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OF  
THE MERIT  
OF  
GOOD WORKS.

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[MEX, Poly]

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# Imprimatur

*Liber cui Titulus, [A Discourse concerning the Merit of Good Works.]*

*Guil. Needham R.R. in Christo P.  
ac D.D. Wilhelmo Archiep. Cantuar. à Sacr. Domest.*

Apr. 1.  
1688.

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A  
DISCOURSE  
Concerning the  
MERIT  
OF  
Good Works.

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A  
DISCOURSE

Concerning the  
Merit of Good Works.

**T**HE Doctrine of the Merit of Good Works is justly look't upon by Protestants as one of the Opinions of the present Church of Rome.

First, The Council of Trent (a) does (a) *Sess. 6. Can. 32.* anathematize those, who deny that a Man justified by Good Works does truly merit Eternal Life. Vega, who wrote his Books of Justification, during the time that he was at the Council, does maintain, (b) That the Council, by truly meriting, did understand merit- (b) *Op. de Justific. q. 9.* *ing de condigno.* Now the difference betwixt Merit *de congruo* and Merit *de condigno* used in the Roman Church, is this; Merit *de congruo* signifies a Good Work, which is worthy of Divine Reward, not out of any obligation from Justice, but out of a principle of fitness (or *congruity*), and from the free Bounty of God. Merit *ex condigno* is a Good Work to which Reward is due from a principle of Justice as well because of the Worth or Dignity of the Work, as because of the worth of the person that has done it.

A. 3.

Secondly,

Secondly, It is the opinion of the Divines of the Church of Rome, as Bellarmine has determin'd (c), Gregory de Valentia maintains it also for a certain (d) point of Faith.

Thirdly, The Inquisition did most evidently declare it, when it did expunge for heretical, out of several Books of that Church, such Propositions, as did deny the Merit of Good Works. The same thing also was done by Cardinal Quiroga, in his *Index Expurgatorius*, which he compos'd according to the order of the Council of Trent.

Fourthly, The same Spirit did appear in the Divines of the Church of Rome, when they advis'd those of their Communion to take heed of the opinion of such ancient Authors as do oppose the Merit of Good Works. Which was done at Rome, in Spain, in France, with respect to such Authors as they could not any longer suppress. Which matter of Fact is so evident, that nothing but the height of impudence can be able to gainsay or deny it.

If it comes once to be fully acknowledg'd, that the Church of Rome is of this opinion, we may justly charge it with one of the proudest Errours, that it could ever possibly be guilty of; and with having renounc'd that grand principle of Christianity, which does look upon that reward which God does vouchsafe to Good Works, as the effect not of Commutative Justice, which gives so much for so much, but as the effect of the faithfulness of God to such as should obey his Commandments, though their obedience has nothing in it self able to merit such a reward. For so saith S. Paul \*, *The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compar'd with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Moreover,

Moreover, we are very sure, that if the Church of Rome, in this Article of her belief, be quite of another opinion than S. Paul and the whole stream of Antiquity was of, for the eleven first ages of the Church, which has sufficiently been prov'd; so neither does it agree with the most eminent Doctors of the Latine Church, which have been since the eleventh age. To prove this, is the design of this Discourse, that there may be no refuge left for this error in this matter.

I begin with that exhortation which Anselme Archbishop of Canterbury (f) requir'd should be given to a certain Monk when he was a dying, after this manner: <sup>(f) Oper. p. 291.</sup> *Do you believe that you cannot be sav'd, but by the death of Jesus Christ? A. I do believe so. Do you heartily thank him for it? A. I do. Be you therefore ever thanking him for it as long as you live, and put your whole trust and confidence in that death alone; and let that be your only safeguard. And if the Lord will enter into judgement with thee, say thus, O Lord, unless I hold the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and thee and thy judgement, I am not able to plead with thee. If he tells you, that you have merited damnation, say unto him, I hold the Death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and my ill deserts; and instead of those Merits which I ought to have, but alas! have not, I offer to thee the Merit of his most meritorious passion. Let him say moreover, I hold the death of Jesus Christ between me and thine anger; after which let him add, Into thy hands &c. and he shall die with assurance; and he shall never see death.*

After this manner did Anselme, who died in the Year 1109. require that a Monk, that is, such a one, as according to their opinion, has Merits enough, both for himself and others, should make his Confession upon his Death-bed. Concerning which action of his,

his, one may observe, *First*, That this *Anselme* was Canonized, and his name is to be found upon the 21<sup>st</sup>. of *April* in the *Roman Martyrology*, which shows that he was no Teacher of Heresie [as they call Heresie]. *Secondly*, That this Exhortation which he required should be given to persons that were dying, was look't upon as so excellent a one all *Europe* over, that there is scarce any Book, belonging to the Church-Affairs, wherein it is not to be found. *Thirdly*, That the Church of *Rome* it self did own it, as Cardinal *Hosius* does witness (e). *Fourthly* That it was never charg'd with containing any pernicious Doctrine till the Popes, and the Inquisitors of the Faith, and the Council of *Trent*, caus'd those Articles, which we just now took notice of, to be blotted out, as contrary to the belief of their Church. *Fifthly* That notwithstanding this condemnation of it by the *Index Expurgatorius*, it is still retain'd in *France*, and may be seen in that edition of the Book Intituled *Ordo Baptizandi*, which was publish'd in the year 1614, where the same Questions and Answers are now to be seen, which were formerly condemn'd by Cardinal *Quiroga*.

