

# The Benefits of Christ

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# The Benefits of Christ

## CHAPTER I

*Of original sin, and of the misery of man.*

The Holy Scripture saith that God created man to his own similitude and likeness, making him as concerning the body impassible, and as touching the soul, righteous, true, godly, merciful, and holy: but after that he, being overcome with desire of knowledge of good and evil, did eat of the apple that God had forbidden him, he lost that image and likeness of God, and became like unto beasts and the devil that had deceived him; and therefore, as concerning the soul he became unrighteous, a liar, and cruel, ungodly, and the enemy of God; and as concerning the body he became passible, and subject unto a thousand evils and infirmities, being not only like but also inferior to the most brute beasts. And, as if our first parents had obeyed God, they had left us, as of inheritance, their righteousness and holiness, so now, in that they were disobedient unto him, they have left us of inheritance their unrighteousness, ungodliness, and hatred towards God, in such sort that it is impossible that by our own strength we can love God and conform ourselves unto his will. We are so become very enemies unto him, as to him that (insomuch as he is a righteous Judge) will punish our faults, neither can we any more trust unto his mercy. And to be short, this our nature by the sin of Adam is wholly corrupt, which nature, being before superior to all creatures, is now become subject to all, yea the bondservant of the devil, sin, and death, and is condemned to the pains of hell, having lost the right judgment or discerning of all things, and beginneth to call good evil and evil good, counting false things true and true things false. Whereupon the prophet considering this, saith that every man is a liar, and that there is not one that doth good,

insomuch that the devil reigneth peaceably as one strongly armed in his own palace, which is this world, whereof he is become prince and governor.

There is no tongue that can express the thousandth part of our miseries, forasmuch that after we were made of God as with his own hands, we have lost that image of God, and are become like unto the devil, and are made also naturally one self [same] thing with him, both willing all that he willeth and also refusing all that displeaseth him. And forasmuch as we be thus given to [a] prey to so wicked a spirit, there is no sin so great that every one of us is not ready to do, when we are not let by the grace of God. This privation or want of righteousness, and this inclination and readiness to all unrighteousness and ungodliness, is called original sin; the which we bring with us from our mother's womb, being born the children of wrath, and yet took beginning of our first parents, and is the occasion and well-head of all the sins and iniquity that we commit, from the which if we will be delivered, and return to this first innocency, recovering the likeness of God, it is necessary that we know first our miseries. And for this cause, even as no man at any time seeketh after a physician if he know not himself to be sick, neither knoweth the excellency of the physician, nor the bounden goodwill that he ought to bear towards him in that behalf, nor if he know not his sickness to be very dangerous, and threatening death, even so no man knoweth Christ the only healer of our souls if he know not his soul to be sick, nor can know the excellency of Christ, nor the bounden goodwill that he ought to bear to him, if he do not go down into the knowledge of his most grievous sins, and of the most dangerous sickness that we have caught by the infection of our first parents.

## CHAPTER II

*That the law was given of God to the intent that we might first know our sin; and then that distrustful to be justified by our own works, we might run unto the mercy of God, and the righteousness of faith.*

And therefore, God minding of his infinite goodness and mercy to send his only-begotten Son to deliver the miserable children of Adam, and knowing that it was needful first to make them know their own misery, God (I say) chose Abraham, in whose seed he did promise to bless all the generations of the earth, and to accept for his peculiar and chosen people all that descended of him, to whom, after they were gone out of Egypt and delivered from the bondage of Pharaoh, he gave by Moses the law, the which forbade concupiscences or lusts, and commanded that we should love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our power; in such wise that all our hope should be put in God, and that we should be ready to depart from our own lives for the same our good God's sake, to suffer all torments in all parts of our bodies, to deprive ourselves of all our goods, dignities, and honours, to honour the same our God with all, choosing rather to die than to commit a thing never so little that should not please the same our good God. And to do all those things with all joyfulness and promptness of heart.

The law commandeth farther that we love our neighbour as ourself, understanding by our neighbour all states of men, as well our enemies as friends, commanding that we be ready to do [to] all men that which we should be done to us, and to love all things that appertain to others as that that pertaineth properly to ourselves. A man then looking (as in a bright glass) in this holy law knoweth forthwith his own likeness and his unability to obey unto the commandment of God, and to give due honour and love again unto his Maker. Then the first office that the law doth is this, it maketh sin to be known, as affirmeth Saint Paul. I knew not (saith he) what sin meant but by the law. The second office of the law is that it maketh sin to increase; for we being separate from the obedience of God, and made servants of the devil, and full of vicious affections and appetites, cannot suffer that God do forbid us concupiscences or lusts, the which the more they be forbidden the more they do increase. Whereupon Saint Paul saith, that above measure he became a sinner; sin (as he himself saith) was dead, but the law once coming it then rose up on and grew. The third office is that it openly declareth the wrath and justice of God, the which threateneth death and pain everlasting to them that doth not fully keep his law. And therefore the Holy Scripture saith, Accursed is he that keepeth not thoroughly all things that are written in the book of the law. Therefore Saint Paul saith, that the law is the administration of death, and that it worketh ire. Then the law having discovered and shewed sin and increased the same, having also shewed the wrath and fury of God, that threateneth death, it doth the fourth office, that is to say, it feareth the man, who then becometh desperate, and would satisfy the law, but he saith plainly that he cannot; and forasmuch as he cannot he is angry with God, and would that there were no God at all, because he feareth to be sharply chastened and punished of him: as Saint Paul saith, The wisdom of the flesh is the enemy of God. Wherefore it is not subject to the law of God, nor can be. The fifth office of the law, and his proper and most excellent and necessary end and effect, is that it causeth a man even of necessity to go unto Christ; as the Hebrews, being afraid, were necessarily constrained to desire Moses, saying, Let not God talk with us lest we die; speak thou to us, and we will obey thee, and do anything. The Lord answered, They have spoken very well; and for none other thing were they praised, but only because they demanded a mediator between them and God, the which was Moses, who signified Jesus Christ, who should be the Advocate and Mediator between them and God.

And therefore God said unto Moses, I will raise to them a prophet from the midst of their own brethren like to thee, and will put my word in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I will command; and I will punish every one that will not obey my word, the which he shall speak in my name.

### CHAPTER III

#### *That the forgiveness of our sins, our justification, and all our salvation dependeth on Christ.*

Forsomuch now as our Lord God hath thus sent that great prophet whom He promised, which is His only-begotten Son, to the intent that he should deliver us from the malediction or curse of the law, and should reconcile us unto God, and make able our will to do good works, healing our freewill, and restoring to us that likeness of God which we had lost by the sin of our first parents; and forsomuch as we know that under heaven there is given none other name to mankind whereby we may be saved besides the name of Jesus Christ, let us therefore run with the paces or steps of our lively faith in him, into his arms that calleth us, crying, Come to me, all ye that labour and are laden, and I will ease you. What consolation, what joyfulness of heart in this life, may be compared to [his] joy and comfort that having felt himself first oppressed with the intolerable weight of his sins, heareth afterward so sweet and pleasant a saying of the Son of God, who promised him so mercifully thoroughly to ease and to deliver him of so great a burden? But all consisteth in this, that we know from whence our sickness and misery cometh: for no man tasteth or truly discerneth that that is good, unless first he have felt that that is evil; and therefore saith Christ, If any man thirst let him come to me and drink; as he might say, except a man know himself a sinner, and thirst for righteousness, he cannot taste how sweet this our Jesus Christ is, nor how pleasant it is to think and speak of Him, and to follow his most holy life and conversation. If then we know our sickness by the office of the law, behold then Saint John Baptist sheweth with his finger unto us our merciful healer and Saviour, saying, Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. The which (I say) delivered us from the grievous yoke of the law, abrogating and making of none effect the maledictions or cursings, and sharp threatenings thereof; healing all our sicknesses, reforming our freewill, and restoring us unto our first innocency, and bringing to us again the likeness of God. And therefore, as Saint Paul saith, As by Adam we are all dead, even so by Christ we all are revived. Then let not us believe that the sin of Adam, which we have inherited, is of greater efficacy than the righteousness of Christ, which we have in like manner by faith inherited.

It might have seemed that a man might have been sorry that without his occasion he should be born and conceived in sin, through the iniquity of his parents, whereby death reigned over all men; but now is taken away all lamentation, forasmuch as in the selfsame manner, without our occasion, the righteousness of Christ, and life everlasting by Christ, is come unto us, death being by him slain; whereupon Saint Paul maketh a very goodly discourse, which I will hereunder write: As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by the means of sin, and so death went over all men, insomuch that all men sinned; for even unto the time of the law was sin in the world, but sin was not regarded as long as there was no law: nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them all that sinned not with like transgression as Adam did, which is the similitude of him that is to come. But the gift is not like as the sin. For if through the sin of one many be dead, much more plenteous upon many was the grace of God and gift by grace, which grace was given by one man, Jesus Christ: and the gift is not over one sin, as death came through one sin of one that sinned; for damnation came of one sin unto condemnation, but the gift came to justify from many sins. For if by the sin of one death reigned by the means of one, much more shall they that receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, reign in life by means of one, that is to say, Jesus Christ. Likewise then as by the sin of one condemnation came on all men, even so by the justifying of one cometh the righteousness that bringeth life upon all men. For as by one man's disobedience many became sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. But the law in the meantime entered in, that sin should increase; never the less, where abundance of sin was, there was more plenteousness of grace, that as sin had reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by the help of Jesus Christ.

By these words of Saint Paul we know that is above said, that is to say, that the law was given to the intent that sin might be known, and that thereby we might know that it is not of greater efficacy than is the righteousness of Christ, by the which we are justified before God. Therefore as Christ is of more power than Adam, even so the righteousness of Christ is of more efficacy than the sin of Adam. And if the sin of Adam were sufficient to make us sinners, and the children of wrath, without any sin actually done of us, much more shall be sufficient the righteousness of Christ to make us righteous, and the children of grace, without any of our good works. Neither can they be good except that before we do them we our own selves be made good and righteous by faith, as affirmed in like manner Saint Augustine. Hereby a man may know in how much error they be which for any sin, be it never so great, do despair of the mercy of God, and do think that he is not able to forgive, take away and pardon every sin, be it never so grievous, when he hath in his only-begotten Son already chastened all our faults and

iniquities, and therefore consequently hath given a general pardon to all mankind, whereof every one hath benefit and fruition that believeth the gospel, that is to say, the most happy news which the apostles have published throughout the world, saying, We even in Christ's stead pray you that ye be reconciled unto God; for he hath made him which knew no sin to be sin for us, that we by his means might be that righteousness that before God is allowed. And Esay, who evidently setteth forth so well the passion of Jesus Christ and the cause of it, that in the writing of the apostles there is not found a better description or a plainer setting forth; he (I say), foreseeing this great benefit of the mercy of God, writeth this most godly sentence, Who giveth credence unto our preaching, or to whom is the arm of the Lord known? he shall grow before the Lord like as a branch, and as a root in a dry ground: he shall have neither beauty nor favour: when we look on him there shall be no fairness, we shall have no lust unto him; he shall be the most simple and despised of all: which yet hath good experience of sorrows and infirmities; we shall reckon him so simple and so vile, that we shall hide our faces from him. Howbeit (of a truth) he taketh only away our infirmity, and beareth our pain, yet we shall judge him as though he were plagued and cast down of God; whereas he (notwithstanding) shall be wounded for our offences and smitten for our wickedness; for the pain of our punishment shall be laid on him, and with his stripes shall we be healed. As for us, we go all astray like sheep, every one turneth his own way; but through him the Lord pardoneth all our sins. He shall be pained and troubled, and shall not open his mouth; he shall be led as a sheep to be slain, yet shall he be still as a lamb before the shearer, and not open his mouth. O great ingratitude and abominable thing it is if we, professing ourselves to be Christians, and knowing that the Son of God hath taken upon him all our sins, and has also cancelled them with his own most precious blood, having suffered himself to be chastened for us on the cross, if we (I say) nevertheless go about to justify ourselves, and to obtain the forgiveness of our sins by our own works, as though the merits, the righteousness, and the blood of Christ were not sufficient to do it unless we put thereunto our foolish righteousness, spotted with the love of ourselves and with the respect to rewards, and with a thousand vanities; for the which we ought rather to ask of God pardon than reward: and we remember not Saint Paul's threatening of the Galatians, who being beguiled by false preachers, not believing that justification by faith was of itself sufficient, did pretend that they would be justified still by the law, to whom Saint Paul said, Christ nothing helpeth you that will justify yourselves by the law; ye are fallen from grace; we therefore look for and hope in the Spirit, to be justified through faith.

