

immunity from any liability to the *eternal* punishment which the sin deserved, but leaves the penitent exposed to a temporal punishment, which God must still inflict, and the penitent must still bear, on account of that sin. There is no doubt, or room for discussion, as to what the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this point is, and therefore we need not adduce quotations.\* Let us briefly consider what this doctrine really involves, as it is usually drawn out and applied; for Romanists have certainly made the most of it, and turned it to very good account.

The first point is, that when the guilt of post-baptismal sin is remitted in the sacrament of penance, so that men are exempted from liability to the eternal punishment which the sin deserved, they still remain liable to a temporal punishment to be inflicted by God on account of it. Now, this doctrine naturally suggests the question, How, or in what way, is this temporal punishment inflicted by God and endured by them; or how is it otherwise disposed of, so that those to whom it attached are no longer subject to any liability to suffer, but are admissible into the enjoyment of perfect happiness? If the general doctrine, that a temporal punishment remains due, after the proper guilt and liability to eternal punishment are taken away, be admitted, the most natural answer to the question suggested would be, that God inflicted, and that men endured, this temporal punishment, in the providential trials and afflictions of this life. Accordingly, the Church of Rome teaches,—as her general doctrine upon this subject plainly required of her,—that the trials and afflictions of justified men—for, of course, it is to them only that the whole subject applies—are strictly and properly penal; and that they thus constitute, at least partly, the infliction and the endurance of this temporal punishment.

This, however, was leaving the matter far too much in the hands of God in His providence, without the intervention of the church and the priest, and was not much fitted to work upon men's fears. Accordingly, the Church of Rome has invented purgatory, in the fire of which men may, and of course many must, endure after death what may *remain* of the temporal punishment due to their mortal sins; and of the whole punishment—for it is only

\* The most direct and explicit authorities on the point are: Con. Trident., sess. vi., cap. xiv., can. 30; and sess. xiv., cap. viii., can. 12 and 13.

temporal—due to their venial sins. This is rather alarming, and does not seem to comport very well with the representations given us in Scripture of the conditions, obligations, and prospects of justified men. But Popery is very skilful in its provisions for affording comfort, as well as for inspiring terror. Accordingly, the church teaches that there is a way in which this temporal punishment, remaining due by men, may be disposed of, or got quit of, without their actually enduring it,—that they may satisfy the claims of God's justice and law in the matter by a different process; and this brings in their doctrine of human satisfaction. It is this, that men, by various works which they can perform,—especially prayers, fastings, and almsgivings,—can and do make *satisfaction or compensation to God for the temporal punishment remaining due to them*, and thus escape the necessity of enduring it. Praying, fasting, and almsgiving, are thus invested with a penal character; they are represented as the endurance of punishment for sin; in short, as standing in the same relation, and effecting the same result, with reference to the temporal punishment due to sin, as the sufferings and death of Christ do with reference to its eternal punishment. Men can render satisfaction to God for the temporal punishment due to their sins, by *voluntarily* undertaking and performing extraordinary acts of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving; but it is much safer, at least for the mass of men, just to perform exactly the penances, or penal endurances,—*i.e.*, the prayers, fastings, and almsdeeds *enjoined* by the priest at absolution, as he of course is the best judge of the amount of suffering or endurance in these ways that may be necessary to make satisfaction to the divine law.

This doctrine of human satisfaction is a very important addition to the general scheme of Popish teaching, as to the way in which men are to be exempted from the consequences of their sins. But we have not yet attained to a full view of it. As a man, by his prayers, fastings, and almsdeeds, may make satisfaction or compensation to God for the temporal punishment due to his own sins, so, by the same means, he can make satisfaction to God for the temporal punishment due to the *sins of others*,—"ut unus posset pro altero satisfacere,"—"alterius nomine possunt quod Deo debetur persolvere."\* As the Church of Rome, while

\* Catech. Trident., P. ii., cap. v., Quæst. lxxii.

explicitly teaching this general doctrine, has not imposed any restriction upon the capacity, or the right, of one man to make satisfaction in the room of another, and to transfer the benefit of his satisfactory endurances to whom he pleases, the practice, which prevails in some Popish countries, of men and women making a livelihood by hiring themselves to perform vicarious prayings, as a satisfaction for the sins of others, is the natural and legitimate result of the authorized teaching of the church. Still, however, even yet, the system laboured under two defects: first, men who needed some assistance in making satisfaction for the temporal punishment due to their sins, might often find a difficulty in getting substitutes to satisfy in their room; and, secondly, even if substitutes could be got without great difficulty, *the church* might not derive much direct benefit from these private and personal transactions, in the way of transferring satisfaction from one man to another. To remedy at once these two evils, she provided a great treasure of satisfactions, and opened a public market for the dispensation of them, that men might be put to no great inconvenience in obtaining a supply of vicarious satisfactions, and that, being indebted for it to the church, they might be reasonably called upon for due and suitable expressions of their obligations to her. Thus at length we have arrived at indulgences, which are just the communication to men of satisfactions made by others, and deposited, under the Pope's control, in what the Council of Trent calls "the heavenly treasures of the Church;" the certain effect of this communication being, that those to whom it is made are, in consequence, exempted, *pro tanto*, from the necessity of either satisfying for, or actually enduring, the temporal punishment which otherwise God would have inflicted upon them. And when I have stated further, that, according to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, indulgences not only exempt men, *pro tanto*, from the necessity of personal suffering or satisfaction in this life, but likewise shorten the duration or mitigate the severity of their sufferings in the fire of purgatory, I think I have introduced all the leading features of the doctrine of the Romanists upon this subject.

