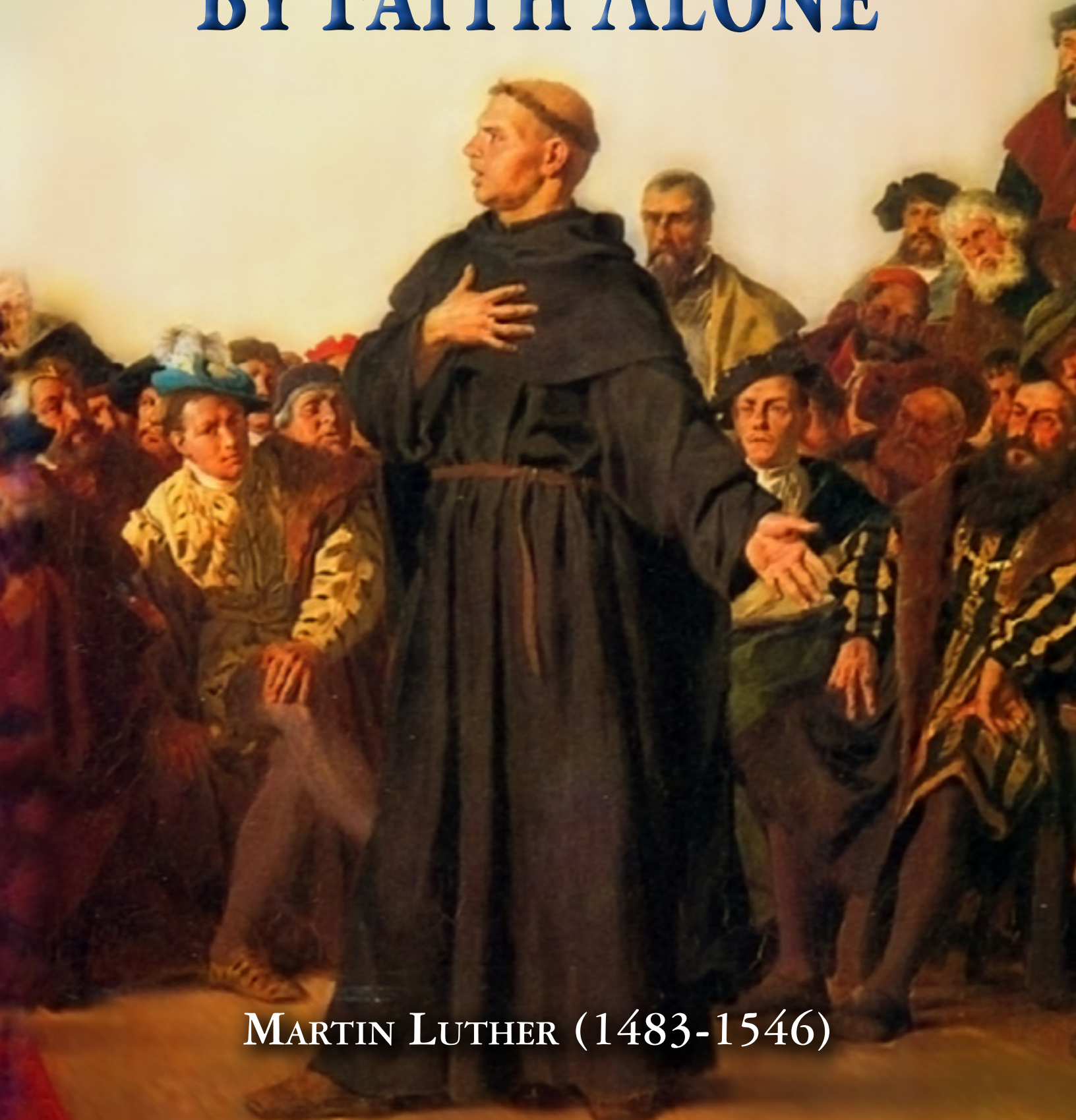


JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE



MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1546)

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

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JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

The Argument of Galatians

1. Righteousness by Faith

First of all, it behooves¹ [us] to speak of the argument of this epistle, that is to say, what matter Saint Paul here chiefly treats of. The argument, therefore, is this: Saint Paul goes about to establish the doctrine of faith, grace, forgiveness of sins—or Christian righteousness—to the end that we may have a perfect knowledge and difference between Christian righteousness and all other kinds of righteousness. For there be divers² sorts of righteousness. There is a political or civil righteousness, which emperors, princes of the world, philosophers, and lawyers deal with. There is also a ceremonial righteousness, which the traditions of men teach. This righteousness parents and schoolmasters may teach without danger, because they do not attribute unto it any power to satisfy for sin, to please God, or to deserve grace. But they teach such ceremonies as are only necessary for the correction of manners and certain observations concerning this life. Besides these, there is another righteousness called the righteousness of the Law, or of the Ten Commandments, which Moses teaches. This we also teach after the doctrine of faith.

There is yet another righteousness which is above all these, to wit, “the righteousness of faith” (Rom 4:13), or Christian righteousness. This Christian righteousness we must diligently discern from the others afore rehearsed—for they are quite contrary to this righteousness, both because they flow out of the laws of emperors, the traditions of the Pope,³ and the commandments of God; and also because they consist in our works, and may be wrought of us either by our pure natural strength, as the papists⁴ term it, or else by the gift of God. For these kinds of righteousness are also of the gift of God, like as other good things are which we enjoy.

But this most excellent righteousness—of faith I mean (which God through Christ, without works, imputes⁵ unto us; Rom 4:11, Eph 2:8-9)—is neither political nor ceremonial, nor the righteousness of God’s Law, nor consists in works, but is clean contrary; that is to say, a mere passive righteousness, as the others above are *active*. For in this we work nothing, we render nothing unto God, but only we receive and suffer Another to

¹ **behooves** – is appropriate for.

² **divers** – several.

³ **Pope** – leader of the Roman Catholic Church.

⁴ **papists** – those who follow the Pope.

⁵ **imputes** – gives apart from man’s works; puts onto one’s account without their earning it.

work in us—that is to say, God. Therefore it seems good to me to call this righteousness of faith, or Christian righteousness, the *passive* righteousness.

This is a righteousness hidden in a mystery, which the world does not know! Yea, Christians themselves do not thoroughly understand it and can hardly take hold of it in their temptations. Therefore, it must be diligently taught and continually practiced. And whoso does not understand or apprehend this righteousness in afflictions and terrors of conscience must needs⁶ be overthrown, for there is no comfort of conscience so firm and so sure as is this passive righteousness.

2. Condemnation by the Works of the Law

But man’s weakness and misery is so great that, in the terrors of conscience and danger of death, we behold nothing else but our works, our worthiness, and the Law, which, when it shows us our sin, by and by our past evil life comes to remembrance. Then the poor sinner, with great anguish of spirit, groans and thus thinks within himself: “Alas! How desperately have I lived! Would to God I might live longer; then would I amend my life.” Thus, man’s reason cannot restrain itself from the sight and beholding of this active or working righteousness, that is to say, her own righteousness. Nor [can man’s reason] lift up her eyes to the beholding of the passive or Christian righteousness, but it rests altogether in the active righteousness, so deeply is this evil rooted in us.

