

CHAPTER 15.

The boasted merit of works subversive both of the glory of God, in bestowing righteousness, and of the certainty of salvation.

The divisions of this chapter are,—

1. To the doctrine of free justification is opposed the question, Whether or not works merit favor with God, sec. 1. This question answered, sec. 2 and 3.
2. An exposition of certain passages of Scripture produced in support of the erroneous doctrine of merit, sec. 4 and 5.
3. Sophisms of Semipelagian Schoolmen refuted, sec. 6 and 7.
4. Conclusion, proving the sufficiency of the orthodox doctrine, sec. 8.

Sections.

1. After a brief recapitulation, the question, Whether or not good works merit favor with God, considered.
2. First answer, fixing the meaning of the term Merit. This term improperly applied to works, but used in a good sense, as by Augustine, Chrysostom, Bernard.
3. A second answer to the question. First by a negative, then by a concession. In the rewarding of works what to be attributed to God, and what to man. Why good works please God, and are advantageous to those who do them. The ingratitude of seeking righteousness by works. This shown by a double similitude.
4. First objection taken from Ecclesiasticus. Second objection from the Epistle to the Hebrews. Two answers to both objections. A weak distinction refuted.
5. A third and most complete answer, calling us back to Christ as the only foundation of salvation. How Christ is our righteousness. Whence it is manifest that we have all things in Christ and he nothing in us.
6. We must abhor the sophistry which destroys the merit of Christ, in order to establish that of man. This impiety refuted by clear passages of Scripture.
7. Errors, of the younger Sophists extracted from Lombard. Refuted by Augustine. Also by Scripture.
8. Conclusion, showing that the foundation which has been laid is sufficient for doctrine, exhortation, and comfort. Summary of the orthodox doctrine of Justification.

1. The principal point in this subject has been now explained: as justifications if dependent upon works, cannot possibly stand in the sight of God, it must depend solely on the mercy of God and communion with Christ, and therefore on faith alone. But let us carefully attend to the point on which the whole subject hinges, lest we get entangled in the common delusion, not only of the vul-

gar, but of the learned. For the moment the question is raised as to the justification by faith or works, they run off to those passages which seem to ascribe some merit to works in the sight of God, just as if justification by works were proved whenever it is proved that works have any value with God. Above we have clearly shown that justification by works consists only in a perfect and absolute fulfillment of the law, and that, therefore, no man is justified by works unless he has reached the summit of perfection, and cannot be convicted of even the smallest transgression. But there is another and a separate question, Though works by no means suffice to justify, do they not merit favor with God?

2. First, I must premise with regard to the term Merit, that he, whoever he was, that first applied it to human works, viewed in reference to the divine tribunal, consulted very ill for the purity of the faith. I willingly abstain from disputes about words, but I could wish that Christian writers had always observed this soberness—that when there was no occasion for it, they had never thought of using terms foreign to the Scriptures—terms which might produce much offense, but very little fruit. I ask, what need was there to introduce the word Merit, when the value of works might have been fully expressed by another term, and without offense? The quantity of offense contained in it the world shows to its great loss. It is certain that, being a high sounding term, it can only obscure the grace of God, and inspire men with pernicious pride. I admit it was used by ancient ecclesiastical writers, and I wish they had not by the abuse of one term furnished posterity with matter of heresy, although in some passages they themselves show that they had no wish to injure the truth. For Augustine says, “Let human merits, which perished by Adam, here be silent, and let the grace of God reign by Jesus Christ,” (August. de Praedest. Sanct). Again, “The saints ascribe nothing to their merits; every thing will they ascribe solely to thy mercy, O God,” (August. in Psal. 139). Again, “And when a man sees that whatever good he has he has not of himself, but of his God, he sees that every thing in him which is praised is not of his own merits, but of the divine mercy,” (August. in Psal. 88). You see how he denies man the power of acting aright, and thus lays merit prostrate. Chrysostom says, “If any works of ours follow the free calling of God, they are return and debt; but the gifts of God are grace, and beneficence, and great liberality.” But to say nothing more of the name, let us attend to the thing. I formerly quoted a passage from Bernard: “As it is sufficient for merit not to presume on merit, so to be without merit is sufficient for condemnation,” (Bernard in Cantic. Serm. 98). He immediately adds an explanation which softens the harshness of the expression, when he says, “Hence be careful to have merits; when you have them, know that they were given; hope for fruit from the divine mercy, and you have escaped all the perils of poverty, ingratitude, and presumption. Happy the Church which neither wants merit without presumption, nor presumption without merit.” A little before he had abundantly shown that he used the words in a sound sense, saying, “Why is the Church anxious about merits? God has furnished her with a firmer and surer ground of boasting. God cannot deny himself; he will do what he has promised. Thus there is no reason for asking by what merits may we hope for blessings; especially when you hear, ‘Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name’s sake,’ (Ezek. 36:22). It suffices for merit to know that merits suffice not.”

3. What all our works can merit Scripture shows when it declares that they cannot stand the view of God, because they are full of impurity; it next shows what the perfect observance of the law (if it can any where be found) will merit when it enjoins, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do," (Luke 17:10); because we make no free-offering to God, but only perform due service by which no favor is deserved. And yet those good works which the Lord has bestowed upon us he counts ours also, and declares, that they are not only acceptable to him, but that he will recompense them. It is ours in return to be animated by this great promise, and to keep up our courage, that we may not weary in well-doing, but feel duly grateful for the great kindness of God. There cannot be a doubt, that every thing in our works which deserves praise is owing to divine grace, and that there is not a particle of it which we can properly ascribe to ourselves. If we truly and seriously acknowledge this, not only confidence, but every idea of merit vanishes. I say we do not, like the Sophists share the praise of works between God and man, but we keep it entire and unimpaired for the Lord. All we assign to man is that, by his impurity he pollutes and contaminates the very works which were good. The most perfect thing which proceeds from man is always polluted by some stain. Should the Lord, therefore, bring to judgment the best of human works, he would indeed behold his own righteousness in them; but he would also behold man's dishonor and disgrace. Thus good works please God, and are not without fruit to their authors, since, by way of recompense, they obtain more ample blessings from God, not because they so deserve, but because the divine benignity is pleased of itself to set this value upon them. Such, however is our malignity, that not contented with this liberality on the part of God, which bestows rewards on works that do not at all deserve them, we with profane ambition maintain that that which is entirely due to the divine munificence is paid to the merit of works. Here I appeal to every man's common sense. If one who by another's liberality possesses the usufruct of a field, rear up a claim to the property of it, does he not by his ingratitude deserve to lose the possession formerly granted? In like manner, if a slave, who has been manumitted, conceals his humble condition of freedman, and gives out that he was free-born, does he not deserve to be reduced to his original slavery? A benefit can only be legitimately enjoyed when we neither arrogate more to our selves than has been given, nor defraud the author of it of his due praise; nay, rather when we so conduct ourselves as to make it appear that the benefit conferred still in a manner resides with him who conferred it. But if this is the moderation to be observed towards men, let every one reflect and consider for himself what is due to God.

