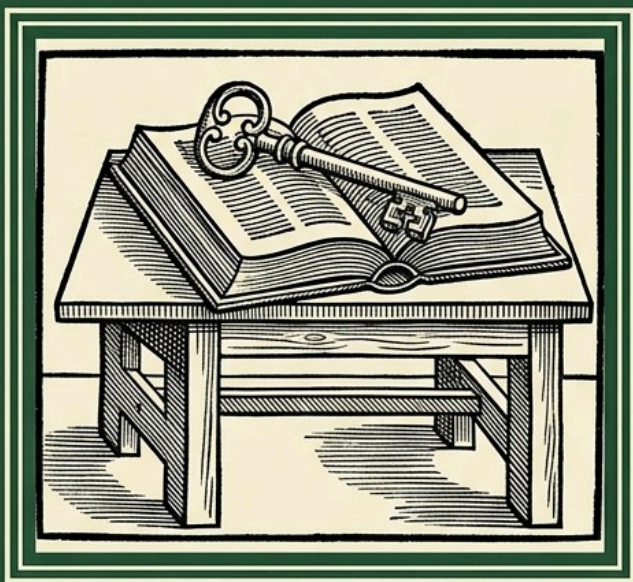


THE LIBERTY OF A CHRISTIAN



MARTIN LUTHER

THE LIBERTY OF A CHRISTIAN

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Martin Luther



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ABOUT THIS BOOK



One of the Reformation's landmark texts, this treatise presents two paradoxical theses: **the Christian is lord of all and subject to none, yet servant of all and subject to all**. Luther argues that **justification by faith alone** unites the soul to Christ in a spiritual marriage, making all Christ's righteousness the believer's own. The second half addresses how this freedom rightly issues in **love and service toward neighbors** — not to earn salvation, but as the natural overflow of a faith-filled heart. A concentrated, passionate, and enduring statement of evangelical freedom.



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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LADY,
ANNE, COUNTESS OF WARWICK



After I had finished this simple translation for the benefit of the unlettered, some of my well-wishers, conceiving well of the matter, were very desirous that I should present the same to some noble personage: others, challenging more knowledge in courtly affairs, persuaded the contrary, being of opinion, that though it might in some respect seem plausible enough, yet the present being but simple, could not deserve to be advanced to court, especially to a place of estate. And although I supposed, and partly knew, that the opinion of the latter was but weak in judgment: yet, lo, it made so much the longer stay in deliberation, by how much I was abashed in conceit, in respect of my rudeness and unfitness, to satisfy the learned and courtly ears. Nevertheless, having clothed my stranger in English attire (whom I call a stranger, in respect of the person who was the first author thereof), and well knowing the court, to the great fame and honor thereof, by the space of many years now passed, to have been the rescue of all strangers distressed, I could not but believe that in the court this stranger, so godly, so zealous, so learned, should be both easily accepted and gently entertained: and encouraged by this well-known experience, I yielded myself to the first persuasion, and

finding by general report, Madame, the noble ornaments and gifts — I speak not only of nature, but of godliness, wisdom, and zeal, joined with singular mildness and benignity, being the fruits of grace amongst the rest especially, to shine in your sacred breast — I was thereby emboldened to proceed, and above all others, to presume upon your honorable patience, and to present to your honor this my poor stranger. In whose commendation I dare boldly affirm, that there was never any a more trusty servant to his master: never any of more undaunted courage in his master's cause: never any that adventured, or dared adventure farther: never any that used more constancy, magnanimity, and force, in battering the fortresses of the enemy: never any that pierced deeper, prevailed further, and procured larger, for the safety of poor Christians, so many hundred years oppressed, imprisoned, impoverished, yoked, and chained in miserable captivity, through the monstrous outrage of that execrable Nimrod of Rome, amongst many of whose exploits, albeit there cannot any one be found that is not able to replenish the spiritual and true Christian man with such and so great joy as cannot with my pen be expressed, yet in my simple judgment, this one little treatise of his, which I have now above all others selected to translate, does far excel and surmount in ghostly consolation, wherein are treated no vain, childish, or trifling toys, but sweet, delectable, serious, weighty, and matters of great importance, namely, the pure faith of a true Christian man, the joyful union and marriage of the most amiable bridegroom Jesus Christ to the poor miserable abject and wretched soul, the well ordering of Christian life, and the gladsome Christian freedom and liberty. Even such a one is this my stranger, whom, if it may please your honor to vouchsafe unto your honorable patronage, I shall not only

account myself most happy in my choice, but also — acknowledging your honorable courtesy in full satisfaction of my English cost, such as it is employed — yield myself doubly bound and indebted to your honor in anything which my pen may endeavor, or travel may perform. The Holy Ghost, the author of all goodness and ghostly consolation, replenish your heart with the most joyful freedom of his grace, to the comfort of all such as travel in the building of God's holy temple.

Your honor's most humble at commandment, James Bell.

TO LEO THE TENTH, BISHOP OF ROME



Amongst the monsters of this world, with whom I have been in continual combat these three whole years and more, I am enforced now at length to turn my eyes unto you, and to have you in remembrance, O most holy father Leo — yea, forasmuch as you only are accounted the very cause of this my turmoil, I cannot choose but be always mindful of you. And albeit I have been constrained, through insatiable cruelty of your wicked sycophants raging against me without desert, to appeal to the next general Council, little esteeming the most vain decrees of your predecessors, Pius and Julius, who of a foolish tyranny have prohibited such appeal to be made from the See Apostolic, yet did I never mean while so to estrange my affection from your holiness, but that I have with all my heart wished all felicity and happiness to you and to your See, and in my daily prayers with tears and sighs, even to the uttermost of my power, have heartily besought God for the same. But as for those which have hitherto practiced to terrify me with the authority and majesty of your name, I have now begun almost to contemn and account them of no force: only one thing yet remains, which I may not despise, which occasioned me at this present to address my letters to your holiness. And this it is, be-

cause I perceive that I am accused unto your holiness, and very grievously blamed for my rashness, in that I am supposed to have no consideration of your personage.

Wherein, to confess the truth plainly, I am privy in my own conscience, that wheresoever it behooves me to make mention of your person, I did never speak thereof without all honor and reverence: the contrary whereof if I had attempted at any time, I might not have been able to justify, and would by all means possible have subscribed unto their judgments conceived of me herein, and withal would have applied to nothing more willingly, than to make open recantation of this my temerity and misdemeanor in that behalf. I have named you a Daniel in Babylon: and your notable innocency, with how earnest affection I have defended it against your slanderous enemy Silvester, every reader does sufficiently understand — namely, that the opinion and report of your irreproachable life, resounding in each coast throughout the whole world, by the testimony of so many and so notable personages, is more famous and renowned than that it may be impeached by the sinister practice of any man, though never so great a potentate. I am not so void of reason as to defame him whom all men commend, so also have I been ever of this mind, not to seek the defacing of any one, though otherwise infamous by report of all others; for I rejoyce not at another man's blemish, who am myself a sufficient witness to my own conscience, of my own great beam in my own eye: nor can be the first that may cast a stone at the woman taken in adultery.

Indeed I have accustomed myself to inveigh against wicked doctrines, somewhat sharply: and have pinched my adversaries, not for their licentious lives, but for their irreligious doctrines,

somewhat earnestly: whereof it so little repents me, that I am fully persuaded, without all regard had of men's censures herein, to persevere in that vehemency of zeal: induced hereunto by the example of Christ, who according to the same zeal, spared not to call his adversaries vipers' brood, blind hypocrites, and children of the devil. So does Paul accuse Simon Magus to be the child of Satan, full of fraud and malice. And some others he reproves openly by the name of dogs, deceivers, and crafty simonists. Of whose sharp words, if nice delicates may be admitted judges, nothing shall be supposed more biting and uncivil. What can be more vehement than the prophets? Certainly the manners of our age are become so tender through the furious swarm of flatterers, that we can no sooner feel our sores a little discovered, but we exclaim forthwith that we are lanced: and being not able to crack the credit of the truth by any caviling, we flee from her, condemning her of harshness, impatience, and lack of modesty. How shall salt season if it be not savory? What avails the edge of a sword if it cannot cut? Cursed is the man that does the Lord's work fraudulently. Wherefore I humbly beseech you, my reverend Leo, vouchsafe these my letters for my excuse, and withal persuade yourself that I never conceived any evil of your personage. Then also, that I am so affected towards you, as that I could heartily wish unto your holiness all felicity forever. Moreover, that I am not at variance with any man for conversation of life, but only touching the only word of truth. In all matters else whatsoever, I will give place to others, but the word, neither can I nor will I forsake or deny. Whoever judges of me otherwise, or has conceived otherwise of my writings, does not judge truly, nor conceive thereof aright.

But your See — which is termed the Court of Rome, and which neither you nor any man living can deny to be more filthy than Babylon and Sodom, and as far forth as I can conceive, grown to most lamentable, forlorn, and most shameless impiety — I have detested indeed, and have taken it very grievously, that the people of Christ should be deluded under the countenance of your name and your holiness, and under the pretense of the Church of Rome: and herein have resisted, and will resist the same, as long as the spirit of faith shall live in me: not because I dare think to achieve impossibilities, or that by my only endeavor, I may hope for any amendment in this most confusedly disordered Babylon, being circumvented with such a rabble of brain-sick blunders: but because I do acknowledge myself indebted to my poor brethren, whose safety I ought to regard; that the loss of them that perish may be abridged, or at the least, less infection may spread abroad from those Romish sores. For these many years now Rome has surrounded the whole world with nothing else — whereof your holiness is not ignorant — but with utter destruction of all things, of bodies, of souls, and with most pestiferous patterns of all monstrous wickedness: which does rage at this day in the sight of all men, more manifest than the sun in midday. And the Church of Rome which was sometime the most holy of all other, is become the most licentious den of thieves, the most shameless brothel-house of all the world, the kingdom of sin, death, and hell, inso-much that it passes all reach of man to devise any abomination that is not haunted there, no, though Antichrist himself were come.

In the meantime you, right reverend father Leo, sit as a lamb in the midst of wolves, as Daniel amidst the lions, and are with Ezekiel conversant with scorpions. How can you alone be able to withstand all these monsters? Guard your personage with three or four cardinals excellent in all learning, and most virtuous in manners: what shall this handful do amongst so great a troop? You shall all be sooner swallowed up with poison, before you may dare attempt any reformation. The Court of Rome is utterly undone, the wrath of God is bent against it even forever and ever. It hates counsels, it fears to be reformed, it is not able to restrain the furiousness of her impiety: and it accomplishes the prophecy of her mother, of whom it is written on this wise: We have cherished Babylon, and she is not recovered, let us forsake her. Indeed it belonged to you and your cardinals to have cured those plagues: but this gout scorns the physician's drugs, and this cart will not go driven nor led. Moved therefore with remorse, herein I sorrowed always, right reverend Leo, because you were installed Pope in this wicked age, whose worthiness deserved a better time: for the Court of Rome is not worthy to be possessed of you, and such as you are, but rather of Satan himself, which in truth does reign in this Babylon more than you. O would to God you could content yourself rather with some private benefice, or with your parents' patrimony, renouncing this pomp, wherewith those flatterers your most detestable enemies do vaunt you to be glorious, with which glory none are meet to be glorified but treacherous Iscariots, the imps of perdition. For what commendation else do you get in that palace, my Leo, but that by how much any teacher is more wickedly execrable, so much the more safely he may shroud himself under your name and authority, to rob men of their money and souls, to heap

mischief upon mischief, to oppress faith, truth, together with all the Church of God? Oh most unfortunate Leo, doubtless enthroned in a most perilous place of renown: for I tell you the truth, because I do wish well unto you: for if Bernard took compassion of his beloved Eugenius, when as yet there was some better hope of the See of Rome — though then also it was filthily imperious — whereof may we complain first, who have wallowed these three hundred years now in stench and destruction? Is not this true, that under the whole out-stretched face of the heavens, there is nothing more contagious, more pestiferous, and more odious than the Court of Rome? For it is more incomparably execrable than the Turkish impiety, so that true it is indeed, that the same which was in times past the gate of heaven, is now become a certain gaping gulf of hell, and so insatiable a gulf as cannot possibly be satisfied, the wrath of God being fully bent against the same. One only comfort remains for the poor wretches, if we be able to reclaim and preserve some few at the least from this wide gaping jaws, as I said before. Behold, my holy father Leo, by what inducement and by what reason I have inveighed against this chair of pestilence: for it is so far off from my thought to grow in outrage against your personage, as that I would hope to obtain your favor, and be deemed a stout patron of your safety, if I would manfully and valiantly crush in pieces the gates of this your dungeon, or of this your hell rather. For howsoever the general force of all policy can possibly imagine to work the utter ruin of the most horrible Court of this age, the same shall redound all to your person, to the preservation of your estate, and to the safety of many others together with you. Such as

do work her confusion do execute your function. They do advance the glory of Christ which do by all means possible detest her. To conclude, they be right Christians which are least Romanists.

