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# **Commentary on Galatians and Ephesians**

**John Calvin**



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## Commentary on Galatians and Ephesians

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**Author(s):** Calvin, John (1509-1564)  
(Alternative)  
(Translator)

**Publisher:** Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library

**Description:** *Commentary on Galatians and Ephesians* is an impressive commentary. Calvin is regarded as one of the Reformation's best interpreters of scripture. He frequently offers his own translations of a passage, explaining the subtleties and nuances of his translation. He has a penchant for incorporating keen pastoral insight into the text as well. He always interacts with other theologians, commentators, and portions of the Bible when interpreting a particular passage. Further, this volume also contains informative notes from the editor. Calvin's *Commentary on Galatians and Ephesians* should not be ignored by anyone interested in those books or John Calvin himself.  
Tim Perrine  
CCEL Staff Writer

**Subjects:** The Bible  
Works about the Bible

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COMMENTARIES  
ON  
THE EPISTLE OF PAUL  
TO THE  
GALATIANS AND EPHESIANS

BY JOHN CALVIN

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN,  
BY THE REV. WILLIAM PRINGLE

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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

The extraordinary ability and skill displayed by Calvin, in his Commentaries on the Inspired Writings, have been set forth by almost all the Translators of this Series. I have always thought, and am happy to have the support of his latest Editor, Dr. Tholuck, that he is more successful in expounding the Epistles Of Paul than in any other portion of Scripture. This might arise in part from having studied them with uncommon ardor and perseverance. The times in which he lived held out strong inducements to examine the great peculiarities of the Christian Faith. And where were these so likely to be found as in the writings of an Apostle whom the Spirit of God employed, more than all the others, in unfolding to the Church “the unsearchable riches of Christ?” ([Ephesians 3:8](#).)

How far that success might be promoted by the resemblance of character which an able and eloquent writer <sup>1</sup> asserts to have existed between the great Apostle and the Reformer, I leave undetermined. But the chief cause unquestionably lay in his singularly clear perception of that scheme of doctrine which Paul was honored to declare. This enabled him to penetrate the design of the Apostle, and to follow closely the course of his argument. In discussions of the greatest intricacy he seldom loses his way.

Various authors, who cannot be named without awakening gratitude, and to whom it would be impossible to do justice in this brief sketch, have supplied the materials of valuable Notes to this volume. From their pages it would have been easy to select many a warm tribute to the Genevan Reformer, to whom they were deeply indebted, and whose writings were consulted by them with acknowledged deference. The greatest lights of our age have not superseded the labors of Calvin, and ablest divines vie with each other in doing homage to his great sagacity as an interpreter of the Holy Scriptures.

To my younger brethren in the ministry may I take the liberty of recommending these Commentaries as an excellent model for expounding the inspired Epistles? The frequent mention of Popery does not lessen the value of this recommendation. How far it may be necessary, at all times, to fortify our hearers against the attacks of the “man of sin,” ([2 Thessalonians 2:3](#).) I do not now stay to inquire. But as a skillful, natural, and impressive application of divine truth to the controversies of the day, the warnings against Popery deserve careful study. They are appropriately introduced, and serve to illustrate more fully the mind of the Spirit.

In describing them as models, it may be proper to mention that they are strictly what their title bears, Commentaries, unaccompanied by those illustrations which, in public instruction, are indispensably necessary. To devout minds they will have many attractions.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Paul of the Reformation. More than two hundred and fifty years have elapsed since he went to join the Apostle whom he so much resembled in the kingdom of God.” — Dr. Mason on Catholic Communion.

They are imbued with the ardent piety and that copious use of the language of Scripture by which all the writings of Calvin are so eminently distinguished.

Achtebarder,  
6<sup>th</sup> September 1854.

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TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS PRINCE

CHRISTOPER,

DUKE OF WIRTEMBERG, EARL OF MONTEBELIARD, ETC.

Though personally unknown to you, most illustrious Prince, I venture unhesitatingly<sup>2</sup> to dedicate to you one of my productions. It may be thought that so bold a step will be censured by some persons as rash, and therefore demands an apology. Nothing is more easy. A few words shall suffice. My motives to address you are chiefly two.

You have hitherto, indeed, pursued the right course with great spirit and energy. Yet I thought that it might not be altogether unnecessary to excite you, by a direct appeal, to the perusal of a work not a little fitted to strengthen your resolutions. One advantage you possess, in the kind providence of God, above most princes of the present day. Having enjoyed an early and liberal education in the Latin language, you are enabled to employ your leisure in reading profitable and religious books. If ever there was a time when the consolations derived from religious instruction were necessary, what other resource is left to the most heroic minds by the present distress of the Church, and by greater and heavier distresses which appear to be approaching? Whoever, therefore, wishes to remain unmoved to the last, let him rely entirely on this support; whoever desires to have a sure protection, let him learn to betake himself to this refuge. Besides, in these four Epistles,<sup>3</sup> of which I now present to you my Expositions, you will find, noble Prince, many subjects of consolation exceedingly adapted to the present times; but to which I do not now more particularly refer, because they will occur to yourself with much better effect in their own places.

I come now to my second reason for dedicating to you this work. During the present confusion of affairs, while some are shaken, and others are entirely thrown down, you have preserved an astonishing composure and moderation, accompanied by a remarkable steadfastness, amidst all the storms which have arisen. I consider, therefore, that it is highly advantageous to the whole Church, to hold out in you, as in a bright mirror, an example which all may imitate. For, while the Son of God enjoins on all his followers, without exception, that they shall choose rather to fight under the banner of his cross than to triumph with the world, yet very few are found who are ready to engage in that kind of warfare. It is the more necessary that all should be stimulated and taught, by such uncommon examples as yours, to correct their effeminacy.

Of my Commentaries I shall only say, that they perhaps contain more than it would become me to acknowledge. On this point, however, I wish you to read and judge for

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<sup>2</sup> “Sans En Faire Difficulté.” “Without Any Scruple”

<sup>3</sup> The Volume To Which This Dedication Was Prefixed, Contained The Commentaries On The Epistles To The Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, And Colossians. — *Ed.*

yourself. Farewell, most illustrious Prince. May the Lord Jesus long preserve you for himself and his Church, and guide you by His Spirit!

Geneva,  
1st February 1548.

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THE ARGUMENT  
OF  
THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS.

What part of Asia was inhabited by the Galatians, and what were the boundaries of their country, is well known; but whence they originally came <sup>4</sup> is not agreed among historians. It is universally admitted that they were Gauls, and, on that account, were denominated Gallo-Grecians. But from what part of Gaul they came it is more difficult to determine.

Strabo thought that the Tectosages came from Gallia Narbonensis, and that the remainder were Celtae; <sup>5</sup> and this opinion has been generally adopted. But, as Pliny enumerates the Ambiani <sup>6</sup> among the Tectosagi, and as it is universally agreed that they were allied to the Tolistobogi, who dwelt on the banks of the Rhine, I think it more probable that, they were Belgians, whose territory extended from a very distant part of the course of the Rhine to the English Channel. The Tolistobogi inhabited that part which receives from its present inhabitants the names of Cleves and Brabant.

The mistake originated, I think, in this way. A band of Tectosagi, who had made all irruption into Gallia Narbonensis, retained their own name, and gave it to the country which they had conquered. This is intimated by Ausonius, <sup>7</sup> who says, "As far as the Teutosagi, whose original name was Belgians; <sup>8</sup> for he calls them Belgians, and says that they were first called Teutosagi, and afterwards Tectosagi. Caesar, <sup>9</sup> indeed, places the Tectosagi in the Hercynian <sup>10</sup> forest; but I consider this to have been in consequence of their emigration, which indeed appears from that very passage.

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4 "Mais quant a leur origine, et le lieu dont ils sont premierement partis, les anciens auteurs ne se trouvent d'accord." "But as to their lineage, and the place from which they originally came, ancient authors are not agreed."

5 "Strabo geographe pense que ceux d'entre eux qui avoyent le nom de Tectosagois estoient venus du pays de Provence, et les autres de la Gaule Celtique." "Strabo, the geographer, thinks that those of them who bore the name of Tectosages had come from Provence, and the remainder from Celtic Gaul."

6 "Ceux d'Amiens." "Those of Amiens."

7 "Ausone poete Bordelois, qui a escrit en Latin." "Ausonius, the poet, a native of Bourdeaux, who wrote in Latin."

8 "Usque in Teutosagos primaevio nomine Belgas."

9 Bell. Gall. 50 6 100 24.

10 A forest in Germany, which Caesar describes to be nine days' journey in breadth, and, at least, sixty days' journey in length. How much more he was unable to say, as he had never found any person who had traveled farther, or could tell where the forest terminated. He regrets the necessity of employing these vague terms, having placed little reliance on the skill or accuracy of his informers. It is mentioned, he adds, by Eratosthenes and other Greek writers, under the name of *Orcynia*. — *Ed.*

But more than enough has now been said as to the origin of the nation, so far as relates to the present passage. Pliny informs us that the Galatians, who inhabited that part of Asia to which they gave their name, were divided into three chief nations, Tectosagi, Tolistobogi, and Trocmi, and accordingly occupied three chief cities. So great was the power which they at one time swayed over their unwarlike neighbors, that they received tribute from a great part of Lesser Asia. Losing at length their ancient valor, and giving themselves up to pleasure and luxury, they were vanquished in war and subdued, with little difficulty, by Cneius Manlius, a Roman consul.

At the time of the Apostle Paul they were under the dominion of the Romans. He had purely and faithfully instructed them in the Gospel; but false apostles had entered, during his absence, and had corrupted the true seed by false and erroneous doctrines. They taught that the observation of ceremonies was still necessary. This might appear to be a trivial matter; but Paul very properly contends as for a fundamental article of the Christian faith. It is no small evil to quench the light of the Gospel, to lay a snare for consciences, and to remove the distinction between the Old and New Testaments. He perceived that these errors were also connected with a wicked and dangerous opinion as to the manner in which justification is obtained. This is the reason why he fights with so much earnestness and vehemence; and, having learned from him the important and serious nature of the controversy, it is our duty to read with greater attention.

One who forms his views of the subject from the Commentaries of Origen and Jerome, will be astonished that Paul should take so deep an interest in external rites; but whoever goes to the fountain will acknowledge that there was abundant reason for all this sharpness of reproof. The Galatians had allowed themselves to be drawn aside from the right course by excessive credulity, or rather by lightness and folly. He therefore censures them more severely; for I do not agree with those who attribute the harshness of his language to their slowness of apprehension. The Ephesians and Colossians had been subjected to the same temptations. If they had lent as ready an ear to the tale of the impostors, do we imagine that Paul would have treated them with greater gentleness? This boldness of rebuke was not suggested by the disposition of the people, but extorted by the baseness of their conduct.

Having ascertained what was the design of writing the Epistle, let us attend to the order in which it is treated. In the *first* and *second* Chapters ([Galatians 1](#) and [Galatians 2](#)) he maintains the authority of his Apostleship, except that, towards the close of the second chapter, he touches incidentally on his main point, the question of Man's Justification, which, however, is avowedly and directly argued in the *third* Chapter, [Galatians 3](#). Although he appears in those two Chapters to have many objects in view, yet his sole object is to prove that He is equal to the highest apostles, and that there is no reason why he should not be considered to hold an equally honorable rank with any of them.

But it is of importance to know why he labors so hard in establishing his own claim to respect. Provided that Christ reigns, and that the purity of doctrine remains uncontaminated, what matters it whether he is higher or lower than Peter, or whether they are all on a footing of equality? If all must “decrease,” that Christ alone may “increase,” ([John 3:30](#).) it is idle to dispute about human ranks. Besides, it may be asked, why does he draw a comparison between himself and other apostles? What dispute had he with Peter, and James, and John? What good purpose did it serve to bring into collision those who were united in sentiment, and in the closest friendship?

I reply, the false apostles, who had deceived the Galatians, endeavored to obtain favor by pretending that they had received a commission from the Apostles. Their chief influence arose from insinuating the belief that they represented the Apostles, and delivered their message. To Paul, on the other hand, they refused the name and authority of an Apostle. They objected that he had not been chosen by our Lord as one of the Twelve; that he had never been acknowledged as such by the college of the Apostles; that he did not receive his doctrine from Christ, or even from the Apostles themselves. All this tended not only to lower Paul’s authority, but to rank him with the ordinary members of the Church, and therefore to place him far below those persons who made these insinuations.

If this had been merely a personal matter, it would have given no uneasiness to Paul to be reckoned an ordinary disciple. But when he saw that his doctrine was beginning to lose its weight and authority, he was not entitled to be silent. It became his duty to make a bold resistance. When Satan does not venture openly to attack doctrine, his next stratagem is to diminish its influence by indirect attacks. Let us remember, then, that in the person of Paul the truth of the Gospel was assailed; for, if he had allowed himself to be stripped of the honor of apostleship, it followed that he had hitherto claimed what he had no title to enjoy; and this false boasting would have made him liable to suspicion in other matters. The estimation in which his doctrine was held depended on the question, whether it came, as some had begun to think, from an ordinary disciple, or from an apostle of Christ.

He was overwhelmed, on the other hand, by the lustre of great names. Those who referred, in a boastful manner, to Peter, and James, and John, pretended to apostolical authority. If Paul had not manfully resisted this boasting, he would have given way to falsehood, and would have allowed the truth of God <sup>11</sup> to suffer again in his own person. He therefore contends earnestly for both points: that he was appointed by the Lord to be an apostle, and that he was in no respect inferior to the rest, but enjoyed the same title, and was equal to them in authority and rank. He might, indeed, have denied that those men were either sent, or hold any commission from Peter and his associates. But he takes far higher ground, that

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11 “La verite de Dieu.”

he does not yield to the Apostles themselves; and if he had declined doing so, he would have been supposed to have distrusted his cause.

Jerusalem was, at that time, the Mother of all the Churches; for the Gospel had spread from it over the whole world, and it might be said to be the principal seat of the kingdom of Christ. Any one who came from it into other churches was received with due respect. But many were foolishly elated with the thought that they had enjoyed the friendship of the Apostles, or at least had been taught in their school; and therefore nothing pleased them but what they had seen at Jerusalem. Every custom that had not been practiced there was not only disliked, but unsparingly condemned by them. This peevish manner becomes highly pernicious, when the custom of a single church is attempted to be enforced as a universal law. We are sometimes so devoted to an instructor or a place, that, without exercising any judgment of our own, we make the opinion of one man the standard for all men, and the customs of one place the standard for every other place. Such attachment is ridiculous, if there be not always in it a mixture of ambition; or rather we should say, excessive peevishness is always ambitious.

To return to those false apostles, if they had only attempted, through wicked contention, to establish everywhere the use of those ceremonies, which they had seen observed at Jerusalem, that would have been no slight offense; for, when a custom is forthwith converted into a law, injustice is perpetrated. But a more serious evil was involved in the wicked and dangerous doctrine, which held consciences to be bound to them by religious considerations, which made justification to depend on the observation of them. Such were the reasons why Paul defended his Apostleship with so much earnestness, and why he contrasted himself with the rest of the Apostles.

He pursues this subject to the end of the *second* Chapter, [Galatians 2](#), when he proceeds to argue the doctrine, that we are justified in the sight of God by Free Grace, and not by the Works of the Law. His argument is this: If Ceremonies have not the power of bestowing Justification, the observation of them is therefore unnecessary. We must remark, however, that he does not confine himself entirely to Ceremonies, but argues generally about Works, otherwise the whole discussion would be trifling.

If any person thinks that we are thus straining the matter too far, let him attend to the two following reasons. First, the question could not be settled without assuming the general principle, that we are justified by the free grace of God; and this principle sets aside not only ceremonies, but every other kind of works. Secondly, Paul did not attach so much importance to Ceremonies as to the wicked doctrine of obtaining Salvation by Works. Let it be observed, therefore, that Paul had good reasons for recurring to first principles. It was necessary to go to the fountain, and to warn his readers that the controversy related, not to some insignificant trifle, but to the most important of all matters — the method of obtaining salvation.



It is a mistake, therefore, to suppose that the Apostle confined himself wholly to the special question about Ceremonies, a subject which did not admit of being settled by itself. A similar instance occurs in history. ([Acts 15:2](#).) Strife and contention had arisen out of the question, whether or not Ceremonies were necessary to be observed. In the course of the discussion, the Apostles dwell largely on the intolerable yoke of the Law, and on the Forgiveness of Sins through Free Grace. What was the object of this? It appears to be a foolish departure from the point in hand; but the contrary is the fact, for a particular error cannot be satisfactorily refuted without assuming a universal principle. As, for instance, if I am called to dispute about, forbidding the use of flesh, I shall not speak merely about the different kinds of food, but shall arm myself with the general doctrine: What authority have the Traditions of men for binding the conscience? I shall quote the declaration, that

“There is one Lawgiver, who has power to save and to destroy.” ([James 4:12](#).)

In short, Paul here argues negatively from general to particular propositions, which is the ordinary and most natural method of reasoning. By what evidences and arguments he proves this principle, that we are justified by the grace of God alone, we shall see when we come to the passage. He pursues this topic till the end of the *third* Chapter, [Galatians 3](#).

In the commencement of the *fourth* Chapter, [Galatians 4](#), he inquires into the proper use of Ceremonies, and the reason why they were appointed; shewing, at the same time, that they are now abolished. It became necessary to meet this silly objection, which might occur to some minds. What, then, was the purpose of Ceremonies? Were they useless? Were the Fathers idly employed in observing them? He illustrates briefly two statements, that in their own time they were not superfluous, and that they have now been abolished by the coming of Christ, because He is the truth and end of them; and therefore he shews that we must abide by Him. Glancing briefly at the difference between our condition and that of the Fathers, he infers that the doctrine of the false apostles is wicked and dangerous, because it darkens the clearness of the gospel by ancient shadows. The Apostle’s doctrine is now intermingled with some affecting exhortations. Towards the close of the Chapter his argument is enlivened by a beautiful allegory.

In the *fifth* Chapter, [Galatians 5](#), he exhorts them to hold fast the Liberty which has been obtained by the blood of Christ, that they may not surrender their consciences to be ensnared by the opinions of men. But he reminds them, at the same time, in what manner Liberty may be lawfully used.<sup>12</sup> He then takes occasion to point out the proper employments of Christians, that they may not uselessly spend their time in Ceremonies, and neglect matters of real importance.

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12 “En quoy consiste ceste liberte, et quel en est le vray et droit usage” “In what that liberty consists, and what is the true and lawful use of it.”

COMMENTARIES ON THE  
EPISTLE OF PAUL  
TO THE GALATIANS.  
CHAPTER 1

Galatians 1:1-5	
1. Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead,)	1. Paulus apostolus, non ab hominibus, neque per hominem, sed per Iesum Christum, et Deum Patrem, qui suscitavit illum ex mortuis,
2. And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:	2. Et qui mecum sunt fratres omnes, ecclesiis Galatiae:
3. Grace <i>be</i> to you, and peace, from God the Father, and <i>from</i> our Lord Jesus Christ,	3. Gratia vobis et pax a Deo Patre, et Domino nostro Iesu Christo,
4. Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:	4. Qui dedit se ipsum pro peccatis nostris, ut nos eriperet a praesenti saeculo maligno, secundum voluntatem Dei et Patris nostri,
5. To whom <i>be</i> glory for ever and ever. Amen.	5. Cui gloria in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

1. *Paul, an apostle.* In the salutations with which he commenced his Epistles, Paul was accustomed to claim the title of “an Apostle.” His object in doing so, as we have remarked on former occasions, was to employ the authority of his station, for the purpose of enforcing his doctrine. This authority depends not on the judgment or opinion of men, but exclusively on the calling of God; and therefore he demands a hearing on the ground of his being “an Apostle.” Let us always bear this in mind, that in the church we ought to listen to God alone, and to Jesus Christ, whom he has appointed to be our teacher. Whoever assumes a right to instruct us, must speak in the name of God or of Christ.

But as the calling of Paul was more vehemently disputed among the Galatians, he asserts it more strongly in his address to that church, than in his other Epistles; for he does not simply affirm that he was called by God, but states expressly that it was *not either from men or by men*. This statement, be it observed, applies not to the office which he held in common with other pastors, but to the apostleship. The authors of the calumnies which he has in his eye did not venture to deprive him altogether of the honor of the Christian ministry. They merely refused to allow him the name and rank of an apostle.

We are now speaking of the apostleship in the strictest sense; for the word is employed in two different ways. Sometimes, it denotes preachers of the Gospel, to whatever class they might belong; but here it bears a distinct reference to the highest rank in the church; so that Paul is equal to Peter and to the other twelve.

The first clause, that he was called *not from men*, he had in common with all the true ministers of Christ. As no man ought to “take this honor unto himself,” ([Hebrews 5:4](#).) so

it is not in the power of men to bestow it on whomsoever they choose. It belongs to God alone to govern his church; and therefore the calling cannot be lawful, unless it proceed from Him. So far as the church is concerned, a man who has been led to the ministry, not by a good conscience, but by ungodly motives, may happen to be regularly called. But Paul is here speaking of a call ascertained in so perfect, a manner, that nothing farther can be desired.

It will, perhaps, be objected — Do not the false apostles frequently indulge in the same kind of boasting? I admit they do, and in a more haughty and disdainful style than the servants of the Lord venture to employ; but they want that actual call from Heaven to which Paul was entitled to lay claim.

The second clause, that he was called *not by man*, belonged in a peculiar manner to the apostles; for in an ordinary pastor, this would have implied nothing wrong. Paul himself, when travelling through various cities in company with Barnabas, “ordained elders in every church,” by the votes of the people, ([Acts 14:23](#);) and he enjoins Titus and Timothy to proceed in the same work. ([1 Timothy 5:17](#) [Titus 1:5](#).) Such is the ordinary method of electing pastors; for we are not entitled to wait until God shall reveal from heaven the names of the persons whom he has chosen.

But if human agency was not improper, if it was even commendable, why does Paul disclaim it in reference to himself? I have already mentioned that something more was necessary to be proved than that Paul was a pastor, or that he belonged to the number of the ministers of the Gospel; for the point in dispute was the apostleship. It was necessary that the apostles should be elected, not in the same manner as other pastors, but by the direct agency of the Lord himself. Thus, Christ himself ([Matthew 10:1](#)) called the Twelve; and when a successor was to be appointed in the room of Judas, the church does not venture to choose one by votes, but has recourse to *lot*. ([Acts 1:26](#).) We are certain that the lot was not employed in electing pastors. Why was it resorted to in the election of Matthias? To mark the express agency of God for it was proper that the apostles should be distinguished from other ministers. And thus Paul, in order to shew that he does not belong to the ordinary rank of ministers, contends that his calling proceeded immediately from God.<sup>13</sup>

But how does Paul affirm that he was *not* called *by men*, while Luke records that Paul and Barnabas were called by the church at Antioch? Some have replied, that he had previously discharged the duties of an apostle, and that, consequently, his apostleship was not founded on his appointment by that church. But here, again, it may be objected, that this was his first designation to be the apostle of the Gentiles, to which class the Galatians belonged. The more correct, and obvious reply is, that he did not intend here to set aside entirely the calling of that church, but merely to shew that his apostleship rests on a higher title. This is true;

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13 “C’est a dire, sans aucun moyen des hommes.” “That is, without any agency of men.”

for even those who laid their hands on Paul at Antioch did so, not of their own accord, but in obedience to express revelation.

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” ([Acts 13:2,3](#).)

Since, therefore, he was called by Divine revelation, and was also appointed and declared by the Holy Spirit to be the apostle of the Gentiles, it follows, that he was not brought forward *by men*, although the customary rite of ordination was afterwards added.<sup>14</sup>

It will, perhaps, be thought that an indirect contrast between Paul and the false apostles is here intended. I have no objection to that view; for they were in the habit of glorying in the name of men. His meaning will therefore stand thus: “Whoever may be the persons by whom others boast that they have been sent, I shall be superior to them; for I hold my commission from God and Christ.”

*By Jesus Christ and God the Father* He asserts that God the Father and Christ had bestowed on him his apostleship. Christ is first named, because it is his prerogative to send, and because we are his ambassadors. But to make the statement more complete, the Father is also mentioned; as if he had said, “If there be any one whom the name of Christ is not sufficient to inspire with reverence, let him know that I have also received my office from God the Father.”

*Who raised him from the dead.* The resurrection of Christ is the commencement of his reign, and is therefore closely connected with the present subject. It was a reproach brought by them against Paul that he had held no communication with Christ, while he was on the earth. He argues, on the other hand, that, as Christ was glorified by his resurrection, so he has actually exercised his authority in the government of his church. The calling of Paul is therefore more illustrious than it would have been, if Christ, while still a mortal, had ordained him to the office. And this circumstance deserves attention; for Paul intimates that the attempt to set aside his authority, involved a malignant opposition to the astonishing power of God, which was displayed in the resurrection of Christ; because the same heavenly Father, who raised Christ from the dead, commanded Paul to make known that exertion of his power.

**2. And all the brethren who are with me.** — He appears to have usually written in the name of many persons, judging that, if those to whom he wrote should attach less weight to a solitary individual, they might listen to a greater number, and would not despise a whole congregation. His general practice is, to insert the salutations from brethren at the conclusion, instead of introducing them at the commencement as joint authors of the epistle: at least,

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14 “Quoy que depuis on ait observe la ceremonie accoustumee en l’ordination des ministeres.” “Although the ceremony usually performed at the ordination of ministers was afterwards added.”

he never mentions more than two names, and those very well known. But here he includes all the brethren; and thus adopts, though not without good reason, an opposite method. The concurrence of so many godly persons must have had some degree of influence in softening the minds of the Galatians, and preparing them to receive instruction.

*To the churches of Galatia.* It was an extensive country, and therefore contained many churches scattered through it. But is it not wonderful that the term “Church”, which always implies unity of faith, should have been applied to the Galatians, who had almost entirely revolted from Christ? I reply, so long as they professed Christianity, worshipped one God, observed the sacraments, and enjoyed some kind of Gospel ministry, they retained the external marks of a church. We do not always find in churches such a measure of purity as might be desired. The purest have their blemishes; and some are marked, not by a few spots, but by general deformity. Though the doctrines and practices of any society may not, in all respects, meet our wishes, we must not instantly pronounce its defects to be a sufficient reason for withholding from it the appellation of a Church. Paul manifests here a gentleness of disposition utterly at variance with such a course. Yet our acknowledgment of societies to be churches of Christ must be accompanied by an explicit condemnation of everything in them that is improper or defective; for we must not imagine, that, wherever there is some kind of church, everything in it that ought to be desired in a church is perfect.

I make this observation, because the Papists, seizing on the single word *Church*, think that whatever they choose to force upon us is sanctioned; though the condition and aspect of the Church of Rome are widely different from what existed in Galatia. If Paul were alive at the present day, he would perceive the miserable and dreadfully shattered remains of a church; but he would perceive no building. In short, the word Church is often applied by a figure of speech in which a part is taken for the whole, to any portion of the church, even though it may not fully answer to the name.

3. *Grace be to you and peace.* This form of salutation, which occurred in the other epistles, has received an explanation, to which I still adhere. Paul wishes for the Galatians a state of friendship with God, and, along with it, all good things; for the favor of God is the source from which we derive every kind of prosperity. He presents both petitions to Christ, as well as to the Father; because without Christ neither grace, nor any real prosperity, can be obtained.

4. *Who gave himself for our sins.* He begins with commending the grace of Christ, in order to recall and fix on Him the attention of the Galatians; for, if they had justly appreciated this benefit of redemption, they would never have fallen into opposite views of religion. He who knows Christ in a proper manner beholds him earnestly, embraces him with the warmest affection, is absorbed in the contemplation of him, and desires no other object. The best remedy for purifying our minds from any kind of errors or superstitions, is to keep in remembrance our relation to Christ, and the benefits which he has conferred upon us.

These words, *who gave himself for our sins*, were intended to convey to the Galatians a doctrine of vast importance; that no other satisfactions can lawfully be brought into comparison with that sacrifice of himself which Christ offered to the Father; that in Christ, therefore, and in him alone, atonement for sin, and perfect righteousness, must be sought; and that the manner in which we are redeemed by him ought to excite our highest admiration. What Paul here ascribes to Christ is, with equal propriety, ascribed in other parts of Scripture to God the Father; for, on the one hand, the Father, by an eternal purpose, decreed this atonement, and gave this proof of his love to us, that he “spared not his only-begotten Son, ([Romans 8:32](#)), but delivered him up for us all;” and Christ, on the other hand, offered himself a sacrifice in order to reconcile us to God. Hence it follows, that his death is the satisfaction for sins.<sup>15</sup>

*That he might deliver us.* He likewise declares the design of our redemption to be, that Christ, by his death, might purchase us to be his own property. This takes place when we are separated from the world; for so long as we are of the world, we do not belong to Christ. The word αἰών, (*age*), is here put for the corruption which is in the world; in the same manner as in the first Epistle of John, ([1 John 5:19](#)) where it is said that “the whole world lieth in the wicked one,” and in his Gospel, ([John 17:15](#)), where the Savior says,

“I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world,  
but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil;”

for there it signifies the present life.

What then is meant by the word “World” in this passage? Men separated from the kingdom of God and the grace of Christ. So long as a man lives to himself, he is altogether condemned. The World is, therefore, contrasted with regeneration, as nature with grace, or the flesh with the spirit. Those who are born of the world have nothing but sin and wickedness, not by creation, but by corruption.<sup>16</sup> Christ, therefore, died for our sins, in order to redeem or separate us from the world.

*From the present wicked age.* By adding the epithet “wicked”, he intended to shew that he is speaking of the corruption or depravity which proceeds from sin, and not of God’s creatures, or of the bodily life. And yet by this single word, as by a thunderbolt, he lays low all human pride; for he declares, that, apart from that renewal of the nature which is bestowed by the grace of Christ, there is nothing in us but unmixed wickedness. We are of the world; and, till Christ take us out of it, the world reigns in us, and we live to the world. Whatever delight men may take in their fancied excellence, they are worthless and depraved; not indeed

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15 “Pour nos pechez.” “For our sins.”

16 “Non pas que cela vienne de la creation, mais de leur corruption.” “Not that this comes from creation, but from their corruption.”

in their own opinion, but in the judgment of our Lord, which is here pronounced by the mouth of Paul, and which ought to satisfy our minds.

*According to the will.* He points out the original fountain of grace, namely, the purpose of God;

“for God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.” ([John 3:16](#).)

But it deserves notice, that Paul is accustomed to represent the decree of God as setting aside all compensation or merit on the part of men, and so *Will* denotes here what is commonly called “good pleasure.”<sup>17</sup> The meaning is, that Christ suffered for us, not because we were worthy, or because anything done by us moved him to the act, but because such was the purpose of God. *Of God and our Father* is of the same import as if he had said, “Of God who is our Father.”<sup>18</sup>

5. *To whom be glory.* By this sudden exclamation of thanksgiving, he intends to awaken powerfully in his readers the contemplation of that invaluable gift which they had received from God, and in this manner to prepare their minds more fully for receiving instruction. It must at the same time be viewed as a general exhortation. Every instance in which the mercy of God occurs to our remembrance, ought to be embraced by us as an occasion of ascribing glory to God.

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17 Οὐκ εἶπε κατ’ ἐπιταγὴν τοῦ Πατρὸς ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ θέλημα, τουτέστι τὴν εὐδοκίαν “He did not say, according to the command, but according to the will, that is, according to the good pleasure, of the Father.” — Theophylact.

18 “An English reader would readily suppose that ‘God and our Father’ are two different persons. The original text suggests no such idea. The meaning is, ‘our God and Father’. — The particle καὶ (and) is here hermeneutic. As Crellius says, it is equivalent to ‘that is’ or ‘who is;’ or rather, it does not connect different persons, but different descriptions of the same person: [1 Corinthians 2:2](#); [Ephesians 1:3](#); [Ephesians 4:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:11](#); [1 Peter 1:2](#) Ἡμῶν belongs equally to both nouns, Θεοῦ and Πατρὸς — *Brown*.



Galatians 1:6-9	
6. I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:	6. Miror quod ita cito transferimini a Christo, qui vos vocavit in gratia, ad aliud evangehum;
7. Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.	7. Quod non est aliud, nisi quod sunt quidant, qui vos turbant, ac volunt evertere evangelium Christi.
8. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.	8. Verum etiamsi nos, aut Angelus e coelo evangelizet vobis praeter id quod evangelizavimus vobis, anathema sit.
9. As we said before, so say I now again, If any <i>man</i> preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.	9. Quemadmodum praediximus, nunc quoque iterum dico; si quis vobis evangelizerit praeterquam quod accepistis, anathema sit.

6. *I wonder.* He commences by administering a rebuke, though a somewhat milder one than they deserved; but his greatest severity of language is directed, as we shall see, against the false apostles. He charges them with turning aside, not only from his gospel, but from Christ; for it was impossible for them to retain their attachment to Christ, without acknowledging that he has graciously delivered us from the bondage of the law. But such a belief cannot be reconciled with those notions respecting the obligation of ceremonial observance which the false apostles inculcated. They were *removed from Christ*; not that they entirely rejected Christianity, but that the corruption of their doctrines was such as to leave them nothing more than an imaginary Christ.

Thus, in our own times, the Papists, choosing to have a divided and mangled Christ, have none, and are therefore “removed from Christ.” They are full of superstitions, which are directly at variance with the nature of Christ. Let it be carefully observed, that we are *removed from Christ*, when we fall into those views which are inconsistent with his mediatorial office; for light can have no fellowship with darkness.

On the same principle, he calls it *another gospel*, that is, a gospel different from the true one. And yet the false apostles professed that they preached the gospel of Christ; but, mingling with it their own inventions,<sup>19</sup> by which its principal efficacy was destroyed, they held a false, corrupt, and spurious gospel. By using the present tense, (“ye are removed”) he

<sup>19</sup> “Leurs songes et inventions.” “Their dreams and inventions.”

appears to say that they were only in the *act* of failing. As if he had said, "I do not yet say that ye have been removed; for then it would be more difficult to return to the right path. But now, at the critical moment, do not advance a single step, but instantly retreat."

*From Christ, who called you by grace.* Others read it, "from him who called you by the grace of Christ," understanding it to refer to the Father; but the reading which we have followed is more simple. When he says that they were called by Christ through grace, this tends to heighten the criminality of their ingratitude. To revolt from the Son of God under any circumstances, is unworthy and disgraceful; but to revolt from him, after being invited to partake salvation by grace, is more eminently base. His goodness to us renders our ingratitude to him more dreadfully heinous.

*So soon.* When it is considered how *soon* they had discovered a want of steadfastness, their guilt is still further heightened. A proper season, indeed, for departing from Christ cannot be imagined. But the fact, that no sooner had Paul left them than the Galatians were led away from the truth, inferred still deeper blame. As the consideration of the grace by which they had been called was adduced to aggravate their ingratitude, so the circumstance of the time when they were removed is now adduced to aggravate their levity.

7. *Which is not another thing*<sup>20</sup> Some explain it thus, "though there is not another gospel;" as if it were a sort of correction of the Apostle's language, to guard against the supposition that there were more gospels than one. So far as the explanation of the words is concerned, I take a more simple view of them; for he speaks contemptuously of the doctrine of the false apostles, as being nothing else than a mass of confusion and destruction. As if he had said, "What do those persons allege? On what grounds do they attack the doctrine which I have delivered? They merely trouble you, and subvert the gospel. They do nothing more." But it amounts to the same meaning; for this, too, I acknowledge, is a correction of the language he had used about *another gospel*. He declares that it is not a gospel, but a mere disturbance. All I intended to say was, that, in my opinion, the word *another* means *another thing*. It resembles strongly the expression in common use, "this amounts to *nothing*, but that you wish to deceive."

*And wish to pervert.* He charges them with the additional crime of doing an injury to Christ, by endeavoring to subvert his gospel. Subversion is an enormous crime. It is worse than corruption. And with good reason does he fasten on them this charge. When the glow of justification is ascribed to another, and a snare is laid for the consciences of men, the Savior no longer occupies his place, and the doctrine of the gospel is utterly ruined.

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20 "ὁ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο. Some have questioned the genuineness of ἄλλο,— conjecturing that some one first introduced ἀλλὰ into the margin as an interpretation of εἰ μὴ, and then some other person changed it into ἄλλο, *per incuriam*, and introduced it into the text. This is ingenious, but, like all conjectural criticism on the New Testament, is of no value." — *Brown*

*The gospel of Christ.* To know what are the leading points of the gospel, is a matter of unceasing importance. When these are attacked, the gospel is destroyed. When he adds the words, *of Christ*, this may be explained in two ways; either that it has come from Christ as its author, or that it purely exhibits Christ. The apostle's reason for employing that expression unquestionably was to describe the true and genuine gospel, which alone is worthy of the name.

8. *But though we.* As he proceeds in defending the authority of his doctrine, his confidence swells. First of all, he declares that the doctrine which he had preached is the only gospel, and that the attempt to set it aside is highly criminal. But then he was aware, the false apostles might object: "We will not yield to you in our desire to maintain the gospel, or in those feelings of respect for it which we are accustomed to cherish." Just as, at the present day, the Papists describe in the strongest terms the sacredness with which they regard the gospel, and kiss the very name with the deepest reverence, and yet, when brought to the trial, are found to persecute fiercely the pure and simple doctrine of the gospel. Accordingly, Paul does not rest satisfied with this general declaration, but proceeds to define what the gospel is, and what it contains, and declares boldly that his doctrine is the true gospel; so as to resist all further inquiry.

Of what avail was it to profess respect for the gospel, and not to know what it meant? With Papists, who hold themselves bound to render *implicit faith*, that might be perfectly sufficient; but with Christians, where there is no knowledge, there is no faith. That the Galatians, who were otherwise disposed to obey the gospel, might not wander hither and thither, and "find no rest for the sole of their foot," ([Genesis 8:9](#);) Paul enjoins them to stand steadfastly by his doctrine. He demands such unhesitating belief of his preaching, that he pronounces a curse on all who dared to contradict it.

And here it is not a little remarkable, that he begins with himself; for thus he anticipates a slander with which his enemies would have loaded him. "You wish to have everything which comes from you received without hesitation, because it is your own." To show that there is no foundation for such a statement, he instantly surrenders the right of advancing anything against his own doctrine. He claims no superiority, in this respect, over other men, but justly demands from all, equally with himself, subjection to the word of God.

*Or an angel from heaven.* In order to destroy more completely the pretensions of the false apostles, he rises so high as to speak of angels; and, on the supposition that they taught a different doctrine, he does not satisfy himself with saying that they were not entitled to be heard, but declares that they ought to be held accursed. Some may think, that it was absurd to engage in a controversy with angels about his doctrine; but a just view of the whole matter will enable any one to perceive, that this part of the apostle's proceedings was proper and necessary. It is impossible, no doubt, for angels from heaven to teach anything else than the certain truth of God. But when the credit due to doctrines which God had revealed concern-

ing the salvation of men was the subject of controversy, he did not reckon it enough to disclaim the judgment of men, without declining, at the same time, the authority of angels.

And thus, when he pronounces a curse on angels who should teach any other doctrine<sup>21</sup> though his argument is derived from an impossibility, it is not superfluous. This exaggerated language must, have contributed greatly to strengthen the confidence in Paul's preaching. His opponents, by employing the lofty titles of men, attempted to press hard on him and on his doctrine. He meets them by the bold assertion, that even angels are unable to shake his authority. This is no disparagement to angels. To promote the glory of God by every possible means was the design of their creation. He who endeavors, in a pious manner, to accomplish this object, by an apparently desrespectful mention of their name, detracts nothing from their high rank. This language not only exhibits, in an impressive manner, the majesty of the word of God, but yields, also, a powerful confirmation to our faith while, in reliance on that word, we feel ourselves at liberty to treat even angels with defiance and scorn. When he says, "let him be accursed," the meaning must be, "let him be held by you as accursed." In expounding [1 Corinthians 12:3](#), we had occasion to speak of the word ἀνάθεμα.<sup>22</sup> Here it denotes cursing, and answers to the Hebrew word, חֵרֵם (hherem.)

9. *As we said before.* Leaving out, in this instance, the mention of himself and of angels, he repeats the former assertion, that it is unlawful for any man to teach anything contrary to what they had learned.<sup>23</sup> Observe the expression — *ye have received*; for he uniformly insists, that they must not regard the gospel as something unknown, existing in the air, or in their own imaginations. He exhorts them to entertain a firm and serious conviction, that the doctrine which they had received and embraced is the true gospel of Christ. Nothing can be more inconsistent with the nature of faith than a feeble, wavering assent. What, then, must be the consequence, if ignorance of the nature and character of the gospel shall lead to hesitation? Accordingly he enjoins them to regard as devils those who shall dare to bring forward a gospel different from his, — meaning by *another gospel*, one to which the inventions

21 "Quand il denonce les anges pour excommuniez et pour abominables, s'ils enseignent autre chose." "When he denounces the angels as excommunicated and detestable persons, if they teach anything else."