4. I know that the Sophists abuse some passages in order to prove that the Scriptures use the term merit with reference to God. They quote a passage from Ecclesiasticus: "Mercy will give place to every man according to the merit of his works," (Ecclesiasticus 16:14); and from the Epistle to the Hebrews: "To do good and communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased," (Heb. 13:16). I now renounce my right to repudiate the authority of Ecclesiasticus; but I deny that the words of Ecclesiasticus, whoever the writer may have been, are faithfully quoted. The Greek is as follows: Pa'sej3 eleemosu'nej3 poie'sei to'pon` e'kastos ga'r kata` ta` e'rga autou eure'sei. "He will make room for all mercy: for each shall find according to his works." That this is the genuine

reading, and has been corrupted in the Latin version, is plain, both from the very structure of the sentence, and from the previous context. In the Epistle to the Hebrews there is no room for their quibbling on one little word, for in the Greek the Apostle simply says, that such sacrifices are pleasing and acceptable to God. This alone should amply suffice to quell and beat down the insolence of our pride, and prevent us from attaching value to works beyond the rule of Scripture. It is the doctrine of Scripture, moreover, that our good works are constantly covered with numerous stains by which God is justly offended and made angry against us, so far are they from being able to conciliate him, and call forth his favor towards us; and yet because of his indulgence, he does not examine them with the utmost strictness, he accepts them just as if they were most pure; and therefore rewards them, though undeserving, with innumerable blessings, both present and future. For I admit not the distinction laid down by otherwise learned and pious men, that good works merit the favors which are conferred upon us in this life, whereas eternal life is the reward of faith only. The recompense of our toils, and crown of our contest, our Lord almost uniformly places in heaven. On the other hand, to attribute to the merit of works, so as to deny it to grace, that we are loaded with other gifts from the Lord, is contrary to the doctrine of Scripture. For though Christ says, "Unto every one that has shall be given;" "thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things," (Mt. 25:29, 21), he, at the same time, shows that all additional gifts to believers are of his free benignity: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that has no money, come ye, buy, and eat: yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price," (Isaiah 55:1). Therefore, every help to salvation bestowed upon believers, and blessedness itself, are entirely the gift of God, and yet in both the Lord testifies that he takes account of works, since to manifest the greatness of his love toward us, he thus highly honors not ourselves only, but the gifts, which he has bestowed upon us.

5. Had these points been duly handled and digested in past ages, never could so many tumults and dissensions have arisen. Paul says, that in the architecture of Christian doctrine, it is necessary to retain the foundation which he had laid with the Corinthians, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," (1 Cor. 3:11). What then is our foundation in Christ? Is it that he begins salvation and leaves us to complete it? Is it that he only opened up the way, and left us to follow it in our own strength? By no means, but as Paul had a little before declared, it is to acknowledge that he has been given us for righteousness. No man, therefore, is well founded in Christ who has not entire righteousness in him, since the Apostle says not that he was sent to assist us in procuring, but was himself to be our righteousness. Thus, it is said that God "has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world," not according to our merit, but "according to the good pleasure of his will;" that in him "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;" that peace has been made "through the blood of his cross;" that we are reconciled by his blood; that, placed under his protection, we are delivered from the danger of finally perishing; that thus ingrafted into him we are made partakers of eternal life, and hope for admission into the kingdom of God.¹ Nor is this all. Being admitted to participation in him, though we are still foolish, he is our wisdom; though we are still sinners he is our righteousness; though we are unclean, he is our purity; though we are weak, unarmed, and exposed to Sa-

¹ 1. Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:3-5; Col. 1:14, 20; John 1:12; 10:28.

tan, yet ours is the power which has been given him in heaven and in earth, to bruise Satan under our feet, and burst the gates of hell (Mt. 28:18); though we still bear about with us a body of death, he is our life; in short, all things of his are ours, we have all things in him, he nothing in us. On this foundation, I say, we must be built, if we would grow up into a holy temple in the Lord.

6. For a long time the world has been taught very differently. A kind of good works called moral has been found out, by which men are rendered agreeable to God before they are ingrafted into Christ; as if Scripture spoke falsely when it says, “He that has the Son has life, and he that has not the Son of God has not life,” (1 John 5:12). How can they produce the materials of life if they are dead? Is there no meaning in its being said that “whatsoever is not of faith is sin?” (Rom. 14:23); or can good fruit be produced from a bad tree? What have these most pestilential Sophists left to Christ on which to exert his virtue? They say that he merited for us the first grace, that is, the occasion of meriting, and that it is our part not to let slip the occasion thus offered. O the daring effrontery of impiety! Who would have thought that men professing the name of Christ would thus strip him of his power, and all but trample him under foot? The testimony uniformly borne to him in Scripture is that whose believeth in him is justified; the doctrine of these men is, that the only benefit which proceeds from him is to open up a way for each to justify himself. I wish they could get a taste of what is meant by these passages: “He that hath the Son hath life.” “He that hearth my word, and believeth in him that sent me,” “is passed from death unto life.” Whose believeth in him “is passed from death unto life.” “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” “He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.” God “has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ.” “Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”¹ There are similar passages without number. Their meaning is not, that by faith in Christ an opportunity is given us of procuring justifications or acquiring salvation, but that both are given us. Hence, so soon as you are ingrafted into Christ by faith, you are made a son of God, an heir of heaven, a partaker of righteousness, a possessor of life, and (the better to manifest the false tenets of these men) you have not obtained an opportunity of meriting, but all the merits of Christ, since they are communicated to you.

7. In this way the schools of Sorbonne, the parents of all heresies, have deprived us of justification by faith, which lies at the root of all godliness. They confess, indeed, in word, that men are justified by a formed faith, but they afterwards explain this to mean that of faith they have good works which avail to justification, so that they almost seem to use the term faith in mockery, because they were unable, without incurring great obloquy, to pass it in silence, seeing it is so often repeated by Scripture. And yet not contented with this, they by the praise of good works transfer to man what they steal from God. And seeing that good works give little ground for exultation, and are not even properly called merits, if they are regarded as the fruits of divine grace, they derive them from the power of free-will; in other words extract oil out of stone. They deny not that the principal cause is in grace; but they contend that there is no exclusion of free-will through which all merit comes. This is the doctrine, not only of the later Sophists, but of Lombard their Py-

1 John 5:12; John 5:24; Rom. 3:24; John 3:24; Eph. 2:6; Col. 1:13

thagoras (Sent. Lib. 2, Dist. 28), who, in comparison of them, may be called sound and sober. It was surely strange blindness, while he had Augustine so often in his mouth, not to see how cautiously he guarded against ascribing a single particle of praise to man because of good works. Above, when treating of free-will, we quoted some passages from him to this effect, and similar passages frequently occur in his writings (see in Psal. 104; Ep. 105), as when he forbids us ever to boast of our merits, because they themselves also are the gifts of God, and when he says that all our merits are only of grace, are not provided by our sufficiency, but are entirely the production of grace, etc. It is less strange that Lombard was blind to the light of Scripture, in which it is obvious that he had not been a very successful student.² Still there cannot be a stronger declaration against him and his disciples than the words of the Apostles who, after interdicting all Christians from glorying, subjoins the reason why glorying is unlawful: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them,” (Eph. 2:10). Seeing, then, that no good proceeds from us unless in so far as we are regenerated—and our regeneration is without exception wholly of God—there is no ground for claiming to ourselves one iota in good works. Lastly, while these men constantly inculcate good works, they, at the same time, train the conscience in such a way as to prevent it from venturing to confide that works will render God favorable and propitious. We, on the contrary, without any mention of merit, give singular comfort to believers when we teach them that in their works they please, and doubtless are accepted of God. Nay, here we even insist that no man shall attempt or enter upon any work without faith, that is, unless he previously have a firm conviction that it will please God.

8. Wherefore, let us never on any account allow ourselves to be drawn away one nail's breadth³ from that only foundation. After it is laid, wise architects build upon it rightly and in order. For whether there is need of doctrine or exhortation, they remind us that “for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil;” that “whosoever is born of God does not commit sin;” that “the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles;” that the elect of God are vessels of mercy, appointed “to honor;” purged, “sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.” The whole is expressed at once, when Christ thus describes his disciples, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”⁴ He who has denied himself has cut off the root of all evils so as no longer to seek his own; he who has taken up his cross has prepared himself for all meekness and endurance. The example of Christ includes this and all offices of piety and holiness. He obeyed his Father even unto death; his whole life was spent in doing the works of God; his whole soul was intent on the glory of his Father; he laid down his life for the brethren; he did good to his enemies, and prayed for them. And when there is need of comfort, it is admirably afforded in these words: “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” “For if we be dead with him we shall also live with him; if we suf-

2 French, “d'autant qu'il n'y estoit gueres exercite;”—inasmuch as he was little versant in it.

3 French, “ne fust ce que de la pointe d'une sepingle;”—were it only a pin's point.

4 John 3:8; 1 Pet. 4:3; 2 Tim. 2:20, 21; Luke 9:23.

fer, we shall also reign with him;” by means of “the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;” the Father having predestinated us “to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren.” Hence it is, that “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord;”¹ nay, rather all things will work together for our good. See how it is that we do not justify men before God by works, but say, that all who are of God are regenerated and made new creatures, so that they pass from the kingdom of sin into the kingdom of righteousness. In this way they make their calling sure, and, like trees, are judged by their fruits.

