WRITINGS OF MARTIN LUTHER - VOLUME 1

by Martin Luther

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Martin Luther (Volume 1), compiled for study and devotional reading.

100 Chapters

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Chapter 1

00.00. Luther, Martin - Library

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Chapter 2

01.00 A Treatise on Good Works

A Treatise on Good Works.. , Dr. Martin Luther (1520):

Introduction to the Treatise Martin Luther’s Dedication of the Treatise Starts discussion on the love of God with the whole heart ...

Starts discussion of Second Commandment (not to take the name of the Lord in vain) Starts discussion of Third Commandment (keep the Sabbath holy) Starts discussion of Fourth Commandment (honor our parents) Starts discussion of Fifth Commandment (do not kill) http://web.archive.org/web/20030217094845/www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-luthworks.html

Chapter 3

01.01 Introduction to the Treatise

A treatise on Good Works together with the Letter of Dedication by Dr. Martin Luther, 1520

Published in:

Works of Martin Luther Adolph Spaeth, L.D. Reed, Henry Eyster Jacobs, et Al., Trans. & Eds.

(Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1915), Vol. 1, pp. 173-285.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Occasion of the Work. -- Luther did not impose himself as reformer upon the Church. In the course of a conscientious performance of the duties of his office, to which he had been regularly and divinely called, and without any urging on his part, he attained to this position by inward necessity. In 1515 he received his appointment as the standing substitute for the sickly city pastor, Simon Heinse, from the city council of Wittenberg. Before this time he was obliged to preach only occasionally in the convent, apart from his activity as teacher in the University and convent. Through this appointment he was in duty bound, by divine and humanm right, to lead and direct the congregation at Wittenberg on the true way to life, and it would have been a denial of the knowledge of salvation which God had led him to acquire, by way of ardent inner struggles, if he had led the congregation on any other way than the one God had revealed to him in His Word. He could not deny before the congregation which had been intrusted to his care, what up to this time he had taught with ever increasing clearness in his lectures at the University -- for in the lectures on the Psalms, which he began to deliver in 1513, he declares his conviction that faith alone justifies, as can be seen from the complete manuscript, published since 1885, and with still greater clearness from his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (1515-1516), which is accessible since 1908; nor what he had urged as spiritual adviser of his convent brethren when in deep distress -- compare the charming letter to Georg Spenlein, dated April 8, 1516.

Luther's first literary works to appear in print were also occasioned by the work of his calling and of his office in the Wittenberg congregation. He had no other object in view than to edify his congregation and to lead it to Christ when, in 1517, he published his first independent work, the Explanation of the Seven Penitential Psalms. On Oct 31 of the same year he published his 95 Theses against Indulgences. These were indeed intended as controversial theses for theologians, but at the same time it is well known that Luther was moved by his duty toward his congregation to declare his position in this matter and to put in issue the whole question as to the right and wrong of indulgences by means of his theses. His sermon Of Indulgences and Grace, occasioned by Tetzel's attack and delivered in the latter part of March, 1518, as well as his sermon Of Penitence, delivered about the same time, were also intended for his congregation. Before his congregation (Sept., 1516-Feb., 1517) he delivered the Sermons on the Ten Commandments, which were published in 1518 and the Sermons on the Lord's Prayer, which were also published in 1518 by Agricola. Though Luther in the same year published a series of controversial writings, which were occasioned by attacks from outside sources, viz., the Resolutiones disputationis de Virtute

indulgentiarum, the Asterisci adversus obeliscos Joh. Eccii, and the Ad dialogum Silv. Prieriatis responsio, still he never was diverted by this necessary rebuttal from his paramount duty, the edification of the congregation. The autumn of the year 1518, when he was confronted with Cajetan, as well as the whole year of 1519, when he held his disputations with Eck, etc., were replete with disquietude and pressing labors; still Luther served his congregation with a whole series of writings during this time, and only regretted that he was not entirely at its disposal. Of such writings we mention: Explanation of the Lord’s Prayer for the simple Laity (an elaboration of the sermons of 1517); Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments; Instruction concerning certain Articles, which might be ascribed and imputed to him by his adversaries; Brief Instruction how to Confess; Of Meditation on the Sacred Passion of Christ; Of Twofold Righteousness; Of the Matrimonial Estate; Brief Form to understand and to pray the Lord’s Prayer; Explanation of the Lord’s Prayer "vor sich und hinter sich"; Of Prayer and Processions in Rogation Week; Of Usury; Of the Sacrament of Penitence; Of Preparation for Death; Of the Sacrament of Baptism; Of the Sacrament of the Sacred Body; Of Excommunication. With but few exceptions these writings all appeared in print in the year 1519, and again it was the congregation which Luther sought primarily to serve. If the bounds of his congregation spread ever wider beyond Wittenberg, so that his writings found a surprisingly ready sale, even afar, that was not Luther’s fault. Even the Tessaradecas consolatoria, written in 1519 and printed in 1520, a book of consolation, which was originally intended for the sick Elector of Saxony, was written by him only upon solicitation from outside sources.

To this circle of writings the treatise Of Good Works also belongs Though the incentive for its composition came from George Spalatin, court-preacher to the Elector, who reminded Luther of a promise he had given, still Luther was willing to undertake it only when he recalled that in a previous sermon to his congregation he occasionally had made a similar promise to deliver a sermon on good works; and when Luther actually commenced the composition he had nothing else in view but the preparation of a sermon for his congregation on this important topic.

But while the work was in progress the material so accumulated that it far outgrew the bounds of a sermon for his congregation. On March 25. he wrote to Spalatin that it would become a whole booklet instead of a sermon; on May 5. he again emphasizes the growth of the material; on May 13. he speaks of its completion at an early date, and on June 8. he could send Melanchthon a printed copy. It was entitled: Von den guten werckenn: D. M. L. Vuittenberg. On the last page it bore the printer’s mark: Getruck zu Wittenberg bey dem iungen Melchior Lotther. Im Tausent funfhundert vnnd zweyntzigsten Jar. It filled not less than 58 leaves, quarto. In spite of its volume, however, the intention of the book for the congregation remained, now however, not only for the narrow circle of the Wittenberg congregation, but for the Christian layman in general. In the dedicatory preface Luther lays the greatest stress upon this, for he writes: "Though I know of a great many, and must hear it daily, who think lightly of my poverty and say that I write only small Sexternlein (tracts of small volume) and German sermons for the untaught laity, I will not permit that to move me. Would to God that during my life I had served but one layman for his betterment with all my powers; it would be sufficient for me, I would thank God and suffer all my books to perish thereafter.... Most willingly I will leave the honor of greater things to others, and not at all will I be ashamed of preaching and writing German to the untaught laity."

Since Luther had dedicated the afore-mentioned Tessaradecas consolatoria to the reigning Prince, he now, probably on Spalatin's recommendation, dedicated the Treatise on Good Works to his brother John, who afterward, in 1525, succeeded Frederick in the Electorate. There was probably good reason for dedicating the book to a member of the reigning house. Princes have reason to take a special interest in the fact that preaching on good works should occur within their realm, for the safety and sane development of their kingdom depend largely upon the cultivation of morality on the part of their subjects. Time and again the papal church had commended herself to princes and statesmen by her emphatic teaching of good works. Luther, on the other hand, had been accused -- like the Apostle Paul before him (Romans 3:31) -- that the zealous performance of good works had abated, that the bonds of discipline had slackened and that, as a necessary consequence, lawlessness and shameless immorality were being promoted by his doctrine of justification by faith alone. Before 1517 the rumor had already spread that Luther intended to do away with good works. Duke George of Saxony had received no good impression from a sermon Luther had delivered at Dresden, because he feared the consequences which Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone might have upon the morals of the masses. Under these circumstances it would not have been surprising if a member of the Electoral house should harbor like scruples, especially since the full comprehension of Luther's preaching on good works depended on an evangelical understanding of faith, as deep as was Luther's own. The Middle Ages had differentiated between fides informis, a formless faith, and fides formata or informata, a formed or ornate faith. The former was held to be a knowledge without any life or effect, the latter to be identical with love for, as they said, love which proves itself and is effective in good works must be added to the formless faith, as its complement and its content, well pleasing to God. In Luther's time every one who was seriously interested in religious questions was reared under the influence of these ideas.

Now, since Luther had opposed the doctrine of justification by love and its good works, he was in danger of being misunderstood by strangers, as though he held the bare knowledge and assent to be sufficient for justification, and such preaching would indeed have led to frivolity and disorderly conduct. But even apart from the question whether or not the brother of the Elector was disturbed by such scruples, Luther must have welcomed the opportunity, when the summons came to him, to dedicate his book Of Good Works to a member of the Electoral house. At any rate the book could serve to acquaint him with the thoughts of his much-abused pastor and professor at Wittenberg, for never before had Luther expressed himself on the important question of good works in such a fundamental, thorough and profound way.

2. The Contents of the Work. -- A perusal of the contents shows that the book, in the course of its production, attained a greater length than was originally intended. To this fact it must be attributed that a new numeration of sections begins with the argument on the Third Commandment, and is repeated at every Commandment thereafter, while before this the sections were consecutively numbered. But in spite of this, the plan of the whole is clear and lucid. Evidently the whole treatise is divided into two parts: the first comprising sections 1-17, while the second comprises all the following sections. The first, being fundamental, is the more important part. Luther well knew of the charges made against him that "faith is so highly elevated" and "works are rejected" by him; but he knew, too, that "neither silver, gold and precious stone, nor any other precious thing had experienced so much augmentation and diminution" as had good works "which should all have but

one simple goodness, or they are nothing but color, glitter and deception." But especially was he aware of the fact that the Church was urging nothing but the so-called self-elected works, such as "running to the convent, singing, reading, playing the organ, saying the mass, praying matins, vespers, and other hours, founding and ornamenting churches, altars, convents, gathering chimes, jewels, vestments, gems and treasures, going to Rome and to the saints, curtsying and bowing the knees, praying the rosary and the psalter," etc., and that she designated these alone as truly good works, while she represented the faithful performance of the duties of one's calling as a morality of a lower order. For these reasons it is Luther's highest object in this treatise to make it perfectly clear what is the essence of good works. Whenever the essence of good works has been understood, then the accusations against him will quickly collapse.

In the fundamental part he therefore argues: Truly good works are not self-elected works of monastic or any other holiness, but such only as God has commanded, and as are comprehended within the bounds of one's particular calling, and all works, let their name be what it may, become good only when they flow from faith, the first, greatest, and noblest of good works." (John 6:29.) In this connection the essence of faith, that only source of all truly good works, must of course be rightly understood. It is the sure confidence in God, that all my doing is wellpleasing to Him; it is trust in His mercy, even though He appears angry and puts sufferings and adversities upon us; it is the assurance of the divine good will even though "God should reprove the conscience with sin, death and hell, and deny it all grace and mercy, as though He would condemn and show His wrath eternally." Where such faith lives in the heart, there the works are good "even though they were as insignificant as the picking up of a straw"; but where it is wanting, there are only such works as "heathen, Jew and Turk" may have and do. Where such faith possesses the man, he needs no teacher in good works, as little as does the husband or the wife, who only look for love and favor from one another, nor need any instruction therein "how they are to stand toward each other, what they are to do, to leave undone, to say, to leave unsaid, to think."

This faith, Luther continues, is "the true fulfilment of the First Commandment, apart from which there is no work that could do justice to this Commandment." With this sentence he combines, on the one hand, the whole argument on faith, as the best and noblest of good works, with his opening proposition (there are no good works besides those commanded of God), and, on the other hand, he prepares the way for the following argument, wherein he proposes to exhibit the good works according to the Ten Commandments. For the First Commandment does not forbid this and that, nor does it require this and that; it forbids but one thing, unbelief; it requires but one thing, faith, "that confidence in God's good will at all times." Without this faith the best works are as nothing, and if man should think that by them he could be well-pleasing to God, he would be lowering God to the level of a "broker or a laborer who will not dispense his grace and kindness gratis."

This understanding of faith and good works, so Luther now addresses his opponents, should in fairness be kept in view by those who accuse him of declaiming against good works, and they should learn from it, that though he has preached against "good works," it was against such as are falsely so called and as contribute toward the confusion of consciences, because they are self-elected, do not flow from faith, and are done with the pretension of doing works well-pleasing to God.

This brings us to the end of the fundamental part of the treatise. It was not Luther’s intention, however, to speak only on the essence of good works and their fundamental relation to faith; he would show, too, how the "best work," faith, must prove itself in every way a living faith, according to the other commandments. Luther does not proceed to this part, however, until in the fundamental part he has said with emphasis, that the believer, the spiritual man, needs no such instruction (1 Timothy 1:9), but that he of his own accord and at all times does good works "as his faith, his confidence, teaches him." Only "because we do not all have such faith, or are unmindful of it," does such instruction become necessary.

Nor does he proceed until he has applied his oft repeated words concerning the relation of faith to good works to the relation of the First to the other Commandments. From the fact, that according to the First Commandment, we acquire a pure heart and confidence toward God, he derives the good work of the Second Commandment, namely, "to praise God, to acknowledge His grace, to render all honor to Him alone." From the same source he derives the good work of the Third Commandment, namely, "to observe divine services with prayer and the hearing of preaching, to incline the imagination of our hearts toward God’s benefits, and, to that end, to mortify and overcome the flesh." From the same source he derives the works of the Second Table.

The argument on the Third and Fourth Commandments claims nearly one-half of the entire treatise. Among the good works which, according to the Third Commandment, should be an exercise and proof of faith, Luther especially mentions the proper hearing of mass and of preaching, common prayer, bodily discipline and the mortification of the flesh, and he joins the former and the latter by an important fundamental discussion of the New Testament conception of Sabbath rest.

Luther discusses the Fourth Commandment as fully as the Third. The exercise of faith, according to this Commandment, consists in the faithful performance of the duties of children toward their parents, of parents toward their children, and of subordinates toward their superiors in the ecclesiastical as well as in the common civil sphere. The various duties issue from the various callings, for faithful performance of the duties of one’s calling, with the help of God and for God’s sake, is the true "good work."

As he now proceeds to speak of the spiritual powers, the government of the Church, he frankly reveals their faults and demands a reform of the present rulers. Honor and obedience in all things should be rendered unto the Church, the spiritual mother, as it is due to natural parents, unless it be contrary to the first Three Commandments. But as matters stand now the spiritual magistrates neglect their peculiar work, namely, the fostering of godliness and discipline, like a mother who runs away from her children and follows a lover, and instead they undertake strange and evil works, like parents whose commands are contrary to God. In this case members of the Church must do as godly children do whose parents have become mad and insane. Kings, princes, the nobility, municipalities and communities must begin of their own accord and put a check to these conditions, so that the bishops and the clergy, who are now too timid, may be induced to follow. But even the civil magistrates must also suffer reforms to be enacted in their particular spheres; especially are they called on to do away with the rude "gluttony and drunkenness," luxury in clothing, the usurious sale of rents and the common brothels. This, by divine and human right, is a part of their enjoined works according to the Fourth Commandment.

Luther, at last, briefly treats of the Second Table of the Commandments, but in speaking of the works of these Commandments he never forgets to point out their relation to faith, thus holding fast this fundamental thought of the book to the end. Faith which does not doubt that God is gracious, he says, will find it an easy matter to be graciously and favorably minded toward one's neighbor and to overcome all angry and wrathful desires. In this faith in God the Spirit will teach us to avoid unchaste thoughts and thus to keep the Sixth Commandment. When the heart trusts in the divine favor, it cannot seek after the temporal goods of others, nor cleave to money, but according to the Seventh Commandment, will use it with cheerful liberality for the benefit of the neighbor. Where such confidence is present there is also a courageous, strong and intrepid heart, which will at all times defend the truth, as the Eighth Commandment demands, whether neck or coat be at stake, whether it be against pope or kings. Where such faith is present there is also strife against the evil lust, as forbidden in the Ninth and Tenth Commandments, and that even unto death.

3. The Importance of the Work. -- Inquiring now into the importance of the book, we note that Luther's impression evidently was perfectly correct, when he wrote to Spalatin, long before its completion -- as early as March 2 5. -- that he believed it to be better than anything he had heretofore written. The book, indeed, surpasses all his previous German writings in volume, as well as all his Latin and German ones in clearness, richness and the fundamental importance of its content. In comparison with the prevalent urging of self-elected works of monkish holiness, which had arisen from a complete misunderstanding of the so-called evangelical counsels (comp. esp. Matthew 19:16-22) and which were at that time accepted as self-evident and zealously urged by the whole church, Luther's argument must have appeared to all thoughtful and earnest souls as a revelation, when he so clearly amplified the proposition that only those works are to be regarded as good works which God has commanded, and that therefore, not the abandoning of one's earthly calling, but the faithful keeping of the Ten Commandments in the course of one's calling, is the work which God requires of us. Over against the wide-spread opinion, as though the will of God as declared in the Ten Commandments referred only to the outward work always especially mentioned, Luther's argument must have called to mind the explanation of the Law, which the Lord had given in the Sermon on the Mount, when he taught men to recognize only the extreme point and manifestation of a whole trend of thought in the work prohibited by the text, and when he directed Christians not to rest in the keeping of the literal requirement of each Commandment, but from this point of vantage to inquire into the whole depth and breadth of God's will -- positively and negatively -- and to do His will in its full extent as the heart has perceived it. Though this thought may have been occasionally expressed in the expositions of the Ten Commandments which appeared at the dawn of the Reformation, still it had never before been so clearly recognized as the only correct principle, much less had it been so energetically carried out from beginning to end, as is done in this treatise. Over against the deep-rooted view that the works of love must bestow upon faith its form, its content and its worth before God, it must have appeared as the dawn of a new era (Galatians 3:22-25) when Luther in this treatise declared, and with victorious certainty carried out the thought, that it is true faith which invests the works, even the best and greatest of works, with their content and worth before God.

This proposition, which Luther here amplifies more clearly than ever before, demanded nothing less than a breach with the whole of prevalent religious views, and at that time must have been

perceived as the discovery of a new world, though it was no more than a return to the clear teaching of the New Testament Scriptures concerning the way of salvation. This, too, accounts for the fact that in this writing the accusation is more impressively repelled than before, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone resulted in moral laxity, and that, on the other hand, the fundamental and radical importance of righteousness by faith for the whole moral life is revealed in such a heart-refreshing manner. Luther's appeal in this treatise to kings, princes, the nobility, municipalities and communities, to declare against the misuse of spiritual powers and to abolish various abuses in civil life, marks this treatise as a forerunner of the great Reformation writings, which appeared in the same year (1520), while, on the other hand, his espousal of the rights of the "poor man" -- to be met with here for the first time -- shows that the Monk of Witttenberg, coming from the narrow limits of the convent, had an intimate and sympathetic knowledge of the social needs of his time. Thus he proved by his own example that to take a stand in the center of the Gospel does not narrow the vision nor harden the heart, but rather produces courage in the truth and sympathy for all manner of misery.

Luther's contemporaries at once recognized the great importance of the Treatise, for within the period of seven months it passed through eight editions; these were followed by six more editions between the years of 1521 and 1525; in 1521 it was translated into Latin, and in this form passed through three editions up to the year 1525; and all this in spite of the fact that in those years the so-called three great Reformation writings of 1520 were casting all else into the shadow. Melanchthon, in a contemporaneous letter to John Hess, called it Luther's best book. John Mathesius, the well-known pastor at Joachimsthal and Luther's biographer, acknowledged that he had learned the "rudiments of Christianity" from it.

Even to-day this book has its peculiar mission to the Church. The seeking after self-elected works, the indolence regarding the works commanded of God, the foolish opinion, that the path of works leads to God's grace and good-will, are even to-day widely prevalent within the kingdom of God. To all this Luther's treatise answers: Be diligent in the works of your earthly calling as commanded of God, but only after having first strengthened, by the consideration of God's mercy, the faith within you, which is the only source of all truly good works and well-pleasing to God.

M. REU.

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01.02 Martin Luther's Dedication of the Treatise

1520

DEDICATION

JESUS

To the Illustrious, High-born Prince and Lord, John, Duke of Saxony, Landgrave of Thuringia, Margrave of Meissen, my gracious Lord and Patron.

Illustrious, High-born Prince, gracious Lord! My humble duty and my feeble prayer for your Grace always remembered!

For a long time, gracious Prince and Lord, I have wished to show my humble respect and duty toward your princely Grace, by the exhibition of some such spiritual wares as are at my disposal; but I have always considered my powers too feeble to undertake anything worthy of being offered to your princely Grace.

Since, however, my most gracious Lord Frederick, Duke of Saxony, Elector and Vicar of the Holy Roman Empire, your Grace's brother, has not despised, but graciously accepted my slight book, dedicated to his electoral Grace, and now published -- though such was not my intention -- I have taken courage from his gracious example and ventured to think that the princely spirit, like the princely blood, may be the same in both of you, especially in gracious kindness and good will. I have hoped that your princely Grace likewise would not despise this my humble offering which I have felt more need of publishing than any other of my sermons or tracts. For the greatest of all questions has been raised, the question of Good Works; in which is practised immeasurably more trickery and deception than in anything else, and in which the simpleminded man is so easily misled that our Lord Christ has commanded us to watch carefully for the sheep's clothings under which the wolves hide themselves.

Neither silver, gold, precious stones, nor any rare thing has such manifold alloys and flaws as have good works, which ought to have a single simple goodness, and without it are mere color, show and deceit.

And although I know and daily hear many people, who think slightingly of my poverty, and say that I write only little pamphlets and German sermons for the unlearned laity, this shall not disturb me. Would to God I had in all my life, with all the ability I have, helped one layman to be better! I would be satisfied, thank God, and be quite willing then to let all my little books perish.

Whether the making of many great books is an art and a benefit to the Church, I leave others to judge. But I believe that if I were minded to make great books according to their art, I could, with God's help, do it more readily perhaps than they could prepare a little discourse after my fashion. If accomplishment were as easy as persecution, Christ would long since have been cast out of heaven again, and God's throne itself overturned. Although we cannot all be writers, we all want to

be critics.

I will most gladly leave to any one else the honor of greater things, and not be at all ashamed to preach and to write in German for the unlearned laymen. Although I too have little skill in it, I believe that if we had hitherto done, and should henceforth do more of it, Christendom would have reaped no small advantage, and have been more benefited by this than by the great, deep books and quaestiones, which are used only in the schools, among the learned.

Then, too, I have never forced or begged any one to hear me, or to read my sermons. I have freely ministered in the Church of that which God has given me and which I owe the Church. Whoever likes it not, may hear and read what others have to say. And if they are not willing to be my debtors, it matters little. For me it is enough, and even more than too much, that some laymen condescend to read what I say. Even though there were nothing else to urge me, it should be more than sufficient that I have learned that your princely Grace is pleased with such German books and is eager to receive instruction in Good Works and the Faith, with which instruction it was my duty, humbly and with all diligence to serve you.

Therefore, in dutiful humility I pray that your princely Grace may accept this offering of mine with a gracious mind, until, if God grant me time, I prepare a German exposition of the Faith in its entirety. For at this time I have wished to show how in all good works we should practice and make use of faith, and let faith be the chief work. If God permit, I will treat at another time of the Faith itself -- how we are daily to pray or recite it.

I humbly commend myself herewith to your princely Grace, Your Princely Grace’s Humble Chaplain,

DR. MARTIN LUTHER. From Wittenberg, March 29th, A. D. 1520.

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Chapter 5

01.03 Starts discussion on the love of God with the

THE TREATISE

I. We ought first to know that there are no good works except those which God has commanded, even as there is no sin except that which God has forbidden. Therefore whoever wishes to know and to do good works needs nothing else than to know God’s commandments. Thus Christ says, Matthew 19:1-30, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." And when the young man asks Him, Matthew 19:1-30, what he shall do that he may inherit eternal life, Christ sets before him naught else but the Ten Commandments. Accordingly, we must learn how to distinguish among good works from the Commandments of God, and not from the appearance, the magnitude, or the number of the works themselves, nor from the judgment of men or of human law or custom, as we see has been done and still is done, because we are blind and despise the divine Commandments.

II. The first and highest, the most precious of all good works is faith in Christ, as He says, John 6:1-71. When the Jews asked Him: "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" He answered: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent." When we hear or preach this word, we hasten over it and deem it a very little thing and easy to do, whereas we ought here to pause a long time and to ponder it well. For in this work all good works must be done and receive from it the inflow of their goodness, like a loan. This we must put bluntly, that men may understand it.

We find many who pray, fast, establish endowments, do this or that, lead a good life before men, and yet if you should ask them whether they are sure that what they do pleases God, they say, "No"; they do not know, or they doubt. And there are some very learned men, who mislead them, and say that it is not necessary to be sure of this; and yet, on the other hand, these same men do nothing else but teach good works. Now all these works are done outside of faith, therefore they are nothing and altogether dead. For as their conscience stands toward God and as it believes, so also are the works which grow out of it. Now they have no faith, no good conscience toward God, therefore the works lack their head, and all their life and goodness is nothing. Hence it comes that when I exalt faith and reject such works done without faith, they accuse me of forbidding good works, when in truth I am trying hard to teach real good works of faith.

III. If you ask further, whether they count it also a good work when they work at their trade, walk, stand, eat, drink, sleep, and do all kinds of works for the nourishment of the body or for the common welfare, and whether they believe that God takes pleasure in them because of such works, you will find that they say, "No"; and they define good works so narrowly that they are made to consist only of praying in church, fasting, and almsgiving. Other works they consider to be in vain, and think that God cares nothing for them. So through their damnable unbelief they curtail and lessen the service of God, Who is served by all things whatsoever that are done, spoken or thought in faith.

So teaches Ecclesiastes ix: "Go thy way with joy, eat and drink, and know that God accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity." "Let thy garments be always white," that is, let all our works be good, whatever they may be, without any distinction. And they are white when I am certain and believe that they please God. Then shall the head of my soul never lack the ointment of a joyful conscience.

So Christ says, John viii: "I do always those things that J please Him." And St. John says, I. John 3:1-36 : "Hereby I we know that we are of the truth, if we can comfort our hearts before Him and have a good confidence. And if our heart condemns or frets us, God is greater than our heart, and we have confidence, that whatsoever we ask, we shall receive of Him, because we keep His Commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." Again: "Whosoever is born of God, that is, whoever believes and trusts God, doth not commit sin, and cannot sin." Again, Psalms 34:1-22 : "None of them that trust in I Him shall do sin." And in Psalm ii: "Blessed are all E they that put their trust in Him." If this be true, then all that they do must be good, or the evil that they do must be quickly forgiven. Behold, then, why I exalt faith so greatly, draw all works into it, and reject all works which do not flow from it.

IV. Now every one can note and tell for himself E when he does what is good or what is not good; for if he 1 finds his heart confident that it pleases God, the work is 5 good, even if it were so small a thing as picking up a straw. If confidence is absent, or if he doubts, the work is not good, although it should raise all the dead and the man should I give himself to be burned. This is the teaching of St. Paul, Romans 14:1-23 : "Whatsoever is not done of or in faith is sin." Faith, as the chief work, and no other work, has given us the name of "believers on Christ." For all other works a heathen, a Jew, a Turk, a sinner, may also do; but to trust firmly that he pleases God, is possible only for a Christian who is enlightened and strengthened by grace.

That these words seem strange, and that some call me a heretic because of them, is due to the fact that men have followed blind reason and heathen ways, have set faith not above, but beside other virtues, and have given it a work of its own, apart from all works of the other virtues; although faith alone makes all other works good, acceptable and worthy, in that it trusts God and does not doubt that for it all things that a man does are well done. Indeed, they have not let faith remain a work, but have made a habitus of it, as they say, although Scripture gives the name of a good, divine work to no work except to faith alone. Therefore it is no wonder that they have become blind and leaders of the blind. And this faith brings with it at once love, peace, joy and hope. For God gives His Spirit at once to him who trusts Him, as St. Paul says to the Galatians: "You received the Spirit not because of your good works, but when you believed the Word of God."

V. In this faith all works become equal, and one is like the other; all distinctions between works fall away, whether they be great, small, short, long, few or many. For the works are acceptable not for their own sake, but because of the faith which alone is, works and lives in each and every work without distinction, however numerous and various they are, just as all the members of the body live, work and have their name from the head, and without the head no member can live, work and have a name.

From which it further follows that a Christian who lives in this faith has no need of a teacher of good works, but whatever he finds to do he does, and all is well done; as Samuel said to Saul:

"The Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt be turned into another man; then do thou as occasion serves thee; for God is with thee." So also we read of St. Anna, Samuel's mother: "When she believed the priest Eli who promised her God's grace, she went home in joy and peace, and from that time no more turned hither and thither," that is, whatever occurred, it was all one to her. St. Paul also says: "Where the Spirit of Christ is, there all is free." For faith does not permit itself to be bound to any work, nor does it allow any work to be taken from it, but, as Psalms 1:1-6 says, "He bringeth forth his fruit in his season," that is, as a matter of course.

VI. This we may see in a common human example. A When a man and a woman love and are pleased with each A other, and thoroughly believe in their love, who teaches them how they are to behave, what they are to do, leave undone, say, not say, think? Confidence alone teaches them all this, and more. They make no difference in works: they do the great, the long, the much, as gladly as the small, the short, the little, and vice versa; and that too with joyful, peaceful, confident hearts, and each is a free companion of the other. But where there is a doubt, search is made for what is best; then a distinction of works is imagined whereby a man may win favor; and yet he goes about it with a heavy heart, and great disrelish; he is, as it were, taken captive, more than half in despair, and often makes a fool of himself.

So a Christian who lives in this confidence toward God, a knows all things, can do all things, undertakes all things B that are to be done, and does everything cheerfully and F freely; not that he may gather many merits and good works, N but because it is a pleasure for him to please God thereby, and he serves God purely for nothing, content that his service pleases God. On the other hand, he who is not at one with God, or doubts, hunts and worries in what way he may do enough and with many works move God. He runs to St. James of Compostella, to Rome, to Jerusalem, hither and yon, prays St. Bridget's prayer and the rest, fasts on this day and on that, makes confession here, and makes confession there, questions this man and that, and yet finds no peace. He does all this with great effort, despair and disrelish of heart, so that the Scriptures rightly call such works in Hebrew A v e n a m a 1, that is, labor and travail. And even then they are not good works, and are all lost. Many have been crazed thereby; their fear has brought them into all manner of misery. Of these it is written, Wis 5:1-23 : "We have wearied ourselves in the wrong way; and have gone through deserts, where there lay no way; but as for the way of the Lord, we have not known it, and the sun of righteousness rose not upon us."

VII. In these works faith is still slight and weak; let us ask further, whether they believe that they are well-pleasing to God when they suffer in body, property, honor, friends, or whatever they have, and believe that God of His mercy appoints their sufferings and difficulties for them, whether they be small or great. This is real strength, to trust in God when to all our senses and reason He appears to be angry; and to have greater confidence in Him than we feel. Here He is hidden, as the bride says in the Song of Songs: "Behold he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows"; that is, He stands hidden among the sufferings, which would separate us from Him like a wall, yea, like a wall of stone, and yet He looks upon me and does not leave me, for He is standing and is ready graciously to help, and through the window of dim faith He permits Himself to be seen. And Jeremiah says in Lamentations, "He casts off men, but He does it not willingly."

This faith they do not know at all, and give up, thinking that God has forsaken them and is become their enemy; they even lay the blame of their ills on men and devils, and have no confidence at all

in God. For this reason, too, their suffering is always an offence and harmful to them, and yet they go and do some good works, as they think, and are not aware of their unbelief. But they who in such suffering trust God and retain a good, firm confidence in Him, and believe that He is pleased with them, these see in their sufferings and afflictions nothing but precious merits and the rarest possessions, the value of which no one can estimate. For faith and confidence make precious before God all that which others think most shameful, so that it is written even o, death in Psalms 116:1-19, "Precious in the i sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." And just as the confidence and faith are better, higher and stronger at this stage than in the first stage, so and to the same degree do the sufferings which are borne in this faith excel all works of faith. Therefore between such works and sufferings there is an immeasurable difference and the sufferings are infinitely better.

VIII. Beyond all this is the highest stage of faith, when; God punishes the conscience not only with temporal sufferings, but with death, hell, and sin, and refuses grace and mercy, as though it were His will to condemn and to be 4 angry eternally. This few men experience, but David cries out in Psalms 6:1-10, "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger." To believe at such times that God, in His mercy, is pleased with us, is the highest work that can be done by and in the creature; but of this the work-righteous and doers of good works know nothing at all. For how could they here look for good things and grace from God, as long as they are not certain in their works, and doubt even on the lowest step of faith.

In this way I have, as I said, always praised faith, and 1 rejected all works which are done without such faith, in] order thereby to lead men from the false, pretentious, pharisaic, unbelieving good works, with which all monastic houses, churches, homes, low and higher classes are overfilled, and lead them to the true, genuine, thoroughly good, believing works. In this no one opposes me except the unclean beasts, which do not divide the hoof, as the Law of Moses decrees; who will suffer no distinction among good works, but go lumbering along: if only they pray, fast, establish endowments, go to confession, and do enough, everything shall be good, although in all this they have had no faith in God’s grace and approval. Indeed, they consider the works best of all, when they have done many, great and long works without any such confidence, and they look for good only after the works are done; and so they build their confidence not on divine favor, but on the works they have done, that is, on sand and water, from which they must at last take a cruel fall, as Christ says, Matthew 7:1-29. This good-will and favor, on which our confidence rests, was proclaimed by the angels from heaven, when they sang on Christmas night: "Gloria in excelsis Deo, Glory to God in the highest, peace to earth, gracious favor to man."

IX. Now this is the work of the First Commandment, which commands: "Thou shalt have no other gods," which means: "Since I alone am God, thou shalt place all thy confidence, trust and faith on Me alone, and on no one else." For that is not to have a god, if you call him God only with your lips, or worship him with the knees or bodily gestures; but if you trust Him with the heart, and look to Him for all good, grace and favor, whether in works or sufferings, in life or death, in joy or sorrow; as the Lord Christ says to the heathen woman, John 4:1-54 : "I say unto thee, they that worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth." And this faith, faithfulness, confidence deep in the heart, is the true fulfilling of the First Commandment; without this there is no other work that is able to satisfy this Commandment. And as this Commandment is the very first, highest and best, from which all the others proceed, in which they exist, and by which they are directed and

measured, so also its work, that is, the faith or confidence in God's favor at all times, is the very first, highest and best, from which all others must proceed, exist, remain, be directed and measured. Compared with this, other works are just as if the other Commandments were without the First, and there were no God, Therefore St. Augustine well says that the works of the First Commandment are faith, hope and love. As I said above, such faith and confidence bring love and hope with them. Nay, if we see it aright, love is the first, or comes at the same instant with faith. For I could not trust God, if I did not think that He wished to be favorable and to love me, which leads me, in turn, to love Him and to trust Him heartily and to look to Him for all good things.

X. Now you see for yourself that all those who do not at i at all times trust God and do not in all their works or sufferings, life and death, trust in His favor, grace and good-will, but seek His favor in other things or in themselves, do not keep this Commandment, and practise real idolatry, even if they were to do the works of all the other Commandments, and in addition had all the prayers, fasting, obedience, patience, chastity, and innocence of all the saints combined. For the chief work is not present, without which all the others are nothing but mere sham, show and pretence, with nothing back of them; against which Christ warns us, Matthew 7:1-29 : "Beware of false prophets, which N come to you in sheep's clothing." Such are all who wish with their many good works, as they say, to make God favorable to themselves, and to buy God's grace from Him, as if He were a huckster or a day-laborer, unwilling to give His grace and favor for nothing. These are the most perverse people on earth, who will hardly or never be converted to the right way. Such too are all who in adversity run hither and thither, and look for counsel and help everywhere except from God, from Whom they are most urgently commanded to seek it; whom the Prophet Isaiah reproves thus, Isaiah 9:1-21 : "The mad people turneth not to Him that smiteth them"; that is, God smote them and sent them sufferings and all kinds of adversity, that they should run to Him and trust Him. But they run away from Him to men, now to Egypt, now to Assyria, perchance also to the devil; and of such idolatry much is written in the same Prophet and in the Books of the Kings. This is also the way of all holy hypocrites when they are in trouble: they do not run to God, but flee from Him, and only think of how they may get rid of their trouble through their own efforts or through human help, and yet they consider themselves and let others consider them pious people.

XI. This is what St. Paul means in many places, where he ascribes so much to faith, that he says: Justus ex fide sua vivit, "the righteous man draws his life out of his faith," and faith is that because of which he is counted righteous before God. If righteousness consists of faith, it is clear that faith fulfils all commandments and makes all works righteous, since no one is justified except he keep all the commands of God. Again, the works can justify no one before God without faith. So utterly and roundly does the Apostle reject works and praise faith, ; that some have taken offence at his words and say: "Well, then, we will do no more good works," although he condemns such men as erring and foolish.

So men still do. When we reject the great, pretentious works of our time, which are done entirely without faith, they say: Men are only to believe and not to do anything good. For nowadays they say that the works of the First Commandment are singing, reading, organ-playing, reading the mass, saying matins and vespers and the other hours, the founding and decorating of churches, altars, and monastic houses, the gathering of bells, jewels, garments, trinkets and treasures, running to Rome and to the saints. Further, when we are dressed up and bow, kneel, pray the rosary and the Psalter, and all this not before an idol, but before the holy cross of God or the

pictures of His saints: this we call honoring and worshiping God, and, according to the First Commandment, "having no other gods"; although these things usurers, adulterers and all manner of sinners can do too, and do them daily.

Of course, if these things are done with such faith that we believe that they please God, then they are praiseworthy, not because of their virtue, but because of such faith, for which all works are of equal value, as has been said. But if we doubt or do not believe that God is gracious to us and is pleased with us, or if we presumptuously expect to please Him only through and after our works, then it is all pure deception, outwardly honoring God, but inwardly setting up self as a false god. This is the reason why I have so often spoken against the display, magnificence and multitude of such works and have rejected them, because it is as clear as day that they are not only done in doubt or without faith, but there is not one in a thousand who does not set his confidence upon the works, expecting by them to win God’s favor and anticipate His grace; and so they make a fair of them, a thing which God cannot endure, since He has promised His grace freely, and wills that we begin by trusting that grace, and in it perform all works, whatever they may be.

XII. Note for yourself, then, how far apart these two are: keeping the First Commandment with outward works only, and keeping it with inward trust. For this last makes true, living children of God, the other only makes worse idolatry t and the most mischievous hypocrites on earth, who with their apparent righteousness lead unnumbered people into their way, and yet allow them to be without faith, so that they are miserably misled, and are caught in the pitiable babbling and mummery. Of such Christ says, Matthew 24:1-51 : "Beware, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there"; and John 4:1-54 : "I say unto thee, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship God, for the Father seeketh spiritual worshipers."

These and similar passages have moved me and ought to move everyone to reject the great display of bulls, seals, flags, indulgences, by which the poor folk are led to build churches, to give, to endow, to pray, and yet faith is not mentioned, and is even suppressed. For since faith knows no distinction among works, such exaltation and urging of one work above another cannot exist beside faith. For faith desires to be the only service of God, and will grant this name and honor to no other work, except in so far as faith imparts it, as it does when the work is done in faith and by faith. This perversion is indicated in the Old Testament, when the Jews left the Temple and sacrificed at other places, in the green parks and on the mountains. This is what these men also do: they are zealous to do all works, but this chief work of faith they regard not at all.

XIII. Where now are they who ask, what works are good; what they shall do; how they shall be religious? Yes, and where are they who say that when we preach of faith, we shall neither teach nor do works? Does not this First Commandment give us more work to do than any man can do? If a man were a thousand men, or all men, or all creatures, this Commandment would yet ask enough of him, and more than enough, since he is commanded to live and walk at all times in faith and confidence toward God, to place such faith in no one else, and so to have only one, the true God, and none other.

Now, since the being and nature of man cannot for an instant be without doing or not doing something, enduring or running away from something (for, as we see, life never rests), let him who will be pious and filled with good works, begin and in all his life and works at all times exercise himself in this faith; let him learn to do and to leave undone all things in such continual faith; then

will he find how much work he has to do, and how completely all things are included in faith; how he dare never grow idle, because his very idling must be the exercise and work of faith. In brief, nothing can be in or about us and nothing can happen to us but that it must be good and meritorious, if we believe (as we ought) that all things please God. So says St. Paul: "Dear brethren, all that ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord." Now it cannot be done in this Name except it be done in this faith. Likewise, Romans 7:1-25 : "We know that all things work together for good to the saints of God."

Therefore, when some say that good works are forbidden when we preach faith alone, it is as if I said to a sick man: "If you had health, you would have the use of all your limbs; but without health, the works of all your limbs are nothing"; and he wanted to infer that I had forbidden the works of all his limbs; whereas, on the contrary, I meant that he must first have health, which will work all the works of all the members. So faith also must be in all works the master-workman and captain, or they are nothing at all.

XIV. You might say: "Why then do we have so many laws of the Church and of the State, and many ceremonies of churches, monastic houses, holy places, which urge and tempt men to good works, if faith does all things through the First Commandment?" I answer: Simply because we do not all have faith or do not heed it. If every man had faith, we would need no more laws, but every one would of himself at all times do good works, as his confidence in God teaches him.

But now there are four kinds of men: the first, just mentioned, who need no law, of whom St. Paul says, 1 Timothy 1:1-20, "The law is not made for a righteous man," that is, for the believer, but believers of themselves do what they know and can do, only because they firmly trust that God’s favor and grace rests upon them in all things. The second class want to abuse this freedom, put a false confidence in it, and grow lazy; of whom St. Peter says, 1 Peter 2:1-25, "Ye shall live as free men, but not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness," as if he said: The freedom of faith does not permit sins, nor will it cover them, but it sets us free to do all manner of good works and to endure all things as they happen to us, so that a man is not bound only to one work or to a few. So also St. Paul, Galatians 5:1-26 : "Use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh." Such men must be urged by laws and hemmed in by teaching and exhortation. The third class are wicked men, always ready for sins; these must be constrained by spiritual and temporal laws, like wild horses and dogs, and where this does not help, they must be put to death by the worldly sword, as St. Paul says, Romans 13:1-14 : "The worldly ruler bears the sword, and serves God with it, not as a terror to the good, but to the evil." The fourth class, who are still lusty, and childish in their understanding of faith and of the spiritual life, must be coaxed like young children and tempted with external, definite and prescribed decorations, with reading, praying, fasting, singing, adorning of churches, organ playing, and such other things as are commanded and observed in monastic houses and churches, until they also learn to know the faith. Although there is great danger here, when the rulers, as is now, alas! the case, busy themselves with and insist upon such ceremonies and external works as if they were the true works, and neglect faith, which they ought always to teach along with these works, just as a mother gives her child other food along with the milk, until the child can eat the strong food by itself.

Since, then, we are not all alike, we must tolerate such people, share their observances and burdens, and not despise them, but teach them the true way of faith. So St. Paul teaches, Romans

14:1-23 : "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, to teach him." And so he did himself, 1 Corinthians 9:1-27 : "To them that are under the law, I became as under the law, although I was not under the law." And Christ, Matthew 17:1-27, when He was asked to pay tribute, which He was not obligated to pay, argues with St. Peter, whether the children of kings must give tribute, or only other people. St. Peter answers: "Only other people." Christ said: "Then are the children of kings free; notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and in his mouth thou shalt find apiece of money; take that and give it for me and thee."

Here we see that all works and things are free to a Christian through his faith; and yet, because the others do not yet believe, he observes and bears with them what he is not obligated to do. But this he does freely, for he is certain that this is pleasing to God, and he does it willingly, accepts it as any other free work which comes to his hand without his choice, because he desires and seeks no more than that he may in his faith do works to please God.

But since in this discourse we have undertaken to teach what righteous and good works are, and are now speaking of the highest work, it is clear that we do not speak of the second, third and fourth classes of men, but of the first, into whose likeness all the others are to grow, and until they do so the first class must endure and instruct them. Therefore we must not despise, as if they were hopeless, these men of weak faith, who would gladly do right and learn, and yet cannot understand because of the ceremonies to which they cling; we must rather blame their ignorant, blind teachers, who have never taught them the faith, and have led them so deeply into works. They must be gently and gradually led back again to faith, as a sick man is treated, and must be allowed for a time, for their conscience sake, to cling to some works and do them as necessary to salvation, so long as they rightly grasp the faith; lest if we try to tear them out so suddenly, their weak consciences be quite shattered and confused, and retain neither faith nor works. But the hardheaded, who, hardened in their works, give no heed to what is said of faith, and fight against it, these we must, as Christ did and taught, let go their way, that the blind may lead the blind.

XVI. But you say: How can I trust surely that all my works are pleasing to God, when at times I fall, and talk, eat, drink and sleep too much, or otherwise transgress, as I cannot help doing? Answer: This question shows that you still regard faith as a work among other works, and do not set it above all works. For it is the highest work for this very reason, because it remains and blots out these daily sins by not doubting that God is so kind to you as to wink at such daily transgression and weakness. Aye, even if a deadly sin should occur (which, however, never or rarely happens to those who live in faith and trust toward God), yet faith rises again and does not doubt that its sin is already gone; as it is written 1 John 2:1-29 : "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with God the Father, Jesus Christ, Who is the propitiation of all our sins." And Wis 15:11-19 : "For if we sin, we are Thine, knowing Thy power." And Proverbs 24:1-34 : "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again." Yes, this confidence and faith must be so high and strong that the man knows that all his life and works are nothing but damnable sins before God’s judgment, as it is written, Psalms 143:1-12 : "In thy sight shall no man living be justified"; and he must entirely despair of his works, believing that they cannot be good except through this faith, which looks for no judgment, but only for pure grace, favor, kindness and mercy, like David, Psalm Psalms 26:1-12 : "Thy loving kindness is ever before mine eyes, and I have trusted in Thy truth"; Psalms 4:1-8 : "The light of Thy countenance is lift up

upon us (that is, the knowledge of Thy grace through faith), and thereby hast Thou put gladness in my heart"; for as faith trusts, so it receives.

See, thus are works forgiven, are without guilt and are good, not by their own nature, but by the mercy and grace of God because of the faith which trusts on the mercy of God. Therefore we must fear because of the works, but comfort ourselves because of the grace of God, as it is written, Psalms 147:1-20 : "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that I fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." So we pray with perfect confidence: "Our Father," and yet petition: "Forgive us our trespasses"; we are children and yet sinners; are acceptable and yet do not do enough; and all this is the work of faith, firmly grounded in God's grace.

XVII. But if you ask, where the faith and the confidence 1 can be found and whence they come, this it is certainly most necessary to know. First: Without doubt faith does not come from your works or merit, but alone from Jesus Christ, and is freely promised and given; as St. Paul writes, Romans 5:1-21 : "God commendeth His love to us as exceeding sweet and kindly, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"; as if he said: "Ought not this give us a strong unconquerable confidence, that before we prayed or cared for it, yes, while we still continually walked in sins, Christ dies for our sin?" St. Paul concludes: "If while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, how much more then, being justified by His blood, shall we be saved from wrath through Him; and if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life."

Lo! thus must thou form Christ within thyself and see how in Him God holds before thee and offers thee His mercy without any previous merits of thine own, and from such a view of His grace must thou draw faith and confidence of the forgiveness of all thy sins. Faith, therefore, does not begin with works, neither do they create it, but it must spring up and flow from the blood, wounds and death of Christ. If thou see in these that God is so kindly affectioned toward thee that He gives even His Son for thee, then thy heart also must in its turn grow sweet and kindly affectioned toward God, and so thy confidence must grow out of pure good-will and love -- God's love toward thee and thine toward God. We never read that the Holy Spirit was given to any one when he did works, but always when men have heard the Gospel of Christ and the mercy of God. From this same Word and from no other source must faith still come, even in our day and always. For Christ is the rock out of which men suck oil and honey, as Moses says, Deuteronomy 32:1-52.

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01.04 Starts discussion of Second Commandment

XVIII. So far we have treated of the first work and of the First Commandment, but very briefly, plainly and hastily, for very much might be said of it. We will now trace the works farther through the following Commandments.

The second work, next to faith, is the work of the Second Commandment, that we shall honor God's Name and not take it in vain. This, like all the other works, cannot be done without faith; and if it is done without faith, it is all sham and show. After faith we can do no greater work than to praise, preach, sing and in every way exalt and magnify God's glory, honor and Name.

And although I have said above, and it is true, that there is no difference in works where faith is and does the work, yet this is true only when they are compared with faith and its works. Measured by one another there is a difference, and one is higher than the other. Just as in the body the members do not differ when compared with health, and health works in the one as much as in the other; yet the works of the members are different, and one is higher, nobler, more useful than the other; so, here also, to praise God's glory and Name is better than the works of the other Commandments which follow; and yet it must be done in the same faith as all the others.

But I know well that this work is lightly esteemed, and has indeed become unknown. Therefore we must examine it further, and will say no more about the necessity of doing it in the faith and confidence that it pleases God. Indeed there is no work in which confidence and faith are so much experienced and felt as in honoring God's Name; and it greatly helps to strengthen and increase faith, although all works also help to do this, as St. Peter says, 2 Peter 1:1-21 : "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence through good works to make your calling and election sure."

XIX. The First Commandment forbids us to have other gods, and thereby commands that we have a God, the true God, by a firm faith, trust, confidence, hope and love, which are the only works whereby a man can have, honor and keep a God; for by no other work can one find or lose God except by faith or unbelief, by trusting or doubting; of the other works none reaches quite to God. So also in the Second Commandment we are forbidden to use His Name in vain. Yet this is not to be enough, but we are thereby also commanded to honor, call upon, glorify, preach and praise His Name. And indeed it is impossible that God's Name should not be dishonored where it is not rightly honored. For although it be honored with the lips, bending of the knees, kissing and other postures, if this is not done in the heart by faith, in confident trust in God's grace, it is nothing else than an evidence and badge of hypocrisy.

See now, how many kinds of good works a man can do under this Commandment at all times and never be without the good works of this Commandment, if he will; so that he truly need not make a long pilgrimage or seek holy places. For, tell me, what moment can pass in which we do not without ceasing receive God's blessings, or, on the other hand, suffer adversity? But what else are God's blessings and adversities than a constant urging and stirring up to praise, honor, and bless God, and to call upon His Name? Now if you had nothing else at all to do, would you not have

enough to do with this Commandment alone, that you without ceasing bless, sing, praise and honor God’s Name? And for what other purpose have tongue, voice, language and mouth been created? As Psalms 51:1-19 says: "Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise." Again: "My tongue shall sing aloud of Thy mercy."

What work is there in heaven except that of this Second Commandment? As it is written in Psalms 84:1-12 : "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be for ever praising Thee." So also David says in Psalms 34:1-22 : "God’s praise shall be continually in my mouth." And St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 10:1-33 : "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Also Colossians 3:1-25 : "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father." If we were to observe this work, we would have a heaven here on earth and always have enough to do, as have the saints in heaven.

XX. On this is based the wonderful and righteous judgment of God, that at times a poor man, in whom no one can see many great works, in the privacy of his home joyfully praises God when he fares well, or with entire confidence calls upon Him when he fares ill, and thereby does a greater and more acceptable work than another, who fasts much, prays much, endows churches, makes pilgrimages, and burdens himself with great deeds in this place and in that. Such a fool opens wide his mouth, looks for great works to do, and is so blinded that he does not at all notice this greatest work, and praising God is in his eyes a very small matter compared with the great idea he has formed of the works of his own devising, in which he perhaps praises himself more than God, or takes more pleasure in them than he does in God; and thus with his good works he storms against the Second Commandment and its works. Of all this we have an illustration in the case of the Pharisee and the Publican in the Gospel. For the sinner calls upon God in his sins, and praises Him, and so has hit upon the two highest Commandments, faith and God’s honor. The hypocrite misses both and struts about with other good works by which he praises himself and not God, and puts his trust in himself more than in God. Therefore he is justly rejected and the other chosen.

The reason of all this is that the higher and better the works are, the less show they make; and that every one thinks they are easy, because it is evident that no one pretends to praise God’s Name and honor so much as the very men who never do it and with their show of doing it, while the heart is without faith, cause the precious work to be despised. So that the Apostle St. Paul dare say boldly, Romans 2:1-29, that they blaspheme God’s Name who make their boast of God’s Law. For to name the Name of God and to write His honor on paper and on the walls is an easy matter; but genuinely to praise and bless Him in His good deeds and confidently to call upon Him in all adversities, these are truly the most rare, highest works, next to faith, so that if we were to see how few of them there are in Christendom, we might despair for very sorrow. And yet there is a constant increase of high, pretty, shining works of men’s devising, or of works which look like these true works, but at bottom are all without faith and without faithfulness; in short, there is nothing good back of them. Thus also Isaiah 48:1-22 rebukes the people of Israel: "Hear ye this, ye which are called by the name of Israel, which swear by the Name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel neither in truth, nor in righteousness"; that is, they did it not in the true faith and confidence, which is the real truth and righteousness, but trusted in themselves, their works and powers, and yet called upon God’s Name and praised Him, two things which do not fit together.

XXI. The first work of this Commandment then is, to praise God in all His benefits, which are innumerable, so that such praise and thanksgiving ought also of right never to cease or end. For who can praise Him perfectly for the gift of natural life, not to mention all other temporal and eternal blessings? And so through this one part of the Commandment man is overwhelmed with good and precious works; if he do these in true faith, he has indeed not lived in vain. And in this matter none sin so much as the most resplendent saints, who are pleased with themselves and like to praise themselves or to hear themselves praised, honored and glorified before men.

Therefore the second work of this Commandment is, to be on one's guard, to flee from and to avoid all temporal honor and praise, and never to seek a name for oneself, or fame and a great reputation, that every one sing of him and tell of him; which is an exceedingly dangerous sin, and yet the most common of all, and, alas! little regarded. Every one wants to be of importance and not to be the least, however small he may be; so deeply is nature sunk in the evil of its own conceit and in its self-confidence contrary to these two first Commandments.

Now the world regards this terrible vice as the highest virtue, and this makes it exceedingly dangerous for those who do not understand and have not had experience of God's Commandments and the histories of the Holy Scriptures, to read or hear the heathen books and histories. For all heathen books are poisoned through and through with this striving after praise and honor; in them men are taught by blind reason that they were not nor could be men of power and worth, who are not moved by praise and honor; but those are counted the best, who disregard body and life, friend and property and everything in the effort to win praise and honor. All the holy Fathers have complained of this vice and with one mind conclude that it is the very last vice to be overcome. St. Augustine says: "All other vices are practised in evil works; only honor and self-satisfaction are practised in and by means of good works."

Therefore if a man had nothing else to do except this second work of this Commandment, he would yet have to work all his life-time in order to fight this vice and drive it out, so common, so subtile, so quick and insidious is it. Now we all pass by this good work and exercise ourselves in many other lesser good works, nay, through other good works we overthrow this and forget it entirely. So the holy Name of God, which alone should be honored, is taken in vain and dishonored through our own cursed name, self-approval and honor-seeking. And this sin is more grievous before God than murder and adultery; but its wickedness is not so clearly seen as that of murder, because of its subtilty, for it is not accomplished in the coarse flesh, but in the spirit.

XXII. Some think it is good for young people that they be enticed by reputation and honor, and again by shame of and dishonor, and so be induced to do good. For there are many who do the good and leave the evil undone out of fear of shame and love of honor, and so do what they would otherwise by no means do or leave undone. These I leave to their opinion. But at present we are seeking how true good works are to be done, and they who are inclined to do them surely do not need to be driven by the fear of shame and the love of honor; they have, and are to have a higher and far nobler incentive, namely, God's commandment, God's fear, God's approval, and their faith and love toward God. They who have not, or regard not this motive, and let shame and honor drive them, these also have their reward, as the Lord says, Matthew 6:1-34; and as the motive, so is also the work and the reward: none of them is good, except only in the eyes of the world.

