason from himself, and that their confidence of being heard stems solely from God’s nature.

*(Concluding considerations: adequacy of the Lord’s Prayer, with freedom to use other words, 48-49)*

#### **48. THE LORD’S PRAYER AS A BINDING RULE**

We have everything we ought, or are at all able, to seek of God, set forth in this form and, as it were, rule for prayer handed down by our best Master, Christ, whom the Father has appointed our teacher and to whom alone he would have us hearken [<sup><401705></sup>Matthew 17:5]. For he both has always been the eternal Wisdom of God [<sup><231102></sup>Isaiah 11:2] and, made man, has been given to men, the angel of great counsel [<sup><230906></sup>Isaiah 9:6, conflated with chapter 28:29 and <sup><243219></sup>Jeremiah 32:19].

And this prayer is in all respects so perfect that any extraneous or alien thing added to it, which cannot be related to it, is impious and unworthy

to be approved by God. <sup>F587</sup> For in this summary he has set forth what is worthy of him, acceptable to him, necessary for us—in effect, what he would willingly grant.

For this reason, those who dare go farther and ask anything from God beyond this: first, wish to add to God’s wisdom from their own, which cannot happen without insane blasphemy; secondly, do not confine themselves within God’s will but, holding it in contempt, stray away farther in their uncontrolled desire; lastly, they will never obtain anything, since they pray without faith. But doubtless all such prayers are made apart from faith, for here the word of God is absent, upon which faith, if it is to stand at all, must always rely. But those who, neglecting the Master’s rule, give themselves over to their own desires not only lack God’s word but contend against it with all their strength. Therefore Tertullian has both truly and elegantly called it “the lawful prayer,” <sup>F588</sup> tacitly indicating that all other prayers lie outside the law and are forbidden.

#### **49. THE LORD’S PRAYER DOES NOT BIND US TO ITS FORM OF WORDS BUT TO ITS CONTENT**

We would not have it understood that we are so bound by this form of prayer that we are not allowed to change it in either word or syllable. For here and there in Scripture one reads many prayers, far different from it in words, yet composed by the same Spirit, the use of which is very profitable to us. Many prayers are repeatedly suggested to believers by the same Spirit, which bear little similarity in wording. In so teaching, we mean only this: that no man should ask for, expect, or demand, anything at all except what is included, by way of summary, in this prayer; and though the words may be utterly different, yet the sense ought not to vary. Thus all prayers contained in Scripture, and those which come forth from godly breasts, are certainly to be referred to it. Truly, no other can ever be found that equals this in perfection, much less surpasses it. Here nothing is left out that ought to be thought of in the praises of God, nothing that ought to come into man’s mind for his own welfare. And, indeed, it is so precisely framed that hope of attempting anything better is rightly taken away from all men. To sum up, let us remember that this is

the teaching of Divine Wisdom, teaching what it willed and willing what was needful.

*(Special times of prayer and undiscouraged perseverance in it, 50-52)*

## 50. PRAYER AT REGULAR TIMES

But, although it has already been stated above <sup>F589</sup> that, lifting up our hearts, we should ever aspire to God and pray without ceasing, still, since our weakness is such that it has to be supported by many aids, and our sluggishness such that it needs to be goaded, it is fitting each one of us should set apart certain hours for this exercise. Those hours should not pass without prayer, and during them all the devotion of the heart should be completely engaged in it. These are: when we arise in the morning, before we begin daily work, when we sit down to a meal, when by God's blessing we have eaten, when we are getting ready to retire.

But this must not be any superstitious observance of hours, whereby, as if paying our debt to God, we imagine ourselves paid up for the remaining hours. Rather, it must be a tutelage for our weakness, which should be thus exercised and repeatedly stimulated. We must take particular care that, whenever we either are pressed or see others pressed by any adversity, we hasten back to God, not with swift feet but with eager hearts. Also, that we should not let our prosperity or that of others go unnoticed, failing to testify, by praise and thanksgiving, that we recognize God's hand therein.

Lastly, in all prayer we ought carefully to observe that our intention is not to bind God to particular circumstances, or to prescribe at what time, in what place, or in what way he is to do anything. Accordingly, in this prayer we are taught not to make any law for him, or impose any condition upon him, but to leave to his decision to do what he is to do, in what way, at what time, and in what place it seems good to him.

<sup>F590</sup> Therefore, before we make any prayer for ourselves, we pray that his will be done [<sup><400610></sup> Matthew 6:10]. By these words we subject our will to his in order that, restrained as by a bridle, it may not presume to control God but may make him the arbiter and director of all its entreaties.

## 51. PATIENT PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER

If, with minds composed to this obedience, we allow ourselves to be ruled by the laws of divine providence, we shall easily learn to persevere in prayer and, with desires suspended, patiently to wait for the Lord. Then we shall be sure that, even though he does not appear, he is always present to us, and will in his own time declare how he has never had ears deaf to the prayers that in men's eyes he seems to have neglected. This, then, will be an ever-present consolation: that, if God should not respond to our first requests, we may not faint or fall into despair. Such is the wont of those who, carried away with their own ardor, so call upon God that unless he attends upon their first act of prayer and brings them help at once, they immediately fancy him angry and hostile toward them and, abandoning all hope of being heard, cease to call upon him. Rather, by deferring our hope with a well-tempered evenness of mind, let us follow hard upon that perseverance which Scripture strongly commends to us. For in The Psalms we can often see that David and other believers, when they are almost worn out with praying and seem to have beaten the air with their prayers as if pouring forth words to a deaf God, still do not cease to pray [<sup><192202></sup> Psalm 22:2]. For, unless the faith placed in it is superior to all events, the authority of God's Word does not prevail.

Also, let us not tempt God and, wearying him with our depravity, provoke him against ourselves. This is usual with many who covenant with God only under certain conditions, and, as if he were the servant of their own appetites, bind him to laws of their own stipulation. If he does not obey them at once, they become indignant, grumble, protest, murmur, and rage at him. To such, therefore, he often grants in wrath and fury what in mercy he denies to others to whom he is favorable. The children of Israel supply proof of this, for whom it would have been much better not to be heard by the Lord than to swallow his wrath with their meat [<sup><041118></sup> Numbers 11:18,33].

## 52. UNHEARD PRAYERS?

But if finally even after long waiting our senses cannot learn the benefit received from prayer, or perceive any fruit from it, still our faith will make us sure of what cannot be perceived by sense, that we have obtained what

was expedient. For the Lord so often and so certainly promises to care for us in our troubles, when they have once been laid upon his bosom. And so he will cause us to possess abundance in poverty, and comfort in affliction. For though all things fail us, yet God will never forsake us, who cannot disappoint the expectation and patience of his people. He alone will be for us in place of all things, since all good things are contained in him and he will reveal them to us on the Day of Judgment, when his Kingdom will be plainly manifested.

Besides, even if God grants our prayer, he does not always respond to the exact form of our request but, seeming to hold us in suspense, he yet, in a marvelous manner, shows us our prayers have not been vain. This is what John's words mean: "If we know that he hears us whenever we ask anything of him, we know that we have obtained the requests we asked of him" [<sup><620515></sup> 1 John 5:15 p.]. This seems a diffuse superfluity of words, but the declaration is especially useful because God, even when he does not comply with our wishes, is still attentive and kindly to our prayers, so that hope relying upon his word will never disappoint us. But believers need to be sustained by this patience, since they would not long stand unless they relied upon it. For the Lord proves his people by no light trials, and does not softly exercise them, but often drives them to extremity, and allows them, so driven, to lie a long time in the mire before he gives them any taste of his sweetness. And, as Hannah says, "He kills and brings to life; he brings down to hell and brings back" [<sup><090206></sup> 1 Samuel 2:6 p.]. What could they do here but be discouraged and rush into despair if they were not, when afflicted, desolate, and already half dead, revived by the thought that God has regard for them and will bring an end to their present misfortunes? Nevertheless, however they stand upon the assurance of that hope, they do not meanwhile cease to pray, for unless there be in prayer a constancy to persevere, we pray in vain.

## CHAPTER 21

### ETERNAL ELECTION, BY WHICH GOD HAS PREDESTINED SOME TO SALVATION, OTHERS TO DESTRUCTION <sup>F591</sup>

*(Importance of the doctrine of predestination excludes both  
presumption and reticence in speaking of it, 1-4)*

#### 1. NECESSITY AND BENEFICIAL EFFECT OF THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION; DANGER OF CURIOSITY

In actual fact, the covenant of life is not preached equally among all men, and among those to whom it is preached, it does not gain the same acceptance either constantly or in equal degree. In this diversity the wonderful depth of God's judgment is made known. For there is no doubt that this variety also serves the decision of God's eternal election. If it is plain that it comes to pass by God's bidding that salvation is freely offered to some while others are barred from access to it, at once great and difficult questions spring up, explicable only when reverent minds regard as settled what they may suitably hold concerning election and predestination. A baffling question this seems to many. For they think nothing more inconsistent than that out of the common multitude of men some should be predestined to salvation, others to destruction. <sup>F592</sup> But how mistakenly they entangle themselves will become clear in the following discussion. Besides, in the very darkness that frightens them not only is the usefulness of this doctrine made known but also its very sweet fruit. We shall never be clearly persuaded, as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the wellspring of God's free mercy until we come to know his eternal election, which illumines God's grace by this contrast: that he does not indiscriminately adopt all into the hope of salvation but gives to some what he denies to others.

How much the ignorance of this principle detracts from God's glory, how much it takes away from true humility, is well known. Yet Paul denies

that this which needs so much to be known can be known unless God, utterly disregarding works, chooses those whom he has decreed within himself. “At the present time,” he says, “a remnant has been saved according to the election of grace. But if it is by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace would no more be grace. But if it is of works, it is no more of grace; otherwise work would not be work.” [<sup><451105></sup>Romans 11:5-6.]<sup>F593</sup> If—to make it clear that our salvation comes about solely from God’s mere generosity—we must be called back to the course of election, those who wish to get rid of all this are obscuring as maliciously as they can what ought to have been gloriously and vociferously proclaimed, and they tear humility up by the very roots. Paul clearly testifies that, when the salvation of a remnant of the people is ascribed to the election of grace, then only is it acknowledged that God of his mere good pleasure preserves whom he will, and moreover that he pays no reward, since he can owe none. They who shut the gates that no one may dare seek a taste of this doctrine wrong men no less than God. For neither will anything else suffice to make us humble as we ought to be nor shall we otherwise sincerely feel how much we are obliged to God. And as Christ teaches, here is our only ground for firmness and confidence: in order to free us of all fear and render us victorious amid so many dangers, snares, and mortal struggles, he promises that whatever the Father has entrusted into his keeping will be safe [<sup><431028></sup>John 10:28-29]. From this we infer that all those who do not know that they are God’s own will be miserable through constant fear. Hence, those who by being blind to the three benefits we have noted<sup>F594</sup> would wish the foundation of our salvation to be removed from our midst, very badly serve the interests of themselves and of all other believers. How is it that the church becomes manifest to us from this, when, as Bernard rightly teaches, “it could not otherwise be found or recognized among creatures, since it lies marvelously hidden... both within the bosom of a blessed predestination and within the mass of a miserable condemnation?”<sup>F595</sup>

But before I enter into the matter itself, I need to mention by way of preface two kinds of men.

Human curiosity renders the discussion of predestination, already somewhat difficult of itself, very confusing and even dangerous. No restraints can hold it back from wandering in forbidden bypaths and

thrusting upward to the heights. If allowed, it will leave no secret to God that it will not search out and unravel. Since we see so many on all sides rushing into this audacity and impudence, among them certain men not otherwise bad, <sup>F596</sup> they should in due season be reminded of the measure of their duty in this regard.

First, then, let them remember that when they inquire into predestination they are penetrating the sacred precincts of divine wisdom. If anyone with carefree assurance breaks into this place, he will not succeed in satisfying his curiosity and he will enter a labyrinth from which he can find no exit. For it is not right for man unrestrainedly to search out things that the Lord has willed to be hid in himself, and to unfold from eternity itself the sublimest wisdom, which he would have us revere but not understand that through this also he should fill us with wonder. He has set forth by his Word the secrets of his will that he has decided to reveal to us. These he decided to reveal in so far as he foresaw that they would concern us and benefit us.

## **2. DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION TO BE SOUGHT IN SCRIPTURE ONLY**

“We have entered the pathway of faith,” says Augustine, “let us hold steadfastly to it. It leads us to the King’s chamber, in which are hid all treasures of knowledge and wisdom. For the Lord Christ himself did not bear a grudge against his great and most select disciples when he said: ‘I have... many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now’ [<sup><431612></sup> John 16:12]. We must walk, we must advance, we must grow, that our hearts may be capable of those things which we cannot yet grasp. But if the Last Day finds us advancing, there we shall learn what we could not learn here.” <sup>F597</sup> If this thought prevails with us, that the Word of the Lord is the sole way that can lead us in our search for all that it is lawful to hold concerning him, and is the sole light to illumine our vision of all that we should see of him, it will readily keep and restrain us from all rashness. For we shall know that the moment we exceed the bounds of the Word, our course is outside the pathway and in darkness, and that there we must repeatedly wander, slip, and stumble. Let this, therefore, first of all be before our eyes: to seek any other knowledge of predestination than what the Word of God discloses is not less insane than if one should purpose to

walk in a pathless waste [cf. <sup><181224></sup>Job 12:24], or to see in darkness. And let us not be ashamed to be ignorant of something in this matter, wherein there is a certain learned ignorance. <sup>F598</sup> Rather, let us willingly refrain from inquiring into a kind of knowledge, the ardent desire for which is both foolish and dangerous, nay, even deadly. But if a wanton curiosity agitates us, we shall always do well to oppose to it this restraining thought: just as too much honey is not good, so for the curious the investigation of glory is not turned into glory [<sup><202527></sup>Proverbs 25:27, cf. Vg.]. For there is good reason for us to be deterred from this insolence which can only plunge us into ruin.

### 3. THE SECOND DANGER: ANXIOUS SILENCE ABOUT THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

There are others who, wishing to cure this evil, all but require that every mention of predestination be buried; indeed, they teach us to avoid any question of it, as we would a reef. <sup>F599</sup> Even though their moderation in this matter is rightly to be praised, because they feel that these mysteries ought to be discussed with great soberness, yet because they descend to too low a level, they make little progress with the human understanding, which does not allow itself to be easily restrained. Therefore, to hold to a proper limit in this regard also, we shall have to turn back to the Word of the Lord, in which we have a sure rule for the understanding. For Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which, as nothing is omitted that is both necessary and useful to know, so nothing is taught but what is expedient to know. Therefore we must guard against depriving believers of anything disclosed about predestination in Scripture, lest we seem either wickedly to defraud them of the blessing of their God or to accuse and scoff at the Holy Spirit for having published what it is in any way profitable to suppress.

Let us, I say, permit the Christian man to open his mind and ears to every utterance of God directed to him, provided it be with such restraint that when the Lord closes his holy lips, he also shall at once close the way to inquiry. The best limit of sobriety for us will be not only to follow God's lead always in learning but, when he sets an end to teaching, to stop trying to be wise. The fact that they fear danger is not sufficiently important that we should on that account turn away our minds from the oracles of God.

Solomon's saying is familiar: "It is the glory of God to conceal the word" [<sup><202502></sup>Proverbs 25:2, Vg.]. But since piety and common sense show that this is not to be understood indiscriminately of everything, we must seek a distinction, lest under the pretense of modesty and sobriety we are satisfied with brutish ignorance. Moses clearly expresses this in a few words: "The secret things," he says, "belong to... our God, but he has manifested them to us and to our children" [<sup><052929></sup>Deuteronomy 29:29, cf. Vg.]. We see how he urges the people to study the teaching of the law only on the ground of a heavenly decree, because it pleased God to publish it; and how he held the same people within these bounds for this reason alone: that it is not lawful for mortal men to intrude upon the secrets of God.

#### 4. THE ALLEGED PERIL IN THE DOCTRINE DISMISSED

Profane men, I admit, in the matter of predestination abruptly seize upon something to carp, rail, bark, or scoff at. But if their shamelessness deters us, we shall have to keep secret the chief doctrines of the faith, almost none of which they or their like leave untouched by blasphemy. An obstinate person would be no less insolently puffed up on hearing that within the essence of God there are three Persons than if he were told that God foresaw what would happen to man when he created him. And they will not refrain from guffaws when they are informed that but little more than five thousand years have passed since the creation of the universe, for they ask why God's power was idle and asleep for so long. <sup>F600</sup> Nothing, in short, can be brought forth that they do not assail with their mockery. Should we, to silence these blasphemies, forbear to speak of the deity of Son and Spirit? Must we pass over in silence the creation of the universe? No! God's truth is so powerful, both in this respect and in every other, that it has nothing to fear from the evilspeaking of wicked men.

So Augustine stoutly maintains in his little treatise *The Gift of Perseverance*. For we see that the false apostles could not make Paul ashamed by defaming and accusing his true doctrine. They say that this whole discussion is dangerous for godly minds—because it hinders exhortations, because it shakes faith, because it disturbs and terrifies the heart itself—but this is nonsense! Augustine admits that for these reasons he was frequently charged with preaching predestination too freely, but, as

it was easy for him, he overwhelmingly refuted the charge.<sup>F601</sup> We, moreover, because many and various absurdities are obtruded at this point, have preferred to dispose of each in its own place.<sup>F602</sup> I desire only to have them generally admit that we should not investigate what the Lord has left hidden in secret, that we should not neglect what he has brought into the open, so that we may not be convicted of excessive curiosity on the one hand, or of excessive ingratitude on the other. For Augustine also skillfully expressed this idea: we can safely follow Scripture, which proceeds at the pace of a mother stooping to her child, so to speak, so as not to leave us behind in our weakness.<sup>F603</sup> But for those who are so cautious or fearful that they desire to bury predestination in order not to disturb weak souls<sup>F604</sup>—with what color will they cloak their arrogance when they accuse God indirectly of stupid thoughtlessness, as if he had not foreseen the peril that they feel they have wisely met? Whoever, then, heaps odium upon the doctrine of predestination openly reproaches God, as if he had unadvisedly let slip something hurtful to the church.

*(Predestination defined and explained in relation to the Israelitish nation, and to individuals, 5-7)*

## **5. PREDESTINATION AND FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD; THE ELECTION OF ISRAEL**

No one who wishes to be thought religious dares simply deny predestination, by which God adopts some to hope of life, and sentences others to eternal death. But our opponents, especially those who make foreknowledge its cause, envelop it in numerous petty objections.<sup>F605</sup> We, indeed, place both doctrines in God, but we say that subjecting one to the other is absurd.

When we attribute foreknowledge to God, we mean that all things always were, and perpetually remain, under his eyes, so that to his knowledge there is nothing future or past, but all things are present. And they are present in such a way that he not only conceives them through ideas, as we have before us those things which our minds remember, but he truly looks upon them and discerns them as things placed before him. And this foreknowledge is extended throughout the universe to every creature. We call predestination<sup>F606</sup> God's eternal decree, by which he compacted with

himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death.

God has attested this not only in individual persons but has given us an example of it in the whole offspring of Abraham, to make it clear that in his choice rests the future condition of each nation. “When the Most High divided the nations, and separated the sons of Adam... the people of Israel were his portion,... the cord of his inheritance.” [<sup><053208></sup> Deuteronomy 32:8-9 p., cf. Vg.] The separation is apparent to all men: in the person of Abraham, as in a dry tree trunk, one people is peculiarly chosen, while the others are rejected; but the cause does not appear except that Moses, to cut off from posterity any occasion to boast, teaches that they excel solely by God’s freely given love. For he declares this the cause of their deliverance: that God loved the patriarchs, “and chose their seed after them” [<sup><050437></sup> Deuteronomy 4:37].

More explicitly, in another chapter: “Not because you surpassed all other peoples in number did he take pleasure in you to choose you... but because he loved you” [<sup><050707></sup> Deuteronomy 7:7-8 p., cf. Vg.]. Moses quite frequently repeats the same declaration: “Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven... earth, and all that is in them. Only he delighted in your fathers and loved them, and chose you their seed” [<sup><051014></sup> Deuteronomy 10:14-15, cf. Vg.]. Likewise, elsewhere, sanctification is enjoined upon them because they have been chosen as his “special people” [<sup><050706></sup> Deuteronomy 7:6]. And in another passage love is again declared the reason for his protection [<sup><052305></sup> Deuteronomy 23:5]. Believers also proclaim this with one voice: “He chooses our heritage for us, the glory of Jacob, whom he has loved” [<sup><194704></sup> Psalm 47:4, cf. Comm.]. For all who have been adorned with gifts by God credit them to his freely given love because they knew not only that they had not merited them but that even the holy patriarch himself was not endowed with such virtue as to acquire such a high honor for himself and his descendants. And in order more effectively to crush all pride, he reproaches them as deserving no such thing, since they were a stubborn and stiff-necked people [<sup><023209></sup> Exodus 32:9; cf. <sup><050906></sup> Deuteronomy 9:6]. Also, the prophets often confront the Jews with this election, to the latter’s

displeasure and by way of reproach, since they had shamefully fallen away from it [cf. <300302> Amos 3:2].

Be this as it may, let those now come forward who would bind God's election either to the worthiness of men or to the merit of works. Since they see one nation preferred above all others, and hear that God was not for any reason moved to be more favorably inclined to a few, ignoble—indeed, even wicked and stubborn—men, will they quarrel with him because he chose to give such evidence of his mercy? But they shall neither hinder his work with their clamorous voices nor strike and hurt his righteousness by hurling the stones of their insults toward heaven. Rather, these will fall back on their own heads! Also, the Israelites are recalled to this principle of a freely given covenant <sup>F607</sup> when thanks are to be given to God, or when hope is to be aroused for the age to come. “He has made us and not we ourselves,” says the prophet, “we are his people and the sheep of his pastures.” [<sup><19A003></sup> Psalm 100:3; cf. Comm. and <sup><199903></sup> Psalm 99:3, Vg.] The negative, which is added to exclude “ourselves,” is not superfluous, since by it they may know that God is not only the Author of all good things in which they abound but has derived the cause from himself, because nothing in them was worthy of so great honor.

He also bids them be content with God's mere good pleasure, in these words: “O seed of Abraham his servant, sons of Jacob, his chosen ones!” [<sup><19A506></sup> Psalm 105:6; 104:6, Vg.]. And after having recounted the continuing benefits of God as the fruit of election, he finally concludes that he acted so generously because “he remembered his covenant” [<sup><19A542></sup> Psalm 105:42]. With this doctrine the song of the whole church is in accord: “Thy right hand... and the light of thy countenance gave the land to our fathers, for thou didst delight in them” [<sup><194403></sup> Psalm 44:3,2]. Now we must note that where “land” is mentioned, it is a visible symbol of the secret separation that includes adoption. David elsewhere urges the people to the same gratitude: “Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!” [<sup><193312></sup> Psalm 33:12, Comm.]. And Samuel arouses them to good hope: “For God will not forsake you for his great name's sake, since it has pleased him to create you a people for himself” [<sup><091222></sup> 1 Samuel 12:22 p.]. In this way, David also arms himself for battle when his faith is assailed: “The blessed one whom thou hast elected... will dwell in thy courts” [<sup><196504></sup> Psalm 65:4; cf.

Comm. and 64:5, Vg.]. Moreover, because the election, being hidden in God, was confirmed by the first liberation, as well as by the second and other intermediate benefits, the word “to elect” is applied to this effect in Isaiah: “God will have mercy on Jacob and will yet elect out of Israel” [<sup><231401></sup> Isaiah 14:1 p., cf. Vg.]. In describing the time to come, the prophet says that the gathering together of the remnant of the people, whom he had seemed to forsake, will be a sign of the stability and firmness of his election, which at that very moment had seemingly failed. When he also says in another place, “I have elected you and not cast you off” [<sup><234109></sup> Isaiah 41:9], he emphasizes the ceaseless course of the remarkable generosity of his fatherly benevolence. The angel in Zechariah expresses this more clearly: “God... will yet elect Jerusalem” [<sup><380212></sup> Zechariah 2:12]. It is as though he, by more harshly chastening, had rejected her, or as though the exile had been an interruption of election. Yet election remains inviolable, although its signs do not always appear.

## **6. THE SECOND STAGE: ELECTION AND REPROBATION OF INDIVIDUAL ISRAELITES**

We must now add a second, more limited degree of election, or one in which God’s more special grace was evident, that is, when from the same race of Abraham God rejected some but showed that he kept others among his sons by cherishing them in the church. Ishmael had at first obtained equal rank with his brother, Isaac, for in him the spiritual covenant had been equally sealed by the sign of circumcision. Ishmael is cut off; then Esau; afterward, a countless multitude, and well-nigh all Israel. In Isaac the seed was called; the same calling continued in Jacob. God showed a similar example in rejecting Saul. This is also wonderfully proclaimed in the psalm: “He rejected the tribe of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim but chose the tribe of Judah” [<sup><197867></sup> Psalm 78:67-68; cf. LXX and <sup><197706></sup> Psalm 77:67-68, Vg. and Comm.]. This is several times repeated in the Sacred History, the better to reveal in this change the marvelous secret of God’s grace. By their own defect and guilt, I admit, Ishmael, Esau, and the like were cut off from adoption. For the condition had been laid down that they should faithfully keep God’s covenant, which they faithlessly violated. Yet this was a singular benefit of God, that he had deigned to prefer them to the other nations, as the psalm says:

“He has not dealt thus with any other nations, and has not shown them his judgments” [<sup><19E720></sup>Psalm 147:20, cf. LXX].

But I had good reason to say that here we must note two degrees, for in the election of a whole nation God has already shown that in his mere generosity he has not been bound by any laws but is free, so that equal apportionment of grace is not to be required of him. The very inequality of his grace proves that it is free. For this reason, Malachi emphasizes Israel’s ungratefulness, because, while not only chosen from the whole human race but also separated out of a holy house as his own people, they faithlessly and impiously despise God, their beneficent Father. “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” he asks. “Yet I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau.” [<sup><390102></sup>Malachi 1:2-3; <sup><450913></sup>Romans 9:13.] For God takes it for granted that, as both had been begotten of a holy father, were successors of the covenant, and in short, were branches of a sacred root, the children of Jacob were now under extraordinary obligation, having been received into that dignity; but after the first-born, Esau, had been rejected, and their father, who was inferior by birth, had been made heir, God accuses them of being doubly thankless, and complains that they were not held by that double bond.

## 7. THE ELECTION OF INDIVIDUALS AS ACTUAL ELECTION

Although it is now sufficiently clear that God by his secret plan freely chooses whom he pleases, rejecting others, still his free election has been only half explained until we come to individual persons, to whom God not only offers salvation but so assigns it that the certainty of its effect is not in suspense or doubt. These are reckoned among the unique offspring mentioned by Paul [ct. <sup><450907></sup>Romans 9:7-8; <sup><480316></sup>Galatians 3:16 ff.]. The adoption was put in Abraham’s hands. Nevertheless, because many of his descendants were cut off as rotten members, we must, in order that election may be effectual and truly enduring, ascend to the Head, in whom the Heavenly Father has gathered his elect together, and has joined them to himself by an indissoluble bond. So, indeed, God’s generous favor, which he has denied to others, has been displayed in the adoption of the race of Abraham; yet in the members of Christ a far more excellent power of grace appears, for, engrafted to their Head, they are never cut off from salvation. Therefore Paul skillfully argues from the passage of Malachi that I have

just cited that where God has made a covenant of eternal life and calls any people to himself, a special mode of election is employed for a part of them, so that he does not with indiscriminate grace effectually elect all [<sup><450913></sup>Romans 9:13]. The statement “I have loved Jacob” [<sup><390102></sup>Malachi 1:2] applies to the whole offspring of the patriarch, whom the prophet there contrasts to the posterity of Esau. Still this does not gainsay the fact that there was set before us in the person of one man an example of election that cannot fail to accomplish its purpose. Paul with good reason notes that they are called the “remnant” [<sup><450927></sup>Romans 9:27; 11:5; cf. <sup><231022></sup>Isaiah 10:22-23]. For experience shows that of the great multitude many fall away and disappear, so that often only a slight portion remains.

It is easy to explain why the general election of a people is not always firm and effectual: to those with whom God makes a covenant, he does not at once give the spirit of regeneration that would enable them to persevere in the covenant to the very end. Rather, the outward change, without the working of inner grace, which might have availed to keep them, is intermediate between the rejection of mankind and the election of a meager number of the godly. The whole people of Israel has been called “the inheritance of God” [<sup><053209></sup>Deuteronomy 32:9; <sup><110851></sup>1 Kings 8:51; <sup><192809></sup>Psalms 28:9; 33:12; etc.], yet many of them were foreigners. But because God has not pointlessly covenanted that he would become their Father and Redeemer, he sees to his freely given favor rather than to the many who treacherously desert him. Even through them his truth was not set aside, for where he preserved some remnant for himself, it appeared that his calling was “without repentance” [<sup><451129></sup>Romans 11:29]. For the fact that God was continually gathering his church from Abraham’s children rather than from profane nations had its reason in his covenant, which, when violated by that multitude, he confined to a few that it might not utterly cease. In short, that adoption of Abraham’s seed in common was a visible image of the greater benefit that God bestowed on some out of the many. This is why Paul so carefully distinguishes the children of Abraham according to the flesh from the spiritual children who have been called after the example of Isaac [<sup><480428></sup>Galatians 4:28]. Not that it was a vain and unprofitable thing simply to be a child of Abraham; such could not be said without dishonoring the covenant! No, God’s unchangeable

plan, by which he predestined for himself those whom he willed, was in fact intrinsically effectual unto salvation for these spiritual offspring alone. But I advise my readers not to take a prejudiced position on either side until, when the passages of Scripture have been adduced, it shall be clear what opinion ought to be held.

### **SUMMARY SURVEY OF THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION**

As Scripture, then, clearly shows, we say that God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction. We assert that, with respect to the elect, this plan was founded upon his freely given mercy, without regard to human worth; but by his just and irreprehensible but incomprehensible judgment he has barred the door of life to those whom he has given over to damnation. Now among the elect we regard the call as a testimony of election. Then we hold justification another sign of its manifestation, until they come into the glory in which the fulfillment of that election lies. But as the Lord seals his elect by call and justification, so, by shutting off the reprobate from knowledge of his name or from the sanctification of his Spirit, he, as it were, reveals by these marks what sort of judgment awaits them. Here I shall pass over many fictions that stupid men have invented to overthrow predestination. They need no refutation, for as soon as they are brought forth they abundantly prove their own falsity. I shall pause only over those which either are being argued by the learned or may raise difficulty for the simple, or which impiety speciously sets forth in order to assail God's righteousness.

# CHAPTER 22

## CONFIRMATION OF THIS DOCTRINE FROM SCRIPTURAL TESTIMONIES

*(Election is not from foreknowledge of merit but is of God's  
sovereign purpose, 1-6)*

### 1. ELECTION VS. FOREKNOWLEDGE OF MERITS

Many persons dispute all these positions which we have set forth, especially the free election of believers; nevertheless, this cannot be shaken. For generally these persons consider that God distinguishes among men according as he foresees what the merits of each will be.<sup>F608</sup> Therefore, he adopts as sons those whom he foreknows will not be unworthy of his grace; he appoints to the damnation of death those whose dispositions he discerns will be inclined to evil intention and ungodliness. By thus covering election with a veil of foreknowledge, they not only obscure it but feign that it has its origin elsewhere, and this commonly accepted notion is not confined to the common folk; important authors of all periods have held it.<sup>F609</sup> This I frankly confess so that no one may assume that if their names be quoted against us, our case will be greatly damaged. For God's truth is here too sure to be shaken, too clear to be overwhelmed by men's authority.

But others, not versed in Scripture, and deserving no approbation, so wickedly assail this sound doctrine that their insolence is intolerable. Because God chooses some, and passes over others according to his own decision, they bring an action against him.<sup>F610</sup> But if the fact itself is well known, what will it profit them to quarrel against God? We teach nothing not borne out by experience:<sup>F611</sup> that God has always been free to bestow his grace on whom he wills. I shall not inquire in what respect the descendants of Abraham excelled other men, except in that esteem whose cause is not found outside God. Let them answer why they are men rather than oxen or asses. Although it was in God's power to make them dogs, he

formed them to his own image. Will they allow brute beasts to argue with God about their condition, as if the distinction were unjust? Surely, it is not fairer for them to possess a privilege that they have obtained without merits than for God variously to dispense his benefits according to the measure of his judgment!

If they shift the argument to individual persons where they find the inequality more objectionable, they ought at least so to tremble at the example of Christ as not to prate so irresponsibly about this lofty mystery. He is conceived a mortal man of the seed of David. By what virtues will they say that he deserved in the womb itself to be made head of the angels, only-begotten Son of God, image and glory of the Father, light, righteousness, and salvation of the world [cf. <sup><580102></sup> Hebrews 1:2 ff.]? Augustine wisely notes this: namely, that we have in the very Head of the church the clearest mirror of free election that we who are among the members may not be troubled about it; and that he was not made Son of God by righteous living but was freely given such honor so that he might afterward share his gifts with others. <sup>F612</sup> If here anyone should ask why others were not as he was—or why all of us are separated from him by such a long distance—why all of us are corrupt, while he is purity itself, such a questioner would display not only his madness but with it also his shamelessness. But if they willfully strive to strip God of his free power to choose or reject, let them at the same time also take away what has been given to Christ.

Now it behooves us to pay attention to what Scripture proclaims of every person. When Paul teaches that we were chosen in Christ “before the creation of the world” [<sup><490104></sup> Ephesians 1:4a], he takes away all consideration of real worth on our part, for it is just as if he said: since among all the offspring of Adam, the Heavenly Father found nothing worthy of his election, he turned his eyes upon his Anointed, to choose from that body as members those whom he was to take into the fellowship of life. Let this reasoning, then, prevail among believers: we were adopted in Christ into the eternal inheritance because in ourselves we were not capable of such great excellence.

This Paul also notes, in another passage, when he urges the Colossians to give thanks because God has made them fit to share the inheritance of the

saints [<sup><510112></sup>Colossians 1:12 p.]. If, to make us fit to receive the glory of the life to come, election precedes this grace of God, what will God find in us now to move him to choose us? Another statement of Paul's will express even more clearly what I mean. "He chose us," says he, "before the foundations of the world were laid" [<sup><490104></sup>Ephesians 1:4a], "according to the good pleasure of his will" [<sup><490105></sup>Ephesians 1:5, Comm.], "that we should be holy and spotless and irreproachable in his sight" [<sup><490104></sup>Ephesians 1:4b, conflated with <sup><510122></sup>Colossians 1:22]. There Paul sets "God's good pleasure" over against any merits of ours.

## **2. ELECTION BEFORE CREATION AND NOT ASSOCIATED WITH FOREKNOWLEDGE OF MERIT**

That the proof may be more complete, it is worthwhile to note the individual parts of this passage [<sup><490104></sup>Ephesians 1:4-5], which, coupled together, leave no doubt. Since he calls them "elect," it cannot be doubted that he is speaking to believers, as he also soon declares; therefore those who misinterpret the word "elect" as confined to the age when the gospel was proclaimed disfigure it with a base fabrication.<sup>F613</sup> By saying that they were "elect before the creation of the world" [<sup><490104></sup>Ephesians 1:4], he takes away all regard for worth. For what basis for distinction is there among those who did not yet exist, and who were subsequently to be equals in Adam? Now if they are elect in Christ, it follows that not only is each man elected without respect to his own person but also certain ones are separated from others, since we see that not all are members of Christ. Besides, the fact that they were elected "to be holy" [<sup><490104></sup>Ephesians 1:4b] plainly refutes the error that derives election from foreknowledge, since Paul declares all virtue appearing in man is the result of election. Now if a higher cause be sought, Paul answers that God has predestined it so, and that this is "according to the good pleasure of his will" [<sup><490105></sup>Ephesians 1:5b]. By these words he does away with all means of their election that men imagine in themselves. For all benefits that God bestows for the spiritual life, as Paul teaches, flow from this one source: namely, that God has chosen whom he has willed, and before their birth has laid up for them individually the grace that he willed to grant them.

### 3. ELECTED TO BE HOLY, NOT BECAUSE ALREADY HOLY

Wherever this decision of God's holds sway, there is no consideration of works. Of course, Paul does not develop the antithesis here, but it must be understood as he himself elsewhere explains it. "He called us," Paul says, "with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose, and the grace that was given to us by Christ before time began." [<sup><550109></sup> 2 Timothy 1:9 p.] And we have already shown that in the words that follow, "that we should be holy and spotless" [<sup><490104></sup> Ephesians 1:4, cf. Vg.], we are freed of every doubt. <sup>F614</sup> Say: "Since he foresaw that we would be holy, he chose us," and you will invert Paul's order. Therefore you can safely infer the following: if he chose us that we should be holy, he did not choose us because he foresaw that we would be so. For these two notions disagree: that the godly have their holiness from election, and that they arrive at election by reason of works. The quibble to which they frequently have recourse, that the Lord does not reward preceding merits with the grace of election yet grants it to future merits, <sup>F615</sup> has no validity. For when it is said that believers were chosen that they might be holy, at the same time he suggested that the holiness that was to be in them originated from election. What consistency is there in saying that the things derived from election gave cause to election?

Paul seems afterward further to confirm what he had said when he states: "According to the purpose of his will" [<sup><490105></sup> Ephesians 1:5, Vg.], "which he had purposed in himself" [<sup><490109></sup> Ephesians 1:9]. For to say that "God purposed in himself" means the same thing as to say that he considered nothing outside himself with which to be concerned in making his decree. Therefore he adds at once that the whole intent of our election is that we should be to the praise of divine grace [cf. <sup><490106></sup> Ephesians 1:6]. Surely the grace of God deserves alone to be proclaimed in our election only if it is freely given. Now it will not be freely given if God, in choosing his own, considers what the works of each shall be. We therefore find Christ's statement to his disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you" [<sup><431516></sup> John 15:16], generally valid among all believers. There he not only rules out past merits but also indicates his disciples had nothing in themselves for which to be chosen if he had not first turned to them in his mercy. And how is Paul's statement to be understood, "Who has first given to him, and he shall receive recompense" [<sup><451135></sup> Romans

11:35]? He means to show that God's goodness so anticipates men that among them he finds nothing either past or future to win them his favor.

#### 4. ROMANS, CHAPTERS 9 TO 11, AND SIMILAR PASSAGES

Therefore, in the letter to the Romans, where Paul both reiterates this argument more profoundly and pursues it more at length, he states that "not all who are descendants of Israel are Israelites" [<sup><450906></sup>Romans 9:6]. For even though all had been blessed by hereditary right, the succession did not pass to all equally. This discussion arose from the pride and false boasting of the Jewish people. For when they claimed for themselves the name "church," they wanted belief in the gospel to depend upon their decision. Today, in like manner, the papists with this false pretext would willingly substitute themselves for God. Paul, although he admits that, by virtue of the covenant, the offspring of Abraham are holy, still contends that many among them are outside of it. And that is not only because they degenerate from legitimate children to bastards but also because God's special election towers and rules over all, alone ratifying his adoption. If their own piety established some in the hope of salvation, and their own desertion disinherited others, it would be quite absurd for Paul to lift his readers to secret election. Now if the will of God, the cause of which neither appears nor ought to be sought outside of himself, distinguishes some from others, so that not all the sons of Israel are true Israelites, it is vain to pretend that every man's condition begins in himself.

From the example of Jacob and Esau, Paul then develops the matter further. For although both were sons of Abraham, enclosed together in their mother's womb, the honor of the first-born was transferred to Jacob. Here was a change like a portent, which, as Paul contends, testified to the election of Jacob and the reprobation of Esau. When one asks the origin and cause, the teachers of foreknowledge would locate it in the virtues and vices of the men. Here is the sum of their facile argument: in the person of Jacob, God showed that he chooses those worthy of his grace; in the person of Esau, that he repudiates those whom he foresees as unworthy.

<sup>F616</sup> So, indeed, they boldly argue. But what does Paul say? "Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call, it was said, 'The elder will serve the younger.' As it is

written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’” [<sup><450911></sup>Romans 9:11-13; cf. <sup><012523></sup>Genesis 25:23.] If foreknowledge had any bearing upon this distinction between the brothers, the mention of time would surely have been inopportune.

Suppose we admit that Jacob was chosen because he had worth arising out of virtues to come; why should Paul say that he had not yet been born? Now it would have been rash to add that he still had done no good, for this answer will be ready: nothing is hidden from God, and so Jacob’s godliness was present before him. If works obtain grace, God’s reward for them ought rightly to have been already established before Jacob’s birth, just as if he had grown up. But the apostle proceeds to resolve this difficulty, and teaches that the adoption of Jacob comes not from works but from God’s call. In treating of works he does not bring in future or past time; he decidedly sets them over against God’s call, wishing by establishing the one skillfully to refute the other. This is as if he said: “It is what God pleased that is to be considered, not what men brought of themselves.” Finally, from the words “election” and “purpose” it is certain that all causes that men commonly devise apart from God’s secret plan are remote from this cause.

## **5. THE CASE OF JACOB AND ESAU REFUTES THE ARGUMENT FROM WORKS**

What will those who assign some place in election to works, either past or future, use for a pretext to obscure these things? For this is directly to evade the apostle’s contention that the distinction between the brothers depends not upon any basis of works but upon the mere calling of God, because it was established between them before they were born. And their subtlety would not have been hidden from Paul if it had had anything genuine in it. But because he well knew that God could foresee nothing good in man except what he had already determined to bestow by the benefit of his election, he does not resort to that absurd disorder of putting good works before their cause. For we have it from the words of the apostle that the salvation of believers has been founded upon the decision of divine election alone, and that this favor is not earned by works but comes from free calling. We have, as it were, an example <sup>F517</sup> of this thing set before us. Esau and Jacob are brothers, born of the same parents, as

yet enclosed in the same womb, not yet come forth into the light. In them all things are equal, yet God's judgment of each is different. For he receives one and rejects the other. It was only by right of primogeniture that one excelled the other. Yet even that is disregarded, and what is denied to the elder is given to the younger.

Indeed, in other cases also God seems always purposely to have despised the right of the first-born, to deprive the flesh of all reason to boast. Disowning Ishmael, he sets his heart on Isaac [<sup><012112></sup> Genesis 21:12]. Setting Manasseh aside, he honors Ephraim more [<sup><014820></sup> Genesis 48:20].

