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A Learned Discourse on Justification

Richard Hooker



A Learned Discourse on Justification

Author(s): Hooker, Richard (c. 1554-1600)

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Description: James Kiefer's introduction to this work explains its premise well. Richard Hooker said once in a sermon, "I doubt not but God was merciful to save thousands of our fathers living in popish superstitions, inasmuch as they sinned ignorantly." Keifer explains that "This sentence, which today would be fiercely attacked by those who thought it arrogant, narrow, and bigoted, was at the time attacked on opposite grounds. Walter Travers...said that since the adherents of the Pope did not believe in justification by faith, they could not be justified by faith, which meant that they could not be justified at all, which meant that they were certainly damned, with no exceptions. Hooker, he claimed, had sold out to the enemy." In response to Travers' objections, Hooker crafted a masterful sermon on justification. A brief look at the table of contents will show readers the outline of his sermon. This work is a practical application of Hooker's educated, logical, and authoritative theology.

Abby Zwart

CCEL Staff Writer

Subjects: Practical theology
Ecclesiastical theology Including the Church, church and state, etc.
Church Polity

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A Sermon by Richard Hooker

with Introductory comments by James Kiefer

Richard Hooker (1554?-1600) was possibly the greatest theologian that England has ever produced. In 1585, he was appointed Master of the Temple: that is, was assigned to one of the most visible pulpits in England. Almost immediately, he incurred the suspicions of the Puritan party. In the course of one of his sermons, he said: "I doubt not but God was merciful to save thousands of our fathers living in popish superstitions, inasmuch as they sinned ignorantly." This sentence, which today would be fiercely attacked by those who thought it arrogant, narrow, and bigoted, was at the time attacked on opposite grounds. Walter Travers, the afternoon lecturer at the Temple, said that since the adherents of the Pope did not believe in justification by faith, they could not be justified by faith, which meant that they could not be justified at all, which meant that they were certainly damned, with no exceptions. Hooker, he claimed, had sold out to the enemy. The sermon given below is Hooker's reply.

In reading it, remember that, when he argues that the popish errors do not automatically damn all who hold them, he needs to state emphatically that he is not himself one who hold such views.

Note also, that he frequently devotes a paragraph to stating the case for the Puritan position (as represented by Travers) and then the following paragraph to a rebuttal. The reader must be attentive to when Hooker is speaking for the prosecution and when for the defense. Doubtless, when the sermon was delivered "live," there were clues in the manner of delivery that are not evident in the written script. I have taken the liberty of inserting the signposts [**OBJECTION:**] and [**REPLY:**] where I thought they might be helpful. I have also included the paragraph numbering (which I think to be standard) from the *Everyman's* edition, and the section titles (which I do not think to be standard) from the P E Hughes edition.

The standard edition of Hooker's writings, edited by John Keble, has footnotes for most of the quotations, from Scripture and other sources. Some of these have been reproduced here, but those interested in his quotations other than from Scripture will want to consult the Keble notes.

For a general account of the writings and thought of Hooker, see C S Lewis's *ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY, EXCLUDING DRAMA* (Oxford U Pres, 1954), especially pages 441-463. (To the reader anxious to understand the issues of the Reformation, I recommend the whole work, but especially pages 32-44, 162-165, 177-180, 181-192, 438-463.)

To Lewis's account of Hooker, one bit of information must be added. In Lewis's day there was some doubt about the authenticity of the last three of the eight books of Hooker's masterpiece, the LAWS OF ECCLESIASTICAL POLITY. Only the first five were published in Hooker's lifetime. Since then, the manuscript of the last three books, in Hooker's handwriting, has come to light, and there is accordingly no scholar (as far as I know) who disputes their genuineness.

And now for Hooker's sermon.

A Learned Discourse of Justification, Works, and how the Foundation of Faith is Overthrown

by

Richard Hooker

"The wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore perverse judgment doth proceed." [Habakkuk 1:4](#)

For better manifestation of the prophet's meaning in this place we are: first, to consider "the wicked," of whom he saith that they "compass about the righteous"; secondly, "the righteous" that are compassed about by them; and, thirdly, that which is inferred, "therefore perverse judgment proceedeth." Touching the first, there are two kinds of wicked men, of whom in the fifth of the former to the Corinthians the blessed Apostle speaketh thus: "Do ye not judge them that are within? But God judgeth them that are without." [[1 Cor 5:12f](#)] There are wicked, therefore, whom the Church may judge, and there are wicked whom God only judgeth, wicked within and wicked without the walls of the Church. If within the Church particular persons, being apparently such, cannot otherwise be reformed, the rule of apostolical judgment is this: "Separate them from among them you"; [[1 Cor 5:13](#)] if whole assemblies, this: "Separate yourselves from among them; for what society hath light with darkness?" [[2 Cor 6:14](#)] But the wicked whom the prophet meaneth were Babylonians, and therefore without. For which cause we have heard at large heretofore in what sort he urgeth God to judge them.

Now concerning the righteous, there neither is nor ever was any mere natural man absolutely righteous in himself: that is to say, void of all unrighteousness, of all sin. We dare not except, no not the blessed Virgin herself, of whom although we say with St. Augustine, for the honour's sake which we owe to our Lord and Saviour Christ, we are not willing, in this cause, to move any question of his mother; yet forasmuch as the schools of Rome have made it a question, we must answer with Eusebius Emisenus, [The quotation that follows has not been traced, but it probably comes from a treatise or homily wrongly attributed to Eusebius of Emesa.] who speaketh of her, and to her, to this effect: "Thou didst by special prerogative nine months together entertain within the closet of thy flesh the hope of all the ends of the earth, the honour of the world, the common joy of men. He, from whom all things had their beginning, hath had his own beginning from thee; of thy body he took the blood which was to be shed for the life of the world; of thee he took that which even for thee he paid. The mother of the Redeemer herself, otherwise than by redemption, is not loosed from the band of that ancient sin." If Christ have paid a ransom for all, [[1 Tim 2:6](#)] even for her, it followeth that all without exception were captives. If one have died for all, all were dead, dead in sin; [[2 Cor 5:14f](#); [Eph 2:1,5](#)] all sinful, therefore none absolutely righteous in

themselves; but we are absolutely righteous in Christ. The world then must show a Christian man, otherwise it is not able to show a man that is perfectly righteous: "Christ is made unto us wisdom, justice [that is, righteousness], sanctification, and redemption"[1 Cor 1:30]: wisdom, because he hath revealed his Father's will; justice, because he hath offered himself a sacrifice for sin; sanctification, because he hath given us of his Spirit; redemption, because he hath appointed a day to vindicate his children out of the bands of corruption into liberty which is glorious.[Rom 8:21] How Christ is made wisdom, and how redemption, it may be declared when occasion serveth; but how Christ is made the righteousness of men we are now to declare.

There is a glorifying righteousness of men in the world to come; and there is a justifying and a sanctifying righteousness here. The righteousness wherewith we shall be clothed in the world to come is both perfect and inherent. That whereby we are justified is perfect, but not inherent. That whereby we are sanctified, inherent, but not perfect. This openeth a way to the plain understanding of that grand question, which hangeth yet in controversy between us and the Church of Rome, about the matter of justifying righteousness.

First, although they imagine that the mother of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ were, for his honour, and by his special protection, preserved clean from all sin, yet touching the rest they teach, as we do, that all have sinned; that infants who did never actually offend have their natures defiled, destitute of justice, and averted from God.[See Council of Trent, sess V, decree concerning original sin. 4] They teach, as we do, that God doth justify the soul of man alone, without any other coefficient cause of justice; that, in making man righteous none do work efficiently with God, but God.[Trent VI, ch 7] They teach, as we do, that unto justice no man ever attained, but by the merits of Jesus Christ.[Ibid] They teach, as we do, that although Christ as God be the efficient, as man the meritorious, cause of our justice, yet in us also there is something required.[TrentjVI ch 4,5; canons 4,9] God is the cause of our natural life; in him we live: but he quickeneth not the body without the soul in the body. Christ hath merited to make us just; but as a medicine which is made for health doth not heal by being made but by being applied, so by the merits of Christ there can be no justification without the application of his merits. Thus far we join hands with the Church of Rome.

DOCTRINAL DISAGREEMENT

Wherein then do we disagree? We disagree about the nature of the very essence of the medicine whereby Christ cureth our disease; about the manner of applying it; about the number and the power of means, which God requireth in us for the effectual applying thereof to our soul's comfort.

When they are required to show what the righteousness is whereby a Christian man is justified, they answer that it is a divine spiritual quality, which quality, received into the soul, doth first make it to be one of them who are born of God; and, secondly, endue it with power to bring forth such works as they do that are born of him; even as the soul of man, being joined unto his body, doth first make him to be in the number of reasonable creatures, and, secondly, enable him to perform the natural functions which are proper to his kind; that it maketh the soul gracious and amiable in the sight of God, in regard whereof it is termed grace; that by it, through the merit of Christ, we are delivered as from sin, so from eternal death and condemnation, the reward of sin. This grace they will have to be applied by infusion, to the end that, as the body is warm by the heat which is in the body, so the soul might be righteous by inherent grace; which grace they make capable of increase; as the body may be more and more warm, so the soul more and more justified, according as grace shall be augmented; the augmentation whereof is merited by good works, as good works are made meritorious by it.[Trent VI, ch 10] Wherefore the first receipt of grace is in their divinity the first justification; the second thereof, the second justification.

As grace may be increased by the merit of good works, so it may be diminished by the demerit of sins venial; it may be lost by mortal sin.[Trent VI, chs 14,15] Inasmuch, therefore, as it is needful in the one case to repair, in the other to recover, the loss which is made, the infusion of grace hath her sundry after-meals; for which cause they make many ways to apply the infusion of grace. It is applied unto infants through baptism, without either faith or works, and in them it really taketh away original sin and the punishment due unto it; it is applied unto infidels and wicked men in their first justification through baptism, without works, yet not without faith; and it taketh away both sin actual and original, together with all whatsoever punishment eternal or temporal thereby deserved. Unto such as have attained the first justification, that is to say, the first receipt of grace, it is applied further by good works to the increase of former grace, which is the second justification. If they work more and more, grace doth more and more increase, and they are more and more justified.

To such as have diminished it by venial sins it is applied by holy water, Ave Marias, crossings, papal salutations, and such like, which serve for reparations of grace decayed. To such as have lost it through mortal sin, it is applied by the sacrament (as they term it) of penance; which sacrament hath force to confer grace anew, yet in such sort that, being so conferred, it hath not altogether so much power as at the first. For it only cleanseth out the

stain or guilt of sin committed, and changeth the punishment eternal into a temporary satisfactory punishment here, if time do serve, if not, hereafter to be endured, except it be either lightened by masses, works of charity, pilgrimages, fasts, and such like; or else shortened by pardon for term, or by plenary pardon quite removed and taken away.[Trent VI, ch 14]

This is the mystery of the man of sin. This maze the Church of Rome doth cause her followers to tread when they ask her the way of justification. I cannot stand now to unrip this building and to sift it piece by piece; only I will set up a frame of apostolical erection by it in a few words, that it may befall Babylon, in presence of that which God hath builded, as it happened unto Dagon before the ark.

"Doubtless," saith the Apostle, "I have counted all things but loss, and I do judge them to be dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God through faith.[[Phil 3:8f](#)] Whether they speak of the first or second justification, they make the essence of it a divine quality inherent, they make it righteousness which is in us. If it be in us, then it is ours, as our souls are ours, though we have them from God and can hold them no longer than pleaseth him; for if he withdraw the breath of our nostrils we fall to dust; but the righteousness wherein we must be found, if we will be justified, is not our own: therefore we cannot be justified by any inherent quality. Christ hath merited righteousness for as many as are found in him. In him God findeth us, if we be faithful, for by faith we are incorporated into him.