On the other side, Satan, abusing the infirmity of our nature, increases and aggravates these cogitations⁷ in us. Then it cannot be but that the poor conscience must be more grievously troubled, terrified, and confounded. For it is impossible that the mind of man itself should conceive any comfort, or look up unto grace only in the feeling and horror of sin or constantly reject all disputing and reasoning about works. For this is far above man’s strength and capacity; yea, and above the Law of God also. True it is, that of all things in the world, the Law is most excellent; yet is it not able to quiet a troubled conscience, but increases terrors, and drives it to desperation, [so] “that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful” (Rom 7:13).

Wherefore, the afflicted and troubled conscience has no remedy against desperation and eternal death unless it takes hold of the forgiveness of sins by grace, freely offered in Christ Jesus; that is to say, this “passive faith” or Christian righteousness. If it can apprehend this, then may it be at quiet and boldly say,

I seek not this active or working righteousness; although I know that I ought to have it, and also to fulfil it. But be it so that I had it, and did fulfil it indeed; yet, notwithstanding, I cannot trust unto it, neither dare I set it against the judgment of God. Thus I abandon myself from all active righteousness, both of mine own and of God’s Law, and embrace only that passive righteousness, which is the righteousness of grace, mercy, and forgiveness of sins. Briefly, I rest only upon that righteousness which is the righteousness of Christ and of the Holy Ghost.

⁶ **must needs** – must necessarily.

⁷ **cogitations** – deep thoughts.

Like as the earth engenders not rain, nor is able by her own strength, labor, and travail to procure the same, but receives it of the mere gift of God from above, so this heavenly righteousness is given us of God without our works or deservings. Look, then, how much the earth of itself is able to do in getting and procuring to itself seasonable showers of rain to make it fruitful. Even so much, and no more, are we able to do by our strength and works in winning this heavenly and eternal righteousness. Therefore, [we] shall never be able to attain unto it unless God Himself, by mere imputation and by His unspeakable gift, bestows it upon us. The greatest knowledge, then, and the greatest wisdom of Christians, is not to know the Law—to be ignorant of works and of the whole active righteousness, especially when the conscience wrestles with the judgment of God. On the contrary, among those which are not of the number of God’s people, the greatest point of wisdom is to know and earnestly to urge the Law and the active righteousness.

3. Teaching about Law and Grace

But it is a thing very strange and unknown to the world, to teach Christians to learn to be ignorant of the Law, and so to live before God as if there were no Law.⁸ Notwithstanding, except you be ignorant of the Law, and be assuredly persuaded in your heart that there is now no Law nor wrath of God, but altogether grace and mercy for Christ’s sake, you cannot be saved; for “by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20). Contrariwise, works and the keeping of the Law must be so straitly⁹ required in the world,¹⁰ as if there were no promise or grace—and that because of the stubborn, proud, and hard-hearted. Before [their] eyes nothing must be set but the Law [so] that they may be terrified and humbled, for the Law is given to terrify and kill such, and to exercise the old man. Both the word of grace and of wrath must be rightly divided according to the apostle (2Ti 2:15; 1Ti 1:8-11).

Here is then required a wise and faithful disposer of the Word of God which can so moderate the Law, that it may be kept within his bounds. He that teaches that men are justified before God by the observation of the Law passes the bounds of the Law and confounds these two kinds of righteousness, active and passive. [He] is but an ill logician, for he does not rightly divide [the Word] (2Ti 2:15). Contrariwise, he that sets forth the Law and works to the old man, and the promise of forgiveness of sins and God’s mercy to the new man, divides the Word well. For the flesh (or the old man) must be coupled with the Law and works; the spirit (or new man) must be joined with the promise of God and His mercy.

Wherefore, when I see a man that is bruised enough already—oppressed with the Law, terrified with sin, and thirsting for comfort—it is time that I should remove out of his sight

⁸ That is, to live by grace without depending upon good works to earn God’s favor. Luther is talking about justification and our acceptance with God here, not sanctification, or our walk of obedience. Christians do good works, joyfully obeying God’s commands *because they love Him* (Rom 12:1-2; Joh 14:15). For a fuller treatment of the law of God and the Christian, see *The Second London Baptist Confession*, 19 “Of the Law of God,” available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁹ **straitly** – strictly.

¹⁰ **required in the world** – preached to the world.

the Law and active righteousness, and that I should set before him, by the gospel, the Christian and passive righteousness. [This], excluding Moses with his Law, offers the promise made in Christ, Who came for the afflicted and for sinners. Here is man raised up again and conceives good hope; neither is he any longer under the Law, but is under grace. How not under the Law? According to the new man, to whom the Law does not appertain. For the Law has his bounds unto Christ, as Paul says afterwards: “For Christ is the end of the law” (Rom 10:4). Christ being come, Moses ceases with his Law, circumcision, the sacrifices, the sabbaths, yea, and all the prophets.

4. Separating Law and Grace in Salvation

This is our divinity,¹¹ whereby we teach how to put a difference between these two kinds of righteousness, active and passive. [We do this] to the end that manners and faith, works and grace, policy and religion, should not be confounded or taken the one for the other. Both are necessary, but both must be kept within their bounds. Christian righteousness appertains to the new man, and the righteousness of the Law appertains to the old man, which is born of flesh and blood. Upon this old man, as upon an ass, there must be laid a burden that may press him down. He must not enjoy the freedom of the spirit of grace, except he first put upon him the new man by faith in Christ, which, notwithstanding, is not fully done in this life—then may he enjoy the kingdom and the inestimable gift of grace.

This I say to the end that no man should think we reject or forbid good works, as the papists do most falsely slander us, neither understanding what they themselves say nor what we teach. They know nothing but the righteousness of the Law, and yet they will judge of that doctrine which is far above the Law, of which it is impossible that the carnal man should be able to judge. Therefore they must needs be offended, for they can see no higher than the Law. Whatsoever, then, is above the Law, is to them a great offence.

But we imagine, as it were, two worlds: the one heavenly and the other earthly. In these, we place these two kinds of righteousness, the one being far separate from the other. The righteousness of the Law is earthly and has to do with earthly things, and by it we do good works. But as the earth brings not forth fruit except first it be watered and made fruitful from above; even so by the righteousness of the Law, in doing many things, we do nothing. In fulfilling of the Law, we fulfil it not, except first—without any merit or work of ours—we be made righteous by the Christian righteousness, in which nothing appertains to the righteousness of the Law (the earthly and active righteousness). But this righteousness is heavenly; which, as is said, we have not of ourselves, but receive it from heaven; for which we work not, but which by grace is wrought in us, and apprehended by faith, whereby we mount up above all laws and works. Wherefore as Saint Paul says, like as we have borne the image of the earthly Adam, so let us bear the image of the heavenly, which is the new man in a new world—where is no law, no sin, no remorse or sting of conscience, no death; but perfect joy, righteousness, grace, peace, life, salvation, and glory.

¹¹ **divinity** – theology.