CHAPTER 16.

Refutation of the calumnies by which it is attempted to throw odium on this doctrine.

The divisions of this chapter are,—

1. The calumnies of the Papists against the orthodox doctrine of Justification by Faith are reduced to two classes. The first class, with its consequences, refuted, sec. 1-3.
2. The second class, which is dependent on the first, refuted in the last section.

Sections.

1. Calumnies of the Papists.
 - a. That we destroy good works, and give encouragement to sin. Refutation of the first calumny.
 - b. Character of those who censure us.
 - c. Justification by faith establishes the necessity of good works.
2. Refutation of a consequent of the former calumny—viz. that men are dissuaded from well-doing when we destroy merit. Two modes of refutation. First mode confirmed by many invincible arguments.
3. The Apostles make no mention of merit, when they exhort us to good works. On the contrary, excluding merit, they refer us entirely to the mercy of God. Another mode of refutation.
4. Refutation of the second calumny and of an inference from it,—viz. that the obtaining righteousness is made too easy, when it is made to consist in the free remission of sins.

1. Our last sentence may refute the impudent calumny of certain ungodly men, who charge us, first, with destroying good works and leading men away from the study of them, when we say, that men are not justified, and do not merit salvation by works; and, secondly, with making the means of justification too easy, when we say that it consists in the free remission of sins, and thus alluring men to sin to which they are already too much inclined. These calumnies, I say, are sufficiently refuted by that one sentence; however, I will briefly reply to both. The allegation is that justification by faith destroys good works. I will not describe what kind of zealots

for good works the persons are who thus charge us. We leave them as much liberty to bring the charge, as they take license to taint the whole world with the pollution of their lives.² They pretend to lament³ that when faith is so highly extolled, works are deprived of their proper place. But what if they are rather ennobled and established? We dream not of a faith which is devoid of good works, nor of a justification which can exist without them: the only difference is, that while we acknowledge that faith and works are necessarily connected, we, however, place justification in faith, not in works. How this is done is easily explained, if we turn to Christ only, to whom our faith is directed and from whom it derives all its power. Why, then, are we justified by faith? Because by faith we apprehend the righteousness of Christ, which alone reconciles us to God. This faith, however, you cannot apprehend without at the same time apprehending sanctification; for Christ “is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,” (1 Cor. 1:30). Christ, therefore, justifies no man without also sanctifying him. These blessings are conjoined by a perpetual and inseparable tie. Those whom he enlightens by his wisdom he redeems; whom he redeems he justifies; whom he justifies he sanctifies. But as the question relates only to justification and sanctification, to them let us confine ourselves. Though we distinguish between them, they are both inseparably comprehended in Christ. Would ye then obtain justification in Christ? You must previously possess Christ. But you cannot possess him without being made a partaker of his sanctification: for Christ cannot be divided. Since the Lord, therefore, does not grant us the enjoyment of these blessings without bestowing himself, he bestows both at once but never the one without the other. Thus it appears how true it is that we are justified not without, and yet not by works, since in the participation of Christ, by which we are justified, is contained not less sanctification than justification.

2. It is also most untrue that men’s minds are withdrawn from the desire of well-doing when we deprive them of the idea of merit. Here, by the way, the reader must be told that those men absurdly infer merit from reward, as I will afterwards more clearly explain. They thus infer, because ignorant of the principle that God gives no less a display of his liberality when he assigns reward to works, than when he bestows the faculty of well-doing. This topic it will be better to defer to its own place. At present, let it be sufficient merely to advert to the weakness of their objection. This may be done in two ways.⁴ For, first, they are altogether in error when they say that, unless a hope of reward is held forth, no regard will be had to the right conduct of life. For if all that men do when they serve God is to look to the reward, and hire out or sell their labour to him, little is gained: he desires to be freely worshipped, freely loved: I say he approves the worshipper who, even if all hope of reward were cut off, would cease not to worship him. Moreover, when men are to be urged, there cannot be a stronger stimulus than that derived from the end of our redemption and calling, such as the word of God employs when it says, that it were the height of impiety and ingratitude not to “love him who first loved us;” that by “the blood of Christ” our conscience is purged “from dead works to serve the living God;” that it were impious sacrilege in any one to count “the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing;” that we have been “delivered out of the hands of our ene-

² This sentence is wholly omitted in the French.

³ Latin, “Dolere sibi simulant.”—French, “Ils alleguent;”—they allege.

⁴ All the previous sentences of this section, except the first, are omitted in the French.

¹ 2 Cor. 4:8; 2 Tim. 2:11; Phil. 3:10; Rom. 7:29, 39.

mies," that we "might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life;" that being "made free from sin," we "become the servants of righteousness;" "that our old man is crucified with him," in order that we might rise to newness of life. Again, "if ye then be risen with Christ (as becomes his members), seek those things which are above," living as pilgrims in the world, and aspiring to heaven, where our treasure is. "The grace of God has appeared to all men, bringing salvation, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." "For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Spirit," which it were impious to profane? "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as the children of light." "God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain" from all illicit desires: ours is a "holy calling," and we respond not to it except by purity of life. "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Can there be a stronger argument in eliciting us to charity than that of John? "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Similar is the argument of Paul, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" "For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body, so also is Christ." Can there be a stronger incentive to holiness than when we are told by John, "Every man that has this hope in him purifieth himself; even as he is pure?" and by Paul, "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit;" or when we hear our Savior hold forth himself as an example to us that we should follow his steps?¹

3. I have given these few passages merely as a specimen; for were I to go over them all, I should form a large volume. All the Apostles abound in exhortations, admonitions and rebukes, for the purpose of training the man of God to every good work, and that without any mention of merit. Nay, rather their chief exhortations are founded on the fact, that without any merit of ours, our salvation depends entirely on the mercy of God. Thus Paul, who during a whole Epistle had maintained that there was no hope of life for us save in the righteousness of Christ, when he comes to exhortations beseeches us by the mercy which God has bestowed upon us (Rom. 12:1). And indeed this one reason ought to have been sufficient, that God may be glorified in us. But if any are not so ardently desirous to promote the glory of God, still the remembrance of his kindness is most sufficient to incite them to do good (see Chrysost. Homily. in Genes). But those men,² because, by introducing the idea of merit, they perhaps extract some forced and servile obedience of the Law, falsely allege, that as we do not adopt the same course, we have no means of exhorting to good works. As if God were well pleased with such services when he declares that he loves a cheerful giver, and forbids any thing to be given him grudgingly or of necessity (2 Cor. 9:7). I say not that I would reject that or omit any kind of exhortation which Scripture employs, its object

1 1 John 5:10, 19; Heb. 9:14; 10 29; Luke 1:74, 75; Rom. 6:18; Col. 3:1; Tit. 2:11; 1 Thess. 5:9; 1 Cor. 3:16; Eph 2:21; 5:8; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Thess. 4:3, 7; 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 6:18; 1 John 4:10; 3:11; 1 Cor. 6:15, 17; 12:12; 1 John 3:3; 2 Cor. 7:1; John 15:10.
2 French, "ces Pharisiens;"—those Pharisees.

being not to leave any method of animating us untried. For it states, that the recompense which God will render to every one is according to his deeds; but, first, I deny that that is the only, or, in many instances, the principal motive; and, secondly, I admit not that it is the motive with which we are to begin. Moreover, I maintain that it gives not the least countenance to those merits which these men are always preaching. This will afterwards be seen. Lastly, there is no use in this recompense, unless we have previously embraced the doctrine that we are justified solely by the merits of Christ as apprehended by faith, and not by any merit of works; because the study of piety can be fitly prosecuted only by those by whom this doctrine has been previously imbibed. This is beautifully intimated by the Psalmist when he thus addresses God, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared," (Ps. 130:4). For he shows that the worship of God cannot exist without acknowledging his mercy, on which it is founded and established. This is specially deserving of notice, as showing us not only that the beginning of the due worship of God is confidence in his mercy; but that the fear of God (which Papists will have to be meritorious) cannot be entitled to the name of merit, for this reason, that it is founded on the pardon and remission of sins.