Now, this is a magnificent and well-compacted scheme, displaying great inventive genius, profound knowledge of human nature, and admirable skill in contrivance and adaptation. Each one of the principles or doctrines in the series, taken by itself, is fitted to obscure and pervert the scriptural account of the provi-

sion made for pardoning men's sins, and saving them from the punishment their sins deserve; and all of them separately, and the whole conjointly, are necessary to be established, as the foundation of the doctrine of indulgences, which may be regarded as constituting the climax of a long and intricate series of anti-scriptural and most dangerous errors. If any one link in the series fail, the doctrine of indulgences falls to the ground; and conversely, if the doctrine of indulgences be thoroughly established, it will be able to afford support to all these positions, which are virtually involved in it. This illustrates how naturally the exposure of indulgences led, in the hands of Luther, and under the guidance of God's word and Spirit, to the full exposition of the doctrine of a free and complete justification through faith in the righteousness of Christ. The doctrine of indulgences, when analysed and investigated, leads us back, step by step, through all the various questions which we have stated (of course, in the inverse order to that which we have pursued), and thus brings us to the very threshold of the Scripture doctrine of justification; while that great doctrine, on the other hand, once clearly seen, and steadily and faithfully applied, at once sweeps away all these errors, and all the practices and arrangements, all the fraud and imposture, which have been based upon them.

I do not mean to enter on any detailed refutation of this gigantic system of heresy and fraud, as my object, in referring to it, was chiefly to illustrate how the Church of Rome follows out her doctrines in their practical applications, and to point out the connection subsisting among the different steps in the series; and thus to exhibit at once a specimen of the general policy of the Church of Rome, in providing so fully, by the same processes, for Satan's object, the ruining of men's souls, by leading them to build upon a false foundation, and for the priest's object, the enslaving of the consciences of the people; and a specimen of the kind of proof on which many of her doctrines and practices are based. Not one of the different positions which constitute the steps in the series we have described, can be established by anything like satisfactory scriptural evidence. Every one of them can be proved to be opposed to the teaching of the word of God, —some of them, indeed, to be in direct collision with fundamental scriptural principles respecting the vicarious satisfaction of Christ, and the way of a sinner's salvation. There is one point

especially to be noticed,—viz., that while all these positions, when viewed conjointly, form a well-contrived and compacted system, yet that not one of them, even if proved, affords any direct evidence in support of the succeeding one; and that, therefore, each of them must be established by its own distinct and appropriate scriptural proof.

I need not dwell upon the illustration of this position; but there is a general observation of some importance in the Popish controversy which is suggested by it, and to which it may be worth while to advert. There are several of the leading doctrines of the Popish system which, in the absence of all direct scriptural evidence in support of them, depend for their authority upon the establishment of a series of positions, all of which must be distinctly and separately proved, and the failure in the proof of any one of which overthrows the whole Popish teaching upon the point. Now, it is common, in such cases, for the defenders of Popery to select that one of the various positions in support of which they think that the largest amount of plausible scriptural evidence can be adduced, and then to assume that the proof of this one separate position, of itself, establishes the general conclusion. It has been shown, for instance, by Dr Isaac Barrow, in his great work on the Supremacy of the Pope, that, in order to establish that doctrine, seven distinct and independent positions must be proved, each of them being necessary for the ultimate result; while Romanists scarcely undertake to establish them all, and dwell almost exclusively upon two or three of them, in support of which they think they can adduce something that is plausible. The invocation of saints, in like manner, in the absence of all direct scriptural evidence bearing upon the point itself, can be based only upon a series of positions, each of which must be established; and yet Romish writers, in discussing this subject, often talk as if they expected that the proof of this one position,—viz., that the saints in heaven offer up prayers for men on earth,—were to be received as *probatio probata* of all that the Church of Rome teaches and practises regarding it. So, in the series of positions which we have described with reference to the forgiveness of post-baptismal sin,—every one of which must be proved by its own distinct and appropriate evidence, before the Romish doctrine of indulgences can be established,—there are several which they scarcely attempt or pretend to prove from

Scripture; while they seem to expect that the proof they adduce in support of one or two of them, shall be received as proving them all, and establishing the important conclusion which hangs upon them. Among these various positions, the one perhaps on which they are fondest of enlarging in argument, because they think they can most plausibly defend it from Scripture, is this,—that the trials and afflictions of justified men are strictly penal in their character; and as this position is really not destitute of some plausible scriptural evidence, it may be proper briefly to advert to it.

It is conceded by Protestants, that all the sufferings which men endure are in some sense punishments of sin,—traceable to sin and demerit as their source or cause. It is further conceded, that the Scripture represents justified and righteous men as bringing trials and afflictions upon themselves by their sins; afflictions which, it is intimated in Scripture, are in some measure regulated, both as to their peculiar character and their severity, by the sins of which such men have been guilty. Now, these concessions, which Scripture plainly enough requires, might not unreasonably be regarded as sufficient to establish the conclusion, that the providential afflictions of righteous men are truly and properly penal, *had we no further information given us in Scripture upon the subject.* But the conclusion is one which important scriptural principles, and clear scriptural statements, *prevent us from receiving.* The whole tenor of the scriptural representations with respect to the nature and consequences of forgiveness, the state and condition of justified men, and the principles which regulate all God's dealings with them, precludes the idea that they are liable to, or that they, in point of fact, suffer at God's hand, inflictions of a strictly penal character. "There is *now* no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,"—no liability to punishment. Their sins have been entirely blotted out, and are remembered no more against them. They have been received finally and unchangeably into the enjoyment of God's favour. They have been adopted as children into His family; and the one object to which all God's views concerning them, and all His dealings toward them, are directed, is to promote their welfare by making them more meet for the full enjoyment of His own presence. He has virtually laid aside, so far as they are concerned, the character of a Judge, and assumed that of a Father. And in

