as some have supposed, but implies,  
as very often, a half-expression-of a desire :  
‘*I was wishing, had it been possible.*’  
The sense of the imperfect tense in such  
expressions is the proper and strict one,  
—and no new discovery, but common  
enough in every schoolboy’s reading: the  
act is unfinished, an obstacle intervening)  
**that I myself** (see ch. vii. 25; it gives  
emphasis, as ‘I, Paul,’ 2 Cor. x. 1, Gal.  
y. 2: ‘I, the very person who write this,  
and whom ye know’) **were accursed** (a  
thing accursed, “**anathema**,” in the original: an irrevocable devotion to God,  
or, a thing or person so devoted. All  
*persons* and *animals* thus devoted were  
put to death; none could be redeemed,  
Lev. xxvii. 28, 29. The subsequent scriptural usage of the word arose from this. It  
never denotes simply an exclusion or ex-  
communication, but always devotion to  
perdition,—a curse. Attempts have been  
made to explain away the meaning here,  
by understanding *excommunication* ; or even  
*natural death* only: but excommunication  
included cursing and delivering over to  
Satan:—and the mere wish for natural  
death would, as Chrysostom eloquently remarks, be altogether beneath the dignity  
of the passage. Perhaps the strangest,  
interpretation is that of Dr. Burton: “St.  
Paul had been set apart and consecrated  
by Christ to His service; and he had  
prayed that this devotion of himself might  
be for the good of his countrymen:”—  
it is however no unfair sample of a multitude of others, all more or less shrinking  
from the full meaning of the fervid words  
of the Apostle) **from Christ** (i.e. cut off  
and separated from Him for ever in eternal  
perdition. No other meaning will satisfy  
the plain sense of the words. On this  
wish, compare Exod. xxxii, 32) **in behalf  
of** (in the place of: or, if thus I could  
benefit, deliver from perdition) **my brethren,  
my kinsmen according to the flesh—**The wish is evidently not to be pressed as  
entailing on the Apostle the charge of inconsistency in loving his nation more than his  
Saviour. It is the expression of an affectionate and self-denying heart, willing to  
surrender all things, even, if it might be so,  
eternal glory itself, if thereby he could obtain for his beloved people those blessings  
of the Gospel which he now enjoyed, but  
from which they were excluded. Nor does  
he describe the wish as ever actually formed;  
only as a conceivable limit to which, if admissible, his self-devotion for them would  
reach. Others express their love by professing themselves ready to give their life  
for their friends; he declares the intensity  
of his affection by reckoning even his *spiritual* life not too great a price, if it might.  
purchase their salvation.

**4.** ] Not  
only on their relationship to himself does he  
ground this sorrow and this self-devotion :  
but on the recollection of their ancient privileges and glories—**Who are Israelites**  
(a name of honour, see John i. 47; 2 Cor.  
xi. 22; Phil. iii. 5); **whose** (**is**) **the adoption** (see Exod. iy. 22; Deut. xiv. 1;  
xxxii. 6; Isa. i. 2), **and the glory** (perhaps  
their general preference and exaltation,  
consequent on the adoption,—but far more  
probably, as all the other substantives refer  
to separate matters of fact,—the Shechinah,  
or visible manifestation of the divine Presence on the mercy-seat between the cherubims ; see references), **and the covenants**(not, *the two tables of the law*,—as some  
understand it,—which formed but one  
covenant, and are included in “*the giving  
of the law;*” nor, *the Old and New Testament Covenants,*—as others,—see Gal. iv.  
24 ff. : but *the several renewals of the covenant* with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and finally  
with the whole people at Sinai:—see Gen. xv.  
9-21; xvii. 4, 7, 10; xxvi. 24; xxviii. 13;  
Exod. xxiv. 7, 8), **and the giving of the law**  
(“if others boast of their Solons and Lycurguses, how far juster ground of boasting:  
is there of the Lord as Lawgiver!”? Calvin.  
The word includes both the act of giving  
the Law, and the Law thus given), **and  
the service** (ordinances of worship: see  
Heb. ix. 1, 6: the words in brackets are not  
expressed in the original, but are implied in  
the word used), **and the promises** (probably  
only those to the patriarchs, of a Redeemer