

Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

INDEX

Chapter I



Dr. Martin Luther 1535

CHAPTER 1

Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the father, who raised him from the dead).

NOW that we have declared the argument and sum of this Epistle to the Galatians, we think it good, before we come to the matter itself, to shew what was the occasion St. Paul wrote this Epistle. He had planted among the Galatians the pure doctrine of the Gospel, and the righteousness of faith; but by and by after his departure, there crept in certain false teachers, which overthrew all that he had planted and truly taught among them. For the devil cannot but furiously impugn this doctrine with all force and subtlety, neither can he rest so long as he seeth any spark thereof remaining. We also, for this only cause, that we preach the Gospel, do suffer of the world, the devil, and his ministers, all the mischief that they can work against us, both on the right hand and on the left.

For the Gospel is such a doctrine as teacheth a far higher matter than is the wisdom, righteousness, and religion of the world, that is to say, free remission of sins through Christ, etc. It leaveth those things in their degree, to be as they are, and commendeth them as the good creatures of God. But the world preferreth these creatures before the Creator, and moreover, by them would put away sin, be delivered from death, and deserve everlasting life. This doth the Gospel condemn. Contrariwise, the world cannot suffer those things to be condemned which it most esteemeth and best liketh of, and therefore it chargeth the Gospel that it is a seditious doctrine and full of errors, that it overthroweth commonwealths, countries, dominions, kingdoms and empires, and therefore offendeth both against God and the Emperor, abolisheth laws, corrupteth good manners, and setteth all men at liberty to do what they list. Wherefore, with just zeal and high service to God (as it would seem) it persecuteth this doctrine, and abhorreth the teachers and professors thereof as the greatest plague that can be in the whole earth.

Moreover, by the preaching of this doctrine, the devil is overthrown, his kingdom is destroyed, the law, sin and death (wherewith, as most mighty and invincible tyrants, he hath brought all mankind in subjection under his dominion) are wrested out of his hands: briefly, his prisoners are translated out of the kingdom of darkness, Into the kingdom of light and liberty.

Should the devil suffer all this? Should not the father of lies employ all his force and subtle policies, to darken, to corrupt, and utterly to root out this doctrine of salvation and everlasting life? Indeed, St. Paul complaineth in this and all other his epistles, that even in his time the devil through his apostles shewed himself a cunning workman in this business. Likewise we also at this day do complain and lament, that Satan hath wrought greater harm to our Gospel by his ministers, the fantastical spirits, than by all the tyrants, kings, princes and bishops that have persecuted it and still do persecute it by force. And had we not watched and labored with such diligence in planting and teaching this doctrine of faith, we had

not so long time remained in concord, but among us also there had long since arisen sects. But because we abide constantly in this doctrine, and it is ceaselessly urged by us, it preserveth us in fullest unity and peace. But others, who either neglect it or desire to teach (as they think) something more exalted, do fall into various pernicious errors and sects whereof there is no end, and so they perish.

We thought good to shew here by the way, that the Gospel is such a doctrine as condemneth all manner of righteousness, and preacheth the only righteousness of Christ, and to them that embrace the same, it bringeth peace of conscience and all good things; and yet, notwithstanding, the world hateth and persecuteth it most bitterly.

I have said before, that the occasion why St. Paul wrote this Epistle, was for that by and by after his departure, false teachers had destroyed those things among the Galatians which he with long and great travail had built.

And these false apostles being of the circumcision and sect of the Pharisees, were men of great estimation and authority, who bragged among the people that they were of that holy and chosen stock of the Jews (John 8, Romans 4:4 ff.), that they were Israelites of the seed of Abraham, that they had the promises and the fathers; and finally, that they were the ministers of Christ, and the Apostles' scholars, with whom they had been conversant, and had seen their miracles, and perhaps had also wrought some signs or miracles themselves for Christ witnesseth (Matthew 7:22) that the wicked also do work miracles. When men having such authority come into any country or city, by and by the people have them in great admiration, and under this color of godliness and religion, they do not only deceive the simple, but also the learned; yea, and those also which seem to be somewhat confirmed in the faith: especially when they brag (as these did) that they are the offspring of the Patriarchs, the ministers of Christ, the Apostles' scholars, etc. Moreover, these false apostles, by all the crafty means they could devise, defaced the authority of St. Paul, saying: 'Why do ye so highly esteem of Paul? Why have ye him in so great reverence? Forsooth, he was but the last of all that were converted unto Christ. But we are the disciples of the Apostles, and were familiarly conversant with them. We have seen Christ working miracles, and heard him preach. Paul came after us, and is inferior unto us: and it is not possible that God should suffer us to err who are of his holy people, the ministers of Christ, and have received the Holy Ghost. Again, we are many, and Paul is but one, and alone, who neither is conversant with the Apostles, nor hath seen Christ. Yea, he persecuted the Church of Christ a great while. Would God (think ye) for Paul's sake only, suffer so many churches to be deceived?'

Even so the Pope at this day, when he hath no authority of the Scripture to defend himself withal, useth this one argument continually against us, 'The Church, the Church.' 'Thinkest thou that God is so offended, that for a few

heretics of Luther's sect he will cast off his whole Church? Thinkest thou that he would leave his Church in error so many hundred years?' And this he mightily maintaineth, that the Church can never be overthrown. Now, like as many are moved with this argument at this day, so in Paul's time these false apostles, through great bragging and setting forth of their own praises, blinded the eyes of the Galatians, so that Paul lost his authority among them, and his doctrine was brought in suspicion.

Against this vain bragging and boasting of the false apostles, Paul with great constancy and boldness setteth his apostolic authority, highly commending his vocation, and defending his ministry. And (although elsewhere he never doth the like) he will not give place to any, no, not to the Apostles themselves, much less to any of their scholars. And to abate their pharisaical pride and shameless boldness, he maketh mention of the history done in Antioch, where he withstood Peter himself. Besides this, not regarding the offense that might arise thereof, he saith plainly in the text, that he was bold to accuse and reprove Peter himself, the chief of the Apostles, who had seen Christ, and had been most familiarly conversant with him. I am an Apostle (saith he) and such a one as pass not what others are: yea, I was not afraid to chide the very pillar of all the rest of the Apostles. And to conclude, in the first two chapters, he doth, in a manner, nothing else but set out his vocation, his office and his Gospel, affirming that it was not of men, and that he had not received it by man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ: also, that if he, or an angel from heaven, should bring any other gospel than that which he had preached, he should be holden accursed.

THE CERTAINTY OF CALLING

But what meaneth Paul by this boasting? I answer: This common place serveth to this end, that every minister of God's Word should be sure of his calling, that before God and man he may with a bold conscience glory therein, that he preacheth the Gospel as one that is called and sent: even as the ambassador of a king glorieth and vaunteth in this, that he cometh not as a private person, but as the king's ambassador; and because of this dignity, that he is the king's ambassador, he is honored and set in the highest place: which honor should not be given unto him if he came as a private person. Wherefore, let the preacher of the Gospel be certain that his calling is from God. And it is expedient, that according to the example of Paul, he should magnify this his calling, to the end that he may win credit and authority among the people, like as the king's ambassador magnifieth his office and calling. And thus to glory is not vain, but a necessary kind of glorying, because he glorieth not in himself, but in the king which hath sent him, whose authority he desireth to be honored and magnified. And when in the name of the king he willett aught to be done by his subjects, he saith not: We pray you, but: We command, we will this to 'be done, etc. But for his private person he saith: We pray, etc.

Likewise, when Paul so highly commendeth his calling, he seeketh not his own praise, but with a necessary and a holy pride he magnifieth his ministry; as to the Romans (11:13) he saith: 'Forasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I will magnify mine office,' that is to say, I will that men receive me, not as Paul of Tarsus, but as Paul the apostle or ambassador of Jesus Christ. And this he doth of necessity, to maintain his authority, that the people in hearing this, might be more attaint and willing to give ear unto him. For they hear not only Paul, but in Paul Christ himself, and God the Father sending him out in his message: whose authority and majesty, like as men ought religiously to honor, so ought they with great reverence to receive and to hear also his messengers bringing his word and message.

This is a notable place, therefore, wherein Paul so glorieth and boasteth as touching his vocation, that he despiseth all others. If any man, after the manner of the world, should despise all others in respect of himself, and attribute all unto himself alone, he should not only show himself a very fool, but also grievously sin. But this manner of boasting is necessary, and pertaineth not to the glory of Paul, but to the glory of God, whereby is offered unto him the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. For by this boasting, the name, the grace, and the mercy of God, is made known unto the world. Thus therefore he beginneth his Epistle.

Paul an apostle, not of men, etc.

Here in the very beginning he toucheth those false teachers which boasted themselves to be the disciples of the Apostles, and to be sent of them, but despised Paul as one that was neither the Apostles' scholar, nor sent of any to preach the Gospel, but came in some other way, and of his own head thrust himself into that office. Against those Paul defendeth his calling, saying: My calling seemeth base to your preachers; but whosoever they be which are come unto you, are sent either of men, or by man; that is to say, they have entered either of themselves, being not called, or else called by others. But my calling is not of men, nor by man, but it is above all manner of calling that can be made after the Apostles, for it is 'by Jesus Christ, and by God the Father,' etc.

Where he saith 'of men,' I mean such as call and thrust in themselves, when neither God nor man calleth or sendeth them, but they run and speak of themselves; as at this day certain fantastical spirits do, which either lurk in corners and seek places where they may pour out their poison, and come not into public congregations, or else they resort thither where the Gospel is planted already. These I call such as are of men. But where he saith 'by man,' I understand such as have a divine calling, but yet by man as by means. God calleth in two manner of ways: by means and without means.

He calleth us all to the ministry of his Word at this day, not immediately by himself, but by other means; that is to say, by man. But the Apostles were called immediately of Christ himself, as the prophets in the Old Testament were called

of God himself, Afterwards the Apostles called their disciples, as Paul called Timothy, Titus, etc. These men called bishops (as in Titus 1), and the bishops their successors down to our own times, and so on to the end of the world. And this is a mediated calling, since it is done by man; yet notwithstanding it is of God. So when a prince or magistrate or I call any man, that man hath his calling by man; and this is the general manner of calling in the world since the Apostles' time. Nor ought it to be changed, but magnified, on account of the fantastical heads, which contemn it and boast of another calling, whereby they say they are impelled by the Spirit to teach. But they are liars and impostors, for they are driven by a spirit which is not good, but evil. For it is not lawful for me to leave my appointed place as a preacher and go unto another city where I am not called, and there preach although as a Doctor of Divinity I might preach in the whole Papacy, would they but tolerate me); no, not even if I hear that falsehoods are being taught, and souls seduced and damned which I might snatch from error and damnation by my sound doctrine. But I ought to commit the matter unto God, who in his own time will find occasion of lawfully calling ministers and giving the Word. For he is the Lord of the harvest, who will send laborers into his harvest; our part is to pray (Matthew 9:38).

Wherefore we ought not to force our way into another's harvest, as the devil is wont to stir up his ministers to do, so that they run without being called and profess with most ardent zeal to be grieved that men are being so miserably seduced, and to desire to teach them the truth and snatch them from the snares of the devil. Even, therefore, if a man with a godly zeal and a good intent seeketh by his own sound doctrine to deliver from error them that are led astray, notwithstanding there ariseth hereof a bad example, whereby occasion is given to ungodly teachers to thrust themselves in, through whom Satan afterwards occupieth the chair; and this example worketh very great harm.

But when the prince or other magistrate calleth me, then can I with assured confidence boast against the devil and the enemies of the Gospel, that I am called by the command of God through the voice of a man. For there is the command of God through the mouth of the prince; and these are true vocations. We also, therefore, are called by divine authority, not indeed immediately by Christ, as the Apostles were, but 'by man.'

Now this place concerning the certainty of calling is very necessary on account of those pestilential and satanic spirits, so that every minister of the Word may boast with John the Baptist: 'The word of the Lord is come upon me' (Luke 3:2). When, there, re, I preach, baptize, administer the sacraments, I do these things as one commanded and called, because the voice of the Lord is come unto me: not in a corner, as the fantastical spirits do boast, but through the mouth of a man who is in the exercise of his lawful right. But if one or two citizens should ask me to preach, I ought not to follow such a private calling, since a window is thereby opened to the ministers of Satan, who following this example

do harm, as we have said above. But when they which hold public offices ask me, then I ought to obey.

Therefore, when Paul saith, 'Not of men, neither by man,' he beateth down the false apostles; as though he would say: Although those vipers brag never so much, what can they brag more than that they are either come 'of men,' that is to say, of themselves without any calling, or 'by man,' that is to say, sent of others? I pass not upon any of these things, neither ought you to regard them. As for me, I am called and sent neither of men, nor by man, but without means, that is to wit, by Jesus Christ himself, and my calling is like in all points the calling of the Apostles, and I am indeed an Apostle. Paul, therefore, handleth this place, of the calling of the Apostles, effectually. And elsewhere, he separateth the degree of apostleship from others, as in 1 Corinthians 12:28, and in Ephesians 4, where he saith: 'And God hath ordained some in the Church, as first Apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers' etc., setting Apostles in the first place; so that they be properly called Apostles, which are sent immediately of God himself, without any other person as means.

So Matthias was called only of God (Acts 1:23 ff.), for when the other Apostles had appointed two, they durst not choose the one nor the other, but they cast lots, and prayed that God would show which of them he would have. For, seeing he should be an Apostle, it behoved that he should be called of God. So was Paul called to be the Apostle of the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Hereof the Apostles also are called saints; for they are sure of their calling and doctrine, and have continued faithful in their office, and none of them became a castaway saving Judas, because their calling is holy.

This is the first assault that Paul maketh against the false apostles, which ran when no man sent them. Calling, therefore, is not to be despised; for it is not enough for a man to have the Word and pure doctrine, but also he must be assured of his calling; and he that entereth without this assurance, entereth to no other end but to kill and destroy. For God never prospereth the labor of those that are not called. And although they teach some good and profitable matters, yet they edify not. So at this day, our fantastical spirits have the words of faith in their mouths, but yet they yield no fruit, but their chief end and purpose is to draw men to their false and perverse opinions. They that have a certain and holy calling must oftentimes sustain many and great conflicts, as they must do whose doctrine is pure and sound, that they may constantly abide in their salutary office, against the infinite and continual assaults of the devil and rage of the world. Here, what should he do whose calling is uncertain, and doctrine corrupt?

This is therefore our comfort, which are in the ministry of the Word, that we have an office which is heavenly and holy, to the which we being lawfully called, do triumph against all the gates of hell. On the other side, it is an horrible thing when the conscience saith: 'This thou hast done without any lawful calling.' Here such terror shaketh a man's mind which is not called, that he would wish he had

never heard the Word which he teacheth; for by his disobedience he maketh all his works evil, were they never so good, insomuch that even his greatest works and labors become his greatest sins.

We see then how good and necessary this boasting and glorying of our ministry is. In times past, when I was but a young divine, methought Paul did unwisely in glorying so oft of his calling in his epistles; but I did not understand his purpose; for I knew not that the ministry of God's Word was so weighty a matter. I knew nothing of the doctrine of faith and a true conscience indeed, for that there was then no certainty taught in either the schools or churches, but all was full of sophistical subtleties of the schoolmen; and therefore no man was able to understand the dignity and power of this holy and spiritual boasting of the true and lawful calling, which serveth first to the glory of God, and secondly to the advancing of our ministry, and moreover, to the salvation of ourselves and of the people.

For by this our boasting we seek not estimation in the world, or praise among men, or money, or pleasures, or favor of the world; but forasmuch as we be in a divine calling, and in the work of God, and the people have great need to be assured of our calling, that they may know our word to be the Word of God, therefore we proudly vaunt and boast of it. It is not then a vain, but a most holy pride against the devil and the world, and true humility before God.

And by God the father, who raised him from the dead

Paul is so inflamed here with zeal, that he cannot tarry till he come to the matter itself, but forthwith, in the very title, he bursteth out and uttereth what he hath in his heart. His intent in this Epistle is, to treat of the righteousness that cometh by faith, and to defend the same: again, to beat down the law, and the righteousness that cometh by works. Of such cogitations he is full, and out of this wonderful and exceeding great abundance of the excellent wisdom and knowledge of Christ in his heart, his mouth speaketh. This flame, this great burning fire of his heart, cannot be hid, nor suffer him to hold his tongue; and therefore he thought it not enough to say that he was an Apostle sent by Jesus Christ, but also addeth: 'by God the Father, who hath raised him up from the dead.'