accordance with these general principles, He is to be regarded, when He sends them trials and sufferings, not as inflicting punishment, strictly and properly so called, but merely as chastening, correcting, disciplining them in the way He sees best fitted to promote their true welfare. He is not exercising His *justitia vindicatrix* in merely testifying His hatred against sin, by simply inflicting pain upon the sinner. His only object is to promote and secure the welfare of His children. The very idea of a penal infliction, properly so called, is that of suffering inflicted for the purpose of occasioning misery to the object of the infliction, because he has deserved it, and because it is intended that the ordinary course of justice and of law should take effect upon him, or,—as it has been defined in the discussion of this subject,—“*vindicta propria est quando malum quod alicui infligitur, non in bonum, sed in malum ejus infligitur.*”<sup>\*</sup> And punishment, or penal infliction, in this, its strict and proper sense, is wholly inapplicable to any of God’s dealings with His own people.†

In short, we must include the whole of what Scripture teaches upon this subject, and embody it, if possible, in one consistent and harmonious doctrine. We cannot, in consistency with Scripture, maintain that God’s dealings with justified men, even when He sends them trials and afflictions, are strictly and properly penal, or directed to the object of merely inflicting upon them suffering, because they have deserved it by their sin. And there is no great difficulty in reconciling this principle with those scriptural views upon which the Popish argument is based, and from which their conclusion is deduced; while that conclusion cannot be reconciled with this principle, and, indeed, flatly contradicts it. All suffering is, in its general character, a punishment on account of sin; but this is not the only character it bears,—the only relation it sustains; and therefore it may not be in this character that it is inflicted by God upon justified men. And as to the relation,—plainly indicated in some instances described in Scripture of God’s dealing with His people,—between the peculiar character and degree of the suffering inflicted upon them, and the sin which in some sense produced or occasioned it, this admits without difficulty of another solution besides that of the suffering being strictly and

<sup>\*</sup> Ames. Bellarm. *Enervat.*, tom. iii., pp. 231, 232. Oxon. 1629. | sec. 30 to the end, and generally on this whole subject, c. iv. and v.

† Calvin. *Instit.*, Lib. iii., c. iv.,

properly penal. The character and degree of the suffering inflicted may have been regulated or determined by the preceding sin, while yet the intended bearing and influence of the suffering might be wholly prospective and not retrospective; and this upon two grounds: first, the very best thing now, for the real good of the individual who has sinned,—the first and most indispensable thing for his future welfare,—may be, that he should be brought under the influence of right impressions with respect to the sin which he has committed, and learn, for his future guidance, the lessons which it is fitted to teach; and, secondly, the sin which he has committed may be a fair measure or index of what he now needs,—of what is truly, in the actual circumstances in which he is placed, best fitted to promote his real welfare, and may thus, *de facto*, regulate the character and degree of the suffering inflicted,—even though this suffering, in its intended bearings and results, has a regard only prospectively and correctively to future good, and not retrospectively and penally to past sin. On these grounds, we think it can be shown that there is nothing in Scripture which necessarily requires us to admit the position (which was strenuously opposed by all the Reformers), that the providential sufferings or afflictions of righteous men are strictly and properly penal; while, on the other hand, a full view of all that Scripture teaches upon the subject compels us to believe that it is not as strict and proper punishments that they are inflicted,—although most certainly they are both fitted and intended, when viewed in connection with the sin that preceded and occasioned them, to produce profound humility and self-abasement, and to lead to unceasing watchfulness and waiting upon God.\*

The first and fundamental position in the series we have described,—that on which, as a basis, the whole series depends,—viz., that with respect to post-baptismal sin there is a *reatus pœnæ*, as distinguished from a *reatus culpæ*, or that a temporal punishment remains due after the proper guilt and consequent liability to eternal punishment have been taken away in the sacrament of penance,—rests wholly upon the proof adduced, that the providen-

\* There is an Antinomian, as well as a Popish, error upon this point to be guarded against. Some Antinomians have maintained that God sees no sin in His people, and does not even correct or chasten them for their sins. | *Vide Burgess on Justification, Part i., Lec. 4, 5, 6; Gillespie's Miscellany Questions.*

tial sufferings of justified and regenerate men are strictly and properly penal. This first position, asserting a distinction, with reference to post-baptismal sins, between the *reatus culpæ* and the *reatus pænæ*, has not in itself, as a general doctrine, any distinct, direct scriptural evidence; and Papists scarcely pretend that it has, while Protestants undertake to show, not only that it is wholly unsanctioned by Scripture, but that it is opposed to clear scriptural statements, and to most important scriptural principles. Papists profess to prove from Scripture that the providential sufferings of righteous men are truly penal inflictions; and from *that* they draw the general conclusion, that temporal punishment remains due by them, after their proper guilt, or *culpa*, or liability to eternal punishment, has been taken away. It is not by any means clear or certain that the conclusion is well founded *in all its extent*, even though the premises should be proved or conceded. But it is unnecessary to dispute this; for the Reformers proved, not only that there is no satisfactory evidence in Scripture that the providential sufferings of righteous men are penal, but that Scripture, when its whole teaching upon the subject is carefully and deliberately examined in combination, contains abundant proof that they are *not* possessed of a strictly and properly penal character. Thus the sole foundation in argument of the great Popish principle about a temporal punishment remaining due after the liability to eternal punishment has been removed by the sacrament of penance, is overturned, and, of course, carries with it the whole system of heresy, fraud, and imposture that is based upon it.