## 6. JACOB'S ELECTION NOT TO EARTHLY BLESSINGS

But suppose someone interrupts me to say that we ought not to conclude from these inferior and slight benefits, concerning the whole of the life to come, that he who has been elevated to the honor of first-born should accordingly be considered as adopted into the inheritance of heaven. For there are very many who do not spare even Paul from the charge that in the testimonies quoted he twisted Scripture to a foreign meaning. <sup>F618</sup> I reply as before that the apostle neither slipped through thoughtlessness nor willfully misused the testimonies of Scripture. <sup>F619</sup> But he saw what they cannot bear to consider: that God willed by an earthly symbol to declare Jacob's spiritual election, which otherwise lay hid in his inaccessible judgment seat. For unless we refer the right of primogeniture granted him to the age to come, it would be an empty and absurd kind of blessing, since from it he obtained nothing but manifold hardships, troubles, sad exile, many sorrows, and bitter cares. Therefore, when Paul saw without doubt that by outward blessing God testified to the blessing, spiritual and unfading, that he had prepared in his Kingdom for his servant, he did not hesitate to seek in the outward blessing evidence to prove the spiritual blessing [cf. <sup><490103></sup> Ephesians 1:3 ff.]. We must also bear in mind that the pledge of a heavenly dwelling place was attached to the Land of Canaan. Hence, it ought not to be doubted that Jacob was, with the angels, engrafted into the body of Christ that he might share the same life.

Jacob, therefore, is chosen and distinguished from the rejected Esau by God's predestination, while not differing from him in merits. If you ask

the reason, the apostle gives this: “For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion’” [<sup><450915></sup>Romans 9:15]. And what does this mean, I ask? It is simply the Lord’s clear declaration that he finds in men themselves no reason to bless them but takes it from his mercy alone [<sup><450916></sup>Romans 9:16]; therefore the salvation of his own is his own work. Inasmuch as God establishes your salvation in himself alone, why do you descend to yourself? Since he appoints for you his mercy alone, why do you have recourse to your own merits? Seeing that he confines your thought within his mercy alone, why do you turn your attention in part to your own works?

Therefore we must come to that lesser people, of whom Paul elsewhere writes that they were foreknown of God [<sup><451102></sup>Romans 11:2]. They are foreknown, not as our opponents imagine that he foreknows, from an idle watchtower, what he does not himself carry out, but in a sense in which we often find the word used. For surely when Peter says, in Luke, that Christ was “delivered up” to death “according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God” [<sup><440223></sup>Acts 2:23], the God he brings forward is not a watcher but the Author of our salvation. Thus also the same Peter, speaking of the believers to whom he writes as chosen according to the prior knowledge of God [<sup><600102></sup>1 Peter 1:2], duly expresses that secret predestination by which God has designated those whom he would have as sons for himself [<sup><600102></sup>1 Peter 1:2]. In adding the word “purpose” as a synonym, since this word everywhere in common parlance expresses a fixed determination, he doubtless teaches that God, while he is the Author of our salvation, does not go outside himself. In this sense, in the same chapter, he speaks of Christ as the lamb foreknown before the creation of the world [<sup><600119></sup>1 Peter 1:19-20]. For what is more absurd or meaningless than for God to look down from on high to see whence salvation was to come to mankind! The people foreknown, then, mean for Paul only a small portion mixed with the multitude, which falsely claims the name of God. Elsewhere, to repress the boasting of those who, only covered with a mask, claim for themselves before the world the chief place among the pious, Paul also says that “the Lord knows who are his” [<sup><550219></sup>2 Timothy 2:19]. In short, with that word Paul points out to us two kinds of people: one, from the whole race of Abraham; the other,

separated from it, and being withdrawn under the eyes of God, hidden from human sight. There is no doubt that he has taken this from Moses, who declares that God would be merciful to whom he willed [<sup><023319></sup>Exodus 33:19], even though the statement concerned the chosen people, whose condition was outwardly equal, as if he had said that in the common adoption is included in his presence a special grace toward some, like a more holy treasure; and that the common covenant does not prevent that small number from being set apart from the rank and file. And he, willing to make himself the free dispenser and judge of this matter, summarily declares that only as it so pleases him will he be merciful to one rather than to another. For when mercy comes to him who seeks it, though he does not indeed suffer refusal, yet he either anticipates or in part acquires for himself the favor for which God claims the praise unto himself.

*(Answers to opponents of this basis of election,  
which also is reprobation, 7-11)*

## 7. CHRIST'S WITNESS CONCERNING ELECTION

Now let the sovereign Judge and Master give utterance on the whole question. Detecting such great hardness in his listeners that he would be almost wasting words before the crowd, in order to overcome this hindrance he cries out: "All that the Father gives me will come to me" [<sup><430637></sup>John 6:37]. "For this is the will of the Father,... that whatever he has given me, I should lose nothing of it." [<sup><430639></sup>John 6:39.] Note that the Father's gift is the beginning of our reception into the surety and protection of Christ. Perhaps someone will here turn the argument around and object that only those who in faith have voluntarily yielded are considered to be the Father's own. Yet Christ insists upon this point alone: even though the desertions of vast multitudes shake the whole world, God's firm plan that election may never be shaken will be more stable than the very heavens. The elect are said to have been the Father's before he gave them his only-begotten Son. They ask whether by nature. No, those who were strangers he makes his own by drawing them to him. Christ's words are too clear to be covered up with any clouds of evasion. "No one," he says, "can come to me unless the Father... draws him... Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me."

[<430644> John 6:44-45.] If all men in general bowed the knee before Christ, election would be general; now in the fewness of believers a manifest diversity appears. Therefore, after Christ declared that the disciples who were given him were the special possession of God the Father [<431706> John 17:6], a little later he adds: “I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine” [<431709> John 17:9 p.; see also <431519> John 15:19]. Whence it comes about that the whole world does not belong to its Creator except that grace rescues from God’s curse and wrath and eternal death a limited number who would otherwise perish. But the world itself is left to its own destruction, to which it has been destined. Meanwhile, although Christ interposes himself as mediator, he claims for himself, in common with the Father, the right to choose. “I am not speaking,” he says, “of all; I know whom I have chosen.” [<431318> John 13:18.] If anyone ask whence he has chosen them, he replies in another passage: “From the world” [<431519> John 15:19], which he excludes from his prayers when he commends his disciples to the Father [<431709> John 17:9]. This we must believe: when he declares that he knows whom he has chosen, he denotes in the human genus a particular species, distinguished not by the quality of its virtues but by heavenly decree.

From this we may infer that none excel by their own effort or diligence, seeing that Christ makes himself the Author of election. He elsewhere numbers Judas among the elect, although he “is a devil” [<430670> John 6:70]. This refers only to the office of apostle, which, even though it is a clear mirror of God’s favor, as Paul often acknowledges in his own person [e.g., <480116> Galatians 1:16; <490307> Ephesians 3:7], still does not contain in itself the hope of eternal salvation. Judas, then, could be worse than a devil, since he faithlessly discharged the office of apostle, but Christ does not allow any of those whom he has once for all engrafted into his body to perish [<431028> John 10:28]; for in preserving their salvation he will perform what he has promised—namely, he will show forth God’s power, which “is greater than all” [<431029> John 10:29].<sup>F620</sup> For what he says elsewhere, “Father,... of those... whom thou hast given me none... is lost but the son of perdition” [<431711> John 17:11-12], even though the expression is misused,<sup>F621</sup> involves no ambiguity. To sum up: by free adoption God makes those whom he wills to be his sons; the intrinsic

cause of this is in himself, for he is content with his own secret good pleasure.

## 8. THE CHURCH FATHERS, ESPECIALLY AUGUSTINE, ON GOD'S "FOREKNOWLEDGE"

But Ambrose, Origen, and Jerome held that God distributed his grace among men according as he foresaw that each would use it well. <sup>F622</sup> Besides, Augustine was of this opinion for a time, but after he had gained a better knowledge of Scripture, he not only retracted it as patently false, but stoutly refuted it. <sup>F623</sup> Indeed, after having retracted it, in censuring the Pelagians because they persisted in this error, he says: "Who would not marvel that the apostle failed to catch this subtlety? For after he had set forth something amazing concerning persons not yet born, and then confronted himself with the question: 'What then? Is there injustice with God?' [<sup><450914></sup> Romans 9:14], here was the place for him to answer that God foresaw the merits of every man. Still he does not say this but takes refuge in God's judgments and mercy." <sup>F624</sup> And in another passage, having taken away all merits before election, Augustine says: "Here, surely, is rendered void the reasoning of those who defend God's foreknowledge against God's grace, and therefore say that we were chosen before the establishment of the world because God foresaw that we would be good, not that he himself would make us good. He who says, 'You did not choose me, but I chose you' [<sup><431516></sup> John 15:16], does not speak of foreseen goodness. For if he had chosen us because he had foreseen that we would be good, he would also have foreseen that we would choose him, and the consequence thereof." <sup>F625</sup> Let Augustine's testimony have weight among us who want to rely upon the fathers' authority. However, Augustine does not allow himself to be cut off from the other fathers but with clear proofs demonstrates that this separation, with the odium of which the Pelagians burdened him, is false. For he quotes from Ambrose: "Christ calls him on whom he shows mercy." Likewise: "If he had willed, he would have made the undevout devout; but God calls whom he vouchsafes to call, and makes godly whom he wills." <sup>F626</sup> If I wanted to weave a whole volume from Augustine, I could readily show my readers that I need no other language than his. But I do not want to burden them with wordiness.

But come now, let us imagine that these fathers are silent; let us pay attention to the matter itself. A difficult question was raised: whether God acted righteously in vouchsating his grace to certain men. Paul could have settled this in one word, by proposing a regard for works. Why, then, does he not do this but rather continues a discourse that is fraught with the same difficulty? Why but because he ought not? For the Holy Spirit, speaking through his mouth, did not suffer from the fault of forgetfulness. Therefore he answers without circumlocutions: God shows favor to his elect because he so wills; he has mercy upon them because he so wills. Accordingly, that declaration prevails: “I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy, and I will take pity on whom I will take pity” [<sup><023319></sup>Exodus 33:19 p.], as if he said: “God is moved to mercy for no other reason but that he wills to be merciful.”

Then that saying of Augustine remains true: “God’s grace does not find but makes those fit to be chosen.” <sup>F627</sup>

## **9. IS NOT ELECTION JOINED TO GOD’S “FOREKNOWLEDGE” OF MAN’S MERITS IN SO FAR AS FREE GRACE MAKES JUST SUCH MERITS POSSIBLE?**

We do not even tarry over the subtlety of Thomas, that foreknowledge of merits is not the cause of predestination on the side of the predestinator’s act but that on our side it may in a way be so called: namely, according to the particular estimate of predestination, as when God is said to predestine glory for man on account of merits, because he has decreed to bestow upon him grace by which to merit glory. <sup>F628</sup> For since the Lord wills that in election we contemplate nothing but his mere goodness, if anyone longs to discern anything more in it, this will be absurd affectation. But if we were willing to contend in subtlety, we have the means to refute this quibble of Thomas’. He contends that glory is in a measure predestined to the elect from merits, for God predestines grace to them by which they may merit glory. But what if I should raise the objection that predestination to grace is subordinate to election to life, and is like a handmaiden to it? that grace is predestined for those to whom the possession of glory has long since been assigned because it pleases the Lord to bring his children from election to justification? Thence it will follow that predestination to glory is the cause of predestination to grace,

rather than the converse. But farewell to these contentions, as they are superfluous among those who consider that there is enough wisdom for them in the Word of God. For long ago an ecclesiastical writer truly wrote, “Those who assign God’s election to merits are wiser than they ought to be.”<sup>F629</sup>

## 10. THE UNIVERSALITY OF GOD’S INVITATION AND THE PARTICULARITY OF ELECTION

Some object that God would be contrary to himself if he should universally invite all men to him but admit only a few as elect. Thus, in their view, the universality of the promises removes the distinction of special grace; and some moderate men speak thus, not so much to stifle the truth as to bar thorny questions, and to bridle the curiosity of many.<sup>F630</sup> A laudable intention, this, but the design is not to be approved, for evasion is never excusable. But those who insolently revile election offer a quibble too disgusting, an error too shameful.<sup>F631</sup> . .

I have elsewhere explained how Scripture reconciles the two notions that all are called to repentance and faith by outward preaching, yet that the spirit of repentance and faith is not given to all. Soon I shall have to repeat some of this.<sup>F632</sup> Now I deny what they claim, since it is false in two ways. For he who threatens that while it will rain upon one city there will be drought in another [<sup><300407></sup> Amos 4:7], and who elsewhere announces a famine of teaching [<sup><300811></sup> Amos 8:11], does not bind himself by a set law to call all men equally. And he who, forbidding Paul to speak the word in Asia [<sup><441606></sup> Acts 16:6], and turning him aside from Bithynia, draws him into Macedonia [<sup><441607></sup> Acts 16:7 ff.] thus shows that he has the right to distribute this treasure to whom he pleases. Through Isaiah he still more openly shows how he directs the promises of salvation specifically to the elect: for he proclaims that they alone, not the whole human race without distinction, are to become his disciples [<sup><230816></sup> Isaiah 8:16]. Hence it is clear that the doctrine of salvation, which is said to be reserved solely and individually for the sons of the church, is falsely debased when presented as effectually profitable to all. Let this suffice for the present: although the voice of the gospel addresses all in general, yet the gift of faith is rare. Isaiah sets forth the cause: that the arm of the Lord has not been revealed to all [<sup><235301></sup> Isaiah 53:1]. If he had said that the gospel is maliciously and

wickedly despised because many stubbornly refuse to hear it, perhaps this aspect of universal calling would have force. But it is not the prophet's intention to extenuate men's guilt when he teaches that the source of the blindness is that the Lord does not deign to reveal his arm to them [<sup><235301></sup>Isaiah 53:1]. He only warns that, because faith is a special gift, the ears are beaten upon in vain with outward teaching. Now I should like to know from these actors whether preaching alone, or faith, makes God's sons.

Surely, when it is said that in the first chapter of John: "All who believe in the only-begotten Son of God also become sons of God themselves" [<sup><430112></sup>John 1:12], no confused mass is placed there, but a special rank is given to believers, "who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" [<sup><430113></sup>John 1:13, Vg.].

But, they say, there is a mutual agreement between faith and the Word. <sup>F633</sup> This is so wherever there is faith; but for seed to fall among thorns [<sup><401307></sup>Matthew 13:7] or on rocky ground [<sup><401305></sup>Matthew 13:5] is nothing new, not only because the greater part indeed show themselves obstinately disobedient to God, but because not all have been supplied with eyes and ears. How, then, shall it be consistent that God calls to himself persons who he knows will not come? Let Augustine answer for me: "You wish to argue with me? Marvel with me, and exclaim, 'O depth!' Let both of us agree in fear, lest we perish in error." <sup>F634</sup> Besides, if election, as Paul testifies, is the mother of faith, I turn back upon their head the argument that faith is not general because election is special. For from this series of causes and effects we may readily draw this inference: when Paul states that "we have been supplied with every spiritual blessing... even as he chose us from the foundation of the world" [<sup><490103></sup>Ephesians 1:3-4 p.], these riches are therefore not common to all, for God has chosen only whom he willed. This is why Paul in another place commends faith to the elect [<sup><560101></sup>Titus 1:1]: that no one may think that he acquires faith by his own effort but that this glory rests with God, freely to illumine whom he previously had chosen. For Bernard rightly says: "Friends listen individually when he also says to them, 'Fear not, little flock' [<sup><421232></sup>Luke 12:32], for 'to you has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven' [<sup><401311></sup>Matthew 13:11]. Who are they? 'Those whom he has foreknown and predestined to be conformed to

the image of his Son' [<sup><450829></sup>Romans 8:29 p.], and to whom God's great and secret plan has become known: 'The Lord knows those who are his' [<sup><550219></sup>2 Timothy 2:19], but what was known to God has been revealed to men. And, indeed, he does not vouchsafe to others participation in so great a mystery, save to those whom he has foreknown and predestined to become his own." A little later he concludes: "'The mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear him' [<sup><19A317></sup>Psalm 103:17; 102:17, Vg.]. From everlasting because of predestination, to everlasting because of beatification—the one knowing no beginning, the other, no end.'" <sup>F635</sup> But why do we need to quote Bernard as a witness, when we hear from the Master's own lips: "Only those see the Father who are from God" [<sup><430646></sup>John 6:46]? By these words he means that all those not reborn of God are astonished at the brightness of his countenance. And indeed, faith is fitly joined to election, provided it takes second place. This order is elsewhere clearly expressed in Christ's words: "This is the will of my Father, that I should not lose what he has given. This is his will, that everyone who believes in the Son may not perish" [<sup><430639></sup>John 6:39-40, freely rendered]. If he willed all to be saved, he would set his Son over them, and would engraft all into his body with the sacred bond of faith. Now it is certain that faith is a singular pledge of the Father's love, reserved for the sons whom he has adopted. Hence Christ says in another passage: "The sheep follow the shepherd, for they know his voice. But a stranger they will not follow,... for they do not know the voice of strangers" [<sup><431004></sup>John 10:4-5, cf. Vg.]. Whence does this distinction arise but from the fact that their ears have been pierced by the Lord? <sup>F636</sup> For no man makes himself a sheep but is made one by heavenly grace. Whence also the Lord teaches that our salvation will be forever sure and safe, for it is guarded by God's unconquerable might [<sup><431029></sup>John 10:29]. Accordingly, he concludes that unbelievers are not of his sheep [<sup><431026></sup>John 10:26]. That is, they are not of the number of those who, as God promised through Isaiah, were to become disciples [cf. <sup><230816></sup>Isaiah 8:16; 54:13]. Now because the testimonies that I have quoted express perseverance, they at the same time attest the unvarying constancy of election.

## 11. REFLECTION ALSO TAKES PLACE NOT ON THE BASIS OF WORKS BUT SOLELY ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL

Now a word concerning the reprobate, <sup>F637</sup> with whom the apostle is at the same time there concerned. For as Jacob, deserving nothing by good works, is taken into grace, so Esau, as yet undefiled by any crime, is hated [<sup><450913></sup>Romans 9:13]. If we turn our eyes to works, we wrong the apostle, as if he did not see what is quite clear to us! Now it is proved that he did not see it, since he specifically emphasizes the point that when as yet they had done nothing good or evil, one was chosen, the other rejected. This is to prove that the foundation of divine predestination is not in works. Then when he raised the objection, whether God is unjust, he does not make use of what would have been the surest and clearest defense of his righteousness: that God recompensed Esau according to his own evil intention. Instead, he contents himself with a different solution, that the reprobate are raised up to the end that through them God's glory may be revealed. Finally, he adds the conclusion that "God has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills" [<sup><450918></sup>Romans 9:18]. Do you see how Paul attributes both to God's decision alone? If, then, we cannot determine a reason why he vouchsafes mercy to his own, except that it so pleases him, neither shall we have any reason for rejecting others, other than his will. For when it is said that God hardens or shows mercy to whom he wills, men are warned by this to seek no cause outside his will.

## CHAPTER 23

### REFUTATION OF THE FALSE ACCUSATIONS WITH WHICH THIS DOCTRINE HAS ALWAYS BEEN UNJUSTLY BURDENED

*(Reprobation the concomitant of election and an act of God's will, 1-3)*

#### 1. ELECTION—BUT NO REPROBATION?

Now when human understanding hears these things, its insolence is so irrepressible that it breaks forth into random and immoderate tumult as if at the blast of a battle trumpet.

Indeed many, as if they wished to avert a reproach from God, accept election in such terms as to deny that anyone is condemned. But they do this very ignorantly and childishly, since election itself could not stand except as set over against reprobation. God is said to set apart those whom he adopts into salvation; it will be highly absurd to say that others acquire by chance or obtain by their own effort what election alone confers on a few.<sup>F638</sup> Therefore, those whom God passes over, he condemns; and this he does for no other reason than that he wills to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines for his own children. And men's insolence is unbearable if it refuses to be bridled by God's Word, which treats of his incomprehensible plan that the angels

themselves adore. However, we have by now been taught<sup>F639</sup> that hardening is in God's hand and will, just as much as mercy is [<sup><450914></sup>Romans 9:14 ff.]. And Paul does not, as do those I have spoken of, labor anxiously to make false excuses in God's defense; he only warns that it is unlawful for the clay to quarrel with its potter [<sup><450920></sup>Romans 9:20]. Now how will those who do not admit that any are condemned by God dispose of Christ's statement: "Every tree that my... Father has not planted will be uprooted" [<sup><401513></sup>Matthew 15:13 p.]? This plainly means that all those whom the Heavenly Father has not deigned to plant as

sacred trees in his field are marked and intended for destruction. If they say this is no sign of reprobation, there is nothing so clear that it can be proved to them.

But if they do not stop wrangling, let sober faith be content with this admonition of Paul's: that there is no reason to quarrel with God "if desiring," on the one hand, "to show his wrath and make his power known, he has endured with much patience" and leniency "the vessels of wrath made for destruction" but, on the other hand, "makes known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy that he has prepared... for glory" [<sup><450922></sup>Romans 9:22-23 p.]. Let readers note that Paul, to cut off occasion for whispering and disparagement, gives the ultimate sovereignty to God's wrath and might, for it is wicked to subject to our determination those deep judgments which swallow up all our powers of mind. Our adversaries give a worthless answer: that God does not utterly reject those whom he tolerates in leniency but suspends judgment on them, should they perchance repent. As if Paul attributed to God patience, in which to await the conversion of those who he says have been "fashioned for destruction"! [<sup><450922></sup>Romans 9:22]. Augustine rightly explains this passage: where might is joined to long-suffering, God does not permit but governs by his power. <sup>F640</sup> They add also that vessels of wrath are for good reason said to be "made for destruction" but that "God has prepared vessels of mercy" [<sup><450922></sup>Romans 9:22]; for in this way Paul ascribes to, and claims for, God the credit for salvation, while he casts the blame for their perdition upon those who of their own will bring it upon themselves. But though I should admit to them that Paul, using a different expression, softens the harshness of the former clause, it is utterly inconsistent to transfer the preparation for destruction to anything but God's secret plan. This was also declared in a little earlier context: God aroused Pharaoh [<sup><450917></sup>Romans 9:17]; then, "he hardens whom he pleases" [<sup><450918></sup>Romans 9:18]. From this it follows that God's secret plan is the cause of hardening. I, at least, maintain this teaching of Augustine's: where God makes sheep out of wolves, he reforms them by a more powerful grace to subdue their hardness; accordingly, God does not convert the obstinate because he does not manifest that more powerful grace, which is not lacking if he should please to offer it. <sup>F641</sup>

*(First objection: the doctrine of election makes God a tyrant, 2-3)*

## 2. GOD'S WILL IS THE RULE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

To the pious and moderate and those who are mindful that they are men, these statements should be quite sufficient. Yet because these venomous dogs spew out more than one kind of venom against God, we shall answer each individually, as the matter requires.

Foolish men contend with God in many ways, as though they held him liable to their accusations. They first ask, therefore, by what right the Lord becomes angry at his creatures who have not provoked him by any previous offense; for to devote to destruction whomever he pleases is more like the caprice of a tyrant than the lawful sentence of a judge. It therefore seems to them that men have reason to expostulate with God if they are predestined to eternal death solely by his decision, apart from their own merit. If thoughts of this sort ever occur to pious men, they will be sufficiently armed to break their force even by the one consideration that it is very wicked merely to investigate the causes of God's will. For his will is, and rightly ought to be, the cause of all things that are. For if it has any cause, something must precede it, to which it is, as it were, bound; this is unlawful to imagine. For God's will is so much the highest rule of righteousness that whatever he wills, by the very fact that he wills it, must be considered righteous. When, therefore, one asks why God has so done, we must reply: because he has willed it. <sup>F642</sup> But if you proceed further to ask why he so willed, you are seeking something greater and higher than God's will, which cannot be found. Let men's rashness, then, restrain itself, and not seek what does not exist, lest perhaps it fail to find what does exist. This bridle, I say, will effectively restrain anyone who wants to ponder in reverence the secrets of his God. Against the boldness of the wicked who are not afraid to curse God openly, the Lord himself will sufficiently defend himself by his righteousness, without our help, when, by depriving their consciences of all evasion, he will convict them and condemn them.

And we do not advocate the fiction of "absolute might"; because this is profane, it ought rightly to be hateful to us. We fancy no lawless god who is a law unto himself. For, as Plato says, men who are troubled with lusts

are in need of law; but the will of God is not only free of all fault but is the highest rule of perfection, and even the law of all laws.<sup>F643</sup> But we deny that he is liable to render an account; we also deny that we are competent judges to pronounce judgment in this cause according to our own understanding. Accordingly, if we attempt more than is permitted, let that threat of the psalm strike us with fear: God will be the victor whenever he is judged by mortal man [Psalm 51. 4; cf. 50. 6, Vg.].

### 3. GOD IS JUST TOWARD THE REPROBATE

So keeping silence, God can restrain his enemies. But lest we allow them to mock his holy name with impunity, out of his Word he supplies us with weapons against them. Accordingly, if anyone approaches us with such expressions as: “Why from the beginning did God predestine some to death who, since they did not yet exist, could not yet have deserved the judgment of death?”<sup>F644</sup> Let us, in lieu of reply, ask them, in turn, what they think God owes to man if He would judge him according to His own nature. As all of us are vitiated by sin, we can only be odious to God, and that not from tyrannical cruelty but by the fairest reckoning of justice. But if all whom the Lord predestines to death are by condition of nature subject to the judgment of death, of what injustice toward themselves may they complain?

Let all the sons of Adam come forward; let them quarrel and argue with their Creator that they were by his eternal providence bound over before their begetting to everlasting calamity. What clamor can they raise against this defense when God, on the contrary, will call them to their account before him? If all are drawn from a corrupt mass, no wonder they are subject to condemnation! Let them not accuse God of injustice if they are destined by his eternal judgment to death, to which they feel—whether they will or not—that they are led by their own nature of itself. How perverse is their disposition to protest is apparent from the fact that they deliberately suppress the cause of condemnation, which they are compelled to recognize in themselves, in order to free themselves by blaming God. But though I should confess a hundred times that God is the author of it—which is very true—yet they do not promptly cleanse away the guilt that, engraved upon their consciences, repeatedly meets their eyes.

*(God's justice not subject to our questioning, 4-7)*

#### 4. GOD'S DECREE IS ALSO HIDDEN IN HIS JUSTICE

Again they object: were they not previously predestined by God's ordinance to that corruption which is now claimed as the cause of condemnation? When, therefore, they perish in their corruption, they but pay the penalties of that misery in which Adam fell by predestination of God, and dragged his posterity headlong after him. Is he not, then, unjust who so cruelly deludes his creatures? <sup>F645</sup> Of course, I admit that in this miserable condition wherein men are now bound, all of Adam's children have fallen by God's will. And this is what I said to begin with, <sup>F646</sup> that we must always at last return to the sole decision of God's will, the cause of which is hidden in him. But it does not directly follow that God is subject to this reproach. For with Paul we shall answer in this way: "Who are you, O man, to argue with God? Does the molded object say to its molder, 'Why have you fashioned me thus? Or does the potter have no capacity to make from the same lump one vessel for honor, another for dishonor?'" [<sup><450920></sup>Romans 9:20-21].

They will say that God's righteousness is not truly defended thus but that we are attempting a subterfuge such as those who lack a just excuse are wont to have. For what else seems to be said here than that God has a power that cannot be prevented from doing whatever it pleases him to do? But it is far otherwise. For what stronger reason can be adduced than when we are bidden to ponder who God is? For how could he who is the Judge of the earth allow any iniquity [cf. <sup><011825></sup>Genesis 18:25]? If the execution of judgment properly belongs to God's nature, then by nature he loves righteousness and abhors unrighteousness. Accordingly, the apostle did not look for loopholes of escape as if he were embarrassed in his argument but showed that the reason of divine righteousness is higher than man's standard can measure, or than man's slender wit can comprehend. The apostle even admits that such depth underlies God's judgments [<sup><451133></sup>Romans 11:33] that all men's minds would be swallowed up, if they tried to penetrate it. But he also teaches how unworthy it is to reduce God's works to such a law that the moment we fail to understand their reason, we dare to condemn them. That saying of Solomon's is well known, although few properly understand it: "The great Creator of all

things pays the fool his wages, and the transgressors theirs” [<sup><202610></sup> Proverbs 26:10, cf. Geneva Bible]. For he is exclaiming about the greatness of God, in whose decision is the punishment of fools and transgressors, although he does not bestow on them his Spirit. Monstrous indeed is the madness of men, who desire thus to subject the immeasurable to the puny measure of their own reason! Paul calls the angels who stood in their uprightness “elect” [<sup><540521></sup> 1 Timothy 5:21]; if their steadfastness was grounded in God’s good pleasure, the rebellion of the others proves the latter were forsaken. No other cause of this fact can be adduced but reprobation, which is hidden in God’s secret plan.

### **5. GOD’S HIDDEN DECREE IS NOT TO BE SEARCHED OUT BUT OBEDIENTLY MARVELED AT**

Come now, suppose some follower of Mani or Coelestius, <sup>F647</sup> a slanderer of divine providence, is present. I say with Paul that we ought not to seek any reason for it because in its greatness it far surpasses our understanding [cf. <sup><450919></sup> Romans 9:19-23]. What marvel, this, or what absurdity? Would he wish God’s might so limited as to be unable to accomplish any more than his mind can conceive? With Augustine I say: the Lord has created those whom he unquestionably foreknew would go to destruction. This has happened because he has so willed it. But why he so willed, it is not for our reason to inquire, for we cannot comprehend it. <sup>F648</sup> And it is not fitting that God’s will should be dragged down into controversy among us, for whenever mention is made of it, under its name is designated the supreme rule of righteousness. Why raise any question of unrighteousness where righteousness clearly appears? And let us not be ashamed, following Paul’s example, to stop the mouths of the wicked, and whenever they dare to rail, repeat the same thing: “Who are you, miserable men, to make accusation against God?” [<sup><450920></sup> Romans 9:20 p.]. Why do you, then, accuse him because he does not temper the greatness of his works to your ignorance? As if these things were wicked because they are hidden from flesh! It is known to you by clear evidence that the judgments of God are beyond measure. You know that they are called a “great deep” [<sup><193606></sup> Psalm 36:6]. Now consider the narrowness of your mind, whether it can grasp what God has decreed with himself. What good will it do you in your mad search to plunge into the “deep,” which your own reason tells

you will be your destruction? Why does not some fear at least restrain you because the history of Job as well as the prophetic books proclaim God's incomprehensible wisdom and dreadful might? If your mind is troubled, do not be ashamed to embrace Augustine's advice: "You, a man, expect an answer from me; I too am a man. Therefore, let both of us hear one who says, 'O man, who are you?' [<sup><450920></sup>Romans 9:20]. Ignorance that believes is better than rash knowledge. Seek merits; you will find only punishment. 'O depth!' [<sup><451133></sup>Romans 11:33.] Peter denies; the thief believes. 'O depth!' Thou seekest reason? I tremble at the depth. Reason, thou; I will marvel. Dispute, thou; I will believe. I see the depth; I do not reach the bottom. Paul rested, for he found wonder. He calls God's judgments 'unsearchable,' and thou settest out to search them? He speaks of his ways as 'inscrutable' [<sup><451133></sup>Romans 11:33], and thou dost track them down?"<sup>F649</sup> It will do us no good to proceed farther, for neither will it satisfy their petulance nor does the Lord need any other defense than what he used through his Spirit, who spoke through Paul's mouth; and we forget to speak well when we cease to speak with God.

## **6. SECOND OBJECTION: THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION TAKES GUILT AND RESPONSIBILITY AWAY FROM MAN**

Their impiety also produces another objection, which tends not so directly to accuse God as to excuse the sinner. Still, he who is condemned by God as a sinner cannot be justified without dishonoring the Judge. Therefore, profane tongues chatter thus: Why should God impute those things to men as sin, the necessity of which he has imposed by his predestination? What should they do? Should they fight against his decrees? But they would do this in vain, since they could not do it at all. Therefore they are not rightfully punished on account of those things of which the chief cause is in God's predestination. Here I shall avoid that defense to which church writers commonly have recourse: namely, that God's foreknowledge does not hinder man from being accounted a sinner; inasmuch as the evils God foresees are man's, not his own. For the quibbling would not stop here but would, rather, urge that God might have countered the evils that he foresaw if he had so willed; that, since he has not done so, by his predetermined plan he has created man to this end, that he may so conduct himself on earth. But if man was created by God's providence to this

condition, that he should afterward do all that he does, then he should not be blamed for what he cannot avoid and undertakes by God's will.<sup>F650</sup> Therefore let us see how this difficulty ought duly to be resolved. First of all, what Solomon says ought to be agreed upon among everyone: "God has made everything for himself, even the wicked for the evil day" [<sup><201604></sup>Proverbs 16:4, cf. Vg.]. Behold! Since the disposition of all things is in God's hand, since the decision of salvation or of death rests in his power, he so ordains by his plan and will that among men some are born destined for certain death from the womb, who glorify his name by their own destruction. If anyone should reply that by God's providence he imposes no necessity upon them but that he has created them in this condition, since he has foreseen their wickedness to come, such a one says something but not everything. The older writers have a habit of using this solution at times but with some hesitation.<sup>F651</sup> But the Schoolmen rest upon it as if no objection could be made against it.<sup>F652</sup> Indeed, I will freely admit that foreknowledge alone imposes no necessity upon creatures, yet not all assent to this. For there are some who wish it also to be the cause of things. But it seems to me that Valla, a man not otherwise much versed in sacred matters, saw more clearly and wisely, for he showed this contention to be superfluous, since both life and death are acts of God's will more than of his foreknowledge.<sup>F653</sup> If God only foresaw human events, and did not also dispose and determine them by his decision, then there would be some point in raising this question: whether his foreseeing had anything to do with their necessity. But since he foresees future events only by reason of the fact that he decreed that they take place, they vainly raise a quarrel over foreknowledge, when it is clear that all things take place rather by his determination and bidding.

## 7. GOD HAS ALSO PREDESTINED THE FALL INTO SIN

They say it is not stated in so many words that God decreed that Adam should perish for his rebellion. As if, indeed, that very God, who, Scripture proclaims, "does whatever he pleases" [<sup><19B503></sup>Psalm 115:3], would have created the noblest of his creatures to an uncertain end. They say that he had free choice that he might shape his own fortune, and that God ordained nothing except to treat man according to his own deserts. If such a barren invention is accepted, where will that omnipotence of God

be whereby he regulates all things according to his secret plan, which depends solely upon itself? Yet predestination, whether they will or not, manifests itself in Adam's posterity. For it did not take place by reason of nature that, by the guilt of one parent, all were cut off from salvation. What prevents them from admitting concerning one man what they unwillingly concede concerning the whole human race? For why should they fritter away their effort in such evasions? Scripture proclaims that all mortals were bound over to eternal death in the person of one man [cf. <450512> Romans 5:12 ff.]. Since this cannot be ascribed to nature, it is perfectly clear that it has come forth from the wonderful plan of God. It is utterly absurd that these good defenders of God's righteousness hang perplexed upon a straw yet leap over high roofs!

Again I ask: whence does it happen that Adam's fall irremediably involved so many peoples, together with their infant offspring, in eternal death unless because it so pleased God? Here their tongues, otherwise so loquacious, must become mute. The decree is dreadful indeed, I confess.

F654 Yet no one can deny that God foreknew what end man was to have before he created him, and consequently foreknew because he so ordained by his decree. If anyone inveighs against God's foreknowledge at this point, he stumbles rashly and heedlessly. What reason is there to accuse the Heavenly Judge because he was not ignorant of what was to happen? If there is any just or manifest complaint, it applies to predestination. And it ought not to seem absurd for me to say that God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of his descendants, but also meted it out in accordance with his own decision. For as it pertains to his wisdom to foreknow everything that is to happen, so it pertains to his might to rule and control everything by his hand. And Augustine also skillfully disposes of this question, as of others: "We most wholesomely confess what we most correctly believe, that the God and Lord of all things, who created all things exceedingly good [cf. <010131> Genesis 1:31], and foreknew that evil things would rise out of good, and also knew that it pertained to his most omnipotent goodness to bring good out of evil things rather than not to permit evil things to be... so ordained the life of angels and men that in it he might first of all show what free will could do, and then what the blessing of his grace and the verdict of his justice could do."

*(God willed, not only permitted, Adam's fall and the rejection of the reprobate, but with justice, 8-11)*

## **8. NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN GOD'S WILL AND GOD'S PERMISSION!**

Here they have recourse to the distinction between will and permission. By this they would maintain that the wicked perish because God permits it, not because he so wills. <sup>F656</sup> But why shall we say "permission" unless it is because God so wills? Still, it is not in itself likely that man brought destruction upon himself through himself, by God's mere permission and without any ordaining. As if God did not establish the condition in which he wills the chief of his creatures to be! I shall not hesitate, then, simply to confess with Augustine that "the will of God is the necessity of things," <sup>F657</sup> and that what he has willed will of necessity come to pass, as those things which he has foreseen will truly come to pass. Now if either the Pelagians, or Manichees, or Anabaptists, or Epicureans (for on this issue we have to deal with these four sects) in excuse for themselves and for the wicked, raise by way of objection the necessity by which they are constrained because of divine predestination, <sup>F658</sup> they advance no argument applicable to the cause. For if predestination is nothing but the meting out of divine justice—secret, indeed, but blameless—because it is certain that they were not unworthy to be predestined to this condition, it is equally certain that the destruction they undergo by predestination is also most just. Besides, their perdition depends upon the predestination of God in such a way that the cause and occasion of it are found in themselves. For the first man fell because the Lord had judged it to be expedient; why he so judged is hidden from us. Yet it is certain that he so judged because he saw that thereby the glory of his name is duly revealed.

Where you hear God's glory mentioned, think of his justice. For whatever deserves praise must be just. Accordingly, man falls according as God's providence ordains, but he falls by his own fault. A little before, the Lord had declared that "everything that he had made... was exceedingly good" [<sup><010131></sup> Genesis 1:31]. Whence, then, comes that wickedness to man, that he should fall away from his God? Lest we should think it comes from creation, God had put his stamp of approval on what had come forth from himself. By his own evil intention, then, man corrupted the pure nature he

had received from the Lord; and by his fall he drew all his posterity with him into destruction. Accordingly, we should contemplate the evident cause of condemnation in the corrupt nature of humanity—which is closer to us—rather than seek a hidden and utterly incomprehensible cause in God’s predestination. And let us not be ashamed to submit our understanding to God’s boundless wisdom so far as to yield before its many secrets. For, of those things which it is neither given nor lawful to know, ignorance is learned; <sup>F659</sup> the craving to know, a kind of madness.

## **9. SUMMARY REFUTATION OF THE SECOND OBJECTION**

Perhaps someone will say that I have not yet brought forward evidence to silence this wicked excuse. But I admit this cannot be so done that impiety will not always growl and mutter. Yet it seems to me that I have said enough to banish not only all reason to gainsay but also all pretext to do so. The reprobate wish to be considered excusable in sinning, on the ground that they cannot avoid the necessity of sinning, especially since this sort of necessity is cast upon them by God’s ordaining. But we deny that they are duly excused, because the ordinance of God, by which they complain that they are destined to destruction, has its own equity—unknown, indeed, to us but very sure. From this we conclude that the ills they bear are all inflicted upon them by God’s most righteous judgment. Accordingly, we teach that they act perversely who to seek out the source of their condemnation turn their gaze upon the hidden sanctuary of God’s plan, and wink at the corruption of nature from which it really springs. God, to prevent them from charging it against himself, bears testimony to his creation. For even though by God’s eternal providence man has been created to undergo that calamity to which he is subject, it still takes its occasion from man himself, not from God, since the only reason for his ruin is that he has degenerated from God’s pure creation into vicious and impure perversity.

## **10. THIRD OBJECTION: THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION LEADS TO THE VIEW THAT GOD SHOWS PARTIALITY TOWARD PERSONS**

Now the adversaries of God’s predestination defame it with a third absurdity. Since we refer solely to the decision of the divine will the

release from universal destruction of those whom he accepts as heirs of his Kingdom, from this they conclude that there is with God “partiality toward persons,” which Scripture everywhere denies. They further conclude either that Scripture disagrees with itself or that in God’s election there is consideration of merits. First, Scripture denies that God shows partiality toward persons in another sense than that in which they judge. For it means by the word “person” not a man but those things in a man which, conspicuous to the eye, customarily either produce favor, grace, and dignity, or arouse hatred, contempt, and disgrace. Such things are riches, wealth, power, nobility, office, country, physical beauty, and the like [cf. <sup><051017></sup>Deuteronomy 10:17]; also, poverty, need, baseness, vileness, contempt, and the like. Thus, Peter and Paul teach that “the Lord shows no partiality toward persons” [<sup><441034></sup>Acts 10:34; cf. <sup><450211></sup>Romans 2:11; <sup><480206></sup>Galatians 2:6], for he does not distinguish between Jew and Greek [<sup><480328></sup>Galatians 3:28] so as to reject one but embrace the other on grounds of race alone. <sup>F660</sup> So James uses the same words when he wants to declare that God in his judgment has no regard for riches [<sup><590205></sup>James 2:5]. But Paul, in another passage, says concerning God that, in judging, a state of freedom or of bondage is not taken into consideration [<sup><510325></sup>Colossians 3:25; <sup><490609></sup>Ephesians 6:9]. Accordingly, no one will contradict us if we say that God chooses as sons those whom he pleases, according to the good pleasure of his will, without any regard for merit, while he casts out and condemns others.

Still, the matter can be explained to fuller satisfaction. Do they ask how it happens that of two men indistinguishable in merit, God in his election passes over one but takes the other? I, in turn, ask: “Do they think that there is anything in him who is taken that disposes God to him?” If they admit that there is nothing, as they must, it will follow that God does not consider the man but seeks from his own goodness the reason to do him good. The fact that God therefore chooses one man but rejects another arises not out of regard to the man but solely from his mercy, which ought to be free to manifest and express itself where and when he pleases <sup>F661</sup> we also see in another passage that “not many originally called were of noble birth, or wise, or distinguished” [<sup><460126></sup>1 Corinthians 1:26 p.], in order that God might humble pride of flesh, so far is God’s favor from being bound to persons!

## 11. GOD'S MERCY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN PREDESTINATION

Some, therefore, falsely and wickedly accuse God of biased justice because in his predestination he does not maintain the same attitude toward all. If, they say, he finds all guilty, let him punish all equally; if innocent, let him withhold the rigor of his judgment from all. But they so act toward him as if either mercy were to be forbidden to him or as if when he wills to show mercy he is compelled to renounce his judgment completely. What is it that they require? If all are guilty, that all together suffer the same punishment. We admit the common guilt, but we say that God's mercy succors some. Let it succor all, they say. But we reply that it is right for him to show himself a fair judge also in punishing. When they do not allow this, what do they do but either try to deprive God of his capacity to show mercy or at least allow it to him on the condition that he give up his judgment completely?