Then, although in ourselves we be altogether sinful and unrighteous, yet even the man who in himself is impious, full of iniquity, full of sin, him being found in Christ through faith, and having his sin in hatred through repentance, him God beholdeth with a gracious eye, putteth away his sin by not imputing it, taketh quite away the punishment due thereunto, by pardoning it, and accepteth him in Jesus Christ as perfectly righteous, as if he had fulfilled all that is commanded him in the law: shall I say more perfectly righteous than if himself had fulfilled the whole law? I must take heed what I say; but the Apostle saith, "God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.[[2 Cor 5:21](#)] Such we are in the sight of God the Father as is the very Son of God himself. Let it be counted folly, or phrensy, or fury, or whatsoever. It is our wisdom and our comfort; we care for no knowledge in the world but this: that man hath sinned and God hath suffered; that God hath made himself the sin of men, and that men are made the righteousness of God.

You see therefore that the Church of Rome, in teaching justification by inherent grace, doth pervert the truth of Christ, and that by the hands of his Apostles we have received otherwise than she teacheth.

SANCTIFICATION

Now concerning the righteousness of sanctification, we deny it not to be inherent; we grant that, unless we work, we have it not; only we distinguish it as a thing in nature different from the righteousness of justification: we are righteous the one way by the faith of Abraham, the other way, except we do the works of Abraham, we are not righteous. Of the one, St. Paul, "To him that worketh not, but believeth, faith is counted for righteousness. [[Rom 4:5](#)] Of the other, St. John, "He is righteous who worketh righteousness. [[1 Jn 3:7](#)] Of the one, St. Paul doth prove by Abraham's example that we have it of faith without works. [[Rom 4](#)] Of the other, St. James by Abraham's example, that by works we have it, and not only by faith. [[Jas 2:18ff](#)] St. Paul doth plainly sever these two parts of Christian righteousness one from the other; for in the sixth to the Romans he writeth, "Being freed from sin and made servants of God, ye have your fruit in holiness, and the end everlasting life. [[Rom 6:22](#)] "Ye are made free from sin and made servants unto God"; this is the righteousness of justification; "Ye have your fruit in holiness": this is the righteousness of sanctification. By the one we are interested in the right of inheriting; by the other we are brought to the actual possessing of eternal bliss, and so the end is everlasting life.

The prophet Habakkuk doth here [[Hab 1:4](#)] term the Jews "righteous men," not only because being justified by faith they were free from sin, but also because they had their measure of fruit in holiness. According to whose example of charitable judgment, which leaveth it to God to discern what men are, and speaketh of them according to that which they do profess themselves to be, although they be not holy whom men do think, but whom God doth know indeed to be such; yet let every Christian man know that in Christian equity he standeth bound so to think and speak of his brethren as of men that have a measure in the fruit of holiness and a right unto the titles wherewith God, in token of special favour and mercy, vouchsafeth to honour his chosen servants. So we see the Apostles of our Saviour Christ do use everywhere the name of saints: so the prophet the name of righteous. But let us all endeavour to be such as we desire to be termed: "Godly names do not justify godless men," saith Salvianus. We are but upbraided when we are honoured with names and titles whereunto our lives and manners are not suitable.

If we have indeed our fruit in holiness, notwithstanding we must note that the more we abound therein the more need we have to crave that we may be strengthened and supported. Our very virtues may be snares unto us. The enemy that waiteth for all occasions to work our ruin hath ever found it harder to overthrow a humble sinner than a proud saint. There is no man's case so dangerous as his, whom Satan hath persuaded that his own righteousness shall present him pure and blameless in the sight of God. If we could say, "we are not guilty of anything at all in our own consciences" (we know ourselves far from this innocency, we cannot say we know nothing by ourselves, but if we could) should we therefore plead not

guilty in the presence of our Judge that sees further into our hearts than we ourselves are able to see? If our hands did never offer violence to our brethren, a bloody thought doth prove us murderers before him.[Cf [Mt 5:21f](#)] If we had never opened our mouths to utter any scandalous, offensive, or hurtful word, the cry of our secret cogitations is heard in the ears of God. If we did not commit the evils which we do daily and hourly, either in deeds, words, or thoughts, yet in the good things which we do how many defects are there intermingled!

God, in that which is done, respecteth specially the mind and intention of the doer. Cut off then all those things wherein we have regarded our own glory, those things which we do to please men or to satisfy our own liking, those things which we do with any by-respect [that is, with any secondary or ulterior motive], not sincerely and purely for the love of God, and a small score will serve for the number of our righteous deeds. Let the holiest and best thing that we do be considered: we are never better affected unto God than when we pray; yet when we pray how are our affections many times distracted! How little reverence do we show to the grand majesty of that God unto whom we speak! How little remorse of our own miseries! How little taste of the sweet influence of his tender mercy do we feel! Are we not as unwilling many times to begin, and as glad to make an end, as if God in saying "Call upon me" had set us a very burdensome task?

It may seem somewhat extreme which I shall speak; therefore let every man judge of it even as his own heart shall tell him, and no otherwise. I will but only make a demand: if God should yield to us, not as unto Abraham, if fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, yea, or if ten good persons could be found in a city, for their sakes that city should not be destroyed;[[Gen 18:23ff](#)] but if God should make us an offer thus large: "Search all the generations of men since the fall of your father Adam, find one man that hath done any one action which hath passed from him pure, without any stain or blemish at all, and for that one man's one-only action neither man nor angel shall feel the torments which are prepared for both" -- do you think that this ransom, to deliver men and angels, would be found among the sons of men? The best things we do have somewhat in them to be pardoned. How then can we do anything meritorious and worthy to be rewarded?

Indeed, God doth liberally promise whatsoever appertaineth to a blessed life unto as many as sincerely keep his law, though they be not able exactly to keep it. Wherefore we acknowledge a dutiful necessity of doing well, but the meritorious dignity of well doing we utterly renounce. We see how far we are from the perfect righteousness of the law. The little fruit which we have in holiness, it is, God knoweth, corrupt and unsound: we put no confidence at all in it, we challenge nothing in the world for it, we dare not call God to a reckoning, as if we had him in our debt-books. Our continual suit to him is, and must be, to bear with our infirmities, to pardon our offences.

But the people of whom the prophet speaketh, were they all, or were the most part of them, such as had care to walk uprightly? Did they thirst after righteousness? Did they wish, did they long with the righteous prophet, "O that our ways were made so direct that we might keep thy statutes"? [Ps 119:5] Did they lament with the righteous apostle, "Miserable men, the good which we wish and purpose, and strive to do, we cannot"? [Rom 7:19,24] No, the words of other prophets concerning this people do show the contrary. How grievously doth Isaiah mourn over them: "Ah sinful nation, people laden with iniquity, wicked seed, corrupt children"! [Is 1:4] All which notwithstanding, so wide are the bowels of his compassion enlarged that he denieth us not, no not when we are laden with iniquity, leave to commune familiarly with him, liberty to crave and entreat that what plagues soever we have deserved we may not be in worse case than unbelievers, that we may not be hemmed in by pagans and infidels. Jerusalem is a sinful polluted city; but Jerusalem compared with Babylon is righteous. And shall the righteous be overborne, shall they be compassed about by the wicked? But the prophet doth not only complain, "Lord, how cometh it to pass that thou handlest us so hardly over whom thy name is called, and bearest with heathen nations that despise thee?" No, he breaketh out through extremity of grief and inferreth thus violently: This proceeding is perverse; the righteous are thus handled, "therefore perverse judgment doth proceed. [Hab 1:1-4; Ps 79; 106:41ff]

THE SALVATION OF "OUR FATHERS"

Which illation [that is, inference] containeth many things whereof it were much better both for you to hear and me to speak, if necessity did not draw me to another task. Paul and Barnabas being requested to preach the same things again which once they had preached, [Acts 13:42] thought it their duties to satisfy the godly desires of men sincerely affected towards the truth. Nor may it seem burdensome to me, or for you unprofitable, that I follow their example, the like occasion unto theirs being offered me. When we had last the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews in our hands, and of that epistle these words, "In these last days he hath spoken unto us by his Son"; [Heb 1:2] after we had thence collected the nature of the visible Church of Christ, and had defined it to be a community of men sanctified through the profession of that truth which God hath taught the world by his Son; and had declared that the scope of Christian doctrine is the comfort of them whose hearts are overcharged with the burden of sin; and had proved that the doctrine professed in the Church of Rome doth bereave men of comfort, both in their lives and at their deaths; the conclusion in the end whereunto we came was this: "The Church of Rome being in faith so corrupted as she is, and refusing to be reformed as she doth, we are to sever ourselves from her. The example of our fathers may not retain us in communion and fellowship with that church, under hope that we, so continuing, might be saved as well as they. God, I doubt not, was merciful to save thousands of them, though they lived in popish superstitions, inasmuch as they sinned ignorantly; but the truth is now laid open before our eyes." The former part of this last sentence, namely, these words. "I doubt not but God was merciful to save thousands of our fathers living In poplsh superstitions inasmuch as they sinned ignorantly" -- this sentence I beseech you to mark, and to sift it with the strict severity of austere judgment, that if it be found as gold it may stand, suitable to the precious foundation whereupon it was then laid; for I protest that if it be hay or stubble mine own hand shall set fire to it. [Cf 1 Cor 3:11ff] Two questions have risen by occasion of the speech before alleged: the one, whether our fathers, infected with popish errors and superstitions, might be saved; the other, whether their ignorance be a reasonable inducement to make us think that they might. We are therefore to examine first what possibility, and then what probability, there is that God might be merciful unto so many of our fathers.

[**OBJECTION:**] So many of our fathers living in popish superstitions, yet by the mercy of God to be saved? No, this could not be: God hath spoken by his angel from heaven unto his people concerning Babylon (by Babylon we understand the Church of Rome), "Go out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. [Rev 18:4] For answer whereunto, first, I do not take these words to be meant only of temporal plagues, of the corporal death, sorrow, famine, and fire whereunto God in his wrath hath condemned Babylon; and that to save his chosen people from these plagues he saith,

"Go out"; and with like intent, as in the Gospel, speaking of Jerusalem's desolation he saith, "Let them that are in Judea flee unto the mountains, and them who are in the midst thereof depart out"; [Mt 24:15ff; Mk 13:14ff; Lk 21:21ff] or as in former times unto Lot, "Arise, take thy wife and thy daughters who are here, lest thou be destroyed in the punishment of the city"; [Gen 19:15] but forasmuch as here it is said, "Go out of Babylon that ye be not partakers of her sins, and by consequence of her plagues," plagues eternal being due to the sins of Babylon, no doubt their everlasting destruction, who are partakers herein, is either principally meant or necessarily implied in this sentence. How then was it possible for so many of our fathers to be saved, since they were so far from departing out of Babylon that they took her for their mother and in her bosom yielded up the ghost?

[REPLY:] First, the plagues being threatened unto them that are partakers in the sins of Babylon; we can define nothing concerning our fathers out of this sentence, unless we show what the sins of Babylon be, and who they be that are such partakers in them that their everlasting plagues are inevitable. The sins which may be common both to them of the Church of Rome and to others departed thence must be severed from this question. He who saith, "Depart out of Babylon lest ye be partakers of her sins", showeth plainly that he meaneth such sins as, except we separate ourselves, we have no power in the world to avoid; such impieties as by law they have established, and whereunto all that are among them either do indeed assent or else are by powerable means forced in show and in appearance to subject themselves: as, for example, in the Church of Rome it is maintained that the same credit and reverence which we give to the Scriptures of God ought also to be given to unwritten verities; that the pope is supreme head ministerial over the universal Church militant; that the bread in the eucharist is transubstantiated into Christ; that it is to be adored, and to be offered up unto God as a sacrifice propitiatory for quick and dead; that images are to be worshipped, saints to be called upon as intercessors, and such like.

Now, because some heresies do concern things only believed; as transubstantiating of sacramental elements in the eucharist; some concern things which are practised also and put in ure [usage], as adoration of the elements transubstantiated, we must note that the practice of that is sometimes received whereof the doctrine which teacheth it is not heretically maintained. They are all partakers in the maintenance of heresies who by word or deed allow them, knowing them, although not knowing them to be heresies; as also they, and that most dangerously of all others, who, knowing heresy to be heresy, do notwithstanding, in worldly respects, make semblance of allowing that which in heart and in judgment they condemn. But heresy is heretically maintained by such as obstinately hold it after wholesome admonition. Of the last sort, as also of the next before, I make no doubt but that their condemnation, without actual repentance, is inevitable. Lest any man therefore should think that in speaking of our fathers I speak indifferently of them all, Iet my words, I beseech

you, be well noted: "I doubt not but God was merciful to save thousands of our fathers"; which thing I will now by God's assistance set more plainly before your eyes.