22 "'Ανάθεμα. This word, which we render *accursed*, doth not signify 'accursed or condemned of God to the punishments of another world.' This the Apostle would not wish to the worst of men. The meaning is, 'Let him be as a person excommunicated, or wholly cut off from the synagogue, or church, with whom it is unlawful to have any commerce or correspondence whatever.' And so it is not properly a wish of the apostle, but a direction to the Galatians how to behave, *Let him be ἀνάθεμα*. 'Hold him, and treat him as an excommunicated and accursed person.'" — Chandler.

23 "D'enseigner autre doctrine que cello qu'il avoit enseignee aux Galatiens." "To teach any other doctrine than that which he had taught to the Galatians."

of other men are added; <sup>24</sup> for the doctrine of the false apostles was not entirely contrary, or even different, from that of Paul, but corrupted by false additions.

To what poor subterfuges do the Papists resort, in order to escape from the Apostle's declaration! First, they tell us, that we have not in our possession the whole of Paul's preaching, and cannot know what it contained, unless the Galatians who heard it shall be raised from the dead, in order to appear as witnesses. Next, they assert, that it is not every kind of addition which is forbidden, but that *other gospels* only are condemned. What Paul's doctrine was, so far as it concerns us to know, may be learned with sufficient clearness from his writings. Of this gospel, it is plain, the whole of Popery is a dreadful perversion. And from the nature of the case, we remark in conclusion, it is manifest that any spurious doctrine whatever is at variance with Paul's preaching; so that these cavils will avail them nothing.

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24 "Quand on y mesle des inventions humaines, et des choses qui ne sont point de mesme." "When it is mixed up with human inventions, and with things that are contrary to it."

Galatians 1:10-14	
<b>10.</b> For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.	<b>10.</b> Nunc enim suadeone secundum homines, an secundum Deum? vel quaero hominibus placere? si enim adhuc hominibus placerem, Christi servus non essem.
<b>11.</b> But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.	<b>11.</b> Notum autem vobis faeio, fratres, Deuteronomy Evangelio, quod evangelizatum est a me, quod non est secundum hominem;
<b>12.</b> For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught <i>it</i> , but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.	<b>12.</b> Neque enim ego ab hormone accepi illud, neque didici; sed per revelationem Iesu Christi.
<b>13.</b> For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it;	<b>13.</b> Audistis enim conversationem meam, quae aliquando fuit in Iudaismo; quod supra modum persequabar ecclesiam Dei, et vastabam illam,
<b>14.</b> And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.	<b>14.</b> Et proficiebam in Iudaismo supra multos aequales meos in genere meo, quum vehementius studiosus essem paternarum traditionum.

Having extolled so confidently his own preaching, he now shows that this was no idle or empty boast. He supports his assertion by two arguments. The first is, that he was not prompted by ambition, or flattery, or any similar passion, to accommodate himself to the views of men. The second and far stronger argument is, that he was not the author of the gospel, but delivered faithfully what he had received from God.

10. *For do I now persuade according to men or according to God?* The ambiguity of the Greek construction in this passage, has given rise to a variety of expositions. Some render it, *Do I now persuade men or God?*<sup>25</sup> Others interpret the words "God" and "men," as

25 "Πείθω. This word, which we render *persuade*, frequently signifies 'to obtain by treaty,' or, 'to endeavor the friendship and good will of any person.' Thus in [Matthew 28:14](#), the chief-priests tell the soldiers, whom they corrupted, to give a false report: 'If this come to the governor's ears, we will *persuade* him, and secure you, that is, prevail with him to be favorable to you, and save you from punishment.' Thus, [Acts 12:20](#), πείσαντες Βλάστον, we render, 'having made Blastus their friend.' Vid. Pind. Ol. 3:28. And in the Apocryphal book of Maccabees, ([2 Maccabees 4:45](#)), when Menelaus found himself convicted of his crimes, he promised Ptolemy a large sum of money, πείσαι τὸν βασιλέα, 'to pacify the king,' to prevent his displeasure, and secure his favor. And thus, in the place before us, 'to persuade God,' is to endeavor to secure his approbation; which, the Apostle

meaning divine and human concerns. This sense would agree very well with the context, if it were not too wide a departure from the words. The view which I have preferred is more natural; for nothing is more common with the Greeks than to leave the preposition κατὰ, *according to*, to be understood.

Paul is speaking, not about the subject of his preaching, but about the purpose of his own mind, which could not refer so properly to men as to God. The disposition of the speaker, it must be owned, may have some influence on his doctrine. As corruption of doctrine springs from ambition, avarice, or any other sinful passion, so the truth is maintained in its purity by an upright conscience. And so he contends that his doctrine is sound, because it is not modified so as to gratify men.

*Or, do I seek to please men?* This second clause differs not much, and yet it differs somewhat from the former; for the desire of obtaining favor is one motive for speaking “according to men.” When there reigns in our hearts such ambition, that we desire to regulate our discourse so as to obtain the favor of men, our instructions cannot be sincere. Paul therefore declares, that he is in no degree chargeable with this vice; and, the more boldly to repel the calumnious insinuation, he employs the interrogative form of speech; for interrogations carry the greater weight, when our opponents are allowed an opportunity of replying, if they have anything to say. This expresses the great boldness which Paul derived from the testimony of a good conscience; for he knew that he had discharged his duty in such a manner as not to be liable to any reproach of that kind. ([Acts 23:1](#); [2 Corinthians 1:12](#).)

*If I yet pleased men* This is a remarkable sentiment; that ambitious persons, that is, those who hunt after the applause of men, cannot serve Christ. He declares for himself, that he had freely renounced the estimation of men, in order to devote himself entirely to the service of Christ; and, in this respect, he contrasts his present position with that which he occupied at a former period of life. He had been regarded with the highest esteem, had received from every quarter loud applause; and, therefore, if he had chosen to please men, he would not have found it necessary to change his condition. But we may draw from it the general doctrine which I have stated, that those who resolve to serve Christ faithfully, must have boldness to despise the favor of men.

The word *men* is here employed in a limited sense; for the ministers of Christ ought not to labor for the express purpose of displeasing men. But there are various classes of men. Those to whom Christ “is precious,” ([1 Peter 2:7](#);) are men whom we should endeavor to please in Christ; while they who choose that the true doctrine shall give place to their own passions, are men to whom we must give no countenance. And godly, upright pastors, will always find it necessary to contend with the offenses of those who choose that, on all points,

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assures the Galatians, was his great and only view, as well as his great support, under the censure and displeasure of men, for preaching the pure and uncorrupted doctrines of the gospel.” — Chandler.

their own wishes shall be gratified; for the Church will always contain hypocrites and wicked men, by whom their own lusts will be preferred to the word of God. And even good men, either through ignorance, or through weak prejudice, are sometimes tempted by the devil to be displeased with the faithful warnings of their pastor. Our duty, therefore, is not to take alarm at any kind of offenses, provided, at the same time, that we do not excite in weak minds a prejudice against Christ himself.

Many interpret this passage in a different manner, as implying an admission to the following effect: "If I pleased men, *then I should not be the servant of Christ*. I own it, but who shall bring such a charge against me? Who does not see that I do not court the favor of men?" But I prefer the former view, that Paul is relating how large an amount of the estimation of men he had relinquished, in order to devote himself to the service of Christ.

**11. *Now I make known to you.*** This is the most powerful argument, the main hinge on which the question turns, that he has not received the gospel from men, but that it has been revealed to him by God. As this might be denied, he offers a proof, drawn from a narrative of facts. To give his declaration the greater weight, he sets out with stating that the matter is not doubtful,<sup>26</sup> but one which he is prepared to prove; and thus introduces himself in a manner well adapted to a serious subject. He affirms that it is *not according to man*; that it savours of nothing human, or, that it was not of human contrivance; and in proof of this he afterwards adds, that he had not been instructed by any earthly teacher.<sup>27</sup>

**12. *For I neither received it from man.*** What then? shall the authority of the word be diminished, because one who has been instructed by the instrumentality of men shall afterwards become a teacher? We must take into account, all along, the weapons with which the false apostles attacked him, alleging that his gospel was defective and spurious; that he had obtained it from an inferior and incompetent teacher; and that his imperfect education led him to make unguarded statements. They boasted, on the other hand, that they had been instructed by the highest apostles, with whose views they were most intimately acquainted. It was therefore necessary that Paul should state his doctrine in opposition to the whole world, and should rest it on this ground, that he had acquired it not in the school of any man, but by revelation from God. In no other way could he have set aside the reproaches of the false apostles.

The objection, that Ananias ([Acts 9:10](#)) was his teacher, may be easily answered. His divine instruction, communicated to him by immediate inspiration, did not render it improper that a man should be employed in teaching him, were it only to give weight to his

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26 "Qu'il ne parle point d'une chose incertaine ou incogne." "That he does not speak about a thing uncertain or unknown."

27 "The idiom by which there is a transposition of ὅτι is frequent, and may here, Schott thinks, have been made use of, in order to place a highly important topic in the most prominent point of view" — Bloomfield.



public ministry. In like manner, we have already shown, that he had a direct call from God by revelation, and that he was ordained by the votes and the solemn approbation of men. These statements are not inconsistent with each other.

**13.** *For ye have heard of my conversation.* The whole of this narrative was added as a part of his argument. He relates that, during his whole life, he had such an abhorrence of the gospel, that he was a mortal enemy of it, and a destroyer of the name of Christianity. Hence we infer that his conversion was divine. And indeed he calls them as witnesses of a matter not at all doubtful, so as to place beyond controversy what he is about to say.

His *equals* were those of his own age; for a comparison with older persons would have been unsuitable. When he speaks of *the traditions of the fathers*, he means, not those additions by which the law of God had been corrupted, but the law of God itself, in which he had been educated from his childhood, and which he had received through the hands of his parents and ancestors. Having been strongly attached to the customs of his fathers, it would have been no easy matter to tear him from them, had not the Lord drawn him by a miracle.

Galatians 1:15-24	
15. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called <i>me</i> by his grace,	15. At postquam placuit Deo, qui me segregaverat ab utero matris meae, et vocavit per gratiam suam,
16. To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:	16. Revelare Filium suum mihi, ut praedicarem ipsnm inter Gentes, continuo non contuli cum carne et sanguine;
17. Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.	17. Neque redii Hierosolymam, ad eos qui ante me fuerunt Apostoli; sed abii in Arabiam, ac denuo reversus sum Damascum.
18. Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.	18. Deinde post annos tres redii Hierosolymam, ut viderein Petrum; et mansi apud illum dies quindecim.
19. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.	19. Alium antem ex Apostolis non vidi quenquam, nisi Iacobum fratrem Domini.
20. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.	20. Porro quae scribo vobis, ecce coram Deo, non mentier.
21. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;	21. Deinde vent in regiones Syriae ac Ciliciae.
22. And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ:	22. Eram autem facie ignotus Ecclesiis Iudaeae, qute erant in Christo.
23. But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.	23. Sed tantum hic rumor apud illos erat; Qui persequabatur nos aliquando, nunc praedicat fidem quam quondam expugnabat.
24. And they glorified God in me.	24. Et glorificabant in me Deum.

15. *But after that it pleased God.* This is the second part of the narrative, and relates to his miraculous conversion. He tells us, first, that he had been called by the grace of God to preach Christ among the Gentiles; and, next, that as soon as he had been called, without consulting the apostles, he unhesitatingly proceeded to the performance of the work, which, he felt assured, had been enjoined upon him by the appointment of God. In the construction of the words, Erasmus differs from the Vulgate. He connects them in the following manner: "When it pleased God that I should preach Christ among the Gentiles, who called me for

this purpose that he might reveal him *by me*.” But I prefer the old translation; for Christ had been revealed to Paul before he received a command to preach. Admitting that Erasmus were right in translating ἐν ἐμοί, *by me*, still the clause, *that I might preach*, is added for the purpose of describing the kind of revelation.

Paul’s reasoning does not, at first sight, appear so strong; for although, when he had been converted to Christianity, he instantly, and without consulting the apostles, entered into the office of preaching the gospel, it does not thence follow that he had been appointed to that office by the revelation of Christ. But the arguments which he employs are various, and, when they are all collected, will be found sufficiently strong to establish his conclusion. He argues, first, that he had been called by the grace of God; next, that his apostleship had been acknowledged by the other apostles; and the other arguments follow. Let the reader, therefore, remember to read the whole narrative together, and to draw the inference, not from single parts, but from the whole.

*Who had separated me.* This separation was the purpose of God, by which Paul was appointed to the apostolic office, before he knew that he was born. The calling followed afterwards at the proper time, when the Lord made known his will concerning him, and commanded him to proceed to the work. God had, no doubt, decreed, before the foundation of the world, what he would do with regard to every one of us, and had assigned to every one, by his secret counsel, his respective place. But the sacred writers frequently introduce those three steps: the eternal predestination of God, the destination from the womb, and the calling, which is the effect and accomplishment of both.

The word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah, though expressed a little differently from this passage, has entirely the same meaning.

“Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth from the womb I sanctified thee; a prophet to the nations have I made thee.” ([Jeremiah 1:5](#).)

Before they even existed, Jeremiah had been set apart to the office of a prophet, and Paul to that of an apostle; but he is said to separate us from the womb, because the design of our being sent into the world is, that he may accomplish, in us, what he has decreed. The calling is delayed till its proper time, when God has prepared us for the office which he commands us to undertake.

Paul’s words may therefore be read thus: “When it pleased God to reveal his Son, by me, who called me, as he had formerly separated me.” He intended to assert, that his calling depends on the secret election of God; and that he was ordained an apostle, not because by his own industry he had fitted himself for undertaking so high an office, or because God had accounted him worthy of having it bestowed upon him, but because, before he was born, he had been set apart by the secret purpose of God.

Thus, in his usual manner, he traces his calling to the good pleasure of God. This deserves our careful attention; for it shows us that we owe it to the goodness of God, not only that

we have been elected and adopted to everlasting life, but that he deigns to make use of our services, who would otherwise have been altogether useless, and that he assigns to us a lawful calling, in which we may be employed. What had Paul, before he was born, to entitle him to so high an honor? In like manner we ought to believe, that it is entirely the gift of God, and not obtained by our own industry, that we have been called to govern the Church.

The subtle distinctions into which some commentators have entered in explaining the word *separated*, are altogether foreign to the subject. God is said to *separate* us, not because he bestows any peculiar disposition of mind which distinguishes us from others, but because he appoints us by his own purpose<sup>28</sup>. Although the apostle had most explicitly attributed his calling to the free grace of God, when he pronounced that voluntary separation from the womb to be the origin of it, yet he repeats the direct statement, both that, by his commendation of Divine grace, he may take away all grounds of boasting, and that he may testify his own gratitude to God. On this subject he is wont freely to expatiate, even when he has no controversy with the false apostles.

**16.** *To reveal his Son to me.* If we read it, “to reveal *by me*,” it will express the design of the apostleship, which is to make Christ known. And how was this to be accomplished? By preaching him among the Gentiles, which the false apostles treated as a crime. But I consider the Greek phrase ἐν ἐμοὶ<sup>29</sup> to be a Hebrew idiom for *to me*; for the Hebrew particle בְּ (beth) is frequently redundant, as all who know that language are well aware. The meaning will therefore be, that Christ was revealed *to* Paul, not that he might alone enjoy, and silently retain in his own bosom the knowledge of Christ, but that he might preach among the Gentiles the Savior whom he had known.

*Immediately I conferred not.* To *confer with flesh and blood*, is to consult with flesh and blood. So far as the meaning of these words is concerned, his intention was absolutely to have nothing to do with any human counsels. The general expression, as will presently appear from the context, includes all men, and all the prudence or wisdom which they may possess.<sup>30</sup> He even makes a direct reference to the apostles, for the express purpose of exhibiting,

28 “Quand par son conseil il nous destine a quelque chose.” “When he appoints us to any thing by his purpose.”

29 “Ἐν ἐμοὶ, that is, ‘to me;’ but yet it appears to denote something more.” — Beza. “The ancient commentators, and, of the moderns, Winer, Schott, and Scott, seem right in regarding this as a strong expression for ‘in my mind and heart.’” — Bloomfield.

30 “The expression, ‘flesh and blood,’ is used to denote men. Thus when Peter confessed to our Lord, ‘Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God,’ Jesus answered, ‘Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.’ ([Matthew 16:17](#).) That is, no man hath made this discovery; and thus it hath the same meaning in the place before us. But as the apostle speaks of his countrymen and equals in age, in the verses before, I apprehend he particularly means them, and that he intends to assure the Galatians, that, notwithstanding his former zeal for the law and the traditions of the Jews, yet that, after his extraordinary conversion, he had no longer any dependence on them, nor sought the least direction from the wisest among them.” — Chandler.

in a stronger light, the immediate calling of God. Relying on the authority of God alone, and asking nothing more, he proceeded to discharge the duty of preaching the gospel.

**17. Neither did I return to Jerusalem.** What he had just written is now explained, and more fully stated. As if he had said, “I did not ask the authority of any man,” not even of the apostles themselves. It is a mistake to suppose, that, because the apostles are now separately mentioned, they are not included in the words, *flesh and blood*. Nothing new or different is here added, but merely a clearer explanation of what had been already said. And no disrespect to the apostles is implied in that expression. For the purpose of shewing that he did not owe his commission to man, the false boasting of unprincipled men laid him under the necessity of contrasting the authority of the apostles themselves with the authority of God. When a creature is brought into comparison with God, however contemptuous or humiliating may be the language employed, he has no reason to complain.

*But I went into Arabia.* In the Acts of the Apostles, Luke has omitted these three years. In like manner, there are other passages of the history which he does not touch; and hence the slander of those who seek to build on this a charge of inconsistency in the narratives is ridiculous. Let godly readers consider the severe temptation with which Paul was called to struggle at the very commencement of his course. He who but yesterday, for the sake of doing him honor, had been sent to Damascus with a magnificent retinue, is now compelled to wander as an exile in a foreign land: but he does not lose his courage.

**18. Then after three years.** It was not till three years after he had begun to discharge the apostolic office, that he *went up to Jerusalem*. Thus, he did not, at the outset, receive the calling of men. But lest it should be supposed that he had separate interests from theirs, and was desirous to avoid their society, he tells us that he went up for the express purpose *to see*<sup>31</sup> *Peter*.<sup>32</sup> Although he had not waited for their sanction before undertaking the office, yet it was not against their will, but with their full consent and approbation, that he held the rank of an apostle. He is desirous to shew that at no period was he at variance with the apostles, and that even now he is in full harmony with all their views. By mentioning the short time that he remained there, he shews that he had come, not with a view to learn, but solely for mutual intercourse.

**19. But I saw no other of the apostles.** This is added to make it evident that he had but one object in his journey, and attended to nothing else.

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31 “ἵστορεῖν signifies either ‘to ascertain any *thing* by inquiry, or any *person* by personal examination;’ but sometimes, as here, to visit for the purpose of becoming acquainted with any one by personal communication.’ So Josephus, Bell. 6:1-8, ὄν (scil. Julianum), ἱστώρησα, ‘whom when I came to know and be with.’ See [Ac 9:26,27](#).” — Bloomfield.

32 “The distinguished guest of a distinguished host.” — Grotius.

*Except James.* Who this James was, deserves inquiry. Almost all the ancients are agreed that he was one of the disciples, whose surname was “Oblias” and “The Just,” and that he presided over the church at Jerusalem.<sup>33</sup> Yet others think that he was the son of Joseph by another wife, and others (which is more probable) that he was the cousin of Christ by the mother’s side:<sup>34</sup> but as he is here mentioned among the apostles, I do not hold that opinion. Nor is there any force in the defense offered by Jerome, that the word Apostle is sometimes applied to others besides the twelve; for the subject under consideration is the highest rank of apostleship, and we shall presently see that he was considered one of the chief *pillars*. (Galatians 2:9.) It appears to me, therefore, far more probable, that the person of whom he is speaking is the son of Alpheus.<sup>35</sup>

The rest of the apostles, there is reason to believe, were scattered through various countries; for they did not idly remain in one place. Luke relates that Paul was brought by Barnabas to the apostles. (Acts 9:27.) This must be understood to relate, not to the twelve, but to these two apostles, who alone were at that time residing in Jerusalem.

**20.** *Now the things which I write to you.* This affirmation extends to the whole narrative. The vast earnestness of Paul on this subject is evinced by his resorting to an oath, which cannot lawfully be employed but on great and weighty occasions. Nor is it wonderful that he insists with so much earnestness on this point; for we have already seen to what expedients the impostors had recourse in order to take from him the name and credit of an apostle. Now the modes of swearing used by good men deserve our attention; for we learn from them that an oath must be viewed simply as an appeal to the judgment-seat of God for the integrity and truth of our words and actions; and such a transaction ought to be guided by religion and the fear of God.

**22.** *And was unknown by face.* This appears to be added for the sake of shewing more strongly the wickedness and malignity of his slanderers. If the churches of Judea who *had only heard* respecting him, were led to give glory to God for the astonishing change which he had wrought in Paul, how disgraceful was it that those who had beheld the fruits of his amazing labors should not have acted a similar part! If the mere report was enough for the former, why did not the facts before their eyes satisfy the latter?

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33 “Qui estoit pasteur en l’église de Jerusalem.” “Who was pastor in the church at Jerusalem.”

34 “Qu’il estoit cousin-germain de Jesus Christ, fils de la soeur de sa mere.” “That he was cousin-german of Jesus Christ, his mother’s sister’s son.”

35 This is fully consistent with the opinion commonly held, that Alpheus or Cleopas was the husband of the sister of Mary, the mother of our Lord, and consequently that James, the son of Alpheus, was our Lord’s cousin-german. — *Ed.*

23. *Which once he destroyed.* This does not mean that *faith*<sup>36</sup> may actually be destroyed, but that he lessened its influence on the minds of weak men. Besides, it is the will, rather than the deed, that is here expressed.

24. *And they glorified God in me*<sup>37</sup> This was an evident proof that his ministry was approved by all the churches of Judea, and approved in such a manner, that they broke out into admiration and praise of the wonderful power of God. Thus he indirectly reproves their malice, by showing that their venom and slanders could have no other effect than to hide the glory of God, which, as the apostles admitted and openly acknowledged, shone brightly in the apostleship of Paul.

This reminds us of the light in which the saints of the Lord ought to be regarded by us. When we behold men adorned with the gifts of God, such is our depravity, or ingratitude, or proneness to superstition, that we worship them as gods, unmindful of Him by whom those gifts were bestowed. These words remind us, on the contrary, to lift up our eyes to the Great Author, and to ascribe to Him what is his own, while they at the same time inform us that an occasion of offering praise to God was furnished by the change produced on Paul, from being an enemy to becoming a minister of Christ.

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36 "The word πίστις denotes not only the act of believing, but that which is believed." — Beza.

37 "He does not say, They praised or glorified me, but, They glorified God. He says, They glorified God in me; for all that belongs to me was from the grace of God." — OEcumenius.

## CHAPTER 2



Galatians 2:1-5	
1. Then, fourteen years after, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with <i>me</i> also.	1. Deinde post annos quatuordecim ascendi rursus Hierosolymam una cum Barnaba, assumpto simul et Tito.
2. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.	2. Ascendi autem secundum revelationem, et contuli cum illis evangelium, quod praedico inter Gentes; privatim vero cum iis qui in pretio erant, ne quo modo in vahum currerem, aut cucurrissem,
3. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:	3. Sed neque Titus, qui mecum erat, quum esset Graecus, compulsus fuit circumcidi;
4. And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:	4. Propter subingresses falsos fratres, qui subintroierant ad explorandum libertatem nostram, quam habemus in Christo Iesu; quo nos in servitutem adigerent;
5. To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.	5. Quibus ne ad heram quidem cessimus per subjectionem, ut veritas evangelii maneret apud vos.

1. *Fourteen years after.* This cannot with certainty be affirmed to be the same journey mentioned by Luke. ([Acts 15:2.](#)) The connection of the history leads us rather to an opposite conclusion. We find that Paul performed four journeys to Jerusalem. Of the first we have already spoken. The second took place when, in company with Barnabas, he brought the charitable contributions of the Greek and Asiatic Churches. ([Acts 15:25.](#)) My belief that this second journey is referred to in the present passage rests on various grounds. On any other supposition, the statements of Paul and Luke cannot be reconciled. Besides, there is ground for conjecturing that the rebuke was administered to Peter at Antioch while Paul was residing there. Now, this happened before he was sent to Jerusalem by the Churches to settle the dispute which had arisen about ceremonial observances. ([Acts 15:2.](#)) It is not reasonable to suppose that Peter would have used such dissimulation, if that controversy had been settled and the decree of the Apostles published. But Paul writes that he came to Jerusalem, and afterwards adds that he had rebuked Peter for an act of dissimulation, an act which Peter certainly would not have committed except in matters that were doubtful.<sup>38</sup>

38 "Sinon les choses estant douteuses et non resolues encore." "Except in matters that were doubtful and not yet settled."

Besides, he would scarcely have alluded, at any time, to that journey<sup>39</sup> undertaken with the consent of all the believers, without mentioning the occasion of it, and the memorable decision which was passed. It is not even certain at what time the Epistle was written, only that the Greeks conjecture that it was sent from Rome, and the Latins from Ephesus. For my own part, I think that it was written, not only before Paul had seen Rome, but before that consultation had been held, and the decision of the Apostles given about ceremonial observances. While his opponents were falsely pleading the name of the apostles, and earnestly striving to ruin the reputation of Paul, what carelessness would it have angered in him to pass by the decree universally circulated among them, which struck at those very persons!<sup>40</sup> Undoubtedly, this one word would have shut their mouth: "You bring against me the authority of the apostles, but who does not know their decision? and therefore I hold you convicted of unblushing falsehood. In their name, you oblige the Gentiles to keep the law, but I appeal to their own writing, which sets the consciences of men at liberty."

We may likewise observe, that, in the commencement of the Epistle, he reproved the Galatians for having so soon revolted from the gospel which had been delivered to them. But we may readily conclude, that, after they had been brought to believe the gospel, some time must have elapsed before that dispute about the ceremonial law arose. I consider, therefore, that the fourteen years are to be reckoned, not from one journey to another, but from Paul's conversion. The space of time between the two journeys was eleven years.

2. *And I went up according to revelation.*<sup>41</sup> He now proceeds to prove his apostleship and his doctrine, not only by works, but also by a Divine revelation. Since God directed that journey, which had for its object the confirmation of his doctrine, the doctrine was confirmed, not by the concurrence of men only, but likewise by the authority of God. This ought to have been more than enough to overcome the obstinacy of those who blamed Paul by holding up the names of the apostles. For although, up to this time, there had been some room for debate, the communication of the mind of God put an end to all discussion.

*I communicated to them.* The word *communicated* claims our first attention; for the apostles do not describe to him what he ought to teach, but, after listening to his own account of his doctrine, express their concurrence and approbation. But, as his opponents might allege that, by cunning dissimulation on many points, he had gained the favor of the apostles, he expressly states that he "communicated to them that doctrine which he preacheth among the Gentiles;" which removes all suspicion of hypocrisy or imposture. We shall see what

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39 "Ce voyage-la qui est escrit au quinzieme chapitre" "That journey which is recorded in the fifteenth chapter" (of the Acts of the Apostles.)

40 "De la quelle il eust au assez pour les vaincre du tout." "Which would have been sufficient for gaining a complete victory over them."

41 "Et y montai par revelation." "And I went up thither by revelation."

followed; for the apostles did not take it amiss that he had not waited to obtain their sanction. On the contrary, without dispute or expostulation, they approved of his labors; and did so by the direction of the same Spirit, under whose guidance Paul had performed his journey to Jerusalem. Thus, he was not made an apostle by them, but acknowledged to be an apostle. But this point will be treated more fully afterwards.

*Lest by any means.* What then? Shall the word of God fall, when it is unsupported by the testimony of men? Though the whole world were unbelieving, yet the word of God remains firm and unshaken: and they who preach the gospel by the command of God are not uselessly employed, even when no fruit is produced by their labors. This is not Paul's meaning; but, as the consciences of men, so long as they doubt and hesitate, derive no benefit from the ministry of the word, so a preacher is said, so far as men is concerned, to *run in vain*, when his labors are ineffectual, and unaccompanied by proper edification.

It was, therefore, a formidable weapon for shaking weak consciences, when the doctrine which Paul preached was falsely declared by impostors to be at variance with the doctrine of the apostles. Multitudes in this manner fell away. The certainty of faith, indeed, does not depend on the agreement of human opinions; but, on the contrary, it is our duty to rest in the naked truth of God, so that neither men nor all the angels together, could shake our faith. Yet ignorant persons, who have imperfectly understood, and never have cordially embraced, sound doctrine, feel the temptation to be almost irresistible, while teachers of acknowledged eminence are found to entertain opposite views. Nay, strong believers are sometimes powerfully affected by this stratagem of Satan, when he holds out to their view the "strife and divisions" ([1 Corinthians 3:3](#)) of those who ought to have been

"perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." ([1 Corinthians 1:10](#).)

It is hard to tell how many were driven from the gospel, how many had their faith shaken, by the mournful controversy about the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, because, on a question of the highest moment, very distinguished men were observed to take opposite sides.

On the other hand, the agreement of all who teach in the Church is a powerful aid for the confirmation of faith. Since, therefore, Satan was laboring so insidiously to hinder the progress of the gospel, Paul resolved to meet him. When he had succeeded in demonstrating that he held the same views with all the apostles, every hinderance was removed. Weak disciples were no longer perplexed by the inquiry, whom they ought to follow. His meaning may be thus summed up: "That my former labors might not be thrown away and rendered useless, I have set at rest the question which disturbed many minds, whether I or Peter deserved your confidence; for in all that I had ever taught we were perfectly at one." If many teachers in our own day were as heartily desirous as Paul was to edify the Church, they would take more pains to be agreed among themselves.

3. *But neither Titus.* This is an additional argument to prove that the Apostles held the same views with himself; for he had brought to them an uncircumcised man, whom they did not hesitate to acknowledge as a brother. The reason is assigned why he was not circumcised; for circumcision, being a matter of indifference, might be neglected or practiced as edification required. Our invariable rule of action is, that, if “all things are lawful for us,” (1 Corinthians 10:23) we ought to inquire what is expedient. He circumcises Timothy, (Acts 16:3,) in order to take away a ground of offense from weak minds; for he was at that time dealing with weak minds, which it was his duty to treat with tenderness. And he would gladly have done the same thing with Titus, for he was unwearied in his endeavors to “support (Acts 20:35) the weak;” but the case was different. For some false brethren were watching for an opportunity of slandering his doctrine, and would immediately have spread the report: “See how the valiant champion of liberty, when he comes into the presence of the apostles, lays aside the bold and fierce aspect which he is wont to assume among the ignorant!” Now, as it is our duty to “bear the infirmities of the weak,” (Romans 15:1,) so concealed foes, who purposely watch for our liberty, must, be vigorously resisted. The duties of love to our neighbor ought never to be injurious to faith; and therefore, in matters of indifference, the love of our neighbour will be our best guide, provided that faith shall always receive our first regard.

4. *And that because of false brethren.* This may mean either that false brethren made it the subject of wicked accusation, and endeavored to compel him; or that Paul purposely did not circumcise him, because he saw that they would immediately make it an occasion of slander. They had insinuated themselves into Paul’s company with the hope of gaining one of two objects. Either he would treat with open scorn the ceremonial law, and then they would rouse the indignation of the Jews against him; or he would refrain entirely from the exercise of his liberty, and in that case they would exult over him among the Gentiles as one who, overwhelmed with shame, had retracted his doctrine.

I prefer the second interpretation, that Paul, having discovered the snares laid for him, determined not to circumcise Titus. When he says that he was not “compelled,” the reader is led to understand that circumcision is not condemned as a bad thing in itself, but that the obligation to observe it was the subject of dispute. As if he had said, “I would have been prepared to circumcise Titus if higher matters had not been involved.” Their intention was to lay down a law; and to such compulsion he would not yield.

5. *To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour.* This steadiness was the seal of Paul’s doctrine. For when false brethren, who wished nothing more than a ground of accusation against him, exerted themselves to the utmost, and he stood firm, there could no longer be any room for doubt. It cannot now be insinuated that he deceived the apostles. He asserts that he did not for a moment *give place* to them *by subjection*, that is, by such a mode of yielding as would have implied that his liberty had been crushed. In every other

respect, he was prepared, to the very close of his life, to exercise mildness and forbearance toward all men.

*That the truth of the gospel.* There was no danger that Paul would be deprived of his liberty even by yielding to them; but the example would have done harm to others, and therefore he prudently inquired what was expedient. This shows us how far offenses must be avoided, and points us to edification as the object which ought to be kept in view in all matters of indifference. The amount, is this: "We are the servants of the brethren, but still keeping in view that we all serve the Lord, and that the liberty of our conscience shall remain unimpaired." When false brethren wished to bring the saints in to bondage, it was their duty not to yield to them.

*The truth of the gospel* denotes its genuine purity, or, which means the same thing, its pure and entire doctrine. For the false apostles did not altogether set aside the gospel, but mixed up with it their own notions, so as to give it a false and disguised aspect, which it always has when we make the smallest departure "from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3.)

With what effrontery then will the Papists boast that they possess the gospel, which is not only corrupted by many inventions, but more than adulterated by many wicked doctrines? Let us remember that it is not enough to retain the name of the gospel, and some kind of summary of its doctrines, if its solid purity do not remain untouched. Where are the men who, by pretended moderation, endeavor to bring about a reconciliation between us and the Papists? as if the doctrine of religion, like a matter affecting money or property, could be compromised. With what abhorrence would such a transaction have been regarded by Paul, who affirms that it is not the true gospel, if it is not pure!

Galatians 2:6-10	
6. But of those who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed <i>to be somewhat</i> in conference added nothing to me:	6. Ab iis autem qui videbantur aliquid esse, quales aliquando fuerint, nihil mea refert (personam hominis Deus non accipit, <a href="#">Deuteronomy 10: 17</a> ; <a href="#">2 Paral. 19:7</a> ; <a href="#">Job 34:19</a> ; <a href="#">Wisdom 6:8</a> ; <a href="#">Ecclesiastes 35:15</a> ; <a href="#">Acts 10:34</a> ; <a href="#">Romans 2:11</a> ; <a href="#">Ephesians 6:9</a> ; <a href="#">Colossians 3:25</a> ; <a href="#">1 Peter 1:17</a> ) nam mihi, qui videbantur esse in pretio nihil contulerunt
7. But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as <i>the gospel</i> of the circumcision <i>was</i> unto Peter;	7. Imo contra, quum vidissent mihi concreditum fuisse evangelium praeprputii, quemadmodum Petro Circumcisionis;
8. (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)	8. (Nam qui efficax fuit in Petro ad apostolatam Circumcisionis efficax fuit et in me erga Gentes);
9. And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas right hands of fellowship; that we <i>should go</i> unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.	9. Quumque cognovissent gratiam mihi datam Iaeobus et Cephas et Ioannes, qui videbantur columnae esse, dextras dederunt mihi ac Barnabae societatis, ut nos inter Gentes, ipsi vore in Circumcisionem, apostolatu fungeremur.
10. Only <i>they would</i> that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.	10. Tantum ut pauperum memores essemus, in quo et diligens fui, ut hoc ipsum facerem.

6. *Of those who seemed to be somewhat.*<sup>42</sup> Paul is not yet satisfied, without making the Galatians understand that he had learned nothing from Peter and the apostles. Hence Por-

42 “Τῶν δοκούντων εἶναι τι, the men ‘who appeared to be somewhat,’ that is, persons of highest character and estimation. For though this word signifies to ‘appear,’ or ‘seem,’ yet it is not always used in a diminutive or disparaging sense, but to denote what they really are, and what others think them to be. Thus, τῶν Ἑλλήνων δοκοῦντες διαφέρειν (Aelian) are persons esteemed as the principal men of Greece; and Aristotle is said σόφος ἄνθρωπος καὶ ὧν καὶ εἶναι δοκῶν, both to be, and to be esteemed as a wise man.” Chandler.

phyry and Julian <sup>43</sup> accuse the holy man of pride, because he claims so much for himself that he cannot endure to learn anything from others; because he boasts of having become a teacher without any instruction or assistance; and because he labors so hard not to appear in an inferior character. But any one who will consider how necessary that boasting was, will acknowledge that it was holy boasting, and worthy of the highest praise; for, if he had yielded this point to his opponents, that he had profited under the apostles, he would have furnished them with two charges against him. They would immediately have said, "And so you made some progress; you corrected your past errors, and did not repeat your former rashness." Thus, in the first place, the whole doctrine which he had hitherto taught would have fallen under suspicion; and, secondly, he would ever afterwards have possessed less authority, because he would have been reckoned but an ordinary disciple. We find, therefore, that it was not on his own account, but by the necessity under which he lay to establish the doctrine, that he was led to this holy boasting. The controversy has no reference to individuals, and therefore cannot be a struggle of ambition; but Paul's determination was that no man, however eminent, should throw into the shade his apostleship, on which the authority of his doctrine depended. If this be not enough to silence those dogs, their barking is sufficiently answered.

*Whatsoever they were.* These words must be read as a separate clause; for the parenthesis was intended to assure his opponents that he did not concern himself with the opinions of men. This passage has been variously interpreted. Ambrose thinks that it is a passing reference to the folly of attempting to lower Paul by holding up the apostles; and represents him as saying; "As if I were not equally at liberty to object that they were poor, illiterate men, while I, from my early years, enjoyed a liberal education under the care of Gamaliel. But I pass over all this, because I know that there is no respect of persons with God." Chrysostom and Jerome take a harsher view of the words, as an indirect threatening of the most distinguished apostles. "Whatsoever they may be, if they swerve from duty, they shall not escape the judgment of God; neither the dignity of their office, nor the estimation of men, shall protect them." But another interpretation appears to me more simple, and more agreeable to Paul's design. He admits that they were first in the order of time, but contends that this did not prevent him from being their equal in rank. He does not say that it is of no consequence to him what they are at present; but he is speaking of a period now past, when they were already apostles, and when he was opposed to the faith of Christ. In short, he does not choose that what is past shall decide the matter; and refuses to admit the proverb, that he who comes first has the best right.

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43 Porphyry, (Πορφύριος,) a Greek philosopher, (whose original name was Malchus,) and Julian, the Roman emperor, (commonly called "the apostate,") were able and virulent opponents of Christianity. Their writings drew forth powerful defences, by which all their arguments were triumphantly confuted. — *Ed.*

*No man's person.* Besides the interpretations which I have mentioned, a third is not unworthy of notice, — that in the government of the world distinctions of rank are admitted, but in the spiritual kingdom of Christ they can have no place. There is plausibility in the statement, but it is in reference to worldly government, that it is said,

“Ye shall not respect persons in judgment,.”

([Deuteronomy 1:17](#).)

But I do not enter into that argument, for it does not affect this passage. Paul simply means, that the honorable rank which the apostles had attained did not prevent him from being called by God, and raised, all at once, from the lowest condition to be their equal. The difference between them, though great, is of no value in the sight of God, who does not accept persons, and whose calling is not influenced by any prejudices. But this view may likewise appear liable to objection; for, granting it to be true, and a truth which must be carefully maintained, that in our intercourse with God there is no respect of persons, how does this apply to Peter and his fellow-apostles, who were venerable, not merely for their rank, but for true holiness and spiritual gifts?

The word *person* is contrasted with the fear of God and a good conscience; and this is its ordinary acceptation in Scripture. ([Acts 10:34,35](#) [1 Peter 1:17](#).) But piety, zeal, holiness, and other similar graces, were the principal grounds of the esteem and respect in which the apostles were held; while Paul speaks contemptuously of them, as if they had possessed nothing but the outward forms.

I reply: Paul is not discussing the real worth of the apostles, but the idle boasting of his adversaries. In order to support their own unfounded pretensions, they talked in lofty terms of Peter, and James, and John, and took advantage of the veneration with which they were regarded by the Church, for accomplishing their earnest desire of degrading Paul. His object is not to inquire what the apostles are, or what opinion must be formed respecting them when controversy is laid aside, but to tear off the disguises which the false apostles wore. As in a subsequent part of the Epistle he treats of circumcision, not in its real character, but in the false and impious notion attached to it by those impostors, so he now declares that the apostles were in the sight of God disguises, by which those persons attempted to shine in the world; and this is evident from the words. Why did they prefer them to Paul? because they were his predecessors in office. This was a mere disguise. In any other point of view, they would have been highly esteemed, and the gifts of God manifested in them would have been warmly admired by one so singularly modest as the apostle Paul, who elsewhere acknowledges that he was “the least of the apostles,” and unworthy to occupy so exalted a station.

