Chapter IX. The formal cause of justification, or the

Principal controversies about justification:Â— 1. Concerning the nature of justification, stated; 2. Of the formal cause of it; 3. Of the way whereby we are made partakers of the benefits of the mediation of Christ Â— What intended by the formal cause of justification, declared Â— The righteousness on the account whereof believers are justified before God alone, inquired after under these terms Â— This the righteousness of Christ, imputed unto them Â— Occasions of exceptions and objections against this doctrine Â— General objections examined Â— Imputation of the righteousness of Christ consistent with the free pardon of sin, and with the necessity of evangelical repentance Â— Method of GodÂ’s grace in our justification Â— Necessity of faith unto justification, on supposition of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ Â— Grounds of that necessity Â— Other objections, arising mostly from mistakes of the truth, asserted, discussed, and answered

The principal differences about the doctrine of justification are reducible unto three heads:Â— 1. The nature of it, Â— namely, whether it consist in an internal change of the person justified, by the imputation of a habit of inherent grace or righteousness; or whether it be a forensic act, in the judging, esteeming, declaring, and pronouncing such a person to be righteous, thereon absolving him from all his sins, giving unto him right and title unto life. Herein we have to do only with those of the church of Rome, all others, both Protestants and Socinians, being agreed on the forensic sense of the word, and the nature of the thing signified thereby. And this I have already spoken unto, so far as our present design does require; and that, I hope, with such evidence of truth as cannot well be gainsaid. Nor may it be supposed that we have too long insisted thereon, as an opinion which is obsolete, and long since sufficiently confuted. I think much otherwise, and that those who avoid the Romanists in these controversies, will give a greater appearance of fear than of contempt; for when all is done, if free justification through the blood of Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness, 206be not able to preserve its station in the minds of men, the Popish doctrine of justification must and will return upon the world, with all the concomitants and consequences of it. Whilst any knowledge of the law or gospel is continued amongst us, the consciences of men will at one time or other, living or dying, be really affected with a sense of sin, as unto its guilt and danger. Hence that trouble and those disquietments of mind will ensue, as will force men, be they never so unwilling, to seek after some relief and satisfaction. And what will not men attempt who are reduced to the condition expressed, Mic. vi. 6, 7? Wherefore, in this case, if the true and only relief of distressed consciences of sinners who are weary and heavy-laden be hid from their eyes, Â— if they have no apprehension of, nor trust in, that which alone they may oppose unto the sentence of the law, and interpose between GodÂ’s justice and their souls, wherein they may take shelter from the storms of that wrath which abides on them that believe not, Â— they will betake themselves unto any thing which confidently tenders them present ease and relief. Hence many persons, living all their days in an ignorance of the righteousness of God, are oftentimes on their sick-beds, and in their dying hours, proselyted unto a confidence in the ways of rest and peace which the Romanists impose upon them; for such seasons of advantage do they wait for, unto the reputation, as they suppose, of their own zeal, Â— in truth unto the scandal of Christian religion. But finding at any time the consciences of men under disquietments, and ignorant of or disbelieving that heavenly relief which is provided in the gospel, they are ready with their applications and medicines, having on them pretended approbations of the experience of many ages, and an innumerable company of devout souls in them. Such is their doctrine of justification, with the addition of those other ingredients of confession, absolution, penances, or commutations, aids from saints and angels, especially the blessed Virgin; all warmed by the fire of purgatory, and confidently administered unto persons sick of ignorance, darkness, and sin. And let none please themselves in the contempt of these things. If the truth concerning evangelical justification be once disbelieved among us, or obliterated by any artifices out of the minds of men, unto these things, at one time or other, they must and will betake themselves. As for the new schemes and projections of justification, which some at present would supply us withal, they are no way suited nor able to give relief or satisfaction unto a conscience really troubled for sin, and seriously inquiring how it may have rest and peace with God. I shall take the boldness, therefore, to say, whoever be offended at it, that if we lose the ancient doctrine of justification through faith in the blood of Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness unto us, public confession of religion 207will quickly issue in Popery or Atheism, or at least in what is the next door unto it, Â— and the Romanists will call that which we inquire after. Some of ours say the righteousness of Christ imputed, some, the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, is the formal cause of our justification; some, that there is no formal cause of justification, but this is that which supplies the place and use of a formal cause, which is the righteousness of Christ. In none of these
things will I concern myself, though I judge what was mentioned in the last place to be most proper and significant.

The substance of the inquiry wherein alone we are concerned, is, What is that righteousness whereby and wherewith a believing sinner is justified before God; or whereon he is accepted with God, has his sins pardoned, is received into grace and favour, and has a title given him unto the heavenly inheritance? I shall no otherwise propose this inquiry, as knowing that it contains the substance of what convinced sinners do look after in and by the gospel.