Many are partakers of the error who are not of the heresy of the Church of Rome. The people, following the conduct of their guides, and observing as they did exactly that which was prescribed them, thought they did God good service, when indeed they did dishonor him. This was their error. But the heresies of the Church of Rome, their dogmatical positions opposite unto Christian truth, what one man among ten thousand did ever understand? Of them who understand Roman heresies, and allow them, all are not alike partakers in the action of allowing. Some allow them as the first founders and establishers of them, which crime toucheth none but their popes and councils. The people are clear and free from this. Of them who maintain popish heresy not as authors, but receivers of it from others, all maintain it not as masters. In this are not the people partakers neither, but only their predicants and their schoolmen [preachers and teachers]. Of them who have been partakers in the sin of teaching popish heresy there is also a difference; for they have not all been teachers of all popish heresies. "Put a difference," saith St. Jude; "have compassion upon some." [Jude 22] Shall we lap up all in one condition? Shall we cast them all headlong? Shall we plunge them all in that infernal and ever-flaming lake -- them who have been partakers in the error of Babylon together with them within the heresy -- them who have been the authors of heresy with them that by terror and violence have been forced to receive it -- them who have taught it with them whose simplicity hath by sleights and conveyances of false teachers been seduced to believe it -- them who have been partakers in one with them who have been partakers in many -- them who in many with them who in all?

Notwithstanding I grant that, although the condemnation of one be more tolerable than of another, yet from the man that laboureth at the plough to him that sitteth in the Vatican, to all partakers in the sins of Babylon, our fathers, though they did but erroneously practise that which their guides did heretically teach, to all without exception plagues worldly were due. The pit is ordinarily the end as well of the guided as the guide in blindness. But woe worth the hour wherein we were born, except we might persuade ourselves better things, things that accompany men's salvation, [Heb 6:9] even where we know that worse and such as accompany condemnation are due. Then must we show some way how possibly they might escape.

THE WAY TO ESCAPE JUDGMENT

What way is there for sinners to escape the judgment of God but only by appealing unto the seat of his saving mercy? Which mercy we do not with Origen extend unto devils and damned spirits. God hath mercy upon thousands, but there be thousands also who be hardened. Christ hath therefore set the bounds; he hath fixed the limits of his saving mercy within the compass of these two terms. In the third of St. John's Gospel, mercy is restrained to believers. "God sent not his Son to condemn the world, but that the world through his might be saved. He that believeth shall not be condemned; he that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not in the Son of God." [Jn 3:17f] In the second of the Revelation, mercy is restrained to the penitent; for of Jezebel and her sectaries thus he speaketh: "I gave her space to repent and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit fornication with her into great affliction, except they repent them of their works; and I will kill her children with death." [Rev 2:21-23] Our hope therefore of the fathers is vain if they were altogether faithless and impenitent.

They be not all faithless that are either weak in assenting to the truth or stiff in maintaining things any way opposite to the truth of Christian doctrine. But as many as hold the foundation which is precious, although they hold it but weakly and as it were by a slender thread, although they frame many base and unsuitable things upon it, things that cannot abide the trial of the fire, yet shall they pass the fiery trial and be saved, who indeed have builded themselves upon the rock which is the foundation of the Church. [See 1 Cor 3:10-15] If then our fathers did not hold the foundation of faith, there is no doubt but they were faithless. If many of them held it, then is there herein no impediment but that many of them might be saved. Then let us see what the foundation of faith is, and whether we may think that thousands of our fathers living in popish superstitions did notwithstanding hold the foundation.

If THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH do import the general ground whereupon we rest when we do believe, the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles are the foundation of Christian faith: "We believe it because we read it," saith St. Jerome. [ADVERSUS HELVIDIUM, 21] O that the Church of Rome did as soundly interpret those fundamental writings whereupon we build our faith as she doth willingly hold and embrace them!

But if the name FOUNDATION do note the principal thing which is believed, then is that the foundation of our faith which St. Paul hath unto Timothy: "God manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, etc.;"[1 Tim 3:16] that of Nathanael: "Thou art the Son of the living God, thou art the king of Israel" [Jn 1:49]; that of the inhabitants of Samaria: "This is Christ, the Saviour of the world." [Jn 4:42] He that directly denieth this doth utterly raze the very foundation of our faith. I have proved heretofore that, although the Church of Rome hath played the harlot worse than ever did Israel, yet are they not, as now the synagogue

of the Jews which plainly denieth Christ Jesus, [Rev 2:9; 3:9] quite and clean excluded from the new covenant. But as Samaria compared with Jerusalem is termed AHOLAH, a church or tabernacle of her own, contrariwise Jerusalem AHOLIBAH, the resting place of the Lord [see Ezek 23]; so whatsoever we term the Church of Rome when we compare her to reformed churches, still we put a difference, as then between Babylon and Samaria, so now between Rome and heathenish assemblies. Which opinion I must and will recall; I must grant, and will, that the Church of Rome together with all her children is clean excluded: there is no difference in the world between our fathers and Saracens, Turks, or Painims, if they did directly deny Christ crucified for the salvation of the world.

But how many millions of them are known so to have ended their mortal lives that the drawing of their breath hath ceased with the uttering of this faith: "Christ my Saviour, my Redeemer Jesus!" And shall we say that such did not hold the foundation of Christian faith?

[OBJECTION:] Answer is made that this they might unfeignedly confess, and yet be far enough from salvation. For behold, saith the Apostle, "I, Paul, say unto you that if ye be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing." [Gal 5:2] Christ, in the work of man's salvation, is alone: the Galatians were cast away by joining circumcision and other rites of the law with Christ. The Church of Rome doth teach her children to join other things likewise with him; therefore their faith, their belief, doth not profit them anything at all.

It is true, they do indeed join other things with Christ; but how? Not in the work of redemption itself, which they grant that Christ alone hath performed sufficiently for the salvation of the whole world; but in the application of this inestimable treasure, that it may be effectual to their salvation, how demurely soever they confess that they seek remission of sins no otherwise than by the blood of Christ, using humbly the means appointed by him to apply the benefit of his holy blood, they teach, indeed, so many things pernicious to the Christian faith, in setting down the means whereof they speak, that the very foundation of faith which they hold is thereby plainly overthrown, and the force of the blood of Jesus Christ extinguished. We may therefore dispute with them, press them, urge them even with as dangerous sequels as the Apostle doth the Galatians.

[REPLY:] But I demand, if some of those Galatians, heartily embracing the Gospel of Christ, sincere and sound in faith, this only error excepted, had ended their lives before they were ever taught how perilous an opinion they held, shall we think that the damage of this error did so outweigh the benefit of their faith that the mercy of God, his mercy, might not save them? I grant that they overthrew the very foundation of faith by consequent. Doth not that so likewise which the Lutheran churches do at this day so stiffly and so fiercely maintain? [perhaps the necessity of auricular confession?] For mine own part, I dare not hereupon deny the possibility of their salvation who have been the chiefest instruments of ours, albeit they carried to their grave a persuasion so greatly repugnant to the truth. Forasmuch therefore as it may be said of the Church of Rome, "She hath yet a little strength," [Rev

3:8] she doth not directly deny the foundation of Christianity," I may, I trust without offense, persuade myself that thousands of our fathers in former times, living and dying within her walls, have found mercy at the hands of God.

[**OBJECTION:**] What, although they repented not of their errors? [**REPLY:**] God forbid that I should open my mouth to gainsay that which Christ himself hath spoken: "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish." [Lk 13:3] And if they did not repent they perished. But withal note that we have the benefit of a double repentance. The least sin which we commit in deed, work, or thought is death, without repentance. Yet how many things do escape us in every of these which we do not know, how many which we do not observe to be sins! And without the knowledge, without the observation of sin there is no actual repentance. It cannot then be chosen but that for as many as hold the foundation, and have all known sin and error in hatred, the blessing of repentance for unknown sins and errors is obtained at the hands of God through the gracious mediation of Christ Jesus, for such suitors as cry with the prophet David, "Purge me, O Lord, from my secret sins." [Ps 19:12]

[**OBJECTION:**] But we wash a wall of loam; we labour in vain; all this is nothing: it doth not prove, it cannot justify, that which we go about to maintain. Infidels and heathen men are not so godless but that they may, no doubt, cry God mercy, and desire in general to have their sins forgiven them. To such as deny the foundation of faith there can be no salvation, according to the ordinary course which God doth use in saving men, without a particular repentance of that error. The Galatians, thinking that except they were circumcised they could not be saved, overthrew the foundation of faith directly. Therefore if any of them did die so persuaded, whether before or after they were told of their error, their case is dreadful, there is no way with them but one, death and condemnation. For the Apostle speaketh nothing of men departed, but saith generally of all: "If ye be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing. Ye are abolished from Christ, whosoever are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." [Gal 5:2:4] Of them in the Church of Rome the reason is the same. For whom Antichrist hath seduced, concerning them did not St. Paul speak long before, that "because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, therefore would God send them strong delusions to believe lies, that all they might be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness"? [2 Thess 2:10-12] And St. John: "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him [the beast], whose names are not written in the Book of Life." [Rev 13:8] Indeed many of them in former times, as their books and writings do yet show, held the foundation, to wit, salvation by Christ alone, and therefore might be saved. For God hath always had a Church among them who firmly kept his saving truth. As for such as hold with the Church of Rome that we cannot be saved by Christ alone without works, they do not only by a circle of consequence, but directly, deny the foundation of faith; they hold it not, not so much as by a slender thread.

GENERAL REPENTANCE NOT INTENDED

[REPLY:] This, to my remembrance, being all that hath been as yet opposed with any countenance or show of reason, I hope, if this be answered, the cause in question is at an end. Concerning general repentance, therefore: what? a murderer, a blasphemer, an unclean person, a Turk, a Jew, any sinner to escape the wrath of God by a general "God forgive me"? Truly, it never came within my heart that a general repentance doth serve for all sins or for all sinners: it serveth only for the common oversights of our sinful life, and for faults which either we do not mark, or do not know that they are faults. Our fathers were actually penitent for sins wherein they knew they displeased God, or else they come not within the compass of my first speech. Again, that otherwise they could not be saved than holding the foundation of Christian faith, we have not only affirmed but proved. Why is it not then confessed that thousands of our fathers, although they lived in popish superstitions, might yet, by the mercy of God, be saved? FIRST, if they had directly denied the very foundation of Christianity, without repenting them particularly of that sin, he who saith there could be no salvation for them, according to the ordinary course which God doth use in saving men, granteth plainly, or at the leastwise closely insinuateth, that an extraordinary privilege of mercy might deliver their souls from hell; which is more than I required. SECONDLY, if the foundation be denied, it is denied by force of some heresy which the Church of Rome maintaineth. But how many were there amongst our fathers who, being seduced by the common error of that church, never knew the meaning of her heresies! So that if all popish heretics did perish, thousands of them who lived in popish superstitions might be saved.

THIRDLY, seeing all that held popish heresies did not hold all the heresies of the pope, why might not thousands who were infected with other leaven live and die unsoured by this, and so be saved? FOURTHLY, if they all had held this heresy, many there were that held it no doubt only in a general form of words, which a favourable interpreter might expound in a sense differing far enough from the poisoned conceit of heresy; as, for example: did they hold that we cannot be saved by Christ without works? We ourselves do, I think, all say as much, with this construction, salvation being taken as in that sentence, "With the heart man believes unto justification and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." [Rom 10:10] Except infants, and men cut off upon the point of their conversion, of the rest none shall see God but such as seek peace and holiness, though not as a cause of their salvation, yet as a way through which they must walk that will be saved. Did they hold that without works we are not justified? Take justification so that it may also imply sanctification, and St. James doth say as much; for except there be an ambiguity in some term, St. Paul and St. James do contradict each other, which cannot be. Now, there is no ambiguity in the name either of faith or of works, both being meant by them both in one and the same sense. Finding therefore that justification is spoken of by St. Paul without implying sanctification

when he proveth that a man is justified by faith without works; finding likewise that justification doth sometimes imply sanctification also with it; I suppose nothing more sound than so to interpret St. James as speaking not in that sense, but in this.