“I am the least of the apostles, and not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.”

([1 Corinthians 15:9](#).)



*They communicated nothing to me.* It might also be rendered, “they communicated nothing with me;” for it is the same word which he formerly used twice.<sup>44</sup> But the meaning is the same. When the apostles had heard Paul’s gospel, they did not on the other side bring forward their own, (as is commonly done when something better and more perfect is desired,) but were satisfied with his explanation, and simply and unhesitatingly embraced his doctrine, so that not even on the most doubtful point did a single word of debate pass between them. Nor are we to suppose that Paul, presuming on his superiority, took the lead in the discussion, and dictated to his brethren. On the contrary, his faith, about which unfavourable rumors had been spread, was fully explained by him, and sanctioned by their approbation.

7. *But, on the contrary.* They immediately *gave him the right hand of fellowship.* ([Galatians 2:9.](#)) Consequently they gave their testimony to his doctrine, and without any exception; for they produced nothing on the other side, as is commonly done on debated points, but acknowledged that he held the same gospel in common with them, and was therefore entitled to the honors and rank of an associate. Now, one condition of this *fellowship* was, that they distributed the provinces among themselves. They were therefore equal, and there was no subjection on the part of Paul. To “give the right hands of fellowship” means here, to have a partnership settled by mutual agreement.

*When they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to me.* He asserts that he was not indebted to the apostles for the favor of being made an apostle by their consent and approbation, but that, in conceding to him the apostleship, they only refused to take away what God had given. He constantly urges that he was made an apostle by the gift and appointment of God, but adds here that he was acknowledged as such by the apostles themselves. Hence it followed, that those unprincipled men were attempting, what the apostles durst not have attempted, to oppose the election of God.

And here he begins to claim what belonged to himself in preference to others, the apostleship of the uncircumcision. For Paul and Barnabas differed from the rest in this respect, that they had been appointed to be apostles of the Gentiles. ([Acts 13:2.](#)) That had been done by a Divine revelation, which the apostles not only did not oppose, but determined to ratify, because not to obey it, would have been impious. This shows us in what manner they arranged their respective duties, in compliance with a Divine revelation, namely, that Paul and Barnabas should be the apostles of the Gentiles, and that the others should be the apostles of the Jews.

But this appears to be at variance with the command of Christ, which enjoins that the twelve shall

“go unto all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” ([Mark 16:15.](#))

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44 “ἀνεθέμην αὐτοῖς”, [Galatians 2:2](#)

I reply, that command was not intended to apply specifically to each individual, but describes in general terms the design of the apostolic office, which was, that salvation must be proclaimed to all nations by the doctrine of the gospel. For the apostles evidently did not travel over the whole world; nay, it is probable that not one of the twelve ever passed into Europe. What they allege about Peter may, for aught I know, be fabulous, and is, at all events, quite uncertain.

All of them, it will be objected, had still a commission both to Gentiles and to Jews. I own they had, as occasion offered. Each apostle, I grant, was entrusted with the publication of the gospel both among Gentiles and Jews; for the distribution was not of such a nature as to assign them fixed boundaries, like those of kingdoms, principalities, and provinces, which could not lawfully be passed. We see that Paul, wherever he went, uniformly offered his labors and services, in the first instance, to the Jews. As he had a right, while living among the Gentiles, to offer himself as an apostle and teacher to the Jews; so the others were at liberty, wherever they had it in their power, to bring Gentiles to Christ; and we find Peter exercising this privilege with regard to Cornelius and others. ([Acts 10:1](#).) But as there were other apostles in that district, which was almost wholly inhabited by Jews, Paul traveled through Asia, Greece, and other distant parts, and on this occasion was specially ordained to be an apostle to the Gentiles. Nay, when the Lord first commanded him to be set apart, he directed him to leave Antioch and Syria, and perform voyages to distant countries for the sake of the Gentiles. On ordinary occasions, therefore, he was the apostle of the Gentiles, and on extraordinary occasions, he was the apostle of the Jews. The other apostles, again, took the Jews for their own department, but with the understanding that, when an opportunity occurred, they would be at liberty to direct their ministrations to the Gentiles; this last, however, being in their case an extraordinary service.

But if Peter's apostleship had a peculiar reference to the Jews, let the Romanists see on what ground they derive from him their succession to the primacy. If the Pope of Rome claims the primacy because he is Peter's successor, he ought to exercise it over the Jews. Paul is here declared to be the chief apostle of the Gentiles, yet they affirm that he was not bishop of Rome; and, therefore, if the Pope would establish any claim to his primacy, let him gather churches from among the Jews. He who by a decree of the Holy Spirit, and by the consent of the whole apostolic college, has been solemnly declared to be one of the apostles, cannot but be acknowledged by us in that character. Those who would transfer that right to Peter set aside all ordination, both human and divine. It is unnecessary to explain here the well-known metaphor in the words *circumcision* and *uncircumcision*, as applied to Jews and Gentiles.

8. *He that wrought effectually.* That the province which had been assigned to him was truly his own, is proved by the exertion of divine power during his ministry. Now, this manifestation of divine energy, as we have frequently seen, is the seal by which his doctrine

was attested, and his office as a teacher sanctioned. Whether Paul refers God's *effectual working* to the success of his preaching, or to the graces of the Holy Spirit which were then bestowed on believers, is doubtful. I do not understand it as denoting the mere success, but the spiritual power and efficacy,<sup>45</sup> which he has elsewhere mentioned. (1 Corinthians 2:4.) The amount of the whole is, that it was no idle bargain which the apostles had made among themselves, but a decision which God had sealed.

**9. And when they perceived the grace.** They who treated with contempt the grace of God, by which the most eminent apostles had been led to admire and reverence Paul, are charged with hateful and proud disdain. If they should allege that they were ignorant of that which the apostles knew from the beginning, the hypocritical pretense was not to be endured. This admonishes us to yield to the grace of God, wherever it is perceived, unless we choose to contend with the Holy Spirit, whose will it is that his gifts shall not remain unemployed. The grace which the apostles perceived to have been given to Paul and Barnabas, induced them to sanction their ministry by receiving them as their associates.

*James and Cephas.* I have already stated, that James was the son of Alphaeus. He could not be "the brother of John" who had been lately put to death by Herod, (Acts 12:2,) and to suppose that one of the disciples had been placed above the apostles would be absurd. That he held the highest rank among the apostles, is made evident by Luke, who ascribes to him the summing up and decision of the cause in the council, (Acts 15:13,) and afterwards mentions his having assembled "all the elders" of the church of Jerusalem. (Acts 21:18.) When he says, that they *seemed to be pillars*, he does not speak contemptuously, but quotes the general opinion, arguing from it, that what was done by such men ought not to be lightly set aside. In a question relating to diversity of rank, it is surprising that James should be mentioned before Peter; but the reason perhaps is, that he presided over the church at Jerusalem. As to the word *pillar*, we know that, from the nature of things, those who excel in ability, prudence, or other gifts, possess greater authority. And even in the Church of God, he who enjoys a larger measure of grace ought, on that account, to receive the higher honor. It argues ingratitude, nay impiety, not to worship the Spirit of God wherever he appears in his gifts; and as a people cannot want a pastor, so the assemblies of pastors require a moderator. But in all cases let the rule be followed,

"He that is greatest among you shall be your servant"  
(Matthew 23:11.)

**10. That we should remember the poor.** It is evident that the brethren who were in Judea labored under extreme poverty: otherwise they would not have burdened other churches. That might arise both from the various calamities which befell the whole nation, and from the cruel rage of their own countrymen, by which they were every day stripped of their posses-

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45 "La vertu et efficace spiriluelle."

sions. It was proper that they should receive assistance from the Gentiles, who owed to them the inestimable benefit of the gospel. Paul says, that he was *forward to do*, that he faithfully performed, what the apostles had requested from him, and thus he takes away from his adversaries a pretext which they were desirous to seize.

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Galatians 2:11-16	
<b>11.</b> But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.	<b>11.</b> Quum autem venisset Petrus Antiochiam, palam ei restiti, eo quod reprehensione dignus esset.
<b>12.</b> For, before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.	<b>12.</b> Nam antequam venissent quidam ab Iacobo, una cum Gentibus sumebat cibum; quum autem venissent, subduxit ac separavit se ab illis, metuens eos qui erant ex Circumcisione.
<b>13.</b> And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.	<b>13.</b> Acts simulabant una cum illo caeteri quoque Iudeai, adeo ut Barnabas simul abduceretur in illorum simulationem.
<b>14.</b> But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before <i>them</i> all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?	<b>14.</b> Verum ubi vidissem, quod non recto pede incederent ad veritatem evangelii, dixi Petro coram omnibus: Si tu, quum sis Iudaeus, Gentiliter vivis, et non Iudaice; cur cogis Gentes Iudaizare?
<b>15.</b> We <i>who are</i> Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,	<b>15.</b> Nos natura Iudaei, et non ex Gentibus peccatores,
<b>16.</b> Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.	<b>16.</b> Cognito, non justificari hominem ex operibus legis, nisi per fidem Iesu Christi, et nos in Iesum Christum credidimus, ut justificaremur ex fide Christi, et non ex operibus legis; propterea quod non justificabitur ex operibus legis onmis care.

**11. When Peter was come.** Whoever will carefully examine all the circumstances, will, I trust, agree with me in thinking, that this happened before the apostles had decided that the Gentiles should receive no annoyance about ceremonial observances. ([Acts 15:28](#).) For Peter would have entertained no dread of offending James, or those sent by him, after that decision had been passed: but such was the dissimulation of Peter, that, in opposing it, Paul was driven to assert “the truth of the gospel.” At first he said, that the certainty of his gospel does not in any degree depend on Peter and the apostles, so as to stand or fall by their

judgment. Secondly, he said, that it had been approved by all without any exception or contradiction, and particularly by those who were universally admitted to hold the highest place. Now, as I have said, he goes further, and asserts that he had blamed Peter for leaning to the other side; and he proceeds to explain the cause of the dispute. It was no ordinary proof of the strength of his doctrine, that he not only obtained their cordial approbation, but firmly maintained it in a debate with Peter, and came off victorious. What reason could there now be for hesitating to receive it as certain and undoubted truth?

At the same time, this is a reply to another calumny, that Paul was but an ordinary disciple, far below the rank of an apostle: for the reproof which he administered was an evidence that the parties were on an equal footing. The highest, I acknowledge, are sometimes properly reproofed by the lowest, for this liberty on the part of inferiors towards their superiors is permitted by God; and so it does not follow, that he who reproves another must be his equal. But the nature of the reproof deserves notice. Paul did not simply reprove Peter, as a Christian might reprove a Christian, but he did it officially, as the phrase is; that is, in the exercise of the apostolic character which he sustained.

This is another thunderbolt which strikes the Papacy of Rome. It exposes the impudent pretensions of the Roman Antichrist, who boasts that he is not bound to assign a reason, and sets at defiance the judgment of the whole Church. Without rashness, without undue boldness, but in the exercise of the power granted him by God, this single individual chastises Peter, in the presence of the whole Church; and Peter submissively bows to the chastisement. Nay, the whole debate on those two points was nothing less than a manifest overthrow of that tyrannical primacy, which the Romanists foolishly enough allege to be founded on divine right. If they wish to have God appearing on their side, a new Bible must be manufactured; if they do not wish to have him for an open enemy, those two chapters of the Holy Scriptures must be expunged.

*Because he was worthy of blame.* The Greek participle, κατεγνωσμένος, signifies Blamed, so that the words run, “because he was blamed;” but I have no doubt whatever, that the word was intended to express, “one who deserves just blame.” Chrysostom makes the meaning to be, that others had previously indulged in complaint and accusation; but this is really trifling. It was customary with the Greeks to give to their participles the signification of nouns, which, every person must see, is applicable to this passage. This will enable us to perceive the absurdity of the interpretation given by Jerome and Chrysostom, who represent the whole transaction as a feigned debate, which the apostles had previously arranged to take place in presence of the people. They are not even supported by the phrase, “I withstood him *to the face*, κατὰ πρόσωπον, which means that “to the face,” or “being present,” Peter was chastised and struck dumb. The observation of Chrysostom, that, for the sake of avoiding scandal, they would have talked in private if they had any difference, is frivolous. The less important must be disregarded in comparison of the most dangerous of all scandals,

that the Church would be rent, that Christian liberty was in danger, that the doctrine of the grace of Christ was overthrown; and therefore this public offense must be publicly corrected.

The chief argument on which Jerome rests is excessively trifling. "Why should Paul," says he, "condemn in another what he takes praise for in himself? for he boasts that 'to the Jews he became as a Jew.'" ([1 Corinthians 9:20](#).) I reply, that what Peter did is totally different. Paul accommodated himself to the Jews no farther than was consistent with the doctrine of liberty; and therefore he refused to circumcise Titus, that the truth of the gospel might remain unimpaired. But Peter Judaized in such a manner as to "compel the Gentiles" to suffer bondage, and at the same time to create a prejudice against Paul's doctrine. He did not, therefore, observe the proper limit; for he was more desirous to please than to edify, and more solicitous to inquire what would gratify the Jews than what would be expedient for the whole body. Augustine is therefore right in asserting, that this was no previously arranged plan, but that Paul, out of Christian zeal, opposed the sinful and unseasonable dissimulation of Peter, because he saw that it would be injurious to the Church.

**12.** *For before that certain persons came.* The state of the case is here laid down. For the sake of the Jews, Peter had withdrawn himself from the Gentiles, in order to drive them from the communion of the Church, unless they would relinquish the liberty of the Gospel, and submit to the yoke of the Law. If Paul had been silent here, his whole doctrine fell; all the edification obtained by his ministry was ruined. It was therefore necessary that he should rise manfully, and fight with courage. This shews us how cautiously we ought to guard against giving way to the opinions of men, lest an immoderate desire to please, or an undue dread of giving offense, should turn us aside from the right path. If this might happen to Peter, how much more easily may it happen to us, if we are not duly careful!

**14.** *But when I saw that they walked not uprightly.* Some apply these words to the Gentiles, who, perplexed by Peter's example, were beginning to give way; but it is more natural to understand them as referring to Peter and Barnabas, and their followers. The proper road to the truth of the gospel was, to unite the Gentiles with the Jews in such a manner that the true doctrine should not be injured. But to bind the consciences of godly men by an obligation to keep the law, and to bury in silence the doctrine of liberty, was to purchase unity at an exorbitant price.

*The truth of the gospel* is here used, by Paul, in the same sense as before, and is contrasted with those disguises by which Peter and others concealed its beauty. In such a case, the struggle which Paul had to maintain must unquestionably have been serious. They were perfectly agreed about doctrine;<sup>46</sup> but since, laying doctrine out of view, Peter yielded too

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46 "From this portion of sacred history, we are not at liberty to conclude that either of those two apostles had fallen into error in faith; or that they differed from each other about doctrine. Unquestionably, so far as relates to doctrine, Peter was of the same opinion with Paul on this subject, that it was lawful for a Jew to live on terms of friendship with believing Gentiles. — The whole of this controversy related, not to the doctrine of

submissively to the Jews, he is accused of halting. There are some who apologize for Peter on another ground, because, being the apostle of the circumcision, he was bound to take a particular concern in the salvation of the Jews; while they at the same time admit that Paul did right in pleading the cause of the Gentiles. But it is foolish to defend what the Holy Spirit by the mouth of Paul has condemned. This was no affair of men, but involved the purity of the gospel, which was in danger of being contaminated by Jewish leaven.

*Before them all.* This example instructs us, that those who have sinned publicly must be publicly chastised, so far as concerns the Church. The intention is, that their sin may not, by remaining unpunished, form a dangerous example; and Paul elsewhere ([1 Timothy 5:20](#)) lays down this rule expressly, to be observed in the case of elders,

“Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear;”

because the station which they hold renders their example more pernicious. It was particularly advantageous, that the good cause, in which all had an interest, should be openly defended in presence of the people, that Paul might have a better opportunity of shewing that he did not shrink from the broad light of day.

*If thou, being a Jew.* Paul’s address to Peter consists of two parts. In the first, he expostulates with him for his injustice toward the Gentiles, in compelling them to keep the law, from the obligations of which he wished himself to be exempted. For, not to mention that every man is bound to keep the law which he lays down for others, his conduct was greatly aggravated by compelling the Gentiles to observe Jewish ceremonies, while he, being a Jew, left himself at liberty. The law was given to Jews, not to Gentiles; so that he argues from the less to the greater.

Next, it is argued, that, in a harsh and violent manner, he *compelled the Gentiles*, by withdrawing from their communion, unless they chose to submit to the yoke of the law; and thus imposed on them an unjust condition. And, indeed, the whole force of the reproof lies in this word, which neither Chrysostom nor Jerome has remarked. The use of ceremonies was free for the purposes of edification, provided that believers were not deprived of their liberty, or laid under any restraint from which the gospel sets them free.

**15. *We who are Jews by nature.*** Some, I am aware, think that this is stated in the form of an objection, (ἀνθυποφορὰ,) anticipating what might be urged on the other side, that the Jews possessed higher privileges; not that they would boast of exemption from the law, (for it would have been highly absurd, that they to whom the Law was given should make this their boast,) but that there was a propriety in retaining some points of distinction between them and the Gentiles. I do not entirely reject, and yet, as will afterwards appear, I do not altogether adopt this view. Some, again, consider that it is Paul himself who uses this argu-

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Christian liberty, but to the exercise of it at different times and places; and on this point the rules of prudence were better understood by Paul than by Peter.” — Witsius.



ment, "If you were to lay upon the Jews the burden of the law, it would be more reasonable, because it is theirs by inheritance." But neither do I approve of this view.

He is now proceeding to the second part of his speech, which commences with an anticipation. The Gentiles differed from them in this respect, that they were "unholy and profane," (1 Timothy 1:9;) while the Jews, being holy, so far as God had chosen them for his people, might contend for this superiority. Skilfully anticipating the objection, Paul turns it to the opposite conclusion. Since the Jews themselves, with all their advantages, were forced to betake themselves to the faith of Christ, how much more necessary was it that the Gentiles should look for salvation through faith? Paul's meaning therefore is: "We, who appear to excel others, — we, who, by means of the covenant, have always enjoyed the privilege of being nigh to God, (Deuteronomy 4:7,) have found no method of obtaining salvation, but by believing in Christ: why, then, should we prescribe another method to the Gentiles? For, if the law were necessary or advantageous for salvation to those who observed its enactments, it must have been most of all advantageous to us to whom it was given; but if we relinquished it, and betook ourselves to Christ, much less ought compliance with it to be urged upon the Gentiles."

The word *sinner*, signifies here, as in many other places, a "profane person," (Hebrews 12:16,) or one who is lost and alienated from God. Such were the Gentiles, who had no intercourse with God; while the Jews were, by adoption, the children of God, and therefore set apart to holiness. *By nature*, does not mean that they were naturally free from the corruption of the human race; for David, who was a descendant of Abraham, acknowledges,

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity,  
and in sin did my mother conceive me," (Psalm 51:5,)

but the corruption of nature, to which they were liable, had been met by the remedy of sanctifying grace. Now, as the promise made the blessing hereditary, so this benefit is called natural; just as, in the Epistle to the Romans, he says, that they were sprung from a "holy root." (Romans 11:16.)

When he says, *we are Jews by nature*, his meaning is, "We are born holy: not certainly by our own merit, but because God hath chosen us to be his people." Well, then, we who were by nature Jews, what have we done? "We have believed in Jesus Christ." What was the design of our believing? "That we might be justified by the faith of Christ." For what reason? Because we "know that a man is not justified by the works of the law." From the nature and effect of faith, he reasons that the Jews are in no degree justified by the law. For, as they who "go about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God," (Romans 10:3,)

so, on the contrary, they who believe in Christ, confess that they are sinners, and renounce justification by works. This involves the main question, or rather, in this single

proposition nearly the whole controversy is embodied. It is the more necessary to bestow some care on the examination of this passage.

The first thing to be noticed is, that we must seek justification by the faith of Christ, because we cannot be justified by works. Now, the question is, what is meant by *the works of the law*? The Papists, misled by Origen and Jerome, are of opinion, and lay it down as certain, that the dispute relates to shadows; and accordingly assert, that by “the works of the law” are meant ceremonies. As if Paul were not reasoning about the free justification which is bestowed on us by Christ. For they see no absurdity in maintaining that “no man is justified by the works of the law,” and yet that, by the merit of works, we are accounted righteous in the sight of God. In short, they hold that no mention is here made of the works of the moral law. But the context clearly proves that the moral law is also comprehended in these words; for almost everything which Paul afterwards advances belongs more properly to the moral than to the ceremonial law; and he is continually employed in contrasting the righteousness of the law with the free acceptance which God is pleased to bestow.

It is objected by our opponents, that the term “works” must have been employed without any addition, if Paul had not intended to limit it to a particular class. But I reply, there is the best of all reasons for this mode of expression; for, though a man were to excel all the angels in holiness, no reward is due to works, but on the footing of a Divine promise. Perfect obedience to the law is righteousness, and has a promise of eternal life annexed to it; but it derives this character from God, who declares that “they who have fulfilled them shall live.” ([Leviticus 18:5](#).) On this point we shall afterwards treat more fully in its own place.<sup>47</sup> Besides, the controversy with the Jews was about the law. Paul, therefore, chose rather to bring the matter to an issue, by meeting them at once on their own ground, than to adopt a more circuitous route, which might wear the aspect of evading the subject, or distrusting his cause. Accordingly he resolves to have a close debate about the law.

Their second objection is, that the whole question raised was about ceremonies, which we readily allow. Why then, say they, would the apostle pass suddenly from a particular department to the whole subject? This was the sole cause of the mistake into which Origen and Jerome were betrayed; for they did not think it natural that, while the false apostles were contending about ceremonies alone, Paul should take in a larger field. But they did not consider that the very reason for disputing so keenly was, that the doctrine led to more serious consequences than at first view appeared. It would not have given so much uneasiness to Paul that ceremonies should be observed, as that the confident hope and the glory of salvation should be made to rest on works; just as, in the dispute about forbidding flesh on certain days, we do not look so much to the importance of the prohibition itself, as to the snare which is laid for the consciences of men. Paul, therefore, does not wander from the

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47 See [p. 90](#).

subject, when he enters into a controversy about the whole law, although the arguments of the false apostles were confined wholly to ceremonies. Their object in pressing ceremonies was, that men might seek salvation by obedience to the law, which, they falsely maintained, was meritorious; and accordingly, Paul meets them, not with the moral law, but with the grace of Christ alone. And yet this extended discussion does not occupy the whole of the Epistle; he comes at length to the specific question of ceremonies: but as the most serious difficulty was, whether justification is to be obtained by works or by faith, it was proper that this should be first settled. As the Papists of the present day are uneasy when we extort from them the acknowledgment that men are justified by faith alone, they reluctantly admit that “the works of the law” include those of a moral nature. Many of them, however, by quoting Jerome’s gloss, imagine that they have made a good defense; but the context will show that the words relate also to the moral law.<sup>48</sup>

**16. *But by the faith of Jesus Christ.*** He does not merely state that ceremonies, or works of any kind, are insufficient without the assistance of faith, but meets their denial by a statement admitting of no exception, as if he had said, “Not by works, but by the Gift of Christ alone.” In any other point of view, the sentiment would have been trivial and foreign to the purpose; for the false apostles did not reject Christ nor faith, but demanded that ceremonies should be joined with them. If Paul had admitted this claim, they would have been perfectly at one, and he would have been under no necessity to agitate the church by this unpleasant debate. Let it therefore remain settled, that the proposition is so framed as to admit of no exception, “that we are justified in no other way than by faith,” or, “that we are not justified but by faith,” or, which amounts to the same thing, “that we are justified by faith alone.”

Hence it appears with what silly trifling the Papists of our day dispute with us about the word, as if it had been a word of our contrivance. But Paul was unacquainted with the theology of the Papists, who declare that a man is justified by faith, and yet make a part of justification to consist in works. Of such half-justification Paul knew nothing. For, when he instructs us that we are justified by faith, because we cannot be justified by works, he takes for granted what is true, that we cannot be justified through the righteousness of Christ, unless we are poor and destitute of a righteousness of our own.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, either

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48 “The Papists will readily acknowledge that we are justified by faith; but they add that it is in part. Now this gloss spoils all; for they are convinced that we cannot be righteous before God, unless it be accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ, and unless we rely on that salvation which he has procured for us. The Papists see this very well; and therefore, with a careless air, they will say, We are justified by faith. But by faith alone? No. On this point they give battle, and this is the chief article on which we differ from them.” — Calvin’s Sermons.

49 *Sinon en nous recognoissant despourveus et du tout desnuez de justice propre a nons.* “Unless by acknowledging that we are poor and utterly destitute of any righteousness of our own.”

nothing or all must be ascribed to faith or to works. As to the word justification, and the manner in which faith is the cause of it, we shall afterwards see.

*By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* He had already appealed to the consciences of Peter and others, and now confirms it more fully by affirming that such is the actual truth, that by the works of the law no mortal will obtain justification. This is the foundation of a freely bestowed righteousness, when we are stripped of a righteousness of our own. Besides, when he asserts that no mortal is justified by the righteousness of the law, the assertion amounts to this, that from such a mode of justification all mortals are excluded, and that none can possibly reach it.

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Galatians 2:17-21	
17. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, <i>is</i> therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.	17. Porro si quaerentes justificari in Christo, inventi sumus ipsi quoque peccatores, ergo Christus peccati minister est? absit.
18. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.	18. Nam si quae destruxi haec rursum aedifico, praevaricatorem me ipsum constituo.
19. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.	19. Ego enim per Legem Legi mortuus sum. Ut Deo viverem,
20. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.	20. Cum Christo sum crucifixus; vivo autem non amplius ego, sed vivit in me Christus; quod autem nunc vivo in carne, in fide vivo Filii Dei, qui dilexit me, et tradidit se ipsum pro me.
21. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness <i>come</i> by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.	21. Non abjicio gratiam Dei; si enim per Legem justitia, ergo Christus gratis mortuus est.

17. *If, while we seek to be justified.* He now returns to the Galatians. We must take care not to connect this verse with the preceding one, as if it were a part of the speech addressed to Peter: for what had Peter to do with this argument? It certainly has very little, if anything, to do with the speech; but let every one form his own opinion.

Chrysostom, and some other commentators, make the whole passage to be an affirmation, and interpret it thus: "If, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we are not yet perfectly righteous, but still unholy, and if, consequently, Christ is not sufficient for our righteousness, it follows that Christ is the minister of the doctrine which leaves men in sin:" supposing that, by this absurd proposition, Paul insinuates a charge of blasphemy against those who attribute a part of justification to the law. But as the expression of indignant abhorrence immediately follows, which Paul is never accustomed to employ but in answer to questions, I am rather inclined to think that the statement is made for the purpose of setting aside an absurd conclusion which his doctrine appeared to warrant. He puts a question, in his usual manner, into the mouth of his antagonists. "If, in consequence of the righteousness of faith, we, who are Jews and were 'sanctified from the womb,' ([Jeremiah 1:5](#) [Galatians 1:15](#)), are reckoned guilty and polluted, shall we say that Christ makes sin to be powerful in his own people, and that he is therefore the author of sin?"

This suspicion arose from his having said that Jews, by believing in Christ, renounce the righteousness of the law; for, while they are still at a distance from Christ, Jews, separated from the ordinary pollution of the Gentiles, appear to be in some respects exempted from the appellation of sinners. The grace of Christ places them on a level with the Gentiles; and the remedy, which is common to both, shews that both had labored under the same disease. This is the force of the particle also, — *we ourselves also*, — meaning not any description of men, but the Jews, who stood highest.

*Far from it.* He properly rejects that inference. Christ, who discovers the sin which lay concealed, is not therefore the minister of sin; as if, by depriving us of righteousness, he opened the gate to sin, or strengthened its dominion.<sup>50</sup> The Jews were mistaken in claiming any holiness for themselves apart from Christ, while they had none. Hence arose the complaint: “Did Christ come to take from us the righteousness of the law, to change saints into polluted men, to subject us to sin and guilt?” Paul denies it, and repels the blasphemy with abhorrence. Christ did not bring sin, but unveiled it; he did not take away righteousness, but stripped the Jews of a false disguise.

**18. *For if I build again.*** The reply consists of two parts. This is the first part, and informs us that the supposition now made is at variance with his whole doctrine, since he had preached the faith of Christ in such a manner as to connect with it the ruin and destruction of sin. For, as we are taught by John, that Christ came not to build up the kingdom of sin, but “that he might destroy the works of the devil,” (1 John 3:8,) so Paul declares, that, in preaching the gospel, he had restoreth true righteousness, in order that sin might be destroyed. It was, therefore, in the highest degree improbable, that the same person who destroyed sin should renew its power; and, by stating the absurdity, he repels the calumny.

**19. *For I through the law.*** Now follows the direct reply, that we must not ascribe to Christ that work which properly belongs to the law. It was not necessary that Christ should destroy the righteousness of the law, for the law itself slays its disciples. As if he had said, “You deceive wretched men by the false notion, that they must live by the law; and, under that pretext, you keep them in the law. And yet you bring it as a charge against the Gospel, that it annihilates the righteousness which we have by the law. But it is the law which forces us to die to itself; for it threatens our destruction, leaves us nothing but despair, and thus drives us away from trusting to the law.”

This passage will be better understood by comparing it with [the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans](#). There Paul describes beautifully, that no man lives to the law, but he to whom the law is dead, that is, has lost all power and efficacy; for, as soon as the law

50 Εἰ παράβασις τιῦτο νενόμισται ὅτι τὸν νόμον καταλιπόντες ἐν Χριστῷ ζητοῦμεν δικαιωθῶναι, ἡ αἰτία εἰς αὐτὸν Χριστὸν χωρήσει. “If this be reckoned an offence, that we have forsaken the law, and seek to be justified through Christ, the blame will fall on Christ himself.” — Theodoret.

begins to live in us, it inflicts a fatal wound by which we die, and at the same time breathes life into the man who is already dead to sin. Those who live to the law, therefore, have never felt the power of the law, or properly understood what the law means; for the law, when truly perceived, makes us die to itself, and it is from this source, and not from Christ, that sin proceeds.

*To die to the law*, may either mean that we renounce it, and are delivered from its dominion, so that we have no confidence in it, and, on the other hand, that it does not hold us captives under the yoke of slavery; or it may mean, that, as it allures us all to destruction, we find in it no life. The latter view appears to be preferable. It is not to Christ, he tells us, that it is owing that the law is more hurtful than beneficial; but the law carries within itself the curse which slays us. Hence it follows, that the death which is brought on by the law is truly deadly. With this is contrasted another kind of death, in the life-giving fellowship of the cross of Christ. He says, that he is crucified together with Christ, that he might live unto God. The ordinary punctuation of this passage obscures the true meaning. It is this: "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live to God." But the context will read more smoothly thus: "I through the law am dead to the law;" then, in a separate sentence, "That I might live to God, I am crucified with Christ."

*That I might live to God.* He shews that the kind of death, on which the false apostles seized as a ground of quarrel, is a proper object of desire; for he declares that we are dead to the law, not by any means that we may live to sin, but that we may live to God. *To live to God*, sometimes means to regulate our life according to his will, so as to study nothing else in our whole life but to gain his approbation; but here it means to live, if we may be allowed the expression, the life of God. In this way the various points of the contrast are preserved; for in whatever sense we are said to die to sin, in the same sense do we live to God. In short, Paul informs us that this death is not mortal, but is the cause of a better life; because God snatches us from the shipwreck of the law, and by his grace raises us up to another life. I say nothing of other interpretations; but this appears to be the apostle's real meaning.

**20. *I am crucified with Christ.*** This explains the manner in which we, who are dead to the law, live to God. Ingrafted into the death of Christ, we derive from it a secret energy, as the twig does from the root. Again, the handwriting of the law,

"which was contrary to us, Christ has nailed to his cross." ([Colossians 2:14](#).)

Being then crucified with him, we are freed from all the curse and guilt of the law. He who endeavors to set aside that deliverance makes void the cross of Christ. But let us remember, that we are delivered from the yoke of the law, only by becoming one with Christ, as the twig draws its sap from the root, only by growing into one nature.

*Nevertheless I live.* To the feelings of man, the word Death is always unpleasant. Having said that we are "crucified with Christ," he therefore adds, "that this makes us alive."

*Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.* This explains what he meant by “living to God.” He does not live by his own life, but is animated by the secret power of Christ; so that Christ may be said to live and grow in him; for, as the soul enlivens the body, so Christ imparts life to his members. It is a remarkable sentiment, that believers live out of themselves, that is, they live in Christ; which can only be accomplished by holding real and actual communication with him. Christ lives in us in two ways. The one life consists in governing us by his Spirit, and directing all our actions; the other, in making us partakers of his righteousness; so that, while we can do nothing of ourselves, we are accepted in the sight of God. The first relates to regeneration, the second to justification by free grace. This passage may be understood in the latter sense; but if it is thought better to apply it to both, I will cheerfully adopt that view.

*And the life which I now live in the flesh.* There is hardly a sentence here which has not been torn by a variety of interpretations. Some understand by the word *flesh*, the depravity of sinful nature; but Paul means by it simply the bodily life, and it is to this that the objection applies. “You live a bodily life; but while this corruptible body performs its functions, — while it is supported by eating and drinking, this is not the heavenly life of Christ. It is therefore an unreasonable paradox to assert, that, while you are openly living after the ordinary manner of men, your life is not your own.”

Paul replies, that it consists in faith; which intimates that it is a secret hidden from the senses of man. The life, therefore, which we attain by faith is not visible to the bodily eye, but is inwardly perceived in the conscience by the power of the Spirit; so that the bodily life does not prevent us from enjoying, by faith, a heavenly life.

“He hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” ([Ephesians 2:6.](#))

Again,

“You are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.” ([Ephesians 2:19.](#))

And again,

“Our conversation is in heaven.” ([Philippians 3:20.](#))

Paul’s writings are full of similar assertions, that, while we live in the world, we at the same time live in heaven; not only because our Head is there, but because, in virtue of union, we enjoy a life in common with him. ([John 14:23.](#))

*Who loved me.* This is added to express the power of faith; for it would immediately occur to any one, — whence does faith derive such power as to convey into our souls the life of Christ? He accordingly informs us, that the love of Christ, and his death, are the objects on which faith rests; for it is in this manner that the effect of faith must be judged. How comes it that we live by the faith of Christ? Because “he loved us, and gave himself for us.” The love of Christ led him to unite himself to us, and he completed the union by his death. By giving himself for us, he suffered in our own person; as, on the other hand, faith makes



us partakers of every thing which it finds in Christ. The mention of love is in accordance with the saying of the apostle John,

“Not that we loved God, but he anticipated us by his love.”

(1 John 4:10)

For if any merit of ours had moved him to redeem us, this reason would have been stated; but now Paul ascribes the whole to love: it is therefore of free grace. Let us observe the order: “He loved us, and gave himself for us.” As if he had said, “He had no other reason for dying, but because he loved us,” and that “when we were enemies,” (Romans 5:10,) as he argues in another Epistle.

*He gave himself.* No words can properly express what this means; for who can find language to declare the excellency of the Son of God? Yet he it is who gave himself as a price for our redemption. Atonement, cleansing, satisfaction, and all the benefits which we derive from the death of Christ, are here represented.<sup>51</sup> The words *for me*, are very emphatic. It will not be enough for any man to contemplate Christ as having died for the salvation of the world, unless he has experienced the consequences of this death, and is enabled to claim it as his own.<sup>52</sup>

**21.** *I do not reject.* There is great emphasis in this expression; for how dreadful is the ingratitude manifested in despising the grace of God, so invaluable in itself, and obtained at such a price! Yet this heinous offense is charged against the false apostles, who were not satisfied with having Christ alone, but introduced some other aids towards obtaining salvation. For, if we do not renounce all other hopes, and embrace Christ alone, we reject the grace of God. And what resource is left to the man, who “puts from him” the grace of God, “and judges himself unworthy of everlasting life?” (Acts 13:46.)

*Christ is dead in vain*<sup>53</sup> There would then have been no value in the death of Christ; or, Christ would have died without any reward; for the reward of his death is, that he has

51 Χριστός ἐστι πάντα ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ κρατῶν καὶ δεσπόζων· Καὶ τὸ μὲν ἡμέτερον θέλημα νεκρὸν ἐστὶ. Τὸ δὲ ἐκείνου ζῶ καὶ κυθερνᾷ τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν. “It is Christ who does and rules and governs all in you; and our will is dead, but his will lives and directs our life.” — Theophylact.

52 “Car cene seroit point assez de considerer que Christ est mort pour le salut du monde, si avec cela un chaeun n’applique particulierement a sa personne l’efficace et jouissance de ceste grace.” “For it would not be enough to consider that Christ died for the salvation of the world, unless each individual specially apply to his own person the efficacy and enjoyment of that grace.”

53 “Δωρεὰν ἀπέθανε does not mean ‘in vain,’ ‘uselessly,’ ‘ineffectually,’ but ‘without just cause;’ for if righteousness be by the law, there was no reason why he should die.” — Tittmann. Εἰ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν ὁ Χριστός εὐδὴλον ὅτι διὰ τὸ μὴ ἰσχύειν τὸν νόμον ἡμᾶς δικαιοῦν· εἰ δ’ ὁ νόμος δικαιοῖ περιττός ὁ τοῦ Χριστοῦ θάνατος. “For if Christ died, it is very evident that it was because the law was unable to justify us; and if the law justifies us, the death of Christ was superfluous.” — Chrysostom.

reconciled us to the Father by making an atonement for our sins. Hence it follows, that we are justified by his grace, and, therefore, not by works. The Papists explain this in reference to the ceremonial law; but who does not see that it applies to the whole law? If we could produce a righteousness of our own, then Christ has suffered in vain; for the intention of his sufferings was to procure it for us, and what need was there that a work which we could accomplish for ourselves should be obtained from another? If the death of Christ be our redemption, then we were captives; if it be satisfaction, we were debtors; if it be atonement, we were guilty; if it be cleansing, we were unclean. On the contrary, he who ascribes to works his sanctification, pardon, atonement, righteousness, or deliverance, makes void the death of Christ.

This argument, we shall perhaps be told, is of no weight against those who propose to unite the grace of Christ with works; which, it is universally admitted, was done by the false apostles. The two doctrines, it is alleged, stand together, that righteousness is by the law, and that we are redeemed by the death of Christ. True; supposing it were granted that a part of our righteousness is obtained by works, and a part comes from grace. But such theology, it may easily be proved, was unknown to Paul. His argument with his opponents is either conclusive or inconclusive. If any blasphemer shall dare to accuse him of bad reasoning, a powerful defense is at hand; for that justification in the sight of God of which he treats, is not what men may imagine to be sufficient, but what is absolutely perfect.

But we are not now called to plead in behalf of Paul against blasphemers, who venture to speak in reproachful language of the Holy Spirit himself. Our present business is with the Papists. They ridicule us, when we argue with Paul that, if righteousness come by works, Christ is dead in vain. They imagine it to be a beautiful reply, with which their sophists furnish them, that Christ merited for us the first grace, that is, the opportunity of meriting; and that the merit of his death concurs with the satisfactions of works for the daily pardon of sins. Let them ridicule Paul, whose language we quote. They must refute him before they can refute us. We know that he had to deal with men, who did not entirely reject the grace of Christ, but ascribed the half of salvation to works. In opposition to them he argues, that “if righteousness is by the law, then Christ is dead in vain;” and by so doing, he certainly does not allow to works one drop of righteousness. Between those men and the Papists there is no difference; and therefore, in refuting them, we are at liberty to employ Paul’s argument.

## CHAPTER 3

Galatians 3:1-5	
1. O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?	1. O stulti Galatae, quis vos fascinavit, ut non obediat veritati? quibus ante oculos Iesus Christus depictus est inter vos crucifixus.
2. This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?	2. Hoc solum volo discere a vobis: Ex operibus Legis Spiritum accepistis, an ex praedicatione fidei?
3. Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?	3. Ita stulti estis, ut, exorsi a Spiritu, nunc carne econsummemini?
4. Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.	4. Tanta passi estis frustra? si tamen etiam frustra.
5. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?	5. Qui ergo subministrat vobis Spiritum, et operatur in vobis virtutes; ex operibus legis, an ex praedicatione fidei id (facit)?