And herein it is agreed by all, the Socinians only excepted, that the procatarctical or procuring cause of the pardon of our sins and acceptance with God, is the satisfaction and merit of Christ. Howbeit, it cannot be denied but that some, retaining the names of them, do seem to renounce or disbelieve the things themselves; but we need not to take any notice thereof, until they are free more plainly to express their minds. But as concerning the righteousness itself inquired after, there seems to be a difference among them who yet all deny it to be the righteousness of Christ imputed unto us. For those of the Roman church plainly say, that upon the infusion of a habit of grace, with the expulsion of sin, and the renovation of our natures thereby, which they call the first justification, we are actually justified before God by our own works of righteousness. Hereon they dispute about the merit and satisfactoriness of those works, with their condignity of the reward of eternal life. Others, as the Socinians, openly disclaim all merit in our works; only some, out of reverence, as I suppose, unto the antiquity of the word, and under the shelter of the ambiguity of its signification, have faintly attempted an accommodation with it. But in the substance of what they assert unto this purpose, to the best of my understanding, they are all agreed: for what the Papists call “justitia operum,” — the righteousness of works, — they call a personal, inherent, evangelical righteousness; whereof we have spoken before. And whereas the Papists say that this righteousness of works is not absolutely perfect, nor in itself able to justify us in the sight of God, but owes all its worth and dignity unto this purpose unto the merit of Christ, they affirm that this evangelical righteousness is the condition whereon we enjoy the benefits of the righteousness of Christ, in the pardon of our sins, and the acceptance of our persons before God. But as unto those who will acknowledge no other righteousness wherewith we are justified before God, the meaning is the same, whether we say that on the condition of this righteousness we are made partakers of the benefits of the righteousness of Christ, or that it is the righteousness of Christ which makes this righteousness of ours accepted with God. But these things must afterwards more particularly be inquired into.

3. The third inquiry wherein there is not an agreement in this matter is, upon a supposition of a necessity that he who is to be justified should, one way or other, be interested in the righteousness of Christ, what it is that on our part is required thereunto. This some say to be faith alone; others, faith and works also, and that in the same kind of necessity and use. That whose consideration we at present undertake is the second thing proposed; and, indeed, herein lies the substance of the whole controversy about our justification before God, upon the determination and stating whereof the determination of all other incident questions does depend.

This, therefore, is that which herein I affirm:— The righteousness of Christ (in his obedience and suffering for us) imputed unto believers, as they are united unto him by his Spirit, is that righteousness whereon they are justified before God, on the account whereof their sins are pardoned, and a right is granted them unto the heavenly inheritance.

This position is such as wherein the substance of that doctrine, in this important article of evangelical truth which we plead for, is plainly and fully expressed. And I have chosen the rather thus to express it, because it is that thesis wherein the learned Davenant laid down that common doctrine of the Reformed churches whose defence he undertook. This is the shield of truth in the whole cause of justification; which, whilst it is preserved safe, we need not trouble ourselves about the differences that are among learned men about the most proper stating and declaration of some lesser concernments of it. This is the refuge, the only refuge, of distressed consciences, wherein they may find rest and peace.

For the confirmation of this assertion, I shall do these three things:— I. Reflect on what is needful unto the explanation of 209it. II. Answer the most important general objections against it. III. Prove the truth of it by arguments and testimonies of the holy Scripture.

I. As to the first of these, or what is necessary unto the explanation of this assertion, it has been sufficiently spoken unto in our foregoing discourses. The heads of some things only shall at present be called over.

1. The foundation of the imputation asserted is union. Hereof there are many grounds and causes, as has been declared; but that which we have immediate respect unto, as the foundation of this imputation, is that whereby
the Lord Christ and believers do actually coalesce into one mystical person. This is by the Holy Spirit inhabiting in him as the head of the church in all fulness, and in all believers according to their measure, whereby they become members of his mystical body. That there is such a union between Christ and believers is the faith of the catholic church, and has been so in all ages. Those who seem in our days to deny it, or question it, either know not what they say, or their minds are influenced by their doctrine who deny the divine persons of the Son and of the Spirit. Upon supposition of this union, reason will grant the imputation pleaded for to be reasonable; at least, that there is such a peculiar ground for it as is not to be exemplified in any things natural or political among men.

2. The nature of imputation has been fully spoken unto before, and whereunto I refer the reader for the understanding of what is intended thereby.

3. That which is imputed is the righteousness of Christ; and, briefly, I understand hereby his whole obedience unto God, in all that he did and suffered for the church. This, I say, is imputed unto believers, so as to become their only righteousness before God unto the justification of life.

If beyond these things any expressions have been made use of, in the explanation of this truth, which have given occasion unto any differences or contests, although they may be true and defensible against objections, yet shall not I concern myself in them. The substance of the truth as laid down, is that whose defence I have undertaken; and where that is granted or consented unto, I will not contend with any about their way and methods of its declaration, nor defend the terms and expressions that have by any been made use of therein. For instance, some have said that “what Christ did and suffered is so imputed unto us, as that we are judged and esteemed in the sight of God to have done or suffered ourselves in him.” This I shall not concern myself in; for although it may have a sound sense given unto it, and is used by some of the ancients, yet because offence is taken at it, and the substance of the truth we plead for is better otherwise expressed, it ought not to be contended about. For we do not say that God judges or esteems that we did and suffered in our own persons what Christ did and suffered; but only that he did it and suffered it in our stead. Hereon God makes a grant and donation of it unto believers upon their believing, unto their justification before him. And the like may be said of many other expressions of the like nature.