But it seemeth here, that the adding of these words: 'And by God the Father, etc.' is not necessary. But because (as I said) Paul speaketh out of the abundance of his heart, his mind burneth with desire to set forth, even in the very entry of his Epistle, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to preach the righteousness of God, which is called the resurrection of the dead. Christ, who liveth and is risen again, speaketh out of him, and moveth him thus to Speak; therefore not without cause he addeth, that he is also an Apostle 'by God the Father, who hath raised up Jesus Christ from the dead.' As if he should say, I have to deal with Satan, and with those vipers, the instruments of Satan, which

go about to spoil me of the righteousness of Christ, who was raised up by God the Father from the dead; by the which alone we are made righteous, by the which also we shall be raised up at the last day, from death to everlasting life. But they that in such sort go about to overthrow the righteousness of Christ, do resist the Father and the Son, and the work of them both.

Thus Paul, even at the first entrance, bursteth out into the whole matter whereof he entreateth in this Epistle. For (as I said) he treateth of the resurrection of Christ, who rose again to make us righteous, and in so doing he hath overcome the law, sin, death, hell, and all evils (Romans 4:25). Christ's victory, then, is the overcoming of the law, of sin, our flesh, the world, the devil, death, hell and all evils: and this his victory he hath given unto us. Although, then, these tyrants and these enemies of ours do accuse us and make us afraid, yet can they not drive us to despair, nor condemn us; for Christ, whom God the Father hath raised up from the dead, is our righteousness and victory (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Therefore, thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

But mark how fitly and to the purpose Paul here speaketh. He saith not: By God who hath made heaven and earth, who is Lord of Angels, who commanded Abraham to go out of his own country, who sent Moses to Pharaoh the king, who brought Israel out of Egypt (as the false prophets did, who boasted of the God of their fathers, the Creator, Maintainer, and Preserver of all things, working wonders among his people); but Paul had another thing in his heart, namely, the righteousness of Christ, and therefore he speaketh words that make much for this his purpose, saying: 'I am an Apostle, neither of men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who hath raised him up from the dead.' Ye see, then, with what fervency of spirit Paul is led in this matter, which he goeth about to establish and maintain against the whole kingdom of hell, the power and wisdom of the world, and against the devil and his apostles.

And all the brethren with me

This maketh much for the stopping of the mouths of these false apostles; for all his arguments tend to the advancing and magnifying of his ministry, and contrariwise, to the discrediting of theirs; as if he should thus say:

Although it be enough, that through a divine calling am sent as an Apostle by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who hath raised him up from the dead; yet lest I should be alone, I add over and besides (which is more than needeth) all the brethren, which are not Apostles, but fellow-soldiers: they write this epistle as well as I, and bear witness with me that my doctrine as true and godly. Wherefore we be sure that Christ is present with us, and that he teacheth and speaketh in the midst of us, and in our Church. As for the false apostles, if they

be anything, they be but sent either of men or by man; but I am sent of God the Father and of Jesus Christ, who is our life and resurrection (John 11:25). My other brethren are sent from God, howbeit by man, that is to wit, by me. Therefore, lest they might say that I alone set myself proudly against so many, I have my brethren with me, all of one mind, as faithful witnesses, which think, write, and teach the selfsame thing that I do.

Unto the churches of Galatia

Paul had preached the Gospel throughout all Galatia, and albeit he had not wholly converted it unto Christ, yet he had many churches in it, into the which the false apostles, Satan's ministers, had crept. So likewise at this day, the fantastical spirits come not to those places where the adversaries of the Gospel bear rule, but where Christians and good men are which love the Gospel. With such they wind in themselves even in the dominions of tyrants and persecutors of the Gospel: where they, creeping into houses under crafty pretense, pour out their poison to the subversion of many. But why go they not rather into the cities, countries, and dominions of the Papists, and there profess and maintain their doctrine in the presence of wicked princes, bishops, and doctors in the universities, as we by God's help and assistance have done? These tender martyrs will adventure no peril, but they resort thither where the Gospel hath an harbor already, where they may live without danger in great peace and quietness. So the false apostles would not endanger themselves to come to Jerusalem to Caiaphas, or to Rome to the emperor, or to other places where no man had preached afore, as Paul and the other Apostles did: but they came into Galatia, which was won unto Christ already by the labor and travail of Paul, and into Asia, and Corinth, and such other places, where good men were that professed the name of Christ, persecuting no man, but suffering all things quietly. There might the enemies of Christ's cross live in great security, and without any persecution.

And here we may learn that it is the lot of godly preachers, that besides the persecution which they suffer of the wicked and unthankful world, and the great travail which they sustain in planting of churches, they are compelled to suffer that thing, which they of long time before had purely taught, to be quickly overthrown of fantastical spirits, who afterwards reign and rule over them. This grieveth godly ministers more than any persecution of tyrants. Therefore, let him not be a minister of the Gospel, which is not content to be thus despised, or is loath to bear this reproach: or if he be, let him give over his charge to another. We also at this day do find the same thing to be true by experience. We are miserably contemned and vexed outwardly by tyrants, inwardly by those whom we have restored to liberty by the Gospel, and also by false brethren. But this is our comfort and glory, that being called of God, we have a promise of everlasting life, and look for that reward 'which eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard, nor

hath entered into the heart of man' (1 Corinthians 2:9). For when the great shepherd Christ shall appear, we shall receive an incorruptible crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4): who here also in this world will not suffer us to perish for hunger.

Jerome moveth here a great question, why Paul calleth those churches, which were no churches: for Paul (saith he) writeth to the Galatians that were perverted and turned back from Christ and from grace, unto Moses and the law. Hereunto I answer, that Paul calleth them the churches of Galatia, by putting a part for the whole, which is a common thing in the Scriptures. For writing in like manner to the Corinthians, he rejoiceth on their behalf, that the grace of God was given them in Christ, namely, that they were made rich through him in all utterance and knowledge. And yet many of them were misled by false apostles, and believed not the resurrection of the dead. So we also at this day call the Roman church holy, and all its bishoprics holy, even though they be abused and the ministers of them ungodly. For God 'ruleth in the midst of his enemies' (Psalm 110:2), 'Antichrist sitteth in the temple of God' (Thessalonians 2:4), and Satan is present in the midst of the sons of God (Job 1:6). Even if the Church is 'in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation' (as Paul saith, Philippians 2:15), even if it is in the midst of wolves and robbers, that is to say, spiritual tyrants, it is none the less the Church. Although the city of Rome is worse than Sodom and Gomorrha, yet there remain in it Baptism, the Sacrament, the voice and text of the Gospel, the Holy Scripture, the Ministries, the name of Christ and the name of God. Those who have these things, have them; those who have not are not excused, for the treasure is there. Therefore the Roman church is holy, because it hath the holy name of God, the Gospel, Baptism, etc. If these things are found among a people, that people is called holy. So our Wittenberg is a holy town, and we are truly holy because we have been baptized, communicated, taught and called of God; we have God's works among us, namely the Word and Sacraments, and these make us holy.

I say these things to the end that we may diligently distinguish Christian holiness from other kinds of holiness. The monks called their orders holy (although they durst not call themselves holy); but they are not holy; because, as we said above, Christian holiness is not active, but passive holiness. Wherefore let no man call himself holy on account of his manner of life or his works, if he fasteth, prayeth, scourgeth his body, giveth alms to the poor, comforteth the sorrowful and afflicted, etc. Else should the Pharisee in Luke (18:11 f.) also be holy. The works indeed are good, and God straitly requireth them of us, but they make us not holy. Thou and I are holy, Church, city and people are holy, not by their own, but by an alien holiness, not by active, but by passive holiness, because they possess divine and holy things, to wit, the vocation of the ministry, the Gospel, baptism, etc., whereby they are holy.

Albeit then, that the Galatians were fallen away from the doctrine of Paul, yet did Baptism, the Word, and the name of Christ, remain among them.

There were also some good men that were not revolted, which had a right opinion of the Word and Sacraments, and used them well. Moreover, these things could not be defiled through them that were revolted. For Baptism, the Gospel, and other things, are not therefore made unholy, because many are polluted and unholy, and have an evil opinion of them: but they abide holy and the same that they were, whether they be among the godly or the ungodly: by whom they can neither be polluted, nor made holy. By our good or evil conversation, by our good or evil life and manners, they be polluted or made holy in the sight of the heathen, but not afore God. Wherefore, the Church is holy even where fantastical spirits do reign, if only they deny not the Word and Sacraments. For if these be denied, there cannot be the Church. Wherefore, wheresoever the substance of the Word and Sacraments remaineth, there is the holy Church, although Antichrist there reign, who (as the Scripture witnesseth) sitteth not in a stable of fiends, or in a swine-sty, or in a company of infidels, but in the highest and holiest place of all, namely, in the temple of God. Wherefore, although spiritual tyrants reign, yet there must be a temple of God, and the same must be preserved under them. Therefore I answer briefly to this question, that the Church is universal throughout the whole world, wheresoever the Gospel of God and the Sacraments be. The Jews, the Turks, and other vain spirits, are not the Church, because they fight against these things and deny them. Hitherto as touching the title or inscription of this Epistle. Now followeth the salutation or greeting of Paul.

Grace be with you and peace from God the father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ

I hope ye are not ignorant what grace and peace meaneth, seeing that these terms are common in Paul, and now not obscure or unknown. But forasmuch as we take in hand to expound this Epistle (which we do, not because it is needful, or for any hardness that is in it, but that our consciences may be confirmed against heresies yet to come), let it not be tedious unto you, if we repeat these things again, that elsewhere and at other times we teach, preach, sing, and set out by writing. For if we lose the article of justification, we lose all things together. Therefore most necessary it is, chiefly and above all things, that we teach and repeat this article continually; like as Moses saith of his law. For it cannot be beaten into our ears enough or too much. Yea, though we learn it and understand it well, yet is there none that taketh hold of it perfectly, or believeth it with all his heart. 'So frail a thing is our flesh, and disobedient to the spirit.

The greeting of the Apostle is strange unto the world, and was never heard of before the preaching of the Gospel. And these two words, grace and peace, comprehend in them whatsoever belongeth to Christianity. Grace releaseth sin, and peace maketh the conscience quiet. The two fiends that torment us are sin and conscience. But Christ hath vanquished these two monsters, and trodden them under foot, both in this world and the world to come. This the world doth not know, and therefore it can teach no certainty of the overcoming of sin,

conscience and death. Only Christians have this kind of doctrine, and are exercised and armed with it, to get victory against sin, despair and everlasting death. And it is a kind of doctrine neither proceeding of free-will, nor invented by the reason or wisdom of man, but given from above. Moreover, these two words, grace and peace, do contain in them the whole sum of Christianity. Grace containeth the remission of sins, peace a quiet and joyful conscience. But peace of conscience can never be had, unless sin be first forgiven. But sin is not forgiven for the fulfilling of the law: for no man is able to satisfy the law. But the law doth rather show sin, accuse and terrify the conscience, declare the wrath of God, and drive to desperation. Much less is sin taken away by the works and inventions of men, as wicked worshippings, strange religions, vows and pilgrimages. Finally, there is no work that can take away sin; but sin is rather increased by works. For the justiciaries and merit-mongers, the more they labor and sweat to bring themselves out of sin, the deeper they are plunged therein. For there is no means to take away sin, but grace alone. Therefore Paul, in all the greetings of his epistles, setteth grace and peace against sin and an evil conscience. This thing must be diligently marked. The words are easy; but in temptation it is the hardest thing that can be, to be certainly persuaded in our hearts, that by grace alone, all other means either in heaven or in earth set apart, we have remission of sins and peace with God.

The world understandeth not this doctrine; and therefore it neither will nor can abide it, but condemneth it as heretical and wicked. It braggeth of freewill, of the light of reason, of the soundness of the powers and qualities of nature, and of good works, as means whereby it could deserve and attain grace and peace; that is to say, forgiveness of sins and a quiet conscience.

But at is impossible that the conscience should be quiet and joyful, unless it have peace through grace; that is to say, through the forgiveness of sins promised in Christ. Many have carefully labored, by finding out diverse and sundry religious orders and exercises for this purpose, to attain peace and quietness of conscience; but by so doing they have plunged themselves in more and greater miseries: for all such devices are but means to increase doubtfulness and despair. Therefore there shall be no rest to my bones or thine, unless we hear the word of grace, and cleave unto it steadfastly and faithfully. Then shall our conscience undoubtedly find grace and peace.

The Apostle doth fitly distinguish this grace and peace from all other kinds of grace and peace whatsoever. He wisheth to the Galatians grace and peace, not from the emperor, or kings and princes: for these do commonly persecute the godly, and rise up against the Lord and Christ his anointed (Psalm 2:1); nor from the world ('for in the world,' saith Christ, 'ye shall have trouble,' John 14:33), but from God our Father etc., which is as much as to say, he wished unto them a heavenly peace. So Christ saith: 'My peace I leave unto you: my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth it, do I give it unto you' (John 14:27). The peace of the world granteth nothing but the peace of our goods and bodies. So the

grace or favor of the world giveth us leave to enjoy our goods, and casteth us not out of our possessions. But in affliction and in the hour of death, the grace and favor of the world cannot help us, they cannot deliver us from affliction, despair and death. But when the grace and peace of God are in the heart, then is a man strong, so that he can neither be cast down with adversity, nor puffed up with prosperity, but walketh on plainly and keepeth the highway. For he taketh heart and courage in the victory of Christ's death; and the confidence thereof beginneth to reign in his conscience over sin and death; because through him he hath assured forgiveness of his sins: which after he hath once obtained, his conscience is at rest, and by the word of grace is comforted. So then a man being comforted and heartened by the grace of God (that is, by forgiveness of sins and by this peace of conscience), is able valiantly to bear and overcome all troubles, yea even death itself. This peace of God is not given to the world, because the world never longeth after it nor understandeth it, but to them that believe. And this cometh to pass by no other mean, than by the only grace of God.

A rule to be observed, that men ought to abstain from the curious searching of God's majesty.

But why doth the Apostle add moreover in this salutation: 'And from our Lord Jesus Christ'? Was it not enough to say: 'And from God our Father'?

Why then doth he couple Jesus Christ with the Father? Ye have oftentimes heard of us, how it is a rule and principle in the Scriptures, diligently to be marked, that we must abstain from the curious searching of God's majesty, which is intolerable to man's body, and much more to his mind. 'No man' (saith the Lord) 'shall see me and live' (Exodus 33:20). The Pope, the Turks, the Jews, land all such as trust in their own merits, regard not this rule, and therefore removing the mediator Christ out of their sight, they speak only of God, and before him only they pray, and do all that they do.

As for example, the monk imagineth thus: 'These works which I do, please God, God will regard these my vows, and for them will save me.' The Turk saith: 'If I keep the things which are commanded in the Alcoran, God will accept me, and give me everlasting life.' The Jew thinketh thus: 'If I keep those things which the law commandeth, I shall find God merciful to me, and so shall I be saved.' So also a sort of fond heads at this day, bragging of the spirit of revelations, of visions, and such other monstrous matters, I wot not what, do walk in wonders above their reaches. These new monks have invented a new cross and new works, and they dream that by doing them they please God. To be brief, as many as know not the article of justification, take away Christ the mercy seat, and will needs comprehend God in his majesty by the judgement of reason, and pacify him with their own works.

But true Christian divinity (as I give you often warning) setteth not God forth unto us in his majesty, as Moses and other doctrines do. It commandeth us not to search out the nature of God: but to know his will set out to us in Christ, whom he would have to take our flesh upon him, to be born and to die for our sins, and that this should be preached among all nations. For seeing the world by wisdom knew not God in the wisdom of God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Corinthians 1:21 ff.). Wherefore, when thy conscience standeth in the conflict, wrestling against the law, sin and death in the presence of God, there is nothing more dangerous than to wander with curious speculations in heaven, and there to search out God in his incomprehensible power, wisdom and majesty, how he created the world, and how he governeth it. If thou seek thus to comprehend God, and wouldest pacify him without Christ the mediator, making thy works a means between him and thyself, it cannot be but that thou must fall as Lucifer did, and in horrible despair lose God and all together. For as God is in his own nature unmeasurable, incomprehensible, and infinite, so is he to man's nature intolerable.

Wherefore if thou wouldest be in safety, and out of peril of conscience and salvation, bridle this climbing and presumptuous spirit, and so seek God as Paul teacheth thee (1 Corinthians 1:21 ff.): 'We (saith he) preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block unto the Jews, and foolishness unto the Grecians: but unto them which are called, both Jews and Grecians, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.' Therefore begin thou there where Christ began, namely, in the womb of the Virgin, in the manger, and at his mother's breasts, etc. For to this end he came down, was born, was conversant among men, suffered, was crucified and died, that by all means he might set forth himself plainly before our eyes, and fasten the eyes of our hearts upon himself, that he thereby might keep us from climbing up into heaven, and from the curious searching of the divine majesty.