5. Proper Places of Works and Grace

Why, do we then nothing? Do we work nothing for the obtaining of this righteousness? I answer, Nothing at all! For this is perfect righteousness, to do nothing, to hear nothing, to know nothing of the Law or of works; but to know and to believe this only: that Christ is gone to the Father, and is not now seen; that He sits in heaven at the right hand of his Father, not as a judge, but “of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1Co 1:30). Briefly, [we believe] that He is our High Priest, entreating for us, and reigning over us and in us, by grace. In this heavenly righteousness, sin can have no place; for there is no law, and where no law is, there can be no transgression (Rom 4:15).

Seeing, then, that sin has here no place, there can be no anguish of conscience, no fear, no heaviness. Therefore, Saint John says, “Whosoever is born of God sinneth not” (1Jo 5:18).¹² But if there be any fear or grief of conscience, it is a token that his righteousness is withdrawn; that grace is hidden; and that Christ is darkened and out of sight. But where Christ is truly seen indeed, there must needs be full and perfect joy in the Lord, with peace of conscience. [This man] most certainly thus thinks:

Although I am a sinner by the Law, and under condemnation of the Law; yet I despair not, yet I die not, because Christ lives, Who is both my righteousness and my everlasting life. In that righteousness and life, I have no sin, no fear, no sting of conscience, no care of death. I am indeed a sinner as touching this present life and the righteousness thereof, as the child of Adam. Where the Law accuses me, death reigns over me and at length would devour me. But I have another righteousness and life above this life, which is Christ the Son of God, Who knows no sin nor death, but is righteousness and life eternal; by Whom this my body, being dead and brought into dust, shall be raised up again, and delivered from the bondage of the Law and sin, and shall be sanctified together with the spirit.

So both these continue while we here live. The flesh is accused, exercised with temptations, oppressed with heaviness and sorrow, bruised by this active righteousness of the Law; but the spirit reigns, rejoices, and is saved by this passive and Christian righteousness, because it knows that it has a Lord in heaven at the right hand of His Father. [Christ the Lord] has abolished the Law, sin, and death, and has trodden under His feet all evils, led them captive, and triumphed over them in Himself (Col 2:15).

Saint Paul, therefore, in this epistle goes about diligently to instruct us, to comfort us, to hold us in the perfect knowledge of this most Christian and excellent righteousness. For if the article of justification be once lost, then is all true Christian doctrine lost. And as many as are in the world that hold not this doctrine are either Jews, Turks,¹³ papists, or heretics. For between the “righteousness which is of the law” (Rom 10:5) and “Christian righteousness,” there is no mean.¹⁴ He, then, that strays from this “Christian

¹² Luther quotes this verse in support of our legal standing with God. However, it is rightly seen as pointing to the practical holiness which is the outworking of our relationship with God.

¹³ **Turks** – Muslims.

¹⁴ **mean** – middle ground.

righteousness” must needs fall into the righteousness of the Law; that is to say, when he has lost Christ, he must fall into the confidence of his own works...

Commentary on Galatians 2:16

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”—Galatians 2:16

1. The Works of the Law

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ.” This word, “the works of the law,” reaches far and comprehends much. We take the work of the Law, therefore, generally for that which is contrary to grace. Whatsoever is not grace is the Law, whether it be judicial, ceremonial, or the Ten Commandments [the summary of the moral law]. Wherefore, if you could do the works of the Law according to this commandment, “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart” (Deu 6:5), etc.—which no man yet ever did or could do—yet you should not be justified before God, for a man is not justified by the works of the Law. But hereof we will speak more largely hereafter.

The “works of the law” then, according to Paul, signifies the work of the whole Law, whether it be judicial, ceremonial, or moral. Now, if the work of the moral law does not justify, much less does circumcision justify, which is a work of the ceremonial law. Wherefore, when Paul says (as he oftentimes does), that a man is not justified by the Law, or “by the works of the law” (which are both one), he speaks generally of the whole Law, setting the righteousness of faith against the righteousness of the whole Law.

By the righteousness [i.e., works] of the Law, he says [in effect], a man is not pronounced righteous [i.e., justified] before God; but the righteousness of faith God imputes freely through grace, for Christ’s sake. The Law, no doubt, is holy, righteous, and good (Rom 7:12), and consequently the works of the Law are holy, righteous, and good—yet, notwithstanding, a man is not justified thereby before God.

Now, the works of the Law may be done either before justification or after. There were many good men even among the pagans—as Xenophon, Aristides, Fabius, Cicero, Pomponius, Atticus, and others—which before justification performed the deeds of the Law and did notable works. Cicero¹⁵ suffered death valiantly in a good and just cause.

¹⁵ **Marcus Tullius Cicero** (106-43 BC) – Roman politician and lawyer who served as consul in the year 63 BC. He is considered one of Rome’s greatest orators and prose stylists.

Pomponius¹⁶ was a constant man and loved truth, for he never made a lie himself, nor could suffer the same in any other. Now, constancy and truth are noble virtues and excellent works of the Law, and yet they were not justified thereby. After justification, Peter, Paul, and all other Christians have done and do the works of the Law, yet are they not justified thereby. “I know nothing by myself [i.e., I know not myself guilty in anything],” says Paul, “yet am I not hereby justified” (1Co 4:4). We see, then, that he speaks not of any part of the Law, but of the whole Law, and all the works thereof.

2. The Divinity of the Popish Sophisters¹⁷ (commonly called Schoolmen¹⁸)

Wherefore, the wicked and pernicious opinion of the papists is utterly to be condemned, which attribute the merit of grace and remission of sins to the work wrought. For they say that a good work, before grace, is able to obtain grace of congruence¹⁹ (which they call *meritum de congruo*), because it is meet²⁰ that God should reward such a work. But when grace is obtained, the work following deserves everlasting life of due debt and worthiness, which they call *meritum de condigno*.²¹ As for example: if a man being in deadly sin, without grace, do a good work of his own good natural inclination—that is, if he say or hear a mass, or give alms and such-like—this man of congruence deserves grace. When he has thus obtained grace, he does now a work which of worthiness deserves everlasting life. For the first, God is no debtor; but because He is just and good, it behooves Him to approve such a good work, though it be done in deadly sin, and to give grace for such a service. But when grace is obtained, God is become a debtor and is constrained of right and duty to give eternal life. For now it is not only a work of free

¹⁶ **Manius Pomponius Matho** (fl. 236-211 BC) – Roman consul and general who was elected consul for the year 233 BC. Matho carried on war against the Sardinians. **Marcus Pomponius Matho** was his brother, a consul in 231 BC, who died in 204 BC.

¹⁷ **sophisters** – those skilled in elaborate and devious argumentation.

¹⁸ **schoolmen** – teachers of philosophy and theology in the Middle Ages. Also known as scholastics; examples include Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) and John Duns Scotus (c. 1265-1308).

¹⁹ **grace of congruence** (*Latin: meritum de congruo*, “the merit of congruity”) – the grace God gives because it is “congruous,” or fitting, that God should reward those good dispositions which they suppose an unregenerate man can produce without the aid of divine grace. The reward which it is fitting for God to confer is the infusion of grace into the heart...Rome’s teaching is that not only can a man so work as to merit salvation, but he can do much more. He can lay up a store of merit which then becomes available to needy souls...This was the notion that lay behind the promotion of papal indulgences, which so aroused Luther and led to the Protestant Reformation. Luther saw this connection, which others missed: he opposed not merely the immoral exercise of the sale of indulgences, giving license to sin, but the entire pernicious doctrine of [human] merit upon which indulgences were founded.—Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Greenville, South Carolina; Ambassador-Emerald International; 2002), 278.