II. These things being premised, I proceed unto the consideration of the general objections that are urged against the imputation we plead for: and I shall insist only on some of the principal of them, and whereunto all others may be resolved; for it were endless to go over all that any man’s invention can suggest unto him of this kind. And some general considerations we must take along with us herein; as, Â—

1. The doctrine of justification is a part, yea, an eminent part, of the mystery of the gospel. It is no marvel, therefore, if it be not so exposed unto the common notions of reason as some would have it to be. There is more required unto the true spiritual understanding of such mysteries; yea, unless we intend to renounce the gospel, it must be asserted that reason as it is corrupted, and the mind of man as destitute of divine, supernatural revelation, do dislike every such truth, and rise up in enmity against it. So the Scripture directly affirms, Rom. viii. 7; 1 Cor. ii. 14.

2. Hence are the minds and inventions of men wonderfully fertile in coining objections against evangelical truths and raising cavils against them. Seldom to this purpose do they want an endless number of sophistical objections, which, because they know no better, they themselves judge insoluble; for carnal reason being once set at liberty, under the false notion of truth, to act itself freely and boldly against spiritual mysteries, is subtle in its arguing, and pregnant in its invention of them. How endless, for instance, are the sophisms of the Socinians against the doctrine of the Trinity! and how do they triumph in them as unanswerable! Under the shelter of them they despise the force of the most evident testimonies of the Scripture and those multiplied on all occasions. In like manner they deal with the doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ, as the Pelagians of old did with that of his grace. Wherefore, he that will be startled at the appearance of subtle or plausible objections against any gospel mysteries that are plainly revealed, and sufficiently attested in the Scripture, is not likely to come unto much stability in his profession of them.

3. The most of the objections which are levied against the truth in this cause do arise from the want of a due comprehension of the 211order of the work of God’s grace, and of our compliance therewithal in a way of duty, as was before observed; for they consist in opposing those things one to another as inconsistent, which, in their proper place and order, are not only consistent, but mutually subservient unto one another, and are found so in the experience of them that truly believe. Instances hereof have been given before, and others will immediately occur. Taking the consideration of these things with us, we may see as the rise, so of what force the objections are.
4. Let it be considered that the objections which are made use of against the truth we assert, are all of them taken from certain consequences which, as it is supposed, will ensue on the admission of it. And as this is the only expedient to perpetuate controversies and make them endless, so, to my best observation, I never yet met with any one but that, to give an appearance of force unto the absurdity of the consequences from whence he argues, he framed his suppositions, or the state of the question, unto the disadvantage of them whom he opposed; a course of proceeding which I wonder good men are not either weary or ashamed of.

1. It is objected, Â“That the imputation of the righteousness of Christ does overthrow all remission of sins on the part of God.Â” This is pleaded for by Socinus, De Servatore, lib. iv. cap. 2Â–4; and by others it is also made use of. A confident charge this seems to them who steadfastly believe that without this imputation there could be no remission of sin. But they say, Â“That he who has a righteousness imputed unto him that is absolutely perfect, so as to be made his own, needs no pardon, has no sin that should be forgiven, nor can he ever need forgiveness.Â” But because this objection will occur unto us again in the vindication of one of our ensuing arguments, I shall here speak briefly unto it:Â—

(1.) Grotius shall answer this objection. Says he, Â“Cum duo nobis peperisse Christum dixerimus, impunitatem et præmio, illud satisfactioni, hoc merito Christi distinctÂʳ tribuit vetus ecclesia. Satisfactio consistit in peccatorum translatione, meritum in perfectissimÂ¹i; obedientiâ¹i, pro nobis præstitÂ¹i, imputazione,Â” PrÃ³fat. ad lib. de Satisfact.; Â— Â“When we have said that Christ has procured or brought forth two things for us, Â— freedom from punishment, and a reward, Â— the ancient church attributes the one of them distinctly unto his satisfaction, the other unto his merit. Satisfaction consists in the translation of sins (from us unto him); merit, in the imputation of his most perfect obedience, performed for us, unto us.Â” In his judgment, the remission of sins and the imputation of righteousness were as consistent as the satisfaction and merit of Christ; as indeed they are.

(2.) Had we not been sinners, we should have had no need of the 212imputation of the righteousness of Christ to render us righteous before God. Being so, the first end for which it is imputed is the pardon of sin; without which we could not be righteous by the imputation of the most perfect righteousness. These things, therefore, are consistent, Â— namely, that the satisfaction of Christ should be imputed unto us for the pardon of sin, and the obedience of Christ be imputed unto us to render us righteous before God; and they are not only consistent, but neither of them singly were sufficient unto our justification.