Now I hold that a young person could be more easily trained and incited by God's fear and commandments than by any other means. Yet where these do not help, we must endure that they do the good and leave the evil for the sake of shame and of honor, just as we must also endure wicked men or the imperfect, of whom we spoke above; nor can we do more than tell them that their works are not satisfactory and right before God, and so leave them until they learn to do right for the sake of God's commandments also. Just as young children are induced to pray, fast, learn, etc., by gifts and promises of the parents, even though it would not be good to treat them so all their lives, so that they never learn to do good in the fear of God: far worse, if they become accustomed to do good for the sake of praise and honor.

XXIII. But this is true, that we must none the less have a good name and honor, and every one ought so to live that nothing evil can be said of him, and that he give offence to no one, as St. Paul says, Romans 12:1-21 : "We are to be zealous to do good, not only before God, but also before all men." And 2 Corinthians 4:1-18 : "We walk so honestly that no man knows anything against us." But there must be great diligence and care, lest such honor and good name puff up the heart, and the heart find pleasure in them. Here the saying of Solomon holds: "As the fire in the furnace proveth the gold, so man is proved by the mouth of him that praises him." Few and most spiritual men must they be, who, when honored and praised, remain indifferent and unchanged, so that they do not care for it, nor feel pride and pleasure in it, but remain entirely free, ascribe all their honor and fame to God, offering it to Him alone, and using it only to the glory of God, to the edification of their neighbors, and in no way to their own benefit or advantage; so that a man trust not in his own honor, nor exalt himself above the most incapable, despised man on earth, but acknowledge himself a servant of God, Who has given him the honor in order that with it he may serve God and his neighbor, just as if He had commanded him to distribute some gulden to the poor for His sake. So He says, Matthew 5:1-48 : "Your light shall shine before men, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven." He does not say, "they shall praise you," but "your works shall only serve them to edification, that through them they may praise God in you and in themselves." This is the correct use of God's Name and honor, when God is thereby praised through the edification of others. And if men want to praise us and not God in us, we are not to endure it, but with all our powers forbid it and flee from it as from the most grievous sin and robbery of divine honor.

XXIV. Hence it comes that God frequently permits a man to fall into or remain in grievous sin, in order that he may be put to shame in his own eyes and in the eyes of all men, who otherwise could not have kept himself from this great vice of vain honor and fame, if he had remained constant in his great gifts and virtues; so God must ward off this sin by means of other grievous sins, that His Name alone may be honored; and thus one sin becomes the other's medicine, because of our perverse wickedness, which not only does the evil, but also misuses all that is good.

Now see how much a man has to do, if he would do good works, which always are at hand in great number, and with which he is surrounded on all sides; but, alas! because of his blindness, he passes them by and seeks and runs after others of his own devising and pleasure, against which no man can sufficiently speak and no man can sufficiently guard. With this all the prophets had to contend, and for this reason they were all slain, only because they rejected such self-devised works and preached only God's commandments, as one of them says, Jeremiah 7:1-34 : "Thus saith the God of Israel unto you: Take your burnt offerings unto all your sacrifices and eat your

burnt-offerings and your flesh yourselves; for concerning these things I have commanded you nothing, but this thing commanded I you: Obey My voice (that is, not what seems right and good to you, but what I bid you), and walk in the way that I have commanded you." And Deuteronomy 12:1-32 : "Thou shalt not do whatsoever is right in thine own eyes, but what thy God has commanded thee."

These and numberless like passages of Scripture are spoken to tear man not only from sins, but also from the works which seem to men to be good and right, and to turn men, with a single mind, to the simple meaning of God's commandment only, that they shall diligently observe this only and always, as it is written, Exodus 13:1-22 : "These commandments shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes." And Psalms 1:1-6 : "A godly man meditates in God's Law day and night." For we have more than enough and too much to do, if we are to satisfy only God's commandments. He has given us such commandments that if we understand them aright, we dare not for a moment be idle, and might easily forget all other works. But the evil spirit, who never rests, when he cannot lead us to the left into evil works, fights on our right through self-devised works that seem good, but against which God has commanded, Deuteronomy 28:1-68, and Joshua 23:1-16, "Ye shall not go aside from My commandments to the right hand or to the left."

XXV. The third work of this Commandment is to call C upon God's Name in every need. For this God regards as keeping His Name holy and greatly honoring it, if we name and call upon it in adversity and need. And this is really why He sends us so much trouble, suffering, adversity and even death, and lets us live in many wicked, sinful affections, that He may thereby urge man and give him much reason to run to Him, to cry aloud to Him, to call upon His holy Name, and thus to fulfil this work of the Second Commandment, as He says in Psalms 1:1-6 : "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me; for I desire the sacrifice of praise." And this is the way whereby thou canst come unto salvation; for through such works man perceives and learns what God's Name is, how powerful it is to help all who call upon it; and whereby confidence and faith grow mightily, and these are the fulfilling of the first and highest Commandment. This is the experience of David, Psalm liv: "Thou hast delivered me out of all trouble, therefore will I praise Thy Name and confess that it is lovely and sweet." And Psalms 91:1-16 says, "Because he hath set his hope upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will help him, because he hath known My Name."

Lo! what man is there on earth, who would not all his life long have enough to do with this work? For who lives an hour without trials? I will not mention the trials of adversity, which are innumerable. For this is the most dangerous trial of all, when there is no trial and every thing is and goes well; for then a man is tempted to forget God, to become too bold and to misuse the times of prosperity. Yea, here he has ten times more need to call upon God's Name than when in adversity. Since it is written, Psalms 91:1-16, "A thousand shall fall on the left hand and ten thousand on the right hand."

So too we see in broad day, in all men's daily experience, that more heinous sins and vice occur when there is peace, when all things are cheap and there are good times, than when war, pestilence, sicknesses and all manner of misfortune burden us; so that Moses also fears for his people, lest they forsake God's commandment for no other reason than because they are too full,

too well provided for and have too much peace, as he says, Deuteronomy 32:1-52 "My people is waxed rich, full and fat; therefore has it forsaken its God." Wherefore also God let many of its enemies remain and would not drive them out, in order that they should not have peace and must exercise themselves in the keeping of God’s commandments, as it is written, Judges 3:1-31. So He deals with us also, when He sends us all kinds of misfortune: so exceedingly careful is He of us, that He may teach us and drive us to honor and call upon His Name, to gain confidence and faith toward Him, and so to fulfil the first two Commandments.

XXVI. Here foolish men run into danger, and especially the work-righteous saints, and those who want to be more than others; they teach men to make the sign of the cross; one arms himself with letters, another runs to the fortunetellers; one seeks this, another that, if only they may thereby escape misfortune and be secure. It is beyond telling what a devilish allurement attaches to this trifling with sorcery, conjuring and superstition, all of which is done only that men may not need God’s Name and put no trust in it. Here great dishonor is done the Name of God and the first two Commandments, in that men look to the devil, men or creatures for that which should be sought and found in God alone, through naught but a pure faith and confidence, and a cheerful meditation of and calling upon His holy Name.

Now examine this closely for yourself and see whether this is not a gross, mad perversion: the devil, men and creatures they must believe, and trust to them for the best; without such faith and confidence nothing holds or helps. How shall the good and faithful God reward us for not believing and trusting Him as much or more than man and the devil, although He not only promises help and sure assistance, but also commands us confidently to look for it, and gives and urges all manner of reasons why we should place such faith and confidence in Him? Is it not lamentable and pitiable that the devil or man, who commands nothing and does not urge, but only promises, is set above God, Who promises, urges and commands; and that more is thought of them than of God Himself? We ought truly to be ashamed of ourselves and learn from the example of those who trust the devil or men. For if the devil, who is a wicked, lying spirit, keeps faith with all those who ally themselves with him, how much more will not the most gracious, all-truthful God keep faith, if a man trusts Him? Nay, is it not rather He alone Who will keep faith? A rich man trusts and relies upon his money and possessions, and they help him; and we are not willing to trust and rely upon the living God, that He is willing and able to help us? We say: Gold makes bold; and it is true, as Baruch iii. says, "Gold is a thing wherein men trust." But far greater is the courage which the highest eternal Good gives, wherein trust, not men, but only God’s children.

XXVII. Even if none of these adversities constrain us to call upon God’s Name and to trust Him, yet were sin alone more than sufficient to train and to urge us on in this work. For sin has hemmed us in with three strong, mighty armies. The first is our own flesh, the second the world, the third the evil spirit, by which three we are without ceasing oppressed and troubled; whereby God gives us occasion to do good works without ceasing, namely, to fight with these enemies and sins. The flesh seeks pleasure and peace, the world seeks riches, favor, power and honor, the evil spirit seeks pride, glory, that a man be well thought of, and other men be despised.

And these three are all so powerful that each one of them is alone sufficient to fight a man, and yet there is no way we can overcome them, except only by calling upon the holy Name of God in a firm faith, as Solomon says, Proverbs 18:1-24 : "The Name of the Lord is a strong tower; the

righteous runneth into it, and is set aloft." And David, Psalms 116:1-19 : "I will drink the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord." Again, Psalms 18:1-50 : "I will call upon the Lord with praise: so shall I be saved from all mine enemies." These works and the power of God's Name have become unknown to us, because we are not accustomed to it, and have never seriously fought with sins, and have not needed His Name, because we are trained only in our self devised works, which we were able to do with our own powers.

XXVIII. Further works of this Commandment are: that we shall not swear, curse, lie, deceive and conjure with the holy Name of God, and otherwise misuse it; which are very simple matters and well known to every one, being the sins which have been almost exclusively preached and proclaimed under this Commandment. These also include, that we shall prevent others from making sinful use of God's Name by lying, swearing, deceiving, cursing, conjuring, and otherwise. Herein again much occasion is given for doing good and warding off evil.

But the greatest and most difficult work of this Commandment is to protect the holy Name of God against all who misuse it in a spiritual manner, and to proclaim it to all men. For it is not enough that I, for myself and in myself, praise and call upon God's Name in prosperity and adversity. I must step forth and for the sake of God's honor and Name bring upon myself the enmity of all men, as Christ said to His disciples: "Ye shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake." Here we must provoke to anger father, mother, and the best of friends. Here we must strive against spiritual and temporal powers, and be accused of disobedience. Here we must stir up against us the rich, learned, holy, and all that is of repute in the world. And although this is especially the duty of those who are commanded to preach God's Word, yet every Christian is also obligated to do so when time and place demand. For we must for the holy Name of God risk and give up all that we have and can do, and show by our deeds that we love God and His Name, His honor and His praise above all things, and trust Him above all things, and expect good from Him; thereby confessing that we regard Him as the highest good, for the sake of which we let go and give up all other goods.

XXIX. Here we must first of all resist all wrong, where truth or righteousness suffers violence or need, and dare make no distinction of persons, as some do, who fight most actively and busily against the wrong which is done to the rich, the powerful, and their own friends; but when it is done to the poor, or the despised or their own enemy, they are quiet and patient. These see the Name and the honor of God not as it is, but through a painted glass, and measure truth or righteousness according to the persons, and do not consider their deceiving eye, which looks more on the person than on the thing. These are hypocrites within and have only the appearance of defending the truth. For they well know that there is no danger when one helps the rich, the powerful, the learned and one's own friends, and can in turn enjoy their protection and be honored by them.

Thus it is very easy to fight against the wrong which is done to popes, kings, princes, bishops and other big-wigs. Here each wants to be the most pious, where there is no great need. O how sly is here the deceitful Adam with his demand; how finely does he cover his greed of profit with the name of truth and righteousness and God's honor! But when something happens to a poor and insignificant man, there the deceitful eye does not find much profit, but cannot help seeing the disfavor of the powerful; therefore he lets the poor man remain unhelped. And who could tell the extent of this vice in Christendom? God says in Psalms 82:1-8, "How long will ye judge unjustly,

and accept the persons of the wicked? Judge the matter of the poor and fatherless, demand justice for the poor and needy; deliver the poor and rid the forsaken out of the hand of the wicked." But it is not done, and therefore the text continues: "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness"; that is, the truth they do not see, but they stop at the reputation of the great, however unrighteous they are; and do not consider the poor, however righteous they are.

XXX. See, here would be many good works. For the greater portion of the powerful, rich and friends do injustice and oppress the poor, the lowly, and their own opponents; and the greater the men, the worse the deeds; and where we cannot by force prevent it and help the truth, we should at least confess it, and do what we can with words, not take the part of the unrighteous, not approve them, but speak the truth boldly.

What would it help a man if he did all manner of good, made pilgrimages to Rome and to all holy places, acquired all indulgences, built all churches and endowed houses, if he were found guilty of sin against the Name and honor of God, not speaking of them and neglecting them, and regarding his possessions, honor, favor and friends more than the truth (which is God’s Name and honor)? Or who is he, before whose door and into whose house such good works do not daily come, so that he would have no need to travel far or to ask after good works? And if we consider the life of men, how in every place men act so very rashly and lightly in this respect, we must cry out with the prophet, Omnis homo mendax, "All men are liars, lie and deceive"; for the real good works they neglect, and adorn and paint themselves with the most insignificant, and want to be pious, to mount to heaven in peaceful security.

But if you should say: "Why does not God do it alone and Himself, since He can and knows how to help each one?" Yes, He can do it; but He does not want to do it alone; He wants us to work with Him, and does us the honor to want to work His work with us and through us. And if we are not willing to accept such honor, He will, after all, perform the work alone, and help the poor; and those who were unwilling to help Him and have despised the great honor of doing His work, He will condemn with the unrighteous, because they have made common cause with the unrighteous. Just as He alone is blessed, but He wants to do us the honor and not be alone in His blessedness, but have us to be blessed with Him. And if He were to do it alone, His Commandments would be given us in vain, because no one would have occasion to exercise himself in the great works of these Commandments, and no one would test himself to see whether he regards God and His Name as the highest good, and for His sake risks everything.

XXXI. It also belongs to this work to resist all false, seductive, erroneous, heretical doctrines, every misuse of spiritual power. Now this is much higher, for these use the holy Name of God itself to fight against the Name of God. For this reason it seems a great thing and a dangerous to resist them, because they assert that he who resists them resists God and all His saints, in whose place they sit and whose power they use, saying that Christ said of them, "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." On which words they lean heavily, become insolent and bold to say, to do, and to leave undone what they please; put to the ban, accurse, rob, murder, and practise all their wickedness, in whatever way they please and can invent, without any hindrance.

Now Christ did not mean that we should listen to them in everything they might say and do, but only then when they present to us His Word, the Gospel, not their word, His work, and not their

work. How else could we know whether their lies and sins were to be avoided? There must be some rule, to what extent we are to hear and to follow them, and this rule cannot be given by them, but must be established by God over them, that it may serve us as a guide, as we shall hear in the Fourth Commandment.

It must be, indeed, that even in the spiritual estate the greater part preach false doctrine and misuse spiritual power, so that thus occasion may be given us to do the works of this Commandment, and that we be tried, to see what we are willing to do and to leave undone against such blasphemers for the sake of God's honor.

Oh, if we were God-fearing in this matter, how often would the knaves of officiales have to decree their papal and episcopal ban in vain! How weak the Roman thunderbolts would become! How often would many a one have to hold his tongue, to whom the world must now give ear! How few preachers would be found in Christendom! But it has gotten the upper hand: whatever they assert and in whatever way, that must be right. Here no one fights for God's Name and honor, and I hold that no greater or more frequent sin is done in external works than under this head. It is a matter so high that few understand it, and, besides, adorned with God's Name and power, dangerous to touch. But the prophets of old were masters in this; also the apostles, especially St. Paul, who did not allow it to trouble them whether the highest or the lowest priest had said it, or had done it in God's Name or in his own. They looked on the works and words, and held them up to God's Commandment, no matter whether big John or little Nick said it, or whether they had done it in God's Name or in man's. And for this they had to die, and of such dying there would be much more to say in our time, for things are much worse now. But Christ and St. Peter and Paul must cover all this with their holy names, so that no more infamous cover for infamy has been found on earth than the most holy and most blessed Name of Jesus Christ!

One might shudder to be alive, simply because of the misuse and blasphemy of the holy Name of God; through which, if it shall last much longer, we will, as I fear, openly worship the devil as a god; so completely do the spiritual authorities and the learned lack all understanding in these things. It is high time that we pray God earnestly that He hallow His Name. But it will cost blood, and they who enjoy the inheritance of the holy martyrs and are won with their blood, must again make martyrs. Of this more another time.

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Chapter 7

01.05 Starts discussion of Third Commandment

I. We have now seen how many good works there are in the Second Commandment, which however are not good in themselves, unless they are done in faith and in the assurance of divine favor; and how much we must do, if we take heed to this Commandment alone, and how we, alas! busy ourselves much with other works, which have no agreement at all with it. Now follows the Third Commandment: "Thou shalt hallow the day of rest." In the First Commandment is prescribed our heart's attitude toward God in thoughts, in the Second, that of our mouth in words, in this Third is prescribed our attitude toward God in works; and it is the first and right table of Moses, on which these three Commandments are written, and they govern man on the right side, namely, in the things which concern God, and in which God has to do with man and man with God, without the mediation of any creature.

The first works of this Commandment are plain and outward, which we commonly call worship, such as going to mass, praying, and hearing a sermon on holy days. So understood there are very few works in this Commandment; and these, if they are not done in assurance of and with faith in God's favor, are nothing, as was said above. Hence it would also be a good thing if there were fewer saint's days, since in our times the works done on them are for the greater part worse than those of the work days, what with loafing, gluttony, and drunkenness, gambling and other evil deeds; and then, the mass and the sermon are listened to without edification, the prayer is spoken without faith. It almost happens that men think it is sufficient that we look on at the mass with our eyes, hear the preaching with our ears, and say the prayers with our mouths. It is all so formal and superficial! We do not think that we might receive something out of the mass into our hearts, learn and remember something out of the preaching, seek, desire and expect something in our prayer. Although in this matter the bishops and priests, or they to whom the work of preaching is entrusted, are most at fault, because they do not preach the Gospel, and do not teach the people how they ought to look on at mass, hear preaching and pray. Therefore, we will briefly explain these three works.

II. In the mass it is necessary that we attend with our a hearts also; and we do attend, when we exercise faith in our hearts. Here we must repeat the words of Christ, when He institutes the mass and says, "Take and eat, this is My Body, which is given for you"; in like manner over the cup, "Take and drink ye all of it: this is a new, everlasting Testament in My Blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins. This shall ye do, as oft as ye do it, in remembrance of Me." In these words Christ has made for Himself a memorial or anniversary, to be daily observed in all Christendom, and has added to it a glorious, rich, great testament, in which no interest, money or temporal possessions are bequeathed and distributed, but the forgiveness of all sins, grace and mercy unto eternal life, that all who come to this memorial shall have the same testament; and then He died, whereby this testament has become permanent and irrevocable. In proof and evidence of which, instead of letter and seal, He has left with us His own Body and Blood under the bread and wine.

Here there is need that a man practise the first works of this Commandment right well, that he doubt not that what Christ has said is true, and consider the testament sure, so that he make not Christ a liar. For if you are present at mass and do not consider nor believe that here Christ through His testament has bequeathed and given you forgiveness of all your sins, what else is it, than as if you said: "I do not know or do not believe that it is true that forgiveness of my sins is here bequeathed and given me"? Oh, how many masses there are in the world at present! but how few who hear them with such faith and benefit! Most grievously is God provoked to anger thereby. For this reason also no one shall or can reap any benefit from the mass except he be in trouble of soul and long for divine mercy, and desire to be rid of his sins; or, if he have an evil intention, he must be changed during the mass, and come to have a desire for this testament. For this reason in olden times no open sinner was allowed to be present at the mass.

When this faith is rightly present, the heart must be made joyful by the testament, and grow warm and melt in God’s love. Then will follow praise and thanksgiving with a pure heart, from which the mass is called in Greek Eucharistia, that is, "thanksgiving," because we praise and thank God for this comforting, rich, blessed testament, just as he gives thanks, praises and is joyful, to whom a good friend has presented a thousand and more gulden. Although Christ often fares like those who make several persons rich by their testament, and these persons never think of them, nor praise or thank them. So our masses at present are merely celebrated, without our knowing why or wherefore, and consequently we neither give thanks nor love nor praise, remain parched and hard, and have enough with our little prayer. Of this more another time.

III. The sermon ought to be nothing else than the proclamation of this testament. But who can hear it if no one preaches it? Now, they who ought to preach it, themselves do not know it. This is why the sermons ramble off into other unprofitable stories, and thus Christ is forgotten, while we fare like the man in 2 Kings 7:1-20 : we see our riches but do not enjoy them. Of which the Preacher also says, "This is a great evil, when God giveth a man riches, and giveth him not power to enjoy them." So we look on at unnumbered masses and do not know whether the mass be a testament, or what it be, just as if it were any other common good work by itself. O God, how exceeding blind we are! But where this is rightly preached, it is necessary that it be diligently heard, grasped, retained, often thought of, and that the faith be thus strengthened against all the temptation of sin, whether past, or present, or to come.

Lo! this is the only ceremony or practice which Christ has instituted, in which His Christians shall assemble, exercise themselves and keep it with one accord; and this He did not make to be a mere work like other ceremonies, but placed into it a rich, exceeding great treasure, to be offered and bestowed upon all who believe on it.

This preaching should induce sinners to grieve over their sins, and should kindle in them a longing for the treasure. It must, therefore, be a grievous sin not to hear the Gospel, and to despise such a treasure and so rich a feast to which we are bidden; but a much greater sin not to preach the Gospel, and to let so many people who would gladly hear it perish, since Christ has so strictly commanded that the Gospel and this testament be preached, that He does not wish even the mass to be celebrated, unless the Gospel be preached, as He says: "As oft as ye do this, remember me"; that is, as St. Paul says, "Ye shall preach of His death." For this reason it is dreadful and horrible in our times to be a bishop, pastor and preacher; for no one any longer

knows this testament, to say nothing of their preaching it, although this is their highest and only duty and obligation. How heavily must they give account for so many souls who must perish because of this lack in preaching.

IV. We should pray, not as the custom is, counting many pages or beads, but fixing our mind upon some pressing need, desire it with all earnestness, and exercise faith and confidence toward God in the matter, in such wise that we do not doubt that we shall be heard. So St. Bernard instructs his brethren and says: "Dear brethren, you shall by no means despise your prayer, as if it were in vain, for I tell you of a truth that, before you have uttered the words, the prayer is already recorded in heaven; and you shall confidently expect from God one of two things: either that your prayer will be granted, or that, if it will not be granted, the granting of it would not be good for you."

Prayer is, therefore, a special exercise of faith, and faith makes the prayer so acceptable that either it will surely be granted, or something better than we ask will be given in its stead. So also says St. James: "Let him who asketh of God not waver in faith; for if he wavers, let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." This is a clear statement, which says directly: he who does not trust, receives nothing, neither that which he asks, nor anything better.

And to call forth such faith, Christ Himself has said, Mark 11:1-33 : "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall surely have them." And Luke 11:1-54 : "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what father is there of you, who, if his son shall ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? or if he ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? But if you know how to give good gifts to your children, and you yourselves are not naturally good, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give a good spirit to all them that ask Him!"

V. Who is so hard and stone-like, that such mighty words ought not to move him to pray with all confidence! joyfully and gladly? But how many prayers must be reformed, if we are to pray aright according to these words! Now, indeed, all churches and monastic houses are full of praying and singing, but how does it happen that so little improvement and benefit result from it, and things daily grow worse? The reason is none other than that which St. James indicates when he says: "You ask much and receive not, because ye ask amiss." For where this faith and confidence is not in the prayer, the prayer is dead, and nothing more than a grievous labor and work. If anything is given for it, it is none the less only temporal benefit without any blessing and help for the soul; nay, to the great injury and blinding of souls, so that they go their way, babbling much with their mouths, regardless of whether they receive, or desire, or trust; and in this unbelief, the state of mind most opposed to the exercise of faith and to the nature of prayer, they remain hardened.

From this it follows that one who prays aright never doubts that his prayer is surely acceptable and heard, although the very thing for which he prays be not given him. For we are to lay our need before God in prayer, but not prescribe to Him a measure, manner, time or place; but if He wills to give it to us better or in another way than we think, we are to leave it to Him; for frequently we do not know what we pray, as St. Paul says, Romans 8:1-39; and God works and gives above all that we understand, as he says, Ephesians 3:1-21, so that there be no doubt that the prayer is acceptable and heard, and we yet leave to God the time, place, measure and limit; He will surely

do what is right. They are the true worshipers, who worship God in spirit and in truth. For they who believe not that they will be heard, sin upon the left hand against this Commandment, and go far astray with their unbelief. But they who set a limit for Him, sin upon the other side, and come too close with their tempting of God. So He has forbidden both, that we should err from His Commandment neither to the left nor to the right, that is, neither with unbelief nor with tempting, but with simple faith remain on the straight road, trusting Him, and yet setting Him no bounds.

VI. Thus we see that this Commandment, like the Second, is to be nothing else than a doing and keeping of the First Commandment, that is, of faith, trust, confidence, hope and love to God, so that in all the Commandments the First may be the captain, and faith the chief work and the life of all other works, without which, as was said, they cannot be good.

But if you say: "What if I cannot believe that my prayer is heard and accepted?" I answer: For this very reason faith, prayer and all other good works are commanded, that you shall know what you can and what you cannot do. And when you find that you cannot so believe and do, then you are humbly to confess it to God, and so begin with a weak spark of faith and daily strengthen it more and more by exercising it in all your living and doing. For as touching infirmity of faith (that is, of the First and highest Commandment), there is no one on earth who does not have his good share of it. For even the holy Apostles in the Gospel, and especially St. Peter, were weak in faith, so that they also prayed Christ and said: "Lord, increase our faith "; and He very frequently rebukes them because they have so little faith.

Therefore you shall not despair, nor give up, even if you find that you do not believe as firmly as you ought and wish, in your prayer or in other works. Nay, you shall thank God with all your heart that He thus reveals to you your weakness, through which He daily teaches and admonishes you how much you need to exercise yourself and daily strengthen yourself in faith. For how many do you see who habitually pray, sing, read, work and seem to be great saints, and yet never get so far as to know where they stand in respect of the chief work, faith; and so in their blindness they lead astray themselves and others; think they are very well off, and so unknowingly build on the sand of their works without any faith, not on God’s mercy and promise through a firm, pure faith.

Therefore, however long we live, we shall always have our hands full to remain, with all our works and sufferings, pupils of the First Commandment and of faith, and not to cease to learn. No one knows what a great thing it is to trust God alone, except he who attempts it with his works.

VII. Again: if no other work were commanded, would not prayer alone suffice to exercise the whole life of man in faith? For this work the spiritual estate has been specially established, as indeed in olden times some Fathers prayed day and night. Nay, there is no Christian who does not have time to pray without ceasing. But I mean the spiritual praying, that is: no one is so heavily burdened with his labor, but that if he will he can, while working, speak with God in his heart, lay before Him his need and that of other men, ask for help, make petition, and in all this exercise and strengthen his faith.

This is what the Lord means, Luke 18:1-43, when He says, "Men ought always to pray, and never cease," although in Matthew 6:1-34 He forbids the use of much speaking and long prayers, because of which He rebukes the hypocrites; not because the lengthy prayer of the lips is evil, but because it is not that true prayer which can be made at all times, and without the inner prayer of

faith is nothing. For we must also practise the outward prayer in its proper time, especially in the mass, as this Commandment requires, and wherever it is helpful to the inner prayer and faith, whether in the house or in the field, in this work or in that; of which we have no time now to speak more. For this belongs to the Lord’s Prayer, in which all petitions and spoken prayer are summed up in brief words.

VIII. Where now are they who desire to know and to do good works? Let them undertake prayer alone, and rightly exercise themselves in faith, and they will find that it is true, as the holy Fathers have said, that there is no work like prayer. Mumbling with the mouth is easy, or at least considered easy, but with earnestness of heart to follow the words in deep devotion, that is, with desire and faith, so that one earnestly desires what the words say, and not to doubt that it will be heard: that is a great deed in God’s eyes.

Here the evil spirit hinders men with all his powers. Oh, how often will he here prevent the desire to pray, not allow us to find time and place, nay, often also raise doubts, whether a man is worthy to ask anything of such a Majesty as God is, and so confuse us that a man himself does not know whether it is really true that he prays or not; whether it is possible that his prayer is acceptable, and other such strange thoughts. For the evil spirit knows well how powerful one man’s truly believing prayer is, and how it hurts him, and how it benefits all men. Therefore he does not willingly let it happen.

When so tempted, a man must indeed be wise, and not doubt that he and his prayer are, indeed, unworthy before such infinite Majesty; in no wise dare he trust his worthiness, or because of his unworthiness grow faint; but he must heed God’s command and cast this up to Him, and hold it before the devil, and say: "Because of my worthiness I do nothing, because of my unworthiness I cease from nothing. I pray and work only because God of His pure mercy has promised to hear and to be gracious to all unworthy men, and not only promised it, but He has also most sternly, on pain of His everlasting displeasure and wrath, commanded us to pray, to trust and to receive. If it has not been too much for that high Majesty so solemnly and highly to obligate His unworthy worms to pray, to trust, and to receive from Him, how shall it be too much for me to take such command upon myself with all joy, however worthy or unworthy I may be?" Thus we must drive out the devil’s suggestion with God’s command. Thus will he cease, and in no other way whatever.

IX. But what are the things which we must bring before Almighty God in prayer and lamentation, to exercise faith thereby? Answer: First, every man’s own besetting need and trouble, of which David says, Psalms 32:1-11 : "Thou art my refuge in all trouble which compasseth me about; Thou art my comfort, to preserve me from all evil which surrounds me." Likewise, Psalms 142:1-7 : "I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before Him; I showed before Him my trouble." In the mass a Christian shall keep in mind the short-comings or excesses he feels, and pour out all these freely before God with weeping and groaning, as woefully as he can, as to his faithful Father, who is ready to help him. And if you do not know or recognise your need, or have no trouble, then you shall know that you are in the worst possible plight. For this is the greatest trouble, that you find yourself so hardened, hard-hearted and insensible that no trouble moves you.

There is no better mirror in which to see your need than simply the Ten Commandments, in which you will find what you lack and what you should seek. If, therefore, you find in yourself a weak

faith, small hope and little love toward God; and that you do not praise and honor God, but love your own honor and fame, think much of the favor of men, do not gladly hear mass and sermon, are indolent in prayer, in which things every one has faults, then you shall think more of these faults than of all bodily harmto goods, honor and life, and believe that they are worse than death and all mortal sickness. These you shall earnestly lay before God, lament and ask for help, and with all confidence expect help, and believe that you are heard and shall obtain help and mercy.

Then go forward into the Second Table of the Commandments, and see how disobedient you have been and still are toward father and mother and all in authority; how you sin against your neighbor with anger, hatred and evil words; how you are tempted to unchastity, covetousness and injustice in word and deed against your neighbor; and you will doubtless find that you are full of all need and misery, and have reason enough to weep even drops of blood, if you could.

X. But I know well that many are so foolish as not to want to ask for such things, unless they first be conscious that they are pure, and believe that God hears no one who is a sinner. All this is the work of those false preachers, who teach men to begin, not with faith and trust in God's favor, but with their own works.

Look you, wretched man! if you have broken a leg, or the peril of death overtakes you, you call upon God, this Saint and that, and do not wait until your leg is healed, or the danger is past: you are not so foolish as to think that God hears no one whose leg is broken, or who is in bodily danger. Nay, you believe that God shall hear most of all when you are in the greatest need and fear. Why, then, are you so foolish here, where there is immeasurably greater need and eternal hurt, and do not want to ask for faith, hope, love, humility, obedience, chastity, gentleness, peace, righteousness, unless you are already free of all your unbelief, doubt, pride, disobedience, unchastity, anger, covetousness and unrighteousness. Although the more you find yourself lacking in these things, the more and more diligently you ought to pray or cry.

So blind are we: with our bodily sickness and need we run to God; with the soul's sickness we run from Him, and are unwilling to come back before we are well, exactly as if there could be one God who could help the body, and another God who could help the soul; or as if we would help ourselves in spiritual need, although it really is greater than the bodily need. Such plan and counsel is of the devil.

Not so, my good man! If you wish to be cured of sin, you must not withdraw from God, but run to Him, and pray with much more confidence than if a bodily need had overtaken you. God is not hostile to sinners, but only to unbelievers, that is, to such as do not recognize and lament their sin, nor seek help against it from God, but in their own presumption wish first to purify themselves, are unwilling to be in need of His grace, and will not suffer Him to be a God Who gives to everyone and takes nothing in return.

XI. All this has been said of prayer for personal needs, and of prayer in general. But the prayer which really belongs to this Commandment and is called a work of the Holy Day, is far better and greater, and is to be made for all Christendom, for all the need of all men, of foe and friend, especially for those who belong to the parish or bishopric.

Thus St. Paul commanded his disciple Timothy: exhort thee, that thou see to it, that prayers and intercessions be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a

quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." For this reason Jeremiah 29:1-32, commanded the people of Israel to pray for the city and land of Babylon, because in the peace thereof they should have peace. And Bar 1:1-22 : "Pray for the life of the king of Babylon and for the life of his son, that we may live in peace under their rule."

This common prayer is precious and the most powerful, and it is for its sake that we come together. For this reason also the Church is called a House of Prayer, because in it we are as a congregation with one accord to consider our need and the needs of all men, present them before God, and call upon Him for mercy. But this must be done with heart-felt emotion and sincerity, so that we feel in our hearts the need of all men, and that we pray with true sympathy for them, in true faith and confidence. Where such prayers are not made in the mass, it were better to omit the mass. For what sense is there in our coming together into a House of Prayer, which coming together shows that we should make common prayer and petition for the entire congregation, if we scatter these prayers, and so distribute them that everyone prays only for himself, and no one has regard for the other, nor concerns himself for another's need? How can that prayer be of help, good, acceptable and a common prayer, or a work of the Holy Day and of the assembled congregation, which they make who make their own petty prayers, one for this, the other for that, and have nothing but self-seeking, selfish prayers, which God hates?

XII. A suggestion of this common prayer has been retained from ancient practice, when at the end of the sermon the Confession of Sins is said and prayer is made on the pulpit for all Christendom. But this should not be the end of the matter, as is now the custom and fashion; it should be an exhortation to pray throughout the entire mass for such need as the preacher makes us feel; and in order that we may pray worthily, he first exhorts us because of our sin, and thereby makes us humble. This should be done as briefly as possible, that then the entire congregation may confess their own sin and pray for every one with earnestness and faith.

Oh, if God granted that any congregation at all heard mass and prayed in this way, so that a common earnest heart-cry of the entire people would rise up to God, what immeasurable virtue and help would result from such a prayer! What more terrible thing could happen to all the evil spirits? What greater work could be done on earth, whereby so many pious souls would be preserved, so many sinners converted?

For, indeed, the Christian Church on earth has no greater power or work than such common prayer against everything that may oppose it. This the evil spirit knows well, and therefore he does all that he can to prevent such prayer. Gleefully he lets us go on building churches, endowing many monastic houses, making music, reading, singing, observing many masses, and multiplying ceremonies beyond all measure. This does not grieve him, nay, he helps us do it, that we may consider such things the very best, and think that thereby we have done our whole duty. But in that meanwhile this common, effectual and fruitful prayer perishes and its omission is unnoticed because of such display, in this he has what he seeks. For when prayer languishes, no one will take anything from him, and no one will withstand him. But if he noticed that we wished to practise this prayer, even if it were under a straw roof or in a pig-sty, he would indeed not endure it, but would fear such a pig-sty far more than all the high, big and beautiful churches, towers and bells in existence, if such prayer be not in them. It is indeed not a question of the places and buildings in

which we assemble, but only of this unconquerable prayer, that we pray it and bring it before God as a truly common prayer.

XIII. The power of this prayer we see in the fact that in olden times Abraham prayed for the five cities, Sodom, Gomorrah, etc., Genesis 18:1-33, and accomplished so much, that if there had been ten righteous people in them, two in each city, God would not have destroyed them. What then could many men do, if they united in calling upon God earnestly and with sincere confidence?

St. James also says: "Dear brethren, pray for one another, that ye may be saved. For the prayer of a righteous man availeth much, a prayer that perseveres and does not cease" (that is, which does not cease asking ever more and more, although what it asks is not immediately granted, as some timid men do). And as an example in this matter he sets before us Elijah, the Prophet, "who was a man," he says, "as we are, and prayed, that it might not rain; and it rained not by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and it rained, and everything became fruitful." There are many texts and examples in the Scriptures which urge us to pray, only that it be done with earnestness and faith. As David says, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry." Again, "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth." Why does he add, "call upon Him in truth"? Because that is not prayer nor calling upon God when the mouth alone mumbles.

What should God do, if you come along with your mouth, book or Paternoster, and think of nothing except that you may finish the words and complete the number? So that if some one were to ask you what it all was about, or what it was that you prayed for, you yourself would not know; for you had not thought of laying this or that matter before God or desiring it. Your only reason for praying is that you are commanded to pray this and so much, and this you intend to do in full. What wonder that thunder and lightning frequently set churches on fire, because we thus make of the House of Prayer a house of mockery, and call that prayer in which we bring nothing before God and desire nothing from Him.

But we should do as they do who wish to ask a favor of great princes. These do not plan merely to babble a certain number of words, for the prince would think they mocked him, or were insane; but they put their request very plainly, and present their need earnestly, and then leave it to his mercy, in good confidence that he will grant it. So we must deal with God of definite things, namely, mention some present need, commend it to His mercy and good-will, and not doubt that it is heard; for He has promised to hear such prayer, which no earthly lord has done.

XIV. We are masters in this form of prayer when we suffer bodily need; when we are sick we call here upon St. Christopher, there upon St. Barbara; we vow a pilgrimage to St. James, to this place and to that; then we make earnest prayer, have a good confidence and every good kind of prayer. But when we are in our churches during mass, we stand like images of saints; know nothing to speak of or to lament; the beads rattle, the pages rustle and the mouth babbles; and that is all there is to it.

But if you ask what you shall speak of and lament in your prayer, you can easily learn from the Ten Commandments and the Lord’s Prayer. Open your eyes and look into your life and the life of all Christians, especially of the spiritual estate, and you will find how faith, hope, love, obedience, chastity and every virtue languish, and all manner of heinous vices reign; what a lack there is of

good preachers and prelates; how only knaves, children, fools and women rule. Then you will see that there were need every hour without ceasing to pray everywhere with tears of blood to God, Who is so terribly angry with men. And it is true that it has never been more necessary to pray than at this time, and it will be more so from now on to the end of the world. If such terrible crimes do not move you to lament and complain, do not permit yourself to be led astray by your rank, station, good works or prayer: there is no Christian vein or trait in you, however righteous you may be. But it has all been foretold, that when God's anger is greatest and Christendom suffers the greatest need, then petitioners and supplicants before God shall not be found, as Isaiah says with tears, Isaiah 64:1-12 : "Thou art angry with us, and there is none that calleth upon Thy Name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee." Likewise, Ezekiel 22:1-31 : "I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out Mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath." With these words God indicates how He wants us to withstand Him and turn away His anger from one another, as it is frequently written of the Prophet Moses, that he restrained God, lest His anger should overwhelm the people of Israel.

XV. But what will they do, who not only do not regard such misfortune of Christendom, and do not pray against it, but laugh at it, take pleasure in it, condemn, malign, sing and talk of their neighbor's sins, and yet dare, unafraid and unashamed, go to church, hear mass, say prayers, and regard themselves and are regarded as pious Christians? These truly are in need that we pray twice for them, if we pray once for those whom they condemn, talk about and laugh at. That there would be such is also prophesied by the thief on Christ's left hand, who blasphemed Him in His suffering, weakness and need; also by all those who reviled Christ on the Cross, when they should most of all have helped Him.

O God, how blind, nay, how insane have we Christians become! When will there be an end of wrath, O heavenly Father? That we mock at the misfortune of Christendom, to pray for which we gather together in Church and at the mass, that we blaspheme and condemn men, this is the fruit of our mad materialism. If the Turk destroys cities, country and people, and ruins churches, we think a great injury has been done Christendom. Then we complain, and urge kings and princes to war. But when faith perishes, love grows cold, God's Word is neglected, and all manner of sin flourishes, then no one thinks of fighting, nay, pope, bishops, priests and clergy, who ought to be generals, captains and standard-bearers in this spiritual warfare against these spiritual and many times worse Turks, these are themselves the very princes and leaders of such Turks and of the devil host, just as Judas was the leader of the Jews when they took Christ. It had to be an apostle, a bishop, a priest, one of the number of the best, who began the work of slaying Christ. So also must Christendom be laid waste by no others than those who ought to protect it, and yet are so insane that they are ready to eat up the Turks and at home themselves set house and sheep-cote on fire and let them burn up with the sheep and all other contents, and none the less worry about the wolf in the woods. Such are our times, and this is the reward we have earned by our ingratitude toward the endless grace which Christ has won for us freely with His precious blood, grievous labor and bitter death.

XVI. Lo! where are the idle ones, who do not know how to do good works? Where are they who run to Rome, to St. James, hither and thither? Take up this one singl work of the mass, look on your neighbor's sin and ruin, and have pity on him; let it grieve you, tell it to God, and pray over it.

Do the same for every other need of Christendom, especially of the rulers, whom God, for the intolerable punishment and torment of us all, allows to fall and be misled so terribly. If you do this diligently, be assured you are one of the best fighters and captains, not only against the Turks, but also against the devils and the powers of hell. But if you do it not, what would it help you though you performed all the miracles of the saints, and murdered all the Turks, and yet were found guilty of having disregarded your neighbor’s need and of having thereby sinned against love? For Christ at the last day will not ask how much you have prayed, fasted, pilgrimaged, done this or that for yourself, but how much good you have done to others, even the very least.

Now without doubt among the "least" are also those who are in sin and spiritual poverty, captivity and need, of whom there are at present far more than of those who suffer bodily need. Therefore tke heed: our own self-assumed good works lead us to and into ourselves, that we seek only our own benefit and salvation; but God’s commandments drive us to our neighbor, that we may thereby benefit others to their salvation. Just as Christ on the Cross prayed not for Himself alone, but rather for us, when He said, "Father, forgive them, fort they know not what they do," so we also must pray for one another. From which every man may know that the slanderers, frivolous judges and despisers of other people are a perverted, evil race, who do nothing else than heap abuse on those for whom they ought to pray; in which vice no one is sunk so deep as those very men who do many good works of their own, and seem to men to be something extraordinary, and are honored because of their beautiful, splendid life in manifold good works.

XVII. Spiritually understood, this Commandment has a yet far higher work, which embraces the whole nature of man. Here it must be known that in Hebrew " Sabbath " means " rest," because on the seventh day God rested and ceased from all His works, which He had made. Genesis 2:1-25. Therefore He commanded also that the seventh day should be kept holy and that we cease from our works which we do the other six days. This Sabbath has now for us been changed into the Sunday, and the other days are called work-days; the Sunday is called rest-day or holiday or holy day. And would to God that in Christendom there were no holiday except the Sunday; that the festivals of Our Lady and of the Saints were all transferred to Sunday; then would many evil vices be done away with through the labor of the work-days, and lands would not be so drained and impoverished. But now we are plagued with many holidays, to the destruction of souls, bodies and goods; of which matter much might be said.

This rest or ceasing from labors is of two kinds, bodily and spiritual. For this reason this Commandment is also to be understood in two ways.

The bodily rest is that of which we have spoken above, namely, that we omit our business and work, in order that we may gather in the church, see mass, hear God’s Word and make common prayer. This rest is indeed bodily and in Christendom no longer commanded by God, as the Apostle says, Colossians 2:2-21, "Let no man obligate you to any holiday whatever" -- for they were of old a figure, but now the truth has been fulfilled, so that all days are holy days, as Isaiah says, Isaiah 66:1-24, "One holy day shall follow the other"; on the other hand, all days are workdays. Yet it is a necessity and ordained by the Church for the sake of the imperfect laity and working people, that they also may be able to come to hear God’s Word. For, as we see, the priests and clergy celebrate mass every day, pray at all hours and train themselves in God’s Word by study, reading and hearing. For this reason also they are freed from work before others,

supported by tithes and have holy-day every day, and every day do the works of the holy-day, and have no work-day, but for them one day is as the other. And if we were all perfect, and knew the Gospel, we might work every day if we wished, or rest if we could. For a day of rest is at present not necessary nor commanded except only for the teaching of God's Word and prayer.

The spiritual rest, which God particularly intends in this Commandment, is this: that we not only cease from our labor and trade, but much more, that we let God alone work in us and that we do nothing of our own with all our powers. But how is this done? In this way: Man, corrupted by sin, has much wicked love and inclination toward all sins, as the Scriptures say, Genesis 8:1-22, "Man's heart and senses incline always to the evil," that is, to pride, disobedience, anger, hatred, covetousness, unchastity, etc., and summa summarum, in all that he does and leaves undone, he seeks his own profit, will and honor rather than God's and his neighbor's. Therefore all his works, all his words, all his thoughts, all his life are evil and not godly.

Now if God is to work and to live in him, all this vice and wickedness must be choked and up-rooted, so that there may be rest and a cessation of all our works, thoughts and life, and that henceforth (as St. Paul says, Galatians 2:1-21) it may be no longer we who live, but Christ Who lives, works and speaks in us. This is not accomplished with comfortable, pleasant days, but here we must hurt our nature and let it be hurt. Here begins the strife between the spirit and the flesh; here the spirit resists anger, lust, pride, while the flesh wants to be in pleasure, honor and comfort. Of this St. Paul says, Galatians 5:1-26, "They that are our Lord Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." Then follow the good works, -- fasting, watching, labor, of which some say and write so much, although they know neither the source nor the purpose of these good works. Therefore we will now also speak of them.

XVIII. This rest, namely, that our work cease and God alone work in us, is accomplished in two ways. First, through our own effort, secondly, through the effort or urging of others.

Our own effort is to be so made and ordered that, in the first place, when we see our flesh, senses, will and thoughts tempting us, we resist them and do not heed them, as the Wise Man says: "Follow not thine own desires." And Moses, Deuteronomy 12:1-32 : "Thou shalt not do what is right in thine own eyes."

Here a man must make daily use of those prayers which David prays: "Lord, lead me in Thy path, and let me not walk in my own ways," and many like prayers, which are all summed up in the prayer, "Thy kingdom come." For the desires are so many, so various, and besides at times so nimble, so subtile and specious, through the suggestions of the evil one, that it is not possible for a man to control himself in his own ways. He must let hands and feet go, commend himself to God's governance, and entrust nothing to his reason, as Jeremiah says, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in his own power." We see proof of this, when the children of Israel went out of Egypt through the Wilderness, where there was no way, no food, no drink, no help. Therefore God went before them, by day in a bright: cloud, by night in a fiery pillar, fed them with manna from heaven, and kept their garments and shoes that they waxed not old, as we read in the Books of Moses. For this reason we pray: "Thy kingdom come, that Thou rule us, and not: we ourselves," for there is nothing more perilous in us than our reason and will. And this is the first and highest work of God in us and the best training, that we cease from our works, that we let our reason and will be idle, that we rest and commend ourselves to God in all things, especially when they seem to be spiritual

and good.

XIX. After this comes the discipline of the flesh, to kill its gross, evil lust, to give it rest and relief. This we must kill and quiet with fasting, watching and labor, and from this we learn how much and why we shall fast, watch and labor.

There are, alas! many blind men, who practise their castigation, whether it be fasting, watching or labor, only because they think these are good works, intending by them to gain much merit. Far blinder still are they who measure their fasting not only by the quantity or duration, as these do, but also by the nature of the food, thinking that it is of far greater worth if they do not eat meat, eggs or butter. Beyond these are those who fast according to the saints, and according to the days; one fasting on Wednesday, another on Saturday, another on St. Barbara's day, another on St. Sebastian's day, and so on. These all seek in their fasting nothing beyond the work itself: when they have performed that, they think they have done a good work. I will here say nothing of the fact that some fast in such a way that they none the less drink themselves full; some fast by eating fish and other foods so lavishly that they would come much nearer to fasting if they ate meat, eggs and butter, and by so doing would obtain far better results from their fasting. For such fasting is not fasting, but a mockery of fasting and of God.

Therefore I allow everyone to choose his day, food and quantity for fasting, as he will, on condition that he do not stop with that, but have regard to his flesh; let him put upon it fasting, watching and labor according to its lust and wantonness, and no more, although pope, Church, bishop, father-confessor or any one else whosoever have commanded it. For no one should measure and regulate fasting, watching and labor according to the character or quantity of the food, or according to the days, but according to the withdrawal or approach of the lust and wantonness of the flesh, for the sake of which alone the fasting, watching and labor is ordained, that is, to kill and to subdue them. If it were not for this lust, eating were as meritorious as fasting, sleeping as watching, idleness as labor, and each were as good as the other without all distinction.

XX. Now, if some one should find that more wantonness arose in his flesh from eating fish than from eating eggs and meat, let him eat meat and not fish. Again, if he find that his head becomes confused and crazed or his body and stomach injured through fasting, or that it is not needful to kill the wantonness of his flesh, he shall let fasting alone entirely, and eat, sleep, be idle as is necessary for his health, regardless whether it be against the command of the Church, or the rules of monastic orders: for no commandment of the Church, no law of an order can make fasting, watching and labor of more value than it has in serving to repress or to kill the flesh and its lusts. Where men go beyond this, and the fasting, eating, sleeping, watching are practised beyond the strength of the body, and more than is necessary to the killing of the lust, so that through it the natural strength is ruined and the head is racked; then let no one imagine that he has done good works, or excuse himself by citing the commandment of the Church or the law of his order. He will be regarded as a man who takes no care of himself, and, as far as in him lies, has become his own murderer.

For the body is not given us that we should kill its natural life or work, but only that we kill its wantonness; unless its wantonness were so strong and great that we could not sufficiently resist it without ruin and harm to the natural life. For, as has been said, in the practice of fasting, watching and labor, we are not to look upon the works in themselves, not on the days, not on the number,

not on the food, but only on the wanton and lustful Adam, that through them he may be cured of his evil appetite.

XXI. From this we can judge how wisely or foolishly some women act when they are with child, and how the sick are to be treated. For the foolish women cling so firmly to their fasting that they run the risk of great danger to the fruit of their womb and to themselves, rather than not to fast when the others fast. They make a matter of conscience where there is none, and where there is matter of conscience they make none. This is all the fault of the preachers, because they continually prate of fasting, and never point out its true use, limit, fruit, cause and purpose. So also the sick should be allowed to eat and to drink every day whatever they wish. In brief, where the wantonness of the flesh ceases, there every reason for fasting, watching, laboring, eating this or that, has already ceased, and there no longer is any binding commandment at all.

But then care must be taken, lest out of this freedom there grow a lazy indifference about killing the wantonness of the flesh; for the roguish Adam is exceedingly tricky in looking for permission for himself, and in pleading the ruin of the body or of the mind; so some men jump right in and say it is neither necessary nor commanded to fast or to mortify the flesh, and are ready to eat this and that without fear, just as if they had for a long time had much experience of fasting, although they have never tried it.

No less are we to guard against offending those who, not sufficiently informed, regard it a great sin if we do not fast or eat as they do. These we must kindly instruct, and not haughtily despise, nor eat this or that in despite of them, but we must tell them the reason why it is right to do so, and thus gradually lead them to a correct understanding. But if they are stubborn and will not listen, we must let them alone, and do as we know it is right to do.

XXII. The second form of discipline which we receive at the hands of others, is when men or devils cause us suffering, as when our property is taken, our body sick, and our honor taken away; and everything that may move us to anger, impatience and unrest. For God’s work rules in us according to His wisdom, not according to our wisdom, according to His purity and chastity, not according to the wantonness of our flesh; for God’s work is wisdom and purity, our work is foolishness and impurity, and these shall rest: so in like manner it should rule in us according to His peace, not our anger, impatience and lack of peace. For peace too is God’s work, impatience is the work of our flesh; this shall rest and be dead, that we thus in every way keep a spiritual holiday, let our works stand idle, and let God work in us.

Therefore in order to kill our works and the Adam in us, God heaps many temptations upon us, which move us to anger, many sufferings, which rouse us to impatience, and last of all death and the world’s abuse; whereby He seeks nothing else than that He may drive out anger, impatience and lack of peace, and attain to His work, that is, to peace, in us. Thus says Isaiah 28:1-29, "He does the work of another that He may come to His own work." What does this mean? He sends us suffering and trouble that He may teach us to have patience and peace; He bids us die that He may make us live, until a man, thoroughly trained, becomes so peaceful and quiet that he is not disturbed, whether it go well or ill with him, whether he die or live, be honored or dishonored. There God Himself dwells alone, and there are no works of men. This is rightly keeping and hallowing the day of rest; then a man does not guide himself, then he desires nothing for himself, then nothing troubles him; but God Himself leads him, there is naught but godly pleasure, joy and

peace with all other works and virtues.

XXIII. These works He considers so great that He commands us not only to keep the day of rest, but also to hallow it or regard it as holy, whereby He declares that there are no more precious things than suffering, dying, and all manner of misfortune. For they are holy and sanctify a man from his works to God's works, just as a church is consecrated from natural works to the worship of God. Therefore a man shall also recognise them as holy things, be glad and thank God when they come upon him. For when they come they make him holy, so that he fulfils this Commandment and is saved, redeemed from all his sinful works. Thus says David: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

In order to strengthen us thereto He has not only commanded us to keep such a rest (for nature is very unwilling to die and to suffer, and it is a bitter day of rest for it to cease from its works and be dead); but He has also comforted us in the Scriptures with many words and told us, Psalms 91:1-16, "I will be with him in all his trouble, and will deliver him." Likewise Psalms 34:1-22 : "The Lord is nigh unto all them that suffer, and will help them."

As if this were not enough, He has given us a powerful, strong example of it, His only, dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who on the Sabbath lay in the tomb the entire day of rest, free from all His works, and was the first to fulfil this Commandment, although He needed it not for Himself, but only for our comfort, that we also in all suffering and death should be quiet and have peace. Since, as Christ was raised up after His rest and henceforth lives only in God and God in Him, so also shall we by the death of our Adam, which is perfectly accomplished only through natural death and burial, be lifted up into God, that God may live and work in us forever. Lo! these are the three parts of man: reason, desire, aversion; in which all his works are done. These, therefore, must be slain by these three exercises, God's governance, our self-mortification, the hurt done to us by others; and so they must spiritually rest before God, and give Him room for His works.

XXIV. But such works are to be done and such sufferings to be endured in faith and in sure confidence of God's favor, in order that, as has been said, all works remain in the First Commandment and in faith, and that faith, for the sake of which all other commandments and works are ordained, exercise and strengthen itself in them. See, therefore, what a pretty, golden ring these three Commandments and their works naturally form, and how from the First Commandment and faith the Second flows on to the Third, and the Third in turn drives through the Second up into the First. For the first work is to believe, to have a good heart and confidence toward God. From this flows the second good work, to praise God's Name, to confess His grace, to give all honor to Him alone. Then follows the third, to worship by praying, hearing God's Word, thinking of and considering God's benefits, and in addition chastising one's self, and keeping the body under.

But when the evil spirit perceives such faith, such honoring of God and such worship, he rages and stirs up persecution, attacks body, goods, honor and life, brings upon us sickness, poverty, shame and death, which God so permits and ordains. See, here begins the second work, or the second rest of the Third Commandment; by this faith is very greatly tried, even as gold in the fire. For it is a great thing to retain a sure confidence in God, although He sends us death, shame, sickness, poverty; and in this cruel form of wrath to regard Him as our all-gracious Father, as must be done in this work of the Third Commandment. Here suffering contains faith, that it must call

upon God’s Name and praise it in such suffering, and so it comes through the Third Commandment into the Second again; and through that very calling on the Name of God and praise, faith grows, and becomes conscious of itself, and so strengthens itself, through the two works of the Third and of the Second Commandment. Thus faith goes out into the works and through the works comes to itself again; just as the sun goes forth unto its setting and comes again unto its rising. For this reason the Scriptures associate the day with peaceful living in works, the night with passive living in adversity, and faith lives and works, goes out and comes in, in both, as Christ says, John 9:1-41.

