

On the Spirit and the Letter

By Saint Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430)

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Chapter 1 [I.] —The Occasion of Writing This Work; A Thing May Be Capable of Being Done, and Yet May Never Be Done

After reading the short treatises which I lately drew up for you, my beloved son Marcellinus, about the [baptism](#) of infants, and the perfection of [man's](#) righteousness,—how that no one in this life seems either to have attained or to be likely to attain to it, except only the Mediator, who bore humanity in the likeness of sinful flesh, without any [sin](#) whatever,—you wrote me in answer that you were embarrassed by the point which I advanced in the second book, that it was possible for a man to be without [sin](#), if he wanted not the will, and was assisted by the aid of [God](#); and yet that except One in whom "all shall be made alive," [1 Corinthians 15:22](#) no one has ever lived or will live by whom this perfection has been attained while living here. It appeared to you absurd to say that anything was possible of which no example ever occurred,—although I suppose you would not hesitate to admit that no camel ever passed through a needle's eye, and yet He said that even this was possible with [God](#); you may read, too, that twelve thousand legions of [angels](#) could possibly have fought for Christ and rescued Him from suffering, but in fact did not; you may read that it was possible for the nations to be exterminated at once out of the land which was given to the children of [Israel](#), [Deuteronomy 31:3](#) and yet that God willed it to be gradually effected. [Judges 2:3](#) And one may meet with a thousand other incidents, the past or the future possibility of which we might readily admit, and yet be unable to produce any [proofs](#) of their having ever really happened. Accordingly, it would not be right for us to deny the possibility of a man's living without [sin](#), on the ground that amongst men none can be found except Him who is in His nature not man only, but also [God](#), in whom we could prove such perfection of character to have [existed](#).

Chapter 2 [II.]—The Examples Apposite

Here, perhaps, you will say to me in answer, that the things which I have instanced as not having been realized, although capable of realization, are *divine* works; whereas a man's being without [sin](#) falls in the range of a man's own work,—that being indeed his very noblest work which effects a full and perfect righteousness complete in every part; and therefore that it is incredible that no man has ever [existed](#), or is existing, or will exist in this life, who has achieved such a work, if the achievement is possible for a human being. But then you ought to reflect that, although this great work, no [doubt](#), belongs to human agency to accomplish, yet it is also a divine gift, and therefore, not [doubt](#) that it is a

divine work; "for it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." [Philippians 2:13](#)

Chapter 3.—Theirs is Comparatively a Harmless Error, Who Say that a Man Lives Here Without Sin

They therefore are not a very dangerous set of [persons](#) and they ought to be urged to show, if they are able, that they are themselves such, who hold that man lives or has lived here without any [sin](#) whatever. There are indeed passages of Scripture, in which I apprehend it is definitely stated that no man who lives on earth, although enjoying freedom of will, can be found without [sin](#); as, for instance, the place where it is written, "Enter not into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight shall no man living be justified." If, however, anybody shall have succeeded in showing that this text and the other similar ones ought to be taken in a different sense from their obvious one, and shall have [proved](#) that some man or men have spent a sinless life on earth,—whoever does not, not merely refrain from much opposing him, but also does not [rejoice](#) with him to the full, is afflicted by extraordinary goads of [envy](#). Moreover, if there neither is, has been, nor will be any man endowed with such perfection of purity (which I am more inclined to [believe](#)), and yet it is firmly set forth and thought there is or has been, or is to be,—so far as I can judge, no great [error](#) is made, and certainly not a dangerous one, when a man is thus carried away by a certain benevolent feeling; provided that he who thinks so much of another, does not think himself to be such a being, unless he has ascertained that he really and clearly is such.

Chapter 4.—Theirs is a Much More Serious Error, Requiring a Very Vigorous Refutation, Who Deny God's Grace to Be Necessary

They, however, must be resisted with the utmost ardor and vigor who suppose that without God's help, the mere power of the human will in itself, can either perfect righteousness, or advance steadily towards it; and when they begin to be hard pressed about their presumption in asserting that this result can be reached without the divine assistance, they check themselves, and do not venture to utter such an opinion, because they see how impious and insufferable it is. But they allege that such attainments are not made without God's help on this account, namely, because God both created man with the free choice of his will, and, by giving him commandments, teaches him, Himself, how man ought to live; and indeed assists him, in that He takes away his [ignorance](#) by instructing him in the [knowledge](#) of what he ought to avoid and to desire in his actions: and thus, by means of the [free-will](#) naturally implanted within him, he enters on the way which is pointed out to him, and by persevering in a just and [pious](#) course of life, deserves to attain to the blessedness of [eternal](#) life.

Chapter 5 [III.]—True Grace is the Gift of the Holy Ghost, Which Kindles in the Soul the Joy and Love of Goodness

We, however, on our side affirm that the human will is so divinely aided in the pursuit of righteousness, that (in addition to man's being created with a [free-will](#), and in addition to the teaching by which he is instructed how he ought to live) he receives the [Holy Ghost](#), by whom there is formed in his mind a delight in, and a [love](#) of, that supreme and unchangeable good which is [God](#), even now while he is still "walking by [faith](#)" and not yet "by sight;" [2 Corinthians 5:7](#) in order that by this gift to him of the earnest, as it were, of the free gift, he may conceive an ardent desire to cleave to his Maker, and may burn to enter upon the participation in that [true](#) light, that it may go well with him from Him to whom he owes his [existence](#). A man's [free-will](#), indeed, avails for nothing except to [sin](#), if he [knows](#) not the way of [truth](#); and even after his duty and his proper aim shall begin to become [known](#) to him, unless he also take delight in and feel a [love](#) for it, he neither does his duty, nor sets about it, nor lives rightly. Now, in order that such a course may engage our affections, God's "[love](#) is shed abroad in our hearts," not through the [free-will](#) which arises from ourselves, but "through the [Holy Ghost](#), which is given to us." [Romans 5:5](#)

Chapter 6 [IV.]—The Teaching of Law Without the Life-Giving Spirit is "The Letter that Kills."

For that teaching which brings to us the command to live in [chastity](#) and righteousness is "the letter that kills," unless accompanied with "the spirit that gives life." For that is not the sole meaning of the passage, "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life," [2 Corinthians 3:6](#) which merely prescribes that we should not take in the literal sense any figurative phrase which in the proper meaning of its words would produce only nonsense, but should consider what else it signifies, nourishing the inner man by our spiritual intelligence, since "being carnally-minded is death, while to be spiritually-minded is life and peace." [Romans 8:6](#) If, for instance, a man were to take in a literal and carnal sense much that is written in the Song of Solomon, he would minister not to the fruit of a luminous charity, but to the feeling of a libidinous desire. Therefore, the apostle is not to be confined to the limited application just mentioned, when he says, "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life;" [2 Corinthians 3:6](#) but this is also (and indeed especially) equivalent to what he says elsewhere in the plainest words: "I had not [known lust](#), except the law had said, You shall not [covet](#);" [Romans 7:7](#) and again, immediately after: "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." [Romans 7:11](#) Now from this you may see what is meant by "the letter that kills." There is, of course, nothing said figuratively which is not to be accepted in its plain sense, when it is said, "You shall not [covet](#);" but this is a very plain and salutary precept, and any man who shall fulfil it will have no [sin](#) at all. The apostle, indeed, purposely selected this general precept, in which he embraced everything, as if this were the voice of the law, prohibiting us from all [sin](#), when he says, "You shall not [covet](#);" for there is no [sin](#) committed except by [evil](#) concupiscence; so that the law which prohibits this is a good and praiseworthy law. But,

when the [Holy Ghost](#) withholds His help, which inspires us with a good desire instead of this [evil](#) desire (in other words, diffuses [love](#) in our hearts), that law, however good in itself, only augments the [evil](#) desire by forbidding it. Just as the rush of water which flows incessantly in a particular direction, becomes more violent when it meets with any impediment, and when it has overcome the stoppage, falls in a greater bulk, and with increased impetuosity hurries forward in its downward course. In some strange way the very object which we [covet](#) becomes all the more pleasant when it is forbidden. And this is the [sin](#) which by the commandment deceives and by it slays, whenever transgression is actually added, which occurs not where there is no law. [Romans 4:15](#)

Chapter 7 [V.]—What is Proposed to Be Here Treated

We will, however, consider, if you please, the whole of this passage of the apostle and thoroughly handle it, as the Lord shall enable us. For I want, if possible, to prove that the apostle's words, "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life," do not refer to figurative phrases,—although even in this sense a suitable signification might be obtained from them,—but rather plainly to the law, which forbids whatever is [evil](#). When I shall have [proved](#) this, it will more manifestly appear that to lead a [holy](#) life is the gift of [God](#),—not only because God has given a [free-will](#) to [man](#), without which there is no living ill or well; nor only because He has given him a commandment to teach him how he ought to live; but because through the [Holy Ghost](#) He sheds [love](#) abroad in the hearts [Romans 7:7](#) of those whom he foreknew, in order to [predestinate](#) them; whom He [predestinated](#), that He might call them; whom He called, that he might justify them; and whom he justified, that He might glorify them. [Romans 8:29-30](#) When this point also shall be cleared, you will, I think, see how vain it is to say that those things only are unexampled possibilities, which are the works of [God](#),—such as the passage of the camel through the needle's eye, which we have already referred to, and other similar cases, which to us no [doubt](#) are impossible, but easy enough to [God](#); and that man's righteousness is not to be counted in this class of things, on the ground of its being properly man's work, not God's; although there is no reason for supposing, without an example, that his perfection exists, even if it is possible. That these assertions are vain will be clear enough, after it has been also plainly shown that even man's righteousness must be attributed to the operation of [God](#), although not taking place without man's will; and we therefore cannot deny that his perfection is possible even in this life, because all things are possible with [God](#), [Mark 10:27](#)—both those which He accomplishes of His own sole will, and those which He appoints to be done with the cooperation with Himself of His creature's will. Accordingly, whatever of such things He does not effect is no [doubt](#) without an example in the way of accomplished facts, although with God it possesses both in His power the [cause](#) of its possibility, and in His wisdom the reason of its unreality. And should this [cause](#) be hidden from man, let him not forget that he is a man; nor charge God with folly simply because he cannot fully comprehend His wisdom.

Chapter 8.—Romans Interprets Corinthians

Attend, then, carefully, to the apostle while in his Epistle to the Romans he explains and clearly enough shows that what he wrote to the Corinthians, "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life," [2 Corinthians 3:6](#) must be understood in the sense which we have already indicated,—that the letter of the law, which teaches us not to commit [sin](#), kills, if the life-giving spirit be absent, forasmuch as it causes [sin](#) to be [known](#) rather than avoided, and therefore to be increased rather than diminished, because to an [evil](#) concupiscence there is now added the transgression of the law.

Chapter 9 [VI].—Through the Law Sin Has Abounded

The apostle, then, wishing to commend the [grace](#) which has come to all nations through [Jesus Christ](#), lest the [Jews](#) should extol themselves at the expense of the other peoples on account of their having received the law, first says that [sin](#) and death came on the [human race](#) through one man, and that righteousness and [eternal](#) life came also through one, expressly mentioning Adam as the former, and Christ as the latter; and then says that "the law, however, entered, that the offence might abound: but where [sin](#) abounded, [grace](#) did much more abound: that as [sin](#) has reigned unto death, even so might [grace](#) reign through righteousness unto [eternal](#) life by Jesus Christ our Lord." [Romans 5:20-21](#) Then, proposing a question for himself to answer, he adds, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in [sin](#), that [grace](#) may abound? God forbid." He saw, indeed, that a perverse use might be made by perverse men of what he had said: "The law entered, that the offence might abound: but where [sin](#) abounded, [grace](#) did much more abound,"—as if he had said that [sin](#) had been of advantage by reason of the abundance of [grace](#). Rejecting this, he answers his question with a "[God](#) forbid!" and at once adds: "How shall we, that are dead to [sin](#), live any longer therein?" [Romans 6:2](#) as much as to say, When [grace](#) has brought it to pass that we should die unto [sin](#), what else shall we be doing, if we continue to live in it, than showing ourselves ungrateful to [grace](#)? The man who extols the [virtue](#) of a medicine does not contend that the diseases and wounds of which the medicine cures him are of advantage to him; on the contrary, in proportion to the praise lavished on the remedy are the blame and horror which are felt of the diseases and wounds healed by the much-extolled medicine. In like manner, the commendation and praise of [grace](#) are vituperation and condemnation of offences. For there was need to prove to man how corruptly weak he was, so that against his iniquity, the [holy](#) law brought him no help towards good, but rather increased than diminished his iniquity; seeing that the law entered, that the offence might abound; that being thus convicted and confounded, he might see not only that he needed a physician, but also God as his helper so to direct his steps that [sin](#) should not rule over him, and he might be healed by betaking himself to the help of the divine mercy; and in this way, where [sin](#) abounded [grace](#) might much more abound,—not through the merit of the sinner, but by the intervention of his Helper.

Chapter 10.—Christ the True Healer

Accordingly, the apostle shows that the same medicine was [mystically](#) set forth in the passion and resurrection of [Christ](#), when he says, "Do you not [know](#), that so many of us as were [baptized](#) into Jesus Christ were [baptized](#) into His death? Therefore we were

buried with Him by [baptism](#) into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the [glory](#) of the [Father](#), even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His [resurrection](#): [knowing](#) this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of [sin](#) might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve [sin](#). For he that is dead is justified from [sin](#). Now, if we be dead with Christ, we [believe](#) that we shall also live with Him: [knowing](#) that [Christ](#), being raised from the dead, dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto [sin](#) once; but in that He lives, He lives unto [God](#). Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto [sin](#), but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." [Romans 6:3-11](#) Now it is plain enough that here by the [mystery](#) of the Lord's death and resurrection is figured the death of our old sinful life, and the rising of the new; and that here is shown forth the abolition of iniquity and the renewal of righteousness. Whence then arises this vast benefit to man through the letter of the law, except it be through the [faith](#) of Jesus Christ?

Chapter 11 [VII.]—From What Fountain Good Works Flow

This [holy](#) meditation preserves "the children of [men](#), who put their trust under the shadow of God's wings," so that they are "drunken with the fatness of His house, and drink of the full stream of His pleasure. For with Him is the fountain of life, and in His light shall they see light. For He extends His mercy to them that [know](#) Him, and His righteousness to the upright in heart." He does not, indeed, extend His mercy to them because they [know](#) Him, but that they may [know](#) Him; nor is it because they are upright in heart, but that they may become so, that He extends to them His righteousness, whereby He justifies the ungodly. [Romans 4:5](#) This meditation does not elevate with [pride](#): this [sin](#) arises when any man has too much confidence in himself, and makes himself the chief end of living. Impelled by this vain feeling, he departs from that fountain of life, from the draughts of which alone is imbibed the [holiness](#) which is itself the good life,—and from that unchanging light, by sharing in which the reasonable [soul](#) is in a certain sense inflamed, and becomes itself a created and reflected luminary; even as "John was a burning and a shining light," [John 5:35](#) who notwithstanding acknowledged the source of his own illumination in the words, "Of His fulness have all we received." [John 1:16](#) Whose, I would ask, but His, of course, in comparison with whom John indeed was no light at all? For "that was the [true](#) light, which lights every man that comes into the world." [John 1:9](#) Therefore, in the same psalm, after saying, "Extend Your mercy to them that [know](#) You, and Your righteousness to the upright in heart," he adds, "Let not the foot of [pride](#) come against me, and let not the hands of sinners move me. There have fallen all the workers of iniquity: they are cast out, and are not able to stand." Since by that impiety which leads each to attribute to himself the excellence which is God's, he is cast out into his own native darkness, in which consist the works of iniquity. For it is manifestly these works which he does, and for the achievement of such alone is he naturally fit. The works of righteousness he never does, except as he receives ability from that fountain and that light, where the life is that wants for nothing, and where is "no variableness, nor the shadow of turning." [James 1:17](#)

Chapter 12.—[Paul](#), Whence So Called; Bravely Contends for Grace

Accordingly [Paul](#), who, although he was formerly called Saul, [Acts 13:9](#) chose this new designation, for no other reason, as it seems to me, than because he would show himself *little*,—the "least of the [apostles](#)," [1 Corinthians 15:9](#) —contends with much [courage](#) and earnestness against the [proud](#) and arrogant, and such as plume themselves on their own works, in order that he may commend the [grace](#) of [God](#). This [grace](#), indeed, appeared more obvious and manifest in his case, inasmuch as, while he was pursuing such vehement measures of [persecution](#) against the Church of God as made him worthy of the greatest punishment, he found mercy instead of condemnation, and instead of punishment obtained [grace](#). Very properly, therefore, does he lift voice and hand in defence of [grace](#), and care not for the [envy](#) either of those who understood not a subject too profound and abstruse for them, or of those who perversely misinterpreted his own sound words; while at the same time he unfalteringly preaches that gift of [God](#), whereby alone [salvation](#) accrues to those who are the children of the promise, children of the divine goodness, children of [grace](#) and mercy, children of the new covenant. In the salutation with which he begins every epistle, he [prays](#): "Grace be to you, and peace, from [God](#) the [Father](#), and from the [Lord Jesus Christ](#);" while this forms almost the only topic discussed for the Romans, and it is plied with so much persistence and variety of argument, as fairly to fatigue the reader's attention, yet with a fatigue so useful and salutary, that it rather exercises than breaks the faculties of the inner man.

