

Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

Chapter IV



Dr. Martin Luther 1535

CHAPTER 4

This I say, that the heir as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors, until the appointed of the father.

YE see with what vehement affection Paul goeth about to call back the Galatians, and what strong arguments he useth in debating the matter, gathering similitudes of experience, of the example of Abraham, of the testimonies of the Scripture, and of the time, so that oftentimes he seemeth to renew the whole matter again. For before, he had in a manner finished the disputation concerning justification, concluding that a man is justified before God by faith only and alone. But because he calleth also to remembrance this political example of the little heir, he bringeth the same also for the confirmation of his matter. Thus trying every way, he lieth in wait with a certain holy subtlety to take the Galatians unawares; as he saith in another place: 'Being crafty, I caught you with guile' (2 Corinthians 12:16). For the ignorant people are sooner persuaded with similitudes and examples, than with deep and subtle disputations. They will rather behold an image well painted, than a book well written. Paul therefore now, after that he had brought the similitude of a man's testament, of the prison, of the schoolmaster, useth also this similitude of an heir (which is familiar and well known to all men), to move and to persuade them. And surely it is a very profitable thing for a teacher to be furnished with similitudes and examples, which not only Paul, but also the prophets, and Christ himself also did often use.

Ye see, saith he, that it is ordained by the civil laws, that an heir, albeit he be the lord of all his father's goods, differeth not from a servant. Indeed he hath an assured hope of an inheritance: but before he come to his years, his tutors hold him in subjection, like as the schoolmaster doth the scholar.

They commit not unto him the ordering of his own goods, but constrain him to serve, so that he is kept and maintained with his own goods like a servant. Therefore as long as this bondage endureth, that is, so long as he is under tutors and governors, he differeth nothing from a servant. And this subjection and servitude is very profitable for him: for otherwise through folly he would soon waste all his goods. This captivity endureth not always, but hath a certain time limited and appointed by the father wherein it must end.

So also we, as long as we were children, were in bondage under the rudiments of the world

In like manner, when we were little children, we were heirs, having the promise of the inheritance to come, which should be given unto us by the seed of Abraham, that is to say, by Christ, in whom all nations should be blessed. But because the fullness of time was not yet come, Moses, our tutor, governor, and schoolmaster,

came holding us in captivity with our hands bound, so that we could bear no rule, nor possess our inheritance. In the meantime notwithstanding, like as an heir is nourished and maintained in hope of liberty to come, even so Moses did nourish us with the hope of the promise to be revealed in the time appointed; to wit, when Christ should come, who by his coming, should put an end to the time of the law (which continued while the polity of Moses yet stood), and begin the time of grace.

Now the time of the law endeth in two manner of ways: first (as I said), by the coming of Christ in the flesh at the time appointed of his Father. 'For Christ was once for all in due time made man, born of a virgin, and made under the law, that he might redeem them which were under the law,' etc. (Galatians 4:4 f.). 'He entered into the holy place once for all through his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption' (Hebrews 9:12).

Moreover, the same Christ who came once in the time appointed, cometh also unto us daily and hourly in spirit. Indeed once with his own blood he redeemed and sanctified all; but because we are not yet perfectly pure (for the remnants of sin do yet cleave in our flesh, which striveth against the spirit), therefore daily he cometh unto us spiritually, and continually more and more accomplisheth the appointed time of his Father, abrogating and abolishing the law.

So he came also in spirit to the fathers of the Old Testament before he appeared in the flesh. They had Christ in spirit. They believed in Christ which should be revealed, as we believe in Christ which is now revealed, and were saved by him as we are, according to that saying: 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.' Yesterday, before the time of his coming in the flesh; today, when he was revealed in the time before appointed; now and for ever he is one and the same Christ. For even by him only and alone all the faithful which either have been, be, or shall be, are delivered from the law, justified and saved. 'In like manner we also,' saith he, 'when we were children, served under the rudiments of the world;' that is to say, the law had dominion over us, oppressed us, and kept us in a strait bondage, as servants and captives. For first it restrained carnal and rebellious persons civilly, that they should not run headlong into all kinds of vice. For the law threateneth punishment to transgressors; which if they feared not, there is no mischief which they would not commit; and over those whom the law so bridleth, it ruleth and reigneth. Again, it did accuse us, terrify us, kill us, and condemn us spiritually and before God: and this was the principal dominion that the law had over us. Therefore, like as an heir is subject unto his tutors, is beaten, and is compelled to obey their laws, and diligently to execute their commandments: even so, men's consciences, before Christ come, are oppressed with the sharp servitude of the law; that is to say, they are accused, terrified and condemned of the law. But this dominion, or rather this tyranny of the law is not continual, but must only endure until the time of grace. Wherefore the office of the law is to reprove and to increase sins, but

unto righteousness: to kill, but unto life. For the law is a schoolmaster unto Christ. Like as therefore the tutors do handle the heir, being yet a child, straitly and hardly, rule him and command him as a servant, and he again is constrained to be subject unto them: even so the law accuseth us, humbleth us, and bringeth us into bondage, that we may be the bondservants of sin, death, and of the wrath of God, which is indeed a most miserable kind of bondage. But as the power of the tutors, and the subjection and bondage of the little heir is not continual, but only endureth unto the time appointed of the father; which being ended, he needeth not to be governed by tutors, nor remaineth under their subjection any more, but with liberty enjoyeth his inheritance: even so the law hath dominion over us, and we are constrained to be servants and captives under his government, but not for ever. For this clause which followeth must be added: 'Until the time appointed of the father.' For Christ which was promised, came and redeemed us which were oppressed with the tyranny of the law.

Contrariwise, the coming of Christ profiteth not the careless hypocrites, the wicked contemners of God, nor the desperate, which think that nothing else remaineth but terrors of the law which they feel. His coming only profiteth those which are tormented and terrified with the law for a time; that is to say, such as despair not in those great and inward terrors which the law stirreth up, but with a sure trust come unto Christ the throne of grace, which hath redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them, and so obtain mercy and grace (Hebrews 4:16; Galatians 3:13).

There is a certain vehemency therefore in this word, 'we were in bondage.'

As if he would say: our conscience was subject to the law, which holding us as bondslaves and captives, like as a tyrant holdeth his prisoners, whipped us, and with all his power exercised his tyranny upon us; that is to say, it brought unto us a terror and a heaviness of spirit, it made us to tremble and ready to despair, threatening unto us everlasting death and damnation. This spiritual bondage is most sharp and bitter, and yet (as I have said) it is not continual, but endureth only so long as we are children; that is, as long as Christ is absent. Whilst he is absent, we are servants, shut under the law, destitute of grace, faith, and all the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

But after that Christ is come, then ceaseth the prison and bondage of the law.

Under the elements or rudiments of this world, etc.

Some have thought that Paul speaketh here of those corporal elements, the fire, the air, the water, and the earth. But Paul hath his peculiar manner of speech; and he speaketh here even of the law of God, which he calleth elements or rudiments of this world: and his words seem to be very heretical. So is he wont in other places also to diminish and to abase the authority of the law very much,

when he calleth it 'the letter that killeth,' 'the ministry of death and damnation,' and 'the power of sin.' And these most odious names, which shew plainly the power and use of the law, he chooseth of purpose, to admonish us, that in the terrors of sin, wrath, and the judgment of God, we trust not to our own righteousness or to the righteousness of the law, seeing that the law, in his best and principal use, can do nothing else but accuse our consciences, increase sin, threaten death and eternal damnation. Wherefore this diminishing and abasing of the law must be applied to the conflict of conscience, and not to the civil life, nor to secure and careless minds.

He calleth therefore the law the elements of the world; that is to say, the outward letters and traditions written in a certain book. For although the law do civilly bridle a man from evil, and constrain him to do well, yet notwithstanding being kept after this sort, it doth not deliver him from sin, it justifieth him not, it prepareth not a way for him to heaven, but leaveth him in the world. I do not obtain righteousness and everlasting life, because I kill not, I commit not adultery, I do not steal, etc. These outward virtues and honest conversations be not the kingdom of Christ, nor the heavenly righteousness, but the righteousness of the flesh and of the world; which also the Gentiles had, and not only the merit-mongers, as in the time of Christ the Pharisees, and in our time the monks and friars, etc. This righteousness some do observe to avoid the punishment of the law; some that they may be praised of men and esteemed righteous, constant, and patient; and therefore it is rather to be called coloured hypocrisy, than righteousness.

Moreover, the law, when it is in its principal use and office, can do nothing but accuse, terrify, condemn and kill. But where such terror, such feeling of sin, of death, of the wrath and judgment of God is, there is no righteousness, no divine or heavenly thing, but all these are mere things of the world; which (because it is the kingdom of the devil) is nothing else but a certain puddle of sin, of death, of hell, and of all evils which the fearful, sorrowful and heavy-hearted do feel: but the secure and careless contemners do not feel them. Wherefore the law, even in his best and most perfect use, doth nothing else but reveal and increase sin, and strike into us the terror of death; and these are but worldly things. We see then that the law giveth no lively, no healthful, no divine or heavenly thing, but only worldly things. Wherefore Paul doth very fitly call the law the elements or rudiments of the world.

And although Paul call the whole law the rudiments of the world (as may appear by that I have said before), yet principally he speaketh thus in contempt of ceremonial laws; which although they profit never so much, yet (saith he) they consist only in outward things, as meat, drink, apparel, places, times, the Temple, the feasts, washings, the sacrifices etc., which be but mere worldly, and things ordained of God only for the use of this present life, but not to justify or save before God. Therefore by this clause, 'the rudiments of the world,' he rejecteth and condemneth the righteousness of the law, which consisted in these

outward ceremonies, being notwithstanding ordained and commanded of God to be observed for a time; and by a contemptible name he calleth it the rudiments of the world.

So the Emperor's laws be rudiments of the world, for they intreat of worldly matters: that is to say, of things concerning this present life, as of goods, possessions, inheritances, murders, adulteries, robberies, etc. whereof speaketh also the second table of the Ten Commandments. As for the Pope's canon laws and decretals, which forbid marriage and meats, those Paul in another place calleth the doctrines of devils; which are also the rudiments of the world, but that they do most wickedly enjoin the observation of outward things contrary to the Word of God and faith.

Wherefore the law of Moses giveth nothing but worldly things; that is to say, it doth only shew civilly and spiritually the evils that be in the world.

Notwithstanding, if it be in its true use, it driveth the conscience, by its terrors, to seek and thirst after the promise of God, and to look unto Christ. But that thou mayest so do, thou hast need of the aid and assistance of the Holy Ghost, which may say in thy heart: It is not the will of God that after the law hath done his office in thee, thou shouldest only be terrified and killed, but that, when thou art brought by the law to the knowledge of thy misery and damnation, thou shouldest not despair, but believe in Christ, 'who is the end of the law unto righteousness, to every one that believeth' (Romans 10:4). Here is no worldly thing done; but here all worldly matters and all laws cease, and heavenly things begin now to appear.

Therefore, so long as we be under the rudiments of the world, that is to say, under the law, which only revealeth and increaseth sins and engendereth wrath, we be servants thrall and subject to the law, although we have the promise of the blessing to come. Indeed the law saith: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, but that I may be able so to do, or to apprehend Christ, this cannot the law give.

I speak not this to the end that the law should be despised, neither doth Paul so mean, but it ought to be had in great estimation. But because Paul is here in the matter of justification, it was necessary that he should speak of the law, as of a thing very contemptible and odious. For justification is a far other manner of thing than the law is. We cannot speak basely and contemptuously enough of the law when we are in this matter. When the conscience therefore is in the conflict, then should it think upon nothing, know nothing at all but Christ only and alone. Then should it remove the law utterly out of its sight, and embrace nothing but the promise concerning Christ. To say this, it is an easy matter; but in the time of temptation, when the conscience wrestleth in the presence of God, to do it indeed, of all things it is the hardest: to wit, that when the law accuseth thee, terrifieth thee, revealeth unto thee thy sin, threateneth the wrath of God and eternal death, that then (I say) thou shouldest have such strength of faith, as if

there had never been any law or any sin, but only Christ, mere grace, and redemption; or that thou shouldest be able to say: O law, I will not hear thee, for thou hast a stammering and a slow tongue; moreover, the fullness of time is now come, and therefore I am free, and will not suffer thy tyranny any longer, etc. Here a man may see how hard a matter it is to separate the law from grace. Again, how divine and heavenly a gift it is to hope here even against hope, and how true this proposition of Paul is, that we are justified by faith alone.

Learn here, therefore, to speak of the law as contemptuously as thou canst in the matter of justification, by the example of the Apostle, which calleth the law 'the rudiments of the world,' 'pernicious traditions,' 'the strength of sin,' 'the ministry of death,' etc. For if thou suffer the law to bear rule in thy conscience when thou standest before God, wrestling against sin and death, then is the law indeed nothing else but a sink of all evils, heresies and blasphemies; for it doth nothing but increase sin, accuse and terrify [the conscience], threaten death, and set forth God as an angry judge, which rejecteth and condemneth sinners. Here therefore, if thou be wise, banish this stuttering and stammering Moses far from thee with his law, and in any wise let not his terrors and his threatenings move thee. Here let him utterly be suspected unto thee as an heretic, as an excommunicate and condemned person, worse than the Pope and the devil himself, and therefore not to be heard or obeyed in any case.

But out of the matter of justification, we ought with Paul to think reverential of the law, to commend it highly, to call it holy, righteous, good, spiritual and divine. Out of the case of conscience we should make a God of it, but in the case of conscience it is a very devil. For, in the least temptation that can be, it is not able to raise up and comfort the conscience; but it doth clean contrary: it terrifieth, it oppresseth it with heaviness, and plucketh it from the assurance of righteousness, of life, and of all goodness. Hereupon Paul a little after, calleth it 'weak and beggarly rudiments.' Wherefore let us not suffer the law in any case to bear rule in our conscience, especially seeing it cost Christ so great a price to deliver the conscience from the tyranny of the law. For he was made a curse for us, that he might deliver us from the curse of the law. Let the godly learn therefore that the law and Christ are two contrary things, whereof the one cannot abide the other. For when Christ is present, the law may in no case rule, but must depart out of conscience, and leave the bed (which is so strait that it cannot hold two, as Isaiah saith, Isaiah 28:20), and give place only to Christ. Let him only reign in righteousness, in peace, in joy and life, that the conscience may sleep and repose itself joyfully in Christ without any feeling of the law, sin and death.

Paul here of purpose useth this figurative speech, 'elements of the world'; whereby (as I said) he doth much abase and diminish the glory and authority of the law, to stir up our minds. For he that readeth Paul attentively, when he heareth that he calleth the law 'the ministry of death,' 'the letter that killeth,' etc. by and by he thinketh thus with himself: Why doth he give such odious, and, as it appeareth to reason, blasphemous terms to the law, which is a divine doctrine

revealed from heaven? To this Paul answereth, that the law is both holy, just and good, and that it is also the ministry of sin and death, but in divers respects. Before Christ, it is holy; after Christ, it is death. Therefore when Christ is come, we ought to know nothing at all of the law, unless it be in this respect, that it hath power and dominion over the flesh, to bridle it and keep it under. Here is a conflict between the law and the flesh (to whom the yoke of the law is hard and grievous) as long as we live.

Only Paul among the Apostles, calleth the law 'the rudiments of the world,' 'weak and beggarly elements' 'the strength of sin,' 'the letter that killeth,' etc. The other Apostles spake not so of the law. Whosoever then will be a right scholar in Christ's school, let him mark diligently this manner of speech used of the Apostle. Christ calleth him 'an elect vessel' (Acts 9:15) and therefore gave unto him an exquisite utterance, and a singular kind of speech above all the rest of the Apostles, that he as an elect vessel might faithfully lay the foundations of the article of justification, and clearly set forth the same.

But after the fulness of time was come, God sent his son, made or born of a woman, and made under the law, that he might redeem them which were under the law

That is to say, after the time of the law was fulfilled, and that Christ was revealed, and had delivered us from the law, and that the promise was published among all nations, etc.

Mark diligently how Paul here defineth Christ. Christ (saith he) is the son of God and of a woman, which for us sinners was made under the law, to redeem us that were under the law. In these words he comprehendeth both the person of Christ and the office of Christ. His person consisteth of his divine and human nature. This he sheweth plainly when he saith, 'God sent his own son, born of a woman.' 'Christ therefore is very God and very man. His office he setteth forth in these words: 'Being made under the law to redeem them that were under the law.'

And it seemeth that Paul here as it were in reproach, calleth the Virgin, the mother of the Son of God, but only a woman; which thing was not well taken even of some of the ancient Fathers, who would that he should rather have called her a virgin, than a woman. But Paul intreateth in this Epistle of the most high and principal matter of all, to wit, of the Gospel, of faith, of Christian righteousness; also what manner of person Christ is, what is his office, what he hath taken upon him and done for our cause, and what benefits he hath brought to us wretched sinners. Wherefore the excellency of so high and so wonderful a matter was the cause that he had no regard to her virginity. It was enough for him to set forth and preach the inestimable mercy of God, which would that his Son should be born of that sex. There he maketh no mention of the dignity of the sex, but of the sex only. And in that he nameth the sex, he signifieth that Christ was

made true and very man of womankind. As if he said, he was born not of man and woman, but only of womankind. Therefore when he nameth but only the womankind, it is the same when he saith: 'made of a woman,' as if he said: 'made of a virgin.' John the Evangelist, when he setteth forth the Word, that it was in the beginning, and was made flesh etc., speaketh not one word of his mother.

Furthermore, this place also witnesseth that Christ, when the time of the law was accomplished, did abolish the same, and so brought liberty to those that were oppressed therewith, but made no new law after or beside that old law of Moses. Wherefore the monks and popish schoolmen do no less err and blaspheme Christ, in that they imagine that he hath given a new law besides the law of Moses, than do the Turks, which vaunt of their Mahomet as a new lawgiver after Christ, and better than Christ. Christ then came not to abolish the old law, that he might make a new, but (as Paul here saith) he was sent of his Father into the world, to redeem those which were kept in thralldom under the law. These words paint out Christ lively and truly: they do not attribute unto him the office to make any new law, but to redeem them which were under the law. And Christ himself saith: 'I judge no man,' and in another place: 'I came not to judge the world, but that the world should be saved by me' (John 8:15; John 12:47); that is to say, I came not to bring any law, nor to judge men according to the same, as Moses and other lawgivers; but I have a higher and better office.

The law killed you, and I again do judge, condemn and kill the law, and so I deliver you from the tyranny thereof.

We that are old men which have been so nusled up in this pernicious doctrine of the Papists, that it hath taken deep root, even in our bones and marrow, have conceived an opinion quite contrary to that which Paul here teacheth. For although we confessed with our mouth that Christ redeemed us from the tyranny of the law, yet in very deed in our hearts we thought him to be a lawgiver, a tyrant and a judge, more terrible than Moses himself. And this perverse opinion we cannot yet at this day in so great light of the truth, utterly reject; so strongly are those things rooted in our hearts which we learn in our youth. But ye which are yet young and are not infected with this pernicious opinion, may learn Christ purely with less difficulty than we that are old can remove out of our minds these blasphemous imaginations which we have conceived of him.

Notwithstanding ye have not utterly escaped the deceits of the devil. For although ye be not as yet infected with this cursed opinion that Christ is a lawgiver, yet have ye in you the root whereof it springeth, that is, ye have the flesh, reason, and the corruption of nature, which can judge no otherwise of Christ, but that he is a lawgiver. Therefore ye must endeavour with all your power to learn so to know and to apprehend Christ, as Paul hath set him forth in this place. But if besides this natural corruption, there come also corrupt and wicked

teachers (of whom the world is full), they will increase this corruption of nature, and so shall the evil be doubled; that is to say, evil instruction will increase and confirm the pernicious error of blind reason, which naturally judgeth Christ to be a lawgiver, and printeth that error mightily in our minds, that without great travail and difficulty, it can never be abolished.

Wherefore it is very profitable for us to have always before our eyes this sweet and comfortable sentence, and such-like, which set out Christ truly and lively, that in our whole life, in all dangers, in the confession of our faith before tyrants, and in the hour of death, we may boldly and with sure confidence say: O law, thou hast no power over me, and therefore thou dost accuse and condemn me in vain. For I believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, whom the Father sent into the world to redeem us miserable sinners oppressed with the tyranny of the law. He gave his life and shed his blood for me. Therefore, feeling thy terrors and threatenings, O law, I plunge my conscience in the wounds, blood, death, resurrection and victory of Christ. Besides him I will see nothing, I will hear nothing. This faith is our victory, whereby we overcome the terrors of the law, sin, death, and all evils, and yet not without great conflicts. And here do the children of God, which are daily exercised with grievous temptations, wrestle and sweat indeed. For oftentimes it cometh into their minds, that Christ will accuse them, and plead against them: that he will require an account of their former life, and that he will condemn them. They cannot assure themselves that he is sent of his Father to redeem us from the tyranny and oppression of the law. And whereof cometh this? They have not yet fully put off the flesh, which rebelled against the spirit. Therefore the terrors of the law, the fear of death, and such-like sorrowful and heavy sights do oftentimes return, which hinder our faith that it cannot apprehend the benefit of Christ (who hath redeemed us from the bondage of the law) with such assurance as it should do.

But how, or by what means hath Christ redeemed us? This was the manner of our redemption: 'He was made under the law.' Christ, when he came, found us all captives under governors and tutors, that is to say, shut up and holden in prison under the law. What did he then? Although he be the Lord of the law, and therefore the law hath no authority or power over him (for he is the Son of God), yet of his own accord he made himself subject to the law. Here the law executed upon him all the jurisdiction it hath over us. It accuseth and terrifieth us: it maketh us subject to sin, death, the wrath of God, and with his sentence condemneth us. And this it doth by good right: for we are all sinners, and by nature the children of wrath.

Contrariwise, Christ did no sin, neither was there any guile found in his mouth (1 Peter 2:22). Therefore he owed nothing to the law.

Yet notwithstanding the law was no less cruel against this innocent, holy, righteous and blessed [Lamb], than it was against us cursed and damned sinners, yea much more rigorous. For it accused him as a blasphemer and a

sedition person: it made him guilty before God of the sins of the whole world: it so terrified and oppressed him with heaviness and anguish of spirit, that he sweat blood, and briefly, it condemned him to death, yea even to the death of the cross (Luke 22:44).

This is indeed a wonderful combat, where the law being a creature giveth such an assault to his Creator, and against all right [and equity] practiseth his whole tyranny upon the Son of God which it exerciseth upon us as the children of wrath. Now, therefore, because the law did so horribly and cursedly sin against his God, it is accused and arraigned. There Christ saith:

O law, thou mighty queen and cruel regent of all mankind, what have I done, that thou hast accused me, terrified me and condemned me, which am innocent? Here the law, which had before condemned and killed all men, when it hath nothing wherewith to defend or purge itself, is again so condemned and vanquished, that it loseth his whole right, not only over Christ (whom without any right it so cruelly handled and killed), but also over all them that believe in him. For to those Christ saith: Come unto me all ye that labor under the yoke of the law. I could have overcome the law by my absolute power, without mine own smart: for I am Lord of the law, and therefore it hath no right over me. But I have made myself subject unto the law for your cause which were under the law, taking your flesh upon me: that is to say, of mine inestimable love I humbled and yielded myself to me same prison, tyranny and bondage of the law, under the which ye served as captives and bond-slaves; I suffered the law to have dominion over me which was his Lord, to terrify me, to make me thrall and captive unto sin, death, and the wrath of God, which it ought not to have done.

Therefore I have vanquished and overthrown the law by double right: first as the Son of God and the Lord of the law; secondly in your person: which is as much as if ye had overcome the law yourselves; for my victory is yours.

After this manner Paul speaketh everywhere of this marvellous combat between Christ and the law. And to make the matter more delectable and more apparent, he is wont to set forth the law by a figure called prosopopoeia, as a certain mighty person, which had condemned and killed Christ: whom Christ again, overcoming, death, had conquered, condemned and killed, Ephesians 2:14: 'Killing enmity in himself.' Again: 'When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive' (Ephesians 4:8; Psalm 68).

He useth the same figure also in his epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Colossians: 'By sin he condemned sin,' etc. (Romans 8:3). Christ therefore by this victory banished the law out of our conscience, so that now it can no more confound us in the sight of God, drive us to desperation, or condemn us. Indeed it ceaseth not still to reveal our sin, to accuse and terrify us; but the conscience taking hold of this word of the Apostle: 'Christ hath redeemed us from the law,' is raised up by faith, and conceiveth great comfort. Moreover, it triumpheth over the

law with a certain holy pride, saying: I care not for thy terrors and threatenings; for thou hast crucified the Son of God, and this hast thou done most unjustly; therefore the sin that thou hast committed against him cannot be forgiven.

Thou hast lost thy right [and sovereignty], and now for ever thou art not only overcome, condemned, and slain unto Christ, but also to me believing in him, unto whom he hath freely given this victory. So the law is dead to us for ever, so that we abide in Christ. Thanks be therefore to God, which hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (Corinthians 15:57).

These things do also confirm this doctrine, that we are justified by faith only. For when this combat was fought betwixt Christ and the law, none of our works or deserts came between, but only Christ was found, who putting upon him our person, made himself subject to the law, and in perfect innocency suffered all the tyranny thereof. Therefore the law, as a thief and a cursed murderer of the Son of God, loseth all his right, and deserveth to be condemned in such sort, that wheresoever Christ is, or is once named, there it is compelled to avoid and fly away, no otherwise than the devil flieth from the Cross. Wherefore if we believe, we are delivered from the law through Christ, who hath triumphed over it by himself.

Therefore this glorious triumph purchased unto us by Christ, is not gotten by any works but only by faith: therefore faith only justifieth.