The other parts of the system, besides being left without any foundation to rest upon, can be, each of them, singly and separately disproved by satisfactory scriptural evidence. Human satisfactions for, or instead of, punishment due to sin, and these either personal or vicarious, rendered either by the sinners themselves or by others in their room, and rendered either in this life upon earth, or in the next in purgatory; an inexhaustible treasure of vicarious satisfactions upon earth, and a place of punishment somewhere in the neighbourhood of hell, and both under the control of the Pope; the penalty of the prayers and the almsdeeds, as well as of the providential sufferings, of righteous men, and their actual endurance of punishment for a time in a future world;—all these are palpably opposed to most important truths plainly taught us in the sacred Scriptures, and altogether constitute the

most marvellous system of falsehood and fraud that has ever been invented.

We are too apt to look upon the Popish purgatory and indulgences *merely* as fraudulent contrivances for enslaving men's consciences, and swindling them out of their money; but there is something far deeper and more destructive about them than this view of their character exhibits. They imply and involve the whole system of erroneous doctrine which we have briefly described. That system of doctrine may have produced purgatory and indulgences, or they may have produced it, or, what is more probable, both may have acted and reacted upon each other. But, however this may have been historically, it is certain that purgatory and indulgences require all these gross corruptions of the scriptural doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. They tend greatly to strengthen and confirm those corruptions, and to give them a deeper hold of men's minds. In this way they serve as fully and as effectually the purposes of Satan as of the priesthood, and tend directly to endanger men's eternal welfare, by producing and confirming erroneous conceptions of the scheme which God has devised and revealed for the salvation of sinners, and thus leading them to exclude themselves from the benefit of its free and gracious provisions. This is a general feature of the whole Popish system.

#### Sec. VIII.—*The Merit of Good Works.*

We have explained and illustrated the way in which the Church of Rome has drawn out its doctrine upon the subject of justification into most important practical applications, so far as concerns the topic of satisfaction and forgiveness of sin,—laying by this process a deep foundation for human satisfaction to God's law,—for purgatory and indulgences. We have now to advert to the manner in which Romanists regulate the practical application of their general doctrine, in its bearing upon the subject of *merit*, and the procuring of the divine favour.

The doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject is this:—that, after men are pardoned and regenerated in baptism, they can, through divine grace, obey the whole law of God, so as not to fall into any mortal sin,—which is practically, under the Popish system, the same as into any sin, for venial sin is usually

so explained as to be really no sin; that, while they can thus abstain from doing anything which really deserves God's wrath, they are able, by their good works, to merit from God increase of grace and eternal life; that they can even do more, in the way of meritorious performance, than is necessary to escape from God's wrath, and to procure anything that may be needful for their own happiness; and that their works of supererogation, as they are called, may be available for the benefit of others. We have already seen that the Church of Rome *underrated* the magnitude and importance of the change effected upon men's state or legal condition when their sins are pardoned; we now see how greatly she *overrates* the change effected upon their character and capacities of obeying the divine law, when they are regenerated. The assertion of their liability to a temporal punishment for their post-baptismal sins after their guilt is remitted,—so far as concerns their desert of eternal punishment, and of the strict and proper penalty of the providential trials and sufferings to which they are subjected,—implies an underrating of the fulness and completeness of the pardon or forgiveness which God bestows for Christ's sake, and of the blessed and filial relation into which justified persons are brought; while the assertion of their ability to keep the whole law, and to perform good works that are truly and properly meritorious,—nay, even works of supererogation,—implies an overrating of the completeness of the sanctification wrought upon men when they become the subjects of divine grace. This difference illustrates an important general feature in the character of the Popish system of theology, with respect to the way of a sinner's salvation,—viz., a tendency to throw into the background what, from the nature of the case, must be God's, and God's only, and to raise into prominence that which, though it is admitted to be, in some sense, God's, is also, in some sense, man's, and which, therefore, man will be able and disposed to ascribe to himself, and to rest upon as his own. Forgiveness is God's gift, and cannot well, from the nature of the case, be represented in any other light. Men *might*, indeed, be able to do something to induce God to bestow it upon them, or might be in some measure indebted for it, in some sense, to the good offices and kind intervention of a fellow-creature; and there is much in the Popish system of doctrine and practice fitted and intended to foster both these notions. But the Church of Rome has not

ventured very directly and explicitly to propound them. On the other hand, holiness, obedience, and good works, though ascribed in a general way to God's grace and the operation of His Spirit, are also qualities and doings of men themselves, which exist in them, and are, in some sense, theirs,—as possessed or effected by them. And there is thus a ground on which, though magnifying their importance and value, men may be led to form high ideas of their own worth and excellence, and to rely much upon themselves in matters connected with God and eternity.

We have already expounded two important principles taught by all the Reformers, and anathematized by the Council of Trent, and forming a sort of connecting link between the subject of original sin and that of justification. The principles were these: First, that there is nothing in men by nature, and before they are justified and regenerated, but what is sinful, wholly and altogether sinful, and deserving of God's wrath; and, second, that there is nothing in men's character and actions, so long as they continue on earth, even after they are forgiven and regenerated, which is not stained or polluted with sinful imperfection,—which has not about it something that deserves God's displeasure, and that, viewed in itself, might justly expose men to punishment. These two positions, if they are really taught in the word of God, as we have shown they are, overturn from the foundation the leading principles on which the whole Popish doctrine of justification is based. It is with the second of them only that we have now to do, in its bearing upon what Papists commonly call the second justification, or the *justificatio justi*, as distinguished from the *justificatio impii*, by which men who have been pardoned and regenerated procure additional supplies of grace, both pardoning and sanctifying, and thus become more righteous and more happy. If it be true that all the actions, even of justified and regenerate men, have something sinful about them, or are stained with some sinful imperfection, it is quite plain that men cannot, as the Church of Rome teaches, render perfect obedience to the divine law; and that their good works cannot, as the Council of Trent affirmed they do, truly and properly deserve or merit increase of grace and eternal life.