4. But the most futile calumny of all is, that men are invited to sin when we affirm that the pardon in which we hold that justification consists is gratuitous. Our doctrine is, that justification is a thing of such value, that it cannot be put into the balance with any good quality of ours; and, therefore, could never be obtained unless it were gratuitous: moreover, that it is gratuitous to us, but not also to Christ, who paid so dearly for it; namely his own most sacred blood, out of which there was no price of sufficient value to pay what was due to the justice of God. When men are thus taught they are reminded that it is owing to no merit of theirs that the shedding of that most sacred blood is not repeated every time they sin. Moreover, we say that our pollution is so great, that it can never be washed away save in the fountain of his pure blood. Must not those who are thus addressed conceive a greater horror of sin than if it were said to be wiped off by a sprinkling of good works? If they have any reverence for God, how can they, after being once purified, avoid shuddering at the thought of again wallowing in the mire, and as much as in them lies troubling and polluting the purity of this fountain? "I have washed my feet," (says the believing soul in the Song of Solomon, 5:3), "how shall I defile them?" It is now plain which of the two makes the forgiveness of sins of less value, and derogates from the dignity of justification. They pretend that God is appeased by their frivolous satisfactions; in other words, by mere dross. We maintain that the guilt of sin is too heinous to be so frivolously expiated; that the offense is too grave to be forgiven to such valueless satisfactions; and, therefore, that forgiveness is the prerogative of Christ's blood alone. They say that righteousness, wherever it is defective, is renewed and repaired by works of satisfaction. We think it too precious to be balanced by any compensation of works, and, therefore, in order to restore it, recourse must be had solely to the mercy of God. For the other points relating to the forgiveness of sins, see the following chapter.

CHAPTER 17.

The promises of the law and the gospel reconciled.

1. In the following chapter, the arguments of Sophists, who would destroy or impair the doctrine of Justification by Faith, are reduced to two classes. The former is general, the latter special, and contains some arguments peculiar to itself. I. The first class, which is general, and in a manner contains the foundation of all the arguments, draws an argument from the promises of the law. This is considered from sec. 1-3.
2. The second class following from the former, and containing special proofs. An argument drawn from the history of Cornelius explained, sec. 4, 5.
3. A full exposition of those passages of Scripture which represent God as showing mercy and favor to the cultivators of righteousness, sec. 6.
4. A third argument from the passages which distinguish good works by the name of righteousness, and declare that men are justified by them, sec. 7, 8.
5. The adversaries of justification by faith placed in a dilemma. Their partial righteousness refuted, sec. 9, 10.
6. A fourth argument, setting the Apostle James in opposition to Paul, considered, sec. 11, 12.
7. Answer to a fifth argument, that, according to Paul, not the hearers but the doors of the law are justified, sec. 13.
8. Consideration of a sixth argument, drawn from those passages in which believers boldly submit their righteousness to the judgment of God, and ask him to decide according to it, sec. 14.
9. Examination of the last argument, drawn from passages which ascribe righteousness and life to the ways of believers, sec. 15.

Sections.

1. Brief summary of Chapters 15 and 16. Why justification is denied to works. Argument of opponents founded on the promises of the law. The substance of this argument. Answer. Those who would be justified before God must be exempted from the power of the law. How this is done.
2. Confirmation of the answer *ab impossibili*, and from the testimony of an Apostle and of David.
3. Answer to the objection, by showing why these promises were given. Refutation of the sophistical distinction between the intrinsic value of works, and their value *er parts*.
4. Argument from the history of Cornelius. Answer, by distinguishing between two kinds of acceptance. Former kind. Sophistical objection refuted.
5. Latter kind. Plain from this distinction that Cornelius was accepted freely before his good works could be accepted. Similar explanations to be given of the passage in which God is represented as merciful and propitious to the cultivators of righteousness.
6. Exposition of these passages. Necessary to observe whether the promise is legal or evangelical. The legal

promise always made under the condition that we “do,” the evangelical under the condition that we “believe.”

7. Argument from the passages which distinguish good works by the name of righteousness, and declare that man is justified by them. Answer to the former part of the argument respecting the name. Why the works of the saints called works of righteousness. Distinction to be observed.
8. Answer to the second part of the argument—viz. that man is justified by works. Works of no avail by themselves; we are justified by faith only. This kind of righteousness defined. Whence the value set on good works.
9. Answer confirmed and fortified by a dilemma.
10. In what sense the partial imperfect righteousness of believers accepted. Conclusion of the refutation.
11. Argument founded on the Epistle of James. First answer. One Apostle cannot be opposed to another. Second answer. Third answer, from the scope of James. A double paralogism in the term Faith. In James the faith said not to justify is a mere empty opinion; in Paul it is the instrument by which we apprehend Christ our righteousness.
12. Another paralogism on the word justify. Paul speaks of the cause, James of the effects, of justification. Sum of the discussion.
13. Argument founded on Rom. 2:13. Answer, explaining the Apostles meaning. Another argument, containing a reduction *ad impossibili*. Why Paul used the argument.
14. An argument founded on the passages in which believers confidently appeal to their righteousness. Answer, founded on a consideration of two circumstances.
 - a. They refer only to a special cause.
 - b. They claim righteousness in comparison with the wicked.
15. Last argument from those passages which ascribe righteousness and life to the ways of believers. Answer. This proceeds from the paternal kindness of God. What meant by the perfection of saints.

1. Let us now consider the other arguments which Satan by his satellites invents to destroy or impair the doctrine of Justification by Faith. I think we have already put it out of the power of our calumniators to treat us as if we were the enemies of good works—justification being denied to works not in order that no good works may be done or that those which are done may be denied to be good; but only that we may not trust or glory in them, or ascribe salvation to them. Our only confidence and boasting, our only anchor of salvation is, that Christ the Son of God is ours, and that we are in him sons of God and heirs of the heavenly kingdom, being called, not by our worth, but the kindness of God, to the hope of eternal blessedness. But since, as has been said, they assail us with other engines, let us now proceed to demolish them also. First, they recur to the legal promises which the Lord proclaimed to the observers of the law, and they ask us whether we hold them to be null or effectual. Since it were absurd and ridiculous to say they are null, they take it for granted that they have some efficacy. Hence they infer that we are not justified by faith only. For the Lord thus speaks: “Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall

keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers; and he will love thee, and bless thee and multiply thee," (Deut. 7:12, 13). Again, "If ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever," (Jer. 7:5-7). It were to no purpose to quote a thousand similar passages, which, as they are not different in meaning, are to be explained on the same principle. In substance, Moses declares that in the law is set down "a blessing and a curse," life and death (Deut. 11:26); and hence they argue, either that that blessing is become inactive and unfruitful, or that justification is not by faith only. We have already shown,¹ that if we cleave to the law we are devoid of every blessing, and have nothing but the curse denounced on all transgressors. The Lord does not promise any thing except to the perfect observers of the law; and none such are any where to be found. The results therefore is that the whole human race is convicted by the law, and exposed to the wrath and curse of God: to be saved from this they must escape from the power of the law, and be as it were brought out of bondage into freedom,—not that carnal freedom which indisposes us for the observance of the law, tends to licentiousness, and allows our passions to wanton unrestrained with loosened reins; but that spiritual freedom which consoles and raises up the alarmed and smitten conscience, proclaiming its freedom from the curse and condemnation under which it was formerly held bound. This freedom from subjection to the law, this manumission, if I may so express it, we obtain when by faith we apprehend the mercy of God in Christ, and are thereby assured of the pardon of sins, with a consciousness of which the law stung and tortured us.