And now if the seeking of righteousness and forgiveness of sins be by the keeping of the law, that the Lord with so great glory and open miracles gave in the hill of Sinai, be a losing of Christ and his grace, what shall we say then of them that pretend and endeavour to justify themselves before God with their own law and observations? Let those persons make the comparison, and after give their judgment. Insomuch as God will not give that honour and glory to his own law, will they then that he give it to their laws and constitutions? This honour he giveth alonely to his only-begotten Son: he only with the sacrifice of his passion hath made satisfaction for all our sins, past, present, and to come, as Saint Paul saith to the Hebrews, 7, 9, 10 chapters, and Saint John in his first epistle, 1, 2 chapters. Through which as oft as we apply by faith this satisfaction of Christ to our souls, we obtain undoubtedly forgiveness of sins, and by his righteousness we become good and righteous before God. And therefore Saint Paul saith in the third [chapter of his] epistle to the Philippians, after that he had said that as touching the righteousness which is in the law he was unrebukeable, he joineth, But the things that were vantage unto me I counted loss for Christ's sake: yea, I think all things but loss for that excellent knowledge sake of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have counted all things loss, and do judge them but dung, that I might win Christ, and might be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which springeth of the faith which is in Jesus Christ; I mean the righteousness which cometh of God through faith in knowing him. O words most notable, the which every Christian man should engrave in his heart, beseeching God to make him taste the same perfectly! Behold how Saint Paul sheweth clearly that whosoever knoweth Christ truly judgeth the works of the law loss, insomuch as they draw a man from trusting in Christ (in whom we ought to settle our health), and causeth him to trust in himself; and aggravating this sentence he joineth therewith, that he judged all things dung, that he might win Christ, and might be found incorporate in him, shewing that whosoever trusteth in works, and goeth about to be justified by them, he winneth not Christ, neither is by any means incorporate in him, and therefore in this truth consisteth the whole mystery of faith; and to the intent that they should the better understand that he said, he joineth to it and affirmeth boldly that he refused all outward justification, all righteousness founded in the observing of the law, trusting only and assuredly unto the righteousness that God giveth by faith to them that believe that he hath chastened in Christ [all our sins, who] (as saith the same Saint Paul) was made of him our wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption, or forgiveness of sins; and therefore (as it is written) he that rejoiceth let him rejoice in the Lord, and not in his own works.

Truth it is that there are found some authorities of the Holy Scripture, which being evil-understanded seem to gainsay this holy doctrine of Saint Paul, and that they should attribute the justification and forgiveness of sins to works and charity; but those authorities are declared wondrous well by some others who have evidently proved that they that understand them in that sense understand them not. Let us then (most dearly beloved brethren) follow not the foolish opinion of the bewitched Galatians, but the verity that Saint Paul teacheth, and let us give all the praise of our justification to the mercy of God, and the merits of his Son, who with his blood hath delivered us from the dominion or danger of the law, from the tyranny of sin, and from death, and hath conducted us into the kingdom of God, by giving to us eternal felicity. I say he hath delivered us from the dominion of the law, for he hath given unto us his Spirit that sheweth us all truth, and he hath made perfect satisfaction for

us to the law, and hath given the same satisfaction to all his members, that is to say, to all true Christians, so that they may safely come to the judgment-seat of God, being apparelled with the righteousness of Christ, and delivered by him from the curse of the law [which] cannot any more accuse or condemn us, nor any more stir up our affections and appetites, nor augment sin in us. And therefore saith Saint Paul, The handwriting that was against us was cancelled by Christ, and disannulled in the wooden cross, our Christ having delivered us from the dominion of the law; consequently he hath delivered us from the tyranny of sin and of death, the which cannot hold us any more oppressed, being overcome first of Christ by his resurrection, and then consequently of us that be his members, on such wise, that we may say with St. Paul [and with] Hosea the prophet, Death is overcome and destroyed. O death, where is thy sting? O hell, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be given to God, who hath given us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is that most happy seed which hath trodden down the head of the most venomous serpent, that is to say the devil; and therefore all those that believe in Christ, putting all their hope and confidence in his mercy, do overcome with Christ sin, death, the devil, and hell. This is that blessed seed of Abraham, in the which God did promise to bless all nations.

Every man ought to have trodden down severally that horrible serpent, and to have delivered himself from the malediction or curse; but that enterprise was so great that the force or power of the whole world gathered together was not sufficient to bear it. Our God then being the Father of all mercy, moved with compassion of our miseries, gave us his only-begotten Son, who hath delivered us from the venom of the serpent, and is made our blessing and justification. Let us embrace, most dearly beloved brethren, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, let us make it ours through faith, let us have a sure confidence to be righteous, not by our own works, but by the merits of Christ, and let us live with quiet conscience towards God, and with assured trust that the righteousness of Christ doth annihilate all our unrighteousness, and maketh us righteous and holy in the sight of God, who forso much as he seeth us made by faith one body in his Son, doth not now any more take us as the children of Adam, but as his children, and maketh us heirs with his own legitimate Son of all his riches.

## CHAPTER IV.

### *Of the effects of the lively faith, and of the unity or agreement of the soul with Christ.*

This holy and lively faith worketh so much, that it bringeth to pass that whosoever believeth that Christ hath taken upon him his sins becometh like unto Christ, and overcome sin, death, the devil, and hell; and this is the cause that the Church (that is to say every faithful soul,) is the wife of Christ, and Christ is her husband. We know that the custom of marriage is that of two there become one self[same] thing, they being two in one flesh, and the goods of both become common to either of them, so that the husband saith the dowry of the wife is his, and in like manner the wife saith that the house and all the riches of the husband are hers; and so truly they be, otherwise they should not be one flesh, as the Holy Scripture saith. Even in the self-same manner God hath married his most dearly-beloved Son with the faithful soul, who having nothing of her own but alonely sin, the Son of God nevertheless hath not disdained to take her for his well-beloved spouse with her own dowry which is sin. And by the uniting and knitting together which is wrought in this most holy matrimony, the thing that appertaineth to the one is also the other's, so that Christ saith then, the dowry of the soul, my dearly-beloved spouse, that is to say, her sins, the transgression of the law, the wrath of God against her, [the] malapertness and boldness of the devil against her, the prison of hell and all her other evils, are come into my power, and are in mine own ordering, and unto me it pertaineth to do with the same dowry even as it pleaseth me, and therefore I will cast it upon the altar of my cross, and make it of none effect.

God then seeing his Son all befilled with the sin of his spouse, scourged him, and killed him upon a wooden cross; but yet because he was his most dearly-beloved and obedient Son, he raised him again from death to life, and gave unto him all power in heaven and in earth, and hath set him on his right hand. The spouse in like manner saith with most hearty rejoicing, The realms and empires of my well-beloved husband are mine. I am queen and empress of heaven and earth, my husband's riches, (that is to say) his holiness, his innocency, his righteousness, his Godhead, with all his virtue and power, are my riches; and therefore I am holy, innocent, righteous, and godly; there is no spot in me; I am fair and well-favoured, because my dearly-beloved husband is not spotted, but fair and well-favoured; and he being altogether mine, consequently all that is his is mine; and because he is holy and pure, I also am become holy and pure. Beginning then with his most innocent nativity, he hath with the same sanctified the filthy nativity of his spouse, conceived in sin. The innocent childhood and youth of the husband hath justified the life of the childhood, the youth, and the imperfect working of his beloved wife; and therefore the love and union that the soul of a true Christian man hath with her husband Christ is so great that the work of both are common to both; so that when it is said Christ did fast, Christ did pray, and was heard by his Father, did raise the dead, delivered men from evil spirits, healed the sick, died, rose again, and ascended to heaven; even in like manner it is said, that the Christian man hath done the selfsame work, because the works of Christ are the work of the Christian man, and by him he hath done them all. Truly it may be said that the Christian man was fastened to the cross, buried, raised again, ascended to heaven, and was made partaker of

the nature of God. On the other side, all the works that a Christian man doth are the works of Christ, because he accepteth them as his own, and because they are unperfect and he perfect, and that he willeth not to have any imperfect thing, therefore with his virtue he maketh them perfect, to the intent that [the] wife should be always merry and content, and not be afear'd; and therefore how much soever her works be imperfect, yet are they acceptable before God for his Son's sake, whom continually he beholdeth. O most great bountifulness of God, how much is the Christian man bound to God! There is no human love that may be compared to the love of God, the dearly-beloved Spouse of the soul of every Christian man. Wherefore Saint Paul saith, that Christ loved his church, (that is to say every soul) his beloved spouse, and offered himself for her to the death of the cross, to sanctify her and purify her with the fountain of water, through the word; to make it to himself a glorious congregation, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be wholly without blame, (that is to say) like unto himself in holiness and innocency, and the true and lawful daughter of God, who loved so the world (as John saith) that he gave his only Son, to the end that every one that believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. Wherefore God sent his Son into the world not to judge it, but because the world should be saved by him, so that he that trusteth in him is not condemned.