But to speak hereof more at large. There never came any such thought into my head, as to inveigh against the Court of Rome, or to discourse thereof anything at all: for when I perceived that all preservatives were insufficient to procure her amendment, I withdrew myself from her, and delivering her a bill of divorce, I spoke unto her in this wise: He that is filthy, let him continue in his filthiness still, and he that is unclean, let him continue in his uncleanness still, yielding myself over to the calm and quiet study of holy Scriptures, whereby I might be able to profit my brethren dwelling round about me. Here now when as I could very little avail, Satan began to open his eyes, and to prick forward his trusty servant John Eck, a notorious enemy of Christ, swelling with a certain outrageous licentiousness of glory, challenging me to a combat unlooked for, tripping me for one very little word escaped me unawares, touching the supremacy of the Church of Rome. This same proud prancing boaster, fussing in his fustian fumes, vaunted lustily that he durst attempt all things for God's glory, and the honor of the holy See Apostolic: and being puffed up with saucy impudence of abusing your power, made no surer account of anything than of present conquest, seeking thereby not so much the primacy of Peter's chair, as his own peerless primacy amongst all the divines of this age. For the better achieving whereof, he perceived that to lead poor Luther captive would be not the least bravery of his triumph, which enterprise, because it happened unluckily and contrary to the exhortation of the foolish sophist, the man

waxed incredibly furious: for he perceived that whatsoever infamy was raised by me against the Romish Church, was procured by his own only temerity and rashness.

Vouchsafe here, I beseech you, right reverend Leo, that I may here once defend my own cause, and discover your very natural enemies. It is not unknown unto you, I suppose, how your legate the Cardinal of Saint Sixtus did deal with me — an indiscreet man, and uncivil, nay rather a false man. Into whose protection when I had yielded myself and all my estate for the reverence that I bear to your holiness, he endeavored not to conclude a quietness which he might even with half a word have established easily, when as I then promised to keep silence, and put up my quarrel, so that my adversaries might be enjoined to do the like. But this glorious man, not satisfied with these conditions, began to authorize my adversaries, to give them free liberty, and to enjoin me to recant, which was no part of his commission. Certainly, when here the cause was yet in very good plight, through his immoderate handling, it began to fester worse and worse, whereupon whatsoever fell afterwards was to be imputed, not to Luther, but to Cardinal Cajetan's indiscretion altogether, who would not permit me to be silent, and to remain in quiet, which I did at that time most earnestly desire — for what might I do more?

After him came Charles Miltitz, and he also legate of your holiness, who traveling many and sundry ways, posting here and there, forth and back, and omitting nothing that might appertain to the redress of the state of the cause, which Cajetan had rashly and proudly disordered, could scarce at length bring it to pass — though countenanced herein by the most renowned Prince Frederick the Elector — that he might have once or twice some fa-

miliar conference with me, where I once again yielded to your authority, contented to hold my peace, not refusing either Archbishop of Triers, or the Bishop of Nürnberg to be judge in the cause, which was concluded and obtained. Whiles these matters proceeded thus very orderly, behold the other — yea, a greater enemy of your estate — Eck rushes out with his disputation at Leipzig, which he had then published against Doctor Carlstadt, and picking a new quarrel of the supremacy of the Pope, bends his shot against me at unawares, and utterly dissolves this conclusion of peace. In the meantime Charles Miltitz attends the outcome, disputation begins, judges are chosen: yet nevertheless, hitherto nothing was determined, and no marvel, forasmuch as through Eck's false lying, dissembling, and false packing, all things were full of unquietness, abounded in all melancholy, and fraught of all parts with confused disorder, so that which way soever judgment were given, greater storms would be raised: for he sought for glory, and not for the truth. And here also I omitted no part of duty that became me to do.

And I confess, that this was not the least occasion of the discovery of the Romish trumperies: yet such as it was, if any offense grew thereby, it was altogether to be imputed to Eck, which undertaking enterprise above his reach, whiles he gaped over-greedily for his own glory, did display abroad to the view of the whole world the infamous estate of Rome. This, even this same Eck is your enemy, my Leo, or rather the enemy of your Court, by whose only example, a man may learn sufficiently, that there is none more pestilent an enemy than a flatterer, for what gained he by his fawning else but a mischief, which no earthly king nor potentate could bring to pass? For the name of the Romish Court does stink now

over the whole world, and the papal authority is very much crazed, notorious ignorance is generally cried out upon, whereof we should not have heard any one word at all, if Eck had not turmoiled the peace agreed upon betwixt Charles and me, which now himself perceives plain enough, all too late, and in vain, storming against the printing of my books. Thus much became him then to have thought upon, when like a wild untamed colt, he ranged wholly for glory, and when he sought naught else but his own advancement, under the color of your holiness, to your marvelous detriment and danger; notwithstanding the foolish vain man hoped that I would have ceased, and kept silence, being afraid of the sound of your authority — for of his wit and learning, I do not believe that he was so foolhardy. And now perceiving that I have taken courage, and my writings scattered abroad too much, being all too late sorry for his unadvisedly willfulness, he does understand that there reigns one in heaven who resists the proud, and casts down the haughty of mind, if at least yet he conceive so much.

Therefore, when as by this our disputation, nothing was wrought but a greater confusion of the Romish cause, Charles Miltitz makes now his third repair to the elders of the order, being assembled in the chapter house, desires advice how to qualify the contention, which was even now grown to great trouble and wonderful peril: from whom — forasmuch as there was small hope now to overthrow me, God's mercy assisting me — some of the greatest personages were sent unto me, to entreat that I would have consideration of the estimation and honor of your holiness, and that I should in humble letters excuse both your innocency and my own, declaring that the matter was not yet grown to so despairing a case

as to be without hope of recovery, if Leo the tenth would of his natural inclination to leniency vouchsafe his aid thereto. Here now as one that has always both offered and wished for tranquility, that I may the better apply myself to more quiet and more profitable exercise, whereas I had so vehemently turmoiled myself to this end, that in mightiness and force, as well of words as courage, I might suppress the insolence of them, whom I perceived to be far unequal to match with me, I did not only yield willingly, but with joy also and thankful mind, embraced the request, as a most acceptable benefit, if it may prove according to our expectation.

In this mind I come now, oh holy father, and falling prostrate at your feet, do most humbly beseech you to grant your assistance herein, and to restrain, if it be possible, the outrage of these flatterers, the very cankers of unity, though masking under the visor of peace. But to wish me to revoke that which I have written, most holy father, it avails not for any man to hope for, unless he be desirous rather to have the matter to be more largely blown abroad.

Moreover, I do not allow these laws concerning the interpretation of God's word to be restrained to the Church of Rome, or tied to any place, forasmuch as the word of God, which teaches freedom of all things else, ought not to be straitened and abridged of her freedom. The two conditions reserved, there is else nothing but that I can both do and suffer: yea, will most willingly yield unto. I do hate contention. I will challenge no man, and I will not be challenged again, but if I be teased, I will not hold my tongue in my master Christ's behalf, for it is an easy matter for your holiness to command silence and quietness on both parts, the quarrels being summoned before you and determined, which I have always desired earnestly to hear.

Beware therefore, my holy father Leo, that you hearken not to these enchanters, which make you not a natural man, but half a God, and would induce you to believe that you are able to command and exact whatsoever you list. It will not be so, neither shall you prevail; you are the servant of servants, and placed in the most dangerous estate of all others. Let them not beguile you, which imagine you to be the Lord of the world, which will not permit any man to be a Christian man, unless he be subject to your authority, which do chatter and jangle that you are of power to command in heaven, in hell, and in purgatory. Those, even those be your enemies, and seek the destruction of your soul, as the prophet Isaiah does witness: O my good people, such as do praise you, even those do deceive you. They are out of the way, which do extol your majesty above the Council and universal Church. They are out of the way which do invest you only in the right of interpreting Scriptures, for such do practice to establish in the Church all their own impieties under your name. And alas for woe, by the means of those persons, Satan has prevailed much in your predecessors. To be brief, believe none of them that do magnify you, but such as do humble you, for this is the judgment of God: He has thrown down the mighty from their seat, and has exalted the humble and meek. Behold what inequality there is betwixt Christ and his successors, when as they all notwithstanding will be accounted vicars of Christ. And I fear much, lest many of them be his vicars in deed a great deal too earnestly: for a vicar is he that does present the person of his prince being not in place. Now, if the Pope does bear dominion while Christ is not present, nor residing within his heart, what is he else than the vicar of Christ? But what manner of church is that then else, but a rude multitude without Christ? And

what manner of vicar is this else, but Antichrist, and an idol? How much more truly spoke the apostles, who named themselves the servants of Christ being present, and not vicars of Christ being absent.

Peradventure, I shall be accounted a shameless fellow, that dare presume to teach so mighty a potentate, from whom all others ought to be instructed, and from whom all judicial courts ought to fetch definitive sentence — as your pestiferous flatterers do arrogantly vaunt. But I follow the example of Bernard, in his book entitled *De Consideratione ad Eugenium*, a necessary book for all Popes to know by heart. Neither do I take this upon me of any greedy desire to teach, but of dutiful affection, in a pure and faithful zeal, which does enforce us to be afraid even of the most plausible things in our neighbors: and being altogether exercised in the perils and profits of other men, will not admit any respect to be had of the worthy or unworthy. For insomuch as I know that your holiness is troubled, and tossed at Rome — that is to say, in the main sea on all sides environed about with infinite dangers, and that you swim now in succorless waves miserably — as that you stand in need of the meanest help of any your poorest brethren, I judged it a point of no great absurdity, if I did lay aside the remembrance of your majesty for a time, until I had executed the duty of love. I will not flatter in so weighty and perilous a cause: in which doing, if I be not conceived to be most friendly and most humble unto you, there is one that does conceive and judge.

To conclude, because I would not seem to come empty-handed unto your holiness, I bring with me this little treatise, published under your name, as a pledge of truce to be concluded, and of good success: wherein you may somewhat conceive in what kind of

studies I can, and am very desirous to employ my time, more fruitfully and commodiously: if I heretofore might, or hereafter may now conveniently be free from your wicked flatterers. The matter is small, if you regard the outward coat, but if you comprehend the thing itself, it is — if I be not deceived — a most notable pattern of a Christian life, briefly compiled. Neither have I ought else, being a poor man, to gratify your holiness withal, neither need you any other present than spiritual consolation, wherewith I do recommend myself wholly to your fatherhood and holiness. Which I beseech Christ Jesus to preserve forever. Amen.