Whensoever thou hast to do therefore in the matter of justification, and disputest with thyself how God is to be found that justifieth or accepteth sinners: where and in what sort he is to be sought; then know thou that there is no other God besides this man Christ Jesus. Embrace him, and cleave to him with thy whole heart, setting aside all curious speculations of the divine majesty, for he that is a searcher of God's majesty shall be overwhelmed of his glory. I know by experience what I say. But these vain spirits which so deal with God that they exclude the mediator, do not believe me. Christ himself saith: 'I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me' (John 14:6). Therefore besides this way Christ, thou shalt find no other way to the Father, but wandering: no verity, but hypocrisy and lying: no life but eternal death. Wherefore mark this well in the matter of justification, that when any of us shall have to wrestle with the law, sin, death and all other evils, we must look upon no other God, but only this God incarnate and clothed with man's nature.

But out of the matter of justification, when thou must dispute with Jews, Turks, Papists, Heretics etc., concerning the power, wisdom and majesty of God, then employ all thy wit and industry to that end, and be as profound and as subtle a disputer as thou canst: for then thou art in another vein. But in the case of conscience, of righteousness and life (which I wish here diligently to be marked) against the law, sin, death and the devil, or in the matter of satisfaction, of remission of sins, of reconciliation, and of everlasting life, thou must withdraw thy mind wholly from all cogitations and searching of the majesty of God, and look only upon this man Jesus Christ, who setteth himself forth unto us to be a mediator, and saith: 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you' (Matthew 11:28). Thus doing, thou shalt perceive the love, goodness and sweetness of God thou shalt see his wisdom, power and majesty sweetened and tempered to thy capacity: yea, and thou shalt find in this mirror and pleasant contemplation, all things according to that saying of Paul to the Colossians: 'In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' and: 'For in him dwelleth the fullness of the godhead bodily' (Colossians 2:3; 2:9). The world is ignorant of this, and therefore it searcheth out the will of God, setting aside the promise in Christ, to its own great peril. 'For no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him' (Matthew 11:27).

And this is the cause why Paul is wont so often to couple Jesus Christ with God the Father, even to teach us what true Christian religion is, which beginneth not at the highest, as other religions do, but at the lowest. It will have us to climb up by Jacob's ladder, whereupon God himself leaneth, whose feet touch the very earth, hard by the head of Jacob (Genesis 28:12). Wherefore, whensoever thou art occupied in the matter of thy salvation, setting aside all curious speculations of God's unsearchable majesty, all cogitations of works, of traditions, of philosophy, yea and of God's law too, run straight to the manger, and embrace this infant, and the Virgin's little babe in thine arms, and behold him as he was born, sucking, growing up, conversant among men, teaching, dying, rising again, ascending up above all the heavens, and having power above all things. By this means shalt thou be able to shake off all terrors and errors, like as the sun driveth away the clouds. And this sight and contemplation will keep thee in the right way, that thou mayest follow whither Christ is gone.

Therefore Paul, in wishing grace and peace not only from God the Father, but also from Jesus Christ, teacheth first, that we should abstain from curious searching of the divine majesty (for God no man knoweth) and to hear Christ, who is in the bosom of the Father, and uttereth to us his will, who also is appointed of the Father to be our teacher, to the end that we should all hear him.

CHRIST IS GOD BY NATURE

The other thing that Paul teacheth here, is a confirmation of our faith that Christ is very God. And such like sentences as this is, concerning the godhead of

Christ, are to be gathered together and marked diligently, not only against the Arians and other heretics, which either have been or shall be hereafter, but also for the confirmation of our faith: for Satan will not fail to impugn in us all the articles of our faith ere we die. He is a most deadly enemy to faith, because he knoweth that it is the victory which overcometh the world (1 John 5:4). Wherefore it standeth us in hand to labor that our faith may be certain, and may increase and be strengthened by diligent and continual exercise of the Word and fervent prayer, that we may be able to withstand Satan.

Now, that Christ is very God, it is manifestly declared, in that Paul attributeth the same things equally unto him which he doth unto the Father, namely, the giving of grace, the forgiveness of sins, peace of conscience, life, victory over sin, death, the devil and hell. This were by no means lawful for him to do, nay, it were sacrilege this to do, except Christ were very God, according to that saying: 'I will not give my glory unto another' (Isaiah 42:8). Again: no man giveth that to others which he himself hath not. But seeing Christ giveth grace, peace and the Holy Ghost, delivereth from the power of the devil, from sin and death, it is certain that he hath an infinite and divine power, equal in all points to the power of the Father.

Neither doth Christ give grace and peace as the Apostles gave and brought the same unto men by preaching of the Gospel; but he giveth it as the Author and Creator. The Father createth and giveth life, grace, peace, and all other good things. The self-same things also the Son createth and giveth. Now, to give grace, peace, everlasting life, to forgive sins, to make righteous, to quicken, to deliver from death and the devil, are not the works of any creature, but of the Divine Majesty alone. The angels can neither create nor give these things; therefore these works pertain only to the glory of the sovereign Majesty, the Maker of all things: and seeing Paul doth attribute the self-same power of creating and giving all these things, unto Christ equally with the Father, it must needs follow that Christ is verily and naturally God.

Many such arguments are in John, where it is proved and concluded by the works which are attributed to the Son as well as to the Father, that the divinity of the Father and of the Son is all one. Therefore the gifts which we receive of the Father, and which we receive of the Son, are all one. For else Paul would have spoken otherwise, after this manner: Grace from God the Father, and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ. But in knitting them both together, he attributeth them equally, as well to the Son as to the Father. I do therefore so diligently admonish you of this thing, because it is dangerous lest among so many errors, and in so great variety and confusion of sects, there might step up some Arians, Eunomians, Macedonians, and such other heretics, that might do harm to the churches with their subtilty.

Indeed the Arians were sharp and subtle fellows. They granted that Christ hath two natures, and that he is called very God of very God, howbeit in name

only. Christ (said they) is a most noble and perfect creature, above the angels, whereby God afterward created heaven and earth, and all other things. So Mahomet also speaketh honorably of Christ.' But all this is nothing else but goodly imaginations, and words pleasant and plausible to man's reason, whereby the fantastical spirits do deceive men, except they take good heed. But Paul speaketh otherwise of Christ. Ye (saith he) are rooted and established in this belief, namely, that Christ is not only a perfect creature, but very God, who doth the self-same things that God the Father doth. He hath the divine works not of a creature, but of the Creator, because he giveth grace and peace: and to give them is to condemn sin, to vanquish death, and to tread the devil under foot. These things no angel can give. But seeing they are attributed unto Christ, it must needs follow that he is very God by nature.

Which gave himself for our sins

Paul in a manner in every word handleth the argument of this Epistle. He hath nothing in his mouth but Christ; and therefore in every word there is a fervency of spirit and life. And mark how well and to the purpose he speaketh. He saith not: Which hath received our works at our hands, nor, which hath received the sacrifices of Moses's law, worshippings, religions, masses, vows, and pilgrimages; but 'hath given' – What? Not gold, nor silver, nor beasts, nor paschal lambs, nor an angel, but 'himself.' For what?

Not for a crown, not for a kingdom, not for our holiness or righteousness, but 'for our sins.' These words are very thunder-claps from heaven against all kinds of righteousness; like as is also this sentence of John: 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.' Therefore we must with diligent attention mark every word of Paul, and not slenderly consider them or lightly pass them over; for they are full of consolation, and confirm fearful consciences exceedingly.

But how may we obtain remission of our sins? Paul answereth, that the man which is called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, hath given himself for them. These are excellent and comfortable words, and are promises of the old law, that our sins are taken away by none other mean, than by the Son of God delivered unto death. With such gunshot and such artillery must the Papacy be destroyed, and all the religions of the heathen, all works, all merits and superstitious ceremonies. For if our sins may be taken away by our own works, merits and satisfactions, what needed the Son of God to be given for them? But seeing he was given for them, it followeth that we cannot put them away by our own works.

Again, by this sentence it is declared, that our sins are so great, so infinite and invincible, that it is impossible for the whole world to satisfy for one of them. And surely the greatness of the ransom (namely, Christ the Son of God, who gave himself for our sins) declareth sufficiently, that we can neither satisfy for sin nor have dominion over it. The force and power of sin is set forth and amplified

exceedingly by these words: 'Which gave himself for our sins.' Therefore here is to be marked the infinite greatness of the price bestowed for it, and then it will appear evidently that the power of it is so great, that by no means it could be put away, but that the Son of God must needs be given for it. He that considereth these things well, understandeth that this one word 'sin' comprehendeth God's everlasting wrath and the whole kingdom of Satan, and that it is a thing more horrible than can be expressed; which ought to move us and make us afraid indeed. But we are careless, yea we make light of sin, and a matter of nothing: which although it bring with it the sting and remorse of conscience, yet notwithstanding we think it not to be of such weight and force, but that by some little work or merit we may put it away.

This sentence therefore witnesseth, that all men are servants and bondslaves to sin, and (as Paul saith in another place) are 'sold under sin' (Romans 7:14); and again, that sin is a most cruel and mighty tyrant over all men; which cannot be vanquished by the power of any creatures, whether they be angels or men, but only by the sovereign and infinite power of Jesus Christ, who hath given himself for the same.

Furthermore, this sentence setteth out to the consciences of all men which are terrified with the greatness of their sins, a singular comfort. For, albeit sin be never so invincible a tyrant, yet notwithstanding, forasmuch as Christ hath overcome it through his death, it cannot hurt them that believe in him.

Moreover, if we arm ourselves with this belief, and cleave with all our hearts unto this man Christ Jesus, then is there a light opened and a sound judgment given unto us, so as we may most certainly and freely judge of all kinds of life. For when we hear that sin is such an invincible tyrant, thus incontinent by a necessary consequence we infer: Then what do the Papists, monks, nuns, priests, Mahometists, Anabaptists, and all such as trust in their works, which will abolish and overcome sin by their own traditions, works preparative, satisfactions, etc.? Here forthwith we judge all those sects to be wicked and pernicious; whereby the glory of God and of Christ is not only defaced, but also utterly taken away, and our own advanced and established.

But weigh diligently every word of Paul, and specially mark well this pronoun, 'our'; for the effect altogether consisteth in the well applying of the pronouns, which we find very often in the Scriptures; wherein also there is ever some vehemency and power. Thou wilt easily say and believe that Christ the Son of God was given for the sins of Peter, of Paul, and of other saints, whom we account to have been worthy of this grace; but it is a very hard thing that thou which judgest thyself unworthy of this grace, shouldest from thy heart say and believe that Christ was given for thine invincible, infinite and horrible sins. Therefore generally and without the pronoun, it is an easy matter to magnify and amplify the benefit of Christ, namely, that Christ was given for sins, but for other men's sins, which are worthy. But when it cometh to the putting to of this pronoun

'our,' there our weak nature and reason starteth back, and dare not come near unto God, nor promise to herself that so great a treasure shall be freely given unto her; and therefore she will not have to do with God, except first she be pure and without sin. Wherefore, although she read or hear this sentence: 'Which gave himself for our sins,' or such like, yet doth she not apply this pronoun 'our' unto herself, but unto others which are worthy and holy; and as for herself, she will tarry till she be made worthy by her own works.

This then is nothing else, but that man's reason fain would that sin were of no greater force and power than she herself dreameth it to be. Hereof it cometh that the hypocrites, being ignorant of Christ, although they feel the remorse of sin, do think notwithstanding that they shall be able easily to put it away by their good works and merits; and secretly in their hearts they wish that these words, 'Which gave himself for our sins,' were but as words spoken in humility, and would have their sins not to be true and very sins indeed, but light and small matters. To be short, man's reason would fain bring and present unto God a reigned and counterfeit sinner, which is nothing afraid nor hath any feeling of sin. It would bring him that is whole, and not him that hath need of a physician; and when it feeleth no sin, then would it believe that Christ was given for our sins.

The whole world is thus affected, and especially they that would be counted more holy and religious than others, as monks, and all justiciaries.

These confess with their mouths that they are sinners, and they confess also that they commit sins daily, howbeit not so great and many, but that they are able to put them away by their own works: yea and besides all this, they will bring their righteousness and deserts to Christ's judgment-seat, and demand the recompense of eternal life for them at the judge's hand. In the meanwhile notwithstanding (as they pretend great humility), because they will not vaunt themselves to be utterly void of sin, they feign certain sins, that for the forgiveness thereof they may with great devotion pray with the publican: 'God be merciful unto me a sinner' (Luke 18:13). Unto them, these words of St. Paul, 'for our sins,' seem to be but light and trifling; therefore they neither understand them, nor in temptation, when they feel sin indeed, can they take any comfort of them, but are compelled flatly to despair.

This is then the chief knowledge and true wisdom of Christians, to count these words of Paul, that Christ was delivered to death, not for our righteousness or holiness, but for our sins (which are very sins indeed, great, many, yea infinite and invincible), to be most true, effectual and of great importance. Therefore, think them not to be small, and such as may be done away by thine own works; neither yet despair thou for the greatness of them, if thou feel thyself oppressed therewith, either in life or death; but learn here of Paul to believe that Christ was given, not for feigned or counterfeit sins, nor yet for small sins, but for great and huge sins; not for one or two, but for all; not for vanquished sins (for no man, no nor angel, is able to overcome the least sin that is), but for invincible sins.

And except thou be found in the number of those that say 'our sins,' that is, which have this doctrine of faith, and teach, hear, learn, love and believe the same, there is no salvation for thee.

Labor therefore diligently, that not only out of the time of temptation, but also in the time and conflict of death, when thy conscience is thoroughly afraid with the remembrance of thy sins past, and the devil assaileth thee with great violence, going about to overwhelm thee with heaps, floods and whole seas of sins, to terrify thee, to draw thee from Christ, and to drive thee to despair; that then I say, thou mayest be able to say with sure confidence: Christ the Son of God was given, not for the righteous and holy, but for the unrighteous and sinners. If I were righteous and had no sin, I should have no need of Christ to be my reconciler. Why then, O thou peevish holy Satan, wilt thou make me to be holy and to seek righteousness in myself, when in very deed I have nothing in me but sins, and most grievous sins? Not feigned or trifling sins, but such as are against the first Table: to wit, great infidelity, doubting, despair, contempt of God, hatred, ignorance and blaspheming of God, unthankfulness, abusing of God's name, neglecting, loathing and despising the Word of God, and such like.

And moreover, these carnal sins against the second Table: as not to yield honor to my parents, not to obey the magistrates, to covet another man's goods, his wife, and such like; albeit that these be light faults in respect of those former sins. And admit that I have not committed murder, whoredom, theft and such other sins against the second Table, in fact; yet I have committed them in heart, and therefore I am a transgressor of all God's commandments, and the multitude of my sins is so great that they cannot be numbered: 'For I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea' (Prayer of Manasses, 9).

Besides this, Satan is such a cunning juggler, that he can make of my righteousness and good works, great sins. For so much, then, as my sins are so weighty, so infinite, so horrible and invincible, and that my righteousness doth nothing further me, but rather hinder me before God: therefore Christ the Son of God was given to death for them, to put them away, and so save all men which believe. Herein therefore consisteth the effect of eternal salvation, namely, in taking these words to be effectual, true, and of great importance. I say not this for nought, for I have oftentimes proved by experience, and I still daily find, what an hard matter it is to believe (especially in the conflict of conscience) that Christ was given, not for the holy, righteous, worthy, and such as were his friends, but for the ungodly, for sinners, for the unworthy, and for his enemies, which have deserved God's wrath and everlasting death.

Let us therefore arm ourselves with these and such like sentences of the holy Scripture, that we may be able to answer the devil (accusing us, and saying: Thou art a sinner, and therefore thou art damned) in this sort:

Because thou sayest I am a sinner, therefore will I be righteous and saved.

Nay (saith the devil) thou shalt be damned. No (say I) for I fly unto Christ, who hath given himself for my sins; therefore, Satan, thou shalt not prevail against me in that thou goest about to terrify me in setting forth the greatness of my sins, and so to bring me into heaviness, distrust, despair, hatred, contempt and blaspheming of God. Yea rather, in that thou sayest I am a sinner, thou givest me armor and weapon against thyself, that with thine own sword I may cut thy throat, and tread thee under my feet: for Christ died for sinners. Moreover, thou thyself preachest unto me the glory of God; for thou puttest me in mind of God's fatherly love towards me, wretched and damned sinner: 'Who so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3:16). And as often as thou objectest that I am a sinner, so often thou callest me to remembrance of the benefit of Christ my Redeemer, upon whose shoulders, and not upon mine, lie all my sins; for 'the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,' and 'for the transgressions of his people was he smitten,' (Isaiah 53:6,8).