Augustine's statements most aptly accord with this: "Since in the first man the whole mass of the race fell under condemnation,... those vessels of it which are made unto honor are vessels not of their own righteousness... but of God's mercy, but that other vessels are made unto dishonor [cf. <sup><450921></sup>Romans 9:21] is to be laid not to inquiry but to judgment." <sup>F662</sup>

Because God metes out merited penalty to those whom he condemns but distributes unmerited grace to those whom he calls, he is freed of all accusation—like a lender, who has the power of remitting payment to one, of exacting it from another. "The Lord can therefore also give grace... to whom he will... because he is merciful, and not give to all because he is a just judge. For by giving to some what they do not deserve,... he can show his free grace... By not giving to all, he can manifest what all deserve." <sup>F663</sup>

For when Paul writes that "God has shut up all things under sin that he may have mercy on all" [<sup><451132></sup>Romans 11:32, conflated with <sup><480322></sup>Galatians 3:22], at the same time it should be added that he is debtor to no one, for "no one has first given to him, that he should demand something back" [<sup><451135></sup>Romans 11:35 p.].

*(Preaching of predestination not injurious but useful, 12-14)*

## **12. FOURTH OBJECTION: THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION DESTROYS ALL ZEAL FOR AN UPRIGHT LIFE**

To overthrow predestination our opponents also raise the point that, if it stands, all carefulness and zeal for well-doing go to ruin. For who can hear, they say, that either life or death has been appointed for him by God's eternal and unchangeable decree without thinking immediately that it makes no difference how he conducts himself, since God's predestination can neither be hindered nor advanced by his effort? Thus all men will throw themselves away, and in a desperate manner rush headlong wherever lust carries them.<sup>F664</sup> Obviously they are not completely lying, for there are many swine that pollute the doctrine of predestination with their foul blasphemies, and by this pretext evade all admonitions and reproofs. God knows what he once for all has determined to do with us: if he has decreed salvation, he will bring us to it in his own time; if he has destined us to death, we would fight against it in vain.<sup>F665</sup>

But Scripture, while it requires us to consider this great mystery with so much more reverence and piety, both instructs the godly to a far different attitude and effectively refutes the criminal madness of these men. For Scripture does not speak of predestination with intent to rouse us to boldness that we may try with impious rashness to search out God's unattainable secrets. Rather, its intent is that, humbled and cast down, we may learn to tremble at his judgment and esteem his mercy. It is at this mark that believers aim. But the foul grunting of these swine is duly silenced by Paul. They say they go on unconcerned in their vices; for if they are of the number of the elect, vices will not hinder them from being at last brought into life. Yet Paul teaches that we have been chosen to this end: that we may lead a holy and blameless life [<sup><490104></sup>Ephesians 1:4]. If election has as its goal holiness of life, it ought rather to arouse and goad us eagerly to set our mind upon it than to serve as a pretext for doing nothing. What a great difference there is between these two things: to cease well-doing because election is sufficient for salvation, and to devote ourselves to the pursuit of good as the appointed goal of election! Away, then, with such sacrileges, for they wickedly invert the whole order of election.<sup>F666</sup>

But they stretch their blasphemies farther when they say that he who has been condemned by God, if he endeavors through innocent and upright life to make himself approved of God [cf. <520215> 2 Timothy 2:15], will lose his labor. In this contention they are convicted of utterly shameless falsehood. Whence could such endeavor arise but from election? For whoever are of the number of the reprobate, as they are vessels made for dishonor [cf. <450921> Romans 9:21], so they do not cease by their continual crimes to arouse God's wrath against themselves, and to confirm by clear signs that God's judgment has already been pronounced upon them—no matter how much they vainly resist it.

### 13. FIFTH OBJECTION: THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION MAKES ALL ADMONITIONS MEANINGLESS

Yet others maliciously and shamelessly misrepresent this doctrine, as if it overthrew all exhortations to godly living. <sup>F667</sup> This matter once occasioned great ill will for Augustine, which he wiped out by the book *Rebuke and Grace, to Valentinus*. <sup>F668</sup> A reading of this book will readily satisfy all godly and teachable folk. Still, I shall touch upon a few things here, which I hope will satisfy those who are upright and uncontentious. What a plain and outspoken preacher of free election Paul was has previously been seen. <sup>F669</sup> Was he therefore cold in admonition and exhortation? Let these good zealots compare their earnestness with his: theirs will be found ice compared with his intense fervor. And surely all scruples are removed by the principle that we have not been called to uncleanness [<sup><520407></sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:7] but “that everyone may... possess his vessel... in honor,” etc. [<sup><520404></sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:4]; “that we are God's work, created for good works which he has prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” [<sup><490210></sup> Ephesians 2:10, cf. Vg.].

To sum up, those moderately versed in Paul will, without long proof, understand how aptly he harmonizes those things which they pretend disagree. Christ commands us to believe in him. Yet when he says, “No one can come to me unless it has been granted him by my Father” [<sup><430665></sup> John 6:65], his statement is neither false nor contrary to his command. Let preaching, then, take its course that it may lead men to faith, and hold them fast in perseverance with continuing profit. And yet let not the knowledge of predestination be hindered, in order that those

who obey may not be proud as of something of their own but may glory in the Lord. With reason, Christ says: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” [<sup><401309></sup>Matthew 13:9]. Therefore, when we exhort and preach to those endowed with ears, they willingly obey, but in those who lack them is fulfilled what is written: “Hearing, they hear not” [<sup><230609></sup>Isaiah 6:9]. “But why,” says Augustine, “should these have ears to hear, and those have them not? ‘Who has known the mind of the Lord?’ [<sup><451134></sup>Romans 11:34.] Must that which is manifest be denied because that which is hidden cannot be comprehended?” I have faithfully reported this from Augustine; but because his words will perhaps have stronger authority than mine, come now, let us quote what he has written: “For if on hearing this some should be overtaken by torpor and slothfulness, and from striving should go headlong to lust after their own desires, does this mean that what has been said about the foreknowledge of God is therefore to be counted false? If God has foreknown that they will be good, will they not be good, whatever be the depth of evil in which they are now engaged? And if he has foreknown that they will be evil, will they not be evil, whatever goodness may now be discerned in them?” On account of such reasons as these, “then, is the truth that is spoken about God’s foreknowledge either to be denied or to be kept back—at a time, for instance, when if it is not spoken, other errors are incurred?” “The reason,” he says, “for keeping back the truth is one thing, the necessity of speaking the truth is another. It would be tedious to inquire into... all the reasons for keeping back the truth; however, this is one of them: lest we should make worse those who do not understand, while wishing to make more learned those who do understand. These are not made more learned” by our speaking any such thing, “nor are they rendered worse. When, however, a truth is of such a nature that he who cannot receive it is made worse by our speaking it, and he who can receive it is made worse by our remaining silent about it, what do we think is to be done? Must we not speak the truth, that he who can receive it may receive it, rather than keep silence, so that not only neither may receive it but that even he who is more intelligent should himself be made worse? For if he should hear and receive it, through him also many might learn... And we are unwilling to say what we can say by the testimony of Scripture. For we are afraid, forsooth! to offend by our speaking him who is not able to receive the truth; but we are not afraid lest by remaining silent he who can receive the

truth may be involved in falsehood.” Finally, compressing this thought more briefly, he confirms it even more clearly. “Wherefore, if both the apostles and the teachers of the church who succeeded them did both these things—namely, handle God’s eternal election reverently, and hold believers under the discipline of a godly life—why do these people of our time, though bound by the invincible force of truth, think it right for them to say: ‘Even if what is said of predestination... be true, yet it must not be preached to the people’? Assuredly it must be preached so that ‘he who has ears to hear may hear’ [<sup><410409></sup>Mark 4:9; <sup><401115></sup>Matthew 11:15; <sup><420808></sup>Luke 8:8]. But who has them if he has not received them from him who” promises to give them? “Certainly, he who does not receive may reject, while yet he who receives may take and drink, may drink and live. For as piety must be preached that... God may be rightly worshiped,... so also must be preached such a predestination... that he who has ears to hear of God’s grace may glory, not in himself but in God.”<sup>F670</sup>

#### **14. AUGUSTINE AS THE PATTERN FOR THE RIGHT MANNER OF PREACHING DIVINE PREDESTINATION**

Yet that holy man, having a remarkable zeal for edification, tempers his method of teaching the truth so that as far as possible he prudently avoids giving offense. For he reminds us that those things which are truly said can at the same time be fittingly said. If anyone addresses the people in this way: “If you do not believe, the reason is that you have already been divinely destined for destruction,” he not only fosters sloth but also gives place to evil intention. If anyone extends to the future also the statement that they who hear will not believe because they have been condemned; this will be cursing rather than teaching. Augustine, therefore, rightly bids such men begone from the church, as foolish teachers or perverse and foreboding prophets.<sup>F671</sup> Elsewhere he contends for the opinion that a man benefits by rebuke when he who causes whom he will to profit even without rebuke shows mercy and lends help. But why is it this way with one man, another way with another? Far be it from us to say that judgment belongs to the clay, not to the potter! Afterward he writes: “But when men either come or return into the way of righteousness through rebuke, who works salvation in their hearts but him who gives the increase—regardless of who plants and waters [<sup><460306></sup>1 Corinthians 3:6-

8]—whom no man’s free choice resists when he wills to save him? It is not, then, to be doubted that the will of God—‘who has done all things that he has pleased in heaven and on earth’ [<sup><19D506></sup>Psalm 135:6 p.], and who has also made the things that are to come [<sup><234511></sup>Isaiah 45:11]—cannot be resisted by human wills so as to prevent his doing what he wills, since he does with the very wills of men what he wills.” Again: when he would lead men to himself. “Does he bind them by bodily fetters? He acts within; he holds their hearts within; he moves their hearts within; and he draws them by their own wills, which he has wrought within them.” But we ought not to omit what he adds immediately thereafter: “For as we know not who belongs to the number of the predestined or who does not belong, we ought to be so minded as to wish that all men be saved.” So shall it come about that we try to make everyone we meet a sharer in our peace. But our peace will rest upon the sons of peace [<sup><421006></sup>Luke 10:6; cf. <sup><401013></sup>Matthew 10:13]. Hence, as far as we are concerned a healthful and severe rebuke should be applied as a medicine to all that they may not either perish themselves or destroy others. It belongs to God, however, to make that rebuke useful to those whom he... has foreknown and predestined. <sup>F672</sup>

## CHAPTER 24

### ELECTION IS CONFIRMED BY GOD’S CALL; MOREOVER, THE WICKED BRING UPON THEMSELVES THE JUST DESTRUCTION TO WHICH THEY ARE DESTINED

*(The elect are effectually called, and incorporated into the communion of Christ, 1-5)*

#### 1. THE CALL IS DEPENDENT UPON ELECTION AND ACCORDINGLY IS SOLELY A WORK OF GRACE

But to make the matter clearer, we must deal with both the calling of the elect and the blinding and hardening of the wicked.

Of the former I have already said something, <sup>F673</sup> when refuting the error of those who think that the universality of the promises makes all mankind equal. Yet it is not without choice that God by his call manifests the election, which he otherwise holds hidden within himself; accordingly, it may properly be termed his “attestation.” “For those whom he foreknew, he also appointed beforehand to be conformed to the image of his son.” [<sup><450829></sup> Romans 8:29.]

“Those whom he appointed beforehand, he also called; those whom he called, he also justified” [<sup><450830></sup> Romans 8:30] that he might sometime glorify them. Although in choosing his own the Lord already has adopted them as his children, we see that they do not come into possession of so great a good except when they are called; conversely, that when they are called, they already enjoy some share of their election. For this reason, Paul calls the Spirit, whom they receive, both “Spirit of adoption” [<sup><450815></sup> Romans 8:15] and the “seal” and “guarantee of the inheritance to come” [<sup><490113></sup> Ephesians 1:13-14; cf. <sup><470122></sup> 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5]. For he surely establishes and seals in their hearts by his testimony the assurance of the adoption to come. Even though the preaching of the

gospel streams forth from the wellspring of election, because such preaching is shared also with the wicked, it cannot of itself be a full proof of election. But God effectively teaches his elect that he may lead them to faith. To this effect we previously quoted from Christ's own words: <sup>F674</sup> "No other than he who is from God has seen the Father" [<sup><430646></sup> John 6:46 p.]. Again: "I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me." [<sup><431706></sup> John 17:6.] In another passage he says: "No one can come to me unless my Father... draws him." [<sup><430644></sup> John 6:44.] Augustine has wisely expounded this passage in these words: "If, as the Truth says, 'Every man that has learned comes' [<sup><430645></sup> John 6:45], whoever does not come certainly has not learned... It does not, therefore, follow that he who can come actually comes unless he has also willed this and acted upon it. But everyone who has learned from the Father not only is able to come but also comes; and in this result are already present the advantage of the possibility, the affect of the will, and the effect of the action." <sup>F675</sup> In another place he expresses it even more clearly: "What is the meaning of 'Every man who has heard and learned from the Father comes unto me' [<sup><430645></sup> John 6:45] except that there is none who hears from the Father, and learns, who comes not to me? For if everyone who has heard from the Father, and has learned, comes, certainly everyone who does not come has not heard from the Father or learned; for if he had heard and learned, he would come... Far removed from carnal sense is this teaching, in which the Father is heard and teaches us to come to the Son." Shortly after: "This grace, therefore, which is secretly bestowed on human hearts, is not received by any hard heart. It is given for this purpose: that hardness of heart may first be taken away. When, therefore, the Father is heard within... he takes away the heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh [<sup><261119></sup> Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26]... He thus makes them children of promise and vessels of mercy, which he has prepared for glory [chapter 13]. Why, then, does he not teach all that they may come to Christ, unless he teaches by mercy all whom he teaches but he teaches not by judgment whom he teaches not? For 'on whom he will, he has mercy; and whom he will, he hardens' [<sup><450918></sup> Romans 9:18; chapter 14]." <sup>F676</sup>

Therefore, God designates as his children those whom he has chosen, and appoints himself their Father. Further, by calling, he receives them into his family and unites them to him so that they may together be one. But when

the call is coupled with election, in this way Scripture sufficiently suggests that in it nothing but God's free mercy is to be sought. For if we ask whom he calls, and the reason why, he answers: whom he had chosen. Moreover, when one comes to election, there mercy alone appears on every side. Here Paul's statement truly has significance: "It depends not upon him who wills, or upon him who runs but upon God, who shows mercy" [<sup>450916</sup>Romans 9:16]. And it is not as those commonly understand it who divide it between God's grace and man's willing and running. For they explain that man's desire and effort of themselves have no weight unless they are favored by God's grace; but when they are helped by his blessing, they also have their parts, these men contend, in obtaining salvation.

I prefer to refute their cavil with Augustine's words rather than with mine. "If the apostle meant nothing else than that it is not a matter of man's willing or running unless the merciful Lord be present, then it will be permissible to turn the statement around: that it is not a matter of mercy alone unless willing and running be present. But if this is manifestly impious, let us not doubt that the apostle credits everything to the Lord's mercy, leaving nothing to our will or effort."<sup>F677</sup> That holy man wrote to this effect. I consider not worth a straw the subtle point they bring in here: that Paul would not have said this unless there had been some effort and some will in us. For he did not consider what was in man, but when he saw that certain men were attributing part of salvation to men's effort, he simply condemned their error in the first half of the sentence, and in the latter half claimed the whole of salvation for God's mercy. And what else do the prophets do but continually preach God's free call?

## **2. THE MANNER OF THE CALL ITSELF CLEARLY INDICATES THAT IT DEPENDS ON GRACE ALONE**

Besides, even the very nature and dispensation of the call clearly demonstrate this fact, for it consists not only in the preaching of the Word but also in the illumination of the Spirit. We learn in the prophet to what people God offers his Word: "I have shown myself to a people not seeking me; I have openly appeared to those who were not asking me. I have said, 'Here am I,' to a nation that did not call on my name" [<sup>236501</sup>Isaiah 65:1]. And that the Jews might not regard this kindness as

applying only to the Gentiles, he also reminds them whence he took their father Abraham when he deigned to show favor to him: out of the very midst of idolatry, in which with all his people he had been sunk [cf. <sup><062402></sup>Joshua 24:2-3]. When he first shines with the light of his Word upon the undeserving, he thereby shows a sufficiently clear proof of his free goodness. Here, then, God's boundless goodness is already manifesting itself but not to the salvation of all; for a heavier judgment remains upon the wicked because they reject the testimony of God's love. And God also, to show forth his glory, withdraws the effectual working of his Spirit from them. This inner call, then, is a pledge of salvation that cannot deceive us. To it applies John's statement: "We recognize that we are his children from the Spirit, which he has given us" [<sup><620324></sup>1 John 3:24; cf. chapter 4:13]. But lest the flesh boast that it did at least answer him when he called and freely offered himself, he declares that it has no ears to hear, no eyes to see, unless he makes them. Furthermore, he makes them not according to each person's gratefulness but according to his election. You have a notable example of this in Luke, where Jews and Gentiles together hear the preaching of Paul and Barnabas. When all have been instructed by the same Word, it is stated that "those who had been ordained to eternal life believed" [<sup><441348></sup>Acts 13:48]. With what shamelessness can we deny that the call is free when in it, even to the last part, election alone reigns?

### **3. FAITH IS THE WORK OF ELECTION, BUT ELECTION DOES NOT DEPEND UPON FAITH**

But here we must beware of two errors: for some make man God's co-worker, to ratify election by his consent. Thus, according to them, man's will is superior to God's plan. As if Scripture taught that we are merely given the ability to believe, and not, rather, faith itself! Others, although they do not so weaken the grace of the Holy Spirit yet led by some reason or other, make election depend upon faith, as if it were doubtful and also ineffectual until confirmed by faith. Indeed, that it is confirmed, with respect to us, is utterly plain; we have also already seen that the secret plan of God, which lay hidden, is brought to light, provided you understand by this language merely that what was unknown is now verified—sealed, as it were, with a seal. But it is false to say that election

takes effect only after we have embraced the gospel, and takes its validity from this. <sup>F678</sup> We should indeed seek assurance of it from this; for if we try to penetrate to God's eternal ordination, that deep abyss will swallow us up. But when God has made plain his ordination to us, we must climb higher, lest the effect overwhelm the cause. For when Scripture teaches that we are illumined according as God has chosen us, what is more absurd and unworthy than for our eyes to be so dazzled by the brilliance of this light as to refuse to be mindful of election? In the meantime, I do not deny that to be assured of our salvation we must begin with the Word, and that our confidence ought to be so intent as to call upon God as our Father. For some men, to make sure about God's plan, which is near us, in our mouth and heart [<sup><053014></sup>Deuteronomy 30:14], perversely yearn to flit about above the clouds. This rashness, therefore, must be restrained by the soberness of faith that in his outward Word, God may sufficiently witness his secret grace to us, provided only the pipe, from which water abundantly flows out for us to drink, does not hinder us from according its due honor to the fountain.

#### **4. THE RIGHT AND WRONG WAY TO ATTAIN CERTAINTY OF ELECTION**

Therefore, as it is wrong to make the force of election contingent upon faith in the gospel, by which we feel that it appertains to us, so we shall be following the best order if, in seeking the certainty of our election, we cling to those latter signs which are sure attestations of it. Satan has no more grievous or dangerous temptation to dishearten believers than when he unsettles them with doubt about their election, while at the same time he arouses them with a wicked desire to seek it outside the way. I call it "seeking outside the way" when mere man attempts to break into the inner recesses of divine wisdom, and tries to penetrate even to highest eternity, in order to find out what decision has been made concerning himself at God's judgment seat. For then he casts himself into the depths of a bottomless whirlpool to be swallowed up; then he tangles himself in innumerable and inextricable snares; then he buries himself in an abyss of sightless darkness. For it is right for the stupidity of human understanding to be thus punished with dreadful ruin when man tries by his own strength to rise to the height of divine wisdom. And this temptation is all the

deadlier, since almost all of us are more inclined to it than any other. Rare indeed is the mind that is not repeatedly struck with this thought: whence comes your salvation but from God's election? Now, what revelation do you have of your election? This thought, if it has impressed itself upon him, either continually strikes him in his misery with harsh torments or utterly overwhelms him. Truly, I should desire no surer argument to confirm how basely persons of this sort imagine predestination than that very experience,<sup>F679</sup> because the mind could not be infected with a more pestilential error than that which overwhelms and unsettles the conscience from its peace and tranquillity toward God. Consequently, if we fear shipwreck, we must carefully avoid this rock, against which no one is ever dashed without destruction. Even though discussion about predestination is likened to a dangerous sea, still, in traversing it, one finds safe and calm—I also add pleasant—sailing unless he willfully desire to endanger himself. For just as those engulf themselves in a deadly abyss who, to make their election more certain, investigate God's eternal plan apart from his Word, so those who rightly and duly examine it as it is contained in his Word reap the inestimable fruit of comfort. Let this, therefore, be the way of our inquiry: to begin with God's call, and to end with it. Still, this does not prevent believers from feeling that the benefits they receive daily from God's hand are derived from that secret adoption, even as they say in Isaiah, "Thou hast done wonderful things; thine ancient thoughts, true and faithful" [<sup><232501></sup> Isaiah 25:1, cf. Vg.]. Since God wills to confirm to us by this, as by a token, as much as we may lawfully know of his plan. But lest this testimony seem weak to anyone, let us consider how much clarity and assurance it gives us. Bernard speaks to the point on this matter. For after dealing with the reprobate he says: "The decree of the Lord stands firm; his purpose of peace stands firm upon those who fear him, overlooking their evil and rewarding their good actions, so that by a marvelous method of his mercy not only good things but also evil ones work together for good... 'Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?' [<sup><450833></sup> Romans 8:33.] It is sufficient for all righteousness to me to have him alone on my side, against whom alone I have offended. Everything that he has decided not to impute to me is as though it had not been." And a little later: "O place of true repose, which I may not unfitly call by the name 'chamber'! O place in which God is beheld, not, as it were, aroused and in wrath, not as distracted with care, but in which is experienced the influence of his

good and favorable and perfect will! That vision does not terrify but soothes; it does not arouse a restless curiosity but allays it; and it does not weary but calms the senses. Here true rest is felt. The God of peace renders all things peaceful, and to behold him at rest is to be at rest.” <sup>F680</sup>

## **5. ELECTION IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD AND RECOGNIZED IN CHRIST ALONE**

First, if we seek God’s fatherly mercy and kindly heart, we should turn our eyes to Christ, on whom alone God’s Spirit rests [cf. <sup><400317></sup> Matthew 3:17]. If we seek salvation, life, and the immortality of the Heavenly Kingdom, then there is no other to whom we may flee, seeing that he alone is the fountain of life, the anchor of salvation, and the heir of the Kingdom of Heaven. Now what is the purpose of election but that we, adopted as sons by our Heavenly Father, may obtain salvation and immortality by his favor? No matter how much you toss it about and mull it over, you will discover that its final bounds still extend no farther. Accordingly, those whom God has adopted as his sons are said to have been chosen not in themselves but in his Christ [<sup><490104></sup> Ephesians 1:4]; for unless he could love them in him, he could not honor them with the inheritance of his Kingdom if they had not previously become partakers of him. But if we have been chosen in him, we shall not find assurance of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the Father, if we conceive him as severed from his Son. Christ, then, is the mirror wherein we must, and without self-deception may, contemplate our own election. For since it is into his body the Father has destined those to be engrafted whom he has willed from eternity to be his own, that he may hold as sons all whom he acknowledges to be among his members, we have a sufficiently clear and firm testimony that we have been inscribed in the book of life [cf. <sup><662127></sup> Revelation 21:27] if we are in communion with Christ.

Now he gave us that sure communion with himself, when he testified through the preaching of the gospel that he had been given to us by the Father to be ours with all his benefits [<sup><450832></sup> Romans 8:32]. We are said to put on him [<sup><451314></sup> Romans 13:14], to grow together into him [<sup><490415></sup> Ephesians 4:15], that we may live because he lives. Frequently this doctrine is repeated: that the Father did not spare his only-begotten Son [cf. <sup><450832></sup> Romans 8:32; <sup><430315></sup> John 3:15] “that whoever believes in

him may not perish” [<sup><430316></sup>John 3:16]. But “he who believes in him” is said to have “passed out of death into life” [<sup><430524></sup>John 5:24]. In this sense, he calls himself “the bread of life” [<sup><430635></sup>John 6:35]; he who eats this bread will never die [<sup><430651></sup>John 6:51,58]. He, I say, was our witness that the Heavenly Father will count as his sons all those who have received him in faith. If we desire anything more than to be reckoned among God’s sons and heirs, we have to rise above Christ. If this is our ultimate goal, how insane are we to seek outside him what we have already obtained in him, and can find in him alone? Moreover, since he is the eternal wisdom of the Father, his unchangeable truth, his firm counsel, we ought not to be afraid of what he tells us in his Word varying in the slightest from that will of the Father which we seek. Rather, he faithfully reveals to us that will as it was from the beginning and ever shall be. The practice of this doctrine ought also to flourish in our prayers. For even though faith in election prompts us to call upon God, still, when we frame our prayers, it would be preposterous to thrust this upon God or to bargain upon this condition: “O Lord, if I have been chosen, hear me.” For it is his will that we be content with his promises, and not inquire elsewhere whether he will be disposed to hear us. This prudence will free us from many traps if we know how to apply to a right use what has been rightly written; but let us not inconsiderately draw out hither and thither what ought to be kept within limits.

*(Under Christ’s protection the perseverance of the elect is secure:  
Scripture passages cited in objection interpreted, 6-11)*

## **6. CHRIST BESTOWS UPON HIS OWN THE CERTAINTY THAT THEIR ELECTION IS IRREVOCABLE AND LASTING**

The fact that, as we said, the firmness of our election is joined to our calling is another means of establishing our assurance. For those whom Christ has illumined with the knowledge of his name and has introduced into the bosom of his church, he is said to receive into his care and keeping. All whom he receives, the Father is said to have entrusted and committed to him to keep unto eternal life. What would we have? Christ proclaims aloud that he has taken under his protection all whom the Father wishes to be saved [cf. <sup><430637></sup>John 6:37,39; 17:6,12]. Therefore, if we desire to know whether God cares for our salvation, let us inquire whether

he has entrusted us to Christ, whom he has established as the sole Savior of all his people. If we still doubt whether we have been received by Christ into his care and protection, he meets that doubt when he willingly offers himself as shepherd, and declares that we shall be numbered among his flock if we hear his voice [<sup><431003></sup> John 10:3]. Let us therefore embrace Christ, who is graciously offered to us, and comes to meet us. He will reckon us in his flock and enclose us within his fold.

But anxiety about our future state steals in; for as Paul teaches that they are called who were previously chosen [<sup><450830></sup> Romans 8:30], so Christ shows that “many are called but few are chosen” [<sup><402214></sup> Matthew 22:14]. Indeed, Paul himself also dissuades us from overassurance: “Let him,” he says, “who stands well, take heed lest he fall” [<sup><461012></sup> 1 Corinthians 10:12]. Again: You are grafted into the people of God? “Be not proud but fear” [<sup><451120></sup> Romans 11:20]. For God can cut you off again that he may engraft others [cf. <sup><451122></sup> Romans 11:22-23]. Finally, we are taught by this very experience that call and faith are of little account unless perseverance <sup>F681</sup> be added; and this does not happen to all. But Christ has freed us from this anxiety, for these promises surely apply to the future: “All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who will come to me I will not cast out” [<sup><430637></sup> John 6:37]. Likewise: “This is the will of him who sent me, the Father, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me but should raise it up again at the last day.” [<sup><430639></sup> John 6:39, cf. Vg.] Again: “My sheep hear my voice... and they follow me. I know them, and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” [<sup><431027></sup> John 10:27-29 p.] Now when he declares, “Every tree that my Father has not planted will be uprooted” [<sup><401513></sup> Matthew 15:13], he conversely implies that those rooted in God can never be pulled up from salvation. With this John’s statement agrees: “If they had been of us, they would not have gone out from us” [<sup><620219></sup> 1 John 2:19 p.]. And here is why Paul magnificently lords it over life and death, things present and to come [<sup><450838></sup> Romans 8:38]; and this boasting must be grounded upon the gift of perseverance. There is no doubt that he applies this idea to all the elect. Elsewhere, Paul says the same thing: “He who has begun a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ”

[<sup><500106></sup>Philippians 1:6]. David also, when his faith was weakening, rested upon this support: “Do not forsake the work of thy hands” [<sup><19D808></sup>Psalms 138:8, cf. Comm.]. Now there is no doubt, when Christ prays for all the elect, that he implores for them the same thing as he did for Peter, that their faith may never fall [<sup><422232></sup>Luke 22:32]. From this we infer that they are out of danger of falling away because the Son of God, asking that their godliness be kept constant, did not suffer a refusal. What did Christ wish to have us learn from this but to trust that we shall ever remain safe because we have been made his once for all?

## 7. HE WHO TRULY BELIEVES CANNOT FALL AWAY

Yet it daily happens that those who seemed to be Christ's, fall away from him again, and hasten to destruction. Indeed, in that same passage, where he declares that none of those whom the Father had given to him perished, he nevertheless excepts the son of perdition [<sup><431712></sup>John 17:12]. True indeed, but it is also equally plain that such persons never cleaved to Christ with the heartfelt trust in which certainty of election has, I say, been established for us. “They went out from us,” says John, “but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.” [<sup><620219></sup>1 John 2:19.] And I do not deny that they have signs of a call that are similar to those of the elect, but I by no means concede to them that sure establishment of election which I bid believers seek from the word of the gospel. So then, let not such instances induce us at all to abandon a quiet reliance upon the Lord's promise, where he declares that all by whom he is received in true faith have been given to him by the Father, no one of whom, since he is their guardian and shepherd, will perish [cf. <sup><430316></sup>John 3:16; 6:39]. We shall speak of Judas shortly. <sup>F682</sup> Paul [cf. <sup><461012></sup>1 Corinthians 10:12] does not discourage Christians from simple confidence but rather from crass and sheer confidence of the flesh, which bears in its train haughtiness, arrogance, and contempt of others, snuffs out humility and reverence for God, and makes one forget grace received. For Paul tells the Gentiles, whom he is teaching, not to vaunt it proudly and inhumanly over the Jews because they have been introduced in place of the latter who have defected [cf. <sup><451118></sup>Romans 11:18 ff.]. He also requires fear, not that we may be dismayed and waver but that, as we have stated elsewhere, <sup>F683</sup> in

preparing us humbly to receive God's grace, our trust in him may in no wise be diminished. Furthermore, he is not speaking to men individually but to the sects generally. For after the church had been divided into two parts, and rivalry gave rise to schism, Paul warned the Gentiles, who were put in the place of a peculiar and holy people, that this ought for them to be reason for fear and modesty. Yet among them many were puffed up, whose empty boasting it was useful to check. But we see elsewhere <sup>F684</sup> that our hope extends into the future, even beyond death, and that nothing is more contrary to its nature than to be doubting what will happen to us.

## 8. GENERAL AND SPECIAL CALLING [<sup><402202></sup> MATTHEW 22:2 FF.]

The statement of Christ "Many are called but few are chosen" [<sup><402214></sup> Matthew 22:14] is, in this manner, very badly understood. Nothing will be ambiguous if we hold fast to what ought to be clear from the foregoing: that there are two kinds of call. There is the general call, by which God invites all equally to himself through the outward preaching of the word—even those to whom he holds it out as a savor of death [cf. <sup><40216></sup> 2 Corinthians 2:16], and as the occasion for severer condemnation. The other kind of call is special, which he deigns for the most part to give to the believers alone, while by the inward illumination of his Spirit he causes the preached Word to dwell in their hearts. Yet sometimes he also causes those whom he illumines only for a time to partake of it; then he justly forsakes them on account of their ungratefulness and strikes them with even greater blindness.

Now since the Lord saw the gospel published far and wide, held in contempt by many, justly valued by few, he describes God to us in the person of a king, who, in giving a solemn feast, sends his heralds round about to invite a great crowd but can obtain acceptance from very few, for each one claims that something prevents him from coming; hence, since they refuse, he is compelled to call in off the crossroads all met there [<sup><402202></sup> Matthew 22:2-9]. Up to this point everyone sees that the parable is to be understood of the outward call. He afterward adds that God acts like a good host, who circulates from table to table, affably greeting his guests. But if he finds one not dressed in a wedding garment, he will not allow him, unfitly dressed, to dishonor the festivity of the banquet with his unclean attire [<sup><402211></sup> Matthew 22:11-13]. This phrase ought, I admit,

to be understood as applying to those who enter the church on profession of faith but not clothed with Christ's sanctification. God will not forever bear such dishonors, even cancers, <sup>F685</sup> of his church but as their baseness deserves, will cast them out. Few, therefore, were chosen from the great number of those called [cf. <sup><402016></sup>Matthew 20:16]; however, we do not say that this is the call by which believers ought to reckon their election. For this call is common also to the wicked, but the other bears with it the Spirit of regeneration [cf. <sup><560305></sup>Titus 3:5], the guarantee and seal of the inheritance to come [<sup><490113></sup>Ephesians 1:13-14], with which our hearts are sealed [<sup><470122></sup>2 Corinthians 1:22] unto the day of the Lord. To sum up, when the hypocrites, not unlike true worshipers of God, boast of piety, Christ declares that they will be cast out of the place, which they wrongly occupy [<sup><402213></sup>Matthew 22:13], just as in the psalm it is said: "O Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle?" [Psalm 14:1, Vg.; 15:1, EV]. "The innocent of hands and pure of heart" [<sup><192404></sup>Psalm 24:4, cf. Comm.; cf. <sup><191502></sup>Psalm 15:2 ff.]. And elsewhere: "This is the generation of those who seek God, of those who seek the face of the God of Jacob." [<sup><192406></sup>Psalm 24:6; 23:6, Vg.] And thus the Spirit urges believers to patience so as not to be vexed at the mingling of the Ishmaelites with the church, since the latter will eventually be unmasked and cast out in disgrace.

## 9. THE EXAMPLE OF JUDAS IS NO COUNTEREVIDENCE

The same reason applies to the exception raised just above, <sup>F686</sup> where Christ says that "no one perished but the son of perdition" [<sup><431712></sup>John 17:12]; This is indeed an inexact expression but not at all obscure; for he was counted among Christ's sheep not because he truly was one but because he occupied the place of one. The Lord's assertion in another passage that he was chosen by him with the apostles is made only with reference to the ministry. "I have chosen twelve," he said, "and one of them is a devil." [<sup><430670></sup>John 6:70 p.] That is, he had chosen him for the apostolic office. But when he speaks of election unto salvation, he banishes him far from the number of the elect: "I am not speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen" [<sup><431318></sup>John 13:18]. If anyone confuses the word "election" in the two passages, he will miserably entangle himself; if he notes their difference, nothing is plainer. Consequently,

when Gregory teaches that we are aware only of our call but unsure of our election, he is badly and dangerously in error. From this notion he exhorts all men to fear and trembling, making use of this reason: that even though we may know what we are today, we know not what we shall be.<sup>F687</sup> But in this passage he sufficiently declares how he tripped on this stone. For, inasmuch as he made election depend upon the merits of works, he supplied ample reason for men's minds to become dejected; he could not strengthen them, for he did not transfer them from themselves to a trust in God's goodness.

From this believers have some taste of what we set out at the beginning: predestination, rightly understood, brings no shaking of faith but rather its best confirmation. Yet I do not deny that the Spirit sometimes accommodates the utterance to the measure of our understanding—for instance, when he says: “They shall not be in the secret of my people, or be enrolled in the register of my servants” [<sup><261309></sup>Ezekiel 13:9 p.]. It is as if God were beginning to write in the book of life those whom he reckons among the number of His people, although we know, as Christ bears witness [<sup><421020></sup>Luke 10:20], that the names of the children of God have been written in the book of life from the beginning [<sup><500403></sup>Philippians 4:3]. But these words simply express the casting away of those who seemed the chief among the elect, as the psalm had it: “Let them be blotted out of the book of life; let them not be enrolled among the righteous” [<sup><196928></sup>Psalm 69:28; cf. <sup><660305></sup>Revelation 3:5].

## **10. THE ELECT BEFORE THEIR CALL. THERE IS NO “SEED OF ELECTION”**

The elect are gathered into Christ's flock by a call not immediately at birth, and not all at the same time, but according as it pleases God to dispense his grace to them. But before they are gathered unto that supreme Shepherd, they wander scattered in the wilderness common to all; and they do not differ at all from others except that they are protected by God's especial mercy from rushing headlong into the final ruin of death. If you look upon them, you will see Adam's offspring, who savor of the common corruption of the mass. The fact that they are not carried to utter and even desperate impiety is not due to any innate goodness of theirs but

because the eye of God watches over their safety and his hand is outstretched to them!

For those who imagine that some sort of seed of election was sown in them from birth itself, and that by its power they have always been inclined to piety and the fear of God, <sup>F688</sup> are not supported by Scriptural authority and are refuted by experience <sup>F689</sup> itself. They put forward a few examples by which to prove that the elect even before illumination were not strangers to religion: Paul lived a blameless life as a Pharisee [<sup><500305></sup> Philippians 3:5-6]; Cornelius, <sup>F690</sup> with alms and prayers, was acceptable to God [<sup><441002></sup> Acts 10:2], and the like, if any. As for Paul, we grant them their point; in Cornelius, we say they are deceived. For it appears that he was then already enlightened and regenerated, so that he lacked nothing but a clear revelation of the gospel. But what will they wring out of these few examples? That all the elect are always endowed with the spirit of piety? No more than if someone—by showing the uprightness of Aristides, Socrates, Xenocrates, Scipio, Curius, Camillus, and others <sup>F691</sup>—infers from it that all who are forsaken in the darkness of idolatry were earnest seekers of holiness and purity. Indeed, Scripture openly disclaims them in more than one place. This state before regeneration described by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians shows no grain of this seed. “You were dead,” he says, “through the trespasses and sins in which you... walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the air, who is now at work in his disobedient sons. Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of the flesh and of the mind. So we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest.” [<sup><490201></sup> Ephesians 2:1-3, abbr.] Again: “Remember that... you were once without hope, and lacking God in the world.” [<sup><490212></sup> Ephesians 2:12 p.] Likewise: You were once darkness but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light.” [<sup><490508></sup> Ephesians 5:8-9.]

But they would perhaps like this to be referred to ignorance of the true God in which, as they do not deny, the elect are held before they are called. Yet this would be shameless calumny, since he draws the inference that they ought no longer to lie [<sup><490425></sup> Ephesians 4:25] or steal [<sup><490428></sup> Ephesians 4:28]. But what answer will they make to the other passages? Such as that in the letter to the Corinthians, where, after declaring that “neither fornicators nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the

effeminate, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor the greedy, will inherit the Kingdom of God” [<sup><460609></sup> 1 Corinthians 6:9-10], he immediately adds that they were guilty of those very transgressions before they knew Christ but are now washed with his blood and freed by the Spirit [<sup><460911></sup> 1 Corinthians 9:11]. Likewise, another passage, in the letter to the Romans: “Just as you... yielded your members as slaves to impurity and to greater iniquity upon iniquity, so now yield your members in bondage to righteousness” [<sup><460619></sup> 1 Corinthians 6:19, cf. Vg.]. “For what fruit did you get from those things at which you now rightly blush?” [<sup><460602></sup> 1 Corinthians 6:21 p.].

## 11. NOT GROWTH FROM SEED BUT DIVINE DELIVERANCE

What kind of seed of election, pray, then sprouted in those who, defiled in many ways throughout life, as if with desperate wickedness, wallowed in the most abominable and execrable sins of all? If Paul had meant to speak [cf. <sup><460609></sup> 1 Corinthians 6:9-11] as they did, he ought to have shown how much they owed to God’s beneficence, by which they had been saved from falling into such filth. So also ought Peter to have urged his followers to gratefulness, on account of the everlasting seed of election. But on the other hand, he warns them that time past has sufficed to fulfill the lusts of the Gentiles [<sup><600403></sup> 1 Peter 4:3]. What if we come to examples? What seed of righteousness was in Rahab the harlot [<sup><060201></sup> Joshua 2:1] before she had faith? In Manasses, when Jerusalem was stained and almost drenched with the blood of the prophets [<sup><122116></sup> 2 Kings 21:16]? In the thief, who only at his last breath thought of repentance [<sup><422342></sup> Luke 23:42]? Away, then, with these arguments which inquisitive men dream up for themselves apart from Scripture! But let what Scripture holds remain with us: “All like lost sheep have gone astray; every one has turned to his own way” [<sup><235306></sup> Isaiah 53:6], that is, to perdition. Those whom the Lord has once determined to snatch from this gulf of destruction he defers until his own time; he only preserves them from falling into unpardonable blasphemy.

*(How God deals with the reprobate, 12-17)*

## **12. GOD'S ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE TOWARD THE REPROBATE**

As God by the effectual working of his call to the elect perfects the salvation to which by his eternal plan he has destined them, so he has his judgments against the reprobate, by which he executes his plan for them. What of those, then, whom he created for dishonor in life and destruction in death, to become the instruments of his wrath and examples of his severity? That they may come to their end, he sometimes deprives them of the capacity to hear his word; at other times he, rather, blinds and stuns them by the preaching of it. Since there are innumerable examples of the first effect, let us choose one only, which is clearer and more notable than the rest. Before the advent of Christ about four thousand years passed, during which he hid the light of his saving doctrine from all the Gentiles. If anyone answers that he did not make them share in this great benefit because he adjudged them unworthy, their descendants will be not a whit more worthy. In addition to experience, Malachi is an effective witness of this matter: for while exposing their unbelief mixed with gross blasphemies, he announces that a redeemer will come [<sup><390401></sup>Malachi 4:1 ff.]. Why then is he given to the latter rather than the former? He who here seeks a deeper cause than God's secret and inscrutable plan will torment himself to no purpose. Nor should we fear lest some pupil of Porphyry may with impunity gnaw at God's justice, <sup>F692</sup> while we answer nothing on its behalf. For when we assert that none undeservedly perish, and that it is by God's freely given kindness that some are released, we have said enough to show forth his glory without the least need of evasion.

The supreme Judge, then, makes way for his predestination when he leaves in blindness those whom he has once condemned and deprived of participation in his light. Of the former effect there are daily proofs as well as many proofs in Scripture. If the same sermon is preached, say, to a hundred people, twenty receive it with the ready obedience of faith, while the rest hold it valueless, or laugh, or hiss, or loathe it. <sup>F693</sup> If anyone should reply that this diversity arises out of their malice and perverseness, I still will not be satisfied, because the nature of the former would be occupied with the same malice if God did not correct it by his goodness,

Therefore, we shall always be confused unless Paul's question comes to mind: Who distinguishes you? [<sup><460407></sup> 1 Corinthians 4:7]. By this he means that some excel others not by their own virtue but by God's grace alone.