At Wittenberg the sixth of September, in the year of our Lord, 1520.

A TREATISE OF MARTIN LUTHER TOUCHING CHRISTIAN LIBERTY



Many men have been of opinion that Christian faith is an easy matter, yea of them also not a few have accounted it in the number of virtues, even as a companion of virtue itself. And this have they done, because they have had no trial thereof by any proof, nor have at any time tasted of what force and power it is: whereas it cannot be possible that any man may be able to write pithily, or understand effectually the things that are written concerning the same truly, unless being pinched at some one time or another with some cross of tribulation, he has felt the inward spirit thereof. But whoever has had but a mean taste of the same, can never possibly be satisfied with writing, speaking, thinking, and hearing thereof. For it is a lively spring unto everlasting life, according as Christ calls it in the fourth of John. Wherein myself, albeit I make no vaunt of my store, and withal do acknowledge the weakness of my inability, yet do nevertheless trust, that by means of sundry and grievous temptations wherewith I have been turmoiled, I have attained no small measure of faith. And that I am thereof able to treat — though not so eloquently, yet certainly more substantially — than those literal and over-subtle schoolmen have hitherto yet disputed, as men altogether ignorant

in the things which themselves have written. To the end therefore I may discover a more easy way to the unlettered to wade herein, to whose capacities I do only apply myself, I do set down first these two propositions touching the freedom and bondage of the spirit.

- 1 A Christian man is a most free lord of all, subject to none.
- 2 A Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

Although these two propositions seem to be mere contraries, yet when they shall be found to have in them a certain sweet agreement, they will avail very much for our present purpose. For Saint Paul is the author of them both, namely, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians the 9th chapter: Being otherwise free, I made myself servant of all. And in the 13th to the Romans: Owe nothing to any man, but that you love one another. But love is naturally dutiful, and humbly obedient to the thing that is loved. Even so Christ, though Lord of all, yet being born of a woman, was made under the law, both free altogether, and a servant, at one and the same time in the shape of God, and in the shape of a servant.

Let us enter into some higher and more deep consideration of those sayings. Man does consist of two natures, to wit, spiritual and corporeal. In respect of the spiritual nature — which some do term to be the soul — he is called spiritual, inward, and of the new man. In respect of the corporeal — which some call the flesh — he is called the carnal, outward, and the old man. Of which the Apostle in the second to the Corinthians, the 4th chapter: Although our outward man be corruptible, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. So that it comes to pass through this diversity, that in the Scriptures two contraries are affirmed of one and the same man, because that these two men being within the same one

man do keep continual battle against each other, while the flesh does covet against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, as in the Epistle to the Galatians the 5th chapter.

First therefore let us examine the inward man, and see by what reason he may be made just, free, and a true Christian, that is to say, spiritual, new, and an inward man. And it is certain, that no external thing at all — how glorious a title soever it bear — is in any respect available to the attaining of Christian righteousness, or freedom, as neither of any value to the procuring of unrighteousness or bondage, which is proved by a very easy demonstration. For what avails it to the soul, if the body be in good liking, health, and full of life: if it eat, drink, and do freely what it lists, when as even the most wicked abjects, bond-slaves of all mischief, do enjoy the same? Again, what loss does the soul sustain by sickness, imprisonment, scarcity of food, thirst, or by any other external disadvantage, when as the very reprobate, and such as be clear void of all good conscience, are molested with the same. None of all those external casualties do extend to the freedom, or bondage, of the soul. In like manner it shall be to small purpose, if the body be garnished with gay copes, such as priests do wear, or be conversant in holy sanctuaries, or be exercised in holy Mass and Matins, or if it pray, fast, abstain from certain meats, or do inure itself to whatsoever exercise wrought and possible to be wrought by the body and in the body. To the freedom and righteousness of the soul is requisite matter of far greater importance, whereas those external things aforesaid may happen unto the most wicked, by practicing of which, they become no better than plain hypocrites. Contrariwise, it shall nothing prejudice the soul, to have the body clad with unhallowed garments, to frequent profane places, to eat

and drink of all sorts of meat without choice, not to bleat out prayer by rote, yea to pass over all those works aforesaid, which may be performed by the very hypocrites.

Be it also that we reject all things, yea, even speculations, meditations, and whatsoever may be done by the endeavor of the soul, it profits nothing. One thing, yea and that only and alone is needful to the attainment of life, righteousness, and Christian liberty, which is the sacred word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, according to the testimony of Christ himself in the 11th chapter of John: I am the resurrection and life; he that believes in me, shall not die forever. And in the 8th chapter of John: If the Son make you free, you shall be truly free. And in the 4th chapter of Matthew: Man lives not by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Let us therefore take this for a strong and undoubted bulwark, that the soul may want all things except the word of God, without which nothing in the world can preserve her in safety: but having the word, she is rich, destitute of nothing, forasmuch as the word of God is the word of life, of light, of peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, freedom, wisdom, power, grace, glory, and inestimably the incomparable treasure of all goodness. And this is it that moved the prophet in all his octaves and in many other places, with so many deep sighs and groanings to cry out, and to call upon the word of God. Again, neither is there any more horrible a plague of God's wrath, than while he sends famine of hearing his word, as he speaks in Amos: as neither is there any greater grace than if he spread abroad his word, as is specified in Psalm 107: He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. Neither was Christ sent to any

other ministry than the ministry of the word, nor is the apostolical bishopric, and whole order ecclesiastical, called and instituted otherwise, than to the ministry of the word.

But you will demand, what word of God is this, and after what manner must it be used, considering there be so many words of God? I answer, the Apostle in the first to the Romans does express the same, namely, the gospel of God concerning his son incarnate, crucified, risen again, and glorified by the Holy Ghost the sanctifier. For Christ has preached, that is to say, has fed the soul, has justified, delivered, and saved the soul, if she believe his doctrine, for faith only is the safe and effectual use of God's word, as to the Romans the 10th: If you confess with your mouth, and believe with the heart, that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. And again: The end of the law is Christ, unto righteousness to all them that do believe. And to the Romans the 1st: The just man shall live by his own faith. For the word of God cannot be comprehended and embraced by any works, but by faith only. Even so it is manifest, that as the soul has need of the only word, to obtain righteousness and life, even so it is justified by only faith, and no works; for if it might be justified by any other means, then should it not stand in need of the word, and so consequently no need of faith. But this faith cannot consist altogether with works, that is to say, if you presume to be justified together with works, whatsoever they be, for this were even to halt on both legs, to worship Baal, and to kiss the hand, which of all other is abominable, as witnesses Job. Therefore, when you begin to believe, you learn withal, that all things in you are altogether blameworthy, sinful, and damnable, according to that saying of the Apostle in the second to the Romans: All have sinned, and have need of the glory of

God. And to the Romans 3: There is none that does good, all have declined out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable. For if you know this once, you shall know that it is necessary for you to hold fast Christ, that believing on him, who has suffered for you, and is risen again, you may be made another man through this faith, being made free from all your sins, and justified by the merits of Jesus Christ only.

Therefore, forasmuch as this faith cannot bear dominion in any, but in the inward man, according to the testimony of Paul in the 10th to the Romans: With the heart we do believe unto righteousness. And forasmuch as this faith only does justify, it is evident that the inward man cannot in any wise be justified, made free, and saved by any external work or exercise, and that works whatsoever avail nothing thereunto, as on the contrary through impiety and only unbelief of the heart, man is made guilty, and the bond-slave of sin, and not by any external sin or work. And therefore the first and principal care of every Christian man ought to be in this especially, that setting aside all vain confidence of works, he strengthen his faith more and more, and by daily increasing grow in knowledge, not of works, but of Christ Jesus crucified for him, and risen again, as Peter in the last of his first Epistle teaches, forasmuch as none other work makes a true Christian man. So Christ in the 6th of John, when the Jews asked a question what they should do to do the works of God, excluding the multitude of works, wherewith he perceived them to swell and be puffed up in pride, did prescribe unto them one only rule, saying: This is the work of God, to believe on him whom he has sent, for him God the Father has sealed. From hence right faith in Christ duly proceeding, is a treasure inestimable, containing in itself all salvation, and

preserving from all evil, as in the last of Mark: He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believes not, shall be damned. Which treasure Isaiah inwardly regarding, did in the 10th of his prophecy say: The decreed consumption overflows with righteousness, and the Lord of hosts shall perfectly fulfill the thing that he has determined in the midst of the whole world, as if he had said, Faith which is a brief and summary fullness of the Law, shall replenish the believers with so great righteousness, that they shall not have need of any other help to attain righteousness. And the same does Paul testify in the 10th to the Romans: For with the heart we believe unto righteousness. But you ask by what means it comes to pass, that faith only may justify, and give such a treasure of so great goodness without works, seeing that the whole Scriptures do prescribe unto us so many works, so many ceremonies, and so many laws? I do answer, above all things be mindful of this chiefly that has been spoken of before, to wit, that only faith without works does justify, does deliver, and does save, which we will make more manifest hereafter. In the meantime mark this, that the whole Scripture of God is divided into two branches, namely, commandments and promises. Indeed the commandments do teach good things, but the things that are taught by them are not forthwith performed, for they do pronounce what we ought to do, but do not give power to do the same, but are instituted to this end, to discover man to himself, by means whereof, man may know his own inability towards the good, and so despair of his own strength. And for this cause they are called the old Testament, and so they be indeed. As for example, Thou shalt not covet, is a commandment, by which we are convinced all to be sinners, because man cannot choose but covet, whatsoever his endeavor be to the

contrary, and therefore, that he may not covet, and so consequently fulfill the commandment, he is compelled to despair of himself, and to seek elsewhere for help of another, which he is not able to find in himself, as Hosea says: Your destruction comes of yourself, O Israel, and your health only from me. The observation of which one commandment is general to be observed in all the rest, for all the commandments are in all respects alike impossible unto us, and beyond our reach. Now when man is taught his own weakness by the commandments, and thereby brought into perplexity, how he may be able to accomplish the law, knowing that the law must be so of all parts accomplished, that no one jot so much, or title thereof may be pretermitted, otherwise in danger of eternal damnation irrecoverable, being then truly humbled, and abased to nothing in his own eyes, he finds nothing in himself, whereby he may be justified, and come to salvation. Lo, here comes the other branch of the Scripture, namely, the promises of God, which do bring the glad tidings of the glory of God, and speak on this wise: If you will fulfill the law and not covet, as the law requires, behold here a remedy: believe in Christ, in whom be promised unto you, grace, righteousness, peace, freedom, and in whom you shall have all things if you believe, and without whom you shall lack all things if you do not believe. For that which is impossible to you in all the works of the law — which be many, and yet unavailable to salvation — you shall very easily and briefly achieve and bring to pass through faith, because God the Father has so established all things in faith, that whoever has faith, may possess all things, and whoever lacks faith, may possess nothing, for God has shut up all things under unbelief, that he might have mercy on all. On this wise the promises of God do give freely unto

us, that which the commandments do exact of us perforce, and do fulfill that which the law does strictly command: that so all things may belong unto God only, as well the commandments, as also the performance of the same. Only God commands, only God performs, and therefore God's promises have relation to the new Testament, yea rather are the new Testament itself.