One had need to transcribe the greatest part of *St. Bernard's* Works, to produce all those places, wherein that Father has shewn himself to be of the same opinion with *St. Anselme*. Thus he speaks in his sixty first Sermon upon the *Canticles*. *In the mercy of the Lord is my Merit; I am rich in Merits, seeing he is rich in compassion. As the mercies of the Lord are numberless, so are my Merits. If my Conscience does accuse me of a great many sins, where sins do abound, there does grace much more abound. . . . Shall I sing of my own righteousnesses? O Lord, I will make mention of thy righteousness only, which is mine also because thou hast made it so.*

He

He speaks still more particularly at the end of his Book of *Grace and of Free-Will*. *How*, says he, does the Apostle call that Crown, which he says is laid up for him, a Crown of righteousness? Is it not because one may justly claim, as a due debt, whatsoever is never so freely promised? He says, in effect, I know whom I have believed; and I am perswaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him. And because he believed him, who had promised him, he does with confidence demand that which had been promised. The promise is of mercy; but it ought to be performed in justice. The Crown then which *St. Paul* does wait for, is a Crown of righteousness, not of his own righteousness, but of God's. For it is but just, that he should pay what he owes, and he owes whatsoever he has promised. So then, 'tis the justice of God only on which the Apostle does rely. . . . If any one therefore would give our Merits their due name, they are certain seeds of hope, motives to charity, marks of a secret predestination, presages of future happiness, the way to a Kingdom, but by no means the cause which does entitle us to it. It is impossible to blast this proud Doctrine of Merits of condignity more effectually than *St. Bernard* does in these words: The same sense is repeated in some others of his Works; as in his first Sermon of the *Annunciation*, and in the fifteenth Sermon on *Quis habitat*, and especially in his hundred and ninetieth Epistle against the Heresies of *Petrus Abelandus*, who was one of the first, after the *Pelagians*, who did oppose this Doctrine of the Gospel.

We may observe in the mean time, *First*, That *St. Bernard* was Canonized by *Alexander the III.* in the Year 1165, viz. Twelve Years after his Death;

B

Secondly.

# A Discourse concerning the

*Secondly*, That Pope *Innocent* the II. does approve of this Epistle of *St. Bernard's* against *Abelardus*, as may be seen by that Epistle which he wrote to the Archbishops of *Sens* and of *Rheims*, to their Suffragans, and to *St. Bernard* himself, and which is the one hundred ninety fourth amongst *St. Bernard's* Epistles. *Thirdly*, That he was the most learned Man in his time. *Fourthly*, That he was the Founder of an eminent Order, which is dispersed throughout all the Western part of the World, and that a great number of Abbots, Bishops and Cardinals have come out of his School.

*Petrus* Abbot of *St. Rhemy*——at *Rheims*, and afterwards Bishop of *Chartres*, wrote these words, a little before the Year 1170 (b). That the conscience of him who does make confession of his greatest sins does stand in need of a handful of the blood of *Jesus Christ*: in stead of dipping the tip of his finger in water; let him wash his hands, not in the blood of a sinner, but in the death of his Redeemer. Let him dip his finger in the place where the Nails were. He does afterward compare the Blood of *Jesus Christ* upon the Cross to that of the Lamb which was sprinkled by the Priest; and from thence takes occasion to express himself thus: Dip then thy finger, and sprinkle it against the Veil of the Sanctuary, to the end that the blood of our Lord's passion may serve thee for a key to open the gates of heaven.

The same Author says also in another Work of his (i), We must every day present before God, not our own Merit, which is evil, but the privilege of his nature, and his mercy. This is the constant Doctrine of the XIIth Age.

(b) Tract. de  
Pauibus, cap.  
15.

(i) Lib. 1. de  
Tabern. Mosai-  
ci Exposit. p.  
99. B. P.

Urban

# Merit of Good Works.

*Urban* the IVth lived about the middle of the XIIIth Age. He is famous for instituting the Feast of the Sacrament, upon the account of a pretended Revelation to a certain religious Woman of the Country of *Liege*. There is a Commentary of his upon the *Miserere*, where he shows, that he does follow the same Doctrine concerning the Merit of Good Works, which was universally received before his time. First, He protests that he does appeal from Justice to Mercy, according to the Exhortation of *St. Anselme*. Secondly, He does confess that there is nothing in him able to merit that Glory which he does wait for (k). Thirdly, He declares that Mercy has no respect to our Merits, but only to our Misery. Fourthly, He does make use of such terms as these: I do not beg for my own Merits sake, or for thy Justice or my own . . . or for my Works sake, wherein I have miserably gone astray, but for thy great mercy. Non peto secundum meritum meum, vel secundum justitiam tuam vel meam . . . vel secundum opera mea, quibus miser deviavi, sed secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.

*Thomas Aquinas* who was contemporary with this Pope speaks thus (m); No Man can make any pretence of Merit before God, unless by supposing a Divine disposition, by virtue of which Man does obtain of God by his operation, quasi mercedem, in manner of a Salary as it were, that for which God has given him the power of working. This is the Doctrine of the Gospel. But see here the leaven which *Thomas* adds to it, and which has so very much sowed the whole mass of the Divinity of the Church of *Rome*. The same *Thomas* in the Third Article of the same Question, with some other Divines in his time, does maintain, That

(k) Quia igitur solvendo non sum, passionis condigne ad tuam gloriam ex-  
peto.

(m) 1. 2. Q.  
114. A. 1.

because of the operation and the grace of the Holy Spirit wrought in the faithful, and from whence Good Works do proceed, their Good Works do merit *de condigno*, which is so very weak a foundation, that one might naturally draw from it a Doctrine quite contrary to that which *Thomas Aquinas* has gathered from it. Upon which account alone *Vasquez* thought himself obliged to refute it. The same Leaven is to be found also in *St. Bonaventure*, in *Guilielmus Antissiodorensis*, and in *Guilielmus Parisiensis*. But all this could not hinder but that the Holy Doctrine should still be preserved in the Chairs and Schools of the *Latine Church*.