1. *O foolish Galatians.* An expostulation is here interwoven — I should rather say, inserted — amidst his doctrinal statements. Some will wonder that he did not delay it to the close of the Epistle, but the very serious nature of the errors which he has brought forward unquestionably roused him to a burst of passion. When we hear that the Son of God, with all his benefits, is rejected, that his death is esteemed as nothing, what pious mind would not break out into indignation? He therefore declares that those who allowed themselves to be involved in so heinous a crime must have been ἀνόητοι, that is, “disordered in mind.” He accuses them not only of having suffered themselves to be deceived, but of having been carried away by some sort of magical enchantment,<sup>54</sup> which is a still more serious charge. He insinuates that their fall partook more of madness than of folly.

Some think that Paul refers to the temper of the nation, that, being sprung from barbarians, it was more difficult to train them; but I rather think that he refers to the subject itself. It looks like something supernatural, that, after enjoying the gospel in such clearness, they

54 “Βασκαίνειν, ‘to enchant, to fascinate, to delude by magical charms,’ — rather an uncommon word, ἀπαξ λεγόμενον in the New Testament. It may amuse to notice the etymon of the word. Some grammarians have strangely thought it derived from φάσει καίνειν, ‘to kill with the eyes.’ Its true etymology obviously is, βάω, βάσκω, βασκάω βασκαίνω. βάσκω (equivalent to φάσκω), ‘to say, to speak,’ comes, in the form βασκαίνω, to signify κακολογεῖν, ‘to calumniate,’ then ‘to deceive,’ then ‘to deceive by magical arts.’” — Brown.

should be affected by the delusions of Satan. He does not merely say that they were “bewitched” and “disordered in mind,” because they did not obey the truth; but because, after having received instruction so clear, so full, so tender, and so powerful, they immediately fell away. Erasmus has chosen to interpret the words, “that ye should not *believe* the truth.” I am not quite prepared to set aside that rendering, but would prefer the word *obey*, because Paul does not charge them with having, from the outset, rejected the gospel, but with not having persevered in obedience.

*Before whose eyes.* This is intended, as I have already hinted, to express an aggravation; for, the better opportunities they had of knowing Christ, the more heinous was the criminality of forsaking him. Such, he tells them, was the clearness of his doctrine, that it was not naked doctrine, but the express, living image of Christ.<sup>55</sup> They had known Christ in such a manner, that they might be almost said to have seen him.

*Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth.* Augustine’s interpretation of the word προεγράφη, (“hath been set forth,”) is harsh, and inconsistent with Paul’s design. He makes it to signify that Christ was to be thrust out from possession. Others propose a different phrase, (*proscriptus*,) which, if used in the sense of “openly proclaimed,” would not be inapplicable. The Greeks, accordingly, borrow from this verb the word προγράμματα, to denote boards on which property intended to be sold was published, so as to be exposed to the view of all. But the participle, *painted*, is less ambiguous, and, in my own opinion, is exceedingly appropriate. To shew how energetic his preaching was, Paul first compares it to a picture, which exhibited to them, in a lively manner, the image of Christ.

But, not satisfied with this comparison, he adds, *Christ hath been crucified among you*, intimating that the actual sight of Christ’s death could not have affected them more powerfully than his own preaching. The view given by some, that the Galatians had “crucified to themselves ([Hebrews 6:6](#)) the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame;” that they had withdrawn from the purity of the gospel; or, at least, had lent their ear, and given their confidence, to impostors who crucified him, — appears to me overstrained. The meaning therefore is, that Paul’s doctrine had instructed them concerning Christ in such a manner as if he had been exhibited to them in a picture, nay, “crucified among them.” Such a representation could not have been made by any eloquence, or by “enticing words of man’s

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55 Καὶ μὴν οὐκ ἐν τῷ Γαλατῶν χώρῳ ἀλλ’ ἐν ἱεροσολύμοις ἐσταυρώθη. Πῶς οὖν φησιν, ἐν ὑμῖν; Τῶς πίστεως δεικνὺς τὴν ἰσχυρὰ καὶ τὰ πόρ’ ῥωθεν δυναμένης ὁρᾶν. Καὶ οὐκ εἶπεν, ἐσταυρώθη ἀλλὰ προεγράθη ἐσταυρωμένος δηλῶν ὅτι τοῖς τῶς πίστεως ὀφθαλμοῖς ἀκριβέστερον ἐθεώρησαν τῶν παρόντων ἐνίων καὶ τὰ γινόμενα θεωμένων “Yet it was not in the country of the Galatians, but in Jerusalem, that he was crucified. How, then, does he say, ‘Among you?’ To demonstrate the power of faith, which is able to see even distant objects, And he does not say, ‘Was crucified,’ but ‘Was painted crucified,’ shewing that by the eyes of faith they beheld more distinctly than some who were present and saw the transactions.” — Chrysostom.

wisdom,” (1 Corinthians 2:4,) had it not been accompanied by that power of the Spirit, of which Paul has treated largely in both the Epistles to the Corinthians.

Let those who would discharge aright the ministry of the gospel learn, not merely to speak and declaim, but to penetrate into the consciences of men, to make them see Christ crucified, and feel the shedding of his blood.<sup>56</sup> When the Church has painters such as these, she no longer needs the dead images of wood and stone, she no longer requires pictures; both of which, unquestionably, were first admitted to Christian temples when the pastors had become dumb and been converted into mere idols, or when they uttered a few words from the pulpit in such a cold and careless manner, that the power and efficacy of the ministry were utterly extinguished.

2. *This one I wish to learn from you.* He now proceeds to support his cause by additional arguments. The first is drawn from their experience, for he reminds them in what manner the gospel was introduced among themselves. When they heard the gospel, they received the Spirit. It was not to the law, therefore, but to faith, that they owed the reception of this benefit. This same argument is employed by Peter in the defense which he makes to his brethren for having baptized uncircumcised persons. (Acts 10:47.) Paul and Barnabas followed the same course in the debate which they maintained at Jerusalem on this subject. (Acts 15:2, 12.) There was therefore manifest ingratitude in not submitting to the doctrine, by means of which they had received the Holy Spirit. The opportunity which he gives them to reply is expressive not of doubt, but of greater confidence: for their convictions, founded on their own experience, forced them to acknowledge that it was true.

*Faith* is here put, by a figure of speech, for the gospel, which is elsewhere called “the law of faith,” (Romans 3:27,) because it exhibits to us the free grace of God in Christ, without any merit of works. *The Spirit* means here, I think, the grace of regeneration, which is common to all believers; though I have no objection to understand it as referring to the peculiar gifts by which the Lord, at that period, honored the preaching of the gospel.<sup>57</sup>

It may be objected, that the Spirit was not, in this respect, given to all. But, it was enough for Paul’s purpose, that the Galatians knew that the power of the Holy Spirit in his Church had accompanied Paul’s doctrine, and that believers were variously endowed with the gifts of the Spirit for general edification. It may likewise be objected, that those gifts were not infallible signs of adoption, and so do not apply to the present question. I reply, that it was

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56 “Display the sufferings of Christ like one who was an eye-witness of those sufferings, and hold up the blood, the precious blood of atonement, as issuing warm from the cross.” — Robert Hall.

57 “Did ye receive that Spirit which was the fullest evidence of your being justified, accepted, and received as the children and people of God, by conformity to the law of Moses, or by embracing the doctrine of the gospel? If by embracing the doctrine of the gospel, then you became justified by embracing that doctrine, and consequently need not conform to the law of Moses, in order to obtain justification.” — Chandler.

enough that the Lord had confirmed the doctrine of Paul by the visible gifts of his Spirit. A still simpler view of the case is, that they had been distinguished by the ordinary privilege of adoption, before those impostors had brought forward their additions. "In whom," says he to the Ephesians,

"ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." ([Ephesians 1:13](#).)

3. *Are ye so foolish?* Commentators are not agreed as to what he means by *the Spirit* and by *the flesh*. He alludes, in my opinion, to what he had said about the Spirit. As if he had said, "As the doctrine of the gospel brought to you the Holy Spirit, the commencement of your course was spiritual; but now ye have fallen into a worse condition, and may be said to have fallen from the Spirit into the flesh." The flesh denotes either outward and fading flyings, such as ceremonies are, particularly when they are separated from Christ; or it denotes dead and fading doctrine. There was a strange inconsistency between their splendid commencement and their future progress.

4. *Have ye suffered so many things?* This is another argument. Having suffered so many things in behalf of the gospel, would they now, in an instant, lose it all? Nay, he puts it in the way of reproach, if they were willing to lose the advantage of so many illustrious struggles which they had made for the faith. If the true faith had not been delivered to them by Paul, it was rash to suffer anything in defense of a bad cause; but they had experienced the presence of God amidst their persecutions. Accordingly, he charges the false apostles with ill-will in depriving the Galatians of such valuable ornaments. But to mitigate the severity of this complaint, he adds, *if it be yet in vain*; thus inspiring their minds with the expectation of something better, and rousing them to the exercise of repentance. For the intention of all chastisement is, not to drive men to despair, but to lead them to a better course.

5. *He therefore that ministereth.* He is not now speaking of the grace of regeneration, but of the other gifts of the Spirit; for a subject different from the preceding one is manifestly introduced. He warns them that all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, in which they excelled, are the fruits of the gospel, of that gospel which had been preached among them by his own lips. Their new teachers deprived them of those gifts when they left the gospel, and fled to another kind of doctrine. In proportion to the value which they attached to those gifts, to which the apostle here adds *miracles*, they ought the more carefully and resolutely to adhere to the gospel.

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Galatians 3:6-9	
6. Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.	6. Quemadmodum Abraham credidit Deo, et imputatum est illi in justitiam. ( <a href="#">Genesis 15:6</a> <a href="#">Romans 4:3</a> <a href="#">James 2:23</a> .)
7. Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.	7. Cognoscite ergo, quod qui ex fide sunt, ii sunt filii Abrahae.
8. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.	8. Scriptura autem, quia praevidebat, quod ex fide justificet Deus Gentes, ante evangelizavit Abrahae: In to benedicentur omnes Gentes. ( <a href="#">Genesis 22:18</a> .)
9. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.	9. Itaque qui ex fide sunt, benedicuntur cure fideli Abraham.

Having appealed to facts and experience, he now gives quotations from Scripture. And first, he brings forward the example of Abraham. Arguments drawn from examples are not always so conclusive, but this is one of the most powerful, because neither in the subject nor in the person is there any ground of exception. There is no variety of roads to righteousness, and so Abraham is called “the father of all them that believe,” ([Romans 4:11](#).) because he is a pattern adapted to all; nay, in his person has been laid down to us the universal rule for obtaining righteousness.

6. *Even as Abraham.* We must here supply some such phrase as *but rather*; for, having put a question, he resolved instantly to cut off every ground of hesitation. At least the phrase “*even as*,” (καθὼς,) refers only to the verse immediately preceding, to the “ministration of the Spirit and of miracles by the hearing of faith;” as if he had said, that, in the grace bestowed on them, a similarity might be found to the case of Abraham.

*Believed God.* By this quotation he proves both here, and in the 4th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, that men are justified by faith, because the faith of Abraham *was accounted to him, for righteousness.* ([Romans 4:3](#).) We must here inquire briefly, first, what Paul intends by *faith*; secondly, what is *righteousness*; and thirdly, why faith is represented to be a cause of justification. Faith does not mean any kind of conviction which men may have of the truth of God; for though Cain had a hundred times exercised faith in God when denouncing punishment against him, this had nothing to do with obtaining righteousness. Abraham was justified by believing, because, when he received from God a promise of fatherly kindness, he embraced it as certain. Faith therefore has a relation and respect to such a divine promise as may enable men to place their trust and confidence in God.



As to the word *righteousness*, we must attend to the phraseology of Moses. When he says, that

“he believed in the Lord,  
and he counted it to him for righteousness,” ([Genesis 15:6](#).)

he intimates that that person is righteous who is reckoned as such in the sight of God. Now, since men have not righteousness dwelling within themselves, they obtain this by imputation; because God holds their faith as accounted for righteousness. We are therefore said to be “justified by faith,” ([Romans 3:28](#); [5:1](#).) not because faith infuses into us a habit or quality, but because we are accepted by God.

But why does faith receive such honor as to be entitled a cause of our justification? First, we must observe, that it is merely an instrumental cause; for, strictly speaking, our righteousness is nothing else than God’s free acceptance of us, on which our salvation is founded. But as the Lord testifies his love and grace in the gospel, by offering to us that righteousness of which I have spoken, so we receive it by faith. And thus, when we ascribe to faith a man’s justification, we are not treating of the principal cause, but merely pointing out the way in which men arrive at true righteousness. For this righteousness is not a quality which exists in men, but is the mere gift of God, and is enjoyed by faith only; and not even as a reward justly due to faith, but because we receive by faith what God freely gives. All such expressions as the following are of similar import: We are “justified freely by his grace.” ([Romans 3:24](#).) Christ is our righteousness. The mercy of God is the cause of our righteousness. By the death and resurrection of Christ, righteousness has been procured for us. Righteousness is bestowed on us through the gospel. We obtain righteousness by faith.

Hence appears the ridiculousness of the blunder of attempting to reconcile the two propositions, that we are justified by faith, and that we are justified at the same time by works; for he who is “just by faith” ([Habakkuk 2:4](#) [Hebrews 10:38](#)) is poor and destitute of personal righteousness, and relies on the grace of God alone. And this is the reason why Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, concludes that Abraham, having obtained righteousness by faith, had no right to glory before God. ([Romans 4:2](#).) For it is not said that faith was imputed to him for a part of righteousness, but simply for righteousness; so that his faith was truly his righteousness. Besides, faith looks at nothing but the mercy of God, and a dead and risen Christ. All merit of works is thus excluded from being the cause of justification, when the whole is ascribed to faith. For faith, — so far as it embraces the undeserved goodness of God, Christ with all his benefits, the testimony of our adoption which is contained in the gospel, — is universally contrasted with the law, with the merit of works, and with human excellence. The notion of the sophists, that it is contrasted with ceremonies alone, will presently be disproved, with little difficulty, from the context. Let us therefore remember, that those who are righteous by faith, are righteous out of themselves, that is, in Christ.

Hence, too, we obtain a refutation of the idle cavilling of certain persons who evade Paul's reasoning. Moses they tell us, gives the name of righteousness to goodness; and so means nothing more than that Abraham was reckoned a good man, because he believed God. Giddy minds of this description, raised up in our time by Satan, endeavor, by indirect slanders, to undermine the certainty of Scripture. Paul knew that Moses was not there giving lessons to boys in grammar, but was speaking of a decision which God had pronounced, and very properly viewed the word righteousness in a theological sense. For it is not in that sense in which goodness is mentioned with approbation among men, that we are accounted righteous in the sight of God, but only where we render perfect obedience to the law. Righteousness is contrasted with the transgression of the law, even in its smallest point; and because we have it not from ourselves, it is freely given to us by God.

But here the Jews object that Paul has completely tortured the words of Moses to suit his own purpose; for Moses does not here treat of Christ, or of eternal life, but only mentions an earthly inheritance. The Papists are not very different from the Jews; for, though they do not venture to inveigh against Paul, they entirely evade his meaning. Paul, we reply, takes for granted, what Christians hold to be a first principle, that whatever promises the Lord made to Abraham were appendages of that first promise,

"I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

([Genesis 15:1](#).)

When Abraham received the promise,

"In multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore" ([Genesis 22:17](#)),

he did not limit his view to that word, but included it in the grace of adoption as a part of the whole, and, in the same manner, every other promise was viewed by him as a testimony of God's fatherly kindness, which tended to strengthen his hope of salvation. Unbelievers differ from the children of God in this respect, that, while they enjoy in common with them the bounties of Providence, they devour them like cattle, and look no higher. The children of God, on the other hand, knowing that all their blessings have been sanctified by the promises, acknowledge God in them as their Father. They are often directed, in this way, to the hope of eternal life; for they begin with the faith of their adoption, which is the foundation of the whole. Abraham was not justified merely because he believed that God would "multiply his seed," ([Genesis 22:17](#)), but because he embraced the grace of God, trusting to the promised Mediator, in whom, as Paul elsewhere declares, "all the promises of God are yea and amen." ([2 Corinthians 1:20](#).)

7. *Know ye therefore*, or, *ye know*; for both readings are equally agreeable to the Greek termination γινώσκετε. But it matters little which is preferred, for the meaning is the same,

only that the old translation, (*know ye*), which I have followed, is more energetic.<sup>58</sup> He says that those “are of faith,” who have relinquished all confidence in works, and rely on the promise of God alone. It is on the authority of Paul himself that we give this interpretation; for in the Epistle to the Romans he thus writes:

“To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.” ([Romans 4:4,5](#).)

To be *of faith*, therefore, is to rest their righteousness and hope of salvation on the mercy of God. That such are the children of God he concludes from the preceding statement; for if Abraham was justified by faith those who wish to be his children must likewise abide firmly by faith. He has omitted one remark, which will be readily supplied, that there is no place in the church for any man who is not a son of Abraham.

**8. *The scripture foreseeing.*** What he had said in a general manner is now applied expressly to the Gentiles; for the calling of the Gentiles was a new and extraordinary occurrence. Doubts existed as to the manner in which they should be called. Some thought that they were required “to be circumcised and to keep the law,” ([Acts 15:24](#)), and that otherwise they were shut out from having a share in the covenant. But Paul shews, on the other hand, that by faith they arrive at the blessing, and by faith they must be “in grafted” ([Romans 11:17, 24](#)), into the family of Abraham. How does he prove this? Because it is said, *In thee shall all nations be blessed*. These words unquestionably recall that all must be blessed in the same manner as Abraham; for he is the model, nay, the rule, to be universally observed. Now, he obtained the blessing by faith, and in the same manner must it be obtained by all.

**9. *Faithful Abraham.*** This expression is very emphatic. They *are blessed*, not with Abraham as circumcised, nor as entitled to boast of the works of the law, nor as a Hebrew, nor as relying on his own excellence, but with Abraham, who by faith alone obtained the blessing; for no personal quality is here taken into the account, but faith alone. The word Blessing is variously employed in Scripture: but here it signifies Adoption into the inheritance of eternal life.

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58 “The scope of the passage shews that γινώσκετε is not the Indicative, but the Imperative. Paul does not presuppose that the Galatians acknowledge this principle; he is exerting himself to convince them of it.” — Brown.

Galatians 3:10-14	
<b>10.</b> For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed <i>is</i> every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.	<b>10.</b> Quictrunque enim ex operibus Legis sunt, sub maledictione sunt. Scripture est enim ( <a href="#">Deuteronomy 27:26</a> ): Maledictus omnis, qui non permanet in omnibus, quae scripta sunt in libro Legis, ut facial ea.
<b>11.</b> But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, <i>it is</i> evident: for, The just shall live by faith.	<b>11.</b> Quod autem in Lege nemo justificetur apud Deum, patet, quia justus ex fide rivet. ( <a href="#">Habakkuk 2:4</a> <a href="#">Romans 1:17</a> <a href="#">Hebrews 10:38</a> .)
<b>12.</b> And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.	<b>12.</b> Lex autem non est ex fide, sed, Qui fecerit haec homo, rivet in ipsis. ( <a href="#">Leviticus 18:5</a> .)
<b>13.</b> Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed <i>is</i> every one that hangeth on a tree:	<b>13.</b> Christus nos redemit a maledictione Legis, factus pro nobis maledictio: (scriptum est enim, maledictus omnis qui pependerit in ligno, ( <a href="#">Deuteronomy 21:23</a> ),)
<b>14.</b> That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.	<b>14.</b> Ut in Gentes benedictio Abrabae perveniat per Christum Iesum; quo promissionem Spiritus accipiamus per fidem.

**10.** *For as many as are of the works of the law.* The argument is drawn from the contradictory nature of the two schemes; for the same fountain does not yield both hot and cold. The law holds all living men under its curse; and from the law, therefore, it is in vain to expect a blessing. They are declared to be *of the works of the law* who place their trust for salvation in those works; for such modes of expression must always be interpreted by the state of the question. Now, we know that the controversy here relates to righteousness. All who wish to be justified by the works of the law are declared to be liable to the curse. But how does he prove this? The sentence of the law is, that all who have transgressed any part of the law are cursed. Let us now see if there be any living man who fulfils the law. But no such person, it is evident, has been, or ever can be found. All to a man are here condemned. The minor and the conclusion are wanting, for the entire syllogism would run thus: "Whoever has come short in any part of the law is cursed; all are held chargeable with this guilt; therefore all are cursed." This argument of Paul would not stand, if we had sufficient strength to fulfill the law; for there would then be a fatal objection to the minor proposition. Either Paul reasons badly, or it is impossible for men to fulfill the law.

An antagonist might now object: "I admit that all transgressors are accursed; what then? Men will be found who keep the law; for they are free to choose good or evil." But Paul places here beyond controversy, what the Papists at this day hold to be a detestable doctrine, that men are destitute of strength to keep the law. And so he concludes boldly that all are cursed, because all have been commanded to keep the law perfectly; which implies that in the present corruption of our nature the power of keeping it perfectly is wanting. Hence we conclude that the curse which the law pronounces, though, in the phrase of logicians, it is *accidental*, is here perpetual and inseparable from its nature. The blessing which it offers to us is excluded by our depravity, so that the curse alone remains.

**11.** *But that no man, is justified by the law.* He again argues from a comparison of contradictory schemes. "If we are justified by faith, it is not by the law: but we are justified by faith therefore it is not by the law." The minor is proved by a passage from Habakkuk, which is also quoted in the Epistle to the Romans. ([Habakkuk 2:4](#); [Romans 1:17](#).) The major is proved by the difference in the methods of justification. The law justifies him who fulfils all its precepts, while faith justifies those who are destitute of the merit of works, and who rely on Christ alone. To be justified by our own merit, and to be justified by the grace of another, are two schemes which cannot be reconciled: one of them must be overturned by the other. Such is the amount of the argument: let us now attend to the separate clauses.

*The just shall live by faith.* As we had occasion to expound this passage where it occurs in the Epistle to the Romans, it will be unnecessary to repeat the exposition of it here. The prophet evidently describes a proud confidence in the flesh as contrasted with true faith. He declares, that "the just shall live;" by which he means, not that they are supported for a short period, and liable to be overwhelmed by an approaching storm; but that they shall continue to live, and that, even amidst the most imminent danger, their life shall be preserved. There is therefore no weight in the scornful reproaches of our adversaries, who allege that the prophet there employs the word Faith in a wider acceptation than Paul does in this passage. By Faith he evidently means the exercise of a calm, steady conscience, relying on God alone; so that Paul's quotation is properly applied.

**12.** *And the law is not of faith.* The law evidently is not contrary to faith; otherwise God would be unlike himself; but we must return to a principle already noticed, that Paul's language is modified by the present aspect of the case. The contradiction between the law and faith lies in the matter of justification. You will more easily unite fire and water, than reconcile these two statements, that men are justified by faith, and that they are justified by the law. "The law is not of faith;" that is, it has a method of justifying a man which is wholly at variance with faith.

*But the man who shall do these things.* The difference lies in this, that man, when he fulfils the law, is reckoned righteous by a legal righteousness, which he proves by a quotation

from Moses. ([Leviticus 18:5](#).) Now, what is the righteousness of faith? He defines it in the Epistle to the Romans,

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” ([Romans 10:9](#).)

And yet it does not follow from this, that faith is inactive, or that it sets believers free from good works. For the present question is not, whether believers ought to keep the law as far as they can, (which is beyond all doubt,) but whether they can obtain righteousness by works, which is impossible. But since God promises life to the doers of the law, why does Paul affirm that they are not righteous? The reply to this objection is easy. There are none righteous by the works of the law, because there are none who do those works. We admit that the doers of the law, if there were any such, are righteous; but since that is a conditional agreement, all are excluded from life, because no man performs that righteousness which he ought. We must bear in memory what I have already stated, that to do the law is not to obey it in part, but to fulfill everything which belongs to righteousness; and all are at the greatest distance from such perfection.

**13.** *Christ hath redeemed us.* The apostle had made all who are under the law subject to the curse; from which arose this great difficulty, that the Jews could not free themselves from the curse of the law. Having stated this difficulty, he meets it, by shewing that Christ hath made us free, which still farther aids his purpose. If we are saved, because we have been freed from the curse of the law, then righteousness is not by the law. He next points out the manner in which we are made free.

*It is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.* Now, Christ hung upon the cross, therefore he fell under that curse. But it is certain that he did not suffer that punishment on his own account. It follows, therefore, either that he was crucified in vain, or that our curse was laid upon him, in order that we might be delivered from it. Now, he does not say that Christ was cursed, but, which is still more, that he was *a curse*, — intimating, that the curse “of all men”<sup>59</sup> was laid upon him” ([Isaiah 53:6](#).) If any man think this language harsh, let him be ashamed of the cross of Christ, in the confession of which we glory. It was not unknown to God what death his own Son would die, when he pronounced the law, “He that is hanged is accursed of God.” ([Deuteronomy 21:23](#).)

But how does it happen, it will be asked, that a beloved Son is cursed by his Father? We reply, there are two things which must be considered, not only in the person of Christ, but even in his human nature. The one is, that he was the unspotted Lamb of God, full of blessing and of grace; the other is, that he placed himself in our room, and thus became a sinner, and subject to the curse, not in himself indeed, but in us, yet in such a manner, that

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59 “La malediction de tous hommes.”

it became necessary for him to occupy our place. He could not cease to be the object of his Father's love, and yet he endured his wrath. For how could he reconcile the Father to us, if he had incurred his hatred and displeasure? We conclude, that he "did always those things that pleased" ([John 8:29](#)) his Father. Again, how would he have freed us from the wrath of God, if he had not transferred it from us to himself? Thus, "he was wounded for our transgressions," ([Isaiah 53:5](#)), and had to deal with God as an angry judge. This is the foolishness of the cross, ([1 Corinthians 1:18](#)), and the admiration of angels, ([1 Peter 1:12](#)), which not only exceeds, but swallows up, all the wisdom of the world.

**14.** *That the blessing of Abraham.* Having said that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law" he now applies that statement more closely to his purpose. The promised blessing of Abraham is founded on this, and flows from it to the Gentiles. If the Jews must be delivered from the law, in order to become the heirs of Abraham, what shall hinder the Gentiles from obtaining the same benefit? And if that blessing is found in Christ alone, it is faith in Christ which alone brings it into our possession.

*The promise of the Spirit* appears to me to mean, agreeably to a Hebrew idiom, a spiritual promise. Although that promise relates to the New Testament, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh," ([Joel 2:28](#)), yet, in this passage, Paul refers to another subject. The spirit is here contrasted with all outward things, not with ceremonies merely, but with lineal descent, so as to leave no room for diversity of rank. From the nature of the promise, he proves that Jews differ nothing from Gentiles; because, if it is spiritual, it is received by faith alone.

Galatians 3:15-18	
<b>15.</b> Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though <i>it be</i> but a man's covenant, yet <i>if it be</i> confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.	<b>15.</b> Fratres, (secundum hominem dico) Hominis licet pactum, tamen si sit comprobatum, nemo rejicit aut addit aliquid.
<b>16.</b> Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.	<b>16.</b> Porro Abrahae dictae sunt promissiones, et semini ejus. Non dicit, Et seminibus, tanquam Deuteronomy multis, sed tanquam Deuteronomy uno, Et semini tuo, qui est Christus.
<b>17.</b> And this I say, <i>that</i> the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.	<b>17.</b> Hoc autem dico: pactum ante comprobatum a Deo erga Christum, Lex, quae post annos quadringentos et triginta coepit, non facit irritum, ut abroget Promissionem.
<b>18.</b> For if the inheritance <i>be</i> of the law, <i>it is</i> no more of promise: but God gave <i>it</i> to Abraham by promise.	<b>18.</b> Nam si ex Lege haereditas, non jam ex Promissione; atqui Abrahae per Promissionem donavit Deus.

**15.** *I speak after the manner of men.* By this expression he intended to put them to the blush. It is highly disgraceful and base that the testimony of God should have less weight with us than that of a mortal man. In demanding that the sacred covenant of God shall receive not less deference than is commonly yielded to ordinary human transactions, he does not place God on a level with men. The immense distance between God and men is still left for their consideration.

*Though it be but a man's covenant.* This is an argument from the less to the greater. Human contracts are admitted on all hands to be binding: how much more what God has established? The Greek word διαθήκη, here used, signifies more frequently, what the Latin versions here render it, (*testamentum*), a *testament*; but sometimes too, a *covenant*, though in this latter sense the plural number is more generally employed. It is of little importance to the present passage, whether you explain it *covenant* or *testament*. The case is different with the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the apostle unquestionably alludes to testaments, ([Hebrews 9:16, 17](#);) but here I prefer to take it simply for the covenant which God made. The analogy from which the apostle argues, would not apply so strictly to a testament as to a covenant. The apostle appears to reason from human bargains to that solemn covenant



into which God entered with Abraham. If human bargains be so firm that they can receive no addition, how much more must this covenant remain inviolable?

**16. Now to Abraham, and his seed.** Before pursuing his argument, he introduces an observation about the substance of the covenant, that it rests on Christ alone. But if Christ be the foundation of the bargain, it follows that it is of free grace; and this too is the meaning of the word *promise*. As the law has respect to men and to their works, so the promise has respect to the grace of God and to faith.

*He saith not, And to seeds.* To prove that in this place God speaks of Christ, he calls attention to the singular number as denoting some particular seed. I have often been astonished that Christians, when they saw this passage so perversely tortured by the Jews, did not make a more determined resistance; for all pass it slightly as if it were an undisputed territory. And yet there is much plausibility in their objection. Since the word *seed* is a collective noun, Paul appears to reason inconclusively, when he contends that a single individual is denoted by this word, under which all the descendants of Abraham are comprehended in a passage already quoted, “In multiplying I will multiply thy seed, ~~וְזָרַעְךָ~~ (*zerang*,) or ~~וְזָרְנָחָךָ~~ (*zargnacha*,) as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore.” ([Genesis 22:17](#).) Having, as they imagine, detected the fallacy of the argument, they treat us with haughty triumph.

I am the more surprised that our own writers should have been silent on this head, as we have abundant means of repelling their slander. Among Abraham’s own sons a division began, for one of the sons was cut off from the family. “In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” ([Genesis 21:12](#).) Consequently Ishmael is not included in the reckoning. Let us come a step lower. Do the Jews allow that the posterity of Esau are the blessed seed? nay, it will be maintained that their father, though the first-born, was struck off. And how many nations have sprung from the stock of Abraham who have no share in this “calling?” The twelve patriarchs, at length, formed twelve heads, not because they were descended from the line of Abraham, but because they had been appointed by a particular election of God. Since the ten tribes were carried away, ([Hosa 9:17](#),) how many thousands have so degenerated that they no longer hold a name among the seed of Abraham? Lastly, a trial was made of the tribe of Judah, that the real succession to the blessing might be transmitted among a small people. And this had been predicted by Isaiah,

“Though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea,  
yet a remnant of them shall return.” ([Isaiah 10:22](#).)

Hitherto I have said nothing which the Jews themselves do not acknowledge. Let them answer me then; how comes it that the thirteen tribes sprung from the twelve patriarchs were the seed of Abraham, in preference to Ishmaelites and Edomites? Why do they exclusively glory in that name, and set aside the others as a spurious seed? They will, no doubt, boast that they have obtained it by their own merit; but Scripture, on the contrary, asserts

that all depends on the calling of God; for we must constantly return to the privilege conveyed in these words, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." ([Genesis 21:12](#).) The uninterrupted succession to this privilege must have been in force until Christ; for, in the person of David, the Lord afterwards brought back by recovery, as we might say, the promise which had been made to Abraham. In proving, therefore, that this prediction applies to a single individual, Paul does not make his argument rest on the use of the singular number. He merely shews that the word *seed* must denote one who was not only descended from Abraham according to the flesh, but had been likewise appointed for this purpose by the calling of God. If the Jews deny this, they will only make themselves ridiculous by their obstinacy.

But as Paul likewise argues from these words, that a covenant had been made in Christ, or to Christ, let us inquire into the force of that expression,

"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

([Genesis 22:18](#).)

The Jews taunt the apostle with making a comparison, as if the seed of Abraham were to be quoted as an example in all disastrous omens and prayers; while, on the contrary, to curse in Sodom or Israel is to employ the name of Sodom or Israel in forms of cursing. This, I own, is sometimes the case, but not always; for to bless one's self in God has quite a different meaning, as the Jews themselves admit. Since, therefore, the phrase is ambiguous, denoting sometimes a cause and sometimes a comparison, wherever, it occurs, it must be explained by the context. We have ascertained, then, that we are all cursed by nature, and that the blessing of Abraham has been promised to all nations. Do all indiscriminately reach it? Certainly not, but those only who are "gathered" ([Isaiah 66:8](#)) to the Messiah; for when, under His government and direction, they are collected into one body, they then become one people. Whoever then, laying disputing aside, shall inquire into the truth, will readily acknowledge that the words here signify not a mere comparison but a cause; and hence it follows that Paul had good ground for saying, that the covenant was made in Christ, or in reference to Christ.

17. *The law which was four hundred and thirty years after.* If we listen to Origen and Jerome and all the Papists, there will be little difficulty in refuting this argument. Paul reasons thus: "A promise was given to Abraham four hundred and thirty years before the publication of the law; therefore the law which came after could not disannul the promise; and hence he concludes that ceremonies are not necessary." But it may be objected, the sacraments were given in order to preserve the faith, and why should Paul separate them from the promise? He does so separate them, and proceeds to argue on the matter. The ceremonies themselves are not so much considered by him as something higher, — the effect of justification which was attributed to them by false apostles, and the obligation on the conscience. From ceremonies, accordingly, he takes occasion to discuss the whole subject of faith and works. If the point in dispute had no connection with obtaining righteousness, with the

merit of works, or with ensnaring the conscience, ceremonies would be quite consistent with the promise.

What, then, is meant by this *disannulling* of the promise, against which the apostle contends? The impostors denied that salvation is freely promised to men, and received by faith, and, as we shall presently see, urged the necessity of works in order to merit salvation. I return to Paul's own language. "The law," he says, "is later than the promise, and therefore does not revoke it; for a covenant once sanctioned must remain perpetually binding." I again repeat, if you do not understand that the promise is free, there will be no force in the statement; for the law and the promise are not at variance but on this single point, that the law justifies a man by the merit of works, and the promise bestows righteousness freely. This is made abundantly clear when he calls it a *covenant* founded on Christ.

But here we shall have the Papists to oppose us, for they will find a ready method of evading this argument. "We do not require," they will say, "that the old ceremonies shall be any longer binding; let them be laid out of the question; nevertheless a man is justified by the moral law. For this law, which is as old as the creation of man, went before God's covenant with Abraham; so that Paul's reasoning is either frivolous, or it holds against ceremonies alone." I answer, Paul took into account what was certainly true, that, except by a covenant with God, no reward is due to works. Admitting, then, that the law justifies, yet before the law men could not merit salvation by works, because there was no covenant. All that I am now affirming is granted by the scholastic theologians: for they maintain that works are meritorious of salvation, not by their intrinsic worth, but by the acceptance of God, (to use their own phrase,) and on the ground of a covenant. Consequently, where no divine covenant, no declaration of acceptance is found, — no works will be available for justification: so that Paul's argument is perfectly conclusive. He tells us that God made two covenants with men; one through Abraham, and another through Moses. The former, being founded on Christ, was free; and therefore the law, which came after, could not enable men to obtain salvation otherwise than by grace, for then, "it would make the promise of none effect." That this is the meaning appears clearly from what immediately follows.

**18.** *If the inheritance be of the law.* His opponents might still reply, that nothing was farther from their intention than to weaken or disannul God's covenant. To deprive them of every kind of subterfuge, he comes forward with the assertion, that salvation by the law, and salvation by the promise of God, are wholly inconsistent with each other. Who will dare to explain this as applying to ceremonies alone, while Paul comprehends under it whatever interferes with a free promise? Beyond all doubt, he excludes works of every description. "For," says he to the Romans,

"if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect." ([Romans 4:14.](#))

Why so? Because salvation would be suspended on the condition of satisfying the law; and so he immediately concludes:

“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, in order that the promise might be sure to all the seed.” ([Romans 4:16](#).)

Let us carefully remember the reason why, in comparing the promise with the law, the establishment of the one overturns the other. The reason is, that the promise has respect to faith, and the law to works. Faith receives what is freely given, but to works a reward is paid. And he immediately adds, *God gave it to Abraham*, not by requiring some sort of compensation on his part, but by free promise; for if you view it as conditional, the word *gave*, (κεχάρισται,) would be utterly inapplicable.

Galatians 3:19-22	
19. Wherefore then <i>serveth</i> the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; <i>and it was</i> ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.	19. Quid igitur Lex? transgressionum causa adjuncta fuit, donee veniret semen, cui promissum fuerat, ordinata per angelos in manu mediatoris.
20. Now a mediator is not <i>a mediator</i> of one, but God is one.	20. Porro mediator unius non est; Deus autem unus est.
21. <i>Is</i> the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.	21. Lexne igitur adversus promissiones Dei? absit; nam si data esset Lex, quae posset vivificare, vere ex Lege esset justitia.
22. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.	22. Sed conclusit Scriptura omnia sub peccatum, ut promissio ex fide Iesu Christi daretur credentibus.

When we are told that the law has no influence in obtaining justification, various suggestions immediately arise, that it must be either useless, or opposed to God's covenant, or something of that sort. Nay, it might occur, why should we not say of the law, what Jeremiah says of the New Testament, ([Jeremiah 31:31](#),) that it was given at a later period, in order to supply the weakness of the former doctrine? Objections of this kind must be answered, if Paul wished to satisfy the Galatians. First, then, he inquires, — what is the use of the law? Having come after the promise, it appears to have been intended to supply its defects; and there was room at least for doubting, whether the promise would have been effectual, if it had not been aided by the law. Let it be observed, that Paul does not speak of the moral law only, but of everything connected with the office held by Moses. That office, which was peculiar to Moses, consisted in laying down a rule of life and ceremonies to be observed in the worship of God, and in afterwards adding promises and threatenings. Many promises, no doubt, relating to the free mercy of God and to Christ, are to be found in his writings; and these promises belong to faith. But this must be viewed as accidental, and altogether foreign to the inquiry, so far as a comparison is made between the law and the doctrine of grace. Let it be remembered, that the amount of the question is this: When a promise had been made, why did Moses afterwards add that new condition, "If a man do, he shall live in them;" and, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them?" ([Leviticus 18:5](#); [Deuteronomy 27:26](#).) Was it to produce something better and more perfect?

19. *Because of transgressions.* The law has manifold uses, but Paul confines himself to that which bears on his present subject. He did not propose to inquire in how many ways the law is of advantage to men. It is necessary to put readers on their guard on this point; for very many, I find, have fallen into the mistake of acknowledging no other advantage belonging to the law, but what is expressed in this passage. Paul himself elsewhere speaks of the precepts of the law as profitable for doctrine and exhortations. (2 Timothy 3:16.) The definition here given of the use of the law is not complete, and those who refuse to make any other acknowledgment in favor of the law do wrong. Now, what is the import of the phrase, *because of transgressions*? It agrees with the saying of philosophers, that “The law was made for restraining evil-doers,” and with the old proverb, “From bad manners have sprung good laws.” But Paul’s meaning is more extensive than the words may seem to convey. He means that the law was published in order to make known transgressions, and in this way to compel men to acknowledge their guilt. As men naturally are too ready to excuse themselves, so, until they are roused by the law, their consciences are asleep.

“Until the law,” says Paul, “sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no law.” (Romans 5:13.)

The law came and roused the sleepers, for this is the true preparation for Christ. “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3:20.) Why?

“That Sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” (Romans 7:13.)

Thus, “the law was added because of transgressions,” in order to reveal their true character, or, as he tells the Romans, that it might make them to abound. (Romans 5:20.)

This passage has tortured the ingenuity of Origen, but to no purpose. If God summon consciences to his tribunal, that those qualities in their transgression, which would otherwise give them pleasure, may humble them by a conviction of guilt, — if he shake off the listlessness which overwhelmed all dread of his judgment-seat, — if he drag to light; sin, which lurked like a thief in the den of hypocrisy, — what is there in all this that can be reckoned absurd? But it may be objected: “As the law is the rule of a devout and holy life, why is it said to be added ‘because of transgressions,’ rather than ‘because of obedience?’” I answer, however much it may point out true righteousness, yet, owing to the corruption of our nature, its instruction tends only to increase transgressions, until the Spirit of regeneration come, who writes it on the heart; and that Spirit is not given by the law, but is received by faith. This saying of Paul, let the reader remember, is not of a philosophical or political character, but expresses a purpose of the law, with which the world had been always unacquainted.