Chapter 13 [VIII.]—Keeping the Law; The Jews' Glorifying; The Fear of Punishment; The Circumcision of the Heart

Then comes what I mentioned above; then he shows what the Jew is, and says that he is called a Jew, but by no means fulfils what he promises to do. "But if," says he, "you call yourself a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest your boast of [God](#), and [know](#) His [will](#), and triest the things that are different, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that you are yourself a guide of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of [knowledge](#) and of the [truth](#) in the law. You therefore who teaches another, do you not teach yourself? You that preaches a man should not steal, do you steal? You that says a man should not commit [adultery](#), do you commit [adultery](#)? You that abhors [idols](#), do you commit sacrilege? You that makes your boast of the law, through breaking the law do you dishonor God? For the name of God is [blasphemed](#) among the [Gentiles](#) through you, as it is written.

Circumcision verily profits, if you keep the law; but if you be a breaker of the law, your [circumcision](#) is made uncircumcision. Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for [circumcision](#)? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge you, who by the letter and [circumcision](#) dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that [circumcision](#) which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one

inwardly; and [circumcision](#) is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of [men](#), but of [God](#)." [Romans 2:17-29](#) Here he plainly showed in what sense he said, "Thou makest your boast of [God](#)." For undoubtedly if one who was [truly](#) a Jew made his boast of [God](#) in the way which [grace](#) demands (which is bestowed not for merit of works, but gratuitously), then his praise would be of [God](#), and not of men. But they, in fact, were making their boast of [God](#), as if they alone had deserved to receive His law, as the Psalmist said: "He did not the like to any nation, nor His judgments has He displayed to them." And yet, they thought they were fulfilling the law of God by their righteousness, when they were rather breakers of it all the while! Accordingly, it "wrought [wrath](#)" [Romans 4:15](#) upon them, and [sin](#) abounded, committed as it was by them who [knew](#) the law. For whoever did even what the law commanded, without the assistance of the Spirit of [grace](#), acted through [fear](#) of punishment, not from [love](#) of righteousness, and hence in the sight of God that was not in the will, which in the sight of men appeared in the work; and such doers of the law were held rather guilty of that which God [knew](#) they would have preferred to commit, if only it had been possible with impunity. He calls, however, "the [circumcision](#) of the heart" the will that is pure from all unlawful desire; which comes not from the *letter*, inculcating and threatening, but from the *Spirit*, assisting and healing. Such doers of the law have their praise therefore, not of men but of [God](#), who by His [grace](#) provides the grounds on which they receive praise, of whom it is said, "My [soul](#) shall make her boast of the Lord;" and to whom it is said, "My praise shall be of You:" but those are not such who would have God praised because they are men; but themselves, because they are righteous.

Chapter 14.—In What Respect the Pelagians Acknowledge God as the Author of Our Justification

"But," say they, "we do praise God as the Author of our righteousness, in that He gave the law, by the teaching of which we have learned how we ought to live." But they give no heed to what they read: "By the law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of [God](#)." [Romans 3:20](#) This may indeed be possible before men, but not before Him who looks into our very heart and inmost will, where He sees that, although the man who fears the law keeps a certain precept, he would nevertheless rather do another thing if he were permitted. And lest any one should suppose that, in the passage just quoted from him, the apostle had meant to say that none are justified by that law, which contains many precepts, under the figure of the ancient [sacraments](#), and among them that [circumcision](#) of the flesh itself, which infants were commanded to receive on the eighth day after birth; he immediately adds what law he meant, and says, "For by the law is the [knowledge](#) of [sin](#)." [Romans 3:20](#) He refers then to that law of which he afterwards declares, "I had not [known sin](#) but by the law; for I had not [known lust](#) except the law had said, You shall not [covet](#)." [Romans 7:7](#) For what means this but that "by the law comes the [knowledge](#) of [sin](#)?"

Chapter 15 [IX.]—The Righteousness of God Manifested by the Law and the Prophets

Here, perhaps, it may be said by that presumption of [man](#), which is [ignorant](#) of the righteousness of [God](#), and wishes to establish one of its own, that the apostle quite properly said, "For by the law shall no man be justified," [Romans 3:20](#) inasmuch as the law merely shows what one ought to do, and what one ought to guard against, in order that what the law thus points out may be accomplished by the will, and so man be justified, not indeed by the power of the law, but by his free determination. But I ask your attention, O man, to what follows. "But now the righteousness of [God](#)," says he, "without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the [prophets](#)." [Romans 3:21](#) Does this then sound a light thing in deaf ears? He says, "The righteousness of God is manifested." Now this righteousness they are [ignorant](#) of, who wish to establish one of their own; they will not submit themselves to it. [Romans 10:3](#) His words are, "*The righteousness of God* is manifested:" he does not say, the righteousness of [man](#), or the righteousness of his own will, but the "*righteousness of God*,"—not that whereby He is Himself righteous, but that with which He endows man when He justifies the ungodly. This is witnessed by the law and the [prophets](#); in other words, the law and the [prophets](#) each afford it testimony. The law, indeed, by issuing its commands and threats, and by justifying no man, sufficiently shows that it is by God's gift, through the help of the [Spirit](#), that a man is justified; and the [prophets](#), because it was what they predicted that Christ at His coming accomplished. Accordingly he advances a step further, and adds, "But righteousness of God by [faith](#) of [Jesus Christ](#)," [Romans 3:22](#) that is by the [faith](#) wherewith one believes in Christ for just as there is not meant the [faith](#) with which Christ Himself believes, so also there is not meant the righteousness whereby God is Himself righteous. Both no [doubt](#) are ours, but yet they are called God's, and Christ's, because it is by their bounty that these gifts are bestowed upon us. The righteousness of God then is without the law, but not manifested without the law; for if it were manifested without the law, how could it be witnessed by the law? That righteousness of [God](#), however, is without the law, which God by the Spirit of [grace](#) bestows on the believer without the help of the law,—that is, when not helped by the law. When, indeed, He by the law discovers to a man his weakness, it is in order that by [faith](#) he may flee for refuge to His mercy, and be healed. And thus concerning His wisdom we are told, that "she carries law and mercy upon her tongue," [Proverbs 3:16](#) —the "*law*," whereby she may convict the [proud](#), the "*mercy*," wherewith she may justify the humbled. "The righteousness of [God](#)," then, "by [faith](#) of [Jesus Christ](#), is unto all that [believe](#); for there is no difference, for all have [sinned](#), and come short of the [glory](#) of God" [Romans 3:22-23](#) —not of their own [glory](#). For what have they, which they have not received? Now if they received it, why do they [glory](#) as if they had not received it? [1 Corinthians 4:7](#) Well, then, they come short of the [glory](#) of [God](#); now observe what follows: "Being justified freely by His [grace](#)." [Romans 3:24](#) It is not, therefore, by the law, nor is it by their own will, that they are justified; but they are justified *freely by His [grace](#)*,—not that it is wrought without our will; but our will is by the law shown to be weak, that [grace](#) may heal its infirmity; and that our healed will may fulfil the law, not by compact under the law, nor yet in the absence of law.

Chapter 16 [X.]—How the Law Was Not Made for a Righteous Man

Because "for a righteous man the law was not made;" [1 Timothy 1:8](#) and yet "the law is [good](#), if a man use it lawfully." [1 Timothy 1:9](#) Now by connecting together these two seemingly contrary statements, the apostle warns and urges his reader to sift the question and solve it too. For how can it be that "the law is [good](#), if a man use it lawfully," if what follows is also [true](#): "[Knowing](#) this, that the law is not made for a righteous man?" [1 Timothy 1:9](#) For who but a righteous man lawfully uses the law? Yet it is not for him that it is made, but for the unrighteous. Must then the unrighteous man, in order that he may be justified,—that is, become a righteous man,—lawfully use the law, to lead him, as by the schoolmaster's hand, [Galatians 3:24](#) to that [grace](#) by which alone he can fulfil what the law commands? Now it is freely that he is justified thereby,—that is, on account of no antecedent merits of his own works; "otherwise [grace](#) is no more [grace](#)," [Romans 11:6](#) since it is bestowed on us, not because we have done good works, but that we may be able to do them,—in other words, not because we have fulfilled the law, but in order that we may be able to fulfil the law. Now He said, "I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it," [Matthew 5:17](#) of whom it was said, "We have seen His [glory](#), the [glory](#) as of the only-begotten of the [Father](#), full of [grace](#) and [truth](#)." [John 1:14](#) This is the [glory](#) which is meant in the words, "All have [sinned](#), and come short of the [glory](#) of [God](#);" [Romans 3:23](#) and this the [grace](#) of which he speaks in the next verse, "Being justified freely by His [grace](#)." [Romans 3:24](#) The unrighteous man therefore lawfully uses the law, that he may become righteous; but when he has become so, he must no longer use it as a chariot, for he has arrived at his journey's end,—or rather (that I may employ the apostle's own simile, which has been already mentioned) as a schoolmaster, seeing that he is now fully learned. How then is the law not made for a righteous man, if it is necessary for the righteous man too, not that he may be brought as an unrighteous man to the [grace](#) that justifies, but that he may use it lawfully, now that he is righteous? Does not the case perhaps stand thus,—nay, not *perhaps*, but rather *certainly*,—that the man who is become righteous thus lawfully uses the law, when he applies it to alarm the unrighteous, so that whenever the disease of some unusual desire begins in them, too, to be augmented by the incentive of the law's prohibition and an increased amount of transgression, they may in [faith](#) flee for refuge to the [grace](#) that justifies, and becoming delighted with the sweet pleasures of [holiness](#), may escape the penalty of the law's menacing letter through the spirit's soothing gift? In this way the two statements will not be contrary, nor will they be repugnant to each other: even the righteous man may lawfully use a good law, and yet the law be not made for the righteous man; for it is not by the law that he becomes righteous, but by the law of [faith](#), which led him to [believe](#) that no other resource was possible to his weakness for fulfilling the precepts which "the law of works" [Romans 3:27](#) commanded, except to be assisted by the [grace](#) of [God](#).

Chapter 17.—The Exclusion of Boasting

Accordingly he says, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of [faith](#)." [Romans 3:27](#) He may either mean, the laudable boasting, which is in the Lord; and that it is *excluded*, not in the sense that it is driven off so as to pass away, but that it is clearly manifested so as to stand out prominently. Whence certain artificers in silver are called "*exclusores*." In this sense it occurs also in that passage in the Psalms: "That they may be *excluded*, who have been [proved](#) with silver,"—that is,

that they may stand out in prominence, who have been tried by the word of [God](#). For in another passage it is said: "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver which is tried in the fire." Or if this be not his meaning, he must have wished to mention that vicious boasting which comes of [pride](#)—that is, of those who appear to themselves to lead righteous lives, and boast of their excellence as if they had not received it,—and further to inform us, that by the law of [faith](#), not by the law of works, this boasting was *excluded*, in the other sense of shut out and driven away; because by the law of [faith](#) every one learns that whatever good life he leads he has from the [grace](#) of [God](#), and that from no other source whatever can he obtain the means of becoming perfect in the [love](#) of righteousness.

Chapter 18 [XI.]—Piety is Wisdom; That is Called the Righteousness of God, Which He Produces

Now, this meditation makes a man godly, and this godliness is [true](#) wisdom. By godliness I mean that which the Greeks designate θεοσέβεια, —that very [virtue](#) which is commended to man in the passage of Job, where it is said to him, "Behold, godliness is wisdom." [Job 28:28](#) Now if the word θεοσέβεια be interpreted according to its derivation, it might be called "*the worship of God*;" and in this worship the essential point is, that the [soul](#) be not ungrateful to Him. Whence it is that in the most [true](#) and excellent [sacrifice](#) we are admonished to "give thanks unto our Lord God." Ungrateful however, our [soul](#) would be, were it to attribute to itself that which it received from [God](#), especially the righteousness, with the works of which (the special property, as it were, of itself, and produced, so to speak, by the [soul](#) itself for itself) it is not puffed up in a vulgar [pride](#), as it might be with riches, or beauty of limb, or eloquence, or those other accomplishments, external or internal, bodily or mental, which [wicked](#) men too are in the [habit](#) of possessing, but, if I may say so, in a wise complacency, as of things which constitute in a special manner the good works of the good. It is owing to this [sin](#) of vulgar [pride](#) that even some great men have drifted from the sure anchorage of the divine nature, and have floated down into the shame of [idolatry](#). Whence the apostle again in the same epistle, wherein he so firmly maintains the principle of [grace](#), after saying that he was a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise, and professing himself ready, so far as to him pertained, to preach the gospel even to those who lived in [Rome](#), adds: "I am not ashamed of the [Gospel](#) of Christ: for it is the power of God unto [salvation](#) to every one that [believes](#); to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from [faith](#) to [faith](#): as it is written, The just shall live by [faith](#)." [Romans 1:14-17](#) This is the righteousness of [God](#), which was veiled in the [Old Testament](#), and is revealed in the New; and it is called *the righteousness of God*, because by His bestowal of it He makes us righteous, just as we read that "[salvation](#) is the Lord's," because He makes us safe. And this is the [faith](#) "from which" and "to which" it is revealed,—*from the [faith](#) of them who preach it, to the [faith](#) of those who [obey](#) it*. By this [faith](#) of Jesus Christ—that is, the [faith](#) which Christ has given to us—we [believe](#) it is from God that we now have, and shall have more and more, the ability of living righteously; wherefore we give Him thanks with that dutiful worship with which He only is to be worshipped.