2. It is pleaded by the same author, and others, Â“That the imputation of the righteousness of Christ overthrows all necessity of repentance for sin, in order unto the remission or pardon thereof, yea, renders it altogether needless; for what need has he of repentance for sin, who, by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, is esteemed completely just and righteous in the sight of God? If Christ satisfied for all sins in the person of the elect, if as our surety he paid all our debts, and if his righteousness be made ours before we repent, then is all necessity of repentance for sin, in order unto the remission or pardon thereof, yea, renders it altogether needless.Â” And these things are much enlarged on by the same author in the place before mentioned.

Ans. (1.) It must be remembered that we require evangelical faith, in order of nature, antecedently unto our justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto us; which also is the condition of its continuation. Wherefore, whatever is necessary thereunto is in like manner required of us in order unto believing. Amongst these, there is a sorrow for sin, and a repentance of it; for whosoever is convinced of sin in a due manner, so as in be sensible of its evil and guilt, Â— both as in its own nature it is contrary unto the preceptive part of the holy law, and in the necessary consequences of it, in the wrath and curse of God, Â— cannot but be perplexed in his mind that he has involved himself therein; and that posture of mind will be accompanied with shame, fear, sorrow, and other afflictive passions. Hereon a resolution does ensue utterly to abstain from it for the future, with sincere endeavours unto that purpose; issuing, if there be time and space for it, in reformation of life. And in a sense of sin, sorrow for it, fear concerning it, abstention from it, and reformation of life, a repentance true in its kind does consist. This repentance is usually called legal, because its motives are principally taken from the law; but yet there is, moreover, required unto it that temporary faith of the gospel which we have before described; and as it does usually produce great effects, in the confession of sin, humiliation for it, and change of life (as in Ahab and the Ninevites), so ordinarily it precedes true saving faith, and justification thereof. Wherefore, the necessity hereof is no way 213weakened by the doctrine of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, yea, it is strengthened and made effectual thereby; for without it, in the order of the gospel, an interest therein is not to be attained. And this is that which, in the Old Testament, is so often proposed as the means and condition of turning away the judgments and punishments threatened unto sin; for it is true and sincere in its kind. Neither do the Socinians require any other repentance unto justification; for as they deny true evangelical repentance in all the especial causes of it, so that which may and
(2.) Justifying faith includes in its nature the entire principle of evangelical repentance, so as that it is utterly impossible that a man should be a true believer, and not, at the same instant of time, be truly penitent; and therefore are they so frequently conjoined in the Scripture as one simultaneous duty. Yea, the call of the gospel unto repentance is a call to faith acting itself by repentance: So the sole reason of that call unto repentance which the forgiveness of sins is annexed unto, Acts ii. 38, is the proposal of the promise which is the object of faith, verse 39. And those conceptions and affections which a man has about sin, with a sorrow for it and repentance of it, upon a legal conviction, being enlivened and made evangelical by the introduction of faith as a new principle of them, and giving new motives unto them, do become evangelical; so impossible is it that faith should be without repentance. Wherefore, although the first act of faith, and its only proper exercise unto justification, does respect the grace of God in Christ, and the way of salvation by him, as proposed in the promise of the gospel, yet is not this conceived in order of time to precede its acting in self-displicency, godly sorrow, and universal conversion from sin unto God; nor can it be so, seeing it virtually and radically contains all of them in itself. However, therefore, evangelical repentance is not the condition of our justification, so as to have any direct influence thereunto; nor are we said anywhere to be justified by repentance; nor is conversant about the proper object which alone the soul respects therein; nor is a direct and immediate giving glory unto God on the account of the way and work of his wisdom and grace in Christ Jesus, but a consequent thereof; nor is that reception of Christ which is expressly required unto our justification, and which alone is required thereunto; Â— yet is it, in the root, principle, and promptitude of mind for its exercise, in every one that is justified, then when he is justified. And it is peculiarly proposed with respect unto the forgiveness of sins, as that without which it is impossible we should have any true sense or comfort of it in our souls; but it is not so as any part 214of that righteousness on the consideration whereof our sins are pardoned, nor as that whereby we have an interest therein. These things are plain in the divine method of our justification, and the order of our duty prescribed in the gospel; as also in the experience of them that do believe. Wherefore, considering the necessity of legal repentance unto believing; with the sanctification of the affections exercised therein by faith, whereby they are made evangelical; and the nature of faith, as including in it a principle of universal conversion unto God; and in especial, of that repentance which has for its principal motive the love of God and of Jesus Christ, with the grace from thence communicated, Â— all which are supposed in the doctrine pleaded for; the necessity of true repentance is immovably fixed on its proper foundation.