Wherefore, when thou sayest I am a sinner, thou dost not terrify me, but comfort me above measure.

Whoso knoweth this one point of cunning well, shall easily avoid all the engines and snares of the devil, who, by putting man in mind of his sin, driveth him to despair and destroyeth him, unless he withstand him with this cunning and with this heavenly wisdom, whereby alone sin, death and the devil are overcome. But the man that putteth not away the remembrance of his sin, but keepeth it still and tormenteth himself with his own cogitations, thinking either to help himself by his own strength, or to tarry the time till his conscience may be quieted, falleth into Satan's snares and miserably afflicteth himself, and at length is overcome with the continuance of the temptation; for the devil will never cease to accuse his conscience.

Against this temptation we must use these words of St. Paul, in the which he giveth a very good and true definition of Christ in this manner: Christ is the Son of God and of the Virgin, delivered and put to death for our sins.

Here, if the devil allege any other definition of Christ, say thou: The definition and the thing defined are false; therefore I will not receive this definition. I speak not this without cause, for I know what moveth me to be so earnest that we should learn to define Christ out of the words of Paul. For indeed Christ is no cruel exactor, but a forgiver of the sins of the whole world. Wherefore if thou be a sinner (as indeed we are all) set not Christ down upon the rainbow as a judge, (for so shalt thou be terrified, and despair of his mercy), but take hold of his true definition, namely, that Christ the Son of God and of the Virgin is a person, not that terrifieth, not that afflicteth, not that condemneth us of sin, not that demandeth an account of us for our life evil passed; but that hath given himself

for our sins, and with one oblation hath put away the sins of the whole world, hath fastened them upon the cross, and put them clean out by himself (Colossians 2:14).

Learn this definition diligently, and especially so exercise this pronoun 'our,' that this one syllable being believed may swallow up all thy sins; that is to say, that thou mayest know assuredly, that Christ hath taken away the sins, not of certain men only, but also of thee, yea and of the whole world.

Then let not thy sins be sins only, but even thy own sins indeed; that is to wit, believe thou that Christ was not only given for other men's sins, but also for thine. Hold this fast and suffer not thyself by any means to be drawn away from this most sweet definition of Christ, which rejoiceth even the very angels in heaven that is to say, that Christ, according to the proper and true definition, is no Moses, no lawgiver, no tyrant, but a mediator for sins, a free giver of grace, righteousness, and life; who gave himself, not for our merits, holiness, righteousness and godly life, but for our sins.

Indeed Christ doth interpret the law, but that is not his proper and principal office.

These things, as touching the words, we know well enough and can talk of them. But in practice and in the conflict, when the devil goeth about to deface Christ, and to pluck the word of grace out of our hearts, we find that we do not yet know them well and as we should do. He that at that time could define Christ truly, and could magnify him and behold him as his most sweet Savior and High-priest, and not as a strait judge, this man had overcome all evils, and were already in the kingdom of heaven. But this to do in the conflict, is of all things the most hard. I speak this by experience.

For I know the devil's subtleties, who at that time not only goeth about to fear us with the terror of the law, yea and also of a little mote maketh many beams; that is to say, of that which is no sin he maketh a very hell (for he is marvellous crafty both in aggravating sin and in puffing up the conscience even in good works), but also is wont to fear us with the very person of the mediator; into the which he transformeth himself and, laying before us some place of Scripture or saying of Christ, suddenly he striketh our hearts, and sheweth himself unto us in such sort as if he were Christ indeed, leaving us sticking so fast in that cogitation, that our conscience would swear it were the same Christ whose saying he alleged. Moreover, such is the subtlety of the enemy, that he will not set before us Christ entirely and wholly, but a piece of Christ only, namely, that he is the Son of God, and man born of the Virgin. And by and by he patcheth thereto some other thing, that is to say, some saying of Christ, wherewith he terrifieth the impenitent sinners, such as that is the thirteenth of Luke: 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' And so, corrupting the true definition of Christ with his poison, he bringeth to pass that albeit we believe Christ to be the mediator, yet in

very deed our troubled conscience feeleth and judgeth him to be a tyrant and a judge. Thus we being deceived by Satan, do easily lose that sweet sight of our High-priest and Savior Christ; which being once lost, we shun him no less than the devil himself.

And this is the cause why I do so earnestly call upon you to learn the true and proper definition of Christ out of these words of Paul: 'which gave himself for our sins.' If he gave himself to death for our sins, then undoubtedly he is no tyrant or judge which will condemn us for our sins.

He is no caster-down of the afflicted, but a raiser-up of those that are fallen, a merciful reliever and comforter of the heavy and broken-hearted.

Else should Paul lie in saying: 'which gave himself for our sins.' If I define Christ thus, I define him rightly, and take hold of the true Christ, and possess him indeed. And here I let pass all curious speculations touching the divine majesty, and stay myself in the humanity of Christ, and possess him indeed. And here I let pass all curious speculations touching the divine majesty, and stay myself in the humanity of Christ, and so I learn truly to know the will of God. Here is then no fear, but altogether sweetness, joy, peace of conscience, and such like. And herewithal there is a light opened, which sheweth me the true knowledge of God, of myself, of all creatures, and of all the iniquity of the devil's kingdom. We teach no new thing, but we repeat and establish old things, which the apostles and all godly teachers have taught before us. And would to God we could so teach and establish them, that we might not only have them in our mouth, but also well-grounded in the bottom of our heart, and especially that we might be able to use them in the agony and conflict of death.

That he might deliver us from this present evil world

In these words also Paul effectually handleth the argument of this Epistle.

He calleth this whole world, which hath been, is, and shall be, the present world, to put a difference between this and the everlasting world to come.

Moreover, he calleth it evil, because that whatsoever is in this world, is subject to the malice of the devil reigning over the whole world. For this cause the world is the kingdom of the devil. For there is in it nothing but ignorance, contempt, blasphemy, hatred of God, and disobedience against all the words and works of God. In and under this kingdom of the world are we.

Here again you see that no man is able by his own works or his own power to put away sins, because this present world is evil and (as St. John saith) 'lieth in the evil One' (1 John 5:19). As many therefore as are in the world, are the captive members of the devil, constrained to serve him and do all things at his pleasure. What availed it then, to set up so many orders of religion for the

abolishing of sins; to devise so many great and most painful works, as to wear shirts of hair, to beat the body with whips till the blood flowed, to go on pilgrimage to St. James in harness, and such other like? Be it so that thou doest all these things, yet notwithstanding this is true, that thou art in this present evil world, and not in the kingdom of Christ. And if thou be not in the kingdom of Christ, it is certain that thou belongest to the kingdom of Satan, which is this evil world. Therefore all the gifts, either of the body or of the mind, which thou enjoyest, as wisdom, righteousness, holiness, eloquence, power, beauty, and riches, are but the slavish instruments of the devil, and with all these thou art compelled to serve him, and to advance his kingdom.

First, with thy wisdom thou darkenest the wisdom and knowledge of Christ, and by thy wicked doctrine leadest men out of the way, that they cannot come to the grace and knowledge of Christ. Thou settest out and preachest thine own righteousness and holiness; but the righteousness of Christ, by which only we are justified and quickened, thou dost hate and condemn as wicked and devilish. To be brief, by thy power thou destroyest the kingdom of Christ, and abusest the same to root out the Gospel, to persecute and kill the ministers of Christ and so many as hear them.

Wherefore, if thou be without Christ, this thy wisdom is double foolishness, thy righteousness double sin and impiety, because it knoweth not the wisdom and righteousness of Christ: moreover, it darkeneth, hindereth, blasphemeth, and persecuteth the same. Therefore Paul doth rightly call it the evil or wicked world; for when it is at the best, then is it worst. In the religious, wise, and learned men, the world is at the best, and yet in very deed in them it is double evil. I overpass those gross vices which are against the second Table, as disobedience to parents, to magistrates, adulteries, whoredoms, covetousness, thefts, murders, and maliciousness, wherein the world is altogether drowned, which notwithstanding are light faults, if ye compare them with the wisdom and righteousness of the wicked, whereby they fight against the first Table.

This white devil, which forceth men to commit spiritual sins that cry themselves up for righteousness, is far more dangerous than the black devil, which only enforceth them to commit fleshly sins, which even the world acknowledgeth to be sins.

By these words then, 'That he might deliver us' etc., Paul sheweth what is the argument of this Epistle: to wit, that we have need of grace and of Christ, and that no creature, neither man nor angel, can deliver man out of this present evil world. For these are works belonging only to the divine majesty, and are not in the power of any, either man or angel: namely, that Christ hath put away sin, and hath delivered us from the tyranny and kingdom of the devil; that is to say, from this wicked world, which is an obedient servant and a willing follower of the devil his God. Whatsoever the murderer and father of lies either doth or speaketh, that the world, as his most loyal and obedient son, diligently followeth and performeth.

And therefore it is full of the ignorance of God, of hatred, lying, errors, blasphemy, and of the contempt of God; moreover, of gross sins, as murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, robberies, and such like, because he followeth his father the devil, who is a liar and a murderer. And the more wise, righteous, and holy that men are without Christ, so much the more hurt they do to the Gospel. So we also, that were religious men, were double wicked in the papacy, before God did lighten us with the knowledge of his Gospel, and yet notwithstanding under the color of true piety and holiness.

Let these words then of Paul remain as they are indeed, true and effectual, not colored or counterfeit, namely, that this present world is evil. Let it nothing at all move thee, that in a great number of men there be many excellent virtues, and that there is so great a shew of holiness in hypocrites.

But mark thou rather what Paul saith, out of whose words thou mayest boldly and freely pronounce this sentence against the world, that the world with all his wisdom, power and righteousness, is the kingdom of the devil; out of the which God alone is able to deliver us by his only begotten Son.

Therefore let us praise God the Father, and give him hearty thanks for this his unmeasurable mercy, that hath delivered us out of the kingdom of the devil (in the which we were holden captives) by his own Son, when it was impossible to be done by our own strength. And let us acknowledge together with Paul, that all our works and righteousness (with all which, we could not make the devil to stoop one hair's breadth) are but loss and dung (Philippians 3:8). Also let us cast under our feet and utterly abhor all the power of free-will, all pharisaical wisdom and righteousness, all religious orders, all masses, ceremonies, vows, fastings, and such like, as a most filthy defiled cloth (Isaiah 64:6) and as the most dangerous poison of the devil. Contrariwise, let us extol and magnify the glory of Christ, who hath delivered us by his death, not from this world only, but from this evil world.

Paul then by this word 'evil,' sheweth that the kingdom of the world, or the devil's kingdom, is the kingdom of iniquity, ignorance, error, sin, death, blasphemy, desperation and everlasting damnation. On the other side, the kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of equity, light, grace, remission of sins, peace, consolation, saving health, and everlasting life, into the which we are translated (Colossians 1:13) by our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory world without end. Amen.

According to the will of God and our father

Here Paul so placeth and ordereth every word, that there is not one of them but it fighteth against those false apostles for the article of justification. Christ (saith he) hath delivered us from this wicked kingdom of the devil and the world; and this hath he done according to the will, good pleasure, and commandment of the

Father. Wherefore we be not delivered by our own will or cunning (Romans 9:16), nor by our own wisdom or policy, but for that God hath taken mercy upon us, and hath loved us; like as it is written also in another place: 'Herein hath appeared the great love of God towards us, not that we have loved God, but that he hath loved us, and hath sent his only begotten Son to be a reconciliation for our sins' (1 John 4:10). That we are then delivered from this present evil world, it is of mere grace, and no desert of ours. Paul is so plentiful and so vehement in amplifying and extolling the grace of God, that he sharpeneth and directeth every word against the false apostles.

There is also another cause why Paul here maketh mention of the Father's will, which also in many places of St. John's gospel is declared, where Christ, commending his office, calleth us back to his Father's will, that in his words and works we should not so much look upon him, as upon the Father. For Christ came into the world and took man's nature upon him, that he might be made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and so reconcile us to God the Father; and that he alone might declare unto us how that this was done through the good pleasure of his Father, that we, by fastening our eyes upon Christ, might be drawn and carried straight unto the Father.

For we must not think (as before we have warned you) that by the curious searching of the majesty of God, any thing concerning God can be known to our salvation, but by taking hold of Christ, who according to the will of the Father hath given himself to death for our sins. When thou shalt acknowledge this to be the will of God through Christ, then wrath ceaseth, fear and trembling vanisheth away, neither doth God appear any other than merciful, who by his determinate counsel would that his Son should die for us, that we might live through him. This knowledge maketh the heart cheerful, so that it steadfastly believeth that God is not angry, but that he so loveth us poor and wretched sinners, that he gave his only begotten Son for us. It is not for nought, therefore, that Paul doth so often repeat and beat into our minds, that Christ was given for our sins, and that by the good will of the Father. On the contrary part, the curious searching of the majesty of God, and his dreadful judgments, namely, how he destroyed the whole world with the flood, how he destroyed Sodom, and such other things, are very dangerous, for they bring men to desperation, and cast them down headlong into utter destruction, as I have shewed before.

Of God and our father

This word 'our' must be referred to both, that the meaning may be this: 'of our God and of our Father.' Then is Christ's Father and our Father all one.

So in the twentieth of John, Christ saith to Mary Magdalene: 'Go to my brethren, and say unto them: I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and to your God.' Therefore God is our Father and our God, but through Christ. And this is an apostolic manner of speech, and even Paul's own phrase,

who indeed speaketh not with such picked and gay words, but yet very fit and to the purpose, and full of burning zeal.

To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen

The Hebrews are wont in their writings to intermingle praise and giving of thanks. This custom the Hebrews and the Apostles themselves do observe.

Which thing may be very often seen in Paul. For the name of the Lord ought to be had in great reverence, and never to be named without praise and thanksgiving. And thus to do, is a certain kind of worship and service to God. So in worldly matters, when we mention the names of kings or princes, we are wont to do it with some comely gesture, reverence, and bowing of the knee: much more ought we when we speak of God, to bow the knee of our heart, and to name the name of God with thankfulness and great reverence.

I marvel

Ye see here how Paul handleth his Galatians, which were fallen away and seduced by the false apostles. He doth not at the first set upon them with vehement and rigorous words, but after a very fatherly sort, not only patiently bearing their fall, but also in a manner excusing the same.

Furthermore, he sheweth towards them a motherly affection, and speaketh them very fair, and yet in such sort, that he reproveth them notwithstanding: howbeit with very fit words and wisely framed to the purpose. Contrariwise he is very hot and full of indignation against those false apostles their seducers, upon whom he layeth the whole fault: and therefore forthwith, even in the entrance of his Epistle, he bursteth out into plain thunderings and lightnings against them. 'If any man' (saith he) 'preach any other Gospel than that ye have received, let him be accursed' (Galatians 1:9). And afterwards in the fifth chapter, he threatened damnation unto them: 'Whoso troubleth you shall bear his condemnation, whatsoever he be' (Galatians 5:10 ff.). Moreover, he curseth them with horrible words, saying: 'Would to God they were cut off which trouble you.' These are dreadful thunderclaps against the righteousness of the flesh or of the law.

He might have handled the Galatians more uncourteously, and have inveighed against them more roughly after this manner: Out upon this backsliding, I am ashamed of you, your unthankfulness grieveth me, I am angry with you; or else thus tragically have cried out against them: O ungracious world, O wicked dealings, etc.! But forasmuch as his purpose is to raise up them that were fallen, and with a fatherly care to call them back again from their error to the purity of the Gospel, he leaveth those rough and sharp words, especially in the first entrance, and most gently and mildly he speaketh unto them. For, seeing he went about to heal them that were wounded, it was not meet that he should now further vex their green wound by laying to it a sharp and a fretting plaster, and so

rather hurt the wounded than heal them. Therefore, of all the sweetest and mildest words, he could not have chosen any one more fit than this: 'I marvel'; whereby he signifieth both that it grieved him and also displeased him, that they had fallen away from him.

And here Paul is mindful of his own rule, which he giveth hereafter in the sixth chapter, where he saith: 'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one with the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' This example must we also follow, that we may shew ourselves to bear like affection toward such as are misled, as parents bear towards their children, that they may perceive our fatherly and motherly affection towards them, and may see that we seek not their destruction, but their welfare. But as for the devil and his ministers, the authors of false doctrine and sects, against them we ought, by the example of the Apostle, to be impatient, proud, sharp and bitter, detesting and condemning their false jugglings and deceits with as much rigor and severity as may be. So parents, when their child is hurt with the biting of a dog, are wont to pursue the dog only, but the weeping child they bemoan and speak fair unto it, comforting it with the most sweet words.