XXV. This order of good works we pray in the Lord’s Prayer. The first is this, that we say: "Our Father, Who art in heaven"; these are the words of the first work of faith, which, according to the First Commandment, does not doubt that it has a gracious Father in heaven. The second: "Hallowed be Thy Name," in which faith asks that God’s Name, praise and honor be glorified, and calls upon it in every need, as the Second Commandment says. The third: "Thy kingdom come," in which we pray for the true Sabbath and rest, peaceful cessation of our works, that God’s work alone be done in us, and so God rule in us as in His own kingdom, as He says, Luke 17:1-17, "Behold, God’s kingdom is nowhere else except within you." The fourth petition is "Thy will be done"; in which we pray that we may keep and have the Seven Commandments of the Second Table, in which faith is exercised toward our neighbor; just as in the first three it is exercised in works toward God alone. And these are the petitions in which stands the word "Thou, Thy, Thy, Thy," because they seek only what belongs to God; all the others say "our, us, our," etc; for in them we pray for our goods and blessedness.

Let this, then, suffice as a plain, hasty explanation of the First Table of Moses, pointing out to simple folk what are the highest of good works.

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Chapter 8

01.06 Starts discussion of Fourth Commandment

The Second Table follows.

"Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother."

From this Commandment we learn that after the excellent works of the first three Commandments there are no better works than to obey and serve all those who are set over us as superiors. For this reason also disobedience is a greater sin than murder, unchastity, theft and dishonesty, and all that these may include. For we can in no better way learn how to distinguish between greater and lesser sins than by noting the order of the Commandments of God, although there are distinctions also within the works of each Commandment. For who does not know that to curse is a greater sin than to be angry, to strike than to curse, to strike father and mother more than to strike any one else? Thus these seven Commandments teach us how we are to exercise ourselves in good works toward men, and first of all toward our superiors.

The first work is that we honor our own father and mother. And this honor consists not only in respectful demeanor, but in this: that we obey them, look up to, esteem and heed their words and example, accept what they say, keep silent and endure their treatment of us, so long as it is not contrary to the first three Commandments; in addition, when they need it, that we provide them with food, clothing and shelter. For not for nothing has He said: "Thou shalt honor them"; He does not say: "Thou shalt love them," although this also must be done. But honor is higher than mere love and includes a certain fear, which unites with love, and causes a man to fear offending them more than he fears the punishment. Just as there is fear in the honor we pay a sanctuary, and yet we do not flee from it as from a punishment, but draw near to it all the more. Such a fear mingled with love is the true honor; the other fear without any love is that which we have toward things which we despise or flee from, as we fear the hangman or punishment. There is no honor in that, for it is a fear without all love, nay, fear that has with it hatred and enmity. Of this we have a proverb of St. Jerome: What we fear, that we also hate. With such a fear God does not wish to be feared or honored, nor to have us honor our parents; but with the first, which is mingled with love and confidence.

II. This work appears easy, but few regard it aright. For where the parents are truly pious and love their children not according to the flesh, but (as they ought) instruct and direct them by words and works to serve God according to the first three Commandments, there the child’s own will is constantly broken, and it must do, leave undone, and suffer what its nature would most gladly do otherwise; and thereby it finds occasion to despise its parents, to murmur against them, or to do worse things. There love and fear depart, unless they have God’s grace. In like manner, when they punish and chastise, as they ought (at times even unjustly, which, however, does not harm the soul’s salvation), our evil nature resents the correction. Beside all this, there are some so wicked that they are ashamed of their parents because of poverty, lowly birth, deformity or dishonor, and allow these things to influence them more than the high Commandment of God, Who is above all things, and has with benevolent intent given them such parents, to exercise and try them in His

Commandment. But the matter becomes still worse when the child has children of its own; then love descends to them, and detracts very much from the love and honor toward the parents.

But what is said and commanded of parents must also be understood of those who, when the parents are dead or absent, take their place, such as relatives, god-parents, sponsors, temporal lords and spiritual fathers. For every one must be ruled and be subject to other men. Wherefore we here see again how many good works are taught in this Commandment, since in it all our life is made subject to other men. Hence it comes that obedience is so highly praised and all virtue and good works are included in it.

III. There is another dishonoring of parents, much more dangerous and subtile than this first, which adorns itself and passes for a real honor; that is, when a child has its own way, and the parents through natural love allow it. Here there is indeed mutual honor, here there is mutual love, and on all sides it is a precious thing, parents and child take mutual pleasure in one another.

This plague is so common that instances of the first form of dishonoring are very seldom seen. This is due to the fact that the parents are blinded, and neither know nor honor God according to the first three Commandments; hence also they cannot see what the children lack, and how they ought to teach and train them. For this reason they train them for worldly honors, pleasure and possessions, that they may by all means please men and reach high positions: this the children like, and they obey very gladly without gainsaying.

Thus God’s Commandment secretly comes to naught while all seems good, and that is fulfilled which is written in the Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, that the children are destroyed by their own parents, and they do like the king Manasseh, who sacrificed his own son to the idol Moloch and burned him, 2 Kings 21:1-26. What else is it but to sacrifice one’s own child to the idol and to burn it, when parents train their children more in the way of the world than in the way of God? let them go their way, and be burned up in worldly pleasure, love, enjoyment, possessions and honor, but let God’s love and honor and the desire of eternal blessings be quenched in them?

O how perilous it is to be a father or a mother, where flesh and blood are supreme! For, truly, the knowledge and fulfilment of the first three and the last six Commandments depends altogether upon this Commandment; since parents are commanded to teach them to their children, as Psalms 78:1-72 says, "How strictly has He commanded our fathers, that they should make known God’s Commandments to their children, that the generation to come might know them and declare them to their children’s children." This also is the reason why God bids us honor our parents, that is, to love them with fear; for that other love is without fear, therefore it is more dishonor than honor.

Now see whether every one does not have good works enough to do, whether he be father or child. But we blind men leave this untouched, and seek all sorts of other works which are not commanded.

IV. Now where parents are foolish and train their children after the fashion of the world, the children are in no way to obey them; for God, according to the first three Commandments, is to be more highly regarded than the parents. But training after the fashion of the world I call it, when they teach them to seek no more than pleasure, honor and possessions of this world or its power.

To wear decent clothes and to seek an honest living is a necessity, and not sin. Yet the heart of a child must be taught to be sorry that this miserable earthly life cannot well be lived, or even begun, without the striving after more adornment and more possessions than are necessary for the protection of the body against cold and for nourishment. Thus the child must be taught to grieve that, without its own will, it must do the world's will and play the fool with the rest of men, and endure such evil for the sake of something better and to avoid something worse. So Queen Esther wore her royal crown, and yet said to God, Esther 14, "Thou knowest, that the sign of my high estate, which is upon my head, has never yet delighted me, and I abhor it as a menstruous rag, and never wear it when I am by myself, but when I must do it and go before the people." The heart that is so minded wears adornment without peril; for it wears and does not wear, dances and does not dance, lives well and does not live well. And these are the secret souls, hidden brides of Christ, but they are rare; for it is hard not to delight in great adornment and parade. Thus St. Cecilia wore golden clothes at the command of her parents, but within against her body she wore a garment of hair.

Here some men say: "How then could I bring my children into society, and marry them honorably? I must make some display." Tell me, are not these the words of a heart which despairs of God, and trusts more on its own providing than on God's care? Whereas St. Peter teaches and says, 1 Peter 5:1-14, "Cast all your care upon Him, and be certain that He cares for you." It is a sign that they have never yet thanked God for their children, have never yet rightly prayed for them, have never yet commended them to Him; otherwise they would know and have experienced that they ought to ask God also for the marriage dower of their children, and await it from Him. Therefore also He permits them to go their way, with cares and worries, and yet succeed poorly.

V. Thus it is true, as men say, that parents, although they had nothing else to do, could attain salvation by training their own children; if they rightly train them to God's service, they will indeed have both hands full of good works to do. For what else are here the hungry, thirsty, naked, imprisoned, sick, strangers, than the souls of your own children? with whom God makes of your house a hospital, and sets you over them as chief nurse, to wait on them, to give them good words and works as meat and drink, that they may learn to trust, believe and fear God, and to place their hope on Him, to honor His Name, not to swear nor curse, to mortify themselves by praying, fasting, watching, working, to attend worship and to hear God's Word, and to keep the Sabbath, that they may learn to despise temporal things, to bear misfortune calmly, and not to fear death nor to love this life.

See, what great lessons are these, how many good works you have before you in your home, with your child, that needs all these things like a hungry, thirsty, naked, poor, imprisoned, sick soul. O what a blessed marriage and home were that where such parents were to be found! Truly it would be a real Church, a chosen cloister, yea, a paradise. Of such says Psalms 128:1-6 : "Blessed are they that fear God, and walk in His Commandments; thou shalt eat of the labor of thine hands; therefore thou shalt be happy, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine in thine house, and thy children shall be as the young scions of laden olive trees about thy table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed, that feareth the Lord," etc. Where are such parents? Where are they that ask after good works? Here none wishes to come. Why? God has commanded it; the devil, flesh and blood pull away from it; it makes no show, therefore it counts for nothing. Here this husband runs to St. James, that wife vows a pilgrimage to Our Lady; no one

vows that he will properly govern and teach himself and his child to the honor of God; he leaves behind those whom God has commanded him to keep in body and soul, and would serve God in some other place, which has not been commanded him. Such perversity no bishop forbids, no preacher corrects; nay, for covetousness' sake they confirm it and daily only invent more pilgrimages, elevations of saints, indulgence-fairs. God have pity on such blindness.

VI. On the other hand, parents cannot earn eternal punishment in any way more easily than by neglecting their own children in their own home, and not teaching them the things which have been spoken of above. Of what help is it, that they kill themselves with fasting, praying, making pilgrimages, and do all manner of good works? God will, after all, not ask them about these things at their death and in the day of judgment, but will require of them the children whom He entrusted to them. This is shown by that word of Christ, Luke 12:1-56, "Ye daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children. The days are coming, in which they shall say: Blessed are the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck." Why shall they lament, except because all their condemnation comes from their own children? If they had not had children, perhaps they might have been saved. Truly, these words ought to open the eyes of parents, that they may have regard to the souls of their children, so that the poor children be not deceived by their false, fleshly love, as if they had rightly honored their parents when they are not angry with them, or are obedient in worldly matters, by which their self-will is strengthened; although the Commandment places the parents in honor for the very purpose that the self-will of the children may be broken, and that the children may become humble and meek.

Just as it has been said of the other Commandments, that they are to be fulfilled in the chief work, so here too let no one suppose that the training and teaching of his children is sufficient of itself, except it be done in confidence of divine favor, so that a man doubt not that he is wellpleasing to God in his works, and that he let such works be nothing else than an exhortation and exercise of his faith, that he trust God and look to Him for blessings and a gracious will; without which faith no work lives, or is good and acceptable; for many heathen have trained their children beautifully, but it is all lost, because of their unbelief.

VII. The second work of this Commandment is to honor and obey the spiritual mother, the holy Christian Church, the spiritual power, so that we conform to what she commands, forbids, appoints, orders, binds and looses, and honor, fear and love the spiritual authority as we honor, love and fear our natural parents, and yield to it in all things which are not contrary to the first three Commandments.

Now with regard to this work, things are almost worse than with regard to the first. The spiritual authority should punish sin with the ban and with laws, and constrain its spiritual children to be good, in order that they might have reason to do this work and to exercise themselves in obeying and honoring it. Such zeal one does not see now; they act toward their subjects like the mothers who forsake their children and run after their lovers, as Hosea ii. says; they do not preach, they do not teach, they do not hinder, they do not punish, and there is no spiritual government at all left in Christendom.

What can I say of this work? A few fast-days and feast-days are left, and these had better be done away with. But no one gives this a thought, and there is nothing left except the ban for debt, and this should not be. But spiritual authority should look to it, that adultery, unchastity, usury, gluttony,

worldly show, excessive adornment, and such like open sin and shame might be most severely punished and corrected; and they should properly manage the endowments, monastic houses, parishes and schools, and earnestly maintain worship in them, provide for the young people, boys and girls, in schools and cloisters, with learned, pious men as teachers, that they might all be well trained, and so the older people give a good example and Christendom be filled and adorned with fine young people. So St. Paul teaches his disciple Titus, that he should rightly instruct and govern all classes, young and old, men and women. But now he goes to school who wishes; he is taught who governs and teaches himself; nay, it has, alas! come to such a pass that the places where good should be taught have become schools of knavery, and no one at all takes thought for the wild youth.

VIII. If the above order prevailed, one could say how honor and obedience should be given to the spiritual authority. But now the case is like that of the natural parents who let their children do as they please; at present the spiritual authority threatens, dispenses, takes money, and pardons more than it has power to pardon. I will here refrain from saying more; we see more of it than is good; greed holds the reins, and just what should be forbidden is taught; and it is clearly seen that the spiritual estate is in all things more worldly than the worldly estate itself. Meanwhile Christendom must be ruined, and this Commandment perish.

If there were a bishop who would zealously provide for all these classes, supervise, make visitations and be faithful as he ought, truly, one city would be too much for him. For in the time of the Apostles, when Christendom was at its best estate, each city had a bishop, although the smallest part of the inhabitants were Christians. How may things go when one bishop wants to have so much, another so much, this one the whole world, that one the fourth of it.

It is time that we pray God for mercy. Of spiritual power we have much; but of spiritual government nothing or little. Meanwhile may he help who can, that endowments, monastic houses, parishes and schools be well established and managed; and it would also be one of the works of the spiritual authority that it lessen the number of endowments, monastic houses and schools, where they cannot be cared for. It is much better that there be no monastic house or endowment than that there be evil government in them, whereby God is the more provoked to anger.

IX. Since, then, the authorities so entirely neglect their work, and are perverted, it must assuredly follow that they misuse their power, and undertake other and evil works, just as parents do when they give some command contrary to God. Here we must be wise; for the Apostle has said, that those times shall be perilous in which such authorities shall rule. For it seems as if we resisted their power if we do not do and leave undone all that they prescribe. Therefore we must take hold of the first three Commandments and the First Table, and be certain that no man, neither bishop, nor pope, nor angel, may command or determine anything that is contrary to or hinders these three Commandments, or does not help them; and if they attempt such things, it is not valid and amounts to nothing; and we also sin if we follow and obey, or even tolerate such acts.

From this it is easy to understand that the commands of fasting do not include the sick, the pregnant women, or those who for other reasons cannot fast without injury. And, to rise higher, in our time nothing comes from Rome but a fair of spiritual wares, which are openly and shamelessly bought and sold, indulgences, parishes, monastic houses, bishoprics, provostships, benefices, and every thing that has ever been founded to God’s service far and wide; whereby not only is all

money and wealth of the world drawn and driven to Rome (for this would be the smallest harm), but the parishes, bishoprics and prelacies are torn to pieces, deserted, laid waste, and so the people are neglected, God's Word and God's Name and honor come to naught, and faith is destroyed, so that at last such institutions and offices fall into the hands not only of unlearned and unfit men, but the greater part into the hands of the Romans, the greatest villains in the world. Thus what has been founded for God's service, for the instruction, government and improvement of the people, must now serve the stable-boys, mule-drivers, yea, not to use plainer language, Roman whores and knaves; yet we have no more thanks than that they mock us for it as fools.

X. If then such unbearable abuses are all carried on in the Name of God and St. Peter, just as if God's Name and the spiritual power were instituted to blaspheme God's honor, to destroy Christendom, body and soul: we are indeed in duty bound to resist in a proper way as much as we can. And here we must do like pious children whose parents have become insane, and first see by what right that which has been founded for God's service in our lands, or has been ordained to provide for our children, must be allowed to do its work in Rome, and to lapse here, where it ought to serve. How can we be so foolish?

Since then bishops and spiritual prelates stand idle in this matter, offer no opposition or are afraid, and thus allow Christendom to perish, it is our duty first of all humbly to call upon God for help to prevent this thing, then to put our hand to work to the same end, send the courtesans and those who bear letters from Rome about their business, in a reasonable, gentle way inform them that, if they wish to care for their parishes properly, they shall live in them and improve the people by preaching or by good example; or if not, and they do live in Rome or elsewhere, lay waste and debauch the churches, then let the pope feed them, whom they serve. It is not fitting that we support the pope's servants, his people, yes, his knaves and whores, to the destruction and injury of our souls.

Lo! these are the true Turks, whom the kings, princes and the nobility ought to attack first: not seeking thereby their own benefit, but only the improvement of Christendom, and the prevention of the blasphemy and disgracing of the divine Name; and so to deal with the clergy as with a father who has lost his sense and wits; who, if one did not restrain him and resist him (although with all humility and honor), might destroy child, heir and everybody. Thus we are to honor Roman authority as our highest father; and yet, since they have gone mad and lost their senses, not allow them to do what they attempt, lest Christendom be destroyed thereby.

XI. Some think, this should be referred to a General Council. To this I say: No! For we have had many councils in which this has been proposed, namely, at Constance, Basel and the last Roman Council; but nothing has been accomplished, and things have grown ever worse, Moreover, such councils are entirely useless, since Roman wisdom has contrived the device that the kings and princes must beforehand take an oath to let the Romans remain what they are and keep what they have, and so has put up a bar to ward off all reformation, to retain protection and liberty for all their knavery, although this oath is demanded, forced and taken contrary to God and the law, and by it the doors are locked against the Holy Spirit, Who should rule the councils. But this would be the best, and also the only remedy remaining, if kings, princes, nobility, cities and communities themselves began and opened a way for reformation, so that the bishops and clergy, who now are afraid, would have reason to follow. For here nothing else shall and must be considered except

God’s first three Commandments, against which neither Rome, nor heaven nor earth can command or forbid anything. And the ban or threatening with which they think they can prevent this, amounts to nothing; just as it amounts to nothing if an insane father severely threatens the son who restrains him or locks him up.

XII. The third work of this Commandment is to obey the temporal authority, as Paul teaches, Romans 13:1-14, and Titus 3:1-15, and St. Peter, 1 Peter 2:1-25 : "Submit yourselves to the king as supreme, and to the princes as his ambassadors, and to all the ordinances of the worldly power." But it is the work of the temporal power to protect its subjects, and to punish thievery, robbery, and adultery, as St. Paul says, Romans 13:1-14 : "It beareth not the sword in vain; it serves God with it, to the terror of evil doers, and to the protection of the good."

Here men sin in two ways. First, if they lie to the government, deceive it, and are disloyal, neither obey nor do as it has ordered and commanded, whether with their bodies or their possessions. For even if the government does injustice, as the King of Babylon did to the people of Israel, yet God would have it obeyed, without treachery and deception. Secondly, when men speak evil of the government and curse it, and when a man cannot revenge himself and abuses the government with grumbling and evil words, publicly or secretly.

In all this we are to regard that which St. Peter bids us regard, namely, that its power, whether it do right or wrong, cannot harm the soul, but only the body and property; unless indeed it should try openly to compel us to do wrong against God or men; as in former days when the magistrates were not yet Christians, and as the Turk is now said to do. For to suffer wrong destroys no one’s soul, nay, it improves the soul, although it inflicts loss upon the body and property; but to do wrong, that destroys the soul, although it should gain all the world’s wealth.

XIII. This also is the reason why there is not such great danger in the temporal power as in the spiritual, when it does wrong. For the temporal power can do no harm, I since it has nothing to do with preaching and faith and the first three Commandments. But the spiritual power does harm not only when it does wrong, but also when it neglects its duty and busies itself with other things, even if they were better than the very best works of the temporal power. Therefore, we must resist it when it does not do right, and not resist the temporal power although it does wrong. For the poor people believe and do as they see the spiritual power believing and doing; if they are not set an example and are not taught, then they also believe nothing and do nothing; since this power is instituted for no other reason than to lead the people in faith to God. All this is not found in the temporal power; for it may do and leave undone what it will, my faith to God still goes its way and works its works, because I need not believe what it believes.

Therefore, also, the temporal power is a very small thing in God’s sight, and far too slightly regarded by Him, that for its sake, whether it do right or wrong, we should resist, become disobedient and quarrel. On the other hand, the spiritual power is an exceeding great blessing, and far too precious in His eyes, that the very least of Christians should endure and keep silent, if it departs a hair’s breadth from its own duty, not to say when it does the very opposite of its duty, as we now see it do every day.

XIV. In this power also there is much abuse. First, when it follows the flatterers, which is a common and especially harmful plague of this power, against which no one can sufficiently guard

and protect himself. Here it is led by the nose, and oppresses the common people, becomes a government of the like of which a heathen says: "The spider-webs catch the small flies, but the mill-stones roll through." So the laws, ordinances and government of one and the same authority hold the small men, and the great are free; and where the prince is not himself so wise that he needs nobody's advice, or has such a standing that they fear him, there will and must be (unless God should do a special wonder) a childish government.

For this reason God has considered evil, unfit rulers the greatest of plagues, as He threatens, Isaiah 3:1-26, "I will take away from them every man of valor, and will give children to be their princes and babes to rule over them." Four plagues God has named in Scripture, Ezekiel 14:1-23. The first and slightest, which also David chose, is pestilence, the second is famine, the third is war, the fourth is all manner of evil beasts, such as lions, wolves, serpents, dragons; these are the wicked rulers. For where these are, the land is destroyed, not only in body and property, as in the others, but also in honor, discipline, virtue and the soul's salvation. For pestilence and famine make people good and rich; but war and wicked rulers bring to naught everything that has to do with temporal and eternal possessions.

XV. A prince must also be very wise and not at all times undertake to enforce his own will, although he may have the authority and the very best cause. For it is a far nobler virtue to endure wrong to one's authority than to risk property and person, if it is advantageous to the subjects; since worldly rights attach only to temporal goods.

Hence, it is a very foolish saying: I have a right to it, therefore I will take it by storm and keep it, although all sorts of misfortune may come to others thereby. So we read of the Emperor Octavianus, that he did not wish to make war, however just his cause might be, unless there were sure indications of greater benefit than harm, or at least that the harm would not be intolerable, and said: " War is like fishing with a golden net; the loss risked is always greater than the catch can be." For he who guides a wagon must walk far otherwise than if he were walking alone; when alone he may walk, jump, and do as he will; but when he drives, he must so guide and adapt himself that the wagon and horses can follow him, and regard that more than his own will. So also a prince leads a multitude with him and must not walk and act as he wills, but as the multitude can, considering their need and advantage more than his will and pleasure. For when a prince rules after his own mad will and follows his own opinion, he is like a mad driver, who rushes straight ahead with horse and wagon, through bushes, thorns, ditches, water, up hill and down dale, regardless of roads and bridges; he will not drive long, all will go to smash.

Therefore it would be most profitable for rulers, that they read, or have read to them, from youth on, the histories, both in sacred and in profane books, in which they would find more examples and skill in ruling than in all the books of law; as we read that the kings of Persia did, Esther 6:1-14. For examples and histories benefit and teach more than the laws and statutes: there actual experience teaches, here untried and uncertain words.

XVI. Three special, distinct works all rulers might do in our times, particularly in our lands. First, to make an end of the horrible gluttony and drunkenness, not only because of the excess, but also because of its expense. For through seasonings and spices and the like, without which men could well live, no little loss of temporal wealth has come and daily is coming upon our lands. To prevent these two great evils would truly give the temporal power enough to do, for the inroads they have

made are wide and deep. And how could those in power serve God better and thereby also improve their own land?

Secondly, to forbid the excessive cost of clothing, whereby so much wealth is wasted, and yet only the world and the flesh are served; it is fearful to think that such abuse is to be found among the people who have been pledged, baptised and consecrated to Christ, the Crucified, and who should bear the Cross after Him and prepare for the life to come by dying daily. If some men erred through ignorance, it might be borne; but that it is practised so freely, without punishment, without shame, without hindrance, nay, that praise and fame are sought thereby, this is indeed an unchristian thing. Thirdly, to drive out the usurious buying of rent-charges, which in the whole world ruins, consumes and troubles all lands, peoples and cities through its cunning form, by which it appears not to be usury, while in truth it is worse than usury, because men are not on their guard against it as against open usury. See, these are the three Jews, as men say, who suck the whole world dry. Here princes ought not to sleep, nor be lazy, if they would give a good account of their office to God.

XVII. Here too ought to be mentioned the knavery which is practised by officiales and other episcopal and spiritual officers, who ban, load, hunt and drive the poor people with great burdens, as long as a penny remains. This ought to be prevented by the temporal sword, since there is no other help or remedy.

O, would God in heaven, that some time a government might be established that would do away with the public bawdy-houses, as was done among the people of Israel! It is indeed an unchristian sight, that public houses of sin are maintained among Christians, a thing formerly altogether unheard of. It should be a rule that boys and girls should be married early and such vice be prevented. Such a rule and custom ought to be sought for by both the spiritual and the temporal power. If it was possible among the Jews, why should it not also be possible among Christians? Nay, if it is possible in villages, towns and some cities, as we all see, why should it not be possible everywhere?

But the trouble is, there is no real government in the world. No one wants to work, therefore the mechanics must give their workmen holiday: then they are free and no one can tame them. But if there were a rule that they must do as they are bid, and no one would give them work in other places, this evil would to a large extent be mended. God help us! I fear that here the wish is far greater than the hope; but this does not excuse us.

Now see, here only a few works of magistrates are indicated, but they are so good and so many, that they have superabundant good works to do every hour and could constantly serve God. But these works, like the others, should also be done in faith, yea, be an exercise of faith, so that no one expect to please God by the works, but by confident trust in His favor do such works only to the honor and praise of his gracious God, thereby to serve and benefit his neighbor.

XVIII. The fourth work of this Commandment is obedience of servants and workmen toward their lords and ladies, masters and mistresses. Of this St. Paul says, Titus 2:1-15 : "Thou shalt exhort servants that they highly honor their masters, be obedient, do what pleases them, not cheating them nor opposing them"; for this reason also: because they thereby bring the doctrine of Christ and our faith into good repute, that the heathen cannot complain of us and be offended. St. Peter

also says: "Servants, be subject to your masters, for the fear of God, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward and harsh. For this is acceptable with God, if a man suffers harshness, being innocent."

Now there is the greatest complaint in the world about servants and working men, that they are disobedient, unfaithful, unmannerly, and over-reaching; this is a plague sent of God. And truly, this is the one work of servants whereby they may be saved; truly they need not make pilgrimages or do this thing or the other; they have enough to do if their heart is only set on this, that they gladly do and leave undone what they know pleases their masters and mistresses, and all this in a simple faith; not that they would by their works gain much merit, but that they do it all in the confidence of divine favor (in which all merits are to be found), purely for nothing, out of the love and good-will toward God which grows out of such confidence. And all such works they should think of as an exercise and exhortation ever to strengthen their faith and confidence more and more. For, as has now been frequently said, this faith makes all works good, yea, it must do them and be the master-workman.

XIX. On the other hand, the masters and mistresses should not rule their servants, maids and workingmen roughly, not look to all things too closely, occasionally overlook something, and for peace' sake make allowances. For it is not possible that everything be done perfectly at all times among any class of men, as long as we live on earth in imperfection. Of this St. Paul says, Colossians 4:1-18, "Masters, do unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." Therefore as the masters do not wish God to deal too sharply with them, but that many things be overlooked through grace, they also should be so much the more gentle toward their servants, and overlook some things, and yet have a care that the servants do right and learn to fear God.

But see now, what good works a householder and a mistress can do, how finely God offers us all good works so near at hand, so manifold, so continuously, that we have no need of asking after good works, and might well forget the other showy, far-off, invented works of men, such as making pilgrimages, building churches, seeking indulgence, and the like.

Here I ought naturally also to say how a wife ought to be obedient, subject to her husband as to her superior, give way to him, keep silent and give up to him, where it is a matter not contrary to God's commands. On the other hand, the husband should love his wife, overlook a little, and not deal strictly with her, of which matter St. Peter and St. Paul have said much. But this has its place in the further explanation of the Ten Commandments, and is easily inferred from these passages.

XX. But all that has been said of these works is included in these two, obedience and considerateness. Obedience is the duty of subjects, considerateness that of masters, that they take care to rule their subjects well, deal kindly with them, and do everything whereby they may benefit and help them. That is their way to heaven, and these are the best works they can do on earth; with these they are more acceptable to God than if without these they did nothing but miracles. So says St. Paul, Romans 12:1-21 : "He that ruleth, let him do it with diligence"; as who should say: "Let him not allow himself to be led astray by what other people or classes of people do; let him not look to this work or to that, whether it be splendid or obscure; but let him look to his own position, and think only how he may benefit those who are subject to him; by this let him stand, nor let himself be torn from it, although heaven stood open before him, nor be driven from it,

although hell were chasing him. This is the right road that leads him to heaven."

Oh, if a man were so to regard himself and his position, and attended to its duties alone, how rich in good works would he be in a short time, so quietly and secretly that no one would notice it except God alone! But now we let all this go, and one runs to the Carthusians, another to this place, a third to that, just as if good works and God's Commandments had been thrown into corners and hidden; although it is written in Proverbs 1:1-33, that divine wisdom crieth out her commandments publicly in the streets, in the midst of the people and in the gates of the cities; which means that they are present in profusion in all places, in all stations of life and at all times, and we do not see them, but in our blindness look for them elsewhere. This Christ declared, Matthew 24:1-51 : "If they shall say unto you: Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not. If they shall say: Behold, He is in the desert, go not forth; behold, He is in the secret chambers, believe it not; they are false prophets and false Christs."

XXI. Again, obedience is the duty of subjects, that they direct all their diligence and effort to do and to leave undone what their over-lords desire of them, that they do not allow themselves to be torn or driven from this, whatever another do. Let no man think that he lives well or does good works, whether it be prayer or fasting, or by whatever name it may be called, if he does not earnestly and diligently exercise himself in this.

But if it should happen, as it often does, that the temporal power and authorities, as they are called, should urge a subject to do contrary to the Commandments of God, or hinder him from doing them, there obedience ends, and that duty is annulled. Here a man must say as St. Peter says to the rulers of the Jews: "We ought to obey God rather than men." He did not say: "We must not obey men"; for that would be wrong; but he said: "God rather than men." Thus, if a prince desired to go to war, and his cause was manifestly unrighteous, we should not follow nor help him at all; since God has commanded that we shall not kill our neighbor, nor do him injustice. Likewise, if he bade us bear false witness, steal, lie or deceive and the like. Here we ought rather give up goods, honor, body, and life, that God's Commandments may stand.

The four preceding Commandments have their works in the understanding, that is, they take a man captive, rule him and make him subject, so that he rule not himself, approve not himself, think not highly of himself; but in humility know himself and allow himself to be led, that pride be prevented. The following Commandments deal with the passions and lust of men, that these also be killed.

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Chapter 9

01.07 Starts discussion of Fifth Commandment

I. The passions of anger and revenge, of which the Fifth Commandment says, "Thou shalt not kill." This Commandment has one work, which however includes many and dispels many vices, and is called meekness. Now this is of two kinds. The one has a beautiful splendor, and there is nothing back of it. This we practice toward our friends and those who do us good and give us pleasure with goods, honor and favor, or who do not offend us with words nor with deeds. Such meekness irrational animals have, lions and snakes, Jews, Turks, knaves, murderers, bad women. These are all content and gentle when men do what they want, or let them alone; and yet there are not a few who, deceived by such worthless meekness, cover over their anger and excuse it, saying: "I would indeed not be angry, if I were left alone." Certainly, my good man, so the evil spirit also would be meek if he had his own way. Dissatisfaction and resentment overwhelm you in order that they may show you how full of anger and wickedness you are, that you may be admonished to strive after meekness and to drive out anger.

The second form of meekness is good through and through, that which is shown toward opponents and enemies, does them no harm, does not revenge itself, does not curse nor revile, does not speak evil of them, does not meditate evil against them, although they had taken away goods, honor, life, friends and everything. Nay, where it is possible, it returns good for evil, speaks well of them, thinks well of them, prays for them. Of this Christ says, Matthew 5:1-48 : "Do good to them that despitefully use you. Pray for them that persecute you and revile you." And Paul, Romans xii: "Bless them which curse you, and by no means curse them, but do good to them."

II. Behold how this precious, excellent work has been lost among Christians, so that nothing now everywhere prevails except strife, war, quarreling, anger, hatred, envy, back-biting, cursing, slandering, injuring, vengeance, and all manner of angry works and words; and yet, with all this, we have our many holidays, hear masses, say our prayers, establish churches, and more such spiritual finery, which God has not commanded. We shine resplendently and excessively, as if we were the most holy Christians there ever were. And so because of these mirrors and masks we allow God’s Commandment to go to complete ruin, and no one considers or examines himself, how near or how far he be from meekness and the fulfilment of this Commandment; although God has said, that not he who does such works, but he who keeps His Commandments, shall enter into eternal life.

Now, since no one lives on earth upon whom God does not bestow an enemy and opponent as a proof of his own anger and wickedness, that is, one who afflicts him in goods, honor, body or friends, and thereby tries whether anger is still present, whether he can be well-disposed toward his enemy, speak well of him, do good to him, and not intend any evil against him; let him come forward who asks what he shall do that he may do good works, please God and be saved. Let him set his enemy before him, keep him constantly before the eyes of his heart, as an exercise whereby he may curb his spirit and train his heart to think kindly of his enemy, wish him well, care for him and pray for him; and then, when opportunity offers, speak well of him and do good to him.

Let him who will, try this and if he find not enough to do all his life long, he may convict me of lying, and say that my contention was wrong. But if this is what God desires, and if He will be paid in no other coin, of what avail is it, that we busy ourselves with other great works which are not commanded, and neglect this? Therefore God says, Matthew 5:1-48 "I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his neighbor, is in danger of the judgment; but whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool (that is, all manner of invective, cursing, reviling, slandering), he shall be in danger of everlasting fire." What remains then for the outward act, striking, wounding, killing, injuring, etc., if the thoughts and words of anger are so severely condemned?

III. But where there is true meekness, there the heart is pained at every evil which happens to one's enemy. And these are the true children and heirs of God and brethren of Christ, Whose heart was so pained for us all when He died on the holy Cross. Even so we see a pious judge passing sentence upon the criminal with sorrow, and regretting the death which the law imposes. Here the act seems to be one of anger and harshness. So thoroughly good is meekness that even in such works of anger it remains, nay, it torments the heart most sorely when it must be angry and severe.

But here we must watch, that we be not meek contrary to God's honor and Commandment. For it is written of Moses that he was the very meekest man on earth, and yet, when the Jews had worshiped the golden calf and provoked God to anger, he put many of them to death, and thereby made atonement before God. Likewise it is not fitting that the magistrates should be idle and allow sin to have sway, and that we say nothing. My own possessions, my honor, my injury, I must not regard, nor grow angry because of them; but God's honor and Commandment we must protect, and injury or injustice to our neighbor we must prevent, the magistrates with the sword, the rest of us with reproof and rebuke, yet always with pity for those who have merited the punishment.

This high, noble, sweet work can easily be learned, if we perform it in faith, and as an exercise of faith. For if faith does not doubt the favor of God nor question that God is gracious, it will become quite easy for a man to be gracious and favorable to his neighbor, however much he may have sinned; for we have sinned much more against God. Behold, a short Commandment this, but it presents a long, mighty exercise of good works and of faith.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

In this Commandment too a good work is commanded, which includes much and drives away much vice; it is called purity, or chastity, of which much is written and preached, and it is well known to every one, only that it is not as carefully observed and practised as other works which are not commanded. So ready are we to do what is not commanded and to leave undone what is commanded. We see that the world is full of shameful works of unchastity, indecent words, tales and ditties, temptation to which is daily increased through gluttony and drunkenness, idleness and frippery. Yet we go our way as if we were Christians; when we have been to church, have said our little prayer, have observed the fasts and feasts, then we think our whole duty is done.

Now, if no other work were commanded but chastity alone, we would all have enough to do with this one; so perilous and raging a vice is unchastity. It rages in all our members: in the thoughts of our hearts, in the seeing of our eyes, in the hearing of our ears, in the words of our mouth, in the works of our hands and feet and all our body. To control all these requires labor and effort; and

thus the Commandments of God teach us how great truly good works are, nay, that it is impossible for us of our own strength to conceive a good work, to say nothing of attempting or doing it. St. Augustine says, that among all the conflicts of the Christian the conflict of chastity is the hardest, for the one reason alone, that it continues daily without ceasing, and chastity seldom prevails. This all the saints have wept over and lamented, as St. Paul does, Romans 7:1-25 : "I find in me, that is in my flesh, no good thing."

II. If this work of chastity is to be permanent, it will drive to many other good works, to fasting and temperance over against gluttony and drunkenness, to watching and early rising over against laziness and excessive sleep, to work and labor over against idleness. For gluttony, drunkenness, lying late abed, loafing and being without work are weapons of unchastity, with which chastity is quickly overcome. On the other hand, the holy Apostle Paul calls fasting, watching and labor godly weapons, with which unchastity is mastered; but, as has been said above, these exercises must do no more than overcome unchastity, and not pervert nature.

Above all this, the strongest defence is prayer and the Word of God; namely, that when evil lust stirs, a man flee to prayer, call upon God’s mercy and help, read and meditate on the Gospel, and in it consider Christ’s sufferings. Thus says Psalms 137:1-9 : "Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth the little ones of Babylon against the rock," that is, if the heart runs to the Lord Christ with its evil thoughts while they are yet young and just beginning; for Christ is a Rock, on which they are ground to powder and come to naught.

See, here each one will find enough to do with himself, and more than enough, and will be given many good works to do within himself. But now no one uses prayer, fasting, watching, labor for this purpose, but men stop in these works as if they were in themselves the whole purpose, although they should be arranged so as to fulfil the work of this Commandment and purify us daily more and more.

Some have also indicated more things which should be avoided, such as soft beds and clothes, that we should avoid excessive adornment, and neither associate nor talk with members of the opposite sex, nor even look upon them, and whatsoever else may be conducive to chastity. In all these things no one can fix a definite rule and measure. Each one must watch himself and see what things are needful to him for chastity, in what quantity and how long they help him to be chaste, that he may thus choose and observe them for himself; if he cannot do this, let him for a time give himself up to be controlled by another, who may hold him to such observance until he can learn to rule himself. This was the purpose for which the monastic houses were established of old, to teach young people discipline and purity.

III. In this work a good strong faith is a great help, more noticeably so than in almost any other; so that for this reason also Isaiah 11:1-16 says that "faith is a girdle of the reins," that is, a guard of chastity. For he who so lives that he looks to God for all grace, takes pleasure in spiritual purity; therefore he can so much more easily resist fleshly impurity: and in such faith the Spirit tells him of a certainty how he shall avoid evil thoughts and everything that is repugnant to chastity. For as the faith in divine favor lives without ceasing and works in all works, so it also does not cease its admonitions in all things that are pleasing to God or displease Him; as St. John says in his Epistle: "Ye need not that any man teach you: for the divine anointing, that is, the Spirit of God, teacheth you of all things."

Yet we must not despair if we are not soon rid of the temptation, nor by any means imagine that we are free from it as long as we live, and we must regard it only as an incentive and admonition to prayer, fasting, watching, laboring, and to other exercises for the quenching of the flesh, especially to the practice and exercise of faith in God. For that chastity is not precious which is at ease, but that which is at war with unchastity, and fights, and without ceasing drives out all the poison with which the flesh and the evil spirit attack it. Thus St. Peter says, "I beseech you, abstain from fleshly desires and lusts, which war always against the soul." And St. Paul, Romans 6:1-23, "Ye shall not obey the body in its lusts." In these and like passages it is shown that no one is without evil lust; but that everyone shall and must daily fight against it. But although this brings uneasiness and pain, it is none the less a work that gives pleasure, in which we shall have our comfort and satisfaction. For they who think they make an end of temptation by yielding to it, only set themselves on fire the more; and although for a time it is quiet, it comes again with more strength another time, and finds the nature weaker than before.

Thou shalt not steal.

This Commandment also has a work, which embraces very many good works, and is opposed to many vices, and is called in German Mildigkeit, "benevolence;" which is a work ready to help and serve every one with one’s goods. And it fights not only against theft and robbery, but against all stinting in temporal goods which men may practise toward one another: such as greed, usury, overcharging and plating wares that sell as solid, counterfeit wares, short measures and weights, and who could tell all the ready, novel, clever tricks, which multiply daily in every trade, by which every one seeks his own gain through the other’s loss, and forgets the rule which says: "What ye wish that others do to you, that do ye also to them." If every one kept this rule before his eyes in his trade, business, and dealings with his neighbor, he would readily find how he ought to buy and sell, take and give, lend and give for nothing, promise and keep his promise, and the like. And when we consider the world in its doings, how greed controls all business, we would not only find enough to do, if we would make an honorable living before God, but also be overcome with dread and fear for this perilous, miserable life, which is so exceedingly overburdened, entangled and taken captive with cares of this temporal life and dishonest seeking of gain.

II. Therefore the Wise Man says not in vain: "Happy is the rich man, who is found without blemish, who does not run after gold, and has not set his confidence in the treasures of money. Who is he? We will praise him, that he has done wondrous things in his life." As if he would say: "None such is found, or very few indeed." Yea, they are very few who notice and recognise such lust for gold in themselves. For greed has here a very beautiful, fine cover for its shame, which is called provision for the body and natural need, under cover of which it accumulates wealth beyond all limits and is never satisfied; so that he who would in this matter keep himself clean, must truly, as he says, do miracles or wondrous things in his life.

Now see, if a man wish not only to do good works, but even miracles, which God may praise and be pleased with, what need has he to look elsewhere? Let him take heed to himself, and see to it that he run not after gold, nor set his trust on money, but let the gold run after him, and money wait on his favor, and let him love none of these things nor set his heart on them; then he is the true, generous, wonderworking, happy man, as Job 31:1-40 says: "I have never yet: relied upon gold, and never yet made gold my hope and confidence." And Psalms 62:1-12 : "If riches increase, set

not your heart upon them." So Christ also teaches, Matthew 6:1-34, that we shall take no thought, what we shall eat and drink and wherewithal we shall be clothed, since God cares for this, and knows that we have need of all these things.

But some say: "Yes, rely upon that, take no thought, and see whether a roasted chicken will fly into your mouth!" I do not say that a man shall not labor and seek a living; but he shall not worry, not be greedy, not despair, thinking that he will not have enough; for in Adam we are all condemned to labor, when God says to him, Genesis iii, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." And Job 5:1-27, "As the birds to flying, so is man born unto labor." Now the birds fly without worry and greed, and so we also should labor without worry and greed; but if you do worry and are greedy, wishing that the roasted chicken fly into your mouth: worry and be greedy, and see whether you will thereby fulfil God's Commandment and be saved!

III. This work faith teaches of itself. For if the heart looks for divine favor and relies upon it, how is it possible that a man should be greedy and worry? He must be sure beyond a doubt that God cares for him; therefore he does not cling to money; he uses it also with cheerful liberality for the benefit of his neighbor, and knows well that he will have enough, however much he may give away. For his God, Whom he trusts, will not lie to him nor forsake him, as it is written, Psalms 37:1-40 : "I have been young, and now am old; never have I seen a believing man, who trusts God, that is a righteous man, forsaken, or his child begging bread." Therefore the Apostle calls no other sin idolatry except covetousness, because this sin shows most plainly that it does not trust God for anything, expects more good from its money than from God; and, as has been said, it is by such confidence that God is truly honored or dishonored.

And, indeed, in this Commandment it can be clearly seen how all good works must be done in faith; for here every one most surely feels that the cause of covetousness is distrust and the cause of liberality is faith. For because a man trusts God, he is generous and does not doubt that he will always have enough; on the other hand, a man is covetous and worries because he does not trust God. Now, as in this Commandment faith is the master-workman and the doer of the good work of liberality, so it is also in all the other Commandments, and without such faith liberality is of no worth, but rather a careless squandering of money.

IV. By this we are also to know that this liberality shall extend even to enemies and opponents. For what manner of good deed is that, if we are liberal only to our friends? As Christ teaches, Luke 6:1-49, even a wicked man does that to another who is his friend. Besides, the brute beasts also do good and are generous to their kind. Therefore a Christian must rise higher, let his liberality serve also the undeserving, evil-doers, enemies, and the ungrateful, even as his heavenly Father makes His sun to rise on good and evil, and the rain to fall on the grateful and ungrateful.

But here it will be found how hard it is to do good works according to God's Commandment, how nature squirms, twists and writhes in its opposition to it, although it does the good works of its own choice easily and gladly. Therefore take your enemies, the ungrateful, and do good to them; then you will find how near you are to this Commandment or how far from it, and how all your life you will always have to do with the practice of this work. For if your enemy needs you and you do not help him when you can, it is just the same as if you had stolen what belonged to him, for you owed it to him to help him. So says St. Ambrose, "Feed the hungry; if you do not feed him, you have, as far as you are concerned, slain him." And in this Commandment are included the works of mercy,

which Christ will require at men’s hands at the last day.

But the magistrates and cities ought to see to it that the vagabonds, pilgrims and mendicants from foreign lands be debarred, or at least allowed only under restrictions and rules, so that knaves be not permitted to run at large under the guise of mendicants, and their knavery, of which there now is much, be prohibited. I have spoken at greater length of this Commandment in the Treatise on Usury.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

This Commandment seems small, and yet is so great, that he who would rightly keep it must risk and imperil life and limb, goods and honor, friends and all that he has; and yet it includes no more than the work of that small member, the tongue, and is called in German Wahrheit sagen, "telling the truth" and, where there is need, gainsaying lies; so that it forbids many evil works of the tongue. First: those which are committed by speaking, and those which are committed by keeping silent. By speaking, when a man has an unjust law-suit, and wants to prove and maintain his case by a false argument, catch his neighbor with subtilty, produce everything that strengthens and furthers his own cause, and withhold and discount everything that furthers his neighbor’s good cause; in doing which he does not do to his neighbor as he would have his neighbor do to him. This some men do for the sake of gain, some to avoid loss or shame, thereby seeking their own advantage more than God’s Commandment, and excuse themselves by saying: Vigilanti jura subveniunt, "the law helps him who watches"; just as if it were not as much their duty to watch for their neighbor’s cause as for their own. Thus they intentionally allow their neighbor’s cause to be lost, although they know that it is just. This evil is at present so common that I fear no court is held and no suit tried but that one side sins against this Commandment. And even when they cannot accomplish it, they yet have the unrighteous spirit and will, so that they would wish the neighbor’s just cause to be lost and their unjust cause to prosper. This sin is most frequent when the opponent is a prominent man or an enemy. For a man wants to revenge himself on his enemy: but the ill will of a man of prominence he does not wish to bring upon himself; and then begins the flattering and fawning, or, on the other hand, the withholding of the truth. Here no one is willing to run the risk of disfavor and displeasure, loss and danger for the truth’s sake; and so God’s Commandment must perish. And this is almost universally the way of the world. He who would keep this Commandment, would have both hands full doing only those good works which concern the tongue. And then, how many are there who allow themselves to be silenced and swerved aside from the truth by presents and gifts! so that in all places it is truly a high, great, rare work, not to be a false witness against one’s neighbor.

II. There is a second bearing of witness to the truth, which is still greater, with which we must fight against the evil spirits; and this concerns not temporal matters, but the Gospel and the truth of faith, which the evil spirit has at no time been able to endure, and always so manages that the great among men, whom it is hard to resist, must oppose and persecute it. Of which it is written in Psalms 82:1-8, "Rid the poor out of the hand of the wicked, and help the forsaken to maintain his just cause."

Such persecution, it is true, has now become infrequent; but that is the fault of the spiritual prelates, who do not stir up the Gospel, but let it perish, and so have abandoned the very thing because of which such witnessing and persecution should arise; and in its place they teach us

their own law and what pleases them. For this reason the devil also does not stir, since by vanquishing the Gospel he has also vanquished faith in Christ, and everything goes as he wishes. But if the Gospel should be stirred up and be heard again, without doubt the whole world would be aroused and moved, and the greater portion of the kings, princes, bishops, doctors and clergy, and all that is great, would oppose it and rage against it, as has always happened when the Word of God has come to light; for the world cannot endure what comes from God. This is proved in Christ, Who was and is the very greatest and most precious and best of all that God has; yet the world not only did not receive Him, but persecuted Him more cruelly than all others who had ever come forth from God.

Therefore, as at that time, so at all times there are few who stand by the divine truth, and imperil and risk life and limb, goods and honor, and all that they have, as Christ has foretold: "Ye shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake." And: "Many of them shall be offended in Me." Yea, if this truth were attacked by peasants, herdsmen, stable-boys and men of no standing, who would not be willing and able to confess it and to bear witness to it? But when the pope, and the bishops, together with princes and kings attack it, all men flee, keep silent, dissemble, in order that they may not lose goods, honor, favor and life.

III. Why do they do this? Because they have no faith in God, and expect nothing good from Him. For where such faith and confidence are, there is also a bold, defiant, fearless heart, that ventures and stands by the truth, though it cost life or cloak, though it be against pope or kings; as we see that the martyrs did. For such a heart is satisfied and rests easy because it has a gracious, loving God. Therefore it despises all the favor, grace, goods and honor of men, lets them come and go as they please; as is written in Psalms 15:1-5 : "He contemneth them that contemn God, and honoreth them that fear the Lord"; that is, the tyrants, the mighty, who persecute the truth and despise God, he does not fear, he does not regard them, he despiseth them; on the other hand, those who are persecuted for the truth's sake, and fear God more than men, to these he clings, these he defends, these he honors, let it vex whom it may; as it is written of Moses, Hebrews 11:1-40, that he stood by his brethren, regardless of the mighty king of Egypt.

Lo, in this Commandment again you see briefly that faith must be the master-workman in this work also, so that without it no one has courage to do this work: so entirely are all works comprised in faith, as has now been often said. Therefore, apart from faith all works are dead, however good the form and name they bear. For as no one does the work of this Commandment except he be firm and fearless in the confidence of divine favor; so also he does no work of any other Commandment without the same faith: thus every one may easily by this Commandment test and weigh himself whether he be a Christian and truly believe in Christ, and thus whether he is doing good works or no. Now we see how the Almighty God has not only set our Lord Jesus Christ before us that we should believe in Him with such confidence, but also holds before us in Him an example of this same confidence and of such good works, to the end that we should believe in Him, follow Him and abide in Him forever; as He says, John 14:1-31 : "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life," -- the Way, in which we follow Him; the Truth, that we believe in Him; the Life, that we live in Him forever.

From all this it is now manifest that all other works, which are not commanded, are perilous and easily known: such as building churches, beautifying them, making pilgrimages, and all that is

written at so great length in the Canon Law and has misled and burdened the world and ruined it, made uneasy consciences, silenced and weakened faith, and has not said how a man, although he neglect all else, has enough to do with all his powers to keep the Commandments of God, and can never do all the good works which he is commanded to do; why then does he seek others, which are neither necessary nor commanded, and neglect those that are necessary and commanded?

The last two Commandments, which forbid evil desires of the body for pleasure and for temporal goods, are clear in themselves; these evil desires do no harm to our neighbor, and yet they continue unto the grave, and the strife in us against them endures unto death; therefore these two Commandments are drawn together by St. Paul into one, Romans 7:1-25, and are set as a goal unto which we do not attain, and only in our thoughts reach after until death. For no one has ever been so holy that he felt in himself no evil inclination, especially when occasion and temptation were offered. For original sin is born in us by nature, and may be checked, but not entirely uprooted, except through the death of the body; which for this reason is profitable and a thing to be desired. To this may God help us. Amen.

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02.01. Biography

The Life and Acts of Martin Luther by Philip Melancthon. This translation appears in _Hymns of the Reformation_ by Martin Luther, reprint 1845 by J. Unwin (London).

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PART ONE

---------- A HISTORY OF THE LIFE AND ACTIONS OF THE VERY REVEREND DR. MARTIN LUTHER, FAITHFULLY WRITTEN BY PHILIP MELANCTHON.

WITTEMBURG. 1549. (sic) DR. MARTIN LUTHER. That venerable man, Martin Luther, whilst he was yet with us, gave us reason to hope that he might himself, narrate the story of his life, with the circumstances of' conflict attending it; and this he would undoubtedly have accomplished, had he not been so soon called out of this mortal existence, onto the eternal fellowship of God, and of his children in heaven.

Profitable indeed, would have been the contemplation of his private life, clearly set forth, for it was full of examples calculated to confirm in after times. the piety of the wise-hearted; and profitable also would have been the recital of events which might tend largely to the information of posterity. Such a work would also have refuted the calumnies of those who profess that Luther, incited by the principal men of the day, or possibly by others, to seek the downfall of episcopal power and dignity, or inflamed by personal ambition, had become the instrument in loosing the bands of monastic thraldom. Much advantage would have been derived from a copious and complete notice of these incidents, illustrated and recorded by himself; and although malevolent persons may object, that self-praise is an unworthy theme for a man to choose, yet we well know the character of Luther to have been of such solidity, that he would have written, even his own history, with the utmost good faith. We may also assert, that many excellent and intelligent men are yet living, to whom he could not but be aware, that the series of these events was well known; it would then have been great folly, if as is sometimes done in works of imagination, he had fabricated any other narrative; but since his lamented death has deprived the world of his autobiography, we shall now, with fidelity, relate those things connected with it which we have heard from his own lips, and those to which we have ourselves been eyewitnesses. The name of Luther is widely spread throughout the ramifications of an ancient family within the Lordship of the illustrious Counts of Mansfield, but the parents of Martin Luther originally resided in the town of Eisleben, where he was born, subsequently they removed to Mansfield, where his father, John Luther, filled the office of magistrate, and for his integrity of character, was valued and beloved by all good men. In his mother, Margaret Luther, was found a fair assemblage of domestic virtues; and a peculiar delicacy of mind was conspicuous in her character, accompanied by the fear of God and the spirit of prayer, so that many excellent women found in her a bright example of Christian virtues. Her reply to questions which I have occasionally put to her, respecting the time of her son's birth, was, that she clearly remembered the day and the hour, but that she was doubtful as to the year; she said,

however, that he was born on the 10th of November, after eleven o'clock at night; and that the name of Martin was given to the infant, because the following day on which, by baptism, he was initiated into the church of God, was dedicated to Saint Martin. But his brother James, a man of uprightness and integrity, was accustomed to say, that the opinion of the family, respecting Luther's age was, that he was born in the year of our Lord 1483. When be had attained an age at which be was capable of receiving instruction, his parents diligently accustomed their son Martin to the service and fear of God, in connection with the performance of' social and family duties; and, as is usual with good persons, they took care that he should receive literary instruction, so that whilst yet quite young his education was entrusted to the care of the father of George Emilius, who, as he is still living, can bear witness to the truth of this relation. At that time the grammar-schools of Saxony were not in a flourishing condition, and on this account, when Martin had entered his fourteenth year, he was sent to Magdeburg, accompanied by John Reineeke, whose character was afterwards of a shining order, and the influence which he obtained in that neighbourhood consequently great. The affection which subsisted between Luther and Reinecke, whether arising from a natural accordance of mind, or from their companionship in youthful studies, was both ardent and lasting. Luther, however, did not remain at Magdeburg longer than twelve months.

During four succeeding years, passed in the school of Eisenach, he had an opportunity of hearing a preceptor who illustrated grammatical studies with greater accuracy and ability than he could have met with elsewhere; for I remember to have heard his talents commended by Luther, who was sent to this town from the circumstance of his mother's descent from an ancient and honorable family in those parts.. Here he completed his grammatical studies. The powers of his intellect being of a gigantic order and peculiarly adapted to the science of eloquence, he speedily surpassed his contemporaries, both in the copiousness of his language as a public speaker, and in prose composition; whilst in poetry, be with ease excelled his competitors in the course of learning.