Chapter 19 [XII]—The Knowledge of God Through the Creation

And then the apostle very properly turns from this point to describe with detestation those men who, light-minded and puffed up by the [sin](#) which I have mentioned in the preceding chapter, have been carried away of their own conceit, as it were, through empty space where they could find no resting-place, only to fall shattered to pieces against the vain figments of their [idols](#), as against stones. For, after he had commended the [piety](#) of that [faith](#), whereby, being justified, we must needs be pleasing to [God](#), he proceeds to call our attention to what we ought to abominate as the opposite. "For the [wrath](#) of [God](#)," says he, "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of [men](#), who hold down the [truth](#) in unrighteousness; because that which may be [known](#) of God is manifest in them: for God has showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood through the things that are made, even His [eternal](#) power and divinity; so that they are without excuse: because, [knowing God](#), they yet [glorified](#) Him not as [God](#), neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and they changed the [glory](#) of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four footed beasts, and to creeping things." [Romans 1:18-23](#) Observe, he does not say that they were [ignorant](#) of the [truth](#), but that they held down the [truth](#) in unrighteousness. For it occurred to him, that he would inquire whence the [knowledge](#) of the [truth](#) could be obtained by those to whom God had not given the law; and he was not silent on the source whence they could have obtained it: for he declares that it was through the visible works of creation that they arrived at the [knowledge](#) of the invisible attributes of the Creator. And, in very deed, as they continued to possess great faculties for searching, so they were able to find. Wherein then lay their impiety? Because "when they [knew God](#), they [glorified](#) Him not as [God](#), nor gave Him thanks, but became vain in their imaginations." Vanity is a disease especially of those who mislead themselves, and "think themselves to be something, when they are nothing." [Galatians 6:3](#) Such men, indeed, darken themselves in that swelling [pride](#), the foot of which the [holy](#) singer [prays](#) that it may not come against him, after saying, "In Your light shall we see light;" from which very light of unchanging [truth](#) they turn aside, and "their foolish heart is darkened." [Romans 1:21](#) For theirs was not a wise heart, even though they [knew God](#); but it was foolish rather, because they did not glorify Him as [God](#), or give Him thanks; for "He said unto man, Behold, the [fear](#) of the Lord, that is wisdom." [Job 28:28](#) So by this conduct, while "professing themselves to be wise" (which can only be understood to mean that they attributed this to themselves), "they became fools." [Romans 1:22](#)

Chapter 20.—The Law Without Grace

Now why need I speak of what follows? For why it was that by this their impiety those men—I mean those who could have [known](#) the Creator through the creature—fell (since "[God](#) resists the [proud](#)" [James 4:6](#)) and whither they plunged, is better shown in the sequel of this epistle than we can here mention. For in this letter of mine we have not

undertaken to expound this epistle, but only mainly on its authority, to demonstrate, so far as we are able, that we are assisted by divine aid towards the achievement of righteousness,—not merely because God has given us a law full of good and [holy](#) precepts, but because our very will without which we cannot do any good thing, is assisted and elevated by the importation of the Spirit of [grace](#), without which help mere teaching is "the letter that kills," [2 Corinthians 3:6](#) forasmuch as it rather holds them guilty of transgression, than justifies the ungodly. Now just as those who come to [know](#) the Creator through the creature received no benefit towards [salvation](#), from their [knowledge](#),—because "though they [knew God](#), they [glorified](#) Him not as [God](#), nor gave Him thanks, although professing themselves to be wise;" [Romans 1:21](#)—so also they who [know](#) from the law how man ought to live, are not made righteous by their [knowledge](#), because, "going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of [God](#)." [Romans 10:3](#)

Chapter 21 [XIII.]—The Law of Works and the Law of Faith

The law, then, of deeds, that is, the law of works, whereby this boasting is not excluded, and the law of [faith](#), by which it is excluded, differ from each other; and this difference it is worth our while to consider, if so be we are able to observe and discern it. Hastily, indeed, one might say that the law of works lay in [Judaism](#), and the law of [faith](#) in [Christianity](#); forasmuch as [circumcision](#) and the other works prescribed by the law are just those which the [Christian](#) system no longer retains. But there is a fallacy in this distinction, the greatness of which I have for some time been endeavoring to expose; and to such as are acute in appreciating distinctions, especially to yourself and those like you, I have possibly succeeded in my effort. Since, however, the subject is an important one, it will not be unsuitable, if with a view to its illustration, we linger over the many testimonies which again and again meet our view. Now, the apostle says that that law by which no man is justified, [Romans 3:20](#) entered in that the offence might abound, [Romans 5:20](#) and yet in order to save it from the aspersions of the [ignorant](#) and the accusations of the impious, he defends this very law in such words as these: "What shall we say then? Is the law [sin](#)? God forbid. Nay, I had not [known sin](#) but by the law: for I had not [known](#) concupiscence, except the law had said, You shall not [covet](#). But [sin](#), taking occasion, wrought, by the commandment, in me all manner of concupiscence." [Romans 7:7-8](#) He says also: "The law indeed is [holy](#), and the commandment is [holy](#), and just, and good; but [sin](#), that it might appear [sin](#), worked death in me by that which is [good](#)." [Romans 7:12-13](#) It is therefore the very letter that kills which says, "You shall not [covet](#)," and it is of this that he speaks in a passage which I have before referred to: "By the law is the [knowledge](#) of [sin](#). But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the [prophets](#); even the righteousness of [God](#), which is by [faith](#) of Jesus Christ upon all them that [believe](#); for there is no difference: seeing that all have [sinned](#), and come short of the [glory](#) of God: being justified freely by His [grace](#), through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom [God](#) has set forth to be a propitiation through [faith](#) in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of [sins](#) that are past, through the forbearance of [God](#); to declare His righteousness at this

time; that He might be just, and the justifier of him which [believes](#) in Jesus." [Romans 3:20-26](#) And then he adds the passage which is now under consideration: "Where, then, is your boasting? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of [faith](#)." [Romans 3:27](#) And so it is the very law of works itself which says, "You shall not [covet](#);" because thereby comes the [knowledge](#) of [sin](#). Now I wish to [know](#), if anybody will dare to tell me, whether the law of [faith](#) does not say to us, "You shall not [covet](#)"? For if it does not say so to us, what reason is there why we, who are placed under it, should not [sin](#) in safety and with impunity? Indeed, this is just what those people thought the apostle meant, of whom he writes: "Even as some affirm that we say, Let us do [evil](#), that good may come; whose damnation is just." [Romans 3:8](#) If, on the contrary, it too says to us, "You shall not [covet](#)" (even as numerous passages in the [gospels](#) and epistles so often testify and urge), then why is not this law also called the law of works? For it by no means follows that, because it retains not the "works" of the ancient [sacraments](#),—even [circumcision](#) and the other ceremonies,—it therefore has no "works" in its own [sacraments](#), which are adapted to the present age; unless, indeed, the question was about sacramental works, when mention was made of the law, just because by it is the [knowledge](#) of [sin](#), and therefore nobody is justified by it, so that it is not by it that boasting is excluded, but by the law of [faith](#), whereby the just man lives. But is there not by it too the [knowledge](#) of [sin](#), when even it says, "You shall not [covet](#)?"

Chapter 22.—No Man Justified by Works

What the difference between them is, I will briefly explain. What the law of works enjoins by menace, that the law of [faith](#) secures by [faith](#). The one says, "You shall not [covet](#);" [Exodus 20:17](#) the other says, "When I perceived that nobody could be continent, except God gave it to him; and that this was the very point of wisdom, to [know](#) whose gift she was; I approached unto the Lord, and I besought Him." [Wisdom 8:21](#) This indeed is the very wisdom which is called [piety](#), in which is worshipped "the Father of lights, from whom is every best giving and perfect gift." [James 1:17](#) This worship, however, consists in the [sacrifice](#) of praise and giving of thanks, so that the worshipper of God boasts not in himself, but in Him. [2 Corinthians 10:17](#) Accordingly, by the law of works, God says to us, Do what I command you; but by the law of [faith](#) we say to [God](#), Give me what Thou commandest. Now this is the reason why the law gives its command,—to admonish us what [faith](#) ought to do, that is, that he to whom the command is given, if he is as yet unable to perform it, may [know](#) what to ask for; but if he has at once the ability, and complies with the command, he ought also to be aware from whose gift the ability comes. "For we have received not the spirit of this world," says again that most constant preacher of [grace](#), "but the Spirit which is of [God](#), that we might [know](#) the things that are freely given to us of [God](#)." [1 Corinthians 2:12](#) What, however, "is the spirit of this world," but the spirit of [pride](#)? By it their foolish heart is darkened, who, although [knowing God](#), [glorified](#) Him not as [God](#), by giving Him thanks. [Romans 1:21](#) Moreover, it is really by this same spirit that they too are deceived, who, while [ignorant](#) of the righteousness of [God](#), and wishing to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to God's righteousness. [Romans 10:3](#) It appears to me, therefore, that he is much more "a child of [faith](#)" who has learned from what source to hope for what he has not yet, than he who attributes to himself whatever he has; although, no [doubt](#), to both of

these must be preferred the man who both has, and at the same time [knows](#) from whom he has it, if nevertheless he does not [believe](#) himself to be what he has not yet attained to. Let him not fall into the mistake of the [Pharisee](#), who, while thanking God for what he possessed, yet failed to ask for any further gift, just as if he stood in want of nothing for the increase or perfection of his righteousness. [Luke 18:11-12](#) Now, having duly considered and weighed all these circumstances and testimonies, we conclude that a man is not justified by the precepts of a [holy](#) life, but by [faith](#) in [Jesus Christ](#),—in a word, not by the law of works, but by the law of [faith](#); not by the letter, but by the spirit; not by the merits of deeds, but by free [grace](#).

Chapter 23 [XIV.]—How the Decalogue Kills, If Grace Be Not Present

Although, therefore, the apostle seems to reprove and correct those who were being persuaded to be [circumcised](#), in such terms as to designate by the word "*law*" [circumcision](#) itself and other similar legal observances, which are now rejected as shadows of a future substance by [Christians](#) who yet hold what those shadows figuratively promised; he at the same time nevertheless would have it to be clearly understood that the law, by which he says no man is justified, lies not merely in those sacramental institutions which contained promissory figures, but also in those works by which whosoever has done them lives holily, and amongst which occurs this prohibition: "You shall not [covet](#)." Now, to make our statement all the clearer, let us look at the Decalogue itself. It is certain, then, that [Moses](#) on the mount received the law, that he might deliver it to the people, written on tables of stone by the finger of [God](#). It is summed up in these ten commandments, in which there is no precept about [circumcision](#), nor anything concerning those animal [sacrifices](#) which have ceased to be offered by [Christians](#). Well, now, I should like to be told what there is in these ten commandments, except the observance of the [Sabbath](#), which ought not to be kept by a [Christian](#),—whether it prohibit the making and worshipping of [idols](#) and of any other gods than the one [true God](#), or the taking of God's name in vain; or prescribe [honour](#) to [parents](#); or give warning against fornication, [murder](#), theft, false [witness](#), [adultery](#), or [coveting](#) other men's property? Which of these commandments would any one say that the [Christian](#) ought not to keep? Is it possible to contend that it is not the law which was written on those two tables that the apostle describes as "the letter that kills," but the law of [circumcision](#) and the other sacred [rites](#) which are now abolished? But then how can we think so, when in the law occurs this precept, "You shall not [covet](#)," by which very commandment, notwithstanding its being [holy](#), just, and good, "[sin](#)," says the apostle, "deceived me, and by it slew me?" What else can this be than "the letter" that "kills"?

Chapter 24.—The Passage in Corinthians

In the passage where he speaks to the Corinthians about the letter that kills, and the spirit that gives life, he expresses himself more clearly, but he does not mean even there any other "letter" to be understood than the Decalogue itself, which was written on the two tables. For these are His words: "Forasmuch as you are manifestly declared to be the

epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living [God](#); not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of [God](#); who has made us fit, as ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was [glorious](#), so that the children of [Israel](#) could not steadfastly behold the face of [Moses](#) for the [glory](#) of his countenance, which was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather [glorious](#)? For if the ministration of condemnation be [glory](#), much more shall the ministration of righteousness abound in [glory](#). [2 Corinthians 3:3-9](#) A good deal might be said about these words; but perhaps we shall have a more fitting opportunity at some future time. At present, however, I beg you to observe how he speaks of the letter that kills, and contrasts therewith the spirit that gives life. Now this must certainly be "the ministration of death written and engraven in stones," and "the ministration of condemnation," since the law entered that [sin](#) might abound. [Romans 5:20](#) But the commandments themselves are so useful and salutary to the doer of them, that no one could have life unless he kept them. Well, then, is it owing to the one precept about the [Sabbath](#)-day, which is included in it, that the Decalogue is called "the letter that kills?" Because, forsooth, every man that still observes that day in its literal appointment is carnally wise, but to be carnally wise is nothing else than death? And must the other nine commandments, which are rightly observed in their literal form, not be regarded as belonging to the law of works by which none is justified, but to the law of [faith](#) whereby the just man lives? Who can possibly entertain so absurd an opinion as to suppose that "the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones," is not said equally of all the ten commandments, but only of the solitary one touching the [Sabbath](#)-day? In which class do we place that which is thus spoken of: "The law works [wrath](#): for where no law is, there is no transgression?" [Romans 4:15](#) and again thus: "Until the law [sin](#) was in the world: but [sin](#) is not imputed when there is no law?" [Romans 5:13](#) and also that which we have already so often quoted: "By the law is the [knowledge](#) of [sin](#)?" [Romans 3:20](#) and especially the passage in which the apostle has more clearly expressed the question of which we are treating: "I had not [known lust](#), except the law had said, You shall not [covet](#)?" [Romans 7:7](#)

Chapter 25.—The Passage in Romans

Now carefully consider this entire passage, and see whether it says anything about [circumcision](#), or the [Sabbath](#), or anything else pertaining to a foreshadowing sacrament. Does not its whole scope amount to this, that the letter which forbids [sin](#) fails to give man life, but rather "kills," by increasing concupiscence, and aggravating sinfulness by transgression, unless indeed [grace](#) liberates us by the law of [faith](#), which is in [Christ Jesus](#), when His [love](#) is "shed abroad in our hearts by the [Holy Ghost](#), which is given to us?" [Romans 5:5](#) The apostle having used these words: "That we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter," [Romans 7:6](#) goes on to inquire, "What shall we say then? Is the law [sin](#)? God forbid. Nay; I had not [known sin](#), but by the law: for I had not [known lust](#), except the law had said, You shall not [covet](#). But [sin](#), taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law

[sin](#) was dead. For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, [sin](#) revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For [sin](#), taking occasion by the commandment deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is [holy](#), and the commandment [holy](#), and just, and good. Was then that which is [good](#) made death unto me? God forbid. But [sin](#), that it might appear [sin](#), worked death in me by that which is [good](#); that [sin](#) by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we [know](#) that the law is spiritual; whereas I am carnal, sold under [sin](#). For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that I do not; but what I [hate](#), that I do. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is [good](#). But then it is no longer I that do it, but [sin](#) that dwells in me. For I [know](#) that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing. To will, indeed, is present with me; but how to perform that which is [good](#) I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the [evil](#) which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that which I would not, it is no more I that do it, but [sin](#) that dwells in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, [evil](#) is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my [mind](#), and bringing me into captivity to the law of [sin](#) which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The [grace](#) of [God](#), through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of [God](#), but with the flesh the law of [sin](#)." [Romans 7:7-25](#)

Chapter 26.—No Fruit Good Except It Grow from the Root of Love

It is evident, then, that the oldness of the letter, in the absence of the newness of the spirit, instead of freeing us from [sin](#), rather makes us guilty by the [knowledge](#) of [sin](#). Whence it is written in another part of Scripture, "He that increases [knowledge](#), increases sorrow," [Ecclesiastes 1:18](#) —not that the law is itself [evil](#), but because the commandment has its good in the demonstration of the letter, not in the assistance of the spirit; and if this commandment is kept from the [fear](#) of punishment and not from the [love](#) of righteousness, it is servilely kept, not freely, and therefore it is not kept at all. For no fruit is [good](#) which does not grow from the root of [love](#). If, however, that [faith](#) be present which works by [love](#), [Galatians 5:6](#) then one begins to delight in the law of God after the inward man, [Romans 7:22](#) and this delight is the gift of the spirit, not of the letter; even though there is another law in our members still warring against the law of the [mind](#), until the old state is changed, and passes into that newness which increases from day to day in the inward man, while the [grace](#) of God is liberating us from the body of this death through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter 27 [XV.]—Grace, Concealed in the Old Testament, is Revealed in the New

This [grace](#) hid itself under a veil in the [Old Testament](#), but it has been revealed in the [New Testament](#) according to the most perfectly ordered dispensation of the ages, forasmuch as God [knew](#) how to dispose all things. And perhaps it is a part of this hiding

of [grace](#), that in the Decalogue, which was given on Mount Sinai, only the portion which relates to the [Sabbath](#) was hidden under a prefiguring precept. The [Sabbath](#) is a day of sanctification; and it is not without significance that, among all the works which God accomplished, the first sound of sanctification was heard on the day when He rested from all His labours. On this, indeed, we must not now enlarge. But at the same time I deem it to be enough for the point now in question, that it was not for nothing that the nation was commanded on that day to abstain from all servile work, by which [sin](#) is signified; but because not to commit [sin](#) belongs to sanctification, that is, to God's gift through the [Holy Spirit](#). And this precept alone among the others, was placed in the law, which was written on the two tables of stone, in a prefiguring shadow, under which the [Jews](#) observe the [Sabbath](#), that by this very circumstance it might be signified that it was then the time for concealing the [grace](#), which had to be revealed in the [New Testament](#) by the death of [Christ](#),—the rending, as it were, of the veil. [Matthew 27:51](#) "For when," says the apostle, "it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." [2 Corinthians 3:16](#)

Chapter 28 [XVI]—Why the Holy Ghost is Called the Finger of God

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the [Spirit of the Lord](#) is, there is liberty." [2 Corinthians 3:17](#) Now this Spirit of [God](#), by whose gift we are justified, whence it comes to pass that we delight not to [sin](#),—in which is liberty; even as, when we are without this Spirit, we delight to [sin](#),—in which is slavery, from the works of which we must abstain;—this [Holy Spirit](#), through whom [love](#) is shed abroad in our hearts, which is the fulfilment of the law, is designated in the gospel as "the finger of [God](#)." [Luke 11:20](#) Is it not because those very tables of the law were written by the finger of [God](#), that the Spirit of God by whom we are sanctified is also *the finger of God*, in order that, living by [faith](#), we may do good works through [love](#)? Who is not touched by this congruity, and at the same time diversity? For as fifty days are reckoned from the celebration of the [Passover](#) (which was ordered by [Moses](#) to be offered by slaying the typical lamb, [Exodus 12:3](#) to signify, indeed, the future death of the Lord) to the day when [Moses](#) received the law written on the tables of stone by the finger of [God](#), [Exodus 31:18](#) so, in like manner, from the death and resurrection of Him who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, [Isaiah 53:7](#) there were fifty complete days up to the time when the finger of God—that is, the [Holy Spirit](#)—gathered together in one [Acts 2:2](#) perfect company those who [believed](#).