Forasmuch therefore as the promises of God be holy words, true, just, peaceable, and full of all goodness, it comes to pass, that the soul which does cleave steadfastly to the same, with an unshaken faith, is become so united unto them, yea is also wholly so swallowed up of them, that it does not only partake thereof, but is thoroughly gorged, and made drunken with all the power and force of the same. For if the touching of Christ did give health, how much more shall a very tender feeling of the word in the spirit, nay rather a thorough swallowing down of the word, communicate to the soul all things that appertain to the word. By this means therefore, the soul through faith only without works, believing in the word of God, is justified, sanctified, pacified, delivered, and replenished with all goodness, and it is truly made the daughter of God, as it is said in the first of John: He gave them power to be made the sons of God, even them that do believe in his name.

By this it may be easily perceived, from whence faith has received so great force, and why neither any one, nor all good works are comparable unto her, because no work can cleave fast unto God's word, nor be within the soul, wherein faith only and the word do reign and govern. For such as the word is, such becomes the soul, made by force of the word, even as a fiery plate of iron does glimmer like unto fire, by means of uniting the fire and the plate together, so that it is manifest, that to a Christian man faith

suffices only for all, and that he needs no works to be justified by. Now if he need no works, then also he needs not the law: if he have no need of the law, surely he is then free from the law. So this also is true: The law is not made for the righteous man, and this is the same Christian liberty. Our faith works in us, not to be idlers, nor to give ourselves to lust and evil life, but that we be not tied to a necessity of observing the law, or doing works, to the end to obtain righteousness or salvation thereby. Let this be the first arm of faith, and let us see another, for this also is the duty of faith, that it reverence him on whom it believes, with a most godly and earnest bent affection, to wit, that it account him true and worthy to be believed, for there is no honor like unto the opinion conceived of truth and righteousness, wherewith we do most highly esteem of him whom we do believe. For what are we able to ascribe to any person, more than truth, righteousness, and goodness, of all parts perfect and absolute? Contrariwise, it is a detestable reproach, to conceive a secret opinion of a man to be false, faithless, and wicked. So the soul, as long as it believes steadfastly in God that makes the promise, does account him true and righteous, than which opinion can nothing be more acceptable to God. This is the highest honor of God, to ascribe unto him truth, justice, and whatsoever else ought to be yielded to him whom we do believe: this man yields himself ready to execute all his will: this man does sanctify his name: this man suffers himself to be exercised, according to the will and pleasure of God, because cleaving firmly to his promises, he doubts not but that he is true, just, wise, and will do, dispose, and govern all things for the best. But is not such a soul by the same faith most humbly obedient to God in all things? What commandment remains then, which this obedience has not suffi-

ciently satisfied? What fullness can be more absolute, than all manner of humble obedience? But this obedience comes not by works, but by faith only, and believing the promises. On the other side, what rebellion? What impiety? What greater reproach can there be unto God, than not to believe him when he promises? For what is this else, than either to make God a liar, or to be doubtful of his truth? That is to say, to ascribe truth to oneself, and to condemn God of vanity and lying, wherein does he not deny God, and make to himself an image of himself in his own heart? What avail deeds, I pray you, wrought in this unbelief, though they seem never so angelic, or apostolic? And therefore very well did God conclude all, not in wrath and lust, but in unbelief, lest such as feign that they have fulfilled the law through chaste and meek works of the law — such be human and civil virtues — should presume upon their salvation, when as being shut up in the sin of unbelief, they must either seek for mercy, or to be damned through justice. But when God does see truth to be ascribed unto him, and that he is worshipped with the faith of our heart, which is as much honor as he desires, then does he honor us again, and imputes unto us truth and righteousness for this faith's sake: for faith, in yielding to God his own, does work truth and righteousness, and therefore God does recompense our righteousness again with glory. For it is true and just, that God is true and just. So also, to ascribe unto God justice and truth, and to confess the same, is to be true and just. To this effect we read in 1 Kings the 5th chapter: Whoever does honor me, I will glorify him: and whoever does despise me, shall be set at nothing. The same also pronounces Paul to the Romans, the 4th chapter, that to Abraham his own faith was imputed unto righteousness, because through the same he gave

unto God the glory most absolutely, and that if we believe, faith shall be imputed for the same cause unto us for righteousness. The third arm of faith, which is a jewel inestimable, is this, that it couples the soul with Christ, even as the spouse with her husband. By which sacrament, as Paul teaches, Christ and the soul are made one flesh. If they be one flesh, then is there a true marriage betwixt them, yea, rather, a marriage of all other most perfect, absolutely accomplished betwixt them — for the marriages betwixt man and wife be but slender figures of this union — whereupon it follows, that all things are common betwixt them, as well good as bad, so that whatsoever Christ does possess, the faithful soul may boldly presume upon the same, and triumph over them, as though they were his own. Likewise, whatsoever appertains to the soul, the same may Christ challenge unto himself, as if they were his own. Let us compare these together, and we shall perceive inestimable treasure. Christ is full of all grace, life, and saving health; the soul is fraught full of all sin, death, and damnation. Now let faith come betwixt these two, and it shall come to pass, that Christ shall be loaded with sin, with death, and with hell, but unto the soul shall be imputed grace, life, and salvation. For it behooves Christ, if he be the husband, to accept and jointly possess the things appertaining to his spouse, and withal, to communicate to his spouse the things that appertain to his possession, for he that gives unto her his body, and himself wholly, how can it be, but that he must give her all things else withal? And he that is possessed of the spouse, how does he not withal possess also the things appertaining to the spouse? Here comes, lo, to the view, a most sweet spectacle, not only of communion, but of a comfortable battle of victory, of salvation and redemption.

For inasmuch as Christ is God and man, and such a person as never yet sinned, never dies, nor is damned, yea such a one as neither can sin, nor die, nor be damned, and that his justice, his life, his saving health, is unconquerable, everlasting and omnipotent — when as, I say, such a person does communicate to himself, yea rather does wed, as his own, the sin, death, and damnation of his spouse through the wedded King and union of faith. And that the case now stands none otherwise than as if they were his own proper peculiar, even as if he himself had sinned, were laboring, dying, and descending into hell, to bring all things in subjection. And that sin, death, and hell could not swallow him, being all of necessity clean swallowed up in him by a miraculous conflict — for his righteousness is greater than the sins of all men: his life surmounts in power all death, his saving health is more victorious than all hell. Even so the faithful soul, through the assurance of her faith in Christ her husband, is delivered from all sins, made safe from death, guarded from hell, and endowed with the everlasting righteousness, life, and saving health of her husband Christ. On this wise Christ does couple her unto himself a glorious spouse without spot and wrinkle, cleansing her with the fountain in the word of life, that is to say, through faith, the word of life, of righteousness, and of salvation. Even so does he marry her unto himself in faith, in mercy and compassions, in justice and judgment, as he testifies in the second of Hosea.

Wherefore who is able to value the royalty of this marriage accordingly? Who is able to comprehend the glorious riches of this grace? Where this rich and loving husband Christ does take unto wife this poor and wicked harlot, redeeming her from all evils, and garnishing her with all his own jewels. For it is impossible now,

that her own sins should destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ's shoulders, and swallowed up in him, since also she does now possess the same righteousness in her husband Christ, of which she may now embolden herself, and presume upon them as in her own right against all her own sins, against death and hell, and may with confidence encounter the enemy, and say: if I have sinned, yet my sweet husband Christ, in whom I do believe, has not sinned, all whose riches are mine, and all mine are his. As in the Song of Solomon: My beloved husband to me, and I unto him. This is that Paul speaks of in the first to the Corinthians the 15th chapter: Thanks be to God which has given us victory through Jesus Christ our Lord — even the victory over sin and death. And in the same place he brings in, that sin is the sting of death, but the force of sin is the law.

Hereof therefore you do understand again, what the cause is that faith is so highly commended: that it is able alone to fulfill the law, and to justify without any help of works. For you do perceive how the first commandment — Thou shalt worship one God only — is now accomplished by faith only. For if you were nothing else from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head but good works, yet would you not be just, nor would you worship God, nor fulfill the first commandment, forasmuch as God cannot be worshipped, unless the praise and glory of all truth and all goodness be truly ascribed unto him: but this cannot works bring to pass, only the faith of the heart must achieve this. For we do glorify and confess him to be true, not by working, but by believing. In this respect faith only is the righteousness of a Christian man, and the accomplishment of all the commandments: for he that does accomplish the first commandment, does fulfill all the rest with no labor at all. For

works being things without sense, cannot glorify God, though they may be practiced to God's glory, being joined with faith. But we, at this present, inquire not the works wrought, of what quality they be: but we do inquire of the person that makes the works, that glorifies and brings forth the works. And the same is the very faith of the heart, the head and substance of all our righteousness: whereupon it follows, that the doctrine that teaches the satisfaction of the law by means of works, is blind and perilous, forasmuch as before all works, it behooves that all the commandments be accomplished, and that works do follow after this fulfilling of the law, as we shall hear more at large afterwards.

But to the end we may more manifestly behold this grace which this our inward man does possess in Christ, it is to be observed, that in the Old Testament, God did sanctify to himself the firstborn of every mankind, and the first birth was wonderfully esteemed, surmounting all other in double honor: namely, in the priesthood, and in the kingdom, for the firstborn brother was priest and lord of all other. Under which shadow Christ was prefigured unto us, the true and only firstborn of God the Father, and of the virgin Mary, and the true king and priest: but not according to the flesh and the world, for his kingdom is not of this world, he reigns and sanctifies in spiritual and heavenly things which are righteousness, truth, wisdom, peace, salvation, etc. Not as though all things of this world and of hell, were not also in subjection unto him — otherwise how could he preserve and defend us from them all — but because his kingdom does consist neither in them nor of them. Even so neither does his priesthood consist in outward pomp of apparel and gestures — such as the human priesthood of Aaron was, and as our ecclesiastical priesthood is at this day — but

in spiritual things, by which he does make intercession for us unto God the Father in heaven, by a certain invisible office, and there does offer up himself, and performs all things that became a priest to do. Even as Paul does describe him by a figure of Melchizedek in his Epistle to the Hebrews. Neither does he only pray, and make intercession for us, but also does teach and instruct us, inwardly in spirit with the lively doctrine of his spirit, which two are the peculiar properties of a priest, which also is figured in carnal priests by prayers and visible preachings.

And even as Christ by his first birth did obtain these two dignities, so does he impart and communicate the same to every his faithful spouse, by the right of the aforesaid marriage, whereby they are all spouses, whosoever are espoused to the husband. And hereof comes it, that we all that believe in Christ are priests and kings in Christ, as in the first of Peter the second chapter: You be a chosen kindred, a people of adoption, a kingly priesthood, and a priestly kingdom, to the end you should show forth his power, who has called you from darkness into his marvelous light. Which two are thus to be taken.

First as concerning the kingdom, every faithful Christian through faith is so advanced above all other things, that in spiritual power he is become lord over all, so that none of all the creatures can do him any harm at all. Nay rather all things are made subject unto him, and compelled to serve for his safety, according to the testimony of Paul in the 8th to the Romans: All things do work together to the elect to good. Likewise in the first to the Corinthians, the 3rd chapter: All things are yours, whether it be life or death, things present, or things to come, but you are Christ's. Not that to every Christian, all preeminence is given in bodily power to pos-

sess and rule over all things — which furious frenzy has bewitched many prelates everywhere — for this dominion is proper to kings, princes, and potentates of the earth. Whereas the very use and manner of our lives, does sufficiently teach us, that we are subject to all, that we do endure many tribulations, yea, and even die the death. Nay, rather, by how much a Christian does excel in Christianity, by so much the more is he subject unto all inconveniences, vexations, and deaths, as we may easily see in the very flower of the firstborn Christ himself and all his holy brethren. This power is spiritual, which does bear dominion even in the midst of enemies, and is mighty even amidst the very tortures, which is nothing else in effect, but that power is made perfect in weakness, and that in all things I may make gain for my safety. Insomuch, that the cross and death itself may be compelled to serve for my benefit, and to work my salvation: and this is that high and notable dignity, yea, that true and omnipotent power, the spiritual kingdom, wherein nothing is so good, nothing so bad, which shall not work to my good, so that I believe. And yet have I need of nothing — since only faith does suffice to salvation — but that faith may in the same exercise her force, and the dominion of her liberty. Behold now this is that inestimable power and liberty of Christians.