We have already showed that there are two kinds of Christian righteousness: the one without us, which we have by imputation; the other in us, which consisteth of faith, hope, charity, and other Christian virtues; and St. James doth prove that Abraham had not only the one, because the thing he believed was imputed unto him for righteousness, but also the other, because he offered up his son. God giveth us both the one justice [righteousness] and the other: the one by accepting us for righteous in Christ; the other by working Christian righteousness in us. The proper and most immediate efficient cause in us of this latter is the spirit of adoption which we have received into our hearts. [Rom 8:15f] That whereof it consisteth, whereof it is really and formally made, are those infused virtues proper and particular unto saints, which the Spirit, in that very moment when first it is given of God, bringeth with it. The effects thereof are such actions as the Apostle doth call the fruits, the works, the operations of the Spirit [see Gal 5:22; 1 Cor 12:6,11, KJV]; the difference of which operations, from the root whereof they spring, maketh it needful to put two kinds likewise of sanctifying righteousness, habitual and actual: habitual, that holiness wherewith our souls are inwardly endued the same instant when first we begin to be temples of the Holy Ghost; [1 Cor 3:16f; 6:19] actual, that holiness which afterward beautifieth all the parts and actions of our life, the holiness for which Enoch, Job, Zachary, Elizabeth, and other saints are in Scriptures so highly commended [see Gen 5:24; Heb 11:5; Job 1:8; Lk 1:5f].

If here it be demanded which of these we do first receive, I answer that the Spirit, the virtues of the Spirit, the habitual justice which is ingrafted, the external justice of Christ Jesus which is imputed, these we receive all at one and the same time. Whensoever we have any of these we have all; they go together. Yet since no man is justified except he believe, and no man believeth except he have faith, and no man hath faith unless he have received the Spirit of adoption, forasmuch as these do necessarily infer justification, but justification doth of necessity presuppose them; we must needs hold that imputed righteousness, in dignity being the chiefest, is notwithstanding in order the last of all these [belief, faith, adoption], but actual righteousness, which is the righteousness of good works, succeedeth all, followeth after all, both in order and in time. Which thing being attentively marked showeth plainly how the faith of true believers cannot be divorced from hope and love; how faith is a part of sanctification, and yet unto sanctification necessary; how faith is perfected by good works, and yet no works of ours good without faith; finally, how our fathers might hold, we are justified by faith alone, and yet hold truly that without good works we are not justified. Did they think that men do merit rewards in heaven by the works they perform on earth? The ancient fathers use meriting for obtaining, and in that sense they of Wittenberg have in their Confession: "We teach that good works commanded of God are necessarily to be

done, and that by the free kindness of God they merit their certain rewards. [Confession of Wuerttemberg, ch 7] Others therefore, speaking as our fathers did, and we taking their speech in a sound meaning, as we may take our fathers', and ought, forasmuch as their meaning is doubtful and charity doth always interpret doubtful things favourably, what should induce us to think that rather the damage of the worse construction did light upon them all than that the blessing of the better was granted unto thousands?

FIFTHLY, if in the worst construction that can be made they had all embraced it living, might not many of them dying utterly renounce it? Howsoever men, when they sit at ease, do vainly tickle their own hearts with the wanton conceit of I know not what proportionable correspondence between their merits and their rewards, which, in the trance of their high speculations, they dream that God hath measured, weighed, and laid up, as it were, in bundles for them; notwithstanding we see by daily experience, in a number even of them, that when the hour of death approacheth, when they secretly hear themselves summoned forthwith to appear and stand at the bar of that Judge whose brightness causeth the eyes of angels themselves to dazzle, all those idle imaginations do then begin to hide their faces. To name merits then is to lay their souls upon the rack; the memory of their own deeds is loathsome unto them; they forsake all things wherein they have put any trust and confidence: no staff to lean upon, no ease, no rest, no comfort then, but only in Christ Jesus.

Wherefore if this proposition were true, "To hold in such wise as the Church of Rome doth that we cannot be saved by Christ alone without works is directly to deny the foundation of faith" -- I say that if this proposition were true, nevertheless so many ways I have showed whereby we may hope that thousands of our fathers living in popish superstitions might be saved. But what if it be not true? What if neither that of the Galatians concerning circumcision nor this of the Church of Rome about works be any direct denial of the foundation, as it is affirmed that both are? I need not wade so far as to discuss this controversy, the matter which first was brought into question being so cleared, as I hope it is. Howbeit, because I desire that the truth even in this also may receive light, I will do mine endeavour to set down somewhat more plainly, first, the foundation of faith, what it is; secondly, what it is directly to deny the foundation; thirdly, whether they whom God hath chosen to be heirs of life may fall so far as directly to deny it; fourthly, whether the Galatians did so by admitting the error about circumcision and the law; last of all, whether the Church of Rome, for this one opinion of works, may be thought to do the like, and thereupon to be no more a Christian Church than are the assemblies of Turks or Jews.

This word FOUNDATION being figuratively used hath always reference to somewhat which resembleth a material building, as both the doctrine of Christianity and the community of Christians do. By the masters of civil policy nothing is so much inculcated as that commonwealths are founded upon laws; for that a multitude cannot be compacted into one body otherwise than by a common acceptance of laws, whereby they are to be kept in order.

The ground of all civil laws is this: No man ought to be hurt or injured by another. Take away this persuasion and you take away all laws; take away laws, and what shall become of commonwealths? So it is in our spiritual Christian community: I do not now mean that body mystical whereof Christ is the only head, that building undiscernible by mortal eyes wherein Christ is the chief cornerstone [Eph 1:22f; 2:20-22; 4:15f; 1 Pet 2:4ff]; but I speak of the visible church, the foundation whereof is the doctrine of the prophets and apostles professed.[Eph 2:20] The mark whereunto their doctrine tendeth is pointed at in those words of Peter unto Christ, "Thou has the words of eternal life" [Jn 6:69]; in those of Paul to Timothy, "The Holy Scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation." [2 Tim 3:15]

It is the demand of nature itself: "What shall we do to have eternal life?" [Cf Lk 10:25; Acts 16:30] The desire of immortality and of the knowledge of that whereby it may be attained is so natural unto all men that even they who are not persuaded that they shall, do notwithstanding wish that they might, know a way how to see no end of life. And because natural means are not able still to resist the force of death, there is no people in the earth so savage which hath not devised some supernatural help or other to fly unto for aid and succour in extremities against the enemies of their lives. A longing therefore to be saved, without understanding the true way how, hath been the cause of all the superstitions in the world. O that the miserable estate of others, who wander in darkness and wot not whither they go, could give us understanding hearts worthily to esteem the riches of the mercies of God towards us, before whose eyes the doors of the kingdom of heaven are set wide open! Should we not offer violence unto it? [Mt 11:12] It offereth violence to us, and we gather strength to withstand it.

THE GROUND OF SALVATION

But I am besides my purpose when I fall to bewail the cold affection which we bear towards that whereby we should be saved, my purpose being only to set down what the ground of salvation is. The doctrine of the Gospel proposeth salvation as the end, and doth it not teach the way of attaining thereunto? Yes, the damsel possessed with a spirit of divination spake the truth: "These men are the servants of the most high God who show unto us the way of salvation" [Acts 16:17] -- "a new and living way which Christ hath prepared for us through the veil, that is, his flesh," [Heb 10:20] salvation purchased by the death of Christ. By this foundation the children of God, before the time of the written law, were distinguished from the sons of men. The reverend patriarchs both professed it living and spake expressly of it in the hour of their death.[Heb 11:4-22] It comforted Job in the midst of grief. [Job 19:23-27] It was afterwards likewise the anchor-hold of all the righteous in Israel, from the writing of the law to the time of grace; every prophet maketh mention of it.[Lk 1:70; 24:25f,44-47] It was so famously spoken of about the time when the coming of Christ to accomplish the promises, which were made long before, drew near, that the sound thereof was heard even amongst the Gentiles. [cf Lk 1:28-32] When he was come, as many as were his acknowledged that he was their salvation; he, that long-expected hope of Israel; he, that "seed in whom all the nations of the world should be blessed." [Gen 22:18; Gal 3:16] So that now his name is a name of ruin, a name of death and condemnation, unto such as dream of a new Messiah, to as many as look for salvation by any other than by him: "For amongst men there is given no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved." [Acts 4:12] Thus much St. Mark doth intimate by that which he putteth in the very front of his book, making his entrance with these words: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." His doctrine he termeth the Gospel because it teacheth salvation; the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God because it teacheth salvation by him.

This is then the foundation whereupon the frame of the Gospel is erected; that very Jesus whom the Virgin conceived of the Holy Ghost, whom Simeon embraced in his arms,[Lk 1:34f; 2:25ff] whom Pilate condemned, whom the Jews crucified, whom the Apostles preached, he is Christ, the Lord, the only Saviour of the world: "other foundation can no man lay. [1 Cor 3:11] Thus I have briefly opened that principle in Christianity which we call the foundation of our faith. It followeth now that I declare unto you what it is directly to overthrow it. This will better appear if first we understand what it is to hold the foundation of faith.

There are who defend that many of the Gentiles who never heard the name of Christ held the foundation of Christianity: and why? They acknowledged many of them the providence of God, his infinite wisdom, strength, and power, his goodness and his mercy towards the children of men; that God hath judgment in store for the wicked, but for the

righteous that seek him rewards, etc. In this which they confessed that lieth covered which we believe; in the rudiments of their knowledge concerning God the foundation of our faith concerning Christ lieth secretly wrapped up and is virtually contained: therefore they hold the foundation of faith, though they never heard it. Might we not with as good colour of reason defend that every ploughman hath all the sciences wherein philosophers have excelled? For no man is ignorant of the first principles which do virtually contain whatsoever by natural means either is or can be known. Yea, might we not with as good reason affirm that a man may put three mighty oaks wheresoever three acorns may be put? For virtually an acorn is an oak. To avoid such paradoxes, we teach plainly that to hold the foundation is in express terms to acknowledge it.

Now, because the foundation is an affirmative proposition, they all overthrow it who deny it; they directly overthrow it who deny it directly; and they overthrow it by consequent, or indirectly, who hold any one assertion whatsoever whereupon the direct denial thereof may be necessarily concluded. What is the question between the Gentiles and us but this: whether salvation be by Christ? What between the Jews and us but this: whether by this Jesus whom we call Christ, yea or no? This to be the main point whereupon Christianity standeth, it is clear by that one sentence of Festus concerning Paul's accusers: "They brought no crime of such things as I supposed, but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." [Acts 25:18f] Where we see that Jesus, dead and raised for the salvation of the world, is by Jews denied, despised by a Gentile, and by a Christian apostle maintained. The fathers therefore in the primitive Church when they wrote -- Tertullian, the book which he calleth APOLOGETICUS; Minucius Felix, the book which he entitleth OCTAVIUS; Arnobius, his seven books against the Gentiles; Chrysostom, his orations against the Jews; Eusebius, his ten books of evangelical demonstration -- they stood in defence of Christianity against them by whom the foundation thereof was directly denied. But the writings of the fathers against Novatians, Pelagians, and other heretics of the like note, refel [refute] positions whereby the foundation of Christian faith was overthrown by consequent only. In the former sort of writings the foundation is proved; in the latter it is alleged as a proof, which to men that had been known directly to deny it must needs have seemed a very beggarly kind of disputing. All infidels therefore deny the foundation of faith directly. By consequent, many a Christian man, yea whole Christian churches, have denied it and do deny it at this present day. Christian churches denying the foundation of Christianity? Not directly, for then they cease to be Christian churches; but by consequent, in respect whereof we condemn them as erroneous, although for holding the foundation we do and must hold them Christian.