The Spirit therefore that is in Paul, is wonderful cunning in handling the afflicted consciences of such as are fallen. Contrariwise, the Pope breaketh out violently like a tyrant, and rappeth out his thunder-cracks and cursings against the miserable and terrified in conscience: which thing may be seen in his bulls, and especially in that bull touching the Lord's Supper. The bishops also do their duty never a whit better. They teach not the Gospel, they are not careful for the saving of men's souls, but only they seek lordship and sovereignty over them, and therefore their speakings and doings are altogether to maintain and support the same. In like manner are all the vain-glorious doctors and teachers affected.

That so soon

Ye see how Paul complaineth, that to fall in faith is an easy matter. In respect whereof, he warneth Christians in another place, that he which standeth, should take heed that he fall not (1 Corinthians 10:12). We also do daily prove by experience, how hardly the mind conceiveth and retaineth a sound and steadfast faith; also with what great difficulty a perfect people is gotten to the Lord. A man may labor half a score years ere he shall get some little church to be rightly and religiously ordered; and when it is so ordered, there creepeth in some mad brain, yea and a very unlearned idiot, which can do nothing else but speak slanderously and spitefully against sincere preachers of the Word, and he in one moment overthroweth all. Whom would not this wicked and outrageous dealing move?

We by the grace of God have gotten here at Wittenberg the form of a Christian church. The Word among us is purely taught, the sacraments are rightly used, exhortations and prayers are made also for all estates, and to be brief, all things go forward prosperously. This most happy course of the Gospel some

mad head would soon stop, and in one moment would overturn all that we in many years with great labor have builded. Even so it befell to Paul, the elect vessel of Christ. He had won the churches of Galatia with great care and travail, which the false apostles in a short time after his departure overthrew, as this and diverse other of his epistles do witness. So great is the weakness and wretchedness of this present life, and so walk we in the midst of Satan's snares, that one fantastical head may destroy and utterly overthrow in a short space, all that which many true ministers, laboring night and day, have builded up many years before. This we learn at this day by experience to our great grief, and yet we cannot remedy this enormity.

Seeing then that the Church is so soft and so tender a thing, and is so soon overthrown, men must watch cheerfully against these fantastical spirits; who, when they have heard two sermons, or have read a few leaves in the Holy Scriptures, by and by they make themselves masters and controllers of all learners and teachers, contrary to the authority of all men. Many such also thou mayest find at this day among handy-crafts men, bold and malapert fellows, who, because they have been tried by no temptations, did never learn to fear God, nor had any taste or feeling of grace. These, for that they are void of the Holy Ghost, teach what liketh themselves best, and such things as are plausible and pleasant to the common people. Then the unskilful multitude, longing to hear news, do by and by join themselves unto them. Yea, and many also which think themselves well seen in the doctrine of faith, and after a sort have been tried with temptations, are seduced by them.

Since that Paul therefore by his own experience may teach us, that congregations which are won by great labor, are easily and soon overthrown, we ought with singular care to watch against the devil ranging everywhere, lest he come while we sleep, and sow tares among the wheat.

For though the shepherds be never so watchful and diligent, yet is the Christian flock in danger of Satan. For Paul (as I said) with singular study and diligence had planted churches in Galatia, and yet he had scarcely set his foot (as they say) out of the door, but by and by the false apostles overthrew some, whose fall afterward was the cause of great ruin in the churches of Galatia. This so sudden and so great a loss, no doubt, was more bitter unto the Apostle than death itself. Therefore let us watch diligently, first every one for himself, secondly all teachers, not only for themselves, but also for the whole Church, that we enter not into temptation.

Ye are removed away

Here once again he useth not a sharp, but a most gentle word. 'He saith not I marvel that ye so suddenly fall away, that ye are so disobedient, light, inconstant, unthankful; but, that ye are so soon removed. As if he should say: Ye are altogether patients or sufferers; for ye have done no harm, but ye have suffered

and received harm. To the intent therefore, that he might call back again those backsliders, he rather accuseth those that did remove, than those that were removed; and yet very modestly he blameth them also, when he complaineth that they were removed. As if he would say: Albeit I embrace you with a fatherly affection, and know that ye are fallen, not by your own default, but by the default of the false apostles; yet notwithstanding, I would have wished that ye had been grown up a little more in the strength of sound doctrine. Ye took not hold enough upon the Word, ye rooted not yourselves deep enough in it, and that is the cause that with so light a blast of wind ye are carried and removed.

Jerome thinketh that Paul meant to interpret this word 'Galatians' by alluding to the Hebrew word Calath, which is as much to say, as 'fallen or carried away.' As though he would say: Ye are right Galatians, both in name and in deed; that is to say, fallen or removed away. Some think that the Germans are descended of the Galatians, neither is this divination perhaps untrue. For the Germans are not much unlike to them in nature.

And I myself also am constrained to wish to my countrymen more steadfastness and constancy; for in all things we do, at the first brunt we be very hot but when the heat of our affections is allayed, anon we become more slack, and with what rashness we begin things, with the same we give them over and utterly reject them.

At the first when the light of the Gospel, after so great darkness of men's traditions, began to appear, many were zealously turned to godliness: they heard sermons greedily, and had the ministers of God's Word in reverence.

But now, when religion is happily reformed with so great increase of God's Word, many which before seemed to be earnest disciples, are become contemners and very enemies thereof. Who not only cast off the study and zeal of God's Word, and despise the ministers thereof, but also hate all good learning, and become plain hogs and belly-gods, worthy (doubtless) to be compared unto the foolish and inconstant Galatians.

From him that hath called you in the grace of Christ

This place is somewhat doubtful, and therefore it hath a double understanding. The first is: From that Christ that hath called you in grace.

The other is: From him (that is to say, from God) which hath called you in the grace of Christ. I embrace the former. For it liketh me, that even as Paul a little before made Christ the Redeemer, who by his death delivereth us from this present evil world, and also the Giver of grace and peace equally with God the Father; so he should make him here also the Caller in grace: for Paul's special purpose is, to beat into our minds the benefit of Christ, by whom we come unto the Father.

There is also in these words – ‘from him that hath called you in grace’ – a great vehemency; wherein is contained withal a contrary relation, as if he should say: Alas how lightly do you suffer yourselves to be withdrawn and removed from Christ, which hath called you, not as Moses did, to the law, works, sin, wrath and damnation, but altogether to grace! So we also complain at this day with Paul, that the blindness and perverseness of men is horrible, in that none will receive the doctrine of grace and salvation. Or if there be any that receive it, yet they quickly slide back again and fall from it; whereas notwithstanding, it bringeth with it all good things, as well ghostly as bodily, namely, forgiveness of sins, true righteousness, peace of conscience, and everlasting life. Moreover it bringeth light, and sound judgment of all kinds of doctrine and trades of life; it approveth and – establisheth civil government, household government, and all kinds of life that are ordained and appointed of God; it rooteth up all doctrines of error, sedition, confusion, and such like; it putteth away the fear of sin and death; and to be short, it discovereth all the subtle sleights and works of the devil, and openeth the benefits and love of God towards us in Christ. What (with a mischief) means the world to hate this Word, this glad tidings of everlasting comfort, grace, salvation and eternal life, so bitterly, and to persecute it with such hellish outrage?

Paul before called this present world evil and wicked, that is to say, the devil’s kingdom; for else it would acknowledge the benefit and mercy of God. But forasmuch as it is under the power of the devil, therefore doth it most spitefully hate and persecute the same; loving darkness, errors, and the kingdom of the devil, more than the light, the truth, and the kingdom of Christ (John 3:19). And thus it doth not through ignorance or error, but through the malice of the devil; which thing hereby may sufficiently appear, in that Christ the Son of God, by giving himself to death for the sins of all men, hath thereby gained nothing else of this perverse and damnable world, but that for this his inestimable benefit, it blasphemeth him and persecuteth his most healthful Word, and fain would yet still nail him to the cross if it could; therefore, not only the world dwelleth in darkness, but it is darkness itself, as it is written in the first of John.

Paul therefore standeth much upon these words ‘From Christ who hath called you’; as though he would say: My preaching was not of the hard laws of Moses, neither taught I that ye should be bond-slaves under the yoke; but I preached mere grace and freedom from the law, sin, etc., that is to say, that Christ hath mercifully called you in grace, that ye should be freemen under Christ, and not bondmen under Moses, whose disciples ye are now become again by the means of your false apostles, who by the law of Moses called you not unto grace, but unto wrath, to the hating of God, to sin and death. But Christ’s calling bringeth grace and saving health; for they that be called by him, instead of the law that worketh sorrow, do gain the glad tidings of the Gospel, and are translated out of God’s wrath into his favor, out of sin into righteousness, and out of death into life. And will you suffer yourselves to be carried, yea and that so

soon and so easily, another way, from such a living fountain, full of grace and life? Now, if Moses by the law of God call men to God's wrath and to sin, whither shall the Pope call men by his own traditions? The other sense, that the Father calleth in the grace of Christ, is also good; but the former sense concerning Christ serveth more fitly for the comforting of afflicted consciences.

Unto another Gospel

Here we may learn to espy the crafty sleights and subtleties of the devil. No heretic cometh under the title of errors and of the devil, neither doth the devil himself come as a devil in his own likeness, especially that white devil which we spake of before. Yea, even the black devil, which forceth men to manifest wickedness, maketh a cloak for them to cover that sin which they commit or purpose to commit. The murderer, in his rage, seeth not that murder is so great and horrible a sin as it is indeed, for that he hath a cloak to cover the same. Whoremongers, thieves, covetous persons, drunkards, and such other, have wherewith to flatter themselves and cover their sins.

So the black devil also cometh out disguised and counterfeit in all his works and devices. But in spiritual matters, where Satan cometh forth not black, but white, in the likeness of an angel, or of God himself, there he passeth himself with most crafty dissimulation and wonderful sleights, and is wont to set forth to sale his most deadly poison for the doctrine of grace, for the Word of God, for the Gospel of Christ. For this cause, Paul calleth the doctrine of the false apostles, Satan's ministers, a gospel also, saying: 'Unto another gospel'; but in derision, as though he would say: Ye Galatians have now other evangelists and another gospel; my Gospel is now despised of you; it is now no more an estimation among you.

Hereby it may easily be gathered, that these false apostles had condemned the Gospel of Paul among the Galatians, saying Paul indeed hath begun well, but to have begun well is not enough, for there remain yet many higher matters; like as they say in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts: It is not enough for you to believe in Christ, or to be baptized, but it behooveth also that ye be circumcised; 'for except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.' This is as much to say, as that Christ is a good workman, which hath indeed begun a building, but he hath not finished it; for this must Moses do.

So at this day, when the fantastical spirits, Anabaptists and others cannot manifestly condemn us, they say: These Lutherans have the spirit of fearfulness, they dare not frankly and freely profess the truth, and go through with it. Indeed they have laid a foundation, that is to say, they have well taught faith in Christ; but the beginning, the middle and the end must be joined together. To bring this to pass, God hath not given unto them, but hath left it unto us. So these perverse and devilish spirits extol and magnify their cursed doctrine, calling it the Word of God, and so under the color of God's name they deceive many. For the devil will

not be ugly and black in his ministers, but fair and white; and to the end he may appear to be such a one, he setteth forth and decketh all his words and works with the color of truth, and with the name of God. Hereof is sprung that common proverb among the Germans: 'In God's name beginneth all mischief.'

Wherefore let us learn that this is a special point of the devil's cunning, that if he cannot hurt by persecuting and destroying, he doth it under a color of correcting and building up. So nowadays he persecuteth us with power and sword, that when we are once taken away and dispatched, he may not only deface the Gospel, but utterly overthrow it. But hitherto he hath prevailed nothing, for he hath slain many who have constantly confessed this our doctrine to be holy and heavenly, through whose blood the Church is not destroyed, but watered. Forasmuch, therefore, as he could prevail nothing that way, he stirreth up wicked spirits and ungodly teachers, which at the first allow our doctrine, and teach the same with a common consent together with us; yet afterwards they say that it is our vocation to teach the first principles of Christian doctrine, but that the true mysteries of the Scriptures are revealed unto them from above, by God himself; and that they are called for this purpose, that they should open them to the world.

After this manner doth the devil hinder the course of the Gospel, both on the right hand and on the left, but more on the right hand (as I said before) by building and correcting, than on the left by persecuting and destroying; wherefore, it behooveth us to pray without ceasing, to read the Holy Scriptures, to cleave fast unto Christ and his holy Word, that we may overcome the devil's subtleties, with the which he assaileth us both on the right hand and on the left. 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, etc.' (Ephesians 6:12).

Which is not another Gospel, but that there be some which trouble you

Here again he excuseth the Galatians, and most bitterly reproveth the false apostles, as though he would say: Ye Galatians are borne in hand, that the Gospel which ye have received of me, is not the true and sincere Gospel, and therefore ye think ye do well to receive that new gospel which the false apostles teach, and seemeth to be better than mine. I do not so much charge you with this fault, as those disturbers which trouble your consciences and pull you out of my hand. Here you see again how vehement and hot he is against those deceivers, and with what rough and sharp words he painteth them out, calling them troublers of the churches, which do nothing else but seduce and deceive innumerable poor consciences, giving occasions of horrible mischiefs and calamities in the congregations. This great enormity we also at this day are constrained to see, to the great grief of our hearts, and yet are we no more able to remedy it than Paul was at that time. This place witnesseth, that those false apostles had reported Paul to be an imperfect apostle, and also a weak and erroneous preacher; therefore he again here calleth them the troublers of the

churches, and overthrowers of the Gospel of Christ. Thus they condemned each other. The false apostles condemned Paul, and Paul again the false apostles. The like contending and condemning is always in the Church, especially when the doctrine of the Gospel flourisheth; to wit, that wicked teachers do persecute, condemn and oppress the godly; and on the other side, that the godly do reprove and condemn the ungodly.

The Papists and the fantastical spirits do at this day hate us deadly, and condemn our doctrine as wicked and erroneous; yea moreover, they lie in wait for our goods and lives: and we again do with a perfect hatred detest and condemn their cursed and blasphemous doctrine. In the meantime, the miserable people are at no stay, wavering hither and thither, as uncertain and doubtful to which part they may lean, or whom they may safely follow; for it is not given to every one to judge Christianly of such weighty matters. But the end will shew which part teacheth truly, and justly condemneth the other. Sure it is that we persecute no man, oppress no man, put no man to death, neither doth our doctrine trouble men's consciences, but delivereth them out of innumerable errors and snares of the devil. For the truth hereof, we have the testimony of many good men who give thanks unto God, for that by our doctrine they have received certain and sure consolation to their consciences. Wherefore, like as Paul at that time was not to be blamed that the churches were troubled, but the false apostles, so at this day it is not our fault, but the fault of the Anabaptists, Sacramentarians and other frantic spirits that many and great troubles are in the Church.

Mark here diligently, that every teacher of works and of the righteousness of the law, is a troubler of the Church and of the consciences of men. And who would ever have believed that the Pope, cardinals, bishops, monks, and that whole synagogue of Satan, specially the founders of those religious orders (of which number, nevertheless, God might save some by miracle) were troublers of men's consciences? Yea, verily, they be yet far worse than were those false apostles; for the false apostles taught, that besides faith in Christ, the works of the law of God were also necessary to salvation; but the Papists, omitting faith, have taught men's traditions and works not commanded of God, but devised by themselves without and against the Word of God: and these have they not only made equal with the Word of God, but also exalted them far above it. But the more holy the heretics seem to be in outward shew, so much the more mischief they do; for if the false apostles had not been endued with notable gifts, with great authority, and a shew of holiness, and had not vaunted themselves to be Christ's ministers, the apostles, disciples, and sincere preachers of the Gospel, they could not so easily have defaced Paul's authority, and led the Galatians out of the way.

Now, the cause why he setteth himself so sharply against them, calling them the troublers of the churches, is for that besides faith in Christ, they taught that circumcision and keeping of the law was necessary to salvation.

The which thing Paul himself witnesseth in the fifth chapter following; and Luke in Acts 15 declareth the same thing in these words: 'That certain men coming down from Judaea, taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved.' Wherefore the false apostles most earnestly and obstinately contended that the law ought to be observed; unto whom the stiff-necked Jews forthwith joined themselves, and so afterwards easily persuaded such as were not established in the faith, that Paul was not a sincere teacher, because he regarded not the law. For it seemed unto them a very strange thing, that the law of God should utterly be taken away, and the Jews, which had always until that time been counted the people of God, to whom also the promises were made, should now be rejected. Yea, it seemed yet a more strange thing unto them, that the Gentiles, being wicked idolators, should attain to this glory and dignity, to be the people of God, without circumcision and without the works of the law, by grace only and faith in Christ.