*Aegidius de Roma* is very famous both for his Birth and Dignities, but especially for having undertaken the Defence of *St. Thomas*. The sum of which has been critically examined by an eminent Divine of *Oxford*, in a Book entituled, *Thoma Reprehensio*. (u). In the mean time he has made no difficulty of deserting *St. Thomas* in the matter of Merit. He does expressly say (o), *First*, That there must be some equality between the Merit and its Reward, and that it is this equality, which is the foundation of Justice; then he concludes, that where there is not such an Equality, there can be no Justice. *Secondly*, He maintains that the faithful are considered in respect of God, as Servants are in respect of their Masters, Children of their Parents, and the Wife of her Husband. He could not have spoken more expressly of Justice or of Merit. *Thirdly*, He shows how that our Saviour Jesus Christ declared this Truth, *Luke 17. 10.* where he says, *When ye shall have done all those things that are commanded you, say we are unprofitable servants, we have done that* which

(u) *Ant. Mirae. rium* (u).  
c. 409.

(o) In 2. *Dist. i.*  
27. Q. 1. *Art.*  
3.

which was our duty to do. (p) For a servant cannot do more than he ought, for whatsoever he does, is but his duty. There is not therefore any thing simply just, nor simply a Merit between a Master and a Servant, but there may be something like it. This is the opinion of him whom they commonly call the Prince of Divines.

*ne simpliciter meritum inter Dominum & Servum, sed potest esse aliquid simile huic.*

(p) *Servus autem nihil potest supererogare, sed totum est debitum quicquid facit. Non est ergo simpliciter iustum*

*Raymondus de Rochefort Penitentiary of Gregory the ninth*, and the third General of the Order of the *Jacobins* compos'd at the same time a Summary of the cases of Repentance, an Abridgment of which may be found in that place, where the Author does set down the confession of dying persons, in the same terms that *St. Anselme* had prescribed to them. There is no need of repeating them, I suppose it was made a little after *Raymondus's* Work was publish'd, because there are so many ancient Manuscripts of it to be found in Libraries.

*Durandus* Bishop of *Puy*, and afterwards Bishop of *Meaux*, does solemnly confute the Doctrine of *St. Thomas Aquinas*, about the Merit of Good Works (q). And he does it so notably both by Scripture and Reason, that the Divines of the Church of *Rome* are fore'd to look upon him as an Antagonist of their *Thomas Aquinas*. Yet for all that, this *Durandus* taught Divinity at *Rome*, and at *Paris* they had generally a great reverence and esteem for him.

Moreover it is plain, that this was not his opinion in particular, but was the general belief of most people: first that very year in which *Durandus* died, viz. in the year 1333. *Guilielmus de Montrotier* publish'd a Treatise of his for a Direction for Curates,

in

(q) n. 2. *Dist.*  
27. q. 2.

(r) Ch. 2. du  
traicté 3 part  
2.

in which these words do occur upon the Lord's Prayer (r): But why do we rather say thy Kingdom come, than say, Let us come into thy Kingdom? I answer, that it is to show us, that no man does obtain the glory of Paradise by his own Merits, but purely by the grace of God, according to that of the Apostle, not by Works of Righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. It is therefore we say adveniat, that is to say, Let thy grace come unto us, and not, Let us arrive at that; because, as was said, we cannot arrive at it by our own Merits.

Secondly, Nicholas de Lyra has made notes upon the whole Bible, and has preserv'd that little knowledge of the Holy Scriptures which did remain before the Reformation. He wrote these words at the same time, upon the tenth Chapter of St. John. The glory of Heaven cannot properly be called wages, but a kind of free gift, in as much as that only which is paid as a recompence for some labour, is called wages. And the reason of this is, because that an Inheritance is distinguish'd from wages properly so called; just as a Son, to whom the Inheritance does belong, ought to be distinguish'd from a hireling, to whom wages is due. Thus the glory of Heaven is given to the faithful, as an inheritance is to Children, and has not therefore the nature of wages.

(f) Lib. 6. c.  
21.

Thirdly, Simon de Cassia who died in the year 1348. speaks after the same manner (f) upon those words, Call the labourers, and give them hire, Jesus Christ, saith he, has made use of a soft word, when he said not, their hire, because no man does merit rewards for his Good Works, nor indeed the greatest wages. Upon which account it is, that he does not add their, but hire only, viz. that which he has from all eternity prepar'd to bestow upon those that Work righteousness.

The

The famous Richard, Archbishop of Armagh, in his Treatise against the errors of the Armenians, speaking of the word merces; does explain himself in these terms (t). Seeing some certain sort of recompence ought to be given to any one, not upon the account of the condignity of his Work, but upon the account of the promise, and so also of the justice of him who gives it, and who promis'd it only in general; let this sort of recompence be given in any degree whatsoever, one may still call it wages for Work.

(t) Lib. 12. c.  
21.

Bradwardin Chancellor of Oxford, and afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury does attack the Pelagians with a vast volume, wherein he overthrows the Doctrine of Merit of condignity in several places, vigorously maintaining this Proposition, That Merits are not the cause of Eternal reward, (u) as the Doctrine of the sacred Scriptures and of Antiquity.

A. 1350.

(u) merita non  
ess. causam  
aeterni premii.