### 13. THE PREACHING OF THE WORD ITSELF CAN CONDUCE TO HARDNESS OF HEART

Why, then, does he bestow grace upon these but pass over the others? Of the former, Luke gives the reason: because they "were ordained to life" [<sup><441348></sup> Acts 13:48]. Of the latter, what shall we think except that "they are the vessels of wrath for dishonor" [<sup><450921></sup> Romans 9:21-22 p.]? Therefore, let us not be ashamed to say with Augustine: "God could," he says, "turn the will of evil men to good because he is almighty. Obviously he could. Why, then, does he not? Because he wills otherwise. Why he wills otherwise rests with him." <sup>F694</sup> For we should be no wiser than it becomes us to be. This is far more adequate than to say evasively with Chrysostom that him who is willing and stretches out his hand God draws to himself. <sup>F695</sup> Otherwise, the distinction would seem to lie not in God's judgment but solely in men's decision, indeed, it does not so stand in man's own impulse, and consequently even the pious and those who fear God still have need of the especial prompting of the Spirit. Lydia, the seller of purple, feared God, yet her heart had to be opened to receive Paul's teaching [<sup><441614></sup> Acts 16:14] and to profit by it. This was said not of one woman only but to teach us that the advancement of every man in godliness is the secret work of the Spirit.

That the Lord sends his Word to many whose blindness he intends to increase cannot indeed be called in question. For what purpose does he cause so many demands to be made upon Pharaoh? Is it because he hoped to soften his heart by oft-repeated embassies? No, before he began, he both had known and had foretold the outcome. "Go," [<sup><020419></sup> Exodus 4:19] the Lord said to Moses, "and declare my will to Pharaoh; 'but I will harden his heart' so that he will not obey" [<sup><020421></sup> Exodus 4:21, cf. Vg.]. Thus when he raises up Ezekiel, he forewarns him that he is sending him to a stubborn and rebellious people [<sup><260203></sup> Ezekiel 2:3] so that he will not be afraid if he finds himself singing to the deaf [<sup><261202></sup> Ezekiel 12:2]. So he advises Jeremiah that his teaching will be like fire, to destroy and scatter

the people like stubble [<sup><240110></sup>Jeremiah 1:10; cf. chapter 5:14]. But the prophecy of Isaiah presses it even farther home, for the Lord sends him out thus: “Go and say to the children of Israel, ‘Hear and hear but do not understand; see and see but do not perceive.’ Make the heart of this people stubborn, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they perchance see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed” [<sup><230609></sup>Isaiah 6:9-10; cf. <sup><401314></sup>Matthew 13:14-15; <sup><410412></sup>Mark 4:12; <sup><420810></sup>Luke 8:10; <sup><431240></sup>John 12:40; <sup><442826></sup>Acts 28:26-27; <sup><451108></sup>Romans 11:8]. Observe that he directs his voice to them but in order that they may become even more deaf; he kindles a light but that they may be made even more blind; he sets forth doctrine but that they may grow even more stupid; he employs a remedy but so that they may not be healed. And John, applying this prophecy, states that the Jews could not believe Christ’s teaching [<sup><431239></sup>John 12:39], for this curse of God hung over them.

We cannot gainsay the fact that, to those whom he pleases not to illumine, God transmits his doctrine wrapped in enigmas in order that they may not profit by it except to be cast into greater stupidity. For Christ testifies that the reason why he expounds to the apostles alone the parables in which he had spoken to the multitude is that to them “it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven but not to the common folk” [<sup><401311></sup>Matthew 13:11 p.]. What does the Lord mean, you will ask, by teaching those by whom he takes care not to be understood? Consider whose fault it is, and stop questioning. For however much obscurity there may be in the Word, there is still always enough light to convict the conscience of the wicked.

#### 14. THE CAUSE OF HARDNESS OF HEART

It now remains for us to see why the Lord does what he manifestly does. If it be answered that it so happens because men have deserved it on account of their impiety, wickedness, and ungratefullness,<sup>F696</sup> this will indeed be well and truly spoken. But because the reason for this variation is not yet clear—why, when some are bent to obedience, these folk remain obdurate—to investigate the matter we must pass on to that point which Paul noted from Moses [<sup><020916></sup>Exodus 9:16], that is, “surely that the Lord from the beginning raised them up to show... his name... in all the earth”

[<sup><450917></sup>Romans 9:17]. The fact that the reprobate do not obey God's Word when it is made known to them will be justly charged against the malice and depravity of their hearts, provided it be added at the same time that they have been given over to this depravity because they have been raised up by the just but inscrutable judgment of God to show forth his glory in their condemnation. Similarly, when it is narrated of Eli's sons that they did not heed his wholesome admonitions, "for it was the will of the Lord to slay them" [<sup><090225></sup> 1 Samuel 2:25], it is not denied that their stubbornness arose out of their own wickedness; but at the same time it is noted why they were left in their stubbornness, even though the Lord could have softened their hearts—because his immutable decree had once for all destined them to destruction. On the same point is John's statement: "Though he had done so many signs before them, yet they did not believe in him. It was that the word of... Isaiah might be fulfilled: 'Lord, who has believed our report?'" [<sup><431237></sup> John 12:37-38; <sup><235301></sup> Isaiah 53:1]. Even though he does not excuse the obstinate from blame, he is still content with this reason, that God's grace is tasteless to men until the Holy Spirit brings its savor. And Christ, quoting Isaiah's prophecy, "They shall all be taught by God" [<sup><430645></sup> John 6:45; <sup><235413></sup> Isaiah 54:13], means only that the Jews are reprobate and alien to the church because they are unteachable. And He offers no other reason than that God's promise does not pertain to them. Paul's statement confirms this: "Christ... a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called... the power... and wisdom of God" [<sup><460123></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:23-24].

For when he stated what usually happens whenever the gospel is preached—namely, that it irritates some, is spurned by others—he says that it is prized only among "those who are called" [cf. <sup><460122></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:22,24]. A little before he had called them "believers" [<sup><460121></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:21], but he did not wish to deny to God's grace, which precedes faith, its rightful place. Rather, he added this second statement by way of correction that those who had embraced the gospel might give the credit for their faith to God's call. Likewise, he teaches a little later that they are "chosen by God" [<sup><460127></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:27-28].

When the impious hear these things, they complain that God with unbridled power abuses his miserable creatures for his cruel amusement.

<sup>F697</sup> But we, who know all men to be on so many counts liable before God's judgment seat that challenged on a thousand points they cannot give satisfaction even on one, confess that the wicked suffer nothing out of accord with God's most righteous judgment. Despite the fact that we do not clearly grasp the reason for this, let us not be unwilling to admit some ignorance where God's wisdom rises to its height.

## **15. SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES THAT SEEM TO PROVE THE OPPOSITE OF THE STATED DOCTRINE:**

### **(A) <sup><263311></sup> EZEKIEL 33:11**

But our opponents are in the habit of quoting in opposition a few Scripture passages in which God seems to deny that the wicked perish by his ordination, except in so far as by their clamorous protests they of their own accord bring death upon themselves. Let us therefore briefly explain these passages and prove that they do not conflict with the foregoing opinion.

A passage of Ezekiel's is brought forward, that "God does not will the death of the wicked but wills that the wicked turn back and live" [<sup><263311></sup> Ezekiel 33:11 p.]. <sup>F698</sup> If it pleases God to extend this to the whole human race, why does he not encourage to repentance the very many whose minds are more amenable to obedience than the minds of those who grow harder and harder at his daily invitations? Among the people of Nineveh [cf. <sup><401241></sup> Matthew 12:41] and of Sodom, as Christ testifies, the preaching of the gospel and miracles would have accomplished more than in Judea [<sup><401123></sup> Matthew 11:23]. If God wills that all be saved, how does it come to pass that he does not open the door of repentance to the miserable men who would be better prepared to receive grace? Hence we may see that this passage is violently twisted if the will of God, mentioned by the prophet, is opposed to His eternal plan, by which He has distinguished the elect from the reprobate. <sup>F699</sup> Now if we are seeking the prophet's true meaning, it is that he would bring the hope of pardon to the penitent only. The gist of it is that God is without doubt ready to forgive, as soon as the sinner is converted. Therefore, in so far as God wills the sinner's repentance, he does not will his death. But experience teaches that God wills the repentance of those whom he invites to himself, in such a way that he does not touch the hearts of all. Yet it is not on that

account to be said that he acts deceitfully, for even though only his outward call renders inexcusable those who hear it and do not obey, still it is truly considered evidence of God's grace, by which he reconciles men to himself. Let us therefore regard the prophet's instruction that the death of the sinner is not pleasing to God as designed to assure believers that God is ready to pardon them as soon as they are touched by repentance but to make the wicked feel that their transgression is doubled because they do not respond to God's great kindness and goodness. God's mercy will always, accordingly, go to meet repentance, but all the prophets and all the apostles, as well as Ezekiel himself, clearly teach to whom repentance is given.

### 16. (B) <sup><540203></sup> 1 TIMOTHY 2:3-4, AND SIMILAR PASSAGES

Secondly, they quote a passage from Paul in which he states that God "wills all men to be saved" [<sup><540203></sup> 1 Timothy 2:3-4]. <sup>F700</sup> Even though this is distinct from the above reason, it has something in common with it. I reply: first, it is clear from the context how He wills it. For Paul couples the two points: that He wills them to be saved, and to come to a recognition of the truth. If they mean that this has been fixed by God's eternal plan so that they may receive the doctrine of salvation, what does that saying of Moses' mean: "What nation is so glorious that God should draw nigh unto it as he does unto you?" [<sup><050407></sup> Deuteronomy 4:7 p., cf. Comm.]. How did it happen that God deprived many peoples of the light of his gospel while others enjoyed it? How did it happen that the pure recognition of the doctrine of godliness never came to some, while others barely tasted some obscure rudiments of it? From this it will be easy to determine the drift of Paul's reasoning. He had enjoined upon Timothy to make solemn prayers in the church for kings and rulers [<sup><540201></sup> 1 Timothy 2:1,2]. But since it seemed somewhat absurd to pour out prayers to God for an almost hopeless class of men (not only strangers all to the body of Christ, but intent upon crushing his Kingdom with all their strength), he adds, "This is acceptable to God, who wills all men to be saved" [<sup><540203></sup> 1 Timothy 2:3-4 p.]. By this, Paul surely means only that God has not closed the way unto salvation to any order of men; rather, he has so poured out his mercy that he would have none without it.

The other statements do not declare what God has determined in his secret judgment regarding all men, but they proclaim that there is ready pardon for all sinners, provided they turn back to seek it. For if they should tenaciously insist on the statement that he wills to have mercy on all [cf. <451132> Romans 11:32], I give by way of exception what is written elsewhere: “Our God is in heaven, where he does whatever he pleases” [<sup><19B503></sup> Psalm 115:3]. So, then, this word is to be explained as to agree with the other: “I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy, and I will pity those whom I pity” [<sup><023319></sup> Exodus 33:19 p.]. He who chooses those upon whom he is bound to show mercy does not bestow it upon all. But since it clearly appears that he is there concerned with classes of men, not men as individuals, away with further discussion! Yet we ought at the same time to note that Paul is not stating what God does at all times, in all places, and to all men, but leaves him free to make even kings and magistrates sharers in the heavenly doctrine, though because of their blindness they should rage against it.

They seem to raise a stronger objection on the basis of a passage in Peter: “God does not will that any should perish but that he should receive all to repentance” [<sup><610309></sup> 2 Peter 3:9 p.]. But the solution of the difficulty occurs immediately in the second phrase, because the will to receive to repentance can only be understood in the sense generally taught. Conversion is obviously in God’s hand: when he promises that he will give a certain few a heart of flesh but leave the rest with a heart of stone [<sup><263626></sup> Ezekiel 36:26], let him be asked whether he wills to convert all. It is indeed true that unless he were ready to receive those who call upon his mercy, this statement would be out of place: “Be converted to me... and I shall be converted to you” [<sup><380108></sup> Zechariah 1:8]. <sup>F701</sup> But I assert that no mortal man approaches God unless God anticipates him. And, if repentance had been man’s to choose, Paul would not have said: “In case God may grant them repentance” [<sup><550225></sup> 2 Timothy 2:25]. Indeed, unless the same God who urges all to repentance with his own voice also drew the elect to himself by the secret moving of his spirit, Jeremiah would not have said: “Convert me, O Lord, and I will be converted... For when thou didst convert me, I repented” [<sup><243118></sup> Jeremiah 31:18-19, cf. Vg.].

## 17. ANSWERS TO FURTHER OBJECTIONS

But, you will say, if this is so, there will be little faith in the gospel promises, which, in testifying to the will of God, assert that he wills what is contrary to his inviolable decree. Not at all. For however universal the promises of salvation may be, they are still in no respect inconsistent with the predestination of the reprobate, provided we pay attention to their effect. When we receive the promises in faith, we know that then and only then do they become effective in us. On the contrary, when faith is snuffed out, the promise is abolished at the same time. If this is their nature, let us see whether they disagree with one another. God is said to have ordained from eternity those whom he wills to embrace in love, and those upon whom he wills to vent his wrath. Yet he announces salvation to all men indiscriminately.<sup>F702</sup> I maintain that these statements agree perfectly with each other. For by so promising he merely means that his mercy is extended to all, provided they seek after it and implore it. But only those whom he has illumined do this. And he illumines those whom he has predestined to salvation. These latter possess the sure and unbroken truth of the promises, so that one cannot speak of any disagreement between God's eternal election and the testimony of his grace that he offers to believers.

But why does he say "all"? It is that the consciences of the godly may rest more secure, when they understand there is no difference among sinners provided faith be present. On the other hand, the wicked cannot claim they lack a sanctuary to which they may hie themselves from the bondage of sin, inasmuch as they, out of their own ungratefulness, reject it when offered. Therefore, since God's mercy is offered to both sorts of men through the gospel, it is faith—the illumination of God—that distinguishes between pious and impious, so that the former feel the working of the gospel, while the latter derive no profit from it. Illumination itself also has God's eternal election as its rule.

Christ's lament which they quote—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,... how often would I have gathered your... chicks, and you would not!"

[<sup><402337></sup>Matthew 23:37 p.]—gives them no support. I admit that Christ not only speaks in his character as man but also reproaches them with having refused his grace in every age.

But we must define the will of God, now under discussion. It is perfectly clear how carefully God took pains to hold that people, and how stubbornly, from the highest to the lowest, given over to wayward desires, they refused to be gathered together. But it does not follow from this that God's plan was made void by men's evil intent. They object that nothing agrees less with God's nature than that he should be of double will.<sup>F703</sup> This I grant them, provided they explain it correctly. But why do they not consider the numerous passages in which God, taking on human emotions, descends to what is beneath his own majesty? He says that he has stretched out his arms... to call a rebellious people [<sup><236502></sup> Isaiah 65:2]; early and late he has taken care to lead them back to him. If they want to apply all this to God, disregarding the figure of speech, many superfluous contentions will arise, which this one solution can dispose of: what is human is transferred to God. Albeit the solution we have elsewhere advanced<sup>F704</sup> is quite sufficient: although to our perception God's will is manifold, he does not will this and that in himself, but according to his diversely manifold wisdom, as Paul calls it [<sup><490310></sup> Ephesians 3:10], he strikes dumb our senses until it is given to us to recognize how wonderfully he wills what at the moment seems to be against his will.

They play with the frivolous argument that, since God is Father of all, it is unjust for him to forsake any but those who by their own guilt previously have deserved this punishment. As if God's generosity did not extend even to pigs and dogs! But if it is a question of mankind, let them answer why God bound himself to one people, to be their Father; also why he picked a small number out of these, like a flower. But their own passion to speak evil prevents these revilers from considering that "God makes his sun rise on the good and the evil" [<sup><400545></sup> Matthew 5:45 p.], so that the inheritance is entrusted to those few to whom he will sometime say, "Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom" [<sup><402534></sup> Matthew 25:34], etc. They also object that God hates nothing he has made.<sup>F705</sup> This I concede to them; yet what I teach stands firm: that the reprobate are hateful to God, and with very good reason. For, deprived of his Spirit, they can bring forth nothing but reason for cursing. They add that "there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile" [<sup><451012></sup> Romans 10:12], and that consequently God's grace is extended to all indiscriminately. Provided, to be sure, that they admit, as Paul states, that "God calls men both from the

Jews and from the Gentiles according to his good pleasure”

[<sup><450924></sup>Romans 9:24 p.], so that he is bound to no one. In this way we also dispose of their objection made in another place, that “God has shut up all things under sin, that he may have mercy upon all” [<sup><451132></sup>Romans 11:32, conflated with <sup><480322></sup>Galatians 3:22]; that is to say, because he wills that the salvation of all who are saved be ascribed to his own mercy, although this benefit is not common to all. Now when many notions are adduced on both sides, let this be our conclusion: to tremble with Paul at so deep a mystery; but, if froward tongues clamor, not to be ashamed of this exclamation of his: “Who are you, O man, to argue with God?” [<sup><450920></sup>Romans 9:20 p.]. For as Augustine truly contends, they who measure divine justice by the standard of human justice are acting perversely. <sup>F706</sup>

# CHAPTER 25

## THE FINAL RESURRECTION

*(Assertion of the doctrine of the final resurrection, 1-4)*

### 1. IMPORTANCE OF AND HINDRANCES TO THE RESURRECTION HOPE

Christ, the Sun of Righteousness [<sup><390402></sup> Malachi 4:2], shining through the gospel and having overcome death, has, as Paul testifies, brought us the light of life [<sup><550110></sup> 2 Timothy 1:10]. Hence we likewise by believing “pass out of death into life” [<sup><430524></sup> John 5:24], being “no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens of the saints and of the household of God” [<sup><490219></sup> Ephesians 2:19], who “made us sit” with his only-begotten Son “in heavenly places” [<sup><490206></sup> Ephesians 2:6], that we may lack nothing for full happiness. Yet lest we be still grievously exercised under hard military service, as though we obtained no benefit from the victory won by Christ, we must cling to what is elsewhere taught concerning the nature of hope. Since we hope for what we do not see [<sup><450825></sup> Romans 8:25], and, as is elsewhere stated, “faith is the indication of things unseen” [<sup><581101></sup> Hebrews 11:1 p.], so long as we are confined in the prison house of the flesh, <sup>F707</sup> “we are away from the Lord” [<sup><470506></sup> 2 Corinthians 5:6]. For this reason, the same Paul says in another passage that “we have died, and our life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, appears, then we also will appear with him in glory” [<sup><510303></sup> Colossians 3:3-4 p.]. This, then, is our condition: “that by living sober, righteous, and godly lives in this age, we may await our blessed hope, and the coming of the glory of our great God, and of our Savior Jesus Christ” [<sup><560212></sup> Titus 2:12-13 p.]. Here, then, we need more than common patience, that we may not in our weariness reverse our course or desert our post.

Therefore, whatever has so far been explained concerning our salvation calls for minds lifted up to heaven, so that “we may love Christ, whom we have not seen, and believing in him may rejoice with unutterable and

exalted joy” until, as Peter declares, we receive “the outcome of our faith” [<sup>600108</sup> 1 Peter 1:8-9]. For this reason, Paul says that the faith and love of the godly have regard to the hope that rests in heaven [<sup>510104</sup> Colossians 1:4-5]. When, therefore, with our eyes fast fixed on Christ we wait upon heaven, and nothing on earth hinders them from bearing us to the promised blessedness, the statement is truly fulfilled “that where our treasure is, our heart is” [<sup>400621</sup> Matthew 6:21]. Hence arises the fact that faith is so rare in this world: nothing is harder for our slowness than to climb over innumerable obstacles in “pressing on toward the goal of the upward call” [<sup>500314</sup> Philippians 3:14]. To the huge mass of miseries that almost overwhelms us are added the jests of profane men, which assail our innocence when we, willingly renouncing the allurements of present benefits, seem to strive after a blessedness hidden from us as if it were a fleeting shadow. Finally, above and below us, before us and behind, violent temptations besiege us, which our minds would be quite unable to sustain, were they not freed of earthly things and bound to the heavenly life, which appears to be far away. Accordingly, he alone has fully profited in the gospel who has accustomed himself to continual meditation upon the blessed resurrection.

## 2. LONGING FOR UNION WITH GOD AS MOTIVE FOR THE HOPE OF RESURRECTION

The ancient philosophers anxiously discussed the sovereign good, and even contended among themselves over it. Yet none but Plato recognized man’s highest good as union with God, <sup>F708</sup> and he could not even dimly sense its nature. And no wonder, for he had learned nothing of the sacred bond of that union. Even on this earthly pilgrimage we know the sole and perfect happiness; but this happiness kindles our hearts more and more each day to desire it, until the full fruition of it shall satisfy us. Accordingly, I said that they alone receive the fruit of Christ’s benefits who raise their minds to the resurrection. <sup>F709</sup> So it is that Paul holds out to believers this goal [<sup>500308</sup> Philippians 3:8], to which he says he strives, for-getting all things [<sup>500313</sup> Philippians 3:13] until he attains it. We also ought to strive toward it the more eagerly, lest, if the world lay hold on us, we be grievously punished for our sloth. Accordingly, in another place he

distinguishes believers by this mark, that their “conversation is in heaven,” whence also they “await their Savior” [<sup><500320></sup>Philippians 3:20].

And, that their courage may not fail in this race, Paul joins all creatures to them as companions. For because formless ruins are seen everywhere, he says that everything in heaven and on earth strives after renewal [<sup><450819></sup>Romans 8:19]. For since Adam by his fall brought into confusion the perfect order of nature, the bondage to which the creatures have been subjected because of man’s sin is heavy and grievous to them. Not that they are endowed with any perception, but they naturally long for the undamaged condition whence they have fallen. Accordingly, Paul has attributed “groaning” and “birth pangs” [<sup><450822></sup>Romans 8:22] to them, that we, “who have received the first fruits of the Spirit’ [<sup><450823></sup>Romans 8:23], should be ashamed to languish in our corruption, and not at least to imitate the dead elements, which bear the punishment for the sin of another. To prick us more sharply, Paul calls the final coming of Christ “our redemption” [cf. <sup><450823></sup>Romans 8:23]. It is true indeed that all the parts of our resurrection have already been completed; but because Christ was once for all offered for sins [<sup><581012></sup>Hebrews 10:12], “he shall appear a second time, apart from sin... unto salvation” [<sup><580928></sup>Hebrews 9:28]. Whatever hardships distress us, let this “redemption” sustain us until its completion.

### **3. THE RESURRECTION HOPED FOR IS THAT OF THE BODY: CHRIST’S RESURRECTION, THE PROTOTYPE**

The very importance of the matter should sharpen our attention. For Paul rightly argues that “if the dead do not rise up again,... the whole gospel is vain and fallacious” [<sup><461513></sup>1 Corinthians 15:13-14 p.], for our condition would be more pitiable than that of all other mortals [<sup><461519></sup>1 Corinthians 15:19], seeing that, exposed to the hatred and reproach of many, we are every hour in danger [cf. <sup><461530></sup>1 Corinthians 15:30], yea, “we are as sheep destined for the slaughter” [<sup><450836></sup>Romans 8:36; <sup><194422></sup>Psalms 44:22; cf. 5:23, Comm.]. Accordingly, the authority of the gospel would fall not merely in one part but in its entirety, which is embraced in our adoption and the effecting of our salvation. Let us, then, be so attentive to this most serious matter of all that no length of time may weary us. I have deferred to this place my brief discussion of it for this purpose: that my

readers may learn, when they have received Christ, the Author of perfect salvation, to rise up higher, and may know that he is clothed in heavenly immortality and glory so that the whole body may be conformed to the Head. Even thus in his person the Holy Spirit repeatedly sets before us the example of the resurrection.

It is difficult to believe that bodies, when consumed with rottenness, will at length be raised up in their season. Therefore, although many of the philosophers declared souls immortal, few approved the resurrection of the flesh. <sup>F710</sup> Even though there was no excuse for this point of view, we are nevertheless reminded by it that it is something too hard for men's minds to apprehend. Scripture provides two helps by which faith may overcome this great obstacle: one in the parallel of Christ's resurrection; the other in the omnipotence of God.

Now whenever we consider the resurrection, let Christ's image come before us. In the nature which he took from us he so completed the course of mortal life that now, having obtained immortality, he is the pledge of our coming resurrection. <sup>F711</sup> For in the miseries that beset us [cf. <sup><470408></sup> 2 Corinthians 4:8-9], "we carry in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may... be manifested in us" [<sup><470410></sup> 2 Corinthians 4:10 p.]. And to separate him from ourselves is not permissible and not even possible, without tearing him apart. From this, Paul argues: "If the dead do not rise up again, then Christ did not rise up again" [<sup><461516></sup> 1 Corinthians 15:16]. For he takes it as an agreed principle that it was not for himself alone that Christ was subjected to death, or that he obtained victory over death by rising again. Rather there was begun in the Head what must be completed in all the members, according to the rank and station of each. For indeed it would not even be right for them to be made equal to him in all respects. It is said in the psalm: "Thou wilt not allow thy meek one to see corruption" [<sup><191610></sup> Psalm 16:10 p.; cf. <sup><440227></sup> Acts 2:27]. Although a portion of this trust belongs to us according to the measure of what is bestowed, the full effect of it appeared in Christ alone, who, immune from all corruption, received back a perfect body. Now, that our fellowship with Christ in the blessed resurrection may not be doubtful, in order that we may be content with this pledge, Paul plainly declares that Christ is seated in heaven [cf. <sup><490120></sup> Ephesians 1:20], and will come on the Last Day as judge to conform our lowly, inglorious body to his glorious body

[<sup><500320></sup>Philippians 3:20-21]. Paul also teaches in another place [<sup><510304></sup>Colossians 3:4] that God raised his Son from the dead, not to make known a single example of his power, but to show toward us believers the same working of the Spirit, whom he calls “life” while he dwells in us because he was given, to the end that he may quicken what is mortal in us [cf. <sup><450811></sup>Romans 8:11].

I am only touching upon what could be treated more fully and deserves to be set out more brilliantly. Yet I trust that devout readers will find in these few words enough material to build up their faith. Therefore, Christ rose again that he might have us as companions in the life to come. He was raised by the Father, inasmuch as he was Head of the church, from which the Father in no way allows him to be severed. He was raised by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Quickener of us in common with him. Finally, he was raised that he might be “the resurrection and the life” [<sup><431125></sup>John 11:25]. As we have said that in this mirror the living image of the resurrection is visible to us, so is it a firm foundation to support our minds, provided we are not wearied or irked with a longer delay; for our task is not to measure minutes of time as we please but patiently to wait until God in his own good time restores his Kingdom. Paul’s exhortation bears upon this: “Christ the first fruits, then... those who are Christ’s, each in his order” [<sup><461523></sup>1 Corinthians 15:23].

But, that no question may be raised concerning Christ’s resurrection, upon which is based the resurrection of us all, we see how often and in what varied ways he has caused it to be attested to us. Scorners will treat as a fairy tale what the Evangelists relate as history. What value will the tidings have, brought by poor frightened women and confirmed by disciples almost lifeless with fear? Why does Christ not rather set up shining trophies of his victory in the midst of the Temple and in the public places? Why does he not appear with terrible mien before Pilate? Why does he not also prove to the priests and the whole of Jerusalem that he had returned to life?<sup>F712</sup> Worldly men would scarcely admit that the witnesses he chose were adequate.

I reply: although in these beginnings his weakness could be despised, by God’s wonderful providence all this was so governed that they who had just been overwhelmed with fright were carried away to the tomb partly

by love of Christ and zeal for piety, partly by their unbelief, that they might not only be eyewitnesses of the matter but might hear from the angels the same thing that they beheld with their eyes. How can we suspect the trustworthiness of those who thought what they heard from the women a mere tale until they were confronted with the fact itself? As for all the people and the ruler himself, after it had been abundantly proved to them, it is no wonder that they were deprived of a sight of Christ as well as of other signs. The tomb is sealed, watchmen guard it [[402766](#)> Matthew 27:66], but on the third day the body is not found [cf. [422403](#)> Luke 24:3] [[402806](#)> Matthew 28:6,11; cf. ch. 27:24]. Bribed soldiers spread the rumor that he has been stolen away by his disciples [[402812](#)> Matthew 28:12-13,15]. As if they were capable of overpowering a troop, or were supplied with weapons, or even had sufficient experience to dare commit such a deed! But if the soldiers had not enough courage to drive them away, why did they not pursue them, that, with the people's help, they might catch some of them? Pilate truly sealed Christ's resurrection with his own ring; and those stationed as guards at the tomb, by their silence or their lying, became the heralds of the same resurrection. Meanwhile, the voice of angels resounded: "He has risen; he is not here" [cf. [402806](#)> Matthew 28:6; [422406](#)> Luke 24:6, KJV, RSV note]. The heavenly splendor showed them plainly to be not men but angels.

Afterward Christ himself removed any doubt that may have remained [[422408](#)> Luke 24:88]. The disciples saw him more than once and even touched his feet and hands [[422440](#)> Luke 24:40; cf. [432027](#)> John 20:27], and their unbelief contributed no little to the strengthening of our faith. He talked with them about the mysteries of the Kingdom of God [[440103](#)> Acts 1:3], and finally, while they looked on, he ascended into heaven [[440109](#)> Acts 1:9]. This sight was shown not only to the eleven apostles, but "he was seen by more than five hundred brethren at one time" [[461506](#)> 1 Corinthians 15:6]. Now when he sent the Holy Spirit he gave certain proof not only of life but also of his supreme Lordship, as he had foretold: "It is expedient for you that I go away; otherwise the Holy Spirit will not come" [[431607](#)> John 16:7 p.]. Now truly, it was not by a dead man's power that Paul was thrown prostrate on the road, but he felt that He whom he was attacking held the most exalted power [[440904](#)> Acts 9:4]. He appeared to Stephen for another reason, that He might conquer the fear

of death with assurance of life [<sup><440755></sup> Acts 7:55]. To discredit so many authentic evidences is not only disbelief but a depraved and even insane obstinacy.

#### **4. GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE AS FOUNDATION OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY**

We have said that in proving the resurrection our thoughts ought to be directed to God's boundless might. Paul briefly teaches this: "To change our lowly body," he says, "to be like his glorious body, according to his power which enables him... to subject all things to himself" [<sup><500321></sup> Philippians 3:21 p.]. Accordingly, nothing could be more unfitting than to be thinking of something that can happen in the course of nature, when there is set before us an incalculable miracle, which by its greatness overwhelms our senses. Still, Paul, by setting forth a proof from nature, confutes the folly of those who deny the resurrection. "You foolish men," he says, "what you sow does not come to life unless it dies," etc. [<sup><461536></sup> 1 Corinthians 15:36.] In sowing, he tells us, we discern an image of the resurrection, for out of corruption springs up grain.

And this fact would not be so hard to believe if we paid proper attention to the miracles thrust before our eyes throughout all the regions of the world. But let us remember that no one is truly persuaded of the coming resurrection unless he is seized with wonder, and ascribes to the power of God its due glory. Isaiah, lifted up by this assurance, exclaims: "Thy dead men shall live; my body shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and praise" [<sup><232619></sup> Isaiah 26:19]. In desperate circumstances David raises himself to God, the Author of life, to whom "belongs the escape from death," as it is said in the psalm [<sup><196820></sup> Psalm 68:20]. Job also, more like a corpse than a man, relying on God's might, doubts not that he will arise as a whole man at that day: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and in the Last Day he will arise upon the dust" (that is, to show his might there), "and I shall again be covered with my skin and in my flesh I shall see God; I myself shall see, and not another" [<sup><181925></sup> Job 19:25-27 p.]. <sup>F713</sup> For even though our opponents quite subtly twist these passages, as if they ought not to be explained as applying to the resurrection, yet they confirm what they long to overthrow; for holy men in their troubles seek comfort from no other source than the similitude of the resurrection.

This is better recognized from a passage in Ezekiel: when the Jews rejected the promise of their return, and objected that it was no more likely that a way would be opened to them than that dead men should go forth from the grave, the prophet receives a vision of a field full of dry bones, which at God's command are to receive flesh and sinews [<sup><263701></sup>Ezekiel 37:1-10]. Although under that figure he arouses the people to hope for a return, yet he takes his basis for hoping from the resurrection; just as it is for us the chief model of all the deliverances that believers experience in this world. So Christ, after he has taught that the voice of the gospel gives life, because the Jews did not receive it, immediately adds: "Do not marvel at this, for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear the voice of the Son of God, and will come forth" [<sup><430528></sup>John 5:28-29 p.].

Therefore, after Paul's example let us now eagerly triumph in the midst of our battles, because He who has promised us a future life is able to preserve what has been entrusted [<sup><550112></sup>2 Timothy 1:12]; and so let us exult that the crown of righteousness has been laid up for us, which the righteous Judge shall give to us [<sup><550408></sup>2 Timothy 4:8]. Thus it will come to pass that whatever annoyances we suffer will foreshow to us the life to come. For it befits God's nature to repay with affliction the wicked who afflict us, but with rest to repay us, who are unjustly afflicted, in the manifestation of Christ with the angels of his might, in the flame of fire [<sup><530106></sup>2 Thessalonians 1:6-8]. But we must grasp what he adds shortly after: He will come "to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all who have believed," because they had faith in the gospel [<sup><530110></sup>2 Thessalonians 1:10].

*(Objections of various classes of opponents to the doctrine refuted, 5-9)*

## **5. PAGAN DENIAL OF RESURRECTION COUNTERED BY BURIAL RITES. THE ERROR OF THE CHILIASTS**

But even though it was fitting for the minds of men to be constantly occupied in this pursuit, as if with deliberate intent to blot out all memory of resurrection, death has been called the bound of all things and the extinction of man.<sup>F714</sup> Surely, Solomon expresses the commonly received opinion when he says, "A living dog is better than a dead lion" [<sup><210904></sup>Ecclesiastes 9:4]. And another passage: "Who knows whether the

spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes downward?" [<sup><210321></sup>Ecclesiastes 3:21 p.] For in every age this brute stupidity has been abroad, and has even forced its way into the church itself, for the Sadducees dared publicly assert that there is no resurrection [<sup><411218></sup>Mark 12:18; <sup><422027></sup>Luke 20:27; <sup><442308></sup>Acts 23:8], in fact, that souls are mortal.

But in order that this gross ignorance might not excuse anyone, by an unbelievable prompting of nature men always had before their eyes an image of the resurrection. Why the sacred and inviolable custom of burial but as an earnest of new life? And no one can claim that this arose out of error, for burial rites were always kept up among the holy patriarchs; and God willed that the same custom remain among the Gentiles so that an image of the resurrection set before them might shake off their drowsiness. Now, although that ceremony was unprofitable, it is useful to us if we wisely look to its purpose. For it is a weighty refutation of unbelief that all together professed what no one believed!

But Satan has not only befuddled men's senses to make them bury with the corpses the memory of resurrection; he has also attempted to corrupt this part of the doctrine with various falsifications that he might at length destroy it. I pass over the fact that in Paul's day he began to overthrow it [<sup><461512></sup>1 Corinthians 15:12 ff.]. But a little later there followed the chiliasts, who limited the reign of Christ to a thousand years. <sup>F715</sup> Now their fiction his too childish either to need or to be worth a refutation. And the Apocalypse, from which they undoubtedly drew a pretext for their error, does not support them. For the number "one thousand" [<sup><662004></sup>Revelation 20:4] does not apply to the eternal blessedness of the church but only to the various disturbances that awaited the church, while still toiling on earth. On the contrary, all Scripture proclaims that there will be no end to the blessedness of the elect or the punishment of the wicked [<sup><402541></sup>Matthew 25:41, 46].

Now all those matters which elude our gaze and far exceed the capacity of our minds must either be believed as from actual oracles of God or utterly cast away. Those who assign the children of God a thousand years in which to enjoy the inheritance of the life to come do not realize how much reproach they are casting upon Christ and his Kingdom. For if they do not put on immortality, then Christ himself, to whose glory they shall be

transformed, has not been received into undying glory [<sup><461513></sup> 1 Corinthians 15:13 ff.].

If their blessedness is to have an end, then Christ's Kingdom, on whose firmness it depends, is but temporary. In short, either such persons are utterly ignorant of everything divine or they are trying by a devious malice to bring to nought all the grace of God and power of Christ, the fulfillment of which is realized only when sin is blotted out, death swallowed up, and everlasting life fully restored!

Even a blind man can see what stupid nonsense these people talk who are afraid of attributing excessive cruelty to God if the wicked be consigned to eternal punishment! If the Lord deprives of his Kingdom those who through their ungratefulness have rendered themselves unworthy of it—that, forsooth, will be too unjust! Yet their sins, they say, are temporal, <sup>F716</sup> Granted. But God's majesty, and also his justice, which they have violated by sinning, are eternal. Therefore it is right that the memory of their iniquity does not perish. Yet thus the punishment will exceed the measure of the transgression. <sup>F717</sup> This blasphemy is not to be borne, when God's majesty is so little esteemed, when the contempt of it is valued less than the loss of one soul. But let us pass over these triflers, lest, contrary to what we have previously said, we seem to judge their ravings worth refuting.

## **6. RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH BUT IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL!**

Besides these, perversely curious men have brought in two other delusions. Some have thought, as if the whole man were to die, that souls would be resurrected with bodies. <sup>F718</sup> Others, while conceding that spirits are immortal, have held that they are to be clothed with new bodies. <sup>F719</sup> Thus they deny the resurrection of the flesh.

Since I have touched somewhat on the former of these notions in treating the creation of man, <sup>F720</sup> it will be enough to admonish my readers again what a brutish error this is: to make of the spirit, formed after the image of God, a fleeting breath, which quickens the body only in this transient life, and to annihilate the temple of the Holy Spirit; lastly, so to despoil of this gift that part of us in which the divine especially shines, and in which

there are such clear tokens of immortality that the condition of the body is better and more excellent than that of the soul.

Far otherwise Scripture—which compares the body to a hut from which, it says, we depart when we die, for in this respect it considers that we differ from brute beasts. Thus Peter, near death, says the time has come to “put off” his “tent” [<sup><610114></sup> 2 Peter 1:14]. But Paul, speaking of believers, after having said: “When our earthly house is destroyed, we have a building... in the heavens” [<sup><470501></sup> 2 Corinthians 5:1], adds that “we are away from the Lord as long as we remain in the body” [verse 6 p.], but we long for the presence of God in the absence of the body [verse 8]. If souls did not outlive bodies, what is it that has God present when it is separated from the body? The apostle banishes doubt when he teaches that we have been gathered “to the spirits of just men” [<sup><581223></sup> Hebrews 12:23]. By these words he means that we are in fellowship with the holy patriarchs who, although dead, cultivate the same godliness as we, so that we cannot be members of Christ unless we unite ourselves with them. And if souls when divested of their bodies did not still retain their essence, and have capacity of blessed glory, Christ would not have said to the thief: “Today you will be with me in paradise” [<sup><422343></sup> Luke 23:43]. Relying on such clear testimonies, in dying let us not hesitate, after Christ’s example, to entrust our souls to God [<sup><422346></sup> Luke 23:46], or, after Stephen’s example, to commit them into Christ’s keeping [<sup><440758></sup> Acts 7:58], who is called with good reason their faithful “Shepherd and Bishop” [<sup><600225></sup> 1 Peter 2:25].

Now it is neither lawful nor expedient to inquire too curiously concerning our souls’ intermediate state. Many torment themselves overmuch with disputing as to what place the souls occupy and whether or not they already enjoy heavenly glory.<sup>F721</sup> Yet it is foolish and rash to inquire concerning unknown matters more deeply than God permits us to know. Scripture goes no farther than to say that Christ is present with them, and receives them into paradise [cf. <sup><431232></sup> John 12:32] that they may obtain consolation, while the souls of the reprobate suffer such torments as they deserve. What teacher or master will reveal to us that which God has concealed? Concerning the place, it is no less foolish and futile to inquire, since we know that the soul does not have the same dimension as the body. The fact that the blessed gathering of saintly spirits is called

“Abraham’s bosom” [<sup><421622></sup>Luke 16:22] is enough to assure us of being received after this pilgrimage by the common Father of the faithful, that he may share the fruit of his faith with us. Meanwhile, since Scripture everywhere bids us wait in expectation for Christ’s coming, and defers until then the crown of glory, let us be content with the limits divinely set for us: namely, that the souls of the pious, having ended the toil of their warfare, enter into blessed rest, where in glad expectation they await the enjoyment of promised glory, and so all things are held in suspense until Christ the Redeemer appear. The lot of the reprobate is doubtless the same as that which Jude assigns to the devils: to be held in chains until they are dragged to the punishment appointed for them [<sup><650106></sup>Jude 1:6].

## 7. RESURRECTION OF THAT BODY IN WHICH WE HAVE BEEN CLOTHED IN THIS LIFE

Equally monstrous is the error of those who imagine that the souls will not receive the same bodies with which they are now clothed but will be furnished with new and different ones.<sup>F722</sup> The Manichaeans gave a worthless reason for this notion, holding it utterly inappropriate that the flesh, being unclean, should rise again.<sup>F723</sup> As if there were no uncleanness in souls, which they nevertheless did not debar from hope of heavenly life! It was as if they were to say: “What is infected with the taint of sin cannot be divinely cleansed.” I say nothing here of that delusion that the flesh was by nature unclean since it was created by the devil.<sup>F724</sup> I am only showing that whatever now exists in us that is unworthy of heaven does not hinder the resurrection. Yet first, since Paul enjoins believers to cleanse themselves of all defilement of flesh and spirit [<sup><470701></sup>2 Corinthians 7:1], the judgment he elsewhere pronounces is a consequence of this: that “everyone may receive back... through his body whether good or ill” [<sup><470510></sup>2 Corinthians 5:10]. With this agrees what he writes to the Corinthians: “So that the life of Jesus Christ may be manifested in our mortal flesh” [<sup><470411></sup>2 Corinthians 4:11]. For this reason, in another passage he prays that God may keep their bodies as well as their souls and spirits sound “until the day of Christ” [<sup><520523></sup>1 Thessalonians 5:23]. And no wonder! For it would be utterly absurd that the bodies which God has dedicated to himself as temples [<sup><460316></sup>1 Corinthians 3:16] should fall away into filth without hope of resurrection! What of the fact that they

are also members of Christ? [<sup><460615></sup> 1 Corinthians 6:15]. Or that God commands all their parts to be sanctified to him? Or that it is his will that his name be praised with men's tongues, that pure hands be lifted to himself [<sup><540208></sup> 1 Timothy 2:8], that sacrifices be offered [<sup><451201></sup> Romans 12:1]? What madness is it for that part of man, deemed by the Heavenly Judge worthy of such shining honor, to be by mortal man reduced to dust beyond hope of restoration? Similarly, Paul, when he exhorts us to obey the Lord both in body and in soul, for both are of God [<sup><460620></sup> 1 Corinthians 6:20], surely does not allow that what he has, so to speak, claimed as sacred to God should be condemned to eternal corruption!