(3.) As unto what was said in the objection concerning ChristÂ’s suffering in the person of the elect, I know not whether any have used it or no, nor will I contend about it. He suffered in their stead; which all sorts of writers, ancient and modern, so express, Â— in his suffering he bare the person of the church. The meaning is what was before declared. Christ and believers are one mystical person, one spiritually-animated body, head and members. This, I suppose, will not be denied; to do so, is to overthrow the church and the faith of it. Hence, what he did and suffered is imputed unto them. And it is granted that, as the surety of the covenant, he paid all our debts, or answered for all our faults; and that his righteousness is really communicated unto us. Â“Why, then,Â” say some, Â“there is no need of repentance; all is done for us already.Â” But why so? Why must we assent to one part of the gospel unto the exclusion of another? Was it not free unto God to appoint what way, method, and order he would, whereby these things should be communicated unto us? Nay, upon the supposition of the design of his wisdom and grace, these two things were necessary:Â—

[1.] That this righteousness of Christ should be communicated unto us, and be made ours, in such a way and manner as that he himself might be glorified therein, seeing he has disposed all things, in this whole economy, unto Â“the praise of the glory of his grace.Â” Eph. i. 6. This was to be done by faith, on our part. It is so; it could be no otherwise: for that faith whereby we are justified is our giving unto God the glory of his wisdom, grace, and love; and whatever does so is faith, and nothing else is so.

[2.] That whereas our nature was so corrupted and depraved as that, continuing in that state, it was not capable of a participation of the righteousness of Christ, or any benefit of it, unto the glory of God and our own good, it was in like manner necessary that it should be renewed and changed. And unless it were so, the design of God 215in the mediation of Christ, Â— which was the entire recovery of us unto himself, Â— could not be attained. And therefore, as faith, under the formal consideration of it, was necessary unto the first end, Â— namely, that of giving glory unto God, Â— so unto this latter end it was necessary that this faith should be accompanied with, yea, and contain in itself, the seeds of all those other graces wherein the divine nature does consist, whereof we are to be made partners. Not only, therefore, the thing itself, or the communication of the righteousness of Christ unto us, but the way, and manner, and means of it, do depend on GodÂ’s sovereign order and disposal. Wherefore, although Christ did make satisfaction to the justice of God for all the sins of the church, and that as a common person (for no man in his wits can deny but that he who is a mediator and a
surety is, in some sense, a common person); and although he did pay all our debts; yet does the particular interest of this or that man in what he did and suffered depend on the way, means, and order designed of God unto that end. This, and this alone, gives the true necessity of all the duties which are required of us, with their order and their ends.

3. It is objected, Ā“That the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, which we defend, overthrows the necessity of faith itself,Ā” This is home indeed. Ā“Alliquid adhÄ‘rebitÄ” is the design of all these objections; but they have reason to plead for themselves who make it. Ā“For on this supposition,Ā” they say, Ā“the righteousness of Christ is ours before we do believe; for Christ satisfied for all our sins, as if we had satisfied in our own persons. And he who is esteemed to have satisfied for all his sins in his own person is acquitted from them all and accounted just, whether he believe or no; nor is there any ground or reason why he should be required to believe. If, therefore, the righteousness of Christ be really ours, because, in the judgment of God, we are esteemed to have wrought it in him, then it is ours before we do believe. If it be otherwise, then it is plain that that righteousness itself can never be made ours by believing; only the fruits and effects of it may be suspended on our believing, whereby we may be made partakers of them. Yea, if Christ made any such satisfaction for us as is pretended, it is really ours, without any farther imputation; for, being performed for us and in our stead, it is the highest injustice not to have us accounted pardoned and acquitted, without any farther, either imputation on the part of God or faith on ours.Ā” These things I have transcribed out of Socinus, De Servatore, lib. iv. cap. 2A–5; which I would not have done but that I find others to have gone before me herein, though to another purpose. And he concludes with a confidence which others also seem, in some measure, to have learned of him; for he says unto his adversary, Ā“HÄ’c tua, tuorumque sententia, adeo fœda et execrabilis est, ut pestilentiorem 216errorem post homines natos in populo. Dei extitisse non credam,Ā” — speaking of the satisfaction of Christ, and the imputation of it unto believers. And, indeed, his serpentine wit was fertile in the invention of cavils against all the mysteries of the gospel. Nor was he obliged by any one of them, so as to contradict himself in what he opposed concerning any other of them; for, denying the deity of Christ, his satisfaction, sacrifice, merit, righteousness, and overthrowing the whole nature of his mediation, nothing stood in his way which he had a mind to oppose. But I somewhat wonder how others can make use of his inventions in this kind; who, if they considered aright their proper tendency, they will find them to be absolutely destructive of what they seem to own. So it is in this present objection against the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. If it has any force in it, as indeed it has not, it is to prove that the satisfaction of Christ was impossible; and so he intended it. But it will be easily removed.