If any one does still desire a stronger proof than the Testimony of these three persons does afford, though because writing in the same time, in places far distant from one another, and upon a popular subject, one might easily believe them for what they say; I may alledg the University of Paris, where Guy a Professour and a Carmelite, having propounded this Proposition against a Jacobin, Man does merit eternal life de condigno, that is to say, in such a manner that unless it were given him, he would be injur'd, and God would wrong himself, he was forc'd to recant it as false, heretical, and blasphemous. This was done in the year 1353. by the order of the Chancellour of the University, and of several other Doctors of the faculty at Paris.

After



*A Discourse concerning the*

After this recantation, we may see many eminent Divines following the opinion of *St. Anselme* and *St. Bernard*. One *Jacobus de Hauteville* Professour at *Paris*, whose opinion *Marsilius ab Ingen* does take notice of. *Marsilius ab Ingen* does formally maintain that our Works whether consider'd in themselves, or as the fruit of the grace of God working with us, cannot merit *ex condigno*, which he proves all along by Scripture: and he does determine on the contrary, that whatsoever is called Merit, does depend upon the acceptance of God through the Merit of *Jesus Christ*. *Gerardus de Zusphe*n, who died four years before *Marsilius*, was plainly of the same opinion.

Towards the end of that age, *Raymondus Jordanus* Abbot of *Celles in Berry* was of this opinion. They publish'd his Books under the name of *Idiota*, but Father *Raynaud* has made it appear that they were this *Raymondus's*. Thus he speaks: (x) *Tribulation*, says he, does not suit well with a past crime which thou dost pardon, nor with the present grace of consolation which thou dost give, nor with the future glory which thou dost freely promise. These words did displease the Censors of the *Bibliotheca Patrum*, who therefore put a *Caute legendum* at the margin. They were so much afraid, lest they should wholly attribute the praise of our Salvation to the mercy of God.

The Doctrine of *St. Anselme*, was not forgotten in the XVth. Age, which furnishes us with a great many eminent witnesses who did oppose the Merit of condignity.

*Petrus de Alliaco* Bishop of *Cambray*, and afterwards a Cardinal, does maintain that Merits are but improperly call'd the cause of Recompence.

*Gerson*

*Merit of Good Works.*

*Gerson* Chancellour of the University of *Paris*, a Person admir'd all Europe over in the time of the Council of *Constance*, does, in his Treatise of the Art of Dying, put these words in the Mouth of a dying Believer, O Lord, I implore thy pardon, not for any value of my own Merits, but by the virtue and efficacy of thy most Holy Passion, by the which thou wert willing to redeem me, even me that was miserable, and didst vouchsafe to purchase Paradise for me by the price of thy Blood. The same *Gerson* when he made his Will, concluded it with this verse,

*Spes mea tu Jesus es, gratia, non opera.*

*Johannes Waldensis*, whose works were examin'd at *Rome* and approv'd of by *Pope Martin* the Vth, does at the same time express himself in as precise a manner. When he saw a great party of *Thomas Aquinas's* opinion concerning Merit of Condignity, he expresses himself thus, I take him for a most Holy Divine, for a most faithful Catholick and most agreeing with the Holy Scriptures, who does simply renounce any such Merit, and does avow with the moderation of the Apostle and the Scriptures, that no Man does simply merit the Kingdom of Heaven, but by the grace of God, or by the will of him who bestows it. He proves his opinion by the Sacred Scripture, by the Fathers, by the Canon of the Mass which speaking of the Saints do import thus much, into whose company we pray thee to admit us, not regarding our Merit, but granting us Pardon. And in another place, he says, To the end that we, who do not trust in the quality of Merits, may merit not thy judgment but thy mercy.

C

I confess

(x) Lib. 2.  
Contempl. p.  
445. T. 5.  
B. P.

I confess that *Waldensis* as learned a Man as he was, does take those words of the *Mafs*, *non estimator Meriti*, *sed donator Veniæ*, in a wrong sense. It is certain by the expositions of the ages before *Waldensis*, that the word *Meritum* does not in this place signify Good Works, but Sins; the sense is, *not regarding our sins, but granting us pardon for them*. Some of those Divines have notwithstanding follow'd the error of *Waldensis*; but if it be a fault, the great approbation which they have for the Works of *Waldensis* has authoriz'd it. And it is very probable, that if so learned a Man as *Waldensis* could thus make use of this place of the *Mafs*, there were a great many Divines in his time, who understood it in the same sense as he did, more regarding the sound of the terms, than their true signification. However it was, see what he adds, God, saith he, according to this article, has no regard to our Merit, either of congruity or of condignity, but to his own grace, will, and mercy. It is therefore very injurious to our Saviour, and him who crowns us so freely, to dispute so much about Merits, without speaking of his Grace.

*Paul* Bishop of *Burgos*, one of the most knowing Prelates of his time in the Holy Scriptures, did so exactly follow the same opinion, that Cardinal *Belarmine* thought himself oblig'd to joyn him with *Thomas Waldensis*, as one of those that did most strongly oppose *Thomas Aquinas's* opinions concerning this matter.

*Biel*, who was the first that taught in the University of *Tubing*, towards the end of the XV<sup>th</sup>. Age, does explain the *Merit of Condignity* in such a manner, as does quite overthrow the same opinions of *Thomas*, referring all to God's acceptance, positively denying

denying the goodness of an action to be the ground of God's rewarding it, but only his promise, which is the opinion of the Ancients and of Protestants.

Pope *Adrian* the sixth, Cardinal *Cajetan*, and *Comrard Koelin*, can easily inform us, what was taught in their time, that is to say, in the first thirty years of the sixteenth Age.