We see what it is to hold the foundation; what directly and what by consequent to deny it. The next thing which followeth is whether they whom God hath chosen to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ may, being once effectually called, and through faith truly

justified, afterwards fall so far as directly to deny the foundation which their hearts have before embraced with joy and comfort in the Holy Ghost, for such is the faith which indeed doth justify. Devils know the same things which we believe [see [Jas 2:19](#)], and the minds of the most ungodly may be fully persuaded of the truth, which knowledge in the one and persuasion in the other is sometimes termed faith, but equivocally, being indeed no such faith as that whereby a Christian man is justified. It is the spirit of adoption which worketh faith in us, in them not. The things which we believe are by us apprehended not only as true but also as good, and that to us: as good, they are not by them apprehended; as true, they are.

Whereupon followeth a third difference: the Christian man the more he increaseth in faith the more his joy and comfort aboundeth; but they, the more sure they are of the truth, the more they quake and tremble at it. This begetteth another effect, wherein the hearts of the one sort have a different disposition from the other. "I am not ignorant," saith Minucius, "that there are too many who, being conscious what they are to look for, do rather wish that they might than think that they shall cease to be when they cease to live; because they hold it better that death should consume them unto nothing than God receive them unto punishment." [Minucius Felix, OCTAVIUS, 34] So it is in other articles of faith, whereof wicked men think, no doubt, many times they are too true. On the contrary side, to the other there is no grief nor torment greater than to feel their persuasion weak in things whereof, when they are persuaded, they reap such comfort and joy of spirit; such is the faith whereby we are justified -- such, I mean, in respect of the quality. For touching the principal object of faith, longer than it holdeth that foundation whereof we have spoken it neither justifieth, nor is, but ceaseth to be faith when it ceaseth to believe that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of the world.

The cause of life spiritual in us is Christ, not carnally or corporally inhabiting, but dwelling in the soul of man, as a thing which (when the mind apprehendeth it) is said to inhabit and possess the mind. The mind conceiveth Christ by hearing the doctrine of Christianity. As the light of nature doth cause the mind to apprehend those truths which are merely rational, so that saving truth, which is far above the reach of human reason, cannot otherwise than by the Spirit of the Almighty be conceived. All these are implied wheresoever any one of them is mentioned as the cause of spiritual life. Wherefore when we read that "the Spirit is our life," [[Rom 8:10](#), KJV] or "the Word our life," [[Phil 2:16](#); [1 Jn 1:1](#)] or "Christ our life," [[Col 3:4](#)] we are in every one of these to understand that our life is Christ, by the hearing of the Gospel apprehended as a Saviour, and assented unto by the power of the Holy Ghost. The first intellectual conceit [concept] and comprehension of Christ so embraced St. Peter calleth the seed whereof we be new born. [[1 Pet 1:23](#)] Our first embracing of Christ is our first reviving from the state of death and condemnation. [[Eph 2:1-6](#)] "He that hath the Son hath life," saith St. John, "and he that hath not the Son of God

hath not life." [1 Jn 5:12] If therefore he who once hath the Son may cease to have the Son, though it be but a moment, he ceaseth for that moment to have life. But the life of them who live by the Son of God is everlasting, not only for that it shall be everlasting in the world to come, but because, as "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more power over him," [Rom 6:9] so the justified man, being alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom he hath life, liveth always. [Rom 6:11]

ETERNAL SECURITY IN CHRIST

I might, if I had not elsewhere largely done it already, show by sundry manifest and clear proofs how the motions and operations of life are sometimes so undiscernible and secret, that they seem stone-dead who notwithstanding are still alive unto God in Christ.

For as long as that abideth in us which animateth, quickeneth, and giveth life, so long we live; and we know that the cause of our life abideth in us for ever. If Christ, the fountain of life, may flit and leave the habitation where once he dwelleth, what shall become of his promise, "I am with you to the world's end"? [Mt 28:20] If the seed of God, which containeth Christ, may be first conceived and then cast out, how doth St. Peter term it immortal? [1 Pet 1:23] How doth St. John affirm it abideth? [1 Jn 3:9] If the Spirit, which is given to cherish and preserve the seed of life, may be given and taken away, how is it the earnest of our inheritance until redemption, [Eph 1:14; 2 Cor 1:22] how doth it continue with us for ever? [Jn 14:16f] If therefore the man who is once just by faith shall live by faith and live for ever, it followeth that he who once doth believe the foundation must needs believe the foundation for ever. If he believe it for ever, how can he ever directly deny it? Faith holding the direct affirmation, the direct negation, so long as faith continueth, is excluded.

But ye will say that, as he who today is holy may tomorrow forsake his holiness and become impure, as a friend may change his mind and become an enemy, as hope may wither, so faith may die in the heart of man, the Spirit may be quenched, [1 Thess 5:19] grace may be extinguished, they who believe may be quite turned away from the truth. The case is clear, long experience hath made this manifest, it needs no proof.

I grant that we are apt, prone, and ready to forsake God; but is God as ready to forsake us? Our minds are changeable; is his so likewise? Whom God hath justified hath not Christ assured that it is his Father's will to give them a kingdom? [Lk 12:32] Which kingdom, notwithstanding, shall not otherwise be given them than "if they continue grounded and established in the faith and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel", [Col 1:23] "if they abide in love and holiness." [1 Tim 2:15] Our Saviour therefore, when he spake of the sheep effectually called and truly gathered into his fold, "I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand," [Jn 10:28] in promising to save them, promised, no doubt, to preserve them in that without which there can be no salvation, as also from that whereby salvation is irremediably lost. Every error in things appertaining to God is repugnant unto faith; every fearful cogitation, unto hope; unto love, every straggling inordinate desire; unto holiness, every blemish whereby either the inward thoughts of our minds or the outward actions of our lives are stained. But heresy, such as that of Ebion, Cerinthus, and others, against whom the Apostles were forced to bend themselves, both by word and also by writing; that repining discouragement of heart which tempteth God, whereof we have Israel in the desert for a pattern; [1 Cor 10:6ff; Heb 3:7ff]

coldness, such as that in the angel of Ephesus; [Rev 2:4] foul sins known to be expressly against the first or the second table of the law, such as Noah, Manasses, David, Solomon, and Peter committed: these are each in their kind so opposite to the former virtues that they leave no place for salvation without an actual repentance. But infidelity, extreme despair, hatred of God and all godliness, obduration in sin, cannot stand where there is the least spark of faith, hope, love, or sanctity, even as cold in the lowest degree cannot be where heat in the first degree is found.

Whereupon I conclude that, although in the first kind no man liveth that sinneth not, and in, the second, as perfect as any do live may sin, yet since the man who is born of God hath a promise that in him the seed of God shall abide, [1 Jn 3:9] which seed is a sure preservative against the sins of the third suit, greater and clearer assurance we cannot have of anything than of this, that from such sins God shall preserve the righteous, as the apple of his eye, for ever. [Dt 32:10; Ps 17:80] Directly we deny the foundation of faith, is plain infidelity. Where faith is entered, there infidelity is for ever excluded. Therefore by him who hath once sincerely believed in Christ the foundation of Christian faith can never be directly denied. Did not Peter [Mt 26:69ff], did not Marcellinus [see Keble, p 519], did not many others both directly deny Christ after they had believed and again believe after they had denied? No doubt, as they may confess in word whose condemnation nevertheless is their not believing (for example we have Judas), so likewise they may believe in heart whose condemnation, without repentance, is their not confessing. Although therefore Peter and the rest, for whose faith Christ had prayed that it might not fail, [Lk 22:31f] did not by denial sin the sin of infidelity, which is an inward abnegation of Christ (for if they had done this their faith had clearly failed); yet, because they sinned notoriously and grievously, committing that which they knew to be so expressly forbidden by the law, which saith, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve, [Dt 6:13; Mt 4:10] necessary it was that he who purposed to save their souls should, as he did, touch their hearts with true unfeigned repentance, that his mercy might restore them again to life whom sin had made the children of death and condemnation.

Touching this point, therefore, I hope I may safely set it down that if the justified err, as he may, and never come to understand his error, God doth save him through general repentance; but if he fall into heresy, he calleth him either at one time or other by actual repentance; but from infidelity, which is an inward direct denial of the foundation, preserveth him by special providence for ever. Whereby we may easily know what to think of those Galatians whose hearts were so possessed with love of the truth that, if it had been possible, they would have plucked out their very eyes to bestow upon their teachers. [Gal 4:15] It is true that they were afterwards greatly changed, both in persuasion and affection, so that the Galatians, when St. Paul wrote unto them, were not now the Galatians which they had been in former times, for that through error they wandered, although they were his sheep. [Gal

1:6] I do not deny, but I should deny that they were his sheep, if I should grant that through error they perished. It was a perilous opinion which they held, in them who held it only as an error, because it overthroweth the foundation by consequent. But in them who obstinately maintained it I cannot think it less than a damnable heresy.

DISTINCTIONS TO BE MADE

We must therefore put a difference between them who err of ignorance, retaining nevertheless a mind desirous to be instructed in the truth, and them who, after the truth is laid open, persist in stubborn defence of their blindness. Heretical defenders, froward and stiff-necked teachers of circumcision, the blessed Apostle calleth dogs. [[Phil 3:2](#)] Silly men, that were seduced to think they taught the truth, he pitieth, he taketh up in his arms, he lovingly embraceth, he kisseth, and with more than fatherly tenderness doth so temper, qualify, and correct the speech he useth towards them, that a man cannot easily discern whether did most abound, the love which he bare to their godly affection or the grief which the danger of their opinion bred him. Their opinion was dangerous; was not so likewise theirs who thought that the kingdom of Christ should be earthly? was not theirs who thought that the Gospel should be preached only to the Jews? What more opposite to prophetic doctrine concerning the coming of Christ than the one, concerning the Catholic Church than the other? Yet they who had these fancies, even when they had them, were not the worst men in the world. The heresy of freewill was a millstone about the Pelagians' neck: shall we therefore give sentence of death inevitable against all those fathers in the Greek church who, being mispersuaded, died in the error of freewill?

Of those Galatians, therefore, who first were justified, and then deceived, as I can see no cause why as many as died before admonition might not by mercy be saved, even in error, so I make no doubt but as many as lived till they were admonished found the mercy of God effectual in converting them from their error, lest any one that is Christ's should perish. Of this, as I take it, there is no controversy. Only against the salvation of them who died, though before admonition, yet in error, it is objected that their opinion was a very plain direct denial of the foundation. If Paul and Barnabas had been so persuaded, they would haply have used their terms otherwise, speaking of the masters themselves who did first set that error abroad, "certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed." [[Acts 15:5](#)] What difference was there between these Pharisees and others from whom by a special description they are distinguished but this: they who came to Antioch teaching the necessity of circumcision were Christians, the other, enemies of Christianity? Why then should these be termed so distinctly believers, if they did directly deny the foundation of our belief, besides which there was none other thing that made the rest to be unbelievers?

We need go no further than St. Paul's very reasoning against them for proof of this matter: "Seeing ye know God, or rather are known of God, how turn you again unto impotent rudiments? The law engendereth servants, her children are in bondage. They who are begotten by the Gospel are free. Brethren, we are not children of the servant, but of the free woman, and will ye yet be under the law?" [[Gal 4:9, 21ff,31](#)] That they thought it unto salvation necessary for the Church of Christ to observe days and months and times and years, to keep

the ceremonies and the sacraments of the law, this was their error. [Gal 4:10f] Yet he who condemneth their error confesseth, notwithstanding, that they knew God and were known of him; he taketh not the honour from them to be termed sons begotten of the immortal seed of the Gospel. Let the heaviest words which he useth be weighed; consider the drift of these dreadful conclusions: "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing; as many as are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." [Gal 5:2,4] It had been to no purpose in the world so to urge them had not the Apostle been persuaded that at the hearing of such sequels, "no benefit by Christ," "a defection from grace," their hearts would tremble and quake within them; and why? because they knew that in Christ, in grace, their salvation lay, which is a plain direct acknowledgement of the foundation.