2. For this reason, the promises offered in the law would all be null and ineffectual, did not God in his goodness send the gospel to our aid, since the condition on which they depend, and under which only they are to be performed—viz. the fulfillment of the law, will never be accomplished. Still, however the aid which the Lord gives consists not in leaving part of justification to be obtained by works, and in supplying part out of his indulgence, but in giving us Christ as in himself alone the fulfillment of righteousness. For the Apostle, after premising that he and the other Jews, aware that "a man is not justified by the works of the law," had "believed in Jesus Christ," adds as the reason, not that they might be assisted to make up the sum of righteousness by faith in Christ, but that they "might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law," (Gal. 2:16). If believers withdraw from the law to faith, that in the latter they may find the justification which they see is not in the former, they certainly disclaim justification by the law. Therefore, whose will, let him amplify the rewards which are said to await the observer of the law, provided he at the same time understand, that owing to our depravity, we derive no benefit from them until we have obtained another righteousness by faith. Thus David after making mention of the reward which the Lord has prepared for his servants (Ps. 25 almost throughout), immediately descends to an acknowledgment of sins, by which the reward is made void. In Psalm 19, also, he loudly extols the benefits of the law; but immediately exclaims, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults," (Ps. 19:12). This passage perfectly accords with the former, when, after saying, "the paths of the Lord are mercy

and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies," he adds, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity: for it is great," (Ps. 25:10, 11). Thus, too, we ought to acknowledge that the favor of God is offered to us in the law, provided by our works we can deserve it; but that it never actually reaches us through any such desert.

3. What then? Were the promises given that they might vanish away without fruit? I lately declared that this is not my opinion. I say, indeed, that their efficacy does not extend to us so long as they have respect to the merit of works, and, therefore, that, considered in themselves, they are in some sense abolished. Hence the Apostle shows, that the celebrated promise, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them," (Lev. 18:5; Ezek. 20:10), will, if we stop at it, be of no avail, and will profit us not a whit more than if it were not given, being inaccessible even to the holiest servants of God, who are all far from fulfilling the law, being encompassed with many infirmities. But when the gospel promises are substituted, promises which announce the free pardon of sins, the result is not only that our persons are accepted of God, but his favor also is shown to our works, and that not only in respect that the Lord is pleased with them, but also because he visits them with the blessings which were due by agreement to the observance of his law. I admit, therefore, that the works of the faithful are rewarded with the promises which God gave in his law to the cultivators of righteousness and holiness; but in this reward we should always attend to the cause which procures favor to works. This cause, then, appears to be threefold. First, God turning his eye away from the works of his servants which merit reproach more than praise, embraces them in Christ, and by the intervention of faith alone reconciles them to himself without the aid of works. Secondly the works not being estimated by their own worth, he, by his fatherly kindness and indulgence, honors so far as to give them some degree of value. Thirdly, he extends his pardon to them, not imputing the imperfection by which they are all polluted, and would deserve to be regarded as vices rather than virtues. Hence it appears how much Sophists² were deluded in thinking they admirably escaped all absurdities when they said, that works are able to merit salvation, not from their intrinsic worth, but according to agreement, the Lord having, in his liberality, set this high value upon them. But, meanwhile, they observed not how far the works which they insisted on regarding as meritorious must be from fulfilling the condition of the promises, were they not preceded by a justification founded on faith alone, and on forgiveness of sins—a forgiveness necessary to cleanse even good works from their stains. Accordingly, of the three causes of divine liberality to which it is owing that good works are accepted, they attended only to one: the other two, though the principal causes, they suppressed.

4. They quote the saying of Peter as given by Luke in the Acts, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34, 35). And hence they infer, as a thing which seems to them beyond a doubt, that if man by right conduct procures the favor of God, his obtaining salvation is not entirely the gift of God. Nay, that when God in his mercy assists the sinner, he is inclined to mercy by works. There is no way of reconciling the passages of Scripture, unless you observe that man's acceptance

¹ See Book 2 chap. 7: sec. 2-8, 15; chap. 8 sec 3; chap 11 sec. 8; Book 3 chap 19. sec 2.

² French, "Les Sophistes de Sorbonne;"—the Sophists of Sorbonne.

with God is twofold. As man is by nature, God finds nothing in him which can incline him to mercy, except merely big wretchedness. If it is clear then that man, when God first interposes for him, is naked and destitute of all good, and, on the other hand, loaded and filled with all kinds of evil,—for what quality, pray, shall we say that he is worthy of the heavenly kingdom? Where God thus clearly displays free mercy, have done with that empty imagination of merit. Another passage in the same book—viz. where Cornelius hears from the lips of an angel, “Thy prayer and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God,” (Acts 10:4), is miserably wrested to prove that man is prepared by the study of good works to receive the favor of God. Cornelius being endued with true wisdom, in other words, with the fear of God, must have been enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom, and being an observer of righteousness, must have been sanctified by the same Spirit; righteousness being, as the Apostle testifies, one of the most certain fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:5). Therefore, all those qualities by which he is said to have pleased God he owed to divine grace: so far was he from preparing himself by his own strength to receive it. Indeed, not a syllable of Scripture can be produced which does not accord with the doctrine, that the only reason why God receives man into his favor is, because he sees that he is in every respect lost when left to himself; lost, if he does not display his mercy in delivering him. We now see that in thus accepting, God looks not to the righteousness of the individual, but merely manifests the divine goodness towards miserable sinners, who are altogether undeserving of this great mercy.

5. But after the Lord has withdrawn the sinner from the abyss of perdition, and set him apart for himself by means of adoption, having begotten him again and formed him to newness of life, he embraces him as a new creature, and bestows the gifts of his Spirit. This is the acceptance to which Peter refers, and by which believers after their calling are approved by God even in respect of works; for the Lord cannot but love and delight in the good qualities which he produces in them by means of his Spirit. But we must always bear in mind, that the only way in which men are accepted of God in respect of works is, that whatever good works he has conferred upon those whom he admits to favor, he by an increase of liberality honors with his acceptance. For whence their good works, but just that the Lord having chosen them as vessels of honor, is pleased to adorn them with true purity? And how are their actions deemed good as if there was no deficiency in them, but just that their merciful Father indulgently pardons the spots and blemishes which adhere to them? In one word, the only meaning of acceptance in this passage is, that God accepts and takes pleasure in his children, in whom he sees the traces and lineaments of his own countenance. We have else here said, that regeneration is a renewal of the divine image in us. Since God, therefore, whenever he beholds his own face, justly loves it and holds it in honor, the life of believers, when formed to holiness and justice, is said, not without cause, to be pleasing to him. But because believers, while encompassed with mortal flesh, are still sinners, and their good works only begun savor of the corruption of the flesh, God cannot be propitious either to their persons or their works, unless he embraces them more in Christ than in themselves. In this way are we to understand the passages in which God declares that he is clement and merciful to the cultivators of righteousness. Moses said to the Israelites, “Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.” These words afterwards became a common form of expression among the peo-

ple. Thus Solomon in his prayer at the dedication says, “Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart,” (1 Kings 8:23). The same words are repeated by Nehemiah (Neh. 1:5). As the Lord in all covenants of mercy stipulates on his part for integrity and holiness of life in his servants (Deut. 29:18), lest his goodness might be held in derision, or any one, puffed up with exultation in it, might speak flatteringly to his soul while walking in the depravity of his heart, so he is pleased that in this way those whom he admits to communion in the covenant should be kept to their duty. Still, however, the covenant was gratuitous at first, and such it ever remains. Accordingly, while David declares, “according to the cleanness of my hands has he recompensed me,” yet does he not omit the fountain to which I have referred; “he delivered me, because he delighted in me,” (2 Sam. 22:20, 21). In commending the goodness of his cause, he derogates in no respect from the free mercy which takes precedence of all the gifts of which it is the origin.