So also we be not only most free kings of all other, but we be priests also forever, which does far surpass all kingdoms: for through our priesthood we are made worthy to appear before God, to plead and pray for other men, and one to instruct the other the things that are of God. For these be the offices peculiar unto priests, which can in no wise be committed to any unbeliever. Such a prerogative has Christ obtained for us, that as joint brethren, co-

heirs, and joint-kings, so also we should be unto him joint-priests, presuming boldly with confidence through the spirit of faith to preach unto the presence of God, and to cry unto him Abba Father, and to pray for each other, and to do all things that we see to be executed and figured by the visible and corporeal function of the priests. But unto the unbeliever nothing serves or works unto good, but he is become servant of all other, to whom all things turn unto evil, because he does wickedly employ all his endeavor for his own behalf, and not to the glory of God. And by this means he is neither priest but profane, whose prayer turns unto sin, nor does appear before God, because God does not hear sinners. Wherefore who is able to comprehend the preeminence of Christian dignity? Which through her own kingly power executes dominion over all things, over death, life, sin, etc., and which through her priestly glory is able to work all things in the sight of God, because God does bring to pass the things for which he does pray and wish, as it is written: He shall work the will of them that fear him, and shall hear their petitions, and shall save them. To this glory surely is no possible access by working, but only by faith and belief.

By the premises may every man easily perceive, by what means a Christian man is free from all, and lord over all: so that to become just and saved, he shall not need any works at all, but through faith only obtains all those things sufficiently. Who, if he would be so mad, as to presume to be made a just, a free, and a safe Christian, by force of any good work, he should surely lose his faith forthwith, together with all his good works. Which folly is aptly moralized in that fable of Aesop, where the dog swims in the water, and carrying flesh in his mouth, deluded with the shadow of

the same flesh glittering in the water, while gaping with open mouth, he snatches after the shadow, he both loses the true flesh, and the shadow withal.

Here you will ask of me, if all be priests that be in Christ's Church: by what title then may they — whom we call commonly priests now — be discerned from laymen? I do answer: There is a great injury committed against these words, to wit, priest, clerk, spiritual, ecclesiastical, while they be translated from all the rest of the Christians, and be abridged to these few, which through evil custom are termed churchmen. For holy Scripture does make no difference betwixt them, saving that it entitles them by the names of ministers, servants, and stewards, which do now vaunt themselves to be popes, bishops, and lords, which ought to minister to others in preaching the word, to teach the faith of Christ and Christian liberty. For albeit this be true, that we be all priests indifferently, yet can we not all, nor yet ought we all minister and teach publicly, though we were all able to do so. For so does Paul teach in his first to the Corinthians, the 4th chapter: Let men so esteem of us, as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

But this stewardship is now enhanced unto so mighty a potentate and pomp of power, and unto a certain terrible tyrant, that no kingdoms of the Gentiles, nor yet any empires of the whole world are not able to counterweigh the same in stateliness. As though laypeople were a certain somewhat besides and no Christians at all. Through which perverseness it is come to pass, that the true knowledge of Christian grace, Christian faith, and Christian liberty, yea of Christ himself, is come wholly to utter ruin, whilst in the meantime an insupportable clog and intolerable bondage of men's works and traditions are crawled up in his place, and we —

according to Jeremiah's lamentations — are become vassals of the most vilest varlets of the world, which do abuse our misery to work all infamous filthiness, and shameful reproaches of their beastly licentiousness.

But to return to our purpose again. I suppose that by the fore-said demonstrations it is made manifest, that it suffices not to a true Christian man to preach the works, life, and doctrine of Christ, after an historical manner, and utter the same, as in telling of tales, as though to know them to be patterns of framing our lives, were enough — like as they use to preach which are now accounted the best — much less if it be utterly concealed, and instead thereof men's constitutions and traditions be taught to supply the place. There be some nowadays, and they not a few, which to this purpose do preach and teach Christ, that they may move the affections of the people to bewail the passion and torments which Christ suffered, and to be displeased against the Jews, and such other childish and fond matters of no great importance. But Christ ought to be preached to this end, that faith in him may increase, that it may appear, that it is not enough, that there is a Christ, but that he may be a Christ — which is a Savior — unto you and unto me. And that he does work the same in us, which is mentioned of him, and is agreeable to the name whereby he is named: which faith springs, flourishes, and is preserved by this, if the preaching does notify the cause wherefore Christ came, what he brought with him, what he gave, and to what use and purpose he is to be embraced. And this comes to pass, where Christian liberty — which we do attain by him — is truly taught: and by what means all we Christians are kings and priests: wherein also we be lords over all:

and upon what this our confidence — that whatsoever we do is well pleasing and acceptable to God — is grounded, as I have said before.

For whose heart hearing these things will not melt for very joy, and wax ravished in love of Christ, having received so great a consolation? To which love he can never possibly attain by any laws or works at all. What is he that can hurt such a heart, or may appall the same with fear? If conscience of sin does rush upon him, or horror of death amaze him, lo, it is ready to trust in the Lord, nor is afraid for any such evil noise, nor is disquieted, until it do despise the enemies, for it believes that Christ's righteousness is become his own righteousness, and that his sin is now no longer his own, but Christ's sin. But it becomes that all sin be swallowed up at the very sight of Christ, through the faith of Christ, as has been declared before, and learn now with the Apostle, to tread upon, and triumph over sin and death, and to say: Death, where is your sting? Death, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, but the power of sin is the law. God be thanked, who has given us victory through Jesus our Lord, for death is swallowed up through the conquest, not of Christ only, but our own also, because it comes to pass by our faith, that the conquest is made ours, and that in the same we do overcome.

Let this suffice touching the inward man, touching his freedom, and touching the principal righteousness of faith, which neither needs laws nor works, which will turn to his destruction that dare presume to be justified by them. Now let us return to the other part, to wit, the outward man: for in this treatise answer shall be made to all them, who being offended with the word of faith, and with the things that have been spoken of before, do reply

on this wise against us. If faith does accomplish all things, and if faith be only and alone sufficient unto righteousness, to what end then are we commanded to do good deeds? We may go play ourselves then, and work no working at all, being furnished sufficiently with faith. I do answer: Not so, you ungodly, not so. Indeed this matter would even so fare, as you say, if we were perfectly and altogether the inward and spiritual men: which we cannot be in any wise, before the last day at the rising again of the dead. So long as we be clothed with this mortal flesh, we do but begin and proceed outward in our course towards perfection, which will be consummated in the life to come. And for this cause, the Apostle in the 8th to the Romans, does call this the first fruits of the Spirit, which we do enjoy in this life, the fullness of which spirit we shall receive in the life to come. To this belongs that whereof we spoke before, namely, that a Christian man is servant of all, and subject to all, for in this that he is free, he works nothing, but in this, that he is a servant, he works all things. Now let us see how these two will stand together. Albeit man be sufficiently justified by faith in the inward man spiritually, as I said before, enjoying all that he ought to have, saving that he must by daily increasing enlarge this same faith, and riches of grace, until he be unclothed of his flesh, yet remains still in this mortal life, upon the face of the earth, wherein he must of very necessity nourish his own body, and be conversant amongst men. And even here now works do begin to take their entrance. Here we may not give ourselves to idleness. Here now we must apply ourselves earnestly to exercise this body with fastings, watchings, labors, and other moderate disciplines, to bring it in subjection to the spirit, that it may become obedient to faith, and conform itself to the inward man, and that it rebel not, nor hinder the

spirit, following therein its own natural inclination, if it be not otherwise tamed. For the inward man being alike fashioned unto God, and created after the image of God, through faith, is both joyful and comfortable, for the love he has to Christ, in whom he is endowed with so many good things, whereupon in this only does it occupy itself, namely, to serve the Lord with a free love, with joy, and thanks.

Now while it is exercised in this course, behold in her own flesh it finds a contrary will, which labors altogether to serve the world, and to seek the things that are her own, which the spirit of faith cannot abide, nor is able to endure it, and therefore with valiant courage attempts to subdue and tame this rebellious will. As Paul witnesses in the 7th to the Romans: I am delighted with the law of God in my inward man, but I see another law in my members, rebelling against the law of my mind, and leading me captive into the law of sin. And in another place: I do chastise my body, and bring it into subjection, lest while I preach to others, I myself may be found a castaway. And in the 5th to the Galatians: They that are of Christ have crucified the flesh, and the concupiscences thereof.

But neither may we do these works in any wise, being of the opinion that man may be justified through them in the sight of God. For this false opinion is not tolerable in the eye of faith, which faith is the only righteousness before God. But in these works we must be of the mind, so to bring the flesh into subjection, and to cleanse the evil concupiscences thereof, that it may not bend the view of the eye to anything else, than to the mortifying of evil concupiscence and lust. For when the soul is washed clean through faith, and made the darling of Christ, it would also desire that all things else, yea, and her own body chiefly might be purged

together withal, to the end all things in her might love, and glorify God together. Whereby it comes to pass, that man through an enforcing necessity of the flesh, may not give himself to idleness, and for that cause is constrained to do many good things, to the end he may bring his body into subjection. And yet these works are not of such power, as to be able to work man's justification before God. But man of a very pure love, does work the same, to the service and obedience of God, beholding in them nothing else than God's good will, unto which he would most willingly and dutifully yield all humble obedience in all things.

By this means every man may easily direct himself, how he ought most orderly, as the saying is, and most commodiously temper his own body, for he shall fast so much, watch and labor so much, as shall seem most expedient, for the taming of the wantonness and licentiousness of his body. But those that do vaunt to be justified by works, do regard not the mortification of the flesh, and the lusts thereof, but the works themselves, being of opinion, that if they do very many and great good deeds, they are thereby in good case, and are become just therewith: sometimes hurting the brains, and destroying nature utterly, or at least making it unprofitable. And this is a wonderful folly, and gross ignorance of Christian life, and of Christian faith, to have a will to be justified and saved by works without faith.

But to the end that which we have said may more easily be conceived, let us make demonstration thereof by similitudes. The works of a Christian man being justified and saved through his own faith, by the mere and free mercy of God, ought to be of none other value and estimation, than the works of Adam and Eve, and all their children should have been in Paradise if they had never

sinned, of whom God spoke in the second of Genesis on this wise: God did place man, whom he created, into Paradise, that he might work and cultivate the same. But God created Adam just and perfect, and without sin, so that he should not have need to be justified and made perfect by any his own work, endeavor, and safe-keeping. But to the end he should not be idle, God enjoined him this work, to cultivate Paradise, and to keep it, which works had been truly most free, wrought in respect of nothing, but of God's good pleasure only, and not to procure righteousness thereby, wherewith he was fully endued already, and which also should have been jointly in the creation of us all.