Lest I should herein seem to hold that which no one godly and learned hath done, let these words be considered, which import as much as I affirm: "Surely those brethren who, in St. Paul's time, thought that God did lay a necessity upon them to make choice of days and meats spake as they believed, and could not but in words condemn that liberty which they supposed to be brought in against the authority of divine Scripture. Otherwise it had been needless for St. Paul to admonish them not to condemn such as eat without scrupulosity whatsoever was set before them. This error, if ye weigh what it is of itself, did at once overthrow all Scripture whereby we are taught salvation by faith in Christ, all that ever the prophets did foretell, all that ever the Apostles did preach of Christ. It drew with it the denial of Christ entirely, insomuch that St. Paul complaineth that his labour was lost upon the Galatians, unto whom this error was obruded, affirming that Christ, if so be they were circumcised, should not profit them anything at all. Yet so far was St. Paul from striking their names out of Christ's book that he commanded others to entertain them, to accept them with singular humanity, to use them like brethren. He knew men's imbecility, he had a feeling of our blindness who are mortal men how great it is, and being sure that they are the sons of God whosoever he endued with his fear would not have them counted enemies of that whereunto they could not as yet frame themselves to be friends, but did even of a very religious affection to the truth unwittingly reject and resist the truth. They acknowledged Christ to be their only and their perfect Saviour, but saw not how repugnant their believing the necessity of Mosaical ceremonies was to their faith in Jesus Christ." [preceding quotation from Bucer, DE UNITATE ECCLESIAE SERVANDA]

Hereunto reply is made that if they had not directly denied the foundation they might have been saved; but saved they could not be; therefore their opinion was, not only by consequent, but directly, a denial of the foundation. When the question was about the possibility of their salvation, their denying of the foundation was brought for proof that they could not be saved: now that the question is about their denial, the impossibility of their salvation is alleged to prove they denied the foundation. Is there nothing which excludeth men from salvation but only the foundation of faith denied? I should have thought that, beside this,

many other things are death except they be actually repented of, as indeed this opinion of theirs was death unto as many as, being given to understand that to cleave thereunto was to fall from Christ, did notwithstanding cleave unto it. But of this enough. Wherefore I come to the last question: whether the doctrine of the Church of Rome concerning the necessity of works unto salvation be a direct denial of the foundation of our faith.

ROME AND THE NECESSITY OF WORKS

I seek not to obtrude upon you any private opinions of mine own. The best learned in our profession are of this judgment, that all the heresies and corruptions of the Church of Rome do not prove her to deny the foundation directly. If they did, they should prove her simply to be no Christian Church. "But I suppose," saith one, "that in the papacy some church remaineth, a church crazed [cracked], or, if you will, broken quite in pieces, forlorn, misshapen, yet some church." His reason is this: "Antichrist must sit in the temple of God." [John Calvin, Letter to Laelius Socinus, 9 Dec 1549, (Brunswick: C A Achwetschke, 1875), Epistola 1324, OPERA QUAE SUPERSUNT OMNIA, vol 13, col 487; cf INST IV, ii, 11f] Lest any man should think such sentences as this to be true only in regard of them whom that church is supposed to have kept by the special providence of God, as it were in the secret corners of his bosom, free from infection and as sound in the faith as, we trust, by his mercy we ourselves are, I permit it to your wise considerations whether it be not more likely that, as phrensy, though itself take away the use of reason, doth notwithstanding prove them reasonable creatures who have it, because none can be frantic but they, so antichristianity, being the bane and plain overthrow of Christianity, may nevertheless argue the church wherein Antichrist sitteth to be Christian. Neither have I ever hitherto heard or read any one word alleged of force to warrant that God doth otherwise than, so as hath been in the next two questions before declared, bind himself to keep his elect from worshipping the beast and from receiving his mark in their foreheads; [Rev 13:16; 14:9] but he hath preserved and will preserve them from receiving any deadly wound at the hands of the man of sin, whose deceit hath prevailed over none to death but only such as never loved the truth and such as took pleasure in unrighteousness. They, in all ages, whose hearts have delighted in the principal truth and whose souls have thirsted after righteousness, if they received the mark of error, even erring and dangerously erring, the mercy of God might save them; if they received the mark of heresy, the same mercy did, I doubt not, convert them .

How far Romish heresies may prevail over God's elect, how many God hath kept from falling into them, how many have been converted from them, is not the question now in hand; for if heaven had not received any one of that coat for these thousand years it may still be true that the doctrine which at this day they do profess doth not directly deny the foundation and so prove them to be no Christian Church. One I have alleged [Calvin] whose words, in my ears, sound that way. Shall I add another whose speech is plainer? "I deny her not the name of a church", saith another, "no more than to a man the name of a man as long as he liveth, what sickness soever he hath." His reason is this: "Salvation in Jesus Christ, which is the mark joineth the Head with the body, Jesus Christ with his church, it is so cut off by man's merits, by the merits of saints, by the pope's pardons, and such other wickedness that the life of the Church holdeth by a very little thread"; [Phillipe de Mornay du Plessis,

TRACTATUS DE ECCLESSIA, Geneva, 1585, ch 2, pp 32f] yet still the life of the Church holdeth. A third hath these words: "I acknowledge the church of Rome, even at this present day, for a church of Christ, such a church as Israel under Jeroboam, yet a church". His reason is this: "Every man seeth, except he willingly hoodwink himself, that as always so now the church of Rome holdeth firmly and steadfastly the doctrine of truth concerning God and the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and baptizeth in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, confesseth and avoucheth Christ for the only Redeemer of the world and the Judge that shall sit upon quick and dead, receiving true believers into endless joy, faithless and godless men being cast with Satan and his angels into flames unquenchable". [Zanchius, DE RELIGIONE CHRISTIANA, Preface]

I may, and will rein the question shorter than they do. Let the pope take down his top and captivate no more men's souls by his papal jurisdiction; let him no longer count himself lord paramount over the princes of the earth, no longer use kings as his tenants paravaile [NOTE: Just as a lord paramount is one who has no lord above him, so a tenant paravaile is one who has no tenant below him -- thus they are opposites, as vale and mount are opposites]; let his stately senate submit their necks to the yoke of Christ and cease to dye their garments, like Edom, in blood; let them, from the highest to the lowest, hate and forsake their idolatry, abjure all their errors and heresies wherewith they have perverted the truth; let them strip their church till they have no polluted rag but this one about her: "By Christ alone, without works, we cannot be saved." It is enough for me if I show that the holding of this one thing doth not prove the foundation of faith directly denied in the Church of Rome.

Works are an addition to the foundation. Be it so, what then? The foundation is not subverted by every kind of addition. Simply to add unto those fundamental words is not to "mingle wine with puddle, heaven with earth, things polluted with the sanctified blood of Christ: of which crime indict them who attribute those operations, in whole or in part, to any creature which in the work of our salvation are wholly peculiar unto Christ; and if I open my mouth to speak in their defence, if I hold my peace and plead not against them as long as breath is in my body, let me be guilty of all the dishonour that ever hath been done to the Son of God. But the more dreadful a thing it is to deny salvation by Christ alone, the more slow and fearful I am, except it be too manifest, to lay a thing so grievous unto any man's charge. Let us beware lest, if we make too many ways of denying Christ, we scarce leave any way for ourselves truly and soundly to confess him. Salvation only by Christ is the true foundation whereupon indeed Christianity standeth. But what if I say, "Ye cannot be saved only by Christ without this addition: Christ believed in heart, confessed with mouth, obeyed in life and conversation"? Because I add, do I therefore deny that which directly I did affirm? There may be an additament of explication which overthroweth not but proveth and concludeth the proposition whereunto it is annexed. He that saith Peter was a chief apostle doth prove that Peter was an apostle. [cf [Gal 2:9](#)] He who saith our salvation is of

the Lord, through sanctification of the Spirit and faith of the truth [cf [2 Thess 2:13](#)], proveth that our salvation is of the Lord. But if that which is added be such a privation as taketh away the very essence of that whereunto it is adjoined, then by sequel it overthroweth. In like sort, he that should say, "Our election is of grace for our works' sake," should then grant in sound of words, but indeed by consequent deny, that our election is of grace; for the grace which electeth us is no grace if it elect us for our works' sake.

Now whereas the Church of Rome addeth works, we must note, further, that the adding works is not like the adding of circumcision unto Christ. Christ came not to abrogate and take away good works: he did, to change circumcision; for we see that in place thereof he hath substituted holy baptism. To say, "Ye cannot be saved by Christ except ye be circumcised", is to add a thing excluded, a thing not only not necessary to be kept, but necessary not to be kept by them that will be saved. On the other side, to say, "Ye cannot be saved by Christ without works," is to add things not only not excluded, but commanded, as being in place and in their kind necessary, and therefore subordinated unto Christ, even by Christ himself, by whom the web of salvation is spun: "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." [[Mt 5:20](#)] They were rigorous exacters of things not utterly to be neglected and left undone, washings and tithings, etc. [cf [Mt 23:23-26](#)] As they were in these things, so must we be in judgment and the love of God. Christ, in works ceremonial, giveth more liberty, in moral, much less, than they did. [cf [Mt 5:21ff](#)] Works of righteousness therefore are not so repugantly added in the one proposition as in the other circumcision is.

FAITH DOES NOT EXCLUDE WORKS

But we say our salvation is by Christ alone; therefore howsoever or whatsoever we add unto Christ in the matter of salvation we overthrow Christ. Our case were very hard if this argument, so universally meant as it is proposed, were sound and good. We ourselves do not teach Christ alone, excluding our own faith, unto justification, Christ alone, excluding our own works, unto sanctification, Christ alone, excluding the one or the other as unnecessary unto salvation. It is a childish cavil wherewith in the matter of justification our adversaries do so greatly please themselves, exclaiming that we tread all Christian virtues under our feet and require nothing in Christians but faith, because we teach that faith alone justifieth; whereas by this speech we never meant to exclude either hope and charity from being always joined as inseparable mates with faith in the man that is justified, or works from being added as necessary duties, required at the hands of every justified man, but to show that faith is the only hand which putteth on Christ unto justification, and Christ the only garment which, being so put on, covereth the shame of our defiled natures, hideth the imperfections of our works, preserveth us blameless in the sight of God, before whom otherwise the very weakness of our faith were cause sufficient to make us culpable, yea, to shut us out from the kingdom of heaven, where nothing that is not absolute can enter.

That our dealing with them be not childish as theirs with us when we hear of salvation by Christ alone, considering that ["alone" is an] exclusive particle, we are to note what it doth exclude, and where. If I say, "Such a judge only ought to determine such a cause," all things incident unto the determination thereof besides the person of the judge, as laws, depositions, evidences, etc., are not hereby excluded; persons are, yet not from witnessing herein or assisting, but only from determining and giving sentence. How then is our salvation wrought by Christ alone? Is it our meaning that nothing is requisite to man's salvation but Christ to save, and he to be saved quietly without any more to do? No, we acknowledge no such foundation. As we have received, so we teach that besides the bare and naked work wherein Christ, without any other associate, finished all the parts of our redemption and purchased salvation himself alone, for conveyance of this eminent blessing unto us many things are required, as to be known and chosen of God before the foundation of the world, in the world to be called, justified, sanctified, after we have left the world to be received into glory: Christ in every one of these hath something which he worketh alone. Through him, according to the eternal purpose of God before the foundation of the world, born, crucified, buried, raised, etc., we were in a gracious acceptation known unto God long before we were seen of men: God knew us, loved us, was kind towards us in Christ Jesus; in him we were elected to be heirs of life. [cf [Eph 1:3ff](#)]

Thus far God through Christ hath wrought in such sort alone that ourselves are mere patients, working no more than dead and senseless matter, wood or stone or iron, doth in

the artificer's hand, no more than the clay when the potter appointeth it to be framed for an honourable use; nay, not so much. For the matter whereupon the craftsman worketh he chooseth, being moved by the fitness which is in it to serve his turn; in us no such thing. Touching the rest, that which is laid for the foundation of our faith importeth, further, that by him we be called, that we have redemption, remission of sins through his blood, health by his stripes, justice by him; that he doth sanctify his Church and make it glorious to himself; that entrance into joy shall be given us by him; yea, all things by him alone. Howbeit, not so by him alone as if in us, to our vocation, the hearing of the Gospel; in our justification, faith; to our sanctification, the fruits of the Spirit; to our entrance into rest, perseverance in hope, in faith, in holiness, were not necessary,

Then what is the fault of the Church of Rome? Not that she requireth works at their hands that will be saved, but that she attributeth unto works a power of satisfying God for sin, and a virtue to merit both grace here and in heaven glory. That this overthroweth the foundation of faith I grant willingly; that it is a direct denial thereof I utterly deny. What it is to hold and what directly to deny the foundation of faith I have already opened. Apply it particularly to this cause, and there needs no more ado. The thing which is handled, if the form under which it is handled be added thereunto, it showeth the foundation of any doctrine whatsoever. Christ is the matter whereof the doctrine of the Gospel treateth, and it treateth of Christ as of a Saviour. Salvation therefore by Christ is the foundation of Christianity. As for works, they are a thing subordinate, no otherwise necessary than because our sanctification cannot be accomplished without them. The doctrine concerning them is a thing builded upon the foundation; therefore the doctrine which addeth unto them power of satisfying or of meriting addeth unto a thing subordinated, builded upon the foundation, not to the very foundation itself. Yet is the foundation consequently by this addition overthrown, forasmuch as out of this addition it may negatively be concluded, he who maketh any work good and acceptable in the sight of God to proceed from the natural freedom of our will, he who giveth unto any good work of ours the force of satisfying the wrath of God for sin, the power of meriting either earthly or heavenly rewards, he who holdeth works going before our vocation in congruity to merit our vocation, works following our first to merit our second justification and by condignity our last reward in the kingdom of heaven, pulleth up the doctrine of faith by the roots; for out of every of these the plain direct denial thereof may be necessarily concluded. Nor this only, but what other heresy is there which doth not raze the very foundation of faith by consequent?