6. Here, by the way, it is of importance to observe how those forms of expression differ from legal promises. By legal promises, I mean not those which lie scattered in the books of Moses (for there many Evangelical promises occur), but those which properly belong to the legal dispensation. All such promises, by whatever name they may be called, are made under the condition that the reward is to be paid on the things commanded being done. But when it is said that the Lord keeps a covenant of mercy with those who love him, the words rather demonstrate what kind of servants those are who have sincerely entered into the covenant, than express the reason why the Lord blesses them. The nature of the demonstration is this: As the end for which God bestows upon us the gift of eternal life is, that he may be loved, feared, and worshipped by us, so the end of all the promises of mercy contained in Scripture justly is that we may reverence and serve their author. Therefore, whenever we hear that he does good to those that observe his law, let us remember that the sons of God are designated by the duty which they ought perpetually to observe, that his reason for adopting us is, that we may reverence him as a father. Hence, if we would not deprive ourselves of the privilege of adoption, we must always strive in the direction of our calling. On the other hand, however, let us remember, that the completion of the Divine mercy depends not on the works of believers, but that God himself fulfill the promise of salvation to those who by right conduct correspond to their calling, because he recognizes the true badges of sons in those only who are directed to good by his Spirit. To this we may refer what is said of the members of the Church, “Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart,” etc. (Ps. 15:1, 2). Again, in Isaiah, “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously,” etc. (Isa. 33:14, 15). For the thing described is not the strength with which believers can stand before the Lord, but the manner in which our most merciful Father introduces them into his fellowship, and defends and confirms them therein. For as he detests sin and loves righteousness, so those whom he unites to himself he purifies by his Spirit, that he may render them conformable to himself and to his kingdom. Therefore, if it be asked, What is the first cause which gives the saints free access to the kingdom of God, and a firm and permanent footing in it? the answer is easy. The Lord in his mercy once adopted and ever defends them. But if the question relates to

the manner, we must descend to regeneration, and the fruits of it, as enumerated in the fifteenth Psalm.

7. There seems much more difficulty in those passages which distinguish good works by the name of righteousness, and declare that man is justified by them. The passages of the former class are very numerous, as when the observance of the commandments is termed justification or righteousness. Of the other classes we have a description in the words of Moses, "It shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments," (Deut. 6:25). But if you object, that it is a legal promise, which, having an impossible condition annexed to it, proves nothing, there are other passages to which the same answer cannot be made; for instance, "If the man be poor," "thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goes down:" "and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the Lord thy God," (Deut. 24:13). Likewise the words of the prophet, "Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore," (Psal. 106:30, 31). Accordingly the Pharisees of our day think they have here full scope for exultation.¹ For, as we say, that when justification by faith is established, justification by works falls; they argue on the same principle, If there is a justification by works, it is false to say that we are justified by faith only. When I grant that the precepts of the law are termed righteousness, I do nothing strange: for they are so in reality. I must, however, inform the reader, that the Hebrew word *!yqj*

has been rendered by the Septuagint, not very appropriately, *dikaio'mata*, justifications, instead of edicts.² But I readily give up any dispute as to the word. Nor do I deny that the Law of God contains a perfect righteousness. For although we are debtors to do all the things which it enjoins, and, therefore, even after a full obedience, are unprofitable servants; yet, as the Lord has deigned to give it the name of righteousness, it is not ours to take from it what he has given. We readily admit, therefore, that the perfect obedience of the law is righteousness, and the observance of any precept a part of righteousness, the whole substance of righteousness being contained in the remaining parts. But we deny that any such righteousness ever exists. Hence we discard the righteousness of the law, not as being in itself maimed and defective, but because of the weakness of our flesh it nowhere appears. But then Scripture does not merely call the precepts of the law righteousness, it also gives this name to the works of the saints: as when it states that Zacharias and his wife "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," (Luke 1:6). Surely when it thus speaks, it estimates works more according to the nature of the law than their own proper character. And here, again, I must repeat the observation which I lately made, that the law is not to be ascertained from a careless translation of the Greek interpreter. Still, as Luke chose not to make any change on the received version, I will not contend for this. The things contained in the law God enjoined upon man for righteousness but that righteousness we attain not unless by observing the whole law: every transgression whatever destroys it. While, therefore, the law commands nothing but righteousness, if we look to itself, every one of its precepts is righteousness: if we look to the men by whom they are performed, being transgressors in many things, they by no means merit the praise of righteousness for one work, and that a

1 French, "de crier contre nous en cest endroit;"— here to raise an outcry against us.

2 French, "Edits ou Statuts;"—Edicts or Statutes.

work which, through the imperfection adhering to it, is always in some respect vicious.³

8. I come to the second class (sec. 1, 7, ad init.), in which the chief difficulty lies. Paul finds nothing stronger to prove justification by faith than that which is written of Abraham, he "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness," (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6). Therefore, when it is said that the achievement of Phinehas "was counted unto him for righteousness," (Psal. 106:30, 31), we may argue that what Paul contends for respecting faith applies also to works. Our opponents, accordingly, as if the point were proved, set it down that though we are not justified without faith, it is not by faith only; that our justification is completed by works. Here I beseech believers, as they know that the true standard of righteousness must be derived from Scripture alone, to consider with me seriously and religiously, how Scripture can be fairly reconciled with that view. Paul, knowing that justification by faith was the refuge of those who wanted righteousness of their own, confidently infers, that all who are justified by faith are excluded from the righteousness of works. But as it is clear that this justification is common to all believers, he with equal confidence infers that no man is justified by works; nay, more, that justification is without any help from works. But it is one thing to determine what power works have in themselves, and another to determine what place they are to hold after justification by faith has been established. If a price is to be put upon works according to their own worth, we hold that they are unfit to appear in the presence of God: that man, accordingly, has no works in which he can glory before God, and that hence, deprived of all aid from works, he is justified by faith alone. Justification, moreover, we thus define: The sinner being admitted into communion with Christ is, for his sake, reconciled to God; when purged by his blood he obtains the remission of sins, and clothed with righteousness, just as if it were his own, stands secure before the judgment-seat of heaven. Forgiveness of sins being previously given, the good works which follow have a value different from their merit, because whatever is imperfect in them is covered by the perfection of Christ, and all their blemishes and pollutions are wiped away by his purity, so as never to come under the cognizance of the divine tribunal. The guilt of all transgressions, by which men are prevented from offering God an acceptable service, being thus effaced, and the imperfection which is wont to sully even good works being buried, the good works which are done by believers are deemed righteous, or; which is the same thing, are imputed for righteousness.