Having thus tasted the sweets of literature, the soul of Luther ardently thirsted for deeper draughts; and with this feeling he sought the University, as being the fountain head of learning. The scope of so great a mind might easily have embraced all the arts in succession, had it found teachers competent to the work; and it is indeed possible that the calmer pursuits of philosophy combined with oratory, would have proved advantageous in moderating the impetuosity of his natural temperament. But at Erfurt, he was subjected to the subtle dialectics prevalent at that time; these he readily embraced, since by the acuteness of his understanding, he perceived with more facility than other men, the causes and designs of those studies. His spirit thus thirsting for knowledge, continually sought a more abundant and better supply. He read many of the works of the ancient Latin authors, as Cicero, Virgil, Livy and others; these he perused, not as schoolboys commonly do, merely by gathering together a vocabulary of words, but for solid instruction, and as mirrors of human life, by which means he gained a full perception of the views and opinions of these writers, and as his memory was both accurate and tenacious, much of what he read and heard was clearly placed before his mental vision. Hence it was remarkable that even in his youth, the talents of Luther were the admiration of the whole University.

Having attained the degree of Master in Philosophy, Luther now in his twentieth year applied himself to the study of the law; and this he did by the advice of his friends, who deemed that a mind of such large endowment, and of such fertility in thought and diction ought by no means to be

kept in the shade, but to be called out for the benefit of the state. Soon afterwards however, and when he had entered his one and twentieth year, suddenly, and in a manner unexpected by his parents and other relatives, he went to the College of Augustine monks, at Erfurt, and requested to be received into it. On his entrance there, he not only applied with the closest diligence to ecclesiastical studies; but also, with the greatest severity of discipline, he exercised the government of himself, and far surpassed all others in the comprehensive range of reading and disputation with a zealous observance of fasting and prayer. He possessed a constitution at which I have often marvelled, being of no small bodily stature, nor of a weekly (sic) habit though very abstemious; I have seen him during four days successively, when in perfect health, literally abstain from both meat and drink; at other times for many days together, he has been satisfied with a small allowance of bread and herring. But the occasion of his entering on this course of life which he considered more particularly adapted to the attainment of piety and the knowledge of God, as he himself has related, and as many are already aware, was the following; often when contemplating the wrath of God, as exhibited in striking instances of His avenging hand, suddenly such terrors have overwhelmed his mind, as almost to deprive him of consciousness; and I myself have seen him whilst engaged in some doctrinal discussion, involuntarily affected in this manner, when he has thrown himself on a bed in an adjoining room, and repeatedly mingled with his prayers the following passage "God has concluded them all in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all." These terrors he experienced either for the first time, or in the most acute manner, during the year in which he was deprived of a favorite friend, who lost his life by some accident of which I am ignorant.

It was not therefore poverty, but religious zeal that led him to this kind of monastic life, in which although he daily made himself acquainted with the doctrine then taught in the schools, read "the Sententiaries," and in public disputations, ably elucidated to admiring audiences, labyrinths of science, inexplicable to others: yet, as in this course of life he sought, not the fame of intellect, but an accession to his piety, he pursued these studies as a recreation, and thus mastered with ease the systems of the schools. Meanwhile he drank with avidity from those fountains of celestial wisdom, the prophetic and apostolic scriptures, that he might acquaint himself with the will of God, and that be might by the surest testimonies, increase his filial fear and confirm his faith whilst the force of his mental anguish impelled him to pursue with greater intensity, these devotional exercises.

He has often said that he was strengthened about this time by the discourses of a certain aged man, in the college of Augustines at Erfurth, who, when he disclosed to him the conflicts of his spirit, introduced his mind to new views on the subject of faith; and he has told me that he led him to that article in the creed, in which it is said " I believe in the remission of sins," which be thus interpreted, "that it is necessary not only to believe in general terms, that sins are remitted to some, as the devils also believe that they were remitted to David or to Peter in particular, but that it is the command of God that each individual man should realize the behest that his sins are forgiven him.(") Luther said that this interpretation of his friend was confirmed by the testimony of Bernardus, and that a passage in the discourse on the Annunciation, has these words ; "but add, that then believe this also, that by Him thy sins are forgiven thee." Such is the testimony which the Holy Ghost speaketh in thine heart, saying, "thy sins are remitted unto thee;" and this is in accordance with apostolic writ, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in

Christ Jesus." Luther was also established in these opinions, not only by the above conversations, but also by the whole tenor of the writings of the Apostle Paul, who uniformly inculcates the doctrine that we are justified by faith. And when afterwards, he placed the expositions of various authors on this subject, in comparison with the preceding conversations, and with his own consoling experience of the work of the Spirit, he evidently perceived the fallacy of the tenets supported by these writers; and as he read and compared the precepts and examples recorded by the Prophets and Apostles, and prayed daily for the establishment of his faith, a clearer light by degrees, shone upon his way.

He now first directed his attention to the pages of Augustine, where both in "The Interpretation of the Psalms," and in "The Treatise on the Letter and the Spirit," he found many perspicuous sentiments which confirmed this doctrine of faith, and fanned the flame of hope that had been kindled in his breast; nor did he altogether relinquish the "Sententiaries.(") He could recite Gabrielis and Cameracensis, almost verbatim; for a long time also, he applied closely to the writings of Occam, the acumen of which author, he preferred to Thomas and Scotus. He also read Gerson with diligence; but all the works of Augustine were frequently read by him, and well stored in his memory. This rigid course of application he commenced at Erfurt, in which town, at the Augustine College, he remained four years. At this time, in the year 1508 the Venerable Stupicius (sic) who had favored the opening of the University at Wittenburg, and who was desirous of promoting the study of Theology in that College, when he became acquainted with the talent and erudition of Luther, then in the twenty-sixth year of his age, invited him to that place, and there amid the daily literary exercises in the schools, his intellectual powers gained still increasing brilliancy.

Luther was attentively listened to by men of high attainments, Doctor Martin Mellerstadius and others; and Doctor M. has often said, that so great were the energies of his mind, as to give clear evidence that he would one day, effect the overthrow of the theories of learning which were then taught in the schools. He now first expounded the Physics and Dialectics of Aristotle; at the same time not forgetting his own favorite study, that of Theology.

After three years he went to Rome, on account of a monkish controversy, and returning within a year, be was according to the custom of the schools, presented to the Elector, Frederic, Grand Duke of Saxony, and dignified with the degree of Doctor; for the Elector had heard him speak in public, and much admired his lofty genius, his convincing eloquence, and the happy mode in which he illustrated subjects brought forward in the assembly: but to form a just estimate of his we should remember that the degree of Doctor was conferred on Luther when only in the thirtieth year of his age. He has himself told us, that when he strenuously declined accepting the degree, he received a charge from Stupicius not to reject the honour conferred on him, adding in pleasantry, that God had much work to be done in the church, for which purpose at some future time, his labours would be called into action ; this although uttered in jest, was realized in the event; as a host of presages often indicates the approaching convulsions.

Luther now began his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans; then, that on the Psalms; and he illustrated these writings in such a manner that, in the opinion of the wise and good, the light of truth first dawned upon them after a long night of darkness. He here shewed the distinction between the law and the gospel; he refuted the error then reigning in the schools and councils,

which taught that men deserve the remission of their sins on account of their own works, and the dogma of the Pharisees, that men are in themselves just before God. In this manner Luther led the minds of men to the Saviour, and, like John the Baptist, he pointed out "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world".; he allowed that sins are freely remitted through the Son of God, and that we must all receive this blessing by faith; these, with other points of Christian doctrine, be set forth to them in a clear light. A career of usefulness thus nobly begun, invested with no common authority, a teacher whose practice so beautifully harmonized with his precepts, that his appeals evidently arose, not from the lips only, but also from the heart. The charm of so admirable a character won the affections of his hearers, as according to the old proverb, "manner has more weight than words; " so that when he afterwards effected a change in some of the established modes of worship, men of rank who knew him well, were the less vehemently opposed to him, on account of the ascendancy which he had gained over the public mind by his elucidation of important theories, as well as by the sanctity of his life; and united with him in lamenting the prevalence of opinions by which they saw that the world was distracted.

Luther did not at this time make any alteration in the ceremonies of the church; on the contrary, he still maintained a severe course of discipline amongst his disciples, nor did he mingle therewith any of his own formidable sentiments, but he explained to them, with renewed earnestness, the universal and all-important doctrines of repentance, of the remission of sins, of faith, and of the true consolation of the cross. With so admirable a theology, the religious world was much captivated; and to the learned also, it was not unwelcome, for they beheld, as it were, Christ, the prophets and apostles brought out of darkness, the prison, and the prison house; they perceived the distinction between the law and the gospel, between the promises of the law and those of the gospel, and between philosophy and the gospel; distinctions which certainly are not recognized in Thomas, Scotus, and others of their school; he thus contrasted, spiritual Holiness with the moral law. At this time, the attention of the pupils in the university was directed to the writings of Erasmus, as studies in the Latin and Greek languages; and thus a more genial philosophy being exhibited to them, many who possessed sound and liberal understandings, for the first time conceived a horror at the barbarous sophistry of the monks.

Luther now began to devote himself more particularly to the acquirement of Greek and Hebrew, in order that having made himself acquainted with the properties and peculiarities of languages, and having drunk at the well-springs of knowledge, he might attain a greater maturity of judgment. When he entered on this course, venal indulgences were promulgated by Tetzel, a friar of the Dominican order and a most audacious sycophant; at the same time, Luther, who was ardent in the pursuit of holiness, being irritated by his impious and nefarious harangues, published his own propositions on the subject of indulgences, which are to be found in the first volume of his works; these he affixed to the church contiguous to the castle of Wittemburg, on the day before the festival of Allsaints, (sic) in the year 1517. Upon this, Tetzel, acting by no means inconsistently with his character, and hoping to ingratiate himself with the Roman Pontiff, called together, as his council, certain monks and theologians imbued more or less with his own sophistry; these men he directed to compose something against Luther, in the mean time, that he might not appear to be silenced, he hurled not only declamations as before, but thundering accusations against Luther, and vociferated on all sides that this heretic would be destroyed by fire. His propositions also, and his protest, were publicly consigned to the flames. These ravings of Tetzel and his satellites,

imposed on Luther the necessity of a more ample discussion of these subjects, and a further vindication of the truth.

Such was the origin of a controversy, in which Luther, not as yet suspecting or imagining the future overthrow of rites and ceremonies, forcibly enjoined moderation, for he did not at that time himself entirely reject the indulgences. He was, therefore, basely calumniated by those who said that he had made a plausible beginning with an intention eventually, to overturn the government, and this, by seeking power, either for himself or for others; so little truth was there in the accusation of his having been suborned or incited by courtiers, as the Duke ofBrunswick expressed in writing, that even the Elector Frederic was grieved by the report of these contests, foreseeing as he did, that although they originated in a popular cause, yet that this flame would gradually spread far and wide, as is said of the strife in Homer, "Soon grows the pigmy to gigantic size." As Frederic, one of the greatest princes of our times, was particularly anxious for the preservation of public tranquility, he was accustomed to refer matters of debate which affected the common weal, to the States of the empire, so that by many evidences, it was clear that he neither instigated nor approved the proceedings of Luther, but he frequently manifested his regret at the existing state of things, as he was apprehensive of stir greater disturbances.

Frederic being a wise prince, and uninfluenced by that worldly policy which hastens to extinguish every appearance of reform, and adhering in his councils to the divine law, which commands its to listen to the voice of the Gospel, which forbids us to resist acknowledged truth, and which calls that a blasphemy under the awful condemnation of God, which pertinaciously withstands it; he followed the course which many wise and learned men have done, he yielded up the cause to God. He also carefully read the polemic writings of the day, and those which appeared to be on the side of truth he was unwilling to reject.

I know, indeed, that Frederic often inquired the opinion of scholars concerning these matters, and, that in the convention held at Cologne, by the Emperor Charles the fifth, after his coronation, be asked Erasmus, of Rotterdam, in a friendly manner, whether he considered that Luther was in the wrong, in those controversies which then engaged so much of his attention; to this Erasmus candidly replied, that he was of opinion that Luther was in the right, but that he was wanting in gentleness of spirit; respecting which the Duke Frederic afterwards writing seriously to Luther, exhorted him to moderate the asperity of his style.

It appears also, that Luther made a promise to Cardinal Cajetan, that he would maintain silence if his opponents would enter into a similar agreement; from which we may clearly perceive, that at that time he had no intention of stirring up further commotions, but that he was desirous of peace: by degrees, however, his attention was drawn to other subjects, as he was attacked on every hand, by illiterate adversaries.

Then followed disputations on "The Distinction between Laws Human and Divine," and, on "the Disgraceful Profanation of the Lord’s Supper, by making a common sale of it, and its perversion in other ways," herein the whole design of sacrifices was explained, and the use of sacraments set forth; and when, now, the pious in monasteries found that the worship of images was to be relinquished, they began to decline from such an unhallowed devotion, Luther added to his "Explications of’ the Doctrine of Repentance," of the Remission of Sins," of "Faith" and "Indulgences," these additional subjects, "The Distinction between laws Human and Divine," "The

Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper," with other sacraments, and also that "of Vows;" these were the main points of the controversy. Eccius at this time instituted an inquiry into the extent of power possessed by the Bishop of Rome, for no other purpose than to excite the hatred of the Pope and of crowned heads against Luther.

Luther, however, retained unaltered the Apostles, the Nicene, and the Athanesian Creeds; but he explained in many of his writings to what extent, and on what grounds, a change must needs be effected in human rites and traditions; what form of doctrine he wished to retain, and what administration of the sacraments he most approved, were obvious from a confession which the Elector-John, Duke of Saxony, and Prince Philip Landgrave of Hesse, &c.presented to the Emperor Charles the Fifth, at an imperial diet, in the year 1530, and are apparent both from the rites of the church in that city, and from the doctrine with which our church now resounds, the chief of which is clearly comprehended in the confession.

I relate these circumstances, not only for the information of pious men as to the errors which Luther attacked and the idols which he removed, but to convince them that he embraced every important doctrine of the Church, restored purity to its ritual, and exhibited models of reform such as is desirable in Christian churches; and it is well that posterity should be made acquainted with the views held by Luther.

I here feel reluctant to mention those who first administered the Lord’s supper in both kinds, those who first omitted private masses, and also what monasteries were first deserted, for Luther disputed but little on these points before the convention which was held at Worms in the year 1521. He himself made no change in the ceremonies, but during his absence Carolostadius and others did; and as he and his party caused some disturbance, Luther on his return, by a plain declaration of his sentiments, testified what he approved and what he disapproved.

We know that statesmen are usually much prejudiced against innovations of all kinds, and must confess that discords often arise even in the discussion of important topics, as amid the sad confusion of human things some evil will ever intervene. But nevertheless, in the church, it is imperative that we esteem the commands of God before all worldly considerations. The eternal Father spake thus concerning His Son, "This is my beloved Son, hear Him." And he threatens with eternal wrath blasphemers, that is to say, those who endeavour to destroy acknowledged truth, for which reason it became the incumbent and Christian duty of Luther, to censure those pernicious errors which men of the Epicurean school. shamelessly augmented, and his auditors were necessarily compelled to agree with so correct a teacher.

If a total change be odious, if dissentions commonly prove injurious, as we now perceive with sorrow to be the case, then those who first propagated error, are as much in fault as those who now with diabolical pertinacity maintain it.

I have dwelt on these subjects not for the purpose of defending Luther, but that pious minds both now and in after generations, may comprehend what is, and ever will be the government of the true church: how from among this mass of iniquity, that is, the abominations of mankind, God by the voice of His Gospel, "which shines as a light in a dark place," gathers the everlasting church unto Himself. For example in the times of the Pharisees, Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary and many others, were guardians of the oracles of God: again, before that time, there were many who

offered prayer acceptably unto Him; some with more, others with less clearness, holding the doctrines of the Gospel; and such was that aged man of whom I have spoken, as supporting Luther under his deep conflicts, and who was to him in some degree a preacher of the true faith.

Thus, that God may henceforward preserve this light in the hearts of many, let us ardently pray, as Isaiah did for his hearers, "Seal the law among my disciples." Finally, it appears by this recital, that vain superstitions are not enduring, but that they shall be rooted up by an Almighty hand: these being the origin of dissentions, care is necessary lest errors should be taught in the church. But to return to Luther; as he first entered on this cause, uninfluenced by private ambition, so, although he was of an ardent and choleric temperament, yet, being ever mindful of his calling, he contended by argument alone, and forbade recourse to arms; thus be knew how to make a distinction .between functions of opposite characters, between that of a bishop teaching in the church of God, and that of the magistrate who, in his proper office, restrains the people by the power of the sword. And as Satan ever studies to distract the church by scandal, and to affix disgrace on the cause of God, whilst he rejoices in iniquity and delights in the transgressions and ruin of miserable man; so on that occasion, be excited the instigators of seditious tumults, as Monitarius and others of the same opinions; these Luther severely condemned, but he lent his own influence to honor and confirm all the bonds of social life. When I reflect however, that high ecclesiastics have often been deceived on this question, I unhesitatingly conclude that a mind which so constantly abode within the bounds of its proper calling, must not only have been governed by human wisdom, but guided also by light from above.

Thus then he dissented widely from the seditious teachers of this age, Monitarius and the Anabaptists, also from those Romish Bishops who most audaciously and shamelessly affirmed that in connection with the gift of the ministry, committed to Peter by secret decrees, political power also was vested in him. In fine, he exhorted all to "render unto God the things which be God’s, and unto Caesar, the things which be, Caesar’s;" that is, that in true repentance, in the acknowledgment and promulgation of sound doctrine, in sincere prayer and in the maintenance of a good conscience, they should worship God, and that every man should in the performance of his civil duties, submit himself unto Him. These were Luther’s true principles, and to them he adhered,_he rendered to God the things that be God’s, he taught correctly, he prayed earnestly, and he possessed all the other graces essential in the man who is acceptable to God. Lastly, in political society he ever avoided seditious counsels; and these virtues I regard with the greater admiration, as they cannot in this life be surpassed.

Although the name of Luther is deservedly of good report, since he reverently occupied his talent, above all must we render thanks unto God for that by this his servant, He has restored to us the light of His Gospel; let us then retain the remembrance of his ministry, and spread his doctrines abroad. Unmoved as I am by the clamours of Epicureans and hypocrites who either deride or condemn the plain truth, it is my decided opinion, that the catholic church accords in receiving the doctrine sounded forth in our temples, as the voice of God, and that it is incumbent on us, that a due recognition of it should pervade our devotions as well as our entire lives: in short, that this is the very doctrine, of which the Son of God says, "If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." I here speak of that profound doctrine as it is understood and explained in our churches by pious and learned men, for although some may expound it more aptly than others, or one may sometimes speak with greater

asperity than another, yet on the whole there is a general agreement among the wise and good, on subjects of this character.

Whilst I have reflected much and frequently on the subject of doctrine, in times least, up to the days of the Apostles, I have plainly perceived that after the first reign of purity had passed away, four remarkable changes in doctrine, followed. During the age of Origen, although there were some who thought correctly, amongst whom I would place Methodius, for he discouraged the fantasies of Origen, yet in the minds of the people, he made the Gospel bend to Philosophy, that is to say, he encouraged the opinion that the just exercise of reason, merits the remission of sins, and, that this is the justice of which it is said, "The just shall live by faith." At this time the distinction between the law and the gospel, with the remembrance of apostolic truths, was entirely lost sight of; nor did the words Letter, Spirit, Justice and Faith retain their original signification. Thus the proper use of words which are the signs of ideas, being lost, it became necessary that something should be devised in their place. From these germs arose the Pelagian error, which was widely spread, so that although the Apostles had taught holy doctrine, drawn from the pure and salutary fountains of gospel truth, Origen mingled therewith much impurity. That the errors of this age might be corrected, at least in some degree, God raised up Augustine; he partially cleansed the sources, nor do I doubt that if he could pass a judgment on the controversies of the present time, he would cast in his vote with us: certainly on the subjects of the Free Remission of Sins, Justification by Faith, the Use of the Sacraments, and other points of less importance, he does think with us. For although in some parts of his writings, he expresses himself more distinctly than in others, yet, if his reader will exercise reason and candour in judging him, he will perceive that his sentiments agree with our own; and, although our adversaries sometimes quote passages taken from his writings, against us, and appeal loudly to the Fathers, they do it not from any regard for truth or antiquity, but like sycophants, they invest images of the present day, with the authority of the ancients, to whom these images were unknown.

Nevertheless, the seeds of superstition appear to have existed even in the ages of the Fathers; thus Augustine established certain regulations respecting vows, although he treats the subject with less austerity than others have done. The contamination of their own times always in some degree, affects even good men, because as we naturally favour the existing customs of the country in which we have been nurtured; that expression of Euripedes is found to be true, "Every thing from the companion of our childhood is sweet." But I could desire that all who boast of being followers of Augustine, would revert to his standing, opinions to the very genius of his mind, if I may so speak, and not maliciously pervert mutilated expressions to their own views. And now light being revived through the writings of this author, be became a blessing to posterity, for after him, Prosper, Maximus, Hugo, and others of a similar class, who were leading men in the schools, down to the time of Bernardus, closely followed the institutes of Augustine. Meanwhile, however, the power and wealth of the Bishops increasing, there followed, as it were, an age of giants ; unholy and unlearned men reigned in the Church, of whom, some were accomplished in forensic learning, and in the arts of the Vatican.

Then arose the Dominicans and the Franciscans, who, when they beheld the pomp and luxury of the Bishops, whose dissolute manners had become obnoxious to them, formed to themselves a more correct mode of life; and for the sake of discipline, they incarcerated themselves in Monasteries. Ignorance at first fostered superstition; but when they afterwards saw that the studies

in the schools were directed only to forensic learning since in Rome, at this time, the practice of the law augmented the influence and wealth of many, they endeavoured to call public attention to the study of theology. But their wisdom failed them in this attempt. Albertus and his followers, who had embraced the opinions of Aristotle, began to convert the doctrines of the Church into philosophy; and this fourth age was not only impure, but absolutely polluted; that is to say, it infused manifest idolatry into the fountains of Gospel Truth. And such labyrinths of false sentiment are to be found in Thomas, Scotus, and similar writers, that wiser theologians have always felt the need of ft more simple and a purer doctrine. Nor can it be said without glaring effrontery, that such a reform was uncalled for; since it is evident that many of the sophisms contained in these disputations, were not intelligible even to those who were conversant with such arguments. Hence it is plainly proved, that they are blindly devoted to idolatry who teach the virtue of sacrifices as contained in works, who sanction the use of image worship, who deny the forgiveness of sin by grace through faith, and who in human ceremonies, make a sacrifice of conscience; and there are truly other things yet more degrading, which cannot be told, and at which the whole frame shudders.

Let us therefore give thanks unto God, the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been pleased by the ministry of Martin Luther, again to purify the sources of Evangelic Truth, and to restore sound doctrine to the Church. Whilst contemplating this theme, it behooves all pious men the world over to mingle their prayers and their sighs, and to supplicate in fervency of spirit, that God will strengthen the work which He has begun in us, because of His Holy Temple.

"O Thou, the living and true God, the Eternal Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Author of all things and of Thy Church, Thine is the word and the promise, ’For my name’s sake I will do it, that they may not blaspheme.’ To Thee I pray with my whole heart, for the sake of Thine own glory and that of Thy Son, that by the voice of Thy Gospel, Thou wilt ever gather the Eternal Church unto Thyself; And for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified for us, and rose again, our Mediator and Intercessor, may it please Thee to reign in our hearts and minds by the Holy Ghost, that we may in sincerity offer up our prayers, and render service acceptable unto Thee. Deign also to bless the pursuits of Philosophy, and direct and support those principles and that discipline which are the guardians of wisdom and the protection of Thy Church. When Thou shalt have so built up the human race, that Thou shalt be universally acknowledged and adored; for which purpose Thou least made Thyself known by such clear testimonies, oh, grant that this fold, in which Thy true doctrine is heard, may not he brought to desolation; and since Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ, when about to endure his agony, prayed for us, ’Father, sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth,’ so, to the prayer of this our Great High Priest, we join our supplications, that the light of Thy truth may for ever shine in the sons of men, to guide and govern them." In prayer for these blessings, we have heard Luther daily engaged, and amid these devotions, his spirit was gently called from its mortal tenement, when he was in the sixty-third year of his age.

Posterity possesses many of Luther’s works, doctrinal and devotional. He published [Greek] ((((((((((or dialectic writings, which contain doctrine wholesome and necessary to man, calculated also to enlighten sincere minds on the subjects of "Repentance," "Faith with its genuine fruits," (the use of the Sacraments," "the distinction between the Law and the Gospel," and "between the Gospel and Philosophy," "on the dignity of political rank," and lastly, "on the most important articles which are essential to the Church." He then added [Greek] (((((((((in which he refuted many

pernicious errors; he also published [Greek] (((((((((; these are "enlarged illustrations of the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures," in which class even his enemies confess, that he has excelled all previous commentators. The value of these writings is appreciated by the religious world; but certainly in usefulness and laborious research, they do not surpass another work of his, "the interpretation of the Old and New Testaments," the perspicuity of which is so great that his German version may serve as a commentary; nor is this publication a commentary only, for it has very learned annotations, with a synopsis of the several parts subjoined; both of which exhibit a summary of heavenly doctrine, and inform the reader on the subjects of the discourse so, that from these sources, the children of God may draw sure evidences of the truth.

Luther himself, wished that none should linger amid the products of his own mind, but was anxious to lead the attention of all, to the fountain-head of divine wisdom: he wished that we might hear the voice of God, that it might in the minds of many, awaken the true faith, and prayer, that God might be truly glorified, and that many might be made heirs of eternal life. . And now it becomes us to acknowledge these desires and these more abundant labors, and to remember them as an example also, that each study according to his talents, how he may best adorn the Church of Christ; for to these two great ends, our whole life with all its purposes and designs, should be referred; in the first place, that we may show forth the glory of God, and in the next, that we may benefit His church: in allusion to the former, Paul says "Do all to the glory of God;" and the latter is referred to in Psalms 122:1-9. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem;" with a sweet promise added in the same verse, "They shall prosper that love Thee." These heavenly commands and these promises invite all to an enlightened knowledge of Christian doctrines: they call upon us, to love the ministers of the Gospel, and those who teach it in its purity; whilst they direct our studies and our labors to the propagation of sound doctrine, and to the maintenance of harmony in the Church of Christ.

DAILY AND FREQUENT PRAYER OF LUTHER.

"Establish in us 0 God! that which "Thou hast wrought, and perfect the work "which Thou hast begun in us to Thy "glory, Amen."

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file: /pub/resources/text/wittenberg/melan: lifea-01.txt .PART TWO Philip Melancthon, to the Students in The University of Wittenburg, on the death of Luther, 1546 On our assembling to hear the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, at nine o’clock in the forenoon, Dr. Philip Melancthon publicly recited to us the following address; saying at the same time, that he was induced to do so by the suggestion of some learned professors, and that we being in possession of the true state of things, might be prepared to reject any incorrect statements which he foresaw would be in circulation after Luther’s death.

Most Noble Youths,

We have undertaken as you know, to deliver a critical exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, wherein is contained the true doctrine of the Son of God, which our Heavenly Father has in peculiar mercy, laid open to us, at this time, through our revered Father and Preceptor, Dr. Martin Luther.

But now alas! so deep a shade of sorrow is cast over these writings, which but augment my grief, that I know not whether I shall be able hereafter to pursue the study of them in our college. I am anxious however, at the request of my friends of the University, and that you may have a right understanding of the circumstances of Luther's death, to communicate to you the following particulars, in order that you may not even entertain, much less circulate, reports which, as is so often the case, will probably now be current in society. On the 17th of February, our Master and Teacher, a little before supper, was attacked by his usual complaint to which I remember he had occasionally been subject. After supper a recurrence of the disorder took place, under the influence of which lie requested pemission to withdraw into an adjoining room, where he lay for nearly two hours, until his sufferings increased. Doctor Jonas sleeping in the same room with him, Doctor Martin called him hastily, requesting him to rise and give orders that Ambrosius, the servant who attended on the children, should make his private apartment warm: and having retired into it, Albert, the illustrious Count of Mansfield, with his Countess, and many others, entered, the names of whom for brevity's sake, we omit. At length when he found that the close of his life was approaching, before four o'clock on the following day, the 18th of February, he commended himself to God in the following prayer:- (Following given in German)

"My heavenly Father, eternal and merciful God ! Thou has revealed unto me Thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, whom I have learned--whom I have proclaimed to be my Lord--whom I love and whom I honour, as my precious Saviour and Redeemer,--whom the ungodly persecute, dishonour, and blaspheme; take Thou my soul unto Thyself.'' Three times he expressed these words.

(Following in Latin) "Into Thy hands I commit my spirit, Thou hast redeemed me, 0 God of Truth !"

(Following in German) "And God so loved the world," &C.

Amid these prayers occasionally repeated, be was called to the one eternal assembly and to everlasting bliss, in which he is now enjoying the presence of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, with that of all the Prophets and Apostles.

Alas, for the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof! Our Elijah is no more, he who guided and governed the Church in this decrepitude of the world. Human sagacity could not have discovered the doctrines of the Remission of Sins, and of Faith in the Son of God; but He has been pleased to reveal them to us through the medium of this, His servant, whom also we see that God has taken unto himself.

Let us therefore cherish his memory with that of the peculiar doctrine which he delivered to us, and let us be the more humbled in our spirits when we contemplate the great calamities and the mighty revolutions which will probably follow this event.

I beseech Thee, 0 Son of God! Thou who wast crucified for us, and art now the risen Emmanuel, that Thou wilt govern, preserve, and defend Thy Church. Amen.

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF THE REV. MARTIN LUTHER, D.D., FROM THE LATIN OF PHILIP MELANCTHON.

Since Luther is no more, his cherished name Shall from our hearts, a deathless tribute claim.

We hailed him minister of Christ, the Lord, Jesus he preached, with faith, and taught his word.

Luther is dead! and now the church in tears A mourner clothed in saddest garb appears.

She weeps her loved preceptor now no more, Honoured and dear, a father's name he bore.

Fallen on the field the mighty chieftain lies, And Israel's voice proclaims his obsequies.

Then let us bathe In tears the muse's lay And publish forth our sorrows to the day It thus becomes us well-to weep and mourn Whilst, orphans in our grief, we dress affection's urn. A FUNERAL ORATION ON THE REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER, PRONOUNCED AT Wittenberg, by Philip Melancthon

Although amid this universal grief, my voice is impeded by sorrow and by tears, yet since in so large an assembly, we are called upon for some expression of our feelings; let it not be after the manner of the heathen, a declamation in praise of the departed one, but rather a commemoration in the audience of those now present of the wonderful pilotage of the church in all her perils; that we may call to mind on what account it behooves us to mourn, what purposes we should ourselves most diligently pursue, and in what manner we should order our lives. For although irreligious men conceive that the interests of this world are borne along in a giddy tide of confusion and uncertainty, yet, reassured as we are by the many indubitable testimonies of God, we make a wide distinction between the church and the profane multitude, and we believe that she is indeed governed and upheld by the power of God: we clearly discern his polity_we acknowledge the true helmsmen, and we watch their course,_we choose also for ourselves, befitting leaders and teachers whom we devotedly follow and revere.

On these so weighty matters, it is necessary both to think and to speak, as often as mention is made of that revered man Dr. Martin Luther, our beloved father and teacher; and whilst he has been the object of most cruel hatred to many, let us who know that he was a divinely inspired minister of the gospel, regard his memory with love and esteem, and let us gather such testimonies as prove that his teaching was by no means a blind dissemination of seditious opinions, as the Epicureans give out, but a demonstration of the will and of the true worship of God, an unfolding of the sacred records and a declaration of the word of God, that is of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In orations such as the present, much is usually said of the individual excellencies of those whom we wish to commend; passing however, in silence over this part of my theme, it is my design to dwell principally on that main point, the call to gospel ministry; and here we may unite in opinion with all just thinkers, that if Luther has illustrated a wholesome and necessary doctrine in the church, we ought to return thanks unto God, that He has been pleased to raise him up to this work, whilst his personal labours, his faith, his constancy, and his other virtues are to be commended, and his memory to be held most dear by all good men. Let this therefore be the beginning, of our oration. The Son of God, as Paul says, sits on the right hand of the Eternal Father, and gives gifts unto men; these gifts are the voice of the Gospel and of the Holy Spirit, with which, as He imparts them, He inspires Prophets, Apostles, Pastors and Teachers, and selects them from this our assembly, that is to say, from those who are yet in the rudiments of divine knowledge, who read, who hear, and who love the prophetic and apostolic writings; nor does he often call to this warfare those who are in the exercise of established power, but it even pleases him to wage war on these very men through leaders chosen from other ranks. It is cheering and instructive to take a retrospect of the church throughout all past ages, and to contemplate the goodness of God who has sent out from its bosom gifted ministers in so unbroken a series, that as

the first of these have passed away, others have pressed closely in their footsteps. The line of the first fathers is well worthy of our consideration. Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methusalem, Noe, Sem, and Abraham, who was raised up to be a fellow-helper of Sem and his associate in the all-important work of spreading true religion; and although at this time Sem was still dwelling in the neighbourhood of Sodom, the people had lost the recollection both of his precepts and those of Noe, and were altogether abandoned to the worship of idols. To Abraham succeeded law and Jacob; next Joseph_who kindled the light of truth throughout all Egypt, at that time the most flourishing kingdom in the world. After these, we read of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and David; then Elisha, of whose ministry the prophet Isaiah was a partaker; then Esdras, Onias, and in succession the Maccabees, Simeon, Zacharias, and John the Baptist: and lastly, Christ and His Apostles. It is delightful to behold this unbroken chain, which is a clear testimony to the presence of God in his church.

After the Apostles followed a band, which although somewhat weaker, was nevertheless honoured with the blessing of God. Polycarp, Irenaeus, Gregory the Niocaesarien, Basilius, Augustinus, Prosper, Maximus, Hugo, Bernardus, Taulerus, and others; and although this later age has become more corrupt, yet God has always preserved a remnant of the faithful, whilst it is evident that the light of the gospel has now been peculiarly manifested through the preaching of Luther.

He is therefore to be numbered with that blessed company, the excellent of the earth, whom God has sent forth for the gathering together and the building up of his church, and whom we truly recognize as ornaments of the human race.

Solon, Themistocles, Scipio, Augustus, and others were indeed great men, who founded, states, or ruled over vast empires; yet do they rank far below our spiritual leaders, Isaiah, John the Baptist, Paul and Luther.

It is also well that we should regard the grand disputations which have existed in the church, and in connection with this subject let us look at those themes of deep and high import which have been brought to light by Luther, and which evince that the tenor of his life was worthy of our highest approbation. It is true that many exclaim "the church is in confusion," saying that inextricable controversies are engendered in it; to these I answer,_such is the mode of divine Government, for when the Holy Spirit convicts the world, dissentions arise through the pertinacity of the wicked; and the guilt is on those who refuse to listen to the Son of God, and of whom our Heavenly Father says, "Hear Him." That Luther illustrated the essential truths of the Gospel is manifest, as the deepest shades had previously veiled its doctrines, in dispersing these he clearly proved to us the nature of sincere repentance, he showed us in whom we must seek refuge, and what is the sure consolation of the mind that trembles under a sense of the wrath of God. He elucidated the doctrine of Paul which says, that man is justified by faith; he showed the difference between the Law and the Gospel, between Spiritual righteousness and the Moral law; he pointed out the nature of true prayer, and he called back the church universal from that heathen madness which teaches that God, is to be invoked even when the mind, oppressed with metaphysical doubts, is flying far from Him: he enforced on us the conviction that prayer is to be made in faith, and in a good conscience, and he led us to the one Mediator, the Son of God sitting at the right hand of the Eternal Father, and interceding for us; not to those images and departed mortals, to whom the ungodly world, with awful infatuation, is wont to perform its devotions. He also pointed

out other sacred duties which are acceptable to God, whilst he was himself careful to adorn and to preserve inviolate the institutions of civil life as no preceding writers had done; he also drew a line of distinction between works necessary to be performed, and the puerile observances of human ceremonies, including there rights and established laws which impede the offering of the heart to God. In order that this heavenly teaching might be transmitted unimpaired to posterity, lie translated the prophetic and apostolic writings into German, which work he executed with such perspicuity, that this version alone imparts more light to the mind of the reader, than the perusal of many commentaries would do. To this he added various expositions which, as Erasmus was accustomed to say, were far superior to any others then extant; and as it is related of the builders of Jerusalem, that they wrought with one hand and held the sword in the other, so was he at the same time contending with the enemies of truth, and composing expositions fraught with divine philosophy; whilst by his pious counsels he strengthened the minds of many.

Since the mystery of godliness lies far beyond the reach of human vision, as for instance, the doctrines of Faith, and of the Remission of Sins, we are constrained to acknowledge that Luther was taught of God; and how many of us have witnessed there wrestlings in which be was himself instructed, and by which we must be convinced that through faith alone we also can be heard and accepted of God. Therefore shall His people to all eternity celebrate the blessings which He has conferred on the church by this His servant: first they will offer up thanksgivings to God, then they will acknowledge that they owe much to the labours of this our friend and brother; although the irreligious who deride the church in general, say that these good deeds are but idle pastime or intoxicating madness.

Let it not be said that endless disputations have been raised, or that the apple of discord has been thrown by the church, as some falsely assert; nor have the enigmas of the Sphynx been propounded by her, for to men of sense and piety who can give a candid judgment, it is by no means difficult on comparing opinions, to distinguish those which accord from those which do not accord with heavenly doctrine; and indeed there is no doubt that in these controversies we discover the revelation of Himself. For since it has pleased God to manifest Himself and His holy will in prophetic and apostolic writ, in which he has revealed himself, we cannot suppose that His word is ambiguous like the leaves of the Sybil, "Which flit abroad, the sport of playful winds."

Others however, without any evil design, have complained that Luther was unduly severe; I do not myself offer an opinion on this subject, but answer I them in the words of Erasmus: "God has administered to us of the present age, a bitter draught, on account of our abounding infirmities." But when he is pleased to raise up such an instrument against the shameless and insolent enemies of truth, as when the Lord said to Jeremiah, "Behold I have given my words into thy mouth, that thou shouldest destroy and build up," and when it is His pleasure to set as it were, His Gorgons in array against them, then it is a vain thing that they should expostulate with Him; for He governs His church not by human counsels, neither truly are His ways our ways. It is however, no uncommon thing for minds of limited scope to undervalue the more powerful energies with which others may be endowed, whether directed to good or evil purposes; thus it was with emotion that Aristides beheld Themistocles undertaking and bringing to a happy issue, vast enterprises; and although he rejoiced in the felicity of the state, he was earnest to arrest that ardent spirit in its career. Nor do I deny that strong and lively impulse often leads astray, since none who are subject to the infirmities of our nature, are without fault. If however, there be any living of whom we may

say as the ancients did of Hercules, Cimon and others, 'Unadorned indeed, but in all important points a good man,' then was Luther a just man, and his name of good report; for in the church, if, as the apostle Paul says, "he war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience," then he pleases God and is to be revered by us. And such we know Luther to have been, for whilst he steadfastly maintained sound doctrine he preserved the integrity of his own conscience: and who that has known him can be ignorant with what large benevolence he was endowed, or forget his suavity in the intercourse of private life, and how far removed he was from contention and strife, whilst to all his actions lie imparted the gravity that became his character, as is depicted in the following passage; "His manner was dignified, and his discourse familiar;" or rather, all with him was in accordance with the language of Paul, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are of good report;" so that the asperity of which we have spoken, appears to have arisen from the love of truth, not from a factious spirit, or from bitterness of feeling: of these things both we and many others have been witnesses. But if I were to undertake an eulogium on the remaining points of Luther's life, a life which until the age of 63 was absorbed in subjects of the highest interest, and was passed in the pursuit of piety and of all that is noble and good, in what lofty strains of eloquence might I not indulge. His was a mind in which we never traced the inroads of wandering lusts; no seditious counsels held their seat there, on the contrary he rather advocated the laying down of arms, as he was unwilling to mingle with the interests of the church, schemes for the aggrandizement either of himself or his friends. Indeed, I esteem his wisdom and his virtue at so high a price as to feel assured that human efforts alone could never have attained to them. Thus it is essential that spirits bold, lofty, and ardent, such as every thing proves Luther's to have been, should be restrained by a power from on high. And now what shall I say of his other virtues? I have myself often surprised him, when with weeping he has been engaged in offering up prayers for the whole church. He devoted almost daily, a portion of time to the repetition of certain psalms with which amid his sighs and tears, he mingled his prayers; and be often said that he felt indignant against those who through slothfulness of spirit, or on account of wordly occupations, say that the prayer of a single sigh is enough. He considered therefore, that forms of prayer are prescribed to us by divine counsel, and that a perusal of them animates our minds even as our voices acknowledge the God whom we worship. And often when weighty deliberations have arisen on the danger of the state, we have seen him endowed with a mighty potency of soul, unmoved by fear and unsubdued by terror, for lie leaned on that sacred anchor which is the power of God; nor did he allow his faith therein to be shaken.

He was also distinguished for the acuteness of his perceptions, as by his own independent judgment lie could readily perceive the course to be pursued in cases of difficulty. Nor was he as many think, negligent of the public weal, or inadvertent to the interests of others; on the contrary he could fully appreciate the welfare of the community, whilst he most sagaciously perceived the sentiments and wishes of those with whom he mingled in social life. And although the genius of his mind was of a lively order, he read with avidity ecclesiastical writings as well as history in general, from which, with a peculiar dexterity, he derived precedents adapted to the present occasion. Of his eloquence we possess enduring monuments, for in this science he undoubtedly equalled those to whom the highest palm in oratory has been conceded. We do then for our own sakes, justly mourn that such a man, endowed with the loftiest grade of intellect, instructed in wisdom, matured by long experience, adorned with many excellent and heroic virtues, and chosen by God for the

building up of his church; that he who has embraced us all with a father's love, should have been thus called away from our earthly fellowship. For we are like orphans deprived of an excellent and faithful parent; but whilst we bow to the will of God, let us not in the memory of our friend allow his virtues, and the benefits which we have derived from his society to perish from amongst us. Let us rather bid him joy that he is now participating in sweet and unrestrained communion with God, and with his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the Prophets and Apostles; which fellowship he ever sought and waited for through faith in the Son of God. In that blessed state he now receives the approval of God on the labours which he here sustained in the propagation of the gospel, with the testimony also of the Church universal in heaven; there, set free from the shackles of mortality as from a prison, and having joined that company which is perfected in wisdom, he now sees, not as in a glass darkly, the essential character of God, the union of the two natures in His Son, and the whole assembly of the gathered and redeemed church; whilst those divine real ties which he here knew but in part, which he briefly demonstrated, and which in faith he contemplated, he now beholds with open face,_and moved with ecstatic joy, in all the ardour of his soul he gives God thanks for his unspeakable gift. He learns why the Son of God is called the Word, and the likeness of the Eternal Father; and in what way Holy Spirit is the bond of mutual love, no only between the Eternal Father and the Son, but also between them and the Church. He had learned whilst here on earth which be the first principles of the oracles of God and often did he most wisely and weightily descant on these highest themes; on the distinction between true and false prayer, and on the knowledge of God and of divine manifestations; also on distinguishing the true God from false deities.

There are many in this assembly, who in times past, have heard him thus express himself, "You shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and [de]scending upon the Son of Man." Thus he delighted first to instill into the minds of his hearers this most full consolation, which declares that heaven is opened, that is to say, that there is a way made for us to God, that the barrier of divine wrath is removed as we flee for refuge to his Son; that God holds near communion with us, and that those who seek him in prayer are received, governed and kept by him. Luther admonished us that this divine promise, which infidels declare to be fabulous, is and must be opposed to human doubts, and to those fears which deter diffident minds from venturing to call upon God, or to put their trust in him; for he said that the angels ascending and descending on the body of Christ, are the ministers of the gospel who with Christ for their leader, first ascend to God and receive from him the gifts of the Gospel, and of the Holy Spirit, and afterwards descend, that is to fulfill their duty of teaching amongst men. He also added this interpretation, that those heavenly spirits themselves, whom we usually call angels, beholding the Son are enabled to comprehend and to rejoice in the mysterious union of the two natures, and as they are soldiers of their Lord in defense of His Church, so are they guided and governed as by the signal of His hand. Now is our departed friend himself a spectator of these most sublime visions, and as he once among the ministers of the Gospel, ascended and descended with Christ for his leader, so now be descries angels sent on embassies by their Lord, and enjoys in common with them, the absorbing contemplation of divine wisdom and of the works of God.

Let us call to mind with what delight he has recited to us the polity, the purposes, the dangers, and the deliverances of the prophets, and with what erudition he was wont to trace the history of the church in all ages; thus it is evident that his heart glowed with no common emotion when speaking

of those favoured servants of the Lord. The spirits of these he now embraces, with delight he listens to their living words, and with them he speaks face to face, whilst they with transport bail him as their fellow, and with one heart and one voice give thanks unto God for having thus gathered and preserved his church.

Therefore we doubt. not that Luther is happy: we do indeed, mourn our bereavement, and whilst we bow to the fiat which has called him hence, we know it to be the will of God that we retain in our memories the virtues and the benefactions of this his servant.

Let us now be faithful to our trust. We must acknowledge that he was a hallowed instrument of God. Let us then devotedly embrace his doctrines, and strive to resemble him in those graces which are essential to our more humble walk, the fear of God, faith and fervency in prayer, soundness in ministry, purity, vigilance in avoiding seditious counsels, and an ardent thirst for knowledge. And as we are called upon to turn our thoughts with intentness and frequency towards those leaders in the church whose histories have been transmitted to us, as Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Paul, so let us often dwell on the doctrine and experience of Luther. Let us now add the tribute of thanksgiving and prayers which are due from this assembly, and let us all unite in this devotion.

"We give thanks unto Thee, oh omnipotent God! the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and Founder of Thy church, with Thy co-eternal Son our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, wise, good, merciful,_a true Judge, powerful and uncontrolled; in that Thou art by Thy dear Son, gathering unto Thyself an inheritance from amongst the human race, and art preserving the ministry of Thy gospel, for which Thou hast at this time raised up Luther. We beseech Thee that thou wilt henceforth sustain and govern thy church, and that thou wilt seal in us the true doctrine, as Isaiah prayed for his disciples. Deign Thou to quicken our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit, that we may offer prayer acceptably unto Thee, and that we may order our lives in Thy fear." In conclusion, as we are aware that the loss from amongst us of those who have directed us in our earthly course, often proves to survivors, the watchword of impending calamities: I would myself, with all to whom is committed the gift of teaching, implore you to consider to what the world now stands exposed. On the one hand the Turks are ravaging, on the other contending parties threaten us with a civil war; every where indeed, we trace the empire of misrule; and now that the enemies of the church no longer fear the power of Luther, they will doubtless with the greater daring, lay waste the doctrine which has been delivered to us by divine authority. That God may avert these evils, let us be more diligent in regulating our lives and directing our pursuits, and let us ever hold this sentiment fixed in our minds, so that whilst we retain, hear, learn, and love the pure truths of the Gospel, we may ourselves constitute the house and church of God: as the Son of God himself says, "If any man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." Encouraged by this cheering promise of our blessed Lord, let us incite one another to the acquiring of heavenly wisdom, and let us not forget that human interests and human institutions are to be respected for the sake of his church. Let us realize to our minds, that future eternity to which God has called us, who indeed has not in vain revealed Himself to us by such illustrious testimonies, neither has he sent his Son in vain, but He truly loves and preserves those who magnify His grace.

Amen.

---------- J. Unwin, Printer, 31, Bucklersbury, London

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02.02. Chronology of Life

A Chronology of Martin Luther’s Life 1483 - Born at Eisleben, Germany, November 10 1484 - Parents, Hans and Margaretha Luder, move family to Mansfield, where Hans works in copper mines 1492 - Attends school in Mansfield 1497 - Attends school in Magdeburg 1498 - Attends school in Eisenach 1501 - Enters University of Erfurt 1502 - Receives B.A. at Erfurt

1505 - Earns M.A. at Erfurt; begins law studies; in thunderstorm on July 2, vows to become a monk; enters Order of Augustinian Hermits 1507 - Ordained and celebrates first Mass 1509 - Receives bachelor of Bible 1510 - Visits Rome 1511 - Transferred to Augustinian house at Wittenberg 1512 - Becomes doctor of theology 1513 - Begins lecturing on the Psalms 1515 - Begins lecturing on Romans; appointed district vicar over ten monasteries 1516 - Begins lecturing on Galatians 1517 - Begins lecturing on Hebrews; on October 31, posts 95 Theses on indulgences

1518 - At meeting of Augustinians in Heidelberg, defends his theology; in October, appears before Cardinal Cajetan at Augsburg, but refuses to recant; in December, his prince, Frederick the Wise, refuses to hand him over to Rome.

1519 - Understands the "righteousness of God" as "passive righteousness with which God justifies us by faith" [some scholars date this discovery earlier]; in July, debates Professor John Eck at Leipzig and denies supreme authority of popes and councils

1520 - Papal bull Exsurge Domine gives Luther 60 days to recant or be excommunicated; writes his 3 seminal treatises, To the Christian Nobility, On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, The Freedom of a Christian; burns papal bull and books of canon law

1521 - Excommunicated by the papal bull Decet Romanum Pontificem; at Diet of Worms in April, on trial before Emperor Charles V and other leaders of church and state, he refuses to recant writings; an edict (in May) condemns him as heretic and outlaw; after the Diet of Worms, he is "kidnapped" by Frederick the Wise, and hidden at Wartburg Castle; begins translating the New Testament

1522 - in March, comes out of hiding and returns to Wittenberg, helping to reestablish order there; finishes New Testament translation, first published in September

1525 - Writes Against the Heavenly Prophets, contending against Andreas Karlstadt and Thomas Müntzer; marries Katherine von Bora in June; writes Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes, criticizing the Peasants’ Revolt; writes Bondage of the Will against Erasmus

1526 - Writes German Mass; becomes a father (son Hans); begins writing against Zwingli’s views on the Lord’s Supper;

1527 - Fights sickness and intense depression; plague strikes Wittenberg; writes "A Mighty Fortress is our God"; daughter Elizabeth born; continues to write against Zwingli 1528 - Writes Great Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper; grieves over Elizabeth’s death; visits churches

1529 - Attends Marburg Colloquy with Zwingli and Southern Germans, but no agreement is reached on the Lord’s Supper; publishes Large Catechism and Small Catechism; daughter Magdalena born

1530 - Luther, as outlaw cannot attend Diet of Augsburg, held in attempt to end religious division in the Holy Roman Empire; Philipp Melanchthon, Luther’s co-worker, presents the Augsburg Confession, a statement of Lutheran beliefs 1531 - Begins lecturing on Galatians; son Martin, born 1532 - Writes On Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers; is given the Augustinian Cloister for his home 1533 - Son Paul is born 1534 - Publishes complete German Bible; daughter Margaret born

1536 - Agrees to Wittenberg Concord on the Lord’s Supper, in attempt to resolve differences with other reformers, but Zwinglians do not accept it; writes Smalcald Articles to prepare for upcoming ecumenical council 1538 - Writes against the Jews in Against the Sabbatarians 1539 - Writes On the Councils and the Church 1542 - drafts his will ; daughter Magdalena dies 1545 - Writes Against the Papacy at Rome, an Institution of the Devil 1546 - Dies in Eisleben, February 18 1552 - Katherine Von Bora dies

03.01. Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians

Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians

(1535) by Martin Luther Translated by Theodore Graebner (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1949)

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03.02. Preface

Preface

_____ THE preparation of this edition of Luther’s Commentary on Galatians was first suggested to me by Mr. P. J. Zondervan, of the firm of publishers, in March, 1937. The consultation had the twofold merit of definiteness and brevity. "Luther is still the greatest name in Protestantism. We want you to help us publish some leading work of Luther’s for the general American market. Will you do it?" "I will, on one condition." "And what is that?" "The condition is that I will be permitted to make Luther talk American, ’streamline’ him, so to speak--because you will never get people, whether in or outside the Lutheran Church, actually to read Luther unless we make him talk as he would talk today to Americans." I illustrated the point by reading to Mr. Zondervan a few sentences from an English translation lately reprinted by an American publisher, of one of Luther’s outstanding reformatory essays. The demonstration seemed to prove convincing for it was agreed that one may as well offer Luther in the original German or Latin as expect the American church-member to read any translations that would adhere to Luther’s German or Latin constructions and employ the Mid-Victorian type of English characteristic of the translations now on the market. "And what book would be your choice?" "There is one book that Luther himself like better than any other. Let us begin with that: his Commentary on Galatians ..." The undertaking, which seemed so attractive when viewed as a literary task, proved a most difficult one, and at times became oppressive. The Letter to the Galatians consists of six short chapters. Luther’s commentary fills seven hundred and thirty-three octavo pages in the Weidman Edition of his works. It was written in Latin. We were resolved not to present this entire mass of exegesis. It would have run to more than fifteen hundred pages, ordinary octavo (like this), since it is impossible to use the compressed structure of sentences which is characteristic of Latin, and particularly of Luther’s Latin. The work had to be condensed. German and English translations are available, but the most acceptable English version, besides laboring under the handicaps of an archaic style, had to be condensed into half its volume in order to accomplish the "streamlining" of the book. Whatever merit the translation now presented to the reader may possess should be written to the credit of Rev. Gerhardt Mahler of Geneva, N.Y., who came to my assistance in a very busy season by making a rough draft of the translation and later preparing a revision of it, which forms the basis of the final draft submitted to the printer. A word should now be said about the origin of Luther’s Commentary on Galatians. The Reformer had lectured on this Epistle of St. Paul’s in 1519 and again in 1523. It was his favorite among all the Biblical books. In his table talks the saying is recorded: "The Epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am as it were in wedlock. It is my Katherine." Much later when a friend of his was preparing an edition of all his Latin works, he remarked to his home circle: "If I had my way about it they would republish only those of my books which have doctrine. My Galatians, for instance. "The lectures which are preserved in the works herewith submitted to the American public were delivered in 1531. They were taken down by George Roerer, who held something of a deanship at Wittenberg University and who was one of Luther’s aids in the translation of the Bible. Roerer took down Luther’s lectures and this

manuscript has been preserved to the present day, in a copy which contains also additions by Veit Dietrich and by Cruciger, friends of Roerer's, who with him attended Luther's lectures. In other words, these three men took down the lectures which Luther addressed to his students in the course of Galatians, and Roerer prepared the manuscript for the printer. A German translation by Justus Menius appeared in the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's writings, published in 1539. The importance of this Commentary on Galatians for the history of Protestantism is very great. It presents like no other of Luther's writings the central thought of Christianity, the justification of the sinner for the sake of Christ's merits alone. We have permitted in the final revision of the manuscript many a passage to stand which seemed weak and ineffectual when compared with the trumpet tones of the Latin original. But the essence of Luther's lectures is there. May the reader accept with indulgence where in this translation we have gone too far in modernizing Luther's expression--making him "talk American." At the end of his lectures in 1531, Luther uttered a brief prayer and then dictated two Scriptural texts, which we shall inscribe at the end of these introductory remarks: "The Lord who has given us power to teach and to hear, let Him also give us the power to serve and to do."

Luke 2:1-52 Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, Good will to men.

Isaiah 40:1-31 The Word of our God shall stand forever.

THEODORE GRAEBNER St. Louis, Missouri

FROM LUTHER'S INTRODUCTION, 1538 In my heart reigns this one article, faith in my dear Lord Christ, the beginning, middle and end of whatever spiritual and divine thoughts I may have, whether by day or by night.

03.03. Galatians 1:1-3

Chapter 1 Galatians 1:1-3

Galatians 1:1. Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead).