The merit of good works was an invention of the schoolmen; for though the fathers often applied the word *merit* to the actions of regenerate men,—and though, of course, Papists quote the pas-

sages in which this term is so applied, in support of the doctrine of their Church,—it has been proved by Protestant writers, that “to merit,” is commonly used by them merely in the vague and general sense of “to procure or obtain,” and not as conveying the Popish notion of meriting or deserving, in a strict or proper sense. The schoolmen asserted the merit of good works in a higher and more exact sense than that in which it had been ascribed to them by the fathers, and indulged in many intricate and useless speculations about the nature and ground of merit, and the qualities and circumstances of actions necessary and sufficient to make them truly and properly meritorious; and, in consequence, a good deal of matter of this sort has been introduced into the discussion of this subject as carried on between Protestants and Papists. Protestants contend, and most reasonably, that they are exempted from any necessity of considering the Popish doctrine of the true and proper merit of good works by the proof they adduce of the position to which we have referred about the sinful deficiency or imperfection attaching to all the actions of justified men; for this doctrine, if true, manifestly precludes the possibility of their being properly meritorious. But as the Papists adduce, in support of their doctrine of the proper merit of good works, some scriptural arguments which are not destitute of plausibility, the Protestants have not declined to examine this subject. We can make only a very few observations upon it.

There are two principal questions usually discussed under this head: First, What are good works? and, secondly, Are they truly and properly meritorious, as the Council of Trent asserts, of God’s favour, increase of grace, and eternal life? First, What are good works? The Church of Rome having determined that good works should be meritorious, resolved also to extend as widely as possible,—at least in certain directions,—the sphere to which this important quality of true and proper merit attached, by comprehending many things under the name of good works whose claim to that designation Protestants refuse to admit,—such as vows, penances, fastings, festivals, pilgrimages, processions, and a number of other observances of a similar kind, connected with the rites and ceremonies of the Romish Church, and all fitted, more or less directly, to advance the interests of the system, and to extend the influence of the priesthood. It is for the purpose

of contradicting and exposing the Popish notions upon this subject, that the chapter on “Good Works” in our Confession of Faith\* is introduced with the following position: “Good works are only such as God hath commanded in His holy word, and *not* such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intention.” This position, the truth of which we need not stop to illustrate, cuts off at once many of the works which the Church of Rome urges upon men as good and meritorious.

It is common also, and quite pertinent, to discuss under this head the famous Popish distinction between commands of duty and counsels of perfection,—a distinction which is the foundation, doctrinally, of the whole monastic system. Papists hold that, while there are many precepts and commands in Scripture addressed to all, and equally binding upon all, there are also some higher exercises of virtue, which are not universally commanded or enjoined, but only counselled or recommended to those who aspire to perfection; and which, of course, are more abundantly meritorious, than those good works which are performed in obedience to express and universal requirements. The chief of these counsels of perfection are the voluntary renunciation of property, of marriage, and of the power of regulating our own actions; and when these things are renounced, and especially when the renunciation is sealed with a vow,—the vow, as they call it, of poverty, chastity, and obedience,—they regard this as a state of perfection which is highly meritorious, in which a very large stock of merit may be laid up. Protestants have no great difficulty in overturning from Scripture their whole distinction, and all the particular instances to which it is applied, and are thus able to maintain unbroken and unqualified their fundamental position, that “good works are only such as God hath commanded in His holy word;” and thus to overturn one of the foundations on which the doctrine of merit and supererogation is based.

Protestants hold, that regenerate men are bound to perform, and do perform, good works, though Papists commonly represent them as denying both these positions. They admit that the good works men perform, are in substance, and as to their main character and leading features, accordant with the requirements of

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\* C. xvi.

God's law, and therefore, in some sense, pleasing and acceptable in His sight; but they maintain that they are not meritorious, or possessed of true and proper merit,—that they are not meritorious, as the Council of Trent asserts, of eternal life,—and that they never surpass, either in number or in excellence, what the law of God requires. Independently of the consideration which was formerly adverted to, and which is absolutely and manifestly inconsistent with the ascription of merit,—viz., that even the best works of regenerate men are stained with sinful imperfection,—Protestants rest their denial of the meritoriousness of good works mainly upon these two grounds: First, that men are under a positive obligation to perform them, and are not at liberty to neglect them; and, secondly, that they bear no proportion to the result which they are said to merit,—viz., the favour of God and eternal life. It seems essential to the idea of true and proper merit, that the actions to which it is ascribed be such as are not incumbent, as matter of imperative and unavoidable obligation, on those by whom they are performed; that they could omit or neglect them without thereby necessarily committing sin, and without thereby justly exposing themselves to punishment. True and proper merit, therefore, cannot attach to any action which God's law expressly enjoins. It might indeed possibly attach, so far as this argument is concerned, to counsels of perfection. But then, first, there is no such class of actions which it is competent to men to perform; and then, secondly, Papists who maintain that there is, do not restrict merit to actions of this class, but extend it,—i.e., the possibility of it,—to all the good works of regenerate men.

On this ground, then, no actions done in obedience to God's law, even though fully accordant with what the law requires, can possess true and proper merit, so as to deserve *anything* at God's hand; and still less, in the second place, can they merit eternal life, from the total want of equality, nay, from the infinite disproportion between the good actions of men, even though they were free from all sinful imperfection, and the result which they are said to deserve. In addition to these general considerations, which evidently exclude or disprove true and proper merit, there is abundance of direct Scripture statement to prove that no man ever merited anything from God; and that every man is, at all times, indebted to God's *unmerited* mercy and kindness, for every

gift he receives, for every favour he enjoys, for every hope he entertains.