Nor does Scripture define anything more clearly than the resurrection of the flesh that we now bear. "For this perishable nature," says Paul, "must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality." [<sup><461553></sup> 1 Corinthians 15:53.] If God made new bodies, where would this change of quality appear? If Scripture had said that we must be renewed, an ambiguous expression would perhaps have given occasion for their cavil. Now when, pointing at the bodies that encompass us, he promises them incorruption, he is openly enough denying that new ones are made. "Indeed, he could not," says Tertullian, "have spoken more precisely unless he had held his own skin in his hands." <sup>F725</sup> Nor will they by any cavil escape the fact that Paul elsewhere, stating that Christ will be the judge of the world, refers to Isaiah's testimony [<sup><451411></sup> Romans 14:11], "As I live, says the Lord" [<sup><234918></sup> Isaiah 49:18, Vg.], "to me every knee shall bow" [<sup><234524></sup> Isaiah 45:24, Vg.; <sup><451411></sup> Romans 14:11, Vg.], since he plainly declares that those whom he is addressing will be required to render account of their life. This would not make sense if new bodies were to be brought before the judgment seat. Further, there is nothing uncertain in the words of Daniel, "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" [<sup><271202></sup> Daniel 12:2], since He does not call forth new matter from the four elements to fashion men, but dead men from their graves.

And this is what plain reason dictates. For if death, which takes its origin from the fall of man, is accidental, the restoration which Christ has brought belongs to that self-same body which began to be mortal. And from the fact that the Athenians laughed when Paul asserted the resurrection

[<441732> Acts 17:32], we may readily infer what his preaching was like; and their laughter in no slight degree serves to strengthen our faith. Christ's saying is worthy of attention: "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, fear him who can destroy both soul and body in the Gehenna of fire" [<401028> Matthew 10:28 p.]. For there would be no reason to fear unless the body we now bear were liable to punishment. And there is another saying of Christ's that is equally plain: "The hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who have done good will come forth to the resurrection of life, but those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" [<430528> John 5:28-29]. Shall we say that souls rest in the graves, that from there they may hearken to Christ? Shall we not say rather that at his command bodies will be restored to the vigor which they had lost?

Besides, if we are to be provided with new bodies, how will head and members match? Christ arose: was it by fashioning a new body for himself? No, as he had foretold, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" [<430219> John 2:19]. He received again the mortal body which he had previously borne. And it would not profit us much if the body which had been offered as an atoning sacrifice had been destroyed and replaced by a new one. We must hold fast to that fellowship which the apostle proclaims: that we arise because Christ arose [<461512> 1 Corinthians 15:12 ff.]. For nothing is less likely than that our flesh, in which we bear about the death of Christ himself, should be deprived of Christ's resurrection. This is apparent from a notable example: when Christ arose, "many bodies of the saints... came out of the tombs" [<402752> Matthew 27:52]. And it cannot be denied that this was the prelude to the resurrection for which we hope, or rather a pledge of it. It was similar to what already existed earlier in Enoch and Elijah, whom Tertullian calls "candidates for the resurrection" because, freed of corruption in body and soul, they were received into God's keeping. <sup>F726</sup>

## 8. SIGNIFICANCE OF RITES HONORING THE BODY

I am ashamed to use so many words in so plain a matter, but my readers will uncomplainingly bear with this annoyance in order that no cranny be left open for bold and wicked minds to deceive the simple. The flighty spirits with whom I am now disputing put forward a fabrication of their

own brains, that in the resurrection there will be a creation of new bodies. By what reason do they feel themselves so impelled except that it seems incredible to them that a corpse so long consumed with corruption could return to its original state? Therefore sheer unbelief is the mother of this notion. On the contrary, in Scripture the Spirit of God is continually urging us to hope for the resurrection of our flesh. Thus baptism, according to Paul, is the seal of our future resurrection [<sup><510212></sup> Colossians 2:12]; no less does the sacred Supper invite us to confidence in it, when we receive by mouth the symbols of spiritual grace. And surely the whole exhortation of Paul, that we should yield our members as weapons obedient to righteousness [<sup><450613></sup> Romans 6:13,19], would be meaningless if it were not accompanied by his subsequent statement: “He who raised Christ from the dead will give life also to your mortal bodies” [<sup><450811></sup> Romans 8:11]. For how would it help to devote feet, hands, eyes, and tongue to God’s service if they were not to share in its fruit and reward? This Paul openly confirms in his own words: “The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. He who raised Christ will also raise us by his power” [<sup><460613></sup> 1 Corinthians 6:13-14, cf. Vg.]. Clearer yet are the words that follow, that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit and members of Christ [<sup><460615></sup> 1 Corinthians 6:15,19]. Meanwhile we see that he associates the resurrection with chastity and holiness, just as a little later he extends the price of redemption to bodies [<sup><460620></sup> 1 Corinthians 6:20]. Now it would not accord with reason that Paul’s body, in which he bore the marks of Christ [<sup><480617></sup> Galatians 6:17], and in which he greatly glorified Christ, should be deprived of the reward of the crown. Whence also arises that glorying: “We await a Redeemer from heaven, who will conform our lowly body to his glorious body” [<sup><500320></sup> Philippians 3:20-21 p.]. And if it is true that “through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God” [<sup><441422></sup> Acts 14:22], no reason supports the refusal of that entrance to the bodies, which God trains under the standard of the cross and adorns with the praise of victory.

Therefore, among the saints no doubt arose of this fact that they should hope to become companions of Christ, who transfers to his own person all the afflictions by which we are tested, to teach that they are life-giving. Indeed, God trained even the holy patriarchs under the law in this faith,

through outward ceremony. For why should a burial rite arise, as noted above,<sup>F727</sup> unless to let men know that a new life was prepared for the bodies laid away?

Spices and other symbols of immortality also looked to the very same end as sacrifices to mitigate the obscurity of teaching under the law. It was not superstition that gave rise to this practice, since as we see the Spirit no less attentive to the burial rites about to be narrated than to the chief mysteries of the faith. And Christ commends this as no mean office [<sup><402610></sup> Matthew 26:10], surely for no other reason than that it raises our eyes from gazing upon a grave that corrupts and effaces everything, to the vision of renewal. Besides, the very careful observance of this ceremony, which is approved in the patriarchs, is proof enough that it was to them a rare and precious aid to faith. And Abraham would not have taken such meticulous care about his wife's tomb [<sup><012304></sup> Genesis 23:4,19] if religion, and a value higher than this world, had not been set before his eyes; that is to say, that by adorning his wife's dead body with the signs of the resurrection, he might strengthen his own faith and that of his household. A clearer proof of this fact appears in the example of Jacob, who, to witness to his posterity that the hope of the promised land did not depart from his mind even at death, orders that his bones be returned thither [<sup><014730></sup> Genesis 47:30]. I ask you, if he was to be clothed with a new body, would it not have been absurd for him to give a command concerning dust about to be reduced to nothing? Therefore, if Scripture has any force with us, there is no doctrine for which a clearer or surer proof can be desired.

Children, even, understand in this way the words "resurrection" and "to rise again." For we do not say of something just created that it "rises again." And that saying of Christ would not stand: "Whatever the Father has given me will not perish, but I shall raise it up on the Last Day" [<sup><430639></sup> John 6:39 p.]. The word "to sleep" has the same implication, since it is applicable only to bodies. Hence also the name given to "cemeteries."

## (THE MANNER OF RESURRECTION)

It now remains for me to give some suggestion of the manner of resurrection. I use this language because Paul, calling it “a mystery” [<sup><461551></sup> 1 Corinthians 15:51 ], urges us to sobriety, and restrains us from philosophizing too freely and subtly. First, we must hold, as I have indicated, that as to substance we shall be raised again in the same flesh we now bear, but that the quality will be different. So it was that, when the same flesh of Christ which had been offered as a sacrifice was raised up, it yet excelled in other gifts as if it had become utterly different. This Paul asserts through familiar examples [<sup><461539></sup> 1 Corinthians 15:39]. For just as the substance of human and animal flesh is the same, but not the quality [verse 39], and all stars are of the same material, but differ in their brilliance [verse 41], so he teaches that, although we shall retain the substance of our bodies, there will be a change [verses 51-52], that its condition may be far more excellent. Therefore, that we may be raised, the corruptible body will not perish or vanish, but, having laid aside corruption, will put on incorruption [verses 53-54]. Since God has all the elements ready at his bidding, no difficulty will hinder his commanding earth, waters, and fire to restore what they seem to have consumed. Isaiah also declares this, although with a figure of speech: “Behold, the Lord will come forth out of his place to visit iniquity upon the earth; and the earth will disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain” [Isaiah 96:21 p.].

But a distinction is to be noted between those who have been long dead and those whom that day will find still alive. “We shall not all sleep,” Paul states, “but we shall all be changed.” [<sup><461551></sup> 1 Corinthians 15:51.] That is, it will not be necessary to introduce an interval of time between death and the beginning of the second life, for “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” the trumpet’s sound will penetrate to the dead, who will be raised imperishable; and to the living, who will be suddenly changed into the same glory [<sup><461552></sup> 1 Corinthians 15:52-53]. Thus, in another place he comforts believers who are to undergo death, for those who are left then will not precede the dead; rather, those who have fallen asleep in Christ will first arise [<sup><520415></sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16].

If anyone objects, quoting the apostle’s statement that “it is appointed for all men to die once” [<sup><580909></sup> Hebrews 9:97 p.], the explanation is easy:

where the state of nature is changed, there is an appearance of death, and it is aptly so called. Accordingly, these things mutually agree that all are to be renewed by death when they strip off the mortal body, yet a severing of body and soul will not be necessary where the change is sudden.

## 9. THE RESURRECTION OF THE UNGODLY

But here a more difficult question arises: By what right do the ungodly and accursed of God have a common resurrection, which is a singular benefit of Christ? We know that in Adam all were condemned to death [cf.

<450512> Romans 5:12; <461522> 1 Corinthians 15:22], but Christ came as “resurrection and life” [<431125> John 11:25]. Did he come to give life to all mankind without distinction? But what would be less fitting than that they in their stubborn blindness should attain what the pious worshipers of God receive by faith alone? However, this fact remains firm: one will be a resurrection of judgment, the other of life [<430522> John 5:22], and Christ will come to “separate the lambs from the goats” [<402532> Matthew 25:32]. I reply that it ought not to seem so strange, since in daily experience we observe what corresponds to it. We know that in Adam we were deprived of the whole world’s inheritance, and that we are disqualified from eating common food for the same just reason as from eating of the tree of life. How does it come about that God not only “makes his sun rise on the good and the evil” [<400545> Matthew 5:45 p.], but that with respect to the uses of the present life his inestimable liberality constantly flows in great plenty? Hence, we surely recognize that the things proper to Christ and his members also pour forth abundantly upon the wicked, not to become their lawful possession, but rather to render them inexcusable. The wicked often experience God’s kindness, by remarkable proofs, so as sometimes to put in the shade all the blessings of the pious, yet these lead to their greater condemnation.

If anyone should object that the resurrection is not fitly conferred by fleeting earthly benefits, my answer is that when they were first cut off from God the fountain of life, they deserved the death of the devil, in which they would be utterly destroyed. Yet by God’s wonderful plan, an intermediate state was found, so that apart from life they should live in death. It ought not to seem in any respect more absurd if there is an incidental resurrection of the wicked, in which they will be unwillingly

haled before the judgment seat of Christ, whom they now refuse to listen to as their Master and Teacher. For to be consumed by death would be a light punishment if they were not brought before the Judge to be punished for their obstinacy, whose vengeance without end and measure they have provoked against themselves.

But, although we must hold to what we have said and to what that famous confession of Paul before Felix contains—that he awaits a coming resurrection of just and unjust [<sup><442415></sup> Acts 24:15]—still Scripture more often sets forth resurrection, along with heavenly glory, to the children of God alone, for Christ came properly not for the destruction of the world but for its salvation. Hence in the creed also there is mention solely of the blessed life.

*(Man's life in the hereafter: eternal enjoyment of God's presence, or eternal misery in alienation from God, 10-12)*

## 10. EVERLASTING BLESSEDNESS

But since the prophecy that death will be swallowed up in victory [Isaiah 95:8; <sup><281314></sup> Hosea 13:14; <sup><461554></sup> 1 Corinthians 15:54-55] will only then be fulfilled, let us always have in mind the eternal happiness, the goal of resurrection—a happiness of whose excellence the minutest part would scarce be told if all were said that the tongues of all men can say. For though we very truly hear that the Kingdom of God will be filled with splendor, joy, happiness, and glory, yet when these things are spoken of, they remain utterly remote from our perception, band, as it were, wrapped in obscurities, until that day comes when he will reveal to us his glory, that we may behold it face to face [cf. <sup><461312></sup> 1 Corinthians 13:12]. We know that “we are God’ children,” says John, but “it does not yet appear... But when “we shall be like him... we shall see him as he is” [<sup><620302></sup> 1 John 3:2]. Accordingly, the prophets, because they could not find words to express that spiritual blessedness in its own nature, merely sketched it in physical terms. Yet because any taste of that sweetness ought to kindle fervent desire in us, let us pause to reflect especially on this: God contains the fullness of all good things in himself like an inexhaustible fountain, nothing beyond him is to be sought by those who strive after the highest good and all the elements of happiness, as we are

taught in many passages. Thus: “Abraham,... I am your very great reward” [[011501](#)> Genesis 15:1]. David’s statement agrees with this: “Jehovah is my portion... ; a goodly lot has fallen to me” [[191605](#)> Psalm 16:5-6 p.].

Another passage: “I shall be satisfied with thy countenance.”

[[191715](#)> Psalm 17:15 p.; see II. 10. 17.] Indeed, Peter declares that believers are called in this to become partakers of the divine nature [[610104](#)> 2 Peter 1:4]. How is this? Because “he will be... glorified in all his saints, and will be marveled at in all who have believed” [[530110](#)> 2 Thessalonians 1:10]. If the Lord will share his glory, power, and righteousness with the elect—nay, will give himself to be enjoyed by them and, what is more excellent, will somehow make them to become one with himself, let us remember that every sort of happiness is included under this benefit. And although we have advanced considerably in this meditation, let us nevertheless acknowledge that, if our mental capacity be compared with the height of this mystery, we still remain at the very lowest roots. In this matter, we must all the more, then, keep sobriety, lest forgetful of our limitations we should soar aloft with the greater boldness, and be overcome by the brightness of the heavenly glory. We also feel how we are titillated by an immoderate desire to know more than is lawful. From this, trifling and harmful questions repeatedly flow forth—trifling, I say, for from them no profit can be derived. But this second kind is worse because those who indulge in them entangle themselves in dangerous speculations; accordingly, I call these questions “harmful.”

We should regard as above all controversy the teaching of Scripture that, just as God, variously distributing his gifts to the saints in this world, beams upon them unequally, so there will not be an equal measure of glory in heaven, where God shall crown his own gifts.<sup>F729</sup> And what Paul says does not apply indiscriminately to all: “You are my crown and glory” [[520220](#)> 1 Thessalonians 2:20] in the day of Christ [[520219](#)> 1 Thessalonians 2:19]. And that saying of Christ’s to the apostles: “You will sit... judging the twelve tribes of Israel” [[401928](#)> Matthew 19:28]. But Paul, who knew that, as God lavishes spiritual gifts upon the saints on earth, he adorns them with glory in heaven, does not doubt that a particular crown is laid up for him in accordance with his labors [[550408](#)> 2 Timothy 4:8]. And Christ, to commend to the apostles the dignity of the office entrusted to them, advises them that its fruit is laid up in heaven [cf. [401921](#)> Matthew

19:21]. So also Daniel: “And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever” [<sup><271203></sup>Daniel 12:3]. For anyone who closely studies the Scriptures, they promise believers not only eternal life but a special reward for each. Hence also comes Paul’s statement: “May God requite him in that day” [<sup><550118></sup>2 Timothy 1:18 p.]. This is confirmed by Christ’s promise: “You will receive a hundredfold... in eternal life” [<sup><401929></sup>Matthew 19:29 p.]. In short, as Christ begins the glory of his body in this world with manifold diversity of gifts, and increases it by degrees, so also he will perfect it in heaven.

## 11. DISPOSING OF SUPERFLUOUS QUESTIONS

But as all the pious will accept this with one accord, because it is sufficiently attested by the Word of God, so on the other hand, bidding farewell to thorny questions which they know to be a hindrance, they will not transgress the limits set. As far as I am concerned, I not only refrain personally from superfluous investigation of useless matters, but I also think that I ought to guard against contributing to the levity of others by answering them. Men hungry for empty learning inquire how great the difference will be between prophets and apostles, and again, between apostles and martyrs; by how many degrees virgins will differ from married women. <sup>F730</sup> In short, they leave no corner of heaven exempt from their search. Then it occurs to them to ask what purpose is to be served by a restoration of the world, since the children of God will not be in need of any of this great and incomparable plenty but will be like the angels [<sup><402230></sup>Matthew 22:30], whose abstinence from food is the symbol of eternal blessedness. <sup>F731</sup> But I reply that in the very sight of it there will be such pleasantness, such sweetness in the knowledge of it alone, without the use of it, that this happiness will far surpass all the amenities that we now enjoy. Let us imagine ourselves set in the richest region on earth, where we lack no pleasure. Who is not from time to time hindered or prevented from enjoying God’s benefits by his own illness? Who does not often have the even tenor of his life broken by his own intemperance? From this it follows that an enjoyment, clear and pure from every vice, even though it makes no use of corruptible life, is the acme of happiness.

Some go farther and ask whether dross and other corruptions in metals are not far distant from the restoration, and at variance from it. Though in some degree I grant them this, with Paul I await the repairing of those faults which took their beginning from sin, for which the creatures “groan and travail” [<sup><450822></sup>Romans 8:22]. They go still farther and ask what better estate remains for man, since the blessing of offspring will then be at an end. This difficulty is also easy to resolve. The fact that Scripture so wonderfully commends the blessing of offspring applies to the increases whereby God continually advances the order of nature toward his goal; but in perfection itself, we know, there is another reckoning. But allurements readily seize the unwary and then they are drawn more and more deeply into the labyrinth. The outcome is that when each one is pleased by his own opinions, there is no end of disputing. Let this, then, be our short way out: to be satisfied with the “mirror” and its “dimness” until we see him face to face [<sup><461302></sup>1 Corinthians 13:22]. For few out of a huge multitude care how they are to go to heaven, but all long to know beforehand what takes place there. Almost all are lazy and loath to do battle, while already picturing to themselves imaginary victories.

## 12. THE LOT OF THE REPROBATE

Now, because no description can deal adequately with the gravity of God’s vengeance against the wicked, their torments and tortures are figuratively expressed to us by physical things, that is, by darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth [<sup><400812></sup>Matthew 8:12; 22:13], unquenchable fire [<sup><400312></sup>Matthew 3:12; <sup><410943></sup>Mark 9:43; <sup><236624></sup>Isaiah 66:24], an undying worm gnawing at the heart [<sup><236624></sup>Isaiah 66:24]. By such expressions the Holy Spirit certainly intended to confound all our senses with dread: as when he speaks of “a deep Gehenna prepared from eternity, fed with fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, kindles it” [<sup><233033></sup>Isaiah 30:33]. As by such details we should be enabled in some degree to conceive the lot of the wicked, so we ought especially to fix our thoughts upon this: how wretched it is to be cut off from all fellowship with God.<sup>F732</sup> And not that only but so to feel his sovereign power against you that you cannot escape being pressed by it. For first, his displeasure is like a raging fire, devouring and engulfing everything it touches. Secondly, all creatures so serve him in the execution

of his judgment that they to whom the Lord will openly show his wrath will feel heaven, earth, sea, living beings, and all that exists aflame, as it were, with dire anger against them, and armed to destroy them. Accordingly, it was no insignificant thing that the apostle declared when he said that the faithless “shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, excluded from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might” [<sup><530109></sup>2 Thessalonians 1:9 p.]. And whenever through physical metaphors the prophets strike us with fear, although they employ no exaggeration to match our sluggishness, they still mingle with their message foreshadowings of the coming judgment, in the sun, the moon, and the whole fabric of the universe [<sup><402429></sup>Matthew 24:29, etc.]. Consequently, unhappy consciences find no rest from being troubled and tossed by a terrible whirlwind, <sup>F733</sup> from feeling that they are being torn asunder by a hostile Deity, pierced and lanced by deadly darts, quaking at God’s lightning bolt, and being crushed by the weight of his hand—so that it would be more bearable to go down into any bottomless depths and chasms than to stand for a moment in these terrors. What and how great is this, to be eternally and unceasingly besieged by him? On this point the Ninetieth Psalm has a memorable statement: although by his mere glance he scatters and brings to nought all mortal men, he urges his own worshipers on, the more because they are timid in this world, that he may inspire them, burdened with the cross, to press forward [<sup><199007></sup>Psalm 90:7 ff.], until he himself is “all in all” [<sup><461528></sup>1 Corinthians 15:28].

# FOOTNOTES

FT1 Book 1. 13:14-15.

FT2 Book 2. 15:2.

FT3 Cf. the language used in Comm. <sup><430113></sup> John 1:13: “Faith flows from regeneration” and is followed by “newness of life and other gifts of the Holy Spirit.” Calvin does not differentiate “Spirit of God” and “Holy Spirit,” as some contemporary theologians have done. Cf. N. Ferre, *The Christian Understanding of God*, pp. 250 f.; N. Bulgakov, *Le Paraclet*, pp. 145 ff. G. S. Hendry argues that in the New Testament the Holy Spirit is, “in an exclusive sense, the Spirit of Christ”: *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*, p. 26; cf. pp. 44 ff., 19. H. P. Van Dusen remarks on Paul’s “alternative use, as though interchangeable, of the variant terms ‘Spirit,’ ‘Spirit of God,’ ‘Spirit of Christ,’ ‘Holy Spirit,’” while the basic concept of the Spirit is of the agency of “transformation., into the likeness of Christ”: *Spirit, Son, and Father*, pp. 66 f.

FT4 “*Singularera quarn suis vitara inspirat filius Dei.*” For “*suis*” the French has “*a ses fideles.*” Cadier explains that Calvin sometimes uses *fideles* to translate not only the Latin *fideles* and *pui* but also *sui*, where the pronoun designates those who belong to Christ, and sometimes in a strong sense, *electi*. Cadier, *Institution* 3. 2, note 2.

FT5 Sec. 2, above.

FT6 “*Corda nostra incendit amore Dei et studio pietatis.*” Calvin’s emblem of the flaming heart on an outstretched hand bore the motto: “*Cor meum quasi immolatum tibi offero, Domine.*” Cf. Luther’s language in *Preface to Romans* (1522), where he says that faith “sets the heart aflame [*cor inflammat*],” and the reflection of this in John Wesley’s experience as recorded in his *Journal* May 24, 1738: “As one was reading Luther’s Preface to Romans...I felt my heart strangely warmed.” Countless passages from the Mystics, and some from Aquinas, offer parallels to Calvin’s language here, but the parallels are often more verbal than substantial. Cf., for example, R. C. Perry’s

remarks on the *Incendium amoris* of Richard Rolle (d. 1349) in 150 13. 210-213, and the studies there cited.

FT7 Sec. 1, above.

FT8 2. 2:18-21, on the limitations of human reason.

FT9 Note that a similar phrase is used above of the Holy Spirit. Calvin frequently dwells on the thought of Christ as Teacher. In Comm. Harmony of the Evangelists, <sup><401705></sup> Matthew 17:5, he observes that the words “Hear ye him” recall the church to its unique Teacher, Christ, “*ad unicum doctorera Christum.*” Cf. Comm. <sup><431514></sup> John 15:14: “*Ordinatus est ecclesiae magister et doctor unicus,*” and similar expressions in Comm. <sup><431520></sup> John 15:20; 20:30; *Sermons on Daniel* 46 (on <sup><271205></sup> Daniel 12:5-7), CR 42. 150. The concept of Christ, the Logos, as Tutor, or Teacher, was developed by Clement of Alexandria in his [Ο Παιδαγωγός](#)

## CHAPTER 2

FT10 The definition of faith begins with sec. 7, below.

FT11 2. 8:3.

FT12 Melanchthon, *Loci communes, 1521*, in the section “On Justification and Faith,” charges the “*Sophists*” with this *opinio vulgaris* of the sufficiency of a historical faith that is vacant of spiritual force. (Ed. H. Engelland, in the series *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl*, ed. R. Stupperich, 2. 1:99; tr. C. L. Hill [from Th. Kolde’s 1910 edition], *The Loci Communes of Philip Melanchthon*, p. 185.)

FT13 1. 2:1; 1. 10:1; 2. 6:4.

FT14 Cf. 4. 8:5. It is Calvin’s constant teaching that apart from Christ we have no real knowledge of God. Cf. 2. 6:2, where he presents Christ, the Mediator, as the object of faith for the “holy fathers” of the Old Testament. Cf. E. A. Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin’s Theology*, p. 164; W. Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, p. 33.

FT15 3. 1:4.

FT16 Augustine, *City of God* 11. 2 (MPL 41. 318; tr. NPNF 2. 227).

- FT7 Lombard, *Sentences* 3. 25:1-4 (MPL 192. 809f.); Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* 2 2ae. 2:5-8. Aquinas teaches implicit faith with the caution that “the simple-minded have faith implicit in the faith of the wiser only to the extent to which the wiser adhere to the divine teaching” (art. 6) (tr. 150 11. 250 f.). Cf. 3. 2:5, where Calvin uses the term “implicit faith” in an acceptable sense, referring to <sup><430453></sup> John 4:53 and <sup><440827></sup> Acts 8:27, 31. Cf. also Augustine, *The Usefulness of Belief* 11:25-13. 29 (MPL 42. 82-86; tr. LCC 6. 311-315); Bonaventura, *Commentary on the Sentences (In Ubros sententiarum)* 3. 25:1. qu. 3 (*Opera omnia* 3. 582 ff.).
- FT18 Ockham, *De sacramento altaris*, ch. 1: “For whatever the Roman Church explicitly believes, this and nothing else either explicitly or implicitly I believe.” (The *De sacramento altaris* of William of Ockham, edited and translated by T. B. Birch, 1. 164 f.) Cf. Biel, *Epythoma pariter et collectorium circa quatuor sententiarum libros* (1510) 3. 25:qu. unica, note 2.
- FT19 “*Implicita*.” Calvin is playing on the word.
- FT20 Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium* 1. 23:28 f., calls for “progress, not alteration of the faith...a great increase and a vigorous progress, in individuals and in the whole group, in the single man as well as in the entire church, as the ages and centuries march on,” but with retention of “the same doctrine.” (MPL 50. 667 f.; tr. 150 9. 69; cf. p. 31.) Cf. 3. 2:19.
- FT21 “*Aulicus*” instead of Vg. “*regulus*,” <sup><430449></sup> John 4:49.
- FT22 Book 4. 1:5.
- FT23 Cf. 1. 2:1; 1. 10:2, note 6.
- FT24 Cf. Luther, *Enchiridion piarum precatationum* (*Werke* WAX. 2:389).
- FT25 Cf. 2. 2:15, note 58.
- FT26 Lombard, *Sentences* 3. 23:4 f. (MPL 192. 805f.); Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* 2 2ae. 4:3, 4 (tr. 150 11. 268 f.).
- FT27 Sec. 2, above.
- FT28 Augustine, *Predestination of the Saints* 2:5 (MPL 44. 963; tr. NPNF V. 499 f.); Lombard, *Sentences* 3. 23:5 (MPL 192. 805 f.); Bonaventura, *Commentary on the Sentences* 3. 23, art. 3. qu. 4, 5.

(*Opera omnia* 4. 505-511); Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* 2 2ae. 4:4 (tr. LGG 11. 269 f.).

FT29 For Calvin's view that the knowledge of God is primarily a matter of the heart rather than of the intellect, see also 1. 5:9, note 29; 3. 2:33, 36.

FT30 Cf. sec. 10, below.

FT31 Cf. Augustine, *On Baptism* 1. 9:11 (MPL 43. 116; tr. NPNF 4. 417).

FT32 **πολύσαμον** For the treatment of <sup><590221></sup>James 2:21, see 3. 17:11.

FT33 **κατάχρησιν**

FT34 Calvin's use of the Pauline concept of "adoption" as sons of God (<sup><450815></sup>Romans 8:15,23; <sup><450904></sup>Romans 9:4; <sup><480405></sup>Galatians 4:5; <sup><490105></sup>Ephesians 1:5; cf. <sup><430112></sup>John 1:12) is frequent in the *Institutes*. The principal references are: 2. 6:1; 2. 7:15; 2. 11:9; 2. 12:2; 3. 1:3; 3. 2:22; 3. 11:6; 3. 14:18; 3. 17:6; 3. 18, 3. 20:16 f.; 3. 21:7; 3. 22:1, 4.

FT35 Apparently the reference is to the opening sentences of this section. Cf. also sec. 15, below, and 3. 20:11, 12, 28.

FT36 "*Sana pietatis doctrina.*" Cf. Introduction, pp. li f.

FT37 3. 2:9.

FT38 **κατάχρησις**

FT39 "*Agnitio.*" Cf. 1. 1, note 1.

FT40 "*Scientia.*"

FT41 **πληροφορίας**

FT42 *Fiduciam*

FT43 *Audaciam*

FT44 2. 1:9; 2. 2:17; 2. 3:1.

FT45 Cf. 2. 2:22-25; 3. 2:4, note 11. C. Trinkhaus, citing this section, remarks, "While for Plato men sinned out of ignorance, for Calvin men were ignorant out of sin": "Renaissance Problems in Calvin's Theology," *Studies in the Renaissance* 3, ed. W. Peery, p. 61.

FT46 Augustine, *John's Gospel* 52:9 (on <sup><431231></sup>John 12:31) (MPL 35. 1772; tr. NPNF 7. 289).

FT47 Cf. 2. 1:1; 3. 2:17

- FT48 Bernard of Clairvaux, *In dedicatione ecclesiae*, sermon 5 (MPL x83. 531-534; tr. *St. Bernard's Sermons for the Seasons*, by a priest of Mount Melleray 2. 419-426).
- FT49 Cf. 1. 2:2; 1. 10:1; 2. 6:4.
- FT50 “*In filios diffidentiae*”: So Vg., <sup><490506></sup>Ephesians 5:6.
- FT51 Augustine, *John's Gospel* 85. 3 (MPL 35. 1849; tr. NPNF 7. 352); *Epistle of* <sup><430904></sup>*John* 9:4 (MPL 35. 1047 f.; tr. NPNF 7. 515); Lombard, *Sentences* 3. 34:5-8 (MPL 192. 825 f.); Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* 2 2ae. 19:2, 8.
- FT52 “*Cuius agnitionem fides requirit.*” Cf. Anselm, *Proslogion*, Preface (MPL 158; tr. 150 10. 70, and the literature cited by E. R. Fairweather, *ibid.*, pp. 65 ff.).
- FT53 Calvin's definition of faith (in the 1539 *Institutio*, ch. 4) was assailed by Albert Pighius, archdeacon of Utrecht, as “indefinite,” “confused,” and tending to “a false security”: *Controversiarum praecipuarum... explicatio* (1542), ch. 2, fo. 58a-60a.
- FT54 Sec. 6, above.
- FT55 1. 16:3.
- FT56 Calvin often asserts this, with various forms of expression. Cf. esp. Comm. <sup><430316></sup>John 3:16.
- FT57 Cf. 1. 5:9; 3. 2:1, 8, 36; Augustine, *Predestination of the Saints* 2:5 (MPL 44. 963; tr. NPNF V. 499); Cadier, *Institution* 3. 56, note 1.
- FT58 2. 2:18-25
- FT59 “*Motu.*”
- FT60 Augustine, *Sermons* 131, 2, 3; 165. 5 (MPL 38. 730, 905; tr. LF *Sermons* 2. 586 f., 839 f.).
- FT61 Cf. 1. 5:9; 3. 2:8, 33; 3. 6:4.
- FT62 Sec. 17, above.
- FT63 Bonaventura so teaches in his *Commentary on the Sentences* 4. 20:1. dubium 1 (*Opera theologiae selecta* 4. 514). He cites Augustine, *Sermons* 393 (MPL 39. 1713). Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* 1 2ae. 112. 5 (“Whether a Man Can Know that He Has Grace”) (tr. 150 11. 180 ff.).

- FT64 3:15
- FT65 Bonaventura and Aquinas, as cited in note 54, above; De Castro, *Adversus omnes haereses* 7 (1543, fo. 133). Vg. reads: “*Nescit homo utrum amore an odio dignus est.*” See the widely different RSV.
- FT66 Cf. Cochlaeus, *Philippicae in apologiam Philippi Melanchthon* (1534) 3.42; J. Latomus, *De fide et operibus (Opera adversus haereses* [1550]. fo. 14l b. f.); A. Pighius, *Controversiarum praecipuarum... explicatio*, fo. 50b ff., assailing Luther’s teaching on *fiducia*, “confident faith.”
- FT67 Latomus, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*
- FT68 Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* 1 2ae. 111. 5 (tr. 150 11. 181).
- FT69 “*Nisi quis ὑπόστασιν fiducia accipere malit.*”
- FT70 VG 1560.
- FT71 Augustine, *John’s Gospel* 129, 1; 45. 2 (MPL 35. 1837, 1872; tr. NPNF 7. 342, 369); *On the Merits and Remission of Sins* 2. 31:50 (MPL 44. 181; tr. NPNF 5. 43).
- FT72 Lombard, *Sentences* 3. 23:9; 25:5 (MPL 192. 807, 81.). Bonaventura, *Commentary on the Sentences* 3. 36:6 (*Opera selecta* 3. 813).
- FT73 Cf. Luther, *On Christian Liberty* (1520): “*Fluit ex fide charitas*” (*Werke* WA 7.66; tr. *Works of Martin Luther* 2. 338); Melanchthon, *Loci communes* (1521), ed. H. 7. Engelland, *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl* 2. 1:1 14 (tr. C. L. Hill, *The Loci* 7. *Communes of Philip Melanchthon*, p. 204).
- FT74 Bernard, *On the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin* 1:1, 3 (MPL 183. 383 f.; tr. *St. Bernard’s Sermons for the Seasons*, by a priest of Mount Melleray 3. 137).
- FT75 3. 18:8.
- FT76 3. 2:6
- FT77 Calvin writes “the tenth chapter,” but the citation is of <sup><581101></sup>Hebrews 11:1; cf. sec. 41, above.
- FT78 Lombard, *Sentences* 3.. 26:1 (MPL 192.811).
- FT79 3. 2:7.
- FT80 Lombard, *Sentences*, *loc. cit.*

FT81 Cf. Bonaventura's criticism of this opinion, *Commentary on the Sentences* 3. 26:1. qu. 4 (*Opera selecta* 3. 571).

## CHAPTER 3.

FT82 "*Poenitentia*" is used by Calvin, as by his medieval predecessors, for both repentance and penance. Cf. the treatment of ecclesiastical penance in 3:4, 5; 4:19:14-17; and of church discipline in 4:12: The present chapter treats repentance in its relation to faith. In sec. 9 it is identified with regeneration.

FT83 The high importance given to repentance here corresponds to the statement, and reflects the language, of Bucer in his *In sacra quatuor Evangelia enarrationes* (edition of Geneva, 1543, fo. 97b). The surprising order in which the treatment of repentance precedes that of justification is chosen, as Calvin indicates, to give emphasis to the doctrine of salvation by faith alone through first calling attention to its effect on holiness. Niesel remarks that this served to forestall Romanist objections, but indicates that it had a more positive theological purpose as well: *The Theology of Calvin*, p. 130.

FT84 The Reformation doctrine that regeneration follows faith as an effect of it is stressed also in Comm. <sup><430113></sup> John 1:13. Cf. 3. 2:1, note 3. Melancthon, *Loci communes* (1521), ed. Engelland, *Melancthons Werke in Auswahl* II. 1:112-114, 149 f.; tr. C. H. Hill, *The Loci Communes of Philip Melancthon*, pp. 202 ff., 249 f.

FT85 Cf. the closing words of sec. 2; also Luther, *Ninety-five Theses* (0517) 1: "*Christus... omnem vitam fidelium poenitentiam esse voluit*" (*Werke* WA 1. 233); Augsburg Confession, art. 12.

FT86 "*Ad resipiscentiam.*" Cf. sec. 5, below, where (following Bucer: see note 15) the verb *resipiscere*, "to come back to one's senses," is joined with the *poenitentiara agere* of <sup><400302></sup> Matthew 3:2.

FT87 Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* 2 2ae. 19:2, 8, discussing "initial fear" in relation to "filial," "servile," and "worldly fear"; tr. 150 11. 311 ff., 321 f.

- FT88 Cf. CR VII. 56, and Zwingli, *Opera*, ed. M. Schuler and J. Schulthess, 3. 388 (tr. *Selected Works of Huldreich Zwingli*, ed. S. M. Jackson, p. 178).
- FT89 Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, sections on penance, e.g., First Week, sec. 82, on exterior and interior penance (*The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*; tr. L. J. Puhl, p. 370).
- FT90 These terms are employed by Melancthon, *Loci communes* (1521), section on penance (ed. Engelland, *op. cit.*, p. 149; tr. Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 249 f.). Cf. *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* 12. 26 (*Bekennnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*), p. 257, note 2.
- FT91 Calvin's use of the word "joy" (*laetitia*) here reflects a passage of Bucer, In *sacra quatuor Evangelia enarrationes*: "*Certe longe plus mellis quam fellis, laetitiae quam tristitiae obtinens*" (1543 edition, fo. 33b).
- FT92 Bucer (*op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*) employs this distinction of legal and evangelical penance. Melancthon uses the illustrations of Saul and Judas here introduced, and observes that "faith marks the distinction between the contrition of Judas and of Peter." Cf. *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* 12. 8 (*Bekennnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, p. 254; cf. p. 258; *Concordia Triglotta*, pp. 254 f.).
- FT93 Melancthon, *Apology*, *loc. cit.* See also Calvin, Comm. <440237> Acts 2:37-38.
- FT94 Melancthon, *Apology*, *loc. cit.*, citing Saul, Judas, and Peter; Bucer, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*, citing the prodigal son and <440237> Acts 2:37.
- FT95 Calvin, in Preface to Comm. Psalms, impressively recalled that his own conversion, though delayed, had been "sudden." (Cf. 150 23. 51.) Here he uses the word "*conversion*" to describe repentance, which is thought of as lifelong.
- FT96 Cf. Bucer, *op. cit.*, 1536 edition, p. 85; 1543 edition, fo. 33b.
- FT97 "*Monet cum Deo esse negotium.*" Cf. Introduction, pp. li ff.; 3. 3. 16; 3. 7:2; 3. 20:29; 4. 11:2.

- FT98 Cf. note 1, above. Calvin thinks here of regeneration as a restoration of the original but ruined image of God in man. The expansion of the passage in the 1539 edition stressing the conflict of flesh and spirit and the distinction between the natural and the regenerate man appears in OS 4. 63. Cf. W. Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, pp. 128 f.
- FT99 Frederick Staphylus (1512-1564) was a Wittenberg alumnus who turned against Lutheranism and his former teacher Melanchthon (1553) and wrote an attack on the Reformation, *Theologiae Martini Lutheri trimembris epitome* (1558). The reference is to a passage in this (then very recent) work found in the collected writings of Staphylus: *In causa religionis sparsira editi libri, in unum volumen digesti* (Ingolstadt, 1613), Part 2, col. 35.
- FT100 Calvin here uses the word “*fomes*,” originally “tinder” or “kindling wood,” but employed in <sup><013708></sup>Genesis 37:8, Vg., and by Tertullian, Augustine, and other church fathers in the sense of incitement to sin. In Scholastic theology it was a well-understood term for the irrepressible inner motion of sin, never completely destroyed in this life. Lombard, *Sentences* 2. 30:7 f.; 2. 22:(MPL 192. 722,726 f.); Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* 2ae. 74. 3, reply to obj. 2.
- FT101 Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 4. 10:27; 4. 11:31 (MPL 44. 629-632, 634-636; tr. NPNF 5. 429, 432 f.); *Against Julian the Pelagian* 1. 1:3; 2. 2. 5-v. 14; 2. 8:23; 2. 9:32 (MPL 44. 642, 673-675, 688 ff., 695 f.; tr. FC 35.56 f., 59 ff., 68 ff., 82-99). Barth and Niesel give citations of the passages adduced by Augustine in this connection from earlier fathers to which Calvin alludes. See also Cadier, *Institution* 3.. 77, note 4.
- FT102 “*Concupiscentiis*.” Cf. Augustine, *John’s Gospel* 41:8, 10 (MPL 35. 1698; tr. NPNF 7. 232 f.); *On the Merits and Remission of Sins* 2. 7:9 (MPL 44-156; tr. NPNF 5. 47 f.); *Against Julian* 2. 1:3; 2. 5:12 (MPL 44- 673, 68.0; tr. FC 35. 57, 70f.); *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 3. 2:5 (MPL 44. 590f.; tr. NPNF 5. 404). The ensuing quotation is from Augustine, *Sermons* 155. 1 (MPL 38. 841; tr. LF *Sermons* 2. 747 f.).
- FT103 2. 2:27.

- FT104 Augustine, *John's Gospel* 41:11 (MPL 35. 1698; tr. NPNF 7. 234); *Sermons* 154. 1 (MPL 38. 833 f.; tr. LF *Sermons* 2. 735); *Against Julian* 3. 26:61 f. (MPL 44. 733 f.; tr. FC 35. 160 fl.). Cf. 4. 15:1, note 20.
- FT105 “*Quem fomitem appellant.*” Cf. note 19, above.
- FT106 Cf. J. Fisher, *Assertionis Lutheranae confutatio* (1523), p. 150.
- FT107 ἀταξία
- FT108 Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 1 13:27; 3. 3. 5 (MPL 44. 563, 590f.; tr. NPNF 5. 385 f., 404). Cf. also his *On the Merits and Remission of Sins* 1. 39:70 (MPL 44. 150 f.; tr. NPNF 5. 43); *Against Julian* 2. 1:3; 2. 4:8; 2. 5:12; 6. 19:61 (MPL 44. 673, 678 f., 682, 860; tr. FC 35.57, 65 f., 70f., 372).
- FT109 Ambrose, *On Isaac or the Soul* 8:65 (MPL 14. 553; CSEL 32. 688); Augustine, *Against Julian* 2. 9:33; 5. 3. 8 (MPL 44. 696, 787; tr. FC 35. 95, 247 ff.).
- FT110 Augustine, *John's Gospel* 41:12 (MPL 35. 1698; tr. NPNF 7. 234). Cf. Fisher as cited in note 25, above.
- FT111 Cf. Calvin's description of outrageous perversions of the doctrine of regeneration by the Quintinists, who were among the more extreme of the Libertine sectarians: *Contre la secte des Libertins* 18(CR 7. 200 ff.).
- FT112 Bernard, *Sermons on the Song of Songs* 11:2 (MPL 183. 824 f.; tr. Eales, *Lqe and Works of St. Bernard* 4. 55).
- FT113 3. 6-10
- FT114 Cf. sec. 6, note 16, above.
- FT115 Calvin's “*vetusti scriptores*” here may include not only church fathers but also the authors of medieval handbooks of penance, the *libri poenitentiales*, in which severe physical penalties were sometimes prescribed. Cf. J. T. McNeill and H. M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, pp. 5, 30 ff. 142 ff., 258 ff., 348.
- FT116 4. 12:8-13.
- FT117 Jerome, *Commentary on* <sup><290212></sup> *Joel* 2:12 (MPL 25. 967).
- FT118 4. 12:14-21.