9. Now, should any one state this to me as an objection to justification by faith, I would first ask him, Whether a man is deemed righteous for one holy work or two, while in all the other acts of his life lie is a transgressor of the law? This were, indeed, more than absurd. I would next ask, Whether he is deemed righteous on account of many good works if he is guilty of transgression in some

3 The French here adds the two following sentences:—"Nostre response done est, merites: mais entant qu'elles tendent à la justice que Dieu nous a commandee, laquelle est nulle, si elle n'est parfaite. Or elle ne se trouve parfaite en nul homme de monde; pourtant faut conclure, q'une bonne oeuvre de soy ne merite pas le nom de justice."—Our reply then is, that when the works of the saints are called righteousness, it is not owing to their merits, but is in so far as they tend to the righteousness which God has commanded, and which is null if it be not perfect. Now it is not found perfect in any man in the world. Hence we must conclude, that no good work merits in itself the name of righteousness.

one part? Even this he will not venture to maintain in opposition to the authority of the law, which pronounces, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them," (Deut. 27:26). I would go still farther and ask, Whether there be any work which may not justly be convicted of impurity or imperfection? How, then, will it appear to that eye before which even the heavens are not clean, and angels are chargeable with folly? (Job 4:18). Thus he will be forced to confess that no good work exists that is not defiled, both by contrary transgression and also by its own corruption, so that it cannot be honored as righteousness. But if it is certainly owing to justification by faith that works, otherwise impure, unclean, defective, unworthy of the sight, not to say of the love of God, are imputed for righteousness, why do they by boasting of this imputation aim at the destruction of that justification, but for which the boast were vain? Are they desirous of having a viper's birth?¹ To this their ungodly language tends. They cannot deny that justification by faith is the beginning, the foundation, the cause, the subject, the substance, of works of righteousness, and yet they conclude that justification is not by faith, because good works are counted for righteousness. Let us have done then with this frivolity, and confess the fact as it stands; if any righteousness which works are supposed to possess depends on justification by faith, this doctrine is not only not impaired, but on the contrary confirmed, its power being thereby more brightly displayed. Nor let us suppose, that after free justification works are commended, as if they afterwards succeeded to the office of justifying, or shared the office with faith. For did not justification by faith always remain entire, the impurity of works would be disclosed. There is nothing absurd in the doctrine, that though man is justified by faith, he is himself not only not righteous, but the righteousness attributed to his works is beyond their own deserts.

10. In this way we can admit not only that there is a partial righteousness in works (as our adversaries maintain), but that they are approved by God as if they were absolutely perfect. If we remember on what foundation this is rested, every difficulty will be solved. The first time when a work begins to be acceptable is when it is received with pardon. And whence pardon, but just because God looks upon us and all that belongs to us as in Christ? Therefore, as we ourselves when ingrafted into Christ appear righteous before God, because our iniquities are covered with his innocence; so our works are, and are deemed righteous, because every thing otherwise defective in them being buried by the purity of Christ is not imputed. Thus we may justly say, that not only ourselves, but our works also, are justified by faith alone. Now, if that righteousness of works, whatever it be, depends on faith and free justification, and is produced by it, it ought to be included under it and, so to speak, made subordinate to it, as the effect to its cause; so far is it from being entitled to be set up to impair or destroy the doctrine of justification.² Thus Paul, to prove that our blessedness depends not on our works, but on the mercy of God, makes special use of the words of David, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,

whose sin is covered;" "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Should any one here obtrude the numberless passages in which blessedness seems to be attributed to works, as, "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord;" "He that has mercy on the poor, happy is he;" "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly," and "that endureth temptation;" "Blessed are they that keep judgment," that are "pure in heart," "meek," "merciful," etc.,³ they cannot make out that Paul's doctrine is not true. For seeing that the qualities thus extolled never all so exist in man as to obtain for him the approbation of God, it follows, that man is always miserable until he is exempted from misery by the pardon of his sins. Since, then, all the kinds of blessedness extolled in the Scripture are vain so that man derives no benefit from them until he obtains blessedness by the forgiveness of sins, a forgiveness which makes way for them, it follows that this is not only the chief and highest, but the only blessedness, unless you are prepared to maintain that it is impaired by things which owe their entire existence to it. There is much less to trouble us in the name of righteous which is usually given to believers. I admit that they are so called from the holiness of their lives, but as they rather exert themselves in the study of righteousness than fulfill righteousness itself, any degree of it which they possess must yield to justification by faith, to which it is owing that it is what it is.

11. But they say that we have a still more serious business with James, who in express terms opposes us. For he asks, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works?" and adds "You see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only," (James 2:21, 24). What then? Will they engage Paul in a quarrel with James? If they hold James to be a servant of Christ, his sentiments must be understood as not dissenting from Christ speaking by the mouth of Paul. By the mouth of Paul the Spirit declares that Abraham obtained justification by faith, not by works; we also teach that all are justified by faith without the works of the law. By James the same Spirit declares that both Abraham's justification and ours consists of works, and not of faith only. It is certain that the Spirit cannot be at variance with himself. Where, then, will be the agreement? It is enough for our opponents, provided they can tear up that justification by faith which we regard as fixed by the deepest roots:⁴ to restore peace to the conscience is to them a matter of no great concern. Hence you may see, that though they indeed carp at the doctrine of justification by faith, they meanwhile point out no goal of righteousness at which the conscience may rest. Let them triumph then as they will, so long as the only victory they can boast of is, that they have deprived righteousness of all its certainty. This miserable victory they will indeed obtain when the light of truth is extinguished, and the Lord permits them to darken it with their lies. But wherever the truth of God stands they cannot prevail. I deny, then, that the passage of James which they are constantly holding up before us as if it were the shield of Achilles, gives them the slightest countenance. To make this plain, let us first attend to the scope of the Apostle, and then show wherein their hallucination consists. As at that time (and the evil has existed in the Church ever since) there were many who, while they gave manifest proof of their infidelity, by neglecting and omitting all the works peculiar to believers, ceased not falsely to glory in the name of faith, James here dissipates their vain confidence. His intention therefore is,

³ Rom. 4:7; Ps 32:1, 2; 112:1; Prov. 14:21; Ps. 1:1; 106:3; 119:11; Mt. 5:3.

⁴ French, "Il suffit à nos adversaires s'ils peuvent deraciner la justice de foy, laquelle nous voulons estre plantee au profond du coeur."—It is enough for our opponents if they can root up justification by faith, which we desire to be planted at the bottom of the heart.

¹ French "Voudrions nous faire une lignee serpentine, que les enfans meurissent leur mere?"—Would we have a viperish progeny, where the children murder the parent?

² The whole sentence in French stands thus:—"Or si cette justice des oeuvres telle quelle procede de la foy et de la justification gratuite, il ne faut pas qu'on la prenne pour destruire ou obscurcir la grace dont elle depend; mais plustost doit estre enclose en icelle, comme le fruit à arbre."—Now, if this righteousness of works, such as it is, proceeds from faith and free justification, it must not be employed to destroy or obscure the grace on which it depends, but should rather be included in it, like the fruit in the tree.

not to derogate in any degree from the power of true faith, but to show how absurdly these triflers laid claim only to the empty name, and resting satisfied with it, felt secure in unrestrained indulgence in vice. This state of matters being understood, it will be easy to see where the error of our opponents lies. They fall into a double paralogism, the one in the term faith, the other in the term justifying. The Apostle, in giving the name of faith to an empty opinion altogether differing from true faith, makes a concession which derogates in no respect from his case. This he demonstrates at the outset by the words, "What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he has faith, and have not works?" (James 2:14). He says not, "If a man have faith without works," but "if he say that he has." This becomes still clearer when a little after he derides this faith as worse than that of devils, and at last when he calls it "dead." You may easily ascertain his meaning by the explanation, "Thou believest that there is one God." Surely if all which is contained in that faith is a belief in the existence of God, there is no wonder that it does not justify. The denial of such a power to it cannot be supposed to derogate in any degree from Christian faith, which is of a very different description. For how does true faith justify unless by uniting us to Christ, so that being made one with him, we may be admitted to a participation in his righteousness? It does not justify because it forms an idea of the divine existence, but because it inclines with confidence on the divine mercy.