See what *Adrian* had written in 4. *Sententiarum* before he was Pope (y). Our Merits, saith he, are like a staff of reed, whereon if a Man lean, it breaks, and pierceth the hand of him that leaneth thereon. He, imitating *Isaiab* herein, does compare the righteousnesses of Man, to a piece of menstruous cloth. Our Saviour, writes he, then speaks rightly, when he says, When we have done all those things that are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants. This Doctor being afterward made Pope in the year 1522. caused his Works to be printed at *Rome*, which was done without any contradiction, neither did he ever retract any thing of this Doctrine.

Cardinal *Cajetan* is famous for his conferences with *Luther*. But as he in his latter days did apply himself to study and comment upon the Holy Scriptures, see how he expresseth himself upon the sixth chapter, verse the twenty third of the *Epistle to the Romans*, following herein the conceptions of *St. Austin*: *St. Paul* does not say that eternal life is the wages of righteousness, but the gift of God, to the end that we may understand, that we do not merit eternal life by our Merits, but by the free gift of God. This is his opinion at last. For I know that though this famous *Thomist* had before pusht things so far, as to maintain, that the Good Works of the righteous do merit eternal life *ex condigno*, yet there was never any divine covenant

made thereupon. As *Bellarmin* does confess *ubi supra* cap. 16.

*Conrad Koelin*, commenting upon the *Summ* of *St. Thomas* does reflect upon *St. Thomas's* opinion, that Good Works receive *quasi mercedem*, that is, as it were a reward, upon the account of the promise of God made to Good Works, and says that he exprest himself thus, *because properly speaking, Man does not receive a reward, because there is nothing just or due in this retribution*, and he maintains that in this respect it cannot properly be called a reward &c.

(2) in 2 Thom.  
q. 114. art. 1.

*Erasmus* is so exprest in this matter in many places, that he was censur'd for it; and was put in the *Index Expurgatorius*.

*Didacus Stella* a famous Cordelier, and Confessor to Cardinal *Granville* has past through the *Index Expurgatorius* of *Quinoga*, for having taught upon *St. Luke*, that we do not merit blessedness *ex condigno*.

*Jossens Clitoveus* an eminent Doctor of *Paris* and a Regular of *Chartres* does make all the same reflections upon those words of the *Masi*, *non estimator Meriti, sed donator Veniæ*, against the Merit of Good Works, which *Waldensis* had done before him. Which shows that our Reformers have only followed the sense which the most eminent Divines of the Church of *Rome* had put upon those words. This is in his *Elucid. Ecclesiast.* p. 156. where he says that which *Luther* treating upon the same Subject could not have said more.

*Johannes Ferus* an eminent Cordelier, and Preacher at *Mayence* has followed the same opinion, as may be seen in his pieces printed at *Paris*, with the privilege and approbation of the *Sorbonne*, in the year 1560. It is true, that following the stile of the Inquisition,

quisition, they have since expunged those places out of his Works. And probably this is the reason, why there is another Edition of them Printed at *Rome*.

*Claudius Espenseus*, the famous Bishop of *Eureux*, who was present as a Doctor at the Council of *Trent*, does defend *Erasmus's* opinion in his Comment upon the Second Epistle to *Timothy* and fourth Chapter, as conformable to the sentiments of *St. Austin*, declaring with that ancient Doctor, that the *Crown of Righteousness* is so called, because it is just that God should grant that which he has in his mercy promised, although the thing be not due.

There is a Work of Abbot *Louis Blasius*, who dyed in the Year 1566, Printed in the *Bibliotheca Patrum* under the name of Abbot *Dacrianus*. It is called *Speculum Monachorum*, where he speaks in several places after such a manner, as shows that he was of an opinion directly opposite to Merits of *Condignity*. Thus he speaks of the faithful; *They do not, says he, confidently place the hope of their Salvation in the number, or in the Merit of the Good Works which they do, but in the liberty of the Children of God which they have obtained by the Blood of Jesus Christ* (a).

(a) T. 5. D.  
16. P. 708.

This is the History of what passed from the XIIth Age, till the Council of *Trent*, about the belief of *Merit of Condignity*. To draw any great advantage from it, I judge it is necessary to add here some Considerations, which we may very naturally make upon it.

### The First Consideration.

THE first Consideration, which one might make upon it, is, That the Church of *Rome* has not been exempted from changes in the most important matters of Religion. That therefore it tells us, with such an Emphasis, of its immutability, is a meer illusion. In vain do they maintain, That an Image of Plaister Work, which they have formerly gilt over, is of pure Massy Gold, since it is sufficient to undeceive the World, that by the breaking off only one Finger of it, it is evident that it is nothing but Plaister Work gilt over. There are none but ignorant persons that can be abused by it. And certainly never was any thing more easie to be conceived than the change which we speak of. Ever since so great a Man as *Thomas Aquinas* and some others did produce this new opinion, though they could not make it be received altogether, yet they have insensibly drawn in some Orders to adhere to this opinion, and to admire their learning. The *Summ* of *St. Thomas* has insensibly been owned by the Popish Divines, and they look't upon it as the Sacred Text, some Ages ago. At last it has in some measure prevailed over *Lombard*, whose Work had served as a Text to an infinite number of Divines from the *XIIth* to this present Age. An eminent instance of what I say is to be seen in the Order of *Cordeliers*. All the World knows that *Joannes Scotus* was the first that thought of the immaculate conception of the

the Blessed Virgin. Nevertheless, the credit of this great Man, and the pertinacious adhesion of the Divines of his Club, has almost subverted the *Roman* School upon this Question. The *Jacobins*, who persist in the ancient opinion, have had much ado to defend themselves against the torrent, and the Council of *Trent* durst not decide a Question clearer than the day, for fear of making a Schism among the Divines of her Communion; the opinion of *Joannes Scotus* having been determined as an Article of Faith at the Council of *Basel*, which shows that within the space of an hundred and twenty three Years, which past from the Death of *Joannes Scotus* to this Council, the greatest part of the Divines had embraced this Novelty; and the *Sorbonne* which looks upon this Council as a General one, does make her Doctors swear, That they will defend this belief even to the loss of their Blood. Thus did error, in a little time, make this great progress in the bosome of the *Roman* Communion. And yet after all this, they are continually buzzing in our Ears the immutability of that Church in matters of Faith.