St. Paul wrote this epistle because, after his departure from the Galatian churches, Jewish-Christian fanatics moved in, who perverted Paul's Gospel of man's free justification by faith in Christ Jesus. The world bears the Gospel a grudge because the Gospel condemns the religious wisdom of the world. Jealous for its own religious views, the world in turn charges the Gospel with being a subversive and licentious doctrine, offensive to God and man, a doctrine to be persecuted as the worst plague on earth. As a result we have this paradoxical situation: The Gospel supplies the world with the salvation of Jesus Christ, peace of conscience, and every blessing. Just for that the world abhors the Gospel. These Jewish-Christian fanatics who pushed themselves into the Galatian churches after Paul's departure, boasted that they were the descendants of Abraham, true ministers of Christ, having been trained by the apostles themselves, that they were able to perform miracles. In every way they sought to undermine the authority of St. Paul. They said to the Galatians: "You have no right to think highly of Paul. He was the last to turn to Christ. But we have seen Christ. We heard Him preach. Paul came later and is beneath us. It is possible for us to be in error--we who have received the Holy Ghost? Paul stands alone. He has not seen Christ, nor has he had much contact with the other apostles. Indeed, he persecuted the Church of Christ for a long time." When men claiming such credentials come along, they deceive not only the naive, but also those who seemingly are well-established in the faith. This same argument is used by the papacy. "Do you suppose that God for the sake of a few Lutheran heretics would disown His entire Church? Or do you suppose that God would have left His Church floundering in error all these centuries?" The Galatians were taken in by such arguments with the result that Paul's authority and doctrine were drawn in question. Against these boasting, false apostles, Paul boldly defends his apostolic authority and ministry. Humble man that he was, he will not now take a back seat. He reminds them of the time when he opposed Peter to his face and reproved the chief of the apostles. Paul devotes the first two chapters to a defense of his office and his Gospel, affirming that he received it, not from men, but from the Lord Jesus Christ by special revelation, and that if he or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than the one he had preached, he shall be accursed. The Certainty of Our Calling

Every minister should make much of his calling and impress upon others the fact that he has been delegated by God to preach the Gospel. As the ambassador of a government is honored for his office and not for his private person, so the minister of Christ should exalt his office in order to gain authority among men. This is not vain glory, but needful glorying. Paul takes pride in his ministry, not to his own praise but to the praise of God. Writing to the Romans, he declares, "Inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office," i.e., I want to be received not as Paul of Tarsus, but as Paul the apostle and ambassador of Jesus Christ, in order that people might be

more eager to hear. Paul exalts his ministry out of the desire to make known the name, the grace, and the mercy of God.

Galatians 1:1. Paul, an apostle, (not of men, etc.)

Paul loses no time in defending himself against the charge that he had thrust himself into the ministry. He says to the Galatians: "My call may seem inferior to you. But those who have come to you are either called of men or by man. My call is the highest possible, for it is by Jesus Christ, and God the Father." When Paul speaks of those called "by men," I take it he means those whom neither God nor man sent, but who go wherever they like and speak for themselves. When Paul speaks of those called "by man" I take it he means those who have a divine call extended to them through other persons. God calls in two ways. Either He calls ministers through the agency of men, or He calls them directly as He called the prophets and apostles. Paul declares that the false apostles were called or sent neither by men, nor by man. The most they could claim is that they were sent by others. "But as for me I was called neither of men, nor by man, but directly by Jesus Christ. My call is in every respect like the call of the apostles. In fact I am an apostle." Elsewhere Paul draws a sharp distinction between an apostleship and lesser functions, as in 1 Corinthians 12:28 : "And God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers." He mentions the apostles first because they were appointed directly by God. Matthias was called in this manner. The apostles chose two candidates and then cast lots, praying that God would indicate which one He would have. To be an apostle he had to have his appointment from God. In the same manner Paul was called as the apostle of the Gentiles. The call is not to be taken lightly. For a person to possess knowledge is not enough. He must be sure that he is properly called. Those who operate without a proper call seek no good purpose. God does not bless their labors. They may be good preachers, but they do no edify. Many of the fanatics of our day pronounce words of faith, but they bear no good fruit, because their purpose is to turn men to their perverse opinions. On the other hand, those who have a divine call must suffer a good deal of opposition in order that they may become fortified against the running attacks of the devil and the world. This is our comfort in the ministry, that ours is a divine office to which we have been divinely called. Reversely, what an awful thing it must be for the conscience if one is not properly called. It spoils one’s best work. When I was a young man I thought Paul was making too much of his call. I did not understand his purpose. I did not then realize the importance of the ministry. I knew nothing of the doctrine of faith because we were taught sophistry instead of certainty, and nobody understood spiritual boasting. We exalt our calling, not to gain glory among men, or money, or satisfaction, or favor, but because people need to be assured that the words we speak are the words of God. This is no sinful pride. It is holy pride.

Galatians 1:1. And God the Father, who raised him from the dead.

Paul is so eager to come to the subject matter of his epistle, the righteousness of faith in opposition to the righteousness of works, that already in the title he must speak his mind. He did not think it quite enough to say that he was an apostle "by Jesus Christ"; he adds, "and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." The clause seems superfluous on first sight. Yet Paul had a good reason for adding it. He had to deal with Satan and his agents who endeavored to deprive him of the righteousness of Christ, who was raised by God the Father from the dead. These perverters of the righteousness of Christ resist the Father and the Son, and the works of them

both. In this whole epistle Paul treats of the resurrection of Christ. By His resurrection Christ won the victory over law, sin, flesh, world, devil, death, hell, and every evil. And this His victory He donated unto us. These many tyrants and enemies of ours may accuse and frighten us, but they dare not condemn us, for Christ, whom God the Father has raised from the dead is our righteousness and our victory. Do you notice how well suited to his purpose Paul writes? He does not say, "By God who made heaven and earth, who is Lord of the angels," but Paul has in mind the righteousness of Christ, and speaks to the point, saying, "I am an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead."

Galatians 1:2. And all the brethren which are with me. This should go far in shutting the mouths of the false apostles. Paul's intention is to exalt his own ministry while discrediting theirs. He adds for good measure the argument that he does not stand alone, but that all the brethren with him attest to the fact that his doctrine is divinely true. "Although the brethren with me are not apostles like myself, yet they are all of one mind with me, think, write, and teach as I do."

Galatians 1:2. Unto the churches of Galatia.

Paul had preached the Gospel throughout Galatia, founding many churches which after his departure were invaded by the false apostles. The Anabaptists in our time imitate the false apostles. They do not go where the enemies of the Gospel predominate. They go where the Christians are. Why do they not invade the Catholic provinces and preach their doctrine to godless princes, bishops, and doctors, as we have done by the help of God? These soft martyrs take no chances. They go where the Gospel has a hold, so that they may not endanger their lives. The false apostles would not go to Jerusalem of Caiaphas, or to the Rome of the Emperor, or to any other place where no man had preached before as Paul and the other apostles did. But they came to the churches of Galatia, knowing that where men profess the name of Christ they may feel secure. It is the lot of God's ministers not only to suffer opposition at the hand of a wicked world, but also to see the patient indoctrination of many years quickly undone by such religious fanatics. This hurts more than the persecution of tyrants. We are treated shabbily on the outside by tyrants, on the inside by those whom we have restored to the liberty of the Gospel, and also by false brethren. But this is our comfort and our glory, that being called of God we have the promise of everlasting life. We look for that reward which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man." Jerome raises the question why Paul called them churches that were no churches, inasmuch as the Galatians had forsaken the grace of Christ for the law of Moses. The proper answer is: Although the Galatians had fallen away from the doctrine of Paul, baptism, the Gospel, and the name of Christ continued among them. Not all the Galatians had become perverted. There were some who clung to the right view of the Word and the Sacraments. These means cannot be contaminated. They remain divine regardless of men's opinion. Wherever the means of grace are found, there is the Holy Church, even though Antichrist reigns there. So much for the title of the epistle. Now follows the greeting of the apostle.

Galatians 1:3. Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ. The terms of grace and peace are common terms with Paul and are now pretty well understood. But since we are explaining this epistle, you will not mind if we repeat what we have so often explained elsewhere. The article of justification must be sounded in our ears incessantly because the frailty of our flesh will not permit us to take hold of it perfectly and to believe it with all our heart.

The greeting of the Apostle is refreshing. Grace remits sin, and peace quiets the conscience. Sin and conscience torment us, but Christ has overcome these fiends now and forever. Only Christians possess this victorious knowledge given from above. These two terms, grace and peace, constitute Christianity. Grace involves the remission of sins, peace, and a happy conscience. Sin is not canceled by lawful living, for no person is able to live up to the Law. The Law reveals guilt, fills the conscience with terror, and drives men to despair. Much less is sin taken away by man-invented endeavors. The fact is, the more a person seeks credit for himself by his own efforts, the deeper he goes into debt. Nothing can take away sin except the grace of God. In actual living, however, it is not so easy to persuade oneself that by grace alone, in opposition to every other means, we obtain the forgiveness of our sins and peace with God. The world brands this a pernicious doctrine. The world advances free will, the rational and natural approach of good works, as the means of obtaining the forgiveness of sin. But it is impossible to gain peace of conscience by the methods and means of the world. Experience proves this. Various holy orders have been launched for the purpose of securing peace of conscience through religious exercises, but they proved failures because such devices only increase doubt and despair. We find no rest for our weary bones unless we cling to the word of grace. The Apostle does not wish the Galatians grace and peace from the emperor, or from kings, or from governors, but from God the Father. He wishes them heavenly peace, the kind of which Jesus spoke when He said, "Peace I leave unto you: my peace I give unto you." Worldly peace provides quiet enjoyment of life and possessions. But in affliction, particularly in the hour of death, the grace and peace of the world will not deliver us. However, the grace and peace of God will. They make a person strong and courageous to bear and to overcome all difficulties, even death itself, because we have the victory of Christ's death and the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins. Men Should Not Speculate About the Nature of God The Apostle adds to the salutation the words, "and from our Lord Jesus Christ." Was it not enough to say, "from God the Father"? It is a principle of the Bible that we are not to inquire curiously into the nature of God. "There shall no man see me, and live," Exodus 33:20. All who trust in their own merits to save them disregard this principle and lose sight of the Mediator, Jesus Christ. True Christian theology does not inquire into the nature of God, but into God's purpose and will in Christ, whom God incorporated in our flesh to live and to die for our sins. There is nothing more dangerous than to speculate about the incomprehensible power, wisdom, and majesty of God when the conscience is in turmoil over sin. To do so is to lose God altogether because God becomes intolerable when we seek to measure and to comprehend His infinite majesty. We are to seek God as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 1:23-24 : "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Begin with Christ. He came down to earth, lived among men, suffered, was crucified, and then He died, standing clearly before us, so that our hearts and eyes may fasten upon Him. Thus we shall be kept from climbing into heaven in a curious and futile search after the nature of God. If you ask how God may be found, who justifies sinners, know that there is no other God besides this man Christ Jesus. Embrace Him, and forget about the nature of God. But these fanatics who exclude our Mediator in their dealings with God, do not believe me. Did not Christ Himself say: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"? Without Christ there is no access to the Father, but futile rambling; no truth, but hypocrisy; no life, but eternal death. When you argue about the nature of God apart from the question of justification, you may be as

profound as you like. But when you deal with conscience and with righteousness over against the law, sin, death, and the devil, you must close your mind to all inquiries into the nature of God, and concentrate upon Jesus Christ, who says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Doing this, you will recognize the power, and majesty condescending to your condition according to Paul's statement to the Colossians, "In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," and, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Paul in wishing grace and peace not alone from God the Father, but also from Jesus Christ, wants to warn us against the curious incursions into the nature of God. We are to hear Christ, who has been appointed by the Father as our divine Teacher. Christ is God by Nature At the same time, Paul confirms our creed, "that Christ is very God." We need such frequent confirmation of our faith, for Satan will not fail to attack it. He hates our faith. He knows that it is the victory which overcometh him and the world. That Christ is very God is apparent in that Paul ascribes to Him divine powers equally with the Father, as for instance, the power to dispense grace and peace. This Jesus could not do unless He were God. To bestow peace and grace lies in the province of God, who alone can create these blessings. The angels cannot. The apostles could only distribute these blessings by the preaching of the Gospel. In attributing to Christ the divine power of creating and giving grace, peace, everlasting life, righteousness, and forgiveness of sins, the conclusion is inevitable that Christ is truly God. Similarly, St. John concludes from the works attributed to the Father and the Son that they are divinely One. Hence, the gifts which we receive from the Father and from the Son are one and the same. Otherwise Paul should have written: "Grace from God the Father, and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ." In combining them he ascribes them equally to the Father and the Son. I stress this on account of the many errors emanating from the sects. The Arians were sharp fellows. Admitting that Christ had two natures, and that He is called "very God of very God," they were yet able to deny His divinity. The Arians took Christ for a noble and perfect creature, superior even to the angels, because by Him God created heaven and earth. Mohammed also speaks highly of Christ. But all their praise is mere palaver to deceive men. Paul's language is different. To paraphrase him: "You are established in this belief that Christ is very God because He gives grace and peace, gifts which only God can create and bestow."

03.04. Galatians 1:4-6

Chapter 1 Galatians 1:4-6 Galatians 1:4. Who gave himself for our sins.

Paul sticks to his theme. He never loses sight of the purpose of his epistle. He does not say, "Who received our works," but "who gave." Gave what? Not gold, or silver, or paschal lambs, or an angel, but Himself. What for? Not for a crown, or a kingdom, or our goodness, but for our sins. These words are like so many thunderclaps of protest from heaven against every kind and type of self-merit. Underscore these words, for they are full of comfort for sore consciences. How may we obtain remission of our sins? Paul answers: "The man who is named Jesus Christ and the Son of God gave himself for our sins." The heavy artillery of these words explodes papacy, works, merits, superstitions. For if our sins could be removed by our own efforts, what need was there for the Son of God to be given for them? Since Christ was given for our sins it stands to reason that they cannot be put away by our own efforts. This sentence also defines our sins as great, so great, in fact, that the whole world could not make amends for a single sin. The greatness of the ransom, Christ, the Son of God, indicates this. The vicious character of sin is brought out by the words "who gave himself for our sins." So vicious is sin that only the sacrifice of Christ could atone for sin. When we reflect that the one little word "sin" embraces the whole kingdom of Satan, and that it includes everything that is horrible, we have reason to tremble. But we are careless. We make light of sin. We think that by some little work or merit we can dismiss sin. This passage, then, bears out the fact that all men are sold under sin. Sin is an exacting despot who can be vanquished by no created power, but by the sovereign power of Jesus Christ alone. All this is of wonderful comfort to a conscience troubled by the enormity of sin. Sin cannot harm those who believe in Christ, because He has overcome sin by His death. Armed with this conviction, we are enlightened and may pass judgment upon the papists, monks, nuns, priests, Mohammedans, Anabaptists, and all who trust in their own merits, as wicked and destructive sects that rob God and Christ of the honor that belongs to them alone. Note especially the pronoun "our" and its significance. You will readily grant that Christ gave Himself for the sins of Peter, Paul, and others who were worthy of such grace. But feeling low, you find it hard to believe that Christ gave Himself for your sins. Our feelings shy at a personal application of the pronoun "our," and we refuse to have anything to do with God until we have made ourselves worthy by good deeds. This attitude springs from a false conception of sin, the conception that sin is a small matter, easily taken care of by good works; that we must present ourselves unto God with a good conscience; that we must feel no sin before we may feel that Christ was given for our sins. This attitude is universal and particularly developed in those who consider themselves better than others. Such readily confess that they are frequent sinners, but they regard their sins as of no such importance that they cannot easily be dissolved by some good action, or that they may not appear before the tribunal of Christ and demand the reward of eternal life for their righteousness. Meantime they pretend great humility and acknowledge a certain degree of sinfulness for which they soulfully join in the publican’s prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But the real significance and comfort of the words "for our sins" is lost upon them. The genius of Christianity takes the words of Paul "who

gave himself for our sins" as true and efficacious. We are not to look upon our sins as insignificant trifles. On the other hand, we are not to regard them as so terrible that we must despair. Learn to believe that Christ was given, not for picayune and imaginary transgressions, but for mountainous sins; not for one or two, but for all; not for sins that can be discarded, but for sins that are stubbornly ingrained. Practice this knowledge and fortify yourself against despair, particularly in the last hour, when the memory of past sins assails the conscience. Say with confidence: "Christ, the Son of God, was given not for the righteous, but for sinners. If I had no sin I should not need Christ. No, Satan, you cannot delude me into thinking I am holy. The truth is, I am all sin. My sins are not imaginary transgressions, but sins against the first table, unbelief, doubt, despair, contempt, hatred, ignorance of God, ingratitude towards Him, misuse of His name, neglect of His Word, etc.; and sins against the second table, dishonor of parents, disobedience of government, coveting of another's possessions, etc. Granted that I have not committed murder, adultery, theft, and similar sins in deed, nevertheless I have committed them in the heart, and therefore I am a transgressor of all the commandments of God. "Because my transgressions are multiplied and my own efforts at self-justification rather a hindrance than a furtherance, therefore Christ the Son of God gave Himself into death for my sins." To believe this is to have eternal life. Let us equip ourselves against the accusations of Satan with this and similar passages of Holy Scripture. If he says, "Thou shalt be damned," you tell him: "No, for I fly to Christ who gave Himself for my sins. In accusing me of being a damnable sinner, you are cutting your own throat, Satan. You are reminding me of God's fatherly goodness toward me, that He so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. In calling me a sinner, Satan, you really comfort me above measure." With such heavenly cunning we are to meet the devil's craft and put from us the memory of sin. St. Paul also presents a true picture of Christ as the virgin-born Son of God, delivered into death for our sins. To entertain a true conception of Christ is important, for the devil describes Christ as an exacting and cruel judge who condemns and punishes men. Tell him that his definition of Christ is wrong, that Christ has given Himself for our sins, that by His sacrifice He has taken away the sins of the whole world. Make ample use of this pronoun "our." Be assured that Christ has canceled the sins, not of certain persons only, but your sins. Do not permit yourself to be robbed of this lovely conception of Christ. Christ is no Moses, no law-giver, no tyrant, but the Mediator for sins, the Giver of grace and life. We know this. Yet in the actual conflict with the devil, when he scares us with the Law, when he frightens us with the very person of the Mediator, when he misquotes the words of Christ, and distorts for us our Savior, we so easily lose sight of our sweet High-Priest. For this reason I am so anxious for you to gain a true picture of Christ out of the words of Paul "who gave himself for our sins." Obviously, Christ is no judge to condemn us, for He gave Himself for our sins. He does not trample the fallen but raises them. He comforts the broken-hearted. Otherwise Paul should lie when he writes "who gave himself for our sins." I do not bother my head with speculations about the nature of God. I simply attach myself to the human Christ, and I find joy and peace, and the wisdom of God in Him. These are not new truths. I am repeating what the apostles and all teachers of God have taught long ago. Would to God we could impregnate our hearts with these truths.

Galatians 1:4. That he might deliver us from this present evil world.

Paul calls this present world evil because everything in it is subject to the malice of the devil, who reigns over the whole world as his domain and fills the air with ignorance, contempt, hatred, and disobedience of God. In this devils's kingdom we live. As long as a person is in the world he cannot by his own efforts rid himself of sin, because the world is bent upon evil. The people of the world are the slaves of the devil. If we are not in the Kingdom of Christ, it is certain we belong to the kingdom of Satan and we are pressed into his service with every talent we possess. Take the talents of wisdom and integrity. Without Christ, wisdom is double foolishness and integrity double sin, because they not only fail to perceive the wisdom and righteousness of Christ, but hinder and blaspheme the salvation of Christ. Paul justly calls it the evil or wicked world, for when the world is at its best the world is at its worst. The grossest vices are small faults in comparison with the wisdom and righteousness of the world. These prevent men from accepting the Gospel of the righteousness of Christ. The white devil of spiritual sin is far more dangerous than the black devil of carnal sin because the wiser, the better men are without Christ, the more they are likely to ignore and oppose the Gospel. With the words, "that he might deliver us," Paul argues that we stand in need of Christ. No other being can possibly deliver us from this present evil world. Do not let the fact disturb you that a great many people enjoy excellent reputations without Christ. Remember what Paul says, that the world with all its wisdom, might, and righteousness is the devil's own. God alone is able to deliver us from the world. Let us praise and thank God for His mercy in delivering us from the captivity of Satan, when we were unable to do so by our own strength. Let us confess with Paul that all our work-righteousness is loss and dung. Let us condemn as filthy rags all talk about free will, all religious orders, masses, ceremonies, vows, fastings, and the like. In branding the world the devil's kingdom of iniquity, ignorance, error, sin, death, and everlasting despair, Paul at the same time declares the Kingdom of Christ to be a kingdom of equity, light, grace, remission of sin, peace, saving health, and everlasting life into which we are translated by our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever. In this passage Paul contends against the false apostles for the article of Justification. Christ, says Paul, has delivered us from this wicked kingdom of the devil and the world according to the good will, the pleasure and commandment of the Father. Hence we are not delivered by our own will, or shrewdness, or wisdom, but by the mercy and love of God, as it is written, 1 John 4:10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Another reason why Paul, like John, emphasizes the Father's will is Christ's habit of directing attention to the Father. For Christ came into the world to reconcile God with us and to draw us to the Father. Not by curious inquiries into the nature of God shall we know God and His purpose for our salvation, but by taking hold of Christ, who according to the will of the Father has given Himself into death for our sins. When we understand this to be the will of the Father in Christ, then shall we know God to be merciful, and not angry. We shall realize that He loved us wretched sinners so much indeed that He gave us His only-begotten Son into death for us. The pronoun "our" refers to both God and Father. He is our God and our Father. Christ's Father and our Father are one and the same. Hence Christ said to Mary Magdalene: "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." God is our Father and our God, but only in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 1:5. To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Hebrew writing is interspersed with expressions of praise and gratitude. This peculiarity can be traced in the apostolic writings, particularly in those of Paul. The name of the Lord is to be mentioned with great reverence and thanksgiving.

Galatians 1:6. I marvel.

How patiently Paul deals with his seduced Galatians! He does not pounce on them but, like a father, he fairly excuses their error. With motherly affection he talks to them yet he does it in a way that at the same time he also reproves them. On the other hand, he is highly indignant at the seducers whom he blames for the apostasy of the Galatians. His anger bursts forth in elemental fury at the beginning of his epistle. "If any may," he cries, "preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Later on, in the fifth chapter, he threatens the false apostles with damnation. "He that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be." He pronounces a curse upon them. "I would they were even cut off which trouble you." He might have addressed the Galatians after this fashion: "I am ashamed of you. Your ingratitude grieves me. I am angry with you." But his purpose was to call them back to the Gospel. With this purpose in his mind he speaks very gently to them. He could not have chosen a milder expression than this, "I marvel." It indicates his sorrow and his displeasure. Paul minds the rule which he himself lays down in a later chapter where he says: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Toward those who have been misled we are to show ourselves parentally affectionate, so that they may perceive that we seek not their destruction but their salvation. Over against the devil and his missionaries, the authors of false doctrines and sects, we ought to be like the Apostle, impatient, and rigorously condemnatory, as parents are with the dog that bites their little one, but the weeping child itself they soothe. The right spirit in Paul supplies him with an extraordinary facility in handling the afflicted consciences of the fallen. The Pope and his bishops, inspired by the desire to lord it over men’s souls, crack out thunders and curses upon miserable consciences. They have no care for the saving of men’s souls. They are interested only in maintaining their position.

Galatians 1:6. That ye are so soon.

Paul deplores the fact that it is difficult for the mind to retain a sound and steadfast faith. A man labors for a decade before he succeeds in training his little church into orderly religion, and then some ignorant and vicious poltroon comes along to overthrow in a minute the patient labor of years. By the grace of God we have effected here in Wittenberg the form of a Christian church. The Word of God is taught as it should be, the Sacraments are administered, and everything is prosperous. This happy condition, secured by many years of arduous labors, some lunatic might spoil in a moment. This happened in the churches of Galatia which Paul had brought into life in spiritual travail. Soon after his departure, however, these Galatian churches were thrown into confusion by the false apostles. The church is a tender plant. It must be watched. People hear a couple of sermons, scan a few pages of Holy Writ, and think they know it all. They are bold because they have never gone through any trials of faith. Void of the Holy Spirit, they teach what they please as long as it sounds good to the common people who are ever ready to join something new. We have to watch out for the devil lest he sow tares among the wheat while we sleep. No sooner had Paul turned his back on the churches of Galatia, than the false apostles went to work.

Therefore, let us watch over ourselves and over the whole church.

Galatians 1:6. I marvel that ye are so soon removed.

Again the Apostle puts in a gentle word. He does not berate the Galatians, "I marvel that ye are so unsteady, unfaithful." He says, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed." He does not address them as evildoers. He speaks to them as people who have suffered great loss. He condemns those who removed them rather than the Galatians. At the same time he gently reproves them for rather themselves to be removed. The criticism is implied that they should have been permitting a little more settled in their beliefs. If they had taken better hold of the Word they could not have been removed so easily. Jerome thinks that Paul is playing upon the name Galatians, deriving it from the Hebrew word Galath, which means fallen or carried away, as though Paul wanted to say, "You are true Galatians, i.e., fallen away in name and in fact." Some believe that the Germans are descended from the Galatians. There may be something to that. For the Germans are not unlike the Galatians in their lack of constancy. At first we Germans are very enthusiastic, but presently our emotions cool and we become slack. When the light of the Gospel first came to us many were zealous, heard sermons greedily, and held the ministry of God’s Word in high esteem. But now that religion has been reformed, many who formerly were such earnest disciples have discarded the Word of God, have become sow-bellies like the foolish and inconsistent Galatians.

Galatians 1:6. From him that called you into the grace of Christ. The reading is a little doubtful. The sentence may be construed to read: "From that Christ that called you into grace"; or it may be construed to read: "From God that called you into the grace of Christ." I prefer the former for it seems to me that Paul’s purpose is to impress upon us the benefits of Christ. This reading also preserves the implied criticism that the Galatians withdrew themselves from that Christ who had called them not unto the law, but unto grace. With Paul we decry the blindness and perverseness of men in that they will not receive the message of grace and salvation, or having received it they quickly let go of it, in spite of the fact that the Gospel bestows all good things spiritual: forgiveness of sins, true righteousness, peace of conscience, everlasting life; and all good things temporal: good judgment, good government and peace. Why does the world abhor the glad tidings of the Gospel and the blessings that go with it? Because the world is the devil’s. Under his direction the world persecutes the Gospel and would if it could nail again Christ, the Son of God, to the Cross although He gave Himself into death for the sins of the world. The world dwells in darkness. The world is darkness. Paul accentuates the point that the Galatians had been called by Christ unto grace. "I taught you the doctrine of grace and of liberty from the Law, from sin and wrath, that you should be free in Christ, and not slaves to the hard laws of Moses. Will you allow yourselves to be carried away so easily from the living fountain of grace and life?"

Galatians 1:6. Unto another gospel.

Note the resourcefulness of the devil. Heretics do not advertise their errors. Murderers, adulterers, thieves disguise themselves. So the devil masquerades all his devices and activities. He puts on white to make himself look like an angel of light. He is astoundingly clever to sell his patent poison for the Gospel of Christ. Knowing Satan’s guile, Paul sardonically calls the doctrine of the false apostles "another gospel," as if he would say, "You Galatians have now another gospel, while my Gospel is no longer esteemed by you." We infer from this that the false apostles had depreciated the Gospel of Paul among the Galatians on the plea that it was incomplete. Their objection to

Paul’s Gospel is identical to that recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Acts to the effect that it was not enough for the Galatians to believe in Christ, or to be baptized, but that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses, for "except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." As though Christ were a workman who had begun a building and left it for Moses to finish. Today the Anabaptists and others, finding it difficult to condemn us, accuse us Lutherans of timidity in professing the whole truth. They grant that we have laid the foundation in Christ, but claim that we have failed to go through with the building. In this way these perverse fanatics parade their cursed doctrine as the Word of God, and, flying the flag of God’s name, they deceive many. The devil knows better than to appear ugly and black. He prefers to carry on his nefarious activities in the name of God. Hence the German proverb: "All mischief begins in the name of God." When the devil sees that he cannot hurt the cause of the Gospel by destructive methods, he does it under the guise of correcting and advancing the cause of the Gospel. He would like best of all to persecute us with fire and sword, but this method has availed him little because through the blood of martyrs the church has been watered. Unable to prevail by force, he engages wicked and ungodly teachers who at first make common cause with us, then claim that they are particularly called to teach the hidden mysteries of the Scriptures to superimpose upon the first principles of Christian doctrine that we teach. This sort of thing brings the Gospel into trouble. May we all cling to the Word of Christ against the wiles of the devil, "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

03.05. Galatians 1:7-24

Chapter 1 Galatians 1:7-24 Galatians 1:7. Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you.

Here again the apostle excuses the Galatians, while he blames the false apostles for disturbing their consciences and for stealing them out of his hand. How angry he gets at these deceivers! He calls them troublemakers, seducers of poor consciences. This passage adduces further evidence that the false apostles defamed Paul as an imperfect apostle and a weak and erroneous preacher. They condemn Paul, Paul condemns them. Such warfare of condemnation is always going on in the church. The papists and the fanatics hate us, condemn our doctrine, and want to kill us. We in turn hate and condemn their cursed doctrine. In the meanwhile the people are uncertain whom to follow and which way to turn, for it is not given to everybody to judge these matters. But the truth will win out. So much is certain, we persecute no man, neither does our doctrine trouble men. On the contrary, we have the testimony of many good men who thank God on their knees for the consolation that our doctrine has brought them. Like Paul, we are not to blame that the churches have trouble. The fault lies with the Anabaptists and other fanatics. Every teacher of work-righteousness is a trouble-maker. Has it never occurred to you that the pope, cardinals, bishops, monks, and that the whole synagogue of Satan are trouble-makers? The truth is, they are worse than false apostles. The files apostles taught that in addition to faith in Christ the works of the Law of God were necessary unto salvation. But the papists omit faith altogether and teach self-devised traditions and works that are not commanded of God, indeed are contrary to the Word of God, and for these traditions they demand preferred attention and obedience. Paul calls the false apostles troublers of the church because they taught circumcision and the keeping of the Law as needful unto salvation. They insisted that the Law must be observed in every detail. They were supporters in this contention by the Jews, with the result that those who were not firmly established in faith were easily persuaded that Paul was not a sincere teacher of God because he ignored the Law. The Jews were offended at the idea that the Law of God should be entirely ignored by Paul and that the Gentiles, former idol-worshippers, should gratuitously attain to the station of God’s people without circumcision, without the penitentiary performance of the law, by grace alone through faith in Christ Jesus. These criticisms were amplified by the false apostles. They accused Paul of designs to abolish the law of God and the Jewish dispensation, contrary to the law of God, contrary to their Jewish heritage, contrary to apostolic example, contrary to Paul’s own example. They demanded that Paul be shunned as a blasphemer and a rebel, while they were to be heard as true teachers of the Gospel and authentic disciples of the apostles. Thus Paul stood defamed among the Galatians. He was forced to attack the false apostles. He did so without hesitation.

Galatians 1:7. And would pervert the gospel of Christ. To paraphrase this sentence: "These false apostles do not merely trouble you, they abolish Christ’s Gospel. They act as if they were the only true Gospel-preachers. For all that they muddle Law and Gospel. As a result they pervert the Gospel. Either Christ must live and the Law perish, or the Law remains and Christ must perish;

Christ and the Law cannot dwell side by side in the conscience. It is either grace or law. To muddle the two is to eliminate the Gospel of Christ entirely." It seems a small matter to mingle the Law and Gospel, faith and works, but it creates more mischief than man's brain can conceive. To mix Law and Gospel not only clouds the knowledge of grace, it cuts out Christ altogether. The words of Paul, "and would pervert the gospel of Christ," also indicate how arrogant these false apostles were. They were shameless boasters. Paul simply had to exalt his own ministry and Gospel.

Galatians 1:8. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

Paul's zeal for the Gospel becomes so fervent that it almost leads him to curse angels. "I would rather that I, my brethren, yes, the angels of heaven be anathematized than that my gospel be overthrown." The Greek word anathema, Hebrew herem, means to accurse, execrate, to damn. Paul first (hypothetically) curses himself. Knowing persons first find fault with themselves in order that they may all the more earnestly reprove others. Paul maintains that there is no other gospel besides the one he had preached to the Galatians. He preached, not a gospel of his own invention, but the very same Gospel God had long ago prescribed in the Sacred Scriptures. No wonder Paul pronounces curses upon himself and upon others, upon the angels of heaven, if anyone should dare to preach any other gospel than Christ's own.

Galatians 1:9. As we said before, so say I now again. If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Paul repeats the curse, directing it now upon other persons. Before, he cursed himself, his brethren, and an angel from heaven. "Now," he says, "if there are any others who preach a gospel different from that you have received from us, let them also be accursed." Paul herewith curses and excommunicates all false teachers including his opponents. He is so worked up that he dares to curse all who pervert his Gospel. Would to God that this terrible pronouncement of the Apostle might strike fear into the hearts of all who pervert the Gospel of Paul. The Galatians might say: "Paul, we do not pervert the Gospel you have brought unto us. We did not quite understand it. That is all. Now these teachers who came after you have explained everything so beautifully." This explanation the Apostle refuses to accept. They must add nothing; they must correct nothing. "What you received from me is the genuine Gospel of God. Let it stand. If any man brings any other gospel than the one I brought you, or promises to deliver better things than you have received from me, let him be accursed." In spite of this emphatic denunciation so many accept the pope as the supreme judge of the Scriptures. "The Church," they say, "chose only four gospels. The Church might have chosen more. Ergo the Church is above the Gospel." With equal force one might argue: "I approve the Scriptures. Ergo I am above the Scriptures. John the Baptist confessed Christ. Hence he is above Christ." Paul subordinates himself, all preachers, all the angels of heaven, everybody to the Sacred Scriptures. We are not the masters, judges, or arbiters, but witnesses, disciples, and confessors of the Scriptures, whether we be pope, Luther, Augustine, Paul, or an angel from heaven.

Galatians 1:10. For do I now persuade men, or God? With the same vehemence Paul continues: "You Galatians ought to be able to tell from my preaching and from the many afflictions which I have endured, whether I serve men or God. Everybody can see that my preaching has stirred up persecution against me everywhere, and has earned for me the cruel hatred of my own people, in

fact the hatred of all men. This should convince you that by my preaching I do not seek the favor and praise of men, but the glory of God." No man can say that we are seeking the favor and praise of men with our doctrine. We teach that all men are naturally depraved. We condemn man's free will, his strength, wisdom, and righteousness. We say that we obtain grace by the free mercy of God alone for Christ's sake. This is no preaching to please men. This sort of preaching procures for us the hatred and disfavor of the world, persecutions, excommunications, murders, and curses. "Can't you see that I seek no man's favor by my doctrine?" asks Paul. "If I were anxious for the favor of men I would flatter them. But what do I do? I condemn their works. I teach things only that I have been commanded to teach from above. For that I bring down upon my head the wrath of Jews and Gentiles. My doctrine must be right. It must be divine. Any other doctrine cannot be better than mine. Any other doctrine must be false and wicked." With Paul we boldly pronounce a curse upon every doctrine that does not agree with ours. We do not preach for the praise of men, or the favor of princes. We preach for the favor of God alone whose grace and mercy we proclaim. Whosoever teaches a gospel contrary to ours, or different from ours, let us be bold to say that he is sent of the devil. VERSE 10. Or do I seek to please men? "Do I serve men or God?" Paul keeps an eye on the false apostles, those flatterers of men. They taught circumcision to avoid the hatred and persecution of men. To this day you will find many who seek to please men in order that they may live in peace and security. They teach whatever is agreeable to men, no matter whether it is contrary to God's Word or their own conscience. But we who endeavor to please God and not men, stir up hell itself. We must suffer reproach, slanders, death. For those who go about to please men we have a word from Christ recorded in the fifth chapter of St. John: "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God alone?"

Galatians 1:10. For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Observe the consummate cleverness with which the false apostles went about to bring Paul into disrepute. They combed Paul's writings for contradictions (our opponents do the same) to accuse him of teaching contradictory things. They found that Paul had circumcised Timothy according to the Law, that Paul had purified himself with four other men in the Temple at Jerusalem, that Paul had shaven his head at Cenchrea. The false apostles slyly suggested that Paul had been constrained by the other apostles to observe these ceremonial laws. We know that Paul observed these decora out of charitable regard for the weak brethren. He did not want to offend them. But the false apostles turned Paul's charitable regard to his disadvantage. If Paul had preached the Law and circumcision, if he had commended the strength and free will of man, he would not have been so obnoxious to the Jews. On the contrary they would have praised his every action.

Galatians 1:11-12. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. This passage constitutes Paul's chief defense against the accusations of his opponents. He maintains under oath that he received his Gospel not from men, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. In declaring that his Gospel is not after man, Paul does not merely wish to state that his Gospel is not mundane. The false apostles made the same claim for their gospel. Paul means to say that he learned his Gospel not in the usual and accepted manner through the agency of men by hearing, reading, or writing. He received the Gospel by special revelation directly from Jesus Christ. Paul received his Gospel on the way to Damascus when Christ appeared to him. St. Luke

furnishes an account of the incident in the ninth chapter of the Book of Acts. "Arise," said Christ to Paul, "and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Christ did not send Paul into the city to learn the Gospel from Ananias. Ananias was only to baptize Paul, to lay his hands on Paul, to commit the ministry of the Word unto Paul, and to recommend him to the Church. Ananias recognized his limited assignment when he said to Paul: "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." Paul did not receive instruction from Ananias. Paul had already been called, enlightened, and taught by Christ in the road. His contact with Ananias was merely a testimonial to the fact that Paul had been called by Christ to preach the Gospel. Paul was forced to speak of his conversion to combat the slanderous contention of the false apostles to the effect that this apostleship was inferior to that of the other apostles. If it were not for the example of the Galatian churches I would never have thought it possible that anybody who had received the Word of God with such eagerness as they had, could so quickly let go of it. Good Lord, what terrible mischief one single false statement can create. The article of justification is fragile. Not in itself, of course, but in us. I know how quickly a person can forfeit the joy of the Gospel. I know in what slippery places even those stand who seem to have a good footing in the matters of faith. In the midst of the conflict when we should be consoling ourselves with the Gospel, the Law rears up and begins to rage all over our conscience. I say the Gospel is frail because we are frail. What makes matters worse is that one-half of ourselves, our own reason, stands against us. The flesh resists the spirit, or as Paul puts it, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit." Therefore we teach that to know Christ and to believe in Him is no achievement of man, but the gift of God. God alone can create and preserve faith in us. God creates faith in us through the Word. He increases, strengthens and confirms faith in us through His word. Hence the best service that anybody can render God is diligently to hear and read God’s Word. On the other hand, nothing is more perilous than to be weary of the Word of God. Thinking he knows enough, a person begins little by little to despise the Word until he has lost Christ and the Gospel altogether. Let every believer carefully learn the Gospel. Let him continue in humble prayer. We are molested not by puny foes, but by mighty ones, foes who never grow tired of warring against us. These, our enemies, are many: Our own flesh, the world, the Law, sin, death, the wrath and judgment of God, and the devil himself. The arguments which the false apostles advanced impress people to this day. "Who are you to dissent from the fathers and the entire Church, and to bring a contradictory doctrine? Are you wiser than so many holy men, wiser than the whole Church?" When Satan, abetted by our own reason, advances these arguments against us, we lose heart, unless we keep on saying to ourselves: "I don’t care if Cyprian, Ambrose, Augustine, Peter, Paul, John, or an angel from heaven, teaches so and so. I know that I teach the truth of God in Christ Jesus." When I first took over the defense of the Gospel, I remembered what Doctor Staupitz said to me. "I like it well," he said, "that the doctrine which you proclaim gives glory to God alone and none to man. For never can too much glory, goodness, and mercy be ascribed unto God." These words of the worthy Doctor comforted and confirmed me. The Gospel is true because it deprives men of all glory, wisdom, and righteousness and turns over all honor to the Creator alone. It is safer to attribute too much glory unto God than unto man. You may argue that the Church and the fathers are holy. Yet the Church is compelled to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses," I am not to be believed, nor is the Church to be believed, or the fathers, or the apostles, or an angel from heaven, if they teach anything contrary to the Word of God. Let the Word of God abide forever. Peter erred in life

and in doctrine. Paul might have dismissed Peter's error as a matter of no consequence. But Paul saw that Peter's error would lead to the damage of the whole Church unless it were corrected. Therefore he withstood Peter to his face. The Church, Peter, the apostles, angels from heaven, are not to be heard unless they teach the genuine Word of God. This argument is not always to our advantage. People ask: "Whom then shall we believe?" Our opponents maintain that they teach the pure Word of God. We do not believe them. They in turn hate and persecute us for vile heretics. What can we do about it? With Paul we glory in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What do we gain? We are told that our glorying is idle vanity and unadulterated blasphemy. The moment we abase ourselves and give in to the rage of our opponents, Papists and Anabaptists grow arrogant. The Anabaptists hatch out some new monstrosity. The Papists revive their old abominations. What to do? Let everybody become sure of his calling and doctrine, that he may boldly say with Paul: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than ye have received, let him be accursed."

Galatians 1:13-14. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation. This passage does not contain doctrine. Paul adduces his own case for an example. "I have," he says, "at one time defended the traditions of the Pharisees more fiercely than any of your false apostles. Now, if the righteousness of the Law had been worth anything I would never have forsaken it. So carefully did I live up to the Law that I excelled many of my companions. So zealous was I in defense of the Law that I wasted the church of God."

Galatians 1:14. Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Speaking now of the Mosaic Law, Paul declares that he was wrapped up in it. To the Philippians he wrote: "As touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." He means to say, "I can compare myself with the best and holiest of all those who are of the circumcision. Let them show me if they can, a more earnest defender of the Mosaic Law than I was at one time. This fact, O Galatians, should have put you on your guard against these deceivers who make so much of the Law. If anybody ever had reason to glory in the righteousness of the Law, it was I." I too may say that before I was enlightened by the Gospel, I was as zealous for the papistical laws and traditions of the fathers as ever a man was. I tried hard to live up to every law as best I could. I punished myself with fasting, watching, praying, and other exercises more than all those who today hate and persecute me. I was so much in earnest that I imposed upon my body more than it could stand. I honored the pope as a matter of conscience. Whatever I did, I did with a single heart to the glory of God. But our opponents, well-fed idlers that they are, will not believe what I and many others have endured.

Galatians 1:15-17. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace. To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

Here Paul relates that immediately upon being called by God to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, he went into Arabia without consulting a single person. "When it had pleased God," he writes, "I did not deserve it. I had been an enemy of Christ. I had blasphemed His Gospel. I had shed

innocent blood. In the midst of my frenzy I was called. Why? On account of my outrageous cruelty? Indeed not. My gracious God who shows mercy unto whom He will, pardoned all mine iniquities. He bestowed His grace upon me, and called me for an apostle." We also have come to the knowledge of the truth by the same kindness of God. I crucified Christ daily in my cloistered life, and blasphemed God by my wrong faith. Outwardly I kept myself chaste, poor, and obedient. I was much given to fasting, watching, praying, saying of masses, and the like. Yet under the cloak of my outward respectability I continually mistrusted, doubted, feared, hated, and blasphemed God. My righteousness was a filthy puddle. Satan loves such saints. They are his darlings, for they quickly destroy their body and soul by depriving them of the blessings of God's generous gifts. I tell you I stood in awe of the pope's authority. To dissent from him I considered a crime worthy of eternal death. I thought of John Huss as a cursed heretic. I counted it a sin even to think of him. I would gladly have furnished the wood to burn him. I would have felt I had done God a real service. In comparison with these sanctimonious hypocrites of the papacy, publicans and harlots are not bad. They at least feel remorse. They at least do not try to justify their wicked deeds. But these pretended saints, so far from acknowledging their errors, justify them and regard them as acceptable sacrifices unto God.

Galatians 1:15 a. When it pleased God.

"By the favor of God I, a wicked and cursed wretch, a blasphemer, persecutor, and rebel, was spared. Not content to spare me, God granted unto me the knowledge of His salvation, His Spirit, His Son, the office of an apostle, everlasting life." Paul speaking. God not only pardoned our iniquities, but in addition overwhelmed us with blessings and spiritual gifts. Many, however, are ungrateful. Worse, by opening again a window to the devil many begin to loathe God's Word, and end by perverting the Gospel.

Galatians 1:15. Who separated me from my mother's womb. This is a Hebrew expression, meaning to sanctify, ordain, prepare. Paul is saying, "When I was not yet born God ordained me to be an apostle, and in due time confirmed my apostleship before the world. Every gift, be it small or great, spiritual or temporal, and every good thing I should ever do, God has ordained while I was yet in my mother's womb where I could neither think nor perform any good thing. After I was born God supported me. Heaping mercy upon mercy, He freely forgave my sins, replenishing me with His grace to enable me to learn what great things are ours in Christ. To crown it all, He called me to preach the Gospel to others."

Galatians 1:15. And called me by his grace.

"Did God call me on account of my holy life? Or on account of my pharisaical religion? Or on account of my prayers, fastings, and works? Never. Well, then, it is certain God did not call me on account of my blasphemies, persecutions, oppressions. What prompted Him to call me? His grace alone."

Galatians 1:16. To reveal his Son to me.

We now hear what kind of doctrine was committed to Paul: The doctrine of the Gospel, the doctrine of the revelation of the Son of God. This doctrine differs greatly from the Law. The Law terrorizes the conscience. The Law reveals the wrath and judgment of God. The Gospel does not threaten. The Gospel announces that Christ is come to forgive the sins of the world. The Gospel

conveys to us the inestimable treasures of God.

Galatians 1:16. That I might preach him among the heathen.

"It pleased God," says the Apostle, "to reveal himself in me. Why? For a twofold purpose. That I personally should believe in the Son of God, and that I should reveal Him to the Gentiles." Paul does not mention the Jews, for the simple reason that he was the called and acknowledged apostle of the Gentiles, although he preached Christ also to the Jews. We can hear the Apostle saying to himself: "I will not burden the Gentiles with the Law, because I am their apostle and not their lawgiver. Not once did you Galatians hear me speak of the righteousness of the Law or of works. My job was to bring you the Gospel. Therefore you ought to listen to no teachers of the Law, but the Gospel: not Moses, but the Son of God; not the righteousness of works, but the righteousness of faith must be proclaimed to the Gentiles. That is the right kind of preaching for Gentiles."

Galatians 1:16. Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.

Once Paul had received the Gospel from Christ, he conferred with nobody in Damascus. He asked no man to teach him. He did not go up to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of Peter and the other apostles. At once he preached Jesus Christ in Damascus.

Galatians 1:17. Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

"I went to Arabia before I saw any of the apostles. I took it upon myself to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles without delay, because Christ had called me for that purpose." This statement refutes the assertion of the false apostles that Paul had been a pupil of the apostles, from which the false apostles inferred that Paul had been instructed in the obedience of the Law, that therefore the Gentiles also ought to keep the Law and submit to circumcision.

Galatians 1:18-19. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.

Paul minutely recounts his personal history to stop the cavil of the false apostles. Paul does not deny that he had been with some of the apostles. He went to Jerusalem uninvited, not to be instructed, but to visit with Peter. Luke reports the occasion in the ninth chapter of the Book of Acts. Barnabas introduced Paul to the apostles and related to them how Paul had met the Lord Jesus on the way to Damascus, also how Paul had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. Paul says that he saw Peter and James, but he denies that he learned anything from them. Why does Paul harp on this seemingly unimportant fact? To convince the churches of Galatia that his Gospel was the true Word of Christ which he learned from Christ Himself and from no man. Paul was forced to affirm and re-affirm this fact. His usefulness to all the churches that had used him as their pastor and teacher was at stake.

Galatians 1:20. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Was it necessary for Paul to go under oath? Yes. Paul is reporting personal history. How else would the churches believe him? The false apostles might say, "Who knows whether Paul is telling the truth?" Paul, the elect vessel of God, was held in so little esteem by his own Galatians to whom he had preached Christ that it was necessary for him to swear an oath that he spoke the truth. If this

happened to Paul, what business have we to complain when people doubt our words, or hold us in little regard, we who cannot begin to compare ourselves with the Apostle?

Galatians 1:21. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

Syria and Cilicia are adjacent countries. Paul traces his movements carefully in order to convince the Galatians that he had never been the disciple of any apostle.

Galatians 1:22-24. And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me. In Syria and Cilicia Paul won the indorsement of all the churches of Judea, by his preaching. All the churches everywhere, even those of Judea, could testify that he had preached the same faith everywhere. "And," Paul adds, "these churches glorified God in me, not because I taught that circumcision and the law of Moses should be observed, but because I urged upon all faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."

03.06. Galatians 2:1-3

Chapter 2 Galatians 2:1-3 Galatians 2:1. Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem.

Paul taught justification by faith in Christ Jesus, without the deeds of the Law. He reported this to the disciples at Antioch. Among the disciples were some that had been brought up in the ancient customs of the Jews. These rose against Paul in quick indignation, accusing him of propagating a gospel of lawlessness. Great dissension followed. Paul and Barnabas stood up for the truth. They testified: "Wherever we preached to the Gentiles, the Holy Ghost came upon those who received the Word. This happened everywhere. We preached not circumcision, we did not require observance of the Law. We preached faith in Jesus Christ. At our preaching of faith, God gave to the hearers the Holy Ghost." From this fact Paul and Barnabas inferred that the Holy Ghost approved the faith of the Gentiles without the Law and circumcision. If the faith of the Gentiles had not pleased the Holy Ghost, He would not have manifested His presence in the uncircumcised hearers of the Word. Unconvinced, the Jews fiercely opposed Paul, asserting that the Law ought to be kept and that the Gentiles ought to be circumcised, or else they could not be saved. When we consider the obstinacy with which Romanists cling to their traditions, we can very well understand the zealous devotion of the Jews for the Law. After all, they had received the Law from God. We can understand how impossible it was for recent converts from Judaism suddenly to break with the Law. For that matter, God did bear with them, as He bore with the infirmity of Israel when the people halted between two religions. Was not God patient with us also while we were blindfolded by the papacy? God is longsuffering and full of mercy. But we dare not abuse the patience of the Lord. We dare no longer continue in error now that the truth has been revealed in the Gospel. The opponents of Paul had his own example to prefer against him. Paul had circumcised Timothy. Paul defended his action on the ground that he had circumcised Timothy, not from compulsion, but from Christian love, lest the weak in faith should be offended. His opponents would not accept Paul’s explanation. When Paul saw that the quarrel was getting out of hand he obeyed the direction of God and left for Jerusalem, there to confer with the other apostles. He did this not for his own sake, but for the sake of the people.

Galatians 2:1. With Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

Paul chose two witnesses, Barnabas and Titus. Barnabas had been Paul’s preaching companion to the Gentiles. Barnabas was an eye-witness of the fact that the Holy Ghost had come upon the Gentiles in response to the simple preaching of faith in Jesus Christ. Barnabas stuck to Paul on this point, that it was unnecessary for the Gentiles to be bothered with the Law as long as they believed in Christ. Titus was superintendent of the churches in Crete, having been placed in charge of the churches by Paul. Titus was a former Gentile.

Galatians 2:2. And I went up by revelation.

If God had not ordered Paul to Jerusalem, Paul would never have gone there.

Galatians 2:2. And communicated unto them that gospel.

After an absence of fourteen years, respectively eighteen years, Paul returned to Jerusalem to confer with the other apostles.

Galatians 2:2. Which I preach among the Gentiles.

Among the Jews Paul allowed Law and circumcision to stand for the time being. So did all the apostles. Nevertheless Paul held fast to the liberty of the Gospel. On one occasion he said to the Jews: "Through this man (Christ) is preached unto you forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38-39.) Always remembering the weak, Paul did not insist that they break at once with the Law. Paul admits that he conferred with the apostles concerning his Gospel. But he denies that the conference benefited or taught him anything. The fact is he resisted those who wanted to force the practice of the Law upon the Gentiles. They did not overcome him, he overcame them. "Your false apostles lie, when they say that I circumcised Timothy, shaved my head in Cenchrea, and went up to Jerusalem, at the request of the apostles. I went to Jerusalem at the request of God. What is more, I won the indorsement of the apostles. My opponents lost out." The matter upon which the apostles deliberated in conference was this: Is the observance of the Law requisite unto justification? Paul answered: "I have preached faith in Christ to the Gentiles, and not the Law. If the Jews want to keep the Law and be circumcised, very well, as long as they do so from a right motive."

Galatians 2:2. But privately to them which were of reputation. This is to say, "I conferred not only with the brethren, but with the leaders among them."

Galatians 2:2. Lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. Not that Paul himself ever thought he had run in vain. However, many did think that Paul had preached the Gospel in vain, because he kept the Gentiles free from the yoke of the Law. The opinion that obedience to the Law was mandatory unto salvation was gaining ground. Paul meant to remedy this evil. By this conference he hoped to establish the identity of his Gospel with that of the other apostles, to stop the talk of his opponents that he had been running around in vain.

Galatians 2:3. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. The word "compelled" acquaints us with the outcome of the conference. It was resolved that the Gentiles should not be compelled to be circumcised. Paul did not condemn circumcision in itself. Neither by word nor deed did he ever inveigh against circumcision. But he did protest against circumcision being made a condition for salvation. He cited the case of the Fathers. "The fathers were not justified by circumcision. It was to them a sign and seal of righteousness. They looked upon circumcision as a confession of their faith." The believing Jews, however, could not get it through their heads that circumcision was not necessary for salvation. They were encouraged in their wrong attitude by the false apostles. The result was that the people were up in arms against Paul and his doctrine. Paul did not condemn circumcision as if it were a sin to receive it. But he insisted, and the conference upheld him, that circumcision had no bearing upon salvation and was therefore not to be forced upon the Gentiles. The conference agreed that the Jews should be permitted to keep their ancient customs for the time being, so long as they did not regard those customs as conveying God’s justification of the sinner. The false apostles were dissatisfied with the verdict of the conference. They did not want to rest circumcision and the practice of the Law in Christian liberty. They insisted that circumcision was obligatory unto

salvation. As the opponents of Paul, so our own adversaries [Luther's, the enemies of the Reformation] contend that the traditions of the Fathers dare not be neglected without loss of salvation. Our opponents will not agree with us on anything. They defend their blasphemies. They go as far to enforce them with the sword. Paul's victory was complete. Titus, who was with Paul, was not compelled to be circumcised, although he stood in the midst of the apostles when this question of circumcision was debated. This was a blow to the false apostles. With the living fact that Titus was not compelled to be circumcised Paul was able to squelch his adversaries.