DIFFERENCES AMONG HERESIES

Howbeit, we make a difference of heresies, accounting them in the next degree to infidelity which directly deny any one thing to be which is expressly acknowledged in the articles of our belief; for out of any one article so denied the denial of the very foundation itself is straightway inferred. As, for example, if a man should say, "There is no Catholic Church," it followeth immediately hereupon that this Jesus whom we call the Saviour is not the Saviour of the world; because all the prophets bear witness that the true Messiah should "show a light unto the Gentiles," [Lk 2:32; Acts 26:23] that is to say, gather such a church as is catholic, not restrained any longer unto one circumcised nation. In a second rank we place them out of whose positions the denial of any of the foresaid articles may be with like facility concluded. Such are they who have denied either the divinity of Christ, with Ebion, or with Marcion his humanity, an example whereof may be that of Cassianus defending the incarnation of the Son of God against Nestorius bishop of Antioch [a slip for Constantinople], who held that the Virgin, when she brought forth Christ, did not bring forth the Son of God but a sole and mere man; [NOTE: Many scholars now doubt that Nestorius did indeed teach the heresy which has been named after him] out of which heresy the denial of the articles of the Christian faith he deduceth thus:

If thou dost deny our Lord Jesus Christ to be God, in denying the Son thou canst not choose but deny the Father; for, according to the voice of the Father himself, "He that hath not the Son hath not the Father." [see 1 Jn 2:23] Wherefore denying him that is begotten thou deniest him who doth beget. Again, denying the Son of God to have been born in the flesh, how canst thou believe him to have suffered? Believing not his passion, what remaineth but that thou deny his resurrection? For we believe him not raised, except we first believe him dead; neither can the reason of his rising from the dead stand without the faith of his death going before. The denial of his death and passion inferreth the denial of his rising from the depth. Whereupon it followeth that thou also deny his ascension into heaven: the Apostle affirming that "he who ascended did first descend." [Eph 4:9] So that, as much as lieth in thee, our Lord Jesus Christ hath neither risen from the depth, nor is ascended into heaven, nor sitteth at the right hand of God the Father, neither shall he come at the day of final account, which is looked for, nor shall judge the quick and dead. And darest thou yet set foot in the church? Canst thou think thyself a bishop when thou hast denied all those things whereby thou didst obtain a bishoply calling? [John Cassian, DE INCARNATIONE DOMINI CONTRA NESTORIUM, 6:17f]

Nestorius confessed all the articles of the creed, but his opinion did imply the denial of every part of his confession. Heresies there are of a third part, such as the Church of Rome maintaineth, which, being removed by a greater distance from the foundation, although indeed they overthrow it, yet because of that weakness which the philosopher noteth in

men's capacities when he saith that the common sort cannot see things which follow in reason, when they follow, as it were, afar off by many deductions; therefore the repugnancy between such heresy and the foundation is not so quickly nor so easily found but that an heretic of this sooner than of the former kind may directly grant, and consequently nevertheless deny, the foundation of faith.

If reason be suspected, trial will show that the Church of Rome doth no otherwise by teaching the doctrine she doth teach concerning works. Offer them the very fundamental words, and what one man is there that will refuse to subscribe unto them? Can they directly grant and deny directly one and the selfsame thing? Our own proceedings in disputing against their works satisfactory and meritorious do show not only that they hold, but that we acknowledge them to hold, the foundation notwithstanding their opinion. For are not these our arguments against them: "Christ alone hath satisfied and appeased his Father's wrath; Christ hath merited salvation alone"? We should do fondly to use such disputes, neither could we think to prevail by them, if that whereupon we ground were a thing which we know they do not hold, which we are assured they will not grant. Their very answers to all such reasons as are in this controversy brought against them will not permit us to doubt whether they hold the foundation or no. Can any man who hath read their books concerning this matter be ignorant how they draw all their answers unto these heads?

That the remission of all our sins, the pardon of all whatsoever punishments thereby deserved, the rewards which God hath laid up in heaven, are by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ purchased and obtained sufficiently for all men; but for no man effectually for his benefit in particular, except the blood of Christ be applied particularly unto him by such means as God hath appointed it to work by.

That those means of themselves being dead things, only the blood of Christ is that which putteth life, force, and efficacy in them to work, and to be available, each in his kind, to our salvation.

Finally, that grace being purchased for us by the blood of Christ, and freely without any merit or desert at the first bestowed upon us, the good things which we do, after grace received, are made satisfactory and meritorious.

Some of their sentences to this effect I must allege for mine own warrant. If we desire to hear foreign judgments, we find in one this confession:

He that would reckon how many the virtues and merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ have been might likewise understand how many the benefits have been that are come unto us by him, forasmuch as men are made partakers of them all by the means of his passion: by him is given unto us remission of our sins, grace, glory, liberty, praise, peace, salvation, redemption, justification, justice, sanctification, sacraments, merits, doctrine, and all other things which we had, and were behoveful for our salvation. [Lewis of Granada]

In another we have these oppositions and answers made unto them:

All grace is given by Christ Jesus. True; but not except Christ Jesus be applied. He is the propitiation for our sins; by his stripes we are healed; he hath offered up himself for us: all this is true, but apply it. [cf [1 Jn 2:2](#); [Is 53:5](#); [1 Pet 2:24](#); [Heb 7:27](#); 9:14; 10:12] We put all satisfaction in the blood of Jesus Christ; but we hold that the means which Christ hath appointed for us in this case to apply it are our penal works. [Francis Panigarola]

Our countrymen in Rheims [a gathering-place for Roman Catholic expatriates from England, and the site of a Jesuit seminary for the training of English priests] make the like answer, that they seek salvation no other way than by the blood of Christ, and that humbly they do use prayers, fasting, alms, faith, charity, sacrifice, sacraments, priests, only as the means appointed by Christ, to apply the benefit of his holy blood unto them: touching our good works, that in their own natures they are not meritorious nor answerable unto the joys of heaven; it cometh by the grace of Christ, and not of the work itself, that we have by well-doing a right to heaven and deserve it worthily.

If any men think that I seek to varnish their opinions, to set the better foot of a lame cause foremost, let him know that since I began thoroughly to understand their meaning I have found their halting in this doctrine greater than perhaps it seemeth to them who know not the deepness of Satan, as the blessed Divine speaketh. [[Rev 2:24](#)] For, although this be proof sufficient, that they do not deny directly the foundation of faith, yet, if there were no other leaven in the whole lump of their doctrine but this, this were sufficient to prove that their doctrine is not agreeable with the foundation of Christian faith. The Pelagians, being over-great friends unto nature, made themselves enemies unto grace, for all their confessing that men have their souls and all the faculties thereof, their wills and the ability of their wills, from God. And is not the Church of Rome still an adversary unto Christ's merits, because of her acknowledging that we have received the power of meriting by the blood of Christ? Sir Thomas More setteth down the odds between us and the Church of Rome in the matter of works thus:

Like as we grant them that no good work of man is rewardable in heaven of his own nature, but through the goodness of God, that list to set so high a price upon so poor a thing, and that this price God setteth through Christ's passion, and for that also they be his own works with us (for good works to God-ward worketh no man, without God work in him); and as we grant them also that no man may be proud of his works for his own imperfect working; and for that in all that man may do he can do no good, but is a servant unprofitable and doth but his bare duty; as we, I say, grant unto them these things, so this one thing or twain do they grant us again, that men are bound to work good works if they have time and power, and that whoso worketh in true faith most shall be most rewarded; but then set they thereto that all his rewards shall be given him for his faith alone, and nothing for his works at all, because his faith is the thing, they say, and forceth him to work well. [Thomas More, A DIALOGUE OF COMFORT, I, 12]

I see by this of Sir Thomas More how easy it is for men of great capacity and judgment to mistake things written or spoken, as well on one side as on another. Their doctrine, as he thought, maketh the works of man rewardable in the world to come through the mere goodness of God, whom it pleaseth to set so high a price upon so poor a thing; and ours, that a man doth receive that eternal and high reward, not for his works, but for his faith's sake by which he worketh; whereas in truth our doctrine is no other than that which we have learned at the feet of Christ: namely, that God doth justify the believing man, yet not for the worthiness of his belief, but for his worthiness who is believed; God rewardeth abundantly everyone who worketh, yet not for any meritorious dignity which is, or can be, in the work, but through his mere mercy, by whose commandment he worketh. Contrariwise, their doctrine is that, as pure water of itself hath no savour, but if it pass through a sweet pipe it taketh a pleasant smell of the pipe through which it passeth, so also, before grace received, our works do neither satisfy nor merit; yet after, they do both the one and the other. Every virtuous action hath then power in such sort to satisfy that if we ourselves commit no mortal sin, no heinous crime, whereupon to spend this treasure of satisfaction in our own behalf, it turneth to the benefit of other men's release on whom it shall please the steward of the house of God to bestow it; so that we may satisfy for ourselves and for others, but merit only for ourselves. In meriting, our actions do work with two hands: with the one they get their morning stipend, the increase of grace; with the other their evening hire, the everlasting crown of glory. Indeed, they teach that our good works do not these things as they come from us, but as they come from grace in us; which grace in us is another thing in their divinity than is the mere goodness of God's mercy toward us in Christ Jesus. [perhaps based on a passage in Panigarola; see also Trent, VI, chs 7,10]

If it were not a strong deluding spirit which hath possession of their hearts, were it possible but that they should see how plainly they do herein gainsay the very ground of apostolic faith? Is this that salvation by grace whereof so plentiful mention is made in the sacred Scriptures of God? Was this their meaning who first taught the world to look for salvation only by Christ? By grace, the Apostle saith, and by grace in such sort as a gift, a thing that cometh not of ourselves, not of our works, lest any man should boast and say, "I have wrought out mine own salvation." [Eph 2:8f; NOTE that the injunction of Phil 2:12, "work out your own salvation," is not an exhortation to save oneself by one's works, but a challenge to put one's salvation to work.] By grace they confess; but by grace in such sort that as many as wear the diadem of bliss, they wear nothing but what they have won. The Apostle, as if he had foreseen how the Church of Rome would abuse the world in time by ambiguous terms, to declare in what sense the name of grace must be taken, when we make it the cause of our salvation, saith, "He saved us according to his mercy"; [Tit 3:5] which mercy, although it exclude not the washing of our new birth, the renewing of our hearts by the Holy Ghost, the means, the virtues, the duties which God requireth at their hands who shall be saved,

yet it is so repugnant unto merits that to say we are saved for the worthiness of anything which is ours is to deny we are saved by grace. Grace bestoweth freely, and therefore justly requireth the glory of that which is bestowed. We deny the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we imbase, disannul, annihilate the benefit of his bitter passion, if we rest in those proud imaginations that life everlasting is deservedly ours, that we merit it, and that we are worthy of it.