Chapter 29 [XVII.]—A Comparison of the Law of Moses and of the New Law

Now, amidst this admirable correspondence, there is at least this very considerable diversity in the cases, in that the people in the earlier instance were deterred by a horrible dread from approaching the place where the law was given; whereas in the other case the [Holy Ghost](#) came upon them who were gathered together in expectation of His promised gift. *There* it was on tables of stone that the finger of God operated; *here* it was on the

hearts of men. *There* the law was given outwardly, so that the unrighteous might be terrified; *here* it was given inwardly, so that they might be justified. [Acts 2:1-47](#) For this, "You shall not commit [adultery](#), You shall not kill, You shall not [covet](#); and if there be any other commandment,"—such, of course, as was written on those tables,—"it is briefly comprehended," says he, "in this saying, namely, You shall [love](#) your neighbour as yourself. Love works no ill to his neighbour: therefore [love](#) is the fulfilling of the law." [Romans 13:9-10](#) Now this was not written on the tables of stone, but "is shed abroad in our hearts by the [Holy Ghost](#), which is given unto us." [Romans 5:5](#) God's law, therefore, is [love](#). "To it the carnal mind is not subject, neither indeed can be;" [Romans 8:7](#) but when the works of [love](#) are written on tables to alarm the carnal [mind](#), there arises the law of works and "the letter which kills" the transgressor; but when [love](#) itself is shed abroad in the hearts of [believers](#), then we have the law of [faith](#), and the spirit which gives life to him that loves.

Chapter 30.—The New Law Written Within

Now, observe how consonant this diversity is with those words of the apostle which I quoted not long ago in another connection, and which I postponed for a more careful consideration afterwards: "Forasmuch," says he, "as you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living [God](#); not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." [2 Corinthians 3:3](#) See how he shows that the one is written without man, that it may alarm him from without; the other within man himself, that it may justify him from within. He speaks of the "fleshy tables of the heart," not of the carnal [mind](#), but of a living agent possessing sensation, in comparison with a stone, which is senseless. The assertion which he subsequently makes,—that "the children of [Israel](#) could not look steadfastly on the end of the face of [Moses](#)," and that he accordingly spoke to them through a veil, [2 Corinthians 3:13](#) — signifies that the letter of the law justifies no man, but that rather a veil is placed on the reading of the [Old Testament](#), until it shall be turned to [Christ](#), and the veil be removed;—in other words, until it shall be turned to [grace](#), and be understood that from Him accrues to us the justification, whereby we do what He commands. And He commands, in order that, because we lack in ourselves, we may flee to Him for refuge. Accordingly, after most guardedly saying, "Such trust have we through Christ to Godward," [2 Corinthians 3:4](#) the apostle immediately goes on to add the statement which underlies our subject, to prevent our confidence being attributed to any strength of our own. He says: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of [God](#); who also has made us fit to be ministers of the [New Testament](#); not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life." [2 Corinthians 3:5-6](#)

Chapter 31 [XVIII.]—The Old Law Ministers Death; The New, Righteousness

Now, since, as he says in another passage, "the law was added because of transgression," [Galatians 3:19](#) meaning the law which is written externally to [man](#), he therefore

designates it both as "the ministration of death," [2 Corinthians 3:7](#) and "the ministration of condemnation;" [2 Corinthians 3:9](#) but the other, that is, the law of the [New Testament](#), he calls "the ministration of the Spirit" [2 Corinthians 3:8](#) and "the ministration of righteousness," [2 Corinthians 3:9](#) because through the Spirit we work righteousness, and are delivered from the condemnation due to transgression. The one, therefore, vanishes away, the other abides; for the terrifying schoolmaster will be dispensed with, when [love](#) has succeeded to [fear](#). Now "where the [Spirit of the Lord](#) is, there is liberty." [2 Corinthians 3:17](#) But that this ministration is vouchsafed to us, not on account of our deserving, but from His mercy, the apostle thus declares: "Seeing then that we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, let us faint not; but let us renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor adulterating the word of God with deceit." [2 Corinthians 4:1-2](#) By this "craftiness" and "deceitfulness" he would have us understand the hypocrisy with which the arrogant would fain be supposed to be righteous. Whence in the psalm, which the apostle cites in testimony of this [grace](#) of [God](#), it is said, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute [sin](#), and in whose mouth is no guile." This is the confession of lowly [saints](#), who do not boast to be what they are not. Then, in a passage which follows not long after, the apostle writes thus: "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For [God](#), who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the [knowledge](#) of the [glory](#) of [God](#) in the face of [Jesus Christ](#)." [2 Corinthians 4:5-6](#) This is the [knowledge](#) of His [glory](#), whereby we [know](#) that He is the light which illumines our darkness. And I beg you to observe how he inculcates this very point: "We have," says he, "this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of [God](#), and not of us." [2 Corinthians 4:7](#) When further on he commends in glowing terms this same [grace](#), in the [Lord Jesus Christ](#), until he comes to that vestment of the righteousness of [faith](#), "clothed with which we cannot be found naked," and while longing for which "we groan, being burdened" with mortality, "earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from [Heaven](#)," "that mortality might be swallowed up of life;"—observe what he says: "Now He that has wrought us for the self-same thing is [God](#), who also has given unto us the earnest of the [Spirit](#);" [2 Corinthians 5:5](#) and after a little he thus briefly draws the conclusion of the matter: "That we might be made the righteousness of [God](#) in Him." [2 Corinthians 5:21](#) This is not the righteousness whereby God is Himself righteous, but that whereby we are made righteous by Him.

Chapter 32 [XIX.]—The Christian Faith Touching the Assistance of Grace

Let no [Christian](#) then stray from this [faith](#), which alone is the [Christian](#) one; nor let any one, when he has been made to feel ashamed to say that we become righteous through our own selves, without the [grace](#) of God working this in us,—because he sees, when such an allegation is made, how unable [pious believers](#) are to endure it,—resort to any subterfuge on this point, by affirming that the reason why we cannot become righteous without the operation of God's [grace](#) is this, that He gave the law, He instituted its teaching, He commanded its precepts of good. For there is no [doubt](#) that, without His assisting [grace](#), the law is "the letter which kills;" but when the life-giving spirit is

present, the law causes that to be loved as written within, which it once caused to be feared as written without.

Chapter 33.—The Prophecy of Jeremiah Concerning the New Testament

Observe this also in that testimony which was given by the [prophet](#) on this subject in the clearest way: "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will consummate a new covenant with the house of [Israel](#), and with the [house of Judah](#); not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of [Egypt](#). Because they continued not in my covenant, I also have rejected them, says the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of [Israel](#); After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their [God](#), and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all [know](#) me, from the least unto the greatest of them, says the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their [sin](#) no more." [What say we to this? One nowhere, or hardly anywhere, except in this passage of the prophet](#), finds in the [Old Testament](#) Scriptures any mention so made of the [New Testament](#) as to indicate it by its very name. It is no [doubt](#) often referred to and foretold as about to be given, but not so plainly as to have its very name mentioned. Consider then carefully, what difference God has testified as existing between the two testaments—the old covenant and the new.

Chapter 34.—The Law; Grace

After saying, "Not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of [Egypt](#)," observe what He adds: "Because they continued not in my covenant." He reckons it as their own fault that they did not continue in God's covenant, lest the law, which they received at that time, should seem to be deserving of blame. For it was the very law that Christ "came not to destroy, but to fulfil." [Matthew 5:17](#) Nevertheless, it is not by that law that the ungodly are made righteous, but by [grace](#); and this change is effected by the life-giving Spirit, without whom the letter kills. "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the [Scripture](#) has concluded all under [sin](#), that the promise by [faith](#) of Jesus Christ might be given to them that [believe](#)." [Galatians 3:21-22](#) Out of this promise, that is, out of the kindness of [God](#), the law is fulfilled, which without the said promise only makes men transgressors, either by the actual commission of some sinful deed, if the flame of concupiscence have greater power than even the restraints of [fear](#), or at least by their mere will, if the [fear](#) of punishment transcend the pleasure of [lust](#). In what he says, "The Scripture has concluded all under [sin](#), that the promise by [faith](#) of Jesus Christ might be given to them that [believe](#)," it is the benefit of this "*conclusion*" itself which is asserted. For what purposes "*has it concluded*," except as it is expressed in the next sentence: "Before, indeed, [faith](#) came, we were kept under the law, *concluded* for the [faith](#) which was afterwards revealed?"

[Galatians 3:23](#) The law was therefore given, in order that [grace](#) might be sought; [grace](#) was given, in order that the law might be fulfilled. Now it was not through any fault of its own that the law was not fulfilled, but by the fault of the carnal mind; and this fault was to be demonstrated by the law, and healed by [grace](#). "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for [sin](#), condemned [sin](#) in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." [Romans 8:3-4](#) Accordingly, in the passage which we cited from the [prophet](#), he says, "I will consummate a new covenant with the house of [Israel](#), and with the [house of Judah](#)," — [and what means I will consummate but I will fulfil?—"not, according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt."](#)

Chapter 35 [XX.]—The Old Law; The New Law

[The one was therefore old, because the other is new. But whence comes it that one is old and the other new, when the same law, which said in the Old Testament, "You shall not covet," \[Exodus 20:17\]\(#\) is fulfilled by the \[New Testament\]\(#\)? "Because," says the \[prophet\]\(#\), "they continued not in my covenant, I have also rejected them, says the Lord." \[It is then on account of the offence of the old man, which was by no means healed by the letter which commanded and threatened, that it is called the old covenant; whereas the other is called the new covenant, because of the newness of the spirit, which heals the new man of the fault of the old. Then consider what follows, and see in how clear a light the fact is placed, that men who bare faith\]\(#\) are unwilling to trust in themselves: "Because," says he, "this is the covenant which I will make with the house of \[Israel\]\(#\); After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." \[See how similarly the apostle states it in the passage we have already quoted: "Not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart," \\[2 Corinthians 3:3\\]\\(#\\) because "not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God." \\[2 Corinthians 3:3\\]\\(#\\) And I apprehend that the apostle in this passage had no other reason for mentioning "the \\[New Testament\\]\\(#\\)" \\("who has made us able ministers of the \\[New Testament\\]\\(#\\); not of the letter, but of the spirit"\\), than because he had an eye to the words of the \\[prophet\\]\\(#\\), when he said "Not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart," inasmuch as in the \\[prophet\\]\\(#\\) it runs: "I will write it in their hearts."\]\(#\)](#)

Chapter 36 [XXI.]—The Law Written in Our Hearts

[What then is God's law written by God Himself in the hearts of men](#), but the very presence of the [Holy Spirit](#), who is "the finger of [God](#)," and by whose presence is shed abroad in our hearts the [love](#) which is the fulfilling of the law, [Romans 13:10](#) and the end of the commandment? [1 Timothy 1:5](#) Now the promises of the [Old Testament](#) are earthly; and yet (with the exception of the sacramental ordinances which were the shadow of things to come, such as [circumcision](#), the [Sabbath](#) and other observances of days, and the ceremonies of certain meats, and the complicated ritual of [sacrifices](#) and sacred things which suited "the oldness" of the carnal law and its slavish yoke) it contains such precepts of righteousness as we are even now taught to observe, which were especially

expressly drawn out on the two tables without figure or shadow: for instance, "You shall not commit [adultery](#)," "You shall do no [murder](#)," "You shall not [covet](#)," "and whatsoever other commandment is briefly comprehended in the saying, You shall [love](#) your neighbour as yourself." [Romans 13:9](#) Nevertheless, whereas as in the said Testament earthly and temporal promises are, as I have said, recited, and these are goods of this corruptible flesh (although they prefigure those heavenly and everlasting blessings which belong to the [New Testament](#)), what is now promised is a good for the heart itself, a good for the [mind](#), a good of the spirit, that is, an intellectual good; since it is said, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write them," —[by which He signified that men would not fear](#) the law which alarmed them externally, but would [love](#) the very righteousness of the law which dwelt inwardly in their hearts.

Chapter 37 [XXII.]—The Eternal Reward

He then went on to state the reward: "I will be their [God](#), and they shall be my people." [This corresponds to the Psalmist's words to God: "It is good](#) for me to hold me fast by [God](#)." "I will be," says [God](#), "their [God](#), and they shall be my people." What is better than this good, what happier than this [happiness](#),—to live to [God](#), to live from [God](#), with whom is the fountain of life, and in whose light we shall see light? Of this life the Lord Himself speaks in these words: "This is life [eternal](#) that they may [know](#) You the only [true God](#), and Jesus Christ whom You have sent," [John 17:3](#) —that is, "You and Jesus Christ whom You have sent," the one [true](#) God. For no less than this did Himself promise to those who [love](#) Him: "He that loves me, keeps my commandments; and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will [love](#) him, and will manifest myself unto him" [John 14:21](#) —in the form, no [doubt](#), of [God](#), wherein He is equal to the Father; not in the form of a servant, for in this He will display Himself even to the [wicked](#) also. Then, however, shall that come to pass which is written, "Let the ungodly man be taken away, that he see not the [glory](#) of the Lord." [Isaiah 26:10](#) Then also shall "the [wicked](#) go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life [eternal](#)." [Matthew 25:46](#) Now this [eternal](#) life, as I have just mentioned, has been defined to be, that they may [know](#) the one [true](#) God. [John 17:3](#) Accordingly John again says: "Beloved, now are we the sons of [God](#); and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we [know](#) that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." [1 John 3:2](#) This likeness begins even now to be reformed in us, while the inward man is being renewed from day to day, according to the image of Him that created him. [Colossians 3:10](#)

Chapter 38 [XXIII.]—The Re-Formation Which is Now Being Effected, Compared with the Perfection of the Life to Come

But what is this change, and how great, in comparison with the perfect eminence which is then to be realized? The apostle applies some sort of illustration, derived from well-[known](#) things, to these indescribable things, comparing the period of childhood with the age of manhood. "When I was a child," says he, "I used to speak as a child, to understand

as a child, to think as a child; but when I became a [man](#), I put aside childish things." [1 Corinthians 13:11](#) He then immediately explains why he said this in these words: "For now we see by means of a mirror, darkly but then face to face: now I [know](#) in part; but then shall I [know](#) even as also I am [known](#)." [1 Corinthians 13:12](#)

Chapter 39 [XXIV]—The Eternal Reward Which is Specially Declared in the New Testament, Foretold by the Prophet

Accordingly, in our [prophet](#) likewise, whose testimony we are dealing with, this is added, that in God is the reward, in Him the end, in Him the perfection of [happiness](#), in Him the sum of the blessed and [eternal](#) life. For after saying, "I will be their [God](#), and they shall be my people," he at once adds, "And they shall no more teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all [know](#) me, from the least even unto the greatest of them." [Now, the present is certainly the time of the New Testament](#), the promise of which is given by the [prophet](#) in the words which we have quoted from his [prophecy](#). Why then does each man still say even now to his neighbour and his brother, "Know the Lord?" Or is it not perhaps meant that this is everywhere said when the gospel is preached, and when this is its very proclamation? For on what ground does the apostle call himself "a teacher of the [Gentiles](#)," [1 Timothy 2:7](#) if it be not that what he himself implies in the following passage becomes realized: "How shall they call on Him in whom they have not [believed](#)? and how shall they [believe](#) in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" [Romans 10:14](#) Since, then, this preaching is now everywhere spreading, in what way is it the time of the [New Testament](#) of which the [prophet](#) spoke in the words, "And they shall not every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all [know](#) me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them," [unless it be that he has included in his prophetic forecast the eternal](#) reward of the said [New Testament](#), by promising us the most blessed [contemplation](#) of God Himself?