### The Second Consideration.

THE second Consideration, which serves to comprehend the means whereby this change was affected, has respect to the Inquisition, which the *Jacobins* of the Cabal of *St. Thomas Aquinas* were possessed of from the Year one thousand two hundred fifty eight. One may see by a writing of the University of *Paris*, that they lay'd the greatest ground of the Pope's approbation of *Thomas Aquinas* his Doctrine upon his Canonizing

Canonizing him. But we know after what manner they have proceeded against the other Orders themselves, when they have dared to oppose the sentiments of this new Saint. How since the Inquisition has come within their hands, they have made use of it to the best advantage against such as had the courage to oppose the designs and definitions of the Popes. They have not forgotten also to make use of it to support the interests of their Order, as far as they were able, in exterminating all such as should dare to contend with them in matter of Religion. They know well enough that before the Tribunal of the Inquisition was erected, no opinion could gain ground so quickly. When persuasion only is made use of without outward force, it is a difficult thing for any new opinion to make any quick progress. There is contradicting, writing, disputing, this hinders the progress of error; but since force and violence were mixt with it, Men hold their peace, and keep their opinion to themselves; there is need of a great deal of courage, and a great deal of consideration publicly to maintain an opinion against him that is furnished with power to destroy you, and who makes his will the only rule and measure of his proceedings. This is the character of the Inquisition, as may be seen in the Inquisitors Directory publisht at Rome, towards the end of the last Age. The People and knowing persons did not think themselves often obliged to go and contend with the Divines, whom they lookt upon as Novators; as long as they saw that the Orthodox opinions do always enjoy the prayers of the Church, as we very clearly see that those did, which respect the Nature of Good Works, though they saw them opposed by those new Disciples of *Thomas Aquinas*.

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### The Third Consideration.

THE third Consideration which one might make upon the means whereby this change was effected, has respect to Confession, by means of which the Monks did insensibly alter that belief which prevailed aforetime. The care which the Monks took to possess themselves of the Consciences of Men, by rendering themselves Masters and Judges of their hearts in the Tribunal of Penance; that great power which they had ever since the XIII<sup>th</sup> Age in directing Mens Consciences, maugre all the opposition of their own ordinary Pastors, has given them occasion to insil into People the same sentiments concerning Works meriting *de Condigno*. And indeed if one does carefully examine the matter, it will appear, *First*, That it is just from that time, that the Monks have set so strange a value upon their Works, as if by that means they were in a much greater degree of perfection, than other Christians are. *Secondly*, It appears, That it is from that time, that they have erected Fraternities, by giving their Votaries Letters of Association for all the Merits of their Convents. As the foundation of these Fraternities was altogether new, so is it in vain to search for any such Letters in Antiquity, as those which we see in these last Ages. *Waldensis* (b) does recite the form of these Associations for the Order of Carmelites, to which he did belong: *We grant you cap. 93. the perpetual participation of whatsoever the Mercy of our Saviour does vouchsafe to effect by our Brethren.*

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M. de

(b) *Ton. de Sacramentalibus*, T. 1. c. 20.

*M. de St. Amour* does recite in his Journal, p. 541. the form of Association which they had in the Order of the *Augustins* by a Grace of the General of that Order in the year 1653. We may easily perceive how the last is much larger than the former. It would be a very silly thing to imagine that there were any such forms of Association in the time of *St. Hilary*, who said so expressly upon the Parable of the wise Virgins, which refused to give of their oyl to the foolish ones, (c) *That no man can be assisted by the Works and Merits of another.* The receiving of errors repugnant to Antiquity is an effect of the corruption of Divinity in these last Ages. And the drawing of such pernicious consequences from them, for to subject the people unto them by pretending to associate them with themselves, is an effect of a Monkish Spirit.

(c) *Can. 21.*  
in *Matth. p.*  
591.

### The Fourth Consideration.

A Fourth Consideration will evidently demonstrate the novelty of this proud Doctrine of Merit of Condignity. 'Tis true, the Popes have turn'd those words of Jesus Christ to *St. Peter*, *Whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth, shall be loos'd in Heaven*, into all senses. *Gregory* the seventh found therein a right of freeing Subjects from the Oath of Allegiance. *Innocent* the Third found therein a right of granting a kind of general Pardon to all such as would go to defend the Holy Land against the Infidels, commanding the Angels to receive them at the hour of their deaths, and to carry them into Heaven without

out ever passing through Purgatory. But ever since the conceit of the Condignity of Works has gained in the World, they have thereupon invented, that the Saints having done a great many Works of Supererogation, they might make a great advantage of them, if they should make a Fond of them, and the *Popes* who know how to manage them well, have found out a very good secret, how to render Indulgences more plausible, by giving them so plausible a foundation. It is certain, if any thing in the World can be so, that Indulgences are nothing else but a relaxation of those punishments, which the Canons did prescribe to those who ought to undergo a publick Penance. The most knowing of the *Roman School* agree to it. It is certain, that in the first Ages of the Church, this Indulgence was granted at the prayer of those who were ready to suffer Martyrdom: But since the conceit of the Merit of Condignity has prevail'd, it is no more as it was; it is now an imputation of the Satisfaction and Merits of such as have suffer'd more than they deserv'd; and who have done more Good Works, than they were oblig'd to do. The *Pope* has gathered together this surplussage of Satisfaction and of Merits, he keeps the key of them, he opens them in the years of *Jubilee*, he opens them at his pleasure, and gives of them what, how much, and to whom he pleases. *Corrio* has observ'd in his History of the *Milanese*, that *Boniface* the eighth sent an Indulgence to *Milain*, of so uncertain an import, that it was granted, (d) neither to the contrite, nor to those that were confessed. In the year 1300. the twenty first day of *January* when the Indulgence was given out at *Rome*, to which place the *Lombards* could not come, because of continual Wars,