These things had the false apostles amplified and set forth to the uttermost, that they might bring Paul into more hatred among the Galatians. And to the end that they might set them the more sharply against him, they said that he preached unto the Gentiles freedom from the law, to bring into contempt, yea and utterly to abolish, the law of God and the whole kingdom of the Jews, contrary to the law of God, contrary to the custom of the Jewish nation, contrary to the example of the Apostles, and to be short, contrary to his own example: wherefore, he was to be shunned as an open blasphemer against God, and a rebel against the whole commonweal of the Jews; saying that they themselves ought rather to be heard, who, besides that they preached the Gospel rightly, were also the very disciples of the Apostles, with whom Paul was never conversant. By this policy they defamed and defaced Paul among the Galatians, so that by this their perverse dealing, of very necessity Paul was compelled with all his might to set himself against these false apostles, whom he boldly reproveth and condemneth, saying that they are the troublers of the churches and overthrowers of Christ's Gospel, as followeth.

And intend to pervert the Gospel of Christ

That is to say, they do not only go about to trouble you, but also utterly to abolish and overthrow Christ's Gospel. For these two things the devil practiceth most busily: first, he is not contented to trouble and deceive many by his ungodly apostles, but moreover he laboreth by them utterly to overthrow the Gospel, and never resteth till he hath brought it to pass. Yet such perversers of the Gospel can abide nothing less than to hear that they are the apostles of the devil; nay, rather they glory above others in the name of Christ, and boast themselves to be the most sincere preachers of the Gospel. But because they mingle the law with the Gospel, they must needs be perversers of the Gospel. For either Christ must remain, and the law perish, or the law must remain, and Christ perish; for Christ and the law can by no means agree and reign together in the conscience. Where

the righteousness of the law ruleth, there cannot the righteousness of grace rule; and again, where the righteousness of grace reigneth, there cannot the righteousness of the law reign; for one of them must needs give place unto the other. And if thou canst not believe that God will forgive thy sins for Christ's sake, whom he sent into the world to be our high priest; how then, pray thee, wilt thou believe that he will forgive the same for the works of the law, which thou couldest never perform, or for thine own works, which (as thou must be constrained to confess) be such, as it is impossible for them to countervail the judgment of God? Wherefore, the doctrine of grace can by no means stand with the doctrine of the law. The one must simply be refused and abolished, and the other confirmed or established. But even as the Jews were averse from this doctrine of faith and grace, so are we also averse from it. I myself would willingly keep both the one and the other: to wit, the righteousness of grace as that which justifieth, and the righteousness of the law as that for which God should have respect unto me. But as Paul saith here, to mingle the one with the other is to overthrow the Gospel of Christ. And yet, if it come to debating, the greater part overcometh the better. For Christ with his side is weak, and the Gospel but a foolish preaching. Contrariwise, the kingdom of the world, and the devil the prince thereof, are strong. Besides that, the wisdom and righteousness of the flesh carry a goodly shew. And by this means, the righteousness of grace and faith is lost, and the other righteousness of the law and works advanced and maintained. But this is our comfort, that the devil with all his limbs cannot do what he would. He may trouble many, but he cannot overthrow Christ's Gospel. The truth may be endangered, but it cannot perish; assailed it is, but vanquished it cannot be; for 'the Word of the Lord endureth for ever' (1 Peter 1:25).

It seemeth to be a light matter to mingle the law and the Gospel, faith and works, together; but it doth more mischief than a man's reason can conceive, for it doth not only blemish and darken the knowledge of grace, but also it taketh away Christ with all his benefits, and it utterly overthroweth the Gospel, as Paul saith in this place. The cause of this great evil is our flesh, which, being plunged in sins, seeth no way how to get out but by works, and therefore it would live in the righteousness of the law, and rest in the trust and confidence of her own works. Wherefore, it is utterly ignorant of the doctrine of faith and grace, without the which, notwithstanding, it is impossible for the conscience to find rest and quietness.

It appeareth also by these words of Paul: 'And intend to pervert the Gospel of Christ,' that the false apostles were exceeding bold and shameless, which with all their might set themselves against Paul. Wherefore he again, using his spirit of zeal and fervency, and being fully persuaded of the certainty of his calling, setteth himself strongly against them, and wonderfully magnifieth his ministry, saying:

But though that we, or an angel from heaven, preach unto you otherwise than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed

Here Paul casteth out very flames of fire, and his zeal is so fervent that he beginneth also almost to curse the angels. Although, saith he, that we ourselves, even I and my brethren Timothy and Titus, and as many as teach Christ purely with me (I speak not now of those seducers of consciences), yea, or if an angel from heaven preach unto you, etc.; notwithstanding I would rather that I myself, my brethren, yea and the very angels from heaven also, should be holden accursed, than that my Gospel should be overthrown. This is indeed a vehement zeal, that he dare so boldly curse, not only himself and his brethren, but also even an angel from heaven.

The Greek word anathema, in Hebrew herem, signifieth a thing accursed, execrable, and detestable, which hath nothing to do, no participation or communion with God. So saith Joshua: Let the city of Jericho be a perpetual anathema, that it be never built again (Joshua 6:17,26). And in the last of Leviticus it is written: If a man or any beast shall have been devoted to anathema, let him be slain and not permitted to live (Leviticus 27:28). So God had appointed that Amalech and certain other cities accursed by God's own sentence, should be utterly razed and destroyed (Exodus 17:13 f.). This then is the mind of Paul I had rather that myself, and other my brethren, yea, and an angel from heaven, should be accursed, than that we or others should preach any other gospel than that we have preached already. So Paul first curseth himself; for cunning artificers are wont first to find fault with themselves, that they may the more freely and sharply afterwards reprove others.

Paul therefore concludeth, that there is no other Gospel beside that which he himself had preached. But he preached not a Gospel which he had himself devised, but the same which God promised before by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures (Romans 1). Therefore he pronounceth himself and others, yea, even an angel from heaven, to be undoubtedly accursed, if they teach any thing contrary to the former Gospel: for the voice of the Gospel once set forth, shall not be called back again till the Day of Judgment.

As we said before, so say we now again, if any man preach unto you otherwise than that you have received, let him be accursed

He repeateth the self-same thing; only changing the persons. Before, he cursed himself, his brethren, and an angel from heaven; here, if there be any (saith he) besides us, which preach unto you any other gospel than that ye have received of us, let them also be accursed. Therefore, he plainly excommunicateth and curseth all teachers in general, himself, his brethren, an angel, and moreover all others whatsoever, namely, all those false teachers his adversaries. Here appeareth an exceeding great fervency of spirit in the Apostle, that he dare curse all teachers throughout the whole world and in heaven, which pervert his Gospel and teach any other: for all men must either believe that Gospel that Paul preached, or else they must be accursed and condemned. Would to God this

terrible sentence of the Apostle might strike a fear into their hearts that seek to pervert the Gospel of Paul; of which sort at this day (the more it is to be lamented) the world is full.

This changing of persons is here to be marked. For Paul speaketh otherwise in his first cursing than he doth in the second. In the first he saith: 'If we, or an angel from heaven, preach unto you any other gospel than that we have preached unto you'; in the second: 'Than that ye have received.' And this he doth of purpose, lest the Galatians should say: We, O Paul, do not pervert the Gospel that thou hast preached unto us; we understood thee not rightly, but the teachers that came after thee have declared unto us the true meaning thereof. This (saith he) will I in no case admit. They ought to add nothing, neither to correct it; but that which ye heard of me is the sincere Word of God; let this only remain. Neither do I desire myself to be another manner of teacher than I was, nor you to be other disciples. Wherefore, if ye hear any man bringing any other gospel than that ye have heard of me, or bragging that he will deliver better things than ye have received of me, let him and his disciples be both accursed. But such is the nature of the ministers of Satan, that on this crafty wise they know how to creep and steal into the minds of men: they confess that they which taught the Gospel before them, began well indeed, but that this is not enough. So at this day the fantastical heads do grant unto us this meed of praise, that we have rightly begun the business of the Gospel. But because we detest and condemn their blasphemous doctrine, they call us new papists, twice as bad as the old. In this wise the thieves and robbers make entrance for themselves into the sheepfold of the Lord, that they may steal and kill and destroy (John 10:1,10): for first they confirm our teaching, then they correct us and expound more clearly (as they dream) that which we have not sufficiently, or less rightly, understood. In the same manner the false apostles gained access to the Galatians. Paul (they said) hath indeed laid the foundation of Christian doctrine, but the true way of justification he doth not hold, because he teacheth men to turn aside from the law: this, therefore, that he was not able rightly to deliver unto you, receive ye from us. But Paul will have naught else taught by any, nor aught else heard and received by the Galatians, save that which he himself taught them before, and they heard and received from him.

They, then, (saith he) which do teach or receive aught else, let them be anathema.

The first two chapters, in a manner, contain nothing else but defenses of his doctrine, and confutations of errors; so that, until he cometh to the end of the second chapter, he toucheth not the chiefest matter which he handleth in this Epistle, namely, the article of justification. Notwithstanding, this sentence of Paul ought to admonish us, that so many as think the Pope to be judge of the Scripture, or the Church to have authority over the Scripture, are accursed: which thing the [popish] schoolmen have wickedly taught, standing upon this ground: The Church hath allowed four gospels only, therefore there are but four; for if it

had allowed more, there had been more. Now, seeing the Church might receive and allow such and so many gospels as it would, therefore the Church is above the Gospel. A goodly argument, forsooth. I approve the Scripture, ergo I am above the Scripture! John Baptist acknowledgeth and confesseth Christ, and pointeth to him with his finger, therefore he is above Christ! The Church approveth the Christian faith and doctrine, therefore the Church is above them! For the overthrowing of this their wicked and blasphemous doctrine, thou hast here a plain text like a thunderbolt, wherein Paul subjecteth both himself and an angel from heaven, and doctors upon earth, and all other teachers and masters whatsoever, under the authority of the Scripture. This queen ought to rule, and all ought to obey and be subject unto her. They ought not to be masters, judges, or arbiters, but only witnesses, disciples, and confessors of the Scripture, whether it be the Pope, Luther, Augustine, Paul, or an angel from heaven. Neither ought any doctrine to be taught or heard in the Church besides the pure Word of God, that is to say, the holy Scripture; otherwise, accursed be both the teachers and hearers together with their doctrine.

For now preach I man's doctrine, or God's?

These words are spoken with the same vehemency of spirit that the former were, as if he should say: Am I, Paul, so unknown amongst you, which have preached so openly in your churches? Are my bitter conflicts, and so many sharp battles against the Jews, yet unknown to you? It appeareth (I think) sufficiently unto you by my preaching and by so many and so great afflictions which I have suffered, whether I serve men or God. For all men see that by this my preaching, I have not only stirred up persecution against me in every place, but have also procured the cruel hatred both of mine own nation and of all other men. I shew therefore plainly enough, that I seek not by my preaching the favor or praise of men, but to set forth the benefit and glory of God.

Neither do we seek the favor of men by our doctrine; for we teach that all men are ungodly by nature, and the children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3).

We condemn man's free-will, his strength, wisdom, and righteousness, and all religion of man's own devising: and to be short, we say that there is nothing in us that is able to deserve grace and the forgiveness of sins; but we preach that we obtain this grace by the free mercy of God only, for Christ's sake: for so the heavens shew forth the glory of God and his works, condemning all men generally with their works (Psalm 19:1 f.).

This is not to preach for the favor of men and of the world. For the world can abide nothing less than to hear his wisdom, righteousness, religion and power condemned; and to speak against those mighty and glorious gifts of the world, is not to flatter the world, but rather to procure hatred and indignation of the world. For if we speak against men, or any thing else that pertaineth to their glory, it

cannot be but that cruel hatred, persecutions, excommunications, murders and condemnations must needs follow.

If then (saith Paul) they see other matters, why see they not this also, that I teach the things that are of God, and not of men? That is to say, that I seek no man's favor by my doctrine, but I set out God's mercy offered unto us in Christ; for if I sought the favor of men I would not condemn their works. Now, forasmuch as I condemn men's works, that is to say, because I shew God's judgment out of his Word (whereof I am a minister and apostle) against all men, how that they are sinners, unrighteous, ungodly, children of wrath, bondslaves of the devil and damned; and that they are not made righteous by works or by circumcision, but by grace only, and faith in Christ: therefore I procure unto myself the deadly hate of men; for they can abide nothing less than to hear that they are such; nay rather, they would be praised for wise, righteous and holy. Wherefore, this witnesseth sufficiently, that I teach not man's doctrine. After the same manner Christ speaketh also in the seventh of John: 'The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil' (John 7:7), and in the third of John: 'This is condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness more than light, because their works were evil' (John 3:19).

Now, that I teach the things which are of God, saith the Apostle, hereby it may sufficiently appear, that I preach the only grace, the mercy, the goodness and the glory of God. Moreover, he that speaketh, as Christ saith, those things which his Lord and Master hath commanded him, and glorifieth not himself, but him whose Apostle he is, bringeth and teacheth the sure Word of God. But I teach those things only which are commanded me from above: neither glorify myself, but him that sent me. Besides that, I stir up against myself the wrath and indignation of both the Jews and Gentiles: therefore my doctrine is true, sincere, certain, and of God, neither can there be any other, much less any better, than this my doctrine is.

Wherefore, whatsoever doctrine else teacheth not as mine doth, that all men are sinners, and are justified by faith only in Christ, must needs be false, wicked, blasphemous, accursed and devilish; and even such also are they which either teach it or receive it.

So we with Paul do boldly pronounce all such doctrine to be accursed as agreeth not with ours. For neither do we seek by our preaching the praise of men, or the favor of princes or bishops, but the favor of God alone, whose only grace and mercy we preach, despising and treading under foot whatsoever is of ourselves. Whosoever he be, then, which shall teach any other gospel, or that which is contrary to ours, we are bold to say that he is sent of the devil, and hold him accursed.

Or go I about to please men?

That is, do I serve men or God? He hath always a glance at the false apostles. These, saith he, must needs seek to please and to flatter men; for by this means they seek, that they again may glory in their flesh. Moreover, because they will not bear the hatred and persecution of men, they teach circumcision, only to avoid the persecution of the Cross of Christ: 'as followeth in the fifth chapter (Galatians 5:11).

So at this day ye may find many which seek to please men, and to the end they may live in peace and security of the flesh, they teach the things which are of men, that is to say, ungodly things; or else they allow the blasphemies and wicked judgments of the adversaries, contrary to the Word of God, against their own conscience, that they may keep still the favor of princes and bishops and not lose their goods. But we, because we endeavor to please God and not men, do stir up against us the malice of the devil and hell itself: we suffer the reproaches and slanders of the world, death and all the mischiefs that can be devised against us.

So saith Paul here: I seek not to please men, that they may raise my doctrine, and report me to be an excellent teacher, but I desire only to please God; and by this means I make men my mortal enemies. Which thing I find by experience to be most true; for they requite me with infamy, slander, imprisonment, the sword, etc. Contrariwise the false apostles teach the things that are of men, that is to say, such things as be pleasant and plausible to man's reason; and that to the end they may live in ease, and purchase the favor, goodwill and praise of the people. And such men find that they seek for: for they are praised and magnified of men. So saith Christ also (Matthew 6:2), that hypocrites do all things to be praised of men. And in the fifth of John he sharply reproveth such: 'How can ye believe,' saith he, 'which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh of God alone?' (John 5:44). The things which Paul hath hitherto taught, are in a manner examples only. In the meantime, notwithstanding, he is very earnest everywhere in proving his doctrine to be sincere and sound. Therefore he exhorteth the Galatians that they forsake it not for any other doctrine.

For if I should yet please men, I were not the servant of Christ

These things are to be referred to the whole office and ministry of Paul, to shew what a contrariety there was between his conversation before in the Jewish law, and his conversation now under the Gospel. As if he would say: Do ye think that I go about still to please men, as I did in times past?

So he speaketh afterwards in the fifth chapter: 'If I yet preach circumcision, why do I suffer persecution?' (Galatians 5:11). As though he would say: Do ye not see and hear of my daily conflicts, great persecutions and afflictions? After I was converted and called to the office of apostleship, I never taught man's

doctrine, neither sought I to please men, but God alone. That is to say, I seek not by my ministry and doctrine the praise and favor of men, but of God.