To the same effect be the works of the faithful believer, who through his own faith being restored again into Paradise, and created again of new, needs no works to become, or be made just thereby. But because he should not be idle, but cultivate his own body, and keep it, he must do such works of freedom in respect of God's good will only, saving that he is not yet fully created again anew with perfect faith and love, which must be increased daily, yet not by force of works, but of their own strength. Take yet another example. A holy bishop consecrating a church, confirming children, or executing some other part of his function, is not himself consecrated a bishop by force of those exercises, nay rather unless he had been a consecrated bishop before, none of all these works could have been to any purpose, but accounted rather childish, altogether foolish and apish. Even so a Christian man, being first consecrated by his own faith, does work good works indeed, yet is he made thereby never a deal the more holy, or the more a

Christian, for this is the work of faith only. Yea rather, unless he did first believe, and were a Christian before, all his works would not be worth a straw, but rather very wicked, and damnable sins.

And for this cause these two sayings be true, namely: Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does make the works to be good. And evil works do not make an evil man, but an evil man does make the works to be evil. So that it behooves always, that the substance or person be good first, before all good works, and that good works follow then by order, and proceed from a good person, as Christ himself witnesses: An evil tree does not bring good fruit, and a good tree does not bring evil fruit. For it is evidently known by experience, that the fruit does not bear the tree, and that the tree does not grow in the fruit, but contrariwise, the trees do bear the fruits, and the fruit does grow in the trees. Therefore, as it is necessary that the tree be first before the fruit, and that the fruit does not make the trees good or evil, but contrarily, such as the tree is, such is the fruit — so is it necessary, that the person, or man himself be either good or bad first, before he make a good or bad work, and that his works make him neither good nor bad, but the man himself makes his own works good or bad.

Similar hereto may we see in all occupations. An evil house or a good house does not make an evil or a good carpenter, but a good or bad carpenter makes a good or bad house. And so generally in all kinds of manual occupations and sciences, no piece of work makes the artificer good or bad, but such as the artificer is, such work makes he. Even so it fares in the case of men's works. Such as the person is either in faith or in unbelief, such is his work, if either done in faith, and so good, or done in unbelief, and so evil. But contrariwise, it is not so, to wit, such as the work is, such is the

person, made in faith or unbelief, for as works do not make a man to be a believer, so neither do they make a man righteous. But faith, as it makes man believing and righteous, so does it make his works to be good. For as much therefore as works do not justify any man, and that it behooves man to be righteous before he work any good work: it appears most manifestly, that faith only by the mere mercy of God through Christ Jesus in his word, does make worthy, and sufficiently justify, and save the person. And that a Christian man needs no work nor law at all, thereby to attain salvation, for that through faith he is free from all law, and does freely work all things that he works of his own mere good will, respecting therein neither profit, nor salvation, but only the good will of God, forasmuch as he is now already fully replenished, and made safe by the grace of God through his own faith.

Even so no good work avails to righteousness and salvation to the unbelieving person. On the other side, no evil work makes him evil or damnable, but his own unbelief, which both makes the tree evil, and withal, makes the works evil and damnable. Whereupon in this, that any person is made good or bad, he does not receive this being good or bad by works, but this his good or evil takes beginning from the root of faith or unbelief, as the wise man records: The beginning of sin is to fall from God, which is in effect, to be unbelieving. And Paul in the 11th to the Hebrews: It becomes him that comes to God, to believe. The same also speaks Christ: Either make the tree good, and the fruit thereof good, or make the tree evil, and the fruit thereof evil, as if he might say: whoever will make good fruits, must begin at the tree first, and plant upon a good stock; so whoever will make good works, must begin, not at the working, but at the believing, which belief does make the per-

son good, for nothing makes the person good, but faith, nor anything makes him evil, but unbelief. Indeed this is true, that by works man is made good or evil in the judgment of men, but this is as much in effect, as to do it to understand, and let it be known who be good, or who be evil, whereof Christ speaks in the 7th of Matthew: You shall know them by their fruits. But this knowledge consists only in show, and outward appearance and semblance, wherein many are deceived that presume to teach and prescribe, whereby men may be justified in the meantime, making not once so much mention of faith at all, masking still in their own maze, always deceived, and deceiving others, going forward from worse unto worse, blind guides of the blind, wearying themselves with a multitude of works, and yet never attaining to true righteousness. Of whom Paul writes in the 1st to Timothy the 3rd chapter: Having indeed an utter show of holiness, but denying the power thereof, always learning, but never attaining to the knowledge of the truth. Therefore it becomes him that will not wander out of the way with these blind guides, to enter into a deeper consideration than the utter show of works, of laws, and doctrines of works, but must rather with a quite contrary aspect pry into the person, and note diligently the reason, whereby man is justified. And here shall he find, that man is justified and saved, not by works, nor by the law, but by the word of God, that is to say, by the promise of his grace, and by faith, that so the glory thereof may redound to the majesty of God, who has saved us that believe, not by the works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his own mercy, through the word of his own grace.

Whereby it remains easy to be known in what respect good works are to be rejected or embraced, and in what sense all the doctrines of men touching works ought to be understood. For if works be compared to righteousness, and be practiced by a perverse self-deceiver, and of that false persuasion, to presume upon the obtaining of true justification thereby, they do now enforce a necessity unavoidable, and do utterly extinguish liberty and faith withal, and so even by this means are now no more good, but merely damnable, for they be not now free, but blasphemous to the grace of God, whose only property is through faith to justify and save. Which things works do affect to bring to pass, not of any their ability, but by a wicked foolhardiness only, issuing from our own gross ignorance: by reason whereof they do violently rush, and intrude into the office of grace and the glory thereof. For this cause therefore we do not reject good works, but rather do most heartily embrace and teach them. Neither do we condemn them in respect of themselves, but in respect of the wicked addition given unto them, and perverse opinion conceived of them, in attaining of righteousness: whereby it comes to pass, that they appear good only in show, being not good in deed, and in truth, thereby being themselves deceived, and deceiving others also, as ravening wolves clothed in sheep's skins.

And this self-deceiving and perverse opinion in works cannot possibly be reclaimed, where pure faith is lacking, nor is removable from these holy workmen before that faith the vanquisher thereof comes in place and bears dominion in the heart. Nature is not of itself forcible enough to expel it, no not so much as to take notice thereof, but esteems it in place of a most holy will. Whereas if custom prevail, and take deep rooting in this perverseness of na-

ture — as is already brought to pass through wicked teachers — it is an incurable disease, and leads astray innumerable people into destruction irrecoverable. And therefore albeit it be a commendable thing to preach and write gloriously of repentance, confession, and satisfaction, yet if they cease here, and proceed no further, even to the instructing of faith: such doctrine doubtless is deceitful and devilish. For even so Christ with his beloved John did not only say: Repent you of your sins: but added also the word of faith: For, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

For the one part of God's word ought not to be preached alone but both together must be taught: both new and old must be delivered out of this treasury, as well the voice of the law, as the word of grace. The voice of the law must be uttered, that the people may be terrified, and framed to know their sins, and thereby be turned to repentance, and amendment of their former life. But here forthwith must not stay be made: for this were only to wound, and not minister plaster: to lance, and not to heal: to kill, and not to quicken: to lead unto hell gates, and not to deliver from thence: to throw down altogether, and not raise up. Wherefore the word of grace also, and the word of promised forgiveness, ought likewise to be preached, to instruct and raise up the faith, without which in vain is the doctrine of the law, of contrition, of repentance, and of all other things also practiced and preached.

Indeed there remain as yet certain preachers of repentance and grace, but they do not disclose the law, and the promises of God, in that lively spirit and force as others' capacities may attain to the true fountains and springhead of repentance and grace. For repentance proceeds from out the law of God, but faith or grace does issue from God's promise. As the Apostle witnesses in the 10th to the

Romans: Faith comes by hearing, but hearing comes of the word of Christ. Wherefore it comes to pass, that man receives consolation, and is raised up through faith of God's promises, who otherwise through the threatenings and terrors of God's law, is brought low, and thrown down into the knowledge of himself. Whereof the Psalmist in the 29th Psalm: Mourning shall dwell until the evening, and joyfulness until the morning.

Let this suffice to have been spoken of works in general, and of those works also which a Christian man does exercise towards his own body. Lastly, we will speak of those works which the Christian does employ to the use of his neighbor. For man does not live unto himself only in this mortal body, to work in the same, but to all men generally upon the earth. Nay rather man lives only to other men, and not to himself: for to this end does he keep his body in subjection, that he may thereby more sincerely and freely serve to the necessities of others. As witnesses Paul in the 14th to the Romans: No man lives to himself, and no man dies to himself. For he that lives, lives unto God, and he that dies, dies unto God. It is not possible therefore, that in this life man should be idle and unfruitful towards his neighbors. For of very necessity he must talk, work, and be conversant amongst men. Even as Christ made to our likeness in properties, was found to be as man, and conversant amongst men, as Baruch testifies in his 3rd chapter.

And yet he needs none of all these to procure righteousness and salvation. And therefore in all his works it becomes him to be so framed in mind, and to direct his whole affection only to minister to the necessities of others, to seek the commodity of others, in all his deeds, having regard to nothing else, than to the benefit and profit of his neighbor. For even so the Apostle commands us to

work with our hands, that we may have wherewith to relieve the necessity of our brethren: whereas otherwise he might have said, to have wherewith to cherish our own bodies. But let him give, says he, to him that is in need. For the property of true Christianity is, to regard the state of his own body, to this end, that through health and well preserving the same, he may be able to labor to gain riches, and to employ them to the relief of the needy. That so the strong member may help the weak member, and that we may be the sons of God, careful, and laboring each for other, bearing one another's burden, and by this means fulfilling the law of Christ. Behold here the true Christian life, this is the natural lively faith, effectual through love: that is to say, when it breaks forth into the work of most free service, with joy and love, wherein he does freely and of his own accord, minister to others, acknowledging itself fully satisfied with the abundance and riches of his own faith.

After the same manner when Paul had made evident to the Philippians, how rich they were made through the faith of Christ, in which they had received plenteous store of all things, he gives unto them another lesson, and says: If you have received any consolation of Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Holy Ghost, fulfill then my joy, that you may be all of one mind, and be endued all with the like love, being alike minded, and thinking all one thing, esteeming nothing of yourselves through contention or vain glory, but striving to excel each other in humility, every one regarding not the things of his own, but the necessities of others. Lo here by this rule of the Apostle, we see plainly the life of true Christians to consist in this, that all their works be directed to the commodity of others, forasmuch as every person does so much abound through his own faith, that all other works, and

all his whole life, does overflow unto him, wherewith he may be able to minister unto, and profit our neighbor, of a free, and voluntary good will, and benevolence.

And to this effect he excites unto them Christ for an example, saying: Let the same mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus, who when he was in the shape of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God. Nevertheless he made himself of no reputation, taking upon him the shape of a servant, and became like unto men, and was found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and was made obedient even unto the death. For this most wholesome word of the Apostle have they hidden in darkness from us, which were altogether ignorant in the speeches of the Apostle, namely, the shape of God, the shape of servant, appearance and the likeness of men, and did apply the same preposterously, to the natures of divinity, and humanity. Whereas Paul's meaning was, that whereas Christ was fully beautified with the shape of God, and abundantly flowing with the store of all good things, so that he needed not any work, nor any passion to make him righteous and saved — for he did absolutely possess all those things, even from the first beginning of himself — yet was he not puffed up in pride with these, nor was lifted up above us, nor did challenge to himself a certain power over us, albeit he might in his own right have claimed the same. But contrariwise, did so behave himself in labor, in works, in suffering, and in doing, that he might be like unto other men, both in appearance and countenance, none otherwise, than as man, even as if he had needed all these, and had possessed no part of the shape of God: all which nevertheless he undertook

for our sakes, to the end he might minister unto our necessities, and that all things might be made ours, which he should bring to pass in this shape of a servant.

