

INSTITUTES
OF
THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

BOOK THIRD.

THE MODE OF OBTAINING THE GRACE OF CHRIST. THE BENEFITS IT CONFERS, AND THE EFFECTS RESULTING FROM IT.

CHAPTER XVI.

REFUTATION OF THE CALUMNIES BY WHICH IT IS ATTEMPTED TO
THROW ODIUM ON THIS DOCTRINE.

The divisions of this chapter are,—I. The calumnies of the Papists against the orthodox doctrine of Justification by Faith are reduced to two classes. The first class, with its consequences, refuted, sec. 1-3. II. The second class, which is dependant on the first, refuted in the last section.

Sections.

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

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

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

2. It is also most untrue that men’s minds are withdrawn from the desire of well-doing when we deprive them of the idea of merit. Here, by the way, the reader must be told that those men absurdly infer merit from reward, as I will afterwards more clearly explain. They thus infer, because ignorant of the principle that God gives no less a display of his liberality when he assigns reward to works, than when he bestows the faculty of well-doing. This topic it will be better to defer to its own place. At present, let it be sufficient merely to advert to the weakness of their objection. This may be done in two ways.‡ For, *first*, they are altogether in error when they say that, unless a hope of reward is held forth, no regard will be had to the right

* This sentence is wholly omitted in the French.

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

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

conduct of life. For if all that men do when they serve God is to look to the reward, and hire out or sell their labour to him, little is gained: he desires to be freely worshipped, freely loved: I say he approves the worshipper w^ho, even if all hope of reward were cut off, would cease not to worship him. Moreover, when men are to be urged, there cannot be a stronger stimulus than that derived from the end of our redemption and calling, such as the word of God employs when it says, that it wore the height of impiety and ingratitude not to “love him w^ho first loved us that by “the blood of Christ” our conscience is purged “from dead works to serve the living God;” that it were impious sacrilege in any one to count “the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing that we have been “delivered out of the hands of our enemies,” that we “might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life;” that being “made free from sin,” we “become the servants of righteousness;” “that our old man is crucified with him,” in order that we might rise to newness of life. Again, “if ye then be risen with Christ, (as becomes his members,) seek those things which are above,” living as pilgrims in the world, and aspiring to heaven, where our treasure is. “The grace of God hath appeared to all men, bringing salvation, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Spirit,” which it were impious to profane? “Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as the children of light.” “God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain “from all illicit desires: ours is a “holy calling,” and we respond not to it except by purity of life. “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Can there be a stronger argument in exciting us to charity than that of John? “If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” Similar is the argument of Paul, “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?” “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” Can there be a stronger incentive to holiness than when we are told by John, “Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure?” and by Paul, “Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit;” or when we hear our Saviour hold forth himself as an example to us that we should fol-

low his steps?*

3. I have given these few passages merely as a specimen; for were I to go over them all, I should form a large volume. All the Apostles abound in exhortations, admonitions, and rebukes, for the purpose of training the man of God to every good work, and that without any mention of merit. Nay, rather their chief exhortations are founded on the fact, that without any merit of ours, our salvation depends entirely on the mercy of God. Thus Paul, who during a whole Epistle had maintained that there was no hope of life for us save in the righteousness of Christ, when he comes to exhortation, beseeches us by the mercy which God has bestowed upon us, (Rom. xii. 1.) And, indeed, this one reason ought to have been sufficient, that God may be glorified in us. But if any are not so ardently desirous to promote the glory of God, still the remembrance of his kindness is most sufficient to incite them to do good, (see Chrysost. Homil. in Genes.) But those men,† because, by introducing the idea of merit, they perhaps extract some forced and servile obedience of the Law, falsely allege, that as we do not adopt the same course, we have no means of exhorting to good works. As if God were well pleased with such services when he declares that he loves a cheerful giver, and forbids any thing to be given him grudgingly or of necessity, (2 Cor. ix. 7.) I say not that I would reject that or omit any kind of exhortation which Scripture employs, its object being not to leave any method of animating us untried. For it states, that the recompense which God will render to every one is *according to his deeds*; but, first, I deny that that is the only, or, in many instances, the principal motive; and, secondly, I admit not that it is the motive with which we are to begin. Moreover, I maintain that it gives not the least countenance to those merits which these men are always preaching. This will afterwards be seen. Lastly, there is no use in this recompense, unless we have previously embraced the doctrine that we are justified solely by the merits of Christ as apprehended by faith, and not by any merit of works; because the study of piety can be fitly prosecuted only by those by whom this doctrine has been previously imbibed. This is beautifully intimated by the Psalmist when he thus addresses God, “There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared,” (Ps. cxxx. 4.) For he shows that the worship of God cannot exist without acknowledging his mercy, on which it is founded and established. This is specially deserving of notice, as showing us not only that the beginning of the due worship of God is confidence in his mercy; but that the fear of God

* 1 John iv. 10, 19; Heb. ix. 14; x. 29; Luke i. 74, 75; Rom. vi. 18; Col. iii. 1; Tit. ii. 11; 1 Thess. v. 9; 1 Cor. iii. 16; Eph. ii. 21; v. 8; 2 Cor. vi. 16; 1 Thess. iv. 3, 7; 2 Tim. i. 9; Rom. vi. 18; 1 John iv. 10; iii. 11; 1 Cor. vi. 15, 17; xii. 12; 1 John iii. 3; 2 Cor. vii. 1; John xv. 10.

† French, “ces Pharisiens;”—those Pharisees.

(which Papists will have to be meritorious) cannot be entitled to the name of merit, for this reason, that it is founded on the pardon and remission of sins.

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