Chapter 40.—How that is to Be the Reward of All; The Apostle Earnestly Defends Grace

What then is the import of the "All, from the least unto the greatest of them," but all that belong spiritually to the house of [Israel](#) and to the [house of Judah](#),—that is, to the children of Isaac, to the seed of [Abraham](#)? For such is the promise, wherein it was said to him, "In Isaac shall your seed be called; for they which are the children of the flesh are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or [evil](#), that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls,) it was said unto her, "The elder shall serve the younger." [Romans 9:7-12](#) This is the house of [Israel](#), or rather the [house of Judah](#), on account of [Christ](#), who came of the [tribe of Judah](#). This is

the house of the children of promise,—not by reason of their own merits, but of the kindness of [God](#). For God promises what He Himself performs: He does not Himself promise, and another perform; which would no longer be promising, but prophesying. Hence it is "not of works, but of Him that calls," [Romans 9:11](#) lest the result should be their own, not God's; lest the reward should be ascribed not to His [grace](#), but to their due; and so [grace](#) should be no longer [grace](#) which was so earnestly defended and maintained by him who, though the least of the [apostles](#), laboured more abundantly than all the rest,—yet not himself, but the [grace](#) of God that was with him. [1 Corinthians 15:9-10](#) "They shall all [know](#) me," He says,—"[All](#)," the house of [Israel](#) and [house of Judah](#). "[All](#)," however, "are not [Israel](#) which are of [Israel](#)," [Romans 9:6](#) but they only to whom it is said in "the psalm concerning the morning aid" (that is, concerning the new refreshing light, meaning that of the new testament), "All you the seed of Jacob, glorify Him; and [fear](#) Him, all you the seed of [Israel](#)." All the seed, without exception, even the entire seed of the promise and of the called, but only of those who are the called according to His purpose. [Romans 8:28](#) "For whom He did [predestinate](#), them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also [glorified](#)." [Romans 8:30](#) "Therefore it is of [faith](#), that it might be by [grace](#); to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed: not to that only which is of the law,"—that is, which comes from the [Old Testament](#) into the New,—"[but to that also which is of \[faith\]\(#\)](#)," which was indeed prior to the law, even "the [faith](#) of [Abraham](#),"—meaning those who imitate the [faith](#) of [Abraham](#),—"who is the father of us all; as it is written, I have made you the father of many nations." [Romans 4:16-17](#) Now all these [predestinated](#), called, justified, [glorified](#) ones, shall [know](#) God by the [grace](#) of the new testament, from the least to the greatest of them.

Chapter 41.—The Law Written in the Heart, and the Reward of the Eternal Contemplation of God, Belong to the New Covenant; Who Among the Saints are the Least and the Greatest

As then the law of works, which was written on the tables of stone, and its reward, the land of promise, which the house of the carnal [Israel](#) after their liberation from [Egypt](#) received, belonged to the old testament, so the law of [faith](#), written on the heart, and its reward, the beatific vision which the house of the spiritual [Israel](#), when delivered from the present world, shall perceive, belong to the new testament. Then shall come to pass what the apostle describes: "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be [knowledge](#), it shall vanish away," [1 Corinthians 13:8](#)—even that imperfect [knowledge](#) of "the child" in which this present life is passed, and which is but "in part," "by means of a mirror darkly." Because of this, indeed, "[prophecy](#)" is necessary, for still to the past succeeds the future; and because of this, too, "tongues" are required,—that is, a multiplicity of expressions, since it is by different ones that different things are suggested to him who does not as yet contemplate with a perfectly purified mind the everlasting light of transparent [truth](#). "When that, however, which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away,"

[1 Corinthians 13:10](#) then, what appeared to the flesh in assumed flesh shall display Itself as It is in Itself to all who [love](#) It; then, there shall be [eternal](#) life for us to [know](#) the one very [God](#); [John 17:3](#) then shall we be like Him, [1 John 3:2](#) because "we shall then [know](#), even as we are [known](#);" [1 Corinthians 13:12](#) then "they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all [know](#) me, from the least unto the greatest of them." [Now this may be understood in several ways: Either, that in that life the saints](#) shall differ one from another in [glory](#), as star from star. It matters not how the expression runs,—whether (as in the passage before us) it be, "From the least unto the greatest of them," or the other way, From the greatest unto the least. And, in like manner, it matters not even if we understand "*the least*" to mean those who simply [believe](#), and "*the greatest*" those who have been further able to understand—so far as may be in this world—the light which is incorporeal and unchangeable. Or, "*the least*" may mean those who are later in time; while by "*the greatest*" He may have intended to indicate those who were prior in time. For they are all to receive the promised vision of God hereafter, since it was for us that they foresaw the future which would be better than their present, that they without us should not arrive at complete perfection. [Hebrews 11:40](#) And so the earlier are found to be the lesser, because they were less deferred in time; as in the case of the gospel "penny a day," which is given for an illustration. [Matthew 20:8](#) This penny they are the first to receive who came last into the vineyard. Or, "the least and the greatest" ought perhaps to be taken in some other sense, which at present does not occur to my mind.

Chapter 42 [XXV.]—Difference Between the Old and the New Testaments

I beg of you, however, carefully to observe, as far as you can, what I am endeavouring to prove with so much effort. When the [prophet](#) promised a new covenant, not according to the covenant which had been formerly made with the people of [Israel](#) when liberated from [Egypt](#), he said nothing about a change in the [sacrifices](#) or any sacred ordinances, although such change, too, was without [doubt](#) to follow, as we see in fact that it did follow, even as the same prophetic scripture testifies in many other passages; but he simply called attention to this difference, that God would impress His [laws](#) on the mind of those who belonged to this covenant, and would write them in their hearts, [whence the apostle drew his conclusion,—](#)"not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart;" [2 Corinthians 3:3](#) and that the [eternal](#) recompense of this righteousness was not the land out of which were driven the Amorites and Hittites, and other nations who dwelt there, [Joshua 12](#) but God Himself, "to whom it is [good](#) to hold fast," in order that God's good that they [love](#), may be the God Himself whom they [love](#), between whom and men nothing but [sin](#) produces separation; and this is remitted only by [grace](#). Accordingly, after saying, "For all shall [know](#) me, from the least to the greatest of them," He instantly added, "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their [sin](#) no more." [By the law of works, then, the Lord says, "You shall not covet:" Exodus 20:17](#) but by the law of [faith](#) He says, "Without me you can do nothing;" [John 15:5](#) for He was treating of good works, even the fruit of the vine-branches. It is therefore apparent what difference there is between the old covenant and the new,—that

in the former the law is written on tables, while in the latter on hearts; so that what in the one alarms from without, in the other delights from within; and in the former man becomes a transgressor through the letter that kills, in the other a lover through the life-giving spirit. We must therefore avoid saying, that the way in which God assists us to work righteousness, and "works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure," [Philippians 2:13](#) is by externally addressing to our faculties precepts of [holiness](#); for He gives His increase internally, [1 Corinthians 3:7](#) by shedding [love](#) abroad in our hearts by the [Holy Ghost](#), which is given to us." [Romans 5:5](#)

Chapter 43 [XXVI.]—A Question Touching the Passage in the Apostle About the Gentiles Who are Said to Do by Nature the Law's Commands, Which They are Also Said to Have Written on Their Hearts

Now we must see in what sense it is that the apostle says, "For when the [Gentiles](#), which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts," [Romans 2:14-15](#) lest there should seem to be no certain difference in the new testament, in that the Lord promised that He would write His [laws](#) in the hearts of His people, inasmuch as the [Gentiles](#) have this done for them naturally. This question therefore has to be sifted, arising as it does as one of no inconsiderable importance. For some one may say, "If God distinguishes the new testament from the old by this circumstance, that in the old He wrote His law on tables, but in the new He wrote them on men's hearts, by what are the faithful of the new testament discriminated from the [Gentiles](#), which have the work of the law written on their hearts, whereby they do by nature the things of the law, [Romans 2:14](#) as if, forsooth, they were better than the ancient people, which received the law on tables, and before the new people, which has that conferred on it by the new testament which nature has already bestowed on them?"

Chapter 44.—The Answer Is, that the Passage Must Be Understood of the Faithful of the New Covenant

Has the apostle perhaps mentioned those [Gentiles](#) as having the law written in their hearts who belong to the new testament? We must look at the previous context. First, then, referring to the gospel, he says, "It is the power of God unto [salvation](#) to every one that [believes](#); to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from [faith](#) to [faith](#): as it is written, The just shall live by [faith](#)." [Romans 1:16-17](#) Then he goes on to speak of the ungodly, who by reason of their [pride](#) profit not by the [knowledge](#) of [God](#), since they did not glorify Him as [God](#), neither were thankful. [Romans 1:21](#) He then passes to those who think and do the very things which they condemn,—having in view, no [doubt](#), the [Jews](#), who made their boast of God's law, but as yet not mentioning them expressly by name; and then he says, "Indignation and [wrath](#), tribulation and anguish, upon every [soul](#) of man that does [evil](#), of the Jew first, and also

of the Gentile: but [glory](#), [honour](#), and peace, to every [soul](#) that does good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of [persons](#) with [God](#). For as many as have [sinned](#) without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have [sinned](#) in the law, shall be judged by the law; for not the hearers of the law are just before [God](#), but the doers of the law shall be justified." [Romans 2:8-13](#) Who they are that are treated of in these words, he goes on to tell us: "For when the [Gentiles](#), which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law," [Romans 2:14](#) and so forth in the passage which I have quoted already. Evidently, therefore, no others are here signified under the name of [Gentiles](#) than those whom he had before designated by the name of "Greek" when he said, "To the Jew first, and also to the Greek." [Romans 1:16](#) Since then the gospel is "the power of God unto [salvation](#) to every one that [believes](#), to the Jew first, and, also to the Greek;" [Romans 1:16](#) and since "indignation and [wrath](#), tribulation and anguish, are upon every [soul](#) of man that does [evil](#), of the Jew first, and also of the Greek: but [glory](#), [honour](#), and peace, to every man that does good; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek;" since, moreover, the Greek is indicated by the term "[Gentiles](#)" who do by nature the things contained in the law, and which have the work of the law written in their hearts: it follows that such [Gentiles](#) as have the law written in their hearts belong to the gospel, since to them, on their believing, it is the power of God unto [salvation](#). To what [Gentiles](#), however, would he promise [glory](#), and [honour](#), and peace, in their doing good works, if living without the [grace](#) of the gospel? Since there is no respect of [persons](#) with [God](#), [Romans 2:11](#) and since it is not the hearers of the law, but the doers thereof, that are justified, [Romans 2:13](#) it follows that any man of any nation, whether Jew or Greek, who shall [believe](#), will equally have [salvation](#) under the gospel. "For there is no difference," as he says afterwards; "for all have [sinned](#), and come short of the [glory](#) of God: being justified freely by His [grace](#)." [Romans 3:22-24](#) How then could he say that any Gentile person, who was a doer of the law, was justified without the Saviour's [grace](#)?

Chapter 45.—It is Not by Their Works, But by Grace, that the Doers of the Law are Justified; God's Saints and God's Name Hallowed in Different Senses

Now he could not mean to contradict himself in saying, "The doers of the law shall be justified," [Romans 2:13](#) as if their justification came through their works, and not through [grace](#); since he declares that a man is justified freely by His [grace](#) without the works of the law, intending by the term "*freely*" nothing else than that works do not precede justification. For in another passage he expressly says, "If by [grace](#), then is it no more of works; otherwise [grace](#) is no longer [grace](#)." [Romans 11:6](#) But the statement that "the doers of the law shall be justified" [Romans 2:13](#) must be so understood, as that we may [know](#) that they are not otherwise doers of the law, unless they be justified, so that justification does not subsequently accrue to them as doers of the law, but justification precedes them as doers of the law. For what else does the phrase "being justified" signify than being made righteous,—by Him, of course, who justifies the ungodly man, that he may become a godly one instead? For if we were to express a certain fact by saying, "The men will be liberated," the phrase would of course be understood as asserting that the liberation would accrue to those who were men already; but if we were to say, The men

will be created, we should certainly not be understood as asserting that the creation would happen to those who were already in [existence](#), but that they became men by the creation itself. If in like manner it were said, The doers of the law shall be honoured, we should only interpret the statement correctly if we supposed that the [honour](#) was to accrue to those who were already doers of the law: but when the allegation is, "The doers of the law shall be justified," what else does it mean than that the just shall be justified? for of course the doers of the law are just [persons](#). And thus it amounts to the same thing as if it were said, The doers of the law shall be created,—not those who were so already, but that they may become such; in order that the [Jews](#) who were hearers of the law might hereby understand that they wanted the [grace](#) of the Justifier, in order to be able to become its doers also. Or else the term "They shall be justified" is used in the sense of, They shall be deemed, or reckoned as just, as it is predicated of a certain man in the [Gospel](#), "But he, willing to justify himself," [Luke 10:29](#)—meaning that he wished to be thought and accounted just. In like manner, we attach one meaning to the statement, "[God](#) sanctifies His [saints](#)," and another to the words, "Sanctified be Your name;" [Matthew 6:9](#) for in the former case we suppose the words to mean that He makes those to be [saints](#) who were not [saints](#) before, and in the latter, that the [prayer](#) would have that which is always [holy](#) in itself be also regarded as [holy](#) by men,—in a word, be feared with a hallowed awe.

Chapter 46.—How the Passage of the Law Agrees with that of the Prophet

If therefore the apostle, when he mentioned that the [Gentiles](#) do by nature the things contained in the law, and have the work of the law written in their hearts, [Romans 2:14-15](#) intended those to be understood who [believed](#) in [Christ](#),—who do not come to the [faith](#) like the [Jews](#), through a precedent law,—there is no good reason why we should endeavour to distinguish them from those to whom the Lord by the [prophet](#) promises the new covenant, telling them that He will write His [laws](#) in their hearts, [inasmuch as they too, by the grafting which he says had been made of the wild olive, belong to the self-same olive-tree, Romans 11:24](#)—in other words, to the same people of [God](#). There is therefore a good agreement of this passage of the apostle with the words of the [prophet](#) so that belonging to the new testament means having the law of God not written on tables, but on the heart,—that is, embracing the righteousness of the law with innermost affection, where [faith](#) works by [love](#). [Galatians 5:6](#) Because it is by [faith](#) that God justifies the [Gentiles](#); and the [Scripture](#) foreseeing this, preached the gospel before to [Abraham](#), saying, "In your seed shall all nations be blessed," in order that by this [grace](#) of promise the wild olive might be grafted into the good olive, and believing [Gentiles](#) might be made children of [Abraham](#), "in [Abraham's](#) seed, which is Christ," [Galatians 3:16](#) by following the [faith](#) of him who, without receiving the law written on tables, and not yet possessing even [circumcision](#), "[believed God](#), and it was counted to him for righteousness." Now what the apostle attributed to [Gentiles](#) of this character,—how that "they have the work of the law written in their hearts;" [Romans 2:15](#) must be some such thing as what he says to the Corinthians: "not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." [2 Corinthians 3:3](#) For thus do they become of the house of [Israel](#), when their uncircumcision is accounted [circumcision](#), by the fact that they do not exhibit the

righteousness of the law by the excision of the flesh, but keep it by the charity of the heart. "If," says he, "the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for [circumcision](#)?" [Romans 2:26](#) And therefore in the house of the [true Israel](#), in which is no guile, they are partakers of the new testament, since God puts His [laws](#) into their [mind](#), and writes them in their hearts with his own finger, the [Holy Ghost](#), by whom is shed abroad in them the [love](#) [Romans 5:5](#) which is the "fulfilling of the law." [Romans 13:10](#)

Chapter 47 [XXVII.]—The Law "Being Done by Nature" Means, Done by Nature as Restored by Grace