A man might say to me, in what manner is made the union of this godly matrimony? how is made this copulation of the soul the wife with her husband Christ? what certainty may I have that my soul is united with Christ and made his wife? how may I assuredly glory of his riches as above the wife hath done of her husband's riches? It is easy to me to believe that others receive this honour and glory; but that I am one of them to whom God hath given so great grace, I cannot persuade myself; I know mine own misery and imperfection. Most dearly beloved brother, I answer thee, that thy certainty consisteth in true and lively faith, with the which, as Saint Peter saith, God purifieth the heart. This faith consisteth in giving credence to the Gospel, (that is to say) to the happy news that is published on God's behalf throughout all the world, which is, that God hath used the rigour of his righteousness against Christ, chastening in him all our sins. Whosoever receiveth this good news and believeth it certainly hath the true faith, and broketh the remission of his sins, and is reconciled with God, and of [a] child of wrath becometh the child of grace, and recovereth the image of God, entereth into the kingdom of God, and maketh himself the temple of God; who marrieth the soul with his only-begotten Son through this faith, the which is the work and gift of God (as Saint Paul oftentimes saith), and God giveth it to them that calleth for the same to justify themselves and to give them life everlasting, as Christ testified, saying, This is the will of him that sent me, that every man that seeth the Son and believeth on him, have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. In like manner he saith, As Moses lift up on [high] the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lift up, that none that believeth in him perish, but have eternal life. And to Martha he said, He that believeth on me, yea though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. And he said to the multitude of the Jews, I am come a light unto the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not bide in darkness. And Saint [John] in his Epistle saith, In this appeared the love of God to us-ward, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into this world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to make agreement for our sins. And to that end he made him partaker of our flesh and blood, as St. Paul saith, because that by death he should destroy him that had lordship over death, that is to say, the devil: and that he might deliver them which through fear of death were all their lifetime in danger of bondage. Having then the testimony of the holy scripture upon these promises which are above recited, and upon many other that are in divers places thereof spread abroad, we in nowise may doubt that the same promises should not be true. And insomuch as the scripture speaketh generally, no man ought to doubt that that which it speaketh should not appertain unto him; which thing, because it may the better be understood, and the whole mystery of faith consisteth in it, let us put the case that a good and holy king causeth a proclamation to be made that all such as have at any time rebelled against him should return safely into his realm, because that he by the desert or merits of one of their kin hath pardoned them all, verily none of these rebels ought to doubt that he hath not assuredly obtained pardon and forgiveness for his rebellion, but ought rather with a sure trust return to his house, and to live under the shadow and defence of that holy king; and if he return not, he should bear the pains, and because of his incredulity die a banished man, and in the displeasure of his king. This holy king is the Lord of heaven and earth, the which through the obedience and merits of Christ our kinsman hath pardoned all our rebellion, and (as we have said above) hath caused to be made a proclamation throughout the whole world that safely we may return to his kingdom. Whosoever then trusteth this promise returneth to the kingdom of God (from the which we were cast forth by the offence of our first parents), and is governed most happily of the Spirit of God. He that trusteth not to this proclamation, broketh or enjoyeth not this general pardon, but through his mistrust remaineth still in exile and banishment under the tyranny of the devil, and liveth and dieth in extreme misery; for he liveth and dieth in the displeasure of the King of heaven and earth; and that worthily; for we cannot greatlier offend God than to make him a liar and a deceiver; and that do we when we trust not to his promise.

O how grievous is this sin of incredulity, the which (as much as in it lieth) doth deprive and spoil God of his glory and of his perfection, besides that it bringeth to itself the hurt of everlasting damnation, and continual vexation of mind that in this life the miserable conscience doth feel; but to the contrary, he that approacheth to God with an unfeigned heart and strong faith, trusting to his promises, without any manner of doubting, believing assuredly that all that God promiseth he shall obtain, that man (I say) giveth glory unto God, that man liveth in continual peace and joyfulness of conscience, always praising and thanking God, who hath chosen him to the glory of everlasting life, having a gage most sure and certain, that is to say, the Son

of the same God for his most dearly-beloved spouse, whose blood hath made his heart as it were ghostly drunken and merry. And this most holy faith engendereth a lively hope and an assured trust or belief in the mercy of God towards us; which faith liveth and worketh in the heart, and by the same we altogether put our whole trust in God, committing unto him wholly the care and charge of us, and that in such sort and manner that being sure of the benevolence and mercy of God towards us, we are not afraid neither of the devil, neither of his ministers, neither of death itself. And this so stedfast and comfortable a belief in the mercy of God once brought into the heart sticketh it up, and with certain most sweet affections directeth it towards God, and filleth it with most ardent charity or love. Wherefore Saint Paul exhorteth us that we go with faith to the throne of grace, and he comforteth us not to cast away our faith and confidence which hath great reward. This holy faith and trust is gended in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given us through faith, that never is void of the love of God; and hereof it cometh that by this lively efficacy or strength we are stirred to do good works; and we get so great an ability and inclination or readiness thereto, that we are very ready to do and suffer all things, be they never so intolerable, for the love and glory of God our most benign Father, who by Christ hath made us so rich of his so abundant grace or favour and good mind, and hath made us of enemies most dear children.

This true faith is not so soon given to man by God but that he is forthwith stirred with a most strong zeal and desire to do good works, and to bring forth most pleasant fruits to the Lord, and to his neighbour, as a very good tree; even as it is impossible but that a fagot of fire being kindled must give forth light. This is the faith without the which it is impossible that any man can please God, and by the which all the saints, both of the Old and New Testament, be saved, as Saint Paul testified of Abraham, of whom the Scripture saith, Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness; and therefore he saith a little before, Let us believe then that man is justified by faith, without the works of the law. And in another place he saith, Even so at this time there is a remnant left through the election of grace; if it be of grace, then it is not of works: for then were grace no more grace. And to the Galatians he saith, that it is a manifest thing that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God; for the just shall live by faith. The law is not of faith, but the man that fulfilleth the things contained in the law shall live by them. And a little above he saith, A man is not justified by the deeds of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ: and a little after saith, that if righteousness come by the law, Christ then died in vain, or for nought. And [to] the Romans, comparing the righteousness of the Gospel, he saith, that that consisteth in working and this in believing; for if thou shalt knowledge with thy mouth that Jesus is the Lord, and shalt believe with thine heart that God raised him up from death, thou shalt be safe; for to believe with the heart justifieth, and to knowledge with the mouth maketh a man safe. See how plainly Saint Paul sheweth that faith without any help of works maketh a man righteous.

And not only Saint Paul, but also the holy doctors that came after him have likewise confirmed and approved this most holy verity of justification by faith, amongst the which is principal Saint Augustine, in his *Book of Faith and Works*, and *Of [the] Spirit and the Letter*, and of the *Eighty-three Questions*, and in that he writteth to the Bishop of Rome, Bonifacius, and in his *Tract on the thirty-first Psalm*, and in many other places he defendeth this opinion; the which Origen also defendeth in his *Fourth Book upon the Epistle to the Romans*, affirming that Saint Paul would have that faith only be sufficient to justify the world in such manner, that he saith the man only by believing becometh righteous, although he have done no works: like as the thief was justified without the works of the law; for the Lord did not seek that which he before had wrought, nor tarried that he should work anything after that he had believed; but having justified him by his confession only, took him for his companion when he entered into Paradise. And in like manner that woman so celebrated in the Gospel of Saint Luke, at the feet of Jesus Christ heard said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven thee; and a little after: Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace. And after that Origen adjoineth: In many places of the Scripture it is seen that the Lord spake in such manner that he shewed that faith is the occasion of the health and salvation of him that believeth. Then the man is justified by faith, to the which the works of the law help nothing; and on the contrary part, where the faith is not which justified him that believeth, although a man have the works that the law commandeth, nevertheless because they be not builded upon the foundation of faith, although in outward appearance they appear never so good, they nevertheless cannot justify him that doth them, he wanting faith, which is the mark of them that are justified of God. And who is he that may glory in his own righteousness, hearing God say by the prophet that all our righteousness is like the clothes stained with the flowers of a woman. Then to glory in the faith of the cross of Jesus Christ is the true glorying. Saint Basil, in his homily *Of humility*, expressly willeth that the Christian man account himself righteous only by faith in Christ; his words be these: The apostle saith, he that glorieth, let him [glory] in the Lord, saying that Christ was made by God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and therefore as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. Therefore the perfect and entire glorying is in God, when a man doth not enhance himself by his own righteousness, but knoweth that he lacketh the true righteousness, and that by the only faith in Christ he is justified. Paul also glorieth in not esteeming his own righteousness, and in seeking by faith in Christ the righteousness that cometh from God. Saint Hilarius, upon Saint Matthew in the ninth canon, saith these words: The scribes were troubled because that sin should be remitted of man, for they esteemed Jesus Christ only as man, and that he had remitted that which the law could not remit, and therefore faith only justified. Saint Ambrose, expounding these words of Saint Paul (To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, is faith counted for righteousness; even as David describeth the blessedfulness of the man to whom God ascribeth righteousness without deeds) Saint Ambrose (I say) writeth this upon these words: Saint Paul saith, that to him that believeth in Christ, that is to say, to the Gentile, is his faith

imputed for righteousness, even as it was to Abraham? In what manner then did the Jews think to be justified by the works of the law after the justification of Abraham, when Abraham was not justified by the works of the law, but only by faith? Then the law is not necessary, since the wicked man only by faith is justified before God, according to the purpose of the mercy of God. So he saith that it is determined of God, that, not meddling with the law, the unrighteous for his health and salvation should seek only the faith of the mercy of God, as David also saith. The apostle verifieth that that he spake after the example of the prophet, The blessedfulness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works. David understandeth that they are blessed of whom God hath determined, that without weariness and without any observations by faith only they be made righteous before God. Then he setteth forth the blessedness of the time in which Christ was born, even as saith the same Lord, Many righteous men and prophets have desired to see the things that you [see, and to hear the things that you] hear, and have not heard them. The same Ambrose, expounding the first chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, saith very plainly, that whosoever believeth in Christ is justified without works and without any of his merits, receiving by faith only the remission of sins. He also affirmeth the same in an epistle to Irenaeus with these words, Let no man glory or boast of his works, for no man is justified by his own works; but he that is righteous hath his righteousness by gift; for he is justified by Christ. Then faith is the thing that delivereth us through the blood of Christ; for he is blessed to whom sin is remitted and pardon given. And Saint Bernard, upon Cantica Salomonis, in the seventy-seventh sermon, confirmeth the same, affirming that our merits have no part in our justification; the which should all wholly be attributed unto mercy, which maketh us just freely, and in this manner delivereth us from the servitude or bondage of sin. And further, Saint Bernard saith, That Christ espouseth the soul and uniteth it with him by faith, not mingling therewith any merits of our works. But not to be too long, I will make an end of allegations as soon as I have told a very good saying of Saint Ambrose, in the book that is entitled, *Of Jacob, and of the blessed life*. This holy man saith, that as Jacob, not having merited through himself the being first born, hid him under the habit of his brother, and apparelled himself with his garments, the which cast out a most swell smell, and in that manner presented himself to his father, to receive to his own behoof the blessing under the similitude or likeness of another. So it [is] necessary that we apparel ourselves with the righteousness of Christ by faith, and that we hide us under the precious purity of our eldest brother, if we will be received as righteous in the sight of God.—And surely this is true. Insomuch that if we come into the presence of God not apparelled with the righteousness of Christ, without doubt we shall be all judged unrighteous, and worthy of all punishment; but, on the other side, if God see us apparelled with the righteousness of Christ, no fail he will accept us as just, holy, and worthy eternal life.

And, verily, great is the foolish rashness of them that pretend to come to righteousness by the observation of the commandments of God, which are all comprehended in loving God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself. Who shall be then so arrogant, or presumptuous and mad, that dare believe to keep truly these two commandments, and seeth not that the law of God in requiring of man a perfect love condemneth all unperfectness? Let every man consider then his own works which partly appeareth good to him, and he shall find that his works rather should be called a transgressing of the holy law, forsomuch as they are unclean and imperfect works. Whereupon concluded the words of David, Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall not man be justified. And Solomon saith, Who may say my heart is clean? And Job crieth out, How can he be clean that is born of a woman? behold, that amongst his saints there is none stedfast, nor the heavens are clear in his sight. How much more is he then abominable, the which drinketh iniquity as water! And Saint John saith, That if we will say that we are without sin, we deceive ourselves. And the Lord taught that we should say always when we pray, Forgive us our debts. By this may be gathered the foolishness of them that make merchandise of their works, presuming with those works to be of power to save not only themselves, but also others, as though the Lord had not said, When ye have done all those things which ye are commanded, say, We are unprofitable servants all, and that we have but done that was our duty to do. Behold, that although we keep perfectly the law of God, we may judge and call ourselves unprofitable servants. Now all men being very far off from this perfect fulfilling of the law, dare any man glory that he hath put together so great a heap of merits to the just measure, that he hath to give to others?