Here again is to be marked, how maliciously and craftily the false apostles went about to bring Paul into hatred among the Galatians. They picked out of his preachings and writings certain contradictions (as our adversaries at this day do out of our books) and by this means they would have convinced him that he had taught contrary things. Wherefore they said, that there was no credit to be given unto him; but that circumcision and the law ought to be kept: which thing he himself also by his example had allowed, because he had circumcised Timothy according to the law, had purified himself with other four men in the temple at Jerusalem, and had shaven his head at Cenchrea, etc. (Acts 16:3; 21:24; 18:18). These things they craftily surmised, that Paul by the commandment and authority of the Apostles was constrained to do: which notwithstanding he had kept freely, bearing with the infirmity of the weak brethren (which yet understood not the Christian liberty) lest they should be offended. To whose cavillations thus he answereth: How true it is which the false apostles forge against me for the overthrowing of my Gospel, and setting up of the law and circumcision again, the matter itself sufficiently declareth. For if I would preach the law and circumcision, and commend the strength, the power, and the will of men, I should not be so odious unto them, but should please them.

Now I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me, was not after man. For neither received I it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Here is the principal point of this matter: which containeth a confutation of his adversaries, and a defense of his doctrine, to the end of the second chapter; and it is a kind of perpetual history which Paul here reciteth. In the harmonizing whereof, St. Jerome turneth himself anxiously about and laboureth exceedingly. But he toucheth not the heart of the matter, for he considereth not what Paul purposeth, or whereunto he hath regard.

Now the histories in the Scriptures are oftentimes briefly told and out of due order, so that they cannot easily be harmonised : as for example, the denials of Peter and the history of the passion of Christ, etc. So here Paul reciteth not the entire history. Therefore I labor not, neither am much troubled about the harmonising of it, but here I consider only what is the mind of Paul, and whereunto he hath regard.

Now here is the principal point of this matter: My Gospel is not according to man, neither received I it of man, but by revelation of Jesus Christ.

Upon this he standeth, this he urgeth and with an oath confirmeth, that he learned not his Gospel of any man, but received it by the revelation of Jesus Christ. And in that he sweareth, he is constrained so to do, that the Galatians

may believe him, and also, that they should give no ear to the false apostles: whom he reproveth as liars, because they had said that he learned and received his Gospel of the Apostles.

Where he saith that his Gospel is not after man, he meaneth not that his Gospel is not earthly, for that is manifest of itself; and the false apostles bragged also that their doctrine was not earthly but heavenly: but he meaneth that he learned not his Gospel by the ministry of men, or received it by any earthly means, as we all learn it either by the ministry of men, or else receive it by some earthly means, some by hearing, some by reading, and some by writing, etc.; but he received the same only by the revelation of Jesus Christ. If any man list to make any other distinction, I am not against it. Here the Apostle sheweth by the way, that Christ is not only man, but that he is both true God and man, when he saith that he received not his Gospel by man.

Now, Paul received his Gospel in the way as he was going to Damascus, where Christ appeared unto him and talked with him. Afterwards also he talked with him in the temple at Jerusalem (Acts 22:17 ff.). But he received his Gospel in the way, as Luke reciteth the story in the ninth of the Acts. 'Arise,' saith Christ, 'and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.' He doth not bid him go into the city, that he might learn the Gospel of Ananias; but Ananias was bid to go and baptize him, to lay his hands upon him, to commit the ministry of the Word unto him, and to commend him unto the Church, and not to teach him the Gospel, which he had received afore (as he glorieth in the same place) by the only revelation of Jesus Christ. And this Ananias himself confesseth, saying: 'Brother Saul, the Lord which appeared to thee in the way, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight.' Therefore he received not his doctrine of Ananias, but being already called, lightened and taught of Christ in the way, he was sent to Ananias that he might also have the testimony of men, that he was called of God to preach the Gospel of Christ.

This Paul was constrained to recite, to put away the slander of the false apostles, who labored to bring him into hatred with the Galatians, saying that Paul was inferior to the rest of the Apostles' scholars, who had received of the Apostles that which they taught and kept; whose conversation also they had seen a long time, and that Paul himself had also received the same things of them, although he did now deny it. Why then would they rather obey an inferior, and despise the authority of the Apostles themselves, who were not only the fore-elders and teachers of the Galatians, but also of all the churches throughout the whole world?

This argument, which the false apostles grounded upon the authority of the Apostles, was strong and mighty, whereby the Galatians were suddenly overthrown, especially in this matter. I would never have believed, had I not been taught by these examples of the churches of Galatia, of the Corinthians and others, that they which had received the Word of God in the beginning with such

joy (among whom were many notable men) could so quickly be overthrown. O good Lord, what horrible and infinite mischiefs may one only argument easily bring, which so pierceth a man's conscience, when God withdraweth his grace, that in one moment he loseth all together. By this subtilty then the false apostles did easily deceive the Galatians, being not fully stablished and grounded, but as yet weak in the faith.

Moreover, the matter of justification is brittle: not of itself, for of itself it is most sure and certain, but in respect of us. Whereof I myself have good experience. For I know in what hours of darkness I sometimes wrestle. I know how often I suddenly lose the beams of the Gospel and grace, as being shadowed from me with thick dark clouds. Briefly, I know in what a slippery place even such also do stand as are well exercised and seem to have sure footing in matters of faith. We have good experience of this matter: for we are able to teach it unto others, and this is a sure token that we understand it; for no man can teach unto others that whereof he himself is ignorant. But when in the very conflict we should use the Gospel, which is the Word of grace, consolation and life, there doth the law, the Word of wrath, heaviness and death prevent the Gospel, and beginneth to rage; and the terrors which it raiseth up in the conscience, are no less than was that horrible shew in the mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16). So that even one place of the Scripture containing some threatening of the law overwhelmeth and drowneth all consolations besides, and so shaketh all our inward powers, that it maketh us to forget justification, grace, Christ, the Gospel, and all together. Therefore in respect of us, it is a very brittle matter, because we are brittle.

Again, we have against us even the one half of ourselves: that is to say, reason, and all the powers thereof. Besides all this, the flesh resisteth the spirit, for it cannot believe assuredly that the promises of God are true.

It fighteth therefore against the spirit, and (as Paul saith) it holdeth the spirit captive (Galatians 5:17; Romans 7:23), so that it cannot believe so steadfastly as it would. Wherefore we teach continually, that the knowledge of Christ and of faith is no work of man, but simply the gift of God, who as he createth faith, so doth he keep it in us. And even as he first giveth faith unto us through the Word, so afterwards he exerciseth, increaseth, strengtheneth and maketh perfect the same in us by the Word.

Therefore the highest worship that a man can offer unto God, and the very sabbath of sabbaths, is to exercise himself in true godliness, diligently to hear and to read the Word. Contrariwise, there is nothing more dangerous than to be weary of the Word. He therefore that is so cold, that he thinketh himself to know enough, and beginneth by little and little to loathe the Word, that man hath lost Christ and the Gospel, and that which he thinketh himself to know, he attaineth only by bare speculation; and he is like unto a man, as St. James saith, 'who

beholding his face in a glass, goeth his way, and by and by forgetteth what his countenance was' (James 1:23,24).

Wherefore let every faithful man labor and strive with all diligence to learn and to keep this doctrine: and to that end, let him use humble and hearty prayer, with continual study and meditation of the Word. And when we have done never so much, yet shall we have enough to keep us occupied.

For we have to do with no small enemies, but strong and mighty, and such as are in continual war against us, namely, our own flesh, all the dangers of the world, the law, sin, death, the wrath and judgment of God, and the devil himself, who never ceaseth to tempt us inwardly by his fiery darts, and outwardly by his false apostles, to the end that he may overthrow, if not all, yet the most part of us.

This argument therefore of the false apostles had a goodly shew, and seemed to be very strong. Which also at this day prevaieth with many, namely, that the Apostles, the holy fathers and their successors have so taught; that the Church so thinketh and believeth. Moreover, that it is impossible that Christ should suffer his Church so long time to err. Art thou alone, say they, wiser than so many holy men, wiser than the whole Church? After this manner the devil, being changed into an angel of light, setteth upon us craftily at this day by certain pestiferous hypocrites, who say: We pass not for the Pope or bishops, the greatest despisers and persecutors of the Word, and we abhor the hypocrisy of monks, and such like; but we would have the authority of the holy catholic Church to remain untouched. The Church hath thus believed and taught this long time. So have all the doctors of the primitive Church, holy men, more ancient and better learned than thou. Who art thou, that darest dissent from all these, and bring unto us a contrary doctrine? When Satan reasoneth thus, conspiring with the flesh and reason, then is thy conscience terrified and utterly despaireth, unless thou constantly return to thyself again, and say:

Whether it be St. Cyprian, Ambrose, Augustine, either St. Peter, Paul, or John, yea or an angel from heaven, that teacheth otherwise, yet this I know assuredly, that I teach not the things of men, but of God that is to say, I attribute all things to God alone, and nothing to men.

When I first took upon me the defense of the Gospel, I remember that Doctor Staupitius, a most worthy man and Vicar of the Augustinian order, said thus unto me: This liketh me well, that this doctrine which thou preachest, yieldeth glory and all things else unto God alone, and nothing unto men: for unto God (it is clear as day) there cannot be attributed too much glory, goodness, etc. This saying did then greatly comfort and confirm me. And true it is, that the doctrine of the Gospel taketh from men all glory, wisdom, righteousness, etc., and giveth the same to the Creator alone, who maketh all things of nothing. We may also more safely attribute too much unto God, than unto man: for in this case I may say

boldly: Be it so, that the Church, Augustine and other doctors, also Peter and Apollos, yea even an angel from heaven, teach a contrary doctrine, yet my doctrine is such, that it setteth forth and preacheth the grace and glory of God alone, and in the matter of salvation, it condemneth the righteousness and wisdom of all men. In this I cannot offend, because I give both to God and man that which properly and truly belongeth unto them both.

But thou wilt say: the Church is holy, the Fathers are holy. It is true; notwithstanding, albeit the Church be holy, yet is it compelled to pray: 'Forgive us our trespasses' (Matthew 6:12). So, though the Fathers be holy, yet are they saved through the forgiveness of sins. Therefore neither am I to be believed, nor the Church, nor the Fathers, nor the Apostles, no, nor an angel from heaven, if we teach any thing against the Word of God; but let the Word of the Lord abide for ever for else this argument of the false apostles had mightily prevailed against Paul's doctrine. For indeed it was a great matter, a great matter I say, to set before the Galatians the whole Church, with all the company of the Apostles, against Paul alone, but lately sprung up and of small authority. This was therefore a strong argument, and concluded mightily. For no man saith willingly that the Church erreth, and yet it is necessary to say that it erreth, if it teach any thing besides or against God's Word.

Peter, the chief of the Apostles, taught both in life and doctrine besides God's Word; therefore he erred and was deceived. Neither did Paul dissemble that error (although it seemed to be but a light fault) because he saw it would turn to the hurt of the whole Church, but withstood him even to his face, because he walked not after the truth of the Gospel (Galatians 2:11). Therefore neither is the Church, nor Peter, nor the Apostles, nor angels from heaven, to be heard, unless they bring and teach the pure Word of God.

This argument, even at this day, is not a little prejudicial to our cause. For if we may neither believe the Pope, nor the Fathers, nor Luther, nor any other, except they teach us the pure Word of God, whom shall we then believe? Who, in the meanwhile, shall certify our consciences, which part teacheth the pure Word of God, we or our adversaries? For they brag that they also have the pure Word of God and teach it. Again, we believe not the Papists, because they teach not the Word of God, neither can they teach it. Contrariwise, they hate us most bitterly, and persecute us as most pestilent heretics and seducers of the people. What is to be done in this case? Shall it be lawful for every fantastical spirit, to teach what himself listeth, seeing the world can neither hear nor abide our doctrine? For although we glory with Paul, that we teach the pure Gospel of Christ (to the which not only ought the Emperor, the Pope and the whole world to yield, but they ought also to receive it with outstretched hands, embrace it lovingly, and give diligent care that it be everywhere taught. But if any man teach otherwise, whether the Pope, or St. Augustine, or an Apostle, or an angel from heaven, let him be anathema with his gospel), yet we profit nothing, but are compelled to hear that this our glorying is not only vain, rash, and arrogant, but

also devilish and full of blasphemy. But if we abase ourselves, and give place to the rage of our adversaries, then both the Papists and Sectaries wax proud. The Sectaries will vaunt that they bring and teach some strange thing which the world never heard of before.

The Papists will set up again and establish their old abominations. Let every man therefore take heed, that he be most sure of his calling and doctrine, that he may boldly say with Paul: 'Although we, or an angel from heaven, preach unto you otherwise than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed' (Galatians 1:8).

For ye have heard of my conversation in times past in jewish religion, how that I persecuted the church of God extremely and wasted it: and profited in the jewish religion, above many of my companions of mine own nation

This place hath in it no singular doctrine. Notwithstanding, Paul allegeth here his own example, saying: I have defended the traditions of the Pharisees, and the Jewish religion, more constantly than ye and all your false teachers. Wherefore, if the righteousness of the law had been anything worth, I had not turned back from it: in the keeping whereof, notwithstanding, before I knew Christ I did so exercise myself, and so profit therein, that I excelled many of my companions of mine own nation.

Moreover, I was so zealous in defense of the same, that I persecuted the Church of God extremely, and wasted it. For having received authority of the high priests, I put many of the saints in prison (Acts 26:10), and when they should be put to death,' I pronounced the sentence; and punishing them throughout all the synagogues, I compelled them to blaspheme, and was so exceeding mad upon them, that I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

And was much more zealous of the traditions of my fathers

He calleth not here the traditions of the fathers, pharisaical or human traditions; for in this place he treateth not of the pharisaical traditions, but of a far higher matter, and therefore he calleth even that holy law of Moses, the fathers' traditions: that is to say, received and left as an inheritance from the fathers. For these, saith he, when I was in the Jewish religion, I was very zealous. He speaketh after the same manner to the Philippians: 'As concerning the law,' saith he, 'I was a Pharisee, concerning zeal, I persecuted the Church, and as concerning the righteousness of the law, I was unrebukable' (Philippians 3:6). As though he would say: Here I may glory, and may compare with the whole nation of the Jews, yea even with the best and holiest of all those which are of the circumcision; let them show me, if they can, a more zealous and earnest defender of Moses' law, than I have been. This thing (O ye Galatians) ought to have persuaded you not to believe these deceivers, which magnify the

righteousness of the law as a matter of great importance; whereas, if there were any cause to glory in the righteousness of the law, I have more cause to glory than any other.

In like manner say I of myself, that before I was lightened with the knowledge of the Gospel, I was as zealous for the papistical laws and traditions of the fathers, as ever any was, most earnestly maintaining and defending them as holy and necessary to salvation. Moreover, I endeavored to observe and keep them myself, as much as was possible for me to do; punishing my poor body with fasting, watching, praying, and other exercises, more than all they which at this day do so bitterly hate and persecute me, because now I take from them the glory of justifying by works and merits. For I was so diligent and superstitious in the observation hereof, that I laid more upon my body than without danger of health it was able to bear. I honored the Pope of mere conscience, and unfeignedly, not seeking after prebends, promotions and livings: but whatsoever I did, I did it with a single heart, of a good zeal, and for the glory of God. But those things which then were gainful unto me, now with Paul I count to be but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord. But our adversaries, as idle bellies, and tried with no temptations, believe not that I and many others have endured such things: I speak of such as with great desire sought for peace and quietness of conscience, which notwithstanding in so great darkness it was not possible for them to find.

But when it had pleased God (which had separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace) to reveal his son in me, that I should preach him among the gentiles, immediately I communicated not with flesh and blood. Neither came I again to Jerusalem, to them which were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia, and turned again unto Damascus

This is the first journey of Paul. Jerome here toileth hard, saying that Luke in the Acts writeth nothing of the journey of Paul into Arabia; as if it were needful to set down the events and doings of every single day, when that were impossible. Let it suffice that we have some particulars and a certain number of histories out of which we can take examples and instruction.

And here he witnesseth that straightway, after he was called by the grace of God to preach Christ among the Gentiles, he went into Arabia, without the advice of any man, to that work whereunto he was called. And this place witnesseth by whom he was taught, and by what means he came to the knowledge of the Gospel and to his apostleship. 'When it had pleased God,' saith he. As if he would say: I have not deserved it, because I was zealous of the law of God without judgment, nay rather, this foolish and wicked zeal stirred me up, that God so permitting, I fell headlong into more abominable and outrageous sins. I persecuted the Church of God, I was an enemy to Christ, I blasphemed his

Gospel, and to conclude, I was the author of shedding much innocent blood. This was my desert. In the midst of this cruel rage, I was called to such inestimable grace. What? Was it because of this outrageous cruelty? No forsooth. But the abundant grace of God, who calleth and showeth mercy to whom he will, pardoned and forgave me all those blasphemies; and for these my horrible sins, which then I thought to be perfect righteousness, and an acceptable service unto God, he gave unto me his grace, the knowledge of his truth, and called me to be an Apostle.