Even so a Christian man being full and abounding through his faith like unto Christ his head, ought to be contented with this shape of God obtained through faith — saving that he ought to increase the same faith, as I said before, until it be made perfect — for this is the life of man, his righteousness, and salvation, both saving the person, making him acceptable, and furnishing him with all things whatsoever Christ does possess, as is before mentioned. Which also Paul in the first to the Galatians does confirm, saying: But in this that I live in the flesh I live in the faith of the Son of God.

And although he be on this wise free from all works, yet in this freedom ought he nevertheless to make himself of no reputation, and put on the shape of a servant, and to become like unto men, to be found in appearance as a man, and to minister, and to help, and by all means possible to work his neighbor's commodity, even after the selfsame manner as he feels, that God has done, and daily does for him through Christ. And this also he must do freely without all respect, saving in respect of God's good pleasure, and even after this manner must he think unfeignedly.

Behold, my good God has given unto me most unworthy and damned wretch, beyond all desert, of his mere and free mercy, in Christ Jesus, all the treasures of righteousness and salvation, so that henceforth I shall not stand in want of anything at all, but of faith, which may firmly believe in Christ. Wherefore to this so loving a Father, who has overwhelmed me with these his inestimable

riches, why should not I frankly, joyfully, with all my heart, and with all my most loving and willing soul, yield all service whatsoever I do know to be well pleasing, and is acceptable in his eyes.

Wherefore I will give myself wholly a certain Christ unto my neighbor, even as Christ gave himself unto me, and will do nothing in this transitory life, but that which I shall perceive to be necessary, commodious, and profitable for my neighbor, inasmuch, as I am sufficiently enough enriched with all good things in Christ through faith.

Lo here out of faith flows love, and rejoicing in the Lord, and out of love flows likewise a cheerful, liberal, and free heart to minister to the necessity of your neighbor, frankly of your own accord, so that here now is no consideration had of gratitude, or ingratitude, of praise or dispraise, of advantage or of loss. For neither does he apply hereunto to win the favor of men, nor makes any difference betwixt friends or foes, nor respects the thankful or unthankful, but most frankly and with most gladsome cheer does yield himself wholly, and all that he possesses, without regard whether he lose the same in the unthankful, or employ it on the deserving. For even so his Father does, disposing all things to all abundantly and most freely, making his sun to shine upon the good and the wicked. In like manner, the son does work and suffer nothing but of a free and cheerful joy, wherewith through Christ he is delighted in God the giver of so great and inestimable treasures.

You see therefore, if we acknowledge all those things which are given unto us, of greatest and highest price — as Peter says — forthwith love is poured abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, whereby we are free, cheerful, omnipotent, doers, workers, and conquerors of all tribulation, servants of our neighbors, yet lords of

all things notwithstanding. But such as do not know the gifts given unto them through Christ, to them Christ is born in vain: such wander in the way of works, and shall never attain to the taste and feeling of those things. Therefore as our neighbor is pressed down with necessity, and wants of our store and abundance, even so were we overwhelmed with necessity in the sight of God, and needed altogether his mercy. Wherefore as our heavenly Father did succor us in Christ Jesus freely, even so ought we help our neighbor freely by our body and by our works, and every of us must be made a certain Christ each to other, that we may be made debtors of Christ, and that Christ may be one and the same in all, that is to say, that we may be true Christians.

Who is able therefore to comprehend the riches and glory of a Christian life, which is able to do all things, possesses all things, and needs nothing, an empress and conqueress of sin, death, and hell, and withal a handmaid nevertheless, serviceable and profitable to all? But the more is the pity. This Christian justification is, at this day, altogether unknown in the whole world, neither is it preached, nor procured, insomuch, that we are ourselves ignorant of [reconstructed: their] name, and for what cause we be [reconstructed: deemed] and called Christians. True [reconstructed: it is], we have received our denomination of Christ, not being absent from us, [reconstructed: but] dwelling within us. That is to say, while we believe in him, and are jointly and mutually a certain Christ each to other, applying ourselves to our neighbors, even as Christ has given himself to us.

But in these our days we are taught by men's doctrines to seek after naught else but deservings, and merits, and the things which are our own, and have made of Christ naught else, but a sharp law-

maker, much more austere than Moses was.

Similarly, the blessed virgin Mary did exhibit herself a singular example of faith above all others, while after the manner of all other women she was purified according to Moses' law — as it is set down in the 2nd of Luke — whereas being notwithstanding not bound to any such law, nor needed to be purified in any such wise, yet she yielded herself to the law of her own accord, and of a free love unto the law, being made like unto other women, lest she might seem to offend [reconstructed: or slight] or despise them. She was not therefore made righteous for that work, but being righteous before, she did this deed surely, and without compulsion. In like manner ought our works to be put in practice, not to the end to be justified by them, for as much as being justified first by faith, it becomes us to work all things freely and cheerfully for our neighbor's sake.

So also Paul did circumcise his scholar Timothy, not because Timothy needed to be circumcised unto righteousness: but lest he might offend or despise the Jews that were weak in faith, and which as yet were not capable of the freedom of faith. But contrariwise, when as the Jews did urge a necessity to be circumcised to righteousness, setting at naught the freedom of faith, he did withstand them, and would not permit Titus to be circumcised (Galatians 3), for as he would not willingly offend or condemn the inability or weakness of others in the faith, applying himself to their capacity for a time, so likewise, would he not give place to the will of stiff-necked justiciaries, when the liberty of faith was likely to suffer reproach, or be despised, keeping the midway, bearing with the weak for a season, and always setting himself against the indurate, to the end he might convert all in general to embrace the

liberty of faith. With like affection must our works be employed, that we tolerate the weak in faith, as the Apostle teaches in the 14th to the Romans, but that with courage we resist the inflexible urgers of works, of which we will treat more at large hereafter.

Likewise Christ in the 17th of Matthew, when tribute was demanded of his disciples, asked the question of Saint Peter, whether the children of the kingdom were exempt from paying tribute, and Peter affirming that they were, did command him notwithstanding to go to the sea, speaking these words: Lest we give them cause of offense, go, and the fish that first comes to your hands take, and opening his mouth, you shall find a coin, take the same, and give it for you and me.

This example is very much available for our purpose. In which, Christ does call himself and his disciples free, and sons of the king, which stand in need of nothing, and yet of his own accord submits himself, and pays tribute.

Therefore, by how much this work of Christ was necessary to Christ, and profitable unto righteousness and salvation, even so much are all the works of his elect and faithful available to righteousness, whereas they be all following after righteousness, and freely performed only to the necessity and example of others.

Of the same condition are the works prescribed by Paul in the 13th chapter to the Romans, and in the 3rd to Timothy, that men should be subject to the higher powers, and prepared to all good works, not because they should be justified thereby, where as they be righteous already through faith, but that by these they might

both be subject to others, and to the higher powers, and of a free love yield humbly obedience to their will in the freedom of the spirit.

Of this same sort ought the works of all colleges, monasteries, and priests have been employed, that every of them might have performed the works of their profession and estate to this end, that by these, every of them might exercise not righteousness, but the taming of his own body, yielding thereby example to others, who have themselves also need to chastise their own bodies. Then also, that they might express humble obedience to others, applying themselves to their commandment, of a free love, having nevertheless a special regard always to this only, to wit, that through vain confidence, none of them presume to be justified, to merit, or to be saved by them, which thing is the proper and peculiar office of faith only, as I have often said before.

Therefore, whoever were furnished with this doctrine, might easily without danger wade in these infinite impositions and traditions of the Pope, of bishops, of monasteries, of churches, of princes and magistrates, the which some foolish pastors do so obtrude upon us, as though they were of an unavoidable necessity to be performed, for the obtaining of righteousness and salvation, calling them commonly the injunctions of the Church, being in deed nothing less. For a Christian man may deliberate with himself on this wise: I will fast, I will pray, I will apply myself to all whatsoever is commanded by men, not because I need to do any of these, to procure righteousness or salvation by them: but because I will express my obedience herein to the Pope, to the bishops, to the potentate, and to the magistrate, or to my neighbor for example's sake. For this cause I will do and suffer all things, even as Christ

did work and suffer many greater things for my sake, whereof he needed not to do any one, being made for my sake subject unto the law, when as in deed he was not under the law. And although these things be exacted of me through the tyrannous force, and injurious tyranny of the magistrates, yet shall they be no prejudice to me, so long as they be not against the glory of God.

The premises considered, it is an easy matter for any man to judge certainly betwixt the difference of all works, and all laws, and know skillfully who be blind, and witless preachers, and who be true and faithful pastors. For whatsoever work be not directed to this only mark, namely, to be employed to the chastisement of the body, or to the dutiful consideration of the neighbor — so that it enforce not anything directly against God's glory — surely the work is neither good nor Christianlike. And this is the cause, that I fear much, very few colleges at all, any monasteries, altars, or any ecclesiastical exercises at this day, be truly Christian, and that also as well those proper and peculiar fastings, as the petty prayers to certain saints be not Christian. I fear much, I say, that in all these things regard is had of naught else, but that which appertains to ourselves, while we be thus minded, that by means of these exercises, our sins are cleansed, and salvation obtained thereby, and so Christian liberty is overthrown. The cause whereof proceeds from blind ignorance of the true Christian faith, full of all freedom. Which gross ignorance and suppression of liberty, very many blind and buzzard-like pastors do earnestly maintain, whilst they do greedily persuade and urge the people to such exercises, advancing them above moon and stars, and glorifying them with their pardons, but of faith never uttering so much as one word. But I would wish you to be well advised, that if you have will at any time to

pray, to fast, or to found churches — as they term it — to beware you do not this to the end to procure to yourself any temporal or everlasting commodity therewith: for in so doing, you shall be prejudicial to your faith, which only does minister all things unto you, and therefore ought only be attended unto, that it may be increased, whether it be occupied in works, or exercised with afflictions. But give freely without hope of requittal, whatsoever you give, that others may be relieved, and grow in well doing through you, and your liberality, for this is the way to make you a good and a true Christian man. For what shall avail you your goods and your works, whereof you are endued with a surplus, over and besides those which do serve to the necessary chastisement of the body? When as you are sufficiently enriched for your necessities, through the faith, in which God has endued you with all plentiful store.

Behold, by this rule it becomes us to pour out each upon other, and to make common each unto other the goods which we have received of God, and that every man clothe himself with his neighbor's estate, and so apply himself to his neighbor's necessities, even as if we were in the like necessity ourselves. Out of Christ's storehouse they overflowed, and from him flowed daily unto us, who has so taken our necessities upon himself, and so performed all things for our sakes, as if himself had been the same that we be. They flow likewise from us, unto them who stand in need of them, insomuch, that I am bound to pour out before God my faith, and my righteousness, to cover and entreat for the sins of my neighbor, the burden of whose sins I must in my own person sustain, and so labor and be afflicted in them, as if they were my own sins. For on this wise was Christ afflicted for our sakes, for this is the very true love, this is the rule of a pure Christian love,

which is in them very natural and pure indeed, in whom dwells a pure and sincere faith indeed. Whereupon, the Apostle in the first to the Corinthians, the 13th chapter, does give this singular prerogative to love: That it seeks not the things that are her own.

And therefore we do conclude, that a Christian man does not live in himself, but in Christ, and in his neighbor, or that to be a Christian man, is to dwell in Christ by faith, and in his neighbor by love.

Again, a Christian man is raised up above himself to Godward by faith, and is thrown down beneath himself, toward his neighbor by love, dwelling always nevertheless in God, and in the love of God, according to the saying of Christ in the first of John: Verily, verily, I say unto you, from henceforth you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. And thus far sufficiently concerning Christian liberty, which is, as you see, spiritual and true, making our hearts free from all sins, from all laws, and commandments — as Paul witnesses in his first Epistle to Timothy, the 1st chapter: The law was not made for the just man — which liberty does as far surmount all other outward and external liberties in excellence, as the heavens does surpass the earth, which Christ grant us to understand, and enjoy to our comfort, Amen.