But now return to our purpose. Let the arrogant sinner consider, the which (doing some works in the sight of the world laudable) pretendeth to justify himself in the sight of God, let him (I say) consider that all the works that come from a corrupt and unclean heart are themselves in like manner corrupt and unclean, and consequently cannot be acceptable to God, nor of effect or power to justify. It is needful then, first, to purify the heart, if we would that our works please God; and that purifying consisteth in faith, as affirmeth the Holy Ghost by the mouth of Saint Peter. We may not then say that the unrighteous man and sinner by his works becometh just, good, and acceptable to God; but we must say that faith purifieth our hearts from all sin, maketh us good, just, and acceptable to God, and consequently causeth that our works (although they be never so imperfect and weak) do nevertheless please his majesty. For when by faith we are become the children of God, he then considereth our works as a father most merciful, and not as a strait judge: for he hath compassion of our frailty, and considereth us as a member of his first-begotten Son, whose righteousness and perfection supplieth our uncleanness and imperfection, the which being covered under the purity and innocence of Christ, be not imputed unto us, nor come [under] the judgment of God.

Whereof it cometh that the works proceeding from true faith (be they of themselves never so impure and imperfect), yet shall they be greatly praised and commended of Christ in the universal judgment, forasmuch as they shall be the fruit and testimony of our faith, by the which we are saved. For insomuch as we have loved the brethren of Christ we shall shew plainly that we again be made faithful, and the brethren of Christ, and by faith we shall be brought unto the perfect possession of the everlasting kingdom, the which God our heavenly Father prepared for us from the beginning of the world: not because of our merits, but through his mercy, by the which he hath chosen and called us to the grace of the Gospel, and hath justified us, that we may glory for ever with his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord, our justification and righteousness; but not for them that will not confess and knowledge that the same his mercy is of itself sufficient to make a man just and acceptable to God, who through his fatherly kindness offereth and giveth unto us Christ with his righteousness, without any merits of our works. And what thing may man work that might deserve so great a reward and treasure as Christ is? This treasure is given only by the grace, favour, and mercy of God, and faith only is the thing which receiveth such a gift, and maketh us have fruition of the forgiveness of our sins; and therefore when Saint Paul and the doctors say that faith only justifieth without the works, they understand that it only maketh us have fruition of the general pardon and maketh us receive Christ; who (Saint Paul saith) dwelleth in our hearts by faith; who hath overcome the terror of our conscience, made satisfaction to the justice of God for our sins, appeased and quenched the wrath of God against us, and the fire of hell, into the which our natural corruption did throw us headlong, and hath vanquished and destroyed the devil with his power and tyranny. The which things all the works that all men together might do could not attain unto nor bring to pass.

This glory and this power is reserved only to the Son of God, that is to say, unto blessed Christ, who is most mighty above all the powers of heaven and earth and hell, and giveth himself with all his merits to those, that despairing of themselves, put all their hope of salvation in him and his merits. And therefore let no man beguile himself when he heareth say, that only faith without works justifieth, (believing as doth the false Christians, which draweth all things to a fleshly living) that the true faith consisteth in believing the story of Jesus Christ, in like manner as they that believe the histories of Caesar and Alexander. This manner of believing is an historical faith, founded on the very report of man, and of writing, and is printed slightly in the mind by a certain use or custom; and is like to the faith of the Turks, who by the selfsame occasions believeth in the fables of Alcoran. This faith (so made) is an imagination of man, which reneweth nothing the heart of man, nor heateth him with godly love, neither doth there follow it any works of faith, nor new life; and therefore they say falsely, both against the holy Scripture and also the holy doctors of the true Church, that only faith justifieth not, but that the works are needful; to the which I answer, that this historical and very vain faith, with the works that follow it, not alone not justifieth, but also casteth a man down headlong into hell, as those that have no oil in their lamps, that is to say, no true faith in their hearts.

The faith that justifieth is a work of God in us by the which our old man is crucified, and we being altogether transformed into Christ do become a new creature, and dearly-beloved sons of God: this godly faith is such that it graffeth us in the death and resurrection of Christ, and consequently mortifieth the flesh with her affections and concupiscences; for we know ourselves by the efficacy of faith to be dead with Christ, and do therefore determine with ourselves and with the world, and also do understand that it appertaineth to those that are dead with Christ, to mortify their worldly members, that is to say, the sinful affections of the mind, and the appetites or lusts of the flesh; and knowing ourselves raised with Christ, we diligently endeavour to lead a spiritual and holy life, and like that which we shall live in heaven after our resurrection. This most holy faith causeth us to broke or enjoy the general pardon that the Gospel publisheth, yea, it leadeth us into the kingdom of God, and maketh peace in our conscience, and maintaineth in it a perpetual and holy joyfulness and mirth. This sameself faith uniteth us with God, and causeth that God dwelleth in our hearts, and clotheth our soul with himself; and consequently his Holy Spirit moveth us to those things to the which it moved Christ, when he was conversant amongst men: I say, to humility, meekness and obedience of God, charity, and to other perfections, by the which we recover the image of God.

Then worthily Christ doth attribute blessedfulness to this inspired faith, the which blessedness cannot stand without good works and holiness; and how may it be true that the Christian man is not holy if by faith Christ is become his sanctification? Then by faith we become just and holy, and therefore almost always Saint Paul calleth those saints which we call Christian men, who if they have not the Spirit of Christ are not Christian men; and if they have the Spirit of Christ which ruleth and governeth them, we should not doubt that those, how well soever they know themselves justified by faith only, should become slothful to do good works; for the Spirit of Christ is the spirit of charity or love, and charity cannot be idle nor easy from doing good works; and so if we will say the truth, a man can never do good works if first he do not know himself justified through the merits and righteousness of Christ, which he maketh his through faith. [Then and not before he] worketh only for the love and glory of God and of Christ, and not for the love he beareth to himself, nor yet for that he would be thereby justified; whereupon it cometh that the true Christian man (that is to say) he that counteth himself righteous through the righteousness of Christ, asketh not whether good works be commanded or not, but being moved and stirred through the strength of God's love towards him, he again offereth himself most ready to holy Christian works, and never ceaseth to work well.

And he that by his faith feeleth not the marvellous effects that we have spoken of, which the inspired faith doth in a Christian man, let him know that he hath not yet the true Christian faith, and let him make instant prayer to God, to give it

him, saying, Lord, help my incredulity or unbelief; and hearing say, that faith only justifieth, let him not deceive himself, saying, What needeth it that I weary myself in doing good works? Faith sufficeth to send me to Paradise; but let him mark that the devils believeth also and trembleth. Now wilt thou go with them into Paradise through this false conclusion or reasoning? Brother, thou mayest know how great an error thou art in: thou thinkest that thou hast the faith that justifieth, and hast it not; thou sayest, I am rich, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, poor, blind, and naked. I persuade thee to buy of God gold fined in the fire, that is to say, true faith fined through good works, to the intent thou mayest become rich and apparelled with white clothes, that is to say, with the innocency of Christ, to the intent that the shamefulfulness of thy nakedness appear not, that is to say the filthiness of thy sins.

Then the faith that justifieth is like a flame of fire, which cannot but shine; and as it is true that the flame only burneth the wood without the help of the light, so it is true that faith only putteth out and burneth the sins without help of works; and nevertheless this faith cannot be without good works; for as when we see a flame of fire that shineth not, we know that it is painted and vain, so likewise when we see not in any man the light of good works, it is a sign that such a one hath not the true inspired faith the which God giveth to his elects, to justify and glorify them. And I think assuredly that Saint James understood this by his words when he said, Shew me thy faith by they deeds, and I will shew thee my faith by my deeds; meaning that he who attendeth to the ambition and pleasures of the world, how much soever he saith he believeth, he believeth not; since he sheweth not in him the effects of faith. We may yet liken this most holy faith that justifieth, to the divinity or Godhead that was in Jesus Christ, who being very man (but without sin) wrought things wonderful, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, going upon the waters, and raising the dead. But these miraculous works were not the cause that Christ was God; for afore that he wrought any of these works he was God, and the lawful and only-begotten Son of God; and it was not to him needful to work such miracles that thereby he might become God, but contrariwise, because he was God he wrought them: wherefore these miracles were not the cause that Christ was God, but they shewed that he was very God. So the true living faith is a divinity in the soul of a Christian man, which worketh marvellously, and is never weary of doing good works; but these works are not the cause that the Christian man is a Christian, (that is to say) just, good, holy, and very acceptable unto God; and to him it was not needful to do such works that thereby he might become such an one; but he, because he is a Christian man by faith (as Christ being a man by his divinity was God) doth all those works. So that these good works do not make the Christian man righteous and good, but doth shew that he is good and righteous. Then even as the divinity or Godhead of Christ was the cause of his miracles, so faith working by love is the cause of the good works of the Christian man. And even as they said of Christ, he hath done this and that miracle; and such miracles, besides that they glorified and gave honour unto God, were also very greatly to Christ's honour as man; who being obedient even to the death, was of God rewarded in the resurrection, and had given to him all power in heaven and in earth, the which before, as man, he then had not; and this he deserved by the agreement and unity that it hath with the manhood of Christ: even so doth faith in the Christian man. For by the agreement and unity that it hath with the soul it attributeth that which appertaineth to the one unto the other; so that many times the holy Scriptures promiseth to a Christian man life everlasting for his good works, because that good works are fruits and testimony of the living faith, and proceedeth from it as the light from the flame of fire, as we have already above said; and this most holy faith embraceth Christ, and uniteth him [with] the soul; and all three, (that is to say faith, Christ, and the soul,) do become one self[same] thing, on such manner that the thing which Christ meriteth the soul in like manner meriteth. And therefore Saint Augustine saith, that God crowneth in us his gifts.

Of this union of the soul with Christ by faith, giveth testimony Christ himself in Saint John, making prayer to the Father for his Apostles, and for them that should believe in him by their preaching, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be also one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And that glory that thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, as we are one. Then when we believe the words of the Apostles who preached Christ to have died for our sins, and to have risen again for our justification, and to make us righteous, we become one thing with Christ, who being one only thing with God, we also by Christ be one only thing with God. O glory to be marvelled at of a Christian man, to whom by faith is granted to possess these things which are not able to be expressed, which the angels do desire to see.

By these arguments may plainly be known the difference that is between us and them that doth defend the justification of faith and works together: in this we agree, that we also establish works, and we affirm that the faith that justifieth cannot be without good works, and we say that the justified by faith be those that do the works that truly may be called good; but in this we differ and vary, that we say that faith without the help of the works justifieth, and the reason is at hand, for we by faith clothe ourselves with Christ, making his righteousness and holiness ours; and insomuch as it is true that by faith the righteousness of Christ is given unto us, we cannot be so unthankful, blind, and wicked, to believe that the same righteousness of Christ without our works is not sufficient to make us acceptable and righteous in the sight of God. And we say with the Apostles, If the blood of oxen and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer when it was sprinkled, purified the unclean, as touching the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, which through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Now let a good Christian man judge which of these two opinions is more true, more holy, and more worthy to be preached or taught, either ours that doth illustrate the

benefit of Christ, and abateth the pride of the man that would exalt his works against the glory of Christ, or the other, which saying, that faith only justifieth not, doth darken the glory and benefit of Christ, and stirreth up the pride of man, who cannot suffer nor abide to be justified and made righteous freely by Jesus Christ our Lord. Some will say, it is a great instigation to do good works when we say that a man by them is made righteous before God. I answer, that we also knowe that good works are acceptable to God, and that he rewardeth them through his mere liberality in Paradise; but we say that those only are good works (as Saint Augustine saith) which are done by those that are justified through faith; for if the tree be not good it cannot bear good fruits.