03.07. Galatians 2:4-13

Chapter 2 Galatians 2:4-13

Galatians 2:4-5. And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Paul here explains his motive for going up to Jerusalem. He did not go to Jerusalem to be instructed or confirmed in his Gospel by the other apostles. He went to Jerusalem in order to preserve the true Gospel for the Galatian churches and for all the churches of the Gentiles. When Paul speaks of the truth of the Gospel he implies by contrast a false gospel. The false apostles also had a gospel, but it was an untrue gospel. "In holding out against them," says Paul, "I conserved the truth of the pure Gospel." Now the true Gospel has it that we are justified by faith alone, without the deeds of the Law. The false gospel has it that we are justified by faith, but not without the deeds of the Law. The false apostles preached a conditional gospel. So do the papists. They admit that faith is the foundation of salvation. But they add the conditional clause that faith can save only when it is furnished with good works. This is wrong. The true Gospel declares that good works are the embellishment of faith, but that faith itself is the gift and work of God in our hearts. Faith is able to justify, because it apprehends Christ, the Redeemer. Human reason can think only in terms of the Law. It mumbles: "This I have done, this I have not done." But faith looks to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, given into death for the sins of the whole world. To turn one’s eyes away from Jesus means to turn them to the Law. True faith lays hold of Christ and leans on Him alone. Our opponents cannot understand this. In their blindness they cast away the precious pearl, Christ, and hang onto their stubborn works. They have no idea what faith is. How can they teach faith to others? Not satisfied with teaching an untrue gospel, the false apostles tried to entangle Paul. "They went about," says Paul, "to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." When Paul saw through their scheme, he attacked the false apostles. He says, "We did not let go of the liberty which we have in Christ Jesus. We routed them by the judgment of the apostles, and we would not give in to them, no, not an inch." We too were willing to make all kinds of concessions to the papists. Yes, we are willing to offer them more than we should. But we will not give up the liberty of conscience which we have in Christ Jesus. We refuse to have our conscience bound by any work or law, so that by doing this or that we should be righteous, or leaving this or that undone we should be damned. Since our opponents will not let it stand that only faith in Christ justifies, we will not yield to them. On the question of justification we must remain adamant, or else we shall lose the truth of the Gospel. It is a matter of life and death. It involves the death of the Son of God, who died for the sins of the world. If we surrender faith in Christ, as the only thing that can justify us, the death and resurrection of Jesus are without meaning; that Christ is the Savior of the world would be a myth. God would be a liar, because He would not have fulfilled His promises. Our stubbornness is right, because we want to preserve the liberty which we have in Christ. Only by preserving our liberty shall we be able to

retain the truth of the Gospel inviolate. Some will object that the Law is divine and holy. Let it be divine and holy. The Law has no right to tell me that I must be justified by it. The Law has the right to tell me that I should love God and my neighbor, that I should live in chastity, temperance, patience, etc. The Law has no right to tell me how I may be delivered from sin, death, and hell. It is the Gospel's business to tell me that. I must listen to the Gospel. It tells me, not what I must do, but what Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has done for me. To conclude, Paul refused to circumcise Titus for the reason that the false apostles wanted to compel him to circumcise Titus. Paul refused to accede to their demands. If they had asked it on the plea of brotherly love, Paul would not have denied them. But because they demanded it on the ground that it was necessary for salvation, Paul defied them, and prevailed. Titus was not circumcised.

Galatians 2:6. But of those who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me. This is a good point in Paul's refutation. Paul disparages the authority and dignity of the true apostles. He says of them, "Which seemed to be somewhat." The authority of the apostles was indeed great in all the churches. Paul did not want to detract from their authority, but he had to speak disparagingly of their authority in order to conserve the truth of the Gospel, and the liberty of conscience. The false apostles used this argument against Paul: "The apostles lived with Christ for three years. They heard His sermons. They witnessed His miracles. They themselves preached and performed miracles while Christ was on earth. Paul never saw Jesus in the flesh. Now, whom ought you to believe: Paul, who stands alone, a mere disciple of the apostles, one of the last and least; or will you believe those grand apostles who were sent and confirmed by Christ Himself long before Paul?" What could Paul say to that? He answered: "What they say has no bearing on the argument. If the apostles were angels from heaven, that would not impress me. We are not now discussing the excellency of the apostles. We are talking about the Word of God now, and the truth of the Gospel. That Gospel is more excellent than all apostles.

Galatians 2:6. God accepteth no man's person.

Paul is quoting Moses: "Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty." (Leviticus 19:15) This quotation from Moses ought to shut the mouths of the false apostles. "Don't you know that God is no respecter of persons?" cries Paul. The dignity or authority of men means nothing to God. The fact is that God often rejects just such who stand in the odor of sanctity and in the aura of importance. In doing so God seems unjust and harsh. But men need deterring examples. For it is a vice with us to esteem personality more highly than the Word of God. God wants us to exalt His Word and not men. There must be people in high office, of course. But we are not to deify them. The governor, the mayor, the preacher, the teacher, the scholar, father, mother, are persons whom we are to love and revere, but not to the extent that we forget God. Least we attach too much importance to the person, God leaves with important persons offenses and sins, sometimes astounding shortcomings, to show us that there is a lot of difference between any person and God. David was a good king. But when the people began to think too well of him, down he fell into horrible sins, adultery and murder. Peter, excellent apostle that he was, denied Christ. Such examples of which the Scriptures are full, ought to warn us not to repose our trust in men. In the papacy appearance counts for everything. Indeed, the whole papacy amounts to nothing more than a mere kowtowing of persons and outward mummery. But God alone is to be feared and honored. I would honor the Pope, I would love his person, if he would leave my conscience alone, and not compel me to sin against God. But the Pope wants to

be adored himself, and that cannot be done without offending God. Since we must choose between one or the other, let us choose God. The truth is we are commissioned by God to resist the Pope, for it is written, "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29) We have seen how Paul refutes the argument of the false apostles concerning the authority of the apostles. In order that the truth of the Gospel may continue; in order that the Word of God and the righteousness of faith may be kept pure and undefiled, let the apostles, let an angel from heaven, let Peter, let Paul, let them all perish.

Galatians 2:6. For they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me. The Apostle repeats: "I did not so confer with the apostles that they taught me anything. What could they possibly teach me since Christ by His revelation had taught me all things? It was but a conference, and no disputation. I learned nothing, neither did I defend my cause. I only stated what I had done, that I had preached to the Gentiles faith in Christ, without the Law, and that in response to my preaching the Holy Ghost came down upon the Gentiles. When the apostles heard this, they were glad that I had taught the truth." If Paul would not give in to the false apostles, much less ought we to give in to our opponents. I know that a Christian should be humble, but against the Pope I am going to be proud and say to him: "You, Pope, I will not have you for my boss, for I am sure that my doctrine is divine." Such pride against the Pope is imperative, for if we are not stout and proud we shall never succeed in defending the article of the righteousness of faith. If the Pope would concede that God alone by His grace through Christ justifies sinners, we would carry him in our arms, we would kiss his feet. But since we cannot obtain this concession, we will give in to nobody, not to all the angels in heaven, not to Peter, not to Paul, not to a hundred emperors, not to a thousand popes, not to the whole world. If in this matter we were to humble ourselves, they would take from us the God who created us, and Jesus Christ who has redeemed us by His blood. Let this be our resolution, that we will suffer the loss of all things, the loss of our good name, of life itself, but the Gospel and our faith in Jesus Christ--we will not stand for it that anybody take them from us.

Galatians 2:7-8. But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; [For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles.]

Here the Apostle claims for himself the same authority which the false apostles attributed to the true apostles. Paul simply inverts their argument. "to bolster their evil cause," says he, "the false apostles quote the authority of the great apostles against me. I can quote the same authority against them, for the apostles are on my side. They gave me the right hand of fellowship. They approved my ministry. O my Galatians, do not believe the counterfeit apostles!" What does Paul mean by saying that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto him, and that of the circumcision to Peter? Did not Paul preach to the Jews, while Peter preached to the Gentiles also? Peter converted the Centurion. Paul’s custom was to enter into the synagogues of the Jews, there to preach the Gospel. Why then should he call himself the apostle of the Gentiles, while he calls Peter the apostle of the circumcision? Paul refers to the fact that the other apostles remained in Jerusalem until the destruction of the city became imminent. But Paul was especially called the apostle of the Gentiles. Even before the destruction of Jerusalem Jews dwelt here and there in the cities of the Gentiles. Coming to a city, Paul customarily entered the synagogues of the Jews and

first brought to them as the children of the kingdom, the glad tidings that the promises made unto the fathers were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. When the Jews refused to hear these glad tidings, Paul turned to the Gentiles. He was the apostle of the Gentiles in a special sense, as Peter was the apostle of the Jews. Paul reiterates that Peter, James, and John, the accepted pillars of the Church, taught him nothing, nor did they commit unto him the office of preaching the Gospel unto the Gentiles. Both the knowledge of the Gospel and the commandment to preach it to the Gentiles, Paul received directly from God. His case was parallel to that of Peter's, who was particularly commissioned to preach the Gospel to the Jews. The apostles had the same charge, the identical Gospel. Peter did not proclaim a different Gospel, nor had he appointed his fellow apostles. They were equals. They were all taught of God. None was greater than the other, none could point to prerogatives above the other. To justify his usurped primacy in the Church the Pope claims that Peter was the chief of the apostles. This is an impudent falsehood.

Galatians 2:8. For he that wrought effectually in Peter. With these words Paul refutes another argument of the false apostles. "What reason have the false apostles to boast that the Gospel of Peter was mighty, that he converted many, that he wrought great miracles, and that his very shadow healed the sick? These reports are true enough. But where did Peter acquire this power? God gave him the power. I have the same power. I received my power, not from Peter, but from the same God, the same Spirit who was mighty in Peter was mighty in me also." Luke corroborates Paul's statement in the words: "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." (Acts 19:11-12.) To conclude, Paul is not going to be inferior to the rest of the apostles. Some secular writers put Paul's boasting down as carnal pride. But Paul had no personal interest in his boasting. It was with him a matter of faith and doctrine. The controversy was not about the glory of Paul, but the glory of God, the Word of God, the true worship of God, true religion, and the righteousness of faith.

Galatians 2:9. And when James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

"The fact is, when the apostles heard that I had received the charge to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles from Christ; when they heard that God had wrought many miracles through me; that great numbers of the Gentiles had come to the knowledge of Christ through my ministry; when they heard that the Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost without Law and circumcision, by the simple preaching of faith; when they heard all this they glorified God for His grace in me." Hence, Paul was justified in concluding that the apostles were for him, and not against him.

Galatians 2:9. The right hands of fellowship. As if the apostles had said to him: "We, Paul, do agree with you in all things. We are companions in doctrine. We have the same Gospel with this difference, that to you is committed the Gospel for the uncircumcised, while the Gospel for the circumcision is committed unto us. But this difference ought not to hinder our friendship, since we preach one and the same Gospel."

Galatians 2:19. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

Next to the preaching of the Gospel, a true and faithful pastor will take care of the poor. Where the Church is, there must be the poor, for the world and the devil persecute the Church and impoverish many faithful Christians. Speaking of money, nobody wants to contribute nowadays to the maintenance of the ministry, and the erection of schools. When it comes to establishing false worship and idolatry, no cost is spared. True religion is ever in need of money, while false religions are backed by wealth.

Galatians 2:11. But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

Paul goes on in his refutation of the false apostles by saying that in Antioch he withstood Peter in the presence of the whole congregation. As he stated before, Paul had no small matter in hand, but the chief article of the Christian religion. When this article is endangered, we must not hesitate to resist Peter, or an angel from heaven. Paul paid no regard to the dignity and position of Peter, when he saw this article in danger. It is written: "He that loveth father or mother or his own life, more than me, is not worthy of me." (Matthew 10:37.) For defending the truth in our day, we are called proud and obstinate hypocrites. We are not ashamed of these titles. The cause we are called to defend, is not Peter's cause, or the cause of our parents, or that of the government, or that of the world, but the cause of God. In defense of that cause we must be firm and unyielding. When he says, "to his face," Paul accuses the false apostles of slandering him behind his back. In his presence they dared not to open their mouths. He tells them, "I did not speak evil of Peter behind his back, but I withstood him frankly and openly." Others may debate here whether an apostle might sin. I claim that we ought not to make Peter out as faultless. Prophets have erred. Nathan told David that he should go ahead and build the Temple of the Lord. But his prophecy was afterwards corrected by the Lord. The apostles erred in thinking of the Kingdom of Christ as a worldly state. Peter had heard the command of Christ, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." But if it had not been for the heavenly vision and the special command of Christ, Peter would never have gone to the home of Cornelius. Peter also erred in this matter of circumcision. If Paul had not publicly censured him, all the believing Gentiles would have been compelled to receive circumcision and accept the Jewish law. We are not to attribute perfection to any man. Luke reports "that the contention between Paul and Barnabas was so sharp that they departed asunder one from the other." The cause of their disagreement could hardly have been small since it separated these two, who had been joined together for years in a holy partnership. Such incidents are recorded for our consolation. After all, it is a comfort to know that even saints might and do sin. Samson, David, and many other excellent men, fell into grievous sins. Job and Jeremiah cursed the day of their birth. Elijah and Jonah became weary of life and prayed for death. Such offenses on the part of the saints, the Scriptures record for the comfort of those who are near despair. No person has ever sunk so low that he cannot rise again. On the other hand, no man's standing is so secure that he may not fall. If Peter fell, I may fall. If he rose again, I may rise again. We have the same gifts that they had, the same Christ, the same baptism and the same Gospel, the same forgiveness of sins. They needed these saving ordinances just as much as we do.

Galatians 2:12. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles. The Gentiles who had been converted to faith in Christ, ate meats forbidden by the Law. Peter, visiting some of these Gentiles, ate meat and drank wine with them, although he knew that these things

were forbidden in the Law. Paul declared that he did likewise, that he became as a Jew to the Jews, and to them that were without law, as without law. He ate and drank with the Gentiles unconcerned about the Jewish Law. When he was with the Jews, however, he abstained from all things forbidden in the Law, for he labored to serve all men, that he "might by all means save some." Paul does not reprove Peter for transgressing the Law, but for disguising his attitude to the Law.

Galatians 2:12. But when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

Paul does not accuse Peter of malice or ignorance, but of lack of principle, in that he abstained from meats, because he feared the Jews that came from James. Peter's weak attitude endangered the principle of Christian liberty. It is the deduction rather than the fact which Paul reproves. To eat and to drink, or not to eat and drink, is immaterial. But to make the deduction "If you eat, you sin; if you abstain you are righteous"--this is wrong. Meats may be refused for two reasons. First, they may be refused for the sake of Christian love. There is no danger connected with a refusal of meats for the sake of charity. To bear with the infirmity of a brother is a good thing. Paul himself taught and exemplified such thoughtfulness. Secondly, meats may be refused in the mistaken hope of thereby obtaining righteousness. When this is the purpose of abstaining from meats, we say, let charity go. To refrain from meats for this latter reason amounts to a denial of Christ. If we must lose one or the other, let us lose a friend and brother, rather than God, our Father. Jerome, who understood not this passage, nor the whole epistle for that matter, excuses Peter's action on the ground "that it was done in ignorance." But Peter offended by giving the impression that he was indorsing the Law. By his example he encouraged Gentiles and Jews to forsake the truth of the Gospel. If Paul had not reproved him, there would have been a sliding back of Christians into the Jewish religion, and a return to the burdens of the Law. It is surprising that Peter, excellent apostle that he was, should have been guilty of such vacillation. In a former council at Jerusalem he practically stood alone in defense of the truth that salvation is by faith, without the Law. Peter at that time valiantly defended the liberty of the Gospel. But now by abstaining from meats forbidden in the Law, he went against his better judgment. You have no idea what danger there is in customs and ceremonies. They so easily tend to error in works.

Galatians 2:13. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

It is marvelous how God preserved the Church by one single person. Paul alone stood up for the truth, for Barnabas, his companion, was lost to him, and Peter was against him. Sometimes one lone person can do more in a conference than the whole assembly. I mention this to urge all to learn how properly to differentiate between the Law and the Gospel, in order to avoid dissembling. When it come to the article of justification we must not yield, if we want to retain the truth of the Gospel. When the conscience is disturbed, do not seek advice from reason or from the Law, but rest your conscience in the grace of God and in His Word, and proceed as if you had never heard of the Law. The Law has its place and its own good time. While Moses was in the mountain where he talked with God face to face, he had no law, he made no law, he administered no law. But when he came down from the mountain, he was a lawgiver. The conscience must be kept above the Law, the body under the Law. Paul reproved Peter for no trifle, but for the chief article of Christian

doctrine, which Peter’s hypocrisy had endangered. For Barnabas and other Jews followed Peter’s example. It is surprising that such good men as Peter, Barnabas, and others should fall into unexpected error, especially in a matter which they knew so well. To trust in our own strength, our own goodness, our own wisdom, is a perilous thing. Let us search the Scriptures with humility, praying that we may never lose the light of the Gospel. "Lord, increase our faith."

03.08. Galatians 2:14-16

Chapter 2 Galatians 2:14-16 Galatians 2:14. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. No one except Paul had his eyes open. Consequently it was his duty to reprove Peter and his followers for swerving from the truth of the Gospel. It was no easy task for Paul to reprimand Peter. To the honor of Peter it must be said that he took the correction. No doubt, he freely acknowledged his fault. The person who can rightly divide Law and Gospel has reason to thank God. He is a true theologian. I must confess that in times of temptation I do not always know how to do it. To divide Law and Gospel means to place the Gospel in heaven, and to keep the Law on earth; to call the righteousness of the Gospel heavenly, and the righteousness of the Law earthly; to put as much difference between the righteousness of the Gospel and that of the Law, as there is difference between day and night. If it is a question of faith or conscience, ignore the Law entirely. If it is a question of works, then lift high the lantern of works and the righteousness of the Law. If your conscience is oppressed with a sense of sin, talk to your conscience. Say: "You are now groveling in the dirt. You are now a laboring ass. Go ahead, and carry your burden. But why don't you mount up to heaven? There the Law cannot follow you!" Leave the ass burdened with laws behind in the valley. But your conscience, let it ascend with Isaac into the mountain. In civil life obedience to the law is severely required. In civil life Gospel, conscience, grace, remission of sins, Christ Himself, do not count, but only Moses with the lawbooks. If we bear in mind this distinction, neither Gospel nor Law shall trespass upon each other. The moment Law and sin cross into heaven, i.e., your conscience, kick them out. On the other hand, when grace wanders unto the earth, i.e., into the body, tell grace: "You have no business to be around the dreg and dung of this bodily life. You belong in heaven." By his compromising attitude Peter confused the separation of Law and Gospel. Paul had to do something about it. He reproved Peter, not to embarrass him, but to conserve the difference between the Gospel which justifies in heaven, and the Law which justifies on earth. The right separation between Law and Gospel is very important to know. Christian doctrine is impossible without it. Let all who love and fear God, diligently learn the difference, not only in theory but also in practice. When your conscience gets into trouble, say to yourself: "There is a time to die, and a time to live; a time to learn the Law, and a time to unlearn the Law; a time to hear the Gospel, and a time to ignore the Gospel. Let the Law now depart, and let the Gospel enter, for now is the right time to hear the Gospel, and not the Law." However, when the conflict of conscience is over and external duties must be performed, close your ears to the Gospel, and open them wide to the Law.

Galatians 2:14. I said unto Peter before them all, If thou being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews. To live as a Jew is nothing bad. To eat or not to eat pork, what difference does it make? But to play the Jew, and for conscience' sake to abstain from certain meats, is a denial of Christ. When Paul saw that Peter's attitude tended to this, he withstood Peter and said to him: "You know that the observance of the law is not needed unto righteousness. You know that we are justified by faith in Christ. You know that we may eat all kinds of meats. Yet by your example you obligate the

Gentiles to forsake Christ, and to return to the Law. You give them reason to think that faith is not sufficient unto salvation." Peter did not say so, but his example said quite plainly that the observance of the Law must be added to faith in Christ, if men are to be saved. From Peter's example the Gentiles could not help but draw the conclusion that the Law was necessary unto salvation. If this error had been permitted to pass unchallenged, Christ would have lost out altogether. The controversy involved the preservation of pure doctrine. In such a controversy Paul did not mind if anybody took offense.

Galatians 2:15. We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles.

"When we Jews compare ourselves with the Gentiles, we look pretty good. We have the Law, we have good works. Our rectitude dates from our birth, because the Jewish religion is natural to us. But all this does not make us righteous before God." Peter and the others lived up to the requirements of the Law. They had circumcision, the covenant, the promises, the apostleship. But because of these advantages they were not to think themselves righteous before God. None of these prerogatives spell faith in Christ, which alone can justify a person. We do not mean to imply that the Law is bad. We do not condemn the Law, circumcision, etc., for their failure to justify us. Paul spoke disparagingly of these ordinances, because the false apostles asserted that mankind is saved by them without faith. Paul could not let this assertion stand, for without faith all things are deadly.

Galatians 2:16. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. For the sake of argument let us suppose that you could fulfill the Law in the spirit of the first commandment of God: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart." It would do you no good. A person simply is not justified by the works of the Law. The works of the Law, according to Paul, include the whole Law, judicial, ceremonial, moral. Now, if the performance of the moral law cannot justify, how can circumcision justify, when circumcision is part of the ceremonial law? The demands of the Law may be fulfilled before and after justification. There were many excellent men among the pagans of old, men who never heard of justification. They lived moral lives. But that fact did not justify them. Peter, Paul, all Christians, live up to the Law. But that fact does not justify them. "For I know nothing by myself," says Paul, "yet am I not hereby justified." (1 Corinthians 4:4.) The nefarious opinion of the papists, which attributes the merit of grace and the remission of sins to works, must here be emphatically rejected. The papists say that a good work performed before grace has been obtained, is able to secure grace for a person, because it is no more than right that God should reward a good deed. When grace has already been obtained, any good work deserves everlasting life as a due payment and reward for merit. For the first, God is no debtor, they say; but because God is good and just, it is no more than right (they say) that He should reward a good work by granting grace for the service. But when grace has already been obtained, they continue, God is in the position of a debtor, and is in duty bound to reward a good work with the gift of eternal life. This is the wicked teaching of the papacy. Now, if I could perform any work acceptable to God and deserving of grace, and once having obtained grace my good works would continue to earn for me the right and reward of eternal life, why should I stand in need of the grace of God and the suffering and death of Christ? Christ would be of no benefit to me. Christ's mercy would be of no use to me. This shows how little insight the pope and the whole of his religious coterie have into spiritual matters, and how little they concern themselves with the spiritual health of their forlorn flocks. They cannot believe that the flesh is

unable to think, speak, or do anything except against God. If they could see evil rooted in the nature of man, they would never entertain such silly dreams about man's merit or worthiness. With Paul we absolutely deny the possibility of self merit. God never yet gave to any person grace and everlasting life as a reward for merit. The opinions of the papists are the intellectual pipe-dreams of idle pates, that serve no other purpose but to draw men away from the true worship of God. The papacy is founded upon hallucinations. The true way of salvation is this. First, a person must realize that he is a sinner, the kind of a sinner who is congenitally unable to do any good thing. "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." Those who seek to earn the grace of God by their own efforts are trying to please God with sins. They mock God, and provoke His anger. The first step on the way to salvation is to repent. The second part is this. God sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we may live through His merit. He was crucified and killed for us. By sacrificing His Son for us God revealed Himself to us as a merciful Father who donates remission of sins, righteousness, and life everlasting for Christ's sake. God hands out His gifts freely unto all men. That is the praise and glory of His mercy. The scholastics explain the way of salvation in this manner. When a person happens to perform a good deed, God accepts it and as a reward for the good deed God pours charity into that person. They call it "charity infused." This charity is supposed to remain in the heart. They get wild when they are told that this quality of the heart cannot justify a person. They also claim that we are able to love God by our own natural strength, to love God above all things, at least to the extent that we deserve grace. And, say the scholastics, because God is not satisfied with a literal performance of the Law, but expects us to fulfill the Law according to the mind of the Lawgiver, therefore we must obtain from above a quality above nature, a quality which they call "formal righteousness." We say, faith apprehends Jesus Christ. Christian faith is not an inactive quality in the heart. If it is true faith it will surely take Christ for its object. Christ, apprehended by faith and dwelling in the heart, constitutes Christian righteousness, for which God gives eternal life. In contrast to the doting dreams of the scholastics, we teach this: First a person must learn to know himself from the Law. With the prophet he will then confess: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And, "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." And, "against thee, thee only, have I sinned." Having been humbled by the Law, and having been brought to a right estimate of himself, a man will repent. He finds out that he is so depraved, that no strength, no works, no merits of his own will ever deliver him from his guilt. He will then understand the meaning of Paul's words: "I am sold under sin"; and "they are all under sin." At this state a person begins to lament: "Who is going to help me?" In due time comes the Word of the Gospel, and says: "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee. Believe in Jesus Christ who was crucified for your sins. Remember, your sins have been imposed upon Christ." In this way are we delivered from sin. In this way are we justified and made heirs of everlasting life. In order to have faith you must paint a true portrait of Christ. The scholastics caricature Christ into a judge and tormentor. But Christ is no law giver. He is the Lifegiver. He is the Forgiver of sins. You must believe that Christ might have atoned for the sins of the world with one single drop of His blood. Instead, He shed His blood abundantly in order that He might give abundant satisfaction for our sins. Here let me say, that these three things, faith, Christ, and imputation of righteousness, are to be joined together. Faith takes hold of Christ. God accounts this faith for righteousness. This imputation of righteousness we need very much, because we are far from perfect. As long as we have this body, sin will dwell in our flesh. Then, too, we sometimes drive away the Holy Spirit; we fall into sin, like Peter, David, and other holy men. Nevertheless we may always take recourse to this fact, "that our

sins are covered," and that "God will not lay them to our charge." Sin is not held against us for Christ's sake. Where Christ and faith are lacking, there is no remission or covering of sins, but only condemnation. After we have taught faith in Christ, we teach good works. "Since you have found Christ by faith," we say, "begin now to work and do well. Love God and your neighbor. Call upon God, give thanks unto Him, praise Him, confess Him. These are good works. Let them flow from a cheerful heart, because you have remission of sin in Christ." When crosses and afflictions come our way, we bear them patiently. "For Christ's yoke is easy, and His burden is light." When sin has been pardoned, and the conscience has been eased of its dreadful load, a Christian can endure all things in Christ. To give a short definition of a Christian: A Christian is not somebody chalks sin, because of his faith in Christ. This doctrine brings comfort to consciences in serious trouble. When a person is a Christian he is above law and sin. When the Law accuses him, and sin wants to drive the wits out of him, a Christian looks to Christ. A Christian is free. He has no master except Christ. A Christian is greater than the whole world.

Galatians 2:16. Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified. The true way of becoming a Christian is to be justified by faith in Jesus Christ, and not by the works of the Law. We know that we must also teach good works, but they must be taught in their proper turn, when the discussion is concerning works and not the article of justification. Here the question arises by what means are we justified? We answer with Paul, "By faith only in Christ are we pronounced righteous, and not by works." Not that we reject good works. Far from it. But we will not allow ourselves to be removed from the anchorage of our salvation. The Law is a good thing. But when the discussion is about justification, then is no time to drag in the Law. When we discuss justification we ought to speak of Christ and the benefits He has brought us. Christ is no sheriff. He is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29.) Galatians 2:16. That we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law.

We do not mean to say that the Law is bad. Only it is not able to justify us. To be at peace with God, we have need of a far better mediator than Moses or the Law. We must know that we are nothing. We must understand that we are merely beneficiaries and recipients of the treasures of Christ. So far, the words of Paul were addressed to Peter. Now Paul turns to the Galatians and makes this summary statement:

Galatians 2:16. For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. By the term "flesh" Paul does not understand manifest vices. Such sins he usually calls by their proper names, as adultery, fornication, etc. By "flesh" Paul understands what Jesus meant in the third chapter of John, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh". (John 3:6.) "Flesh" here means the whole nature of man, inclusive of reason and instincts. "This flesh," says Paul, "is not justified by the works of the law." The papists do not believe this. They say, "A person who performs this good deed or that, deserves the forgiveness of his sins. A person who joins this or that holy order, has the promise of everlasting life." To me it is a miracle that the Church, so long surrounded by vicious sects, has been able to survive at all. God must have been able to call a few who in their failure to discover any good in themselves to cite against the wrath and judgment of God, simply took to the suffering and death of Christ, and were saved by this simple faith. Nevertheless God has punished the contempt of the Gospel and of Christ on the part of the papists, by turning them over to a reprobate state of mind in which they reject the Gospel, and receive with gusto the abominable rules, ordinances, and traditions of men in preference to the Word of God, until they went so far as

to forbid marriage. God punished them justly, because they blasphemed the only Son of God. This is, then, our general conclusion: "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

03.09. Galatians 2:17-21

Chapter 2 Galatians 2:17-21

Galatians 2:17. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

Either we are not justified by Christ, or we are not justified by the Law. The fact is, we are justified by Christ. Hence, we are not justified by the Law. If we observe the Law in order to be justified, or after having been justified by Christ, we think we must further be justified by the Law, we convert Christ into a legislator and a minister of sin. "What are these false apostles doing?" Paul cries. "They are turning Law into grace, and grace into Law. They are changing Moses into Christ, and Christ into Moses. By teaching that besides Christ and His righteousness the performance of the Law is necessary unto salvation, they put the Law in the place of Christ, they attribute to the Law the power to save, a power that belongs to Christ only." The papists quote the words of Christ: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matthew 19:17.) With His own words they deny Christ and abolish faith in Him. Christ is made to lose His good name, His office, and His glory, and is demoted to the status of a law enforcer, reproving, terrifying, and chasing poor sinners around. The proper office of Christ is to raise the sinner, and extricate him from his sins. Papists and Anabaptists deride us because we so earnestly require faith. "Faith," they say, "makes men reckless." What do these law-workers know about faith, when they are so busy calling people back from baptism, from faith, from the promises of Christ to the Law? With their doctrine these lying sects of perdition deface the benefits of Christ to this day. They rob Christ of His glory as the Justifier of mankind and cast Him into the role of a minister of sin. They are like the false apostles. There is not a single one among them who knows the difference between law and grace. We can tell the difference. We do not here and now argue whether we ought to do good works, or whether the Law is any good, or whether the Law ought to be kept at all. We will discuss these questions some other time. We are now concerned with justification. Our opponents refuse to make this distinction. All they can do is to bellow that good works ought to be done. We know that. We know that good works ought to be done, but we will talk about that when the proper time comes. Now we are dealing with justification, and here good works should not be so much as mentioned. Paul’s argument has often comforted me. He argues: "If we who have been justified by Christ are counted unrighteous, why seek justification in Christ at all? If we are justified by the Law, tell me, what has Christ achieved by His death, by His preaching, by His victory over sin and death? Either we are justified by Christ, or we are made worse sinners by Him." The Sacred Scriptures, particularly those of the New Testament, make frequent mention of faith in Christ. "Whosoever believeth in him is saved, shall not perish, shall have everlasting life, is not judged," etc. In open contradiction to the Scriptures, our opponents misquote, "He that believeth in Christ is condemned, because he has faith without works." Our opponents turn everything topsy-turvy. They make Christ over into a murderer, and Moses into a savior. Is not this horrible blasphemy?

Galatians 2:17. Is therefore Christ the minister of sin? This is Hebrew phraseology, also used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:1-18. There Paul speaks of two ministers: The minister of the letter, and the minister of the spirit; the minister of the Law, and the minister of grace; the minister of death, and the minister of life. "Moses," says Paul, "is the minister of the Law, of sin, wrath, death, and condemnation." Whoever teaches that good works are indispensable unto salvation, that to gain heaven a person must suffer afflictions and follow the example of Christ and of the saints, is a minister of the Law, of sin, wrath, and of death, for the conscience knows how impossible it is for a person to fulfill the Law. Why, the Law makes trouble even for those who have the Holy Spirit. What will not the Law do in the case of the wicked who do not even have the Holy Spirit? The Law requires perfect obedience. It condemns all do not accomplish the will of God. But show me a person who is able to render perfect obedience. The Law cannot justify. It can only condemn according to the passage: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Paul has good reason for calling the minister of the Law the minister of sin, for the Law reveals our sinfulness. The realization of sin in turn frightens the heart and drives it to despair. Therefore all exponents of the Law and of works deserve to be called tyrants and oppressors. The purpose of the Law is to reveal sin. That this is the purpose of the Law can be seen from the account of the giving of the Law as reported in the nineteenth and twentieth chapters of Exodus. Moses brought the people out of their tents to have God speak to them personally from a cloud. But the people trembled with fear, fled, and standing aloof they begged Moses: "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." The proper office of the Law is to lead us out of our tents, in other words, out of the security of our self-trust, into the presence of God, that we may perceive His anger at our sinfulness. All who say that faith alone in Christ does not justify a person, convert Christ into a minister of sin, a teacher of the Law, and a cruel tyrant who requires the impossible. All merit-seekers take Christ for a new lawgiver. In conclusion, if the Law is the minister of sin, it is at the same time the minister of wrath and death. As the Law reveals sin it fills a person with the fear of death and condemnation. Eventually the conscience wakes up to the fact that God is angry. If God is angry with you, He will destroy and condemn you forever. Unable to stand the thought of the wrath and judgment of God, many a person commits suicide.

Galatians 2:17. God forbid.

Christ is not the minister of sin, but the Dispenser of righteousness and the Giver of life. Christ is Lord over law, sin and death. All who believe in Him are delivered from law, sin and death. The Law drives us away from God, but Christ reconciles God unto us, for "He is the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." Now if the sin of the world is taken away, it is taken away from me. If sin is taken away, the wrath of God and His condemnation are also taken away. Let us practice this blessed conviction.

Galatians 2:18. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

"I have not preached to the end that I build again the things which I destroyed. If I should do so, I would not only be laboring in vain, but I would make myself guilty of a great wrong. By the ministry of the Gospel I have destroyed sin, heaviness of heart, wrath, and death. I have abolished the Law, so that it should not bother your conscience any more. Should I now once again establish the Law, and set up the rule of Moses? This is exactly what I should be doing, if I would urge

circumcision and the performance of the Law as necessary unto salvation. Instead of righteousness and life, I would restore sin and death." By the grace of God we know that we are justified through faith in Christ alone. We do not mingle law and grace, faith and works. We keep them far apart. Let every true Christian mark the distinction between law and grace, and mark it well. We must not drag good works into the article of justification as the monks do who maintain that not only good works, but also the punishment which evildoers suffer for their wicked deeds, deserve everlasting life. When a criminal is brought to the place of execution, the monks try to comfort him in this manner: "You want to die willingly and patiently, and then you will merit remission of your sins and eternal life." What cruelty is this, that a wretched thief, murderer, robber should be so miserably misguided in his extreme distress, that at the very point of death he should be denied the sweet promises of Christ, and directed to hope for pardon of his sins in the willingness and patience with which he is about to suffer death for his crimes? The monks are showing him the paved way to hell. These hypocrites do not know the first thing about grace, the Gospel, or Christ. They retain the appearance and the name of the Gospel and of Christ for a decoy only. In their confessional writings faith or the merit of Christ are never mentioned. In their writings they play up the merits of man, as can readily be seen from the following form of absolution used among the monks. "God forgive thee, brother. The merit of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the blessed Saint Mary, always a virgin, and of all the saints; the merit of thy order, the strictness of thy religion, the humility of thy profession, the contrition of thy heart, the good works thou hast done and shalt do for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, be available unto thee for the remission of thy sins, the increase of thy worth and grace, and the reward of everlasting life. Amen." True, the merit of Christ is mentioned in this formula of absolution. But if you look closer you will notice that Christ’s merit is belittled, while monkish merits are aggrandized. They confess Christ with their lips, and at the same time deny His power to save. I myself was at one time entangled in this error. I thought Christ was a judge and had to be pacified by a strict adherence to the rules of my order. But now I give thanks unto God, the Father of all mercies, who has called me out of darkness into the light of His glorious Gospel, and has granted unto me the saving knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord. We conclude with Paul, that we are justified by faith in Christ, without the Law. Once a person has been justified by Christ, he will not be unproductive of good, but as a good tree he will bring forth good fruit. A believer has the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will not permit a person to remain idle, but will put him to work and stir him up to the love of God, to patient suffering in affliction, to prayer, thanksgiving, to the habit of charity towards all men.

Galatians 2:19. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. This cheering form of speech is frequently met with in the Scriptures, particularly in the writings of St. Paul, when the Law is set against the Law, and sin is made to oppose sin, and death is arrayed against death, and hell is turned loose against hell, as in the following quotations: "Thou hast led captivity captive," Psalms 68:18. "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction," Hosea 13:14. "And for sin, condemned sin in the flesh," Romans 8:3. Here Paul plays the Law against the Law, as if to say: "The Law of Moses condemns me; but I have another law, the law of grace and liberty which condemns the accusing Law of Moses." On first sight Paul seems to be advancing a strange and ugly heresy. He says, "I am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." The false apostles said the very opposite. They said, "If you do not live to the law, you are dead unto God." The doctrine of our opponents is similar to that of the false apostles in Paul’s day. Our opponents

teach, "If you want to live unto God, you must live after the Law, for it is written, Do this and thou shalt live." Paul, on the other hand, teaches, "We cannot live unto God unless we are dead unto the Law." If we are dead unto the Law, the Law can have no power over us. Paul does not only refer to the Ceremonial Law, but to the whole Law. We are not to think that the Law is wiped out. It stays. It continues to operate in the wicked. But a Christian is dead to the Law. For example, Christ by His resurrection became free from the grave, and yet the grave remains. Peter was delivered from prison, yet the prison remains. The Law is abolished as far as I am concerned, when it has driven me into the arms of Christ. Yet the Law continues to exist and to function. But it no longer exists for me. "I have nothing to do with the Law," cries Paul. He could not have uttered anything more devastating to the prestige of the Law. He declares that he does not care for the Law, that he does not intend ever to be justified by the Law. To be dead to the Law means to be free of the Law. What right, then, has the Law to accuse me, or to hold anything against me? When you see a person squirming in the clutches of the Law, say to him: "Brother, get things straight. You let the Law talk to your conscience. Make it talk to your flesh. Wake up, and believe in Jesus Christ, the Conqueror of Law and sin. Faith in Christ will lift you high above the Law into the heaven of grace. Though Law and sin remain, they no longer concern you, because you are dead to the Law and dead to sin." Blessed is the person who knows how to use this truth in times of distress. He can talk. He can say: "Mr. Law, go ahead and accuse me as much as you like. I know I have committed many sins, and I continue to sin daily. But that does not bother me. You have got to shout louder, Mr. Law. I am deaf, you know. Talk as much as you like, I am dead to you. If you want to talk to me about my sins, go and talk to my flesh. Belabor that, but don't talk to my conscience. My conscience is a lady and a queen, and has nothing to do with the likes of you, because my conscience lives to Christ under another law, a new and better law, the law of grace." We have two propositions: To live unto the Law, is to die unto God. To die unto the Law, is to live unto God. These two propositions go against reason. No law-worker can ever understand them. But see to it that you understand them. The Law can never justify and save a sinner. The Law can only accuse, terrify, and kill him. Therefore to live unto the Law is to die unto God. Vice versa, to die unto the Law is to live unto God. If you want to live unto God, bury the Law, and find life through faith in Christ Jesus. We have enough arguments right here to conclude that justification is by faith alone. How can the Law effect our justification, when Paul so plainly states that we must be dead to the Law if we want to live unto God? If we are dead to the Law and the Law is dead to us, how can it possibly contribute anything to our justification? There is nothing left for us but to be justified by faith alone. Galatians 2:19 is loaded with consolation. It fortifies a person against every danger. It allows you to argue like this: "I confess I have sinned." "Then God will punish you." "No, He will not do that." "Why not? Does not the Law say so?" "I have nothing to do with the Law." "How so?" "I have another law, the law of liberty." "What do you mean--'liberty'?" "The liberty of Christ, for Christ has made me free from the Law that held me down. That Law is now in prison itself, held captive by grace and liberty." By faith in Christ a person may gain such sure and sound comfort, that he need not fear the devil, sin, death, or any evil. "Sir Devil," he may say, "I am not afraid of you. I have a Friend whose name is Jesus Christ, in whom I believe. He has abolished the Law, condemned sin, vanquished death, and destroyed hell for me. He is bigger than you, Satan. He has licked you, and holds you down. You cannot hurt me." This is the faith that overcomes the devil. Paul manhandles the Law. He treats the Law as if it were a thief and a robber He treats the Law as contemptible to the conscience, in order that those who believe in Christ may take courage

to defy the Law, and say: "Mr. Law, I am a sinner. What are you going to do about it?" Or take death. Christ is risen from death. Why should we now fear the grave? Against my death I set another death, or rather life, my life in Christ. Oh, the sweet names of Jesus! He is called my law against the Law, my sin against sin, my death against death. Translated, it means that He is my righteousness, my life, my everlasting salvation. For this reason was He made the law of the Law, the sin of sin, the death of death, that He might redeem me from the curse of the Law. He permitted the Law to accuse Him, sin to condemn Him, and death to take Him, to abolish the Law, to condemn sin, and to destroy death for me. This peculiar form of speech sounds much sweeter than if Paul had said: "I through liberty am dead to the law." By putting it in this way, "I through the law am dead to the law," he opposes one law with another law, and has them fight it out. In this masterly fashion Paul draws our attention away from the Law, sin, death, and every evil, and centers it upon Christ.

Galatians 2:20. I am crucified with Christ.

Christ is Lord over the Law, because He was crucified unto the Law. I also am lord over the Law, because by faith I am crucified with Christ. Paul does not here speak of crucifying the flesh, but he speaks of that higher crucifying wherein sin, devil, and death are crucified in Christ and in me. By my faith in Christ I am crucified with Christ. Hence these evils are crucified and dead unto me.

Galatians 2:20. Nevertheless I live.

"I do not mean to create the impression as though I did not live before this. But in reality I first live now, now that I have been delivered from the Law, from sin, and death. Being crucified with Christ and dead unto the Law, I may now rise unto a new and better life." We must pay close attention to Paul’s way of speaking. He says that we are crucified and dead unto the Law. The fact is, the Law is crucified and dead unto us. Paul purposely speaks that way in order to increase the portion of our comfort.

Galatians 2:20. Yet not I.

Paul explains what constitutes true Christian righteousness. True Christian righteousness is the righteousness of Christ who lives in us. We must look away from our own person. Christ and my conscience must become one, so that I can see nothing else but Christ crucified and raised from the dead for me. If I keep on looking at myself, I am gone. If we lose sight of Christ and begin to consider our past, we simply go to pieces. We must turn our eyes to the brazen serpent, Christ crucified, and believe with all our heart that He is our righteousness and our life. For Christ, on whom our eyes are fixed, in whom we live, who lives in us, is Lord over Law, sin, death, and all evil.

Galatians 2:20. But Christ liveth in me.

"Thus I live," the Apostle starts out. But presently he corrects himself, saying, "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." He is the form of my perfection. He embellishes my faith. Since Christ is now living in me, He abolishes the Law, condemns sin, and destroys death in me. These foes vanish in His presence. Christ abiding in me drives out every evil. This union with Christ delivers me from the demands of the Law, and separates me from my sinful self. As long as I abide in Christ, nothing can hurt me. Christ domiciling in me, the old Adam has to stay outside and remain subject to the

Law. Think what grace, righteousness, life, peace, and salvation there is in me, thanks to that inseparable conjunction between Christ and me through faith! Paul has a peculiar style, a celestial way of speaking. "I live," he says, "I live not; I am dead, I am not dead; I am a sinner, I am not a sinner; I have the Law, I have no Law." When we look at ourselves we find plenty of sin. But when we look at Christ, we have no sin. Whenever we separate the person of Christ from our own person, we live under the Law and not in Christ; we are condemned by the Law, dead before God. Faith connects you so intimately with Christ, that He and you become as it were one person. As such you may boldly say: "I am now one with Christ. Therefore Christ's righteousness, victory, and life are mine." On the other hand, Christ may say: "I am that big sinner. His sins and his death are mine, because he is joined to me, and I to him." Whenever remission of sins is freely proclaimed, people misinterpret it according to Romans 3:8, "Let us do evil, that good may come." As soon as people hear that we are not justified by the Law, they reason maliciously: "Why, then let us reject the Law. If grace abounds, where sin abounds, let us abound in sin, that grace may all the more abound." People who reason thus are reckless. They make sport of the Scriptures and slander the sayings of the Holy Ghost. However, there are others who are not malicious, only weak, who may take offense when told that Law and good works are unnecessary for salvation. These must be instructed as to why good works do not justify, and from what motives good works must be done. Good works are not the cause, but the fruit of righteousness. When we have become righteous, then first are we able and willing to do good. The tree makes the apple; the apple does not make the tree.

Galatians 2:20. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.

Paul does not deny the fact that he is living in the flesh. He performs the natural functions of the flesh. But he says that this is not his real life. His life in the flesh is not a life after the flesh. "I live by the faith of the Son of God," he says. "My speech is no longer directed by the flesh, but by the Holy Ghost. My sight is no longer governed by the flesh, but by the Holy Ghost. My hearing is no longer determined by the flesh, but by the Holy Ghost. I cannot teach, write, pray, or give thanks without the instrumentality of the flesh; yet these activities do not proceed from the flesh, but from God." A Christian uses earthly means like any unbeliever. Outwardly they look alike. Nevertheless there is a great difference between them. I may live in the flesh, but I do not live after the flesh. I do my living now "by the faith of the Son of God." Paul had the same voice, the same tongue, before and after his conversion. Before his conversion his tongue uttered blasphemies. But after his conversion his tongue spoke a spiritual, heavenly language. We may now understand how spiritual life originates. It enters the heart by faith. Christ reigns in the heart with His Holy Spirit, who sees, hears, speaks, works, suffers, and does all things in and through us over the protest and the resistance of the flesh.

Galatians 2:20. Who loved me, and gave himself for me. The sophistical papists assert that a person is able by natural strength to love God long before grace has entered his heart, and to perform works of real merit. They believe they are able to fulfill the commandments of God. They believe they are able to do more than God expects of them, so that they are in a position to sell their superfluous merits to laymen, thereby saving themselves and others. They are saving nobody. On the contrary, they abolish the Gospel, they deride, deny, and blaspheme Christ, and call upon themselves the wrath of God. This is what they get for living in their own righteousness, and not in the faith of the Son of God. The papists will tell you to do the best you can, and God will

give you His grace. They have a rhyme for it: "God will no more require of man, Than of himself perform he can." This may hold true in ordinary civic life. But the papists apply it to the spiritual realm where a person can perform nothing but sin, because he is sold under sin. Our opponents go even further than that. They say, nature is depraved, but the qualities of nature are untainted. Again we say: This may hold true in everyday life, but not in the spiritual life. In spiritual matters a person is by nature full of darkness, error, ignorance, malice, and perverseness in will and in mind. In view of this, Paul declares that Christ began and not we. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me. He found in me no right mind and no good will. But the good Lord had mercy upon me. Out of pure kindness He loved me, loved me so that He gave Himself for me, that I should be free from the Law, from sin, devil, and death." The words, "The Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me," are so many thunderclaps and lightning bolts of protest from heaven against the righteousness of the Law. The wickedness, error, darkness, ignorance in my mind and my will were so great, that it was quite impossible for me to be saved by any other means than by the inestimable price of Christ's death. Let us count the price. When you hear that such an enormous price was paid for you, will you still come along with your cowl, your shaven pate, your chastity, your obedience, your poverty, your works, your merits? What do you want with all these trappings? What good are the works of all men, and all the pains of the martyrs, in comparison with the pains of the Son of God dying on the Cross, so that there was not a drop of His precious blood, but it was all shed for your sins. If you could properly evaluate this incomparable price, you would throw all your ceremonies, vows, works, and merits into the ash can. What awful presumption to imagine that there is any work good enough to pacify God, when to pacify God required the invaluable price of the death and blood of His own and only Son?

Galatians 2:20. For me. Who is this "me"? I, wretched and damnable sinner, dearly beloved of the Son of God. If I could by work or merit love the Son of God and come to Him, why should He have sacrificed Himself for me ? This shows how the papists ignore the Scriptures, particularly the doctrine of faith. If they had paid any attention at all to these words, that it was absolutely necessary for the Son of God to be given into death for me, they would never have invented so many hideous heresies. I always say, there is no remedy against the sects, no power to resist them, except this article of Christian righteousness. If we lose this article we shall never be able to combat errors or sects. What business have they to make such a fuss about works or merits? If I, a condemned sinner, could have been purchased and redeemed by any other price, why should the Son of God have given Himself for me? Just because there was no other price in heaven and on earth big and good enough, was it necessary for the Son of God to be delivered for me. This He did out of His great love for me, for the Apostle says, "Who loved me." Did the Law ever love me? Did the Law ever sacrifice itself for me? Did the Law ever die for me? On the contrary, it accuses me, it frightens me, it drives me crazy. Somebody else saved me from the Law, from sin and death unto eternal life. That Somebody is the Son of God, to whom be praise and glory forever. Hence, Christ is no Moses, no tyrant, no lawgiver, but the Giver of grace, the Savior, full of mercy. In short, He is no less than infinite mercy and ineffable goodness, bountifully giving Himself for us. Visualize Christ in these His true colors. I do not say that it is easy. Even in the present diffusion of the Gospel light, I have much trouble to see Christ as Paul portrays Him. So deeply has the diseased opinion that Christ is a lawgiver sunk into my bones. You younger men are a good deal better off than we who are old. You have never become infected with the nefarious errors on which I suckled all my youth, until at the mention of the name of Christ I shivered with fear. You, I say, who are

young may learn to know Christ in all His sweetness. For Christ is Joy and Sweetness to a broken heart. Christ is a Lover of poor sinners, and such a Lover that He gave Himself for us. Now if this is true, and it is true, then are we never justified by our own righteousness. Read the words "me" and "for me" with great emphasis. Print this "me" with capital letters in your heart, and do not ever doubt that you belong to the number of those who are meant by this "me." Christ did not only love Peter and Paul. The same love He felt for them He feels for us. If we cannot deny that we are sinners, we cannot deny that Christ died for our sins.

Galatians 2:21. I do not frustrate the grace of God.

Paul is now getting ready for the second argument of his Epistle, to the effect that to seek justification by works of the Law, is to reject the grace of God. I ask you, what sin can be more horrible than to reject the grace of God, and to refuse the righteousness of Christ? It is bad enough that we are wicked sinners and transgressors of all the commandments of God; on top of that to refuse the grace of God and the remission of sins offered unto us by Christ, is the worst sin of all, the sin of sins. That is the limit. There is no sin which Paul and the other apostles detested more than when a person despises the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Still there is no sin more common. That is why Paul can get so angry at the Antichrist, because he snubs Christ, rebuffs the grace of God, and refuses the merit of Christ. What else would you call it but spitting in Christ's face, pushing Christ to the side, usurping Christ's throne, and to say: "I am going to justify you people; I am going to save you." By what means? By masses, pilgrimages, pardons, merits, etc. For this is Antichrist's doctrine: Faith is no good, unless it is reinforced by works. By this abominable doctrine Antichrist has spoiled, darkened, and buried the benefit of Christ, and in place of the grace of Christ and His Kingdom, he has established the doctrine of works and the kingdom of ceremonies. We despise the grace of God when we observe the Law for the purpose of being justified. The Law is good, holy, and profitable, but it does not justify. To keep the Law in order to be justified means to reject grace, to deny Christ, to despise His sacrifice, and to be lost.

Galatians 2:21. For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. Did Christ die, or did He not die? Was His death worth while, or was it not? If His death was worth while, it follows that righteousness does not come by the Law. Why was Christ born anyway? Why was He crucified? Why did He suffer? Why did He love me and give Himself for me? It was all done to no purpose if righteousness is to be had by the Law. Or do you think that God spared not His Son, but delivered Him for us all, for the fun of it? Before I would admit anything like that, I would consign the holiness of the saints and of the angels to hell. To reject the grace of God is a common sin, of which everybody is guilty who sees any righteousness in himself or in his deeds. And the Pope is the sole author of this iniquity. Not content to spoil the Gospel of Christ, he has filled the world with his cursed traditions, e.g., his bulls and indulgences. We will always affirm with Paul that either Christ died in vain, or else the Law cannot justify us. But Christ did not suffer and die in vain. Hence, the Law does not justify. If my salvation was so difficult to accomplish that it necessitated the death of Christ, then all my works, all the righteousness of the Law, are good for nothing. How can I buy for a penny what cost a million dollars? The Law is a penny's worth when you compare it with Christ. Should I be so stupid as to reject the righteousness of Christ which cost me nothing, and slave like a fool to achieve the righteousness of the Law which God disdains? Man's own righteousness is in the last analysis a despising and rejecting of the grace of God. No combination of words can do justice to such an outrage. It is an insult to say that any man died in vain. But to

say that Christ died in vain is a deadly insult. To say that Christ died in vain is to make His resurrection, His victory, His glory, His kingdom, heaven, earth, God Himself, of no purpose and benefit whatever. That is enough to set any person against the righteousness of the Law and all the trimmings of men's own righteousness, the orders of monks and friars, and their superstitions. Who would not detest his own vows, his cowls, his shaven crown, his bearded traditions, yes, the very Law of Moses, when he hears that for such things he rejected the grace of God and the death of Christ. It seems that such a horrible wickedness could not enter a man's heart, that he should reject the grace of God, and despise the death of Christ. And yet this atrocity is all too common. Let us be warned. Everyone who seeks righteousness without Christ, either by works, merits, satisfactions, actions, or by the Law, rejects the grace of God, and despises the death of Christ.

03.10. Galatians 3:1-9

Chapter 3 Galatians 3:1-9 Galatians 3:1. O foolish Galatians. The Apostle Paul manifests his apostolic care for the Galatians. Sometimes he entreats them, then again he reproaches them, in accordance with his own advice to Timothy: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort." In the midst of his discourse on Christian righteousness Paul breaks off, and turns to address the Galatians. "O foolish Galatians," he cries. "I have brought you the true Gospel, and you received it with eagerness and gratitude. Now all of a sudden you drop the Gospel. What has got into you?" Paul reproves the Galatians rather sharply when he calls them "fools, bewitched, and disobedient." Whether he is indignant or sorry, I cannot say. He may be both. It is the duty of a Christian pastor to reprove the people committed to his charge. Of course, his anger must not flow from malice, but from affection and a real zeal for Christ. There is no question that Paul is disappointed. It hurts him to think that his Galatians showed so little stability. We can hear him say: "I am sorry to hear of your troubles, and disappointed in you for the disgraceful part you played." I say rather much on this point to save Paul from the charge that he railed upon the churches, contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. A certain distance and coolness can be noted in the title with which the Apostle addresses the Galatians. He does not now address them as his brethren, as he usually does. He addresses them as Galatians in order to remind them of their national trait to be foolish. We have here an example of bad traits that often cling to individual Christians and entire congregations. Grace does not suddenly transform a Christian into a new and perfect creature. Dregs of the old and natural corruption remain. The Spirit of God cannot at once overcome human deficiency. Sanctification takes time. Although the Galatians had been enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of faith, something of their national trait of foolishness plus their original depravity clung to them. Let no man think that once he has received faith, he can presently be converted into a faultless creature. The leavings of old vices will stick to him, be he ever so good a Christian.

Galatians 3:1. Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?

Paul calls the Galatians foolish and bewitched. In the fifth chapter he mentions sorcery among the works of the flesh, declaring that witchcraft and sorcery are real manifestations and legitimate activities of the devil. We are all exposed to the influence of the devil, because he is the prince and god of the world in which we live. Satan is clever. He does not only bewitch men in a crude manner, but also in a more artful fashion. He bedevils the minds of men with hideous fallacies. Not only is he able to deceive the self-assured, but even those who profess the true Christian faith. There is not one among us who is not at times seduced by Satan into false beliefs. This accounts for the many new battles we have to wage nowadays. But the attacks of the old Serpent are not without profit to us, for they confirm our doctrine and strengthen our faith in Christ. Many a time we were wrestled down in these conflicts with Satan, but Christ has always triumphed and always will triumph. Do not think that the Galatians were the only ones to be bewitched by the devil. Let us realize that we too may be seduced by Satan.

Galatians 3:1. Who hath bewitched you? In this sentence Paul excuses the Galatians, while he blames the false apostles for the apostasy of the Galatians. As if he were saying: "I know your defection was not willful. The devil sent the false apostles to you, and they tallied you into believing that you are justified by the Law. With this our epistle we endeavor to undo the damage which the false apostles have inflicted upon you." Like Paul, we struggle with the Word of God against the fanatical Anabaptists of our day; and our efforts are not entirely in vain. The trouble is there are many who refuse to be instructed. They will not listen to reason; they will not listen to the Scriptures, because they are bewitched by the tricky devil who can make a lie look like the truth. Since the devil has this uncanny ability to make us believe a lie until we would swear a thousand times it were the truth, we must not be proud, but walk in fear and humility, and call upon the Lord Jesus to save us from temptation. Although I am a doctor of divinity, and have preached Christ and fought His battles for a long time, I know from personal experience how difficult it is to hold fast to the truth. I cannot always shake off Satan. I cannot always apprehend Christ as the Scriptures portray Him. Sometimes the devil distorts Christ to my vision. But thanks be to God, who keeps us in His Word, in faith, and in prayer. The spiritual witchery of the devil creates in the heart a wrong idea of Christ. Those who share the opinion that a person is justified by the works of the Law, are simply bewitched. Their belief goes against faith and Christ.