These words then, 'Christ was made under the law' etc., as they are pithy and import a certain vehemency, so are they diligently to be weighed and considered. For they declare that the Son of God being made under the law, did not only perform one or two works of the law, that is to say, he was not only circumcised, or presented in the Temple, or went up to Jerusalem with other at the times appointed, or only lived civilly under the law, but he suffered all the tyranny of the law. For the law being in his principal use and full of power, set upon Christ, and so horribly assailed him, that he felt such anguish and terror, as no man upon the earth had ever felt the like. This his bloody sweat doth sufficiently witness, his comfort ministered by the angel, that mighty prayer which he made in the garden, and briefly, that lamentable complaint upon the cross: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' These things he suffered to redeem those that were under the law, that is to say, in heaviness of spirit, in anguish and terror, and ready to despair, which were oppressed with the heavy burden of their sins, as indeed we are all oppressed. For as touching the flesh we sin daily against all the commandments of God. But Paul giveth us good comfort when he saith: 'God sent his Son,' etc.

So Christ, a divine and human person, begotten of God without beginning, and born of the Virgin in the time appointed, came not to make a law, but to feel and suffer and terrors of the law with all extremity, and to overcome the same, that so he might utterly abolish the law. He was not made a teacher of the law,

but an obedient disciple to the law, that by this his obedience he might redeem them which were under the law. This is against the doctrine of the Papists, who have made Christ a law-giver, yea, much more severe and rigorous than Moses. Paul teacheth here clean contrary, to wit, that God humbled his Son under the law, that is to say, constrained him to bear the judgment and curse of the law, sin, death, etc.

For Moses the minister of sin, wrath, and death, apprehended, bound, condemned, and killed Christ: and all this he suffered. Therefore Christ standeth as a mere patient, and not as an agent, in respect of the law. He is not then a law-giver, or a judge after the law, but in that he made himself subject to the law, bearing the condemnation of the law, he delivered us from the curse thereof.

Now, whereas Christ in the Gospel giveth commandments, and teacheth the law, or rather expoundeth it, this pertaineth not to the doctrine of justification, but of good works. Moreover, it is not the proper office of Christ (for the which he came principally into the world) to teach the law, but an accidental or by-office: like as it was to heal the sick, to raise up the dead, do good to the unworthy, comfort the afflicted, etc. These are indeed excellent and divine works and benefits; but yet not the very proper and principal works of Christ. For the prophets also taught the law, and wrought miracles. But Christ is God and man, who fighting against the law, suffered the utmost cruelty and tyranny thereof. And in that he endured the burden of the law, he vanquished it in himself: and afterward being raised up again from death, he condemned and utterly abolished the law which was our deadly enemy, so that it cannot condemn and kill the faithful any more. Wherefore the true and proper office of Christ is to wrestle with the law, with the sin and death of the whole world, and so to wrestle that he must suffer and abide all these things; and by suffering them in himself, conquer and abolish them, and by this means deliver the faithful from the law and from all evils. Therefore to teach the law and to work miracles, are particular benefits of Christ, for the which he came not principally into the world. For the prophets, and especially the Apostles, did greater miracles than Christ did (John 14).

Seeing then that Christ hath overcome the law in his own person, it followeth necessarily that he is naturally God. For there is none, whether he be man or angel, which is above the law, but only God. But Christ is above the law, for he hath vanquished it: therefore he is the Son of God, and naturally God. If thou lay hold upon Christ in such sort as Paul here painteth him out, thou canst not err nor be confounded. Moreover, thou shalt easily judge of all kinds of life, of the religions and ceremonies of the whole world. But if this true picture of Christ be defaced, or in any wise darkened, then followeth a confusion of all things. For the natural man cannot judge of the law of God. Here faileth the cunning of the philosophers, of the canonists, and of all men. For the law hath power and dominion over man. Therefore the law judgeth man, and not man the law.

Only the Christian hath a true and certain judgment of the law. And how?

That it doth not justify. Wherefore then is the law made, if it do not justify?

Righteousness before God, which is received by faith alone, is not the final cause why the righteous do obey the law, but the peace of the world, thankfulness towards God, and good example of life, whereby other be provoked to believe the Gospel. The Pope hath so confounded and mingled the ceremonial law, the moral law, and faith together, that he hath at length preferred the ceremonial law before the moral law, and the moral law before faith.

That we might receive the adoption of sons

Paul setteth forth and amplifieth very largely this place of Genesis 22.: 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' A little before he called this blessing of the seed of Abraham, righteousness, life, the promise of the Spirit, deliverance from the law, the testament, etc. Here he calleth it the adoption and inheritance of everlasting life. All these this word 'blessing' doth comprehend. For when the curse (which is sin, death, etc.) is abolished by this Seed, then in the stead thereof succeedeth the blessing, that is, righteousness, life, and all good things.

But by what merit have we received this blessing, that is to say, this adoption and inheritance of everlasting life? By none at all. For what can men deserve that are shut under sin, subject to the curse of the law, and worthy of everlasting death? We have then received this blessing freely, and being utterly unworthy thereof, but yet not without merit. What merit is that? Not ours; but the merit of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who being made under the law, nor for himself but for us (as Paul said afore, that he was made a curse for us), redeemed us which were under the law.

Wherefore we have received this adoption by the only redemption of Jesus Christ the Son of God, which is our rich and everlasting merit, whether it be of congruence or worthiness [going before grace or coming after]. And with this free adoption we have also received the Holy Ghost, which God hath sent into our hearts, 'crying: Abba, Father,' as followeth:

And because you are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts.

The Holy Ghost is sent in two manner of ways. In the primitive Church he was sent in a manifest and visible appearance. So he came upon Christ at Jordan in the likeness of a dove, and in the likeness of fire upon the Apostles and other believers. And this was the first sending of the Holy Ghost; which was necessary in the primitive Church, for it was expedient that it should be established by manifest miracles, because of the unbelievers, as Paul witnesseth. '[Strange] tongues,' saith he, 'be for a sign and a token, not to them that believe, but to

them that believe not' (Corinthians 14:22). But after that the Church was gathered together and confirmed with those miracles, it was not necessary that this visible sending of the Holy Ghost should continue any longer.

Secondly, the Holy Ghost is sent by the Word into the hearts of the believers, as here it is said, 'God sent the spirit of his Son,' etc. This sending is without any visible appearance; to wit, when by the hearing of the spoken Word, we receive an inward fervency and light, whereby we are changed and become new creatures; whereby also we receive a new judgment, new feelings and motions. This change and this new judgment is no work of reason, or of the power of man, but is the gift and the operation of the Holy Ghost, which cometh with the Word preached, which purifieth our hearts by faith, and bringeth forth in us spiritual motions. Therefore there is a great difference betwixt us and those which with force and subtlety persecute the doctrine of the Gospel. For we by the grace of God can certainly judge by the Word, of the will of God towards us; also of all laws and doctrines, of our own life and of the life of others.

Contrariwise, the Papists and Sectaries cannot certainly judge of anything.

For they corrupt, they persecute and blaspheme the Word. Now without the Word a man can give no certain judgment of anything.

And although it appear not before the world, that we be renewed in mind and have the Holy Ghost, yet notwithstanding our judgment, our speech, and our confession do declare sufficiently, that the Holy Ghost with his gifts is in us. For before we could judge rightly of nothing. We spake not as now we do. We confessed not that all our works were sin and damnable; that Christ was our only merit both before grace and after, as now we do in the true knowledge and light of the Gospel. Wherefore let this trouble us nothing at all, that the world (whose works we testify to be evil) judgeth us to be most pernicious heretics and seditious persons, destroyers of religion, and troublers of the common peace, possessed of the devil speaking in us and governing all our actions. Against this perverse [and wicked] judgment of the world, let this testimony of our conscience be sufficient, whereby we assuredly know, that it is the gift of God, that we do not only believe in Jesus Christ, but that we also preach and confess him openly before the world. As we believe with our heart, so do we speak with our mouth, according to that saying of the Psalmist: 'I believed, and therefore I have spoken etc.' (Psalm 115:10).

Moreover we exercise ourselves unto godliness and avoid sin as much as we may. If we sin, we sin not of purpose, but of ignorance, and we are sorry for it. We may slip, for the devil lieth in wait for us both day and night. Also the remnants of sin cleave yet fast in our flesh: therefore as touching the flesh we are sinners, yea, after that we have received the Holy Ghost. And there is no great difference betwixt a Christian and a civil honest man. For the works of a Christian in outward shew are but base and simple. He doth his duty according to his

vocation, he governeth the commonwealth, he guideth his family, he tilleth the ground, he giveth counsel, he aideth and succoureth his neighbour. These works the carnal man doth not much esteem, but thinketh them to be common and nothing worth, being such as the laity, yea the heathen also do. For the world understandeth not the things which are of the Spirit of God, and therefore it judgeth perversely of the works of the godly. But the monstrous superstition of hypocrites and their will-works they have in great admiration. They count them holy works, and spare no charges in maintaining the same. Contrariwise, the works of the faithful (which although in outward appearance they seem to be but vile and nothing worth, yet are they good works indeed, and accepted of God, because they are done in faith, with a cheerful heart, and with obedience and thankfulness towards God), these works, I say, they do not only not acknowledge to be good works, but also they despise and condemn them as most ungodly and unrighteous. The world therefore believeth nothing less than that we have the Holy Ghost. Notwithstanding in the time of tribulation or of the cross, and of the confession of our faith (which is the proper and principal work of those that believe), when we must either forsake wife, children, goods and life, or else deny Christ, then it appeareth that we make confession of our faith, that we confess Christ and his Word, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

We ought not therefore to doubt whether the Holy Ghost dwelleth in us or not; but to be assuredly persuaded that we 'are the temple of the Holy Ghost,' as Paul saith (1 Corinthians 6:19). For if any man feel in himself a love towards the Word of God, and willingly heareth, talketh, writeth, and thinketh of Christ, let that man know that it is not the work of man's will or reason, but the gift of the Holy Ghost; for it is impossible that these things should be done without the Holy Ghost. Contrariwise, where hatred and contempt of the Word is, there the devil, the God of this world, reigneth, blinding men's hearts and holding them captive, that the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should not shine upon them (Corinthians 4:4). Which thing we see at this day in the most part of the common people, which have no love to the Word, but condemn it as though it pertained nothing at all unto them. But whosoever do feel any love or desire to the Word, let them acknowledge with thankfulness, that this affection is poured into them by the Holy Ghost. For we bring not this affection and desire with us; neither can we be taught by any laws how we may obtain it: but this change is plainly and simply the work of the right hand of the Most High. Therefore, when we willingly and gladly hear the Word preached concerning Christ the Son of God, who for us was made man and became subject to the law, that he might redeem us: then God, by and with this preaching, assuredly sendeth the Holy Ghost into our hearts.

Wherefore it is very expedient for the godly to know, that they, have the Holy Ghost.

This I say, to confute that pernicious doctrine of the sophisters and monks, which taught that no man can certainly know (although his life be never so upright and blameless) whether he be in the favor of God or no. And this

sentence, commonly received, was a special principle and article of faith in the whole Papacy, whereby they utterly defaced the doctrine of faith, tormented men's consciences, banished Christ out of the Church, darkened and denied all the benefits and gifts of the Holy Ghost, abolished the true worship of God, set up idolatry, contempt of God, and blasphemy against God in men's hearts. For he that doubteth of the will of God towards him, and hath no assurance that he is in grace, cannot believe that he hath remission of sins, that God careth for him, and that he can be saved.

Augustine saith very well and godly, that every man seeth most certainly his own faith, if he have faith. This do they deny. God forbid (say they) that I should assure myself that I am under grace, that I am holy, and that I have the Holy Ghost, yea, although I live godly, and do all works. Ye which are young, and are not infected with this pernicious opinion (whereupon the whole kingdom of the Pope is grounded), take heed and fly from it, as from a most horrible plague. We that are old men have been trained up in this error even from our youth, and have been so nusled therein, that it hath taken deep root in our hearts. Therefore it is to us no less labor to unlearn and forget the same, than to learn and lay hold upon true faith. But we must be assured and out of doubt that we are under grace, that we please God for Christ's sake, and that we have the Holy Ghost. 'For if any man have not the spirit of Christ, the same is none of his' (Romans 8:9). Moreover, whatsoever a man doubting thinketh, speaketh, or doeth, it is sin; for whatsoever proceedeth not of faith, is sin.

Wherefore, whether thou be a minister of God's Word, or a magistrate in the commonwealth, thou must assuredly think that thy office pleaseth God: but this thou canst never do, unless thou have the Holy Ghost. But thou wilt say: I doubt not but that my office pleaseth God, because it is God's ordinance; but I doubt of mine own person whether it please God or no.

Here thou must resort to the Word of God, which especially seeketh to assure us, that not only the office of the person, but also the person itself pleaseth God. For the person is baptized, believeth in Christ, is purged in his blood from all sins, liveth in the communion and fellowship of his Church. Moreover, he doth not only love the pure doctrine of the Word, but also is glad and greatly rejoiceth when he seeth it advanced, and the number of the faithful increased. Contrariwise, he detesteth the Pope and all Sectaries with their wicked doctrine, according to that saying of the Psalm: 'I hate them that imagine evil things, but thy law do I love' (Psalm 119:113).

We ought therefore to be surely persuaded, that not only our office, but our person pleaseth God: yea, whatsoever it saith, doth, or thinketh particularly, the same pleaseth God, not for our own sakes, but for Christ's sake, whom we believe to have been made under the law for us.

Now we are sure that Christ pleaseth God, that he is holy, etc. Forasmuch then as Christ pleaseth God and we are in him, we also please God and are holy. And although sin do still remain in our flesh, and we do also daily fall and offend, yet grace is more abundant and stronger than sin. The mercy and truth of the Lord reigneth over us forever. Wherefore sin cannot terrify us and make us doubtful of the grace of God [which is] in us. For Christ, that most mighty giant, hath quite abolished the law, condemned sin, vanquished death, and all evils. So long as he is at the right hand of God, making intercession for us, we cannot doubt of the grace [and favor] of God towards us.

Moreover, God hath also sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, as Paul here saith. But Christ is most certain in his spirit that he pleaseth God, etc.; therefore we also, having the same spirit of Christ, must be assured that we are under grace for his sake, who is most assured. This I have said concerning the inward testimony, whereby a [Christian man's] heart ought to be fully persuaded that he is under grace and hath the Holy Ghost. Now, the outward signs (as before I have said) are, gladly to hear of Christ, to preach and teach Christ, to render thanks unto him, to praise him, to confess him, yea, with the loss of goods and life: moreover, to do our duty according to our vocation as we are able, in faith, joy, etc.; not to delight in sins, nor to thrust ourselves into another man's vocation, but to attend upon our own, to help our needy brother, to comfort the heavy hearted, etc. By these signs as by certain effects and consequents we are fully assured and confirmed, that we are in God's favor. The wicked also imagine that they have the same signs, but they have nothing less. Hereby we may plainly perceive that the Pope with his doctrine doth nothing else, but trouble and torment men's consciences, and at length drive them into desperation. For he not only teacheth, but also commandeth men to doubt.

Therefore as the Psalm saith: 'There is no [truth or] certainty in his mouth' (Psalm 5:9). And in another place: 'Under his tongue is iniquity and mischief' (Psalm 10:7).

Here we may see what great infirmity is yet in the faith of the godly. For if we could be fully persuaded that we are under grace, that our sins are forgiven, that we have the spirit of Christ, that we are the children of God; then doubtless we should be joyful and thankful to God for this inestimable gift. But because we feel contrary motions, that is to say, fear, doubtfulness, anguish and heaviness of heart, and such-like, therefore we cannot assure ourselves hereof; yea our conscience judgeth it a great presumption and pride to challenge this glory. Wherefore, if we will understand this thing rightly and as we should do, we must put it in practice; for without experience and practice it can never be learned.

Wherefore let every man so practice with himself, that his conscience may be fully assured that he is under grace, and that his person and his works do please God. And if he feel in himself any wavering or doubting, let him exercise his faith and wrestle against this doubting, and let him labor to attain more

strength and assurance of faith, so that he may be able to say: I know that I am accepted, and that I have the Holy Ghost; not for mine own worthiness, my work, my merit, but for Christ's sake, who for our sakes made himself thrall and subject to the law, and took away the sins of the world. In him do I believe. If I be a sinner and err, he is righteous and cannot err. Moreover, I gladly hear, read, sing and write of him, and I desire nothing more than that his Gospel may be known to the whole world, and that many may be converted unto him.

These things do plainly witness that the Holy Ghost is present [with us and in us]. For such things are not wrought in the heart by man's strength, nor gotten by man's industry or travail, but are obtained by Christ alone, who first maketh us righteous by the knowledge of himself, and afterwards he createth a clean heart in us, bringeth forth new motions, and giveth unto us that assurance whereby we are persuaded that we please the Father for his sake. Also he giveth us a true judgment whereby we prove and try those things which before we knew not, or else altogether despised. It behoveth us therefore to wrestle against this doubting, that we may daily overcome more and more, and attain to a full persuasion and certainty of God's favor towards us, rooting out of our hearts this cursed opinion (that a man ought to doubt of the grace and favor of God), which hath infected the whole world. For if we be not sure that we are in grace, and that we please God for Christ's sake, then we deny that Christ hath redeemed us, we utterly deny all his benefits. Ye that are young, can easily lay hold on the doctrine of the Gospel and shun that pestilent opinion, wherewith ye have not yet been infected.

Crying, abba father

Paul might have said: God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, calling, 'Abba Father.' He saith not so but crying, 'Abba Father,' that he might shew and set forth the temptation of a Christian which yet is but weak and weakly believeth. In the eighth to the Romans, he calleth this crying an unspeakable groaning. 'Likewise,' he saith, 'the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession for us with unspeakable groanings,' etc.

And this is a singular consolation, when he saith that the Spirit of Christ is sent into our hearts, crying, 'Abba Father'; and again, that he helpeth our infirmities, making intercession for us with unspeakable groanings. He that could assuredly believe this, should never be overcome with any affliction, were it never so great. But there are many things that hinder this faith in us.

First, our heart is born in sin; moreover this evil is naturally grafted in us, that we doubt of the good will of God towards us, and cannot assure ourselves that we please God, etc. Besides all this, the devil our adversary rangeth about with terrible roarings (1 Peter 5:8), and saith: Thou art a sinner; therefore God is angry with thee, and will destroy thee for ever.

Against these horrible and intolerable cries, we have nothing whereupon to hold and stay ourselves, but the bare Word which setteth Christ before us as a conqueror over sin and death, and over all evils. But to cleave fast to the Word in this temptation and these terrors of conscience, herein standeth all the difficulty. For then Christ appeareth to no sense. We see him not: the heart feeleth not his presence or succor in temptation: but rather it seemeth that he is angry with us, and that he forsaketh us.

Moreover, a man in temptation feeleth the power of sin, the weakness of the flesh, and wavering of the mind; he feeleth the fiery darts of the devil, the terrors of death, the anger and judgment of God. All these things cry out horribly against us, so that we see nothing else but desperation and eternal death. But yet in the midst of these terrors of the law, thunderings of sin, assaults of death, and roarings of the devil, the Holy Ghost (saith Paul) crieth in our hearts, 'Abba, Father.' And this cry far surmounteth the horrible cries of the law, sin, death, the devil etc.; it pierceth the clouds and the heavens, and ascendeth up into the ears of God.

Paul signifieth therefore by these words, that there is yet infirmity in the godly; as he doth also in the eighth chapter to the Romans, when he saith: 'The Spirit helpeth our infirmities.' Forasmuch therefore as the sense and feeling of the contrary is strong in us; that is to say, forasmuch as we feel more the displeasure of God, than his goodwill and favor towards us: therefore the Holy Ghost is sent into our hearts, which doth not only sigh and request for us, but mightily crieth, 'Abba Father!' and prayeth for us according to the will of God with [tears and] unspeakable groanings. And how is this done? When we are in terrors and in the conflict of conscience, we take hold of Christ, and believe that he is our savior; but then do the law and sin terrify and torment us most of all. Moreover, the devil assaileth us with all his engines and fiery darts, and goeth about with all his power to take away Christ and all consolations from us. Here we feel ourselves almost gone, and at the point of desperation: for then are we that bruised reed and smoking flax [which Isaiah speaketh of, chap. 42:3].

Notwithstanding, in the mean season, the Holy Ghost helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us with unspeakable groanings, and certifieth our spirits that we are the children of God. Thus is the mind raised up in those terrors; it looketh unto his Savior and high Bishop, Jesus Christ; it overcometh the infirmity of the flesh; it conceiveth comfort again, and saith, 'Abba Father.' This groaning, which then we scantily feel, Paul calleth a crying and unspeakable groaning, which filleth both heaven and earth. Moreover, he calleth it the crying and groaning of the Spirit, because the Holy Ghost stirreth up the same in our hearts when we are weak and oppressed with temptation and terror.

Although then the law, sin and the devil cry out against us never so much with great and terrible roarings, which seem to fill heaven and earth, and far to

exceed this groaning of our heart, yet can they not hurt us. For the more fiercely they assail us, accuse and torment us with their cryings, so much the more do we groan; and in groaning lay hold upon Christ, call upon him with our heart and mouth, cleave unto him, and believe that he was made under the law for us, that he might deliver us from the curse of the law, and destroy both sin and death. And thus, when we have taken hold of Christ by faith, we cry through him: 'Abba Father.' And this our cry doth far surmount the roaring of [the law, sin,] the devil, etc.

But so far off is it that we think this groaning, which we make in these terrors and this our weakness, to be a cry, that scarcely we perceive it to be a groaning. For our faith, which in temptation thus sigheth unto Christ, is very weak, if we consider our own sense and feeling, and therefore we hear not this cry. We have but only the Word, which when we apprehend in this conflict, we have a little breathing, and then we groan. Of this groaning some little feeling we have, but the cry we hear not. 'But he', saith Paul, 'which searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the meaning of the Spirit,' etc. To this Searcher of the hearts, this small and feeble groaning (as it seemeth unto us) is a loud and mighty cry, and an unspeakable groaning; in comparison whereof the great and horrible roarings of the law, of sin, of death, of the devil, and of hell, are nothing, neither can they once be heard.

Paul therefore, not without cause, calleth this groaning of a godly afflicted heart, a cry and a groaning of the spirit which cannot be expressed. For it filleth heaven; so that the angels think they hear nothing else but this cry.

But in us there is a clean contrary feeling. For it seemeth unto us that this our small groaning doth not so pierce the clouds, that there is nothing else heard in heaven of God or his angels. Nay, we think, and especially during the time of temptation, that the devil horribly roareth against us, that the heavens thunder and the earth trembleth, that all will fall upon us, that all creatures threaten our destruction, that hell is open and ready to swallow us up. This feeling is in our heart; these horrible voices, and this fearful shew we hear and we see. And this is it that Paul saith in 2 Corinthians 12, that 'the strength of Christ is made perfect in our weakness,' For then is Christ almighty indeed; then doth he truly reign and triumph in us, when we are so weak that we can scarcely groan. But Paul saith that this groaning is, in the ears of God, a most mighty cry, which filleth both heaven and earth.

Christ also in the eighteenth of Luke, in the parable of the wicked judge, calleth this groaning of a faithful heart, a cry, yea and such a cry as ceaseth not day and night to cry unto God, where he saith: 'Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. Now shall not God avenge his elect, which cry day and night unto him, yea though he suffer long over them? Yea I tell you, he will avenge them quickly.' We at this day, in so great persecution and contradiction of the Pope, of tyrants and Sectaries, which fight against us both on the right hand and on the left, can do

nothing else but utter such groanings. And these were our guns and artillery wherewith we have so many years scattered the counsels and enterprises of our adversaries; whereby also we have begun to overthrow the kingdom of Antichrist. They also shall provoke Christ to hasten the day of his glorious coming, wherein he shall abolish all rule, authority and power, and shall put all his enemies under his feet. Amen.

In the fourteenth of Exodus (Exodus 14), the Lord speaketh unto Moses at the Red Sea, saying: 'Why criest thou unto me?' Yet Moses cried not, but trembled and almost despaired, for he was in great trouble. It seemed that infidelity reigned in him and not faith. For he saw the people of Israel so compassed and enclosed with the Egyptian host and with the sea, that there was no way whereby they might escape. Here Moses durst not once open his mouth. How then did he cry? We must not judge therefore according to the feeling of our own heart, but according to the Word of God, which teacheth us that the Holy Ghost is given to those that are afflicted, terrified, and ready to despair, to raise them up and comfort them, that they be not overcome in their temptations and afflictions, but may overcome them, and yet not without great terrors and troubles.

The Papists dreamed, that holy men had the Holy Ghost in such sort that they never had nor felt any temptation. They spake of the Holy Ghost only by speculation [and naked knowledge]. But Paul saith, that the strength of Christ is made perfect in our weakness. Also, that the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us with unspeakable groanings.

Therefore we have then most need of the help and comfort of the Holy Ghost, yea and then is he most ready to help us, when we are most weak and nearest to desperation. If any man suffer affliction with a constant and joyful heart, then hath the Holy Ghost done his office in him. And indeed he exerciseth his work specially and properly in those which have suffered great terrors and afflictions, and have approached, as the Psalm saith, nigh to the gates of death. As I said of Moses, which saw present death, in the waters, and on every side whithersoever he turned his face. He was therefore in extreme anguish and desperation; and (no doubt) he felt in his heart a mighty cry of the devil against him, saying: All this people shall this day perish, for they can escape no way; and of this great calamity thou only shalt be found to be the author, because thou hast led them out of Egypt.

Besides all this, the people cried out against him, saying: 'Were there no graves in Egypt? Thou hast brought us out that we should die here in the wilderness. Had it not been better for us to have served the Egyptians, than here wretchedly to die in the wilderness?' (Exodus 14:11 f.). The Holy Ghost was not here in Moses by bare speculation and knowledge only, but truly and effectually, who made intercession for him with unspeakable groaning, so that he sighed unto the Lord and said: O Lord at thy commandment have I led forth this people;

help us therefore. This groaning and sighing unto God the Scripture calleth a crying.