*Till the seed should come.* If it has respect to *seed*, it must be to that on which the blessing has been pronounced, and therefore it does not interfere with the promise. The word till, (ἄχρις οὗ,) signifies *so long as* the seed is expected: and hence it follows, that it must have been intended to occupy not the highest, but a subordinate rank. It was given in order to

rouse men to the expectation of Christ. But was it necessary that it should last only until the coming of Christ? For if so, it follows that it is now abolished. The whole of that administration, I reply, was temporal, and was given for the purpose of preserving among the ancient people an attachment to the faith of Christ. And yet I do not admit that, by the coming of Christ, the whole law was abolished. The apostle did not intend this, but merely that the mode of administration, which for a time had been introduced, must receive its accomplishment in Christ, who is the fulfillment of the promise.<sup>60</sup> But on this subject we shall have occasion to speak more fully afterwards.

*Ordained by angels.* The circumstance, that it was delivered through angels, tends to the commendation of the law. This is declared by Stephen ([Acts 7:53](#)) also, who says, that they had “received the law, (εἰς διαταγὰς ἀγγέλων,) into the dispositions of angels.” The interpretation given by some, that Moses and Aaron, and the priests, are the angels here meant, is more ingenious than solid. Nor is it wonderful that angels, by whom God bestows on us some of the smallest of his blessings, should have been intrusted also with this office of attending as witnesses at the promulgation of the law.

*In the hand of a Mediator Hand* usually signifies ministration; but as angels were ministers in giving the law, I consider “the hand of the Mediator” to denote the highest rank of service. The Mediator was at the head of the embassy, and angels were united with him as his companions. Some apply this expression to Moses, as marking a comparison between Moses and Christ; but I agree rather with the ancient expositors, who apply it to Christ himself.<sup>61</sup> This view, it will be found, agrees better with the context, though I differ from the ancients likewise as to the meaning of the word. *Mediator* does not, as they imagine, signify here one who makes reconciliation, which it does in these words,

“There is one Mediator between God and men,  
the man Christ Jesus,” ([1 Timothy 2:5](#)),

— but an ambassador employed in promulgating a law.

We are thus to understand, that, since the beginning of the world, God has held no intercourse with men, but through the agency of his eternal Wisdom or Son. Hence Peter says, that the holy prophets spake by the “Spirit of Christ,” ([1 Peter 1:11](#)), and Paul makes

60 “Qui est le parfait accomplissement de la promesse.” “Who is the perfect accomplishment of the promise.”

61 “Though some learned men have been of opinion that the mediator here mentioned is the Son of God, yet I think no reasonable doubt can be entertained as to its denoting Moses. Strictly speaking, Aaron, or rather the priesthood, was the mediator of the old covenant. It answers to the Great High-Priest, (ἀρχιερεύς,) Mediator, (μεσίτης,) and Surety, (ἔγγυος,) of the new covenant. But the reference seems here to the *giving* of the law: that was by Moses. ‘The law was given by Moses.’ ([John 1:17](#).) God speaks to Moses, and Moses speaks to the people; and this arrangement was entered into by the express request of the people themselves. Moses himself says, ‘I stood between the Lord and you at that time. ([Deuteronomy 5:5](#).) Philo calls Moses μεσίτης.” — Brown.

him the leader of the people in the wilderness. (1 Corinthians 10:4.) And certainly the Angel who appeared to Moses, (Exodus 3:2,) can be no other person; for he claims to himself the peculiar and essential name of God, which is never applied to creatures. As he is the Mediator of reconciliation, by whom we are accepted of God, — the Mediator of intercession, who opens up for us a way to “call on the Father,” (1 Peter 1:17,) — so he has always been the Mediator of all doctrine, because by him God has always revealed himself to men. And this he intended to state expressly, for the purpose of informing the Galatians, that he who is the foundation of the covenant of grace, held also the highest rank in the giving of the law.

20. *Now, a mediator is not a mediator of one.* Some are disposed to philosophize on this expression, and would make Paul’s meaning to be, that the twofold nature of Christ is not one in essence. But that Paul is here speaking of the contracting parties, no man of sound judgment entertains a doubt. And so they commonly expound it, that there is no room for a Mediator, unless when one of the parties has a matter to transact with the other. But why that statement should have been introduced they leave undetermined, though the passage manifestly deserves the most careful attention. There may, perhaps, be an Anticipation (πρόληψις) of some wicked thought that might arise about a change of the divine purpose. Some one might say, “As men, when they change their mind about their covenants, are wont to retract them, so has it happened with the covenants of God.” If you take this to be the meaning, then, in the former clause, Paul would acknowledge that men, who occupy one side of this contract, are unsteady and changeable, while God nevertheless remains the same, is consistent with himself, and partakes not of the unsteadiness of men.

But when I take a closer view of the whole subject, I rather think that it marks a difference between Jews and Gentiles. Christ is not the Mediator of one, because, in respect of outward character, there is a diversity of condition among those with whom, through his mediation, God enters into covenant. But Paul asserts that we have no right to judge in this manner of the covenant of God, as if it contradicted itself, or varied according to the diversities of men. The words are now clear. As Christ formerly reconciled God to the Jews in making a covenant, so now he is the Mediator of the Gentiles. The Jews differ widely from the Gentiles; for circumcision and ceremonies have erected “the middle wall of partition between them.” (Ephesians 2:14.) They were “nigh” to God, (Ephesians 2:13,) while the Gentiles were “afar off;” but still God is consistent with himself. This becomes evident, when Christ brings those who formerly differed among themselves to one God, and makes them unite in one body. *God is one*, because he always continues to be like himself, and, with unvarying regularity, holds fixed and unalterable the purpose which he has once made.<sup>62</sup>

62 “This is confessedly one of the most obscure passages in the New Testament, and, perhaps, above all others, ‘vexatus ab interpretibus,’ (tortured by interpreters,) if it be true, as Winer affirms, that there are no less than 250 modes of explanation, most of which are stated and reviewed by Koppe, Berger, Keil, Bonitz, Weigand, and



21. *Is the law then against the promises of God?* The certainty and steadiness of the divine purpose being admitted, we are bound equally to conclude that its results are not contrary to each other. Still there was a difficulty to be resolved, arising from the apparent contradiction between the Law and the covenant of grace. This is, perhaps, an exclamation. Dreading no farther contradiction, now that the point is settled, Paul concludes, that the former arguments have placed it beyond a doubt, and exclaims: "Who will now dare to imagine a disagreement between the law and the promises?" And yet this does not prevent Paul from proceeding to remove the difficulties that might still arise.

Before answering the question, he expresses, in his usual manner, a high disdain of such folly; thus intimating the strong abhorrence with which pious men must regard whatever brings reproach on the Divine character. But another instance of high address, which claims our notice, is found in this turn of expression. He charges his adversaries with the offense of making God contradict himself. For from him the Law and the promises have evidently proceeded: whoever then alleges any contradiction between them blasphemes against God: but they do contradict each other, if the Law justifies. Thus does Paul most dexterously retort upon his adversaries the charge which they falsely and calumniously brought against him.

*For if there had been a law given.* The reply is (what is called) indirect, and does not plainly assert an agreement between the law and the promises, but contains all that is necessary to remove the contradiction. At first sight, you would say that this sentence departs from the context, and has nothing to do with the solution of the question; but this is not the case. The law would be opposed to the promises, if it had the power of justifying; for there would be two opposite methods of justifying a man, two separate roads towards the attainment of righteousness. But Paul refuses to the law such a power; so that the contradiction is removed. I would admit, says he, that righteousness is obtained by the law, if salvation were found in it. But what?

22. *The Scripture hath concluded.* By the word Scripture is chiefly intended the law itself. It "hath concluded all under sin," and therefore, instead of giving, it takes away righteousness from all. The reasoning is most powerful. "You seek righteousness in the law: but the law itself, with the whole of Scripture, leaves nothing to men but condemnation; for all men, with their works, are pronounced to be unrighteous: who then shall live by the law?" He alludes to these words,

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Scheft." — (Bloomfield.) Schott remarks, that the bare fact of upwards of 250 interpretations makes it impossible to deny that some obscurity attaches to the Apostle's language in this passage, arising chiefly from mere brevity of style, but judiciously adds, that, had there not been many commentators more eager to bring forward anything that has the appearance of novelty, than to investigate the ordinary meaning of the terms, the scope of the passage, and the doctrinal statements and reasonings contained in the writings of the Apostle Paul, the interpretations would never have swelled to so large an amount. — *Ed.*

“He who shall do these things, shall live in them.” ([Leviticus 18:5](#).)

Shut out by it, says he, from life through guilt, in vain should we seek salvation by the law. — The word translated *all* (τὰ πάντα) signifies *all things*, and conveys more than if he had said *all men*; for it embraces not only men, but every thing which they possess or can accomplish.

*That the promise by faith.* There is no remedy but to throw away the righteousness of works, and betake ourselves to the faith of Christ. The result is certain. If works come into judgment, we are all condemned; therefore we obtain, by the faith of Christ, a free righteousness. This sentence is full of the highest consolation. It tells us that, wherever we hear ourselves condemned in Scripture, there is help provided for us in Christ, if we betake ourselves to him. We are lost, though God were silent: why then does he so often pronounce that we are lost? It is that we may not perish by everlasting destruction, but, struck and confounded by such a dreadful sentence, may by faith seek Christ, through whom we “pass from death into life.” ([1 John 3:14](#).) By a figure of speech, (μετωνυμία,) in which the thing containing is put for the thing contained, the *promise* denotes that which is promised.

Galatians 3:23-29	
23. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.	23. Antequam autem veniret fides, sub Lege custodiebamur, conclusi sub fidem, quae revelanda erat.
24. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.	24. Itaque Lex paedagogus noster fuit in Christum, ut ex fide justificaremur.
25. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.	25. Adveniente autem fide, non amplius sub paedagogo sumus.
26. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.	26. Nam omnes filii Dei estis per fidem in Christo Iesu.
27. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.	27. Siquidem quicumque in Christum baptizati estis, Christum induistis.
28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.	28. Non est Iudaeus neque Graecus, non est servus neque liber, non est masculus neque femina; omnes enim vos unus estis in Christo Iesu.
29. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.	29. Si autem vos Christi, ergo semen Abrahae estis, et secundum promissionem haeredes.

23. *Before faith came.* The question proposed is now more fully defined. He explains at great length the use of the law, and the reason why it was temporal; for otherwise it would have appeared to be always unreasonable that a law should be delivered to the Jews, from which the Gentiles were excluded. If there be but one church consisting of Jews and Gentiles, why is there a diversity in its government? Whence is this new liberty derived, and on what authority does it rest, since the fathers were under subjection to the law? He therefore informs us, that the distinction is such as not to interrupt the union and harmony of the church.

We must again remind the reader that Paul does not treat exclusively of ceremonies, or of the moral law, but embraces the whole economy by which the Lord governed his people under the Old Testament. It became a subject of dispute whether the form of government instituted by Moses had any influence in obtaining righteousness. Paul compares this law first to a *prison*, and next to a *schoolmaster*. Such was the nature of the law, as both comparisons plainly show, that it could not have been in force beyond a certain time.

*Faith* denotes the full revelation of those things which, during the darkness of the shadows of the law, were dimly seen; for he does not intend to say that the fathers, who lived under the law, did not possess faith. The faith of Abraham has already come under our notice, and other instances are quoted by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. ([Hebrews 11.](#)) The doctrine of faith, in short, is attested by Moses and all the prophets: but, as faith was not then clearly manifested, so the *time of faith* is an appellation here given, not in an absolute, but in a comparative sense, to the time of the New Testament. That this was his meaning is evident from what he immediately adds, that they were *shut up under the faith which should afterwards be revealed*; for this implies that those who were under the custody of the law were partakers of the same faith. The law did not restrain them from faith; but, that they might not wander from the fold of faith, it kept possession of themselves. There is an elegant allusion, too, to what he had formerly said, that “the scripture hath concluded all under sin.” They were besieged on every hand by the curse, but this siege was counteracted by an imprisonment which protected them from the curse; so that the imprisonment by the law is here proved to have been highly generous in its character.

Faith was not yet *revealed*, not because the fathers wanted light, but because they had less light than we have. The ceremonies might be said to shadow out an absent Christ, but to us he is represented as actually present, and thus while they had the mirror, we have the substance. Whatever might be the amount of darkness under the law, the fathers were not ignorant of the road in which they ought to walk. Though the dawn is not equal to the splendor of noon, yet, as it is sufficient to direct a journey, travelers do not wait till the sun is fully risen. Their portion of light resembled the dawn, which was enough to preserve them from all error, and guide them to everlasting blessedness.

**24. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster** This is the second comparison, which still more clearly expresses Paul’s design. A schoolmaster is not appointed for the whole life, but only for childhood, as the etymology of the Greek word παιδαγωγός implies.<sup>63</sup> Besides, in training a child, the object is to prepare him, by the instructions of childhood, for maturer years. The comparison applies in both respects to the law, for its authority was limited to a particular age, and its whole object was to prepare its scholars in such a manner, that, when its elementary instructions were closed, they might make progress worthy of manhood. And

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63 “As the law was before compared to a *jailer*, so it is here likened to a παιδαγωγός, by which term is not to be understood a *schoolmaster*, (for that would have been διδάσκαλος,) but the *paedagogus* or person (usually a freedman or slave) who conducted children to and from school, attended them out of school hours, formed their manners, superintended their moral conduct, and in various respects prepared them for the διδάσκαλος.” — Bloomfield. Our author’s observations on παιδαγωγός, in another passage, have brought out the full meaning of this word, and the classical authorities for the use of it, in the translator’s notes. — Calvin on the Corinthians, vol. 1, p. 169. — Ed

so he adds, that it was our schoolmaster (εἰς Χριστὸν) *unto Christ*. The grammarian, when he has trained a boy, delivers him into the hands of another, who conducts him through the higher branches of a finished education. In like manner, the law was the grammar of theology, which, after carrying its scholars a short way, handed them over to *faith* to be completed. Thus, Paul compares the Jews to children, and us to advanced youth.

But a question arises, what was the instruction or education of this schoolmaster? First, the law, by displaying the justice of God, convinced them that in themselves they were unrighteous; for in the commandments of God, as in a mirror, they might see how far they were distant from true righteousness. They were thus reminded that righteousness must be sought in some other quarter. The promises of the law served the same purpose, and might lead to such reflections as these: "If you cannot obtain life by works but by fulfilling the law, some new and different method must be sought. Your weakness will never allow you to ascend so high; nay, though you desire and strive ever so much, you will fall far short of the object." The threatenings, on the other hand, pressed and entreated them to seek refuge from the wrath and curse of God, and gave them no rest till they were constrained to seek the grace of Christ.

Such too, was the tendency of all the ceremonies; for what end did sacrifices and washings serve but to keep the mind continually fixed on pollution and condemnation? When a man's uncleanness is placed before his eyes, when the unoffending animal is held forth as the image of his own death, how can he indulge in sleep? How can he but be roused to the earnest cry for deliverance? Beyond all doubt, ceremonies accomplished their object, not merely by alarming and humbling the conscience, but by exciting them to the faith of the coming Redeemer. In the imposing services of the Mosaic ritual, every thing that was presented to the eye bore an impress of Christ. The law, in short, was nothing else than an immense variety of exercises, in which the worshippers were led by the hand to Christ.

*That we might be justified by faith.* He has already said that the law is not perfect, when he compared it to the training of childhood; but it would make men perfect if it bestowed upon them righteousness. What remains but that faith shall take its place? And so it does, when we, who are destitute of a righteousness of our own, are clothed by it with the righteousness of Christ. Thus is the saying accomplished, "he hath filled the hungry with good things." ([Luke 1:53](#).)

**25.** *But after that faith is come.* This phrase has been already considered. It denotes the brighter revelation of grace after that "the vail of the temple was rent in twain," ([Matthew 27:51](#).) which, we know, was effected by the manifestation of Christ. He affirms that, under the reign of Christ, there is no longer any childhood which needs to be placed under a schoolmaster, and that, consequently, the law has resigned its office, — which is another application of the comparison. There were two things which he had undertaken to prove, — that the law is a preparation for Christ, and that it is temporal. But here the question is

again put, Is the law so abolished that we have nothing to do with it? I answer, the law, so far as it is a rule of life, a bridle to keep us in the fear of the Lord, a spur to correct the sluggishness of our flesh, — so far, in short, as it is

“profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that believers may be instructed in every good work,” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17,)

— is as much in force as ever, and remains untouched.

In what respect, then, is it abolished? Paul, we have said, looks at the law as possessing certain qualities, and those qualities we shall enumerate. It annexes to works a reward and a punishment; that is, it promises life to those who keep it, and curses all transgressors. Meanwhile, it requires from man the highest perfection and most exact obedience. It makes no abatement, gives no pardon, but calls to a severe reckoning the smallest offenses. It does not openly exhibit Christ and his grace, but points him out at a distance, and only when hidden by the covering of ceremonies. All such qualities of the law, Paul tells us, are abolished; so that the office of Moses is now at an end, so far as it differs in outward aspect from a covenant of grace.

**26.** *For ye are all the children of God.* It would be unjust, and in the highest degree unreasonable, that the law should hold believers in perpetual slavery. This is proved by the additional argument, that they are the children of God. It would not be enough to say that we are no longer children, unless it were added that we are freemen; for in slaves age makes no alteration. The fact of their being the children of God proves their freedom. How? *By faith in Christ Jesus;* for

“as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

(John 1:12.)

Since, then, by faith we have obtained adoption, by faith likewise we have obtained our freedom.

**27.** *As many of you as have been baptized.* The greater and loftier the privilege is of being the children of God, the farther is it removed from our senses, and the more difficult to obtain belief. He therefore explains, in a few words, what is implied in our being united, or rather, made one with the Son of God; so as to remove all doubt, that what belongs to him is communicated to us. He employs the metaphor of a garment, when he says that the Galatians *have put on Christ*; but he means that they are so closely united to him, that, in the presence of God, they bear the name and character of Christ, and are viewed in him rather than in themselves. This metaphor or similitude, taken from garments, occurs frequently, and has been treated by us in other places.

But the argument, that, because they have been baptized, they have put on Christ, appears weak; for how far is baptism from being efficacious in all? Is it reasonable that the grace of the Holy Spirit should be so closely linked to an external symbol? Does not the uniform

doctrine of Scripture, as well as experience, appear to confute this statement? I answer, it is customary with Paul to treat of the sacraments in two points of view. When he is dealing with hypocrites, in whom the mere symbol awakens pride, he then proclaims loudly the emptiness and worthlessness of the outward symbol, and denounces, in strong terms, their foolish confidence. In such cases he contemplates not the ordinance of God, but the corruption of wicked men. When, on the other hand, he addresses believers, who make a proper use of the symbols, he then views them in connection with the truth — which they represent. In this case, he makes no boast of any false splendor as belonging to the sacraments, but calls our attention to the actual fact represented by the outward ceremony. Thus, agreeably to the Divine appointment, the truth comes to be associated with the symbols.

But perhaps some person will ask, Is it then possible that, through the fault of men, a sacrament shall cease to bear a figurative meaning? The reply is easy. Though wicked men may derive no advantage from the sacraments, they still retain undiminished their nature and force. The sacraments present, both to good and to bad men, the grace of God. No falsehood attaches to the promises which they exhibit of the grace of the Holy Spirit. Believers receive what is offered; and if wicked men, by rejecting it, render the offer unprofitable to themselves, their conduct cannot destroy the faithfulness of God, or the true meaning of the sacrament.<sup>64</sup> With strict propriety, then, does Paul, in addressing believers, say, that when they were baptized, they “put on Christ;” just as, in the Epistle to the Romans, he says,

“that we have been planted together into his death,  
so as to be also partakers of his resurrection.”

(Romans 6:5.)

In this way, the symbol and the Divine operation are kept distinct, and yet the meaning of the sacraments is manifest; so that they cannot be regarded as empty and trivial exhibitions; and we are reminded with what base ingratitude they are chargeable, who, by abusing the precious ordinances of God, not only render them unprofitable to themselves, but turn them to their own destruction!

**28.** *There is neither Jew nor Greek.* The meaning is, that there is no distinction of persons here, and therefore it is of no consequence to what nation or condition any one may belong: nor is circumcision any more regarded than sex or civil rank. And why? Because Christ makes them all one. Whatever may have been their former differences, Christ alone is able to unite them all. *Ye are one:* the distinction is now removed. The apostle’s object is to shew that the grace of adoption, and the hope of salvation, do not depend on the law, but are contained in Christ alone, who therefore is all. Greek is here put, as usual, for Gentile, and one department for the whole class.

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<sup>64</sup> “If any person receives nothing more than this bodily washing, which is perceived by the eyes of flesh, he has not put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” — Jerome.

**29.** *Then are ye Abraham's seed.* This is not intended to convey the idea, that to be a child of Abraham is better than to be a member of Christ, — but to repress the pride of the Jews, who gloried in their privilege, as if they alone were the people of God. They reckoned no distinction higher than to belong to the race of Abraham; and this very distinction he makes to be common to all who believe in Christ. The conclusion rests on this argument, that Christ is the blessed seed, in whom, as we have said, all the children of Abraham are united. He proves this by the universal offer of the inheritance to them all, from which it follows, that the promise includes them among the children. It deserves notice, that, wherever faith is mentioned, it is always his relation to the promise.



## CHAPTER 4

Galatians 4:1-5	
1. Now I say, <i>That</i> the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;	1. Dico autem: quamdiu haeres puer est, nihil differt a servo, quum tamen sit dominus omnium;
2. But is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the father.	2. Sed sub tutoribus et curatoribus est, usque ad tempus a patre definitum.
3. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:	3. Sic et nos quum essemus pueri, sub elementis mundi in servitute eramus.
4. But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,	4. Quando autem venit plenitudo temporis, misit Deus Filium suum, factum ex muliere, redactum sub Legem;
5. To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.	5. Ut eos, qui sub Lege erant, redimeret, ut adoptionem reciperemus.

1. *Now I say.* Whoever made the division into chapters has improperly separated this paragraph from the preceding, as it is nothing else than the concluding section, (ἐπεξεργασία,) in which Paul explains and illustrates the difference that exists between us and the ancient people. He does so by introducing a third comparison, drawn from the relation which a person under age bears to his tutor. The young man, though he is free, *though he is lord of all* his father's family, still resembles a slave; for he is under the government of tutors.<sup>65</sup> But the period of guardianship lasts only "until the time appointed by the father" after which he enjoys his freedom. In this respect the fathers under the Old Testament, being the sons of God, were free; but they were not in possession of freedom, while the law held the place of their tutor, and kept them under its yoke. That slavery of the law lasted as long as it pleased God, who put an end to it at the coming of Christ. Lawyers enumerate various methods by which the tutelage or guardianship is brought to a close; but of all these methods, the only one adapted to this comparison is that which Paul has selected, "the appointment of the father."

65 "Ἐπίτροπος signifies both a child's guardian to take care of his person and estate, and his instructor and tutor, ἐπίτροπος καὶ τοῦ παιδὸς καὶ τῶν χρημάτων, 'the guardian both of the child and of his property.' (Aelian, v. H. 1. 3. c. 26.) Here it properly signifies the latter, his preceptor or tutor. The next word, οἰκόνομος, which we render governor, here denotes his guardian, who is to take care of his person and estate; and to each of these the heirs to large inheritances are generally subject, even as servants are subject to their proper masters." — Chandler.

Let us now examine the separate clauses. Some apply the comparison in a different manner to the case of any man whatever, whereas Paul is speaking of two nations. What they say, I acknowledge, is true; but it has nothing to do with the present passage. The elect, though they are the children of God from the womb, yet, until by faith they come to the possession of freedom, remain like slaves under the law; but, from the time that they have known Christ, they no longer require this kind of tutelage. Granting all this, I deny that Paul here treats of individuals, or draws a distinction between the time of unbelief and the calling by faith. The matters in dispute were these. Since the church of God is one, how comes it that our condition is different from that of the Israelites? Since we are free by faith, how comes it that they, who had faith in common with us, were not partakers with us of the same freedom? Since we are all equally the children of God, how comes it that we at this day are exempt from a yoke which they were forced to bear? On these points the controversy turned, and not on the manner in which the law reigns over each of us before we are freed by faith from its slavery. Let this point be first of all settled, that Paul here compares the Israelitish church, which existed under the Old Testament, with the Christian church, that thus we may perceive in what points we agree and in what we differ. This comparison furnishes most abundant and most profitable instruction.

First, we learn from it that our hope at the present day, and that of the fathers under the Old Testament, have been directed to the same inheritance; for they were partakers of the same adoption. According to the dreams of some fanatics, and of Servetus among others, the fathers were divinely elected for the sole purpose of prefiguring to us a people of God. Paul, on the other hand, contends that they were elected in order to be together with us the children of God, and particularly attests that to them, not less than to us, belonged the spiritual blessing promised to Abraham.

Secondly, we learn that, notwithstanding their outward slavery, their consciences were still free. The obligation to keep the law did not hinder Moses and Daniel, all the pious kings, priests, and prophets, and the whole company of believers, from being free in spirit. They bore the yoke of the law upon their shoulders, but with a free spirit they worshipped God. More particularly, having been instructed concerning the free pardon of sin, their consciences were delivered from the tyranny of sin and death. Hence we ought to conclude that they held the same doctrine, were joined with us in the true unity of faith, placed reliance on the one Mediator, called on God as their Father, and were led by the same Spirit. All this leads to the conclusion, that the difference between us and the ancient fathers lies in accidents, not in substance. In all the leading characters of the Testament or Covenant we agree: the ceremonies and form of government, in which we differ, are mere additions. Besides, that period was the infancy of the church; but now that Christ is come, the church has arrived at the estate of manhood.

The meaning of Paul's words is clear, but has he not some appearance of contradicting himself? In the Epistle to the Ephesians he exhorts us to make daily progress

"till we come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."  
([Ephesians 4:13](#).)

In the first Epistle to the Corinthians he says, ([1 Corinthians 3:2](#).)

"I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able;"

and shortly after this he compares the Galatians to children. ([Galatians 4:19](#)) In those passages, I reply, the apostle speaks of particular men, and of their faith as individuals; but here he speaks generally of two bodies without regard to persons. This reply will assist us in resolving a much greater difficulty. When we look at the matchless faith of Abraham, and the vast intelligence of the holy prophets, with what effrontery shall we dare to talk of such men as our inferiors? Were not they rather the heroes, and we the children? To say nothing of ourselves, who among the Galatians would have been found equal to any of those men?

But here, as I have already said, the apostle describes not particular persons, but the universal condition of both nations. Some men were endowed with extraordinary gifts; but they were few, and the whole body did not share with them. Besides, though they had been numerous, we must inquire not what they inwardly were, but what was that kind or government under which God had placed them; and that was manifestly a school, παιδαγωγία, a system of instruction for children. And what are we now? God has broken those chains, governs his church in a more indulgent manner, and lays not upon us such severe restraint. At the same time, we may remark in passing, that whatever amount of knowledge they might attain partook of the nature of the period; for a dark cloud continually rested on the revelation which they enjoyed. And hence that saying of our Savior,

"Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." ([Luke 10: 23, 24](#).)

We now understand in what respect we are preferred to those who were greatly our superiors; for the statements are not applied to persons, but relate entirely to the economy of the Divine administration.

This passage will prove a most powerful battery for destroying the pageantry of ceremonies, which constitutes the entire splendor of the Papal system. For what else is it that dazzles the eyes of simple people, so as to lead them to regard the dominion of the Pope, if not with admiration, at least with some degree of reverence, but the magnificent array of ceremonies, rites, gesticulations, and equipage of every description, contrived for the express purpose of amazing the ignorant? From this passage it appears that they are false disguises, by which the true beauty of the church is impaired. I do not now speak of greater and more

frightful corruptions, such as, that they hold them out for divine worship, imagine them to possess the power of meriting salvation, and enforce with more rigid severity the observation of those trifles than the whole law of God. I only advert to the specious pretext under which our modern contrivers apologize for such a multitude of abominations. What though they object that the ignorance of the multitude prevails to a greater extent than it formerly did among the Israelites, and that many assistances are therefore required? They will never be able in this way to prove that the people must be placed under the discipline or a school similar to what existed among the people of Israel; for I shall always meet them with the declaration, that the appointment of God is totally different.

If they plead expediency, I ask, are they better judges of what is expedient than God himself? Let us entertain the firm conviction that the highest advantage, as well as the highest propriety, will be found in whatever God has determined. In aiding the ignorant, we must employ not those methods which the fancy of men may have been pleased to contrive, but those which had been fixed by God himself, who unquestionably has left out nothing that was fitted to assist their weakness. Let this shield suffice for repelling any objections: “God has judged otherwise, and his purpose supplies to us the place of all arguments; unless it be supposed that men are capable of devising better aids than those which God had provided, and which he afterwards threw aside as useless.” Let it be carefully observed, Paul does not merely say that the yoke which had been laid upon the Jews is removed from us, but expressly lays down a distinction in the government which God has commanded to be observed. I acknowledge that we are now at liberty as to all outward matters, but only on the condition that the church shall not be burdened with a multitude of ceremonies, nor Christianity confounded with Judaism. The reason of this we shall afterwards consider in the proper place.

3. *Under the elements of the world.* *Elements* may either mean, literally, outward and bodily things, or, metaphorically, rudiments. I prefer the latter interpretation. But why does he say that those things which had a spiritual signification were *of the world*? We did not, he says, enjoy the truth in a simple form, but involved in earthly figures; and consequently, what was outward must have been “of the world,” though there was concealed under it a heavenly mystery.

4. *When the fullness of the time was come.* He proceeds with the comparison which he had adduced, and applies to his purpose the expression which has already occurred, “the time appointed by the Father,” — but still shewing that the time which had been ordained by the providence of God was proper and seasonable. That season is the most fit, and that mode of acting is the most proper, which the providence of God directs. At what time it was expedient that the Son of God should be revealed to the world, it belonged to God alone to judge and determine. This consideration ought to restrain all curiosity. Let no man presume to be dissatisfied with the secret purpose of God, and raise a dispute why Christ did

not appear sooner. If the reader desires more full information on this subject, he may consult what I have written on the conclusion of the Epistle to the Romans.

*God sent forth his Son.* These few words contain much instruction. The Son, who was sent, must have existed before he was sent; and this proves his eternal Godhead. Christ therefore is the Son of God, sent from heaven. Yet this same person was *made of a woman*, because he assumed our nature, which shews that he has two natures. Some copies read *natum* instead of *filium*; but the latter reading is more generally followed, and, in my opinion, is preferable. But the language was also expressly intended to distinguish Christ from other men, as having been formed of the substance of his mother, and not by ordinary generation. In any other sense, it would have been trifling, and foreign to the subject. The word *woman* is here put generally for the female sex.

*Subjected under the law.* The literal rendering is, *Made under the law*; but in my version I have preferred another word, which expresses more plainly the fact that he was placed in subjection to the law. Christ the Son of God, who might have claimed to be exempt from every kind of subjection, became subject to the law. Why? He did so in our room, that he might obtain freedom for us. A man who was free, by constituting himself a surety, redeems a slave: by putting on himself the chains, he takes them off from the other. So Christ chose to become liable to keep the law, that exemption from it might be obtained for us; otherwise it would have been to no purpose that he should come under the yoke of the law, for it certainly was not on his own account that he did so.

*To redeem them that were under the law* <sup>66</sup> We must here observe, the exemption from the law which Christ has procured for us does not imply that we no longer owe any obedience to the doctrine of the law, and may do whatever we please; for the law is the everlasting rule of a good and holy life. But Paul speaks of the law with all its appendages. From subjection to that law we are redeemed, because it is no longer what it once was. "The vail being rent," ([Matthew 27:51](#),) freedom is openly proclaimed, and this is what he immediately adds.

5. *That we might receive the adoption.* The fathers, under the Old Testament, were certain of their adoption, but did not so fully as yet enjoy their privilege. *Adoption*, like the phrase, "the redemption of our body," ([Romans 8:23](#),) is here put for actual possession. As, at the last day, we receive the fruit of our redemption, so now we receive the fruit of adoption, of which the holy fathers did not partake before the coming of Christ; and therefore those who now burden the church with an excess of ceremonies, defraud her of the just right of adoption.

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<sup>66</sup> "So far was he from subjecting to the yoke of the law those to whom the law had not been given, that he came in order to emancipate even the Jews themselves." — Wetstein.

Galatians 4:6-11	
6. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.	6. Quoniam autem estis filii, misit Deus Spiritum Filii sui in corda vestra, clamantem, Abba, Pater.
7. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.	7. Itaque non amplius es servus, sed filius; si autem filius, etiam haeres Dei per Christum.
8. Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.	8. At tunc quum nondum cognoveratis Deum, serviebatis eis qui natura non sunt dii.
9. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?	9. Nunc autem postquam cognovistis Deum, vel potius cogniti fuistis a Deo; quomodo convertimini rursus ad infirma et egena elementa, quibus rursus Deuteronomy integro servire vultis?
10. Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.	10. Dies observatis, et menses, et tempera, et annos.
11. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.	11. Timeo Deuteronomy vobis, ne forte in vobis frustra laboraverim.

6. *And because ye are sons.* The adoption which he had mentioned, is proved to belong to the Galatians by the following argument. This adoption must have preceded the testimony of adoption given by the Holy Spirit; but the effect is the sign of the cause. In venturing, he says, to call God your Father, you have the advice and direction of the Spirit of Christ; therefore it is certain that you are the sons of God. This agrees with what is elsewhere taught by him, that the Spirit is the earnest and pledge of our adoption, and gives to us a well-founded belief that God regards us with a father's love.

“Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” (2 Corinthians 1:22.)

“Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 5:5.)

But it will be objected, do not wicked men, too, carry their rashness so far as to proclaim that God is their Father? Do they not frequently, with greater confidence than others, utter their false boasts? I reply, Paul's language does not relate to idle boasting, or to the proud

opinion of himself which any man may entertain, but to the testimony of a pious conscience which accompanies the new birth. This argument can have no weight but in the case of believers, for ungodly men have no experience of this certainty; as our Lord himself declares.

“The Spirit of truth,” says he, “whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.”

([John 14:17](#).)

This is implied in Paul’s words, *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts*. It is not what the persons themselves, in the foolish judgment of the flesh, may venture to believe, but what God declares in their hearts by his Spirit. *The Spirit of his Son* is a title more strictly adapted to the present occasion than any other that could have been employed. We are the sons of God, because we have received the same Spirit as his only Son.

Let it be observed, that Paul ascribes this universally to all Christians; for where this pledge of the Divine love towards us is wanting, there is assuredly no faith. Hence it is evident what sort of Christianity belongs to Popery, since any man who says, that he has the Spirit of God, is charged by them with impious presumption. Neither the Spirit of God, nor certainty, belongs to their notion of faith. This single tenet held by them is a remarkable proof that, in all the schools of the Papists, the devil, the father of unbelief, reigns. I acknowledge, indeed, that the scholastic divines, when they enjoin upon the consciences of men the agitation of perpetual doubt, are in perfect agreement with what the natural feelings of mankind would dictate. It is the more necessary to fix in our minds this doctrine of Paul, that no man is a Christian who has not learned, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to call God his Father.

*Crying*. This participle, I think, is used in order to express greater boldness. Hesitation does not allow us to speak freely, but keeps the mouth nearly shut, while the half-broken words can hardly escape from a stammering tongue. “Crying,” on the other hand, expresses firmness and unwavering confidence.

“For we have not received again the spirit of bondage to fear, but of freedom to full confidence.” ([Romans 8:15](#).)

*Abba, Father*. The meaning of these words, I have no doubt, is, that calling upon God is common to all languages. It is a fact which bears directly on the present subject, that the name *Father* is given to God both by the Hebrews and by the Greeks; as had been predicted by Isaiah,

“Every tongue shall make confession to my name.”

([Isaiah 45:23](#).)

The whole of this subject is handled by the apostle at greater length in his Epistle to the Romans. I judge it unnecessary to repeat here observations which I have already made in the exposition of that Epistle, and which the reader may consult. Since, therefore, Gentiles



are reckoned among the sons of God, it is evident that adoption comes not by the merit of the law, but by the grace of faith.

7. *Wherefore thou art no more a servant.* In the Christian Church slavery no longer exists, but the condition of the children is free. In what respect the fathers under the law were slaves, we have already inquired; for their freedom was not yet revealed, but was hidden under the coverings and yoke of the law. Our attention is again directed to the distinction between the Old and New Testaments. The ancients were also sons of God, and heirs through Christ, but we hold the same character in a different manner; for we have Christ present with us, and in that manner enjoy his blessings.

8. *But when ye as yet knew not God.* This is not intended as an additional argument; and indeed he had already proved his point so fully, that no doubt remained, and the rebuke which was now to be administered could not be evaded. His object is to make their fall appear more criminal, by comparing it with past events. It is not wonderful, he says, that formerly *ye did service to them which by nature are no gods*; for, wherever ignorance of God exists, there must be dreadful blindness. You were then wandering in darkness, but how disgraceful is it that in the midst of light you should fall into such gross errors! The main inference is, that the Galatians were less excusable for corrupting the gospel than they had formerly been for idolatry. But here it ought to be observed, that, till we have been enlightened in the true knowledge of one God, we always serve idols, whatever pretext we may throw over the false religion. The lawful worship of God, therefore, must be preceded by just views of his character. *By nature*, that is, in reality, *they are no gods*. Every object of worship which men contrive is a creature of their own imagination. In the opinion of men idols may be gods, but in reality they are nothing.

9. *But now,*<sup>67</sup> *after that ye have known God.* No language can express the base ingratitude of departing from God, when he has once been known. What is it but to forsake, of our own accord, the light, the life, the fountain of all benefits, — “to forsake,” as Jeremiah complains,

“the fountain of living waters, and hew out cisterns,  
broken cisterns, that can hold no water!” (Jeremiah 2:13.)

Still farther to heighten the blame, he corrects his language, and says, *or rather have been, known by God*; for the greater the grace of God is towards us, our guilt in despising it must be the heavier. Paul reminds the Galatians whence they had derived the knowledge of God. He affirms that they did not obtain it by their own exertions, by the acuteness or in-

67 *Μᾶλλον δὲ* “The Greek writers make use of these two particles for the purpose of correcting what they have already said, and, as if it had not been enough, of adding something more. Thus, [Romans 8:34](#), and in Polybius. *Χρήσιμον εἶη μᾶλλον δ’ ἀναγκαῖον*. “It would be useful, it would even be necessary.” *Καὶ γὰρ ἄτοπον μᾶλλον δ’ ὥς εἰπεῖν ἀδύνατον, αδυνατον*. “It would be absurd; it would even be impossible.” — Raphelius.

dustury of their own minds, but because, when they were at the farthest possible remove from thinking of him, God visited them in his mercy. What is said of the Galatians may be extended to all; for in all are fulfilled the words of Isaiah,

“I am sought by them that asked not for me:  
I am found by them that sought me not.” (Isaiah 65:1.)

The origin of our calling is the free election of God, which predestinates us to life before we are born. On this depends our calling, our faith, our whole salvation.

*How turn ye again?* They could not turn *again* to ceremonies which they had never practiced. The expression is figurative, and merely denotes, that to fall again into wicked superstition, as if they had never received the truth of God, was the height of folly. When he calls the ceremonies *beggarly elements*, he views them as out of Christ, and, what is more, as opposed to Christ. To the fathers they were not only profitable exercises and aids to piety, but efficacious means of grace. But then their whole value lay in Christ, and in the appointment of God. The false apostles, on the other hand, neglecting the promises, endeavored to oppose the ceremonies to Christ, as if Christ alone were not sufficient. That they should be regarded by Paul as worthless trifles, cannot excite surprise; but of this I have already spoken. The word *bondage* conveys a reproof for submitting to be slaves.<sup>68</sup>

**10.** *Ye observe days.* He adduces as an instance one description of “elements,” the observance of days. No condemnation is here given to the observance of dates in the arrangements of civil society. The order of nature out of which this arises, is fixed and constant. How are months and years computed, but by the revolution of the sun and moon? What distinguishes summer from winter, or spring from harvest, but the appointment of God, — an appointment which was promised to continue to the end of the world? (Genesis 8:22.) The civil observation of days contributes not only to agriculture and to matters of politics, and ordinary life, but is even extended to the government of the church. Of what nature, then, was the observation which Paul reproves? It was that which would bind the conscience, by religious considerations, as if it were necessary to the worship of God, and which, as he expresses it in the Epistle to the Romans, would make a distinction between one day and another. (Romans 14:5.)

When certain days are represented as holy in themselves, when one day is distinguished from another on religious grounds, when holy days are reckoned a part of divine worship, then days are improperly observed. The Jewish Sabbath, new moons, and other festivals, were earnestly pressed by the false apostles, because they had been appointed by the law. When we, in the present age, intake a distinction of days, we do not represent them as ne-

68 “Par ce mot de *Servir*, il reprend la necessity, a laquelle ils s’astroyent d’observer les ceremonies.” “By the word ‘bondage,’ he reproves them for the necessity to which they had reduced themselves to observe ceremonies.”

cessary, and thus lay a snare for the conscience; we do not reckon one day to be more holy than another; we do not make days to be the same thing with religion and the worship of God; but merely attend to the preservation of order and harmony. The observance of days among us is a free service, and void of all superstition.

