

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 16.-Of Good Works.

IV. They, who in their obedience, attain to the greatest height, which is possible in this life, are so farre from being able to supererogate, and to doe more than God requires, as that they fall short of much which in duty they are bound to doe¹.

Question 1.—*What does the term “supererogation” mean?*

Answer.—The term “supererogation” means “more than is demanded.” The Roman Church teaches the ordinary Arminian theory of perfectionism. In addition to this error, they teach (a.) that good works subsequent to baptism merit increase of grace and eternal felicity (*Council of Trent*, sess. 6., ch. 16., can. 24, 32); and (b.) they distinguish between the commands and the counsels of Christ. The former are binding upon all classes of the people, and their observance necessary in order to salvation, Luke 10:28. The latter, consisting of advice, not of commands—such as celibacy, voluntary poverty, obedience to monastic rule, etc., Matt. 19:12; Luke 6:20; Matt. 5:48—are binding only on those who voluntarily assume them, seeking a higher degree of perfection and a more exalted reward.

Question 2.—*Are they who in their obedience, attain to the greatest height, which is possible in this life, so far from being able to supererogate, and to do more than God requires, that they fall short of much, which in duty they are bound to do?*

Answer.—Yes. Luke 17:10; Neh. 13:22; Job 9:2,3; Gal. 5:17. Well then, Papists err, maintaining, that a man regenerated cannot only fulfil the law of God perfectly, but may do also more good than the law of God requires of him. This is their mad fancy of supererogation. They are confuted for these reasons: 1.) Because no man living is able to fulfil the whole law of God, Ps. 143:2; Isa. 64:6; 1 John 1:8. Far less is any man able to do more than the law requires. 2.) Because we are obliged to seek remission of sins every day, Matt. 6:12. But to seek pardon of sin every day, and to perform works of supererogation, are inconsistent together. 3.) Because Christ says, When you shall have done all those things which are commanded, you are still an unprofitable servant, Luke 17:10. 4.) Because, according to this doctrine of works of supererogation, we must accuse the Scripture and law of God, of imperfection, as if they were not a perfect rule of life and manners, which is contrary to the Psalmist, Ps. 19:8. And contrary to 2 Tim. 3:15,17; Deut. 4:2. 5.) Because whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, these are commanded as things necessary to all men, Phil. 4:8. Therefore, either the works which the Papists call works of supererogation, are true, honest, just, and pure; and if they be such, they are commanded by God in Scripture, and not works of supererogation, 1 Thess. 5:21. Or they are dishonest, impure, unjust, and if such, then no man is so mad as to call them good works, much less works of supererogation, Luke 16:15.

That works of supererogation are always and essentially impossible to all creatures in all worlds is also evident—1.) From the very nature of the moral law, Rom. 7:12. That

¹Luke 17:10; Neh. 13:22; Job 9:2,3; Gal. 5:17.

which is right under any relation is intrinsically obligatory upon the moral agent standing in that relation, Neh. 9:13. If it be moral, it is obligatory, Ps. 19:7-12. If it be not obligatory, it is not moral, Rom. 3:19; Gal. 3:10. If it is not moral, it is, of course, of no moral value or merit, Isa. 1:12. If it is obligatory, it is not supererogatory, Mic. 6:8. When men do what it is their duty to do, they are to claim nothing for it, Luke 17:10. 2.) The doing of that which God has not made it man's duty to do—all manner of will-worship and commandments of men—God declares is an abomination to him, Col. 2:18-23; 1 Tim. 4:3; Matt. 15:9. 3.) Christ has given no "counsels," as distinct from his commands, Ps. 40:6. His absolute and universal command to love God with the whole soul, and our neighbor as ourselves, covers the whole ground of possible ability or opportunity on earth or in heaven, Matt. 22:37-40. 4.) Increase of grace and eternal felicity, and all else which the believer needs or is capable of, is secured for him by the purchase of Christ's blood, and either given freely now without price, or is reserved for him in that eternal inheritance which he is to receive as a joint-heir with Christ, Heb. 9:15. 5.) The working of the Roman Catholic system of celibacy, voluntary poverty, and monastic vows, has produced such fruits as prove the principle on which they rest radically immoral and false, Matt. 23:27; Isa. 57:9.