This matter I have the more largely prosecuted, that I might plainly shew what the office of the Holy Ghost is, and when he specially exerciseth the same. In temptation, therefore, we must in no wise judge thereof according to our own sense and feeling, or by the crying of the law, sin, and the devil, etc. If we here follow our own sense, and believe those cryings, we shall think ourselves to be destitute of all help and succor of the Holy Ghost, and utterly cast away from the presence of God. Nay rather let us then remember what Paul saith: that the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, etc.; also that it crieth, 'Abba Father;' that is to say, it uttereth a certain feeble sighing and groaning of the heart (as it seemeth unto us), which notwithstanding before God is a loud cry and an unspeakable groaning.

Wherefore, in the midst of thy temptation and infirmity, cleave only unto Christ, and groan unto him. He giveth the Holy Ghost which crieth, 'Abba Father.' And this feeble groaning is a mighty cry in the ears of God, and so filleth heaven and earth, that God heareth nothing else: and moreover, it stoppeth the cries of all other things whatsoever.

Thou must mark also that Paul saith, that the Spirit maketh intercession for us in our temptation, not with many words or long prayer, but only with a groaning, which notwithstanding cannot be expressed; and that he crieth not aloud with tears, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O God,' etc., but only uttereth a little sound and a feeble groaning, as 'Ah, Father!' This is but a little word, and yet notwithstanding it comprehendeth all things. The mouth speaketh not, but the affection of the heart speaketh after this manner: Although I be oppressed with anguish and terror on every side, and seem to be forsaken and utterly cast away from thy presence, yet am I thy child, and thou art my Father for Christ's sake: I am beloved, because of the Beloved. Wherefore, this little word 'Father', conceived effectually in the heart, passeth all the eloquence of Demosthenes, Cicero, and of the most eloquent rhetoricians that ever were in the world. This matter is not expressed with words, but with groanings; which groanings cannot be uttered with any words or eloquence, for no tongue can express them.

I have used many words to declare that a Christian must assure himself that he is in the favour of God, and that he hath the crying of the Holy Ghost in his heart. This have I done, that we may learn to reject and utterly to abandon that devilish opinion of the whole kingdom of the Pope, which taught that a man ought to be uncertain and to stand in doubt of the grace [and favor] of God towards him. If this opinion be received, then Christ profiteth nothing. For he that doubteth of God's favor towards him, must needs doubt also of the promises of God, and so consequently of the will of God, and of the benefits of Christ, namely that he was born, suffered, died, and rose again for us, etc. But there can be no greater blasphemy against God, than to deny his promises, to deny God Himself, to deny

Christ, etc. Wherefore it was not only an extreme madness, but an horrible impiety that the monks did so earnestly entice the youth, both men and women, into their monasteries, and to their holy orders (as they called them), as to a most certain state of salvation, and yet, when they had thus done, they bade them doubt of the grace [and favor] of God [towards them].

Moreover, the Pope called all the world to the obedience of the holy church of Rome, as to an holy state, in the which they might undoubtedly attain salvation; and yet after he had brought them under the obedience of his laws, he commanded them to doubt [of their salvation]. So the kingdom of Antichrist braggeth and vaunteth at the first, of the holiness of his orders, his rules and his laws, and assuredly promiseth everlasting life to such as observe and keep them. But afterwards, when these miserable men have long afflicted their bodies with watching, fasting, and such-like exercises, according to the traditions and ordinances of men, this is all that they gain thereby, that they are uncertain whether this obedience please God or no. Thus Satan most horribly dallied in the death and destruction of souls through the Pope: and therefore is the Papacy a slaughter-house of consciences, and the very kingdom of the devil.

Now to establish and confirm this pernicious and cursed error, they alleged the saying of Solomon: 'The just and the wise and their works are in the hands of God: and yet no man knoweth whether he be worthy of love or of hatred' (Ecclesiastes 9:1). Some understand this of that hatred which is to come; and some again of that which is present: but neither of them understand Solomon, who in that place meaneth nothing less than that which they dream. Moreover, the whole Scripture teacheth us especially and above all things, that we should not doubt, but assure ourselves and undoubtedly believe that God is merciful, loving and patient; that he is neither dissembler nor deceiver; but that he is faithful and true, and keepeth his promise; yea and hath performed that he promised, in delivering his only begotten Son to death for our sins, that every one that believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Here we cannot doubt but that God is favorable unto us and loveth us indeed, that the hatred and wrath of God is taken away, seeing he suffered his Son to die for us wretched sinners. Although this matter be set out and often repeated throughout the whole Gospel, yet it profited nothing at all. This one saying of Solomon perversely understood, did more prevail (especially among the votaries and monks of the straighter religion) than all the promises and consolations of the whole Scripture, yea, than Christ himself. They abused the Scripture therefore to their own destruction, and were most justly punished for despising the Scriptures, and rejecting the Gospel.

It is expedient for us to know these things: first, because the Papists at this day do vaunt themselves, as if they had never committed any evil; therefore they must be convinced by their own abominations, wherewith they have filled the whole world, as their books do witness, whereof there is yet an infinite number: secondly, that we may be fully certified that we have the pure doctrine of the

Gospel; of which certainty the Pope cannot glory, in whose kingdom, though all things else were sound and uncorrupt, yet this monstrous doctrine of doubting [of God's grace and favor] passeth all other monsters. And although it be manifest that the enemies of Christ teach uncertain things, because they command that men's consciences should remain in doubt, yet notwithstanding they confidently condemn and kill us as heretics, because we dissent from them and teach those things which are certain. And this they do with such devilish rage and cruelty, as if they were most assured of their doctrine.

Let us therefore give thanks unto God, that we are delivered from this monstrous doctrine of doubting, and can now assure ourselves that the Holy Ghost crieth and bringeth forth in our hearts unspeakable groanings.

And this is our anchor-hold, and our foundation: the Gospel commandeth us to behold, not our own good works, our own perfection, but God the promiser, and Christ the Mediator. Contrariwise, the Pope commandeth us to look, not unto God the promiser, nor unto Christ our high Bishop, but unto our works and merits. Here on the one side, doubting and desperation must needs follow: but on the other side, assurance and joy of the Spirit. For we cleave unto God who cannot lie. For he saith: Behold, I deliver my Son to death, that through his blood he may redeem thee from thy sins and from eternal death. In this case I cannot doubt, unless I will utterly deny God. And this is the reason that our doctrine is [most sure and] certain: because it carrieth us out of ourselves, that we should not lean to our own strength, our own conscience, our own feeling, our own person, and our own works, but to that which is without us, that is to say, the promise and truth of God which cannot deceive us. This the Pope knoweth not, and therefore he wickedly imagineth that no man knoweth, be he never so just and so wise, whether he be worthy of love or of hatred.

But if a man be just and wise, he knoweth assuredly that he is beloved of God, or else he is neither just nor wise.

Moreover, this sentence of Solomon speaketh nothing at all of the hatred or favor of God towards men, but it is a moral sentence reproving the ingratitude of men. For such is the perverseness and ingratitude of the world that the better a man deserveth, the less thanks he shall have, and oftentimes he that should be his most friend, shall be his most enemy.

Contrariwise, such as least deserve, shall be most esteemed. So David, a holy man and a good king, was cast out of his kingdom. The prophets, Christ and his Apostles were slain. To conclude, the histories of all nations witness, that many men well deserving of their country, were cast into banishment by their own citizens, and there lived in great misery, and some also shamefully perished in prison. Wherefore Solomon in this place speaketh not of the conscience having to do with God, nor of the favor or judgment, [the love of hatred] of God; but of the judgments and affections of men among themselves. As though he

would say: there are many just and wise men, by whom God worketh much good, and giveth peace and quietness unto men. But so far off are they from acknowledging the same, that oftentimes they requite them again most unkindly and uncourteously for their well-doings and deservings. Therefore although a man do all things well, and never so well, yet he knoweth not whether by this his diligence and faithfulness he deserve the hatred or favor of men.

So we at this day, when we thought we should have found favor among our own countrymen, for that we preach unto them the Gospel of peace, life, and eternal salvation; instead of favor, we have found bitter and cruel hatred. Indeed, at the first many were greatly delighted with our doctrine, and received it gladly. We thought they would have been our friends and brethren, and that with one consent together with us, they would have planted and preached this doctrine to others. But now we find that they are false brethren and our deadly enemies, which sow and spread abroad false doctrine; and that which we teach well and godly, they pervert and overthrow, stirring up grievous offenses in the churches. Whosoever therefore doth his duty godly and faithfully, in what kind of life soever he be, and for his well-doing receiveth nothing again but the ingratitude and hatred of men, let him not vex and torment himself therefore, but let him say with Christ: 'They hated me without a cause,' and: 'For that they should have loved me, they slandered me; but I did pray' (Psalm 109:3 f.).

The Pope therefore with this ungodly doctrine, whereby he commanded men to doubt of the favor of God towards them, took away God and all his promises out of the Church, buried all the benefits of Christ, and abolished the whole Gospel. These inconveniences do necessarily follow: for men do not lean to God which promiseth, but to their own works and merits.

Therefore they cannot be assured of the good-will of God towards them, but must needs doubt thereof, and so at length despair. For nowhere can a man understand what God's will is, and what pleaseth him, but in his [good] Word. This Word assureth us at God hath cast away all the anger and displeasure which he had conceived against us, when he gave his only begotten Son for our sins, etc. Also the Sacraments, the power of the Keys, etc. do certify us: which, if God did not love us, he would not have given unto us. With such infinite testimonies of his favor towards us are we overwhelmed. Wherefore let us utterly abandon this pestilent doubting, wherewith the whole church of the Pope was poisoned, and let us be fully assured that God is merciful unto us, that we please him and he hath a care over us for Christ's sake, and that we have the Holy Ghost, which maketh intercession for us with such crying and groaning as cannot be expressed.

Now this is the true crying and groaning indeed, when a man in temptation calleth upon God, not as a tyrant, not as an angry judge, not as a tormentor, but as a Father, although this groaning be so soft and so secret, that it can scarcely be perceived. For in serious temptations, and in the time of trial, where the

conscience wrestleth with the judgment of God, it is wont to call God, not a father, but an unjust, an angry, a cruel tyrant and judge. And this crying, which Satan stirreth up in the heart, far passeth the cry of the Spirit, and is strongly felt. For then it seemeth that God hath forsaken us, and will throw us down into hell. So the faithful complain oftentimes in the Psalms: 'I am cast down from the presence of God,' and 'I am become as a broken vessel,' etc. This is not the groaning that crieth: 'Abba, Father;' but the roaring of the hatred of God, which crieth strongly:

O cruel judge, O cruel tormentor, etc. Here it is now time that thou turn away thine eyes from the law, from works, and from the sense and feeling of thine own conscience, and lay hold by faith of the promise; that is to say, of the Word of grace and life, which raiseth up the conscience again, so that now it beginneth to groan and say: Although the law accuse me, sin and death terrify me never so much, yet thou O God promisest grace, righteousness and everlasting life through Jesus Christ.

And so the promise bringeth a sighing and a groaning, which crieth: 'Abba, Father.'

I reject not here that which some do affirm, namely, that Paul of set purpose useth two words, whereof the one is Hebrew and the other Greek, because the Church was gathered of both Jews and Gentiles, and that whereas these twain did employ diverse tongues in calling God Father, yet notwithstanding the groaning of them both is one and the same, seeing they both cry 'Father'.

Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son

This is the summing-up and the conclusion of that which he said before. As if he should say: This being true that we by the Gospel have received the Spirit whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father'; then is this decree assuredly pronounced in heaven, that there is no bondage any more, but mere liberty, adoption, and sonship. And who bringeth this liberty? Verily this groaning.

By what means? The Father offereth unto me by his promise, his grace and his fatherly favor. This remaineth then, that I should receive this grace.

And this is done when I again with this groaning do cry, and with a childlike heart do assent unto this name of Father. Here then the father and the son meet, and the marriage is made up without all pomp and solemnity: that is to say, nothing at all cometh between, no law nor work is here required. For what should a man do in these terrors and horrible darkness of temptations? Here is nothing else but the Father promising, and calling me his son by Christ, who was made under the law, etc.; and I receiving and answering by this groaning, saying 'Father'. Here then is no exacting, but only that childlike groaning that apprehendeth a sure hope and trust in tribulation, and saith: Thou promisest, and

callest me thy child for Christ's sake; and I again receive [thy promise] and call thee Father. This is indeed to be made children simply without any works. But these things without experience [and practice] cannot be understood.

Paul in this place taketh the word 'servant' otherwise than he did before in the third chapter, where he saith: 'There is neither bond nor free,' etc.

Here he calleth him a servant of the law, which is subject to the law, as he did a little before: 'We were in bondage under the rudiments of the world.'

Wherefore to be a servant according to Paul in this place, is to be guilty and captive under the law, under the wrath of God and death, to behold God, not as merciful Father, but as a tormentor, an enemy, and a tyrant.

This is indeed to be kept in bondage and Babylonical captivity, and to be cruelly tormented therein. For the law delivereth not from sin and death, but revealeth and increaseth sin, and engendereth wrath. This bondage (saith Paul) continueth no longer; it oppresseth us not, nor maketh us heavy any more, etc. Paul saith concretely: There shall be no servant any more. But the meaning will be more plain if we put it abstractly thus: There shall be no bondage in Christ, but mere sonship. For when faith cometh, that bondage ceaseth, as he said also before in the third chapter.

Now, if we by the Spirit of Christ crying in our heart, 'Abba, Father,' be no more servants, but children, then it followeth that we are not only delivered from the portents of the Pope and the abominations of men's traditions, but also from all the jurisdiction and power of the law of God. Wherefore we ought in no wise to suffer the law to reign in our conscience, and much less the Pope with his vain threatenings and terrors. Indeed he roareth mightily as a lion (Revelation 10:10), and threateneth to all those that obey not his laws, the wrath and indignation of Almighty God and of his blessed Apostles, etc. But here Paul armeth and comforteth us against these roarings, when he saith: 'Thou art no more a servant but a son.' Take hold of this consolation by faith, and say: O law, thy tyranny can have no place in the throne where Christ my Lord sitteth: there I cannot hear thee (much less do I hear thee, O Antichrist), for I am free and a son, who must not be subject to any bondage or servile law. Let not Moses therefore with his laws (much less the Pope), ascend up into the bride-chamber there to lie, that is to say, to reign in the conscience; which Christ hath delivered from the law, to the end that it should not be subject to any bondage. Let the servants abide with the ass in the valley: let none but Isaac ascend up into the mountain with his father Abraham (Genesis 12:5). That is, let the law have dominion over the body and over the old man: let him be under the law, and suffer the burden to be laid upon him; let him suffer himself to be exercised and vexed with the law; let the law limit and prescribe him what he ought to do, what he ought to suffer, and how he ought to live and govern himself among men. But let it not defile the bed in which Christ should rest and sleep alone: that is to say, let it not trouble the conscience.

For she alone ought to live with Christ her spouse in the kingdom of liberty and adoption.

If then (saith he) by the Spirit of Christ ye cry, 'Abba, Father,' then are ye indeed no longer servants but free men and sons. Therefore ye are without law, without sin, without death; that is to say, ye are saved, and ye are now quite delivered from all evils. Wherefore the adoption bringeth with it the eternal kingdom and all the heavenly inheritance. Now, how inestimable the glory of this gift is, man's heart is not able in this life to conceive, and much less to utter. In the meantime we see this but darkly [and as it were afar off]: we have this little groaning and feeble faith which only resteth upon the hearing and the sound of the voice of Christ in giving the promise. In respect of our sense and feeling, therefore, this thing is exceeding small, but in itself, it is very great and infinite: so that a Christian hath in him a thing which is infinite, although to his own sight and feeling it is very little and limited. Therefore we must not measure this thing by reason or by our own feeling, but by that which is far other, to wit, the promise of God. Now because he is infinite, therefore his promise is also infinite, although it seem to be never so much enclosed in these narrow straits, [these anguishes, I mean,] and in the compass (so to speak) of the Word. Wherefore there is nothing that can now accuse, terrify, or bind the conscience any more. For there is no more servitude, but adoption: which not only bringeth unto us liberty from the law, sin and death, but also the inheritance of everlasting life, as followeth.

Now, if thou be a son, thou art also the heir of God through Christ

For he that is a son, must also be an heir: for by his birth he is worthy to be an heir. There is no work or merit that bringeth to him the inheritance, but his birth only: and so in obtaining the inheritance he is a mere patient, and not an agent; that is to say, not to beget, not to labor, not to care, but to be born is that which maketh him an heir: for he doth nothing to the end that he may be born, but only suffereth. So we obtain eternal blessings, namely the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, the glory of the resurrection, and everlasting life, not as agents, but as patients [that is, not by doing, but by receiving]. Nothing here cometh between, but faith alone apprehendeth the promise offered. Like as therefore a son in the politic and household government is made an heir by his only birth: so here faith only maketh us sons of God, born of the Word, which is the womb of God, wherein we are conceived, carried, born, and nourished up, etc. By this birth then, whereby we are made new creatures, formed by faith in the Word, we are made Christians, children and heirs of God through Christ.

Now, being heirs we are delivered from death, the devil etc., and we have righteousness and eternal life.

But this far passeth all man's capacity, that he calleth us heirs: not of some rich and mighty prince, not of the emperor, not of the world, but of almighty God,

the creator of all things. This our inheritance then (as Paul saith in another place) is 'unspeakable' (2 Corinthians 9:15). And if a man could comprehend the great excellency of this matter, that he is the son and heir of God, and with a constant faith believe the same, this man would esteem all the power and riches of all the kingdoms of the world but as filthy dung, in comparison of his eternal inheritance. He would abhor whatsoever is high and glorious in the world: yea, the greater the pomp and glory of the world is, the more would he hate it. To conclude, whatsoever the world most highly esteemeth and magnifieth, that should be in his eyes most vile and abominable. For what is all the world, with all his power, riches, and glory, in comparison of God whose son and heir he is?

Furthermore, he would heartily desire with Paul to be loosed and to be with Christ (Philippians 1:23), and nothing could be more welcome unto him than speedy death, which he would embrace as a most joyful peace, knowing that it should be the end of all his miseries, and that through it he should attain to his inheritance, etc. Yea, a man that could perfectly believe this, should not long remain alive, but should be swallowed up incontinent with excessive joy.

But the law of the members striving against the law of the mind, hindereth faith in us, and suffereth it not to be perfect. Therefore we have need of the help and comfort of the Holy Ghost, which in our troubles and afflictions may make intercession for us with unspeakable groanings, as before I have said. Sin yet remaineth in the flesh, which oftentimes oppresseth the conscience, and so hindereth faith, that we cannot with joy perfectly behold and desire those eternal riches which God hath given unto us through Christ. Paul himself feeling this battle of the flesh against the Spirit, crieth out: 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?' (Romans 7:24). He accuseth his body, which notwithstanding it behoveth him to love, calling it by an odious name, his death. As if he would say: My body doth more afflict me, and more grievously vex me, than death itself; for it hindereth in him also the joy of spirit. He had not always the sweet and joyful cogitations of the heavenly inheritance to come, but he felt oftentimes also heaviness of spirit, anguish and terrors.

Hereby we may plainly see how hard a matter faith is: which is not easily and quickly apprehended, as certain full and loathing spirits dream, which swallow up at once all that is contained in the holy Scriptures. The infirmity which is in the saints, and the striving of the flesh against the Spirit, do sufficiently witness how feeble faith is in them. For a perfect faith bringeth by and by a perfect contempt and loathing of this present life. If we could fully assure ourselves, and constantly believe that God is our Father, and we his sons and heirs, then should we utterly condemn this world, with all the glory, righteousness, wisdom, and power, with all the royal sceptres and crowns, and with all the riches and pleasure thereof. We should not be so careful for this life: we should not be so addicted to worldly things, trusting unto them when we have them, lamenting and despairing when we lose them; but we should do all things with great love, humility, and patience. But we do the contrary; for the flesh is yet strong, our faith is feeble, and the spirit

weak. Therefore Paul saith very well, that we have here in this life, but only the first-fruits of the Spirit; and that in the world to come, we shall have the tenths also.

Through Christ

Paul hath Christ always in his mouth: he cannot forget him; for he did well foresee that nothing should be less known in the world (yea among them which should profess themselves to be Christians) than Christ and his Gospel. Therefore he talketh of him, and setteth him before our eyes continually. And as often as he speaketh of grace, righteousness, the promise, adoption, and inheritance, he is always wont to add, 'in Christ,' or 'through Christ,' covertly impugning the law. As if he would say: These things come unto us neither by the law nor by the works thereof; much less by our own strength, or by the works of men's traditions; but only by Christ.

But even then when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods, but now seeing ye know God, yea rather are known of God, how turn you again to impotent and beggarly rudiments, whereunto, as from the beginning, ye will be in bondage again?

This is the conclusion of Paul's disputation. From this place unto the end of the Epistle he doth not much dispute, but giveth precepts as touching manners. Notwithstanding he first reproveth the Galatians, being sore displeased that this divine and heavenly doctrine should be so suddenly and easily removed out of their hearts. As if he would say: Ye have teachers which will bring you back again into the bondage of the law. This did not I; but by my doctrine I called you out of darkness, and out of the ignorance of God, into a wonderful light and knowledge of him. I brought you out of bondage, and set you in the freedom of the sons of God, not by preaching unto you the works of the law, or the merits of men, but the grace and righteousness of God, and the giving of heavenly and eternal blessings through Christ. Now, seeing this is true, why do ye so soon forsake the light and return to darkness? Why do ye suffer yourselves so easily to be brought from grace unto the law, from freedom to bondage?

Here again we see (as before I have said) that to fall in faith is an easy matter, as the example of the Galatians witnesseth. The example of the Sacramentarians, the Anabaptists, etc. witnesseth the same also at this day.

We for our part do set forth the doctrine of faith with continual travail, by preaching, by reading, and by writing; we purely and plainly, distinguish the Gospel from the law, and yet do we little prevail. This cometh of the devil, who goeth about by all subtle means to seduce men [and to hold them in error]: he can abide nothing less than the true knowledge of grace, and faith in Christ. Therefore, to the end he may take Christ dean out of sight, he setteth before them other shews, wherewith [he so deceiveth them, that] by little and little he

leadeth them from faith and the knowledge of grace, to the disputation of the law. When he hath brought this about, then is Christ taken away. It is not without cause, therefore, that Paul speaketh so much and so often of Christ, and that he goeth about so purely to set forth the doctrine of faith: whereunto he attributeth righteousness only and alone, and taketh it from the law, declaring that the law hath a clean contrary effect: that is, to engender wrath, to increase sin, etc. For he would gladly persuade us that we should not suffer Christ to be plucked out of our heart; that the spouse should not suffer her husband to depart out of her arms, but should always embrace him and cleave fast unto him, who being present, there is no danger; yea there is the [faithful] groaning, fatherly goodwill, adoption, and inheritance.

But why saith Paul that the Galatians turned back again to weak and beggarly rudiments, that is to say, to the law, whereas they never had the law; for they were Gentiles (notwithstanding he wrote these things to the Jews also, as afterwards we will declare)? Or why speaketh he not rather after this manner: Once when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature were no gods; but now seeing ye know God, why turn ye back again, forsaking the true God, to worship idols? Doth Paul take it to be all one thing to fall from the promise to the law, from faith to works, and to do service unto gods which by nature are no gods? I answer:

Whosoever is fallen from the article of justification, is ignorant of God, and an idolater. Therefore it is all one thing, whether he afterwards turn again to the law, or to the worshipping of idols; it is all one whether he be called a monk, a Turk, a Jew, or an Anabaptist. For when this article is taken away, there remaineth nothing else but error, hypocrisy, impiety and idolatry, how much soever it seem in outward appearance to be the very truth, the true service of God, and true holiness, etc.

The reason is, because God will or can be known no otherwise than by Christ, according to that saying of John 1: 'The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' He is the Seed promised unto Abraham, on whom God hath founded all his promises. Wherefore Christ is the only mean, and as ye would say, the glass by which we see God, that is to say, we know his will. For in Christ we see that God is not a cruel exactor or a judge, but a most favorable, loving and merciful Father, who, to the end he might bless us, that is to say, deliver us from the law, sin, death and all evils, and might endue us with grace, righteousness, and everlasting life, 'spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all,' etc. (Romans 8:32). This is a true knowledge of God, and a divine persuasion, which deceiveth us not, but painteth out God unto us lively, and in such sort that beside him there is no God.

He that is fallen from this knowledge, must needs conceive this fantasy in his heart: I will set up such a service of God; I will enter into such an order; I will choose this or that work: and so I will serve God, and I doubt not but God will

accept this and reward me with everlasting life for the same. For he is merciful and liberal, giving all good things even to the unworthy and unthankful; much more will he give unto me grace and everlasting life for my great and manifold good deeds and merits. This is the highest wisdom, righteousness and religion, that reason can judge of; which is common to all nations, to the Papists, Jews, Turks,, heretics, etc.

They can go no higher than that Pharisee did, of whom mention is made in the Gospel (Luke 18:11 f.). They have no knowledge of Christian righteousness, or the righteousness of faith. 'For the natural man perceiveth not the things of God' (1 Corinthians 2:14); also, 'There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God,' etc. (Romans 3:11). Therefore there is no difference at all between a Papist, a Jew, a Turk, and an heretic. Indeed there is a difference of the persons, the places, religions, works and worshippings; notwithstanding there is all one and the same reason, the same heart, opinion and cogitation in them all. For the Turk thinketh the self-same thing that the Charterhouse Monk doth: namely, if I do this or that [work], God will be merciful unto me; if I do it not, he will be angry. There is no mean betwixt man's working and the knowledge of Christ. If this knowledge be darkened or defaced, it is all one whether thou be a monk, a Turk, a Jew, etc. Wherefore it is an extreme madness that the Papists and Turks do so strive among themselves about religion and the service of God, contending that both of them have the true religion and true worship of God. And the monks themselves agree not together: for one of them will be accounted more holy than another for certain foolish outward ceremonies, and yet in their hearts the opinion of them all is so alike, that one egg is not more like to another. For this is the imagination of them all: If I do this work, God will have mercy upon me; if I do not, he will be angry. And therefore every man that revolteth from the knowledge of Christ, must needs fall into idolatry, for he cannot but conceive such an imagination of God as is not agreeable to his nature: as the Charterhouse monk for the observing of his rule, the Turk for the keeping of his Alcoran, hath this affiance, that he pleaseth God, and shall receive a reward of him for his labor.