²⁰ **meet** – fitting.

²¹ **meritum de condigno** (*Latin: “merit of condignity”*) – that merit belonging only to the regenerate and produced by the aid of divine grace, which in and of itself (as distinct from mere covenant or promise) deserves God’s reward...salvation by works. The Romish position is that through the sacraments, grace is infused into the sinner’s heart for Christ’s sake and that his subsequent good works merit...a just claim to salvation.—*Ibid.*

will, done according to the substance, but also done in grace, which makes a man acceptable unto God, that is to say, in charity.

This is the divinity of the antichristian kingdom, which here I recite to the end²² that the disputation of Paul may be the better understood (for two contrary things being set together may be the better known), and...that all men may see how far from the truth these blind guides and leaders of the blind have wandered; and how, by this wicked and blasphemous doctrine, they have not only darkened the gospel, but have taken it clean away and buried Christ utterly. For if I, being in deadly sin, can do any little work which is not only acceptable in God's sight, of itself and according to the substance,²³ but also is able to deserve grace of congruence, and [if] when I have received grace, I may do works according to grace—that is to say, according to charity—and get of right and duty eternal life, what need have I now of the grace of God, forgiveness of sins, of the promise, and of the death and victory of Christ? Christ is now to me unprofitable, and His benefit of none effect—for I have free will and power to do good works whereby I *deserve* grace of congruence, and afterwards, by the worthiness of my work, eternal life.

Such monstrous and horrible blasphemies should have been set forth to the Turks and Jews, and not to the church of Christ. And hereby it plainly appears that the Pope—with his bishops, doctors, priests, and all his religious rabble—had no knowledge or regard of holy matters, and that they were not careful for the health of the silly and miserable scattered flock. For if they had seen (but, as it were, through a cloud) what Paul calls sin and what he calls grace, they would never have compelled the people to believe such abominations and execrable²⁴ lies. By deadly sin, they understood only the external word committed against the Law—as murder, theft, and such-like. They could not see that ignorance, hatred, and contempt of God in the heart, ingratitude, murmuring against God, and resisting the will of God are also deadly sins—and that the flesh cannot think, speak, or do anything but that which is devilish and altogether against God. If they had seen these mischiefs fast rooted in the nature of man, they would never have devised such impudent and execrable dreams touching the deserving of congruence and worthiness.

Wherefore we must properly and plainly define what a wicked man or deadly sinner is. He is such a holy and bloody hypocrite as Paul was when he went to Damascus to persecute Jesus of Nazareth, to abolish the doctrine of the gospel, to murder the faithful, and utterly to overthrow the church of Christ. And who will not say but that these were horrible sins? Yet Paul could not see them. For he was so blinded with a perverse zeal of God, that he thought these abominations to be perfect righteousness and high service unto God. And shall we say that such as defend these horrible sins to be perfect righteousness do deserve grace?

Wherefore, with Paul, we utterly deny the merit of congruence and worthiness, and affirm that these speculations are nothing else but mere deceits of Satan. [These] were never done indeed nor notified by any examples, for God never gave to any man grace

²² **to the end** – for the purpose.

²³ **acceptable...according to the substance** – acceptable based on the worth of the good work itself.

²⁴ **execrable** – detestable.

and everlasting life for the merit of congruence or worthiness. These disputations of the schoolmen touching the merit of congruence and worthiness, are therefore nothing else but vain toys and dreams of idle brains, to no other end and purpose but to draw men from the true worship of God. And hereupon is the whole papacy grounded, for there is no religious person but he has this imagination: I am able by the observation of my holy order to deserve grace of congruence; and, by the works which I do after I have received this grace, I am able to heap up such treasure of merit, as shall not only be sufficient for me to obtain eternal life, but also to give or sell unto others. Thus have all the religious orders taught, and thus have they lived. And to defend this horrible blasphemy against Christ, the papists do at this day attempt against us what they can. And there is not one of them all, but the more holy hypocrite and merit-monger he is, the more cruel and deadly enemy he is to the gospel of Christ!

3. The True Way to Christianity

Now, the true way to Christianity is this: that a man *first* acknowledges himself to be a sinner by the Law, and that it is impossible for him to do any good work. For the Law says, “A corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit” (Mat 7:17); that is, you are an evil tree, and therefore all that you think, speak, or do is against God. You cannot therefore deserve grace by your works, which if you go about to do, you double your offence—for since you are an evil tree, you cannot but bring forth evil fruits, that is to say, sins. “For whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom 14:23). Wherefore, he that would deserve grace by works going before faith goes about to please God with sins, which is nothing else but to heap sin upon sin, to mock God, and to provoke His wrath. When a man is thus taught and instructed by the Law, then he is terrified and humbled, then he sees indeed the greatness of his sin and cannot find in himself one spark of the love of God. Therefore, he justifies God in His word and confesses that he is guilty of death and eternal damnation. The first part of Christianity, then, is the preaching of repentance and the knowledge of ourselves.

The *second* part is, if you will be saved, you may not seek salvation by works: for “God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (1Jo 4:9). He was crucified and died for you, and offered up your sins in His own body (Joh 3:16; Heb 9:28). Here is no congruence or work done before grace, but wrath, sin, terror, and death. Wherefore, the Law does nothing else but utter sin, terrify, and humble—and by this means prepares us to justification and drives us to Christ. For God has revealed unto us by His Word that He will be unto us a merciful Father; and without our deserts (seeing we can deserve nothing), will freely give unto us remission of sins, righteousness, and life everlasting—for Christ His Son’s sake. For God gives His gifts freely unto all men, and that is the praise and glory of His divinity. But the justiciaries²⁵ and merit-mongers do not want to receive grace and everlasting life of Him freely, but want to deserve the same by their own works. For this cause, they would utterly take from Him the glory of His divinity. To the end therefore that He may maintain and defend the same,

²⁵ **justiciaries** – those who take it upon themselves to administer (God’s) justice.

He is constrained to send His Law before, which, as lightning and thundering from heaven, may bruise and break those hard rocks.

This briefly is our doctrine as touching Christian righteousness, contrary to the abominations and blasphemies of the papists concerning the merit of congruence and worthiness, of works before grace and after grace—which monstrous dreams were devised by such as were never exercised with any temptations, never had any true feelings of sin or of the terror of death; and therefore they know not what they say or what they teach. Moreover, they can show no example of any work done either before or after grace that could justify [anyone] before God. Wherefore they are nothing else but vain toys and foolish fables whereby the papists deceive both themselves and others. For Paul here plainly affirms that no man is justified by the works of the Law either going before grace (whereof he speaks in this place) or coming after grace.