I answer, first, in general, that the whole fallacy of this objection lies in the opposing one part of the design and method of GodÂ’s grace in this mystery of our justification unto another; or the taking of one part of it to be the whole, which, as to its efficacy and perfection, depends on somewhat else. Hereof we warned the reader in our previous discourses. For the whole of it is a supposition that the satisfaction of Christ, if there be any such thing, must have its whole effect without believing on our part; which is contrary unto the whole declaration of the will of God in the gospel. But I shall principally respect them who are pleased to make use of this objection, and yet do not deny the satisfaction of Christ. And I say, Ā—

(1.) When the Lord Christ died for us, and offered himself as a propitiatory sacrifice, Ā“God laid all our sins on him,Ā” Isa. liii. 6; and he then Ā“bare them all in his own body on the tree,Ā” 1 Pet. ii. 24. Then he suffered in our stead, and made full satisfaction for all our sins; for he Ā“appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,Ā” Heb. ix. 26; and Ā“by one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified,Ā” chap. x. 14. He whose sins were not actually and absolutely satisfied for in that one offering of Christ, shall never have them expiated unto eternity; for Ā“henceforth he dies no more,Ā” there is Ā“no more sacrifice for sin,Ā” The repetition of a sacrifice for sin, which must be the crucifying of Christ afresh, overthrows the foundation of Christian religion.

(2.) Notwithstanding this full, plenary satisfaction once made for the sins of the world that shall be saved, yet all men continue equal to be born by nature Ā“children of wrath;Ā” and whilst they believe not, Ā“the wrath of God abides on them,Ā” John iii. 36; Ā— that is, they are obnoxious unto and under the curse of the law. Wherefore, on 217the only making of that satisfaction, no one for whom it was made in the design of God can be said to have suffered in Christ, nor to have an interest in his satisfaction, nor by any way or means be made partaker of it antecedently unto another act of God in its imputation unto him. For this is but one part of the purpose of GodÂ’s grace as unto our justification by the blood of Christ, Ā— namely, that he by his death should make satisfaction for our sins; nor is it to be separated from what also belongs unto it in the same purpose of God. Wherefore, from the position or grant of the satisfaction of Christ, no argument can be taken unto the negation of a consequential act of its imputation unto us; nor, therefore, of the necessity of our faith in the believing and receiving of it, which is no less the appointment of God than it was that Christ should make that satisfaction. Wherefore, Ā—
Chapter IX. The formal cause of justification, or the

(3.) That which the Lord Christ paid for us is as truly paid as if we had paid it ourselves. So he speaks, Ps. lxix. 5, אֲשֶׁר לאֹ־גָזֹלֲתִי; אָז אָשִׁיב. He made no spoil of the glory of God; what was done of that nature by us, he returned it unto him. And what he underwent and suffered, he underwent and suffered in our stead. But yet the act of God in laying our sins on Christ conveyed no actual right and title to us unto what he did and suffered. They are not immediately thereon, nor by virtue thereof, ours, or esteemed ours; because God has appointed somewhat else, not only antecedent thereunto, but as the means of it, unto his own glory. These things, both as unto their being and order, depend on the free ordination of God. But yet, A—

(4.) It cannot be said that this satisfaction was made for us on such a condition as should absolutely suspend the event, and render it uncertain whether it should ever be for us or no. Such a constitution may be righteous in pecuniary solutions. A man may lay down a great sum of money for the discharge of another, on such a condition as may never be fulfilled; for, on the absolute failure of the condition, his money may and ought to be restored unto him, whereon he has received no injury or damage. But in penal suffering for crimes and sins, there can be no righteous constitution that shall make the event and efficacy of it to depend on a condition absolutely uncertain, and which may not come to pass or be fulfilled; for if the condition fail, no recompense can be made unto him that has suffered. Wherefore, the way of the application of the satisfaction of Christ unto them for whom it was made, is sure and steadfast in the purpose of God.

(5.) God has appointed that there shall be an immediate foundation of the imputation of the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ unto us; whereon we may be said to have done and suffered in him 218what he did and suffered in our stead. And this is our actual coalescency into one mystical person with him by faith. Hereon does the necessity of faith originally depend. And if we shall add hereunto the necessity of it likewise unto that especial glory of God which he designs to exalt in our justification by Christ, as also unto all the ends of our obedience unto God, and the renovation of our natures into his image, its station is sufficiently secured against all objections. Our actual interest in the satisfaction of Christ depends on our actual insertion into his mystical body by faith, according to the appointment of God.

4. It is yet objected, Â“That if the righteousness of Christ be made ours, we may be said to be saviours of the world, as he was, or to save others, as he did; for he was so and did so by his righteousness, and no otherwise.Â” This objection also is of the same nature with those foregoing, A— a mere sophistical cavil. For, A—

(1.) The righteousness of Christ is not transfused into us, so as to be made inherently and subjectively ours, as it was in him, and which is necessarily required unto that effect of saving others thereby. Whatever we may do, or be said to do, with respect unto others, by virtue of any power or quality inherent in ourselves, we can be said to do nothing unto others, or for them, by virtue of that which is imputed unto us only for our own benefit. That any righteousness of ours should benefit another, it is absolutely necessary that it should be wrought by ourselves.

(2.) If the righteousness of Christ could be transfused into us, and be made inherently ours, yet could we not be, nor be said to be, the saviours of others thereby; for our nature in our individual persons is not Â“subjectum capax,Â” or capable to receive and retain a righteousness useful and effectual unto that end. This capacity was given unto it in Christ by virtue of the hypostatical union, and no otherwise. The righteousness of Christ himself, as performed in the human nature, would not have been sufficient for the justification and salvation of the church, had it not been the righteousness of his person who is, both God and man; for Â“God redeemed his church with his own blood.Â”

(3.) This imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto us, as unto its ends and use, has its measure from the will of God, and his purpose in that imputation; and this is, that it should be the righteousness of them unto whom it is imputed, and nothing else.