Such a God as after this sort forgiveth sins and justifieth [sinners], can nowhere be found, and therefore this is but a vain imagination, a dream, and an idol of the heart. For God hath not promised that he will save and justify men for their religions, observations, ceremonies [and ordinances], devised by men; yea, God abhorreth nothing more (as the whole Scripture witnesseth) than such will-works, such [services, rites and] ceremonies; for the which also he overthroweth whole kingdoms and empires. Therefore, as many as trust to their own strength and righteousness, do serve a God, but such a God as they themselves have devised, and not the true God indeed. For the true and natural God speaketh thus: No righteousness, wisdom, nor religion, pleaseth me, but that only whereby the Father is glorified through the Son. Whosoever apprehendeth this Son, and me or my promise in him by faith, to him I am God, to him I am a Father, him do I

accept, justify, and save. All other abide under wrath, because they worship that thing which by nature is no God.

Whosoever forsaketh this doctrine must needs fall into the ignorance of God; he understandeth not what the true Christian righteousness, wisdom, and service of God is; he is an idolater, abiding under the law, sin, death, and the power of the devil, and all things that he doth are accursed and condemned. Therefore the Anabaptist, imagining with himself that he pleaseth God if he be re-baptized, if he forsake his house, wife and children; if he mortify his flesh, and suffer much adversity, and at length death itself; yet there is not one drop of the knowledge of Christ in him, but secluding Christ, he dreameth altogether of his own works, of the forsaking of his goods, of his [affliction and] mortification, and now differeth nothing from the Turk, Jew, or Papist, in spirit or in heart, but only in outward appearance, works and ceremonies, which he hath chosen to himself. The same confidence in works have all the monks [and other religious orders]; notwithstanding in their apparel and other outward things there is a difference.

There are at this day very many like unto these, which notwithstanding would be counted among the true professors and teachers of the Gospel; and as touching the words, they teach that men are delivered from their sins by the death of Christ. But because they teach faith in such sort, that they attribute more to charity than to faith, they highly dishonor Christ, and wickedly pervert his Word. For they dream that God regardeth and accepteth us for our charity's sake, whereby we being reconciled to God, do love God and our neighbor. If this be true, then have we no need of Christ at all. Such men serve not the true God, but an idol of their own heart, which they themselves have devised. For the true God doth not regard or accept us for our charity, virtues, or newness of life, but for Christ's sake, etc.

But they make this objection: Yet notwithstanding, the Scripture commandeth that we should love God with all our heart, etc. It is true. But it followeth not that because God commandeth us, therefore we do it. If we did love God with all our heart, etc., then no doubt we should be justified, and live through this obedience, as it is written: 'He that shall do these things shall live in them' (Leviticus 18:5). But the Gospel saith:

Thou dost not these things, therefore thou shalt not live in them. For this sentence, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,' etc., requireth a perfect obedience, a perfect fear, trust and love towards God. These things men neither do nor can perform, in this corrupt nature. Therefore this law, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,' etc., justifieth not, but accuseth and condemneth allmen, according to that saying, 'The law causeth wrath,' etc. (Romans 4:15). Contrariwise, 'Christ is the finishing and accomplishing of the law to righteousness, to everyone that believeth' (Romans 10:4). Of this we have spoken largely before.

In like manner, the Jew keeping the law with this opinion, that he by this obedience will please God, serveth not the God of his fathers, but is an idolator, worshipping a dream and an idol of his own heart, which is nowhere to be found. For the God of his fathers, whom he saith he worshippeth, promised to Abraham a seed, through the which all nations should be blessed. Therefore God is known, and the blessing is given, not by the law, but by the Gospel of Christ.

Although Paul spake these words: 'Then, when ye knew not God, ye did service' etc., properly and principally to the Galatians, which were Gentiles; yet notwithstanding, by the same words he also toucheth the Jews, who, though they had rejected idols outwardly, yet in their hearts they worshipped them more than did the Gentiles, as is said, Romans 2: 'Thou abhorrest idols, and committest sacrilege.' The Gentiles were not the people of God, they had not his Word, and therefore their idolatry was gross. But the idolatrous Jews cloaked their idolatry with the name and Word of God (as all justiciaries are wont to do), and so with this outward shew of holiness they deceived many. Therefore idolatry, the more holy and spiritual it seemeth to be the more hurtful it is.

But how may these two contrary sayings which the Apostle here setteth down, be reconciled together? 'Ye knew not God,' and 'ye worshipped God.' I answer: All men naturally have this general knowledge, that there is a God, according to that saying, Romans 1: 'Forasmuch as that which may be known of God was manifest in them. For [God manifested it unto them, in that] the invisible things of him [did appear by the creation of the world].' Moreover, the ceremonies and religions which were and always remained among all nations, sufficiently witness that all men have had a certain general knowledge of God. But whether they had it by nature, or by the tradition of their forefathers, I will not here dispute. But here some will object again: If all men knew God, wherefore then doth Paul say, that the Galatians knew not God before the preaching of the Gospel? I answer:

There is a double knowledge of God, general and particular. All men have the general knowledge, namely, that there is a God, that he created heaven and earth, that he is just, that he punisheth the wicked, etc. But what God thinketh of us, [what his will is towards us,] what he will give or what he will do to the end we may be delivered from sin and death, and be saved (which is the true knowledge of God indeed), this they know not.

As it may be that I know some man by sight, whom indeed I know not thoroughly, because I understand not what affection he beareth towards me. So men know naturally that there is a God, but what his will is, or what is not his will, they do not know. For it is written: 'There is none that understandeth God' (Romans 3:11), and in another place: 'No man hath seen God' (John 1:18). That is to say, no man hath known what is the will of God. Now, what doth it avail thee if thou know that there is a God, and yet art ignorant what is his will towards thee? Here some think one thing, and some another. The Jews imagine this to

be the will of God, if they worship him according to the rule of Moses' law; the Turk, if he observe his Alcoran; the monk, if he keep his order and perform his vows. But all these are deceived and 'become vain in their own cogitations,' as Paul saith (Romans 1), not knowing what pleaseth or displeaseth God. Therefore, instead of the true and natural God, they worship the dreams and imaginations of their own heart, which are by nature nothing.

This is it that Paul meaneth when he saith: 'When ye knew not God,' that is, when ye knew not the will of God, 'ye served those which by nature were no gods,' that is to say, ye served the dreams and imaginations of your own heart, whereby ye imagined without the Word, that God was to be worshipped with this or that work, with this or that rite or ceremony.

For upon this proposition, which all men do naturally hold, namely, that there is a God, hath sprung all idolatry, which without the knowledge of the Divinity, could never have come into the world. But because men had this natural knowledge of God, they conceived vain and wicked imaginations of God, without and against the Word, which they esteemed and maintained as the very truth itself, and so dreamed that God is such a one, as by nature he is not. So the monk imagineth him to be such a God as forgiveth sins, giveth grace and everlasting life for the keeping of his rule.

This God is nowhere to be found. Therefore he serveth not the true God, but that which by nature is no God; to wit, the imagination and idol of his own heart; that is to say, his own false and vain opinion of God, which he dreameth to be an undoubted truth. Now reason itself will enforce us to confess, that man's opinion is no God. Therefore whosoever will worship God without his Word, serveth not the true God (as Paul saith), but that which by nature is no God.

Therefore whether ye call rudiments here the law of Moses, or else the traditions of the Gentiles (albeit he speaketh here properly and principally of the rudiments of Moses), there is no great difference. For he that falleth from grace to the law, falleth with no less danger than he that falleth from grace to idolatry. For without Christ there is nothing else but mere idolatry, an idol and false imagination of God, whether it be called Moses' law, or the Pope's ordinances, or the Turk's Alcoran, etc. Therefore he saith with a certain admiration:

But now seeing ye know God

As though he should say: This is a marvellous thing, that ye, knowing God by the preaching of faith, do so suddenly revolt from the true knowledge of his will (wherein I thought ye were so surely established, that I feared nothing less than that ye should so easily be overthrown), and do now again, by the instigation of the false apostles, return to the weak and beggarly elements, which ye would serve again afresh. Ye heard before by my preaching, that this is the will of God, to bless all nations: not by circumcision, or by the observation of the law, but by

Christ promised to Abraham. They that believe in him shall be blessed with faithful Abraham; they are the sons and heirs of God. Thus (I say) have ye known God.

Yea rather are known of God, etc.

He correcteth the sentence going before: 'But now seeing ye have known God;' or rather turneth it after this manner: 'yea rather ye are known of God.' For he feared lest they had lost God utterly. As if he would say:

Alas! are ye come to this point, that now ye know not God, but return again from grace to the law? Yet notwithstanding God knoweth you. And indeed our knowledge is rather passive than active; that is to say, it consisteth in this, that we are rather known of God, than that we know him. All our doing, [that is, all our endeavor to know and to apprehend God,] is to suffer God to work in us. He giveth the Word, which when we have received by faith given from above, we are newborn and made the sons of God. This is then the sense and meaning: 'Ye are known of God,' that is, ye are visited with the Word, ye are endued with faith and the Holy Ghost, whereby ye are renewed, etc. Wherefore, even by these words, 'ye are known of God,' he taketh away all righteousness from the law, and denieth that we attain the knowledge of God through the worthiness of our own works. 'For no man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him' (Matthew 11:27); and also: 'He by his knowledge shall justify many, because he shall bear their iniquities' (Isaiah 53:11). Wherefore our knowledge concerning God consisteth in suffering, and not in doing. He much marvelleth therefore, that seeing they knew God truly by the Gospel, they returned so suddenly to weak and beggarly rudiments, by the persuasion of the false apostles. As I myself also should greatly marvel, if our church (which by the grace of God is godly reformed in pure doctrine and faith) should be so seduced and perverted by some fond and frantic head, through the preaching of one or two sermons, that they would not acknowledge me for their pastor any more. Which thing notwithstanding shall one day come to pass, if not whilst we live, yet when we are dead and gone. For many shall then rise up, which will be masters and teachers, who under a color of true religion shall teach false and perverse doctrine, and shall quickly overthrow all that we in so long time and with so great travail have builded. We are not better than the Apostles, who whilst they yet lived, saw (not without their great grief and sorrow) the subversion of those churches which they themselves had planted through their ministry. Therefore it is no great marvel if we be constrained to behold the like evil at this day in those churches where sectaries do reign, who hereafter when we are dead, shall possess also those churches which we have won and planted by our ministry, and with their poison infect and subvert the same. And yet notwithstanding Christ shall remain and reign to the end of the world, and that marvellously, as he did under the Papacy.

Paul seemeth to speak very spitefully of the law, when he calleth it the rudiments (as he did also before in the beginning of this chapter), and not only rudiments, but weak and beggarly rudiments. Is it not blasphemy to give such odious names to the law of God? The law being in his true use, ought to serve the promises, and to stand with the promises and grace. But if it fight against them, it is no more the holy law of God, but a false and a devilish doctrine, and doth nothing else but drive men to desperation, and therefore must be rejected.

Wherefore when he calleth the law weak and beggarly rudiments, he speaketh of the law in respect of proud and presumptuous hypocrites which would be justified by it, and not of the law being spiritually understood, which engendereth wrath (Romans 4:15). For the law (as I have often said) being in his own proper use, accuseth and condemneth the old man; and in this respect it is not only a strong and rich rudiment but most mighty and most rich, yea rather an invincible power and riches: and if here the conscience be compared with the law, then it is most weak and beggarly. For it is so tender a thing, that for a small sin it is so troubled and terrified, that it utterly despaireth, unless it be raised up again. Wherefore, the law in his proper use hath more strength and riches, than heaven and earth is able to contain; insomuch that one jot or one tittle of the law is able to kill all mankind, as the history of the law given by Moses doth witness (Exodus 19:20). This is the true and divine use of the law, of which Paul speaketh not in this place.

Paul therefore intreateth here of hypocrites, which are fallen from grace, or which have not yet attained to grace. These, abusing the law, seek to be justified by it. They exercise and tire themselves day and night in the works thereof, as Paul witnesseth of the Jews: 'For I bear them record,' saith he, 'that they have the zeal of God, but not according to knowledge; for they are ignorant of the righteousness of God,' etc. (Romans 10:2 f.). Such do hope so to be strengthened and enriched by the law, that they may be able to set their power and wealth of righteousness which they have gotten by the law, against the wrath and judgment of God, and so to appease God and to be saved thereby. In this respect then, we may well say that the law is a weak and a beggarly rudiment; that is to say, which can give neither help nor counsel.

And whoso listeth to amplify this matter, may do so in the rhetorical manner and say, that the law is a weak and a beggarly rudiment actively, because it maketh men more weak and beggarly: and passively, because that of itself it hath no power or riches, whereby it is able to give or to bring righteousness: and moreover, that neutrally and in itself, it is not only weak and beggarly, but even weakness and beggary itself. How then shall it enrich or strengthen those, which were before both weak and beggarly?

Therefore to seek to be justified by the law, is as much as if a man being weak and feeble already, would seek some other greater evil whereby he might overcome his weakness and poverty, which notwithstanding would bring him

unto utter destruction. As if he which hath the falling sickness, would seek to join unto it the pestilence for a remedy; or if a leper should come to a leper, or a beggar to a beggar, the one to help and to enrich the other. Here, as the proverb saith, one man milketh the he-goat while the other holdeth the sieve under.

Paul therefore sheweth that they which seek to be justified by the law, have this commodity thereby, that daily they become more and more weak and beggarly. For they be weak and beggarly of themselves; that is to say, they are by nature the children of wrath, subject to death and everlasting damnation; and yet they lay hold upon that which is nothing else but mere weakness and beggary, seeking to be strengthened and enriched thereby.

Therefore everyone that falleth from the promise to the law, from faith to works, doth nothing else but lay upon himself, being weak and beggarly already, such a yoke as he is not able to bear (Acts 15:10), and in bearing thereof is made ten times more weak and beggarly so that at length he is driven to despair, unless Christ come and deliver him.

This thing the Gospel also witnesseth, speaking of the woman which was grieved twelve years with a bloody issue, and suffered many things of many physicians, upon whom she had spent all her substance, and yet could not be cured; but the longer she was under their hands, the worse she was (Mark 5:25 ff.). As many therefore as do the works of the law to be justified thereby, are not only not made righteous, but twice more unrighteous than they were before; that is (as I have said), more weak and beggarly and more unapt to do any good work. This have I proved to be true both in myself and many others. I have known many monks in the Papacy, which with great zeal have done many great works for the attaining of righteousness and salvation, and yet were they more impatient, more weak, more miserable, more faithless, more fearful, and more ready to despair than any other. The civil magistrates who were ever occupied in great and weighty affairs, were not so impatient, so fearful, so fainthearted, so superstitious, and so faithless, as these justiciaries [and meritmongers] were.

Whosoever then seeketh righteousness by the law, doth nothing else but seek by repeated acts to acquire for himself a habit of that first act, imagining that God being angry and threatening, must needs be pacified with works. Now when he hath once conceived this fantasy, he beginneth to work. But he can never find so many good works as are able to quiet his conscience, but still he desireth more, yea he findeth sins in those works he hath done already. Therefore his conscience can never be certified, but he must needs be always in doubt, and thus think with himself: Thou hast not sacrificed as thou shouldest do; thou hast not prayed aright; this thou hast left undone; this or that sin thou hast committed. Here the heart trembleth and feeleth itself oppressed with innumerable sins, which still increase without end, so that he swerveth from righteousness more and more, until at length he fall to desperation. Hereof it cometh that many, being at the point of death, have uttered these desperate words: O wretch that I am!

I have not kept mine order. Whither shall I flee from the wrath of Christ, that angry judge? Would to God I had been made a swineherd, or the vilest wretch in the whole world.

Thus the monk in the end of his life is more weak, more beggarly, more faithless and fearful than he was at the beginning, when he first entered into his order. The reason is, because he would strengthen himself through weakness, and enrich himself through poverty. The law, or men's traditions, or the rule of his order, should have healed him when he was sick, and enriched him when he was poor: but he is become more feeble and more poor than the publicans and harlots. The publicans and harlots have not an heap of good works to trust unto, as the monks have; but although they feel their sins never so much, yet they can say with the publican: 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' (Luke 18:13). But contrariwise the monk, which hath spent all his time in weak and beggarly elements, is confirmed in this opinion: If thou keep thy rule, thou shalt be saved, etc. With this false persuasion he is so deluded and bewitched, that he cannot apprehend grace, no nor once remember grace. Thus, notwithstanding all the works which either he doth or hath done, be they never so many and so great, he thinketh that he hath never done enough, but hath still an eye to more works; and so, by heaping up of works, he goeth about to appease the wrath of God and to justify himself, until he be driven to utter desperation. Wherefore, whosoever falleth from faith and followeth the law, is like to Aesop's dog, which foregoeth the flesh, and snatcheth at the shadow.

Wherefore, it is impossible that such as seek [righteousness and] salvation by the law (whereunto all men are naturally inclined), should ever find quietness and peace of conscience: yea they do nothing else but heap laws upon laws, whereby they torment both themselves and others, and afflict men's consciences so miserably, that through extreme anguish of heart, many die before their time. For one law always bringeth forth ten more, and so they increase without number and without end. This do the innumerable Summae witness (especially that devilish one which they call the Angelic), wherein laws of this sort are gathered and expounded.

To be brief: he that striveth to be justified by the law, endeavoureth to do that which he shall never be able to accomplish. Hereunto we may apply, as I see the Fathers did, the sayings of wise and learned men concerning labor done in vain, such as: 'Rolling the stone,' 'Drawing water with a sieve,' etc. And I think that with such inventions and parables the Fathers wished to remind their disciples of the distinction between the law and the Gospel, and so to show that when men have fallen from grace, albeit that they exercise and weary themselves with ceaseless and burdensome toil, yet their labor is in vain. Such are rightly said to roll the stone; that is, to labor to no purpose, as the poets tell of Sisyphus, which rolled the stone to the top of the mountain in hell, and as often as it reached the top, it rolled down again. Also, to draw water with a sieve; that is, to weary themselves

with endless and useless labor, as the poets tell of the daughters of Danaus, which in hell did carry water in cracked vessels to a bottomless jar.

I would that ye which are students of sacred learning, had a store of such parables, that ye might the better retain the distinction between the law and the Gospel: as that to seek to be justified by the law is to count money out of an empty purse, to eat from an empty platter and drink from an empty cup, to seek strength and riches where there is naught but weakness and poverty, to lay yet more burdens on one that is weighed down and crushed with his load, to pay an hundred guineas when thou hast not a penny, to take the shirt off a naked man, to oppress the sick and needy with more sickness and need, etc.

Now who would have thought that the Galatians, which had learned so sound and so pure a doctrine of such an excellent Apostle and teacher, could be so suddenly led away from the same, and utterly perverted by the false apostles? It is not without cause that I repeat this so often, that to fall away from the truth of the Gospel is an easy matter. The reason is, because even godly men do not sufficiently consider, what a precious and a necessary treasure the true knowledge of Christ is. Therefore they do not labor so diligently and so carefully as they should do, to obtain and to retain the same. Moreover, the greater part of those that hear the Word, are exercised with no cross [or affliction]; they wrestle not against sin, death and the devil, live in security without any conflict. Such men because they are not proved and tried with temptations, and therefore are not armed with the Word of God against the subtleties of the devil, never feel the use and power of the Word. Indeed whilst they are among faithful ministers and preachers, they can follow their words, and say as they say, persuading themselves that they perfectly understand the matter of justification. But when they are gone, and wolves in sheep's clothing are come in their place, it happeneth unto them as it did to the Galatians; that is to say, they are suddenly seduced and easily turned back to weak and beggarly rudiments.

Paul hath here his peculiar manner of speech, which the other Apostles did not use. For there was none of them besides Paul, that gave such names to the law; to wit, that it is a weak and a beggarly rudiment, that is to say, utterly unprofitable to righteousness. And surely I durst not have given such terms unto the law, but should have thought it great blasphemy against God, if Paul had not done so before. But of this I have intreated more largely before, where I shewed when the law is weak and beggarly, and when it is most strong and rich, etc. Now if the law of God be weak and unprofitable to justification, much more are the laws and decrees of the Pope weak and unprofitable to justification. Not that I utterly reject and condemn all his laws, for I say that many of them are useful for external discipline, to the end that all things may be done orderly in the Church, that no dissensions, strife, etc. should arise, even as the emperor's laws are useful for the good order of the commonweal, etc. But with this commendation and use of his laws, the Pope is not content, but he requireth us to believe that by the observation of them we are justified and saved. This we deny, and we give

sentence against the decrees, laws and traditions of the Pope, with such boldness and assurance, as Paul did against the law of God, they they are not only weak and beggarly rudiments, and utterly unprofitable to righteousness, but also execrable, accursed, devilish and damnable: for they blaspheme grace, they overthrow the Gospel, abolish faith, take away Christ, etc.

Forasmuch men as the Pope requireth that we should keep his laws as necessary to salvation, he is very Antichrist and the vicar of Satan; and as many as cleave unto him, and confirm his abominations and blasphemies, or keep them to this end, that thereby they may merit the forgiveness of their sins, are the servants of Antichrist and of the devil. Now such hath the doctrine of the papistical church been of a long time, that these laws ought to be kept as necessary to salvation. Thus the Pope sitteth in the temple of God, vaunting himself as God: he setteth himself against God, and exalteth himself above all that is called God or worshipped, etc. (Thessalonians 2:4); and men's consciences more feared and revered the laws and ordinances of the Pope, than the Word of God and his ordinances. By this means he was made the lord of heaven and earth and of hell, and bare a triple crown upon his head. The cardinals also and bishops his creatures, were made kings and princes of the world : and therefore, if he did not burden men's consciences with his laws, he could not long maintain his terrible power, his dignity and his riches, but his whole kingdom would quickly fall.

This place which Paul here handleth, is weighty and of great importance, and therefore the more diligently to be marked; to wit, that they which fall from grace to the law, do utterly lose the knowledge of the truth; they see not their own sins; they neither know God, nor themselves, nor the devil; and moreover they understand not the force and use of the law, although they brag neversomuch that they keep and observe the same. For without the knowledge of grace, that is to say, without the Gospel of Christ, it is impossible for a man to give this definition of the law, that it is a weak and beggarly rudiment and unprofitable to righteousness. But rather he judgeth quite contrary of the law: to wit, that it is not only necessary to salvation, but also that it strengtheneth such as are weak, and enricheth such as are poor and beggarly; that is to say, that such as obey and observe the same, shall be able to merit righteousness and everlasting salvation. If this opinion remain, the promise of God is denied, Christ is taken away, lying, impiety and idolatry is established. Now the Pope, with all his bishops, his schools and whole synagogue, taught that his laws are necessary to salvation: therefore he was a teacher of weak and beggarly elements, wherewith he made the Church of Christ throughout the whole world most weak and beggarly; that is to say, he burdened and miserably tormented the Church with his wicked laws, defacing Christ and burying his Gospel. Therefore if thou wilt observe the laws of the Pope without offense of conscience, see to it thou keep them without the opinion of righteousness; for righteousness is given through Christ alone.

Whereunto ye will be in bondage again

This he addeth, to declare that he speaketh of proud and presumptuous hypocrites, which seek to be justified by the law, as I have shewn before.

For otherwise he calleth the law holy, good, etc., as 1 Timothy 1:8: 'We know that the law is good, if a man use it rightly,' that is to say, civilly to bridle evildoers, and spiritually to increase transgressions. But whosoever observeth the law to obtain righteousness before God, maketh the law, which is good, damnable and hurtful unto himself. He reproveth the Galatians therefore, because they would be in bondage to the law again, which doth not take away sins, but increaseth them. For whilst a sinner, being weak and poor himself, seeketh to be justified by the law, he findeth nothing in it but weakness and poverty itself. And here two sick and feeble beggars meet together, of whom the one is not able to help and heal the other, but rather molesteth and troubleth the other.

We, as being strong in Christ, will gladly serve the law, not the weak and beggarly, but the mighty and rich law, that is to say, so far forth as it hath power and dominion over the body: for then we serve the law, but only in our body and outward members, and not in our conscience. But the Pope requireth that we should obey his laws with this opinion, that if we do this or that, we are righteous; if we do it not, we are damned. Here the law is no more than a weak and beggarly element. For whilst this bondage of the conscience continueth under the law, there can be nothing but mere weakness and poverty. Wherefore all the weight of the matter lieth in this word 'to serve.' The meaning therefore of Paul is this, that he would not have the conscience to serve under the law as a captive, but to be free and to have dominion over the law. For the conscience is dead to the law through Christ, and the law again unto the conscience. Whereof we have more largely intreated afore in the second chapter.

Ye observe days and months, times and years

By these words he plainly declareth what the false apostles taught, namely, the observation of days, months, times and years. Almost all the doctors have interpreted this place as concerning the astrological days of the Chaldaeans, saying that the Gentiles in doing business or awaiting the issues of life and affairs, did observe certain fixed days, months, etc., and that the Galatians at the bidding of the false apostles did also the same.