4. Error of the Schoolmen: “Charity” as Merit

You see, then, that Christian righteousness is not such an essential quality engrafted in the nature of man, as the schoolmen do imagine when they say: “When a man does any good work, God accepts it; and for that work He pours into him charity”—which they call “charity infused.” This charity, they say, is a quality remaining in the heart, and this they call “formal righteousness.” (This manner of speaking is expedient for you to know.)

They can abide nothing less than to hear that this quality forming and adorning the soul, as whiteness does the wall, should not be counted righteousness. They can climb no higher than to this cogitation of man’s reason: that man is righteous by his own formal righteousness, which is grace making him acceptable unto God; that is to say, charity. So to this quality cleaving unto the soul—that is to wit, charity (which is a work after the Law, for the Law says, “Thou shall love the LORD thy God,” etc., Deu 6:5)—they attribute formal righteousness, that is to say, true Christian righteousness. And they say that this righteousness is worthy of everlasting life, and he that has it is formally righteous. And moreover, he is effectually or actually righteous, because he now does good works, whereunto everlasting life is due. This is the opinion of the popish schoolmen, yea, even of the best of them all.

Some others there be which are not so good, as Scotus²⁶ and Occam,²⁷ which said, “that for the obtaining of the grace of God, this charity, infused or given of God, is not necessary; but that a man, even by his own natural strength, may procure this charity above all things.” For so reasons Scotus: if a man love a creature, a young man a maiden, a covetous man money, which are the less good, he may also love God, which is the greater good. If he has a love of the creature through his natural strength, much more

²⁶ **John Duns Scotus** (c. 1265-1308) – Scottish philosopher and theologian, one of the most important of the High Middle Ages; recognized by the Pope.

²⁷ **William of Ockham** (also Occam, c. 1287-1347) – English Franciscan friar, scholastic philosopher and theologian; believed to have been born in Ockham, Surrey; one of the major figures of medieval thought.

has he a love of the Creator. With this argument were all the sophisters convicted, and none of them all was able to refute it. Notwithstanding, thus they reply:

The Scripture compels us to confess, say they, that God (besides that natural love and charity which is engrafted in us, wherewith alone He is not contented) requires also charity that He Himself gives.

And hereby they accuse God as a tyrant and a cruel exactor, Who is not content that we keep and fulfil His Law, but above the Law (which we ourselves are able to fulfil), requires also that we should accomplish it with other circumstances and furniture,²⁸ as apparel to the same. As if a mistress should not be contented that her cook had dressed her meat excellently well, but should chide her for that she did not prepare the same, being decked with precious apparel and adorned with a crown of gold. Now, what a mistress were this, who—when her cook had done all that she was bound to do, and also exactly performed the same—would moreover require that she should wear such ornaments as she could not have? Even so, what a one should God be, if He should require His Law to be fulfilled of us (which notwithstanding by our own natural strength we observe and fulfil) with such furniture as we cannot have?

But here, lest they should seem to avouch contrary things, they make a distinction, and say that the Law is fulfilled two manner of ways: first, according to the substance of the deed; and secondly, according to the mind of the commander. According to the substance of the deed, say they, we may fulfil all things which the Law commands, but not according to the mind of the commander, which is, that God is not contented that you have done all things which are commanded in the Law (although He can require no more of you), but He further requires that you should fulfil the Law in charity—not that charity which you have by nature, but that which is above nature and heavenly, which He Himself gives. And what is this else, but to make of God a tyrant and a tormentor, which requires that of us which we are not able to perform? It is in a manner as much as if they should say that the fault is not in us if we be damned, but in God, which with this circumstance requires His Law to be accomplished of us.

These things I do the more diligently repeat that you may see how far they have strayed from the true sense of the Scripture. [They] have said that by our own natural strength we may love God above all things, or, at least, by the work wrought we may deserve grace and everlasting life. And because God is not content that we fulfil the Law according to the substance of the deed, but will have us also to fulfil the same according to the mind of the commander, therefore the Scripture further compels us to have a quality above nature poured into us from above; and that is charity, which they call “formal righteousness,” adorning and beautifying faith—being also the cause that faith justifies us. So faith is the body and the shell; charity the life, the kernel, the form, and the furniture. These are the monstrous dreams of the schoolmen.

²⁸ **furniture** – fittings; accessories.

5. Answer to the Schoolmen

But we, in the stead of this charity, do place faith. And we say that faith apprehends Jesus Christ, Who is the form which adorns and furnishes faith as color adorns and beautifies a wall. Christian faith, therefore, is not an idle quality or empty husk in the heart, which may be in deadly sin until charity comes and quickens it. If it be true faith, it is a sure trust and confidence in the heart, and a firm consent whereby Christ is apprehended—so that Christ is the object of faith; yea, rather even Christ Himself is present in faith. Faith therefore is a certain obscure knowledge, or, rather, darkness which sees nothing; and yet Christ, apprehended by faith, sits in this darkness—like as God in Sinai and in the Temple sat in the “thick darkness” (Exo 20:21; 1Ki 8:10-12). Wherefore, our formal righteousness is not charity furnishing and beautifying faith, but it is faith itself, which is, as it were, a certain cloud in our hearts; that is to say, a steadfast trust and affiance²⁹ in the thing which we see not, which is Christ—Who, although He be not seen at all, yet He is present.

Faith, therefore, justifies because it apprehends and possesses this treasure, even Christ present. But this presence cannot be comprehended by us, because it is in darkness, as I have said. Wherefore, where assured trust and affiance of the heart is, there Christ is present: yea, even in the cloud and obscurity of faith. And this is the true formal righteousness whereby a man is justified—and not by charity, as the popish schoolmen do most wickedly affirm.

To conclude, like as the schoolmen say, that charity furnishes and adorns faith, so do we say that it is Christ which furnishes and adorns faith, or rather, that He is the very form and perfection of faith. Wherefore Christ, apprehended by faith and dwelling in the heart, is the true Christian righteousness, for the which God counts us righteous and gives us eternal life. Here is no work of the Law, no charity, but a far other manner of righteousness, and a certain new world beyond and above the Law. For Christ or faith is not the Law nor the work of the Law. But concerning this matter, which the schoolmen neither well understood nor taught, we intend to speak more largely hereafter. Now it shall be enough that we have showed that Paul speaks not here of the ceremonial law only, but of the whole Law.

6. The True Rule of Christianity

a. *Conviction of sin*

Contrary to these vain trifles and doting dreams (as we have also noted before), we teach faith and give a true rule of Christianity in this sort: first, that a man must be taught by the Law to know himself, that so he may learn to say with the prophet, “All have sinned, and come short [i.e., have need] of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Also, “There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way” (Rom 3:10-12). Also, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned” (Psa 51:4) (*see also* Rom 1:24; Psa 14:1; Psa 53:4). Thus we, by a contrary way, drive men from the merit of congruence and worthiness. Now,

²⁹ **affiance** – confidence.

when a man is humbled by the Law and brought to the knowledge of himself, then follows true repentance³⁰ (for true repentance begins at the fear and judgment of God), and he sees himself to be so great a sinner that he can find no means how he may be delivered from his sin by his own strength, works, or merits. Then he perceives well what Paul means when he says that man is the servant and bond-slave of sin, “sold under sin” (Rom 7:14); also, that God has shut up all under sin, “concluded them all in unbelief” (Rom 11:32); and that the whole world is guilty before God (Rom 3:19). Then he sees that all the divinity of the schoolmen, touching the merit of congruence and worthiness, is nothing else but mere foolishness, and that by this means the whole papacy falls.