(4.) We do not say that the righteousness of Christ, as made absolutely for the whole church, is imputed unto every believer; but his satisfaction for every one of them in particular, according unto the 219will of God, is imputed unto them, A— not with respect unto its general ends, but according unto every oneÂ’s particular interest. Every believer has his own home of this bread of life; and all are justified by the same righteousness.
(5.) The apostle declares, as we shall prove afterwards, that as AdamÂ’s actual sin is imputed unto us unto condemnation, so is the obedience of Christ imputed unto us to the justification of life. But AdamÂ’s sin is not so imputed unto any person as that he should then and thereby be the cause of sin and condemnation unto all other persons in the world, but only that he himself should become guilty before God thereon. And so is it on the other side. And as we are made guilty by AdamÂ’s actual sin, which is not inherent in us but only imputed unto us; so are we made righteous by the righteousness of Christ, which is not inherent in us, but only imputed unto us. And imputed unto us it is, because himself was righteous with it, not for himself, but for us.

5. It is yet said, Â“That if we insist on personal imputation unto every believer of what Christ did, or if any believer be personally righteous in the very individual acts of ChristÂ’s righteousness, many absurdities will follow.Â” But it was observed before, that when any design to oppose an opinion from the absurdities which they suppose would follow upon it, they are much inclined so to state it as, that at least they may seem so to do. And this oft times the most worthy and candid persons are not free from, in the heat of disputation. So I fear it is here fallen out; for as unto personal imputation, I do not well understand it. All imputation is unto a person, and is the act of a person, be it of what, and what sort it will; but from neither of them can be denominated a personal imputation. And if an imputation be allowed that is not unto the persons of men, Â— namely, in this case unto all believers, Â— the nature of it has not yet been declared, as I know of.

That any have so expressed the imputation pleaded for, Â“That every believer should be personally righteous in the very individual acts of ChristÂ’s righteousness.Â” I know not; I have neither read nor heard any of them who have so expressed their mind. It may be some have done so: but I shall not undertake the defence of what they have done; for it seems not only to suppose that Christ did every individual act which in any instance is required of us, but also that those acts are made our own inherently, Â— both which are false and impossible. That which indeed is pleaded for in this imputation is only this, that what the Lord Christ did and suffered as the mediator and surety of the covenant, in answer unto the law, for them, and in their stead, is imputed unto every one of them unto the justification of life. And sufficient this is unto that end, without any 220such supposals.

(1.) From the dignity of the person who yielded this obedience, which rendered it both satisfactory and meritorious, and imputable unto many. (2.) From the nature of the obedience itself, which was a perfect compliance with, a fulfilling of, and satisfaction unto the whole law in all its demands. This, on the supposition of that act of GodÂ’s sovereign authority, whereby a representative of the whole church was introduced to answer the law, is the ground of his righteousness being made theirs, and being every way sufficient unto their justification. (3.) From the constitution of God, that what was done and suffered by Christ as a public person, and our surety, should be reckoned unto us, as if done by ourselves. So the sin of Adam, whilst he was a public person, and represented his whole posterity, is imputed unto us all, as if we had committed that actual sin. This Bellarmine himself frequently acknowledges: Â“Peccavimus in primo homine quando ille peccavit, et illa ejus prævaricatio nostra etiam prævaricatio fuit. Non enim vere per Adami inobedientiam constitueremur peccatores, nisi inobedientia illius nostra etiam inobedientia esset.Â” De Amiss. Grat. et Stat. Peccat., lib. v. cap. 18. And elsewhere, that the actual sin of Adam is imputed unto us, as if we all had committed that actual sin; that is, broken the whole law of God. And this is that whereby the apostle illustrates the imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto believers; and it may on as good grounds be charged with absurdities as the other. It is not, therefore, said that God judges that we have in our own persons done those very acts, and endured that penalty of the law, which the Lord Christ did and endured; for this would overthrow all imputation; Â— but what Christ did and suffered, that God imputes unto believers unto the justification of life, as if it had been done by themselves; and his righteousness as a public person is made theirs by imputation, even as the sin of Adam, whilst a public person, is made the sin of all his posterity by imputation.