And St. Augustine, whom others thereafter followed, expounded these words of Paul as concerning that Gentile custom, although afterwards he interpreted them also of the days, months, etc. of the Jews. But Paul here instructeth the conscience; therefore he speaketh not of that Gentile custom of observing days, etc., which pertaineth only to the body, but he speaketh of the law of God, and of the observation of days, months, etc., according to the law of Moses; that is to say, concerning religious days, months and seasons, which the Galatians taught

by the false apostles did observe unto justification. For Moses had commanded the Jews to keep holy the Sabbath-day, the new moons, the first and the seventh month, the three appointed times or feasts (namely the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and of the Tabernacles) and the year of Jubilee. These ceremonies the Galatians were constrained by the false apostles to keep as necessary to righteousness. Therefore he saith that they, losing the grace and liberty which they had in Christ, were turned back to the serving of weak and beggarly elements. For they were persuaded by the false apostles, that these laws must needs be kept, and by keeping of them they should obtain righteousness; but if they kept them not, they should be damned. Contrariwise, Paul can in no wise suffer that men's consciences should be bound to the law of Moses, but always delivereth them from the law. 'Behold I, Paul,' (saith he, a little after in the fifth chapter), 'do say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing;' and, 'Let no man judge you in meat or drink or in respect of an holiday, of a new moon or sabbath-day,' etc. (Colossians 2:16). So saith our Savior Christ: 'The kingdom of God cometh not with observation' (Luke 17:20). Much less then are men's consciences to be burdened and snared with human traditions. Here some man may say: If the Galatians sinned in observing days and seasons, how is it not sin when ye do the same? I answer: We observe the Lord's day, the day of his Nativity, Easter (Pascha), and such-like feasts, with all liberty, We burden not consciences with these ceremonies, neither teach as the false apostles and the Papists did, that they are necessary to righteousness, or that we can make satisfaction for sins by them; but we keep them to the end that all may be done orderly and without tumult in the Church, and that outward concord (for in spirit we have another concord) be not broken, as once it came to pass when the Roman pontiff, Victor, excommunicated all the churches of Asia for no other cause than that they celebrated the Paschal day at another time than the Roman church. Irenaeus reprehendeth this in Victor, as assuredly it was worthy to be reprehended: for it was extreme madness on account of so light a matter to hand over the churches of the East to the devil. The [true] knowledge of the observation of days and seasons was thus rare even among the greatest men. Jerome had it not, neither had Augustine understood it, if he had not been vexed and exercised by the Pelagians.

But we chiefly observe such feasts to the end that the ministry of the Word may be preserved, that the people may assemble themselves at certain days and times to hear the Word, to come to the knowledge of God, to have communion, to pray together for all necessities, and to give thanks to God for all his benefits both bodily and spiritual. And it was for this cause above all, I believe, that the observation of the Lord's day, Easter, Pentecost, etc. was instituted of the Fathers.

I am in fear of you, lest I have bestowed on you labor in vain

Here Paul sheweth himself to be greatly troubled through the fall of the Galatians; whom he would more bitterly reprove, but that he feareth, lest if he

should deal with them more sharply, he should not only not make them better, but more offend them, and so utterly alienate their minds from him.

Therefore in writing he changeth and mitigateth his words; and as though all the harm redounded unto himself, he saith: 'I am in fear of you, lest I have bestowed my labor on you in vain;' that is to say, it grieveth me that I have preached the Gospel with so great diligence and faithfulness amongst you, and see no fruit to come thereof. Notwithstanding, although he show a very loving and a fatherly affection towards them, yet withal he chideth them somewhat sharply, but yet covertly. For when he saith that he had labored in vain, that is to say, that he had preached the Gospel among them without any fruit; he showeth covertly that either they were obstinate unbelievers, or else were fallen from the doctrine of faith. Now both these, as well unbelievers as backsliders from the doctrine of faith, are sinners, wicked, unrighteous and damned. Such therefore do obey the law in vain: they observe days, months and years in vain. And in these words, 'I am in fear of you, lest I have bestowed on you labor in vain,' is contained a secret excommunication. For the Apostle meaneth hereby that the Galatians were secluded and separate from Christ, unless they speedily returned to sound and sincere doctrine again; yet he pronounced no open sentence against them. For he perceived that he could do no good with over-sharp dealing; wherefore he changeth his style, and speaketh them fair, saying:

Be ye as I am, for I am as ye are.

This place is not dialectical, but full of affections, which must be handled rhetorically. Hitherto Paul had been wholly occupied in teaching: and being moved with this great enormity [and wicked revolting] of the Galatians, he was vehemently incensed against them, and chid them bitterly, calling them fools, bewitched, not believing the truth, crucifiers of Christ, etc. Now the greater part of his Epistle being finished, he beginneth to perceive that he had handled them too sharply. Therefore being careful lest he should do more hurt than good through his severity, he showeth that this his sharp chiding proceedeth of a fatherly affection and a true apostolical heart. And so he amplifieth the matter with sweet and gentle words, to the end that if he had offended any (as no doubt there were many offended), by these sweet and loving words he might win them again.

And here by his own example he admonisheth all pastors and ministers, that they ought to bear a fatherly and motherly affection, not towards ravening wolves, but towards the poor sheep, miserably seduced and going astray, patiently bearing with their faults and infirmities, instructing and restoring them with the spirit of meekness. For they cannot be brought in the right way by any other means; and by over-sharp reproving and rebuking they are provoked to anger, or else to desperation, but not to repentance. And here is to be noted by me way, that such is the nature and fruit of true and sound doctrine, that when it is well taught and well understood, it joienth men's hearts together with a singular concord. But when men reject godly and sincere doctrine, and embrace errors,

this unity and concord is soon broken. Therefore as soon as thou seest thy brethren seduced by vain and fantastical spirits, to fall from the article of justification, thou shalt perceive that by and by they will pursue the faithful with bitter hatred, whom before they most tenderly loved.

This we find to be true at this day in our false brethren, the Sacramentarians and Anabaptists, who at the beginning of the reformation of the Gospel, were glad to hear us and read our books with great zeal and affection. They acknowledged the gift of the Holy Ghost in us, and revered us for the same, as ministers of God. Some of them also lived familiarly with us for a time, and behaved themselves very modestly and soberly among us. But when they were departed from us and perverted by the Sectaries, they showed themselves more bitter enemies to our doctrine and our name than any other; for although they hated the Papists, they hated us yet more. I do much and often marvel whereupon they should conceive such a deadly hatred against us, whom they before so dearly and so tenderly loved; for we offended them not in anything nor gave them any occasion to hate us. Yea, they are constrained to confess that we desire nothing more, than that the glory of God may be advanced, the benefit of Christ truly known, and the truth of the Gospel purely taught, which God hath now again in these latter days revealed by us unto this unthankful world; which thing should rather provoke them to love us than to hate us. I marvel therefore not without cause, whereof this change cometh. Verily there is no other cause, but that they have gotten unto themselves new masters and harkened to new teachers, whose poison hath so infected them, that now of very friends they are become our mortal enemies. And I see the condition of the Apostles and all other faithful ministers to be such, that their disciples and hearers being once infected with the errors of the [false apostles and] heretics, have and do set themselves against them, and become their enemies. There were very few amongst the Galatians which continued in the sound doctrine of the Apostle. All the rest being seduced by the false apostles, did not acknowledge Paul for their pastor and teacher any more; yea, there was nothing more odious unto them than the name and doctrine of Paul. And I fear me, that this Epistle brought very few of them back again from their error.

If the like case should happen to us; that is to say, if in our absence our church should be seduced by fantastical heads, and we should write hither, not one or two, but many epistles, we should prevail little or nothing at all.

Our men (a few only excepted of the stronger sort) would use themselves no otherwise towards us, than they do at this day which are seduced by the Sectaries; who would sooner worship the Pope, than they would obey our admonitions or approve our doctrine. No man shall persuade them they reject Christ, and return again to weak and beggarly elements, and to those which by nature are no gods. They can abide nothing less, than to hear that their teachers, by whom they are seduced, are overthrowers of the Gospel of Christ, and troublers of men's consciences and of the churches. The Lutherans only (say

they) are not wise, they alone do not preach Christ, they alone have not the Holy Ghost, the gift of prophecy, and the true understanding of the Scriptures. our teachers are in nothing inferior unto them; yea, in many things they excel them, because they follow the Spirit and teach spiritual things. Contrariwise [the Lutherans] never yet tasted what true divinity meant, but stick in the letter, and therefore they teach nothing but the catechism, faith, and charity, etc. Wherefore (as I am wont to say), like as to fall in faith is an easy matter, so is it most perilous, to wit, even from the high heaven into the deep pit of hell. It is not such as properly followeth the nature of man, as murder, adultery, and such like; but devilish and the proper work of the devil. For they which so fall, cannot be easily recovered, but most commonly they continue perverse and obstinate in their error. Therefore the latter end of those men is worse than the beginning, as our Savior Christ witnesseth when he saith: 'The unclean spirit being cast out of his house, when he returneth, he entereth in again not alone, but taketh unto him seven spirits worse than himself, and there dwelleth,' etc. (Matthew 12:43 ff.).

Paul therefore perceiving through the revelation of the Holy Ghost, that it was to be feared lest the minds of the Galatians, whom of a godly zeal he had called foolish and bewitched etc., by this sharp chiding should rather be stirred up against him, than amended (especially since he now knew that the false apostles were among them, who would expound this sharp chiding which proceeded from a fatherly affection, unto the worst, crying out: Now Paul, which some of you so greatly praise, sheweth what he is, and with what spirit he is led; who, when he was with you, would seem to be unto you a father, but his letters show in his absence that he is a tyrant, etc.). Therefore he is so troubled through a godly care and fatherly affection, that he cannot well tell how and what to write to them. For it is a dangerous thing for a man to defend his cause by letter against those which are absent, and have now begun to hate him, and are persuaded by others that his cause is not good. Therefore being in great perplexity, he saith a little after: 'I am troubled [and at my wit's end] for your cause;' that is, I know not what to do, or how to deal with you.

Be ye as I am, for I am as ye are.

These words are to be understood, not of doctrine, but of affections.

Therefore the meaning is not: Be ye as I am, that is to say, think of doctrine as I do, but: Bear such an affection towards me as I do towards you. As though he would say: Perhaps I have too sharply chidden you, but pardon this my sharpness, and judge not my heart by my words, but my words by the affection of my heart. My words seem rough, and my chastisement sharp, but my heart is loving and fatherly. Therefore, O my Galatians, take this my chiding with such a mind as I bear towards you: for the matter required that I should show myself so sharp and severe towards you.

Even so may we also say of ourselves. Our correction is severe, and our manner of writing sharp and vehement; but certainly there is no bitterness in our heart, no envy, no desire of revenge against our adversaries; but there is in us a godly carefulness and sorrow of spirit. We do not so hate the Pope and other erroneous spirits, that we wish any evil unto them, or desire their destruction; but rather we desire that they may return again to the right way, and be saved together with us. The schoolmaster chastiseth the scholar, not to hurt him, but to reform him. The rod is sharp, but correction is necessary for the child, and the heart of him that correcteth, loving and friendly. So the father chastiseth his son, not to destroy him but to reform and amend him. Stripes are sharp and grievous to the child, but the father's heart is loving and kind: and unless he loved his child, he would not chastise him, but cast him off, despair of his welfare and suffer him to perish. This correction therefore which he giveth to his child, is a token of fatherly affection, and is very profitable for the child. Even so, O my Galatians, think ye likewise of my dealing towards you: then ye will not judge my chiding to be sharp and bitter, but profitable for you. 'All chastisement for the present time seemeth not to be joyous, but grievous: but afterwards,' etc. (Hebrews 12:11). Let the same affection therefore be in you towards me which I bear towards you. I bear a loving heart towards you: the same I desire again of you.

Thus he speaketh them fair, and with this fair speech he still continueth, that he might pacify their minds which were stirred up against him by his sharp chiding. Notwithstanding he revoketh not his severe words. Indeed he confesseth that they were sharp and bitter: but necessity (saith he) compelled me to reprehend you somewhat sharply and severely. But that which I did, proceeded of a sincere and loving heart towards you. The physician giveth a bitter potion to his patient, not to hurt him, but to cure him. If then the bitterness of the medicine, which is given to the sick body, is not to be imputed to the physician, but to the medicine and the malady; judge ye also in like manner of my severe and sharp reprehension.

Brethren, I beseech you: ye have not hurt me at all

Is this to beseech the Galatians, when he calleth them bewitched, disobedient to the truth, and crucifiers of Christ? It seemeth rather to be a great rebuke. But contrariwise, Paul saith that it is no rebuke, but an earnest beseeching; and indeed so it is. And it is as much as if he said: I confess that I have chidden you somewhat bitterly; but take it in good part, and then shall ye find this my chiding to be no chiding, but a praying and a beseeching. If a father likewise do sharply correct his son, it is as much as if he said: My son, I pray thee to be a good child, etc. It seemeth indeed to be a correction; but if ye respect the father's heart, it is a gentle and earnest beseeching.

Ye have not hurt me at all

As if he said: Why should I be angry with you, or of a malicious mind speak evil of you, seeing ye have nothing offended me? – Why then sayest thou that we are perverted, that we have forsaken thy doctrine, that we are foolish, bewitched, etc.? These things do witness that we have offended thee. – He answereth: Ye have not offended me, but yourselves, and therefore I am thus troubled, not for mine own cause, but for the love I bear unto you. Think not therefore that my chiding did proceed of malice or any evil affection. For I take God to witness, ye have done me no wrong, but contrariwise ye have bestowed great benefits upon me.

Thus speaking them fair, he prepareth their minds to suffer his fatherly chastisement with a childlike affection. And this is to temper wormwood or a bitter potion with honey and sugar, to make it sweet again. So parents speak their children fair when they have well beaten them, giving them apples, pears and other like things, whereby the children know that their parents love them and seek to do them good, how sharp soever their correction doth appear.

And ye know how through the infirmity of the flesh, I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And the trial of me which was in my flesh, ye despised not, neither abhorred, but ye received me as an angel of God, yea as Christ Jesus.

Now he declareth what pleasure he had received of the Galatians. The first benefit (saith he), which I esteem as the greatest of all, was this: When I began first to preach the Gospel amongst you, and that through the infirmity of the flesh and great temptations, my cross did nothing at all offend you; but ye showed yourselves so loving, so kind and so friendly towards me, that not only ye were not offended with this my infirmity of the flesh, with my temptations and afflictions wherewith I was almost overwhelmed, but also ye loved me dearly, and received me as an angel of God, yea rather at Christ Jesus himself. This is indeed a great commendation of the Galatians, that they received the Gospel of a man so contemptible and afflicted on every side as Paul was. For where he preached the Gospel amongst them, both the Jews and Gentiles murmured and raged against him. For all the mighty, wise, religious and learned men, hated, persecuted and blasphemed Paul. With all this the Galatians were no wit offended, but, turning their eyes from the beholding of this infirmity, these temptations and dangers, they did not only hear that poor, despised, wretched and afflicted Paul, and acknowledged themselves to be his disciples, but also they received and heard him as an angel of God, yea as Jesus Christ himself. This is a worthy commendation and a singular virtue of the Galatians, and indeed such a commendation as he giveth to none of all those to whom he wrote, besides these Galatians.

Jerome and certain other of the ancient fathers expound this infirmity of the flesh in Paul, to be some disease of the body, or some temptation of lust. These good fathers lived when the Church was outwardly in a peaceable and prosperous state, without any cross or persecution. For then the bishops began

to increase in riches, estimation and glory in the world; and many also exercised tyranny over the people which were committed to their charge, as the ecclesiastical history witnesseth. Few did their duty, and they that would seem to do it, forsaking the doctrine of the Gospel, set forth their own decrees to the people. Now, when the pastors and bishops are not exercised with the Word of God, but neglect the pure and sincere preaching thereof, they must needs fall into security: for they are not exercised with temptations, with the cross and persecutions, which are wont always undoubtedly to follow the pure preaching of the Word.

Therefore it was impossible that they should understand Paul. But we by the grace of God, have sound and sincere doctrine, which also we preach and teach freely, and therefore are compelled to suffer the bitter hatred, afflictions and persecutions of the devil and the world. And if we were not exercised outwardly by tyrants and heretics with force and subtilty, and inwardly with terrors and the fiery darts of the devil, Paul should be as obscure and unknown unto us as he was in times past to the whole world, and yet is to the Papists, the Anabaptists, and other adversaries.

Therefore the gift of knowledge and interpretation of the Scriptures, and our study, together with our toward and outward temptations, open unto us the meaning of Paul, and the sense of all the holy Scriptures.

Paul therefore calleth the infirmity of the flesh, no disease [of the body] or [temptation of] lust, but his suffering and affliction which he sustained in his body; which he setteth against the virtue and power of the Spirit. But lest we should seem to wrest and pervert Paul's words, let us hear himself speaking in 2 Corinthians 12: 'Very gladly will I rejoice rather in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in anguish for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.' And in the eleventh chapter: 'In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more plenteous, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one, I was thrice beaten with rods. I was once stoned, I suffered thrice shipwreck,' etc. These afflictions which he suffered in his body he calleth the infirmity of the flesh, and not any corporal disease. As though he would say: When I preached the Gospel amongst you, I was oppressed with sundry evils and afflictions; I was always in danger both of the Jews and of the Gentiles, and also of false brethren; I suffered hunger, and wanted all things; I was the very filth and off-scouring of the world. He maketh mention of this his infirmity in many places, as in 1 Corinthians 4; Corinthians 4, 6, 11, 12, and in many other.

We see then that Paul calleth 'infirmities of the flesh' the afflictions which he suffered in the flesh, like as the other Apostles, the prophets, and all godly men did; notwithstanding he was mighty in spirit. For the power of Christ was in him, which always reigned and triumphed through him.

Which thing he testifieth in 2 Corinthians 12 in these words: 'for when I am weak, then am I strong;' also: 'I will gladly rejoice in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me' and in the second chapter: 'Thanks be to God who always maketh us to triumph in Christ.' As though he would say: Indeed the devil, the unbelieving Jews, and the Gentiles rage cruelly against us; notwithstanding we continue constant and invincible against all their assaults, and will they kill them, our doctrine prevaieth and triumpheth. This was the strength and power of spirit in Paul, against which he setteth here the infirmity and bondage of the flesh.

Now this infirmity of the flesh in the godly doth wonderfully offend reason.

Therefore Paul so highly commendeth the Galatians, because they were not offended with this great infirmity, and these vile [and contemptible] forms of the cross which they saw in him; out received him as an angel, yea as Christ Jesus. And Christ himself also armeth the faithful against these base [and contemptible] forms of the cross in which he appeared, when he saith; 'Blessed is he that is not offended in me' (Matthew 11:6). And surely it is a great matter, that they which believe in him, do acknowledge him to be Lord of all, and Savior of the world; whom notwithstanding they hear to have been the most miserable of all others, the least of men, yea a very scorn of men, and a contempt of the people (Psalm 22:7): briefly, despised and hated of all men, and condemned to the death of the cross; and even of his own people, and especially of those that were [esteemed] the best, the wisest and holiest of all other. This is a great matter, I say, not to be moved with these great offenses, and to be able, not only to contemn them, but also to esteem this poor Christ, so spitefully scorned, spit upon, whipped and crucified, more than the riches of all the richest, the strength of all the strongest, the wisdom of all the wisest, the holiness of all the holiest men, with all the crowns and sceptres of all the kings and princes of the whole world. They therefore are worthily called blessed of Christ, which are not offended in him. So it was a great thing that the Galatians were not offended by that most offensive infirmity and those contemptible forms of the cross, which they saw in Paul, but received him as an angel, and as Jesus Christ. Moreover, as Christ saith that his disciples continued with him in his temptations, so Paul saith that the Galatians did not despise his temptations which he bore in the flesh. Not without cause, therefore, doth he praise them so highly.

Now Paul had not only outward temptations (whereof I have spoken already), but also inward and spiritual temptations, as Christ had in the garden; such as that was whereof he complaineth in 2 Corinthians 12, namely, the skolo in the flesh and the angel of Satan which buffeted him. This I say by the way, because the Papists, seeing that the Latin translation hath stimulum carnis, have interpreted this stimulum as a motion of carnal lust. But in the Greek it is skolo, which signifieth a goad or a sharp-pointed stake. It was therefore a spiritual temptation. And herein is no repugnance, in that he added this word

'flesh,' saying: 'A prick was given me in the flesh.' Yea he calleth it of purpose a prick in the flesh.

For the Galatians and others which were conversant with Paul, had seen him oftentimes in great heaviness, anguish and terror. Wherefore the Apostles had not only bodily, but also spiritual temptations; which also he confesseth in 2 Corinthians 7 with these words: 'Fightings without, and terrors within.' And Luke saith in the last of the Acts, that Paul, when he had long striven in the tempests of the sea, even unto the heaviness of his spirit, was again refreshed, and waxed bold when he saw the brethren that came from Rome to meet him at the market of Appius and Three Taverns.

Also, in Philippians 2, he confesseth that God had mercy upon him, in that he restored Epaphroditus so weak and near to death, unto health again, lest he should have sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore besides outward temptations of the body, the Apostles also suffered anguish and heaviness of spirit.

But why saith Paul that he was not despised of the Galatians? It seemeth that they despised him, when they fell away from his Gospel. Paul expoundeth himself: When I first preached to you the Gospel (saith he) ye did not as other people have done, who, being greatly offended through this my infirmity and temptation of the flesh, have despised and rejected me. For man's reason is soon offended with these vile and contemptible forms of the cross, and judgeth those to be stark mad, which [being so afflicted] will go about to comfort, to help, and to succor others; also, those that boast of their great riches, that is to say, of righteousness, strength, victory over sin, death, and all evils, of joy, salvation, and everlasting life, and yet notwithstanding are needy, weak, heavy-hearted, and despised, evil-intreated and slain (not by the multitude, but by them that are highest in church and state) as very noisome poisons both of commonweals and religion; and they which kill them, think they do high service unto God (John 16:2). Therefore, when they promise unto others eternal treasures, and they themselves perish so wretchedly before the world, they are laughed to scorn, and compelled to hear: 'Physician, cure thyself' (Luke 4:23). And hereof come these complaints which are everywhere in the Psalms: 'I am a worm, and no man,' etc., and: 'Depart not from me, for tribulation is at hand, and there is none to help,' etc. (Psalm 22:6,11).

This is therefore a great commendation of the Galatians, that they were not offended with this infirmity and temptation of Paul, but received him as an angel of God, yea as Jesus Christ. It is indeed a great virtue and worthy of great praise to hear the Apostles; but it is a greater, and a true Christian virtue, to give ear unto one so miserable, weak and contemptible as Paul was among the Galatians (as here he witnesseth of himself), and to receive him as an angel from heaven, and to give him such honor as if he had been Christ Jesus himself, and not be offended with his afflictions, being so great and so many. Wherefore by these words he highly commendeth the virtue of the Galatians, which he saith he will

keep in perpetual remembrance, and so greatly esteemeth the same, that he desireth it may be known unto all men. Notwithstanding, in setting forth so highly their benefits and praises, he showeth covertly how entirely they loved him before the coming of the false apostles, and therewithal he moveth them to continue as they began, and to embrace him with no less love and reverence than they did before.

And hereby it may also appear, that the false apostles had greater authority among the Galatians than Paul himself had; for the Galatians, being moved with their authority preferred them far above Paul, whom before they so dearly loved, and received as an angel of God, etc.

What was then your felicity?

As if he would say: How happy were ye counted! How much were ye then praised and commended! The like manner of speech we have in the song of the Virgin Mary: 'All generations shall call me blessed' (Luke 1:48).

And these words, 'What was then your felicity?' contain in them a certain vehemency. As if he should say: Ye were not only blessed, but in all things most blessed and highly commended. Thus he goeth about to qualify and mitigate his bitter potion, that is to say, his sharp chiding, fearing lest the Galatians should be offended therewith; especially seeing he knew that the false apostles would slander him, and most spitefully interpret his words.

For this is the quality and nature of these vipers, that they will slander and maliciously pervert those words which proceed from a simple and sincere heart, and wrest them clean contrary to the true sense and meaning thereof.

They are marvellous cunning workmen in this matter, far passing all the wit and eloquence of all the rhetoricians in the world. For they are led with a wicked spirit, which so bewitcheth them, that they being inflamed with a devilish rage against the faithful, can no otherwise do, but maliciously interpret and wickedly pervert their words and writings. Therefore they are like unto the spider, that sucketh venom out of sweet and pleasant flowers, which proceedeth not of the flowers, but of their own venomous nature, [which turneth that into poison that of itself is good and wholesome]. Paul, therefore, by these mild and sweet words goeth about to prevent the false apostles, to the end they should have no occasion to slander and pervert his words after this manner: Paul handleth you very urgently, he calleth you foolish, bewitched, and disobedient to the truth, which is a sure token that he seeketh not your salvation, but accounteth you as damned and rejected of Christ, etc.

For I bear you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me

He praiseth the Galatians above measure. Ye did not only intreat me (saith he) most courteously and with all reverence, receiving me as an angel of God, etc., but also if necessity had required ye would have plucked out your own eyes and given them unto me; yea, you would have bestowed your lives for me. And indeed the Galatians bestowed their lives for him: for in that they received and maintained Paul (whom the world accounted most execrable and accursed) they turned upon their own heads, as receivers and maintainers of Paul, the cruel hatred and indignation of all the Gentiles and Jews.

So also at this day the name of Luther is most odious to the world. He that praiseth me, sinneth worse than any idolater, blasphemmer, perjurer, whoremonger, adulterer, murderer, or thief. It must needs be, therefore, that the Galatians were well-established in the doctrine and faith of Christ, seeing that they with so great danger of their lives received and maintained Paul, which was hated throughout all the world; for else they would never have sustained that cruel hatred of the whole world.

Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?