Here, now, he begins to sigh, and says in this wise: Who then can give succor? For he, being thus terrified with the Law, utterly despairs of his own strength. He looks about, and sighs for the help of a mediator³¹ and savior. Here, then, comes in good time the healthful word of the gospel, and says, “Son...thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mat 9:2). Believe in Christ Jesus crucified for your sins. If you feel your sins and the burden thereof, look not upon them in yourself, but remember that they are translated and laid upon Christ, Whose stripes have made you whole (Isa 53:5).

This is the beginning of health and salvation. By this means we are delivered from sin, justified, and made inheritors of everlasting life, not for our own works and deserts, but for our faith, whereby we lay hold upon Christ. Wherefore we also acknowledge a quality and a formal righteousness of the heart; not charity (as the sophisters do), but faith—and yet so notwithstanding that the heart must behold and apprehend nothing but Christ the Savior.

b. Christ

And here it is necessary that you know the true definition of Christ. The schoolmen, being utterly ignorant hereof, have made Christ a judge and a tormentor, devising this fond fancy concerning the merit of congruence and worthiness. But Christ, according to His true definition, is no lawgiver,³² but a forgiver of sins and a savior. This faith apprehends, and undoubtedly believes, that He abundantly has wrought works and merits of congruence and worthiness before and after grace. For He might have satisfied for all the sins of the world by one only drop of His blood; but now he has shed it plentifully, and has satisfied abundantly. “By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb 9:12) (*see also* Rom 3 and 4). “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath

³⁰ See *Repentance: What Saith the Scriptures* by A. W. Pink (1886-1952) and Free Grace Broadcaster 203, *Repentance*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

³¹ **mediator** – go-between; one who intervenes between two hostile parties for the purpose of restoring them to a relationship of harmony and unity. See Free Grace Broadcaster 183, *Christ the Mediator*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

³² **Christ...no lawgiver** – He saves His people not by law, but by grace. However, in the sense of the law as a rule of life for His people He is the Lawgiver (Joh 13:34; Jam 2:8-13; Jam 4:12; Joh 5:22).

set forth to be a propitiation³³ through faith in his blood” (Rom 3:24-25). Wherefore it is a great matter to lay hold upon Christ, by faith, Him bearing the sins of the world. And this faith alone is counted for righteousness.

c. *Faith and acceptation*

Here is to be noted that these three things—faith, Christ, and acceptation or imputation—must be joined together. Faith takes hold of Christ, and has Him present and holds Him enclosed, as the ring does the precious stone. And whosoever shall be found having this confidence in Christ apprehended in the heart, him will God account for righteous. This is the means, and this is the merit, whereby we attain the remission of sins and righteousness. The Lord says [in effect], Because you believe in Me, and your faith lays hold upon Christ, Whom I have freely given unto you that He might be your mediator and High Priest, therefore you are justified and righteous. Wherefore, God accepts, or accounts, us as righteous only for our faith in Christ.

And this acceptation or imputation is very necessary: first, because we are not yet perfectly righteous, but, while we remain in this life, sin dwells still in our flesh (Rom 8:3)—and this remnant of sin God purges from us. Moreover, we are sometimes left of the Holy Ghost and fall into sins, as did Peter, David, and other holy men. Notwithstanding, we have always recourse to this article: that our sins are covered, and that God will not lay them to our charge (Psa 32:1-2; Rom 4:8). Not that sin is not in us (as the papists have taught, saying that we must be always working well until we feel that there is no guilt of sin remaining in us). Yea, sin is indeed always in us, and the godly do feel it; but it is covered and is not imputed unto us of God for Christ’s sake—[in] Whom, because we apprehend by faith, all our sins are now no sins. But where Christ and faith are not, there is no remission or covering of sins, but mere imputation of sins and condemnation. Thus will God glorify His Son, and will be glorified Himself in us through Him.

When we have thus taught faith in Christ, *then* we teach also good works. Because you have laid hold upon Christ by faith, through Whom you are made righteousness, begin now to work well. Love God and your neighbor, call upon God, give thanks unto Him, praise Him, [and] confess Him. These are good works indeed, which flow out of this faith and this cheerfulness conceived in the heart—for we have remission of sins freely by Christ.

Now, what cross or affliction soever afterwards ensues, they are easily borne and cheerfully suffered. “For my yoke [i.e., the yoke that Christ lays upon us] is easy, and my burden is light” (Mat 11:30). When sin is pardoned and the conscience delivered from the burden and sting of sin, then may a Christian bear all things easily. Because he feels all things within sweet and comfortable, therefore he does and suffers all things willingly. But when a man walks in his own righteousness, whatsoever he does is grievous and tedious unto him, because he does it unwillingly.

³³ **propitiation** – Propitiation has reference to the wrath or displeasure of God. To propitiate is to satisfy the divine justice and thus to appease His wrath. In the biblical usage of the term, the justice of God is satisfied by the propitiatory sacrifice. (Morton H. Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 382)

d. A Christian

We therefore make this definition of a Christian: that a Christian is not he who has no sin, but he to whom God imputes not his sin through faith in Christ. This doctrine brings great consolation to poor, afflicted consciences in serious and inward terrors. It is not without good cause, therefore, that we do so often repeat and beat into your minds the forgiveness of sins, imputation of righteousness for Christ's sake, and also that a Christian has nothing to do with the Law³⁴ and sin, especially in the time of temptation—for in that he is a Christian, he is above the Law and sin. For he has Christ the Lord of the Law present and enclosed in his heart, even (as we have said) as a ring has a jewel or precious stone enclosed in it. Therefore, when the Law accuses and sin terrifies him, he looks upon Christ. And when he has apprehended Christ by faith, he has present with him the Conqueror of the Law, sin, death, and the devil—Who reigns and rules over these so that they cannot hurt him. Wherefore, a Christian man, if you define him rightly, is free from all laws³⁵ and is not subject unto any creature, either within or without. [This is] in that he is a Christian, I say, and not in that he is a man or a woman; that is to say, in that he has his conscience adorned and beautified with this faith, with this great and inestimable treasure—or, as Paul says, this “unspeakable gift” (2Co 9:15), which cannot be magnified and praised enough, for it makes us the children and heirs of God. And by this means a Christian is greater than the whole world—for he has such a gift, such a treasure, in his heart that, although it seems to be but little; yet, notwithstanding the smallness thereof, it is greater than heaven and earth because Christ, which is this gift, is greater.