Hereon none of the absurdities pretended, which are really such, do at all follow. It does not so, that Christ in his own person performed every individual act that we in our circumstances are obliged unto in a way of duty; nor was there any need that so he should do. This imputation, as I have showed, stands on other foundations. Nor does it follow, that every saved personÂ’s righteousness before God is the same identically and numerically with ChristÂ’s in his public capacity as mediator; for this objection destroys itself, by affirming that as it was his, it was the righteousness of God-man, and so it has an especial nature as it respects or relates unto his person. It is the same that Christ in his public capacity did work or effect. But there is a wide difference in the consideration of that as his absolutely, and as made ours. It was formally inherent in 221him, Â— is only materially imputed unto us; was actively his, Â— is passively ours; was wrought in the person of God-man for the whole church, Â— is imputed unto each single believer, as unto his own concernment only. AdamÂ’s sin, as imputed unto us, is not the sin of a representative, though it be of him that was so, but is the particular sin of every one of us; but this objection must be farther spoken unto, where it occurs afterwards. Nor will it follow, that on this supposition we should be accounted to have done that which was done long before we were in a capacity of doing any thing; for what is done for us and in our stead, before we are in any such capacity, may be imputed unto us, as is the sin of Adam. And yet there is a manifold sense wherein men may be said to have
Chapter IX. The formal cause of justification, or the

done what was done for them and in their name, before their actual existence; so that therein is no absurdity. As unto what is added by the way, that Christ did not do nor suffer the "idem" that we were obliged unto; whereas he did what the law required, and suffered what the law threatened unto the disobedient, which is the whole of what we are obliged unto, it will not be so easily proved, nor the arguments very suddenly answered, whereby the contrary has been confirmed. That Christ did sustain the place of a surety, or was the surety of the new covenant, the Scripture does so expressly affirm that it cannot be denied. And that there may be sureties in cases criminal as well as civil and pecuniary, has been proved before. What else occurs about the singularity of Christ's obedience, as he was mediator, proves only that his righteousness, as formally and inherently his, was peculiar unto himself; and that the adjuncts of it, which arise from its relation unto his person, as it was inherent in him, are not communicable unto them to whom it is imputed.

6. It is, moreover, urged, "That upon the supposed imputation of the righteousness of Christ, it will follow that every believer is justified by the works of the law; for the obedience of Christ was a legal righteousness, and if that be imputed unto us, then we are justified by the law; which is contrary unto express testimonies of Scripture in many places." Ans. (1.) I know nothing more frequent in the writings of some learned men than that the righteousness of Christ is our legal righteousness; who yet, I presume, are able to free themselves of this objection. (2.) If this do follow in the true sense of being justified by the law, or the works of it, so denied in the Scripture, their weakness is much to be pitied who can see no other way whereby we may be freed from an obligation to be justified by the law, but by this imputation of the righteousness of Christ. (3.) The Scripture which affirms that Å“by the deeds of the law no man can be justified," affirms in like manner that by Å“faith we do not make void the law, but establish it;" Å“that the righteousness of the law is 222fulfilled in us;" Å“that Christ Å“came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it;" and is the Å“end of the law for righteousness unto them that do believe." And that the law must be fulfilled, or we cannot be justified, we shall prove afterwards. (4.) We are not hereon justified by the law, or the works of it, in the only sense of that proposition in the Scripture; and to coin new senses or significations of it is not safe. The meaning of it in the Scripture is, that only Å“the doers of the law shall be justified," Rom. ii. 13; and that Å“he that does the things of it shall live by them,“ chap. x. 5, Å“namely, in his own person, by the way of personal duty, which alone the law requires. But if we, who have not fulfilled the law in the way of inherent, personal obedience, are justified by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto us, then are we justified by Christ, and not by the law.

But it is said that this will not relieve; for if his obedience be so imputed unto us, as that we are accounted by God in judgment to have done what Christ did, it is all one upon the matter, and we are as much justified by the law as if we had in our own proper persons performed an unsinning obedience unto it. This I confess I cannot understand. The nature of this imputation is here represented, as formerly, in such a way as we cannot acknowledge; from thence alone this inference is made, which yet, in my judgment, does not follow thereon. For grant an imputation of the righteousness of another unto us, be it of what nature it will, all justification by the law and works of it, in the sense of the Scripture, is gone for ever. The admission of imputation takes off all power from the law to justify; for it can justify none but upon a righteousness that is originally and inherently his own: Å“The man that does them shall live in them." If the righteousness that is imputed be the ground and foundation of our justification, and made ours by that imputation, state it how you will, that justification is of grace, and not of the law. However, I know not of any that say we are accounted of God in judgment personally to have done what Christ did; and it may have a sense that is false, Å“namely, that God should judge us in our own persons to have done those acts which we never did. But what Christ did for us, and in our stead, is imputed and communicated unto us, as we coalesce into one mystical person with him by faith; and thereon are we justified. And this absolutely overthrows all justification by the law or the works of it; though the law be established, fulfilled, and accomplished, that we may be justified.

Neither can any, on the supposition of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ truly stated, be said to merit their own salvation. Satisfaction and merit are adjuncts of the righteousness of Christ, as formally inherent in his own person; and as such it cannot be transfused into another. Wherefore, as it is imputed unto individual believers, it has not those properties accompanying of it, which belong only unto its existence in the person of the Son of God. But this was spoken unto before, as also much of what was necessary to be here repeated.

These objections I have in this place taken notice of because the answers given unto them do tend to the farther explanation of that truth, whose confirmation, by arguments and testimonies of Scripture, I shall now proceed unto.