Here he showeth the reason why he speaketh the Galatians so fair. For he suspecteth that they take him for their enemy, because he had reproved them so sharply. I pray you (saith he), set apart these rebukes, and separate them from doctrine, and ye shall find that my purpose was not to rebuke you, but to teach you the truth. Indeed I confess that my epistle is sharp and severe; but by this severity I go about to call you back again to the truth of the Gospel, from the which ye are fallen, and to keep you in the same; therefore apply this sharpness and this bitter potion, not to your persons, but to your disease; and judge me not to be your enemy in rebuking you so sharply, but rather think that I am your father: for unless I loved you dearly as my children, and knew also that I am beloved of you, I would not have reproved you so sharply.

It is the part of a friend freely to admonish his friend if he do amiss, and when he is so admonished, if he be wise, he is not angry with the other which hath so friendly admonished him and told him the truth, but giveth him thanks. It is commonly seen in the world that truth bringeth hatred, and that he is accounted an enemy which speaketh the truth. But amongst friends it is not so; much less amongst Christians. Seeing therefore I have reprehended you of mere love, to the end ye might abide in the truth, ye ought not to be offended with me, nor lose the truth, or think me your enemy because of my friendly and fatherly reprehension. All these things are spoken of Paul to confirm that which was said before: 'Be ye as I am.

Ye have not hurt me' etc.

They are jealous over you amiss

He reproveth here the flattery of the false apostles. For Satan is wont, by his ministers, through wonderful subtilty and crafty sleights to beguile the simple, as Paul saith: 'With fair speech and flattery they deceive the hearts of the simple' (Romans 16:18). For first of all they make great protestations that they seek nothing else but the advancement of God's glory; and moreover, that they are moved by the Spirit (because the miserable people are neglected, or else because the truth is not purely taught of others) to teach the infallible truth, that by this means the elect may be delivered from error, and may come to the true light and knowledge of the truth. Moreover, they promise undoubted salvation to those that receive their doctrine. If vigilant and faithful pastors do not withstand these ravening wolves, they will do great harm to the Church under this pretense of godliness and under this sheep's clothing. For the Galatians might say: Why dost thou inveigh so bitterly against our teachers, for that they be jealous over us? For that which they do, they do of zeal and mere love: this ought not to offend thee, etc. Indeed (saith he) they are jealous over you, but their jealousy is not good. So at this day we are compelled to hear from the Sacramentarians that we by our obstinacy do offend against charity and break the peace of the churches, because we reject their doctrine of the Lord's Supper. It were better, say they, that we should let it pass, especially seeing there be no danger in it, than that we should for the sake of this one article of doctrine (and that not the chiefest) stir up so great discords and contentions in the Church; especially seeing they dissent from us in no other article of doctrine save this of the Lord's Supper. To this I reply: Cursed be that charity and concord which cannot be preserved but at the peril of the Word of God.

So the false apostles feigned that they did fervently love the Galatians, and were moved with a certain divine zeal towards them. Now zeal properly signifieth an angry love, or as ye would say, jealousy. Elias saith: 'I have been very jealous for the Lord of Hosts' (1 Kings 19:14). After this manner the husband is jealous towards his wife, the father towards his son, the brother towards his brother, that is to say, they love them fervently; yet so, that they hate their vices, and go about to mend them.

Such a zeal the false apostles pretended to bear towards the Galatians. Paul indeed alloweth that they bore a fervent love towards the Galatians, and were very jealous for them; but their zeal (saith he) was not good. Now, by this color and subtle pretense the simple are deceived, when these seducers do make them to believe that they bear a great zeal and affection towards them, and that they are very careful for them; Paul therefore warneth us here to put a difference betwixt a good zeal and an evil zeal. Indeed a good zeal is to be commended, but not an evil zeal. I am as zealous over you (saith Paul) as they now judge ye which of our zeals is better, mine or theirs; which is good and godly; which is evil and carnal. Therefore let not their zeal so easily seduce you; for:

They would exclude you, that you should altogether love them

As if he said: True it is that they are very zealous towards you, but by this means they seek that ye again should be zealous towards them and reject me. If their zeal were sincere and godly, then surely they would be content that I should be beloved of you as well as they. But they hate our doctrine, and therefore their desire is that it may be utterly abolished, and their own preached amongst you. Now, to the end they might bring this to pass, they go about by this jealousy to pluck your hearts from me, and to make me odious unto you, that when ye have conceived an hatred against me and my doctrine, and turned your affection and zeal towards them, ye should love them only, and receive no other doctrine but theirs. Thus he bringeth the false apostles into suspicion among the Galatians, showing that by this goodly pretense they go about to deceive them. So our Savior Christ also warneth us, saying: 'Take heed of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing' (Matthew 7:15).

Paul suffered the same temptation which we suffer at this day. He was marvellously troubled with this enormity, that after the preaching of his good and wholesome doctrine, he saw so many sects, commotions, dissipations of commonweals, changes of kingdoms, and other like things, to ensue, which were the cause of infinite evils and offenses. He was accused by the Jews to be a pernicious fellow, a mover of sedition in his whole nation, and to be an author of the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5). As if they had said: This is a seditious and a blasphemous fellow; for he preacheth such things whereby he not only overthroweth the Jewish commonwealth, excellently well ordered and established by the laws of God; but also abolisheth even the Ten Commandments, the religion and service of God, and our priesthood, and publisheth throughout the world the Gospel (as he calleth it) whereof are sprung infinite evils, seditions, offenses, and sects. He was compelled to hear of the Gentiles also, which cried out against him in Philippi, that he was a troubler of the city,, and preached customs which were not lawful for them to receive (Acts 16:20 f.).

Such troubles of commonweals and other calamities, as famine, wars, dissensions, and sects, the Jews and Gentiles imputed to the doctrine of Paul and of the other Apostles; and therefore they persecuted them as common plagues, and enemies of the public peace and of religion. The Apostles, notwithstanding all this, did not cease to do their office, but most constantly preached and confessed Christ. For they knew that they should rather obey God than men (Acts 5:29); and that it was better that the whole world should be troubled and in an uproar, than that Christ should not be preached, or that one soul should be neglected and perish.

In the meantime it was (no doubt) a heavy cross to the Apostles to see these offenses; for they were not made of iron. It was a wonderful grief unto them, that

that people for whose sakes Paul wished to be separate from Christ, should perish with all their ornaments (Romans 9). They saw that great tumults and changes of kingdoms should follow their doctrine; and (which was more bitter unto them than death itself, but especially unto Paul) they saw that even amongst them there sprang up many sects. It was heavy news to Paul when he heard that the Corinthians denied the resurrection of the dead; when he heard that the churches which were planted by his ministry were troubled; that the Gospel was overthrown by the false apostles, and that all Asia was revolted from his doctrine, and certain great personages besides.

But he knew that his doctrine was not the cause of these offenses and sects, and therefore he was not discouraged, he forsook not his vocation, but went forward knowing that the Gospel which he preached, was the power of God to salvation to all that believe, howsoever it seem to the Jews and Gentiles to be a foolish and offensive doctrine (Romans 1:16).

He knew that they are blessed which are not offended by this Word of the Cross, whether they be teachers or hearers, as Christ himself saith: 'Blessed is he which is not offended in me.' Contrariwise he knew that they were condemned, which judged this doctrine to be foolish and heretical.

Therefore he boldly said (as Christ did) of the Jews and Gentiles which were offended with this doctrine: 'Let them alone, they are blind and leaders of the blind' (Matthew 15:14).

We also are constrained at this day to hear the same spoken of us, which was said of Paul and the other Apostles; to wit, that the doctrine of the Gospel which we profess, is the cause of many and great evils, as of seditions, wars, sects, and innumerable offenses. Yea, they impute unto us all the troubles which are at this day. Assuredly we teach no heresies or wicked doctrine, but we preach the glad tidings concerning Christ, that he is our high priest and our redeemer. Moreover, our adversaries are constrained (if they will confess the truth) to grant us this, that we have given no occasion through our doctrine, of seditions, wars, tumults, etc.; but always have taught that honor and reverence must be given to the magistrates, because God hath so commanded. Neither are we the authors of offenses; but in that the wicked are offended, the fault is in themselves and not in us. God hath commanded us to preach the doctrine of the Gospel without any respect of offense. But because this doctrine condemneth the wicked doctrine and idolatry of our adversaries, they being provoked thereby, raise offenses of themselves, which the schoolmen called offenses taken, which they said, ought not to be avoided, nor can be avoided.

Christ taught the Gospel, having no regard to the offense of the Jews. 'Suffer them,' (saith he) 'they are blind and leaders of the blind,' etc. (Matthew 15:14). The more the priests forbade the Apostles to preach in the name of Jesus, the more the Apostles gave witness that the same Jesus whom they had crucified, is

both Lord and Christ, and whosoever should call upon him should be saved, and that there is no other name given unto men under heaven, whereby they must be saved, etc. (Acts 2:21,36; 4:12). Even so we preach Christ at this day, not regarding the clamors of the wicked Papists and all our adversaries, which cry out that our doctrine is seditious and full of blasphemy, that it troubleth the commonwealth, overthroweth religion and teacheth heresies, and briefly that it is the cause of all evils. When Christ and his Apostles preached, the same was said likewise of them by the wicked Jews. Not long after, the Romans came, and according to their own prophecy, destroyed both the place and the nation. Wherefore let the enemies of the Gospel at this day, take heed that they be not overwhelmed with these evils, which they prophecy unto themselves These they make grievous and heinous offenses, that monks and priests do marry wives, that we eat flesh upon the Fridays and such-like. But this is no offense to them at all, that by their wicked doctrine they seduce and daily destroy innumerable souls, that by their evil example they offend the weak, that they blaspheme and condemn the glorious Gospel of the mighty God, and that they persecute and kill those that love the sincerity of doctrine [and the Word of life]; this (I say) is to them no offense, but an obedience, a service and an acceptable sacrifice unto God. Let us suffer them therefore: 'for they are blind and leaders of the blind.' 'He that hurteth, let him hurt still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still' (Revelation 22:11). But we, because we believe, will speak and set forth the wonderful works of the Lord so long as we have breath, and will endure the persecutions of our adversaries until the time that Christ our high Bishop and King shall come from heaven, who, we hope, will come shortly as a just Judge to take vengeance of all those that obey not the Gospel. So be it.

With these offenses which the wicked allege, the godly are nothing moved.

For they know that the devil hateth nothing more than the pure doctrine of the Gospel, and therefore he goeth about to deface it with innumerable offenses, that by this means he might root it out of men's hearts for ever.

Before, when nothing else was taught in the Church but man's traditions, the devil did not so rage. For whilst the strong man kept the house, all that he possessed was in peace: but now when a Stronger cometh, which vanquisheth and bindeth that strong one and spoileth his house, then he beginneth to rage indeed (Luke 11:21 f.). And this is an infallible token, that the doctrine which we profess is of God. For else (as it is said in Job 40.), that Behemoth would lie hid under the trees in the covert of the reed and fens. But now that he rangeth about like a roaring lion and stirreth up such hurly-burlies, it is a manifest token that he feeleth the power of our preaching.

When Paul saith: 'They are jealous over you, but amiss' etc., he showeth, by the way, who are the authors of sects; to wit, those jealous spirits which in all times overthrow the true doctrine, and trouble the public peace. For these being stirred up with a perverse zeal, imagine that they have a certain singular

holiness, modesty, patience, and doctrine above others, and therefore they think that they are able to provide for the salvation of all men, that they can teach more profound and profitable things, ordain better service and ceremonies than all other teachers besides, whom they despise as nothing in comparison of themselves, and abase their authority, and corrupt those things which they have purely taught. The false apostles had such a wicked and perverse zeal, stirring up sects, not only in Galatia, but also in all the places wheresoever Paul and the other Apostles had preached; after the which sects followed innumerable offenses and marvellous troubles. 'For the devil' (as Christ saith) 'is a liar and a murderer' (John 8:44), and therefore he is wont not only to trouble men's consciences by false doctrine, but also to stir up tumults, seditions, wars, and all mischief.

There are very many at this day in Germany which are possessed with this kind of jealousy, which pretend great religion, modesty, doctrine, patience etc., and yet in very deed they are ravening wolves; who with their hypocrisy seek nothing else but to discredit us, that the people might esteem and reverence them only, and receive no other doctrine but theirs.

Now, because these men have a great opinion of themselves and despise others, it cannot be, but that there must needs follow horrible dissensions, sects, divisions and seditions. But what should we do? We cannot remedy this matter; as Paul could not do in his time. Notwithstanding he gained some, which obeyed his admonitions. So I hope also that we have called some back from the errors of the Sectaries.

But it is a good thing to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you

As if he should say: I commend you for this, that ye were so zealous for me and loved me so entirely, when I preached the Gospel amongst you in the infirmity of the flesh. Ye ought to bear the same affection towards me now when I am absent, even as if I had never departed from you. For although I be absent in the body, yet have ye my doctrine, which ye ought to retain and maintain, seeing ye received the Holy Ghost through it; thinking with yourselves that Paul is always present with you as long as ye have his doctrine. I do not therefore reprehend your zeal but I praise it, and so far forth I praise it as it is the zeal of God or of the Spirit, and not of the flesh.

Now, the zeal of the Spirit is always good; for it is an earnest affection and motion of the heart to a good thing, and so is not the zeal of the flesh.

He commendeth therefore the zeal of the Galatians, that thereby he may pacify their minds and that they may patiently suffer his correction. As if he would say: Take my correction in good part; for it proceedeth of no anger or malice, but

of a sorrowful heart and careful for your salvation. This is a lively example to teach all ministers how to be careful for their sheep, and to assay every way, that by chiding, fair speaking, or intreating, they may keep them in sound doctrine, and turn them from subtle seducers and false teachers.

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you.

All his words are weighty and fitly framed to the purpose, that they may move the hearts of the Galatians, and win their favor again. And these are sweet and loving words, when he calleth them his little children. When he saith: 'Of whom I travail in birth,' it is an allegory. For the Apostles are in the stead of parents; as schoolmasters also are, in their place and calling or as parents beget the bodily form, so they beget the form of the mind. Now, the form of a Christian mind is faith, or the confidence of the heart that layeth hold upon Christ, and cleaveth to him alone, and to nothing else.

The heart being furnished with this confidence or assurance, to wit, that for Christ's sake we are righteous, hath the true form of Christ. Now, this form is given by the ministry of the Word, as it is said, 1 Corinthians 4:15; 'I have begotten you through the Gospel,' that is to say, in spirit, that ye might know Christ and believe in him. Also 2 Corinthians 3:3: 'Ye are the epistle of Christ ministered by us and written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.' For the Word cometh from the mouth of the Apostle or of the minister, and entereth into the heart of him that heareth it. There the Holy Ghost is present, and imprinteth the Word in the heart, so that it consenteth unto it. Thus every godly teacher is a father which gendereth and formeth the true shape of a Christian mind, and that by the ministry of the Word.

Moreover, by these words, 'Of whom I travail in birth,' he toucheth the false apostles. As though he would say: I did beget you rightly through the Gospel; but these corrupters have formed a new shape in your heart, not of Christ, but of Moses: so that now your affiance is not grounded any more upon Christ, but upon the works of the law. This is not the true form or the form of Christ, but it is another form, and altogether devilish. And he saith not: Of whom I travail in birth until my form be fashioned in you, but 'Until Christ be formed in you;' that is to say, I travail that ye may receive again the shape and similitude of Christ, and not of Paul. In which words he again reproveth the false apostles; for they had abolished the form of Christ in the hearts of the believers, and had devised another form, that is to say, their own; as he saith (chapter 6:13): 'They would have you circumcised, that they might glory in your flesh.'

Of this form of Christ he speaketh also in Colossians 3: 'Put ye on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.' Paul therefore goeth about to repair the form of Christ in the Galatians, that was disfigured and corrupted by the false apostles: which is, that they should feel,

think, and will, as God doth, whose thought and will is, that we should obtain remission of our sins and everlasting life by Jesus Christ his Son, whom he sent into the world to the end he might be the propitiation for our sins, yea for the sins of the whole world, and that we through this his Son should know that he is appeased and become our loving Father. They that believe this, are like unto God: that is to say, all their thoughts are of God, as the affection of their heart is; they have the same form in their mind which is in God or in Christ. This is to be renewed in the spirit of our mind, and to put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, as Paul saith (Ephesians 4:23 f.).

He saith then, that he travaileth asain of the Galatians in birth, and yet so notwithstanding, that the form of the children should not be the form of the Apostle, so that the children should not resemble the form of Paul, or of Cephas etc. (1 Corinthians 1:12 f.), but of another father, that is to say, of Christ. I will fashion him (saith he) in you, that the same mind may be in you, which was in Christ himself (Philippians 2:5). To be brief: 'I travail of you;' that is to say, I labor carefully to call you back to your former faith, the which ye have lost (being deceived by the craft and subtilty of the false apostles) and are returned to the law and works. Therefore I must now again carefully travail to bring you back from the law to the faith of Christ. This he calleth to travail in birth, etc.

And I would I were with you now, that I might change my voice, etc.

These are the true cares of an Apostle. It is a common saying, that a letter is a dead messenger; for it can give no more than it hath. And no epistle or letter is written so exactly, wherein there is not somewhat lacking. For the circumstances are diverse; there is a diversity of times, places, persons, manners, and affections; all which no epistle can express; therefore it moveth the reader diversely, making him now sad, now merry, as he himself is disposed. But if any thing be spoken sharply or out of time, the lively voice of a man may expound, mitigate, or correct the same.

Therefore the Apostle wisheth that he were with them, to the end he might temper and change his voice, as he should see it needful by the qualities of their affections. As, if he should see any of them very much troubled, he might so temper his words, that they should not be oppressed thereby with more heaviness: contrariwise, if he should see others high-minded, he might more sharply reprehend them, lest they should be too secure and careless, and so at length become contemners [of God].

Wherefore he could not devise how he being absent, should deal with them by letters. As if he should say: If my epistle be too sharp, I fear I shall more offend than amend some of you; and if it be too gentle, it will not profit those which are perverse and obstinate; for dead letters and words give no more than they have. Contrariwise, the lively voice of a man compared to an epistle, is a queen: for it can add and diminish, it can change itself into all manner of

affections, times, places, and persons. To be brief, I would gladly convert you by [my] letters, that is to say, call you back from the law to the faith of Jesus Christ; but I fear that I shall not do so by dead letters. But if I were with you, I could change my voice, I could reprove them bitterly that are obstinate, and comfort the weak with sweet and loving words, as occasion should require.

For I am troubled for you

That is to say: I am so troubled in my spirit, that I know not how by letters to behave myself towards you. Here is a lively description of the true affection of an Apostle. He omitteth nothing, he chideth the Galatians, he intreateth them, he speaketh them fair, he highly commendeth their faith, laboring by all means to bring them back again to the truth of the Gospel, and to deliver them out of the snares of the false apostles. These are vehement words, proceeding from an heart stirred up and inflamed with a hot burning zeal, and therefore ought diligently to be considered.

Tell me, ye that will be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

Here would Paul have closed up his epistle: for he desired not to write any more, but rather to be present with the Galatians, and to speak unto them himself. But he being in great perplexity and very careful for this matter, taketh by the way this allegory, which then came into his mind. For the people are greatly delighted with allegories and similitudes, and therefore Christ himself oftentimes useth them. For they are, as it were, certain pictures which set forth things as if they were painted before the eyes of the simple, and therefore they move and persuade very much, especially the simple and ignorant. First therefore, he stirreth up the Galatians through their ears with words and writings. Secondly, he painteth out the matter itself before their eyes with this goodly allegory.

Now Paul was a marvellously cunning workman in handling of allegories; for he is wont to apply them to the doctrine of faith, to grace, and to Christ, and not to the law and the works thereof, as Origen and Jerome do, who are worthily reprehended for that they turned the plain sentences of the Scripture, where allegories have no place, into unfit and foolish allegories. Therefore to use allegories, it is oftentimes a very dangerous thing. For unless a man have the perfect knowledge of Christian doctrine, he cannot use allegories rightly and as he should do.

But why doth Paul call the book of Genesis, out of the which he allegeth the history of Ishmael and of Isaac, the law, seeing that book containeth nothing at all concerning the law; and especially that place which he allegeth, speaketh not of any law, but only containeth a plain history of Abraham's two children? Paul is wont to call the first book of Moses the law after the manner of the Jews; which although it contain no law besides the law of circumcision, but principally teacheth faith, and witnesseth that the patriarchs pleased God because of their

faith; yet the Jews notwithstanding, because of the law of circumcision therein contained, called the book of Genesis, with the rest of the books of Moses, the law.

So did Paul himself also being a Jew. And Christ under the name of the law, comprehended not only the books of Moses, but also the Psalms: 'But it is, that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law: They hated me without cause' (John 15:25; Psalm 35:19).

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a servant, and one by a free woman. But he which was of the servant, was born after the flesh: and he which was of the free woman, was born after the promise

As if he said: Ye forsake grace, faith, and Christ, and turn back again to the law; ye will be under the law, and become wise through it. Therefore I will talk with you of the law. I pray you consider the law diligently. Ye shall find that Abraham had two sons, Ishmael by Agar, and Isaac by Sarah.

They were both the true sons of Abraham. Ishmael was as well the true son of Abraham as Isaac was, for both came of one father, of one flesh, and of one seed. What was then the difference? This maketh not the difference (saith Paul), that the mother of the one was free and the other bond (albeit it pertaineth to the allegory); but that Ishmael, which was born of the bond woman, was born after the flesh, that is to say, without the promise and the word of God. But Isaac was not only born of the free woman, but also according to the promise. What then? Yet was Isaac notwithstanding as well born of the seed of Abraham as Ishmael was. I grant that they were both the children of one father, and yet notwithstanding there is a difference. For although Isaac was born of the flesh, yet the promise and appointment of God went before. None observed this difference but only Paul, which he gathered out of the text of Genesis after this manner.

Whereas Agar conceived and brought forth Ishmael, there was no word of God that foreshewed that this should come to pass; but, by the permission of Sarah, Abraham went in to his servant Agar, whom Sarah, being barren, had given to wife to Abraham, as is said in the book of Genesis. For Sarah had heard that Abraham by the promise of God should have seed of his body, and she hoped that she should be the mother of this seed. But when she had waited now for the promise many years with great anguish of spirit, and saw that the matter was so long deferred, she was out of hope.

This holy woman therefore giveth place for the honor of her husband, and resigneth her right to another, that is to say, to her maid. Notwithstanding she suffereth not her husband to marry another wife out of his house, but she giveth unto him in marriage her own servant, to the end that she might be builded by her. For so saith the history: 'Now Sarah, Abraham's wife, bare him no children;

and she had a maid, an Egyptian, Agar by name. And Sarah said unto Abraham: Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from child-bearing. I pray thee go in to my maid; it may be that I shall be builded by her' (Genesis 16). This was a great humility of Sarah, who so abased herself, and took in good part this temptation and trial of her faith. For thus she thought: God is no liar; that which he hath promised to my husband, he will surely perform. But peradventure God will not that I should be the mother of that seed. It shall not grieve me that Agar should have this honor, unto whom let my lord enter, for I may peradventure be builded by her.

Ishmael therefore is born without the Word, at the only request of Sarah.

For there is no word of God which commanded Abraham thus to do, or promised thus unto him a son, but all this is done at adventure. Which also the words of Sarah do declare: 'It may be' (saith she) 'that I shall be builded by her.' Seeing therefore there was no word of God spoken to Abraham before, as there was when Sarah should bring forth Isaac, but only the word of Sarah; it is evident enough that Ishmael was the son of Abraham after the flesh only, without the word of God: therefore he was born at adventure, and unlooked for as another child is. This Paul observed and diligently considered.

In Romans 9 he prosecuteth the same argument which here he repeateth and setteth in an allegory, and concludeth strongly, that not all the sons of Abraham are the sons of God. Abraham (saith he) hath two sorts of children. Some are born of his flesh and blood, but the word and promise of God goeth before, as Isaac. Other are born without the promise, as Ishmael. Therefore the children of the flesh (saith he) are not the children of God, but the children of the promise, etc. And by this argument he mightily stoppeth the mouths of the proud Jews, which gloried that they were the seed and children of Abraham: as also Christ doth in the third of Matthew, and in the eighth of John. As if he said: it followeth not, I am the carnal seed of Abraham, therefore I am the child of God; Esau is the natural son, therefore the heir. Nay rather (saith he) they that will be the children of Abraham, besides their carnal birth, must be also the sons of the promise, and must believe. And they only are the true children of Abraham, and consequently of God, who have the promise and believe.

But Ishmael, because he was not promised of God to Abraham, is a son after the flesh only, and not after the promise, and therefore he was born at adventure, as other children be. For no mother knoweth whether she shall have a child or no, or if she perceive herself to be with child, yet she cannot tell whether it shall be a son or a daughter. But Isaac was expressly named (Genesis 17:19): 'Sarah thy wife' (saith the angel to Abraham) 'shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name Isaac.' Here the son and the mother are expressly named. Thus, for this humility of Sarah, because she gave up her right and suffered the

contempt of Agar, God requited her with this honor, that she should be the mother of the promised son, etc.

The which things are spoken by allegories

Allegories do not strongly persuade in divinity, but as certain pictures they beautify and set out the matter. For if Paul had not proved the righteousness of faith against the righteousness of works by strong and pithy arguments, he should have little prevailed by this allegory. But because he had fortified his cause before with invincible arguments, taken of experience, of the example of Abraham, of the testimonies of the Scripture, and similitudes: now in the end of his disputations he addeth an allegory, to give a beauty to all the rest. For it is a seemly thing sometimes to add an allegory when the foundation is well laid and the matter thoroughly proved. For as painting is an ornament to set forth and garnish an house already builded, so is an allegory the light of a matter which is already otherwise proved and confirmed.

For these mothers are the two testaments: the one from mount sinai, which gendereth unto bondage, which is Agar. (for in Arabia mount sinai is called Agar) etc.

