

Article 5

The Justification of Man

1. No Christian should doubt that after the fall of our first parent all men are, as the apostle says, born children of wrath [Eph. 2:3] and enemies of God [Rom. 5:10] and thereby are in death and slavery to sin [Rom. 6:16-20].

2. Likewise, no Christian should question that nobody can be reconciled with God, nor set free from slavery to sin, except by Christ the one mediator between God and men [1 Tim. 2:5], by whose grace, as the apostle said to the Romans, we are not only reconciled to God [5:10] and set free from slavery to sin [6:18, 22], but also made sharers in the divine nature [2 Pet. 1:4] and children of God [Rom. 8:14-16].

3. (1) Likewise, it is quite clear that adults do not obtain these blessings of Christ, except by the prevenient movement of the Holy Spirit, by which their mind and will are moved to hate sin. (2) For, as St. Augustine says, it is impossible to begin a new life if we do not repent of the former one. (3) Likewise, in the last chapter of Luke [24:47], Christ commands that repentance and forgiveness of sin should be preached in his name. (4) Also, John the Baptist, sent to prepare the way of the Lord, preached repentance, saying [Matt. 3:2]: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is drawing near'. (5) Next, man's mind is moved toward God by the Holy Spirit through Christ and this movement is through faith. Through this [faith] man's mind believes with certainty all that God has transmitted, and also with full certainty and without doubt assents to the promises made to us by God who, as stated in the psalm [145:13], is faithful in all his words. From there he acquires confidence on account of God's promise, by which he has pledged that he will remit sins freely and that he will adopt as children those who believe in Christ, those I say who repent of their former life. (6) By this faith, he is lifted up to God by the Holy Spirit and so he receives the Holy Spirit, remission of sins, imputation of righteousness and countless other gifts.

4. (1) So it is a reliable and sound doctrine that the sinner is justified by living and efficacious faith, for through it we are pleasing and acceptable to God on account of Christ. (2) And living faith is what we call the movement of the Holy Spirit, by which those who truly repent of their old life are lifted up to God and truly appropriate the mercy promised in Christ, so that they now truly recognise that they have received the remission of sins and reconciliation on account of the merits of Christ, through the free goodness of God, and cry out to God: 'Abba Father' [Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6]. (3) But this happens to no one unless also at the same time love is infused which heals the will so that the healed will may begin to fulfil the law, just as Saint Augustine said. (4) So living faith is that which both appropriates mercy in Christ, believing that the righteousness which is in Christ is freely imputed to it, and at the same time receives the promise of the Holy Spirit and love. (5) Therefore the faith that truly justifies is that faith which is effectual through love [Gal. 5:6]. (6) Nevertheless it remains true, that it is by this faith that we are justified (i.e. accepted and reconciled to God) inasmuch as it appropriates the mercy and righteousness which is imputed to us on account of Christ and his merit, not on account of the worthiness or perfection of the righteousness imparted to us in Christ.

5. (1) Although the one who is justified receives righteousness and through Christ also has inherent [righteousness], as the apostle says: 'you are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified, etc.' [1 Cor. 6:11] (which is why the holy fathers made use of [the term] 'to be justified' even to mean 'to receive inherent righteousness'), nevertheless, the faithful soul depends not on this, but only on the righteousness of Christ given to us as a gift, without which there is and can be no righteousness at all. (2) And thus by faith in Christ we are justified or reckoned to be righteous, that is we are accepted through his merits and not on account of our own worthiness or works. (3) And on account of the righteousness inherent in us we are said to be righteous, because the works which we perform are righteous, according to the saying of John: 'who- ever does what is right is righteous' [1 John 3:7].

6. Although fear of God, patience, humility and other virtues ought always to grow in the regenerate, because this renewal is imperfect and enormous weakness remains in them, it should nevertheless be taught that those

who truly repent may always hold with most certain faith that they are pleasing to God on account of Christ the mediator. For it is Christ who is the propitiator, the High Priest and the one who prays for us, the one the Father gave to us and with him all good things [Rom. 8:32].

7. Seeing that in our weakness there is no perfect certainty and that there are many weak and fearful consciences, which often struggle against great doubt, nobody should be excluded from the grace of Christ on account of such weakness. Such people should be earnestly encouraged boldly to set the promises of Christ against these doubts and by diligent intercession to pray that their faith may be increased, according to the saying: 'Lord increase our faith' [Luke 17:5].

8. (1) Likewise, every Christian should learn that this grace and this regeneration have not been given to us so that we might remain idle in that stage of our renewal which we at first obtained, but so that we may grow in everything into him who is the head [Eph. 4:15]. (2) Therefore, the people must be taught to devote effort to this growth which indeed happens through good works, both internal and external, which are commanded and commended by God. To these works God has, in many passages from the Gospels, clearly and manifestly promised on account of Christ a reward — good things in this life, as much for the body as for the soul (as much as seems right to divine providence) and after this life in heaven. (3) Therefore, although the inheritance of eternal life is due to the regenerate on account of the promise, as soon as they are reborn in Christ, nevertheless God also renders a reward to good works, not according to the substance of the works, nor because they come from us, but to the extent that they are performed in faith and proceed from the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, free choice concurring as a partial agent.

9. The joy of those who have performed more and better works will be greater and more abundant, on account of the increase of faith and love, in which they have grown through exercises of that kind. (1) Now those who say that we are justified by faith alone should at the same time teach the doctrine of repentance, of the fear of God, of the judgment of God and of good works, so that all the chief points of the preaching may remain firm, as Christ said: 'preaching repentance and the remission of sins in my name' [Luke 24:47]. (2) And that is to prevent this way of speaking [i.e. sola fide] from being understood other than has been previously mentioned.