Nor ought it to disturb us that the apostle described them as doing that which is contained in the law "*by nature*,"—not by the Spirit of [God](#), not by [faith](#), not by [grace](#). For it is the Spirit of [grace](#) that does it, in order to restore in us the image of [God](#), in which we were naturally created. [Genesis 1:27](#) Sin, indeed, is contrary to nature, and it is [grace](#) that heals it,—on which account the [prayer](#) is offered to [God](#), "Be merciful unto me: heal my [soul](#); for I have [sinned](#) against You." Therefore it is by nature that men do the things which are contained in the law; [Romans 2:14](#) for they who do not, fail to do so by reason of their sinful defect. In consequence of this sinfulness, the law of God is erased out of their hearts; and therefore, when, the [sin](#) being healed, it is written there, the prescriptions of the law are done "*by nature*,"—not that by nature [grace](#) is denied, but rather by [grace](#) nature is repaired. For "by one man [sin](#) entered into the world, and death by [sin](#), and so death passed upon all [men](#); in which all have [sinned](#);" [Romans 5:12](#) wherefore "there is no difference: they all come short of the [glory](#) of [God](#), being justified freely by His [grace](#)." [Romans 3:22-24](#) By this [grace](#) there is written on the renewed inner man that righteousness which [sin](#) had blotted out; and this mercy comes upon the [human race](#) through [our Lord Jesus Christ](#). "For there is [one God](#), and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." [1 Timothy 2:5](#)

Chapter 48.—The Image of God is Not Wholly Blotted Out in These Unbelievers; Venial Sins

According to some, however, they who do by nature the things contained in the law must not be regarded as yet in the number of those whom Christ's [grace](#) justifies, but rather as among those some of whose actions (although they are those of ungodly men, who do not [truly](#) and rightly worship the [true](#) God) we not only cannot blame, but even [justly](#) and rightly praise, since they have been done—so far as we read, or [know](#), or hear—according to the rule of righteousness; though at the same time, were we to discuss the question with what motive they are done, they would hardly be found to be such as deserve the praise and defence which are due to righteous conduct. [XXVIII.] Still, since God's image has not been so completely erased in the [soul](#) of man by the stain of earthly affections, as to have left remaining there not even the merest lineaments of it whence it might be [justly](#) said that man, even in the ungodliness of his life, does, or appreciates, some things contained in the law; if this is what is meant by the statement that "the

[Gentiles](#), which have not the law" (that is, the law of God), "do by nature the things contained in the law," [Romans 2:14](#) and that men of this character "are a law to themselves," and "show the work of the law written in their hearts,"—that is to say, what was impressed on their hearts when they were created in the image of God has not been wholly blotted out:—even in this view of the subject, that wide difference will not be disturbed, which separates the new covenant from the old, and which lies in the fact that by the new covenant the law of God is written in the hearts of [believers](#), whereas in the old it was inscribed on tables of stone. For this writing in the heart is effected by renovation, although it had not been completely blotted out by the old nature. For just as that image of God is renewed in the mind of [believers](#) by the new testament, which impiety had not quite abolished (for there had remained undoubtedly that which the [soul](#) of man cannot be except it be rational), so also the law of [God](#), which had not been wholly blotted out there by unrighteousness, is certainly written thereon, renewed by [grace](#). Now in the [Jews](#) the law which was written on tables could not effect this new inscription, which is justification, but only transgression. For they too were men, and there was inherent in them that power of nature, which enables the rational [soul](#) both to perceive and do what is lawful; but the godliness which transfers to another life [happy](#) and [immortal](#) has "a spotless law, converting [souls](#)," so that by the light thereof they may be renewed, and that be accomplished in them which is written, "There has been manifested over us, O Lord, the light of Your countenance." Turned away from which, they have deserved to grow old, while they are incapable of renovation except by the [grace](#) of [Christ](#),—in other words, without the intercession of the Mediator; there being "one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all." [1 Timothy 2:5-6](#) Should those be strangers to His [grace](#) of whom we are treating, and who (after the manner of which we have spoken with sufficient fulness already) "do by nature the things contained in the law," [Romans 2:14](#) of what use will be their "excusing thoughts" to them "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of [men](#)," [Romans 2:15-16](#) unless it be perhaps to procure for them a milder punishment? For as, on the one hand, there are certain venial [sins](#) which do not hinder the righteous man from the attainment of [eternal](#) life, and which are unavoidable in this life, so, on the other hand, there are some good works which are of no avail to an ungodly man towards the attainment of everlasting life, although it would be very difficult to find the life of any very bad man whatever entirely without them. But inasmuch as in the kingdom of God the [saints](#) differ in [glory](#) as one star does from another, [1 Corinthians 15:41](#) so likewise, in the condemnation of everlasting punishment, it will be more tolerable for [Sodom](#) than for that other city; [Luke 10:12](#) while some men will be twofold more the children of [hell](#) than others. [Matthew 23:15](#) Thus in the [judgment of God](#) not even this fact will be without its influence,—that one man will have [sinned](#) more, or less, than another, even when both are involved in the ungodliness that is worthy of damnation.

Chapter 49.—The Grace Promised by the Prophet for the New Covenant

What then could the apostle have meant to imply by,—after checking the boasting of the [Jews](#), by telling them that "not the hearers of the law are just before [God](#), but the doers of the law shall be justified," [Romans 2:13](#) —immediately afterwards speaking of them "which, having not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law," [Romans 2:14](#) if in this description not they are to be understood who belong to the Mediator's [grace](#), but rather they who, while not worshipping the [true](#) God with [true](#) godliness, do yet exhibit some good works in the general course of their ungodly lives? Or did the apostle perhaps deem it probable, because he had previously said that "with God there is no respect of [persons](#)," [Romans 2:11](#) and had afterwards said that "[God](#) is not the [God](#) of the [Jews](#) only, but also of the [Gentiles](#)," [Romans 3:29](#) —that even such scanty little works of the law, as are suggested by nature, were not discovered in such as received not the law, except as the result of the remains of the image of [God](#); which He does not disdain when they [believe](#) in Him, with whom there is no respect of [persons](#)? But whichever of these views is accepted, it is evident that the [grace](#) of God was promised to the new testament even by the [prophet](#), and that this [grace](#) was definitively announced to take this shape,—God's [laws](#) were to be written in men's hearts; and they were to arrive at such a [knowledge](#) of [God](#), that they were not each one to teach his neighbour and brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all were to [know](#) Him, from the least to the greatest of them. [This is the gift of the Holy Ghost](#), by which [love](#) is shed abroad in our hearts, [Romans 5:5](#) —not, indeed, any kind of [love](#), but the [love](#) of [God](#), "out of a pure heart, and a good [conscience](#), and an unfeigned [faith](#)," [1 Timothy 1:5](#) by means of which the just man, while living in this pilgrim state, is led on, after the stages of "the glass," and "the enigma," and "what is in part," to the actual vision, that, face to face, he may [know](#) even as he is [known](#). [1 Corinthians 13:12](#) For one thing has he required of the Lord, and that he still seeks after, that he may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, in order to behold the pleasantness of the Lord.

Chapter 50 [XXIX.]—Righteousness is the Gift of God

Let no man therefore boast of that which he seems to possess, as if he had not received it; [1 Corinthians 4:7](#) nor let him think that he has received it merely because the external letter of the law has been either exhibited to him to read, or sounded in his ear for him to hear. For "if righteousness is by the law, then Christ has died in vain." [Galatians 2:21](#) Seeing, however, that if He has not died in vain, He has ascended up on high, and has led captivity captive, and has given gifts to [men](#), it follows that whosoever has, has from this source. But whosoever denies that he has from Him, either has not, or is in great danger of being deprived of what he has. "For it is one God which justifies the [circumcision](#) by [faith](#), and the uncircumcision through [faith](#)," [Romans 3:30](#) in which clauses there is no real difference in the sense, as if the phrase "by [faith](#)" meant one thing, and "through [faith](#)" another, but only a variety of expression. For in one passage, when speaking of the [Gentiles](#),—that is, of the uncircumcision,—he says, "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the [heathen](#) by [faith](#)," [Galatians 3:8](#) and again, in another, when speaking of the [circumcision](#), to which he himself belonged, he says, "We who are [Jews](#) by nature, and not sinners of the [Gentiles](#), [knowing](#) that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but through [faith](#) in [Jesus Christ](#), even we [believed](#) in [Jesus Christ](#)." Observe, he says that both the uncircumcision are justified by [faith](#), and the [circumcision](#) through [faith](#), if,

indeed, the [circumcision](#) keep the righteousness of [faith](#). For the [Gentiles](#), which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is by [faith](#), [Romans 9:30](#) —by obtaining it of [God](#), not by assuming it of themselves. But [Israel](#), which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. And why? Because they sought it not by [faith](#), but as it were by works [Romans 9:31-32](#) —in other words, working it out as it were by themselves, not believing that it is God who works within them. "For it is God which works in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure." [Philippians 2:13](#) And hereby "they stumbled at the stumbling-stone." [Romans 9:32](#) For what he said, "not by [faith](#), but as it were by works," [Romans 9:32](#) he most clearly explained in the following words: "They, being [ignorant](#) of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of [God](#). For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that [believes](#)." [Romans 10:3-4](#) Then are we still in [doubt](#) what are those works of the law by which a man is not justified, if he believes them to be his own works, as it were, without the help and gift of [God](#), which is "by the [faith](#) of Jesus Christ?" And do we suppose that they are [circumcision](#) and the other like ordinances, because some such things in other passages are read concerning these sacramental [rites](#) too? In this place, however, it is certainly not [circumcision](#) which they wanted to establish as their own righteousness, because God established this by prescribing it Himself. Nor is it possible for us to understand this statement, of those works concerning which the Lord says to them, "You reject the commandment of [God](#), that you may keep your own tradition;" [Mark 7:9](#) because, as the apostle says, [Israel](#), which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness." [Romans 9:31](#) He did not say, Which followed after their own traditions, framing them and relying on them. This then is the sole distinction, that the very precept, "You shall not [covet](#)," [Exodus 20:17](#) and God's other good and [holy](#) commandments, they attributed to themselves; whereas, that man may keep them, God must work in him through [faith](#) in [Jesus Christ](#), who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that [believes](#)." [Romans 10:4](#) That is to say, every one who is incorporated into Him and made a member of His body, is able, by His giving the increase within, to work righteousness. It is of such a man's works that Christ Himself has said, "Without me you can do nothing." [John 15:5](#)

Chapter 51.—Faith the Ground of All Righteousness

The righteousness of the law is proposed in these terms,—that whosoever shall do it shall live in it; and the purpose is, that when each has discovered his own weakness, he may not by his own strength, nor by the letter of the law (which cannot be done), but by [faith](#), conciliating the Justifier, attain, and do, and live in it. For the work in which he who does it shall live, is not done except by one who is justified. His justification, however, is obtained by [faith](#); and concerning [faith](#) it is written, "Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring down Christ therefrom;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what says it? The word is nigh you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is (says he), the word of [faith](#) which we preach: That if you shall confess with your mouth the [Lord Jesus](#), and shall [believe](#) in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." [Romans 10:6-9](#)

As far as he is saved, so far is he righteous. For by this [faith](#) we [believe](#) that God will raise even us from the dead,—even now in the spirit, that we may in this present world live soberly, righteously, and godly in the renewal of His [grace](#); and by and by in our flesh, which shall rise again to [immortality](#), which indeed is the reward of the [Spirit](#), who precedes it by a resurrection which is appropriate to Himself,—that is, by justification. "For we are buried with Christ by [baptism](#) unto death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the [glory](#) of the [Father](#), even so we also should walk in newness of life." [Romans 6:4](#) By [faith](#), therefore, in Jesus Christ we obtain [salvation](#),—both in so far as it is begun within us in reality, and in so far as its perfection is waited for in hope; "for whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." "How abundant," says the Psalmist, "is the multitude of Your goodness, O Lord, which You have laid up for them that [fear](#) You, and hast perfected for them that hope in You!" By the law we [fear God](#); by [faith](#) we hope in God: but from those who [fear](#) punishment [grace](#) is hidden. And the [soul](#) which labours under this [fear](#), since it has not conquered its [evil](#) concupiscence, and from which this [fear](#), like a harsh master, has not departed,—let it flee by [faith](#) for refuge to the mercy of [God](#), that He may give it what He commands, and may, by inspiring into it the sweetness of His [grace](#) through His [Holy Spirit](#), [cause](#) the [soul](#) to delight more in what He teaches it, than it delights in what opposes His instruction. In this manner it is that the great abundance of His sweetness,—that is, the law of [faith](#),—His [love](#) which is in our hearts, and shed abroad, is perfected in them that hope in Him, that good may be wrought by the [soul](#), healed not by the [fear](#) of punishment, but by the [love](#) of righteousness.

Chapter 52 [XXX.]—Grace Establishes Free Will

Do we then by [grace](#) make void [free will](#)? God forbid! Nay, rather we establish [free will](#). For even as the law by [faith](#), so [free will](#) by [grace](#), is not made void, but established. [Romans 3:31](#) For neither is the law fulfilled except by [free will](#); but by the law is the [knowledge](#) of [sin](#), by [faith](#) the acquisition of [grace](#) against [sin](#), by [grace](#) the healing of the [soul](#) from the disease of [sin](#), by the health of the [soul](#) freedom of will, by [free will](#) the [love](#) of righteousness, by [love](#) of righteousness the accomplishment of the law. Accordingly, as the law is not made void, but is established through [faith](#), since [faith](#) procures [grace](#) whereby the law is fulfilled; so [free will](#) is not made void through [grace](#), but is established, since [grace](#) cures the will whereby righteousness is freely loved. Now all the stages which I have here connected together in their successive links, have severally their proper voices in the sacred Scriptures. The law says: "You shall not [covet](#)." [Exodus 20:17](#) Faith says: "Heal my [soul](#), for I have [sinned](#) against You." Grace says: "Behold, you are made whole: [sin](#) no more, lest a worse thing come unto you." [John 5:14](#) Health says: "O Lord my [God](#), I cried unto You, and You have healed me." Free will says: "I will freely [sacrifice](#) unto You." Love of righteousness says: "Transgressors told me pleasant tales, but not according to Your law, O Lord." How is it then that miserable men dare to be [proud](#), either of their [free will](#), before they are freed, or of their own strength, if they have been freed? They do not observe that in the very mention of [free will](#) they pronounce the name of liberty. But "where the [Spirit of the Lord](#) is, there is liberty." [2 Corinthians 3:17](#) If, therefore, they are the slaves of [sin](#), why do they boast of [free will](#)? For by what a man is overcome, to the same is he delivered as a slave. [2 Peter 2:19](#) But if they have been freed, why do they vaunt themselves as if it

were by their own doing, and boast, as if they had not received? Or are they free in such sort that they do not choose to have Him for their Lord who says to them: "Without me you can do nothing;" [John 15:5](#) and "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed?" [John 8:36](#)

Chapter 53 [XXXI.]—Volition and Ability

Some one will ask whether the [faith](#) itself, in which seems to be the beginning either of [salvation](#), or of that series leading to [salvation](#) which I have just mentioned, is placed in our power. We shall see more easily, if we first examine with some care what "our power" means. Since, then, there are two things,—will and ability; it follows that not every one that has the will has therefore the ability also, nor has every one that possesses the ability the will also; for as we sometimes will what we cannot do, so also we sometimes can do what we do not will. From the words themselves when sufficiently considered, we shall detect, in the very ring of the terms, the derivation of volition from willingness, and of *ability* from ableness. Therefore, even as the man who wishes has volition, so also the man who can has ability. But in order that a thing may be done by ability, the volition must be present. For no man is usually said to do a thing with ability if he did it unwillingly. Although, at the same time, if we observe more precisely, even what a man is compelled to do unwillingly, he does, if he does it, by his volition; only he is said to be an unwilling agent, or to act against his will, because he would prefer some other thing. He is compelled, indeed, by some unfortunate influence, to do what he does under compulsion, wishing to escape it or to remove it out of his way. For if his volition be so strong that he prefers not doing this to not suffering that, then beyond [doubt](#) he resists the compelling influence, and does it not. And accordingly, if he does it, it is not with a full and [free will](#), but yet it is not without will that he does it; and inasmuch as the volition is followed by its effect, we cannot say that he lacked the ability to do it. If, indeed, he willed to do it, yielding to compulsion, but could not, although we should allow that a coerced will was present, we should yet say that ability was absent. But when he did not do the thing because he was unwilling, then of course the ability was present, but the volition was absent, since he did it not, by his resistance to the compelling influence. Hence it is that even they who compel, or who persuade, are accustomed to say, Why don't you do what you have in your ability, in order to avoid this [evil](#)? While they who are utterly unable to do what they are compelled to do, because they are supposed to be able usually answer by excusing themselves, and say, I would do it if it were in my ability. What then do we ask more, since we call that ability when to the volition is added the faculty of doing? Accordingly, every one is said to have that in his ability which he does if he likes, and does not if he dislikes.