- FT119 Bucer, *In sacra quatuor Evangelia enarrationes* (1536 edition, pp. 35, 85, 159).
- FT120 3. 3:1.
- FT121 Plato, *Apology of Socrates* 29 A, B; 4x C, D; *Phaedo* 64 A, B; 67 A-E; 8 (LCL Plato 1. 106 f., 142 ff., 222 f., 232-235, 280 ff.).
- FT122 “*Nisi prius iustitiae amore captus.*” Cf. Luther, Letter to J. Staupitz, May 30, 1518: “*Quod penitentia vera non est, nisi quae ab amore iustitiae et Dei incipit*” (*Werke WA* 1. 5~5; O. Scheel, *Dokumente zu Luthers Entwicklung*, 2d ed., p. 10; tr. *Works of Martin Luther* 1. 40); Luther, *Sermon on Repentance* (*Werke WA* 1. 320).
- FT123 Cf. 1 Clement 2:3. This view is attributed by Calvin to the Anabaptists: *Brief Instruction Against the Anabaptists* (CR 7. 73 f.). Cf. the Anabaptist articles of Schleithem, quoted and answered by Zwingli (Zwingli, *Opera*, ed. M. Schuler and J. Schulthess, 3. 390; tr. S. M. Jackson, *Selected Works of Huldreich Zwingli*, pp. 180 f.; tr. J. G. Wenger from the German text, “The Schleithem Confession of Faith,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 19 [1945], 148). Cf. 4. 16:1, note 2.
- FT124 Both the Montanists of tertullian’s time and the Novatianists later argued from <sup><580604></sup>Hebrews 6:4-6 in support of their rigorism in excluding the lapsed from penance. This was one of the reasons (as Filaster of Brescia [d. ca. 397] affirms in *De heresibus* 61 [margin 89]; MPL 12. 1202) for the delay in according canonical status to Hebrews. Cf. J. Moffatt, *International Critical Commentary: Hebrews*, pp. 18, 20: When Tertullian became a Montanist, he so interpreted the passage as to hold apostates incapable of repentance and ineligible for admission to penance.
- FT125 Augustine, *Unfinished Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* 22 (MPL 35. 2104); *Letters* 185. 1. 49 (MPL 3.3: 814; tr. FC 12. 188 f.).
- FT126 Augustine, *Sermon on the Mount* 1. 22. 73 (MPL 34. 1266; tr. NPNF 6. 30 f.); Bede, *Exposition of Matthew’s Gospel* 2. 12 (MPL 92.63).
- FT127 *Ponit Spiritum blasphemiae*” (VG, “*esprit de blaspheme*”), in agreement with Froben’s text of <sup><400103></sup>Matthew 1:31, Basel, 1538.

The Greek is **βλασφημία** (lit., “blasphemy of the Spirit”; RSV, “blasphemy against the Spirit”).

- FT128** This phraseology has not been located in the literature of the Novatianist controversy, but Cyprian charges Novatianus with identifying apostasy (or lapsing) with the sin against the Holy Ghost (MPL 35. a304). Cf. O. D. Watkins, *A History of Penance* 1. 17, 132-221.
- FT129** “*Voluntarie.*”
- FT130** Sec. 21, above.
- FT131** Following 70 and Vg. here (as in his Comm. <sup><012738></sup> Genesis 27:38, 39), Calvin has interchanged the blessing of Esau with that of Jacob in Gen., ch. 27. Cf., however, <sup><581120></sup> Hebrews 11:20.
- FT132** cf. Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospels* 2. hom. 14:15 (MPL 76. 1256); Columbanus, *Penitential* [ca. 600] A. 1 (MPL 80. 323; tr. J. T. McNeill, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, p. 350); Pseudo-Ambrose, *Sermons* 25:1 (MPL 17. 655); Lombard, *Sentences* 4. 14:1 (MPL 192.869); Pseudo-Augustine, *De vera et falsa poenitentia* 8:21 (MPL 40. 1120). The last-named work appeared only about 1100 but was held genuine and authoritative by the Schoolmen and was first declared spurious by Trithemius of Spannheim, ca. 1495. The present chapter has all the 17 references to it in the *Institutes* cited by Smits (2. 263), with four exceptions, which are from the 1536 edition. Cf. 3. 4:39, note 83; Smits 1. 184, 190.
- FT133** Chrysostom, *Homilies on Repentance*, hom. 7:1 (MPG 49. 338). The conception of penance as medicine for sill is a commonplace of the early fathers and of the medieval penitential handbooks. Cf. A. Harnack, *Medizinisches aus der ultesten Kirchengeschichte* (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 8 [1892]), pp. 137 ff.; McNeill and Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, pp. 44 f., 182; McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls*, pp. 44 f., 114, 119, 134, 179, 315. Calvin’s *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (1541) command “that there be no rigour by which anyone may be injured; for even the corrections are only medicines” (CR 10 1:30; tr. 150 22. 71).
- FT134** The “three parts of penance”-contrition, confession, and satisfaction-were formally treated in innumerable medieval works. This scheme is

followed in Lombard's *Sentences* 4. 16:1 (MPL 192. 877) and in the *Decretum* of Gratian 2. 1:40 (Friedberg 1.1168), where it is supported by a work on repentance wrongly ascribed to Chrysostom (*Opera*, edited by Erasmus, 1530, 2. 347; 1547 edition, 5. 904). Cf.

Melanchthon, *Loci communes* (1521), section "*vis peccati et fructus*" (ed. Engelland, *op. cit.*, p. 35; tr. Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 103: both editors have useful notes on attrition, the prelude to contrition). The "immense volumes" to which Calvin here refers may include such elaborate treatises as those generally called *summae confessorum*: see A.M. Walz, *Compendium historiae ordinis praedicatorum*, p. 145. Luther several times attacked this threefold conception of penance: see, for example, *Werke* WA 6. 610; 7. 110. Fisher, in replying to Luther, defends it at length in *Assertionis Lutheranae confutatio* (1523), pp. 156-178.

FT135 On daily repentance for venial sins, cf. Augustine, *Enchiridion* 19:71 (MPL 40. 265; tr. LCC 7. 381); Caesarius of Arles (d. 542) in MPL 39. 2220; and Columbanus, *Regula coenobialis*, ed. O. Seebass in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 15 (1895), 366-386, sec. 1 (tr. McNeill and Gamer, *op. cit.*, p. 258); Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* 3. 87. 1. The description of penance as "the second plank after shipwreck" is called by Luther that dangerous saying of St. Jerome's" (*Babylonish Captivity*, section on Baptism, *Werke* WA 6; tr. *Works of Martin Luther* 2.119, 202). See Jerome, *Letters* 84. 6; 130. 9 (MPL 21. 748, 1115; tr. NPNF 2 ser. 6. 178, 266). Cf. Lombard, *Sentences* 4. 14:1 (MPL 191. 869; tr. LCC 10. 348). Jerome's phrase is approved in the Council of Trent, session 6, ch. 14:Schaff, *Creeds* 2. 105.

FT136 "*De asini umbra rixam esse.*" In a fable of Aesop (ca. 570 b.c.), the owner who hired out his ass and accompanied the rider on foot disputed the latter's right to rest at noonday under the ass's shadow. "To dispute about the shadow of an ass" became a commonplace of Greek writers. Erasmus (*Adagia* [1523] 1. 3. 52) associates the expression with Demosthenes; cf. Plutarch, *Lives of the Orators* (*Moralia* 848 A, B), where Demosthenes makes dramatic use of the fable (LCL Plutarch, *Moralia* X. 434 f.).

FT137 Biel, *Epythoma pariter et collectorium circa quatuor sententiarum Ubros* 9: On contrition in obtaining pardon, cf. C. R. Meyer, *The*

*Thomistic Concept of Justifying Contrition*, pp. 60 f., 190 ff. Cf. 2. 2:4, note 15; 3. 4:17, note 36.

- FT138 3. 3. 10. Cf. Melanchthon, *Loci communes*, ed. Engelland, *op. cit.*, pp. 92, 96, 119; tr. Hill, pp. 117, 181 f., 211.
- FT139 Numerous divergent opinions of medieval theologians and canonists on confession are cited by H. C. Lea, *History of Confession and Indulgences I*. 168 ff. Lombard, in *Sentences* 4. 17:1-4 (MPL 192. 880 ff.), is not in agreement with Gratian, *Decretum* 2. 1:30-37 (Friedberg 1. 1165-1167).
- FT140 “*Exceptionem item, quia responderit Adam quasi excipiens.*” Calvin is using terms of law: *exceptio* is a plea or objection formally entered.
- FT141 Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Canaanite Woman*, hom. 9 (MPG 51. 456 f.).
- FT142 Pseudo-Augustine, *De vera et falsa poenitentia* 10:15 (MPL 40. 1122); Gratian, *Decretum* 2. 1:88 (Friedberg 1. 1188).
- FT143 Pseudo-Chrysostom, *Contra Judaeos, Gentiles et haereticos* (MPG 48. 1188).
- FT144 These were stock proof texts employed by innumerable medieval writers to justify auricular confession.
- FT145 A reference to the Forged Decretals (ascribed to early popes), which appeared about 850 in France. See P. Hinschius, *Decretales Pseudo-Isidorianae et Capitula Angilramni*; E.H. Davenport, *The Forged Decretals*; J. Haller, *Nikolaus I und Pseudoisidor*; E.H. Fournier and G. Le Bras, *Histoire des collections canoniques en Occident depuis les fausses ddcrtales jusqu’au decret de Gratien* 1. 196 f. (arguing for origin in Brittany); W. Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages*, pp. 167-189.
- FT146 Fourth Lateran Council (1215) canon 21:Text in Mansi 22. 1007 ff.: Hefele-Leclercq 5. 1350. Calvin’s chuckle over “both sexes” is an example of his familiarity with the jests of the learned in the Middle Ages. Cf. H. C. Lea (*op. cit.*, 1. 230)citing William of Ware (ca. 1300): “The ponderous jocularity of the Schoolmen explained that the phrase *omnis utriusque sexus* was not intended to mean hermaphrodites exclusively and was to be construed distributively and not

conjunctively.” About 1379 one Richard Hemsley in a sermon at Newcastle on Tyne facetiously alluded to this. He was cited to Rome for his impertinence and was dubbed “Friar Richard of both sexes.” See W. A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, pp. 164 f.

- FT147 “*Proprius sacerdos.*” Each person was commanded, in the Lateran canon, to confess to “his own priest.” The term was discussed with animation where jurisdiction was disputed, especially after the friars became active in the confessional.
- FT148 Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 7:16 (ed. R. Hussey [Oxford, 1860], 11. 724 ff.); Cassiodorus, *Tripartite History* 9. 85 (MPL 69.1151; tr. NPNF 2 ser. 2. 386 f.). The account in Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* 5:19, differs from this in some details. Cf. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls*, p. 98.
- FT149 The four statements here ascribed to Chrysostom were all assumed to be his in Calvin’s time, and were printed in his *Opera* edited by Erasmus, 1530. The first is from homily ii on Psalm 50, sec. 5, and is given as spurious in MPG 55. 580 ff. The second, from *Sermon on Penance and Confession*, is in the 1530 edition, 5. 512 (1547 edition, 5. 906) and is not in MPG. The other passages are genuine and are as follows: *Incomprehensible Nature of God, Against the Anomeans*, horn. 5:7 (MPG 48. 746); *Discourses on Lazarus* 4:4 (MPG 48. 1012).
- FT150 In <sup><190717></sup> Psalm 7:17, the Hebrew word פָּרַס (from פָּרַד, “to praise aloud”) is rendered in 150 ἔξομολογησάμενάι; in *confieri* (to confess). Cf. <sup><190901></sup> Psalm 9:1: <sup><194204></sup> Psalm 42:4.
- FT151 “*Cognitor.*” In this phrase (Hebrews 4: 1) Vg. has “*discretor.*”
- FT152 “*Paedagogia.*”
- FT153 Calvin, in his Strasbourg Liturgy (1539), and in that of Geneva (1542), used a form of confession of sins that had been employed by Bucer. Text with variants of different editions CR 6. 173 ff.; tr. B. Thompson, “Reformed Liturgies in Translation in. Calvin”: *Bulletin of the Theological Seminary of the Evangelical and Reformed Church* 28 (1957), 52 f. Cf. W. D. Maxwell, *Outline of Christian Worship*, pp. 112-119.

- FT154 Calvin's high doctrine of the authority of ministers in confession and absolution, subject to the authority of the Word of God, comes to expression here. Cf. J.-D. Benoit, *Calvin, directeur d'ames*, pp. 245 f.; McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls*, pp. 197, 209.
- FT155 Calvin's *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (1541) provided for procedures in such cases. (CR 10. 1:29 f.; tr. 150 22. 70 f.)
- FT156 Cyprian, *Letters* 16:2 (CSEL 3. 2:518; tr. ANF [letter 9:2] 4. 290).
- FT157 4:11,12.
- FT158 Cf. sec. 7, above. Lombard affirms the opinions here reported: *Sentences* 4. 17:2, 4; 18:1 (MPL 192. 881, 883, 885). This section has numerous reminiscences of works of Augustine; cf. Smits 2. 39.
- FT159 This view is mentioned and rejected by Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologiae* 4. qu. 79, memb. 3. art. 1.
- FT160 Lombard, *Sentences* 4. 18:4, 6, 7, 8; 4. 19:1 (MPL 192. 886-889).
- FT161 The doctrine of the *thesaurus ecclesiae* was formulated by Alexander of Hales (*Summa theologiae* 4. qu. 83, memb. 1. art. 1; memb. 3. art. 5) and revised by Aquinas and others. With respect to its bearing on jurisdiction (the power of the keys), it was discussed with wide divergence of opinion. The doctrine is succinctly defined in Clement VI's constitution *Unigenitus* (1343) (Friedberg 2. 1304; tr. Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church*, pp. 259 f.; J. F. Clarkson, *et al.*, *The Church Teaches*, p. 30. It is explained as inexhaustible, being derived from the free outpouring of Christ's blood and from the merits of the Mother of God and of all the elect. Cf. Bonaventura, *Commentary on the Sentences* 4. 20:part 2. art. 1. qu. 3, 4 (*Opera omnia* 4. 521-525); Lea, *op. cit.*, 1, ch. 7; 1. 506; R. Seeberg, *History of Doctrines*; tr. C. E. Hay, 2. 139. It should be acknowledged that conceptions of vicarious merit in penance were a commonplace of the penitential booklets centuries before Hales (McNeill and Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, p. 48, and index, s.v. "composition"). The doctrine of the treasury was assailed by Luther from 1517 and was spiritedly defended by his early opponents: see, for example, Fisher, *Assertionis Lutheranae confutatio* (1523), ch. 18 (pp. 298-315).
- FT162 3. 5:2.

FT163 4. 10.

FT164 “*Carnificina*.” Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin habitually protested against the old practice of the confessional on the ground that it left consciences in torment. See esp. Luther’s *Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses*, 7th thesis (*Werke* WA 1. 541 f.; tr. *Luther’s Works*, American Edition, ed. H. Grimm; general ed., H. T. Lehmann, 31. 100, 103); McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls*, pp. 166 f.

FT165 “*Caelum undique et undique pontus*”: Vergil, *Aeneid* 3. 193 (LCL Virgil 1. 360). On the elaborate tabulation of sins, cf. McNeill and Gamer, *op. cit.*, pp. 19 f., 341 f. See also Pseudo-Augustine, *De vera et falsa poenitentia* 14. 29 (MPL 40. 111).

FT166 An apt phrase of Plautus to suggest the plight of one who has no resource left: “*Nunc ego inter sacrum saxumque sto, nec quid faciam scio*.” *The Captives* 617 (50 Plautus I. 512 f.).

FT167 Cf. 3. 4:2, note 6; Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologiae* 4. qu. 69. memb. 8.

FT168 “*Iusta et integra enumeratio*.” Cf. sec. 2a, below. The requirement that confession of sins should be “integral,” i.e., complete and without any reservation or concealment, is frequently stressed in *libri poenitentiales* from the eighth century down. Long series of questions were often provided to secure this end. Cf. McNeill and Gamer, *op. cit.*, pp. 154, 214, 281, 315 ff., 324 ff., 580, 396, 403.

FT169 Cf. Tertullian, *On Repentance* 10: “*If we conceal something from men’s notice, shall we conceal it from God?...Is it better to be damned in secret than to be absolved in public?*” (CCL Tertullianus 1. 337; tr. ANF 3. 664).

FT170 I.e., Nectarius: cf. sec. 7, above.

FT171 “*Proram (ut aiunt) et puppim*.” Cicero calls this a Greek proverb: *Letters to His Friends* 16. 24:1 (LCL edition, 3. 374). Cf. 4. 17:33; 4. 18:18.

FT172 Lombard, *Sentences* 4. 17:1 (MPL 192.880).

FT173 References are to sec. 14, above, and 4. 12, below.

FT174 4. 5:1-4; 4. 6.

FT175 Lombard, *Sentences* 4. 19:1, 5 (MPL 191. 889, 891).

FT176 Cf. sec. 15, note 18, above.

FT177 “*Ubi integra non est confessio.*” Cf. sec. 18, note 37, above.

FT178 IV. 12:1-13.

FT179 Lombard, *Sentences* 4. 17:4, 5; 4. 18:6, 7 (MPL 192. 882 f., 887 f.). Lombard, in dist. 17, here employs numerous citations of Pseudo-Augustine, *De vera et/alsa poenitentia* 8:21 (MPL 40. 120 f.; Smits II. 263). Cf. 3. 4:1, note 1.

FT180 “*Tribuni personam sustinens, Deo intercederet.*” The reference is to the right of *intercessio*, or veto, exercised at discretion by Roman tribunes on measures proposed in the Senate and Comitia, ca. 400 B.C.

FT181 Following a long development of composition in penance (redemption of penalties by payments), Lombard and Gratian authorized the requirement of satisfactions in accordance with Calvin’s statement here: Lombard, *Sentences* 4. 16:4 (MPL 192. 879); Gratian, *Decretum* 2. 33:3. 1. 41, 63 (MPL 187. 1532, 1544; Friedberg 1. 1168, 1177).

FT182 Cf. Comm. <sup><470519></sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19-20.

FT183 A summary of Lombard, *Sentences* 3. 19:4 (MPL 192. 797). Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* 3. Suppl. 14:5: Works diminish the pains of hell.

FT184 2. 16:3-5.

FT185 Cf. 3. 13:3.

FT186 Aquinas holds that sin cannot be taken away without the sacrament of penance: *Summa Theol.* 3. 86. 4, reply to obj. 3. Cf. Council of Trent, session 6, canon 29: Schaff, *Creeds* 2. 116 f.

FT187 3. 12:1, 5.

FT188 Cf. Lombard, *Sentences* 4. 16:4 (MPL 192. 879); Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* 3. 87. 3; 1 2ae. 88.

FT189 Cf. Comm. <sup><380504></sup> Zechariah 5:4. Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 3. 23:8 (CSEL 19. 253; MPL 6. 427; tr. ANF 7. 93), attributes this teaching to Zeno. Cf. Cicero, *Pro Murena* 29:6: “*Omnia peccata esse paria*” (LCL edition, p. 222); Fisher, *Assertionis Lutheranae confutatio*, p.

158; Melanchthon, *Loci communes*, ed. Engelland, pp. 138 f.; tr. Hill, p.p. 137 ff.

FT190 The expression is Cicero's: *On Duties* 3. 33. 117 (LCL edition, p.898).

FT191 Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* 3. 86. 4; 3. Suppl. 15:1. Cf. 1 2ae. 87. 4; Bonaventura, *Commentary on the Sentences* 4. 18, part 1. art. 2. qu. 2: "Poena inseparabilis est a culpa Dominus dum remittat culpam, remittat poenam totam" (*Opera selecta* 4. 460).

FT192 Augustine, *Psalms*, Psalm 32 (Latin, Psalm 31). 2:9 (MPL 36. u64; tr. LF *Psalms* 1:288).

FT193 This striking sentence remained unchanged from the 1536 edition (OS 1. 1 19) although in an altered context. Such a statement should be given due weight in any estimate of Calvin's judgment of his function as an exegete. Cf. CR 7. 148: "I do not ask anyone to tarry with me [*s'arreste a moi*] or with my opinion except on the condition that he has first recognized that my teaching is useful."

FT194 ἀπολύτρωσιν

FT195 ἀντίλυτρον

FT196 Augustine, *Psalms*, Psalm 129. 3 (MPL 37. 1697; tr. NPNF 8. 13).

FT197 Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* 3. 86. 1, 4, reply to obj. 3; 1. 49:1; De Castro, *Adversus omnes haereses* (1543, fo. 147 D); Fisher, *Assertionis Luth-eranae confutatio* (on <sup><600408></sup> 1 Peter 4:8), p. 302; Eck, *Enchiridion*, ch. 9.

FT198 Pseudo-Chrysostom, *De fide et lege naturae* in (MPG 48. 1085). The punishment of a son as contrasted with that of a slave is introduced again in 3. 8:6.

FT199 Similarly, Augustine contrasts "the anger of God" with "the far more striking evidence of his mercy": *Enchiridion* 8:27 (MPL 40. 245; ed. O. Scheel, p. 8; tr. LCC 7. 555).

FT200 Pseudo-Chrysostom, *Sermo de poenitentia et confessione*, in the edition of Chrysostom edited by Erasmus (Basel, 1530), 5. 514 (1547 edition, 5. 907).

- FT201 Augustine, *Psalms*, Psalm 102 (Latin, Psalm 101). 20 (MPL 37. 1332; tr. NPNF 8. 500); Psalm 139 (Latin, Psalm 138). 15 (MPL 37. 1793; tr. LF *Psalms* 6. 204).
- FT202 Augustine, *On the Merits and Remission of Sins* 2. 33:53;34:56 (MPL 44. 182 ff.; tr. NPNF 5. 65-67). For numerous other examples of Calvin's claim that "Augustine is with us," see Smits 1. 27 1. Cf. the statement in *De aeterna Dei praedestinatione*: "*Totus noster est*" (CR 8. 166).
- FT203 Chrysostom, *Homilies on Providence, to Stagirus* 3. 14 (Basel edition, 1547, 5. 666; MPG 47. 493 f.).
- FT204 Ambrose, *Exposition of the Gospel of Luke* 10. 88:"1 do not find what he said; I find that he wept" (CSEL 32. 4:489. 8; MPL 15. 1918). Cf. Gratian, *Decreturn* 3. 33:3. 1. 1 (MPL 187. 1510; Friedberg 1. 1159).
- FT205 ἀπολύτρωσις
- FT206 3. 14:21; Comm. Harmony of the Evangelists, <402315> Matthew 23:15; <421134> Luke 11:34-41.
- FT207 Pseudo-Chrysostom, *Homily on Psalm 50*, hom. 2:2 (MPG 55. 577).
- FT208 Pseudo-Augustine, *De dogmatibus ecclesiasticis* 24 (MPL 58. 994).
- FT209 Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis*, hom. 10:2 (MPG 53.83 ff.).
- FT210 Augustine, *Enchiridion* 19:72 (MPL 40.266; ed. O. Scheel, p. 46; tr. 150 7. 382); *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 3. 6:16 (MPL 44. 600; tr. NPNF 5. 409 f.).
- FT211 Augustine, *Enchiridion* 17:65 (MPL 40. 262 f.; tr. 150 7. 377); Gratian, *Decreturn* 2. 33:3.84 (Friedberg 1. 1183; MPL 187. 1533).
- FT212 Sec. 38, above.
- FT213 "*Coryphaeus*."
- FT214 Calvin has quoted without suspicion a number of Pseudo-Augustine texts, but again rejects with contempt the obviously late *De vera et falsa poeni-tentia*. Cf. 3. 4:1, note 1; 3. 4:13, note 48. In 3. 14:8, however, a particular statement from this work is approved.
- FT215 Cf. N. Paulus, *Geschichte des Ablasses am Ausgange des Mittelalters*; W. E. Lunt, *Papal Revenues in the Middle Ages*: I. 111-125, documents in 2. 148-485; B. J. Kidd, *Documents Illustrative of the Continental*

*Reformation*, pp. 1-10. Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* 3. Suppl. 25:1, states that “indulgences hold good both in the church’s court and in the judgment of God” because of “the oneness of the mystical body in which many have performed works of satisfaction beyond the requirements.”

FT216 “*Helleboro.*”

FT217 “*Plumbum semper novurn alerri, novos nummos elici.*” Cf. *Grievances of the German Nation Against the Roman Curia* (1511), ed. C. G. F. Walch, *Monimenta roealii aevi* (Gottingen, 1757), 1. 1:109; Kidd, *Documents*, pp. 13 f. The clerks whose function it was to affix the leaden seals to papal bulls John Calvin’s *Institutes Book Three Remainder of Chapter Five Footnotes* [second part of footnotes 3 for chapter 5] were known as *plumbatores*. W. E. Lunt, *Papal Revenues in the Middle Ages II*. 298.

FT218 Section 1, above. Cf. III. 4. 15, note 30. From Aquinas down, the Scholastics accorded to the pope the primary authority to dispense the treasury of merits (*Summa Theol.* III. Suppl. 26. 3). This was defended by opponents of the Reformation. Leo X’s bull, *Exsurge Domine*, June 15, 1520, reciting the errors of Luther, includes his rejection of “the treasury of the church from which the pope grants indulgences”: “*Thesaurus Ecclesiae, unde Papa dat indulgentias, non sunt merita Christi et sanctorum*” (17th error). (Kidd, *Documents*, no. 38, p. 77.)

FT219 *Decretals V.* 28. 14 (Friedberg II. 889); Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* III. Suppl. xxvi. 3; Fisher, *Assertionis Lutheranae confutatio*, art. xvii, p. 305.

FT220 Leo I, *Letters cxxiv.* 4; clxv. 5 (MPL 54. 1064 f.; tr. NPNF 2 ser. XII. 107); clxv. 5 (MPL 54. 1163); Leo I, *Sermons* 65. 3 (MPL 54. 359 f.).

FT221 Augustine, *John’s Gospel lxxxiv.* 2 (MPL 35. 1847; tr. NPNF VII. 350); *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians IV.* 4. 6 (MPL 44. 613; tr. NPNF V. 419).

FT222 Cf. III. 5. 2, note 4; Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* III. Suppl. 25. 1. 2; Eck, *Enchiridion*, ch. xxiv (1533); Fisher, *Confutatio*, pp. 304 ff.

FT223 Section 3, above, and passages cited in note 8.

- FT224 Augustine, *Psalms*, Psalm 61. 4 (MPL 36. 730; tr. LF [Psalm 62] *Psalms* III. 187); *John's Gospel* 47. 2 (MPL 35. 1733; tr. NPNF VII. 260).
- FT225 κοινωμία
- FT226 Luther, *Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum*, positio 33 (*Werke* WA I. 235).
- FT227 A reference to Melancthon's omission of the topic of purgatory in the Augsburg Confession (1530) and the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (1532).
- FT228 Cf. section 2, above, and Aquinas on purgatory, *Summa Theol.* III. Suppl., Appendix II.
- FT229 Lombard, *Sentences* IV. 21. 1 (MPL 192. 895); Eck, *Enchiridion* (1526), ch. xxv; Bernard, *Sermons on the Song of Songs* 66. 10. 1, citing <sup><401232></sup> Matthew 12:32 for purgatory (MPL 183. 1 100; tr. S. J. Eales, *Life and Works of St. Bernard* IV. 405 f.).
- FT230 "Summum ius," the full demand of the letter of the law as distinct from equity or discerning justice. Calvin evidently has in mind the maxim *summum ius, summa iniuria* (Cicero, *On Duties* I. 10), which was then familiar and was employed by Luther. Cf. McNeill, "Natural Law in the Thought of Luther," *Church History* X (1941), 220.
- FT231 "Infernorum." The opinions here controverted are expressed in Eck, *Enchiridion* (1526), ch. 25; cf. Herborn, *Enchiridion* xlviiii (CC 12. 162).
- FT232 Augustine, *Against Gaudentius* I. 31. 38 (MPL 43. 729).
- FT233 Jerome, *Preface to the Books of Samuel and Malachi* (MPL 28. 556 f.).
- FT234 Rufinus, *Commentary on the Apostles' Creed* xxviii (MPL 21. 374). This treatise was published as a work of Cyprian in Erasmus' edition of Cyprian (1530-1540). Calvin does not so regard it. Cf. IV. 1. 2, note 5.
- FT235 Chrysostom, *Homilies on Repentance*, homily 6. 3 (MPG 49. 317 f.); Augustine, *Enchiridion* 8. 68 (MPL 40. 864 f.; tr. LCC VII. 379 f.); *City of God* XXI. 26. 1,2 (MPL 41. 743 f.; tr. NPNF II. 473 f.). Cf.

Lombard, *Sentences* IV. 21. 1-3, where <sup><460315></sup> 1 Corinthians 3:15 is made to refer to purgatory.

FT236 Augustine, *Enchiridion*, *loc. cit.*

FT237 Aquinas, in *Summa Theol.* III. Suppl. lxxi. 2-8, treats at length prayers for the dead: they benefit souls in purgatory, but not the unbaptized children in limbo or the souls in heaven. Qu. lxxi. 10 is on indulgences for the dead. Cf. J. Latomus, *De quibusdam articulis in ecclesia controversis* (*Opera* [1550], fo. 199a); J. Cochlaeus, *Confutatio ccccc articulorum M. Lutheri ex xxvi sermonibus eius*, xviii (art. 305); Augustine, *Enchiridion* 29. 109 f. (MPL 40. 283; tr. LCC VII. 405).

FT238 Tertullian, *Exhortation to Chastity* 11; *On Monogamy* 10 (CCL Tertullianus II. 1031, 1243; tr. ANF IV. 56,66 f.).

FT239 Augustine, *Confessions* IX. 11. 27; IX. 13. 37 (MPL 32. 775,779 f.; tr. LCG VII. 195, 200).

FT240 Augustine, *On Care for the Dead* (MPL 40. 591-610; tr. NPNF III. 539-551). Augustine is negative on benefits to the dead by the living.

FT241 Augustine, *Enchiridion* 18. 69; 29. 1 10 (MPL 40. 265, 283 f.; tr. LGG VII. 381, 405); Tertullian, *Exhortation to Chastity* and *On Monogamy*, as cited in note 24, above; Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* III. Suppl. lxxi; Latomus, as cited in note 23, above; Paris Faculty of Theology, *Instruction on the Articles of Melancthon* (1535), art. 12, in Daniel Gerdesius, *Historia reformationis sire annales evangelii seculo XVI* IV. 86.

FT242 Augustine, *John's Gospel* 49. 10 (MPL 35. 1751; tr. NPNF VII. 273 f.). Cf. Calvin's treatment of the topic in *Psychopannychia* (written 1534; published 1542) (CR V. 177-231; tr. Calvin, *Tracts* I. 419-490). Chapter Six Footnotes

FT243 III. 3. 9. On III. 6-10, see Introduction, pp. xlii, n. 19, and lx, n. 65. Chapter 6 is introductory to the four ensuing chapters.

FT244 "Rationem vitae formandae."

FT245 See the discussion of this point in the Introduction, pp. lxx f.

FT246 "Per mundi labyrinthum." Cf. I. 5. 12, note 86.

- FT247 Cicero, *On Duties* III. 3. 13 (LCL edition, pp. 280 f.); *De finibus* II. 11. 34; III. 7:26; IV. 15. 40 (LCL edition, pp. 120 f., 245 f., 344 ff.); Seneca, *On the Happy Life* 8. 2 (LCL Seneca, *Moral Essays* II. 116 f.): “To live happily xs to live according to nature.”
- FT248 Cicero, *De finibus* II. 21. 68; II. 23. 76 (LCL edition, pp. 156 f., 164 ff.); Seneca, *Moral Epistles* lxxxiv, lg (LCL Seneca, III. 284 f.).
- FT249 Cf. III. 2. 36, note 52.
- FT250 Seneca, *Moral Epistles* cviii. 23; 48. 4, 12 (LCL Seneca, III. 244; I. 316 f., 320 f.).
- FT251 “*In terreno hoc corporis carcere.*” Cf. III. 9. 4, note 7, and III. 25. 1, “*carnis ergastulo inclusi.*” The notion of the body as prison of the soul is from Plato: cf. *Phaedo* 62 B, 81 E, 82 E, 83 A; *Cratylus* 400 (LCL Plato I. 216 f., 284 f., 288 ff.; Plato VI. 62 f.).

## CHAPTER 7

- FT252 The impressive sentences above, beginning, “We are not our own,” add substance to Calvin’s concept of “the Christian philosophy.” Cf. p. 6, note 8; III. 8. 9, note 7.
- FT253 Cf. I. 17. 2, note 2.
- FT254 Cicero, *De finibus* III. 11. 36: “Nothing else than moral worth is to be counted as a good” (LCL edition, pp. 254 f.); *De legibus* I. 14. 40 (LCL edition, *Laws, and Republic*, pp. 340 f.); Seneca, *Dialogues* VII. 9. 4 (LCL Seneca, *Moral Essays* II. 122 f.); Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of the Philosophers* VII. lxxxix. 127 (LCL edition, II. 196 f.). Cf. Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* V. 17. 16 (CSEL 19. 454; MPL 6 [ch. xviii]. 606; tr. ANF VII. 153).
- FT255 From Livy, *History* III. 33. 7 (LCL Livy, II. 110). Among numerous references to man’s vainglory and pride, see I. 1. 2; I. 3. 1 (end); II. 1. 4; III. xiii, 1.
- FT256 “*Mundum vitiorum esse reconditum in hominis anima.*”
- FT257 “*Ut reddatur unicuique quod suum est.*” Cf. <sup><451307></sup>Romans 13:7; III. 5. 7, note 16; IV. 20. 3, note 9; Comm. <sup><560211></sup>Titus 2:11-14; and

Aristotle's fundamental treatment of the relation of justice and equity **ἐπιεικεία** *Nicomachean Ethics* V. 10 (LCL edition, pp. 312 f.).

FT258 “*Docet perigrinandum esse in mundo.*” Calvin here adopts, without developing in detail, the familiar pilgrimage metaphor as appropriate to the Christian and the church in the world, in preparation for the glory that shall be. Cf. III. 9. 4-5; III. 10. 1; Augustine, *City of God* XV. 6 (MPL 41. 442; tr. NPNF II. 287).

FT259 Cf. section 2, above. Calvin adopts the traditional view that pride is the mother of the deadly sins. Cf. I. 1. 2: “*ingenita est omnibus nobis superbia*”; II. 1. 10 He here rebukes a superiority-conscious and self-sufficient intellectualism, and places under divine judgment such humanist gratification over intellectual gifts as we find in Sir Edward Dyer's well-loved verse (1588): My minde to me a kingdom is, Such perfect joy therein I finde As farre exceeds all earthly blisse That God or nature hath assignde.

FT260 **τῆς φιλονεικίας καὶ φιλαυτίας**

FT261 Cf. “the image of God in all men,” above, and I. 15. 3-4, where (section 3) the image of God in man includes all things in which man excels other animals and (section 4) has not been utterly destroyed through Adam's sin. Cf. II. 8. 45. Further illustration from Calvin's writings of the obligation to others involved in their participation in the image of God may be found in W. Kolffhaus, *Vom christlichen Leben nach Johannes Calvin*, pp. 328 ff.; R. S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, pp. 150 ff. Bucer had argued similarly in *Das ihm selbs niemant sonder anderen leben soll . . .* (1523); tr. P. T. Fuhrmann, *Instruction in Christian Love*, p. 29.

FT262 “*Naturae lege.*” In this section, Calvin brings together Christian charity and natural law. Cf. Seneca's recognition that we are born to help each other: “*Homo in adiutorum mutuum genitus est.*” *De ira* I. 5. 2 (LCL Seneca, *Moral Essays* I. 118 f.).

FT263 Sections 8 and 9 present what is a frequent theme in Calvin. A worldly prosperity may be attained in forgetfulness of God, but it is accursed. Poverty with piety is an incomparably happier state. Cf. II. 10. 12, note 1 1; III. 20. 46.

FT264 Cf. I. 17. 10; III. 9. 6; III. 10. 5.

FT265 Cf. I. v. 4, 11; I. 16. 2-4, 8-9.

FT266 ἄσκοπος

FT267 In his essay, *On Tranquillity of Mind* 8-11, Seneca, without introducing religion, recommends fortitude in response to the mutability of fortune. In *Moral Epistles* cvii. 7, he writes: “*Fortiter fortuita patiemur.*” However, in *Epistles* lxxvi. 23 he speaks similarly of what has happened “by divine law” (LCL Seneca, *Moral Essays* II. 240-262; *Epistulae morales* III. 226; II. 160 f.). Chapter Eight  
Footnotes

FT268 Cf. Comm. <193005> Psalm 30:5,7.

FT269 Cf. Luther, *Fourteen Comforts* (1520) 1. 7 (*Werke* WA VI. 110; tr. B. L. Woolf, *Reformation Writings of Martin Luther* II. 43).

FT270 Both Cicero and Seneca introduce the injunction, “Follow God,” as an old precept. Cicero, *De finibus* III. 22. 73 (LCL edition, pp. 292 f.); Seneca, *On the Happy Life* 15. 5 (LCL Seneca, *Moral Essays* II. 238).

FT271 I. 17. 8; III. 4. 31,35.

FT272 This section appeared first in the 1539 edition, after Calvin’s flight from France (1535) and from Geneva (1538). But it resembles a passage in his Preface to Olivetan’s French New Testament, written in 1534. (CR IX. 809.) (See J. Haroutunian’s translation, LCC XXIII. 67 f.)

FT273 The ancient literature of consolation has many examples of this. Cicero illustrates the teaching of the Stoics, who “construct foolish syllogisms to prove that pain is not an evil.” *Tusculan Disputations* II. 12:20 (LCL edition, pp. 176 f.). Cf. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls*, pp. 26-36. On Calvin’s admission of tears and anxiety here, cf. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p. 191.

FT274 Calvin owed much to the ancient Stoics, but he frequently condemns features of their writings incompatible with Christian faith, including their principle of ἀπαθεία, the rejection of feeling, and their related doctrine of fate. Cf. I. 16. 8; III. 4. 28; III. 7. 15, and appended notes; Comm. <260104> Ezekiel 1:4; 17:10; Matthew 10:29; L. Zanta, *La Renaissance du Stoicisme au seizieme siecle*, chapters 1,2; Q. Breen, *John Calvin: A Study in French Humanism*, ch. 4.

- FT275 Cf. Seneca: “[Creator] scripsit quidem rata, sed sequitur.” *On Providence* v. 8 (LCL Seneca, *Moral Essays* I. 38).
- FT276 The translation is influenced by VG: “*Qu’il ne fait rien sinon d’une justice bien ordonne.*” Chapter Nine Footnotes
- FT277 Cf. J. Bohatec, *Bude und Calvin*, pp. 416-420; H. Quistorp, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Last Things*, tr. H. Knight, pp. 41-54; W. Kolffhaus, *Vom christlichen Leben nach Johannes Calvin*, pp. 539-565; R. S. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life*, Part II, ch. 4.
- FT278 Cf. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage* (MPL 40. 373-391; tr. NPNF III. 399-413).
- FT279 Cf. III. viii. 3.
- FT280 “*Hominem animal esse ἐφήμερον.*” Cf. Plato, *Laws* XI. 923 (LCL Plato, *Laws* II. 420); *Republic* X. 617 D (“*ψυχὰὶ ἐφήμεραι.*”) (LCL Plato, *Republic* II. 506).
- FT281 Theognis, *Elegies* 425-428 (LCL *Greek Elegy* I. 280 f.); Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* I. xlvi, 113f. (LCL edition, pp. 136f.); Herodotus, *History* I. 31 (self-immolation of Cleobis and Biton) (LCL Herodotus I. 34 ff.).
- FT282 Euripides on Cresphontes, quoted in Latin by Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* I. 48. 115 (LCL edition, pp. 138 f.).
- FT283 Plato, *Phaedo* 64 A, 80 E (LCL *Plato* I. 222 f., 280 f.; Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* I. 49. 118 (LCL edition, pp. 142 ff.). Cf. Melanchthon: “*Neque vero Christiana est vita, nisi assiduo moreamur.*” *Loci communes*, ed. Engelland, p. 156; tr. Hill, p. 259. On the body as prison, cf. III. 6. 5, note 9.
- FT284 Cf. III. 10. 6, note 9.
- FT285 The corresponding sentence in VG may be translated: “But someone will object that all things crave to persist in their being.”
- FT286 Cyprian, *On the Mortality* (i.e., on the plague of A.D. 252) 3. 1 (CSEL 3. 294 ff.; tr. ANF V. 470).
- FT287 CL I. 10. 2; III. 7. 8.
- FT288 See III. 25. 12, where Calvin interprets the corporeal images that figuratively represent the state of the damned. Chapter Ten Footnotes

FT289 Cf. III. 7. 3, note 7.

FT290 Cf. Augustine, *On the Good of Marriage* 9. 9 (MPL 40. 380; tr. NPNF III. 403); *Psalms*, Psalm 4. 8 (MPL 36. 81; tr. LF *Psalms* I. 20.

FT291 Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of the Philosophers* VI. 5. 4 (LCL edition, II. 90 f.).

FT292 A passage significant for Calvin's recognition of beauty as possessing value beyond mere utility. Cf. Comm. <010420> Genesis 4:20: Although music serves our enjoyment rather than our need, "it ought not on that account to be judged of no value; still less should it be condemned" (J. Haroutunian's translation, LCC XXIII. 355). For further illustration, see R. S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, pp. 137 ff.; L. Wencelius, *L'Esthétique de Calvin*, pp. 112 f., 134.

FT293 End of section 1, above.

FT294 Cf. VG.

FT295 The expression "*Magna cura cibi, magna virtutis incuria*" is attributed to Cato by Ammianus Marcellinus: *De rebus gestis* (ca. 390) XVI. 5. 2 (LCL edition, I. 214).

FT296 III. 7. 5.

FT297 On Calvin's conception of vocation, see Karl Holl, "Die Geschichte des Worts Beruf," *Gesammelte Aufsätze* III, no. 9, 189-219; H. Hauser, "L'Economie Calvinienne," *Etude sur Calvin et le Calvinisme*, pp. 227-242; G. Harkness, *John Calvin: The Man and His Ethics*, chs. 8-10; on this section, see esp. p. 211. Miss Harkness has, perhaps too gently, criticized the exaggerated opinions of M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, tr. T. Parsons, to which R. H. Tawney largely subscribes in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*. Despite the brilliance of Weber's essay, Calvin's statements on vocation were very inadequately brought to notice in it. Some other studies bearing on this point are briefly described in J. T. McNeill, "Thirty Years of Calvin Study," *Church History* XVII (1948), 232-235. R. S. Wallace, in *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (a significant independent examination of Calvin's entire ethical teaching in its religious setting), sheds light on the conception of occupational calling, esp. in Part III, chapters 3-6. Cf. Kolffhaus, *op. cit.*, pp. 420-433. A. Bieler, in a more recent work, *La Pensee économique et sociale*

*de Calvin*, brings a basic knowledge of Calvin to the examination of the various theories, and offers an adverse view of Weber's interpretation. See especially Part II, chapter 6, pp. 477-514, and, on vocation, Part II, chapter 5, pp. 391-414. Valuable also is *Protestantism and Capitalism: The Weber Thesis and Its Critics*, ed. R. W. Green, with critical appraisals by W. S. Hudson, H. See, H. M. Robertson, A. Fanfani, and A. Hyma. Cf. II. 10. 12, note 11.