In fine, to satisfy those persons, who can never hear anything, be it never so well spoken, but that they will deprave it by evil conceiving, somewhat must be annexed, if that at the least they be able to conceive the same. There be very many, who hearing the doctrine of this Christian liberty of faith, will by and by take occasion thereof, to maintain the liberty of the flesh, supposing forthwith that they may lawfully attempt all things, nor will express

their liberty and Christianity in any one thing else, than in despising, and reproving of ceremonies, of men's traditions and constitutions, as though they ought for this cause to be deemed Christians, because they do not fast in the days appointed for fasting, or because they eat flesh, whilst other do abstain from flesh, or because they do not frequent Masses and Matins, or other usual service in the Church, disdainfully scorning and scoffing at the ordinances of men, utterly setting at naught all other things appertaining to Christian religion. Against whom, there is another sort that do with tooth and nail bend their force, which contrariwise, do endeavor to attain salvation, by the only observation and reverence of ceremonies, as though they should for this cause be saved, because they fast on the fasting days, or abstain from flesh, or inure themselves to certain prayers, excessively vaunting the traditions of the Church, and of the fathers, yet otherwise not esteeming the things that are proper and peculiar to our Christian faith, worth a rush. Both which sorts of people are surely altogether much blame-worthy forasmuch, as passing over matters of great importance, and carelessly neglecting the things necessarily belonging to salvation, they turmoil themselves in so great outrage about those trifling toys, being altogether unnecessary and unprofitable.

How much more soundly does Paul teach to keep the middle way, condemning both those by-paths, saying: He that eats, let him not despise him that eats not: and he that eats not, let him not judge him that eats. Here you see, that such as do neglect, and condemn the ceremonies, not of devotion, but of mere contempt, be accounted blameworthy, whereas the Apostle teaches them not to despise, for knowledge does cause to swell, and to be puffed up. Again, he exhorts the obstinate, that they judge not others, for nei-

ther of them does observe charity, edifying one another. Wherefore in this perplexity, counsel must be sought out of Scripture, which does teach us, not to decline on the right, nor on the left hand, but to pursue the right judgments of the Lord, quickening the hearts. For as no man is righteous, because he humbles himself, and is addicted to works, and rites of ceremonies, so neither shall any man be accounted for this only cause righteous, because he does omit and contemn them.

For we be not freed through our faith in Christ from works, but from the opinions of works, that is to say, from the foolish presumption conceived of justification, purchased by means of works. For faith does redeem our consciences, [reconstructed: utterly] keep and preserve [reconstructed: them], whereby we attain this knowledge, that righteousness consists not in works, albeit works neither can, nor ought to be neglected. As we cannot live to this world without food and sustenance, nor without the general preservation of this mortal body, yet is not our righteousness settled in these, but in faith, for which, the other things notwithstanding may not be despised, and utterly shaken off. So in this world, we be fast chained to the necessary preservation of the life of this body, yet are we not thereby made righteous. My kingdom, says Christ, is not from hence, nor of this world, but he said not: my kingdom is not here, nor in this world. Likewise Paul: Albeit we walk in the flesh, yet our warfare is not according to the flesh. And in the first to the Galatians: Whereas I do live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God. Even so in this that we work, that we live, and that we are exercised in works and ceremonies, the necessity of this present life, and the careful regard of governing our bodies, does exact it of us, yet are we never a deal righteous by

them, but in the faith of the Son of God. Therefore, a Christian man must keep his course in the middle way, and must pass away from those two sorts of people. For either he shall meet with those perverse frowards, being indurate with these ceremonies, which, like deaf serpents, will not hearken unto the liberty of the truth, but magnify their ceremonies, command and enforce the observation of them without faith, as necessities of justification, such as the Jews were in times past unwilling to come to knowledge thereby, to walk aright. Such it becomes us to resist, to impugn them, and to offend them stoutly, lest by this their wicked opinion, they draw together with themselves many, into their false illusions. In the presence of such it is convenient to eat flesh, to break fasting days, and for the maintenance of our liberty in faith, to do other like things, which they reckon in place of most grievous sins. And in this manner must we speak of them: Let them alone, they be blind themselves, and blind guides of the blind, for in this respect Paul would not suffer Titus to receive circumcision, though they stiffly urged it hereunto. So did Christ also defend his apostles, when as they plucked the ears of corn on the Sabbath day, and many such like.

On the other side, we shall meet with the simple, unlearned, ignorant, and weak in faith — as Paul calls them — whose capacities are not yet able to comprehend this liberty of faith, though they have a will thereunto. Such must be borne with, lest they be offended: and their weakness must be favored, until they may be more fully instructed. For whereas those persons do not observe such ceremonies of any grounded malice, nor are willfully obstinate in judgment, but conceive of them according to the inability of their faith only, fastings, abstinence from choice meats, and

such other ceremonies, which they do suppose to be necessary, must be observed for avoiding offense in them. For this does charity exact of us, which hurts no man but helps us. For such continue not weak through their own default, but through the negligence of their pastors, which with their cramps and grappling irons of traditions, have entangled, evil handled, and deadly wounded them, who otherwise ought to have been delivered, made whole, and revived with the doctrine of faith and Christian liberty. The same does the Apostle teach in the 14th chapter to the Romans: If my meat do offend my brother, I will not eat flesh forever. And again: I know that in Christ there is nothing defiled, but unto him that thinks it to be defiled, but it is evil to the man that eats to the offense of his brother.

Therefore, although we must stoutly withstand those teachers of traditions, and sharply inveigh against the constitutions of bishops, wherewith they overrun the people of God, yet regard must be had of the timorous weaklings, whom those cruel bloodsuckers, do cruelly detain captive with those traditions, until they be set at liberty. On this wise encounter manfully against the wolves, but for the sheep, and not against the sheep also, which you shall the better do, if you bend your force earnestly against those laws and law-makers, and yet withal yourself observe them in the sight of the weak, lest they become offended through you, until themselves may know that tyranny, and understand their own liberties. And if you will enjoy your own liberty, use it to yourself in secret, as Paul teaches you in the 14th to the Romans: Keep you the faith which you have unto yourself before God, but beware that you use it not before the weak. Again, before tyrants and obstinate frowards, use the same in despite of them, yea, and that most manfully and con-

stantly: that they also may understand their own wickedness, and their laws to be nothing available to righteousness, as also that they had no authority to make such laws.

Forasmuch therefore, as the society of this present life cannot be maintained in due order without ceremonies and works: yea rather, forasmuch as the raging and rude age of young persons has need to be restrained and bridled with such reins, as it were with a snaffle, and that every man ought to chastise his own body: with the same exercises, it becomes therefore the minister of Christ to be prudent and faithful, that he may so instruct and guide Christ's flock in all these things, that their conscience and faith may not be offended, and to be circumspect, that no unsavory opinion, nor bitter taste of loathsomeness may take root in them, by means whereof, many may be infected — whereof Paul did forewarn the Hebrews — that is to say, lest losing their faith utterly, they begin to be defiled with vain presumption of works, as though they were to be saved by works, which is a speedy contagion, and does pierce deeply into many, unless faith be busily and seriously enforced withal. But the disease is unavoidable, where faith being put up to silence, only traditions of men taught to be retained, as has been hitherto through the pestiferous, detestable, and soul-slaying traditions of our prelates, and wandering opinions of our divines, hauling infinite souls to the devil, with these intricate fetters, which by plain demonstration does denounce very Antichrist himself.

To conclude, such as is poverty in abundance, painfulness in authority, humbleness in honor, abstinence in feasting, chastity in valor, even so righteousness of faith is dangerously beset being joined with ceremonies. May a man carry fire in his bosom, says

Solomon, and not burn his garments? And yet as in riches, in authority, in honors, in dalliance, in banquetings, so must we be conversant in ceremonies, that is to say, in dangers. Yea rather as it is needful for young boys to be nursed and cherished in the laps and arms of maidens, lest they perish, in whom being grown to riper years, were no small peril of safety to frequent the company of maidens: even so is it requisite to lock up the ranging years of licentious youth within the cloisters, yea, within iron closets of such ceremonies and exercises, whereas they may be restrained and abide correction, lest their insolent courage draw them headlong into wickedness. Which ceremonies do nevertheless procure death unto them, if they persevere in opinion to be justifiable by them, whereas they ought rather to be instructed, that they were clogged with such restraint, not for any such cause as to be made righteous, or to merit much thereby, but to the end, they should not rush willfully into vices, and so be the more tractably trained to the righteousness of faith: which they would in no wise endure through the outrage of their youth, unless the same had been tamed and brought low.

Which does argue, that ceremonies ought not to be of any other price and estimation in the life of a true Christian man, than as amongst carpenters and artificers, certain old posts, logs, or platforms, are framed to direct and raise up buildings by: which be not made to the end they should serve and remain to any special use, but because without such by-helps, buildings and works cannot easily be raised, for when the work or building is finished, those devices are laid aside.

So that here you see, that ceremonies are not utterly abrogated, but rather earnestly required, but the vain persuasion and presumption of them is contemned, because no man accounts them to be a true and permanent building. If any man would be so notably senseless, as to regard nothing else in his whole life, but to direct those preparations, with all honor, with all diligence, with all continuance, and would never bend his cogitations to the very building itself, stroking, smoothing, and vaunting himself in these preparations, and vain rotten props, would not all men lament his madness, and think within themselves, that whilst he employed this cost to no purpose, he might have built some matter of better substance? So now we do neither abandon ceremonies, nor works, but rather do allow them, nevertheless we do utterly abhor the vain opinion conceived of them, lest that any man persuade himself, that to observe them is the true righteousness, as hypocrites do, which do abuse and misspend their whole life in these exercises, and never reach unto the substance, in respect whereof they are practiced. Or as the Apostle speaks: Always learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth. For they seem as though they had a will to build, and always prepare themselves thereunto, and yet they never build, persisting always in the glittering shadow of godliness, but never attain to the power and substance thereof.

Yet do they wonderfully flatter themselves in these exercises, presuming also arrogantly to judge all others, whom they see not glittering in the like bravery of works, whereas they might otherwise be able to achieve matters of greater importance, to the singular comfort of themselves and others, with this vainly employed ostentation, and abuse of God's gifts, if they were endued with a right and true faith. But whereas the nature of man and reason — as

they term it — natural, is naturally inclined to superstition, and pursuing all laws and works, is prone of herself to fall into vain presumption of obtaining justification through them: add moreover hereunto, because it is accustomed and inured to conceive so highly of the same works, through the usual admiration of all earthly lawmakers, it is not possible surely of her own strength, to clear itself from this servile bondage of works, and to bend her force to know the liberty of faith.

Therefore it is requisite, that we flee to prayer, that the Lord would vouchsafe to draw us and make us instructed unto God, that is to say, apt scholars for God, and that himself will vouchsafe to write his law in our hearts — as he has promised — otherwise we do all come to confusion. For except he do engraft in our souls this marvelous wisdom hidden in a mystery, nature cannot choose but condemn it, and adjudge it for a heretic, because she is offended [reconstructed: by it], and it appears foolish in her eyes. Even as we saw to have happened in times past to the prophets of God and the apostles, and even as the wicked blind prelates, and their false flatterers do now unto me, and others like unto me. Unto whom, and to us also, God be merciful, and show the light of his countenance upon us, that we may know his way upon the earth, and his saving health amongst all generations. Who be blessed forever and ever.

Amen.

FINIS.

THANKS FOR READING



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