ERROR AND HERESY NOT ALWAYS IDENTICAL

Howbeit, considering how many virtuous and just men, how many saints, how many martyrs, how many of the ancient fathers of the Church have had their sundry perilous opinions -- and among sundry of their opinions this, that they hoped to make God some part of amends for their sins by the voluntary punishments which they laid upon themselves: because by a consequent it may follow hereupon that they were injurious unto Christ, shall we therefore make such deadly epitaphs and set them upon their graves: "They denied the foundation of faith directly, they are damned, there is no salvation for them"? St. Augustine hath said, "Errare possum, haereticus esse nolo." [I may be mistaken, but I have not the will to be heretical.] And except we put a difference between them that err and them that obstinately persist in error, how is it possible that ever any man should hope to be saved?

Surely, in this case, I have no respect of any person alive or dead. Give me a man, of what estate or condition soever, yea, a cardinal or a pope, whom at the extreme point of his life affliction hath made to know himself, whose heart God hath touched with true sorrow for all his sins, and filled with love toward the Gospel of Christ, whose eyes are opened to see the truth, and his mouth to renounce all heresy and error any way opposite thereunto, this one opinion of merits excepted, which he thinketh God will require at his hands, and because he wanteth, therefore trembleth and is discouraged: "It may be I am forgetful or unskilful, not furnished with things new and old, as a wise and learned scribe should be," [Mt 13:52] nor able to allege that whereunto, if it were alleged, he doth bear a mind most willing to yield, and so to be recalled as well from this as from other errors -- and shall I think, because of this only error, that such a man toucheth not so much as the hem of Christ's garment? If he do, wherefore should not I have hope that virtue may proceed from Christ to save him? Because his error doth by consequent overthrow his faith shall I therefore cast him off as one who hath utterly cast of Christ, one who holdeth not so much as by a slender thread? No, I will not be afraid to say unto a cardinal or to a pope in this plight, "Be of good comfort, we have to do with a merciful God, ready to make the best of that little which we hold well, and not with a captious sophister who gathereth the worst out of everything wherein we err." Is there any reason that I should be suspected, or you offended, for this speech?

Let all affection [that is, sentiment or predisposition] be laid aside; let the matter be indifferently considered. Is it a dangerous thing to imagine that such men may find mercy? The hour may come when we shall think it a blessed thing to hear that if our sins were as the sins of the pope and cardinals the bowels of the mercy of God are larger. I do not propose unto you a pope with the neck of an emperor under his foot, a cardinal riding his horse to the bridle in the blood of saints, but a pope or a cardinal sorrowful, penitent, disrobed, stripped, not only of usurped power, but also delivered and recalled from error and Antichrist,

converted and lying prostrate at the feet of Christ; and shall I think that Christ will spurn him? Shall I cross and gainsay the merciful promises of God generally made unto penitent sinners by opposing the name of a pope or a cardinal? What difference is there between a pope and cardinal, and a John a Style, in this case? If we think it impossible for them, after they be once come within that rank, to be afterwards touched with any such remorse, let that be granted. The Apostle saith, "If I or an angel from heaven preach unto you," etc. [Gal 1:8] Let it be as likely that St. Paul or an angel from heaven should preach heresy as that a pope or a cardinal should be brought so far forth to acknowledge the truth; yet if a pope or a cardinal should, what could we find in their persons why they might not be saved? It is not their persons, you will say, but the error wherein I suppose them to die which excludeth them from hope of mercy: the opinion of merits doth take away all possibility of salvation from them. What, although they hold it only as an error; although they hold the truth soundly and sincerely in all other parts of Christian faith; although they have in some measure all the virtues and graces of the Spirit, all other tokens of God's elect children in them; although they be far from having any proud presumptuous opinion that they shall be saved for the worthiness of their deeds; although the only thing which troubleth and molesteth them be but a little too much dejection, somewhat too great a fear, rising from an erroneous conceit [conception] that God will require a worthiness in them which they are grieved to find wanting in themselves; although they be not obstinate in this persuasion; although they be willing and would be glad to forsake it, if any one reason were brought to disprove it; although the only let [hindrance] why they do not forsake it ere they die be the ignorance of the means whereby it might be disproved; although the cause why the ignorance in this point is not removed be the want of knowledge in such as should be able, and are not, to remove it? Let me die if ever it be proved that simply an error doth exclude a pope or a cardinal, in such a case, utterly from hope of life. Surely, I must confess unto you, if it be an error to think that God may be merciful to save men even when they err, my greatest comfort is my error: were it not for the love I bear unto this error, I would neither wish to speak nor to live.

Wherefore, to resume that mother-sentence, whereof I little thought that so much trouble would have grown, "I doubt not but God was merciful to save thousands of our fathers living in popish superstitions, inasmuch as they sinned ignorantly": alas, what bloody matter is there contained in this sentence that it should be an occasion of so many hard censures! Did I say that "thousands of our fathers might be saved"? I have showed which way it cannot be denied. Did I say, "I doubt it not but they were saved"? I see no impiety in this persuasion, though I had no reason in the world for it. Did I say, "Their ignorance doth make me hope they did find mercy and so were saved"? What doth hinder salvation but sin? Sins are not equal; and ignorance, though it do not make sin to be no sin, yet, seeing it did make their sin the less, why should it not make our hope concerning their life the greater? We pity the most, and I doubt not but God hath most compassion over, them that sin for

want of understanding. As much is confessed by sundry others, almost in the selfsame words which I have used. It is but only my ill hap that the same sentences which favour verity in other men's books should seem to bolster heresy when they are once by me recited. [cf the opinion of Calvin, cited above] If I be deceived in this point, not they but the blessed Apostle hath deceived me. What I said of others, the same he saith of himself: "I obtained mercy, for I did it ignorantly." [1 Tim 1:13] Construe his words, and ye cannot misconstrue mine. I speak no otherwise, I meant no otherwise.

Thus have I brought the question concerning our fathers at the length unto an end; of whose estate, upon so fit an occasion as was offered me, handling the weighty causes of separation between the Church of Rome and us, and the weak motives which commonly are brought to retain men in that society, amongst which motives the example of our fathers deceased is one; although I saw it convenient to utter that sentence which I did, to the end that all men might thereby understand how untruly we are said to condemn as many as have been before us otherwise persuaded than we ourselves are; yet more than one sentence I did not think it expedient to utter, judging it a great deal meeter for us to have regard to our own estate than to sift over curiously what is become of other men; and fearing lest that such questions as this, if voluntarily they should be too far waded in, might seem worthy of that rebuke which our Saviour thought needful in a case not unlike: "What is this unto thee?" [Jn 21:22] When as I was forced, much besides mine expectation, to render a reason of my speech, I could not but yield at the call of others to proceed as duty bound me for the fuller satisfaction of men's minds. Wherein I have walked, as with reverence, so with fear: with reverence in regard of our fathers who lived in former times; not without fear, considering them that are alive.

I am not ignorant how ready men are to feed and soothe up themselves in evil. Shall I (will the man say that loveth the present world more than he loveth Christ), shall I incur the high displeasure of the mightiest upon earth, shall I hazard my goods, endanger my estate, put my life in jeopardy, rather than yield to that which so many of my fathers have embraced, and yet found favour in the sight of God? "Curse Meroz, saith the Lord, curse her inhabitants because they help not the Lord, they help him not against the mighty." [Jud 5:23] If I should not only not help the Lord against the mighty, but help to strengthen them that are mighty against the Lord, worthily might I fall under the burden of that curse, worthy I were to bear my own judgment. But if the doctrine which I teach be a flower gathered in the garden of the Lord, a part of the saving truth of the Gospel, from whence notwithstanding poisoned creatures do suck venom, I can but wish it were otherwise and content myself with the lot that hath befallen me, the rather because it hath not befallen me alone. St. Paul did preach a truth, and a comfortable truth, when he taught that the greater our misery is in respect of our iniquities the readier is the mercy of our God for our release, if we seek unto him; the

more we have sinned, the more praise and glory and honour unto him that pardoneth our sin.

But mark what lewd collections were made hereupon by some: "Why then am I condemned for a sinner?" And, saith the Apostle, "as we are blamed and as some affirm that we say, why do we not evil that good may come of it?" [[Rom 3:7f](#)] He was accused to teach that which ill-disposed men did gather by his teaching, though it were clean not only beside but also against his meaning. The Apostle addeth: "Their condemnation who thus do is just." I am not hasty to apply sentences of condemnation: I wish from my heart their conversion, whosoever are thus perversely affected. For I must needs say, their case is fearful, their estate dangerous, who harden themselves, presuming on the mercy of God towards others. It is true that God is merciful, but let us beware of presumptuous sins. [[Ps 19:13](#)] God delivered Jonah from the bottom of the sea: will you therefore cast yourselves headlong from the tops of rocks and say in your hearts, "God shall deliver us"? [[cf Mt 4:5-7](#)] He pitieth the blind that would gladly see; but will God pity him that may see and hardeneth himself in blindness? No; Christ hath spoken too much unto you for you to claim the privilege of your fathers.

As for us that have handled this cause concerning the condition of our fathers, whether it be this thing or any other which we bring unto you, the counsel is good which the wise man giveth: "Stand thou fast in thy sure understanding, in the way and knowledge of the Lord, and have but one manner of word, and follow the word of peace and righteousness." [[Ecclus 5:10](#)] As a loose tooth is a great grief unto him that eateth, so doth a wavering and unstable word, in speech that tendeth to instruction, offend. "Shall a wise man speak words of the wind," saith Eliphaz -- light, inconstant, unstable words? [[Job 15:2](#)] Surely the wisest may speak words of the wind: such is the untoward constitution of our nature that we neither do so perfectly understand the way and knowledge of the Lord, nor so steadfastly embrace it when it is understood, nor so graciously utter it when it is embraced, nor so peaceably maintain it when it is uttered, but that the best of us are overtaken sometimes through blindness, sometimes through hastiness, sometimes through impatience, sometimes through other passions of the mind, whereunto (God doth know) we are too subject.

We must therefore be contented both to pardon others and to crave that others may pardon us for such things. Let no man who speaketh as a man think himself (whilst he liveth) always freed from scapes and oversights in his speech. The things themselves which I have spoken unto you I hope are sound, howsoever they have seemed otherwise unto some, at whose hands if I have, in that respect, received injury, I willingly forget it; although, in truth, considering the benefit which I have reaped by this necessary search of truth, I rather incline unto that of the Apostle, "They have not injured me at all." [[2 Cor 2:5,10](#)] I have cause to wish, and I do wish them as many blessings in the kingdom of heaven as they have forced me to utter words and syllables in this cause, wherein I could not be more sparing in speech than I have been. "It becometh no man," saith St. Jerome, "to be patient in the crime of

heresy." [that is, "patient when under suspicion of heresy." Jerome, AGAINST JOHN OF JERUSALEM, 2 J P Migne, PATROLOGIOE LATINAE, vol 33] Patient, as I take it, we should be always, though the crime of heresy were intended; but silent in a thing of so great consequence I could not, beloved, I durst not be; especially the love which I bear to the truth in Christ Jesus being hereby somewhat called in question. Whereof I beseech them, in the meekness of Christ, [2 Cor 10:1] that have been the first original cause, to consider that a watchman may cry "An enemy!" when indeed a friend cometh. In which case, as I deem such a watchman to be more worthy to be loved for his care than disliked for his error, so I have judged it my own part in this case, as much as in me lieth, to take away all suspicion of any unfriendly intent or meaning against the truth, from which, God doth know, my heart is free.

Now to you, beloved, who have heard these things I will use no other words of admonition than those which are offered me by St. James: "My brethren, have not this faith of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ in respect of persons." [Jas 2:1] Ye are now to learn that, as of itself it is not hurtful, so neither should it be to any man scandalous and offensive, in doubtful cases, to hear the different judgment of men. Be it that Cephas hath one interpretation and Apollos hath another, that Paul is of this mind and Barnabas of that; if this offend you, the fault is yours. Carry peaceable minds, and ye may have comfort by this variety.

Now the God of peace give you peaceable minds and turn it to your everlasting comfort!

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