Moreover, such as are justified by faith, knowing themselves righteous through the righteousness of God executed in Christ, make not merchandise with God of their good works, pretending with them to buy of him their justification; but being inflamed with the love of God, and desirous to glorify Christ, who hath justified them and given to them all his merits and riches, they give heed with all their hearts to do the will of God, and fight manfully against the love of themselves, the world, and the devil. And when they fall through the frailty of the flesh, they rise again and be so much the more desirous to do good works, and the more enamoured and in love with God; considering that their sins are not imputed unto them by him, forso much as they are incorporate and made one body with Christ, who hath made satisfaction for all his members on a wooden cross, and continually maketh intercession to his eternal Father for them; who, for the love of his only Son, beholdeth them always with a most pleasant countenance, and governeth and defendeth them as his most dearly-beloved sons, and in the end will give them the inheritance everlasting, making them like to the glorious image of Christ.

These amorous instigations and kind provocations are those that move the true Christians to do good works, who considering that they are become through faith the children of God, and partakers of the nature of God, be stirred up through the Holy Ghost that dwelleth in them to live as appertaineth to the children of one so great a lord, and they are ashamed not to keep the worthiness of their heavenly nobility, and therefore they wholly apply their minds to follow their eldest brother Jesus Christ, living in most great humility and meekness, seeking in all things the glory of God, giving their life for their brethren, doing good to their enemies, rejoicing [in] slanders and in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; and they say with Zacharias, We are delivered from the hands of our enemies, to the intent that we may without fear serve God in holiness and in righteousness before him all the days of our life. They say with Saint Paul, The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared, and hath taught us, that we should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and appearing of the glory of the great God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ. These and other such like thoughts, desires, and affections, worketh the inspired faith in the minds of all such as are thereby justified; and he that doth not feel in his heart either altogether or else at the leastway partly these godly affections and effects, but is given to the flesh and to the world, let him be well assured that he hath not yet the faith that justifieth, nor is any member of Christ, for he hath not the Spirit of him, and consequently is not of Christ; and he that is not of Christ is not a Christian. Then at the last let man's wisdom cease to speak against the righteousness of holy faith, and let us give all the glory of our justification to the merits of Christ, with whom we apparel ourselves through faith.

## CHAPTER V.

### *How the Christian man apparelleth or clotheth himself with Christ.*

And although by the things above said it may clearly enough be understood how the Christian man apparelleth himself with Christ, nevertheless we will speak somewhat more, knowing that to talk of Christ and of his gifts to a good Christian it can never seem tedious nor painful, although a thing were repeated a thousand times. I say, that the Christian knoweth Christ to be his by faith, with all his righteousness, holiness, and innocency. And as a man apparelleth himself with a very fair and precious garment when he will present himself to the presence of a great lord, so the Christian, apparelled and covered with the innocency of Christ and with all his perfections, presenteth himself before God [the] Lord of all, putting his trust in the merits of Christ none otherwise than if he had merited and obtained [them all]; faith (without doubt) causeth that we possess Christ and all that is his, as every one of us possesseth his own garment. And therefore to apparel ourself with Christ is none other thing than to believe assuredly that Christ is ours (as true it is if we believe it), and to believe that by this heavenly garment we be dearly-beloved and acceptable in the presence of God; because it is most certain that he is a most kind Father, hath given unto us his Son, and willeth that all his righteousness and all that he is, that he may and that he hath wrought, be in our jurisdiction and rule, in such manner that it is lawful for us to glory as though we by our own power had gotten and wrought them. Whosoever then believeth this shall without fail find that which he believeth to be very true, as we have above shewed. Then the Christian man ought to have a firm faith and trust that all the goods, all the grace, and all the riches of Christ be his; for God having given us Christ, how may it be that he giveth not us all things with him?

If this be true (as indeed it is) the Christian man may say truly, I am the son of God, Christ is my brother, I am lord of heaven and earth, of hell, of death, and of the law; and therefore the law cannot accuse nor say evil of me, being made mine the righteousness of my Christ. This faith is that only which maketh a man to be called a Christian, and it apparelleth him with Christ, as we have said. And this may properly be called a great mystery, under which are contained the things of almighty God both marvellous and unheard, the which cannot enter into the heart of man, if God do not mollify it with his grace, as he promiseth by the mouth of Ezekiel, saying, A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put into you: as for that stony heart I will take it out of your body, and give you a fleshly heart. He then which doth not believe in this manner, that is to say, that Christ is his with all his goods that he possesseth, he (I say) cannot call himself a true Christian, nor never can have a merry and a quiet conscience, nor a good and a fervent mind to work well, and shall fall very soon from good works, or rather he can never do any that may be truly called good works. This only faith and trust that we have in the merits of Christ maketh men true Christians, strong, rejoicing, merry, in love with God, ready to do good works, possessors of the kingdom of God, and his dearly-beloved children, in whom truly and certainly the Holy Ghost dwelleth.

What mind is so abject, or lewd, vile, and cold, that considering the inestimable greatness of the gift which God hath given unto us, giving us his most dearly-beloved Son with all his perfections, is not inflamed with most ardent desire to be like unto him in good works, forso much as he is also given to us of the Father for an example, whom we ought always to behold, forming on such manner our life and conversation that it should be a representation of following the life of Christ; for, as Saint Peter saith, Christ suffered for us, leaving us an ensample that we should follow his steps. By considering of this springeth the other manner of apparelling us with Christ, the which we may call example; for the Christian ought to rule all his life by the example of Christ, conforming himself like unto him in all his thoughts, words, and works, leaving his ill life past, and apparelling himself [with] a new life, that is to say, with the life of Christ. Whereupon Saint Paul saith, Let us cast away the works of darkness, and [let] us apparel ourselves with the armour of light: let us walk honestly as it were in daylight, not in banqueting [and] drunkenness, neither in chambering and wantonness, neither in strife and envying; but let us put upon us our Lord Jesus Christ, and let us not make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of it. Wherefore the true Christian man being enamoured on Christ, saith thus within himself, Since Christ having no need of me, hath recovered me with his own blood, and became poor to make me rich, I will in like manner again give my goods and my life for the love and health of my neighbour; and even as I am apparelled with Christ through the love that he hath borne to me, so will I that my neighbour in Christ for the love that I bare unto him for Christ's sake be apparelled with me and my goods. And if a man do not in this manner, then is he not yet a true Christian man, and therefore let not any man brag or say, I love Christ, if he love not the members and the brethren of Christ; for if we love not our neighbour for whose sake Christ hath shed his own precious blood, we cannot say truly that we do love Christ, who being equal with God, was obedient to the Father, even to the death of the cross, and hath loved and redeemed us, giving unto us himself with all his works and with all that he possesseth. In this same self manner, forso much as we be abundantly rich with the goods of Christ, we ought to be obedient to God again, and to offer and give our works, and all that is ours and ourselves, likewise to our neighbours and brethren in Christ, serving them in all their needs, and being to them, as a man might say, another Christ. And even as Christ was humble, meek, and most far off from contention and strife, so ought we to give ourselves altogether to humbleness and meekness, fleeing all strife and contention, no less those that consist in words and disputations, than those that consist in deeds. Even as Christ suffered all the persecutions and shames of the world for the glory of God, so ought we joyfully to sustain the shames and persecutions that the false Christians do to all those who will live godly in Christ. Christ did give his life for his enemies and prayed for them on the cross, and so we ought ever to pray for our enemies, and give our life gladly for their health. And this is to follow Christ's footsteps, as Saint Peter saith. For when we know Christ with all his riches to be our own, which is to clothe us with Christ, and to become clean and pure of all spots, there resteth then none other thing for us to do but to glorify God through the following of Christ, and to do the selfsame thing to our brethren that Christ hath done to us; and that, through his own word, we bear in mind without ceasing, that whatsoever good or benefit we do to his brethren and ours he accepteth as benefit done to him. And without doubt, forso much as the true Christians are the members of Christ, we can do neither good nor evil unto the true Christian man, but we do evil or good to Christ, forasmuch as he rejoiceth and suffereth in his members. Then as Christ is our apparel, by faith, so ought we through love to be the apparel of our brethren, and the selfsame care and regard that we have of our own body we ought to have of theirs who are true members of our body, of the which Christ is the head. This is that godly love and charity which springeth up out of the unfeigned faith wherewith God inspireth his elects, of the which Saint Paul saith that it worketh through love.

But forasmuch as the life of Christ, with the imitation or following of which we ought to apparel ourselves, was a perpetual cross, full of tribulation, shame, and persecutions; if we will conform ourselves and become like unto his life, it is needful that we do bear continually the cross, as he himself saith, If any man will follow me let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. The chief cause of this cross is that our Lord God with this exercise will mortify in us the affections of the mind and the appetites and lusts of the flesh, to the intent that we may comprehend in ourselves that perfection in the which we are comprehended of Christ, through the incorporation and being made one body in him, and will that our faith, fined as gold in the furnace of adversity, shine to his praise. And moreover, he will that by our infirmities we shall illustrate and set forth his mighty power, the which the world (in despite of itself) seeth in us when our frailness through

tribulations and persecutions become strong, and the more it is beaten down and oppressed, so much the more it cometh strong and stable or stedfast. Whereupon Saint Paul saith, We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency [of the] power might be of God, and not ours. We are troubled on every side, yet are we not utterly without shift; we are in poverty, but not utterly without somewhat; we suffer persecution, but are not forsaken therein; we are cast down, nevertheless we perish not; and always we bear about in our body the dying of our Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might appear in our bodies.

Then seeing Christ and his dear disciples have glorified God with their tribulations, let us also embrace them joyfully, saying with Saint Paul, God forbid that I should glory but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And let us work and behave ourselves in such sort that the world (to his own hurt) may know and see with his eyes the marvellous effects that God worketh in them that sincerely embrace the grace of the Gospel; let the man of the world (I say) see with how much tranquility and quietness of mind the true Christians sustain the loss of goods, the death of their children, slanders, infirmities of the body, and the persecutions of the false Christians; let them see how these only do honour God in the spirit and truth, thankfully taking at the hand of him all that happeneth to them, counting for good, just, and holy, all that he doeth; and in all prosperity and adversity praising and thanking him as a most good and merciful Father, and knowing that tribulation bringeth patience, patience bringeth experience, experience bringeth hope, and hope makes not ashamed. I say that patience worketh experience; for God having promised to help in tribulations them that trust in him, we know it by experience whilst we stand strong and constant and be holden up by the hand of God, which thing we cannot do by our own strength. Then through patience we have experience, that the Lord bringeth the help that he hath promised in our need, through which our hope is established; therefore it should be to him much ingratitude and unthankfulness not to abide and look for that help and favour at his hand, which we had before by experience found so certain and constant. But what needeth so many words? it ought to be sufficient and enough to know that the true Christian men through tribulations apparel themselves with the image and likeness of Christ crucified, which if we shall bear willingly we shall apparel ourselves afterward with the image of Christ glorified; for even as the afflictions of Christ now abound in us, even so through Christ shall also abound our consolation and comfort; and if we suffer with him we shall reign together with him.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *Certain remedies against incredulity or unbelief.*