FT298 Cf. Cicero, *On Old Age* 20. 73: "Pythagoras forbids us to desert our fort and station in life unbidden by God, our commander."

FT299 Cf. IV. 20. 15-30; Seneca, *On Benefits* VII. 15. 2; 20. 3 (LCL Seneca, *Moral Essays* III. 490 f., 504 f.).

FT300 Here we have Calvin's far-reaching observation on the splendor of God brightening even the lowliest daily task that is done in his service. Cf. Wallace, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

FT301 The reference is to II. 12. 1; III. ff; III. 3, *passim*.

FT302 III. 3. 1; III. 3. 6-10.

FT303 On the primary importance of the doctrine of justification by faith, see Melancthon, *Loci communes* (1535) (CR Melancthon XXI. 420); *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* IV. 2 (*Bekennnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, pp. 158 f., 415: *praecipuus locus doctrinae Christianae*"); *Concordia Trigtotta*, pp. 120 f.); Doumergue, *Calvin* IV. 267-271; J. S. Whale, *The Protestant Tradition*, pp. 43 f.

FT304 The word to which Calvin alludes is [שׁוֹמֵר]. The plural form is used in <sup><110121></sup> 1 Kings 1:21.

FT305 Ambrose, *Exposition of Psalm* 118 10. 47 (CSEL 62. 231; MPL 15. 1418).

FT306 Calvin here assails Osiander's radical view of justification. See W. Niesel's brief treatment of the issues between Osiander and Calvin, *The Theology of Calvin*, pp. 133 ff., and his study "Calvin wider Osianders Rechtfertigungslehre," *Zeitschrift fur Kirchengeschichte* XLVI (1927), 410-430. Osiander's doctrine was set forth in his *Disputation on Justification* (1550), containing 81 propositions, and in his *Confession of the Only Mediator and of Justification by Faith*

(1551). A brief, clear account of the controversy within Lutheranism, which arose from these treatises and from his *An filius Dei fuerit incarnandus* (cf. I. 15. 3, note 8), is found in *Concordia Triglotta*, pp. 152-159. His view that Christ is our righteousness solely by his divine nature, whereby he imparts to us “essential righteousness,” was regarded as invalidating the Reformation doctrine of Christ’s sacrifice in the agony of the cross. Cf. sec. 8, below.

FT307 Osiander challenged Augustine’s view (*De Trinitate* X. 12. 19) that the image of God is in the mind of man, with its three parts, memory, intellect, and will: *An filius Dei* (appended essay, *De imagine Dei*) B 3a; Satan too has these (B 4a). The image of God was shut up (*inclusa*) in Christ’s humall nature (C 2a), which was from eternity in God (D 1b). Adam’s original righteousness is defined as the righteousness of God dwelling in Adam (F 4a).

FT308 Cf. Augustine, *Sermons* clxxxii. 4 (MPL 38. 986; tr. LF *Sermons* II. 956 f.); *On Christ’s Agony* 10. 11 (MPL 40. 297); *City of God* XI. 22 (MPL 41. 336; tr. NPNF II. 297); *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* II. 2. 2 (MPL 44. 572; tr. NPNF V. 392); *Unfinished Treatise Against Julian* III. clxxxvi; II. clxxxviii (MPL 45. 1325, 1218 f.); *On Genesis, Against the Manichees* II. 8. 11 (MPL 34. 202).

FT309 Osiander, *An filius Dei* E 3b-4a; D 1b-2a. Cf. I. 15:3, note 8; II. 12. 4-7.

FT310 The points challenged above are advanced in Osiander’s *Confession* A 4b; G 1a. Calvin is anxious to refute the doctrine of essential righteousness in order to guard that of righteousness imparted solely through Christ’s sacrifice. Cf. sections 8 and 10, below.

FT311 “*Sepiae*.” The cuttlefish is described by Aristotle, *Parts of Animals* IV. 5 (LCL edition, pp. 318 f.), and by Pliny, *Natural History* IX. 29. 45 (tr. J. Bostock and C. H. Riley II. 497). The illustration is used by Tertullian, *Against Marcion* II. 20. 1 (CCL Tertullianus I. 497; tr. ANF III. 312 f.).

FT312 “*Nomen iustitiae et verbum iustificandi*.”

FT313 In the preceding sentences Calvin has reference to statements in Osiander’s *Confession*, between E 3a and in 3b of that treatise.

FT314 Section 3, above.

- FT315 Osiander, *op. cit.*, E 3ab; G 1a-3a; O 4a-P 3a.
- FT316 Osiander, *op. cit.*, G 1b-2a. Various references to the same work can be traced in this section. See Cadlet, *Institution* III. 200, note 4; 202, note 9. In sections 8-12, Calvin is vigorously combatting a view that would confine the redemptive work of Christ to his divine nature, thus rendering meaningless his cross and resurrection.
- FT317 II. 14. 2.
- FT318 In VG the text varies from this and may be rendered: “He raises his crest [like a crowing cock] and fills many pages with boasts.”
- FT319 Cf. Comm. Isaiah 53. 11.
- FT320 At several points in this section the French text somewhat expands the Latin, evidently for clarification and simplification of the thought. Here the explanation is inserted: “meaning that those of whom he speaks have been swimming between two waters, for they love rather to keep their good reputation in the world than to be prized in God’s sight.”
- FT321 Cf. IV. 17. 4. See also Cadier, *Institution* III. 201, note 4; R. S. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, pp. 167 ff. The relation of the divine and the human in the Eucharist corresponds to the work of Christ as God *and* man in justification.
- FT322 “*Mystica . . . unio*”; VG: “*union sacrée*.” Cf. “fellowship of righteousness” and “spiritual bond [*conjunctio*],” below. Cf. III. 2. 24; IV. 17. 8-12. Niesel notes that Calvin nowhere teaches “the absorption of the pious mystic into the sphere of the divine being”: *The Theology of Calvin*, p. 126; cf. pp. 144, 222.
- FT323 Osiander, *Confession* R 1a, T 1b. VG inserts here: “*Osiander tire de la que Dieu a mesle son essence avec la nostre*.”
- FT324 Cf. section 6, above; section 11, below. Osiander’s Lutheran opponents commonly said, as Calvin does, that he confused justification with regeneration. Niesel has discussed the *duplex iustitia* in his article “Calvin wider Osianders Rechtfertigungslehre” (cited above, section 5, note 5), PP. 418f. Cf. “two kinds of grace” in section 6, above.

- FT325 By the parenthetic phrase Calvin impugns Osiander's judgment while disparaging his competence to interpret the Hebrew words he freely employs.
- FT326 "*Secundum ratam partem*," a variation of the commercial law phrase *pro rata parte*, whence English "prorate."
- FT327 Osiander, *Confession* N 4b-O 3a.
- FT328 II. 17. 1.
- FT329 Cf. Horace, *Satires* I. 1. 61: "*At bona pars hominum decepta cupidine falso*" (LCL edition, p. 8).
- FT330 Fisher, *Confutatio*, pp. 65 ff.; Cochlaeus, *Confutatio ccccc articulorum M. Lutheri*, articles 26, 462; Cochlaeus, *Philippicae in apologiam Philippi Melancthonis* (1534) III. 10, fo. H 2b, 3a.
- FT331 Cf. III. 14. 9.
- FT332 Referring to the quotation of <sup><450402></sup>Romans 4:2 in section 23.
- FT333 "These men" are sixteenth-century defenders of the medieval system who have gone beyond the Scholastics in their perverse treatment of justification and grace, concealing the divine mercy. See the references in OS IV. 198 f. to Faber, Cochlaeus, Schatzgeyer, Fisher, and Latomus. The important decree on justification of the Council of Trent, session 6 (January 13, 1547), with 33 canons anathematizing those who deviate from the doctrine, closed the debate from the Roman side. (Schaff, *Creeds* II. 89-118.) Gr. Melancthon, *Acta Concilii Tridentini anno MDXLVI celebrati* (dated by Old Style calendar), especially his spirited reply to canon 9 of the series, which condemns justification by faith alone, n 7b ff.
- FT334 Lombard, *Sentences* III. 19. 1 (MPL 192. 795 f.).
- FT335 Cf. Augustine, *Sermons* cxxx. 2 (MPL 38. 726 f.; tr. LF *Sermons* II. 581 f.); *On the Spirit and the Letter* 13. 21 (MPL 44. 214; tr. NPNF V. 92), *et passim*. Other citations in Smits II. 41.
- FT336 Eck, *Enchiridion*, ch. v; Council of Trent, session 6, canon 1 (Schaff, *Creeds* II. 110).
- FT337 Luther, in translating the New Testament, used the expression "by faith alone" in <sup><450328></sup>Romans 3:28. This is defended by Melancthon, *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* IV. 73 (*Bekennnisschriften der*

*Evangelisch-Luther. ischen Kirche* I. 174; *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 141). Calvin, in defending *sola fide*, is aware that numerous attacks have been made on it, and that it has been roundly condemned by the Council of Trent (see note 31). Cf. Fisher, *Confutatio*, p. 60; Herborn, *Enchiridion* iv (CC 12. 27).

FT338 Apparently the reference to Origen is in error. It has been traced (OS IV. 203) to a quotation of Pelagius by Jerome, *Commentary on Romans*, ch. 3 (MPL 30. 66), and is found also in Pseudo-Ambrose, *Commentary on Romans* 3 (MPL 17. 79). It is employed by Herborn, *Enchiridion* iv (CC 12. 30), and other disputants.

FT339 “*Quin generalem exclusivam obtineamus.*”

FT340 Fisher, *Confutatio*, pp. 65 f., 80; Herborn, *Enchiridion* iv (CC 12. 27 ff.); Cochlaeus, *Philippicae* III. 10; De Castro, *Adversus haereses* VII, art. “*fides*” (1543, fo. 24 K-105 D).

FT341 Sections 2 and 4, above.

FT342 Section 4.

FT343 Augustine, *City of God* XIX. 27 (MPL 4I. 657; tr. NPNF II. 419).

FT344 Bernard, *Sermons on the Song of Songs* 23. 15 (MPL 183. 892; tr. S. J. Eales, *Life and Works of St. Bernard* IV. 141).

FT345 Bernard, *op. cit.*, 22. 6, 20 (MPL 183. 880, 884; tr. Eales, *op. cit.*, IV. 126, 130).

FT346 Lombard, *Sentences* II. 27. 6 (MPL 192. 715); Duns Scotus, *On the Sentences* II. 27. 13 (*Opera omnia* XIII. 249).

FT347 Cf. Comm. 2 Corinthians 5. 21, where Calvin discusses Christ’s “expiatory sacrifice.”

FT348 “*Nos haberi iustos.*”

FT349 “Here are the words . . . error of deeds.” Addition of 1553.

FT350 Ambrose, *On Jacob and the Happy Life* II. 2. 9 (CSEL 32. 2. 36 f.).  
Chapter Twelve Footnotes

FT351 “*λογομαχία.*”

FT352 This sentence first appears in the Latin *Institutio* published in August, 1539. It is related to the letter of Sadoleto to the magistrates of Geneva, March 18, and Calvin’s reply to this, September 1, 1539.

Sadoletto asked how a convert to the Reformation would answer “before the dread tribunal of the sovereign Judge,” and to this Calvin cogently replied. See OS I. 451, 480-486; tr. Calvin, *Tracts* I. 16, 55 ff.; LCC XXII. 246-250.

FT353 Cf. I. 1. 2.

FT354 Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* III. 5. 15 (MPL 44. 599; tr. NPNF V. 409).

FT355 “*Turbatur . . . non perturbabitur.*”

FT356 Bernard, *On the Psalm, He That Dwelleth* (Psalm 91) 15. 5 (MPL 183. 246); *Sermons on the Song of Songs* 61. 3; 13. 4; lxviii. 6 (MPL 183. 1072, 836, 1111; tr. Eales, *Life and Works of St. Bernard* IV. 367, 69, 424 f.).

FT357 Cf. I. 1. 2; I. 5. 3, 10; II. 8. 1; III. 13.3.

FT358 Cf. Cochlaeus, *De libero arbitrio hominis* (1525), fo. O 7a: “*Non sumus natura impii.*” (It is not sin for us to be bipeds, or to walk with countenance uplifted toward the stars . . . ; vice is against nature.)

FT359 Cf. II. 1. 2; II. 2. 11, note 49.

FT360 Augustine, *Sermons* clxxiv. 2 (MPL 38. 941; tr. LF *Sermons* II. 891 f.).

FT361 Bernard, *Sermons on the Song of Songs* 13. 5 (MPL 183. 836; tr. Eales, *op. cit.*, IV. 70). Chapter Thirteen Footnotes

FT362 “*Sarta tecta,*” lit., “mended and covered,” is used by Plautus in this sense: *Trinummus* 317 (LCL Plautus V. 126).

FT363 Cf. III. 4. 9, note 19.

FT364 Cf. III. 4. 27; III. 12. 5, note 7.

FT365 Augustine, *Psalms*, Psalm 88. 1. 5 (MPL 37. 1123; tr. LF *Psalms* IV. 243 f.).

FT366 Bernard, *Sermon on the Dedication of a Church* 5. 6 (MPL 183. 523; tr. *St. Bernard's Sermons for the Seasons*, by a priest of Mount Melleray, II. 424).

FT367 An adverse reference to Osiander's view of justification is implied here. CL III. 11. 5, note 5.

FT368 Again alluding to Osiander; cf. III. 11. 6, note 13.

- FT369 “*Gratiae dulcedinem.*”
- FT370 “*Suavissimum illud patris nomen.*” Cf. I. 14. 2, 22; III. 20. 36-38.  
Chapter Fourteen Footnotes
- FT371 Cf. I. 5. 3,5; I. 15. 2-4.
- FT372 Augustine, *Against Julian IV.* 3. 16 ff., 21, 25-26 (MPL 44. 744 ff., 749 ff.; tr. FC 35. 179 ff., 186 f., 189 f.).
- FT373 Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians III.* 5. 14 (MPL 44. 597 f.; tr. NPNF V. 404).
- FT374 Augustine, *Psalms*, Psalm 31. 2. 4 (MPL 36. 259 f.; tr. LF *Psalms I.* 253 f.).
- FT375 III. 13. 2.
- FT376 “*Foedus.*” Cf. II. 10. 1-5; III. 17. 2; III. 21. 5-7, where Calvin outlines his version of the “federal theology,” which had earlier beginnings. Typical observations on the covenant of grace are also found in I. 6. 1; II. 8. 21; II. 10. 7; II. 11. 4,7,11; IV. 14. 6.
- FT377 Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* IIIae. cxii. 2; Duns Scotus, *On the Sentences III.* xlx. qu. unica. 8 (*Opera omnia XIV.* 719.).
- FT378 Section 1, above.
- FT379 Pseudo-Augustine, *De vera et falsa poenitentia* 15. 30 (MPL 40. 1125); Gregory the Great, *Letters IX.* 122, as quoted in Gratian, *Decretum II.* 3. 7. 5 (Friedberg I. 527).
- FT380 Cf. Melanchthon, *Loci communes*, ed. Engelland, *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl II.* 1. 145; tr. Hill, p. 245.
- FT381 Cf. Bucer, *In quatuor Evangelia enarrationes* (1536, p. 122; 1553, fo. 75a).
- FT382 Cf. Latomus, *De fide et operibus (Opera [1550], fo. 135a ff.)*.
- FT383 Section 1, above.
- FT384 VG: “*le principal poinct de la dispute, que nous avons avec les papists.*”
- FT385 Cf. II. 2. 6, note 35; III. 13. 3; III. 17. 7. VG is here expanded to this effect: “It is quite true that the poor world has been seduced until now to think that man could of himself prepare to be justified by God, and that this blasphemy has commonly reigned both in preaching and in

the schools, as it is today upheld by those who would maintain all the abominations of the papacy. But those who have possessed any reason have always agreed with us, as I have said.”

FT386 Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* I IIae. cxiii. 1; cxiv. 3.

FT387 Duns Scotus, *On the Sentences* I. 17. 3. 25 f. (*Opera omnia* X. 84a); Jean Gerson (d. 1499), *De vita spirituali*, corollary 10 (*Opera omnia*, ed. L. E. Du Pin, III. 13).

FT388 Bonaventura, *On the Sentences* IV. 20. part 2. art. 1. qu. 3 (*Opera selecta* IV. 507); Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* III. Suppl. 25:1.

FT389 The reference is to the opinion condemned in section 12; cf. note 18.

FT390 III. 4. 25-39.

FT391 Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* I IIae. cix. 4.

FT392 “*Ad dilectionem.*” Cf. II. 8. 54, note 61; III. 18. 8, note 11.

FT393 Chrysostom, *Homilies on Philemon* 2. 4 (MPG 62. 713 f.).

FT394 Cf. III. 12. 1.

FT395 Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* 2. 3,7 (LCL Aristotle, *Physics* I. 128 ff., 166 f.); *Metaphysics* I. 3 (LCL *Metaphysics* I. 16 f.); Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* I. 19. 8; II IIae. 15. 1,2. Louis Goumaz utilizes the series of causes for the structure of his searching treatise, *La Doctrine du salut d’après les commentaires de Jean Calvin sur le Nouveau Testament*. See esp. pp. 93 ff., 130 ff., 184 ff., 225 ff., 249 ff. The four “causes” of salvation are respectively identified with God the Father, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the glory of God.

FT396 Herborn, *Enchiridion* xliv (CC 12. 154 ff.); Latomus, *De fide et operibus* (*Opera* [1550], fo. 138a).

FT397 III. 17. 14.

FT398 III. 12. 2.

FT399 Cf. III. 24. 4; W. Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, 178 f.; F. Wendel, *Calvin*, pp. 209 f.

FT400 Augustine, *Psalms*, Psalm 137. 18 (MPL 37. 1783 f.; tr. NPNF [Psalm 138, section 13] VIII. 635).

FT401 Section 17, above, and note 25.

- FT402 “*Tantae Dei benignitatis gloriare.*” Chapter Fifteen Footnotes
- FT403 “*Praecipuum . . . causae cardinem.*” The phrasing is intentionally similar to that used in III. 11. 1 at note 3.
- FT404 II. 7. 3.
- FT405 The objection is against Tertullian’s use of the word “merit” in this sense. Cf. Tertullian, *Apology* I. 21. 16; *On Repentance* 2 (CCL Tertullianus I. 125, 322; tr. NPNF III. 35, 657 f.).
- FT406 Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints* 15. 31 (MPL 44. 983; tr. NPNF V. 513); *Psalms*, Psalm 139. 18 (MPL 37. 1814; tr. NPNF [Psalm 140o, section 16] VIII. 644); Psalm 84. 9 (MPL 37. 1073; tr. NPNF [Psalm 85, section 6] VIII. 406).
- FT407 Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis*, homily 34. 6 (MPG 53. 321).
- FT408 Bernard, *Sermons on the Song of Songs* lxviii. 6 (MPL 183. 1111; tr. Eales, *Life and Works of St. Bernard* IV. 419).
- FT409 Lombard, *Sentences* II. 27. 5 (MPL 192. 715); Aquinas, *Quodlibetal Questions* IV. 7.
- FT410 It is argued by Eck, *Enchiridion*, chapter 5 (1533 edition, fo. 28a-32b), Herborn, *Enchiridion* 5 (CC 12. 32), and other opponents of the Reformation, that faith is insufficient for eternal life, and that good works are meritorious thereto.
- FT411 “*Solius fidei praemium.*” Cf. III. 11. 19, note 35; III. 17. 7, 8, 10.
- FT412 Duns Scotus, *On the Sentences* III. 19. qu. unica. 8 (*Opera omnia* XIV. 719).
- FT413 According to Aquinas, unformed faith (*fides informata*) is faith without works of charity; formed faith (*fides formata*) is faith that works by charity: *Summa Theol.* I IIae. cxiii. 4; cxiv. 3, 4, 8; II IIae. 5. 3 (tr. LCC XI. 189 f., 206-209, 214 f., 282-284).
- FT414 Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* IIIae. ciii. 3; civ. 3,4; cix. 2 (tr. LCC XI. 140 f.). In *Contra gentes* 3. 149, Aquinas points out that “the divine help is the influence of the first cause upon secondary causes . . . God does not destroy our acts of will; indeed he causes them” (tr. A. T. Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas: Philosophical Texts*, p. 158).

- FT415 Lombard, *Sentences* II. 26-28 (MPL 192. 709-719). Smits finds in Augustine no less than twenty-six passages bearing on the argument here: these characteristically assert the unaided grace of God in salvation: e.g., *Psalms*, Psalm 68 (Vg., Psalm 67). 41 (MPL 36. 838; tr. LF *Psalms* III. 351); *Enchiridion* 9. 32; 28, 106; 31. 117 (MPL 40. 248,282,287; tr. LCC VII. 858 f., 403 f., 409).
- FT416 II. 2. 8.
- FT417 Augustine, *Psalms*, Psalm 144. 11 (MPL 37. 1876; tr. LF [Psalm 145] *Psalms* VI. 325); *Letters* cxciv. 4. 16-19 (MPL 33. 879 ff.; tr. FC 30. 311-313).
- FT418 Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* I Ilae. cxii. 5 (tr. LCC XI. 18of.), quoting <183626> Job 36:26 and <460403> 1 Corinthians 4:3. He says that “a man cannot judge with certainty whether he has grace.”
- FT419 Cf. Melancthon, *Loci communes* (1521), ed. H. Engelland, *Melancthons Werke in Auswahl* II. 1. 112; tr. C. L. Hill, *The Loci Communes of Philip Melancthon*, p. 212. Chapter Sixteen Footnotes
- FT420 Eck, *Enchiridion*, chapter 5 (1533 edition, fo. 24b f.); Erasmus, *De libero arbitrio*, ed. J. von Walter, pp. 9 f. (“opening a door to impiety of all sorts”); Cochlaeus, *Philippicae* III. 15, 20,21-62; fo. I 2b, fo. K lb-2a (“spread of irreligion”), fo. N 2a.
- FT421 This statement seems on the surface out of accord with parts of Calvin’s argument against Osiander in III. 11. But there also (section 6), while distinguishing justification from sanctification, he strongly asserts that they are “inseparable,” citing, as here, <460130> 1 Corinthians 1:30. Cf. also III. 20. 45.
- FT422 3:18. Cf. Erasmus, *De libero arbitrio*, ed. Von Walter, p. 78; De Castro, *Adversus haereses* 12 (1543, fo. 150). The passage from Erasmus is translated by M. M. McLaughlin in the *Portable Renaissance Reader*, ed. J.B. Ros and M. M. McLaughlin, p. 684. See also L. Goumaz, *La Doctrine du salut*, pp. 259 ff.
- FT423 J. Faber, *De fide et operibus* 23, 25 (Opera [1550], fo. 103b f.).
- FT424 Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis*, homily 26. 5,6 (MPG 53. 235-239).
- FT425 Section 2, above.

- FT426 III. 18. 3.
- FT427 E.g., Latomus, *De fide et operibus* (*Opera* [1550], fo. 141ab).
- FT428 Gr. Erasmus, *De libero arbitrio*, ed. J. von Walter, p. 10; Cochlaeus, *Philippicae* III. 21 (fo. K lb-2a) on the Saxon Visitations (1528). The latter document is translated by G. Bergendoff in *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 40. 269-320.
- FT429 Cf. Bonaventura, *Commentary on the Sentences* IV. part 2. art. 1. qu. 4 (*Opera selecta* IV. 350 ff.).
- FT430 Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* III. Suppl. 12. 3; 15. 1.
- FT431 “*Ex capite proximo.*” For “*proximo*” here erroneous, the 1539 edition has “*quinto*,” “fifth”; the editions 1543-1554 have “*nono*,” “ninth.” The passages to be consulted are, in fact, III. 3. 19; III. 4. 25, 27, 30.

## CHAPTER 19

- FT432 Such arguments were advanced by many of Luther's opponents, including Erasmus, *De libero arbitrio*, ed. J. von Walter, pp. 23 ff., 33; Latomus, *De fide et operibus* (*Opera* [1550], fo. 14lab).
- FT433 II. 7. 3.
- FT434 “*Ex pacti ratione.*” Cf. Bonaventura, *On the Sentences* II. 27. 2. qu. 3 (*Opera selecta* II. 659); De Castro, *Adversus haereses X*: “*ex pacto . . . ex conventionione*” (1543, fo. 160 B, C).
- FT435 Cf. III. 23, 10; Cochlaeus, *Philippicae* III. 13, fo. H 4a; Lombard, *Sentences* III. 25. 4 (MPL 192. 810).
- FT436 Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* I IIae. cix. 6 (tr. LCC XI. 146 ff.); III. Suppl. 10. 4, reply to obj. 3; 59. 4, reply to obj. 2. Cf. Eck, *Enchiridion*, chapter 5; Herborn, *Enchiridion* 38 (CC 12. 128-132).
- FT437 I. 15. 4.
- FT438 “*Foedus.*” Cf. III. 14. 6, note 6; III. 21. 5-7.
- FT439 “*δικαιώματα*,” the LXX rendering of [δικαιώματα], which Calvin would prefer to render “edicts.” VG has “*edits ou statuts.*”

- FT440 Note the insistence on “faith alone” in sections 7,8,10. The view that works complete justification was frequently put forth in controversy against Luther, and was concisely affirmed by the Council of Trent in canon 24 of the Decree on Justification (Schaff, *Creeds* II. 115).
- FT441 Clarified in VG by the addition: “*que les enfans meurtrissent leur mere.*”
- FT442 Fisher, *Confutatio*, p. 492.
- FT443 This passage from James was naturally a favorite among opponents of the doctrine of justification by faith, especially since Luther called James “truly an epistle of straw” (“*ein recht strohern Epistel*”) (1522) as compared with the writings of John and Paul. Cf. Kaspar Schatzgeyer, *Scrutinium divinae Scripturae pro conciliatione dissidentium dogmatum* (1522) 2 (CC 5-27); De Castro, *Adversus haereses* X (1543, fo. 128 E); Fisher, *Confutatio*, p. 76; Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* II IIae. 4. 4 (tr. LCC XI. 269).
- FT444 Referring to the post-Homeric legend of the Aethiopsis in which Achilles is mortally wounded in the one vulnerable spot in his body, the heel that had been grasped in the hand of his mother Thetis when in infancy he was immersed.
- FT445 Paul and James differ not in doctrine, but by their use of the word “justify” in different senses. Cf. Cadier, *Institution* 3. 282, note 1. Calvin, in *Sermons on Various Passages of Genesis*, third sermon on Abraham’s justification, speaks of a double justification—first, a general pardon of those who are called, and thereafter “justification even in our works by pure faith” (CR 23, 718-719). Cf. Comm. <450830> Romans 8:30, where election and calling are distinguished from the other aspect of justification, which is the continuance of God’s favor through the course of life. Paul, says Cadier, treats of justification in the first sense; James, in the second.
- FT446 <450213> Romans 2:13 is cited in this sense by Eck, *Enchiridion*, ch. 5 (1533 edition, fo. 23a), and by others on the papal side. For “Ambrose” read “Ambrosiaster,” the writer so designated by Erasmus, a contemporary of Ambrose and the author of a *Commentary on Paul’s Epistles* long ascribed to that father. See his *Commentary on* <450213> Romans 2:13 (MPL 17. 67).

- FT447 III. 14. 18-20.
- FT448 The doctrine of *gratia acceptans*, accepting grace, was developed by the Franciscan Scholastics Duns Scotus and Ockham, and was asserted by Eck (*Enchiridion*, chapter 5.) and others of the period. is Augustine, *On Man's Perfection in Righteousness* 1 (MPL 44. 292 f.); tr. NPNF V. 159 f.). Coelestius was the associate of Pelagius: cf. II. 1. 5, note 8.
- FT449 Augustine, *On Man's Perfection in Righteousness* 1 (MPL 44. 292 f.); tr. NPNF V. 159 f.) Coelestius was the associate of Pelagius: cf. 2 5, note 8.
- FT450 Augustine, *On Man's Perfection in Righteousness* 9. 20 (MPL 44. 301 f.; tr. NPNF V. 165 f.).
- FT451 Augustine, *Against Two Epistles of the Pelagians* III. 7. 19 (MPL 44. 602; tr. NPNF V. 411).
- FT452 This beginning is related to the opening sentence of III. 14. 14. Cf. III. 16. 2, note 3. The argument associating merit with reward (“*ubi merces ibi merita*,” Cochlaeus, *Philippicae* III. 65, fo. N 2b) was a commonplace of Roman theology. Cf. De Castro, *Adversus omnes haereses* IX (1543, fo. 150): “*Quomodo toties auditur praemium, ubi prorsus nullum est meritum?*”
- FT453 Pseudo-Ambrose, *The Call of the Gentiles* I. 5 (MPL 17. 1091). The text of Prosper in MPL 51 does not contain these sentences. Cf. II. 2. 5, note 27.
- FT454 Cf. III. 25. 12. For related passages in Augustine, see Smits II. 43.
- FT455 Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* I IIae. cxiv. 1 (tr. LCC XI. 203 f.); Cochlaeus, *Philippicae* III. 65.
- FT456 Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will* 6. 14 (MPL 44. 890; tr. NPNF V. 449). The passage, <sup><550408></sup>2 Timothy 4:8, is cited by Eck, *Enchiridion*, chapter 5 (1533 edition, fo. 26a). J. Clichtove, in *Improbatio quorundam articulorum Martini Lutheri* (1535), citing this text, asks: “Works of righteousness: what are they but merits? [*Quid sunt nisi merita?*]” Cf. Fisher, *Confutatio*, art. 1, p. 66; Herborn, *Enchiridion* 5 (CC 12. 33).

- FT457 Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* III. 5. 14 (MPL 44. 598; tr. NPNF V. 409).
- FT458 De Castro, *Adversus haereses*, s.v. “*opera*,” 11 (1543, fo. 140 A); Latomus, *De fide et operibus* (*Opera* [1550], fo. 133a), on <sup><421609></sup>Luke 16:9 and <sup><540617></sup>1 Timothy 6:17-19.
- FT459 <sup><580610></sup>Hebrews 6:10 is so cited by Herborn, *Enchiridion* 5 (CC 12. 33), and in the Tridentine decree on justification, chapter 16 (Schaff, *Creeds* II. 107): “Life eternal . . . a reward [*merces*] . . . be faithfully rendered to their good works and merits.”
- FT460 Augustine, *Psalms*, Psalm 32. 2. 1. 9; Psalm 83. 16; Psalm 109. 1 (MPL 36. 284; 37. 1068; 37. 1445; tr. LF [Psalm 33] *Psalms* I. 317 f.; [Psalm 34] IV. 164; [Psalm 110] V. 229 f.); *Sermons* clviii. 2. 2 (MPL 38. 863; tr. LF *Sermons* II. 779).
- FT461 Fisher, *Coniutatio*, p. 63; De Castro, *Adversus haereses* VII, s.v. “*gratia*” (1543, fo. 128ab, 132b); Lombard, *Sentences* III. 23. 5 (MPL 192. 811); Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* I IIae. cxiii. 4, reply to obj. 1; II IIae. 23, 27 (tr. LCC XI. 342-368). Cf. Augustine, *Enchiridion* 31. 1,7 (MPL 40. 287; tr. LCC VII. 409).
- FT462 III. 2. 9-13.
- FT463 “κατ ἀνακεφαλαίωσιν.”
- FT464 Cf. III. 17. 15; Duns Scotus, *On the Sentences* I. 17. 3. 22 (*Opera omnia* X. 82); Cochlaeus, *Philippicae* III. 10.
- FT465 De Castro, *Adversus haereses* VII (1543, fo. 128 C B; K. Schatzgeyer, *Scrutinium divinae Scripturae pro conciliatione dissidentium dogmatum* (1522) 2 (CC 5. 26); Cochlaeus, *Philippicae* III. 55, fo. 3 3b; Clichtove, *Improbatio*, fo. 14a (on <sup><401912></sup>Matthew 19:12).
- FT466 These words are from the 1545 edition.
- FT467 Eck, *Enchiridion*, chapter 5: “*Fides opus vocatur*” (1533 edition, fo. 25b), quoting <sup><430629></sup>John 6:29. Cf. Calvin, *Comm.* <sup><430629></sup>John 6:29.
- FT468 Calvin here records dissent from Luther’s position. Cf. Luther, sermons on <sup><411614></sup>Mark 16:14, May 29, 1522, and <sup><410801></sup>Mark 8:1, July 19, 1523 (*Werke* WAX. 3. 141 f.; XII. 637; cf. XXI. 1. 360).

- FT469 “*Lucianici homines*,” i.e., men of the spirit of Lucian of Samosata (d. ca. 200), who satirized Christian belief and practice in his *De morte Peregrini*.
- FT470 II. 7. 14, 15; III. 11. 17,18.
- FT471 Melanchthon, *Loci communes* (1521), ed. H. Engelland, *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl* II. 1. 129; tr. C. S. Hill, pp. 214 f. The 1559 edition (*Loci praecipui*) distinguishes four stages (*gradus*) of Christian liberty: the remission of sins, the illumination of the spirit, political life not subject to the Mosaic law, and freedom of conscience in things indifferent (ed. Engelland, *op. cit.*, II. 2. 764-772).
- FT472 Cf. Servetus, *On the Righteousness of Christ’s Kingdom* (1532) 3, “a comparison of the law and the gospel,” D 7a-8b (tr. Wilbur, *Two Treatises of Servetus*, pp. 239-241).
- FT473 Calvin asserts liberty of conscience “*in rebus non necessariis*.” Cf. Kupert Meldenius (Peter Meiderlin), *Paraenesis votiva pro pace ecclesiae* (1626), motto at end: *In necessariis unitas, in non necessariis libertas, in omnibus caritas*.” (McNeill, *Unitive Protestantism*, pp. 267 f., note 12; 311.)
- FT474 Cf. Melanchthon, *Loci communes*, ed. Engelland, p. 137; tr. Hill, p. 224: “They who are in Christ as driven by the Spirit to do the law . . .”
- FT475 Fisher, *Confutatio*, art. 31, p. 492.
- FT476 “*Parcere pro indulgere vel humaniter ad vitia connivere*” (VG: “*dissimulant les vices*”). For Calvin’s explanation of the Hebrew word [חַמַּל] as “to overlook or spare” and hence “to pardon or take pity on,” see Comm. <241505> Jeremiah 15:5; Comm. <290218> Joel 2:18.
- FT477 “*ᾄδιάφοροι*,” things indifferent, a topic discussed in many contexts in Calvin’s time. Cf. Melanchthon’s *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* XV. 52 (*Concordia Triglotta*, pp. 328 f.: “For love’s sake we do not refuse to observe adiaphora with others”). For Calvin, the subject has been examined by T. W. Street, *John Calvin on Adiaphora, an Exposition* (doctoral dissertation. Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1954). Referring to this section, Dr. Street stresses the high importance for Calvin of liberty in adiaphora (pp. 66 f.). Cf. IV. 10. 22. See also R. S. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life*, pp. 309 f.

FT478 Calvin's discerning comment here on the conscience entrapped in a compulsive and progressively severe austerity may be compared with his counsels of moderation in the enjoyment of God's temporal gifts in III. 10. 1-4. Some early monastic texts contain warnings against such extremes, especially with reference to fasting. See, for example, Cassian, *Conferences* 21:13,14 (MPL 41. 1187-1190; CSEL 13. 587-590; tr. NPNF 2 ser. XI. 508 f.); *Sayings of the Fathers* X. 1 (LCC XII. 105). However, in the instance of Dioscorus of Namisias, a protracted resolute reduction of food and drink is held exemplary: *Sayings of the Fathers* IV. 13 (LCC XII. 50).

FT479 "*Res omnes externas libertati nostrae subiicit.*" Cf. III. 10. 4: "*in rebus externis libertas.*" In this and the following section Calvin's Christian view of the adiaphora finds expression. This is not to deny his debt to the Stoics in clarification of the concept. Cf. E. F. Meylan, "The Stoic Doctrine of Indifferent Things and the Conception of Christian Liberty in Calvin's *Institutio Christianae Religionis*" (*Romanic Review* VIII [1937], 135-145).

FT480 The source of this saying has not been identified.

FT481 In 1522 some Zurich citizens, to celebrate their Scriptural liberty, held meat dinners on Fridays, and on Ash Wednesday the printer Christopher Froschauer and others, in Zwingli's presence, ate "two dried sausages." (Kidd, *Documents*, p. 390.) These, or similar, incidents may have been remembered here.

FT482 "*De scandaiis.*" The topic of giving offense in religious practices is treated by Calvin in his treatise *De scandalis* (1550) (OS II. 162-240; CR VIII. 1-84; tr. A. Golding, *A Little Booke Concernyng Offences*, 1567). Cf. Melancthon, *Loci communes* (1521) at end; ed. Engelland, *op. cit.*, pp. 161 ff.; tr. Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 265 ff.

FT483 In this section, Calvin varies his language by using without distinction "*offensio*" and "*offendiculum*" as well as "*scandalum.*" Cf. Melancthon: "A scandal is an offense by which either faith or charity is injured in a neighbor" (ed. Engelland, *op. cit.*, p. 161; tr. Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 265 f.).

FT484 An inversion of <sup><461029></sup> 1 Corinthians 10:29: it is given correctly in section 16, near the end.

- FT485 “*Vel moderanda . . . vel ogendiculis redimenda.*” The answer lies in care for charity and the neighbor’s good, but this principle is to be guarded from hypocritical pretense (section 13).
- FT486 These writings include: *Epistolae duae de rebus hoc saeculo cognitu apprime necessartiis* (Basel, 1537) (OS I. 287-362; Epistle 1 tr. in Calvin, *Tracts* III. 360-411: *On Shunning the Unlawful Rites of the Ungodly*); *What a Believer Ought to Do . . . Among the Papists* (1543) (CR VI. 537-578; tr. R. G. [1548]: *The Mynde of John Calvyne, What a Faithful Man Ought to Do, Dwelling Among the Papists*); *Excuse of John Calvin to the Nicodemites* (1544) (CK VI. 589-614); *On Avoiding Superstition* (2549) (CR VI, 617-640); *De scandalis* (1550) (OS II, 161-240).
- FT487 By “constitutions” Calvin has reference to the papal constitutions mentioned in IV. 10. 8,9.
- FT488 Cf. the thirteenth-century papal claim of “*plenitudo potestatis in temporalibus et in spiritualibus,*” combatted by Marsiglio of Padua and William of Ockham. See esp. Ockham, *De imperatorum et pontificum potestate*, ed. C. K. Brampton, chapters 1-4, pp. 5-10; chapter 11, p. 24.
- FT489 IV. 20.
- FT490 IV. 10,11.
- FT491 “*Conscientiae forum.*” Ci. IV. 10. 3. See R. J. Deferrari and others, *A Lexicon of St. Thomas Aquinas*, s.v. “*forum,*” p. 443; *Catholic Encyclopedia*, art. “*forum.*”
- FT492 See HDRE IV, art. “*conscience,*” opening paragraph, and section “*Greek and Roman,*” esp. pp. 39 ff.; Cicero, *Nature of the Gods* III. 35. 85 (LCL edition, pp. 370 f.); Plutarch, *Moralia* 476 (LCL Plutarch, *Moralia* VI. 234 f.); Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* I. lxxix. 13; I IIae. 19. 5; *De veritate* 17. 5 (A. T. Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas: Philosophical Texts*, p. 115); and literature cited in W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. “*συνείδησις.*”
- FT493 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* V. 11. 41. (LCL Quintilian II. 294 f.). Cf. Comm. Seneca, *On Clemency* I. 13: “*magis vis conscientiae*” (CR V. 102).

FT494 Cf. section 11, note 16. John Calvin's Institutes Book 4 Chapter One Footnotes

FT495 This thoughtful and ample chapter, with its tone of devout warmth, takes its place in the forefront of historically celebrated discussions of prayer, such as Tertullian's *De oratione* (CCL Tertullian I. 257-274; tr. ANCL XI. 178-204); Origen, II *Περὶ εὐχῆς* (MPG 11. 415-562; tr. LCC II. 238-287; ACW XIX. 3-140); Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Lord's Prayer* (MPG 44. 1119-1194); and the short treatises of Augustine (MPL 47. 1113-1127) and of Hugh of St. Victor (MPL 176. 977-988). R. S. Wallace devotes a revealing chapter to Calvin's teaching on prayer, with citations from many of his works, in his *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, pp. 271-295.

FT496 Cf. the note on Christian philosophy, p. 6, note 8; III. 7. 1, note 1, and the references to philosophers as a class in I. 5. 12; I. 15. 6; III. 7. 2; III. 6:1,3; III. 8. 9.

FT497 Cf. the references to adoption in II. 7. 15; II. 14. 5-7; III. 1. 3; III. 2. 11, 22; III. 11. 6; III. 14. 18; III. 17. 6; III. 28. 2

FT498 *Nec lactare eos verbis.* Cf. VG: "*Et qu'il ne les allaite point de vaines parolles.*"

FT499 Cf. Seneca, *Epistles* 31. 5 (LCL Seneca, I. 222 f.).

FT500 Calvin, in describing prayer as familiar conversation ("*colloquium*"; cf. "*alloguim*," section 5) with God, is using the language of Augustine (*Letters*, cxxx; MPL 33. 502-509), Cassian (MPL 49. 769), Benedict (MPL 66. 329), the *Vitae Patrum*, story of Barlaam and Josaphat 20 (MPL 73-520), and in a sense, Aquinas (*Contra gentes* 4. 22). Calvin is particularly careful to guard this conception from every element of irreverence, casualness, or levity. Cf. the opening sentences of section 16, below.

FT501 Cf. Horace, *Satires* I. 8. 1-3 (LCL edition, pp. 96 ff.); <234410> Isaiah 44:10-17; Erasmus, *Colloquies*, "The Shipwreck" (tr. C. R. Thompson, *Ten Colloquies of Erasmus*, pp. 6 ff.).

FT502 "*Duce Spiritu.*" As by the Holy Spirit we understand the Scripture (I. 7. 4,5), so here by the prompting of the Spirit we are guided in prayer.