Chapter 54.—Whether Faith Be in a Man's Own Power

Attend now to the point which we have laid down for discussion: whether [faith](#) is in our own power? We now speak of that [faith](#) which we employ when we [believe](#) anything, not that which we give when we make a promise; for this too is called [faith](#). We use the word in one sense when we say, "He had no [faith](#) in me," and in another sense when we say,

"He did not keep [faith](#) with me." The one phrase means, "He did not [believe](#) what I said;" the other, "He did not do what he promised." According to the [faith](#) by which we [believe](#), we are faithful to [God](#); but according to that whereby a thing is brought to pass which is promised, [God](#) Himself even is faithful to us; for the apostle declares, "[God](#) is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able." [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) Well, now, the former is the [faith](#) about which we inquire, Whether it be in our power? even the [faith](#) by which we [believe God](#), or [believe](#) in God. For of this it is written, "[Abraham believed God](#), and it was counted unto him for righteousness." And again, "To him that [believes](#) in Him that justifies the ungodly, his [faith](#) is counted for righteousness." [Romans 4:5](#) Consider now whether anybody believes, if he be unwilling; or whether he believes not, if he shall have willed it. Such a position, indeed, is absurd (for what is believing but consenting to the [truth](#) of what is said? and this consent is certainly [voluntary](#)): [faith](#), therefore, is in our own power. But, as the apostle says: "There is no power but comes from [God](#)," [Romans 13:1](#) what reason then is there why it may not be said to us even of this: "What have you which you have not received?" [1 Corinthians 4:7](#)—for it is God who gave us even to [believe](#). Nowhere, however, in [Holy Scripture](#) do we find such an assertion as, There is no volition but comes from [God](#). And rightly is it not so written, because it is not [true](#): otherwise God would be the author even of [sins](#) (which [Heaven](#) forbid!), if there were no volition except what comes from Him; inasmuch as an [evil](#) volition alone is already a [sin](#), even if the effect be wanting,—in other words, if it has not ability. But when the [evil](#) volition receives ability to accomplish its intention, this proceeds from the judgment of [God](#), with whom there is no unrighteousness. [Romans 9:14](#) He indeed punishes after this manner; nor is His chastisement [unjust](#) because it is secret. The ungodly man, however, is not aware that he is being punished, except when he unwillingly discovers by an open penalty how much [evil](#) he has willingly committed. This is just what the apostle says of certain men: "[God](#) has given them up to the [evil](#) desires of their own hearts, . . . to do those things that are not convenient." Accordingly, the Lord also said to [Pilate](#): "You could have no power at all against me, except it were given you from above." [John 19:11](#) But still, when the ability is given, surely no necessity is imposed. Therefore, although David had received ability to kill Saul, he preferred sparing to striking him. Whence we understand that bad men receive ability for the condemnation of their depraved will, while good men receive ability for trying of their good will.

Chapter 55 [XXXII.]—What Faith is Laudable

Since [faith](#), then, is in our power, inasmuch as every one believes when he likes, and, when he believes, believes voluntarily; our next inquiry, which we must conduct with care, is, What [faith](#) it is which the apostle commends with so much earnestness? For indiscriminate [faith](#) is not good. Accordingly we find this caution: "Brethren, [believe](#) not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of [God](#)." [1 John 4:1](#) Nor must the clause in commendation of [love](#), that it "[believes](#) all things," [1 Corinthians 13:7](#) be so understood as if we should detract from the [love](#) of any one, if he refuses to [believe](#) at once what he hears. For the same [love](#) admonishes us that we ought not readily to [believe](#) anything [evil](#) about a brother; and when anything of the kind is said of him, does it not judge it to be more suitable to its character not to [believe](#)? Lastly, the same [love](#), "which

[believes](#) all things," does not [believe](#) every spirit. Accordingly, charity *believes* all things no [doubt](#), but it *believes in* God. Observe, it is not said, Believes *in* all things. It cannot therefore be [doubted](#) that the [faith](#) which is commended by the apostle is the [faith](#) whereby we [believe](#) in [God](#). [Romans 4:3](#)

Chapter 56.—The Faith of Those Who are Under the Law Different from the Faith of Others

But there is yet another distinction to be observed,—since they who are under the law both attempt to work their own righteousness through [fear](#) of punishment, and fail to do God's righteousness, because this is accomplished by the [love](#) to which only what is lawful is pleasing, and never by the [fear](#) which is forced to have in its work the thing which is lawful, although it has something else in its will which would prefer, if it were only possible, that to be lawful which is not lawful. These [persons](#) also [believe](#) in [God](#); for if they had no [faith](#) in Him at all, neither would they of course have any dread of the penalty of His law. This, however, is not the [faith](#) which the apostle commends. He says: "You have not received the spirit of bondage again to [fear](#); but you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." [Romans 8:15](#) The [fear](#), then, of which we speak is slavish; and therefore, even though there be in it a belief in the [Lord](#), yet righteousness is not loved by it, but condemnation is feared. God's children, however, exclaim, "Abba, Father,"—one of which words they of the [circumcision](#) utter; the other, they of the uncircumcision,—the Jew first, and then the Greek; [Romans 2:9](#) since there is "one [God](#), which justifies the [circumcision](#) by [faith](#), and the uncircumcision through [faith](#)." [Romans 3:30](#) When indeed they utter this call, they seek something; and what do they seek, but that which they hunger and thirst after? And what else is this but that which is said of them, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled?" [Matthew 5:6](#) Let, then, those who are under the law pass over hither, and become sons instead of slaves; and yet not so as to cease to be slaves, but so as, while they are sons, still to serve their Lord and Father freely. For even this have they received; for the Only-begotten "gave them power to become the sons of [God](#), even to them that [believe](#) in His name;" [John 1:12](#) and He advised them to ask, to seek, and to knock, in order to receive, to find, and to have the gate opened to them, adding by way of rebuke, the words: "If you, being [evil](#), [know](#) how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give [good](#) things to them that ask Him?" [Matthew 7:11](#) When, therefore, that strength of [sin](#), the law, [1 Corinthians 15:56](#) inflamed the sting of death, even [sin](#), to take occasion and by the commandment work all manner of concupiscence in them, [Romans 7:8](#) of whom were they to ask for the gift of continence but of Him who [knows](#) how to give good gifts to His children? Perhaps, however, a [man](#), in his folly, is unaware that no one can be continent except God give him the gift. To [know](#) this, indeed, he requires Wisdom herself. [Wisdom 8:21](#) Why, then, does he not listen to the Spirit of his Father, speaking through Christ's apostle, or even Christ Himself, who says in His gospel, "Seek and you shall find;" [Matthew 7:7](#) and who also says to us, speaking by His apostle: "If any one of you lack wisdom, let him ask of [God](#), that gives to all [men](#) liberally, and upbraids not, and it shall be given to him. Let him, however, ask in [faith](#), nothing wavering?" [James 1:5-6](#) This is the [faith](#) by which the

just man lives; [Romans 1:17](#) this is the [faith](#) whereby he believes on Him who justifies the ungodly; [Romans 4:5](#) this is the [faith](#) through which boasting is excluded, [Romans 3:27](#) either by the retreat of that with which we become self-inflated, or by the rising of that with which we [glory](#) in the Lord. This, again, is the [faith](#) by which we procure that largess of the [Spirit](#), of which it is said: "We indeed through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by [faith](#)." [Galatians 5:5](#) But this admits of the further question, Whether he meant by "the hope of righteousness" that by which righteousness hopes, or that whereby righteousness is itself hoped for? For the just man, who lives by [faith](#), hopes undoubtedly for [eternal](#) life; and the [faith](#) likewise, which hungers and thirsts for righteousness, makes progress therein by the renewal of the inward man day by day, [2 Corinthians 4:16](#) and hopes to be satiated therewith in that [eternal](#) life, where shall be realized that which is said of God by the psalm: "Who satisfies your desire with [good](#) things." This, moreover, is the [faith](#) whereby they are saved to whom it is said: "By [grace](#) are you saved through [faith](#); and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." [Ephesians 2:8-10](#) This, in short, is the [faith](#) which works not by [fear](#), but by [love](#); [Galatians 5:6](#) not by dreading punishment, but by loving righteousness. Whence, therefore, arises this [love](#),—that is to say, this charity,—by which [faith](#) works, if not from the source whence [faith](#) itself obtained it? For it would not be within us, to what extent soever it is in us, if it were not diffused in our hearts by the [Holy Ghost](#) who is given to us. [Romans 5:5](#) Now "*the love of God*" is said to be shed abroad in our hearts, not because He loves us, but because He makes us lovers of Himself; just as "*the righteousness of God*" [Romans 3:21](#) is used in the sense of our being made righteous by His gift; and "*the salvation of the Lord*," in that we are saved by Him; and "*the faith of Jesus Christ*," [Galatians 2:16](#) because He makes us [believers](#) in Him. This is that righteousness of [God](#), which He not only teaches us by the precept of His law, but also bestows upon us by the gift of His Spirit.

Chapter 57 [XXXIII.]—Whence Comes the Will to Believe?

But it remains for us briefly to inquire, Whether the will by which we [believe](#) be itself the gift of [God](#), or whether it arise from that [free will](#) which is naturally implanted in us? If we say that it is not the gift of [God](#), we must then incur the [fear](#) of supposing that we have discovered some answer to the apostle's reproachful appeal: "What do you have that you did not receive? Now, if you received it, why do you [glory](#), as if you had not received it?" [1 Corinthians 4:7](#) —even some such an answer as this: "See, we have the will to [believe](#), which we did not receive. See in what we [glory](#),—even in what we did not receive!" If, however, we were to say that this kind of will is nothing but the gift of [God](#), we should then have to [fear](#) lest unbelieving and ungodly men might not unreasonably seem to have some fair excuse for their unbelief, in the fact that God has refused to give them this will. Now this that the apostle says, "It is God that works in you both to will and to do of His own good pleasure," [Philippians 2:13](#) belongs already to that [grace](#) which [faith](#) secures, in order that good works may be within the reach of [man](#),—

even the good works which [faith](#) achieves through the [love](#) which is shed abroad in the heart by the [Holy Ghost](#) which is given to us. If we [believe](#) that we may attain this [grace](#) (and of course [believe](#) voluntarily), then the question arises whence we have this will?—if from nature, why it is not at everybody's command, since the same God made all [men](#)? if from God's gift, then again, why is not the gift open to all, since "He will have all [men](#) to be saved, and to come unto the [knowledge](#) of the [truth](#)?" [1 Timothy 2:4](#)

Chapter 58.—The Free Will of Man is an Intermediate Power

Let us then, first of all, lay down this proposition, and see whether it satisfies the question before us: that [free will](#), naturally assigned by the Creator to our rational [soul](#), is such a neutral power, as can either incline towards [faith](#), or turn towards unbelief. Consequently a man cannot be said to have even that will with which he believes in [God](#), without having received it; since this rises at the call of God out of the [free will](#) which he received naturally when he was created. God no [doubt](#) wishes all [men](#) to be saved [1 Timothy 2:4](#) and to come into the [knowledge](#) of the [truth](#); but yet not so as to take away from them [free will](#), for the good or the [evil](#) use of which they may be most righteously judged. This being the case, unbelievers indeed do contrary to the [will](#) of [God](#) when they do not [believe](#) His gospel; nevertheless they do not therefore overcome His [will](#), but rob their own selves of the great, nay, the very greatest, good, and implicate themselves in penalties of punishment, destined to experience the power of Him in punishments whose mercy in His gifts they despised. Thus [God's will](#) is for ever invincible; but it would be vanquished, unless it devised what to do with such as despised it, or if these despises could in any way escape from the retribution which He has appointed for such as they. Suppose a master, for example, who should say to his servants, I wish you to labour in my vineyard, and, after your work is done, to feast and take your rest but who, at the same time, should require any who refused to work to grind in the mill ever after. Whoever neglected such a command would evidently act contrary to the master's will; but he would do more than that,—he would vanquish that will, if he also escaped the mill. This, however, cannot possibly happen under the government of [God](#). Whence it is written, "[God](#) has spoken once,"—that is, irrevocably,—although the passage may refer also to His one only Word. [John 1:1](#) He then adds what it is which He had irrevocably uttered, saying: "Twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto [God](#). Also unto You, O Lord, does mercy belong: because You will render to every man according to his work." He therefore will be guilty unto condemnation under God's power, who shall think too contemptuously of His mercy to [believe](#) in Him. But whosoever shall put his trust in Him, and yield himself up to Him, for the forgiveness of all his [sins](#), for the cure of all his corruption, and for the kindling and illumination of his [soul](#) by His warmth and light, shall have good works by his [grace](#); and by them he shall be even in his body redeemed from the corruption of death, crowned, satisfied with blessings,—not temporal, but [eternal](#),—above what we can ask or understand.

Chapter 59.—Mercy and Pity in the Judgment of God

This is the order observed in the psalm, where it is said: "Bless the Lord, O my [soul](#), and forget not all His recompenses; who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercy; who satisfies your desire with [good](#) things." And lest by any chance these great blessings should be despaired of under the deformity of our old, that is, mortal condition, the Psalmist at once says, "Your youth shall be renewed like the eagle's;" as much as to say, All that you have heard belongs to the new man and to the new covenant. Now let us consider together briefly these things, and with delight contemplate the praise of mercy, that is, of the [grace](#) of [God](#). "Bless the Lord, O my [soul](#)," he says, "and forget not all His recompenses." Observe, he does not say blessings, but *recompenses*; [because](#) He recompenses [evil](#) with good. "Who forgives all your iniquities:" this is done in the sacrament of [baptism](#). "Who heals all your diseases:" this is effected by the believer in the present life, while the flesh so [lusts](#) against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, that we do not the things we would; [Galatians 5:17](#) while also another law in our members [wars](#) against the law of our mind; [Romans 7:23](#) while to will is present indeed to us but not how to perform that which is [good](#). [Romans 7:18](#) These are the diseases of a man's old nature which, however, if we only advance with persevering purpose, are healed by the growth of the new nature day by day, by the [faith](#) which operates through [love](#). [Galatians 5:6](#) "Who redeems your life from destruction;" this will take place at the resurrection of the dead in the last day. "Who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercy;" this shall be accomplished in the day of judgment; for when the righteous King shall sit upon His throne to render to every man according to his works, who shall then boast of having a pure heart? or who shall [glory](#) of being clean from [sin](#)? It was therefore necessary to mention God's loving-kindness and tender mercy there, where one might expect debts to be demanded and deserts recompensed so strictly as to leave no room for mercy. He crowns, therefore, with loving-kindness and tender mercy; but even so according to works. For he shall be separated to the right hand, to whom, it is said, "I was an hungered, and you gave me meat." [Matthew 25:35](#) There will, however, be also "judgment without mercy;" but it will be for him "that has not showed mercy." [James 2:13](#) But "blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" [Matthew 5:7](#) of [God](#). Then, as soon as those on the left hand shall have gone into [eternal fire](#), the righteous, too, shall go into everlasting life, [Matthew 25:46](#) because He says: "This is life [eternal](#), that they may [know](#) You the only [true God](#), and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." [John 17:3](#) And with this [knowledge](#), this vision, this [contemplation](#), shall the desire of their [soul](#) be satisfied; for it shall be enough for it to have this and nothing else,—there being nothing more for it to desire, to aspire to, or to require. It was with a craving after this full [joy](#) that his heart glowed who said to the Lord Christ, "Show us the [Father](#), and it suffices us;" and to whom the answer was returned, "He that has seen me has seen the Father." [John 14:8-9](#) Because He is Himself the [eternal](#) life, in order that men may [know](#) the one [true God](#), You and whom You have sent, Jesus Christ. If, however, he that has seen the Son has also seen the [Father](#), then assuredly he who sees the Father and the Son sees also the [Holy Spirit](#) of the Father and the Son. So we do not take away [free will](#), while our [soul](#) blesses the Lord and forgets not all His recompenses; nor does it, in [ignorance](#) of God's righteousness, wish to set up one of its own; [Romans 10:3](#) but it believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, [Romans 4:5](#) and until it arrives at sight, it lives by [faith](#),—even the [faith](#) which works by [love](#). [Galatians 5:6](#) And this [love](#) is shed abroad

in our hearts, not by the sufficiency of our own will, nor by the letter of the law, but by the [Holy Ghost](#) who has been given to us. [Romans 5:5](#)

Chapter 60 [XXXIV.]—The Will to Believe is from God

Let this discussion suffice, if it satisfactorily meets the question we had to solve. It may be, however, objected in reply, that we must take heed lest some one should suppose that the [sin](#) would have to be imputed to God which is committed by [free will](#), if in the passage where it is asked, "What do you have that you did not receive?"