But because the devil and man's wisdom evermore goeth about to spoil us of this most holy faith, by which we believe that in Christ all our sins are chastened, and that through his most precious blood we are reconciled and made at one with God, it is needful that the Christian have always his armour ready to defend himself from this most evil temptation, which goeth about to deprive the soul of her life. Amongst these armours we judge prayers, often use of the most holy communion, the remembrance of baptism and of predestination, to be most mighty. In our prayers let us say with the father of the lunatic, Lord, help our unbelief; and let us say with the Apostle, Lord, increase our faith; and if we will that there shall reign in us a continual desire to increase in faith, hope, and charity, forthwith let us pray as Saint Paul ordained, for prayer is none other thing than a fervent desire founded and fixed in God. With the remembrance of baptism we shall assure ourselves to be in peace with God; for Saint Peter saith, that the ark of Noe was a figure of baptism; then as Noe, believing the promises of God, saved himself in the ark from the flood, even so we, through faith, save ourselves in baptism from the wrath of God; the which faith is founded in and upon the word of Christ, who said, He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, (and with good reason), for in baptism we apparel and clothe ourselves with Christ, as Saint Paul affirmeth, and consequently we are made partakers of his righteousness and all his goods. And under this most precious garment the sins that our frail nature doth commit are covered, and are not imputed to us of God; and, as Saint Paul saith, the blessing of the psalm appertaineth to us which saith, Blessed are they whose unrighteousnesses are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin. But let [the] Christian man beware that he take not through these words license to sin, for this doctrine appertaineth not to them who, when they are honoured with the name of a Christian, do with words confess Christ, and with works deny him; but it pertaineth to the true Christians which, although they fight manfully with the flesh, the world, and the devil, yet they fall every day, and are constrained to say continually, Forgive us our debts. To those we speak to comfort and hold them up, to the intent they fall not into desperation as though the blood of Christ did not cleanse them from all sin, and as [though] he were not the Advocate and propitiation or sacrifice for all his members. Then when we shall be moved to doubt of the remission of sins, and our conscience shall be given to be troubled, let us, being apparelled with faith, run straightway to the precious blood of Jesus Christ which was shed for us on the altar of the cross, and to the faithful distributed in the last supper, under the cover of the most holy sacrament; which was by Christ instituted because we should

celebrate the remembrance of his death, and with this visible sacrament should make our afflicted conscience certain of our reconciliation and atonement with God.

Blessed Christ made his testament when he said, This is my body which is given for you: and, This is my blood of the new testament, that shall be shed for many for the remission of sins. We know that the testament (as saith Saint Paul), though it be but a man's testament, yet no man despiseth it or addeth anything thereto when it is once allowed; and no man's testament is available before his death, but after his death it is most available. Then the testament of Christ in the which he promiseth the remission of sins, grace, the benevolence of him and his Father, and promiseth mercy and eternal life,—this testament (I say), to the intent it should be available, he hath confirmed with his precious blood and his own death. Whereof Saint Paul saith, that Christ for this cause is the Mediator of the new testament, that through death which chanced for the redemption of those transgressions that were in the first testament, they which were called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance; for wheresoever is a testament there must also be [the] death of him that maketh [it: seeing that a testament is then only of] authority when men are dead; for it is of no value as long as he that made it is alive. Then by the death of Christ we are sure and most certain that the testament is available in which are remitted all our iniquities, and we are made inheritors of eternal life; and in token and witness hereof he hath left in place of a seal this most godly sacrament, the which not only giveth an assured belief to our souls of eternal life, but also maketh us certain of the immortality of our flesh; for in the same hour our flesh is vivificate and made alive by that immortal flesh, and in a certain manner becometh partaker of immortality by it.

He that is partaker of this divine flesh through this faith shall not perish for ever, but he that is partaker without this faith [it] turneth to him as deadly poison; for even as the corporal meat, when it findeth the stomach filled with evil humours doth also corrupt and hurt, so likewise this spiritual meat, if it find a soul corrupted with malice and infidelity, then thrusteth it that soul into greater danger and peril; not through the fault of itself, but because to the unclean and unfaithful nothing is clean, although it be sanctified by the blessing of the Lord. For, as Saint Paul saith, Whosoever shall eat of this bread, or drink of the cup unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and eateth and drinketh his own damnation, because he maketh no difference of the Lord's body, the which without faith and charity usurpeth the supper of the Lord; and, because he believeth not that that body is his life and the cleansing of all his sins, therefore he maketh Christ a liar, treadeth under his feet the Son of God, and counteth the blood of the testament as a profane thing, by the which he is sanctified, and doth injury to the Spirit of Grace, and shall be punished most sharply of God for this infidelity and hypocritical wickedness, because he hath not trusted to be justified by the passion of Christ, and, nevertheless, receiving this most holy sacrament, he maketh profession not to put his trust in any other thing. Wherefore he accuseth himself, and is witness of his own wickedness, and condemneth himself to eternal death, and refuseth eternal life, the which God promiseth him in this most holy sacrament.

Then, when the Christian perceiveth that his enemies would overthrow him, that is to say, when he doubteth lest he have not obtained remission of his sins by Christ, and lest he be not able to withstand the devil with his temptations, and when the accusation of his doubtful conscience prevaileth against him in such manner that he beginneth to fear that hell should swallow him, and that death (through the wrath of God) should overcome and slay him eternally: when (I say) he feeleth these vexations of mind, let him then go with a good courage and sure trust and belief to this most holy sacrament, and let him receive it devoutly, saying in his heart, and answering to his enemies, I confess that I have deserved a thousand hells and everlasting death for my sins, but this most godly sacrament which presently I receive, maketh me assured and certain of the remission of all my sins, and of my reconciliation and atonement with God. If I look to my works, there is no doubt I shall find myself a sinner and condemned, and my conscience shall be never quieted if I shall believe that through the works which I do my sins are forgiven me; but if I look to the promises and covenant of God, who promiseth by the blood of Christ the remission of my sins, I am as certainly assured that I have obtained and gotten his grace, as I am most sure and certain that he that promised and made this covenant cannot lie nor beguile: and by this constant faith I become righteous, and this is the righteousness of Christ by which I am saved, and my conscience is made quiet. Hath not he given his most innocent body into the hands of sinners for my sins? Hath not he shed his blood to cleanse all mine iniquities? Then why art thou so heavy, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Put thy trust in the Lord, who beareth so great love toward thee, that to deliver thee from eternal death, he hath willed that his only-begotten Son should die, who hath taken to himself our poverty to give us his riches, he hath taken upon him our infirmity to strengthen us with his strongness, and became mortal to make us immortal, and descended into the earth that we should ascend into heaven, and became son of man together with us to make us with him the children of God. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's chosen? it is God that justifieth. Who shall then condemn? it is Christ which is dead, yea, rather which is risen again, which is also on the right hand of God, and maketh intercession for us. Let alone then (O my soul) thy mourning and sighing. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, which forgiveth all thy sins, and healeth all thine infirmities; which saveth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindness. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, long-suffering, and of great goodness: he will not always be chiding, neither will he keep his anger for ever: he hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our wickedness. For look, how high the heaven is in comparison of the earth, so great is his mercy also toward them that fear him. Look how wide the east is from the west, so far hath he set our sins from us. Yea, like as a father pitieth his own children, even so the Lord hath been merciful to us,

giving us his only-begotten Son. With this faith, with these thanks, with these and such like thoughts and meditations, we ought to receive the sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. In this manner it casteth away the fear of the soul, augmenteth charity, confirmeth faith, maketh clear the conscience, and the tongue is never found weary in praising God, and rendering unto him infinite thanks for so great a benefit. This is the virtue, the efficacy, and the only trust of our soul: this is the stone upon the which the conscience builded feareth not any tempest, neither the gates of hell, neither [the] wrath of God, neither the law, neither sin, neither death, neither the devil, nor any other thing. And because all the substance of this matter consisteth in this most divine sacrament, when the Christian man is there present he ought to hold always the eyes of his mind fixed on the passion of this our most benign Lord, beholding on the one side him on the cross laden with all our sins, and on the other side God that chastened him, punishing, instead of us, his most dearly-beloved Son. O happy is he that shutteth his eyes from all other sight, and will see and understand no other thing than Jesus Christ crucified, in whom all the grace and all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are laid up! Happy (I say) is he that always feedeth his mind with so divine a meat, and with so sweet and healthsome liquor maketh his soul drunk as with the love of God!

But before I make an end of this matter, I will advertise the Christian that Saint Augustine accustomed to call this most divine sacrament a bond of charity, and a mystery of unity, and saith, He that receiveth the mystery of unity, and keepeth not the bond of peace, doth not receive that mystery for his soul's health, but a witness against himself. Then we ought to know that the Lord ordained this sacrament, not only to ascertain us of the forgiveness of sins, but also to inflame us to peace, to agreement, and to brotherly love. Wherefore the Lord, in this sacrament, maketh us in such sort partakers of his body that he cometh one self thing with us and we with him. Then he having no more than one body, of the which he maketh us all partakers, it is necessary that also all we by such like participation become one body; the which unity the bread of the sacrament representeth, which even as it is made of many grains being mingled together, and so confused that the one cannot be discerned from the other, so ought we to be joined together and united with so much concord of mind, that there cannot come among us any never so little division. That sheweth Saint Paul when he saith, Is not the cup of blessing, which we bless, partaking of the blood of Christ? Is not the bread, which we break, partaking of the body of Christ? because that we (though we be many) yet are one bread and one body, inasmuch as we are all partakers of one bread. Then, receiving of the holy communion we ought to consider, that all we be incorporate and made one body in Christ, and that all we be members of one self body, members (I say) of Christ, in such manner that we cannot offend, slander, nor despise any of our brethren; but also in him we offend, slander, and despise Jesus Christ. We cannot have discord with our brethren, but in like case we have the same with Christ; we cannot love Christ, but that we love him in our brethren. Look how much care and regard we have to our own body, and so much we ought to have to our brethren which be the members of our body. Like as no part of our body feelth any pain, the which doth not pass forth into all the other parts, even so we ought not to suffer that our brethren should feel any evil that should not move us also to compassion. With these thoughts we ought to prepare ourselves to so great a sacrament, establishing in our mind an ardent love toward our neighbour, for what prick can more stir us to mutual love than to see that Christ, giving himself to us, not only commandeth us to give ourselves one to another, but (insomuch as he maketh himself common to all us) he causeth also that all we in him be one self thing. Wherefore, we ought to desire and diligently endeavour that in all us may be one only mind, one only heart, and one only tongue, being concordant and united in our thoughts, in our words, and in our works.