We also are come at this day to the knowledge of grace by the self-same merits. I crucified Christ daily in my monkish life, and blasphemed God through my false faith, wherein I then continually lived. Outwardly I was not as other men, extortioners, unjust, whoremongers; but I kept chastity, poverty and obedience. Moreover, I was free from the cares of this present life. I was only given to fasting, watching, praying, saying of masses, and such like. Notwithstanding, in the meantime, I fostered under this cloaked holiness and trust in mine own righteousness, continual mistrust, doubtfulness, fear, hatred and blasphemy against God. And this my righteousness was nothing else but a filthy puddle, and the very kingdom of the devil. For Satan loveth such saints, and accounteth them for his dear darlings, who destroy their own bodies and souls, and deprive themselves of all the blessings of God's gifts. In the meantime notwithstanding, wickedness, blindness, contempt of God, ignorance of the Gospel, profanation of the Sacraments, blaspheming and treading of Christ under foot, and the abuse of all the benefits and gifts of God, do reign in them at the full. To conclude, such saints are the bondslaves of Satan, and therefore are driven to think, speak and do whatsoever he will, although outwardly they seem to excel all others in good works, in holiness and strictness of life.

Such we were under the Popedom: verily no less, if not more, contumelious and blasphemous against Christ and his Gospel, than Paul himself, and specially I; for I did so highly esteem the Pope's authority, that to dissent from him, even in the least point, I thought it a sin worthy of everlasting death. And that wicked opinion caused me to think that John Hus was a cursed heretic, yea and I accounted it an heinous offense but once to think of him; and I would myself, in defense of the Pope's authority, have ministered fire and sword for the burning and destroying of that heretic, and thought it an high service unto God so to do. Wherefore if you compare publicans and harlots with these holy hypocrites, they are not evil. For they, when they offend, have remorse of conscience, and do not justify their wicked doings; but these men are so far from acknowledging their abominations, idolatries, wicked will-worshippings and ceremonies to be sins, that they affirm the same to be righteousness, and a most acceptable sacrifice unto God, yea, they adore them as matters of singular holiness, and through them do promise salvation unto others, and also sell them for money, as things available to salvation.

This is then our goodly righteousness, this is our high merit, which bringeth us unto the knowledge of grace: to wit, that we have so deadly and so devilishly persecuted, blasphemed, trodden under foot, and condemned God, Christ, the Gospel, faith, the Sacraments, all godly men, the true worship of God, and have taught and stablished quite contrary things. And the more holy we were, the more were we blinded, and the more did we worship the devil. There was not one of us but he was a bloodsucker, if not in deed, yet in heart.

When it pleased God

As though he would say: It is the alone and inestimable favor of God, that not only he hath spared me, so wicked and so cursed a wretch, such a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a rebel against God, but beside, that, hath also given unto me the knowledge of salvation, his Spirit, Christ his Son, the office of an Apostle, and everlasting life. So God beholding us guilty in the like sins, hath not only pardoned our impieties and blasphemies of his mere mercy for Christ's sake, but hath also overwhelmed us with great benefits and spiritual gifts. But many of us are not only unthankful unto God for this his inestimable grace, and as it is written (2 Peter 1:9), do forget the cleansing of their old sins; but also opening again a window to the devil, they begin to loathe his Word, and many also do pervert and corrupt it, and so become authors of new errors. The ends of these men are worse than the beginnings (Matthew 12:45).

Which had separated me from my mother's womb

This is an Hebrew phrase. As if he said: Which had sanctified, ordained, and prepared me. That is, God had appointed, when I was yet in my mother's womb, that I should so rage against his Church, and that afterwards he would mercifully call me back again from the midst of my cruelty and blasphemy, by his mere grace, into the way of truth and salvation. To be short, when I was not yet born, I was an Apostle in the sight of God, and when the time was come, I was declared an Apostle before the whole world.

Thus Paul putteth off all deserts, and giveth glory to God alone, but to himself all shame and confusion. As though he would say: All the gifts both small and great, as well spiritual as corporal, which God purposed to give unto me, and all the good things which at any time in all my life I should do, God himself had before appointed when I was yet in my mother's womb, where I could neither wish, think, nor do any good thing. Therefore this gift came unto me by the mere predestination and free mercy of God before I was yet born. Moreover, after I was born, he supported me, being laden with innumerable and most horrible iniquities. And that he might the more manifestly declare the unspeakable and inestimable greatness of his mercy towards me, he of his mere grace forgave my abominable and infinite sins, and moreover replenished me with such plenty of his grace, that I did not only know what things are given unto us in Christ, but preached the same also unto others. Such are the deserts and merits of all men,

and especially of those old dotards, who exercise themselves wholly in the stinking puddles of man's own righteousness.

And called me by his grace

Mark the diligence of the Apostle. 'He called me,' saith he. How? Was it for my pharisaical religion, or for my blameless and holy life? For my prayers, fastings and works? No. Much less for my blasphemies, persecutions, oppressions. How then? By his mere grace alone.

To reveal his son in me

You hear in this place, what manner of doctrine is given and committed to Paul: to wit, the doctrine of the Gospel, which is the revelation of the Son of God. This is a doctrine quite contrary to the law, which revealeth not the Son of God, but it showeth forth sin, it terrifieth the conscience, it revealeth death, the wrath and judgment of God, and hell. The Gospel therefore is such a doctrine, as admitteth no law yea, it must be separate as far from the law, as there is distance between heaven and earth. This difference in itself is easy and plain, but unto us it is hard and full of difficulty. For it is an easy matter to say, that the Gospel is nothing else but the revealing of the Son of God, or the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and not the revealing of the law. But in the agony and conflict of conscience, to hold this fast and to practice it indeed, it is a hard matter, yea to them also that be most exercised therein.

Now, if the Gospel be the revealing of the Son of God, as Paul defineth it in this place, then surely it accuseth not, it terrifieth not the conscience, it threateneth not death, it bringeth not to despair, as the law doth; but it is a doctrine concerning Christ, who is assuredly neither law nor work, but our righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30). Although this thing be more clear than the sunlight, yet notwithstanding, the madness and blindness of the Papists hath been so great, that of the Gospel they have made a law of charity, and of Christ a lawmaker, giving more strait and heavy commandments than Moses himself. But the Gospel teacheth, that Christ came not to set forth a new law, and to give commandments as touching manners: but that he came to this end, that he might be made an oblation for the sins of the whole world, and that our sins might be forgiven, and everlasting life given unto us for his sake, and not for the works of the law, or for our own righteousness.

Of this inestimable treasure freely bestowed upon us, the Gospel properly preacheth unto us. Wherefore it is a kind of doctrine that is not learned or gotten by any study, diligence, or wisdom of man, nor yet by the law of God, but is revealed by God himself, as Paul saith in this place; first by the external Word, then by the working of God's spirit inwardly. The Gospel therefore is a divine Word that came down from heaven, and is revealed by the Holy Ghost, who was

also sent for the same purpose: yet in such sort notwithstanding, that the outward Word must go before. For Paul himself had no inward revelation, until he had heard the outward. Word from heaven, which was this, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' (Acts 9:4). First, therefore, he heard the outward Word, then afterwards followed revelations, the knowledge of the Word, faith, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

That I should preach him among the gentiles

'It pleased God,' saith he, 'to reveal his Son in me.' To what purpose? Not only that I myself should believe in the Son of God, but also that I should preach him among the Gentiles. And why not among the Jews? Lo, here we see that Paul is properly the Apostle of the Gentiles, albeit he preached Christ among the Jews also.

Paul comprehendeth here in a few words, as he is wont, his whole divinity, which is: to preach Christ among the Gentiles. As if he would say: I will not burden the Gentiles with the law, because I am the Apostle and evangelist of the Gentiles, and not their lawgiver. Thus he directeth all his words against the false apostles. As though he would say: O ye Galatians, ye have not heard the righteousness of the law, or of works, to be taught by me; for this belongeth to Moses, and not to me, Paul, being the Apostle of the Gentiles. For my office and ministry is to bring the Gospel unto you, and to show unto you the same revelation which I myself have had.

Therefore ought you to hear no teacher that teacheth the law. For among the Gentiles, the law ought not to be preached, but the Gospel; not Moses, but the Son of God; not the righteousness of works, but the righteousness of faith. This is the preaching that properly belongeth to the Gentiles.

Immediately I communicated not with flesh and blood

St. Jerome hath here a great contention against Porphyrius and Julian, which charge Paul with arrogance because he would not confer his Gospel with the rest of the Apostles; also because Paul calleth the Apostles 'flesh and blood.' But Paul here making mention of flesh and blood, speaketh not of the Apostles. For by and by he addeth: 'Neither came I again to Jerusalem, to them which were apostles before me.' But this is Paul's meaning, that after he had once received the revelation of the Gospel from Christ, he consulted not with any man in Damascus, much less did he desire any man to teach him the Gospel; again, that he went not to Jerusalem, to Peter and the other Apostles, to learn the Gospel of them, but that forthwith in Damascus, where he received baptism of Ananias, and imposition of hands (for it was necessary for him to have the outward sign and testimony of his calling), he preached Jesus as the Son of God. The same also writeth Luke, Acts 9.

Neither came I to Jerusalem, to them that were apostles before me, but went into Arabia, and turned again unto Damascus

That is, I went into Arabia before I saw the Apostles or consulted with them, and forthwith I took upon me the office of preaching the Gospel among the Gentiles: for thereunto I was called, and had also received a revelation from God. In vain therefore doth Jerome inquire what Paul did in Arabia. For what else should he do, but preach Christ? For to this end (saith he) was the Son of God revealed in him, that he might preach him among the Gentiles. Wherefore he betaketh himself forthwith from Damascus, a Gentile city, unto Arabia, where also were Gentiles, and there doeth his office with his might. He did not then receive his Gospel of any man, or of the Apostles themselves, but was content with his heavenly calling, and with the revelation of Jesus Christ alone. Wherefore this whole place is a confutation of the false apostles' argument, which they used against Paul, saying that he was but a scholar and a hearer of the Apostles, who lived after the law; and moreover, that Paul himself also had lived according to the law, and therefore it was necessary that the Gentiles themselves should keep the law, and be circumcised. To the end therefore that he might stop the mouths of these cavillers, he rehearseth this long history: Before my conversion, saith he, I learned not my Gospel of the Apostles, nor of any other of the brethren that believed (for I persecuted extremely, not only this doctrine, but also the Church of God, and wasted it); neither after my conversion, for forthwith I preached, not Moses with his law, but Jesus Christ at Damascus, consulting with no man, neither as yet having seen any of the Apostles. So we also can boast, that we have not received our doctrine from the Pope. The holy Scripture and the outward symbols we have indeed from him, but not the doctrine, which hath come unto us by the gift of God alone. Whereunto hath been added our own study, reading and inquiry.

The argument of our adversaries, therefore, is a thing of naught, which they use at this day, saying: Who should believe your doctrine, ye Lutherans, seeing ye are in no public office? Ye ought to take your doctrine from the Pope and the bishops, which are ordained and in a lawful function, etc.

Then after three years I came again to Jerusalem, to visit Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. And none other of the apostles saw I, save James, the lord's brother.

Paul granteth that he was with the Apostles, but not with all the Apostles.

Howbeit he declareth that he went up to Jerusalem to them, not commanded, but of his own accord, not to learn any thing of them, but only to see Peter. The same thing Luke also writeth in the ninth chapter of the Acts, that Barnabas led Paul to the Apostles, and declared to them, how that he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he spake unto him; also that he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. This witness beareth Barnabas of him.

All his words are so framed, that they prove his Gospel not to be of man. Indeed he granteth that he had seen Peter, and James the brother of our Lord, but none other of the Apostles besides these two, and that he learned nothing of them.

He granteth therefore, that he was at Jerusalem with the Apostles; and this did the false apostles rightly report. He granteth moreover, that he had lived after the manner of the Jews, but yet only among the Jews. For this rule did Paul keep: 'When thou art at Rome, live after the Roman manner.'

And this is it which he saith in 1 Corinthians 9 (19 ff.): 'When I was free from all men, I made myself servant to all men, that I might win the more.'

To the Jews I became as a Jew, etc. I was made all things to all men, that I might save all.' He granteth therefore, that he was at Jerusalem with the Apostles, but he denieth that he had learned his Gospel of them. Also he denieth that he was constrained to teach the Gospel as the Apostles had prescribed. The whole effect then of this matter lieth in this word, 'to see':

I went, saith he, to see Peter, and not to learn of him. Therefore neither is Peter my master, nor yet James. And as for the other Apostles, he utterly denieth that he saw any of them.

But why doth Paul repeat this so often, that he learned not his Gospel of men, nor of the Apostles themselves? His purpose is this, to persuade the churches of Galatia, which were now led away by the false apostles, and to put them out of all doubt that his Gospel was the true Word of God; and for this cause he repeateth it so often. And if he had not prevailed herein, he never could have stopped the mouths of the false apostles. For thus they would have objected against him: We are as good as Paul, we are disciples of the Apostles as well as he; moreover, he is but one alone, and we are many; therefore we excel him, both in authority and in number also.

Here Paul was constrained to glory, to affirm and swear, that he learned not his Gospel of any man, neither received it of the Apostles themselves. It was most necessary for him thus to glory, and it was no vain boasting, as Porphyrius and Julian falsely declare, who perceived not (as Jerome likewise did not) what Paul was about. For his ministry was here in great danger, and all the churches likewise, which had used him as their chief pastor and teacher. The necessity therefore of his ministry, and of all the churches, required that with a necessary and holy pride he should vaunt of his vocation, and of the knowledge of the Gospel revealed unto him by Christ, that their consciences might be thoroughly persuaded that his doctrine was the true Word of God. Here had Paul a weighty matter in hand: namely, that all the churches might be kept in sound doctrine; yea, the controversy was in deed, as touching life and death everlasting. For if the pure Word of God be once taken away, there remaineth no consolation, no life, no salvation. The cause therefore why he reciteth these things, is to retain

the churches in true and sound doctrine. His purpose is therefore to show by this history, that he received his Gospel of no man.

Again, that he preached for a certain time, namely, the space of three or four years, both in Damascus and Arabia, by revelation from God, before he had seen any of the Apostles, even the selfsame Gospel that the Apostles had preached. Jerome here maketh sport with the mystery of the fifteen days. He saith also that Paul in those fifteen days was taught of Peter and instructed in the mystery of the Ogdoad and Hebdoad. But these things have nothing to do with the fact. For Paul saith in plain words that he came to Jerusalem to see Peter, and stayed with him fifteen days. If his purpose had been to learn the Gospel of Peter, he must needs have stayed there several years.

In fifteen days he could not have been made so great an apostle and teacher of the Gentiles – not to mention that in these fifteen days (as Luke testifieth, Acts 9:28 ff.) he spake with boldness in the name of the Lord and disputed with the Greeks, etc.

And now the things which I write unto you, behold I witness before God I lie not

Wherefore addeth he an oath? Because he reporteth an history. He is constrained to swear, to the end that the churches might believe him; lest the false apostles should say: Who knoweth whether Paul speaketh the truth or no? Here you see that Paul, the elect vessel of Christ, was in so great contempt among his own Galatians, to whom he had preached Christ, that it was necessary for him to swear that he spake the truth. If this happened then to the Apostles, to have so mighty adversaries that they durst despise them and accuse them of lying, what marvel is it if the like at this day happen unto us, which in no respect are worthy to be compared with the Apostles? He sweareth in a matter (as it seemeth) of no weight, that he speaketh the truth, namely, that he tarried not with Peter to learn of him, but only to see him; but if you weigh the matter diligently, it is very weighty and of great importance, as may appear by what is said before. In like manner we swear after the example of Paul, in this wise: God knoweth that we lie not, etc.

After that, I went into the coasts of syria and cilicia

Syria and Cilicia are countries near situate together. This is it that he still goeth about to persuade, that as well before he had seen the Apostles as after, he was always a teacher of the Gospel, and that he received it by the revelation of Christ, and was never any disciple of the Apostles.

For I was unknown by face unto the churches of judaea which were in Christ. But they heard only some say, he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which before he destroyed. And they glorified God in me

This he addeth for the sequel and continuance of the history, that after he had seen Peter, he went into Syria and Cilicia, and there preached, and so preached, that he won the testimony of all the churches in Judaea. As though he would say: I appeal to the testimony of all the churches, yea even of those which are in Judaea; for the churches do witness, not only in Damascus, Arabia, Syria and Cilicia, but also in Judaea, that I have preached the same faith which I once withstood and persecuted. And they glorified God in me, not because I taught that circumcision and the law of Moses ought to be kept, but for the preaching of faith, and for the edifying of the churches by my ministry in the Gospel. Ye therefore have the testimony not only of the people of Damascus and of Arabia, etc., but also of the whole catholic Church in Judaea, etc.