Galatians 3:1. That ye should not obey the truth.

Paul incriminates the Galatians in worse failure. "You are so bewitched that you no longer obey the truth. I fear many of you have strayed so far that you will never return to the truth." The apostasy of the Galatians is a fine indorsement of the Law, all right. You may preach the Law ever so fervently; if the preaching of the Gospel does not accompany it, the Law will never produce true conversion and heartfelt repentance. We do not mean to say that the preaching of the Law is without value, but it only serves to bring home to us the wrath of God. The Law bows a person down. It takes the Gospel and the preaching of faith in Christ to raise and save a person.

Galatians 3:1. Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth.

Paul’s increasing severity becomes apparent as he reminds the Galatians that they disobeyed the truth in defiance of the vivid description he had given them of Christ. So vividly had he described Christ to them that they could almost see and handle Him. As if Paul were to say: "No artist with all his colors could have pictured Christ to you as vividly as I have pictured Him to you by my preaching. Yet you permitted yourselves to be seduced to the extent that you disobeyed the truth of Christ."

Galatians 3:1. Crucifed among you.

"You have not only rejected the grace of God, you have shamefully crucified Christ among you." Paul employs the same phraseology in Hebrews 6:6 : "Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." It should make any person afraid to hear Paul say that those who seek to be justified by the Law, not only deny Christ, but also crucify Him anew. If those who seek to be justified by the Law and its works are crucifiers of Christ, what are they, I like to know, who seek salvation by the filthy rags of their own work-righteousness? Can there be anything more horrible than the papacy, an alliance of people who crucify Christ in themselves, in the Church, and in the hearts of the believers? Of all the diseased and vicious doctrines of the

papacy the worst is this: "If you want to serve God you must earn your own remission of sins and everlasting life, and in addition help others to obtain salvation by giving them the benefit of your extra work-holiness." Monks, friars, and all the rest of them brag that besides the ordinary requirements common to all Christians, they do the works of supererogation, i.e., the performance of more than is required. This is certainly a fiendish illusion. No wonder Paul employs such sharp language in his effort to recall the Galatians from the doctrine of the false apostles. He says to them: "Don't you realize what you have done? You have crucified Christ anew because you seek salvation by the Law." True, Christ can no longer be crucified in person, but He is crucified in us when we reject grace, faith, free remission of sins and endeavor to be justified by our own works, or by the works of the Law. The Apostle is incensed at the presumptuousness of any person who thinks he can perform the Law of God to his own salvation. He charges that person with the atrocity of crucifying anew the Son of God.

Galatians 3:2. This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

There is a touch of irony in these words of the Apostle. "Come on now, my smart Galatians, you who all of a sudden have become doctors, while I seem to be your pupil: Received ye the Holy Ghost by the works of the Law, or by the preaching of the Gospel?" This question gave them something to think about, because their own experience contradicted them. "You cannot say that you received the Holy Spirit by the Law. As long as you were servants of the Law, you never received the Holy Ghost. Nobody ever heard of the Holy Ghost being given to anybody, be he doctor or dunce, as a result of the preaching of the Law. In your own case, you have not only learned the Law by heart, you have labored with all your might to perform it. You most of all should have received the Holy Ghost by the Law, if that were possible. You cannot show me that this ever happened. But as soon as the Gospel came your way, you received the Holy Ghost by the simple hearing of faith, before you ever had a chance to do a single good deed." Luke verifies this statement of Paul in the Book of Acts: "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." (Acts 10:44.) "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning." (Acts 11:15.) Try to appreciate the force of Paul's argument which is so often repeated in the Book of Acts. That Book was written for the express purpose of verifying Paul's assertion, that the Holy Ghost comes upon men, not in response to the preaching of the Law, but in response to the preaching of the Gospel. When Peter preached Christ at the first Pentecost, the Holy Ghost fell upon the hearers, "and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Cornelius received the Holy Ghost while Peter was speaking of Christ. "The Holy Ghost fell on all of them which heard the word." These are actual experiences that cannot very well be denied. When Paul and Barnabas returned to Jerusalem and reported what they had been able to accomplish among the Gentiles, the whole Church was astonished, particularly when it heard that the uncircumcised Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost by the preaching of faith in Christ. Now as God gave the Holy Ghost to the Gentiles without the Law by the simple preaching of the Gospel, so He gave the Holy Ghost also to the Jews, without the Law, through faith alone. If the righteousness of the Law were necessary unto salvation, the Holy Ghost would never have come to the Gentiles, because they did not bother about the Law. Hence the Law does not justify, but faith in Christ justifies. How was it with Cornelius? Cornelius and his friends whom he had invited over to his house, do nothing but sit and listen. Peter is doing the

talking. They just sit and do nothing. The Law is far removed from their thoughts. They burn no sacrifices. They are not at all interested in circumcision. All they do is to sit and listen to Peter. Suddenly the Holy Ghost enters their hearts. His presence is unmistakable, "for they spoke with tongues and magnified God." Right here we have one more difference between the Law and the Gospel. The Law does not bring on the Holy Ghost. The Gospel, however, brings on the gift of the Holy Ghost, because it is the nature of the Gospel to convey good gifts. The Law and the Gospel are contrary ideas. They have contrary functions and purposes. To endow the Law with any capacity to produce righteousness is to plagiarize the Gospel. The Gospel brings donations. It pleads for open hands to take what is being offered. The Law has nothing to give. It demands, and its demands are impossible. Our opponents come back at us with Cornelius. Cornelius, they point out, was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people and prayed God always." Because of these qualifications, he merited the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. So reason our opponents. I answer: Cornelius was a Gentile. You cannot deny it. As a Gentile he was uncircumcised. As a Gentile he did not observe the Law. He never gave the Law any thought. For all that, he was justified and received the Holy Ghost. How can the Law avail anything unto righteousness? Our opponents are not satisfied. They reply: "Granted that Cornelius was a Gentile and did not receive the Holy Ghost by the Law, yet the text plainly states that he was a devout man who feared God, gave alms, and prayed. Don’t you think he deserved the gift of the Holy Ghost?" I answer: Cornelius had the faith of the fathers who were saved by faith in the Christ to come. If Cornelius had died before Christ, he would have been saved because he believed in the Christ to come. But because the Messiah had already come, Cornelius had to be apprized of the fact. Since Christ has come we cannot be saved by faith in the Christ to come, but we must believe that he has come. The object of Peter’s visit was to acquaint Cornelius with the fact that Christ was no longer to be looked for, because He is here. As to the contention of our opponents that Cornelius deserved grace and the gift of the Holy Ghost, because he was devout and just, we say that these attributes are the characteristics of a spiritual person who already has faith in Christ, and not the characteristics of a Gentile or of natural man. Luke first praises Cornelius for being a devout and God-fearing man, and then Luke mentions the good works, the alms and prayers of Cornelius. Our opponents ignore the sequence of Luke’s words. They pounce on this one sentence, "which gave much alms to the people," because it serves their assertion that merit precedes grace. The fact is that Cornelius gave alms and prayed to God because he had faith. And because of his faith in the Christ to come, Peter was delegated to preach unto Cornelius faith in the Christ who had already come. This argument is convincing enough. Cornelius was justified without the Law, therefore the Law cannot justify. Take the case of Naaman, the Syrian, who was a Gentile and did not belong to the race of Moses. Yet his flesh was cleansed, the God of Israel was revealed unto him, and he received the Holy Ghost. Naaman confessed his faith: "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel." (2 Kings 5:15.) Naaman does not do a thing. He does not busy himself with the Law. He was never circumcised. That does not mean that his faith was inactive. He said to the Prophet Elisha: "Thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord. In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." What did the Prophet tell him?" Go in peace." The Jews do not like to hear the prophet say this. "What," they

exclaim, "should this heathen be justified without the Law? Should he be made equal to us who are circumcised?" Long before the time of Moses, God justified men without the Law. He justified many kings of Egypt and Babylonia. He justified Job. Nineveh, that great city, was justified and received the promise of God that He would not destroy the city. Why was Nineveh spared? Not because it fulfilled the Law, but because Nineveh believed the word of God. The Prophet Jonah writes: "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth." They repented. Nowhere in the Book of Jonah do you read that the Ninevites received the Law of Moses, or that they were circumcised, or that they offered sacrifices. All this happened long before Christ was born. If the Gentiles were justified without the Law and quietly received the Holy Spirit at a time when the Law was in full force, why should the Law count unto righteousness now, now that Christ has fulfilled the Law? And yet many devote much time and labor to the Law, to the decrees of the fathers, and to the traditions of the Pope. Many of these specialists have incapacitated themselves for any kind of work, good or bad, by their rigorous attention to rules and laws. All the same, they could not obtain a quiet conscience and peace in Christ. But the moment the Gospel of Christ touches them, certainty comes to them, and joy, and a right judgment. I have good reason for enlarging upon this point. The heart of man finds it difficult to believe that so great a treasure as the Holy Ghost is gotten by the mere hearing of faith. The hearer likes to reason like this: Forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death, the gift of the Holy Ghost, everlasting life are grand things. If you want to obtain these priceless benefits, you must engage in correspondingly great efforts. And the devil says, "Amen." We must learn that forgiveness of sins, Christ, and the Holy Ghost, are freely granted unto us at the preaching of faith, in spite of our sinfulness. We are not to waste time thinking how unworthy we are of the blessings of God. We are to know that it pleased God freely to give us His unspeakable gifts. If He offers His gifts free of charge, why not take them? Why worry about our lack of worthiness? Why not accept gifts with joy and thanksgiving? Right away foolish reason is once more offended. It scolds us. "When you say that a person can do nothing to obtain the grace of God, you foster carnal security. People become shiftless and will do no good at all. Better not preach this doctrine of faith. Rather urge the people to exert and to exercise themselves in good works, so that the Holy Ghost will feel like coming to them." What did Jesus say to Martha when she was very "careful and troubled about many things" and could hardly stand to see her sister Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, just listening? "Martha, Martha," Jesus said, "thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." A person becomes a Christian not by working, but by hearing. The first step to being a Christian is to hear the Gospel. When a person has accepted the Gospel, let him first give thanks unto God with a glad heart, and then let him get busy on the good works to strive for, works that really please God, and not man-made and self-chosen works. Our opponents regard faith as an easy thing, but I know from personal experience how hard it is to believe. That the Holy Ghost is received by faith, is quickly said, but not so quickly done. All believers experience this difficulty. They would gladly embrace the Word with a full faith, but the flesh deters them. You see, our reason always thinks it is too easy and cheap to have righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and life everlasting by the mere hearing of the Gospel.

Galatians 3:3. Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Paul now begins to warn the Galatians against a twofold danger. The first danger is: "Are ye so foolish, that after ye have begun in the Spirit, ye would now end in the flesh?" "Flesh" stands for the righteousness of reason which seeks justification by the accomplishment of the Law. I am told that I began in the spirit under the papacy, but am ending up in the flesh because I got married. As though single life were a spiritual life, and married life a carnal life. They are silly. All the duties of a Christian husband, e.g., to love his wife, to bring up his children, to govern his family, etc., are the very fruits of the Spirit. The righteousness of the Law which Paul also terms the righteousness of the flesh is so far from justifying a person that those who once had the Holy Spirit and lost Him, end up in the Law to their complete destruction.

Galatians 3:4. Have ye suffered so many things in vain? The other danger against which the Apostle warns the Galatians is this: "Have ye suffered so many things in vain?" Paul wants to say: "Consider not only the good start you had and lost, but consider also the many things you have suffered for the sake of the Gospel and for the name of Christ. You have suffered the loss of your possessions, you have borne reproaches, you have passed through many dangers of body and life. You endured much for the name of Christ and you endured it faithfully. But now you have lost everything, the Gospel, faith, and the spiritual benefit of your sufferings for Christ's sake. What a miserable thing to endure so many amictions for nothing."

Galatians 3:4. If it be yet in vain. The Apostle adds the afterthought: "If it be yet in vain. I do not despair of all hope for you. But if you continue to look to the Law for righteousness, I think you should be told that all your past true worship of God and all the afflictions that you have endured for Christ's sake are going to help you not at all. I do not mean to discourage you altogether. I do hope you will repent and amend."

Galatians 3:5. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? This argument based on the experience of the Galatians, pleased the Apostle so well that he returns to it after he had warned them against their twofold danger. "You have not only received the Spirit by the preaching of the Gospel, but by the same Gospel you were enabled to do things." "What things?" we ask. Miracles. At least the Galatians had manifested the striking fruits of faith which true disciples of the Gospel manifested in those days. On one occasion the Apostle wrote: "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." This "power" revealed itself not only in readiness of speech, but in demonstrations of the supernatural ability of the Holy Spirit. When the Gospel is preached unto faith, hope, love, and patience, God gives His wonder-working Spirit. Paul reminds the Galatians of this. "God had not only brought you to faith by my preaching. He had also sanctified you to bring forth the fruits of faith. And one of the fruits of your faith was that you loved me so devotedly that you were willing to pluck out your eyes for me." To love a fellow-man so devotedly as to be ready to bestow upon him money, goods, eyes in order to secure his salvation, such love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. "These products of the Spirit you enjoyed before the false apostles misled you," the Apostle reminds the Galatians. "But you haven't manifested any of these fruits under the regime of the Law. How does it come that you do not grow the same fruits now? You no longer teach truly; you do not believe boldly; you do not live well; you do not work hard; you do not bear things patiently. Who has spoiled you that you no longer love me; that you are not now ready to pluck out your eyes for me? What has happened to cool your personal interest in me?" The same thing happened to me. When I began to proclaim the Gospel, there were many, very many who were delighted with our doctrine

and had a good opinion of us. And now? Now they have succeeded in making us so odious to those who formerly loved us that they now hate us like poison. Paul argues: "Your experience ought to teach you that the fruits of love do not grow on the stump of the Law. You had not virtue prior to the preaching of the Gospel and you have no virtues now under the regime of the false apostles." We, too, may say to those who misname themselves "evangelical" and flout their new-found liberty: Have you put down the tyranny of the Pope and obtained liberty in Christ through the Anabaptists and other fanatics? Or have you obtained your freedom from us who preach faith in Christ Jesus? If there is any honesty left in them they will have to confess that their freedom dates from the preaching of the Gospel.

Galatians 3:6. Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. The Apostle next adduces the example of Abraham and reviews the testimony of the Scriptures concerning faith. The first passage is taken from Genesis 15:6 : "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." The Apostle makes the most of this passage. Abraham may have enjoyed a good standing with men for his upright life, but not with God. In the sight of God, Abraham was a condemned sinner. That he was justified before God was not due to his own exertions, but due to his faith. The Scriptures expressly state: "Abraham believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Paul places the emphasis upon the two words: Abraham believed. Faith in God constitutes the highest worship, the prime duty, the first obedience, and the foremost sacrifice. Without faith God forfeits His glory, wisdom, truth, and mercy in us. The first duty of man is to believe in God and to honor Him with his faith. Faith is truly the height of wisdom, the right kind of righteousness, the only real religion. This will give us an idea of the excellence of faith. To believe in God as Abraham did is to be right with God because faith honors God. Faith says to God: "I believe what you say." When we pay attention to reason, God seems to propose impossible matters in the Christian Creed. To reason it seems absurd that Christ should offer His body and blood in the Lord’s Supper; that Baptism should be the washing of regeneration; that the dead shall rise; that Christ the Son of God was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, etc. Reason shouts that all this is preposterous. Are you surprised that reason thinks little of faith? Reason thinks it ludicrous that faith should be the foremost service any person can render unto God. Let your faith supplant reason. Abraham mastered reason by faith in the Word of God. Not as though reason ever yields meekly. It put up a fight against the faith of Abraham. Reason protested that it was absurd to think that Sarah who was ninety years old and barren by nature, should give birth to a son. But faith won the victory and routed reason, that ugly beast and enemy of God. Everyone who by faith slays reason, the world’s biggest monster, renders God a real service, a better service than the religions of all races and all the drudgery of meritorious monks can render. Men fast, pray, watch, suffer. They intend to appease the wrath of God and to deserve God’s grace by their exertions. But there is no glory in it for God, because by their exertions these workers pronounce God an unmerciful slave driver, an unfaithful and angry Judge. They despise God, make a liar out of Him, snub Christ and all His benefits; in short they pull God from His throne and perch themselves on it. Faith truly honors God. And because faith honors God, God counts faith for righteousness. Christian righteousness is the confidence of the heart in God through Christ Jesus. Such confidence is accounted righteousness for Christ’s sake. Two things make for Christian righteousness: Faith in Christ, which is a gift of God; and God’s acceptance of this imperfect faith of ours for perfect righteousness. Because of my faith in Christ, God overlooks my distrust, the unwillingness of my spirit, my many other sins. Because the shadow of Christ’s wing

covers me I have no fear that God will cover all my sins and take my imperfections for perfect righteousness. God "winks" at my sins and covers them up. God says: "Because you believe in My Son I will forgive your sins until death shall deliver you from the body of sin." Learn to understand the constitution of your Christian righteousness. Faith is weak, but it means enough to God that He will not lay sin to our charge. He will not punish nor condemn us for it. He will forgive our sins as though they amount to nothing at all. He will do it not because we are worthy of such mercy. He will do it for Jesus' sake in whom we believe. Paradoxically, a Christian is both right and wrong, holy and profane, an enemy of God and a child of God. These contradictions no person can harmonize who does not understand the true way of salvation. Under the papacy we were told to toil until the feeling of guilt had left us. But the authors of this deranged idea were frequently driven to despair in the hour of death. It would have happened to me, if Christ had not mercifully delivered me from this error. We comfort the afflicted sinner in this manner: Brother, you can never be perfect in this life, but you can be holy. He will say: "How can I be holy when I feel my sins?" I answer: You feel sin? That is a good sign. To realize that one is ill is a step, and a very necessary step, toward recovery. "But how will I get rid of my sin?" he will ask. I answer: See the heavenly Physician, Christ, who heals the broken-hearted. Do not consult that Quackdoctor, Reason. Believe in Christ and your sins will be pardoned. His righteousness will become your righteousness, and your sins will become His sins. On one occasion Jesus said to His disciples: "The Father loveth you." Why? Not because the disciples were Pharisees, or circumcised, or particularly attentive to the Law. Jesus said: "The Father loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. It pleased you to know that the Father sent me into the world. And because you believed it the Father loves you." On another occasion Jesus called His disciples evil and commanded them to ask for forgiveness. A Christian is beloved of God and a sinner. How can these two contradictions be harmonized: I am a sinner and deserve God's wrath and punishment, and yet the Father loves me? Christ alone can harmonize these contradictions. He is the Mediator. Do you now see how faith justifies without works? Sin lingers in us, and God hates sin. A transfusion of righteousness therefore becomes vitally necessary. This transfusion of righteousness we obtain from Christ because we believe in Him.

Galatians 3:7. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. This is the main point of Paul's argument against the Jews: The children of Abraham are those who believe and not those who are born of Abraham's flesh and blood. This point Paul drives home with all his might because the Jews attached saving value to the genealogical fact: "We are the seed and children of Abraham." Let us begin with Abraham and learn how this friend of God was justified and saved. Not because he left his country, his relatives, his father's house; not because he was circumcised; not because he stood ready to sacrifice his own son Isaac in whom he had the promise of posterity. Abraham was justified because he believed. Paul's argumentation runs like this: "Since this is the unmistakable testimony of Holy Writ, why do you take your stand upon circumcision and the Law? Was not Abraham, your father, of whom you make so much, justified and saved without circumcision and the Law by faith alone?" Paul therefore concludes: "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Abraham was the father of the faithful. In order to be a child of the believing Abraham you must believe as he did. Otherwise you are merely the physical offspring of the procreating Abraham, i.e., you were conceived and born in sin unto wrath and condemnation. Ishmael and Isaac were both the natural children of Abraham. By rights Ishmael should have enjoyed the prerogatives of the firstborn, if

physical generation had any special value. Nevertheless he was left out in the cold while Isaac was called. This goes to prove that the children of faith are the real children of Abraham. Some find fault with Paul for applying the term "faith" in Genesis 15:6 to Christ. They think Paul's use of the term too wide and general. They think its meaning should be restricted to the context. They claim Abraham's faith had no more in it than a belief in the promise of God that he should have seed. We reply: Faith presupposes the assurance of God's mercy. This assurance takes in the confidence that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. Never will the conscience trust in God unless it can be sure of God's mercy and promises in Christ. Now all the promises of God lead back to the first promise concerning Christ: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The faith of the fathers in the Old Testament era, and our faith in the New Testament are one and the same faith in Christ Jesus, although times and conditions may differ. Peter acknowledged this in the words: "Which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." (Acts 10:1-11.) And Paul writes: "And did all drink the spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:4.) And Christ Himself declared: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad." (John 8:56.) The faith of the fathers was directed at the Christ who was to come, while ours rests in the Christ who has come. Time does not change the object of true faith, or the Holy Spirit. There has always been and always will be one mind, one impression, one faith concerning Christ among true believers whether they live in times past, now, or in times to come. We too believe in the Christ to come as the fathers did in the Old Testament, for we look for Christ to come again on the last day to judge the quick and the dead.

Galatians 3:7. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Paul is saying: "You know from the example of Abraham and from the plain testimony of the Scriptures that they are the children of Abraham, who have faith in Christ, regardless of their nationality, regardless of the Law, regardless of works, regardless of their parentage. The promise was made unto Abraham, 'Thou shalt be a father of many nations'; again, 'And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.'" To prevent the Jews from misinterpreting the word "nations," the Scriptures are careful to say "many nations." The true children of Abraham are the believers in Christ from all nations.

Galatians 3:8. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith.

"Your boasting does not get you anywhere," says Paul to the Galatians, "because the Sacred Scriptures foresaw and foretold long before the Law was ever given, that the heathen should be justified by the blessed 'seed' of Abraham and not by the Law. This promise was made four hundred and thirty years before the Law was given. Because the Law was given so many years after Abraham, it could not abolish the promised blessing." This argument is strong because it is based on the exact factor of time. "Why should you boast of the Law, my Galatians, when the Law came four hundred and thirty years after the promise ?" The false apostles glorified the Law and despised the promise made unto Abraham, although it antedated the Law by many years. It was after Abraham was accounted righteous because of his faith that the Scriptures first make mention

of circumcision. "The Scriptures," says Paul, "meant to forestall your infatuation for the righteousness of the Law by installing the righteousness of faith before circumcision and the Law ever were ordained."

Galatians 3:8. Preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. The Jews misconstrue this passage. They want the term "to bless" to mean "to praise." They want the passage to read: In thee shall all the nations of the earth be praised. But this is a perversion of the words of Holy Writ. With the words "Abraham believed" Paul describes a spiritual Abraham, renewed by faith and regenerated by the Holy Ghost, that he should be the spiritual father of many nations. In that way all the Gentiles could be given to him for an inheritance. The Scriptures ascribe no righteousness to Abraham except through faith. The Scriptures speak of Abraham as he stands before God, a man justified by faith. Because of his faith God extends to him the promise: "In thee shall all nations be blessed."

Galatians 3:9. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. The emphasis lies on the words "with faithful Abraham." Paul distinguishes between Abraham and Abraham. There is a working and there is a believing Abraham. With the working Abraham we have nothing to do. Let the Jews glory in the generating Abraham; we glory in the believing Abraham of whom the Scriptures say that he received the blessing of righteousness by faith, not only for himself but for all who believe as he did. The world was promised to Abraham because he believed. The whole world is blessed if it believes as Abraham believed. The blessing is the promise of the Gospel. That all nations are to be blessed means that all nations are to hear the Gospel. All nations are to be declared righteous before God through faith in Christ Jesus. To bless simply means to spread abroad the knowledge of Christ's salvation. This is the office of the New Testament Church which distributes the promised blessing by preaching the Gospel, by administering the sacraments, by comforting the broken- hearted, in short, by dispensing the benefits of Christ. The Jews exhibited a working Abraham. The Pope exhibits a working Christ, or an exemplary Christ. The Pope quotes Christ's saying recorded in John 13:15, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." We do not deny that Christians ought to imitate the example of Christ; but mere imitation will not satisfy God. And bear in mind that Paul is not now discussing the example of Christ, but the salvation of Christ. That Abraham submitted to circumcision at the command of God, that he was endowed with excellent virtues, that he obeyed God in all things, was certainly admirable of him. To follow the example of Christ, to love one's neighbor, to do good to them that persecute you, to pray for one's enemies, patiently to bear the ingratitude of those who return evil for good, is certainly praiseworthy. But praiseworthy or not, such virtues do not acquit us before God. It takes more than that to make us righteous before God. We need Christ Himself, not His example, to save us. We need a redeeming, not an exemplary Christ, to save us. Paul is here speaking of the redeeming Christ and the believing Abraham, not of the model Christ or the sweating Abraham. The believing Abraham is not to lie buried in the grave. He is to be dusted off and brought out before the world. He is to be praised to the sky for his faith. Heaven and earth ought to know about him and about his faith in Christ. The working Abraham ought to look pretty small next to the believing Abraham. Paul's words contain the implication of contrast. When he quotes Scripture to the effect that all nations that share the faith of faithful Abraham are to be blessed, Paul means to imply the contrast that all nations are accursed without faith in Christ.

03.11. Galatians 3:10-19

Chapter 3 Galatians 3:10-19 Galatians 3:10. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. The curse of God is like a flood that swallows everything that is not of faith. To avoid the curse we must hold on to the promise of the blessing in Christ. The reader is reminded that all this has no bearing upon civil laws, customs, or political matters. Civil laws and ordinances have their place and purpose. Let every government enact the best possible laws. But civil righteousness will never deliver a person from the condemnation of God’s Law. I have good reason for calling your attention to this. People easily mistake civil righteousness for spiritual righteousness. In civil life we must, of course, pay attention to laws and deeds, but in the spiritual life we must not think to be justified by laws and works, but always keep in mind the promise and blessing of Christ, our only Savior. According to Paul everything that is not of faith is sin. When our opponents hear us repeat this statement of Paul, they make it appear as if we taught that governments should not be honored, as if we favored rebellion against the constituted authorities, as if we condemned all laws. Our opponents do us a great wrong, for we make a clear-cut distinction between civil and spiritual affairs. Governmental laws and ordinances are blessings of God for this life only. As for everlasting life, temporal blessings are not good enough. Unbelievers enjoy more temporal blessings than the Christians. Civil or legal righteousness may be good enough for this life but not for the life hereafter. Otherwise the infidels would be nearer heaven than the Christians, for infidels often excel in civil righteousness.

Galatians 3:10. For it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Paul goes on to prove from this quotation out of the Book of Deuteronomy that all men who are under the Law are under the sentence of sin, of the wrath of God, and of everlasting death. Paul produces his proof in a roundabout way. He turns the negative statement, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," into a positive statement, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." These two statements, one by Paul and the other by Moses, appear to conflict. Paul declares, "Whosoever shall do the works of the Law, is accursed." Moses declares, "Whosoever shall not do the works of the Law, is accursed." How can these two contradictory statements be reconciled? How can the one statement prove the other? No person can hope to understand Paul unless he understands the article of justification. These two statements are not at all inconsistent. We must bear in mind that to do the works of the Law does not mean only to live up to the superficial requirements of the Law, but to obey the spirit of the Law to perfection. But where will you find the person who can do that? Let him step forward and we will praise him. Our opponents have their answer ready-made. They quote Paul’s own statement in Romans 2:13, "The doers of the law shall be justified." Very well. But let us first find out who the doers of the law are. They call a "doer" of the Law one who performs the Law in its literal sense. This is not to "do" the Law. This is to sin. When our opponents go about to perform the Law they sin against the first, the second, and the third commandments, in fact they sin against the whole Law. For God requires above all that we

worship Him in spirit and in faith. In observing the Law for the purpose of obtaining righteousness without faith in Christ these law-workers go smack against the Law and against God. They deny the righteousness of God, His mercy, and His promises. They deny Christ and all His benefits. In their ignorance of the true purpose of the Law the exponents of the Law abuse the Law, as Paul says, Romans 10:3, "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." In their folly our opponents rush into the Scriptures, pick out a sentence here and a sentence there about the Law and imagine they know all about it. Their work-righteousness is plain idolatry and blasphemy against God. No wonder they abide under the curse of God. Because God saw that we could not fulfill the Law, He provided a way of salvation long before the Law was ever given, a salvation that He promised to Abraham, saying, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." The very first thing for us to do is to believe in Christ. First, we must receive the Holy Spirit, who enlightens and sanctifies us so that we can begin to do the Law, i.e., to love God and our neighbor. Now, the Holy Ghost is not obtained by the Law, but by faith in Christ. In the last analysis, to do the Law means to believe in Jesus Christ. The tree comes first, and then come the fruits. The scholastics admit that a mere external and superficial performance of the Law without sincerity and good will is plain hypocrisy. Judas acted like the other disciples. What was wrong with Judas? Mark what Rome answers, "Judas was a reprobate. His motives were perverse, therefore his works were hypocritical and no good." Well, well. Rome does admit, after all, that works in themselves do not justify unless they issue from a sincere heart. Why do our opponents not profess the same truth in spiritual matters? There, above all, faith must precede everything. The heart must be purified by faith before a person can lift a finger to please God. There are two classes of doers of the Law, true doers and hypocritical doers. The true doers of the Law are those who are moved by faith in Christ to do the Law. The hypocritical doers of the Law are those who seek to obtain righteousness by a mechanical performance of good works while their hearts are far removed from God. They act like the foolish carpenter who starts with the roof when he builds a house. Instead of doing the Law, these law-conscious hypocrites break the Law. They break the very first commandment of God by denying His promise in Christ. They do not worship God in faith. They worship themselves. No wonder Paul was able to foretell the abominations that Antichrist would bring into the Church. That Antichrists would come, Christ Himself prophesied, Matthew 24:5, "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." Whoever seeks righteousness by works denies God and makes himself God. He is an Antichrist because he ascribes to his own works the omnipotent capability of conquering sin, death, devil, hell, and the wrath of God. An Antichrist lays claim to the honor of Christ. He is an idolater of himself. The law-righteous person is the worst kind of infidel. Those who intend to obtain righteousness by their own efforts do not say in so many words: "I am God; I am Christ." But it amounts to that. They usurp the divinity and office of Christ. The effect is the same as if they said, "I am Christ; I am a Savior. I save myself and others." This is the impression the monks give out. The Pope is the Antichrist, because he is against Christ, because he takes liberties with the things of God, because he lords it over the temple of God. I cannot tell you in words how criminal it is to seek righteousness before God without faith in Christ, by the works of the Law. It is the abomination standing in the holy place. It deposes the Creator and deifies the creature. The real doers of the Law are the true believers. The Holy Spirit enables them to love God and their neighbor. But because we have only the first- fruits of the Spirit and not the tenth-fruits, we do not observe the Law perfectly. This

imperfection of ours, however, is not imputed to us, for Christ's sake. Hence, the statement of Moses, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," is not contrary to Paul. Moses requires perfect doers of the Law. But where will you find them? Nowhere. Moses himself confessed that he was not a perfect doer of the Law. He said to the Lord: "Pardon our iniquity and our sin." Christ alone can make us innocent of any transgression. How so? First, by the forgiveness of our sins and the imputation of His righteousness. Secondly, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, who engenders new life and activity in us.

Objections to the Doctrine of Faith Disproved

Here we shall take the time to enter upon the objections which our opponents raise against the doctrine of faith. There are many passages in the Bible that deal with works and the reward of works which our opponents cite against us in the belief that these will disprove the doctrine of faith which we teach. The scholastics grant that according to the reasonable order of nature being precedes doing. They grant that any act is faulty unless it proceeds from a right motive. They grant that a person must be right before he can do right. Why don't they grant that the right inclination of the heart toward God through faith in Christ must precede works? In Hebrews 11:1-40 we find a catalogue of various works and deeds of the saints of the Bible. David, who killed a lion and a bear, and defeated Goliath, is mentioned. In the heroic deeds of David the scholastic can discover nothing more than outward achievement. But the deeds of David must be evaluated according to the personality of David. When we understand that David was a man of faith, whose heart trusted in the Lord, we shall understand why he could do such heroic deeds. David said: "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." Again: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee." (1 Samuel 17:37, 1 Samuel 17:45-46.) Before David could achieve a single heroic deed he was already a man beloved of God, strong and constant in faith. Of Abel it is said in the same Epistle: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." When the scholastics come upon the parallel passage in Genesis 4:4 they get no further than the words: "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." "Aha!" they cry. "See, God has respect to offerings. Works do justify." With mud in their eyes they cannot see that the text says in Genesis that the Lord had respect to the person of Abel first. Abel pleased the Lord because of his faith. Because the person of Abel pleased the Lord, the offering of Abel pleased the Lord also. The Epistle to the Hebrews expressly states: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice." In our dealings with God the work is worth nothing without faith, for "without faith it is impossible to please him." (Hebrews 11:6.) The sacrifice of Abel was better than the sacrifice of Cain, because Abel had faith. As to Cain he had no faith or trust in God's grace, but strutted about in his own fancied worth. When God refused to recognize Cain's worth, Cain got angry at God and at Abel. The Holy Spirit speaks of faith in different ways in the Sacred Scriptures. Sometimes He speaks of faith independently of other matters. When the Scriptures speak of faith in the absolute or abstract, faith refers to justification directly. But when the Scripture speaks of rewards and works it speaks of compound or relative faith. We will furnish some examples. Galatians 5:6, "Faith which worketh by love." Leviticus 18:5, "Which if a man do, he shall live in them." Matthew 19:17, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Psalms 37:27, "Depart from evil, and do

good." In these and other passages where mention is made of doing, the Scriptures always speak of a faithful doing, a doing inspired by faith. "Do this and thou shalt live," means: First have faith in Christ, and Christ will enable you to do and to live. In the Word of God all things that are attributed to works are attributable to faith. Faith is the divinity of works. Faith permeates all the deeds of the believer, as Christ's divinity permeated His humanity. Abraham was accounted righteous because faith pervaded his whole personality and his every action. When you read how the fathers, prophets, and kings accomplished great deeds, remember to explain them as the Epistle to the Hebrews accounts for them: "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions." (Hebrews 11:33.) In this way will we correctly interpret all those passages that seem to support the righteousness of works. The Law is truly observed only through faith. Hence, every "holy," "moral" law-worker is accursed. Supposing that this explanation will not satisfy the scholastics, supposing that they should completely wrap me up in their arguments (they cannot do it), I would rather be wrong and give all credit to Christ alone. Here is Christ. Paul, Christ's apostle, declares that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (Galatians 3:13.) I hear with my own ears that I cannot be saved except by the blood and death of Christ. I conclude, therefore, that it is up to Christ to overcome my sins, and not up to the Law, or my own efforts. If He is the price of my redemption, if He was made sin for my justification, I don't give a care if you quote me a thousand Scripture passages for the righteousness of works against the righteousness of faith. I have the Author and Lord of the Scriptures on my side. I would rather believe Him than all that riffraff of "pious" law- workers.

Galatians 3:11. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. The Apostle draws into his argument the testimony of the Prophet Habakkuk: "The just shall live by his faith." This passage carries much weight because it eliminates the Law and the deeds of the Law as factors in the process of our justification. The scholastics misconstrue this passage by saying: "The just shall live by faith, if it is a working faith, or a faith formed and performed by charitable works." Their annotation is a forgery. To speak of formed or unformed faith, a sort of double faith, is contrary to the Scriptures. If charitable works can form and perfect faith I am forced to say eventually that charitable deeds constitute the essential factor in the Christian religion. Christ and His benefits would be lost to us.

Galatians 3:12. And the law is not of faith. In direct opposition to the scholastics Paul declares: "The law is not of faith." What is this charity the scholastics talk so much about? Does not the Law command charity? The fact is the Law commands nothing but charity, as we may gather from the following Scripture passages: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:5.) "Strewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." (Exodus 20:6.) "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:40.) If the law requires charity, charity is part of the Law and not of faith. Since Christ has displaced the Law which commands charity, it follows that charity has been abrogated with the Law as a factor in our justification, and only faith is left.

Galatians 3:12. But, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

Paul undertakes to explain the difference between the righteousness of the Law and the righteousness of faith. The righteousness of the Law is the fulfillment of the Law according to the passage: "The man that doeth them shall live in them." The righteousness of faith is to believe the

Gospel according to the passage: "The just shall live by faith." The Law is a statement of debit, the Gospel a statement of credit. By this distinction Paul explains why charity which is the commandment of the Law cannot justify, because the Law contributes nothing to our justification. Indeed, works do follow after faith, but faith is not therefore a meritorious work. Faith is a gift. The character and limitations of the Law must be rigidly maintained. When we believe in Christ we live by faith. When we believe in the Law we may be active enough but we have no life. The function of the Law is not to give life; the function of the Law is to kill. True, the Law says: "The man that doeth them shall live in them." But where is the person who can do "them," i.e., love God with all his heart, soul, and mind, and his neighbor as himself? Paul has nothing against those who are justified by faith and therefore are true doers of the Law. He opposes those who think they can fulfill the Law when in reality they can only sin against the Law by trying to obtain righteousness by the Law. The Law demands that we fear, love, and worship God with a true faith. The law-workers fail to do this. Instead, they invent new modes of worship and new kinds of works which God never commanded. They provoke His anger according to the passage: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:9.) Hence, the law-righteous workers are downright rebels against God, and idolaters who constantly sin against the first commandment. In short, they are no good at-all though outwardly they seem to be extremely solicitous of the honor of God. We who are justified by faith as the saints of old, may be under the Law, but we are not under the curse of the Law because sin is not imputed to us for Christ’s sake. If the Law cannot be fulfilled by the believers, if sin continues to cling to them despite their love for God, what can you expect of people who are not yet justified by faith, who are still enemies of God and His Word, like the unbelieving law-workers? It goes to show how impossible it is for those who have not been justified by faith to fulfill the Law.

Galatians 3:13. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

Jerome and his present-day followers rack their miserable brains over this comforting passage in an effort to save Christ from the fancied insult of being called a curse. They say: "This quotation from Moses does not apply to Christ. Paul is taking liberties with Moses by generalizing the statements in Deuteronomy 21:23. Moses has ’he that is hanged.’ Paul puts it ’every one that hangeth.’ On the other hand, Paul omits the words ’of God’ in his quotation from Moses: ’For he that is hanged is accursed of God.’ Moses speaks of a criminal who is worthy of death." "How," our opponents ask, "can this passage be applied to the holy Christ as if He were accursed of God and worthy to be hanged?" This piece of exegesis may impress the naive as a zealous attempt to defend the honor and glory of Christ. Let us see what Paul has in mind. Paul does not say that Christ was made a curse for Himself. The accent is on the two words "for us." Christ is personally innocent. Personally, He did not deserve to be hanged for any crime of His own doing. But because Christ took the place of others who were sinners, He was hanged like any other transgressor. The Law of Moses leaves no loopholes. It says that a transgressor should be hanged. Who are the other sinners? We are. The sentence of death and everlasting damnation had long been pronounced over us. But Christ took all our sins and died for them on the Cross. "He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:12.) All the prophets of old said that Christ should be the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, blasphemer that ever was or ever could be on earth.

When He took the sins of the whole world upon Himself, Christ was no longer an innocent person. He was a sinner burdened with the sins of a Paul who was a blasphemer; burdened with the sins of a Peter who denied Christ; burdened with the sins of a David who committed adultery and murder, and gave the heathen occasion to laugh at the Lord. In short, Christ was charged with the sins of all men, that He should pay for them with His own blood. The curse struck Him. The Law found Him among sinners. He was not only in the company of sinners. He had gone so far as to invest Himself with the flesh and blood of sinners. So the Law judged and hanged Him for a sinner. In separating Christ from us sinners and holding Him up as a holy exemplar, errorists rob us of our best comfort. They misrepresent Him as a threatening tyrant who is ready to slaughter us at the slightest provocation. I am told that it is preposterous and wicked to call the Son of God a cursed sinner. I answer: If you deny that He is a condemned sinner, you are forced to deny that Christ died. It is not less preposterous to say, the Son of God died, than to say, the Son of God was a sinner. John the Baptist called Him "the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Being the unspotted Lamb of God, Christ was personally innocent. But because He took the sins of the world His sinlessness was defiled with the sinfulness of the world. Whatever sins I, you, all of us have committed or shall commit, they are Christ's sins as if He had committed them Himself. Our sins have to be Christ's sins or we shall perish forever. Isaiah declares of Christ: "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." We have no right to minimize the force of this declaration. God does not amuse Himself with words. What a relief for a Christian to know that Christ is covered all over with my sins, your sins, and the sins of the whole world. The papists invented their own doctrine of faith. They say charity creates and adorns their faith. By stripping Christ of our sins, by making Him sinless, they cast our sins back at us, and make Christ absolutely worthless to us. What sort of charity is this? If that is a sample of their vaunted charity we want none of it. Our merciful Father in heaven saw how the Law oppressed us and how impossible it was for us to get out from under the curse of the Law. He therefore sent His only Son into the world and said to Him: "You are now Peter, the liar; Paul, the persecutor; David, the adulterer; Adam, the disobedient; the thief on the cross. You, My Son, must pay the world's iniquity." The Law growls: "All right. If Your Son is taking the sin of the world, I see no sins anywhere else but in Him. He shall die on the Cross." And the Law kills Christ. But we go free. The argument of the Apostle against the righteousness of the Law is impregnable. If Christ bears our sins, we do not bear them. But if Christ is innocent of our sins and does not bear them, we must bear them, and we shall die in our sins. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Let us see how Christ was able to gain the victory over our enemies. The sins of the whole world, past, present, and future, fastened themselves upon Christ and condemned Him. But because Christ is God He had an everlasting and unconquerable righteousness. These two, the sin of the world and the righteousness of God, met in a death struggle. Furiously the sin of the world assailed the righteousness of God. Righteousness is immortal and invincible. On the other hand, sin is a mighty tyrant who subdues all men. This tyrant pounces on Christ. But Christ's righteousness is unconquerable. The result is inevitable. Sin is defeated and righteousness triumphs and reigns forever. In the same manner was death defeated. Death is emperor of the world. He strikes down kings, princes, all men. He has an idea to destroy all life. But Christ has immortal life, and life immortal gained the victory over death. Through Christ death has lost her sting. Christ is the Death of death. The curse of God waged a similar battle with the eternal mercy of God in Christ. The curse meant to condemn God's mercy. But it could not do it because the mercy of God is

everlasting. The curse had to give way. If the mercy of God in Christ had lost out, God Himself would have lost out, which, of course, is impossible. "Christ," says Paul, "spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." (Colossians 2:15.) They cannot harm those who hide in Christ. Sin, death, the wrath of God, hell, the devil are mortified in Christ. Where Christ is near the powers of evil must keep their distance. St. John says: "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4.) You may now perceive why it is imperative to believe and confess the divinity of Christ. To overcome the sin of a whole world, and death, and the wrath of God was no work for any creature. The power of sin and death could be broken only by a greater power. God alone could abolish sin, destroy death, and take away the curse of the Law. God alone could bring righteousness, life, and mercy to light. In attributing these achievements to Christ the Scriptures pronounce Christ to be God forever. The article of justification is indeed fundamental. If we remain sound in this one article, we remain sound in all the other articles of the Christian faith. When we teach justification by faith in Christ we confess at the same time that Christ is God. I cannot get over the blindness of the Pope's theologians. To imagine that the mighty forces of sin, death, and the curse can be vanquished by the righteousness of man's paltry works, by fasting, pilgrimages, masses, vows, and such gewgaws. These blind leaders of the blind turn the poor people over to the mercy of sin, death, and the devil. What chance has a defenseless human creature against these powers of darkness? They train sinners who are ten times worse than any thief, whore, murderer. The divine power of God alone can destroy sin and death, and create righteousness and life. When we hear that Christ was made a curse for us, let us believe it with joy and assurance. By faith Christ changes places with us. He gets our sins, we get His holiness. By faith alone can we become righteous, for faith invests us with the sinlessness of Christ. The more fully we believe this, the fuller will be our joy. If you believe that sin, death, and the curse are void, why, they are null, zero. Whenever sin and death make you nervous write it down as an illusion of the devil. There is no sin now, no curse, no death, no devil because Christ has done away with them. This fact is sure. There is nothing wrong with the fact. The defect lies in our lack of faith. In the Apostolic Creed we confess: "I believe in the holy Christian Church." That means, I believe that there is no sin, no curse, no evil in the Church of God. Faith says: "I believe that." But if you want to believe your eyes you will find many shortcomings and offenses in the members of the holy Church. You see them succumb to temptation, you see them weak in faith, you see them giving way to anger, envy, and other evil dispositions. "How can the Church be holy?" you ask. It is with the Christian Church as it is with the individual Christian. If I examine myself I find enough unholiness to shock me. But when I look at Christ in me I find that I am altogether holy. And so it is with the Church. Holy Writ does not say that Christ was under the curse. It says directly that Christ was made a curse. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 Paul writes: "For he (God) hath made him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Although this and similar passages may be properly explained by saying that Christ was made a sacrifice for the curse and for sin, yet in my judgment it is better to leave these passages stand as they read: Christ was made sin itself; Christ was made the curse itself. When a sinner gets wise to himself he does not only feel miserable, he feels like misery personified; he does not only feel like a sinner, he feels like sin itself. To finish with this verse: All evils would have overwhelmed us, as they shall overwhelm the unbelievers forever, if Christ had not become the great transgressor and guilty bearer of all our sins. The sins of the world got Him down for a moment. They came around Him like water. Of Christ, the Old

Testament Prophet complained: "Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off." (Psalms 88:16.) By Christ's salvation we have been delivered from the terrors of God to a life of eternal felicity.

Galatians 3:14. That the blessing of Abraham might come, on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.

Paul always keeps this text before him: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The blessing promised unto Abraham could come upon the Gentiles only by Christ, the seed of Abraham. To become a blessing unto all nations Christ had to be made a curse to take away the curse from the nations of the earth. The merit that we plead, and the work that we proffer is Christ who was made a curse for us. Let us become expert in the art of transferring our sins, our death, and every evil from ourselves to Christ; and Christ's righteousness and blessing from Christ to ourselves.

Galatians 3:14. That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

"The promise of the Spirit" is Hebrew for "the promised Spirit." The Spirit spells freedom from the Law, sin, death, the curse, hell, and the judgment of God. No merits are mentioned in connection with this promise of the Spirit and all the blessings that go with Him. This Spirit of many blessings is received by faith alone. Faith alone builds on the promises of God, as Paul says in this verse. Long ago the prophets visualized the happy changes Christ would effect in all things. Despite the fact that the Jews had the Law of God they never ceased to look longingly for Christ. After Moses no prophet or king added a single law to the Book. Any changes or additions were deferred to the time of Christ's coming. Moses told the people: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." (Deuteronomy 18:15.) God's people of old felt that the Law of Moses could not be improved upon until the Messiah would bring better things than the Law, i.e., grace and remission of sins.

Galatians 3:15. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

After the preceding, well-taken argument, Paul offers another based on the similarity between a man's testament and God's testament. A man's testament seems too weak a premise for the Apostle to argue from in confirmation of so important a matter as justification. We ought to prove earthly things by heavenly things, and not heavenly things by earthly things. But where the earthly thing is an ordinance of God we may use it to prove divine matters. In Matthew 7:11 Christ Himself argued from earthly to heavenly things when He said: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" To come to Paul's argument. Civil law, which is God's ordinance, prohibits tampering with any testament of man. Any person's last will and testament must be respected. Paul asks: "Why is it that man's last will is scrupulously respected and not God's testament? You would not think of breaking faith with a man's testament. Why do you not keep faith with God's testament?" The Apostle says that he is speaking after the manner of men. He means to say: "I will give you an illustration from the customs of men. If a man's last will is respected. and it is, how much more ought the testament of God be honored: 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' When Christ died, this testament was sealed by His blood. After His death the testament was opened, it was published to the nations. No man ought to alter God's testament as

the false apostles do who substitute the Law and traditions of men for the testament of God." As the false prophets tampered with God’s testament in the days of Paul, so many do in our day. They will observe human laws punctiliously, but the laws of God they transgress without the flicker of an eyelid. But the time will come when they will find out that it is no joke to pervert the testament of God.

Galatians 3:16. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. The word testament is another name for the promise that God made unto Abraham concerning Christ. A testament is not a law, but an inheritance. Heirs do not look for laws and assessments when they open a last will; they look for grants and favors. The testament which God made out to Abraham did not contain laws. It contained promises of great spiritual blessings. The promises were made in view of Christ, in one seed, not in many seeds. The Jews will not accept this interpretation. They insist that the singular "seed" is put for the plural "seeds." We prefer the interpretation of Paul, who makes a fine case for Christ and for us out of the singular "seed," and is after all inspired to do so by the Holy Ghost.

Galatians 3:17. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. The Jews assert that God was not satisfied with His promises, but after four hundred and thirty years He gave the Law. "God," they say, "must have mistrusted His own promises, and considered them inadequate for salvation. Therefore He added to His promises something better, the Law. The Law," they say, "canceled the promises." Paul answers: "The Law was given four hundred and thirty years after the promise was made to Abraham. The Law could not cancel the promise because the promise was the testament of God, confirmed by God in Christ many years before the Law. What God has once promised He does not take back. Every promise of God is a ratified promise." Why was the Law added to the promise? Not to serve as a medium by which the promise might be obtained. The Law was added for these reasons: That there might be in the world a special people, rigidly controlled by the Law, a people out of which Christ should be born in due time; and that men burdened by many laws might sigh and long for Him, their Redeemer, the seed of Abraham. Even the ceremonies prescribed by the Law foreshadowed Christ. Therefore the Law was never meant to cancel the promise of God. The Law was meant to confirm the promise until the time should come when God would open His testament in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God did well in giving the promise so many years before the Law, that it may never be said that righteousness is granted through the Law and not through the promise. If God had meant for us to be justified by the Law, He would have given the Law four hundred and thirty years before the promise, at least He would have given the Law at the same time He gave the promise. But He never breathed a word about the Law until four hundred years after. The promise is therefore better than the Law. The Law does not cancel the promise, but faith in the promised Christ cancels the Law. The Apostle is careful to mention the exact number of four hundred and thirty years. The wide divergence in the time between the promise and the Law helps to clinch Paul’s argument that righteousness is not obtained by the Law. Let me illustrate. A man of great wealth adopts a strange lad for his son. Remember, he does not owe the lad anything. In due time he appoints the lad heir to his entire fortune. Several years later the old man asks the lad to do something for him. And the young lad does it. Can the lad then go around and say that he deserved the inheritance by his obedience to the old man’s request ? How can anybody say that

righteousness is obtained by obedience to the Law when the Law was given four hundred and thirty years after God’s promise of the blessing? One thing is certain, Abraham was never justified by the Law, for the simple reason that the Law was not in his day. If the Law was non-existent how could Abraham obtain righteousness by the Law? Abraham had nothing else to go by but the promise. This promise he believed and that was counted unto him for righteousness. If the father obtained righteousness through faith, the children get it the same way. We use the argument of time also. We say our sins were taken away by the death of Christ fifteen hundred years ago, long before there were any religious orders, canons, or rules of penance, merits, etc. What did people do about their sins before these new inventions were hatched up? Paul finds his arguments for the righteousness of faith everywhere. Even the element of time serves to build his case against the false apostles. Let us fortify our conscience with similar arguments. They help us in the trials of our faith. They turn our attention from the Law to the promises, from sin to righteousness; from death to life. It is not for nothing that Paul bears down on this argument. He foresaw this confusion of the promise and the Law creeping into the Church. Accustom yourself to separate Law and Gospel even in regard to time. When the Law comes to pay your conscience a visit, say: "Mister Law, you come too soon. The four hundred and thirty years aren’t up yet. When they are up, you come again. Won’t you ?"

Galatians 3:18. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise. In Romans 4:14, the Apostle writes: "For if they which are made of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect." It cannot be otherwise. That the Law is something entirely different from the promise is plain. The Law thunders: "Thou shalt, thou shalt not." The promise of the "seed" pleads: "Take this gift of God." If the inheritance of the gifts of God were obtained by the Law, God would be a liar. We would have the right to ask Him: "Why did you make this promise in the first place: ’In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed’? Why did you not say: ’In thy works thou shalt be blessed’?"

Galatians 3:18. But God gave it to Abraham by promise. So much is certain, before the Law ever existed, God gave Abraham the inheritance or blessing by the promise. In other words, God granted unto Abraham remission of sins, righteousness, salvation, and everlasting life. And not only to Abraham but to all believers, because God said: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The blessing was given unconditionally. The Law had no chance to butt in because Moses was not yet born. "How then can you say that righteousness is obtained by the Law?" The Apostle now goes to work to explain the province and purpose of the Law.

Galatians 3:19. Wherefore then serveth the law? The question naturally arises: If the Law was not given for righteousness or salvation, why was it given? Why did God give the Law in the first place if it cannot justify a person? The Jews believed if they kept the Law they would be saved. When they heard that the Gospel proclaimed a Christ who had come into the world to save sinners and not the righteous; when they heard that sinners were to enter the kingdom of heaven before the righteous, the Jews were very much put out. They murmured: "These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day." (Matthew 20:12.) They complained that the heathen who at one time had been worshipers of idols obtained grace without the drudgery of the Law that was theirs. Today we hear the same complaints. "What was the use of our having lived in a cloister, twenty, thirty, forty years; what was the sense of having vowed chastity, poverty, obedience; what good are all the masses and

canonical hours that we read; what profit is there in fasting, praying, etc., if any man or woman, any beggar or scour woman is to be made equal to us, or even be considered more acceptable unto God than we?" Reason takes offense at the statement of Paul: "The law was added because of transgressions." People say that Paul abrogated the Law, that he is a radical, that he blasphemed God when he said that. People say: "We might as well live like wild people if the Law does not count. Let us abound in sin that grace may abound. Let us do evil that good may come of it." What are we to do? Such scoffing distresses us, but we cannot stop it. Christ Himself was accused of being a blasphemer and rebel. Paul and all the other apostles were told the same things. Let the scoffers slander us, let them spare us not. But we must not on their account keep silent. We must speak frankly in order that afflicted consciences may find surcease. Neither are we to pay any attention to the foolish and ungodly people for abusing our doctrine. They are the kind that would scoff, Law or no Law. Our first consideration must be the comfort of troubled consciences, that they may not perish with the multitudes. When he saw that some were offended at his doctrine, while others found in it encouragement to live after the flesh, Paul comforted himself with the thought that it was his duty to preach the Gospel to the elect of God, and that for their sake he must endure all things. Like Paul we also do all these things for the sake of God’s elect. As for the scoffers and skeptics, I am so disgusted with them that in all my life I would not open my mouth for them once. I wish that they were back there where they belong under the iron heel of the Pope. People foolish but wise in their conceits jump to the conclusion: If the Law does not justify, it is good for nothing. How about that? Because money does not justify, would you say that money is good for nothing? Because the eyes do not justify, would you have them taken out? Because the Law does not justify it does not follow that the Law is without value. We must find and define the proper purpose of the Law. We do not offhand condemn the Law because we say it does not justify. We say with Paul that the Law is good if it is used properly. Within its proper sphere the Law is an excellent thing. But if we ascribe to the Law functions for which it was never intended, we pervert not only the Law but also the Gospel. It is the universal impression that righteousness is obtained through the deeds of the Law. This impression is instinctive and therefore doubly dangerous. Gross sins and vices may be recognized or else repressed by the threat of punishment. But this sin, this opinion of man’s own righteousness refuses to be classified as sin. It wants to be esteemed as high-class religion. Hence, it constitutes the mighty influence of the devil over the entire world. In order to point out the true office of the Law, and thus to stamp out that false impression of the righteousness of the Law, Paul answers the question: "Wherefore then serveth the Law?" with the words:

Galatians 3:19. It was added because of transgressions.