(d) *nec contritus, nec confessi.*

Pope Boniface at the Intercession of Viscount John Galeasius, granted it to Milan in the same form as he had given it to Rome, viz. That every one under the Dominion of that Viscount, although he was neither Contrite nor Confessed, should be absolved from any sin: on Condition that he remain ten days together in that City, and visit five Churches every day ..... and offer the first time two parts of the Money that he might expend in his Journey to Rome, two parts of which are to be bestowed towards the building of a Church, and the third part to the Pope. These are the words of Corvino. Theodericus of Niem Bishop of Verd, relateth almost the same thing of Urban the Sixth: this Pope not content with the great Offerings which were made in the Churches of Rome by the Germans, Hungarians, Poles, Bohemians, English, and by those that were of the Kingdoms and Provinces under his Obedience he sent out his Questors into several Kingdoms to sell his Indulgence for that Money which it might cost the People in their Journey to Rome; and thus he amassed together a large heap of wealth, because they absolved from all sins confessed, even without Penance. This is a marvelous effect, but so marvelous that any one may be assured, that whosoever they were that have ever been the greatest persons, and most knowing in Antiquity, not to speak at present of the Apostles, did never discover any thing of it by all the effort of their meditation and study. This truth was acknowledged by Antoninus, Sylvester, Prieras, and by Fisher Bishop of Rochester in the last Age.

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### The Fifth Consideration.

THE Fifth Consideration does respect not only that division which is among the Schoolmen about this matter, (which is no very rare thing, no more than their opposition to the sentiments of the purest antiquity is,) but that contradiction also wherein one may see the Writers of the Church of Rome, are with themselves about it. Can any one imagine a more ridiculous contradiction than that of St. Thomas Aquinas and of his followers? They confess, That Man has nothing in himself whereby he can merit, That there is need of an effectual Grace for the conversion of any Man, That this Grace is given freely. It follows from hence, and 'tis the Doctrine of St. Austin, That Man being indebted to God for this Grace which does push him forward to good Works, and which does move him to every good action, he can never merit thereby. In the mean time, notwithstanding this principle which they lay down, they cease not to maintain, That the faithful do merit, properly speaking. Behold also another as palpable a contradiction about the same matter. They maintain that Man can make no pretence to the glory of Heaven without the promise which God has given him of it; They are forc'd to confess moreover upon this foundation, That there is no proportion between Good Works and the Glory of Heaven. From these two principles it necessarily follows, That if God does give the glory of Heaven to the faithful, 'tis purely of grace, and because he has promised it. Nevertheless after their agreement in these two principles, they cease not to oppose the consequences of them, by

by maintaining that Good Works have properly the nature of true Merits. This is what the Council of *Trent* has determined in authorizing that ridiculous contradiction which the *Thomists* are guilty of.

### *The Sixth Consideration.*

Whatsoever corruption the *Thomists* have introduced in Divinity, by their belief concerning the Merit of Good Works, it is easy to understand, that they have not been so far able to subvert the reigning conceptions of the *Latine Church*, but that there is still remaining within the bosom of it a great many persons which do retain the purest opinions. 'Tis a truth which is easily known, because a great many famous Doctors and most eminent persons in that Communion do always vigorously oppose this novelty, and do maintain the antient Doctrine. I am even persuaded that it is almost impossible, but that the greatest part of the people must continue in the Ancient opinions, if they have had but the least knowledge of the Gospel: especially when they come to attend to the prayers which were in publick use, and to that confession which they caused to be made to dying persons. In effect whatsoever great thoughts one might grant them of those new Saints whose works have contributed most to the treasure of Indulgences, there is need of but a very little common sense to understand that the greatest Saints dying with those protestations which they caused them to make at the very point of death, (then especially obliged to speak sincerely

sincerely in so principal and so important a circumstance of time,) were either perfect hypocrites; or in fine, that they merited by this lying confession; which are so many palpable and gross absurdities, that it is not at all necessary to confute them. We must confess then that these Disputes of the *Thomists* have been retained for some time in the Chairs of the Colleges, and agitated by the Divines only, and that the people had then no part in them. Secondly that since they are gone out from the Universities, and have entred into the Chairs and Seats of the Confessors, they have there been contradicted by divers excellent persons; which serves to defend the ancient Doctrine, and to show plainly the novelty of the other. Thirdly, that when they had very near prevail'd in the *Latine Church*, it has always preserved in its publick service, sentiments opposite to that which might pass for the common sentiment of the Divines of its School. It is here, that we may safely apply the remark of St. *Ambrose*, That oftentimes the ears of the people are more chaste than the lips of the Pastors; and that which he says at another time, That the people may retain the Orthodoxy, even then when they are led by Pastors which are engaged in Errour.