**11.** *Lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.* The expression is harsh, and must have filled the Galatians with alarm; for what hope was left to them, if Paul's labor had been in vain? Some have expressed astonishment that Paul should be so powerfully affected by the observance of days, as almost to designate it a subversion of the whole gospel. But if we carefully weigh the whole, we shall see that there was just reason; and that the false apostles not only attempted to lay the yoke of Jewish bondage on the neck of the church, but filled their minds with wicked superstitions. To bring back Christianity to Judaism, was in itself no light evil; but far more serious mischief was done, when, in opposition to the grace of Christ, they set up holidays as meritorious performances, and pretended that this mode of worship would propitiate the divine favor. When such doctrines were received, the worship of God was corrupted, the grace of Christ made void, and the freedom of conscience oppressed.

Do we wonder that Paul should be afraid that he had labored in vain, that the gospel would henceforth be of no service? And since that very description of impiety is now supported by Popery, what sort of Christ or what sort of gospel does it retain? So far as respects the binding of consciences, they enforce the observance of days with not less severity than was done by Moses. They consider holidays, not less than the false apostles did, to be a part of the worship of God, and even connect with them the diabolical notion of merit. The Papists must therefore be held equally censurable with the false apostles; and with this addition in aggravation, that, while the former proposed to keep those days which had been appointed by the law of God, the latter enjoin days, rashly stamped with their own seal, to be observed as most holy.

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Galatians 4:12-20	
12. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I <i>am</i> ; for I <i>am</i> as ye <i>are</i> : ye have not injured me at all.	12. Estote ut ego; quia ego quoque sum ut vos. Fratres, rogo vos; nihil mihi fecistis injuriae.
13. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.	13. Novistis antem, quod per infirmitatem carnis evangelizaverim vobis prius;
14. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, <i>even</i> as Christ Jesus.	14. Et experimentum mei, quod fuit in carne mea, non contempsistis, neque respuistis; sed tanquam angelum Dei suscepistis me, tanquam Christum Iesum.
15. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if <i>it had been</i> possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.	15. Ubi igitur beatitudo vestra? testimonium enim reddo vobis, quod, si possibile fuisset, etiam oculos vestros effossos dedissetis mihi.
16. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?	16. Ergo vera loquendo inimicus sum vobis factus?
17. They zealously affect you, <i>but</i> not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.	17. Aemulantur vos, non bene; imo excludere vos volunt, ut ipsos aemulemini.
18. But <i>it is</i> good to be zealously affected always in a good <i>thing</i> , and not only when I am present with you.	18. Bonum autem est aemulari in bono semper, et non tantum quum praesens sum apud vos.
19. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,	19. Filioli mei, quos iterum parturio, donec formetur in vobis Christus.
20. I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.	20. Vellem autem nunc coram esse vobiscum, et mutare vocem meam; quia anxius sum in vobis.

12. *Be as I am.* Having till now spoken roughly, he begins to adopt a milder strain. The former harshness had been more than justified by the heinousness of the offense; but as he wished to do good, he resolves to adopt a style of conciliation. It is the part of a wise pastor to consider, not what those who have wandered may justly deserve, but what may be the likeliest method of bringing them back to the right path. He must “be instant in season, out

of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.” (2 Timothy 4:2.) Following the method which he had recommended to Timothy, he leaves off chiding, and begins to use entreaties. *I beseech you*, he says, and calls them *brethren*, to assure them that no bitterness had mingled with his reproofs.

The words, *be as I am*, refer to the affection of the mind. As he endeavors to accommodate himself to them, so he wishes that they would do the like by him in return. *For I am as ye are*. “As I have no other object in view than to promote your benefit, so it is proper that you should be prevailed on to adopt moderate views, and to lend a willing, obedient ear to my instructions.” And here again pastors are reminded of their duty to come down, as far as they can, to the people, and to study the various dispositions of those with whom they have to deal, if they wish to obtain compliance with their message. The proverb still holds: “to be loved, you must be lovely.”

*Ye have not injured me at all*. This is intended to remove the suspicion which might have rendered his former reproofs more disagreeable. If we think that a person is speaking under a sense of injury, or revenging a private quarrel, we turn away our minds from him entirely, and are sure to torture whatever he says into an unfavourable interpretation. Paul therefore meets the rising prejudice by saying, “So far as respects myself, I have no cause to complain of you. It is not on my own account, nor from any hostility to you, that I feel warmly; and therefore, if I use strong language, it must arise from some other cause than hatred or anger.”

13. *Ye know that, through infirmity of the flesh*. He recalls to their recollection the friendly and respectful manner in which they had received him, and he does so for two reasons. First, to let them know that he loved them, and thus to gain a ready ear to all that he says; and secondly, to encourage them, that, as they had begun well, they would go on in the same course. This mention of past occurrences, then, while it is an expression of his kind regards, is intended likewise as an exhortation to act in the same manner as they had done at an earlier period.

By *infirmity of the flesh* he means here, as in other places, what had a tendency to make him appear mean and despised. *Flesh* denotes his outward appearance, which the word *infirmity* describes to have been contemptible. Such was Paul when he came among them, without show, without pretense, without worldly honors or rank, without everything that could gain him respect or estimation in the eyes of men. Yet all this did not prevent the Galatians from giving him the most honorable reception. The narrative contributes powerfully to his argument, for what was there in Paul to awaken their esteem or veneration, but the power of the Holy Spirit alone? Under what pretext, then, will they now begin to despise that power? Next, they are charged with inconsistency, since no subsequent occurrence in the life of Paul could entitle them to esteem him less than before. But this he leaves

to be considered by the Galatians, contenting himself with indirectly suggesting it as a subject of consideration.

**14. My temptation.** That is, “Though ye perceived me to be, in a worldly point of view, a contemptible person, yet ye did not reject me.” He calls it a *temptation* or trial, because it was a thing not unknown or hidden, and he did not himself attempt to conceal it, as is usually done by ambitious men, who are ashamed of anything about them that may lower them in public estimation. It frequently happens that unworthy persons receive applause, before their true character has been discovered, and shortly afterwards are dismissed with shame and disgrace. But widely different was the case of Paul, who had used no disguise to impose on the Galatians, but had frankly told them what he was.

*As an angel of God.* In this light every true minister of Christ ought to be regarded. As God employs the services of angels for communicating to us his favors, so godly teachers are divinely raised up to administer to us the most excellent of all blessings, the doctrine of eternal salvation. Not without good reason are they, by whose hands God dispenses to us such a treasure, compared to angels: for they too are the messengers of God, by whose mouth God speaks to us. And this argument is used by Malachi.

“The priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, *for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.*” ([Malachi 2:7.](#))

But the apostle rises still higher, and adds, *even as Christ Jesus*; for the Lord himself commands that his ministers shall be viewed in the same light as himself.

“He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me.” ([Luke 10:16.](#))

Nor is this wonderful; for it is in his name that they discharge their embassy, and thus they hold the rank of him in whose room they act. Such is the highly commendatory language which reveals to us at once the majesty of the gospel, and the honorable character of its ministry. If it be the command of Christ that his ministers shall be thus honored, it is certain that contempt of them proceeds from the instigation of the devil; and indeed they never can be despised so long as the word of God is esteemed. In vain do the Papists attempt to hold out this pretext for their own arrogant pretensions. As they are plainly the enemies of Christ, how absurd is it that they should assume the garb, and take to themselves the character, of Christ’s servants! If they wish to obtain the honors of angels, let them perform the duty of angels: if they wish that we should listen to them as to Christ, let them convey to us faithfully his pure word.

**15. Where is there your blessedness?** Paul had made them happy, and he intimates that the pious affection with which they formerly regarded him was an expression of their happiness. But now, by allowing themselves to be deprived of the services of him to whom they ought to have attributed whatever knowledge they possessed of Christ, they gave evidence that they were unhappy. This hint was intended to produce keen reflection. “What? Shall

all this be lost? Will you forfeit all the advantage of having once heard Christ speaking by my lips? Shall the foundation in the faith which you received from me be to no purpose? Shall your falling away now destroy the glory of your obedience in the presence of God?" In short, by despising the pure doctrine which they had embraced, they throw away, of their own accord, the *blessedness* which they had obtained, and draw down upon themselves the destruction in which their unhappy career must terminate.

*For I bear you record.* It is not enough that pastors be respected, if they are not also loved; for both are necessary to make the doctrine they preach be fully relished; and both, the apostle declares, had existed among the Galatians. He had already spoken of their respect for him, and he now speaks of their love. To be willing to *pluck out their own eyes*, if it had been necessary, was an evidence of very extraordinary love, stronger than the willingness to part with life.

**16.** *Am I therefore become your enemy?* He now returns to speak about himself. It was entirely their own fault, he says, that they had changed their minds. Though it is a common remark, that truth begets hatred, yet, except through the malice and wickedness of those who cannot endure to hear it, truth is never hateful. While he vindicates himself from any blame in the unhappy difference between them, he indirectly censures their ingratitude. Yet still his advice is friendly, not to reject, on rash or light grounds, the apostleship of one whom they had formerly considered to be worthy of their warmest love. What can be more unbecoming than that the hatred of truth should change enemies into friends? His aim then is, not so much to upbraid, as to move them to repentance.

**17.** *They are jealous of you.* He comes at length to the false apostles, and does more by silence to make them odious, than if he had given their names; for we usually abstain from naming those whose very names produce in us dislike and aversion. He mentions the immoderate ambition of those men, and warns the Galatians not to be led astray by their appearance of zeal. The comparison is borrowed from honorable love, as contrasted with those professions of regard which arise from unhallowed desires. Jealousy, on the part of the false apostles, ought not to impose upon them; for it proceeded not from right zeal, but from an improper desire of obtaining reputation, — a desire most unlike that holy jealousy of which Paul speaks to the Corinthians.

"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

(2 Corinthians 11:2, 3.)

To expose still more fully their base arts, he corrects his language. *Yea, they would exclude you*<sup>69</sup> They not only endeavor to gain your affections, but, as they cannot obtain possession of you by any other means, they endeavor to kindle strife between us. When you have been thrown as it were destitute, they expect that you will yield yourselves up to them; for they perceive that, so long as there shall be maintained between us a religious harmony, they can have no influence. This stratagem is frequently resorted to by all the ministers of Satan. By producing in the people a dislike of their pastor, they hope afterwards to draw them to themselves; and, having disposed of the rival, to obtain quiet possession. A careful and judicious examination of their conduct will discover that in this way they always begin.

**18.** *But it is good to be the object of jealousy.* It is hard to say whether this refers to himself or to the Galatians. Good ministers are exhorted to cherish holy jealousy in watching over the churches,

“that they may present them as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

(2 Corinthians 11:2.)

If it refers to Paul, the meaning will be: “I confess that I also am jealous of you, but with a totally different design: and I do so as much when I am absent as when I am present, because I do not seek my own advantage.” But I am rather inclined to view it as referring to the Galatians, though in this case it will admit of more than one interpretation. It may mean: “They indeed attempt to withdraw your affections from me, that, when you are thrown destitute, you may go over to them; but do you, who loved me while I was present, continue to cherish the same regard for me when I am absent.” But a more correct explanation is suggested by the opposite senses which the word ζηλοῦσθαι bears. As, in the former verse, he had used the word *jealous* in a bad sense, denoting an improper way of accomplishing an object, so here he uses it in a good sense, denoting a zealous imitation of the good qualities of another. By condemning improper jealousy, he now exhorts the Galatians to engage in a different sort of competition, and that, too, while he was absent.

**19.** *My little children.* The word *children* is still softer and more affectionate than brethren; and the diminutive, *little children*, is an expression, not of contempt, but of endear-

69 Ἔστι γὰρ καὶ ζῶλος ἀγαθὸς ὅταν τις οὕτω ζηλοῖ ὥστε μιμήσασθαι τὴν ἀρετὴν· ἔστι καὶ ζῶλος προνηρὸς ὥστε ἐκβάλλειν τῷ ἀρετῷ τὸν κατορθοῦντα· ὃ δὴ καὶ αὐτοὶ νῦν ἐπιχειροῦσι, τῷ μὲν τελείας γνώσεως ἐκβάλλειν θέλοντες, εἰς δὲ τὴν ἡκρωτηριασμένην ὑμᾶς δὲ τοὺς νῦν ὑψηλοτέρους αὐτῶν ὄντας, ἐν τάξει καταστήσωσι μαθητῶν· τοῦτο γὰρ ἐδήλωσεν εἰτὼν ἵνα αὐτοὺς ζηλοῦτε “There is a good zeal, when one emulates in such a manner as to imitate virtue; and there is a bad zeal, which ‘drives away’ from virtue one who is acting right. And this is what they are now attempting to do, when they wish to ‘drive away’ from perfect knowledge, and to lead them to that which is mutilated and spurious, for no other reason than that they may occupy the ranks of teachers, and that you, who are higher than themselves, may be placed by them in the rank of scholars; for this is what he meant by saying, ‘that ye may emulate them.’” — Chrysostom.



ment, though, at the same time, it suggests the tender years of those who ought now to have arrived at full age. ([Hebrews 5:12](#).) The style is abrupt, which is usually the case with highly pathetic passages. Strong feeling, from the difficulty of finding adequate expression, breaks off our words when half uttered, while the powerful emotion chokes the utterance.

*Of whom I travail in birth again.* This phrase is added, to convey still more fully his vehement affection, which endured, on their account, the throes and pangs of a mother. It denotes likewise his anxiety; for

“a woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.” ([John 16:21](#).)

The Galatians had already been conceived and brought forth; but, after their revolt, they must now be begotten a second time.

*Until Christ be formed in you.* By these words he soothes their anger; for he does not set aside the former birth, but says that they must be again nourished in the womb, as if they had not yet been fully formed. That Christ should be formed in us is the same thing with our being formed in Christ; for we are born so as to become new creatures in him; and he, on the other hand, is born in us, so that we live his life. Since the true image of Christ, through the superstitions introduced by the false apostles, had been defaced, Paul labors to restore that image in all its perfection and brightness. This is done by the ministers of the gospel, when they give

“milk to babes, and strong meat to them that are of full age,” ([Hebrews 5:13, 14](#).)

and, in short, ought to be their employment during the whole course of their preaching. But Paul here compares himself to a woman in labor, because the Galatians were not yet completely born.

This is a remarkable passage for illustrating the efficacy of the Christian ministry. True, we are “born of God,” ([1 John 3:9](#);) but, because he employs a minister and preaching as his instruments for that purpose, he is pleased to ascribe to them that work which Himself performs, through the power of his Spirit, in co-operation with the labors of man. Let us always attend to this distinction, that, when a minister is contrasted with God, he is nothing, and can do nothing, and is utterly useless; but, because the Holy Spirit works efficaciously by means of him, he comes to be regarded and praised as an agent. Still, it is not what he can do in himself, or apart from God, but what God does by him, that is there described. If ministers wish to do anything, let them labor to form Christ, not to form themselves, in their hearers. The writer is now so oppressed with grief, that he almost faints from exhaustion without completing his sentence.

**20.** *I would wish to be present with you now.* This is a most serious expostulation, the complaint of a father so perplexed by the misconduct of his sons, that he looks around him

for advice, and knows not to what hand to turn.<sup>70</sup> He wishes to have an opportunity of personally addressing them, because we thus obtain a better idea of what is adapted to present circumstances; because, according as the hearer is affected, according as he is submissive or obstinate, we are enabled to regulate our discourse. But something more than this was meant by the desire to *change the voice*.<sup>71</sup> He was prepared most cheerfully to assume a variety of forms, and even, if the case required it, to frame a new language. This is a course which pastors ought most carefully to follow. They must not be entirely guided by their own inclinations, or by the bent of their own genius, but must accommodate themselves, as far as the case will allow, to the capacity of the people, — with this reservation, however, that they are to proceed no farther than conscience shall dictate,<sup>72</sup> and that no departure from integrity shall be made, in order to gain the favor of the people.

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70 ἀποροῦμαι ἐν ὑμῖν. “By these words the apostle undoubtedly expresses more than that he was ‘in doubt about’ the Galatians, and was at a loss what he should say about them; for in the preceding verse he had given utterance to the vehement emotion of his mind. With very nearly the same kind of emphasis does this word occur in the Septuagint, at [Genesis 32:7](#), where it is said, ‘And Jacob was greatly afraid, and was in deep anxiety.’ The concluding words are translated καὶ ἠπορεῖτο” — Keuchenius.

71 “To speak sometimes gently, and sometimes harshly, as the case might demand.” — Luther. Φωνή signifies not only a voice, but the thing that is spoken, (Aelian, V. H., p. 347,) whether it be by word of mouth, or by letter. And therefore, when the apostle says that he ‘desired to change his voice,’ he means, that he should be glad to be present and converse with them personally, instead of writing to them at a distance; because then he could be more fully informed of their true state, and better able to know how to order his discourse to them.” — Chandler.

72 “Seulement qu’ils regardent de ne faire chose contre l’honneur de Dieu et leur conscience.” “Only let them beware of doing anything against the honour of God and their own conscience.”

Galatians 4:21-26	
21. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?	21. Dicite mihi, qui sub Lege vultis esse, Legem non auditis?
22. For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.	22. Scriptum est enim, quod Abraham duos filios habuit; unum ex ancilla, alterum ex libera.
23. But he <i>who was</i> of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman <i>was</i> by promise.	23. Sed qui erat ex ancilla, secundum carnem erat genitus: qui vero ex libera, per promissionem.
24. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.	24. Quae allegorica sunt; nam duae sunt pactiones, una quidem a monte Sina, quae in servitutem generat; ea est Agar.
25. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.	25. Nam Agar, Sina mons est in Arabia; ex adverso autem respondet ei quae nunc est Ierusalem; servit enim cum liberis suis.
26. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.	26. Quae autem sursum est Ierusalem, libera est, quae mater est nostra omnium.

21. *Tell me.* Having given exhortations adapted to touch the feelings, he follows up his former doctrine by an illustration of great beauty. Viewed simply as an argument, it would not be very powerful; but, as a confirmation added to a most satisfactory chain of reasoning, it is not unworthy of attention.

*To be under the law*, signifies here, to come under the yoke of the law, on the condition that God will act toward you according to the covenant of the law, and that you, in return, bind yourself to keep the law. In any other sense than this, all believers are under the law; but the apostle treats, as we have already said, of the law with its appendages.

22. *For it is written.* No man who has a choice given him will be so mad as to despise freedom, and prefer slavery. But here the apostle teaches us, that they who are under the law are slaves. Unhappy men! who willingly choose this condition, when God desires to make them free. He gives a representation of this in the two sons of Abraham, one of whom, the son of a slave, held by his mother's condition;<sup>73</sup> while the other, the son of a free woman, obtained the inheritance. He afterwards applies the whole history to his purpose, and illustrates it in an elegant manner.

<sup>73</sup> "La servile condition de sa mere." "His mother's condition as a slave."

In the first place, as the other party armed themselves with the authority of the law, the apostle quotes the law on the other side. *The law* was the name usually given to the Five Books of Moses. Again, as the history which he quotes appeared to have no bearing on the question, he gives to it an allegorical interpretation. But as the apostle declares that these things are *allegorized*, (ἀλληγορούμενα,) Origen, and many others along with him, have seized the occasion of torturing Scripture, in every possible manner, away from the true sense. They concluded that the literal sense is too mean and poor, and that, under the outer bark of the letter, there lurk deeper mysteries, which cannot be extracted but by beating out allegories. And this they had no difficulty in accomplishing; for speculations which appear to be ingenious have always been preferred, and always will be preferred, by the world to solid doctrine.

With such approbation the licentious system gradually attained such a height, that he who handled Scripture for his own amusement not only was suffered to pass unpunished, but even obtained the highest applause. For many centuries no man was considered to be ingenious, who had not the skill and daring necessary for changing into a variety of curious shapes the sacred word of God. This was undoubtedly a contrivance of Satan to undermine the authority of Scripture, and to take away from the reading of it the true advantage. God visited this profanation by a just judgment, when he suffered the pure meaning of the Scripture to be buried under false interpretations.

Scripture, they say, is fertile, and thus produces a variety of meanings.<sup>74</sup> I acknowledge that Scripture is a most rich and inexhaustible fountain of all wisdom; but I deny that its fertility consists in the various meanings which any man, at his pleasure, may assign. Let us know, then, that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning; and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely. Let us not only neglect as doubtful, but boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those pretended expositions, which lead us away from the natural meaning.

But what reply shall we make to Paul's assertion, that these things *are allegorical*? Paul certainly does not mean that Moses wrote the history for the purpose of being turned into an allegory, but points out in what way the history may be made to answer the present subject. This is done by observing a figurative representation of the Church there delineated. And a mystical interpretation of this sort (ἀναγωγή) was not inconsistent with the true and literal meaning, when a comparison was drawn between the Church and the family of Abraham. As the house of Abraham was then a true Church, so it is beyond all doubt that the principal and most memorable events which happened in it are so many types to us. As in circumcision, in sacrifices, in the whole Levitical priesthood, there was an allegory, as there

74 "Et pour ceste cause elle engendre plusieurs sens et de diverses sortes." "And therefore it produces many meanings, and of various kinds."

is an allegory at the present day in our sacraments, — so was there likewise in the house of Abraham; but this does not involve a departure from the literal meaning. In a word, Paul adduces the history, as containing a figurative representation of the two covenants in the two wives of Abraham, and of the two nations in his two sons. And Chrysostom, indeed, acknowledges that the word *allegory* points out the present application to be (κατάχρησις)<sup>75</sup> different from the natural meaning; which is perfectly true.

**23. But he who was of the bond woman.** Both were sons of Abraham according to the flesh; but in Isaac there was this peculiarity, that he had the promise of grace. In Ishmael there was nothing besides nature; in Isaac there was the election of God, signified in part by the manner of his birth, which was not in the ordinary course, but miraculous. Yet there is an indirect reference to the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews: for the latter boast of their ancestry, while the former, without any human interference, are become the spiritual offspring of Abraham.

**24. These are the two covenants.** I have thought it better to adopt this translation, in order not to lose sight of the beauty of the comparison; for Paul compares the two διαθήκαι, to two mothers, and to employ *testamentum*, (a testament,) which is a neuter noun, for denoting a mother, would be harsh. The word *pactio* (a covenant) appears to be, on that account, more appropriate; and indeed the desire of obtaining perspicuity, as well as elegance, has led me to make this choice.<sup>76</sup>

The comparison is now formally introduced. As in the house of Abraham there were two mothers, so are there also in the Church of God. Doctrine is the mother of whom we are born, and is twofold, Legal and Evangelical. The legal mother, whom Hagar resembles,

<sup>75</sup> “A cataehresis borrows the name of one thing to express another; which thing, though it has a name of its own, yet, under a borrowed name, surprises us with novelty, or infuses into our discourses a bold and daring energy. The Sacred Scriptures will furnish us with many instances of this trope. [Leviticus 26:30](#), — ‘And I will cast your carcases upon the carcases of your idols;’ that is, upon the ruins of your idols, which shall be as much destroyed as the body is when it is slain, and become a dead carcase. So [Deuteronomy 32:14](#); [Psalm 80:5](#); [Hosea 14:2](#). But the boldest catachresis, perhaps, in all the Holy Scriptures, is in [1 Corinthians 1:25](#)., Because the foolishness of God,’ says the apostle, ‘is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men;’ that is, what men are apt to account foolishness in God surpasses their wisdom, and what they may be ready to misconstrue as weakness in God, excels all their power. Gibbons’s Rhetoric.

<sup>76</sup> To a Latin scholar the author’s meaning is obvious enough. But it may be proper to apprise the English reader, that *pactio* (a covenant) is a feminine noun, and, on that account, is pronounced to be more natural and graceful, in a metaphorical description of a mother, than *testamentum*, (a testament,) which, being a neuter noun, sounds harshly in this connection. In that point of view, the preference is little else than a matter of taste; but, on far higher grounds, “covenant” is a more faithful translation than “testament;” and a careful investigation of the meaning of διαθήκη would contribute greatly to elucidate many passages of Scripture. — Ed.

*gendereth to bondage*. Sarah again, represents the second, which *gendereth to freedom*; though Paul begins higher, and makes our first mother Sinai, and our second, Jerusalem. The two covenants, then, are the mothers, of whom children unlike one another are born; for the legal covenant makes slaves, and the evangelical covenant makes freemen.

But all this may, at first sight, appear absurd; for there are none of God's children who are not born to freedom, and therefore the comparison does not apply. I answer, what Paul says is true in two respects; for the law formerly brought forth its disciples, (among whom were included the holy prophets, and other believers,) to slavery, though not to permanent slavery, but because God placed them for a time under the law as "a schoolmaster."<sup>77</sup> (Galatians 3:25.) Under the vail of ceremonies, and of the whole economy by which they were governed, their freedom was concealed: to the outward eye nothing but slavery appeared. "Ye have not," says Paul to the Romans, "received the spirit of bondage again to fear." (Romans 8:15.) Those holy fathers, though inwardly they were free in the sight of God, yet in outward appearance differed nothing from slaves, and thus resembled their mother's condition. But the doctrine of the gospel bestows upon its children perfect freedom as soon as they are born, and brings them up in a liberal manner.

Paul does not, I acknowledge, speak of that kind of children, as the context will show. By the children of Sinai, it will afterwards be explained, are meant hypocrites, who are at length expelled from the Church of God, and deprived of the inheritance. What, then, is the *gendering to bondage*, which forms the subject of the present dispute? It denotes those who make a wicked abuse of the law, by finding in it nothing but what tends to slavery. Not so the pious fathers, who lived under the Old Testament; for their slavish birth by the law did not hinder them from having Jerusalem for their mother in spirit. But those who adhere to the bare law, and do not acknowledge it to be "a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ," (Galatians 3:24,) but rather make it a hinderance to prevent their coming to him, are the Ishmaelites born to slavery.

It will again be objected, why does the apostle say that such persons are born of God's covenant, and are considered to belong to the Church? I answer, strictly speaking, they are not God's children, but are degenerate and spurious, and are disclaimed by God, whom they falsely call their Father. They receive this name in the Church, not because they are members of it in reality, but because for a time they presume to occupy that place, and impose on men by the disguise which they wear. The apostle here views the Church, as it appears in this world: but on this subject we shall afterwards speak.

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77 "C'est a dire, les conduisoit comme petits enfans." "That is, treated them like little children."

25. *For Agar is mount Sinai*<sup>78</sup> I shall not waste time in refuting the expositions of other writers; for Jerome's conjecture, that Mount Sinai had two names, is trifling; and the disquisitions of Chrysostom about the agreement of the names are equally unworthy of notice. Sinai is called Hagar,<sup>79</sup> because it is a type or figure, as the Passover was Christ. The situation of the mountain is mentioned by way of contempt. It lies in Arabia, beyond the limits of the holy land, by which the eternal inheritance was prefigured. The wonder is, that in so familiar a matter they erred so egregiously.

*And answers, on the other hand.* The Vulgate translates it, *is joined* (conjunctus est) to Jerusalem; and Erasmus makes it, *borders on* (confinis) Jerusalem; but I have adopted the phrase, *on the other hand*, (ex adverso,) in order to avoid obscurity. For the apostle certainly does not refer to nearness, or relative position, but to resemblance, as respects the present comparison. The word, σύστοιχα, which is translated *corresponding to*, denotes those things which are so arranged as to have a mutual relation to each other, and a similar word, συατοιχία, when applied to trees and other objects, conveys the idea of their following in regular order. Mount Sinai is said (συστοιχεῖν) *to correspond to* that which is now Jerusalem, in the same sense as Aristotle says that Rhetoric is (ἀντίστροφος) the *counterpart* to Logic, by a metaphor borrowed from lyric compositions, which were usually arranged in two parts, so adapted as to be sung in harmony. In short, the word, συστοιχεῖ, *corresponds*, means nothing more than that it belongs to the same class.

But why does Paul compare the present Jerusalem with Mount Sinai? Though I was once of a different opinion, yet I agree with Chrysostom and Ambrose, who explain it as referring to the earthly Jerusalem, and who interpret the words, *which now is*, τῷ νῦν Ἰερουσαλήμ, as marking the slavish doctrine and worship into which it had degenerated. It ought to have been a lively image of the new Jerusalem, and a representation of its character. But such as it now is, it is rather related to Mount Sinai. Though the two places may

78 "Car Agar est la montagne de Sina en Arabie, et est correspondante a Ierusalem; ou, Sina est une montagne en Arabie, correspondante a Ierusalem." "For Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem; or, Sinai is a mountain in Arabia, which corresponds to Jerusalem."

79 "Several critics have thought it so extraordinary, that they have attempted to alter it from mere conjecture, as may be seen in Bowyer's 'Critical Conjectures.' But no man, who knew that the Arabic word 'Hagar' meant a rock, could think of making an alteration in this passage; for it is obvious that τὸ Ἀγάρ, in the neuter gender, cannot signify the woman *Hagar*; and Paul has not been guilty of a grammatical error, since the passage must be translated, 'The word Hagar denotes Mount Sinai in Arabia.'" — Michaelis. "That this was an appellation of Sinai among the people of the surrounding country, we have the testimony of Chrysostom and the ancient commentators, which is also confirmed by the accounts of modern travellers. And it might well have it, since ἡγάρα (*hagar*) in Arabia signifies a rock, or rocky mountain; and as Sinai is remarkably such, it might be κατ' ἐξοχὴν, called τὸ Ἀγάρ." — Bloomfield.

be widely distant from each other, they are perfectly alike in all their most important features. This is a heavy reproach against the Jews, whose real mother was not Sarah but the spurious Jerusalem, twin sister of Hagar; who were therefore slaves born of a slave, though they haughtily boasted that they were the sons of Abraham.

**26. But Jerusalem, which is above.** The Jerusalem which he calls *above*, or heavenly, is not contained in heaven; nor are we to seek for it out of this world; for the Church is spread over the whole world, and is a “stranger and pilgrim on the earth.” ([Hebrews 11:13](#).) Why then is it said to be from heaven? Because it originates in heavenly grace; for the sons of God are

“born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh,  
nor of the will of man,” ([John 1:13](#)),

but by the power of the Holy Spirit. The heavenly Jerusalem, which derives its origin from heaven, and dwells above by faith, is the mother of believers. To the Church, under God, we owe it that we are

“born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,”  
([1 Peter 1:23](#)),

and from her we obtain the milk and the food by which we are afterwards nourished.

Such are the reasons why the Church is called the mother of believers. And certainly he who refuses to be a son of the Church in vain desires to have God as his Father; for it is only through the instrumentality of the Church that we are “born of God,” ([1 John 3:9](#)), and brought up through the various stages of childhood and youth, till we arrive at manhood. This designation, “the mother of us all,” reflects the highest credit and the highest honor on the Church. But the Papists are fools and twice children, who expect to give us uneasiness by producing these words; for their mother is an adulteress, who brings forth to death the children of the devil; and how foolish is the demand, that the children of God should surrender themselves to her to be cruelly slain! Might not the synagogue of Jerusalem at that time have assumed such haughty pretensions, with far higher plausibility than Rome at the present day? and yet we see how Paul strips her of every honorable distinction, and consigns her to the lot of Hagar.

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Galatians 4:27-31	
27. For it is written, Rejoice, <i>thou</i> barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.	27. Scriptum est enim: Exulta, sterilis, quum non paris; erumpe et elama, quae non parituris; quae plures erunt liberi desertae quam habentis maritum. ( <a href="#">Isaiah 54:1.</a> )
28. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.	28. Nos autem, fratres, secundum Issac, promissionis sumus filii. ( <a href="#">Romans 9:7.</a> )
29. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him <i>that was born</i> after the Spirit, even so <i>it is</i> now.	29. Sed quemadmodum tunc, qui secundum carnem erat genitus, persequabatur eum qui secundum Spiritum genitus erat; sic et nunc.
30. Nevertheless, 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 freewoman.	30. Sed quid dicit Scriptura? Ejice ancillam, et filium ejus; non enim haereditatem obtinebit filius ancillae cum filio liberae. ( <a href="#">Genesis 21:10.</a> )
31. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.	31. Ergo, fratres, non sumus ancillae filii, sed liberae.

27. *For it is written.* The apostle proves, by a quotation from Isaiah, that the lawful sons of the Church are born according to the promise. The passage is in [Isaiah 54](#) where the prophet speaks of the kingdom of Christ and the calling of the Gentiles, and promises to the barren wife and the widow a numerous offspring; for it is on this ground that he exhorts the Church to “sing” and “rejoice.” The design of the apostle, let it be carefully remarked, is to deprive the Jews of all claim to that spiritual Jerusalem to which the prophecy relates. Isaiah proclaims, that her children shall be gathered out of all the nations of the earth, and not by any preparation of hers, but by the free grace and blessing of God.

He next concludes that we become the sons of God by promise, after the example (κατὰ Ἰσαὰκ) of Isaac, and that in no other way do we obtain this honor. To readers little skilled or practiced in the examination of Scripture, this reasoning may appear inconclusive; because they do not hold the most undoubted of all principles, that all the promises, being founded on the Messiah, are of free grace. It was because the apostle took this for granted, that he so fearlessly contrasted the promise with the law.

29. *As then, he that was born after the flesh.* He denounces the cruelty of the false apostles, who wantonly insulted pious persons that placed all their confidence in Christ. There was abundant need that the uneasiness of the oppressed should be soothed by consolation, and that the cruelty of their oppressors should be severely checked. It is not wonderful, he says,

that the children of the law, at the present day, do what Ishmael their father at first did, who, trusting to his being the first-born, persecuted Isaac the true heir. With the same proud disdain do his posterity now, on account of outward ceremonies, circumcision, and the various services of the law, molest and vaunt over the lawful sons of God. *The Spirit* is again contrasted with the flesh, that is, the calling of God with human appearance. (1 Samuel 16:7.) So the disguise is admitted to be possessed by the followers of the Law and of works, but the reality is claimed for those who rely on the calling of God alone, and depend upon his grace.

*Persecuted.* But persecution is nowhere mentioned, only Moses says that Ishmael was ~~metzahek~~, (*metzahek*,) *mocking*, (Genesis 21:9;) and by this participle he intimates that Ishmael ridiculed his brother Isaac. The explanation offered by some Jews, that this was a simple smile, is entirely inadmissible; for what cruelty would it have argued, that a harmless smile should have been so fearfully revenged? There cannot then be a doubt that he maliciously endeavored to provoke the child Isaac by reproachful language.

But how widely distant is this from persecution? <sup>80</sup> And yet it is not idly or unguardedly that Paul enlarges on this point. No persecution ought to distress us so much as to see our calling attempted to be undermined by the reproaches of wicked men. Neither blows, nor scourging, nor nails, nor thorns, occasioned to our Lord such intense suffering as that blasphemy:

“He trusted in God; what availeth it to him?  
for he is deprived of all assistance.” (Matthew 27:43.)

There is more venom in this than in all persecutions; for how much more alarming is it that the grace of Divine adoption shall be made void, than that this frail life shall be taken from us? Ishmael did not persecute his brother with the sword; but, what is worse, he treated him with haughty disdain by trampling under foot the promise of God. All persecutions arise from this source, that wicked men despise and hate in the elect the grace of God; a memorable instance of which we have in the history of Cain and Abel. (Genesis 4:8.)

This reminds us, that not only ought we to be filled with horror at outward persecutions, when the enemies of religion slay us with fire and sword; when they banish, imprison, torture, or scourge; but when they attempt, by their blasphemies, to make void our confidence,

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80 “The history tells us, that he laughed at, derided, and mocked him to scorn, which is real persecution; probably through pride, and the conceit of being Abraham’s eldest son and heir.” — Chandler. “Διῶκω will here denote injurious treatment of every kind, both in deeds and words. And although the Mosaic history records only one instance of insulting treatment, — namely, on Ishmael mocking Sarah, when she weaned Isaac, (Genesis 21:9, 10,) yet when we consider the disappointment which both Hagar and Ishmael must have felt on the birth of Isaac, it was not unnatural for them to feel ill-will, and show it on every occasion, to the real heir of the promise. And many such are recorded, from tradition, in the Rabbinical writers.” — Bloomfield.

which rests on the promises of God; when they ridicule our salvation, when they wantonly laugh to scorn the whole gospel. Nothing ought to wound our minds so deeply as contempt of God, and reproaches cast upon His grace: nor is there any kind of persecution more deadly than when the salvation of the soul is assailed. We who have escaped from the tyranny of the Pope, are not called to encounter the swords of wicked men. But how blind must we be, if we are not affected by that spiritual persecution, in which they strive, by every method, to extinguish that doctrine, from which we draw the breath of life! — when they attack our faith by their blasphemies, and shake not a few of the less informed! For my own part, I am far more grieved by the fury of the Epicureans than of the Papists. They do not attack us by open violence; but, in proportion as the name of God is more dear to me than my own life, the diabolical conspiracy which I see in operation to extinguish all fear and worship of God, to root out the remembrance of Christ, or to abandon it to the jeers of the ungodly, cannot but rack my mind with greater anxiety, than if a whole country were burning in one conflagration:

**30.** *But what saith the Scripture?* There was some consolation in knowing that we do but share the lot of our father Isaac; but it is a still greater consolation, when he adds, that hypocrites, with all their boasting, can gain nothing more than to be *cast out* of the spiritual family of Abraham; and that, to whatever extent they may harass us for a time, the inheritance will certainly be ours. Let believers cheer themselves with this consolation, that the tyranny of the Ishmaelites will not last for ever. They appear to have reached the highest pre-eminence, and, proud of their birthright, look down upon us with contempt; but they will one day be declared to be the descendants of Hagar, the sons of a slave, and unworthy of the inheritance.

Let us be instructed by this beautiful passage,  
 “not to fret ourselves because of evil-doers,  
 neither be envious against the workers of iniquity,”  
 (Psalm 37:1,)

when they hold a temporary habitation and rank in the Church, but patiently to look for the end which awaits them. There are many pretended Christians, or strangers, who hold a place in the Church, but who afterwards give evidence of their departure from the faith, as he who, proud of his birthright, at first reigned, was cast out like a foreigner with the posterity of Ishmael. Some censorious persons smile at Paul’s simplicity, in comparing a woman’s passion, arising out of a trifling quarrel, to a judgment of God. But they overlook the decree of God, which took effect in such a manner, as to make it manifest that the whole transaction was directed by a heavenly providence. That Abraham should have been commanded to humor his wife (Genesis 21:12) entirely in the matter, is no doubt extraordinary, but proves that God employed the services of Sarah for confirming his own promise. In a word, the *casting out* of Ishmael was nothing else than the consequence and the accomplish-

ment of that promise, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called,” ([Genesis 21:12](#),) — not in Ishmael. Although, therefore, it was the revenging of a woman’s quarrel, yet God did not the less make known his sentence by her mouth as a type of the Church.

**31.** *So then, brethren.* He now exhorts the Galatians to prefer the condition of the children of Sarah to that of the children of Hagar; and having reminded them that, by the grace of Christ, they were born to freedom, he desires them to continue in the same condition. If we shall call the Papists, Ishmaelites and Hagarites, and boast that we are the lawful children, they will smile at us; but if the two subjects in dispute be fairly compared, the most ignorant person will be at no loss to decide.

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CHAPTER 5

Galatians 5:1-6	
1. Stand fast therefore in the liberty where-with Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.	1. In libertate igitur, qua Christus nos liberavit, state; et ne rursum jugo servitutis implicemini.
2. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.	2. Ecee, ego Paulus denuncio vobis, quod, si circumcidamini, Christus vobis nihil proderit.
3. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.	3. Testificor enim rursum cuivis homini, qui circumciditur, quod debitor sit totius Legis faciendae.
4. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.	4. Exinaniti estis a Christo, quicumque per Legem justificamini, a gratia excidistis.
5. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.	5. Nos enim Spiritu, ex fide, spem justitiae expectamus.
6. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.	6. Nam in Christo Iesu neque Circumcisio quicquam valet, neque Praeputium; sed fides per dilectionero operans.