[1 Corinthians 4:7](#) the very will by which we [believe](#) is reckoned as a gift of [God](#), because it arises out of the [free will](#) which we received at our creation. Let the objector, however, attentively observe that this will is to be ascribed to the divine gift, not merely because it arises from our [free will](#), which was created naturally with us; but also because God acts upon us by the incentives of our perceptions, to will and to [believe](#), either externally by evangelical exhortations, where even the commands of the law also do something, if they so far admonish a man of his infirmity that he betakes himself to the [grace](#) that justifies by believing; or internally, where no man has in his own control what shall enter into his thoughts, although it appertains to his own will to consent or to dissent. Since [God](#), therefore, in such ways acts upon the reasonable [soul](#) in order that it may [believe](#) in Him (and certainly there is no ability whatever in [free will](#) to [believe](#), unless there be persuasion or summons towards some one in whom to [believe](#)), it surely follows that it is God who both works in man the willing to [believe](#), and in all things prevents us with His mercy. To yield our consent, indeed, to God's summons, or to withhold it, is (as I have said) the function of our own will. And this not only does not invalidate what is said, "For what do you have that you did not receive?" [1 Corinthians 4:7](#) but it really confirms it. For the [soul](#) cannot receive and possess these gifts, which are here referred to, except by yielding its consent. And thus whatever it possesses, and whatever it receives, is from [God](#); and yet the act of receiving and having belongs, of course, to the receiver and possessor. Now, should any man be for constraining us to examine into this profound [mystery](#), why this person is so persuaded as to yield, and that person is not, there are only two things occurring to me, which I should like to advance as my answer: "O the depth of the riches!" [Romans 11:33](#) and "Is there unrighteousness with God?" [Romans 9:14](#) If the man is displeased with such an answer, he must seek more learned disputants; but let him beware lest he find presumptuous ones.

Chapter 61 [XXXV.]—Conclusion of the Work

Let us at last bring our book to an end. I hardly [know](#) whether we have accomplished our purpose at all by our great prolixity. It is not in respect of you, [my Marcellinus,] that I have this misgiving, for I [know](#) your [faith](#); but with reference to the minds of those for whose sake you wished me to write,—who so much in opposition to my opinion, but (to speak mildly, and not to mention Him who spoke in His [apostles](#)) certainly against not only the opinion of the great [Apostle Paul](#), but also his strong, earnest, and vigilant conflict, prefer maintaining their own views with tenacity to listening to him, when he "beseeches them by the mercies of [God](#)," and tells them, "through the [grace](#) of God which

was given to him, not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God had dealt to every man the measure of [faith](#)."

Chapter 62.—He Returns to the Question Which Marcellinus Had Proposed to Him

But I beg of you to advert to the question which you proposed to me, and to what we have made out of it in the lengthy process of this discussion. You were perplexed how I could have said that it was possible for a man to be without [sin](#), if his will were not wanting, by the help of God's aid, although no man in the present life had ever lived, was living, or would live, of such perfect righteousness. Now, in the books which I formerly addressed to you, I set forth this very question. I said: "If I were asked whether it be possible for a man to be without [sin](#) in this life, I should allow the possibility, by the [grace](#) of [God](#), and his own [free will](#); for I should have no [doubt](#) that the [free will](#) itself is of God's [grace](#),—that is, has its place among the gifts of [God](#),—not only as to its [existence](#), but also in respect of its goodness; that is, that it applies itself to doing the commandments of [God](#). And so, God's [grace](#) not only shows what ought to be done, but also helps to the possibility of doing what it shows." You seemed to think it absurd, that a thing which was possible should be unexampled. Hence arose the subject treated of in this book; and thus did it devolve on me to show that a thing was possible although no example of it could be found. We accordingly adduced certain cases out of the gospel and of the law, at the beginning of this work,—such as the passing of a camel through the eye of a needle; [Matthew 19:24](#) and the twelve thousand legions of [angels](#), who could fight for [Christ](#), if He pleased; [Matthew 26:53](#) and those nations which God said He could have exterminated at once from the face of His people,—none of which possibilities were ever reduced to fact. To these instances may be added those which are referred to in the Book of Wisdom, [Wisdom xvi](#) suggesting how many are the strange torments and troubles which God was able to employ against ungodly men, by using the creature which was [obedient](#) to His beck, which, however, He did not employ. One might also allude to that mountain, which [faith](#) could remove into the sea, [Matthew 21:21](#) although, nevertheless, it was never done, so far as we have ever read or heard. Now you see how thoughtless and foolish would be the man who should say that any one of these things is impossible with [God](#), and how opposed to the sense of Scripture would be his assertion. Many other cases of this kind may occur to anybody who reads or thinks, the possibility of which with God we cannot deny, although an example of them be lacking.

Chapter 63.—An Objection

But inasmuch as it may be said that the instances which I have been quoting are divine works, whereas to live righteously is a work that belongs to ourselves, I undertook to show that even this too is a divine work. This I have done in the present book, with perhaps a fuller statement than is necessary, although I seem to myself to have said too little against the opponents of the [grace](#) of [God](#). And I am never so much delighted in my treatment of a subject as when Scripture comes most copiously to my aid; and when the question to be discussed requires that "he that [glories](#) should [glory](#) in the Lord;"

[2 Corinthians 10:17](#) and that we should in all things lift up our hearts and give thanks to the Lord our [God](#), from whom, "as the Father of lights, every good and every perfect gift comes down." [James 1:17](#) Now if a gift is not God's gift, because it is wrought by us, or because we act by His gift, then it is not a work of God that "a mountain should be removed into the sea," inasmuch as, according to the Lord's statement, it is by the [faith](#) of men that this is possible. Moreover, He attributes the deed to their actual operation: "If you have [faith](#) in yourselves as a grain of mustard-seed, you shall say unto this mountain, "Be removed, and be cast into the sea; and it shall be done, and nothing shall be impossible *to you*." Observe how He said "to you," not "to Me" or "to the Father;" and yet it is certain that no man does such a thing without God's gift and operation. See how an instance of perfect righteousness is unexampled among [men](#), and yet is not impossible. For it might be achieved if there were only applied so much of will as suffices for so great a thing. There would, however, be so much will, if there were hidden from us none of those conditions which pertain to righteousness; and at the same time these so delighted our [mind](#), that whatever hindrance of pleasure or pain might else occur, this delight in [holiness](#) would prevail over every rival affection. And that this is not realized, is not owing to any intrinsic impossibility, but to God's judicial act. For who can be [ignorant](#), that what he should [know](#) is not in man's power; nor does it follow that what he has discovered to be a desirable object is actually desired, unless he also feel a delight in that object, commensurate with its claims on his affection? For this belongs to health of [soul](#).

Chapter 64 [XXXVI.]—When the Commandment to Love is Fulfilled

But somebody will perhaps think that we lack nothing for the [knowledge](#) of righteousness, since the Lord, when He summarily and briefly expounded His word on earth, informed us that the whole law and the [prophets](#) depend on two commandments; [Matthew 22:40](#) nor was He silent as to what these were, but declared them in the plainest words: "You shall [love](#)," said He, "the Lord your [God](#), with all your heart, and with all your [soul](#), and with all your mind;" and "You shall [love](#) your neighbour as yourself." [Matthew 22:37, 39](#) What is more surely [true](#) than that, if these be fulfilled, all righteousness is fulfilled? But the man who sets his mind on this [truth](#) must also carefully attend to another,—in how many things we all of us offend, [James 3:2](#) while we suppose that what we do is pleasant, or, at all events, not displeasing, to God whom we [love](#); and afterwards, having (through His inspired word, or else by being warned in some clear and certain way) learned what is not pleasing to Him, we [pray](#) to Him that He would forgive us on our repentance. The life of man is full of examples of this. But whence comes it that we fall short of [knowing](#) what is pleasing to Him, if it be not that He is to that extent unknown to us? "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." [1 Corinthians 13:12](#) Who, however, can make so bold, on arriving far enough, to say: "Then shall I [know](#) even as also I am [known](#)," [1 Corinthians 13:12](#) as to think that they who shall see God will have no greater [love](#) towards Him than they have who now [believe](#) in Him? or that the one ought to be compared to the other, as if they were very near to each other? Now, if [love](#) increases just in proportion as our [knowledge](#) of its

object becomes more intimate, of course we ought to [believe](#) that there is as much wanting now to the fulfilment of righteousness as there is defective in our [love](#) of it. A thing may indeed be [known](#) or [believed](#), and yet not loved; but it is an impossibility that a thing can be loved which is neither [known](#) nor [believed](#). But if the [saints](#), in the exercise of their [faith](#), could arrive at that great [love](#), than which (as the Lord Himself testified) no greater can possibly be exhibited in the present life,—even to lay down their lives for the [faith](#), or for their brethren, [John 15:13](#) —then after their pilgrimage here, in which their walk is by "[faith](#)," when they shall have reached the "sight" of that final [happiness](#) [2 Corinthians 5:7](#) which we hope for, though as yet we see it not, and wait for in patience, [Romans 8:23](#) then undoubtedly [love](#) itself shall be not only greater than that which we here experience, but far higher than all which we ask or think; [Ephesians 3:20](#) and yet it cannot be possibly more than "with all our heart, and with all our [soul](#), and with all our mind." For there remains in us nothing which can be added to the whole; since, if anything did remain, there would not be the whole. Therefore the first commandment about righteousness, which bids us [love](#) the Lord with all our heart, and [soul](#), and mind [Matthew 22:37](#) (the next to which is, that we [love](#) our neighbour as ourselves), we shall completely fulfil in that life when we shall see face to face. [1 Corinthians 13:12](#) But even now this commandment is enjoined upon us, that we may be reminded what we ought by [faith](#) to require, and what we should in our hope look forward to, and, "forgetting the things which are behind, reach forth to the things which are before." [Philippians 3:13](#) And thus, as it appears to me, that man has made a far advance, even in the present life, in the righteousness which is to be perfected hereafter, who has discovered by this very advance how very far removed he is from the completion of righteousness.

Chapter 65.—In What Sense a Sinless Righteousness in This Life Can Be Asserted

Forasmuch, however, as an inferior righteousness may be said to be competent to this life, whereby the just man lives by [faith](#) [Romans 1:17](#) although absent from the Lord, and, therefore, walking by [faith](#) and not yet by sight, [2 Corinthians 5:7](#) —it may be without absurdity said, no [doubt](#), in respect of it, that it is free from [sin](#); for it ought not to be attributed to it as a fault, that it is not as yet sufficient for so great a [love](#) to God as is due to the final, complete, and perfect condition thereof. It is one thing to fail at present in attaining to the fulness of [love](#), and another thing to be swayed by no [lust](#). A man ought therefore to abstain from every unlawful desire, although he loves God now far less than it is possible to [love](#) Him when He becomes an object of sight; just as in matters connected with the bodily senses, the eye can receive no pleasure from any kind of darkness, although it may be unable to look with a firm sight amidst refulgent light. Only let us see to it that we so constitute the [soul](#) of man in this corruptible body, that, although it has not yet swallowed up and consumed the motions of earthly [lust](#) in that super-eminent perfection of the [love](#) of [God](#), it nevertheless, in that inferior righteousness to which we have referred, gives no consent to the aforesaid [lust](#) for the purpose of effecting any unlawful thing. In respect, therefore, of that [immortal](#) life, the commandment is even now applicable: "You shall [love](#) the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your [soul](#), and with all your might;" [Deuteronomy 6:5](#) but in reference to the present life the

following: "Let not [sin](#) reign in your mortal body, that you should [obey](#) it in the [lusts](#) thereof." [Romans 6:12](#) To the one, again, belongs, "You shall not [covet](#);" [Exodus 20:17](#) to the other, "You shall not go after your [lusts](#)." [Sirach 18:30](#) To the one it appertains to seek for nothing more than to continue in its perfect state; to the other it belongs actively to do the duty committed to it, and to hope as its reward for the perfection of the future life,—so that in the one the just man may live forevermore in the sight of that [happiness](#) which in this life was his object of desire; in the other, he may live by that [faith](#) whereon rests his desire for the ultimate blessedness as its certain end. (These things being so, it will be [sin](#) in the man who lives by [faith](#) ever to consent to an unlawful delight,—by committing not only frightful deeds and crimes, but even trifling faults; sinful, if he lend an ear to a word that ought not to be listened to, or a tongue to a phrase which should not be uttered; sinful, if he entertains a thought in his heart in such a way as to wish that an [evil](#) pleasure were a lawful one, although [known](#) to be unlawful by the commandment,—for this amounts to a consent to [sin](#), which would certainly be carried out in act, unless [fear](#) of punishment deterred.) Have such just men, while living by [faith](#), no need to say: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors?" [Matthew 6:12](#) And do they prove this to be wrong which is written, "In Your sight shall no man living be justified?" and this: "If we say that we have no [sin](#), we deceive ourselves, and the [truth](#) is not in us?" [1 John 1:8](#) and, "There is no man that [not](#);" [1 Kings 8:46](#) and again, "There is not on the earth a righteous man, who does good and [not](#)" [Sirach 7:21](#) (for both these statements are expressed in a general future sense,—"[not](#)," "[will not sin](#),"—not in the past time, "has not [sinned](#)")?—and all other places of this purport contained in the [Holy Scripture](#)? Since, however, these passages cannot possibly be false, it plainly follows, to my [mind](#), that whatever be the quality or extent of the righteousness which we may definitely ascribe to the present life, there is not a man living in it who is absolutely free from all [sin](#); and that it is necessary for every one to give, that it may be given to him; and to forgive, that it may be forgiven him; [Luke 11:4](#) and whatever righteousness he has, not to presume that he has it of himself, but from the [grace](#) of [God](#), who justifies him, and still to go on hungering and thirsting for righteousness [Matthew 5:6](#) from Him who is the living bread, [John 6:51](#) and with whom is the fountain of life; who works in His [saints](#), while labouring amidst [temptation](#) in this life, their justification in such manner that He may still have somewhat to impart to them liberally when they ask, and something mercifully to forgive them when they confess.

Chapter 66.—Although Perfect Righteousness Be Not Found Here on Earth, It is Still Not Impossible

But let objectors find, if they can, any man, while living under the weight of this corruption, in whom [God](#) has no longer anything to forgive; unless nevertheless they acknowledge that such an individual has been aided in the attainment of his good character not merely by the teaching of the law which God gave, but also by the infusion of the Spirit of [grace](#)—they will incur the charge of ungodliness itself, not of this or that particular [sin](#). Of course they are not at all able to discover such a [man](#), if they receive in a becoming manner the testimony of the divine writings. Still, for all that, it must not by any means be said that the possibility is lacking to God whereby the [will](#) of man can be

so assisted, that there can be accomplished in every respect even now in a [man](#), not that righteousness only which is of [faith](#), [Romans 10:6](#) but that also in accordance with which we shall by and by have to live for ever in the very vision of [God](#). For if he should now wish even that this corruptible in any particular man should put on incorruption, [1 Corinthians 15:53](#) and to command him so to live among mortal men (not destined himself to die) that his old nature should be wholly and entirely withdrawn, and there should be no law in his members warring against the law of his [mind](#), [Romans 7:23](#) — moreover, that he should discover God to be everywhere present, as the [saints](#) shall hereafter [know](#) and behold Him,—who will madly venture to affirm that this is impossible? Men, however, ask why He does not do this; but they who raise the question consider not duly the fact that they are human. I am quite certain that, as nothing is impossible with God [Luke 1:37](#) so also there is no iniquity with Him. [Romans 9:14](#) Equally sure am I that He resists the [proud](#), and gives [grace](#) to the [humble](#). [James 4:6](#) I [know](#) also that to him who had a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of [Satan](#) to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure, it was said, when he besought God for its removal once, twice, nay thrice: "My [grace](#) is sufficient for you; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." [2 Corinthians 12:7-9](#) There is, therefore, in the hidden depths of God's judgments, a certain reason why every mouth even of the righteous should be shut in its own praise, and only opened for the praise of [God](#). But what this certain reason is, who can search, who investigate, who [know](#)? So "unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who has [known](#) the mind of the Lord? or who has been his counsellor? or who has first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be [glory](#) for ever. [Amen](#)." [Romans 11:33-36](#)