And let every Christian man mark, that as often as we receive this most holy sacrament, we bind ourselves to all the offices of charity in such manner that we may not offend our brethren in anything, nor leave to do anything whereby we may help and succour them in their necessity. And if any come to this celestial table of the Lord, being divided and alienated, or strange from their brethren, let those account for certain that they eat it unworthily, and are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, eating and drinking their own damnation, since it is so that there lacketh no will in them to divide and rend the body of Christ, so long as they be divided through hatred from their brethren, that is to say, the members of Christ. Such, albeit they have no part in Christ, nevertheless, receiving the most holy sacrament they make semblance to believe that their whole health consisteth in the participation and union that they have with Christ. Let us then go to receive this heavenly bread, to celebrate the remembrance of the passion of the Lord, and to hold up and strengthen with this remembrance the faith and the certainty of the forgiveness of our sins, and to stir up our minds and tongues to praise and publish the infinite bountifulness of our Lord God and finally to nourish the mutual charity, and to testify the same one to another, through the most strait bond and uniting together that all we have in the body of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Besides prayer, the remembrance of baptism, and the often using of the most holy communion, there is a very good remedy against incredulity and bond or servile fear, which is not [a] friend to Christian charity: that remedy is, the remembrance of our predestination and election to eternal life, founded and grounded in God's word, the which is the word of the Holy Ghost, with the which we may slay our enemies. Rejoice (saith the Lord) because your names are written in heaven. There is no greater joyfulness of heart in this present life, and that comforteth more the Christian man afflicted, tempted, or fallen into any sin, than to remember that he is predestinate, and to be sure that he is one of those whose names are written in the book of life, and that they were elected of God, to be made like to the image or likeness of Christ. O ineffable, and unable to be spoken of, is the consolation of him that hath this faith, and that revolveth continually in his heart this most pleasant

predestination, by the which it cometh to pass that how much soever he hath fallen, yet God his Father who hath predestinate him to eternal life, always holdeth him up by the hand; this man saith always in his heart, If God hath chosen and predestinate me to the glory of his sons, who can let me from it? If God be on our side (as Saint Paul saith) who can be against us? And to the intent that our predestination might be fulfilled in us he hath sent his most dearly-beloved Son, who is a most sure gage that we (who have received the grace of the gospel) are even now the sons of God chosen to eternal life. This holy predestination keepeth the true Christian in a continual mirth and joyfulness of spirit, increaseth in him a desire to go good works, inflameth him with love towards God, and maketh him [the] enemy of the world and of sin. Who ever shall be so mad and hard-hearted, that knowing God through his mercy to have made him from the beginning his son, will not burn wholly in love again towards God? Who shall be so vile and weak-spirited, that will not judge all the pleasures and all the honours and riches of the world to be as a very vile mire, knowing himself now to be become by God a citizen of heaven? these are those that prayeth in spirit and verity, receiving all things prosperous, and adverse, from the hands of God their Father; always praising and thanking him as a meek, just, and holy Father, in all his doings. These being enamoured and in love with God, and armed of the knowledge of their predestination, feareth not death, sin, the devil, nor hell; they know not what thing the wrath of God is, for in God they see none other thing but love, and that very fatherly love towards them. And if they have tribulations they receive them as favours and good gifts of God, and cry (with Saint Paul), Who shall separate us from the love of God, shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, either hunger, either nakedness, either peril, either sword? as is written, For thy sake are we killed all day long, and are counted as sheep to be slain; nevertheless, in all these things, we overcome strongly, through his help that loved us. Then, not without cause saith Saint John, that the true Christians know themselves to be saved and glorious, and that by faith they become holy as Christ is holy; and when Saint Paul exhorteth his disciples to a godly and holy life or conversation, he useth to put them in remembrance of their election and predestination, as a most effectual thing to stir up the minds of true Christians to the love of God, and to desire of good works. And blessed Christ for the same causes spake openly of this holy predestination; for he knew how much the knowledge of it was to the edifying of the elect.

But peradventure thou wilt say to me, I know that those whose names are written in heaven, hath cause to live in perpetual mirth and joyfulness of mind, and to glorify God with their words and deeds, but I know not if I be in this number, wherefore I live in perpetual dread, especially knowing myself very weak and frail unto sin, from whose violence I cannot defend me so much, but that every day I am overcome. And to this is to be added, that oftentimes seeing myself afflicted and vexed with diverse tribulations, I see, almost as with mine eyes, the wrath of God that scourgeth me. Answering to these doubts (most dearly-beloved brother), I say that thou mayest reckon assuredly that these are the temptations of the devil, who, by all manner of ways, seeketh to spoil us of faith, and of that sure trust which springeth of faith, and maketh us sure of the favour of Almighty God towards us. Of this precious garment the devil goeth about to spoil the soul of the Christian man, because he knoweth that no man doth truly believe if he believe not the word of God, who promiseth remission of all sins, and his peace to all those that receive his grace and favour, [and] offereth them in the gospel: I say, that whosoever by these promises of God doth not persuade himself assuredly that God is his most merciful and above all other most loving Father, at whose hands he with a firm faith looketh for the inheritance of the celestial kingdom, that man doth not rightly believe, but maketh himself utterly unworthy of the grace of God. Wherefore Saint Paul saith, that we are the house of God, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of that hope unto the end: and another time exhorteth us not to cast away our confidence which hath great reward of recompense. Then, most dearly-beloved brother, let us earnestly apply ourselves, and endeavour to do the will of God as good children, and let us beware of sin as much as we can possibly; and if by chance we sin through our frailty, yet let us not believe therefore that we be vessels of wrath, or that we be utterly forsaken of the Holy Ghost; for we have still our advocate before God the Father, Jesus Christ, who is righteousness, who is the sacrifice for our sins. Let us remember, brother, this sentence of Saint Augustine, who saith, that no holy or righteous man is without sin, yet notwithstanding he ceaseth not to remain righteous and holy still, so that he have a mind and desire to be holy and righteous. And therefore if we be afflicted and troubled, let us not believe that God sendeth us tribulations because he is our enemy, but rather because he is our most merciful Father; for whom the Lord loveth, him he chasteneth, and scourgeth every child that he receiveth.

Forsomuch, then, as we have received the grace of the Gospel, by the which man is accepted and taken of God as his son, we ought not to doubt of the grace and good-will of Almighty God towards us, and knowing that the word of God, and the imitating and following of Christ's life and conversation delighteth us, we ought to think and believe assuredly that we are the sons of God, and temple of the Holy Ghost; because these things cannot be done by the working of man's wisdom, but they are the gifts of the Holy Ghost, who by faith dwelleth in us, and is a seal that assureth us, and sealeth in our hearts those godly promises, the certainty of which he hath before graven or printed in our hearts, and to stablish and confirm the same he is given to us of God in the stead of an earnest penny. As Saint Paul saith, Afterward that ye heard the word of truth, I mean the gospel of our salvation wherein ye believed, [ye] were sealed with the holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance. Behold how he sheweth that the hearts of the faithful are graven or printed with the Holy Ghost as with a seal, so that he calleth the Holy Ghost the spirit of promise, because he assureth us of the promise of the gospel; the which, as we have often said, is happy news promising remission of sins and eternal life to those that believeth that in Christ all their sins were chastened. All that believe in Christ Jesus are the sons of God, as saith Saint Paul, and because we are sons, God hath sent the

Spirit of his Son into our hearts, which crieth Abba, Father. And to the Romans he saith, As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God; for ye have not received the spirit of bondage to fear any more, but ye have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The same Spirit certifieth our spirit that we are the sons of God, [and] if we be sons we are also heirs. And it is to be noted, that in these two places Saint Paul most clearly speaketh of no spiritual revelation, but of the witness that the Holy Ghost beareth to all those that receive the grace of the Gospel; then if the Holy Ghost maketh us sure that we are the sons and the inheritors of God, why should we doubt of our predestination? The same Paul saith in the same epistle, Those which [he] appointed before, them also he called: and which he called, them also he justified: [and] which [he] justified, them he also glorified. What shall we say then to these things? If God be on our side who can be against us? If then I know clearly that God hath called me, giving me faith and the effects of faith, that is to say, quietness of conscience, mortification, and killing of the flesh, and the vivification and quickening of the spirit, either altogether or else partly, wherefore should I doubt not to be predestinate? Moreover we say with Saint Paul, that all true Christians (that is to say those that believeth the Gospel) have not received the spirit of the world; but the Spirit which cometh of God, by whose inspiration they know the things that are given to them of God. What marvel is it, then, if we know that God from the beginning hath given us eternal life?

But some say that no man ought to be so arrogant, to glory and rejoice that he hath the Spirit of Christ. Such men speak as though a Christian man might glory to have gotten by his own merits the Spirit of God, and not by God's mere mercy; and as though to confess that a man is a Christian man were arrogancy, and that a man might be a Christian man were arrogancy, and that a man might be a Christian man though he have not the Spirit of Christ, and that without very hypocrisy we might call Christ our Lord, or God our Father, though the Holy Ghost do not move our heart and tongue to speak so sweet words. And yet for all that those that count us arrogant because that we say that God with faith giveth us the Holy Spirit, not only do not forbid us to say daily the Lord's Prayer, commonly called the Pater Noster, but they command us to say it. But tell me how is it possible to separate faith from the Holy Ghost, the same faith being the proper work of the Holy Spirit, if it be arrogancy to believe that the Spirit of Christ be in us? Wherefore commandeth Saint Paul the Corinthians to prove if they have faith, affirming that they are reprobate or cast away if they know not that Christ is in them? But truly it is great blindness to blame of arrogancy such Christians as dare rejoice and glory of the presence of the Holy Ghost, without the which rejoicing there is no true Christianity at all; but Christ cannot lie, who saith that his Spirit is unknown to the world, and is only known to them with whom he abideth.

Let those become then true Christians, let them put away their Jewish hearts, let them embrace (as they are bound to do) the grace and mercy of God offered unto them in the Gospel, and they shall know that the Christians have the Holy Ghost and are assured thereof. But some man perchance might say that the Christian man without a special revelation cannot know that he is in the favour of God, and consequently cannot know that he is predestinate, and might allege principally these words of Solomon, Man knoweth not if he be worthy of hatred or love; and these words of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, I know not myself culpable in anything, yet am I not thereby justified. It appeareth to me that I have shewed above plainly by sundry places of Holy Scripture, that that opinion is false. Now therefore remaineth only briefly to shew that these two authorities (upon the which principally it is founded) ought not to be understood to that sense. As touching the sentence of Solomon, although it be not truly translated in the common translation; nevertheless there is no man so foolish, that reading all the discourse of Solomon seeth not plainly that he meaneth thus: If any man, by such outward things as happen unto a man in this present life, would judge that he is loved or hated of God, he travaileth in vain, since it is so that the selfsame things happen oftentimes both to the righteous and to the unrighteous, to him that sacrificeth and to him that doth not sacrifice, to the good and to the sinner. Whereupon it may be easily gathered, that God sheweth not always his love to them to whom he giveth outward or worldly prosperity, nor sheweth always hatred towards them whom he afflicteth. Appareth it to thee then, (most dearly-beloved brother), that it ought to be concluded that a man cannot be certain of the grace of God, because this certainty may not be perceived by such sundry chances as happen in things transitory and temporal? The selfsame Solomon a little before saith, that it cannot be discerned wherein the soul of man differeth from the soul of a beast, for the man is seen die and the beast in one self manner. Will we then by this thing that happeneth outwardly conclude, that the persuasion which we have conceived of the immortality of souls is founded only upon a conjecture? But it is superfluous in a thing so clear and well known to every man.