Abraham is a figure of God, which hath two sons, that is to say, two sorts of people who are represented by Ishmael and Isaac. These two are born unto him by Agar and Sarah, the which signifieth the two Testaments, the Old and the New. The Old is of Mount Sinai, begetting unto bondage, which is Agar. For the Arabians in their language call Agar the same mountain which the Jews call Sinai (which seemeth to have that name of brambles and thorns) which also Ptolemaeus and the Greek commentaries do witness. After the same manner diverse names are given to many mountains, according to the diversity of nations. So the mount which Moses calleth Hermon, of the Sidonians is called Sirion, and of the Amorites Senir.

Now this serveth very well to the purpose, that Mount Sinai in the Arabian language signifieth as much as an hand-maid; and I think the likeness of this name gave Paul light and occasion to seek out this allegory. Likewise then as Agar the bondmaid brought forth to Abraham a son, and yet not an heir but a servant: so Sinai, the allegorical Agar, brought forth to God a son, that is to say, a carnal people. Again, as Ishmael was the true son of Abraham, so the people of Israel had the true God to be their Father, which gave them his law, his oracles, religion, and true service, and the temple; as it is said in Psalm 147: 'He sheweth his word unto Jacob,' etc.

Notwithstanding this only was the difference: Ishmael was born of a bondmaid after the flesh, that is to say, without the promise, and could not therefore be the heir. So the mystical Agar, that is to say, Mount Sinai, where the law was given and the Old Testament ordained, brought forth to God, the great

Abraham, a people, but without the promise, that is to say a carnal and a servile people, and not the heir of God. For the promises as touching Christ the giver of all blessing, and as touching the deliverance from the curse of the law, from sin and death, also as touching the free remission of sins, of righteousness and everlasting life, are not added to the law, but the law saith: 'He that shall do these things shall live in them' (Leviticus 18:5, Romans 10:5).

Therefore the promises of the law are conditional, promising life, not freely, but to such as fulfill the law, and therefore they leave men's consciences in doubt: for no man fulfilleth the law. But the promises of the New Testament have no such condition joined unto them, nor require anything of us, nor depend upon any condition of our worthiness, but bring and give unto us freely forgiveness of sins, grace, righteousness and life everlasting for Christ's sake, as I have said more largely in another place.

Therefore the law or the Old Testament containeth only conditional promises; for it hath always such conditions as these are, joined to it: If ye hearken to my voice, if ye keep my statutes, if ye walk in my ways, ye shall be my people, etc. The Jews not considering this, laid hold of those conditional promises as if they had been absolute and without all conditions: which they supposed that God could never revoke, but must needs keep them. Hereupon, when they heard the prophets (which could well discern betwixt the corporal promises of the law, and the spiritual promises concerning Christ and his kingdom) foreshew the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, of the Temple, of the kingdom and priesthood, they persecuted and killed them as heretics and blasphemers of God; for they saw not this condition that was annexed: If ye keep my commandments, it shall go well with you, etc.

Therefore Agar the bondmaid bringeth forth but a bond-servant. Ishmael then is not the heir, although he be the natural son of Abraham, but remaineth a bondman. What is here lacking? The promise and the blessing of the Word. So the law given in Mount Sinai, which the Arabians call Agar, begetteth none but servants. For the promise made as concerning Christ, was not annexed to the law. Wherefore O ye Galatians, if ye forsaking the promise and faith, fall back to the law and works, ye shall always continue servants: that is, ye shall never be delivered from sin and death, but ye shall always abide under the curse of the law. For Agar gendereth not the seed of the promise and heirs, that is to say, the law justifieth not, it bringeth not the sonship and inheritance, but rather hindereth these, and worketh wrath.

And answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and she is in bondage with her children

This a wonderful allegory. As Paul a little before made Agar of Sinai, so now of Jerusalem he would gladly make Sarah, but he dareth not, neither can he so do; but is compelled to join Jerusalem with mount Sinai, for he saith that the same

pertaineth to Agar, seeing mount Agar reacheth even to Jerusalem. And it is true that there be continual mountains reaching from Arabia Petraea unto Kadesh-barnea of Jewry. He saith then that this Jerusalem which now is, that is to say, this earthly and temporal Jerusalem, is not Sarah, but pertaineth to Agar, for there Agar reigneth. For in it is the law begetting unto bondage; in it is the worship and ceremonies, the temple, the kingdom, the priesthood; and whatsoever was ordained in Sinai by the mother, which is the law, the same is done in Jerusalem. Therefore I join her with Sinai, and I comprehend both in one word, to wit, Sinai or Agar.

I durst not have been so bold to handle this allegory after this manner, but would rather have called Jerusalem Sarah or the New Testament, especially seeing the preaching of the Gospel began in it, the Holy Ghost was there given, and the people of the New Testament were there born; and I would have thought that I had found out a very fit allegory. Wherefore it is not for every man to use allegories at his pleasure: for a goodly outward shew may soon deceive a man, and cause him to err. Who would not think it a very fit thing to call Sinai Agar, and Jerusalem Sarah? Indeed Paul maketh Jerusalem Sarah, but not this corporal Jerusalem which he simply joineth unto Agar; but that spiritual and heavenly Jerusalem, in which the law reigneth not, nor the carnal people, as in that Jerusalem which is in bondage with her children, but wherein the promise reigneth, wherein is also a spiritual and a free people.

And to the end that the law should be quite abolished, and that whole kingdom which was established in Agar, the earthly Jerusalem was by the permission of God horribly destroyed with all her ornaments, the temple, the ceremonies, etc. Now although the New Testament began in it, and so was spread throughout the whole world, yet notwithstanding it appertaineth to Agar; that is to say, it is the city of the law, of the ceremonies and of the priesthood, instituted by Moses. Briefly, it is gendered of Agar the bondwoman, and therefore is in bondage with her children, that is to say, it walketh in the works of the law, and never attaineth to the liberty of the spirit, but abideth continually under the law, sin, an evil conscience, the wrath and judgment of God, and under the guilt of death and hell. Indeed it hath the liberty of the flesh, it hath a corporal kingdom, it hath magistrates, riches, and possessions, and such-like things: but we speak of the liberty of the spirit, whereby we are dead to the law, to sin and death, and we live and reign in grace, forgiveness of sins, righteousness and everlasting life. This cannot the earthly Jerusalem perform, and therefore it abideth with Agar.

But Jerusalem which is above, is free; which is the mother of us all

That earthly Jerusalem (saith he) which is beneath, having the policy and ordinances of the law, is Agar, and is in bondage with her children; that is to say, she is not delivered from the law, sin and death. But Jerusalem which is above, that is to say, the spiritual Jerusalem, is Sarah (albeit Paul addeth not the proper

name Sarah, but giveth her another name, calling her the free-woman), that is to say, that true lady and free-woman which is our mother, gendering us unto liberty, and not unto bondage as Agar doth.

Now this heavenly Jerusalem which is above, is the Church, that is to say, the faithful dispersed throughout the whole world, which have one and the same Gospel, one and the same faith in Christ, the same Holy Ghost, and the same Sacraments.

Therefore understand not this word 'above' (ajnagwgikw~v) of the triumphant Church (as the schoolmen call it) in heaven; but of the militant Church on earth. For the godly are said to have their conversation in heaven, Philippians 3: 'Our conversation is in heaven;' not locally, but in that a Christian believeth, in that he layeth hold of those inestimable, those heavenly and eternal gifts, he is in heaven. Ephesians 1: 'Which hath blessed us with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.' We must therefore distinguish the heavenly and spiritual blessing from the earthly.

For the earthly blessing is to have a good civil government both in commonweals and families; to have children, peace, riches, fruits of the earth, and other corporal commodities. But the heavenly blessing is to be delivered from the law, sin and death; to be justified and quickened to life; to have peace with God; to have a faithful heart, a joyful conscience and a spiritual consolation; to have the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the gift of prophecy, and the revelation of the Scriptures; to have the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and to rejoice in God. These are the heavenly blessings which Christ giveth to his Church.

Wherefore Jerusalem which is above, that is to say, the heavenly Jerusalem, is the Church which is now in the world, and not the city of the life to come, or the Church triumphant, as the idle and unlearned monks and the school doctors dreamed, which taught that the Scripture hath four senses: the literal sense, the moral sense, the allegorical sense, and the mystical sense; and according to these senses they have foolishly interpreted almost all the words of the Scriptures – as: this word 'Jerusalem' literally signified that city which was so named: morally a pure conscience: allegorically the Church militant: mystically the celestial city or the Church triumphant. With these trifling and foolish fables they rent the Scriptures into so many and diverse senses, that silly poor consciences could receive no certain doctrine of any thing. But Paul said here that the old and earthly Jerusalem belongeth unto Agar, and that it is in bondage with her children, and is utterly abolished. But the new and heavenly Jerusalem which is a queen and a free-woman, is appointed of God in earth and not in heaven, to be the mother of us all, of whom we have been gendered, and yet daily are gendered. Therefore it is necessary that this our mother should be in earth among men, as also her generation is. Notwithstanding she gendereth by the Holy Ghost, by the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, and not in the flesh.

This I say to the end that in this matter we should not be carried away with our cogitations into heaven, but that we should know that Paul setteth the Jerusalem which is above, against the earthly Jerusalem, not locally but spiritually. For there is a distinction between those things which are spiritual, and those which are corporal or earthly. The spiritual things are 'above' the earthly are beneath: so Jerusalem which is above, is distinguished from the carnal and temporal Jerusalem which is beneath, not locally (as I have said) but spiritually. For this spiritual Jerusalem which took her beginning in the corporal Jerusalem, hath not any certain place as hath the other in Judaea: but it is dispersed throughout the whole world, and may be in Babylon, in Turkey, in Tartary, in Scythia, in Judaea, in Italy, in Germany, in the isles of the sea, in the mountains and valleys, and in all places of the world where men dwell which have the Gospel and believe in Jesus Christ.

Wherefore Sarah or Jerusalem our free mother, is the Church itself, the spouse of Christ, of whom we all are gendered. This mother gendereth free children without ceasing to the end of the world, as long as she exerciseth the ministry of the Word that is to say, as long as she preacheth and publisheth the Gospel, for this is truly to gender. Now, she teacheth the Gospel after this manner: to wit, that we are delivered from the curse of the law, from sin, death and all other evils by Jesus Christ, and not by the law, neither by works. Therefore Jerusalem which is above, that is to say, the Church, is not subject to the law and works, but she is free and a mother without the law, sin and death. Now, such a mother as she is, such children she gendereth.

This allegory teacheth very aptly that the Church should do nothing else but preach and teach the Gospel truly and sincerely, and by this means should gender children. So we are all fathers and children, one to another; for we are begotten one of another. I, being begotten by other through the Gospel, do now beget other, which shall also beget other hereafter, and so this begetting shall endure to the end of the world. Now I speak of the generation, not of Agar the bondmaid, which gendereth her bond-servants by the law; but of Sarah the free-woman, who gendereth heirs without the law, and without man's works or endeavors. For in that Isaac is heir, and not Ishmael (albeit notwithstanding that both of them were the natural sons of Abraham), Isaac had the inheritance by the word of promise, namely: 'Sarah thy wife shall bring thee a son, and thou shalt call his name Isaac' (Genesis 17:19). This did Sarah well understand, and therefore she saith: 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son' etc.; and Paul also allegeth these words afterwards. Wherefore as Isaac hath the inheritance of his father only by the promise and by his birth, without the law and without works; even so we are born through the Gospel, of that free-woman Sarah, that is to say, the Church, true heirs of the promise. She instructeth us, nourisheth us, and carrieth us, in her womb, in her lap and in her arms: she formeth and fashioneth us to the image of Christ, until we grow up to a perfect man, etc. So all things are done by the ministry of the Word.

Wherefore the office of the free-woman is to gender children to God her husband without ceasing and without end: that is to say, such children as know that they are justified by faith and not by the law.

For it is written: rejoice thou barren that bearest no children; break forth and cry thou that travailest not, for the desolate hath many more children than she that hath an husband (isaiah 54: 1)

Paul allegeth this place out of Isaiah the prophet, which is altogether allegorical. It is written (saith he) that the mother of many children, and she which hath an husband, must be sick and die; and contrariwise, that the barren and she which hath no children, must have abundance of children.

After the same manner Hannah signifieth in her song, out of the which Isaiah took this prophecy (1 Samuel 2:4 ff.): 'The bow of the mighty men is broken, and the weak are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread, and the hungry are filled: so that the barren hath born seven, and she that had many children is feeble.' A marvellous matter (saith he): she that was fruitful shall be made barren, and she that was barren fruitful. Moreover, such as before were strong, full, rich, glorious, righteous, living and blessed, shall become feeble, hungry, poor, ignominious sinners, subject to death and damnation: and contrariwise, the feeble and hungry, etc., shall be strong and satisfied, etc.

The Apostle sheweth by this allegory of the prophet Isaiah, the difference which is between Agar and Sarah, that is to say, between the Synagogue and the Church, or between the law and the Gospel. The law being the husband of the fruitful woman, that is to say, of the Synagogue, begetteth very many children. For men of all ages, not only idiots, but also the wisest and best (that is to say, all mankind except the children of the free-woman) do neither see nor know any other righteousness than the righteousness of the law: much less do they know any which is more excellent: wherefore they think themselves righteous if they follow the law and outwardly perform the works thereof. (And in this word 'law' I include all laws, human and divine.) These although they be fruitful, have many disciples, and shine in the righteousness and glorious works of the law, yet notwithstanding are not free, but bondservants; for they are the children of Agar, which gendereth to bondage. Now if they be servants, they cannot be partakers of the inheritance, but shall be cast out of the house; for servants remain not in the house for ever (John 8:35). Yea they are already cast out of the kingdom of grace and liberty: 'For he that beheveth not, is condemned already' (John 3:18). They remain therefore under the malediction of the law, under sin and death, under the power of the devil, and under the wrath and judgment of God.

Now, if the moral law itself or the Ten Commandments of God, can do nothing else but gender servants, that is to say, cannot justify, but only terrify,

accuse, condemn, and drive men's consciences to desperation: how then, I pray you, shall the traditions of men and the laws of the Pope justify, which are the doctrines of devils? They therefore that teach and set forth either the traditions of men or the law of God as necessary to obtain righteousness before God, do nothing else but gender bondservants.

Notwithstanding such teachers are counted the best men: they obtain the favor of the world, and are most fruitful mothers, for they have an infinite number of disciples. For [man's] reason understandeth not what faith and true godliness is, and therefore it neglecteth and despiseth it, and is naturally addicted to superstition and hypocrisy, that is to say, to the righteousness of works. Now, because this righteousness shineth and flourisheth everywhere, therefore it is a mighty empress of the whole world. They therefore which teach the righteousness of works by the law, beget many children which outwardly seem to be free, and have a glorious shew of excellent virtues, but in conscience they are servants and bondslaves of sin: therefore they are to be cast out of the house and condemned.

Contrariwise Sarah the free-woman, that is to say, the true Church, seemeth to be barren. For the Gospel which is the Word of the Cross which the Church preacheth, shineth not so brightly as the doctrine of the law and works, and therefore she hath not so many disciples to cleave unto her. Moreover, she beareth this title, that she forbiddeth good works, maketh men secure, idle, and negligent, raiseth up heresies and seditions, and is the cause of all mischief; and therefore she seemeth to bring no success or prosperity, but all things seem to be full of barrenness, desolation and desperation. Therefore the wicked are certainly persuaded, that the Church with her doctrine cannot long endure. The Jews assured themselves that the Church which was planted by the Apostles, should be overthrown; the which by an odious name they called a sect. For thus they speak to Paul in Acts 28:22: 'As concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against.' In like manner how often (I pray you) have our adversaries been deceived, which somewhiles appointed one time, and somewhiles another, when we should certainly be destroyed? Christ and his Apostles were oppressed; but after their death the doctrine of the Gospel was further spread abroad than it was during their life. In like manner our adversaries may oppress us at this day, but the Word of God shall abide for ever. How much soever then the Church seemeth to be barren and forsaken, weak and despised, and outwardly to suffer persecution, and moreover be compelled to hear this reproach, that her doctrine is heretical and seditious; notwithstanding she alone is fruitful before God, gendering by the ministry of the Word an infinite number of children, heirs of righteousness and everlasting life; and although outwardly they suffer persecution, yet in spirit they are most free: who not only are judges over all doctrines and works, but also are most victorious conquerors against the gates of hell.

The prophet therefore confesseth that the Church is in heaviness; for else he would not exhort her to rejoice. He granteth that she is barren before the world; for else he would not call her barren and forsaken, having no children: but before God, saith he, she is fruitful, and therefore he biddeth her to rejoice. As though he would say: Thou art indeed forsaken and barren, and hast not the law for thy husband, and therefore thou hast no children. But rejoice: for although thou hast not the law for thy husband, but art forsaken as a virgin that is ready to marry (for he will not call her a widow), which should have an husband if she were not forsaken of him, or if he were not slain, thou (I say) which art solitary and forsaken of thy husband the law, and not subject to the marriage of the law, shalt be a mother of innumerable children. Wherefore the people or the church of the New Testament is altogether without the law (as touching the conscience), and therefore she seemeth to be forsaken in the sight of the world. But although she seem to be never so barren without the law and without works, yet notwithstanding she is most fruitful before God, and bringeth forth an infinite number of children, not in bondage but in freedom. By what means? Not by the law, but by the Word and Spirit of Christ which is given by the Gospel, through the which she conceiveth, bringeth forth, and nourisheth her children.

Paul therefore plainly sheweth by this allegory the difference between the law and the Gospel: first, when he calleth Agar the Old Testament, and Sarah the New; again, when he calleth the one a bondmaid, the other a free-woman; moreover when he saith that the married and fruitful is become barren and cast out of the house with her children; contrariwise, when the barren and forsaken is become fruitful, and bringeth forth an infinite number of children, and those also inheritors. By these differences are resembled the two sorts of people, of faith and of the law I mean. The people of faith have not the law for their husband, they serve not in bondage, they are not born of that mother Jerusalem which now is; but they have the promise, they are free, and are born of free Sarah.

He separateth therefore the spiritual people of the New Testament from the other people of the law, when he saith that the spiritual people are not the children of Agar the bondmaid, but of Sarah the free-woman, which knoweth nothing of the law. And by this means he placeth the people of faith far above and without the law. Now, if they be above and without the law, then are they justified by the spiritual birth only, which is nothing else but faith; and not by the law or by the works thereof. Now, as the people of grace neither have nor can have the law; so the people of the law neither have nor can have grace: for it is impossible that the law and grace should stand together. Therefore we must be justified by faith, and lose the righteousness of the law; or else be justified by the law and lose the righteousness of faith. But this is a foul and a lamentable loss, to lose grace and to return to the law. Contrariwise, it is an happy and blessed loss, to lose the law and lay hold of grace.

We therefore (following the example and diligence of Paul) do endeavor as much as is possible, to set forth plainly the difference between the law and the

Gospel; which is very easy as touching the words. For who seeth not that Agar is not Sarah, and that Sarah is not Agar? Also that Ishmael is not Isaac, and that he hath not that which Isaac hath? A man may easily discern these things. But in great terrors and in the agony of death, when the conscience wrestleth with the judgment of God, it is the hardest thing of all others to say with a sure and steadfast hope: I am not the son of Agar, but of Sarah; that is to say, the law belongeth nothing unto me, for Sarah is my mother, who bringeth forth free children and heirs, and not servants.

Paul then by this testimony of Isaiah hath proved that Sarah, that is to say, the Church, is the true mother which bringeth forth free children and heirs: contrariwise that Agar, that is to say, the Synagogue, gendereth many children indeed, but they are servants and must be cast out. Moreover, because this place speaketh also of the abolishing of the law, and of Christian liberty, it ought to be diligently considered. For as it is the most principal and special article of Christian doctrine, to know that we are justified and saved by Christ, so it is also very necessary to know and understand well the doctrine concerning the abolishment of the law. For it helpeth very much to confirm our doctrine as touching faith, and to attain sound and certain consolation of conscience, when we are assured that the law is abolished, and specially in great terrors and serious conflicts.

I have often said before, and now I say again (for it cannot be too often repeated), that a Christian laying hold of the benefit of Christ through faith, hath no law, but all the law is to him abolished with all his terrors and torments. This place of Isaiah teacheth the same thing, and therefore it is very notable and full of comfort, stirring up the barren and forsaken to rejoice, which was counted worthy to be mocked or pitied according to the law. For such as were barren, were accursed according to the law. But the Holy Ghost turneth this sentence, and pronounceth the barren worthy of praise and blessing: and contrariwise, the fruit ful and such as bring forth children, accursed; when he saith: 'Rejoice thou barren,' etc. 'for the desolate hath many more children than the married wife.' Howsoever then Sarah, that is to say, the Church, seemeth to be forsaken and barren before the world, not having the righteousness and works of the law: yet notwithstanding she is a most fruitful mother, having an infinite number of children before God, as the prophet witnesseth. Contrariwise, although Agar seem never so fruitful and to bring forth never so many children, yet notwithstanding she hath no issue remaining; for the children of the bondwoman are cast out of the house together with their mother, and receive not the inheritance with the children of the free-woman; as Paul saith afterward.

Because therefore we are the children of the free-woman, the law our old husband is abolished (Romans 7). Who as long as he had dominion over us, it was impossible for us to bring forth children free in spirit, or knowing grace; but we remained with the other in bondage. True it is, that as long as the law reigneth, men are not idle, but they labor sore, they bear the burden and the heat

of the day, they bring forth and gender many children: but as well the fathers as the children are bastards, and do not belong to the free mother; therefore they are at the length cast out of the house and inheritance with Ishmael; they die and are damned. It is impossible therefore that men should attain to the inheritance, that is to say, that they should be justified and saved, by the law, although they travail never so much, and be never so fruitful therein. Accursed therefore be that doctrine, life and religion, which endeavoureth to get righteousness before God by the law or the works thereof. But let us prosecute our purpose as touching the abolishment of the law.

Thomas and other school-doctors, speaking of the abolishment of the law, say that the judicial and the ceremonial laws are pernicious and deadly since the coming of Christ, and therefore they are abolished; but not so the moral law. These [blind doctors] knew not what they said. But if thou wilt speak of the abolishment of the law, talk of the law as it is in its own proper use and office, and as it is spiritually taken; and comprehend withal the whole law, making no distinction at all between the judicial, ceremonial, and moral law. For when Paul saith that we are delivered from the curse of the law by Christ, he speaketh of the whole law, and principally of the moral law, which only accuseth, curseth and condemneth the conscience, which the other two do not. Wherefore we say that the moral law, or the law of the Ten Commandments, hath no power to accuse and terrify the conscience in which Christ reigneth by his grace: for he hath abolished the power thereof.

Not that the conscience doth not at all feel the terrors of the law (for indeed it feeleth them), but that they cannot condemn it, nor bring it to desperation. 'For there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:1), also: 'If the son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed' (John 8:36). Howsoever then a Christian man be terrified through the law showing unto him his sin, notwithstanding he despaireth not. For he believeth in Christ, and being baptized in him and cleansed by his blood, he hath remission of all his sins. Now, when our sin is pardoned through Christ, who is the Lord of the law (and yet so pardoned that he gave himself for it), the law being a servant hath no more power to accuse and condemn us for sin, seeing it is forgiven us and we are now made free, forasmuch as the Son hath delivered us from bondage. Wherefore the law is wholly abolished to them that believe in Christ.

But (thou wilt say) I do nothing. Thou canst do nothing whereby thou mayest be delivered from the tyranny of the law. But hear this joyful tidings which the Holy Ghost bringeth unto thee out of the words of the prophet: 'Rejoice thou that art barren,' etc. As if he would say: Why art thou so heavy, why dost thou so mourn, since there is no cause why thou shouldest so do? But I am barren and forsaken, etc. Well: although thou be never so barren and forsaken, not having the righteousness of the law, notwithstanding Christ is thy righteousness: he was made a curse for THEE, to deliver thee from the curse of the law. If thou believe in him, the law is dead Unto thee. And look how much Christ is greater than the

law, so much hast thou a more excellent righteousness than the righteousness of the law. Moreover, thou art fruitful and not barren; for thou hast many more children than she which hath an husband.

There is also another abolishment of the law which is outward: to wit, that the politic laws of Moses do nothing belong unto us. Wherefore we ought not to call them back again, nor superstitiously bind ourselves unto them; as some went about to do in times past, being ignorant of this liberty. Now, although the Gospel make us not subject to the judicial laws of Moses, yet notwithstanding it doth not exempt us from the obedience of all politic laws, but maketh us subject in this corporal life, to the laws of that government wherein we live; that is to say, it commandeth everyone to obey his magistrate and laws, 'not only because of wrath, but also for conscience sake' (1 Peter 2: Romans 13). And the Emperor [or any other Prince] should not offend, if he used some of the judicial laws of Moses: yea he might use them freely and without offense. Therefore the popish schoolmen are deceived, which dream that the judicial laws of Moses are pernicious and deadly since the coming of Christ.

Likewise we are not bound to the ceremonies of Moses: much less to the ceremonies of the Pope. But because this bodily life cannot be altogether without ceremonies or rites (for there needs must be some instruction), therefore the Gospel suffereth ordinances to be made in the Church as touching days, times, places etc., that the people may know upon what day, in what hour, and in what place to assemble together to hear the Word of God, etc. It permitteth also that lessons and readings should be appointed, as in the schools, especially for the instruction of children and such as are ignorant. These things it permitteth to the end that all may be done comely and orderly in the Church (1 Corinthians 14). Not that they which keep such ordinances do thereby merit remission of sins, etc.

Moreover they may be [changed or] omitted without sin, so that it be done without offense of the weak. Neither is it true that the ceremonies of Moses after the revelation of Christ are deadly: else had the Christians sinned in observing the feasts of Pasch and Pentecost, which the old church instituted by the example of the Mosaic law (albeit in a far other manner and to a far other end).