I have said that the Popish doctrine of the true and proper merit of good works is not altogether destitute of what may seem, at first sight, to be plausible scriptural evidence. It must be plain, however, that with such an amount of scriptural evidence against it as that to which we have briefly referred, as establishing the positions above laid down, it could be admitted only if principles or statements in support of it could be produced from Scripture, of a very clear and explicit description,—principles bearing very directly and conclusively upon the precise point in dispute,—statements which cannot be explained away by any reasonable or legitimate process, and which cannot admit of any other meaning than that which the Papists ascribe to them. Of course the Scripture proof they adduce consists in those statements which plainly indicate some connection as actually subsisting, according to God's arrangements, between good works and admission into heaven; and especially those which represent heaven and eternal life as the *reward* of good works (*μισθος*, *merces*). Now, here again, it might be admitted, as in the question formerly adverted to about the strictly penal character of the providential sufferings of good men, that *had we no other information given us* in Scripture upon the subject, these statements might not unreasonably be regarded as sanctioning the Popish principle, that good works are meritorious of eternal life. But here also, as there, we contend,—first, that this Popish view of the nature or character of the connection subsisting between good works and eternal life, is wholly precluded by other scriptural principles and statements; and, secondly, that there is no great difficulty in reconciling the representations on which the Popish conclusion is based, with the Protestant principle that they are not meritorious of eternal life; while, on the other hand, it is not possible to reconcile those scriptural representations on which the Protestant conclusion is founded, with the Popish principle that they *are*. Eternal life is, no doubt, represented in Scripture as the reward of good works; and Papists allege that merit and reward are correlative ideas, the one necessarily implying the other. But eternal life is also represented in Scripture as the free gift of God; and Protestants contend that its being a free gift *necessarily* excludes the idea of its being truly merited by good works; and



that its being a reward does *not* necessarily imply the reverse. This is the state of the question. I cannot enter into any detailed discussion of it, but would only remark,—first, that it has been proved that the idea of reward is, in several instances, introduced and applied in Scripture in cases where there was certainly nothing meritorious, and that, consequently, merit is not its specific and invariable correlative; and, secondly, that when the apostle says,\* “To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt,” he plainly and unequivocally intimates that the word *reward* is taken in two different senses; and that a thing may be truly represented as a reward, when he who receives it had no claim to it, had done nothing whatever to merit it, but had obtained it of grace without merit. Since this distinction has the express sanction of Scripture, and since Scripture also affords abundant materials to prove that the reward of eternal life is given of grace and not of debt, we are not only warranted, but bound, if we would submit fully to the whole teaching of Scripture upon this subject, to apply the distinction, and to regard it not only as legitimate, but imperative, to believe that the circumstance of eternal life being represented as the reward of good works was not intended to convey the idea that it is merited by them; and to maintain, without any limitation or modification, the great scriptural principle, that eternal life, and everything that conduces to, or prepares for, it, is altogether the free gift of God’s unmerited kindness through Christ.

This doctrine of merit, then, is another important point in which the Church of Rome has grievously perverted the word of God,—perverted it in a way in which no other sect has ventured to follow her example, since even Socinians reject the idea of merit,—perverted it in a way which has a most direct and powerful tendency to produce a state of mind and feeling diametrically opposed to what the whole word of God inculcates, and fitted to exert a most injurious influence upon men’s spiritual welfare.

Bellarmino, after labouring to establish the doctrine of the Council of Trent,—that the good works of regenerate men are truly meritorious of eternal life,—proposes to investigate, distinctly and separately, this question, How far *reliance* ought to be placed upon merits,—“*quatenus fiducia in meritis collocari possit.*”†

\* Rom. iv. 4.

† Bellarm., De Justificat., L. v., c. vii.

He represents, and very truly, the heretics, as he calls them, as unanimous in maintaining that no reliance whatever is to be placed upon merits, and then proceeds to ridicule the earnestness of Calvin and other Protestants in asserting this, and to try to prove what he calls the doctrine of the Catholic Church,—viz., that though men ought indeed to place their chief confidence in God, yet that they should also place some reliance upon their own merits, “*præcipuam quidem spem, et fiduciam in Deo ponendam esse; aliquam tamen etiam in meritis poni posse.*” Many Popish writers have asserted this principle more broadly and offensively than Bellarmine has done; and, to do him justice, he seems almost ashamed of the doctrine which his church obliged him to defend; for he concludes with a remarkable statement, which has been often quoted, and which is not only a virtual retractation of this particular sentiment, but really amounts, in substance and spirit, to a virtual repudiation of the whole five books he had written upon justification. It is in these words: “*Propter incertitudinem propriæ justitiæ, et periculum inanis gloriæ tutissimum est, fiduciam totam in sola Dei misericordia, et benignitate reponere.*” This is a very interesting and important declaration, especially as indicating very plainly, though indirectly, the true character and tendency of Popish doctrine, and the sense entertained of the danger of practically applying and acting upon it, by the ablest of its defenders. If men *have* merits,—true and proper merits,—as the Council of Trent expressly asserts, and as Bellarmine had laboured to prove, *they are entitled to rely upon them*; and from all we know of human nature and the history of the world, we may be assured that they will rely upon them, instead of placing their whole confidence in the sole mercy and kindness of God. The doctrine of the Church of Rome warrants this, nay, requires it; and men who are ignorant of the word of God, and ignorant of themselves, will have no difficulty in receiving and applying this teaching. When they are taught that they can truly and properly merit by their good works the favour of God and eternal life, they will not be deterred from relying upon these merits by a prudential caution, such as Bellarmine has given,—a mere *tutissimum est*,—a hint that they had better not, and that, all things considered, it is safer to abstain. The whole word of God teaches us that we should place no reliance upon our own merits, and rest our whole confidence upon the alone mercy and kindness