- FT503 The stress upon existential praying as distinct from the mere recital of prayers is similar in Origen, *On Prayer* 12 (LCC II. 261 f.). Cf. Aquinas; *Summa Theol.* I IIae. 33. 13 (attention makes prayer meritorious); Luther, *Larger Catechism*, part 3 (introduction to the Lord's Prayer) (*Bekennnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, p. 668); *Treatise of Good Works*, Third Commandment, section 4 (*Werke* WA VI. 232; tr. *Works of Martin Luther* I. 225 f.).
- FT504 Section 51, below. It is noteworthy that section 7 differs considerably from the text of the French editions 1551-1537. For the latter, see Benoit, *Institution* III. 483 f., note (a).
- FT505 Section 8, below.
- FT506 Section 3, above.
- FT507 III. 3. 1-5.
- FT508 Cf. Luther, *Enchiridion piarum precatationum* (*Werke* WA X. 2. 395); *Treatise of Good Works*, *loc. cit.*
- FT509 Cf. Luther, *Enchiridion piarum precatationum* (*Werke* WA X. 2. 396).
- FT510 III. 2. 12-26.
- FT511 The corresponding parts of the editions of 1536 and 1539 are somewhat more extended than in sections 12-15 here. At this point it is stated (1539): "To this sting [*aculeum*] by which the consciousness of our unhappy state continually pricks us, our most gracious Father has joined two things: a command bidding us to pray and a promise by which he undertakes that we shall obtain whatever we ask." Cf. Luther, *Enchiridion piarum precatationum* (*Werke* WA X. 2. 395); *Treatise of Good Works*, Third Commandment, sections 4,5 (*Werke* WA VI. 233 f.; tr. *Works of Martin Luther* I. 226-227). Scripture proofs follow. It is said that while by <sup><022007></sup>Exodus 20:7 we are forbidden to take the Lord's name in vain, yet "we are at the same time commanded to take it to his glory, ascribing to him all praise of power, bounty, strength, and protection, while we both ask and expect of him these same things" (OS IV. 313, footnote).
- FT512 Cf. I. 4. 1; 1. 5. 8; III. 24. 12.

- FT513 “*Clamavit ad me.*” In Comm. Psalm 91. 5, Calvin has “*Invocavit me*”; Vg. has “*clamabit ad me,*” and modern versions also use the future tense.
- FT514 Section 13, above.
- FT515 Luther, *Enchiridion piarum precationum* (*Werke* WA X. 2. 395).
- FT516 Section 12, above.
- FT517 III. 3. 25.
- FT518 A variation on the language of Augustine, *City of God* XXII. 2. 1-2 (MPL 41. 753; tr. NPNF II. 499 f.).
- FT519 Sections 4,5, above.
- FT520 Section 6, above.
- FT521 Cf. section 5, above. Cf. also section 29, below; Comm. Psalm 63. 4; Comm. <442036> Acts 20:36; Comm. <540208> 1 Timothy 2:8. The raising of both hands in prayer was common in antiquity (HDRE X. 185, 201), and this became one of the postures practiced in monasticism and in the penitential discipline of the church. Cf. McNeill and Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, pp. 33 f., 144, 146. Calvin approves kneeling in public worship, IV. 10. 30.
- FT522 “*Horribilis Dei maiestas.*” Cf. III. 23. 7: “*decretum . . . horrible.*”
- FT523 “*Umbratilis.*” Cf. II. 7. 1,16; II. 8. 28; II. 9. 3, 4; II. 11. 2-6.
- FT524 Cf. Comm. *Harmony Four Books of Moses*, <022809> Exodus 28:9-21.
- FT525 Clichtove, *De veneratione sanctorum* (Paris, 1523) I. 10 (fo. 26b-29b); Eck, *Enchiridion*, ch. 14 (1533 edition, fo. 47b, 49a); Latomus, *Adversus M. Bucerum de controversiis . . . altera plenaque defensio* (Cologne, 1545), fo. I 1b-M 4b. Latomus cites Augustine (*City of God* XXII. 10 and other passages) to claim that Augustine favored the invocation of saints (fo. L 1a-2b).
- FT526 Augustine, *Against a Letter of Parmenianus* II. 8. 16 (MPL 43. 60); *Psalms*, Psalm 94. 6 (MPL 37. 1220 f.; tr. LF [Psalm 95] *Psalms* IV. 389).
- FT527 Cf. section 36, below.
- FT528 Ambrose, *On Isaac or the Soul* 8. 75 (CSEL 32. 694; MPL 14. 520).

- FT529 *Eck, Enchiridion*, ch. 14 (1533 edition, fo. 49b), citing <sup><451530></sup>Romans 15:30.
- FT530 “*Prosis.*” Proses in the liturgy are verses sung or spoken between the epistle and the gospel. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “Prose. 2. Ecclesiastical.”
- FT531 Cf. citations in note 31; J. Faber, *De intercessione sanctorum, adversus J. Oecolampadium (Opuscula [1537] II, first title)*, c 1b-f 4a, esp. e 1a.
- FT532 Eligius (d. 660) and Medard (d. 545), celebrated saints and early bishops of Noyon, the city of Calvin’s birth.
- FT533 “*Semper ad Patrem dirigitur oratio*”: Third Council of Carthage (397), canon 23 (Mansi III. 884). Augustine, *City of God* VIII. 27, 1; 22. 10 (MPL 41. 255, 772; tr. NPNF II. 164 f., 492); *Against Faustus* 20. 21 (MPL 42. 384 f.; tr. NPNF IV. 262).
- FT534 *Eck, op. cit.*, fo. 48b.
- FT535 *Eck, op. cit.*, fo. 46b; Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* III. Suppl. lxxii. 3.
- FT536 “For the third . . . godliness,” 1553 addition.
- FT537 *Eck, op. cit.*, fo. 49a; De Castro, *Adversus haereses* (1543 ed., fo. 164 B, E).
- FT538 *Eck, op. cit.*, fo. 471-481. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* II IIae. lxxxiii. 11.
- FT539 De Castro, *Adversus haereses* (1543, fo. 164 B, C).
- FT540 *Eck, op. cit.*, fo. 49a; De Castro, *op. cit.*, fo. 198 A.
- FT541 The quotation here seems to be a blend of Vg. <sup><195108></sup>Psalm 51:8 and <sup><196511></sup>Psalm 65:11 (same numbers in KJV).
- FT542 *Eck, op. cit.*, fo. 47b, quoting <sup><198206></sup>Psalm 82:6.
- FT543 Section 26, above.
- FT544 Sections 17-19, above.
- FT545 Section 20, above.
- FT546 Section 21, above.
- FT547 Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* III. Suppl. lxxxii. 2; *Eck, op. cit.*, fo. 50 b; De Castro, *Adversus haereses*, fo. 197 E.

- FT548 George of Cappadocia, martyred in 303, whose cult spread in England after Richard Lionheart's crusade. There were two third-century saints named Hippolytus, of whom the better known was a scholar and controversial figure in the church at Rome, and who was banished, reconciled, and martyred (236).
- FT549 "*In die necessitatis*," apparently from Ecclesiasticus 6:10.
- FT550 Section 1, above.
- FT551 *Ibid.*
- FT552 "*Confiteamur*." Gr. III. 4. 9, note 19.
- FT553 "*Ex hac dulcedine amoris*." Cf. "*tanta dulcedine*," section 14, above. The word *dulcedo*, "sweetness," was prominent in the vocabulary of the medieval mystics, including Bernard, Richard of St. Victor, Rolle, and Ruysbroeck. For translated passages, see LCC 13. 68 ff., 105 f., 210 f., 235, 323 ff.
- FT554 Section 51, below.
- FT555 "βαττολογίαν."
- FT556 "*Negotium cure Deo*." Cf. I. 17. 2; III. 3. 6; III. 3. 16; III. 7. 2, and notes appended.
- FT557 Section 4, above.
- FT558 "*Cordis affectum*." Cf. III. 1. 3, note 6; Bucer, *Enarrationes in quatuor Evangelia* (1536), p. 157.
- FT559 Citing the example of Christ for both personal and public prayer, Calvin here makes a transition in his discourse to the common prayer of the congregation, the topic of sections 30-33. For the twentieth-century liturgical movement in the Reformed churches of France and Switzerland, which escapes the limits set by Calvin, see esp. J. D. Benoit, *Liturgical Renewal: Studies in Catholic and Protestant Developments on the Continent*, pp. 9-68.
- FT560 "*Templorum usus*." Cf. Comm. <sup><440931></sup> Acts 9:31: "For the church is the temple and the house of God."
- FT561 Zwingli, reacting from abuses in pre-Reformation singing, replaced it by Scripture readings (1525). Conrad Grebel's similar position is seen in his earnest rebuke of Thomas Mfintzer for introducing

congregational singing (LCC XXV. 75). Calvin, like Luther, unhesitatingly affirms the place of singing in public worship, the texts used being French versifications of the psalms. Cf. L. Wencelius, *L'Esthétique de Calvin*, pp. 250-303; F. Blume, *Die evangelische Kirchenmusik*; G. Garside, Jr., "Calvin's Preface to the Psalter, a Reappraisal," *The Musical Quarterly* XXXVII (1951), 566-577. Calvin's exhortation to devotion of heart and mind in singing was anticipated in many Christian texts, notably in Benedict's *Monastic Rule* 19: "Ut mens nostra concordet voci nostrae"; J. McCann, *The Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English*, p. 68.

FT562 Augustine, *Confessions* IX. 7. 15 (MPL 32. 770; tr. LCC VII. 187).

FT563 Augustine, *Retractations* II. 11 (MPL 32. 634).

FT564 Augustine, *Confessions* X. 33. 50 (MPL 32. 800; tr. LCC VII. 230 f.). In this context Augustine remarks that he has "sometimes" wished he might banish all the melodies used in the psalmody as uncondusive to worship. But as with Calvin, reform of singing rather than its rejection was his choice.

FT565 "By the word . . . the understanding," 1539 as modified in 1553.

FT566 Plato, *Alcibiades* II. 142 E, 143 A (LCL Plato VIII. 249).

FT567 Augustine, *Enchiridion* 30. 115 f. (MPL 40. 285; tr. LCC VII. 408). Luther calls "Deliver us from evil the seventh petition," in *Eine kurze Form (A Short Exposition of the Decalogue, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, 1520 [Werke WA VII. 229; tr. Works of Martin Luther II. 384]; cf. Enchiridion piarum precatationum, 1529 [Werke WA XXX. 1. 264 ff., 306 f.]*.

FT568 Pseudo-Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* (incomplete work), hom. 14 (MPG 56. 715).

FT569 Cf. Bucer, *Enarrationes in quatuor Evangelia* (1536), p. 209.

FT570 Cf. sections 21,37,38.

FT571 Cf. sec. 21, above.

FT572 "Diffundi per omnia": VG: "ains qu'il par tout et remplit toutes choses."

FT573 "Humanum genus. Sections 41 and 42 illustrate Calvin's conception of the victory and future universality of Christ's Kingdom throughout

the human race, a topic frequently introduced in the Commentaries. Cf. Comm. <sup><190208></sup>Psalm 2:8; 21:8; 28:57; 45:16; 47:8; 72:8; 110:2; <sup><400610></sup>Matthew 6:10; 12:31; <sup><431331></sup>John 13:31 f.; R. S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian*

FT574 III. 3, 19; III. 6-10.

FT575 Cf. IV. 1. 17; Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Loci communes* II. 17. 14 (1576 edition, p. 462), Calvin's view of the victorious warfare of the Kingdom of God in the world is discussed with references in K. Frohlich, *Gottesreich, Welt und Kirche bei Calvin*, pp. 19-28. Cf. H. Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, pp. 114 ff. Calvin's eschatology is summarily stated in the closing sentences of this section.

FT576 Section 35, above.

FT577 In Comm. Harmony of the Evangelists, <sup><400611></sup>Matthew 6:11, Calvin describes the Vg. rendering, "*panis supersubstantialis*," as "exceedingly absurd," and calls Erasmus' defense of it "frivolous."

FT578 Tertullian, *On Prayer* 6 (CCL Tertullianus I. 260 f.; tr. ANF III. 683), argues that "daily bread" should be understood spiritually, Christ being the bread of life (<sup><430635></sup>John 6:35). Cf. Augustine, *On the Sermon on the Mount* II. 7. 25-27 (MPL 34. 1279 ff.; tr. NPNF VI. 41 f.).

FT579 Cf. I. 16. 7.

FT580 Cf. III. 15,16,18.

FT581 Alluding to the Spirituals, or Libertines. Cf. *Sermons on Galatians* 2 (<sup><480101></sup>Galatians 1:1-5): "There are fantastic people who have imagined a perfection such that when we are regenerated we no longer have need of the remission of our sins" (CR L. 298); *Contre la secte phantastique des Libertins* 18 (CR VII. 205). Calvin has in mind especially the Quintinists, followers of a radical named Quintin, who had been burned at Tournai in 1530. Cf. III. 3. 14, note 30.

FT582 Luther's familiar hymn, "Ein feste Burg" (text in *Werke* WA XXXV. 455 f.), vividly expresses his similar sense of the menacing might of the enemy: his "craft and power." Cf. H. Obendieck, *Der Teufel bei Martin Luther*, pp. 53-59, 165-170. Bunyan, in his *Grace Abounding*,

and in his description of the combat of Christian with Apollyon in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, has also powerfully expressed the conflict of the soul with its infernal assailant.

FT583 Sections 38,39, above.

FT584 The closing benediction does not appear in the earliest New Testament manuscripts, or in Vg.

FT585 Similar phraseology is found in Luther, *Enchiridion piarum precatioinum*, Exposition of the Catechism (1529) (*Werke* WA XXX. 1:308), on the "Amen" after the Lord's Prayer. The Latin is more emphatic than the German: "*Certo tibi omnia illa donabuntur.*"

FT586 Section 8, above.

FT587 Cf. Augustine, *Letters* cxxx. 12. 22 f. (MPL 33. 502 f.; tr. FC 18. 393).

FT588 Tertullian, *On Flight in Persecution* 2. 5 (CCL Tertullian II. 1138; tr. ANCL XI. 359).

FT589 Section 4, above.

FT590 Cf. Luther, *Enchiridion piarum precatioinum* (*Werke* WA X. 2. 397).

## CHAPTER 21

FT591 While predestination is much stressed by Calvin, the formal treatment of the topic falls under the head not of the doctrine of God but of the doctrine of salvation, and is reserved to this point after the main outlines of the latter doctrine have been made clear. Calvin argues from Scripture, with much aid from Augustine. For his increasing use of passages from Augustine, and the expansion of his treatment of predestination, see Smits I. 45 f., 61 f., 104 f., 109. His position had, in fact, been in the main anticipated in the writings of medieval Augustinians, especially those of the fourteenth century, such as Thomas Bradwardine and Gregory of Rimini. See Introduction, section 10, notes 54 to 59. Amid an extensive literature of research the following titles will furnish useful orientation here: J. B. Mozley, *A Treatise on the Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination*; K. Ermisch, *Predestination, an Historical Sketch*; P. Vigneau, *Justification et*

*Prddestination au xiv siecle: Duns Scot, Pierre d'Auriole, Guillaume d'Occam, Gregoire de Rimini*, ch. v.; H. A. Oberman, *Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine, a Fourteenth-Century Augustinian*; G. Left, *Bradwardine and the Pelagians*. Important early discussions by Reformed theologians are Jerome (Girolamo) Zanchi, *De praedestinatione* (1562), and J. Piscator, *Disputatio theologica de praedestinatione* (Herborn in Nassau, 1595). Zanchi's treatise was utilized and largely translated by A. Toplady in *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination* (London, 1769), replying to Wesley, who (in *Dialogue Between a Predestinarian and His Friend* and related writings) represents the eighteenth-century Arminian view. Modern Calvinist statements include B. B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation*; L. Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*; K. Barth, *Gottes Gnadenwahl* (Theologische Existenz Heute, No. 47). Wendel has a well-informed and useful treatment of Calvin's doctrine of predestination, *Calvin*, pp. 199-216. For additional titles, see his note 100 on p. 200.

<sup>FT592</sup> Of the many who took this attitude, Calvin may have had chiefly in mind Erasmus, Eck, and Albert Pighius, each of whom had written a treatise on free will attacking the predestination doctrine of Luther. See also here the documents connected with the prosecution of Jerome Bolsec (1551) (CR VIII. 145).

<sup>FT593</sup> Cf. the treatment of this verse in Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* I. cxi. 2; cxiv. 5. Calvin, in his approach to the doctrine of predestination, stresses humility, a virtue elsewhere commended in the highest terms. Cf. II. 2. 11, note 49.

<sup>FT594</sup> I.e., God's free mercy, God's glory, and our sincere humility, as just observed. Cf. Cadier, *Institution* III. 394.

<sup>FT595</sup> Bernard, *Sermons on the Song of Songs* lxxviii. 4 (MPL 183. 1 161; tr. Eales, *Life and Works of St. Bernard* IV. 480 f.).

<sup>FT596</sup> The phrase "certain men not otherwise bad" (written 1539) has been made to refer to Zwingli, whose discourse *On Providence* (mainly on predestination) Calvin censured in a confidential letter to Bullinger, January, 1552, which reflects one from Bullinger to him of December, 1551 (CR XIV. 215, 253; OS IV. 370, note 4). "If I seem to you to be wrong," says Galvin here, "I shall willingly suffer your admonition."

- FT597 Augustine, *John's Gospel* 53. 7 (MPL 35. 1777; tr. NPNF VII. 293).
- FT598 “*Docta ignorantia*.” Cf. III. 23. 8. The phrase is from Augustine, *Letters* cxxx. 15. 28 (MPL 33. 505; tr. FC 18. 398). A century before Calvin, it formed the title of an important philosophical study of the knowledge of God by Nicolas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia* (1440), ed. P. Rotta; tr. G. Heron, *Of Learned Ignorance (John Rylands Library Bulletin XXI [1937], 2)*.
- FT599 Cf. Melanchthon, *Loci theologici* (1535) (CR Melanchthon XXI. 452); Cadier, *Institution* III. 395, note 6. Cf. section 4, note 12.
- FT600 Cf. I. 14. 1.
- FT601 Augustine, *On the Gift of Perseverance* 14-20 (MPL 45. 1013-1020; tr. NPNF V. 538-547). (For “*do*” in Augustine’s title, the 1559 text has “*bono*”). Cf. Melanchthon, *op. cit.* (CR Melanchthon III. 337, 452).
- FT602 These “notions” are refuted in III. 23.
- FT603 Augustine, *On Genesis in the Literal Sense* V. 3,6 (MPL 34. 323).
- FT604 This is regarded by Barth and Niesel as a reference to the policy of Bern, whose ministers and magistrates sent responses to the Genevese December 7, 1551. In these they called for “a cessation of discussion” of the predestination issue for the sake of “the tranquillity and peace of the church.” (CR VIII. 237-242.)
- FT605 Pighius, *De libero arbitrio* IV (in *Controversiarum praecipuarum . . . explicatio*, 1542), fo. 64b f.; IX. 2, fo. 159b. Cf. III. 22. 1-8; III. 23. 6. In the sentences following, Calvin clearly distinguishes foreknowledge from predestination. F. Wendel cites texts to show how Calvin’s view here is related to the various positions of Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Bucer, and Duns Scotus (Wendel, *Calvin*, pp. 209, 206 f.).
- FT606 With this brief definition, cf. the latter part of section 7. See also Wendel, *Calvin*, pp. 211 f.
- FT607 On the covenant of grace, cf. I. 6:1, note 3; II. 10. 1, note 1; II. 11.4, note 6; III. 14. 6, note 6; III. 17. 6; and sections 6,7, below. See also L. Goumaz, *La Doctrine du salut*, pp. 151 ff.; Heppe RD, ch. 16; T. F. Torrance, *The School of Faith*, Introduction, pp. 1, lxiii, lxxiii, cxx f.

## CHAPTER 22

FT608 Wimpina, Conrad, *Sectarum errorum, hallucinationum, et schismatum . . . concisior Anacephalaeosis* (1528) III. *De praedestinatione* I. 3, fo. R 3a. Piscator deals at length, negatively, with the question “whether election depends on foreseen faith”: *Disputatio theologica de praedestinatione*, pp. 88-172. Cf. J. Wolleb, *Christianae theologiae compendium* 21 (Basel, 1626), as quoted in Heppe RD, p. 167.

FT609 Section 8, below.

FT610 Cf. Pighius, *De libero arbitrio* VII, fo. 118b f.

FT611 Calvin rests his doctrine of predestination on Scripture, but declares it also consonant with observation and experience: cf. III. 24. 4,12,15; Doumergue, *Calvin* IV. 437; K. Barth, *Gottes Gnadenwahl*, pp. 12 f. Numerous similar passages appear in Calvin’s *Eternal Predestination of God*. There, for example, he holds it “undeniably manifest” that very few of those outwardly called believe. (CR VIII. 298 f.; tr. H. Cole, *Calvin’s Calvinism*, p. 95.)

FT612 Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace* 11. 30 (MPL 44. 984 f.; tr. NPNF V. 484); *On the Gift of Perseverance* 24. 67 (MPL 45. 1033 f.; tr. NPNF V. 552); *Sermons* clxxiv. 2 (MPL 38. 94a; tr. LF *Sermons* II. 891 f.). The theme of adoption in Christ is here resumed from the closing section of chapter 21.

FT613 Calvin assails this view in his treatise *On the Eternal Predestination of God* (1552) (CR VIII. 255 f., 260, 344; tr. H. Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 22 ff., 29, 181).

FT614 Containing the argument from <sup><490104></sup>Ephesians 1:4 begun in section 1.

FT615 Cf. section 22:9, note 21; Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* I. 23. 5; God foreordains that he will give grace, that glory may be merited (tr. LCC XI. 110); Clichtove, *Improbatio*, fo. 8b.

FT616 Pighius, *De libero arbitrio* VII, fo. 117ab; IX. 2, fo. 157 ff. The reprobate, God foresees to be unworthy.

FT617 “ ὑποτύποσιν.”

FT618 Erasmus, *De libero arbitrio*, ed. J. von Walter, p. 54.

- FT619 Cf. III. 21. 4,7.
- FT620 The perseverance of the elect rests upon the sovereign power of God [*Dei potentiam quae maior omnibus est*] exercised by Christ on their behalf.
- FT621 “καταχρηστικῆ.”
- FT622 Ambrosiaster (cf. III. 17. 13, note 15), *Commentary on Romans*, <450829> Romans 8:29 (MPL 17. 134); Origen, *Commentary on Romans* VII. 8 (MPG 14. 1126); Pelagius, on <450829> Romans 8:29 (in Jerome’s *Works*) (MPL 30. 684 f.).
- FT623 Augustine, *Retractations* I. 23.2-4 (MPL 32. 62, f.); *Exposition of Romans* lv, lx (MPL 35. 2076, 2078).
- FT624 Augustine, *Letters* cxciv. 8. 35 (MPL 33. 886; tr. FC 30. 327); *On the Predestination of the Saints* 3. 7 (MPL 44. 964 f.; tr. NPNF V. 500).
- FT625 Augustine, *John’s Gospel* lxxxvi, 2 (MPL 35. 1851; tr. NPNF VII. 353).
- FT626 Augustine, *On the Gift of Perseverance* 19. 49 (quoting Ambrose, *Exposition of Luke’s Gospel* 1. 10; 7. 27) (MPL 45. 1024; tr. NPNF V. 546); *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin* I. 46. 51 (MPL 44. 383).
- FT627 Augustine, *Letters* clxxxvi. 5. 15: “*electio gratiae, quae non invenit eligendos sed facit*” (MPL 33. 821; tr. FC 30. 202).
- FT628 Aq. uinas, *Commentary on the Sentences* I. 41. 1, art. 3; *Summa Theol.* I. 23. 5; cf. section 3, note 8, above.
- FT629 Erroneously attributed to Pseudo-Ambrose (i.e., Prosper of Aquitaine), *The Call of the Gentiles* I. 2, but not found in either of Migne’s texts of this work (MPL 17; MPL 51).
- FT630 Cf. Melanchthon’s letter to Calvin, May 11, 1543 (CR XI. 541; Herminjard, *Correspondance* VIII. 343 f.); Melanchthon, *Loci theologici* (1543) (CR Melanchthon XXI. 914 ff.). Calvin’s preface to the French translation (1546) of this work of Melanchthon refers to the avoidance of disputed points on election (CK IX. 849).
- FT631 The “revilers” of election in controversy with Calvin were such men as Jerome Bolsec, banished from Geneva 1551, and Sebastian Castellio,

author of three dialogues on predestination, election, and free will, respectively.

FT632 III. 3. 21; III. 24.

FT633 Cf. III. 2. 6,7,31; Melanchthon, *Loci theologici* 1535 (1543) (CR Melanchthon XXI. 451, 916).

FT634 Augustine, *Sermons* 26. 12,13 (MPL 38. 177).

FT635 Bernard, *Letters* cvii. 4,5 (MPL 182. 244 f.; tr. Eales, *Life and Works of St. Bernard* I. 356-359).

FT636 “*Nisi quia divinitus perforatae sunt illis aures.*” The figure is that of a shepherd earmarking his sheep.

FT637 Cf. Wendel, *Calvin*, pp. 212 ff. Chapter Twenty-Three Footnotes

FT638 Lutheran opinions are in view here. The (later) Epitome of the Formula of Concord XI, on predestination and election, 3,4, states that while foreknowledge extends to all, election extends only to the godly (*Concordia Triglotta*, pp. 832 f.). Cf. Melanchthon, *Loci theologici* (1543) (CR Melanchthon XXI. 915 f.).

FT639 II. 4. 4.

FT640 Augustine, *Against Julian* V. 3. 13 (MPL 44. 790 f.; tr. FG 35. 254 f.).

FT641 Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints* 2. 4 (MPL 44. 962; tr. NPNF V. 499); *Sermons* 26. 5. 5 (MPL 38. 173).

FT642 So frequently Augustine; e.g., *On Genesis, Against the Manichees* I. 2. 4 (MPL 34. 175).

FT643 cf. *Calumniae nebulonis cuiusdam de occulta providentia Dei*, reply to art. 1 (CR IX. 288 f.; tr. H. Cole, *Calvin's Calvinism* [1856], pp. 266 f.). “Therefore, with reference to the sentiments of the Schoolmen concerning the absolute or tyrannical will of God, I not only repudiate, but abhor them all, because they separate the justice of God from his ruling power.” In these sentences Calvin repudiates an opinion that has often been ascribed to him. The point is resumed in the middle of section 4. See F. Wendel’s discussion of the matter with reference to the *potentia absoluta* of Nominalist theologians, where he calls attention also to some misunderstandings of the latter (Wendel, *Calvin*, pp. 92 ff.). Cf. Doumergue, *Jean Calvin* IV. 120 f.

- FT644 Augustine, *Unfinished Treatise Against Julian* I. xlvihi; II. 8 (MPL 45. 1069 f., 1145).
- FT645 Cf. Erasmus, *De libero arbitrio*, ed. von Walter, p. 80.
- FT646 Section 2, above.
- FT647 The text has “Coelestinus” (here miswritten “Caelestinus” by Calvin for “Coelestius”. Cf. 1 13. 1, note 3; 3 17:15, note 18, and sec. 8, below.
- FT648 Augustine, Letters 186. 7:23 (MPL 33. 824; tr. FC 30. 207).
- FT649 Augustine, Sermons 27 3:4; 6:6; 7:7 (MPL 38:179-182)
- FT650 Erasmus, op. cit., p. 48
- FT651 Cf. III. 22. 8, note 15.
- FT652 Lombard, *Sentences* I. 40. 4; I. 38. 4 (MPL 192. 682,628).
- FT653 Calvin, independently following Luther, claims Lorenzo Valla (d. 1457) as an ally on predestination. Erasmus had admitted as much in his *De libero arbitrio*, adding words here reflected by Calvin: “Valla has little authority among theologians of weight” (*op. cit.*, ed. von Walter, p. 13). Luther had coupled Valla’s name with Wycliffe’s on this topic (*Werke* WA XVIII. 640). Valla’s *Dialogue on Free Will* (*De libero arbitrio*) has been edited by M. Anfossi and translated with a useful introduction by C. Trinkhaus in E. Cassirer, P.O. Kristeller, and J.H. Randall, *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, pp. 147-182. See esp. pp. 174-178. Valla’s *Dialogue* was first printed at Basel in 1518.
- FT654 “*Decretum quidem horribile, fateor.*” VG: “*Je confesse que ce decret nous doit epouvanter.*” Cf. “*horribilis Dei maiestas,*” III. 20 17. Calvin is awestruck but unrelenting in his declaration that God is the author of reprobation. The theme is pursued in his treatise *On the Eternal Predestination of God* (cf. CR VIII. 316 ff.; tr. H. Cole, *Calvin’s Calvinism*, pp. 128 ff.).
- FT655 Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace* 10. 27 (MPL 44. 932; tr. NPNF V. 482 f.). Calvin affirms Adam’s original free will (cf. I. 15. 8), yet insists that Adam’s fall was willed by God, thus demonstrating the feebleness of man’s will and the power of divine grace and judgment. Cf. Cadier, *Institution* III. 427, note 2.
- FT656 Erasmus, *De libero arbitrio*, ed. von Walter, p. 53.

- FT656 Augustine, *On Genesis in the Literal Sense* VI. 15. 26 (MPL 34. 350).
- FT658 Cf. II. 3. 5; II. 5. 1,2.
- FT659 GL III. 21. 2, note 8.
- FT660 Cf. III. 17. 4.
- FT661 Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* II. 7.13-16 (MPL 44. 579-583; tr. NPNF V. 397-399).
- FT662 Augustine, *Letters* clxxxvi. 7. 22; 6. 18 (MPL 33. 824, 823; tr. FC 30. 206; 204).
- FT663 Pseudo-Augustine, *On Predestination and Grace* 3. 3 (MPL 45. 1667 f.); Augustine, *On the Gift of Perseverance* 12. 28 (MPL 45. 1009; tr. NPNF V. 536).
- FT664 Erasmus, *De libero arbitrio*, p. 10; J. Faber, *De absoluta necessitate xvii* (*Opuscula quaedam* [Leipzig, 1537], fo. e 4a).
- FT665 Cf. his description of the Quintinists: *Contre la secte phantastique des Libertins* (CR VII. 247).
- FT666 Cf. III. 22. 2-3.
- FT667 Cf. II. 5. 4-5; *Congregation sur l'election eternelle de Dieu* (CR VIII. 107); *Calumniae nebulonis cuiusdam de occulta providentia Dei* (1558), 11th charge (CR IX. 275-281; tr. H. Cole, *Calvin's Calvinism*, pp. 323-328).
- FT668 Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace* (MPL 44. 915-946; tr. NPNF V. 471-491).
- FT669 II. 22. 1-6.
- FT670 Augustine, *On the Gift of Perseverance* 14. 37; 15. 38; 16. 40 (MPL 45. 1016-1018; IX. NPNF V. 540 ff.).
- FT671 Augustine, *op. cit.*, 20. 51; 22:61 (MPL 45. 1025, 1030; tr. NPNF V. 546 f., 550).
- FT672 Augustine, *On Rebuke and Grace* 5. 8; 14. 43, 45; 15. 46; 16. 49 (MPL 41. 920, 942-946; tr. NPNF V. 474, 489 ff.). Cf. Introduction 10, note 59.

## CHAPTER 24

FT673 III. 22. 10-11.

FT674 III. 22. 10.

FT675 Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin* 14,15, 31 (MPL 44. 368, 376 f.; tr. NPNF V. 223 f., 225).

FT676 Augustine, *On the Predestination of the Saints* 8:13,14 (MPL 44. 970 f.; tr. NPNF V. 5-5).

FT677 Augustine, *Enchiridion* 9. 32 (MPL 40. 248; ed. Scheel, pp. 21 f.; tr. LCC VII. 358). The opinion refuted is that of Erasmus (*De libero arbitrio*, ed. von Walter, p. 49) and of numerous defenders of free will.

FT678 The “some” first mentioned are Roman Catholic writers; the “others,” Lutherans, especially Melanchthon. See *Loci theologici* (CR Melanchthon XXI. 451, 914). The argument here is tied in with that in section 2.

FT679 Again, the appeal to experience (cf. III. 22. 1, note 4, and section 6, below); those who seek assurance apart from the Word suffer anguish of conscience, while those who dwell upon the Word find consolation and realize their adoption.

FT680 Bernard, *Sermons on the Song of Songs* 23. 15,16 (MPL 183. 892 f.; tr. Eales, *Life and Works of St. Bernard* IV. 141 f).

FT681 “*Perseverantia*.” The weightiest patristic work on perseverance in grace is Augustine’s *On the Grit of Perseverance*, a work not infrequently quoted in the *Institutes* (MPL 45. 993-1033; tr. NPNF V. 523-552).

FT682 Sec. 9, below.

FT683 III. 2. 22.

FT684 III. 2. 39.

FT685 “*καρκινώματα*.”

FT686 Section 7, above.

FT687 Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospels* II, homily 38. 14 (MPL 76. 3290).

- FT688 “*Semen . . . electionis.*” Cf. section 11: Bucer holds that the elect even before conversion and while they live in wickedness yet show the seeds of piety (*pietatis seminaria*) (*In Evangelia enarrationes* on <sup><400418></sup>Matthew 4:18 [1530, fo. 122a; 154. 3, fo. 121a]). Calvin has this Bucer passage in mind here and below in this section.
- FT689 Cf. III. 22. 1, note 4.
- FT690 The case of Cornelius was frequently cited against the Reformers. Calvin has treated the incident in *Comm. Acts*, chapters 22 to 33; I. 12. 3; III. 2. 32; III. 17. 4.
- FT691 Cf. II. 3. 4.
- FT692 Augustine, *Letters* cii. 4. 22 (MPL 33. 379; tr. FC 18. 164); Jerome, *Letters* cxxxiii. 9 (CSEL 56. 255; tr. NPNF 2 ser. VI. 278).
- FT693 Cf. I. 4. 1; I. 5. 8; III. 20. 14.
- FT694 Augustine, *On Genesis in the Literal Sense* XI. 10. 13 (MPL 34. 434).
- FT695 The text cites (Chrysostom) “*Homil. de convers. Pauli.*” The reference is to Chrysostom, *De ferendis reprehensionibus et de mutatione nominum*, homily 3. 6, which, in the Basel edition of 1530, was entitled *De ferendis reprehensionibus et conversione Pauli* (MPG 51. 143): “*Qui vero trahit volentem trahit, humique iacentem ac manum porrigentem.*” “A false and profane assertion,” says Calvin, *Comm. John*
- FT696 Erasmus, *De libero arbitrio*, ed. von Walter, p. 53.
- FT697 *Ibid.*, p. 79 ff.
- FT698 J. Faber, *Adversus absolutam necessitatem rerum contingentium* (*Opuscula quaedam* [Leipzig, 1537], fo. B 3a); Pighius, *De libero arbitrio* VI, fo. 92a; Calvin, *Calumniae nebutonis cuiusdam* (CR IX. 292), referring to the citation (col. 276) by his opponent (Castellio) of <sup><261832></sup>Ezekiel 18:32, “*nolo mortem peccatoris* (Vg.: *morientis*)” tr. H. Cole, *Calvin’s Calvinism*, p. 275. (Cf. <sup><263311></sup>Ezekiel 33:11.)
- FT699 Bernard treats this point in his *Sermon on Christ’s Nativity*, quoting <sup><450918></sup>Romans 9:18 and <sup><261832></sup>Ezekiel 18:32 (MPL 182. 128 f.).
- FT700 Faber, *Adversus absolutam necessitatem*, *loc. cit.*; Pighius, *De libero arbitrio* IX, fo. 160b; Calvin, in *Congregation sur l’élection éternelle*

*de Dieu* (CR VIII. 112); *De aeterna praedestinatione Dei* (CR VIII. 366 f.); *Calumniae nebulonis cuiusdam* (CR IX. 292). Cf. Melanchthon, *Loci theologici* (CR, Melanchthon XXI. 452, 915).

FT701 Faber, *op. cit.*, xvii (*Opuscula* I. fo. E 5a); Calvin, *Calumniae nebulonis cuiusdam*, *loc. cit.*

FT702 From the closing sentence of section 16 to this point, there is apparently a reference to Melanchthon's statements in *Loci communes*, 1535 (CR Melanchthon XXI. 419,428,451 f.).

FT703 Cf. I. 17. 2, note 4; I. xviii, 1-4.

FT704 I. 18. 3; III. 20. 43.

FT705 This passage controverts the assertions of numerous opponents of predestination, especially Pighius (*De libero arbitrio* VII. 2; VIII. 2; IX. 2; folios 115b, 135ab, 163a), and Castellio as quoted by Calvin in *Calumniae nebulonis cuiusdam* (CR IX. 275 f.; tr. Cole, *Calvin's Calvinism*, p. 264). Castellio argues that since God makes animals love their offspring, he must love his own offspring, i.e., all men, and has created none for perdition. God saw that what he had created, man included, was good, etc.

FT706 Pseudo-Augustine, *Of Predestination and Grace* 2 (MPL 45. 1667). Chapter Twenty-Five Footnotes

FT707 "*Carhis ergastulo . . . inclusi.*" Cf. III. 6. 5, note 9; III. 9. 4.

FT708 Plato, *Theaetetus* 176 AD (LCL Plato II. 126-129); *Laws* IV. 715 E. 716 E (LCL Plato I. 292-297).

FT709 Middle of section 1, above. Cf. III. 18. 3.

FT710 Plato, *Phaedo* 105 D-107 C (LCL Plato I. 362-370; Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* I. 49. 118 (LCL edition, pp. 142 f.). Democritus, says Pliny (*Natural History* VII. iv. 189; LCL Pliny II. 634), promised to return to earth, but failed to do so.

FT711 The incredibility of the resurrection to natural reason is treated more amply in the 1539 edition in a paragraph that contains some sentences, also omitted here, from the 1536 edition. See OS IV. 435, notes b and c; Pannier, *Institution* (1541) II. 161 f. (In part): "a thing not hard to believe, but quite incredible if we were to consider it from the standpoint of human reason. While a number of the philosophers were

not ignorant of the immortality of the soul, not one has had the least notion of the resurrection of the flesh.” We have certainty of it through Christ’s resurrection.

FT712 Origen, *Against Celsus* II. 59,63,70 (MPG 11. 889 f., 898 f., 905 f.; GCS 2. 182,184 f., 192 f.; tr. ANF IV. 455 f., 460).

FT713 Cf. II. 10. 19; *Sermons on Job* lxxii (CR XXXIV. 127 f.). The misinterpreters of <sup><181925></sup> Job 19:25 here are Anabaptists. Cf. *Brieve instruction contre les erreurs de la secte commune des Anabaptistes* (1544) (CR VII. 138 f.); tr. *A Shorte Instruction for to warn all good Christian People against the Pestiferous Errours of the Common Secte of Anabaptists* (London, 1549), fo. L 1a-2a; *Psycho-pannychia* (CR V. 229 ff.; tr. Galvin, *Tracts* III, 487 ff.).

FT714 Horace, *Epistles* I. 16. 79 (LCL edition, pp. 356 f.).

FT715 The name “chiliasts” (millenarians) was applied to a number of ancient sects who held a belief in the one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. See art. “Chiliasmus” in *Reallexikon fur Antike und Christentum* II (1951), 175 ff.; N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*; H. Quistorp, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Last Things*, pp. 158-162. Cf. Augustine, *City of God* XX. 7, 9 (MPL 41. 666-669, 672-675; tr. NPNF II. 426, 430).

FT716 This universalism was favored by certain Anabaptists such as John Denck, Balthasar Hubmaier, and Sebastian Franck; also by Melchior Holmann. For the titles and texts in English, see LCC XXV. 86, 112, 145, 182. Augustine answers disciples of the Neoplatonist Porphyry (233-302) to the same effect: *Letters* cii, questions 2. 8; 4. 22; 5. 28 (MPL 33. 373, 379, 381; tr. FC 18. 153,164,168,170).

FT717 Augustine, *Letters*, *loc. cit.*

FT718 Cf. Calvin’s preface to *Psychopannychia* (CR V. 17a f.; tr. Calvin, *Tracts* III. 415). In attacking the doctrine of “the sleep of souls,” he refers to the heresy of Pope John XXII (1316-1334) that the souls of departed saints are not permitted to see the Beatific Vision until the resurrection. This doctrine was condemned by the Paris theologians in 1333. Cf. *Catholic Encyclopedia*, art. “John XXII.”

FT719 Probably the reference is to the view of Laelius Socinus that the soul would be given a new body at the resurrection. Cf. section 7, below.

- FT720 I. 5. 5; I. 15.2.
- FT721 Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* III. Suppl. lxi. 2.
- FT722 The material of sections 7 and 8 is largely drawn from Calvin's letter to Laelius Socinus in June, 1549 (CR XIII. 309-311). Barth and Niesel have quoted here sections 222-223 of the 1551 *Institution*, a text still closer to the letter cited (OS IV. 443 ff.).
- FT723 Augustine, *Against Adimantus* 12. 5 (MPL 42. 146).
- FT724 A Manichaean opinion. Cf. Augustine, *Sermons* 12. 10. 10-11. 11 (MPL 38. 205 f.); *Unfinished Treatise Against Julian* I. cxv f. (MPL 45. 1125).
- FT725 "Cutem ipsam tenens": Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* li (CCL Tertullianus II. 955; tr. ANF III. 585).
- FT726 Tertullian, *op. cit.*, lviii (CCL Tertullianus II. 1007; tr. ANF III. 590).
- FT727 Section 5, above.
- FT728 Calvin reminds us that etymologically a "cemetery" is a "sleeping place." VG adds: "*qui vaut autant comme dormitoire.*"
- FT729 Augustine, *Psalms*, <sup><197002></sup>Psalm 70:2. 5; <sup><19A207></sup>Psalm 102:7 (MPL 36. 896; 37. 1321; tr. LF[Psalm 71] *Psalms* III. 437; [Psalm 103] V. 42 f.).
- FT730 Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* III. Suppl. xciii. 3: "The various mansions [of the saints] are distinguished according to the various degrees of charity"; cf. qu. xcvi, esp. art. II, on the aureoles (<sup><401921></sup>Matthew 19:21) of virgins, martyrs, and doctors.
- FT731 Aquinas, *op. cit.*, qu. xci, on the renewal of the world. Cf. P.E. Schramm's *Kaiser, Rom, und Renovatio*, a detailed study of the concept of "*renovatio mundi*" to the twelfth century; McNeill, *Christian Hope for World Society*, ch. IV: "Rome and World Renewal."
- FT732 Hell, in whatever "physical metaphors" it is depicted, is, for Calvin, essentially this: "*alienari ab omni Dei societate.*" Cf. Milton, *Paradise Lost* V. 877, where Abdiel addresses Satan: "O alienate from God, O spirit accurst." See also R. M. Frye, *God, Man, and Satan*, chapter 2, esp. pp. 40 f.

<sup>FT733</sup>“*Diro turbine.*” One is reminded of the ceaseless torrents of cold, foul rain, hail, and sleet, observed by Dante as, with Vergil, he traverses the Third Circle of Hell (*Inferno*, Canto VI); but the contexts bear no resemblance.