Now, Paul speaketh here especially of the abolishment of the moral law: which is diligently to be considered. For he speaketh against the righteousness of the law, that he might establish the righteousness of faith, concluding thus: If only grace or faith in Christ justify, then is the whole law abolished without any exception. And this he confirmeth by the testimony of Isaiah, whereby he exhorteth the barren and forsaken to rejoice: for it seemeth she hath no child, nor hope ever to have any, that is to say, she hath no disciples, no favor nor countenance of the world, because she preacheth the word of the cross of Christ crucified, against all the wisdom of the flesh. But thou that art barren (saith the prophet), let not this any whit trouble thee: yea rather lift up thy voice and rejoice, for she that is forsaken hath more children than she that hath an husband: that is

to say, she that is married and hath a great number of children shall be made weak, and thou that art forsaken shalt have many children.

He calleth the Church barren because her children are not begotten by the law, by works, by any industry or endeavor of man; but by the word of faith in the Spirit of God. Here is nothing else but being born; no working at all. Contrariwise, they that are fruitful, labor and exercise themselves with great travail in bearing and bringing forth; and here is altogether working, and no birth. But because they endeavor to get the right of children and heirs by the righteousness of the law or by their own righteousness, they are servants and never receive the inheritance, no, though they tire themselves to death with continual travail. For they go about to obtain that by their own works against the will of God, which God of his mere grace will give to all believers for Christ's sake. The faithful work well also; but they are not thereby made sons and heirs (for this their birth bringeth unto them): but this they do to the end that they being now made children for Christ's sake, might glorify God by their good works, and help their neighbors.

Now we, brethren, after the manner of isaac are children of the promise

That is to say, we are not children of the flesh, as Ishmael, or as all the fleshly Israel, which gloried that they were the seed of Abraham and the people of God. But Christ answered them, John 8: 'If ye were the sons of Abraham, ye would not seek to kill me which hath spoken the truth unto you;' also: 'If God were your father, then would ye love me and receive my word.' As if he would say: Brethren born and brought up together in one house, know one another's voice; 'but ye be of your father the devil,' etc. We are not such children (saith he) as they are, which remain servants, and at length shall be cast out of the house. But we are children of the promise, as Isaac was; that is to say, of grace and of faith, born only of the promise. Concerning this I have spoken sufficiently before in the third chapter, intreating upon this place: 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' Therefore we are pronounced righteous, not by the law, by works, or our own righteousness, but by the mere [mercy and] grace of God. Paul repeateth very often, and diligently setteth forth the promise which is received by faith alone; for he knew that it was very necessary so to do.

Hitherto as touching the allegory out of Genesis; to the which Paul annexeth the place of Isaiah as an interpretation. Now he applieth the history of Ishmael and Isaac for our example and consolation.

But as then he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now

This place containeth a singular consolation. Whosoever are born and live in Christ, and rejoyce in this birth and inheritance of God, have Ishmael for their enemy and their persecutor. This we learn at this day by experience; for we see

that all the world is full of tumults, persecutions, sects and offenses. Wherefore, if we did not arm ourselves with this consolation of Paul, and suchlike, and well understand this article of justification, we should never be able to withstand the violence and subtle sleights of Satan.

For who should not be troubled with these cruel persecutions of our adversaries, and with these sects and infinite offenses which a sort of busy and fantastical spirits stir up at this day? Verily it is no small grief unto us, when we are constrained to hear that all things were in peace and tranquillity before the Gospel came abroad; but since the preaching and publishing thereof, all things are unquiet, and the whole world is in an uproar, so that everyone armeth himself against another. When a man that is not endued with the Spirit of God heareth this, by and by he is offended, and judgeth that the disobedience of subjects against their magistrates, that seditions, wars, plagues and famine, that the overthrowing of commonweals, kingdoms and countries, that sects, offenses, and such other infinite evils do proceed altogether of the doctrine of the Gospel.

Against this great offense we must comfort and arm ourselves with this sweet consolation, that the faithful must bear this name and this title in the world, that they are seditious and schismatics, and the authors of innumerable evils. And hereof it cometh, that our adversaries think they have a just cause against us, yea that they do God high service when they hate, persecute and kill us (John 16:2). It cannot be then but that Ishmael must persecute Isaac: but Isaac again persecuteth not Ishmael.

Whoso will not suffer the persecution of Ishmael, let him not profess himself to be a Christian.

But let our adversaries (which so mightily amplify these evils at this day) tell us what good things ensued the preaching of the Gospel of Christ and his Apostles. Did not the destruction of the kingdom of the Jews follow?

Was not the Roman empire overthrown? Was not the whole world in an uproar? And yet the Gospel was not the cause hereof, which Christ and his Apostles preached for the profit and salvation of men, and not for their destruction. But these things followed through the iniquity of the people, the nations, the kings and princes, who being possessed of the devil would not hearken to the Word of grace, life, and eternal salvation; but detested and condemned it as a doctrine most pernicious and hurtful to religion and commonweals. And that this should so come to pass, the Holy Ghost foretold by David when he saith, Psalm 2: 'Why do the heathen rage?' etc.

Such tumults and hurly-burles we hear and see at this day. The adversaries lay the fault in our doctrine. But the doctrine of grace and peace stirreth not up these troubles: but the people, nations, kings and princes of the earth (as the Psalmist saith) rage and murmur, conspire and take counsel, not against us (as

they think) nor against our doctrine, which they blaspheme as false and seditious: but against the Lord and his anointed.

Therefore all their counsels and practices are and shall be disappointed and brought to nought. 'He that dwelleth in the heaven shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision' (Psalm 2:4). Let them cry out therefore as long as they list, that we raise up these tumults and seditions: notwithstanding this Psalm comforteth us, and saith that they themselves are the authors of these troubles. They cannot believe this, and much less can they believe that it is they which murmur, rise up, and take counsel against the Lord and his anointed: nay rather they think that they maintain the Lord's cause, that they defend his glory, and do him acceptable service in persecuting us: but the Psalm lieth not, and that shall the end declare.

Here we do nothing, but we only suffer, as our conscience beareth us witness in the Holy Ghost. Moreover, the doctrine for the which they raise up such tumults and offenses, is not ours, but it is the doctrine of Christ.

This doctrine we cannot deny, nor forsake the defense thereof, seeing Christ saith: 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed' etc. Mark 8:38) He therefore that will preach Christ truly, and confess him to be our righteousness, must be content to hear that he is a pernicious fellow and that he troubleth all things. 'They which have troubled the world (said the Jews of Paul and Silas) are come unto us, and have done contrary to the decrees of Caesar' (Acts 17). And in Acts 24: 'We have found this pestilent ow stirring up sedition among all the Jews throughout the whole world, and the author of the sect of Nazarenes,' etc.

In like manner also the Gentiles complain in Acts 16: 'These men trouble our city.' So at this day they accuse Luther to be a troubler of the Papacy, and of the Roman empire. If I would keep silence, then all things should be in peace which the strong man possesseth (Luke 11:21), and the Pope would not persecute me any more. But by this means the Gospel of Christ should be blemished and defaced. If I speak, the Pope is troubled and overthrown. Either we must lose the Pope, an [earthly and] mortal man, or else Christ which is eternal, and with him eternal life. Let the Pope perish then, which is earthly and mortal, rather than the heavenly and eternal Christ.

Christ himself, when he foresaw in spirit the great troubles which should follow his preaching, comforted himself after this manner: 'I came (saith he) to send fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?' (Luke 12:49) In like manner we see at this day, that great troubles follow the preaching of the Gospel, through the persecution and blasphemy of our adversaries, and the contempt and ingratitude of our own people.

This matter so grieveth us, that oftentimes, after the flesh [and after the judgment of reason], we think it had been better that the doctrine of the Gospel had not been published, than that after the preaching thereof, the public peace should be so troubled. But according to the Spirit, we say boldly with Christ: 'I came to send fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it should now be kindled?' Now, after that this fire is kindled, there follow forthwith great commotions. For it is not a king or an emperor that is thus provoked; but the God of this world. which is a most mighty spirit, and the lord of the whole world. This weak word, preaching Christ crucified, setteth upon mighty and terrible adversary. Behemoth, feeling the divine power of this word, stirreth up all his members, shaketh his tail, and maketh the depth of the sea to boil like a pot (Job 41:31). Hereof come all these tumults, all these furious and cruel rages of the world.

Wherefore let it not trouble us that our adversaries are offended, and cry out, that there cometh no good by the preaching of the Gospel. They are infidels, they are blind and obstinate, and therefore it is impossible that they should see any fruit of the Gospel. But contrariwise, we which believe, do see the inestimable profits and fruits thereof; although outwardly for a time we be oppressed with infinite evils, despised, spoiled, accused, condemned as the outcasts and filthy dung of the whole world, and put to death, and inwardly afflicted with the feeling of our sin, and vexed with devils. For we live in Christ, in whom and by whom we are [made] kings and lords over sin, death, the flesh, the world, hell, and all evils. In whom and by whom also we tread under our feet that dragon and basilisk, which is the king of sin and death. How is this done? In faith. For the blessedness which we hope for, is not yet revealed, which in the meantime we wait for in patience, and yet notwithstanding do now assuredly possess the same by faith.

We ought therefore diligently to learn the article of justification: for that only is able to support us against these infinite slanders and offenses and to comfort us in all our temptations and persecutions. For we see that it cannot otherwise be, but that the world will be offended with the doctrine of godliness, and continually cry out that no good cometh of it. For 'the natural man understandeth not those things which are of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him' (1 Corinthians 2:14). He only beholdeth the outward evils, troubles, rebellions, murders, sects, and other such-like things. With these sights he is offended and blinded, and finally falleth into the contempt and blaspheming of God's Word.

On the contrary part, we ought to stay and comfort ourselves in this, that our adversaries do not accuse and condemn us for any manifest wickedness which we have committed, as adultery, murder, theft, and such-like, but for our doctrine. And what do we teach? That Christ the Son of God, by the death of the Cross, hath redeemed us from our sins and from everlasting death. Therefore they do not impugn our life, but our doctrine; yea the doctrine of Christ, and not ours. Therefore, if there be any offense, it is Christ's offense and not ours; and so the

fault wherefore they persecute us, Christ hath committed, and not we. Now whether they will condemn Christ, and pluck him out of heaven as an heretic and seditious person for this fault, that he is our only justifier and Savior, let them look to that. As for us, we commending this his own cause unto himself, are quiet beholders whether of them shall have the victory, Christ or they. Indeed, after the flesh, it grieveth us that these Ishmaelites hate and persecute us so furiously: notwithstanding, according to the spirit, we glory in these afflictions, both because we know that we suffer them not for our sins, but for Christ's cause, whose benefit and whose glory we set forth, and also because Paul giveth us warning aforehand, that Ishmael must mock and persecute him. The Jews expound this place, which Paul allegeth out of Genesis 21, of Ishmael mocking and persecuting Isaac, after this manner, that Ishmael constrained Isaac to commit idolatry. If he did so, yet I believe not that it was any such gross idolatry as the Jews dream of, to wit, that Ishmael made images of clay, after the manner of the Gentiles, which he compelled Isaac to worship: for this Abraham would in no wise have suffered. But I think that Ishmael was in outward shew a holy man, as Cain was, who also persecuted his brother, and at length killed him: not for any corporal thing, but because he saw that God esteemed him above the other.

In like manner Ishmael was outwardly a lover of religion: he sacrificed and exercised himself in well-doing. Therefore he mocked his brother Isaac, and would be esteemed a better man than he for two causes: first, for his religion and service of God; secondly, for his civil government and inheritance. And these two things he seemed justly to challenge to himself.

For he thought that the kingdom and priesthood pertained to him by the right of God's law as the first-born, and therefore he persecuted Isaac spiritually because of religion, and corporally because of the inheritance.

This persecution always remaineth in the Church, especially when the doctrine of the Gospel flourisheth, to wit, that the children of the flesh mock the children of the promise, and persecute them. The Papists and the fantastical spirits persecute us at this day, and for none other cause, but for that we teach that righteousness cometh by the promise. For it vexeth the Papists that we will not worship their idols, that is to say, that we set not forth their righteousness, their works and worshippings, devised and ordained by men, as available to obtain grace and forgiveness of sins. And for this cause they go about to east us out of the house, that is to say, they vaunt that they are the Church, the children and people of God, and that the inheritance belongeth unto them, etc. Contrariwise, they excommunicate and banish us as heretics and seditious persons: and if they can, they kill us also: and in so doing they think they do God good service.

So, as much as in them lieth, they cast us out of this life and the life to come. The fantastical spirits do hate us deadly, because we impugn and detest their errors and heresies which they spread abroad and daily renew in the Church,

and for this cause they judge us to be far worse than the Papists; and therefore they have conceived a more cruel hatred against us, than against the Papists, judging us to be far worse than those.

As soon therefore as the Word of God is brought to light, the devil is angry, and useth all his force and subtle sleights to persecute it, and utterly to abolish it. Therefore he can no otherwise do, but raise up infinite sects, [horrible] offenses, cruel persecutions, and [abominable] murders. For he is the father of lying and of murder. He spreadeth his lies throughout the world by false teachers, and he killeth men by tyrants. By these means he possesseth both the spiritual and the corporal kingdom: the spiritual kingdom by the lying of false teachers (stirring up also without ceasing every man particular by his fiery darts to heresies and wicked opinions); the corporal kingdom by the sword of tyrants. Thus this father of lying and of murder, stirreth up persecution on every side, both spiritual and corporal, against the children of the free-woman. The spiritual persecution, which we are at this day constrained to suffer of heretics, is to us most grievous and intolerable, because of the infinite offenses and slanders wherewith the devil goeth about to deface our doctrine. For we are enforced to hear, that the heresies and errors of the Anabaptists and Sacramentarians, and all other enormities do proceed from our doctrine. The corporal persecution, by which tyrants lie in wait for our goods and lives, is more tolerable; for they persecute us not for our sins, but for the testimony of the Word of God. Let us learn therefore even by the title which Christ giveth to the devil, to wit, that he is the father of lying and murder (John 8), that when the Gospel flourisheth and Christ reigneth, then sects of perdition must needs spring up and murderers, persecuting the truth, must rage everywhere. And Paul saith: 'There must be heresies' (1 Corinthians 11:19). He that is ignorant of this, is soon offended, and falling away from the true God and true faith, he returneth to his old God and old [false] faith.

Paul therefore in this place armeth the godly beforehand, that they should not be offended with those persecutions) sects and offenses, saying: 'But as then he that was-born after the flesh,' etc. As if he would say: If we be the children of the promise, and born after the Spirit, we must surely look to be persecuted of our brother, which is born after the flesh; that is to say, not only our enemies, which are manifestly wicked, shall persecute us, but also such as at the first were our dear friends, with whom we were familiarly conversant in one house, which received from us the [true] doctrine of the Gospel, shall become our deadly enemies, and persecute us extremely. For they are brethren after the flesh, and must persecute the brethren which are born after the Spirit. So Christ (in Psalm 41) complaineth of Judas: 'The man of my peace in whom I trusted, which did eat bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me.' But this is our consolation, that we have not given any occasion to our Ishmaelites to persecute us. The Papists persecute us, because we teach the pure and sincere doctrine of the Gospel; which if we would forsake, they would persecute us no more. Moreover, if we would approve the pernicious heresies of the Sectaries, they would praise us.

But, because we detest and abhor the impiety both of the one and the other, therefore do they so spitefully hate and so cruelly persecute us.

But not only Paul (as I have said) armeth us against such persecutions and offenses, but Christ himself also most sweetly comforteth us in the fifteenth chapter of John, saying: 'If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you,' etc. As if he would say: I am the cause of all these persecutions which ye endure; and if ye be killed, it is I for whose sake ye are killed; for if ye did not preach my word and confess me, the world would not persecute you. But it goeth well with you; for 'the servant is not greater than his master.' If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you for my name's sake, etc.

By these words Christ layeth all the fault upon himself, and delivereth us from all fear. As if he would say: Ye are not the cause why the world hateth and persecuteth you, but my name which ye preach and confess, is the cause thereof. But be of good comfort, I have overcome the world.

This affiance upholdeth us, so that we doubt nothing but that Christ is strong enough not only to bear, but also to vanquish all the cruelty of tyrants, and the subtle sleights of heretics. And this he hath declared in shewing forth his power against the Jews and the Romans, whose tyranny and persecutions he suffered for a time. He also suffered the subtle and crafty practices of heretics, but in time and place he overthrew them all, and remained king and conqueror. Let the Papists then rage as much as they will; let the Sectaries slander and corrupt the Gospel of Christ as much as they can; notwithstanding Christ shall reign eternally and his Word shall stand for ever, when all his enemies shall be brought to nought. Moreover, this is a singular consolation, that the persecution of Ishmael against Isaac shall not always continue, but shall endure for a little while, and when that is ended, the sentence shall be pronounced, as followeth:

But what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman

This word of Sarah was very grievous to Abraham; and no doubt, when he heard this sentence, his fatherly bowels were moved with compassion towards his son Ishmael; for he was born of his flesh. And this the Scripture plainly witnesseth, when it saith: 'And this thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight, because of his son.' But God confirmeth the sentence which Sarah pronounced, saying to Abraham: 'Let it not be grievous in thy sight for the child and for thy bondwoman: in all that Sarah shall say unto thee hear her voice: for in Isaac shall thy seed be called' (Genesis 21:9-12).

The Ishmaelites hear in this place the sentence pronounced against them, which overthroweth the Jews, Grecians, Romans, and all others which persecute the Church of Christ. The selfsame sentence also shall overthrow the Papists, and as many as trust in their own works, which at this day boast themselves to be the people of God and the Church: which also trust that they shall surely, receive the inheritance, and judge us which rest upon the promise of God, not only to be barren and forsaken, but also heretics cast out of the Church, and that it is impossible that we should be sons and heirs. But God overthroweth their judgement and pronounceth this sentence against them, that because they are the children of the bondwoman, and persecute the children of the free-woman, therefore they shall be cast out of the house, and shall have no inheritance with the children or promise; to whom only the inheritance belongeth because they are the children of the freewoman. This sentence is ratified, and can never be revoked, for the Scripture cannot be broken: wherefore it shall assuredly come to pass that our Ishmaelites shall not only lose the ecclesiastical and politic government which they now have, but also everlasting life. For the Scripture hath foretold that the children of the bondwoman shall be cast out of the house, that is to say, out of the Kingdom of Grace; for they cannot be heirs together with the children of the free-woman.

Now here is to be noted that the Holy Ghost calleth the people of the law and works, as it were in contempt, the child of the bondwoman. As if he said: Why do ye vaunt of the righteousness of the law and works, and why do ye glory that ye are the people and children of God for the same? If ye know not on whom ye are born, I will tell you: Ye are bondservants born of a bondwoman. And what servants? The bondservants of the law, and consequently of sin, of death, and of everlasting damnation. Now a servant is no inheritor, but is cast out of the house. Wherefore the Pope with all his kingdom, and all other justiciaries (what outward appearance of holiness soever they have) which hope to obtain grace and salvation by laws human or divine, are children of that bondwoman, and have no inheritance with the children of the free woman. I speak now, not of the popes, cardinals, bishops, and monks, that were manifestly wicked, who have made their bellies their God, and have committed such horrible sins as I will not willingly name; but of the best of them, such as I and many others were, which lived holily, and went about through great labor and travail by keeping of their monkish order, to pacify the wrath of God, and to merit remission of sins and everlasting life. These hear their sentence here pronounced, that the sons of the bondwoman must be cast out of the house with their mother the bondwoman.

Such sentences diligently considered, make us certain of our doctrine, and confirm us in the righteousness of faith, against the doctrine and righteousness of works, which the world embraceth and magnifieth, condemning and despising the other. And this troubleth and offendeth weak minds: which albeit they plainly see the impiety and execrable wickedness of the Papists, yet notwithstanding, they are not easily persuaded that all the multitude which beareth the name and tide of the Church do err, and that there are but few of them which have a sound

and a right opinion of the doctrine of faith. And if the Papacy had the same holiness and austerity of life which it had in the time of the ancient fathers, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and others, when the clergy had not yet so evil a fame for their simony, excess, abundance of riches, voluptuousness, whoredom, sodomitry, and such other infinite sins, but lived after the canons and decrees of the Fathers religiously and holily in outward shew, and unmarried, what could we do now against the Papacy?

The single life which the clergy kept very straitly in the time of the Fathers, was a goodly thing, and made of men very angels in the sight of the world, and therefore Paul Colossians 2:18, calleth it the religion of angels. And the Papists sing thus of their virgins: He led an angelical life in the flesh, seeing he lived contrary to the flesh. Moreover the life which they call the contemplative live (whereunto the clergymen were then very much given, utterly neglecting all civil and household government) had a goodly shew of holiness. Wherefore if that outward shew and appearance of the old Papacy remained at this day, we should peradventure do but little against it by our doctrine of faith, seeing we do now so little prevail, when (that old outward shew of godliness and severe discipline being utterly abolished) there is nothing to be seen in the Papacy but a very sink and puddle of vices and abominations.

But admit the case that the old religion and discipline of the Papacy were yet remaining; notwithstanding, we ought by the example of Paul (who vehemently pursued the false apostles, which outwardly appeared to be very good and holy men) to fight against the meritmongers of the papistical kingdom, and to say: Although ye live a single life, tiring and consuming your bodies with continual travail, and walking in humility and the religion of angels, yet are ye servants of the law, of sin, and of the devil, and must be cast out of the house; for ye seek righteousness and salvation by your works, and not by Christ.

Wherefore we ought not so much to consider the wicked life of the Papists, as their abominable doctrine and hypocrisy, against the which we specially fight. Let us suppose then that the religion and discipline of the old Papacy doth yet still flourish, and that it is now observed with as much severity and straitness as ever it was (as by the hermits, by Jerome, by Augustine, Gregory, Bernard, Francis, Dominic and many other); yet must we say notwithstanding: If ye have nothing but this holiness and chastity of life to set against the wrath and judgment of God, ye are in very deed the sons of the bondwoman which must be cast out of the kingdom of heaven and be damned.

And now they themselves do not defend their wicked life, nay rather they which are the best and soundest of them all do detest it; but they fight for the maintenance and defense of the doctrine of devils, for hypocrisy, and for the righteousness of works. Here they alleage the authority of Councils and the examples of holy Fathers, whom they affirm to have been the authors of their holy orders and statutes etc. Therefore we fight not against the manifest

wickedness and abominations of the Papacy, but against the greatest holiness and holiest saints thereof, which think they lead an angelical life, whilst they dream that they keep not only the commandments of God, but also the counsels of Christ, and do works of supererogation, and such as they are not bound to do. This we say is to labor in vain, except they take hold of that 'one thing' alone, which Christ saith is 'necessary' and choose the good part with Mary, which shall not be taken from them (Luke 10:42).

This did Bernard, a man so godly, so holy, and so chaste, that he is to be commended and preferred above them all. He being once grievously sick, and having no hope of life, put not his trust in his single life wherein he had lived most chastely, not in his good works and deeds of charity, whereof he had done many; out removed them far out of his sight, and laying hold on the benefit of Christ by faith, he said: I have lived wickedly, but thou Lord Jesus Christ, by double fight dost possess the kingdom of heaven: first, because thou art the Son of God; secondly, because thou hast purchased it by thy death and passion. The first thou keepest for thy self by thy birthright. The second thou givest to me, not by the right of my works, but by the right of grace. He set not against the wrath and judgment of God his monkery and his angelical life; but he took hold of that one thing which was necessary, and so was saved. I think that Jerome, Gregory, and many other of the fathers and hermits were saved after the same sort. And it is not to be doubted but that also in the Old Testament many kings of Israel and other idolaters were saved in like manner, who at the hour of death casting away their vain trust which they had in idols, took hold of the promise of God concerning the Seed of Abraham which should come, that is to say, Christ in whom all nations should be blessed. And if at this day there be any of the Papists which shall be saved, they must simply lean not to their own good deeds and deserts, but to the only mercy of God offered unto us in Christ, and say with Paul: 'I have not mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is by faith in Christ' (Philippians 3:9).

Then brethren we are not children of the servant but of the freewoman

Paul here concludeth his allegory of the barren Church, and of the fruitful people of the law. We are not (saith he) the children of the bondwoman; that is to say, we are not under the law which begetteth unto bondage, that is, which terrifieth, accuseth and bringeth to desperation: but we are delivered from it by Christ; therefore it cannot terrify nor condemn us, etc.

Of this we have spoken enough before. Moreover, although the sons of the bondwoman do persecute us never so much for a time, yet this is our comfort, that they shall themselves at length be cast into outer darkness and be compelled to leave the inheritance unto us, which belongeth unto us as the sons of the free-woman.

Paul therefore by these words, 'bondwoman' and 'free-woman,' took occasion (as we have heard) to reject the righteousness of the law, and to confirm the doctrine of justification. And of purpose he taketh hold of this word 'free-woman,' vehemently urging and amplifying the same, especially in the beginning of the chapter following. Whereupon he taketh occasion to reason of Christian liberty, the knowledge whereof is very necessary: for the Pope hath utterly overthrown it and made the Church subject by man's traditions and ceremonies to a most miserable and filthy bondage. That liberty which is purchased by Christ, is unto us at this day a most strong fort, whereby we defend ourselves against the tyranny of the Pope.

Wherefore we must diligently consider this doctrine of Christian liberty, as well to confirm the doctrine of justification, as also to raise up and comfort [weak] consciences against so many troubles and offenses, which our adversaries do impute unto the Gospel. Now, Christian liberty is a very spiritual thing, which the carnal man doth not understand. Yea they which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, and can talk well thereof, do very hardly retain it in their heart. It seemeth to reason that it is a matter of small importance. Therefore if the Holy Ghost do not magnify it that it may be esteemed accordingly, it is condemned.