of God and the work of Christ. The Church of Rome denies this great principle, and inculcates a doctrine directly opposed to it in substance and tendency. We must believe the Romish doctrine of merit, for the Council of Trent requires this, under an anathema. But Bellarmine is constrained at last virtually to admit, that though we must believe with the Catholic Church, it is safer to feel and act with heretics,—to feel and act as if we disbelieved the Council of Trent, and concurred in opinion with the Reformers. It is safest to rely exclusively upon the mercy and kindness of God; and that doctrine is to be received as scriptural and true which inculcates and produces this exclusive reliance upon Him; while that doctrine is to be rejected as unquestionably false, and as unspeakably dangerous, which sanctions, and has a direct tendency to produce, any reliance upon our own merits for the enjoyment of God's favour and the possession of eternal life.

In regard to works of supererogation, the Council of Trent has not formally and explicitly asserted their possibility and reality. The responsibility of the Church of Rome for the doctrine that men may do more, in the way of obedience to God's law, than is necessary in order to escaping wholly from the consequences of their own sins, and meriting heaven for themselves, is deduced inferentially, though satisfactorily and conclusively, from her teaching concerning the distinction between commands of duty and counsels of perfection,—concerning vicarious human satisfactions,—and especially concerning the general treasury of merits, composed indiscriminately of the superfluous merits of Christ and the saints, and the use and application of the contents of this treasury as the ground and foundation of indulgences. The generality of approved Romish writers have plainly taught the doctrine of supererogation, though in modern times they do not usually give so much prominence as they used to do, either to it or to the general treasury of the church. Moehler, in his *Symbolism*,\* describes it “as that remarkable doctrine . . . which certainly, like every other that hath for centuries existed in the world . . . is sure to rest upon some deep foundation.” He adduces no other positive evidence in support of it, and this is not sufficient. It is a remarkable doctrine, and it *does* rest upon a deep founda-

\* *Symbolism*, vol. i., p. 244.

tion; but this deep foundation is nothing but the natural tendency of fallen and depraved men to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, and to go about to establish a righteousness of their own. He does not attempt to answer the scriptural arguments against it, and tries to evade the objections against it from experience, merely by a misapplication of the well-known principle, that “Christians of a very high stamp appear to men of a lower grade of perfection as enthusiasts, as men of heated fancy and distempered mind;” while he alleges, with ludicrous complacency, that “the tenderness and delicacy” of this doctrine “eluded the perception of the Reformers.” But it is unnecessary to dwell upon this doctrine, so remarkable, so deep-seated, so tender, and so delicate. It may be sufficient to quote concerning it the following extract from Melancthon's “*Commonplaces*,”—an extract which, in spirit and style, very much resembles what might have been expected from Luther, and which, perhaps, may be regarded as giving some countenance to Moehler's insinuation about the bluntness and coarseness of the perceptions of the Reformers upon this topic: “This is not a human notion, but an absolute sarcasm of the devil, mocking and deriding the blindness into which he has betrayed us; that, when God has published His law, to show for what perfection man was created, and into what ruin he has fallen, the devil should put such an irony” or drollery “upon us, as to persuade us that now, in our present ruined state, we can even go *beyond* that law.”\*

*Sec. IX.—Practical Tendency of the Popish Doctrine of Justification.*

We have now completed our survey of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, as contrasted with that of the Reformers, on the vitally important subject of justification, or the forgiveness and acceptance of sinners in the sight of God,—on everything bearing on that change of state in relation to God and His law, which is indispensable to their eternal welfare.

We have found that there is good ground to believe that the Council of Trent has taught,—and that, of course, the Church of

\* Scott, *Continuation of Milner*, vol. ii., p. 237; Melancthon. *Opera*, tom. i., p. 177.

Rome is pledged irrevocably to maintain,—doctrines upon this subject which are inconsistent with the teaching of the word of God; erroneous and anti-scriptural views regarding the nature and import of justification,—the ground or basis on which it rests,—and the way and manner in which men individually become possessed of it. This consideration of itself, independently of the importance, absolute or comparative, of the particular topics involved in the Romish doctrine of justification as a whole, affords quite sufficient reason why we should reject the claims which the Church of Rome puts forth to be received as the mother and mistress of all churches,—as the infallible expounder of divine truth; and why we should abandon her communion, and seek or provide for ourselves a purer dispensation of the word of life. The subject is, from its very nature,—from its direct and immediate bearing upon the spiritual and eternal welfare of men,—one of primary importance in a practical point of view; and all error concerning it must be dangerous and injurious. Indeed, it may be said that the leading object or end of the whole inspired word of God is to unfold to men,—first, what is their state and condition by nature; and, secondly, what provision God has made for saving them from this state; and in what way men individually become interested in this provision, and partakers in its blessed results. On the first of these great heads of doctrine,—the condition and character of men by nature,—the Church of Rome acted, as we have had occasion to explain, with a good deal of caution; while in regard to the second, though not laying aside altogether her cautious and insidious mode of procedure, she has ventured more boldly and decidedly to corrupt the truth revealed in the word of God, and to inculcate erroneous views upon points bearing immediately upon men's relation to God and their eternal destinies,—to furnish unsound and misleading information upon the great questions, How may man be just before God? and, What must we do to be saved? In introducing this subject, we said that the Church of Rome held some general scriptural principles upon this subject, which, if honestly and fully followed out, would have led to much sounder views upon the whole matter than the Council of Trent has inculcated; and that the great general charge adduced against her by the Reformers was, that, in the more detailed exposition of her views, and in the practical arrangements and requirements which she has based upon them, she has neutralized all that was sound