And as touching the words of Saint Paul, I say that he, speaking of the administration of the Gospel, saith that he knoweth not that he hath at any time erred in it, but that through that he is not certain that he hath done his duty amongst them, nor that thereby he hath obtained before God the praise of righteousness as a person that hath done all that which is righteous, and that appertaineth to a faithful steward; in like manner as a just and discreet steward of an household, speaking of his office and duty dareth not justify himself, [nor] affirm that he hath truly in all things and at all times done his duty and the will of his lord, but referreth that to his judgment. That this is the sense of the words of Saint Paul, no man will doubt that readeth and considereth with any judgment the words going before and coming after. I know that some, expounding the words of Saint Paul, say, that although he knew not in himself any sin, yet for all that he thought not himself righteous before God, forso much as no man (as affirmeth David) may know perfectly his sins. But those men consider not that Saint Paul counteth

not righteousness to come by works but by faith, and that he refuseth all his own righteousness, sticking only unto the righteousness that God giveth for Christ's sake; neither consider they that he was most certain that he was justified in that he kept the entire and pure Christian faith, and knew that in heaven was prepared for him a crown of righteousness, and was certain that no creature, celestial, terrestrial, nor infernal, was able to separate him from the love of God; and was very desirous to die, knowing assuredly that he should be with Christ, which thing should all be false, if he had not been sure that he was righteous (I say) by faith and not by works. Let us cease then (most dearly-beloved brethren) to say that Saint Paul saith that which he never thought, or rather that which he always oppugned, and spake against, most sharply reprovng those that measured righteousness by works, and not by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

But besides these two authorities of Solomon and Saint Paul, they may allege some other places of the Holy Scripture which exhort men to fear, which places appear to be contrary to our certainty of our predestination; if I should declare particularly all those places, I should be too tedious to you, but I say in general that such fear as dreadeth punishment belongeth properly to the Old Testament, and childly love properly belongeth to the New Testament, as Saint Paul testifieth, when he saith to the Romans, Ye have not received the spirit of bondage to fear any more; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby ye cry, Abba, Father. And to Timothy he saith, That God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but the spirit of power and of love: who, according to the promise made by the mouth of his prophets, hath given us Christ, and hath brought to pass that we without fear (delivered from the hands of our enemies) do serve him in holiness and righteousness, even in his presence, all [the] days of our life.

Of this and of many other like places of Holy Scripture is gathered plainly, that the penal and servile fear, or such fear as riseth of doubt, either of bondage or pain, pertaineth not to a Christian man; and this we also do confirm, because that this fear is contrary to spiritual rejoicing or rejoicing in the Spirit, which thing properly appertaineth to a Christian man, as Saint Paul sheweth plainly to the Romans, saying, The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost. That is to say, whosoever entereth into the kingdom of the grace, favour, and mercy, that is offered to man in the Gospel, he is justified by faith, and consequently hath fruition of the quietness of his conscience, the which produceth a perfect, spiritual, and holy joyfulness and rejoicing; so that the said Saint Paul many times exhorteth Christians to live always merrily and joyfully. And Saint Peter saith that whoso believe in Christ, although they be afflicted with divers temptations, yet they rejoice with a glorious and inenarrable joyfulness. Then, when the Holy Scripture threateneth and feareth the Christians, they ought to understand that it speaketh to such Christians as live sensually; the which, not keeping the worthiness that is required to be in the sons of God, ought to be entreated and ordered as servants, and holden in awe till they taste how sweet the Lord is, and till faith work in them her effects, and that they have so much childly love that it be sufficient to keep them in the worthiness or beautifulness of Christian godliness, and in the imitation and following of Christ. When the same Scripture exhorteth true Christians to fear, understand not that they ought to fear the judgment and wrath of God, as though they should be condemned thereby; for as we have already said, by the testimony or witness that the Holy Ghost beareth unto their spirit, they know that God hath called and elected them, yea, and that through his mere mercy, and not for their merits' sake. Wherefore let not them doubt aught but that by the same mercy he is able to maintain them in the same felicity, wherein he hath placed them. So that the Scripture exhorteth not those to a bond or servile fear, but to a childly fear; that is to say, that as good children we should beware lest we lose Christian godliness, and commit anything unseemly to be done of the sons of God, and so to grieve the Holy Ghost that abideth in us, and that knowing the corruption and wickedness of this our nature, we should stand always attentive and watching, and that we should never trust in ourselves, because that in our flesh and in our minds there do dwell appetites and affections, the which (as mortal enemies of the spirit) use always deceits, and devise to make us proud, ambitious, covetous, and sensual; this is the fear to the which the Scripture exhorteth the true Christians, who have already tasted how sweet the Lord is, and give their whole study and diligence to follow the steps of Christ's life and conversation. And through this holy fear they go and spoil themselves, even so much as they spoil themselves of the old man; but the true Christians should not spoil themselves wholly of this childly fear, the which greatly nourisheth Christian charity, (even as the servile fear is [an] enemy,) and cannot stand without it.

By the things before spoken of may clearly be understood that a good Christian ought in no wise to doubt of the remission of sins, nor of the favour and grace of God towards him. Notwithstanding for the more satisfying of the reader, I will write beneath some authorities of holy doctors who confirm this verity. Saint Hilary, upon Saint Matthew in the fifth canon, saith, that God will that without any doubt of unconstant will, we do believe; for otherwise justification through faith is not obtained if the selfsame faith be doubtful. Behold, that (after Saint Hilary) a man obtaineth not remission of his sins, if he believe not undoubtedly to obtain the same: and worthily, for he that doubteth (as Saint James saith) is like the waves of the sea, which are driven and moved by the winds. Wherefore let not that man think to receive anything of God.

Let us give ear then to Saint Augustine, who, in his Manual, teacheth us to cast away the foolish opinion that would deprive us of this holy and godly certainty and assurance. Murmur (saith he) as much as thou wilt then, [thou] foolish cogitation or thought, saying, 'What art thou? and how great is this thy glory and rejoicing? With what merits hopest thou to obtain it?' I answer thee boldly, 'I know in whom I have believed. O know that he (through his great love) hath made me his son. I know that he is true in his promise, able to give that he promiseth, and can do what he will. The multitude of my sins

cannot make me fear if I think on the death of the Lord. All my hope is in his death. His death is my merits, my refuge, my health, life, and resurrection. My merit is the mercy of the Lord. I am not poor in merits while the Lord lacketh not mercy. And if the merits of the Lord be many, I am abundantly rich in merits. How much the more he is able to save, so much the more am I sure to be saved.' The same Saint Augustine, in another place, speaking with God, saith that he might indeed have despaired for his great sins and for his infinite negligences, if the Word had not become incarnate. And after addeth these words, All my hope and all the certainty of my belief is put in his precious blood, which was shed for us and for our salvation. In him I rest, in him believing I desire to come to thee, O Father; not having mine own righteousness, but that which cometh by thy Son Christ Jesus. Saint Augustine, in these two places, sheweth clearly that a Christian ought not to fear, but to be assured of his justification, grounding it not upon his own works, but on the precious blood of Christ, the which cleanseth us of all our sins, and maketh our peace with God.

Saint Bernard, in his first sermon of the *Annunciation of the Lord*, sheweth most plainly that it sufficeth not to believe that thou canst not have remission of thy sins but by the mercy of God: neither sufficeth it to believe that thou canst not have any good desire nor any good works, if he give thee not the same: neither sufficeth it to believe that thou canst not merit or deserve eternal life without thy good works, if the same be not given thee by mere gift. But, besides these things, (saith Saint Bernard,) which are rather to be judged an uncertain beginning and foundation of faith, it is necessary that thou believe that by him also thy sins be forgiven thee. Behold, how this holy man confesseth, that it sufficeth not to believe in the general remission of sins, but it is needful that thou believe particularly that to thee are forgiven thine iniquities by Christ. And the cause or reason is apparent; for God promising justification by Christ's merits, if thou believe not that thou art righteous by them thou makest God a liar, and consequently makest thyself most unworthy of his grace and liberality. Thou wilt say to me, I believe well that there is remission of sins, and I know that God is true, but I doubt lest I be not worthy of so great a gift. I answer thee, that the remission of sins should not be a gift and grace, or favour, but a reward, if God hath given it thee through the worthiness of thy works; but I reply to thee and affirm, that God accepteth thee as righteous and imputeth not to thee thy sin through the merits of Christ, the which are given thee and become thine through faith. Then, following the holy counsel of Saint Bernard, believe not only the general remission of sins, but apply belief to thyself, believing undoubtedly that through Christ all thine iniquities are forgiven, and in this manner thou shalt give glory to God, confessing him merciful and true, and shalt become righteous and holy in the sight of God, being partaker, through this faith and confession, of the righteousness and holiness of Jesus Christ.

Now, returning to reason somewhat of predestination, I say that by the things above said, a man may clearly understand and see that the certainty of predestination hurteth not the true Christians, but helpeth them very greatly; and I cannot see that it can hurt the reprobate and false Christians; for how much soever those men which be reprobate do force themselves to believe that they be in the number of them that are predestinate, yet they can never persuade their conscience thereunto, which always will reply and testify the contrary.

But it appeareth at the first show that the doctrine of predestination might hurt them, because they use to say thus: If I be of the number of those that be reprobates and castaways, then what helpeth my good works? and again, If I be of the number of them that are predestinate I shall be saved without wearying of myself in doing good works. I will in few words answer thee, that with those their devilish arguments they procure and increase against themselves the wrath of God, who hath opened to Christians the knowledge of predestination, to the intent to make them fervent and not cold in the love of God, ready and not slow in good works. Whereupon the true Christian, on the one side, believeth undoubtedly that he is predestinate unto eternal life, and to be saved, not by his own merits, but by the election of God, who, not through our works, but to shew his mercy, hath predestinate us; and again, on the other side, he wholly giveth himself to do good works and to follow Christ, even as though his salvation did depend and consist in his own industry and diligence. But he who through the doctrine or teaching of predestination ceaseth or abstaineth from doing good works, saying, If I be predestinate I shall be saved without taking pains to do good works; he, I say, sheweth plainly that [he] wrought not for the love he bare to God, but for the love he bare to himself. Wherefore, peradventure, in the sight of man his works were good and holy, but in the sight of God (who considereth chiefly for what intent they were done) they were nought and abominable. Whereupon it may be easily gathered that the doctrine or teaching of predestination rather helpeth than hurteth even the false Christians, for it discovereth their hypocrisy, the which cannot be healed so long as it is hidden under the cloak of outward works.

But I would that those which say, I will do no good works, for if I be predestinate, though I weary not myself I shall be saved, I would (I say) that they said to me when they are sick, I will have neither physician nor medicine, for that which God hath determined of me cannot fail. Wherefore eat they? wherefore drink they? Wherefore till they the earth, plant the vines, and do with so great diligence the things convenient for the sustentation of the body? Wherefore say they not, All our pains and diligence are superfluous; because that which God hath afore seen and determined, touching our life and death, it is not possible but to come to pass? Then, if the providence of God maketh them not negligent nor idle in the things that pertaineth to the body, why should it make them slothful or idle in those things that pertain to the Christian perfection, the which, without comparison is more noble than the body. But, insomuch as we see that neither Jesus Christ nor Saint Paul do let for the slander of the reprobate to preach the verity which is needful and convenient to edify the elect withal, for whose sakes the

natural Son of God became man and died on the cross, we likewise ought not to leave off for the slander of the false Christians to preach predestination to the true Christians, since we see that it doth so greatly edify.

We are now come to the end of our reasoning, in the which our principal intent was to magnify and praise (to our small power) the marvellous high benefit that a Christian receiveth by the death of Jesus Christ, and to shew that faith by itself justifieth: that is to say, that God accepteth and taketh for righteous all those that truly believe that Christ Jesus hath made satisfaction for their sins; yet, like as light cannot be separated from the flame which by itself burneth, and so doth not the light: even so good works cannot be separate from faith which by itself justifieth, and so do not good works. This most holy doctrine, which exalteth Christ Jesus and maketh low the pride of man, hath been and always shall be oppugned of those Christians who have Jewish minds; but happy is he who, following Saint Paul, spoileth himself of all his own righteousness [other] than that which cometh by Jesus Christ, with the which he being apparelled or clothed, he may appear most safely in the sight of God the Father, and receive of him the blessing and the inheritance of heaven and heart with his only natural Son Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory for ever. *Amen.*