While this doctrine, pacifying and quieting the conscience, remains pure and uncorrupt, Christians are made judges over all kinds of doctrine, and are lords over the laws of the whole world. Then can they certainly judge that the Turk with his Alcoran³⁶ is damned because he goes not the right way, that is, he acknowledges not himself to be miserable and damnable, nor apprehends Christ by faith, for Whose sake he might be assured that his sins are pardoned. In like manner, they boldly pronounce sentence against the Pope, that he is condemned with all his kingdom, because he so walks and so teaches (with all his religious rabble of sophisters and schoolmen) that by the merit of congruence we must come to grace, and that afterward by the merit of worthiness we are received into heaven. “Here,” says the Christian, “this is not the right way to justify us; neither does this way lead to heaven. For I cannot by my works going before grace, deserve grace; nor by my works following grace, deserve eternal life—but to him that believes, sin is pardoned and righteousness imputed.” This trust and this confidence make him the child of God and heir of His kingdom, for in hope he possesses already everlasting life, assured unto him by promise. Through faith in Christ, therefore, all things are given unto us: grace, peace, forgiveness of sins, salvation, and everlasting life—and not for the merit of congruence and worthiness!

³⁴ **nothing to do with the law** – that is, as a way to earn God's favor to get the help he needs.

³⁵ **free from all laws** – that is, free from all law-keeping as a way to earn God's favor.

³⁶ **Turk with his Alcoran** – Muslim with his Koran.

7. False Teachers

Wherefore this doctrine of the schoolmen, with their ceremonies, masses, and infinite foundation of the papistical kingdom, are most abominable blasphemies against God, sacrileges, and plain denials of Christ. [This] Peter foretold in these words: “There shall be,” says he, “false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them,” etc. (2Pe 2:1). As though he would say,

The Lord has redeemed and bought us with His blood that He might justify and save us; this is the way of righteousness and salvation. But there shall come false teachers that, denying the Lord, shall blaspheme the way of truth, righteousness, and salvation. They shall find out new ways of falsehood and destruction, and many shall follow their damnable ways.

Peter, throughout this whole chapter, most [vividly] paints out the papacy, which, neglecting and despising the gospel of faith in Christ, has taught the works and traditions of men. [These include] the merit of congruence and worthiness, the difference of days, meats, vows, invocation of saints, pilgrimages, purgatory, and such-like. In these fantastical opinions, the papists are so nestled that it is impossible for them to understand one syllable of the gospel, faith, or Christ.

And this the thing itself well declares, for they take that privilege unto themselves which belongs unto Christ alone. He only forgives sins; He only gives righteousness and everlasting life. And they most impudently and wickedly do vaunt³⁷ that they are able to obtain these things by their own merits and worthiness before and after grace. This, say Peter and the other apostles, is to bring in damnable heresies and sects of perdition. For by these means they deny Christ, tread His blood under their feet, blaspheme the Holy Ghost, and despise the grace of God. Wherefore, no man can sufficiently conceive how horrible the idolatry of the papists is. As [extremely] inestimable is the gift which is offered unto us by Christ, even so [extremely] abominable are these profanations³⁸ of the papists. Wherefore they ought not to be lightly esteemed or forgotten, but diligently weighed and considered.

8. The Grace of God

And this makes very much also for the amplifying of the grace of God, and benefit of Christ, as by the contrary. For the more we know the profanation of the papist mass, so much the more we abhor and detest the same and embrace the true use of the holy communion—which the Pope has taken away and has made merchandise thereof that, being bought for money, it might profit others. For he says that the massing priest—an apostate, denying Christ and blaspheming the Holy Ghost, standing at the altar—does a good work, not only for himself but also for others, both quick and dead; and for the whole church, and that only by the work wrought, and by no other means.

Wherefore, even by this we may plainly see the inestimable patience of God, in that He has not long ago destroyed the whole papacy and consumed it with fire and brim-

³⁷ **vaunt** – boast.

³⁸ **profanations** – treating holy things with contempt.

stone, as He did Sodom and Gomorrah. But now these jolly fellows go about not only to cover, but highly to advance their impiety³⁹ and filthiness. This we may in no case dissemble.⁴⁰ We must, therefore, with all diligence, set forth the article of justification, [so] that, as a most clear sun, it may bring to light the darkness of their hypocrisy and discover their filthiness and shame.

9. Faith Alone

For this cause, we do so often repeat and so earnestly set forth the righteousness of faith that the adversaries may be confounded and this article established and confirmed in our hearts. And this is a most necessary thing; for if we once lose this sun, we fall again into our former darkness. And most horrible it is that the Pope should ever be able to bring this to pass in the church: that Christ should be denied, trodden under foot, spit upon, blasphemed, yea, and *that* even by the gospel and sacraments—which he has so darkened and turned into such horrible abuse, that he has made them to serve him against Christ, for the establishing and confirming of his detestable abominations. O deep darkness! O horrible wrath of God!

“Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.”—Galatians 2:16

This is the true means of becoming a Christian, even to be justified by faith in Jesus Christ and not by the works of the Law. Here we must stand, not upon the wicked gloss⁴¹ of the schoolmen, which say that faith justifies when charity and good works are joined with it. With this pestilent gloss the sophisters have darkened and corrupted this and other like sentences in Paul, wherein he manifestly attributes justification to faith only in Christ. But when a man hears that he ought to believe in Christ, and yet, notwithstanding, faith does not justify except it be formed and furnished with charity, by and by he falls from faith—and thus he thinks, “If faith without charity does not justify, then faith is in vain and unprofitable. And charity alone justifies; for except faith be formed with charity, it is nothing.”

a. *The role of charity*

And to confirm this pernicious and pestilent gloss, the adversaries do allege this place: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels...and have not charity, I am nothing” (1Co 13:1-2). This place is their brazen wall! But they are men without understanding, and therefore they can see or understand nothing in Paul. By this false interpretation, they have not only perverted the words of Paul, but have also denied Christ and buried all His benefits. Wherefore, we must avoid this gloss as a most deadly and devilish poison, and conclude with Paul that we are justified, not by faith furnished with charity, but by faith *only and alone*.

³⁹ **impiety** – lack of reverence for God; wickedness.

⁴⁰ **dissemble** – disguise in order to conceal.

⁴¹ **gloss** – deceptive interpretation.

We grant that we must teach also good works and charity, but it must be done in time and place; that is to say, when the question is concerning works, and does not touch this article of justification. But here the question is: By what means are we justified and attain eternal life? To this we answer with Paul that by faith only in Christ we are pronounced righteous, and not by the works of the Law or charity (Gal 2:16). [This is] not because we reject good works, but because we will not suffer ourselves to be removed from this anchor-hold of our salvation, which Satan most desires. Wherefore, since we are now in the matter of justification, we reject and condemn all good works; for this place will admit no disputation of good works. In this matter, therefore, we do generally cut off all laws and all the works of the Law.

But the Law is “holy, and just, and good” (Rom 7:12). True, it is. But when we are in the matter of justification, there is no time or place to speak of the Law. [Instead,] the question is what Christ is, and what benefit He has brought unto us. Christ is not the Law; He is not my work, or the work of the Law. He is not my charity, my obedience, or my poverty; but He is the Lord of life and death, a mediator, a savior, and a redeemer of those that were under the Law and sin. We are in Him by faith, and He in us. The bridegroom must be alone with the bride in his secret chamber, all the servants and family being put apart. But afterwards, when the door is open and he comes forth, then let the servants and handmaidens return to minister unto them. Then let charity do her office,⁴² and let good works be done.

b. The role of the Law

We must learn therefore to discern all laws (yea, even the Law of God), and all works, from the promise of the gospel and from faith, [so] that we may define Christ rightly. For Christ is no law, and therefore He is no exactor of the Law and works; but He is “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Joh 1:29). This faith alone lays hold of—and not charity, which notwithstanding must follow faith as a certain thankfulness. Wherefore, victory over sin and death, salvation, and everlasting life come not by the Law, nor by the works of the Law, nor yet by the power of free-will, but by the Lord Jesus Christ only and alone.