1. *Stand fast therefore.* After having told them that they are the *children of the free woman*, he now reminds them that they ought not lightly to despise a freedom so precious. And certainly it is an invaluable blessing, in defense of which it is our duty to fight, even to death; since not only the highest temporal considerations, but our eternal interests also, animate us to the contest.<sup>81</sup> Many persons, having never viewed the subject in this light, charge us with excessive zeal, when they see us so warmly and earnestly contending for freedom of faith as to outward matters, in opposition to the tyranny of the Pope. Under this cloak, our adversaries raise a prejudice against us among ignorant people, as if the whole object of our pursuit were licentiousness, which is the relaxation of all discipline. But wise and skillful persons are aware that this is one of the most important doctrines connected with salvation. This is not a question whether you shall eat this or that food, — whether you shall observe or neglect a particular day, (which is the foolish notion entertained by many, and the slander uttered by some,) but what is your positive duty before God, what is necessary to salvation,

81 “Car il n’est pas yci seulement question du monde et des eommoditez de ceste vie, mais aussi des choses saintes et qui eoncernent le service de Dieu.” “For the present subject comprehends not merely the world and the benefits of this life, but also holy things, and those which relate to the worship of God.”

and what cannot be omitted without sin. In short, the controversy relates to the liberty of conscience, when placed before the tribunal of God.

The *liberty* of which Paul speaks is exemption from the ceremonies of the law, the observance of which was demanded by the false apostles as necessary. But let the reader, at the same time, remember, that such liberty is only a part of that which Christ has procured for us: for how small a matter would it be, if he had only freed us from ceremonies? This is but a stream, which must be traced to a higher source. It is because

“Christ was made a curse, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law,” ([Galatians 3:13](#);)

because he has revolted the power of the law” so far as it held us liable to the judgment of God under the penalty of eternal death; because, in a word, he has rescued us from the tyranny of sin, Satan, and death. Thus, under one department is included the whole class; but on this subject we shall speak more fully on the Epistle to the Colossians.

This *liberty* was procured for us by Christ on the cross: the fruit and possession of it are bestowed upon us through the Gospel. Well does Paul, then, warn the Galatians, *not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage*, — that is, not to allow a snare to be laid for their consciences. For if men lay upon our shoulders an unjust burden, it may be borne; but if they endeavor to bring our consciences into bondage, we must resist valiantly, even to death. If men be permitted to bind our consciences, we shall be deprived of an invaluable blessing, and an insult will be, at the same time, offered to Christ, the Author of our freedom. But what is the force of the word *again*, in the exhortation, “and be not entangled *again* with the yoke of bondage?” for the Galatians had never lived under the law. It simply means that they were not to be entangled, as if they had not been redeemed by the grace of Christ. Although the law was given to Jews, not to Gentiles, yet, apart from Christ, neither the one nor the other enjoys any freedom, but absolute bondage.

2. *Behold, I Paul*. He could not have pronounced a severer threatening than that it would exclude them entirely from the grace of Christ. But what is the meaning of this, that Christ will *profit nothing* to all who are circumcised? Did Christ *profit nothing* to Abraham? Nay, it was in order that Christ might profit him that he received circumcision. If we say that it was in force till the coming of Christ, what reply shall we make to the case of Timothy? We must observe, that Paul’s reasoning is directed not so properly against the outward rite or ceremony, as against the wicked doctrine of the false apostles, who pretended that it was a necessary part of the worship of God, and at the same time made it a ground of confidence as a meritorious work. These diabolical contrivances made Christ to *profit nothing*; not that the false apostles denied Christ, or wished him to be entirely set aside, but that they made such a division between his grace and the works of the law as to leave not more than the half of salvation due to Christ. The apostle contends that Christ cannot be divided in this way, and that he “profiteth nothing,” unless he is wholly embraced.

And what else do our modern Papists but thrust upon us, in place of circumcision, trifles of their own invention? The tendency of their whole doctrine is to blend the grace of Christ with the merit of works, which is impossible. Whoever wishes to have the half of Christ, loses the whole. And yet the Papists think themselves exceedingly acute when they tell us that they ascribe nothing to works, except through the influence of the grace of Christ, as if this were a different error from what was charged on the Galatians. They did not believe that they had departed from Christ, or relinquished his grace; and yet they lost Christ entirely, when that important part of evangelical doctrine was corrupted.

The expression *Behold, I Paul*, is very emphatic; for he places himself before them, and gives his name, to remove all appearance of hesitation. And though his authority had begun to be less regarded among the Galatians, he asserts that it is sufficient to put down every adversary.

3. *For I testify again*. What he now advances is proved by the contradiction involved in the opposite statement. He who is *a debtor to do the whole law* <sup>82</sup> will never escape death, but will always continue to be held as guilty; for no man will ever be found who satisfies the law. <sup>83</sup> Such being the obligation, the man must unavoidably be condemned, and Christ can render him no service. We see then the contradictory nature of the two propositions, that we are partakers of the grace of Christ, and yet that we are bound to fulfill the whole law. But will it not then follow, that none of the fathers were saved? Will it not also follow that Timothy was ruined, since Paul caused him to be circumcised? ([Acts 16:3](#).) Wo to us then, till we have been emancipated from the law, for subjection is inseparable from circumcision!

It ought to be observed that Paul is accustomed to view circumcision in two different aspects, as every person who has best, owed a moderate degree of attention on his writings will easily perceive. In the Epistle to the Romans, ([Romans 4:11](#)), he calls it “a seal of the righteousness of faith;” and there, under circumcision, he includes Christ and the free promise of salvation. But here he contrasts it with Christ, and faith, and the gospel, and grace, — viewing it simply as a legal covenant, founded on the merit of works.

The consequence is, as we have already said, that he does not always speak about circumcision in the same way; but the reason of the difference must be taken into account. When he views circumcision in its own nature, he properly makes it to be a symbol of grace, because such was the appointment of God. But when he is dealing with the false apostles, who abused circumcision by making it an instrument for destroying the Gospel, he does

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82 “If Judaism is the road to salvation, the whole of Judaism must be observed. You must not cull and throw away whatever part of it you think fit.” — Grotius.

83 “Car il ne s’en trouvera jamais un seul, qui satisfait entierement a la Loy.” “For never will there be found a single individual who entirely satisfies the law.”



not there consider the purpose for which it was appointed by the Lord, but attacks the corruption which has proceeded from men.

A very striking example occurs in this passage. When Abraham had received a promise concerning Christ, and justification by free grace, and eternal salvation, circumcision was added, in order to confirm the promise; and thus it became, by the appointment of God, a sacrament, which was subservient to faith. Next come the false apostles, who pretend that it is a meritorious work, and recommend the observance of the law, making a profession of obedience to it to be signified by circumcision as an initiatory rite. Paul makes no reference here to the appointment of God, but attacks the unscriptural views of the false apostles.

It will be objected, that the abuses, whatever they may be, which wicked men commit, do not at all impair the sacred ordinances of God. I reply, the Divine appointment of circumcision was only for a time. After the coming of Christ, it ceased to be a Divine institution, because baptism had succeeded in its room. Why, then, was Timothy circumcised? Not certainly on his own account, but for the sake of weak brethren, to whom that point was yielded. To show more fully the agreement between the doctrine of the Papists and that which Paul opposes, it must be observed, that the sacraments, when we partake of them in a sincere manner, are not the works of men, but of God. In baptism or the Lord's supper, we do nothing but present ourselves to God, in order to receive his grace. Baptism, viewed in regard to us, is a passive work: we bring nothing to it but faith; and all that belongs to it is laid up in Christ. But what are the views of the Papists? They contrive the *opus operatum*,<sup>84</sup> by which men merit the grace of God; and what is this, but to extinguish utterly the truth of the sacrament? Baptism and the Lord's supper are retained by us, because it was the will of Christ that the use of them should be perpetual; but those wicked and foolish notions are rejected by us with the strong abhorrence which they deserve.

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84 "Thus the Council of Trent has decreed: "If any man shall say that the sacraments of the new law do not contain the grace which they signify, or do not confer grace upon those who do not oppose an obstacle to it, as if external signs of grace or righteousness received by faith, let him be accursed." — Sessio 7. *De Sacramentis in genere*, Canon vi. Again, "If any man shall say, that grace is not conferred by the sacraments of the new law themselves, *ex opere operato*, but that faith alone in the divine promise is sufficient to obtain grace, let him be accursed. — Sessio vii. *De Sacramentis in genere*, Canon viii. The translator subjoins a few observations, by the late Rev. Dr. Dick, on a phrase which appears to defy translation. "This barbarous phrase *opus operatum*, which is utterly unintelligible without an explanation, signifies the external celebration of the sacraments. It has been defined by Popish writers to be the performance of the external work without any internal motion; and sacraments have been said to confer grace *ex opere operato*, because, besides the exhibition and application of the sign, no good motion is necessary in the receiver. All that is required is, that no obstacle shall be opposed to the reception of grace, and the only obstacle is mortal sin." — *Lectures on Theology*, volume 4.

4. *Christ has become of no effect unto you.* “If ye seek any part of righteousness in the works of the law, Christ has no concern with you, and *ye are fallen from grace.*” They were not so grossly mistaken as to believe that by the observance of the law alone they were justified, but attempted to mix Christ with the law. In any other point of view, Paul’s threatenings would have utterly failed to produce alarm. “What are you doing? You deprive yourselves of every advantage from Christ, and treat his grace as if it were of no value whatever.” We see then that the smallest part of justification cannot be attributed to the law without renouncing Christ and his grace.

5. *For we through the Spirit.* He now anticipates an objection that, might readily occur. “Will circumcision then be of no use?” *In Jesus Christ*, he replies, it *availeth* nothing. *Righteousness*, therefore, depends on faith, and is obtained, through the Spirit, without ceremonies. To *wait for the hope of righteousness*, is to place our confidence in this or that object, or, to decide from what quarter righteousness is to be expected; though the words probably contain the exhortation, “Let us continue steadfastly in the hope of righteousness which we obtain by faith.” When he says that we obtain righteousness by faith, this applies equally to us and to our fathers. All of them, as Scripture testifies, ([Hebrews 11:5](#)), “pleased God;” but their faith was concealed by the veil of ceremonies, and therefore he distinguishes us from them by the word *Spirit*, which is contrasted with outward shadows. His meaning therefore is, that all that is now necessary for obtaining righteousness is a simple faith, which declines the aid of splendid ceremonies, and is satisfied with the spiritual worship of God.

6. *For in Jesus Christ.* The reason why believers now wait for the hope of righteousness through the Spirit is, that in Christ, that is, in the kingdom of Christ, or in the Christian church, circumcision with its appendages is abolished; for, by a figure of speech in which a part is taken for the whole, the word Circumcision is put for ceremonies. While he declares that they no longer possess any influence, he does not admit that they were always useless; for he does not maintain that they were repealed till after the revelation of Christ. This enables us to answer another question, Why does he here speak so contemptuously of circumcision, as if it had been of no advantage? The rank which circumcision once held as a sacrament is not now considered. The question is not what was its value before it had been abolished. But under the kingdom of Christ, he pronounces it to be on a level with uncircumcision, because the coming of Christ has put an end to legal ceremonies.

*But faith, which worketh by love.* The contrast here introduced, between ceremonies and the exercise of love, was intended to prevent the Jews from thinking too highly of themselves, and imagining that they were entitled to some superiority; for towards the close of the Epistle, instead of this clause, he uses the words, *a new creature.* ([Galatians 6:15](#).) As if he had said, Ceremonies are no longer enjoined by Divine authority; and, if we abound in the exercise of love, all is well. Meanwhile, this does not set aside our sacraments, which

are aids to faith but is merely a short announcement of what he had formerly taught as to the spiritual worship of God.

There would be no difficulty in this passage, were it not for the dishonest manner in which it has been tortured by the Papists to uphold the righteousness of works. When they attempt to refute our doctrine, that we are justified by faith alone, they take this line of argument. If the faith which justifies us be that "which worketh by love," then faith alone does not justify. I answer, they do not comprehend their own silly talk; still less do they comprehend our statements. It is not our doctrine that the faith which justifies is alone; we maintain that it is invariably accompanied by good works; only we contend that faith alone is sufficient for justification. The Papists themselves are accustomed to tear faith after a murderous fashion, sometimes presenting it out of all shape and unaccompanied by love, and at other times, in its true character. We, again, refuse to admit that, in any case, faith can be separated from the Spirit of regeneration; but when the question comes to be in what manner we are justified, we then set aside all works.

With respect to the present passage, Paul enters into no dispute whether love cooperates with faith in justification; but, in order to avoid the appearance of representing Christians as idle and as resembling blocks of wood, he points out what are the true exercises of believers. When you are engaged in discussing the question of justification, beware of allowing any mention to be made of love or of works, but resolutely adhere to the exclusive particle. Paul does not here treat of justification, or assign any part of the praise of it to love. Had he done so, the same argument would prove that circumcision and ceremonies, at a former period, had some share in justifying a sinner. As in Christ Jesus he commends faith accompanied by love, so before the coming of Christ ceremonies were required. But this has nothing to do with obtaining righteousness, as the Papists themselves allow; and neither must it be supposed that love possesses any such influence.

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Galatians 5:7-12	
7. Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?	7. Currebatis bene. Quis vos impedit, ne obediretis veritati?
8. This persuasion <i>cometh</i> not of him that calleth you.	8. Persuasio non est ex eo qui vocavit vos.
9. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.	9. Modicum fermentum totam massam fermentat.
10. I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.	10. Ego persuasus sum Deuteronomy vobis in Domino, quod non aliud sitis sensuri: qui autem turbat vos, portabit iudicium, quisquis sit.
11. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.	11. Ego autem, fratres, si circumcisionem adhuc praedicem, quid adhuc persecutionem patior? exinanitum est scandalum crucis.
12. I would they were even cut off which trouble you.	12. Utinam etiam abscindantur, qui vos conturbant.

7. *Ye did run well.* The censure which the apostle administers for their present departure from the truth is mingled with approbation of their former course, for the express purpose that, by being brought to a sense of shame, they may return more speedily to the right path. The astonishment conveyed in the question, *who hindered you?* was intended to produce a blush. I have chosen to translate the Greek word *πείσθαι*, *obey*, rather than *believe*, because, having once embraced the purity of the gospel, they had been led away from a course of obedience.

8. *This persuasion cometh not.* Having formerly combated them by arguments, he at length pronounces, with a voice of authority, that their *persuasion* came not from God. Such an admonition would not be entitled to much regard, were it not supported by the authority of the speaker. But Paul, to whom the Galatians had been indebted for the announcement of their Divine calling, was well entitled to address them in this confident language. This is the reason why he does not directly say, *from God*, but expresses it by a circumlocution, *him that hath called you*<sup>85</sup> As if he had said, “God is never inconsistent with himself, and he it

85 “The apostle’s statement seems to be, ‘This persuasion to which you have yielded is not from Christ. It comes from a very different quarter. The men who have employed it are not moved by *his* spirit. They have no divine authority; and you ought not to yield to them, no, not for an hour.’” — Brown.

is who by my preaching called you to salvation. This new persuasion then has come from some other quarter; and if you wish to have it thought that your calling is from God, beware of lending an ear to those who thrust upon you their new inventions.” Though the Greek participle καλοῦντος, I acknowledge, is in the present tense, I have preferred translating, *who hath called you*, in order to remove the ambiguity.

**9. A little leaven.** This refers, I think, to doctrine, not to men. It guards them against the mischievous consequences which arise from corruption of doctrine, and warns them not to consider it, as is commonly done, to be a matter attended by little or no danger. Satan’s stratagem is, that he does not attempt an avowed destruction of the whole gospel, but he taints its purity by introducing false and corrupt opinions. Many persons are thus led to overlook the seriousness of the injury done, and therefore make a less determined resistance. The apostle proclaims aloud that, after the truth of God has been corrupted, we are no longer safe. He employs the metaphor of *leaven*, which, however small in quantity, communicates its sourness to the whole mass. We must exercise the utmost caution lest we allow any counterfeit to be substituted for the pure doctrine of the gospel.

**10. I have confidence in you.** All his fierceness is again directed against the false apostles. To them the evil is traced, and on them the punishment is threatened. Good hopes are expressed regarding the Galatians, that they will quickly and readily return to a sincere belief. It gives us courage to learn that good hopes are entertained about us; for we reckon it shameful to disappoint those whose feelings towards us are kind and friendly. But to bring back the Galatians to the pure doctrine of faith, from which they had turned aside, was the work of God. The apostle says that he has confidence in them, ἐν Κυρίῳ, *through the Lord*, by which he reminds them that repentance is a heavenly gift, and that they must ask it from God.

*He that troubleth you*<sup>86</sup> The sentiment which he had just delivered is confirmed by thus indirectly imputing the greater part of the blame to those impostors by whom the Galatians had been deceived. From the punishment denounced against *them*, the Galatians are very nearly exempted. Let all who introduce confusion into churches, who break the unity of faith, who destroy their harmony, lend an ear to this; and if they have any right feeling, let them tremble at this word. God declares, by the mouth of Paul, that none “through whom such offenses come” (Luke 17:1) will pass unpunished. The phrase, *whosoever he be*, is em-

86 “However, he ‘that troubleth you,’ or rather, ‘perplexes and unsettles you,’ as if this was *all* he could do, — not *teach* them. So Galen, cited by Wetstein; ταράττοντες μόνον τοὺς μανθάνοντας, διδάσκοντες δὲ οὐδέν, ‘only troubling the scholars, and teaching them nothing.’ The use of the singular will not prove that there was no more than *one* false teacher; since it may be used collectively. Yet the apostle seems to glance at one, the principal of them; and by ὅστις ἅν ᾤ, ‘whosoever he be,’ we may infer that he was a person of some consequence.” — Bloomfield.

phatic; for the high sounding language of the false apostles had terrified the ignorant multitude. It became necessary for Paul to defend his doctrine with corresponding warmth and energy, and not to spare any one who dared to raise his voice against it, however eminent or however distinguished.

**11. *And I, brethren.*** This argument, is drawn from the final cause. "It would be completely in my power," he says, "to avoid the displeasure of men, and every kind of danger and persecution, were I only to mix ceremonies with Christ. The earnestness with which I oppose them is not on my own account, nor for my own advantage." But does it therefore follow that his doctrine is true? I answer, proper feelings and pure conscience, when manifested by a teacher, have no small share in obtaining confidence. Besides, it cannot be believed that any man would be so mad as to take measures, of his own accord, for bringing distress upon himself. Lastly, he throws upon his adversaries the suspicion, that, in preaching circumcision, they were more disposed to consult their own ease than to be faithful in the service of Christ. In short, Paul was at the farthest remove from ambition, covetousness, or regard to personal interest, since he despised favor and applause, and exposed himself to the persecutions and fury of the multitude rather than swerve a hair's-breadth from the purity of the gospel.

*Then is the offense of the cross ceased.* Willingly does Paul, in speaking of the gospel, call it the cross, or the preaching of the cross, when he wishes to bring its poor, simple style, into contrast with the "great swelling words" ([Jude 1:16](#)) of human wisdom or righteousness. For the Jews, puffed up with an ill-founded confidence in their righteousness, and the Greeks, with a foolish belief of their wisdom, despised the meanness of the gospel. When therefore he says that now, If the preaching of circumcision be admitted, the offense of the cross will no longer exist, he means that the gospel will meet with no annoyance from the Jews, but will be taught with their entire concurrence. And why? Because they will no longer take offense at a pretended and spurious gospel, gathered out of Moses and out of Christ, but will look with greater indulgence on that mixture which will leave them in possession of their former superiority.

**12. *Would that they were even cut off.*** His indignation proceeds still farther, and he prays for destruction on those impostors by whom the Galatians had been deceived. The word, "cut off," appears to be employed in allusion to the circumcision which they pressed. "They tear the church for the sake of circumcision: I wish they were entirely cut off." Chrysostom favors this opinion. But how can such an imprecation be reconciled with the mildness of an apostle, who ought to wish that all should be saved, and that not a single person should perish? So far as men are concerned, I admit the force of this argument; for it is the will of God that we should seek the salvation of all men without exception, as Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world. But devout minds are sometimes carried beyond the consideration of men, and led to fix their eye on the glory of God, and the kingdom of

Christ. The glory of God, which is in itself more excellent than the salvation of men, ought to receive from us a higher degree of esteem and regard. Believers earnestly desirous that the glory of God should be promoted, forget men, and forget the world, and would rather choose that the whole world should perish, than that the smallest portion of the glory of God should be withdrawn.

Let us remember, however, that such a prayer as this proceeds from leaving men wholly out of view, and fixing our attention on God alone. Paul cannot be accused of cruelty, as if he were opposed to the law of love. Besides, if a single man or a few persons be brought into comparison, how immensely must the church preponderate! It is a cruel kind of mercy which prefers a single man to the whole church. "On one side, I see the flock of God in danger; on the other, I see a wolf "seeking," like Satan, "whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8.) Ought not my care of the church to swallow up all my thoughts, and lead me to desire that its salvation should be purchased by the destruction of the wolf? And yet I would not wish that a single individual should perish in this way; but my love of the church and my anxiety about her interests carry me away into a sort of ecstasy, so that I can think of nothing else." With such zeal as this, every true pastor of the church will burn. The Greek word translated "who *trouble* you," signifies to remove from a certain rank or station. By using the word καὶ, *even*, he expresses more strongly his desire that the impostors should not merely be degraded, but entirely separated and cut off.<sup>87</sup>

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87 "But I am so far from inculcating on you the necessity of circumcision, I would even wish that all those, without exception, who endeavour thus to subvert your faith, were wholly cut off from the communion of the Christian church. — I wish that, instead of having hearkened to these seducing teachers, they had been cut off by you, excluded from the church, and disowned as brethren.' (See 1 Corinthians 5:7, 11.) And where he here expresses his wish, that the troublers of the Galatians were cut off, it is only putting them in mind what would have been both their prudence and their duty to have done; not to have hearkened to them, but to have disowned, and refused society with them as Christians. This being the plain and natural sense of the apostle's words, they cannot be charged with any ill-natured or unfriendly wish." — Chandler.

Galatians 5:13-18	
13. For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only <i>use</i> not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.	13. Vos enim in libertatem vocati estis, fratres; tantum ne libertatem in occasionem detis carni, sed per charitatem servite vobis invicem.
14. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, <i>even</i> in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.	14. Nam tota Lex in uno verbo completur, nempe hoc: Diliges proximum tuum sicut to ipsum.
15. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.	15. Quodsi alius alium vicissim mordetis et devoratis, videte, ne vicissim alius ab alio consumamini.
16. <i>This</i> I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.	16. Dico autem: Spiritu ambulate; et concupiscentiam carnis non perficietis.
17. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.	17. Nam care concupiscit adversus Spiritum; Spiritus autem adversus carnem; haec mutuo inter se adversantur; ut non, quaecunque volueritis, eadem faciat.
18. But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.	18. Quod si Spiritu ducimini, non estis sub Lege.

13. *Ye have been called to liberty.* He now proceeds to show in what way liberty must be used. In the course of expounding the First Epistle to the Corinthians, we have pointed out that liberty is one thing, and that the use of it is another thing. Liberty lies in the conscience, and looks to God; the use of it lies in outward matters, and deals not with God only, but with men. Having exhorted the Galatians to suffer no diminution of their liberty, he now enjoins them to be moderate in the use of it, and lays down as a rule for the lawful use, that it shall not be turned into pretext or occasion for licentiousness. Liberty is not granted to the flesh, which ought rather to be held captive under the yoke, but is a spiritual benefit, which none but pious minds are capable of enjoying.

*But by love.* The method here explained of restraining liberty from breaking out into wide and licentious abuse is, to have it regulated *by love*. Let us always remember that the present question is not, in what manner we are free before God, but in what manner we may use our liberty in our intercourse with men. A good conscience submits to no slavery; but to practice outward slavery, or to abstain from the use of liberty, is attended by no danger. In a word, if “by love we serve one another,” we shall always have regard to edifica-



tion, so that we shall not grow wanton, but use the grace of God for his honor and the salvation of our neighbors.

**14. *For all the law.*** There is a contrast in this verse, though not plainly stated, yet evidently to be understood, between Paul's exhortation and the doctrine of the false apostles. While they insisted on ceremonies alone, Paul takes a passing glance of the actual duties and exercises of Christians. The present commendation of love is intended to inform the Galatians, that love forms the chief part of Christian perfection. But we must inquire in to the reason why all the precepts of the law are included under *love*. The law consists of two tables, the first of which instructs us concerning the worship of God and the duties of piety, and the second instructs us concerning the love of our neighbor; for it is ridiculous to make a part the same with the whole. Some avoid this difficulty by reminding us that the first table contains nothing more than to love God with our whole heart. But Paul makes express mention of love to our neighbor, and therefore a more satisfactory solution must be sought.

Piety to God, I acknowledge, ranks higher than love of the brethren; and therefore the observance of the first table is more valuable in the sight of God than the observance of the second. But as God himself is invisible, so piety is a thing hidden from the eyes of men; and, though the manifestation of it was the purpose for which ceremonies were appointed, they are not certain proofs of its existence. It frequently happens, that none are more zealous and regular in observing ceremonies than hypocrites. God therefore chooses to make trial of our love to himself by that love of our brother, which he enjoins us to cultivate. This is the reason why, not here only, but in the Epistle to the Romans, ([Romans 8:8](#), [13:10](#),) love is called "the fulfilling of the law;" not that it excels, but that it proves the worship of God to be real. God, I have said, is invisible; but he represents himself to us in the brethren, and in their persons demands what is due to himself. Love to men springs only from the fear and love of God; and therefore we need not wonder if, by a figure of speech, in which a part is taken for the whole, the effect include under it the cause of which it is the sign. But it would be wrong in any person to attempt to separate our love of God from our love of men.

***Thou shalt love thy neighbor.*** He who loves will render to every man his right, will do injury or harm to no man, will do good, as far as lies in his power, to all; for what else is included in the whole of the second table? This, too, is the argument employed by Paul in his Epistle to the Romans ([Romans 13:10](#).) The word, *neighbor*, includes all men living; for we are linked together by a common nature, as Isaiah reminds us, "that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh" ([Isaiah 58:7](#).) The image of God ought to be particularly regarded as a sacred bond of union; but, for that very reason, no distinction is here made between friend and foe, nor can the wickedness of men set aside the right of nature.

“*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*”. The love which men naturally cherish toward themselves ought to regulate our love of our neighbor. All the doctors of the Sorbonne<sup>88</sup> are in the habit of arguing that, as the rule is superior to what it directs, the love of ourselves must always hold the first rank. This is not to interpret, but to subvert our Lord’s words. They are asses, and have not even a spark of the love of their neighbour; for if the love of ourselves were the rule, it would follow that it is proper and holy, and is the object of the divine approbation. But we shall never love our neighbors with sincerity, according to our Lord’s intention, till we have corrected the love of ourselves. The two affections are opposite and contradictory; for the love of ourselves leads us to neglect and despise others, — produces cruelty, covetousness, violence, deceit, and all kindred vices, — drives us to impatience, and arms us with the desire of revenge. Our Lord therefore enjoins that it be changed into the love of our neighbor.

15. *But if ye bite and devour one another*. From the nature of the subject, as well as from the language employed, we may conjecture that the Galatians had disputes among themselves; for they differed about doctrine. The apostle now demonstrates, from the result, how destructive such proceedings in the church must ultimately prove to be. False doctrine was probably a judgment from heaven upon their ambition, pride, and other offenses. This may be concluded from what frequently happens in the divine dispensations, as well as from an express declaration by the hand of Moses.

“Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul.” (Deuteronomy 13:3.)

By *biting and devouring*<sup>89</sup> he means, I think, slanders, accusations, reproaches, and every other kind of offensive language, as well as acts of injustice arising either from fraud

88 The College of the *Sorbonne*, in Paris, takes its name from *Robert de Serbonne*, who founded it in the middle of the thirteenth century. Its reputation for theological learning, philosophy, classical literature, and all that formerly constituted a liberal education, was deservedly high. In the Doctors of the Sorbonne the Reformation found powerful adversaries. The very name of this university, to which the greatest scholars in Europe were accustomed to pay deference, would be regarded by the multitude with blind veneration. If such men as Calvin, Beza, Melancthon, and Luther, were prepared by talents and acquirements of the first order to brave the terrors of that name, they must have frequently lamented its influence on many of their hearers. Yet our author meets undaunted this formidable array, and enters the field with the full assurance of victory. Despising, as we naturally do, the weak superstitions and absurd tenets held by the Church of Rome, we are apt to underrate our obligations to the early champions of the Reformed faith, who encountered, with success, those veteran warriors, and ‘contended earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.’ (Jude 1:3.)” — *Ed.*

89 Ταῖς λέξεσι δὲ ἐμφαντικῶς ἐχρήσατο· Οὐ γὰρ εἶπε δάκνετε, μόνον ὅπερ ἐστὶ φυμονμένου ἀλλὰ καὶ κατεσθίετε ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἐμμένοντος τῷ πονηρίᾳ· ὁ μὲν γὰρ δάκνων ὀργῶς ἐπλήρωσε πάθος ὁ δὲ κατεσθίων θηριωδίας ἐσχάτης παρέσχευ ἀπόδειξιν· “These words are used by him emphatically; for he did not merely say

or violence. And what is the end of them? To be *consumed*, while the tendency of brotherly love is to produce mutual protection and kindness. I wish we could always remember, when the devil tempts us to disputes, that the disagreement of members within the church can lead to nothing else than the ruin and consumption of the whole body. How distressing, how mad is it, that we, who are members of the same body, should be leagued together, of our own accord, for mutual destruction!

**16.** *This I say then.* Now follows the remedy. The ruin of the church is no light evil, and whatever threatens it must be opposed with the most determined resistance. But how is this to be accomplished? By not permitting the flesh to rule in us, and by yielding ourselves to the direction of the Spirit of God. The Galatians are indirectly told, that they are carnal, destitute of the Spirit of God, and that the life which they lead is unworthy of Christians; for whence did their violent conduct towards each other proceed, but from their being guided by the lust of the flesh? This, he tells them, is an evidence that they do not walk according to the Spirit.

*Ye shall not fulfill.* We ought to mark the word *fulfill*; by which he means, that, though the sons of God, so long as they groan under the burden of the flesh, are liable to commit sin, they are not its subjects or slaves, but make habitual opposition to its power. The spiritual man may be frequently assaulted by the lusts of the flesh, but *fulfill* them, — he does not permit them to reign over him. — On this subject, it will be proper to consult [the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans](#)

**17.** *For the flesh lusteth.* The spiritual life maintained without a struggle. We are here informed of the nature of the difficulty, which arises from our natural inclinations being opposed to the Spirit. The word *flesh*, as we had occasion to observe, in expounding the Epistle to the Romans, denotes the nature of man; for the limited application of it, which the sophists make to the lower senses, as they are called, is refuted by various passages; and the contrast between the two words puts an end to all doubt. *The Spirit* denotes the renewed nature, or the grace of regeneration; and what else does the *flesh* mean, but “the old man?” ([Romans 6:6](#) [Ephesians 4:22](#) [Colossians 3:9](#).) Disobedience and rebellion against the Spirit of God pervade the whole nature of man. If we would obey the Spirit, we must labor, and fight, and apply our utmost energy; and we must begin with self-denial. The compliment paid by our Lord to the natural inclinations of men, amounts to this, — that there is no greater agreement between them and righteousness, than between fire and water. Where, then, shall we find a drop of goodness in man’s free will? unless we pronounce that to be good which is contrary to the Spirit of God;

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‘Bite,’ which denotes an angry person, but likewise, ‘Devour,’ which denotes one who persists in wickedness. He who ‘bites’ has exhausted his angry passion, but he who ‘devours’ has given a demonstration of extreme cruelty.” — Chrysostom.

“because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

([Romans 8:7](#).)

All the thoughts of the flesh are acts of enmity against God.

*So that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* This refers, unquestionably, to the regenerate. Carnal men have no battle with depraved lusts, no proper desire to attain to the righteousness of God. Paul is addressing believers. *The things that ye would* must mean, not our natural inclinations, but the holy affections which God bestows upon us by his grace. Paul therefore declares, that believers, so long as they are in this life, whatever may be the earnestness of their endeavors, do not obtain such a measure of success as to serve God in a perfect manner. The highest result does not correspond to their wishes and desires. I must again refer the reader, for a more extended view of my sentiments on this subject, to the Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, (See Calvin on [Romans 7:15](#).)

**18.** *But if ye be led by the Spirit.* In the way of the Lord believers are apt to stumble. But let them not be discouraged, because they are unable to satisfy the demands of the law. Let them listen to the consolatory declaration of the apostle, which is also found in other parts of his writings, ([Romans 6:14](#),) *ye are not under the law*. Hence it follows, that the performance of their duties is not rejected on account of their present defects, but is accepted in the sight of God, as if it had been in every respect perfect and complete. Paul is still pursuing the controversy about freedom. The Spirit is elsewhere ([Romans 8:15](#)) denominated by him, “the Spirit of adoption;” and when the Spirit makes men free, he emancipates them from the yoke of the law. As if he had said, “Is it your desire instantly to terminate the controversies in which you are now engaged? Walk according to the Spirit. You will then be free from the dominion of the law, which will act only in the capacity of a kind adviser, and will no longer lay a restraint upon your consciences.” Besides, when the condemnation of the law is removed, freedom from ceremonies follows as a necessary consequence; for ceremonies mark the condition of a slave.

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Galatians 5:19-21	
<b>19.</b> Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are <i>these</i> ; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,	<b>19.</b> Manifesta vero sunt opera carnis, quae sunt adulterium, scortatio, immunditia, lascivia,
<b>20.</b> Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,	<b>20.</b> Idololatria, veneficium, inimicitiae, contentio, aemulationes, irae, concertationes, seditiones, haereses,
<b>21.</b> Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told <i>you</i> in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.	<b>21.</b> Invidiae, homicidia, ebrietates, comissiones, et his similia; Deuteronomy quibus praedico vobis, quemadmodum et praedixi, quod qui talia agunt regnum Dei haereditate non possidebunt.

**19.** *Now the works of the flesh are manifest.* To obey the spirit and to oppose the flesh, are two great objects which have been set before Christians, and for the attainment of which they have been urged to make the most strenuous exertions. In accordance with these views, he now draws a picture both of the flesh and of the spirit. If men knew themselves, they would not need this inspired declaration, for they are nothing but flesh; but such is the hypocrisy belonging to our natural state, we never perceive our depravity till the tree has been fully made known by its fruits. ([Matthew 7:16](#); [Luke 6:44](#).)

The apostle therefore now points out to us those sins against which we must fight, in order that we may not live according to the flesh. He does not indeed enumerate them all, and so he himself states at the conclusion of the list; but from those brought forward, the character of the remainder may be easily ascertained. *Adultery* and *fornication* are placed first, and next follows *uncleanness*, which extends to every species of unchastity. *Lasciviousness* appears to be a subsidiary term, for the Greek word ἀσέλγεια, which is thus translated, is applied to those who lead wanton and dissolute lives. These four denote sins forbidden by the seventh commandment. The next mentioned is *idolatry*, which is here employed as a general term for services grossly superstitious and openly practiced.

Seven classes which immediately follow, are closely allied, and another two are afterwards added. *Anger* and *hatred* differ chiefly in this, that anger is short, and hatred is lasting. *Emulations* and *envyings* are the occasions of hatred; and the following distinction between them is stated by Aristotle, in his second book on Rhetoric: — He who *emulates* is grieved that another should excel him, not because the virtue or worth of that person, in itself considered, gives him uneasiness, but because he would wish to be superior. The *envious* man has no desire to excel, but is grieved at the excellence of other men. None, therefore, he tells us, but low and mean persons indulge in envy, while emulation dwells in lofty and heroic

minds. Paul declares both to be diseases of the *flesh*. From anger and hatred arise *variance, strife, seditions*; and he even traces the consequences so far as to mention *murders* and *witchcraft*.<sup>90</sup> By revellings,<sup>91</sup> he means a dissolute life, and every kind of intemperance in the gratification of the palate. It deserves notice, that heresies are enumerated among the works of the flesh; for it shows clearly that the word *flesh* is not confined, as the sophists imagine, to sensuality. What produces heresies but ambition, which deals not with the lower senses, but with the highest faculties of the mind? He says that these works are *manifest*, so that no man may think that he will gain anything by evading the question;<sup>92</sup> for what avails it to deny that the flesh reigns in us, if the fruit betrays the quality of the tree?

21. *Of which I tell you before.* By this awful threatening he intended not only to alarm the Galatians, but likewise to glance indirectly at the false apostles, who had laid aside the far more valuable instruction, and spent their time in disputing about ceremonies. He instructs us, by his example, to press those exhortations and threatenings, agreeably to the words of the prophet,

“Cry aloud, spare not; proclaim to my people their sins.”

([Isaiah 58:1](#))

What can be conceived more dreadful than that men should walk after the flesh, and shut themselves out from the kingdom of God? Who will dare to treat lightly the “abominable things which God hates?” ([Jeremiah 44:4](#).)

But in this way, we shall be told, all are cut off from the hope of salvation; for who is there that is not chargeable with some of those sins? I reply, Paul does not threaten that all who have sinned, but that all who remain impenitent, shall be excluded from the kingdom of God. The saints themselves often fall into grievous sins, but they return to the path of righteousness, “that which they do they allow not,” ([Romans 7:15](#)), and therefore they are not included in this catalogue. All threatenings of the judgments of God call us to repentance. They are accompanied by a promise that those who repent will obtain forgiveness; but if we continue obstinate, they remain as a testimony from heaven against us.

90 “The original word *φαρμακεία* sometimes denotes ‘poisonings,’ which were frequently practised among the heathens. Sometimes it signifies incantations or magic arts, or witchcraft, by which impostors and cheats endeavoured to impose on ignorant and credulous people, and which were carried on by poisonous intoxicating draughts and ointments, by which they did great mischief to the bodies of men. As it is here immediately placed after idolatry, I should imagine that the apostle intended those cursed arts of incantations and charms, those various methods of imposture and cheats, which were made use of by the heathen priests, to promote the idolatrous reverence and worship of their false gods. (See [Revelation 18:23](#).)” — Chandler.

91 By *κῶμοι* are denoted those nocturnal revellings usually attendant on an evening of debauchery, consisting of licentious singing, dancing, and parading the streets with drunken riotings.” — Bloomfield.

92 “En volant nier, et usant de tergiversation.” “By wishing to deny it, and by shuffling.”

*They who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* The word κληρονομεῖν signifies to possess by hereditary right; for by no right but that of adoption, as we have seen in other passages, do we obtain eternal life.

Galatians 5:22-26	
22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,	22. Fructus vero Spiritus est charitas, gaudium, pax, tolerantia, comitas, benignitas, fides,
23. Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.	23. Mansuetudo, temperantia: adversus ejusmodi non est Lex.
24. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.	24. Qui autem Christi sunt carnem crucifixerunt cum affectibus et concupiscentiis.
25. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.	25. Si vivimus Spiritu, etiam Spiritu ambulemus.
26. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.	26. Ne sinims inanis gloriae cupidi, invicem provocantes, invicem invidentes.

22. *But the fruit* <sup>93</sup> *of the Spirit.* In the former part of the description he condemned the whole nature of man as producing nothing but evil and worthless fruits. He now informs us that all virtues, all proper and well regulated affections, proceed from the Spirit, that is, from the grace of God, and the renewed nature which we derive from Christ. As if he had said, "Nothing but what is evil comes from man; nothing good comes but from the Holy Spirit." There have often appeared in unrenewed men remarkable instances of gentleness, integrity, temperance, and generosity; but it is certain that all were but specious disguises. Curius and Fabrieius were distinguished for courage, Cato for temperance, Scipio for kindness and generosity, Fabius for patience; but it was only in the sight of men, and as members of civil society, that they were so distinguished. In the sight of God nothing is pure but what proceeds from the fountain of all purity.

*Joy* does not here, I think, denote that "joy in the Holy Ghost" ([Romans 14:17](#)), of which he speaks elsewhere, but that cheerful behavior towards our fellow-men which is the opposite of moroseness. *Faith* means truth, and is contrasted with cunning, deceit, and falsehood, as *peace* is with quarrels and contentions. *Long-suffering* is gentleness of mind, which disposes us to take everything in good part, and not to be easily offended. The other terms require no explanation, for the dispositions of the mind must be learned from the outward conduct.

93 "In the service of *sin* the toil is so great that, in comparison thereof, the benefit is as nothing; in the service of *God* the benefit is so great that, in comparison thereof, the labour is as nothing. Where the flesh rules all, the 'work' exceeds the 'fruit;' and therefore, without even mentioning the 'work,' it is called the 'fruit' of the Spirit. (See [Ephesians 5:9, 11](#).)" — Bishop Sanderson.



But if spiritual men are known by their works, what judgment, it will be asked, shall we form of wicked men and idolaters, who exhibited an illustrious resemblance of all the virtues? for it is evident from their works that they were spiritual. I reply, as all the works of the flesh do not appear openly in a carnal man, but his carnality is discovered by one or another vice, so a single virtue will not entitle us to conclude that a man is spiritual. Sometimes it will be made evident, by other vices, that sin reigns in him; and this observation may be easily applied to all the cases which I have enumerated.