12. We have not made good our point until we dispose of the other paralogism: since James places a part of justification in works. If you would make James consistent with the other Scriptures and with himself, you must give the word justify, as used by him, a different meaning from what it has with Paul. In the sense of Paul we are said to be justified when the remembrance of our unrighteousness is obliterated and we are counted righteous. Had James had the same meaning it would have been absurd for him to quote the words of Moses, "Abraham believed God," etc. The context runs thus: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." If it is absurd to say that the effect was prior to its cause, either Moses falsely declares in that passage that Abraham's faith was imputed for righteousness or Abraham, by his obedience in offering up Isaac, did not merit righteousness. Before the existence of Ishmael, who was a grown youth at the birth of Isaac, Abraham was justified by his faith. How thee can we say that he obtained justification by an obedience which followed long after? Wherefore, either James erroneously inverts the proper order (this it were impious to suppose), or he meant not to say that he was justified, as if he deserved to be deemed just. What then? It appears certain that he is speaking of the manifestation, not of the imputation of righteousness, as if he had said, Those who are justified by true faith prove their justification by obedience and good works, not by a bare and imaginary semblance of faith. In one word, he is not discussing the mode of justification, but requiring that the justification of believers shall be operative. And as Paul contends that men are justified without the aid of works, so James will not allow any to be regarded as justified who are destitute of good works. Due attention to the scope will thus disentangle every doubt; for the error of our opponents lies chiefly in this, that they think James is defining the mode of justification, whereas his only object is to destroy the depraved security of those who vainly pretended faith as an excuse for their contempt

of good works. Therefore, let them twist the words of James as they may, they will never extract out of them more than the two propositions: That an empty phantom of faith does not justify, and that the believer, not contented with such an imagination, manifests his justification by good works.

13. They gain nothing by quoting from Paul to the same effect, that "not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified," (Rom. 2:13). I am unwilling to evade the difficulty by the solution of Ambrose, that Paul spoke thus because faith in Christ is the fulfillment of the law. This I regard as a mere subterfuge, and one too for which there is no occasion, as the explanation is perfectly obvious. The Apostle's object is to suppress the absurd confidence of the Jews who gave out that they alone had a knowledge of the law, though at the very time they were its greatest despisers. That they might not plume themselves so much on a bare acquaintance with the law, he reminds them that when justification is sought by the law, the thing required is not the knowledge but the observance of it. We certainly mean not to dispute that the righteousness of the law consists in works, and not only so, but that justification consists in the dignity and merits of works. But this proves not that we are justified by works unless they can produce some one who has fulfilled the law. That Paul had no other meaning is abundantly obvious from the context. After charging Jews and Gentiles in common with unrighteousness, he descends to particulars and says, that "as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law," referring to the Gentiles, and that "as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law," referring to the Jews. Moreover, as they, winking at their transgressions, boasted merely of the law, he adds most appropriately, that the law was passed with the view of justifying not those who only heard it, but those only who obeyed it; as if he had said, Do you seek righteousness in the law? do not bring forward the mere hearing of it, which is in itself of little weight, but bring works by which you may show that the law has not been given to you in vain. Since in these they were all deficient, it followed that they had no ground of boasting in the law. Paul's meaning, therefore, rather leads to an opposite argument. The righteousness of the law consists in the perfection of works; but no man can boast of fulfilling the law by works, and, therefore, there is no righteousness by the law.

14. They now betake themselves to those passages in which believers boldly submit their righteousness to the judgment of God, and wish to be judged accordingly; as in the following passages: "Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me." Again, "Hear the right, O Lord;" "Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing." Again "The Lord regarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands has he recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God." "I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity." Again, "Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity;" "I have not sat with vain persons; neither will I go in with dissemblers;" "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men; in whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity."¹ I have already spoken of the confidence which the saints seem to derive simply

¹ Ps. 7:9; 17:1; 18:20; 26:1, 9, 10. Farther on, see Chap 14 s18; Chap. 20 s10.

from works. The passages now quoted will not occasion much difficulty, if we attend to their *peri'stasis*, their connection, or (as it is commonly called) special circumstances. These are of two kinds; for those who use them have no wish that their whole life should be brought to trial, so that they may be acquitted or condemned according to its tenor; all they wish is, that a decision should be given on the particular case; and even here the righteousness which they claim is not with reference to the divine perfection, but only by comparison with the wicked and profane. When the question relates to justification, the thing required is not that the individual have a good ground of acquittal in regard to some particular matter, but that his whole life be in accordance with righteousness. But when the saints implore the divine justice in vindication of their innocence, they do not present themselves as free from fault, and in every respect blameless but while placing their confidence of salvation in the divine goodness only, and trusting that he will vindicate his poor when they are afflicted contrary to justice and equity, they truly commit to him the cause in which the innocent are oppressed. And when they sist themselves with their adversaries at the tribunal of God, they pretend not to an innocence corresponding to the divine purity were inquiry strictly made, but knowing that in comparison of the malice, dishonesty, craft, and iniquity of their enemies, their sincerity justice, simplicity, and purity, are ascertained and approved by God, they dread not to call upon him to judge between them. Thus when David said to Saul, "The Lord render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness," (1 Sam. 26:23), he meant not that the Lord should examine and reward every one according to his deserts, but he took the Lord to witness how great his innocence was in comparison of Saul's injustice. Paul, too, when he indulges in the boast, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward," (2 Cor. 1:12), means not to call for the scrutiny of God, but compelled by the calumnies of the wicked he appeals, in contradiction of all their slanders, to his faith and probity, which he knew that God had indulgently accepted. For we see how he elsewhere says, "I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified," (1 Cor. 4:4); in other words, he was aware that the divine judgment far transcended the blind estimate of man. Therefore, however believers may, in defending their integrity against the hypocrisy of the ungodly, appeal to God as their witness and judge, still when the question is with God alone, they all with one mouth exclaim, "If thou, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" Again, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Distrusting their own words, they gladly exclaim, "Thy loving-kindness is better than life," (Ps. 130:3; 143:2; 63:3).

15. There are other passages not unlike those quoted above, at which some may still demur. Solomon says, "The just man walketh in his integrity," (Prov. 20:7). Again, "In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death," (Prov. 12:28). For this reason Ezekiel says, He that "has walked in my statutes, and has kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live," (Ezek. 18:9, 21; 23:15). None of these declarations do we deny or obscure. But let one of the sons of Adam come forward with such integrity. If there is none, they must perish from the presence of God, or retake themselves to the asylum of mercy. Still we deny not that the integrity of believers, though partial and imperfect, is a step to immortality. How so, but just that the works

of those whom the Lord has assumed into the covenant of grace, he tries not by their merit, but embraces with paternal indulgence. By this we understand not with the Schoolmen, that works derive their value from accepting grace. For their meaning is, that works otherwise unfit to obtain salvation in terms of law, are made fit for such a purpose by the divine acceptance. On the other hand, I maintain that these works being sullied both by other transgressions and by their own deficiencies, have no other value than this, that the Lord indulgently pardons them; in other words, that the righteousness which he bestows on man is gratuitous. Here they unseasonably obtrude those passages in which the Apostle prays for all perfection to believers, "To the end he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father," (1 Thess. 3:13, and elsewhere). These words were strongly urged by the Celestines of old, in maintaining the perfection of holiness in the present life. To this we deem it sufficient briefly to reply with Augustine, that the goal to which all the pious ought to aspire is, to appear in the presence of God without spot and blemish; but as the course of the present life is at best nothing more than progress, we shall never reach the goal until we have laid aside the body of sin, and been completely united to the Lord. If any one choose to give the name of perfection to the saints, I shall not obstinately quarrel with him, provided he defines this perfection in the words of Augustine, "When we speak of the perfect virtue of the saints, part of this perfection consists in the recognition of our imperfection both in truth and in humility," (August. ad Bonif. lib. 3, c. 7).