“That we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.”—Galatians 2:16b

Paul speaks here not of the ceremonial law only, as before we have said, but of the whole Law—for the ceremonial law was the law of God as well as the moral law. For example, circumcision, the institution of the priesthood, and the service and ceremonies of the Temple were as well commanded of God as the Ten Commandments. Moreover, when Abraham was commanded to offer up his son Isaac in sacrifice, it was a law. This work of Abraham pleased God no less than other works of the ceremonial law did, and yet was he not justified by this work, but by faith, for the Scripture says, “Abraham *believed* God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom 4:3; Gen 15:6).

⁴² **office** – function; role.

But since the revealing of Christ, say they, the ceremonial law kills and brings death. Yea, so does the Law of the Ten Commandments also, [if] without faith in Christ. Moreover, there may no law be suffered to reign in the conscience, but only the law of the spirit and life, whereby we are made free in Christ from the Law of the letter and of death, from the works thereof, and from all sins. [This is] not because the Law is evil, but because it is not able to justify us, for it has a plain contrary effect and working. It is a high and an excellent matter to be at peace with God; and therefore, in this case, we have need of a far other mediator than Moses or the Law. Here we must be nothing at all, but only receive the treasure which is Christ, and apprehend Him in our hearts by faith—although we feel ourselves to be never so full of sin. These words, therefore, of the apostle, “That we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law,” are very effectual—and not in vain or unprofitable as the schoolmen think, and therefore they pass them over so lightly.

10. The Flesh

Hitherto you have heard the words of Paul which he spoke unto Peter, wherein he has briefly comprised the principal article of all Christian doctrine, which makes true Christians indeed. Now he turned to the Galatians, to whom he writes, and thus he concludes: since it is so that we are justified by faith in Christ, then “by the works of the law, shall no flesh be justified.”

“Flesh,” in Paul, does not signify (as the schoolmen dream) manifest and gross sins, for those he uses to call by their proper names—as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and such-like. But by “flesh,” Paul means here as Christ does in the third chapter of John: “That which is born of the flesh,” says He, “is flesh” (Joh 3:6). Flesh therefore signifies the whole nature of man, with reason and all other powers—whatsoever belongs to man. This flesh, says he, is not justified by works, no, not of the Law. “Flesh,” therefore, according to Paul, signifies all the righteousness, wisdom, devotion, religion, understanding, and will that is possible to be in a natural man. So that if a man be never so righteous according to reason and the Law of God; yet—with all his righteousness, works, merits, devotion, and religion—he is not justified.

This the papists do not believe; but, being blind and obstinate, they defend their abominations against their own conscience, and continue still in this their blasphemy, having in their mouths these execrable words: He that does this or that good work deserves forgiveness of his sins; whosoever enters into this or that holy order and keeps this rule, to him we assuredly promise everlasting life. It cannot be uttered what an horrible blasphemy it is to attribute to the doctrine of devils—to the decrees and ordinances of men, to the wicked traditions of the Pope, to the hypocritical works and merits of monks and friars—that which Paul the apostle of Christ takes from the Law of God. For if no flesh be justified by the works of the Law, much less shall it be justified by the rules

of Benedict, Francis, or Augustine,⁴³ in which there is not one jot⁴⁴ of true faith in Christ. But this only they teach: that whosoever keeps these things has life everlasting.

11. Traditions of Men

Wherefore, I have much and often marveled that—these sects of perdition reigning so many years in so great darkness and errors—the Church could endure and continue as it has done. Some there were whom God called by the text of the gospel and by baptism.⁴⁵ These walked in simplicity and humbleness of heart, thinking the monks, friars, and such only as were anointed of the bishops to be religious and holy—and themselves to be profane, secular, and not worthy to be compared unto them. Wherefore, they—finding in themselves no good works to set against the wrath and judgment of God—did fly to the death and passion of Christ, and were saved in this simplicity.

Horrible and unspeakable is the wrath of God, in that He has so long time punished the contempt of the gospel and Christ in the papists, and also their ingratitude, in giving them over unto a reprobate sense. They—blaspheming and denying Christ altogether as touching His office—instead of the gospel, received the execrable rules, ordinances, and traditions of men. [These] they devoutly adored and honored—yea, and preferred the same—far above the Word of God, until at length they were forbidden to marry. [They] were bound to that incestuous single life wherein they were outwardly polluted and defiled with all kinds of horrible wickedness, as adultery, whoredom, uncleanness, sodomy, and such other abominations. This was the fruit of that filthy single life.

So God, punishing sin with sin, inwardly “gave them over to a reprobate mind” (Rom 1:28), and outwardly suffered them to fall into such horrible abominations, and that justly, because they blasphemed the only Son of God. In Christ the Father would be glorified, Whom He delivered to death, that all which believe in Him might be saved by Him, and not by their own execrable rules and orders. “Them that honour me,” He says, “I will honour” (1Sa 2:30). Now, God is honored in His Son. Whoso, then, believes that the Son is our Mediator and Savior, he honors the Father, and him again does God honor—that is to say, adorns him with His gifts: forgiveness of sins, righteousness, the Holy

⁴³ **Benedict** of Nursia (480-543 or 547) – Considered a saint by the Roman Catholic Church. He founded twelve communities for monks at Subiaco, Lazio, in Italy and wrote the “Rule of Saint Benedict,” containing precepts for his monks.

Francis of Assisi (1181/1182-1226) – Italian Roman Catholic friar, deacon, and preacher. He founded the Order of Friars Minor and is one of the most venerated religious figures in history, known for his simple lifestyle.

Augustine (354-430) – Bishop of Hippo, early church theologian known by many as the father of orthodox theology; born in Tagaste, North Africa.

⁴⁴ **jot** – smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet; therefore, smallest part (see Mat 5:18).

⁴⁵ **baptism** – one of two ordinances (the other being the Lord’s Supper) that Christ gave to the Church (Mat 28:19) to remember Him publicly, whereby the believer is immersed in water, signifying the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. See *Baptism, A Burial* and *Baptismal Regeneration* by Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892), and *Baptism—The Heaven-drawn Picture* by Peter Masters; all available from CHAPEL LIBRARY. Luther believed in infant baptism; however, the position of the publishers is baptism of believers only (Act 8:37).

Ghost, and everlasting life. Contrariwise, “They that despise me,” He says, “shall be lightly esteemed [i.e., despised].”

This is then a general conclusion: “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified” (Rom 3:20). The Law of God is greater than the whole world, for it comprehends all men; and the works of the Law far excel even the most glorious will-works of the merit-mongers. And yet Paul says that neither the Law, nor the works of the Law, do justify. Therefore, we conclude with Paul, that *only faith justifies*.