**23. *Against such there is no law.*** Some understand these words as meaning simply that the law is not directed against good works, “from evil manners have sprung good laws.” But Paul’s real meaning is deeper and less obvious; namely, that, where the Spirit reigns, the law has no longer any dominion. By moulding our hearts to his own righteousness, the Lord delivers us from the severity of the law, so that our intercourse with himself is not regulated by its covenant, nor our consciences bound by its sentence of condemnation. Yet the law continues to teach and exhort, and thus performs its own office; but our subjection to it is withdrawn by the Spirit of adoption. He thus ridicules the false apostles, who, while they enforced subjection to the law, were not less eager to release themselves from its yoke. The only way, he tells us, in which this is accomplished, is, when the Spirit of God obtains dominion, from which we are led to conclude that they had no proper regard to spiritual righteousness.

**24. *And they that are Christ’s.*** He adds this, in order to show that all Christians have renounced the flesh, and therefore enjoy freedom. While he makes this statement, the apostle reminds the Galatians what true Christianity is, so far as relates to the life, and thus guards them against a false profession of Christianity. The word *crucified* is employed to point out that the mortification of the flesh is the effect of the cross of Christ. This work does not belong to man. By the grace of Christ

“we have been planted together in the likeness of his death” ([Romans 6:5](#)),

that we no longer might live unto ourselves. If we are buried with Christ, by true self-denial, and by the destruction of the old man, we shall then enjoy the privilege of the sons of God. The flesh is not yet indeed entirely destroyed; but it has no right to exercise dominion, and ought to yield to the Spirit. The *flesh* and its *lusts* are a figure of speech of exactly the same import with the *tree* and its *fruits*. The *flesh* itself is the depravity of corrupt nature, from which all evil actions proceed. ([Matthew 15:19](#); [Mark 7:21](#).) Hence it follows, that the members of Christ have cause to complain, if they are still held to be in bondage to the law, from which all who have been regenerated by his Spirit are set free.

**25. *If we live in the Spirit.*** According to his usual custom, the apostle draws from the doctrine a practical exhortation. The death of the flesh is the life of the Spirit. If the Spirit of God lives in us, let him govern our actions. There will always be many persons daring enough to make a false boast of living in the Spirit, but the apostle challenges them to a

proof of the fact. As the soul does not remain idle in the body, but gives motion and rigour to every member and part, so the Spirit of God cannot dwell in us without manifesting himself by the outward effects. By the *life* is here meant the inward power, and by the *walk* the outward actions. The metaphorical use of the word *walk*, which frequently occurs, describes works as evidences of the spiritual life.

**26.** *Let us not be desirous of vain-glory*, The special exhortations which were addressed to the Galatians were not more necessary for them than they are adapted to our own time. Of many evils existing in society at large, and particularly in the church, ambition is the mother. Paul therefore directs us to guard against it, for the *vain-glory* (κενοδοξία) of which he speaks is nothing else than *ambition*, (filimia,) or the desire of honor, by which every one desires to excel all others. The heathen philosophers do not condemn every desire of glory; but among Christians, whoever is desirous of glory departs from true glory, and therefore is justly charged with idle and foolish ambition. It is not lawful for us to glow but in God alone. Every other kind of glorying is pure vanity. Mutual *provocations* and *envyings* are the daughters of ambition. He who aspires to the highest rank must of necessity envy all others, and disrespectful, biting, stinging language is the unavoidable consequence.

## CHAPTER 6

Galatians 6:1-5	
1. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.	1. Fratres, etiamsi praeoccupatus fuerit homo in aliquo lapsu, vos, qui spirituales estis, instaurate ejusmodi hominem spiritu lenitatis; considerans to ipsum, ne tu quoque tenteris.
2. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.	2. Alii aliorum onera portate, et sic adimplete legem Christi.
3. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.	3. Nam si quis putat se esse aliquid, quum nihil sit, se ipsum decipit.
4. But let every man prove his own worth, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.	4. Opus autem suum probet unusquisque; et tunc in se ipso solo gloriam habebit, non autem in alio.
5. For every man shall bear his own burden.	5. Quisque enim proprium onus portabit.

1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in any fault* <sup>94</sup> Ambition is a serious and alarming evil. But hardly less injury is frequently done by unseasonable and excessive severity, which, under the plausible name of zeal, springs in many instances from pride, and from dislike and contempt of the brethren. Most men seize on the faults of brethren as an occasion of insulting them, and of using reproachful and cruel language. Were the pleasure they take in upbraiding equalled by their desire to produce amendment, they would act in a different manner. Reproof, and often sharp and severe reproof, must be administered to offenders. But while we must not shrink from a faithful testimony against sin, neither must we omit to mix oil with the vinegar.

We are here taught to correct the faults of brethren in a mild manner, and to consider no rebukes as partaking a religious and Christian character which do not breathe the spirit of meekness. To gain this object, he explains the design of pious reproofs, which is, *to restore him who is fallen*, to place him in his former condition. That design will never be accom-

94 "In the original it is ἐν τινὶ παραπτώματι, 'in any fault.' The expression is general, though it seems to refer to those works of the flesh of which he had made mention in the 19th and following verses of the foregoing chapter. 'If in any of these faults any person should happen to be overtaken;' the last word seems to denote somewhat of a surprise, by which a man might be drawn into a sin, without any previous deliberate purpose or design; a sin committed through some extraordinary and sudden temptation. The last words of the verse, 'lest thou also be tempted,' seem plainly to intimate that this was the apostle's meaning." — Chandler.

plished by violence, or by a disposition to accuse, or by fierceness of manner or language; and consequently, we must display a gentle and meek spirit, if we intend to heal our brother. And lest any man should satisfy himself with assuming the outward form, he demands *the spirit of meekness*; for no man is prepared for chastising a brother till he has succeeded in acquiring a gentle spirit.<sup>95</sup>

Another argument for gentleness in correcting brethren is contained in the expression, “if a man be *overtaken*.” If he has been carried away through want of consideration, or through the cunning arts of a deceiver, it would be cruel to treat such a man with harshness. Now, we know that the devil is always lying in wait, and has a thousand ways of leading us astray. When we perceive a brother to have transgressed, let us consider that he has fallen into the snares of Satan; let us be moved with compassion, and prepare our minds to exercise forgiveness. But offenses and falls of this description must undoubtedly be distinguished from deep seated crimes, accompanied by deliberate and obstinate disregard of the authority of God. Such a display of wicked and perverse disobedience to God must be visited with greater severity, for what advantage would be gained by gentle treatment? The particle *if also*, (ἐὰν καὶ,) implies that not only the weak who have been tempted, but those who have yielded to temptation, shall receive forbearance.

*Ye who are spiritual.* This is not spoken in irony; for, however spiritual they might be, still they were not wholly filled with the Spirit. It belongs to such persons to raise up the fallen. To what better purpose can their superior attainments be applied than to promote the salvation of the brethren? The more eminently any man is endowed with Divine grace, the more strongly is he bound to consult the edification of those who have been less favored. But such is our folly, that in our best duties we are apt to fail, and therefore need the exhortation which the apostle gives to guard against the influence of carnal views.

*Considering thyself.* It is not without reason that the apostle passes from the plural to the singular number. He gives weight to his admonition, when he addresses each person individually, and bids him look carefully into himself. “Whoever thou art that takest upon thee the office of reproving others, look to thyself.” Nothing is more difficult than to bring us to acknowledge or examine our own weakness. Whatever may be our acuteness in detecting the faults of others, we do not see, as the saying is, “the wallet that hangs behind our own back;”<sup>96</sup> and therefore, to arouse us to greater activity, he employs the singular number.

95 “I observe an agreement in a somewhat peculiar rule of Christian conduct, as laid down in this epistle, and as exemplified in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. It is not the repetition of the same general precept, which would have been a coincidence of little value; but it is the general precept in one place, and the application of that precept to an actual occurrence in the other. (See [2 Corinthians 2:6-8](#).) I have little doubt but that it was the same mind which dictated these two passages.” Paley’s *Horae Paulinae*.

96 Catullus.

These words may admit of two senses. As we acknowledge that we are liable to sin, we more willingly grant that forgiveness to others which, in our turn, we expect will be extended to us. Some interpret them in this manner: "Thou who art a sinner, and needest the compassion of thy brethren, oughtest not to show thyself fierce and implacable to others."<sup>97</sup> But I would rather choose to expound them as a warning given by Paul, that, in correcting others, we should not ourselves commit sin. There is a danger here which deserves our most careful attention, and against which it is difficult to guard; for nothing is more easy than to exceed the proper limits. The word *tempt*, however, may very properly be taken in this passage as extended to the whole life. Whenever we have occasion to pronounce censure, let us begin with ourselves, and, remembering our own weakness, let us be indulgent to others.

2. *Bear ye one another's burdens.* The weaknesses or sins, under which we groan, are called *burdens*. This phrase is singularly appropriate in an exhortation to kind behavior, for nature dictates to us that those who bend under a burden ought to be relieved. He enjoins us to *bear* the burdens. We must not indulge or overlook the sins by which our brethren are pressed down, but relieve them, — which can only be done by mild and friendly correction. There are many adulterers and thieves, many wicked and abandoned characters of every description, who would willingly make Christ an accomplice in their crimes. All would choose to lay upon believers the task of bearing their burdens. But as the apostle had immediately before exhorted us to *restore* a brother, the manner in which Christians are required to *bear one another's burdens* cannot be mistaken.

*And so fulfill the law of Christ.* The word *law*, when applied here to Christ, serves the place of an argument. There is an implied contrast between the law of Christ and the law of Moses. "If you are very desirous to keep a law, Christ enjoins on you a law which you are bound to prefer to all others, and that is, to cherish kindness towards each other. He who has not this has nothing. On the other hand, he tells us, that, when every one compassionately assists his neighbor, the law of Christ is *fulfilled*; by which he intimates that every thing which does not proceed from love is superfluous; for the composition of the Greek word ἀναπληρώσατε, conveys the idea of what is absolutely perfect. But as no man performs in every respect what Paul requires, we are still at a distance from perfection. He who comes the nearest to it with regard to others, is yet far distant with respect to God.

3. *For if a man think himself.* There is an ambiguity in the construction, but Paul's meaning is clear. The phrase, *When he is nothing*, appears at first view to mean, "if any person, who is in reality nothing, claims to be something;" as there are many men of no real worth who are elated by a foolish admiration of themselves. But the meaning is more gen-

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97 "Even in those who do not need forbearance, nothing is more becoming than gentleness; and I reckon him to be the best and most blameless man who pardons others, as if he were daily sinning, and yet abstains from sin, as if he pardoned nobody." — Plin. Ep.

eral, and may be thus expressed: "Since all men are nothing, he who wishes to appear something, and persuades himself that he is somebody, deceives himself." First, then, he declares that we are nothing, by which he means, that we have nothing of our own of which we have a right to boast, but are destitute of every thing good: so that all our glorying is mere vanity. Secondly, he infers that they who claim something as their own deceive themselves. Now, since nothing excites our indignation more than that others should impose upon us, it argues the height of folly that we should willingly impose upon ourselves. This consideration will render us much more candid to others. Whence proceeds fierce insult or haughty sternness, but from this, that every one exalts himself in his own estimation, and proudly despises others? Let arrogance be removed, and we shall all discover the greatest modesty in our conduct towards each other.

4. *But let every man prove his own work.* By a powerful blow, Paul has already struck down the pride of man. But it frequently happens that, by comparing ourselves with others, the low opinion which we form of them leads us to entertain a high opinion of ourselves. Paul declares that no such comparison ought to be allowed. Let no man, he says, measure himself by the standard of another, or please himself with the thought, that others appear to him less worthy of approbation. Let him lay aside all regard to other men, examine his own conscience, and inquire what is *his own work*. It is not what we gain by detracting from others, but what we have without any comparison, that can be regarded as true praise.

Some consider Paul to be speaking in irony. "Thou flatterest thyself by a comparison with the faults of others; but if thou wilt consider who thou art, thou wilt then enjoy the praise which is justly due to thee." In other words, no praise whatever shall be thine; because there is no man by whom the smallest portion of praise is really deserved. In conformity with this view, the words that follow, *every man shall bear his own burden*, are supposed to mean, that it is usual for every man to bear his own burden. But the plain and direct sense of the words agrees better with the apostle's reasoning. "With respect to thyself alone, and not by comparison with others, thou wilt have praise." I am well aware that the next sentence, which annihilates all the glory of man, has been regarded as justifying the ironical interpretation. But the glorying of which this passage treats, is that of a good conscience, in which the Lord allows his people to indulge, and which Paul elsewhere expresses in very animated language.

"Paul earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."

(Acts 23:1.)

This is nothing more than an acknowledgment of Divine grace, which reflects no praise whatever on man, but excites him to give God the glory. Such a reason for glorying do the godly find in themselves; and they ascribe it, not to their own merits, but to the riches of the grace of God.

“For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.”

(2 Corinthians 1:12.)

Our Lord himself instructs us:

“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”

(Matthew 6:6.)

Strictly speaking, he makes no assertion, but leads us to conclude, that, when a man is valued for his own worth, and not for the baseness of others, the praise is just and substantial. The statement is therefore conditional, and imports that none are entitled to be regarded as good men, who are not found to be so, apart from the consideration of others.

5. *For every man shall bear his own burdens.* To destroy sloth and pride, he brings before us the judgment of God, in which every individual for himself, and without a comparison with others, will give an account of his life. It is thus that we are deceived; for, if a man who has but one eye is placed among the blind, he considers his vision to be perfect; and a tawny person among negroes thinks himself white. The apostle affirms that the false conclusions to which we are thus conducted will find no place in the judgment of God; because there every one will bear his own burden, and none will stand acquitted by others from their own sins. This is the true meaning of the words.

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Galatians 6:6-10	
6. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.	6. Coremunicet is, qui instituitur in sermone, cum doctore, in omnibus bonis.
7. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.	7. Ne erretis: Deus non subsannatur; quod enim seminaverit homo, hoc etiam metet.
8. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.	8. Nam qui seminat carni suae, ex carne metet corruptionem; qui autem seminat Spiritui, ex Spiritu metet vitam aeternam.
9. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.	9. Bonum autem faciendo ne defatigemur; nam si non defecerimus, metemus opportuno tempore.
10. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all <i>men</i> , especially unto them who are of the household of faith..	10. Ergo ubi tempus habemus, beneficiamus erga omnes, praesertim vero erga domesticos fidel.

6. *Let him that is taught in the word.* It is probable that the teachers and ministers of the word were at that time neglected. This shewed the basest ingratitude. How disgraceful is it to defraud of their temporal support those by whom our souls are fed! — to refuse an earthly recompense to those from whom we receive heavenly benefits! But it is, and always has been, the disposition of the world, freely to bestow on the ministers of Satan every luxury, and hardly to supply godly pastors with necessary food. Though it does not become us to indulge too much in complaint, or to be too tenacious of our rights, yet Paul found himself called upon to exhort the Galatians to perform this part of their duty. He was the more ready to do so, because he had no private interest in the matter, but consulted the universal benefit of the Church, without any regard to his own advantage. He saw that the ministers of the word were neglected, because the word itself was despised; for if the word be truly esteemed, its ministers will always receive kind and honorable treatment. It is one of the tricks of Satan to defraud godly ministers of support, that the Church may be deprived of such ministers.<sup>98</sup> An earnest desire to preserve a gospel ministry, led to Paul's recommendation that proper attention should be paid to good and faithful pastors.

<sup>98</sup> "De tels serviteurs." "Of such servants."

*The word* is here put, by way of eminence, (κατ' ἐξοχὴν,) for the doctrine of godliness. Support is declared to be due to those by whom we *are taught in the word*. Under this designation the Papal system supports idle bellies of dumb men, and fierce wild beasts, who have nothing in common with the doctrine of Christ. *In all good things*. He does not propose that no limit should be set to their worldly enjoyments, or that they should revel in superfluous abundance, but merely that none of the necessary supports of life should be withheld. Ministers ought to be satisfied with moderate fare, and the danger which attends pomp and luxury ought to be prevented. To supply their real necessities, let believers cheerfully devote any part of their property that may be required for the services of devout and holy teachers. What return will they make for the invaluable treasure of eternal life, which is communicated to them by the preaching of those men?

7. *God is not mocked*. The design of this observation is to reply to the dishonest excuses which are frequently pleaded. One alleges that he has a family to support, and another asserts that he has no superfluity of wealth to spend in liberality or profusion. The consequence is, that, while such multitudes withhold their aid, the few persons who do their duty are generally unable to contribute the necessary support. These apologies Paul utterly rejects, for a reason which the world little considers, that this transaction is with God. The supply of a man's bodily wants is not the sole question, but involves the degree of our regard for Christ and his gospel. This passage contains evidence that the custom of treating faithful ministers with scorn did not originate in the present day; but their wicked taunts will not pass unpunished.

*For whatsoever a man soweth*. Our liberality is restrained by the supposition, that whatever passes into the hands of another is lost to ourselves, and by the alarm we feel about our own prospects in life. Paul meets these views by a comparison drawn from seed-time, which, he tells us, is a fit representation of acts of beneficence. On this subject we had occasion to speak, in expounding the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, where the same metaphor was employed. Happy would it be for us, if this truth were deeply impressed upon our minds. How "very gladly" would we "spend and be spent" ([2 Corinthians 12:15](#)) for the good of our neighbours, encouraged by the hope of the coming harvest! No operation is more cheerfully performed by husbandmen than throwing the seed into the ground. They are enabled to wait with patience during nine months of the year, by the expectation of reaping a corruptible harvest, while our minds are not properly affected by the hope of a blessed immortality.

8. *For he that soweth to his flesh*. Having stated the general sentiment, he now divides it into parts. To *sow to the flesh*, is to look forward to the wants of the present life, without any regard to a future life. They who do this will gather fruit corresponding to the seed which they have sown, — will heap up that which shall miserably perish. *To sow in the flesh*, (*seminare in carne*,) is supposed by some to mean indulgence in the lusts of the flesh, and corruption to mean destruction; but the former exposition agrees better with the context.

In departing from the old translation and from Erasmus, I have not acted rashly. The Greek words, ὁ σπείρων εἰς τὴν σάρκα ἑαυτοῦ, literally signify, *he that soweth into his flesh*. And what else does this mean, but to be so entirely devoted to the flesh, as to direct all our thoughts to its interests or convenience?

*But he that soweth to the spirit.* By *the spirit* I understand the spiritual life, to which they are said to sow whose views are directed more to heaven than to earth, and whose life is regulated by the desire of reaching the kingdom of God. From their spiritual employments they will reap in heaven incorruptible fruit. Those employments are denominated spiritual on account of their end, though in some respects they are external and relate to the body, as in the very case now under consideration of supporting pastors. If the Papists shall endeavor, in their usual manner, to build upon these words the righteousness of works, we have already shewn how easily their absurdities may be exposed. Though eternal life is a reward, it does not follow either that we are justified by works, or that works are meritorious of salvation. The undeserved kindness of God appears in the very act of honoring the works which his grace has enabled us to perform, by promising to them a reward to which they are not entitled.

Is a more complete solution of the question demanded?

1. We have no good works which God rewards but those which we derive from his grace.
2. The good works which we perform by the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit, are the fruits of that adoption which is an act of free grace.
3. They are not only unworthy of the smallest and most inconsiderable reward, but deserve to be wholly condemned, because they are always stained by many blemishes; and what have pollutions to do with the presence of God?
4. Though a reward had been a thousand times promised to works, yet it is not due but by fulfilling the condition of obeying the law perfectly; and how widely distant are we all from that perfection!

Let Papists now go and attempt to force their way into heaven by the merit of works. We cheerfully concur with Paul and with the whole Bible in acknowledging, that we are unable to do anything but by the free grace of God, and yet that the benefits resulting from our works receive the name of a reward.

9. *Let us not be weary in well-doing.* *Well-doing* (καλὸν) does not simply mean doing our duty, but the performance of acts of kindness, and has a reference to men. We are instructed *not to be weary* in assisting our neighbours, in performing good offices, and in exercising generosity. This precept is highly necessary; for we are naturally reluctant to discharge the duties of brotherly love, and many unpleasant occurrences arise by which the ardor of the best disposed persons is apt to be cooled. We meet with many unworthy and many ungrateful persons. The vast number of necessitous cases overwhelms us, and the

applications which crowd upon us from every quarter exhaust our patience. Our warmth is abated by the coolness of other men. In short, the world presents innumerable hinderances, which tend to lead us aside from the right path. Most properly, therefore, does Paul admonish us not to relax through weariness.

*If we faint not.* That is, we shall reap the fruit which God promises, if we “persevere to the end.” (Matthew 10:22.) Those who do not persevere resemble indolent husbandmen, who, after ploughing and sowing, leave the work unfinished, and neglect to take the necessary precautions for protecting the seed from being devoured by birds, or scorched by the sun, or destroyed by cold. It is to no purpose that we begin to do good, if we do not press forward to the goal.

*In due season* <sup>99</sup> Let no man, from a wish to gather the fruit in this life, or before its proper time, deprive himself of the spiritual harvest. The desires of believers must be both supported and restrained by the exercise of hope and patience.

**10. While we have opportunity.** The metaphor is still pursued. Every season is not adapted to tillage and sowing. Active and prudent husbandmen will observe the proper season, and will not indolently allow it to pass unimproved. Since, therefore, God has set apart the whole of the present life for ploughing and sowing, let us avail ourselves of the season, lest, through our negligence, it may be taken out of our power. Beginning with liberality to ministers of the gospel, Paul now makes a wider application of his doctrine, and exhorts us to *do good to all men*, but recommends to our particular regard *the household of faith*, or believers, because they belong to the same family with ourselves. This similitude is intended to excite us to that kind of communication which ought to be maintained among the members of one family. There are duties which we owe to all men arising out of a common nature; but the tie of a more sacred relationship, established by God himself, binds us to believers.

<sup>99</sup> Ἐγενήσαν ἀμφότεροι κατὰ τοὺς ἰδίους καιροὺς τύραννοι Συρακουσῶν. “Both at their own time became tyrants of Syracuse” — Polybius. Xenophon and other classical writers employ the phrase ἐν καιρῷ in the general sense of “seasonably,” and sometimes very nearly in the same sense as when the adjective ἴδιος is added. Κυρ. Παιδ.. 8:5. 5. — Ed

Galatians 6:11-13	
<b>11.</b> Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.	<b>11.</b> Videtis, qualibus literis vobis scripserim mea manu.
<b>12.</b> As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.	<b>12.</b> Quicunque volunt placere juxta faciem in carne, hi cogunt vos circumcidi; tantum ut ne persequutionem sustineant cruce Christi.
<b>13.</b> For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.	<b>13.</b> Neque enim qui circumciduntur, ipsi Legea servant; sed volunt vos circumcidi, ut in carne vestra glorientur.

**11.** *Ye see.* The meaning of the Greek verb ἴδετε, is so far doubtful that it may be taken either in the imperative or indicative mood; but the force of the passage is little if at all affected. To convince the Galatians more fully of his anxiety about them, and at the same time to ensure their careful perusal, he mentions that this long Epistle had been written with his own hand. The greater the toil to which he had submitted on their account, the stronger were their inducements to read it, not in a superficial manner, but with the closest attention.

**12.** *As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh.* Such men pay no regard to edification, but are guided by an ambitious desire to hunt after popular applause. The Greek verb εὐπροσώπῳσαι,<sup>100</sup> is highly expressive, and denotes the kind looks and address which were assumed for the purpose of pleasing. He charges the false apostles with ambition. As if he had said, “When those men lay circumcision upon you as a necessary burden, do you wish to know what sort of persons they are, what are the objects of their regard or pursuit? You are mistaken if you imagine that they are at all influenced by godly zeal. To gain or preserve the favor of men is the object they have in view in offering this bribe.” It was because they were Jews that they adopted this method of retaining the good-will, or at least allaying the resentment, of their own nation. It is the usual practice of ambitious men meanly to fawn on those from whose favor they hope to derive advantage, and to insinuate themselves into

100 “The word we render, ‘to make a fair shew,’ properly signifies to be handsome and lovely. Hence it is used to signify anything that recommends itself by its specious appearance, [Thus ἀπολογία εὐπροσώπος, Lucian.] Now this was the case of these Judaizing teachers. Their great care was to avoid persecution: and, in order to this, they made it their study εὐπροσώπῳσαι, to keep fair with the Jews, ἐν σαρκί, by means of the flesh, that is, not only by boasting of their own circumcision, but by making it a point of merit with them, that they had pressed the necessity of circumcision upon others.” — Chandler.

their good graces, that, when better men have been displaced, they may enjoy the undivided power. This wicked design he lays open to the Galatians, in order to put them on their guard.

*Only lest they should suffer persecution.* The pure preaching of the gospel is again designated the cross of Christ. But there is likewise an allusion to their favourite scheme of resolving to preach Christ without the cross. The deadly rage by which the Jews were animated against Paul, arose from their being unable to endure a neglect of ceremonies. To avoid persecution, those men flattered the Jews. Yet after all, if they had themselves kept the law, their conduct might have been suffered. On the contrary, they disturbed the whole church for the sake of their personal ease, and scrupled not to lay a tyrannical yoke on the consciences of men, that they might be entirely freed from bodily uneasiness. A dread of the cross led them to corrupt the true preaching of the cross.

**13.** *For neither they who hold by circumcision keep the law.* The old version and Erasmus translate thus: *who are circumcised*. But Paul appears to me to refer to teachers only; and for this reason I would prefer to render the words, *those who hold by circumcision*, which would not include all circumcised persons, and thus would avoid ambiguity. The meaning is, “It is not from a strong attachment to the law that they bind you with the yoke of ceremonies; for, even with their own circumcision, they do not keep the law. It is no doubt under the pretext of the law that they require you to be circumcised; but, though they have themselves been circumcised, they do not perform what they enjoin upon others.” When he says, indeed, that they do not *keep the law*, it is doubtful whether he refers to the whole law, or to ceremonies. Some understand him as saying that the law is an intolerable burden, and therefore they do not satisfy its demands. But he rather insinuates against them a charge of insincerity, because, except when it suited their own designs, they found themselves at liberty to despise the law.

Even now this disease rages everywhere with virulence. You will find many who are prompted more by ambition than by conscience to defend the tyranny of the papal system. I speak of our courtly apostles, who are attracted by the smell of a kitchen, and who pronounce, with an air of authority, that the decrees of the holy Church of Rome must be observed with reverence. And what is their own practice all the while! They pay no more regard to any decisions of the Roman see than to the braying of an ass, but they take care to avoid personal risk. In short, Paul had the same kind of controversy with those impostors as we now have with hypocritical professors of the gospel, who hold out to us a monstrous union between Christ and the Pope. Paul therefore declares that they are not acting the part of honest men, and that they have no other object in enjoining circumcision than to boast to the Jews of the converts they have made. Such is the import of the words, *that they may glory in your flesh*. “They wish to triumph over you, and to gratify their own desire of applause, by offering up your mutilated flesh to the false zealots of the law, as a token of peace and harmony.”

Galatians 6:14-18	
<b>14.</b> But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.	<b>14.</b> Mihi antem absit gloriari, nisi in truce Domini nostri Iesu Christi, per quam mundus mihi crucifixus est, et ego mundo.
<b>15.</b> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.	<b>15.</b> Nam in Christo neque circumcisio quicquam valet, neque praeputium; sed nova creatura.
<b>16.</b> And as many as walk according to this rule, peace <i>be</i> on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.	<b>16.</b> Et quicumque hac regula ambulabunt, pax super eos et misericordia, et super Israel Dei.
<b>17.</b> From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.	<b>17.</b> In reliquis nemo facessat mihi molestiam; ego enim stigmata Domini Iesu in corpore meo porto.
<b>18.</b> Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ <i>be</i> with your spirit. Amen.	<b>18.</b> Gratia Domini nostri Iesu Christi cum spiritu vestro, fratres. Amen.
To the Galatians written from Rome.	Ad Galatas missa fuit e Roma.

**14.** *But God forbid that I should glory.* The designs of the false apostles are here contrasted with his own sincerity. As if he had said, “To avoid being compelled to bear a cross, they deny the cross of Christ, purchase with your flesh the applause of men, and end by triumphing over you. But my triumph and my glory are in the cross of the Son of God.” If the Galatians had not been utterly destitute of common sense, ought they not to have held in abhorrence the men whom they beheld making sport of their dangerous condition.

*To glory in the cross of Christ*, is to glory in Christ crucified. But something more is implied. In that death, — so full of disgrace and ignominy, which God himself has pronounced to be accursed, and which men are wont to view with abhorrence and shame, — in that death he will glory, because he obtains in it perfect happiness. Where man’s highest good exists, there is his glory. But why does not Paul seek it elsewhere? Though salvation is held out to us in the cross of Christ, what does he think of his resurrection? I answer, in the cross redemption in all its parts is found, but the resurrection of Christ does not lead us away from the cross. And let it be carefully observed, that every other kind of glorying is rejected by him as nothing short of a capital offense. “May God protect us from such a fearful calamity!” Such is the import of the phrase which Paul constantly employs, *God forbid*

BY WHICH *the world is crucified*. As the Greek word for *cross*, σταυρός, is masculine, the relative pronoun may be either rendered *by whom*, or *by which*, according as we refer it to Christ or to the cross. In my opinion, however, it is more proper to apply it to the cross; for by it strictly we die to the world. But what is the meaning of *the world*? It is unquestionably contrasted with the *new creature*. Whatever is opposed to the spiritual kingdom of Christ is the world, because it belongs to the old man; or, in a word, *the world* is the object and aim of the old man.

*The world is crucified to me*. This exactly agrees with the language which he employs on another occasion.

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” ([Philippians 3:7, 8.](#))

To crucify the world is to treat it with contempt and disdain.

He adds, *and I unto the world*. By this he means that he regarded himself as unworthy to be taken into the account, and indeed as utterly annihilated; because this was a matter with which a dead man had nothing to do. At all events, he means, that by the mortification of the old man he had renounced the world. Some take his meaning to be, “If the world looks upon me as abhorred and excommunicated, I consider the world to be condemned and accursed.” This appears to me to be overstrained, but I leave my readers to judge.

**15. For in Christ Jesus.** The reason why he is crucified to the world, and the world to him, is, that in Christ, to whom he is spiritually united, nothing but a new creature is of any avail. Everything else must be dismissed, must perish. I refer to those things which hinder the renewing of the Spirit. “If any man be in Christ” says he, “let him be a new creature.” ([2 Corinthians 5:17.](#)) That is, if any man wishes to be considered as belonging to the kingdom of Christ, let him be created anew by the Spirit of God; let him not live any longer to himself or to the world, but let him be raised up to “newness of life.” ([Romans 6:4.](#)) His reasons for concluding that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any importance, have been already considered. The truth of the gospel swallows up, and brings to nought, all the shadows of the law.

**16. And as many as walk according to this rule.** “May they enjoy all prosperity and happiness!” This is not merely a prayer in their behalf, but a token of approbation. His meaning therefore is, that those who teach this doctrine are worthy of all esteem and regard, and those who reject it do not deserve to be heard. The word *rule* denotes the regular and habitual course which all godly ministers of the gospel ought to pursue. Architects employ a model in the erection of buildings, to assist them in preserving the proper form and just proportions. Such a *model* (κανόνα) does the apostle prescribe to the ministers of the word, who are to build the church “according to the pattern shewn to them.” ([Hebrews 8:5.](#))



Faithful and upright teachers, and all who allow themselves to conform to this rule, must derive singular encouragement from this passage, in which God, by the mouth of Paul, pronounces on them a blessing. We have no cause to dread the thunders of the Pope, if God promises to us from heaven *peace* and *mercy*. The word *walk* may apply both to a minister and to his people, though it refers chiefly to ministers. The future tense of the verb, (ἔσοι στοιχήσουσιν,) as many as *shall walk*, is intended to express perseverance.

*And upon the Israel of God* <sup>101</sup> This is an indirect ridicule of the vain boasting of the false apostles, who vaunted of being the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh. There are two classes who bear this name, a pretended Israel, which appears to be so in the sight of men, — and the Israel of God. Circumcision was a disguise before men, but regeneration is a truth before God. In a word, he gives the appellation of the *Israel of God* to those whom he formerly denominated the children of Abraham by faith, (Galatians 3:29,) and thus includes all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, who were united into one church. On the contrary, the name and lineage are the sole boast of Israel according to the flesh; and this led the apostle to argue in the Epistle to the Romans, that “they are not all Israel which are of Israel, neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children.” (Romans 9:6, 7.)

17. *Let no man trouble me.* He now speaks with the voice of authority for restraining his adversaries, and employs language which his high rank fully authorized. “Let them cease to throw hinderances in the course of my preaching.” He was prepared, for the sake of the church, to encounter difficulties, but does not choose to be interrupted by contradiction. *Let no man trouble me.* Let no man make opposition to obstruct the progress of my work.

*As to everything else,* (τοῦ λοιποῦ,) that is, as to everything besides the *new creature*. “This one thing is enough for me. Other matters are of no importance, and give me no concern. Let no man question me about them.” He thus places himself above all men, and allows to none the power of attacking his ministry. Literally, the phrase signifies, as to *the rest* or *the remainder*, which Erasmus, in my opinion, has improperly applied to time.

*For I bear* <sup>102</sup> *in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.* This accounts for his bold, authoritative language. And what were those marks? Imprisonment, chains, scourging, blows,

101 Ἰσραηλιτικὸν γὰρ τὸ ἀληθινὸν πνευματικὸν καὶ Ἰακώβ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἀβραάμ τοῦ ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ ἐπὶ τῷ πίστει μερτυρηθέντος ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ εὐλογηθέντος καὶ πατρὸς πολλῶν κληθέντος ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν, οἱ διὰ τούτου σταυρωθέντος Χριστοῦ τῷ Θεῷ προσαχθόντες. “We, who have been brought to God by this crucified Christ are the true spiritual Israel, and the seed of Judah, and of Jacob, and of Isaac, and of Abraham, whose faith was attested, and who was blessed by God, and called the father of many nations, while he was in circumcision” — Justin Martyr.

102 Οὐκ εἶπε δὲ ἔχω ἀλλὰ βαστάζω ὥσπερ τι τρόπαιον ἢ σημεῖον βασιλικὸν καὶ τούτοις ἐναβρύνομαι. “He does not say, I have, but, I bear, as some trophy or royal symbol; and I deck myself with them.” — Theophylact

stoning, and every kind of injurious treatment which he had incurred in bearing testimony to the gospel. Earthly warfare has its honors, in conferring which a general holds out to public view the bravery of a soldier. So Christ our leader has his own marks, of which he makes abundant use, for conferring on some of his followers a high distinction. These marks, however, differ from the other in one important respect, that they partake of the nature of the cross, and in the sight of the world are disgraceful. This is suggested by the word translated *marks*, (στίγματα,) for it literally denotes the *marks* with which barbarian slaves, or fugitives, or malefactors, were usually branded. Paul, therefore, can hardly be said to use a figure, when he boasts of shining in those marks with which Christ is accustomed to honor his most distinguished soldiers,<sup>103</sup> which in the eye of the world were attended by shame and disgrace, but which before God and the angels surpass all the honors of the world.<sup>104</sup>

18. *The grace*<sup>105</sup> *of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.* His prayer is not only that God may bestow upon them his grace in large measure, but that they may have a proper feeling of it in their hearts. Then only is it truly enjoyed by us, when it comes to our *spirit*. We ought therefore to entreat that God would prepare in our souls a habitation for his grace. Amen.

END OF THE COMMENTARIES ON THE  
EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

103 “There is no warlike weapon, οὐ γὰρ οὐκ ἔχνη ἐν ἑμαυτῷ φέρω, of which I do not bear the marks upon me.” — Arrian.

104 “So far am I from being liable to be torn away from the truth of the gospel, by any reproaches or afflictions, that the disgrace inflicted on me for Christ’s sake, and the imprisonment, and scourging, and bonds, and stonings, and other distresses which I have endured for the name of Christ, shall be carried about with me, in my body, wherever I go, as marks and tokens of my Lord Jesus Christ. I will exhibit them as so many trophies, and will reckon it to be my glory, that I am counted worthy to imitate, in any manner, the cross of Christ which I preach.” — Erasmus’s Paraphrase.

105 “It is of little moment whether, by the ‘grace,’ we understand that free love and favour, which He always bears in his heart to all that believe in his name, or all that kindness — all those heavenly and spiritual blessings — in the communication of which He manifests this love, this free favour.” — Brown.

## THE ARGUMENT

Ephesus, which is familiarly known in history under a great variety of names,<sup>106</sup> was a very celebrated city of Lesser Asia. The remarkable events connected with the work of God in “forming there a people for himself,” ([Isaiah 43:21](#)), through the labors of Paul, together with the commencement and progress of that church, are related by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. At present, I shall do nothing more than glance at what bears directly on the argument of the Epistle. The Ephesians had been instructed by Paul in the pure doctrine of the gospel. At a later period, while he was a prisoner at Rome, and perceiving that they needed confirmation, he wrote to them, on that account, the present Epistle.

The first three chapters are chiefly occupied with commending the grace of God. Immediately after the salutation in the commencement of the first chapter, he treats of God’s free election. This affords him an opportunity of stating that they were now called into the kingdom of God, because they had been appointed to life before they were born. And here occurs a striking display of God’s wonderful mercy, when the salvation of men is traced to its true and native source, the free act of adoption. But as the minds of men are ill fitted to receive so sublime a mystery, he betakes himself to prayer, that God would enlighten the Ephesians in the full knowledge of Christ.

In the second chapter, by drawing two comparisons, he places in a strong light the riches of divine grace. 1. He reminds them how wretched they were before they were called to Christ. We never become duly sensible of our obligations to Christ, nor estimate aright his kindness towards us, till we have been led to view, on the other side, the unhappy condition in which we formerly were “without Christ.” ([Ephesians 2:12](#).) 2. The Gentiles were “aliens” from the promises of eternal life, which God had been pleased to bestow on the Jews alone.

In the third chapter, he declares that he had been appointed to be, in a peculiar manner, the Apostle of the Gentiles, because, for a long period, they were “strangers and foreigners,” ([Ephesians 2:19](#)), but are now included among the people of God. As this was an unusual event, and as its very novelty produced uneasiness in many minds, he calls it a

“mystery which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men,” ([Ephesians 3:4,5](#)),

but “the dispensation” ([Ephesians 3:2](#)) of which had been intrusted to himself.

Towards the close of the chapter, he again prays that God would grant to the Ephesians such an intimate knowledge of Christ, that they would have no desire to know anything else. His object in doing so is not merely to lead them to gratitude to God for so many favors, and to the expression of that gratitude by entire devotion to his service, but still more to remove all doubt about his own calling. Paul was probably afraid that the false apostles would shake their faith by insinuating that they had been only half-instructed. They had

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106 See Rosenmuller’s Biblical Geography, volume 27, page 26, Biblical Cabinet.

been Gentiles, and, when they embraced pure Christianity, had been told nothing about ceremonies or circumcision. But all who enjoined on Christians the observance of the law were loud in the avowal, that those who have not been introduced into the church of God by circumcision must be held as profane persons. This was their ordinary song, that no man who is not circumcised is entitled to be reckoned among the people of God, and that all the rites prescribed by Moses ought to be observed. Accordingly, they brought it as a charge against Paul, that he exhibited Christ as equally the Savior of Gentiles and of Jews. They asserted that his apostleship was a profanation of the heavenly doctrine, because it threw open to wicked men, without discrimination, a share in the covenant of grace.

That the Ephesians, when assailed by these calumnies, might not give way, he resolved to meet them. While he argues so earnestly that they were called to the gospel because they had been chosen before the creation of the world, he charges them, on the other hand, not to imagine that the gospel had been accidentally brought to them by the will of men, or that it flew to them by chance;<sup>107</sup> for the preaching of Christ among them was nothing else than the announcement of that eternal decree. While he lays before them the unhappy condition of their former life, he at the same time reminds them that the singular and astonishing mercy of God appeared in rescuing them from so deep a gulf. While he sets before their eyes his own commission as the apostle of the Gentiles, he confirms them in the faith which they had once received, because they had been divinely admitted into the communion of the church. And yet each of the sentences to which we have now referred must be viewed as an exhortation fitted to excite the Ephesians to gratitude.

In the fourth chapter, he describes the manner in which the Lord governs and protects his church, which is, by the gospel preached by men. Hence it follows, that in no other way can its integrity be preserved, and that the object at which it aims is true perfection. The apostle's design is, to commend to the Ephesians the ministry by which God reigns amongst us. He afterwards details the fruits of this preaching, — a holy life and all the duties of piety. Nor does he satisfy himself with describing in general terms how Christians ought to live, but lays down particular exhortations adapted to the various relations of society.

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107 “Ou, qu’il ait prins sa volée vers eux.” “Or, that it took its flight towards them.”