### *The Seventh Consideration.*

We know that the Council of *Trent* has condemned the Merit of Congruity, that is to say, the opinion of a great many Schoolmen, who maintain that Works done before Grace, do merit Grace, if not absolutely,



solutely, yet at least by a kind of agreeableness, to which God cannot refuse it. But to say the truth, one may very well wonder, why Merit of Congruity has been more unfortunate than that of Condignity; at least if we look upon them as coming from the Schoolmen. There have been as many at least, who have defended the Merit of Congruity, as that of Condignity. Almost all the School of *Scotus* defended Merits of Congruity, that School of *Scotus* which was so considered at the Council of *Trent*, that if the Immaculate Conception which the *Scorists* defended was not established there into an Article of Faith, for fear of seeming to give a deference to the Authority of the Council of *Basil*, which the Court of *Rome* lookt upon as a Cabal or unlawful Assembly, at least they left it in its possession by a particular Article; and there was some appearance as if Merits of Congruity might have the same approbation. What then could have drawn this condemnation upon them? It is no hard matter to guess what it was. On the one side, they had a mind to preserve the power of conferring grace to the Sacrament of Penance, and to other Sacraments; and they know that this is a privilege that does return wholly to them that minister the Sacraments, on whom grace does by this means depend. On the other side, they found no advantage in this opinion, not to say that it did visibly oppose the Doctrine of *St. Austin*, and of the Councils and the Popes that had approved of it. But it was otherwise with the Doctrine of Merit of Condignity. *First*, They could not renounce it without justifying the Reformation which *Luther* had commenced, by overthrowing the foundation of Indulgences, which is the Merit

of

of Condignity. *Secondly*, The Popes and the Monks would visibly lose their Credit. The Pope would lose his entire Revenue of Indulgences. The Monks would lose all the fruit of their Severities. For to speak what I think, the confidence which they repose in the Merits of the Ancient Saints is small enough; and I am perswaded that for one Visionary who shall put any confidence in the Merits of the Fathers of the Desert of *Thebais*, who lived in the *Vth* Age, one may find a hundred thousand which think of nothing but the Merits of the Fathers of the neighbouring Convent, which may sufficiently be seen by the Fraternities and by the Letters, of which there are a great many forms among the Religious. This was it which forced the Fathers of the Council to anathematize three sorts of persons, *viz.* Those that deny, that Good Works do truly merit the augmentation of Grace; those that deny, that they do truly merit eternal Glory; and those that deny, that they do merit the possession of eternal Life. For the second Article does clearly express the Merit of Condignity, which the *Lutherans* deny as strongly as they do the last Article, which does in truth depend on it, but of which the Council makes a branch by it self, because it would consider the dignity of the Work and the Works themselves, before that it would consider that which they obtain of God (*e*).

(*e*) *Can.* 32.  
*Sess.* 6.

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## The Eighth Consideration.

**B**UT, in fine, whatsoever determination was made at the Council of Trent upon this matter, I desire the Reader to consider that there always has been a great many Christians within the Communion of the Church of Rome, who have only apparently followed the Decrees of that Council; and who after all have followed the Doctrines of the Gospel and of Antiquity. I say moreover, that they have strongly opposed them, and that it was out of pure necessity that they revoked them at the hour of Death. So true is it that Conscience cannot always be seduced by the errors of the understanding; 'tis true also, that when Men are approaching before the Throne of God's Justice, it is difficult for them to preserve that Spirit of Pride which is in the Roman School. One can hardly produce a more lively proof of the truth of this Reflection than the instance of Cardinal Hosius, who presided at the Council of Trent under Pius the IVth. These are some of the expressions of his last Will: *I approach the Throne of thy Grace O Father of Mercies and of all consolation, to the end that I may obtain mercy and find grace in thy sight. Whensoever it shall please thee to demand back again that which thou hast committed to me, into thy hands I resign my Spirit; which if thou shouldst look upon as it is in it self, I confess it is not worthy to appear in the presence of thy Majesty, for it is full of all kind of pollutions; but if thou hast respect to the Blood of thy Son, wherein it has been washed and purify'd, and to those bitter Torments which he suffered for our sins* that

that he might render us acceptable in thy sight, they are worthy that for their sake thou shouldst give it eternal Life, which he purchased at so great a price. He desires that God would not look upon him in himself, but in the face of Jesus Christ. I am not worthy, says he, that thou shouldst behold me with the Eyes of thy Majesty, but as it is most worthy that for the sake of his Death and Passion, thou shouldst not only look upon me; but crown me also. 'Tis therefore that I come unto thee, most dear Father, and that without any Merits, but those inestimable ones of thy Son Jesus Christ my Lord and my Redeemer. I bring thee the Merit of that Death, wherein alone I place all my hope and my confidence; that is my righteousness, my satisfaction, my redemption and my propitiation. The Death of my Lord is my Merit. And after that having recited the words of St. Bernard in his sixty first Sermon upon the Canticles, which I have cited before, he adds, speaking of the Blood of Jesus Christ, *Regard that price; for that price sake declare me worthy to be placed among the Sheep at thy right Hand.* See here what the Conscience says, when it beholds its Sins and its Good Works; and it will never speak otherwise, especially at the hour of Death, where it scatters away its illusions; except the Church of Rome does blot out of her Books the Questions which are made to dying persons, because they contain a clear and express abjuration of the Doctrine of Merits of Condignity. And though the Indexes made by the orders of the Council of Trent have attempted to raze them out, yet they have hitherto never been able to do it in the Roman Communion. And if the Priests who ought to make use of them about dying persons, do suppress them, to accommodate themselves

themselves to the designs of the Council, and of the *Index Expurgatorius*, such at least as do not acknowledge the Tribunal of the Inquisition, do retain this truth, as that which does afford all the consolation to dying persons that they can have.

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**F I N I S.**

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