and scriptural in the general principles which she conceded, and has thus introduced important perversions of scriptural truth. The great general scriptural truths which she concedes upon this subject are,—that the forgiveness of sinners, and their admission to the enjoyment of God's favour, are to be traced to the mercy and kindness of God, and to the work of Christ as Mediator. These are great truths; and when they are honestly and fully held and applied, they are fitted, as instruments in the hand of God's Spirit, to produce all those things that accompany salvation,—all those things that are necessary to prepare men for admission into the enjoyment of God's presence. It is in virtue of her teaching these great truths that salvation is possible in the Church of Rome, as Protestants have always admitted that it is. The man who honestly believes, and fully and faithfully applies, these great general truths, not only may, but, according to God's arrangements, must be saved; and since the Church of Rome does inculcate these truths, and does not formally and expressly teach what explicitly and palpably contradicts them, Protestants have never had any hesitation about admitting the possibility of men in the Church of Rome really and practically resting only upon the mercy of God and the work of Christ, and so attaining to salvation in the way which God has appointed.

When, however, we attend more closely and particularly to the detailed exposition of the views of the Church of Rome upon this subject, and to the practical applications she makes of them, we can discern a great deal that tends to obscure and pervert these great general truths,—to throw them into the background,—to prevent them from exercising their natural and appropriate influence, and to promote a general state of mind and feeling, the reverse of what they are fitted to produce. The leading allegations which Protestants have adduced and established against the full and detailed scheme of Popish doctrine upon this subject are these:—first, that it excludes the vicarious work of Christ, including His satisfaction and obedience, from its rightful place in the matter of a sinner's justification, and thus tends to involve the whole subject of the way and manner in which Christ's work bears at once upon God's act in bestowing, and men's act in receiving, pardon and acceptance, in vagueness, obscurity, and confusion;—and, secondly, that it assigns to men's own doings in

the matter a place and influence which they are wholly unfitted to sustain, and thus tends to lead men to go about to establish a righteousness of their own, instead of doing what is indispensable to their salvation,—namely, submitting themselves to the righteousness of God, the righteousness of Jesus Christ which is of God by faith;—and to cherish a feeling of self-righteousness and self-dependence. The Council of Trent, aware that these charges had been adduced against the Romish doctrine by the Reformers, and that there was at least some appearance of ground for them, wind up their whole deliverance upon the various topics comprehended under the head of justification in their thirty-third or last canon, in the following words: “If any one saith, that, by the Catholic doctrine touching Justification, by this holy Synod set forth in this present decree, the glory of God, or the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ are in any way derogated from, and not rather that the truth of our faith, and the glory in fine of God and of Jesus Christ are rendered (more) illustrious; let him be anathema.”\* And Calvin’s answer to this canon, in his Antidote, to which I have had repeated occasion to refer, is in these words: “An ingenious caution, truly, to prevent every man from seeing what all see. They have almost entirely frustrated or made void the glory of God and the grace of Christ together; and at the same time they forbid, under a curse, any one to imagine that they have derogated in the least from either. This is just as if any one should kill a man in the open market, in the sight of all men, and then should enjoin that no one should believe in the reality of the murder which all had seen committed. These men clearly show their true character, by trying to deter men by anathema from venturing to perceive that impiety of which they themselves were conscious.”† Perhaps this striking statement of Calvin’s, though true in the main, scarcely takes sufficiently into account the skill and caution with which the decree of the Council of Trent upon this subject was framed, and applies more exactly to the general strain of doctrine and sentiments that prevailed in the ordinary public teaching of the Romish Church. Enough, however, has, I trust, been said to show, that in the decrees and canons of the sixth session of the Council of Trent, there is much that

\* Sess. vi., Canon xxxiii., Waterworth’s translation.

† Antidot. in Canon. xxxiii., sess. vi.

contradicts the teaching of the word of God upon the most important of all subjects,—that gives a most erroneous view of the plan which God has devised, executed, and revealed for saving sinners,—a view fitted to exert an injurious influence upon their spiritual welfare, and to endanger the salvation of their souls;—and that, of course, the Church of Rome incurred fearful guilt, and became more deeply and hopelessly apostate than ever, by deliberately, solemnly, and unchangeably rejecting those great scriptural principles concerning the way of a sinner’s salvation, which, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, the Reformers were made the instruments of reviving and restoring, and pressing again upon the attention of men.

We cannot fully understand the bearing and tendency of the Romish system, unless we view its formal doctrinal statements in connection with the known principles and tendencies of human nature; and observe also how Papists, in the application of their doctrines, and in the practical arrangements and outward observances which are based upon them, have most carefully and skilfully made provision for fostering and strengthening tendencies of an erroneous and dangerous description. The view we have given of the doctrine formally professed by the Church of Rome, upon the leading topics involved in the exposition of justification, discloses some very important corruptions of the system unfolded in Scripture, as being that which God has provided and revealed for securing men’s deliverance and salvation, and imparting to them the blessings necessary for that end. This must necessarily be very injurious and very dangerous in its practical bearing upon men’s opinions and conduct with respect to the way of salvation. But the full extent of its injurious and dangerous tendency is brought out only when the system is contemplated in connection with the natural tendencies of depraved men.

One of the strongest and most universal tendencies of men in their fallen and depraved condition, is to go about to establish a righteousness of their own,—to rely upon what they themselves are, or do, or can do, for procuring the forgiveness of their sins and the enjoyment of God’s favour. That this tendency is natural to fallen men, and is deep-seated in their moral constitution, is abundantly proved by a survey of the religions of heathenism and of corrupted Judaism. This tendency was openly and decidedly opposed by the inspired apostles, as going far to neutralize