All things differ. Let everything serve its unique purpose. Let the sun shine by day, the moon and the stars by night. Let the sea furnish fish, the earth grain, the woods trees, etc. Let the Law also serve its unique purpose. It must not step out of character and take the place of anything else. What is the function of the Law? "Transgression," answers the Apostle. The Twofold Purpose of the Law The Law has a twofold purpose. One purpose is civil. God has ordained civil laws to punish crime. Every law is given to restrain sin. Does it not then make men righteous? No. In refraining from murder, adultery, theft, or other sins, I do so under compulsion because I fear the jail, the noose, the electric chair. These restrain me as iron bars restrain a lion and a bear. Otherwise they would tear everything to pieces. Such forceful restraint cannot be regarded as

righteousness, rather as an indication of unrighteousness. As a wild beast is tied to keep it from running amuck, so the Law bridles mad and furious man to keep him from running wild. The need for restraint shows plainly enough that those who need the Law are not righteous, but wicked men who are fit to be tied. No, the Law does not justify. The first purpose of the Law, accordingly, is to restrain the wicked. The devil gets people into all kinds of scrapes. Therefore God instituted governments, parents, laws, restrictions, and civil ordinances. At least they help to tie the devil's hands so that he does not rage up and down the earth. This civil restraint by the Law is intended by God for the preservation of all things, particularly for the good of the Gospel that it should not be hindered too much by the tumult of the wicked. But Paul is not now treating of this civil use and function of the Law. The second purpose of the Law is spiritual and divine. Paul describes this spiritual purpose of the Law in the words, "Because of transgressions," i.e., to reveal to a person his sin, blindness, misery, his ignorance, hatred, and contempt of God, his death, hell, and condemnation. This is the principal purpose of the Law and its most valuable contribution. As long as a person is not a murderer, adulterer, thief, he would swear that he is righteous. How is God going to humble such a person except by the Law? The Law is the hammer of death, the thunder of hell, and the lightning of God's wrath to bring down the proud and shameless hypocrites. When the Law was instituted on Mount Sinai it was accompanied by lightning, by storms, by the sound of trumpets, to tear to pieces that monster called self-righteousness. As long as a person thinks he is right he is going to be incomprehensibly proud and presumptuous. He is going to hate God, despise His grace and mercy, and ignore the promises in Christ. The Gospel of the free forgiveness of sins through Christ will never appeal to the self-righteous. This monster of self-righteousness, this stiff-necked beast, needs a big axe. And that is what the Law is, a big axe. Accordingly, the proper use and function of the Law is to threaten until the conscience is scared stiff. The awful spectacle at Mount Sinai portrayed the proper use of the Law. When the children of Israel came out of Egypt a feeling of singular holiness possessed them. They boasted: "We are the people of God. All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." (Exodus 19:8) This feeling of holiness was heightened when Moses ordered them to wash their clothes, to refrain from their wives, and to prepare themselves all around. The third day came and Moses led the people out of their tents to the foot of the mountain into the presence of the Lord. What happened? When the children of Israel saw the whole mountain burning and smoking, the black clouds rent by fierce lightning flashing up and down in the inky darkness, when they heard the sound of the trumpet blowing louder and longer, shattered by the roll of thunder, they were so frightened that they begged Moses: "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." (Exodus 20:19.) I ask you, what good did their scrubbing, their snow-white clothes, and their continence do them? No good at all. Not a single one could stand in the presence of the glorious Lord. Stricken by the terror of God, they fled back into their tents, as if the devil were after them. The Law is meant to produce the same effect today which it produced at Mount Sinai long ago. I want to encourage all who fear God, especially those who intend to become ministers of the Gospel, to learn from the Apostle the proper use of the Law. I fear that after our time the right handling of the Law will become a lost art. Even now, although we continually explain the separate functions of the Law and the Gospel, we have those among us who do not understand how the Law should be used. What will it be like when we are dead and gone? We want it understood that we do not reject the Law as our opponents claim. On the contrary, we uphold the Law. We say the Law is good if it is used for the purposes for which it was designed, to check civil transgression, and to magnify

spiritual transgressions. The Law is also a light like the Gospel. But instead of revealing the grace of God, righteousness, and life, the Law brings sin, death, and the wrath of God to light. This is the business of the Law, and here the business of the Law ends, and should go no further. The business of the Gospel, on the other hand, is to quicken, to comfort, to raise the fallen. The Gospel carries the news that God for Christ's sake is merciful to the most unworthy sinners, if they will only believe that Christ by His death has delivered them from sin and everlasting death unto grace, forgiveness, and everlasting life. By keeping in mind the difference between the Law and the Gospel we let each perform its special task. Of this difference between the Law and the Gospel nothing can be discovered in the writings of the monks or scholastics, nor for that matter in the writings of the ancient fathers. Augustine understood the difference somewhat. Jerome and others knew nothing of it. The silence in the Church concerning the difference between the Law and the Gospel has resulted in untold harm. Unless a sharp distinction is maintained between the purpose and function of the Law and the Gospel, the Christian doctrine cannot be kept free from error.

Galatians 3:19. It was added because of transgressions. In other words, that transgressions might be recognized as such and thus increased. When sin, death, and the wrath of God are revealed to a person by the Law, he grows impatient, complains against God, and rebels. Before that he was a very holy man; he worshipped and praised God; he bowed his knees before God and gave thanks, like the Pharisee. But now that sin and death are revealed to him by the Law he wishes there were no God. The Law inspires hatred of God. Thus sin is not only revealed by the Law; sin is actually increased and magnified by the Law. The Law is a mirror to show a person what he is like, a sinner who is guilty of death, and worthy of everlasting punishment. What is this bruising and beating by the hand of the Law to accomplish? This, that we may find the way to grace. The Law is an usher to lead the way to grace. God is the God of the humble, the miserable, the afflicted. It is His nature to exalt the humble, to comfort the sorrowing, to heal the broken-hearted, to justify the sinners, and to save the condemned. The fatuous idea that a person can be holy by himself denies God the pleasure of saving sinners. God must therefore first take the sledge-hammer of the Law in His fists and smash the beast of self-righteousness and its brood of self-confidence, self-wisdom, self-righteousness, and self-help. When the conscience has been thoroughly frightened by the Law it welcomes the Gospel of grace with its message of a Savior who came into the world, not to break the bruised reed, nor to quench the smoking flax, but to preach glad tidings to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, and to grant forgiveness of sins to all the captives. Man's folly, however, is so prodigious that instead of embracing the message of grace with its guarantee of the forgiveness of sin for Christ's sake, man finds himself more laws to satisfy his conscience. "If I live," says he, "I will mend my life. I will do this, I will do that." Man, if you don't do the very opposite, if you don't send Moses with the Law back to Mount Sinai and take the hand of Christ, pierced for your sins, you will never be saved. When the Law drives you to the point of despair, let it drive you a little farther, let it drive you straight into the arms of Jesus who says: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Galatians 3:19. Till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. The Law is not to have its say indefinitely. We must know how long the Law is to put in its licks. If it hammers away too long, no person would and could be saved. The Law has a boundary beyond which it must not go. How long ought the Law to hold sway? "Till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." That may be taken literally to mean until the time of the Gospel. "From the days of John the

Baptist," says Jesus, "until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John." (Matthew 11:12-13.) When Christ came the Law and the ceremonies of Moses ceased. Spiritually, it means that the Law is not to operate on a person after he has been humbled and frightened by the exposure of his sins and the wrath of God. We must then say to the Law: "Mister Law, lay off him. He has had enough. You scared him good and proper." Now it is the Gospel's turn. Now let Christ with His gracious lips talk to him of better things, grace, peace, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life.

Galatians 3:19. And it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. The Apostle digresses a little from his immediate theme. Something occurred to him and he throws it in by the way. It occurred to him that the Law differs from the Gospel in another respect, in respect to authorship. The Law was delivered by the angels, but the Gospel by the Lord Himself. Hence, the Gospel is superior to the Law, as the word of a lord is superior to the word of his servant. The Law was handed down by a being even inferior to the angels, by a middleman named Moses. Paul wants us to understand that Christ is the mediator of a better testament than mediator Moses of the Law. Moses led the people out of their tents to meet God. But they ran away. That is how good a mediator Moses was. Paul says: "How can the Law justify when that whole sanctified people of Israel and even mediator Moses trembled at the voice of God? What kind of righteousness do you call that when people run away from it and hate it the worst way? If the Law could justify, people would love the Law. But look at the children of Israel running away from it." The flight of the children of Israel from Mount Sinai indicates how people feel about the Law. They don't like it. If this were the only argument to prove that salvation is not by the Law, this one Bible history would do the work. What kind of righteousness is this law-righteousness when at the commencement exercises of the Law Moses and the scrubbed people run away from it so fast that an iron mountain, the Red Sea even, could not have stopped them until they were back in Egypt once again? If they could not hear the Law, how could they ever hope to perform the Law? If all the world had stood at the mountain, all the world would have hated the Law and fled from it as the children of Israel did. The whole world is an enemy of the Law. How, then, can anyone be justified by the Law when everybody hates the Law and its divine author? All this goes to show how little the scholastics know about the Law. They do not consider its spiritual effect and purpose, which is not to justify or to pacify afflicted consciences, but to increase sin, to terrify the conscience, and to produce wrath. In their ignorance the papists spout about man's good will and right judgment, and man's capacity to perform the Law of God. Ask the people of Israel who were present at the presentation of the Law on Mount Sinai whether what the scholastics say is true. Ask David, who often complains in the Psalms that he was cast away from God and in hell, that he was frantic about his sin, and sick at the thought of the wrath and judgment of God. No, the Law does not justify.

03.12. Galatians 3:20-29

Chapter 3 Galatians 3:20-29 Galatians 3:20. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one.

Here the Apostle briefly compares the two mediators: Moses and Christ. "A mediator," says Paul, "is not a mediator of one." He is necessarily a mediator of two: The offender and the offended. Moses was such a mediator between the Law and the people who were offended at the Law. They were offended at the Law because they did not understand its purpose. That was the veil which Moses put over his face. The people were also offended at the Law because they could not look at the bare face of Moses. It shone with the glory of God. When Moses addressed the people he had to cover his face with that veil of his. They could not listen to their mediator Moses without another mediator, the veil. The Law had to change its face and voice. In other words, the Law had to be made tolerable to the people. Thus covered, the Law no longer spoke to the people in its undisguised majesty. It became more tolerable to the conscience. This explains why men fail to understand the Law properly, with the result that they become secure and presumptuous hypocrites. One of two things has to be done: Either the Law must be covered with a veil and then it loses its full effectiveness, or it must be unveiled and then the full blast of its force kills. Man cannot stand the Law without a veil over it. Hence, we are forced either to look beyond the Law to Christ, or we go through life as shameless hypocrites and secure sinners. Paul says: "A mediator is not a mediator of one." Moses could not be a mediator of God only, for God needs no mediator. Again, Moses could not be a mediator of the people only. He was a mediator between God and the people. It is the office of a mediator to conciliate the party that is offended and to placate the party that is the offender. However, Moses' mediation consisted only in changing the tone of the Law to make it more tolerable to the people. Moses was merely a mediator of the veil. He could not supply the ability to perform the Law. What do you suppose would have happened if the Law had been given without a mediator and the people had been denied the services of a go-between? The people would have perished, or in case they had escaped they would have required the services of another mediator to preserve them alive and to keep the Law in force. Moses came along and he was made the mediator. He covered his face with a veil. But that is as much as he could do. He could not deliver men's consciences from the terror of the Law. The sinner needs a better mediator. That better mediator is Jesus Christ. He does not change the voice of the Law, nor does He hide the Law with a veil. He takes the full blast of the wrath of the Law and fulfills its demands most meticulously. Of this better Mediator Paul says: "A mediator is not a mediator of one." We are the offending party; God is the party offended. The offense is of such a nature that God cannot pardon it. Neither can we render adequate satisfaction for our offenses. There is discord between God and us. Could not God revoke His Law? No. How about running away from God? It cannot be done. It took Christ to come between us and God and to reconcile God to us. How did Christ do it? "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." (Colossians 2:14.) This one word, "mediator," is proof enough that the Law cannot justify. Otherwise we should not need a mediator. In Christian theology the Law does not justify. In fact it has the contrary effect. The Law alarms us,

it magnifies our sins until we begin to hate the Law and its divine Author. Would you call this being justified by the Law? Can you imagine a more arrant outrage than to hate God and to abhor His Law? What an excellent Law it is. Listen: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods. . .showing mercy unto thousands . . . honor thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land. . ." (Exodus 20:2-3, 6, 12.) Are these not excellent laws, perfect wisdom? "Let not God speak with us, lest we die," cried the children of Israel. Is it not amazing that a person should refuse to hear things that are good for him? Any person would be glad to hear, I should think, that he has a gracious God who shows mercy unto thousands. Is it not amazing that people hate the Law that promotes their safety and welfare, e.g., "Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal"? The Law can do nothing for us except to arouse the conscience. Before the Law comes to me I feel no sin. But when the Law comes, sin, death, and hell are revealed to me. You would not call this being made righteous. You would call it being condemned to death and hell-fire.

Galatians 3:20. But God is one.

God does not offend anybody, therefore He needs no mediator. But we offend God, therefore we need a mediator. And we need a better mediator than Moses. We need Christ.

Galatians 3:21. Is the law then against the promises of God?

Before he digressed Paul stated that the Law does not justify. Shall we then discard the Law? No, no. It supplies a certain need. It supplies men with a needed realization of their sinfulness. Now arises another question: If the Law does no more than to reveal sin, does it not oppose the promises of God? The Jews believed that by the restraint and discipline of the Law the promises of God would be hastened, in fact earned by them. Paul answers: "Not so. On the contrary, if we pay too much attention to the Law the promises of God will be slowed up. How can God fulfill His promises to a people that hates the Law?"

Galatians 3:21. God forbid.

God never said to Abraham: "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because thou hast kept the Law." When Abraham was still uncircumcised and without the Law or any law, indeed, when he was still an idol worshiper, God said to him: "Get thee out of thy country, etc.; I am thy shield, etc.; In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." These are unconditional promises which God freely made to Abraham without respect to works. This is aimed especially at the Jews who think that the promises of God are impeded by their sins. Paul says: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promises because of our sins, or hastens His promises because of any merit on our part." God’s promises are not influenced by our attitudes. They rest in His goodness and mercy. Just because the Law increases sin, it does not therefore obstruct the promises of God. The Law confirms the promises, in that it prepares a person to look for the fulfillment of the promises of God in Christ. The proverb has it that Hunger is the best cook. The Law makes afflicted consciences hungry for Christ. Christ tastes good to them. Hungry hearts appreciate Christ. Thirsty souls are what Christ wants. He invites them: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Christ’s benefits are so precious that He will dispense them only to those who need them and really desire them.

Galatians 3:21. For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. The Law cannot give life. It kills. The Law does not justify a person before God; it increases sin. The Law does not secure righteousness; it hinders righteousness. The Apostle declares emphatically that the Law of itself cannot save. Despite the intelligibility of Paul's statement, our enemies fail to grasp it. Otherwise they would not emphasize free will, natural strength, the works of supererogation, etc. To escape the charge of forgery they always have their convenient annotation handy, that Paul is referring only to the ceremonial and not to the moral law. But Paul includes all laws. He expressly says: "If there had been a law given." There is no law by which righteousness may be obtained, not a single one. Why not?

Galatians 3:22. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin.

Where? First in the promises concerning Christ in Genesis 3:15 and in Genesis 22:18, which speak of the seed of the woman and the seed of Abraham. The fact that these promises were made unto the fathers concerning Christ implies that the fathers were subject to the curse of sin and eternal death. Otherwise why the need of promises? Next, Holy Writ "concludes" all under sin in this passage from Paul: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." Again, in the passage which the Apostle quotes from Deuteronomy 27:26, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." This passage clearly submits all men to the curse, not only those who sin openly against the Law, but also those who sincerely endeavor to perform the Law, inclusive of monks, friars, hermits, etc. The conclusion is inevitable: Faith alone justified without works. If the Law itself cannot justify, much less can imperfect performance of the Law or the works of the Law, justify.

Galatians 3:22. That the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. The Apostle stated before that "the Scripture hath concluded all under sin." Forever? No, only until the promise should be fulfilled. The promise, you will recall, is the inheritance itself or the blessing promised to Abraham, deliverance from the Law, sin, death, and the devil, and the free gift of grace, righteousness, salvation, and eternal life. This promise, says Paul, is not obtained by any merit, by any law, or by any work. This promise is given. To whom? To those who believe. In whom? In Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:23. But before faith came. The Apostle proceeds to explain the service which the Law is to render. Previously Paul had said that the Law was given to reveal the wrath and death of God upon all sinners. Although the Law kills, God brings good out of evil. He uses the Law to bring life. God saw that the universal illusion of self-righteousness could not be put down in any other way but by the Law. The Law dispels all self-illusions. It puts the fear of God in a man. Without this fear there can be no thirst for God's mercy. God accordingly uses the Law for a hammer to break up the illusion of self- righteousness, that we should despair of our own strength and efforts at self-justification.

Galatians 3:23. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. The Law is a prison to those who have not as yet obtained grace. No prisoner enjoys the confinement. He hates it. If he could he would smash the prison and find his freedom at all cost. As long as he stays in prison he refrains from evil deeds. Not because he wants to, but because he has to. The bars and the chains restrain him. He does not regret the crime that put him in jail. On the contrary, he is mighty sore that he cannot rob and kill as before. If

he could escape he would go right back to robbing and killing. The Law enforces good behavior, at least outwardly. We obey the Law because if we don't we will be punished. Our obedience is inspired by fear. We obey under duress and we do it resentfully. Now what kind of righteousness is this when we refrain from evil out of fear of punishment? Hence, the righteousness of the Law is at bottom nothing but love of sin and hatred of righteousness. All the same, the Law accomplishes this much, that it will outwardly at least and to a certain extent repress vice and crime. But the Law is also a spiritual prison, a veritable hell. When the Law begins to threaten a person with death and the eternal wrath of God, a man just cannot find any comfort at all. He cannot shake off at will the nightmare of terror which the Law stirs up in his conscience. Of this terror of the Law the Psalms furnish many glimpses. The Law is a civil and a spiritual prison. And such it should be. For that the Law is intended. Only the confinement in the prison of the Law must not be unduly prolonged. It must come to an end. The freedom of faith must succeed the imprisonment of the Law. Happy the person who knows how to utilize the Law so that it serves the purposes of grace and of faith. Unbelievers are ignorant of this happy knowledge. When Cain was first shut up in the prison of the Law he felt no pang at the fratricide he had committed. He thought he could pass it off as an incident with a shrug of the shoulder. "Am I my brother's keeper?" he answered God flippantly. But when he heard the ominous words, "What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground," Cain began to feel his imprisonment. Did he know how to get out of prison? No. He failed to call the Gospel to his aid. He said: "My punishment is greater than I can bear." He could only think of the prison. He forgot that he was brought face to face with his crime so that he should hurry to God for mercy and for pardon. Cain remained in the prison of the Law and despaired. As a stone prison proves a physical handicap, so the spiritual prison of the Law proves a chamber of torture. But this it should only be until faith be revealed. The silly conscience must be educated to this. Talk to your conscience. Say: "Sister, you are now in jail all right. But you don't have to stay there forever. It is written that we are 'shut up unto faith which should afterwards be revealed.' Christ will lead you to freedom. Do not despair like Cain, Saul, or Judas. They might have gone free if they had called Christ to their aid. Just take it easy, Sister Conscience. It's good for you to be locked up for a while. It will teach you to appreciate Christ." How anybody can say that he by nature loves the Law is beyond me. The Law is a prison to be feared and hated. Any unconverted person who says he loves the Law is a liar. He does not know what he is talking about. We love the Law about as well as a murderer loves his gloomy cell, his straight-jacket, and the iron bars in front of him. How then can the Law justify us?

Galatians 3:23. Shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

We know that Paul has reference to the time of Christ's coming. It was then that faith and the object of faith were fully revealed. But we may apply the historical fact to our inner life. When Christ came He abolished the Law and brought liberty and life to light. This He continues to do in the hearts of the believers. The Christian has a body in whose members, as Paul says, sin dwells and wars. I take sin to mean not only the deed but root, tree, fruit, and all. A Christian may perhaps not fall into the gross sins of murder, adultery, theft, but he is not free from impatience, complaints, hatreds, and blasphemy of God. As carnal lust is strong in a young man, in a man of full age the desire for glory, and in an old man covetousness, so impatience, doubt, and hatred of God often prevail in the hearts of sincere Christians. Examples of these sins may be garnered from the Psalms, Job, Jeremiah, and all the Sacred Scriptures. Accordingly each Christian continues to

experience in his heart times of the Law and times of the Gospel. The times of the Law are discernible by heaviness of heart, by a lively sense of sin, and a feeling of despair brought on by the Law. These periods of the Law will come again and again as long as we live. To mention my own case. There are many times when I find fault with God and am impatient with Him. The wrath and the judgment of God displease me, my wrath and impatience displease Him. Then is the season of the Law, when "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." The time of grace returns when the heart is enlivened by the promise of God's mercy. It soliloquizes: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Can you see nothing but law, sin, death, and hell? Is there no grace, no forgiveness, no joy, peace, life, heaven, no Christ and God? Trouble me no more, my soul. Hope in God who has not spared His own dear Son but has given Him into death for thy sins." When the Law carries things too far, say: "Mister Law, you are not the whole show. There are other and better things than you. They tell me to trust in the Lord." There is a time for the Law and a time for grace. Let us study to be good timekeepers. It is not easy. Law and grace may be miles apart in essence, but in the heart, they are pretty close together. In the heart fear and trust, sin and grace, Law and Gospel cross paths continually. Whether reason hears that justification before God is obtained by grace alone, it draws the inference that the Law is without value. The doctrine of the Law must therefore be studied carefully lest we either reject the Law altogether, or are tempted to attribute to the Law a capacity to save. There are three ways in which the Law may be abused. First, by the self- righteous hypocrites who fancy that they can be justified by the Law. Secondly, by those who claim that Christian liberty exempts a Christian from the observance of the Law. "These," says Peter, "use their liberty for a cloak of maliciousness," and bring the name and the Gospel of Christ into ill repute. Thirdly, the Law is abused by those who do not understand that the Law is meant to drive us to Christ. When the Law is properly used its value cannot be too highly appraised. It will take me to Christ every time.

Galatians 3:24. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. This simile of the schoolmaster is striking. Schoolmasters are indispensable. But show me a pupil who loves his schoolmaster. How little love is lost upon them the Jews showed by their attitude toward Moses. They would have been glad to stone Moses to death. (Exodus 17:4.) You cannot expect anything else. How can a pupil love a teacher who frustrates his desires? And if the pupil disobeys, the schoolmaster whips him, and the pupil has to like it and even kiss the rod with which he was beaten. Do you think the schoolboy feels good about it? As soon as the teacher turns his back, the pupil breaks the rod and throws it into the fire. And if he were stronger than the teacher he would not take the beatings, but beat up the teacher. All the same, teachers are indispensable, otherwise the children would grow up without discipline, instruction, and training. But how long are the scolding and the whippings of the schoolmaster to continue? Only for a time, until the boy has been trained to be a worthy heir of his father. No father wants his son to be whipped all the time. The discipline is to last until the boy has been trained to be his father's worthy successor. The Law is such a schoolmaster. Not for always, but until we have been brought to Christ. The Law is not just another schoolmaster. The Law is a specialist to bring us to Christ. What would you think of a schoolmaster who could only torment and beat a child? Yet of such schoolmasters there were plenty in former times, regular bruisers. The Law is not that kind of a schoolmaster. It is not to torment us always. With its lashings it is only too anxious to drive us to Christ. The Law is like the good schoolmaster who trains his children to find pleasure in doing things they formerly detested.

Galatians 3:24. That we might be justified by faith. The Law is not to teach us another Law. When a person feels the full force of the Law he is likely to think: I have transgressed all the commandments of God; I am guilty of eternal death. If God will spare me I will change and live right from now on. This natural but entirely wrong reaction to the Law has bred the many ceremonies and works devised to earn grace and remission of sins. The Law means to enlarge my sins, to make me small, so that I may be justified by faith in Christ. Faith is neither law nor word; but confidence in Christ "who is the end of the law." How so is Christ the end of the Law? Not in this way that He replaced the old Law with new laws. Nor is Christ the end of the Law in a way that makes Him a hard judge who has to be bribed by works as the papists teach. Christ is the end or finish of the Law to all who believe in Him. The Law can no longer accuse or condemn them. But what does the Law accomplish for those who have been justified by Christ? Paul answers this question next.

Galatians 3:25. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. The Apostle declares that we are free from the Law. Christ fulfilled the Law for us. We may live in joy and safety under Christ. The trouble is, our flesh will not let us believe in Christ with all our heart. The fault lies not with Christ, but with us. Sin clings to us as long as we live and spoils our happiness in Christ. Hence, we are only partly free from the Law. "With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." (Romans 7:25.) As far as the conscience is concerned it may cheerfully ignore the Law. But because sin continues to dwell in the flesh, the Law waits around to molest our conscience. More and more, however, Christ increases our faith and in the measure in which our faith is increased, sin, Law, and flesh subside. If anybody objects to the Gospel and the sacraments on the ground that Christ has taken away our sins once and for always, you will know what to answer. You will answer: Indeed, Christ has taken away my sins. But my flesh, the world, and the devil interfere with my faith. The little light of faith in my heart does not shine all over me at once. It is a gradual diffusion. In the meanwhile I console myself with the thought that eventually my flesh will be made perfect in the resurrection.

Galatians 3:26. For we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Paul as a true apostle of faith always has the word "faith" on the tip of his tongue. By faith, says he, we are the children of God. The Law cannot beget children of God. It cannot regenerate us. It can only remind us of the old birth by which we were born into the kingdom of the devil. The best the Law can do for us is to prepare us for a new birth through faith in Christ Jesus. Faith in Christ regenerates us into the children of God. St. John bears witness to this in his Gospel: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1:12.) What tongue of man or angel can adequately extol the mercy of God toward us miserable sinners in that He adopted us for His own children and fellow-heirs with His Son by the simple means of faith in Christ Jesus!

Galatians 3:27. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. To "put on Christ" may be understood in two ways, according to the Law and according to the Gospel. According to the Law as in Romans 13:14, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," which means to follow the example of Christ. To put on Christ according to the Gospel means to clothe oneself with the righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and Spirit of Christ. By nature we are clad in the garb of Adam. This garb Paul likes to call "the old man." Before we can become the children of God this

old man must be put off, as Paul says, Ephesians 4:29. The garment of Adam must come off like soiled clothes. Of course, it is not as simple as changing one's clothes. But God makes it simple. He clothes us with the righteousness of Christ by means of Baptism, as the Apostle says in this verse: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." With this change of garments a new birth, a new life stirs in us. New affections toward God spring up in the heart. New determinations affect our will. All this is to put on Christ according to the Gospel. Needless to say, when we have put on the robe of the righteousness of Christ we must not forget to put on also the mantle of the imitation of Christ.

Galatians 3:28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. The list might be extended indefinitely: There is neither preacher nor hearer, neither teacher nor scholar, neither master nor servant, etc. In the matter of salvation, rank, learning, righteousness, influence count for nothing. With this statement Paul deals a death blow to the Law. When a person has put on Christ nothing else matters. Whether a person is a Jew, a punctilious and circumcised observer of the Law of Moses, or whether a person is a noble and wise Greek does not matter. Circumstances, personal worth, character, achievements have no bearing upon justification. Before God they count for nothing. What counts is that we put on Christ. Whether a servant performs his duties well; whether those who are in authority govern wisely; whether a man marries, provides for his family, and is an honest citizen; whether a woman is chaste, obedient to her husband, and a good mother: all these advantages do not qualify a person for salvation. These virtues are commendable, of course; but they do not count points for justification. All the best laws, ceremonies, religions, and deeds of the world cannot take away sin guilt, cannot dispatch death, cannot purchase life. There is much disparity among men in the world, but there is no such disparity before God. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23.) Let the Jews, let the Greeks, let the whole world keep silent in the presence of God. Those who are justified are justified by Christ. Without faith in Christ the Jew with his laws, the monk with his holy orders, the Greek with his wisdom, the servant with his obedience, shall perish forever.

Galatians 3:28. For ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

There is much imparity among men in the world. And it is a good thing. If the woman would change places with the man, if the son would change places with the father, the servant with the master, nothing but confusion would result. In Christ, however, all are equal. We all have one and the same Gospel, "one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all," one Christ and Savior of all. The Christ of Peter, Paul, and all the saints is our Christ. Paul can always be depended on to add the conditional clause, "In Christ Jesus." If we lose sight of Christ, we lose out.

Galatians 3:29. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

"If ye be Christ's" means, if you believe in Christ. If you believe in Christ, then are you the children of Abraham indeed. Through our faith in Christ Abraham gains paternity over us and over the nations of the earth according to the promise: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Through faith we belong to Christ and Christ to us.

03.13. Galatians 4:1-9

Chapter 4 Galatians 4:1-9

Galatians 4:1. Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all;

Galatians 4:2. But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. The Apostle had apparently finished his discourse on justification when this illustration of the youthful heir occurred to him. He throws it in for good measure. He knows that plain people are sooner impressed by an apt illustration than by learned discussion. "I want to give you another illustration from everyday life," he writes to the Galatians. "As long as an heir is under age he is treated very much like a servant. He is not permitted to order his own affairs. He is kept under constant surveillance. Such discipline is good for him, otherwise he would waste his inheritance in no time. This discipline, however, is not to last forever. It is to last only until 'the time appointed of the father.'"

Galatians 4:3. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. As children of the Law we were treated like servants and prisoners. We were oppressed and condemned by the Law. But the tyranny of the Law is not to last forever. It is to last only until "the time appointed of the father," until Christ came and redeemed us.

Galatians 4:3. Under the elements of the world. By the elements of the world the Apostle does not understand the physical elements, as some have thought. In calling the Law "the elements of the world" Paul means to say that the Law is something material, mundane, earthly. It may restrain evil, but it does not deliver from sin. The Law does not justify; it does not bring a person to heaven. I do not obtain eternal life because I do not kill, commit adultery, steal, etc. Such mere outward decency does not constitute Christianity. The heathen observe the same restraints to avoid punishment or to secure the advantages of a good reputation. In the last analysis such restraint is simple hypocrisy. When the Law exercises its higher function it accuses and condemns the conscience. All these effects of the Law cannot be called divine or heavenly. These effects are elements of the world. In calling the Law the elements of the world Paul refers to the whole Law, principally to the ceremonial law which dealt with external matters, as meat, drink, dress, places, times, feasts, cleansings, sacrifices, etc. These are mundane matters which cannot save the sinner. Ceremonial laws are like the statutes of governments dealing with purely civil matters, as commerce, inheritance, etc. As for the pope's church laws forbidding marriage and meats, Paul calls them elsewhere the doctrines of devils. You would not call such laws elements of heaven. The Law of Moses deals with mundane matters. It holds the mirror to the evil which is in the world. By revealing the evil that is in us it creates a longing in the heart for the better things of God. The Law forces us into the arms of Christ, "who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Romans 1:4.) Christ relieves the conscience of the Law. In so far as the Law impels us to Christ it renders excellent service. I do not mean to give the impression that the Law should be despised. Neither does Paul intend to leave that impression. The Law ought to be

honored. But when it is a matter of justification before God, Paul had to speak disparagingly of the Law, because the Law has nothing to do with justification. If it thrusts its nose into the business of justification we must talk harshly to the Law to keep it in its place. The conscience ought not to be on speaking terms with the Law. The conscience ought to know only Christ. To say this is easy, but in times of trial, when the conscience writhes in the presence of God, it is not so easy to do. As such times we are to believe in Christ as if there were no Law or sin anywhere, but only Christ. We ought to say to the Law: "Mister Law, I do not get you. You stutter so much. I don't think that you have anything to say to me." When it is not a question of salvation or justification with us, we are to think highly of the Law and call it "holy, just, and good." (Romans 7:12) The Law is of no comfort to a stricken conscience. Therefore it should not be allowed to rule in our conscience, particularly in view of the fact that Christ paid so great a price to deliver the conscience from the tyranny of the Law. Let us understand that the Law and Christ are impossible bedfellows. The Law must leave the bed of the conscience, which is so narrow that it cannot hold two, as Isaiah says, Isaiah 28:20. Only Paul among the apostles calls the Law "the elements of the world, weak and beggarly elements, the strength of sin, the letter that killeth," etc. The other apostles do not speak so slightingly of the Law. Those who want to be first-class scholars in the school of Christ want to pick up the language of Paul. Christ called him a chosen vessel and equipped with a facility of expression far above that of the other apostles, that he as the chosen vessel should establish the doctrine of justification in clear-cut words.

Galatians 4:4-5. But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.

"The fullness of the time" means when the time of the Law was fulfilled and Christ was revealed. Note how Paul explains Christ. "Christ," says he, "is the Son of God and the son of a woman. He submitted Himself under the Law to redeem us who were under the Law." In these words the Apostle explains the person and office of Christ. His person is divine and human. "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman." Christ therefore is true God and true man. Christ's office the Apostle describes in the words: "Made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Paul calls the Virgin Mary a woman. This has been frequently deplored even by some of the ancient fathers who felt that Paul should have written "virgin" instead of woman. But Paul is now treating of faith and Christian righteousness, of the person and office of Christ, not of the virginity of Mary. The inestimable mercy of God is sufficiently set forth by the fact that His Son was born of a woman. The more general term "woman" indicates that Christ was born a true man. Paul does not say that Christ was born of man and woman, but only of woman. That he has a virgin in mind is obvious. This passage furthermore declares that Christ's purpose in coming was the abolition of the Law, not with the intention of laying down new laws, but "to redeem them that were under the law." Christ himself declared: "I judge no man." (John 8:15.) Again, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." (John 12:47.) In other words: "I came not to bring more laws, or to judge men according to the existing Law. I have a higher and better office. I came to judge and to condemn the Law, so that it may no more judge and condemn the world." How did Christ manage to redeem us? "He was made under the law." When Christ came He found us all in prison. What did He do about it? Although He was the Lord of the Law, He voluntarily placed Himself under the Law and permitted it to exercise dominion over Him, indeed to accuse and to condemn Him. When the Law takes us into judgment it has a perfect right to do so. "For we are by nature the children of wrath,

even as others." (Ephesians 2:3.) Christ, however, "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." (1 Peter 2:22.) Hence the Law had no jurisdiction over Him. Yet the Law treated this innocent, just, and blessed Lamb of God as cruelly as it treated us. It accused Him of blasphemy and treason. It made Him guilty of the sins of the whole world. It overwhelmed him with such anguish of soul that His sweat was as blood. The Law condemned Him to the shameful death on the Cross. It is truly amazing that the Law had the effrontery to turn upon its divine Author, and that without a show of right. For its insolence the Law in turn was arraigned before the judgment seat of God and condemned. Christ might have overcome the Law by an exercise of His omnipotent authority over the Law. Instead, He humbled Himself under the Law for and together with them that were under the Law. He gave the Law license to accuse and condemn Him. His present mastery over the Law was obtained by virtue of His Sonship and His substitutionary victory. Thus Christ banished the Law from the conscience. It dare no longer banish us from God. For that matter,--the Law continues to reveal sin. It still raises its voice in condemnation. But the conscience finds quick relief in the words of the Apostle: "Christ has redeemed us from the law." The conscience can now hold its head high and say to the Law: "You are not so holy yourself. You crucified the Son of God. That was an awful thing for you to do. You have lost your influence forever." The words, "Christ was made under the law," are worth all the attention we can bestow on them. They declare that the Son of God did not only fulfill one or two easy requirements of the Law, but that He endured all the tortures of the Law. The Law brought all its fright to bear upon Christ until He experienced anguish and terror such as nobody else ever experienced. His bloody sweat. His need of angelic comfort, His tremulous prayer in the garden, His lamentation on the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" bear eloquent witness to the sting of the Law. He suffered "to redeem them that were under the law." The Roman conception of Christ as a mere lawgiver more stringent than Moses, is quite contrary to Paul’s teaching. Christ, according to Paul, was not an agent of the Law but a patient of the Law. He was not a law-giver, but a law-taker. True enough, Christ also taught and expounded the Law. But it was incidental. It was a sideline with Him. He did not come into the world for the purpose of teaching the Law, as little as it was the purpose of His coming to perform miracles. Teaching the Law and performing miracles did not constitute His unique mission to the world. The prophets also taught the Law and performed miracles. In fact, according to the promise of Christ, the apostles performed greater miracles than Christ Himself. (John 14:12.) The true purpose of Christ’s coming was the abolition of the Law, of sin, and of death. If we think of Christ as Paul here depicts Him, we shall never go wrong. We shall never be in danger of misconstruing the meaning of the Law. We shall understand that the Law does not justify. We shall understand why a Christian observes laws: For the peace of the world, out of gratitude to God, and for a good example that others may be attracted to the Gospel.

Galatians 4:5. That we might receive the adoption of sons.

Paul still has for his text Genesis 22:18, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." In the course of his Epistle he calls this promise of the blessing righteousness, life, deliverance from the Law, the testament, etc. Now he also calls the promise of blessing "the adoption of sons," the inheritance of everlasting life. What ever induced God to adopt us for His children and heirs? What claim can men who are subservient to sin, subject to the curse of the Law, and worthy of everlasting death, have on God and eternal life? That God adopted us is due to the merit of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who humbled Himself under the Law and redeemed us law-ridden sinners.

Galatians 4:6. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts. In the early Church the Holy Spirit was sent forth in visible form. He descended upon Christ in the form of a dove (Matthew 3:16), and in the likeness of fire upon the apostles and other believers. (Acts 2:3.) This visible outpouring of the Holy Spirit was necessary to the establishment of the early Church, as were also the miracles that accompanied the gift of the Holy Ghost. Paul explained the purpose of these miraculous gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 14:22, "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." Once the Church had been established and properly advertised by these miracles, the visible appearance of the Holy Ghost ceased. Next, the Holy Ghost is sent forth into the hearts of the believers, as here stated, "God sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." This sending is accomplished by the preaching of the Gospel through which the Holy Spirit inspires us with fervor and light, with new judgment, new desires, and new motives. This happy innovation is not a derivative of reason or personal development, but solely the gift and operation of the Holy Ghost. This renewal by the Holy Spirit may not be conspicuous to the world, but it is patent to us by our better judgment, our improved speech, and our unashamed confession of Christ. Formerly we did not confess Christ to be our only merit, as we do now in the light of the Gospel. Why, then, should we feel bad if the world looks upon us as ravagers of religion and insurgents against constituted authority? We confess Christ and our conscience approves of it. Then, too, we live in the fear of God. If we sin, we sin not on purpose, but unwittingly, and we are sorry for it. Sin sticks in our flesh, and the flesh gets us into sin even after we have been imbued by the Holy Ghost. Outwardly there is no great difference between a Christian and any honest man. The activities of a Christian are not sensational. He performs his duty according to his vocation. He takes good care of his family, and is kind and helpful to others. Such homely, everyday performances are not much admired. But the setting-up exercises of the monks draw great applause. Holy works, you know. Only the acts of a Christian are truly good and acceptable to God, because they are done in faith, with a cheerful heart, out of gratitude to Christ. We ought to have no misgivings about whether the Holy Ghost dwells in us. We are "the temple of the Holy Ghost." (1 Corinthians 3:16.) When we have a love for the Word of God, and gladly hear, talk, write, and think of Christ, we are to know that this inclination toward Christ is the gift and work of the Holy Ghost. Where you come across contempt for the Word of God, there is the devil. We meet with such contempt for the Word of God mostly among the common people. They act as though the Word of God does not concern them. Wherever you find a love for the Word, thank God for the Holy Spirit who infuses this love into the hearts of men. We never come by this love naturally, neither can it be enforced by laws. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Roman theologians teach that no man can know for a certainty whether he stands in the favor of God or not. This teaching forms one of the chief articles of their faith. With this teaching they tormented men’s consciences, excommunicated Christ from the Church, and limited the operations of the Holy Ghost. St. Augustine observed that "every man is certain of his faith, if he has faith." This the Romanists deny. "God forbid," they exclaim piously, "that I should ever be so arrogant as to think that I stand in grace, that I am holy, or that I have the Holy Ghost." We ought to feel sure that we stand in the grace of God, not in view of our own worthiness, but through the good services of Christ. As certain as we are that Christ pleases God, so sure ought we to be that we also please God, because Christ is in us. And although we daily offend God by our sins, yet as often as we sin, God’s mercy bends over us. Therefore sin cannot get us to doubt the grace of God. Our certainty is of Christ, that mighty Hero who overcame the Law, sin, death, and all evils.

So long as He sits at the right hand of God to intercede for us, we have nothing to fear from the anger of God. This inner assurance of the grace of God is accompanied by outward indications such as gladly to hear, preach, praise, and to confess Christ, to do one's duty in the station in which God has placed us, to aid the needy, and to comfort the sorrowing. These are the affidavits of the Holy Spirit testifying to our favorable standing with God. If we could be fully persuaded that we are in the good grace of God, that our sins are forgiven, that we have the Spirit of Christ, that we are the beloved children of God, we would be ever so happy and grateful to God. But because we often feel fear and doubt we cannot come to that happy certainty. Train your conscience to believe that God approves of you. Fight it out with doubt. Gain assurance through the Word of God. Say: "I am all right with God. I have the Holy Ghost. Christ, in whom I do believe, makes me worthy. I gladly hear, read, sing, and write of Him. I would like nothing better than that Christ's Gospel be known throughout the world and that many, many be brought to faith in Him."

Galatians 4:6. Crying, Abba, Father.

Paul might have written, "God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, calling Abba, Father." Instead, he wrote, "Crying, Abba, Father." In the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans the Apostle describes this crying of the Spirit as "groanings which cannot be uttered." He writes in the 26th verse: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The fact that the Spirit of Christ in our hearts cries unto God and makes intercession for us with groanings should reassure us greatly. However, there are many factors that prevent such full reassurance on our part. We are born in sin. To doubt the good will of God is an inborn suspicion of God with all of us. Besides, the devil, our adversary, goeth about seeking to devour us by roaring: "God is angry at you and is going to destroy you forever." In all these difficulties we have only one support, the Gospel of Christ. To hold on to it, that is the trick. Christ cannot be perceived with the senses. We cannot see Him. The heart does not feel His helpful presence. Especially in times of trials a Christian feels the power of sin, the infirmity of his flesh, the goading darts of the devil, the agues of death, the scowl and judgment of God. All these things cry out against us. The Law scolds us, sin screams at us, death thunders at us, the devil roars at us. In the midst of the clamor the Spirit of Christ cries in our hearts: "Abba, Father." And this little cry of the Spirit transcends the hullabaloo of the Law, sin, death, and the devil, and finds a hearing with God. The Spirit cries in us because of our weakness. Because of our infirmity the Holy Ghost is sent forth into our hearts to pray for us according to the will of God and to assure us of the grace of God. Let the Law, sin, and the devil cry out against us until their outcry fills heaven and earth. The Spirit of God outcries them all. Our feeble groans, "Abba, Father," will be heard of God sooner than the combined racket of hell, sin, and the Law. We do not think of our groanings as a crying. It is so faint we do not know we are groaning. "But he," says Paul, "that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." (Romans 8:27.) To this Searcher of hearts our feeble groaning, as it seems to us, is a loud shout for help in comparison with which the howls of hell, the din of the devil, the yells of the Law, the shouts of sin are like so many whispers. In the fourteenth chapter of Exodus the Lord addresses Moses at the Red Sea: "Wherefore criest thou unto me?" Moses had not cried unto the Lord. He trembled so he could hardly talk. His faith was at low ebb. He saw the people of Israel wedged between the Sea and the approaching armies of Pharaoh. How were they to escape? Moses did not know what to say. How then could God say that Moses

was crying to Him? God heard the groaning heart of Moses and the groans to Him sounded like loud shouts for help. God is quick to catch the sigh of the heart. Some have claimed that the saints are without infirmities. But Paul says: "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." We need the help of the Holy Spirit because we are weak and infirm. And the Holy Spirit never disappoints us. Confronted by the armies of Pharaoh, retreat cut off by the waters of the Red Sea, Moses was in a bad spot. He felt himself to blame. The devil accused him: "These people will all perish, for they cannot escape. And you are to blame because you led the people out of Egypt. You started all this." And then the people started in on Moses. "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." (Exodus 14:11-12.) But the Holy Ghost was in Moses and made intercession for him with unutterable groanings, sighings unto the Lord: "O Lord, at Thy commandment have I led forth this people. So help me now." The Spirit intercedes for us not in many words or long prayers, but with groanings, with little sounds like "Abba." Small as this word is, it says ever so much. It says: "My Father, I am in great trouble and you seem so far away. But I know I am your child, because you are my Father for Christ's sake. I am loved by you because of the Beloved." This one little word "Abba" surpasses the eloquence of a Demosthenes and a Cicero. I have spent much time on this verse in order to combat the cruel teaching of the Roman church, that a person ought to be kept in a state of uncertainty concerning his status with God. The monasteries recruit the youth on the plea that their "holy" orders will assuredly recruit them for heaven. But once inside the monastery the recruits are told to doubt the promises of God. In support of their error the papists quote the saying of Solomon: "The righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them." (Ecclesiastes 9:1.) They take this hatred to mean the wrath of God to come. Others take it to mean God's present anger. None of them seem to understand this passage from Solomon. On every page the Scriptures urge us to believe that God is merciful, loving, and patient; that He is faithful and true, and that He keeps His promises. All the promises of God were fulfilled in the gift of His only- begotten Son, that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Gospel is reassurance for sinners. Yet this one saying from Solomon, misinterpreted at that, is made to count for more than all the many promises of all the Scriptures. If our opponents are so uncertain about their status with God, and even go so far as to say that the conscience ought to be kept in a state of doubt, why is it that they persecute us as vile heretics? When it comes to persecuting us they do not seem to be in doubt and uncertainty one minute. Let us not fail to thank God for delivering us from the doctrine of doubt. The Gospel commands us to look away from our own good works to the promises of God in Christ, the Mediator. The pope commands us to look away from the promises of God in Christ to our own merit. No wonder they are the eternal prey of doubt and despair. We depend upon God for salvation. No wonder that our doctrine is certified, because it does not rest in our own strength, our own conscience, our own feelings, our own person, our own works. It is built on a better foundation. It is built on the promises and truth of God. Besides, the passage from Solomon does not treat of the hatred and love of God towards men. It merely rebukes the ingratitude of men. The more deserving a person is, the less he is appreciated. Often those who should be his best friends, are his worst enemies. Those who least deserve the praise of the world, get most. David was a holy man and a good king. Nevertheless he was chased from his own country. The prophets, Christ, the apostles, were slain. Solomon in this passage does not

speak of the love and hatred of God, but of love and hatred among men. As though Solomon wanted to say: "There are many good and wise men whom God uses for the advancement of mankind. Seldom, if ever, are their efforts crowned with gratitude. They are usually repaid with hatred and ingratitude." We are being treated that way. We thought we would find favor with men for bringing them the Gospel of peace, life, and eternal salvation. Instead of favor, we found fury. At first, yes, many were delighted with our doctrine and received it gladly. We counted them as our friends and brethren, and were happy to think that they would help us in sowing the seed of the Gospel. But they revealed themselves as false brethren and deadly enemies of the Gospel. If you experience the ingratitude of men, don't let it get you down. Say with Christ: "They hated me without cause." And, "For my love they are my adversaries; but I give myself unto prayer." (Psalms 109:4.) Let us never doubt the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, but make up our minds that God is pleased with us, that He looks after us, and that we have the Holy Spirit who prays for us.

Galatians 4:7. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son. This sentence clinches Paul's argument. He says: "With the Holy Spirit in our hearts crying, 'Abba, Father,' there can be no doubt that God has adopted us for His children and that our subjection to the Law has come to an end." We are now the free children of God. We may now say to the Law: "Mister Law, you have lost your throne to Christ. I am free now and a son of God. You cannot curse me any more." Do not permit the Law to lie in your conscience. Your conscience belongs to Christ. Let Christ be in it and not the Law. As the children of God we are the heirs of His eternal heaven. What a wonderful gift heaven is, man's heart cannot conceive, much less describe. Until we enter upon our heavenly inheritance we are only to have our little faith to go by. To man's reason our faith looks rather forlorn. But because our faith rests on the promises of the infinite God, His promises are also infinite, so much so that nothing can accuse or condemn us.

Galatians 4:7. And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. A son is an heir, not by virtue of high accomplishments, but by virtue of his birth. He is a mere recipient. His birth makes him an heir, not his labors. In exactly the same way we obtain the eternal gifts of righteousness, resurrection, and everlasting life. We obtain them not as agents, but as beneficiaries. We are the children and heirs of God through faith in Christ. We have Christ to thank for everything. We are not the heirs of some rich and mighty man, but heirs of God, the almighty Creator of all things. If a person could fully appreciate what it means to be a son and heir of God, he would rate the might and wealth of nations small change in comparison with his heavenly inheritance. What is the world to him who has heaven? No wonder Paul greatly desired to depart and to be with Christ. Nothing would be more welcome to us than early death, knowing that it would spell the end of all our miseries and the beginning of all our happiness. Yes, if a person could perfectly believe this he would not long remain alive. The anticipation of his joy would kill him. But the law of the members strives against the law of the mind, and makes perfect joy and faith impossible. We need the continued help and comfort of the Holy Spirit. We need His prayers. Paul himself cried out: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The body of this death spoiled the joy of his spirit. He did not always entertain the sweet and glad expectation of his heavenly inheritance. He often felt miserable. This goes to show how hard it is to believe. Faith is feeble, because the flesh wars against the spirit. If we could have perfect faith, our loathing for this life in the world would be complete. We would not be so careful about this life. We would not be so attached to the world and the things of the world. We would not feel so good when we have them;

we would not feel so bad when we lose them. We would be far more humble and patient and kind. But our faith is weak, because our spirit is weak. In this life we can have only the first- fruits of the Spirit, as Paul says.

Galatians 4:8. Through Christ. The Apostle always has Christ on the tip of his tongue. He foresaw that nothing would be less known in the world some day than the Gospel of Christ. Therefore he talks of Christ continually. As often as he speaks of righteousness, grace, the promise, the adoption, and the inheritance of heaven, he adds the words, "In Christ," or "Through Christ," to show that these blessings are not to be had by the Law, or the deeds of the Law, much less by our own exertions, or by the observance of human traditions, but only by and through and in Christ.

Galatians 4:8-9. Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? This concludes Paul’s discourse on justification. From now to the end of the Epistle the Apostle writes mostly of Christian conduct. But before he follows up his doctrinal discourse with practical precepts he once more reproves the Galatians. He is deeply displeased with them for relinquishing their divine doctrine. He tells them: "You have taken on teachers who intend to recommit you to the Law. By my doctrine I called you out of the darkness of ignorance into the wonderful light of the knowledge of God. I led you out of bondage into the freedom of the sons of God, not by the prescription of laws, but by the gift of heavenly and eternal blessings through Christ Jesus. How could you so soon forsake the light and return to darkness? How could you so quickly stray from grace into the Law, from freedom into bondage?" The example of the Galatians, of Anabaptists, and other sectarians in our day bears testimony to the ease with which faith may be lost. We take great pains in setting forth the doctrine of faith by preaching and by writing. We are careful to apply the Gospel and the Law in their proper turn. Yet we make little headway because the devil seduces people into misbelief by taking Christ out of their sight and focusing their eyes upon the Law. But why does Paul accuse the Galatians of reverting to the weak and beggarly elements of the Law when they never had the Law? Why does he not say to them: "At one time you Galatians did not know God. You then served idols that were no gods. But now that you have come to know the true God, why do you go back to the worship of idols?" Paul seems to identify their defection from the Gospel to the Law with their former idolatry. Indeed he does. Whoever gives up the article of justification does not know the true God. It is one and the same thing whether a person reverts to the Law or to the worship of idols. When the article of justification is lost, nothing remains except error, hypocrisy, godlessness, and idolatry. God will and can be known in no other way than in and through Christ according to the statement of John 1:18, "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Christ is the only means whereby we can know God and His will. In Christ we perceive that God is not a cruel judge, but a most loving and merciful Father who to bless and to save us "spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all." This is truly to know God. Those who do not know God in Christ arrive at this erroneous conclusion: "I will serve God in such and such a way. I will join this or that order. I will be active in this or that charitable endeavor. God will sanction my good intentions and reward me with everlasting life. For is He not a merciful and generous Father who gives good things even to the unworthy and ungrateful? How much more will He grant unto me everlasting life as a due payment in return for my many good deeds and merits." This is the religion of reason. This is the natural religion of the

world. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:14.) "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." (Romans 3:11.) Hence, there is really no difference between a Jew, a Mohammedan, and any other old or new heretic. There may be a difference of persons, places, rites, religions, ceremonies, but as far as their fundamental beliefs are concerned they are all alike. Is it therefore not extreme folly for Rome and the Mohammedans to fight each other about religion? How about the monks? Why should one monk want to be accounted more holy than another monk because of some silly ceremony, when all the time their basic beliefs are as much alike as one egg is like the other? They all imagine, if we do this or that work, God will have mercy on us; if not, God will be angry. God never promised to save anybody for his religious observance of ceremonies and ordinances. Those who rely upon such things do serve a god, but it is their own invention of a god, and not the true God. The true God has this to say: No religion pleases Me whereby the Father is not glorified through His Son Jesus. All who give their faith to this Son of Mine, to them I am God and Father. I accept, justify, and save them. All others abide under My curse because they worship creatures instead of Me. Without the doctrine of justification there can be only ignorance of God. Those who refuse to be justified by Christ are idolaters. They remain under the Law, sin, death, and the power of the devil. Everything they do is wrong. Nowadays there are many such idolaters who want to be counted among the true confessors of the Gospel. They may even teach that men are delivered from their sins by the death of Christ. But because they attach more importance to charity than to faith in Christ they dishonor Him and pervert His Word. They do not serve the true God, but an idol of their own invention. The true God has never yet smiled upon a person for his charity or virtues, but only for the sake of Christ's merits. The objection is frequently raised that the Bible commands that we should love God with all our heart. True enough. But because God commands it, it does not follow that we do it. If we could love God with all our heart we should undoubtedly be justified by our obedience, for it is written, "Which if a man do, he shall live in them." (Leviticus 18:5.) But now comes the Gospel and says: "Because you do not do these things, you cannot live in them." The words, "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God," require perfect obedience, perfect fear, perfect trust, and perfect love. But where are the people who can render perfection? Hence, this commandment, instead of justifying men, only accuses and condemns them. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4.) How may these two contradictory statements of the Apostle, "Ye knew not God," and "Ye worshipped God," be reconciled? I answer: By nature all men know that there is a God, "because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen." (Romans 1:19-20.) Furthermore, the different religions to be found among all nations at all times bear witness to the fact that all men have a certain intuitive knowledge of God. If all men know God how can Paul say that the Galatians did not know God prior to the hearing of the Gospel? I answer: There is a twofold knowledge of God, general and particular. All men have the general and instinctive recognition that there is a God who created heaven and earth, who is just and holy, and who punishes the wicked. How God feels about us, what His intentions are, what He will do for us, or how He will save us, that men cannot know instinctively. It must be revealed to them. I may know a person by sight, and still not know him, because I do not know how he feels about me. Men know instinctively that there is a God. But what His will is toward them, they do not know. It is written: "There is none that understandeth God." (Romans 3:11.) Again, "No man hath seen God." (John 1:18.) Now, what good does it do

you if you know that there is a God, if you do not know how He feels about you, or what He wants of you? People have done a good deal of guessing. The Jew imagines he is doing the will of God if he concentrates on the Law of Moses. The Mohammedan thinks his Koran is the will of God. The monk fancies he is doing the will of God if he performs his vows. But they deceive themselves and become "vain in their imaginations," as Paul says, Romans 1:21. Instead of worshipping the true God, they worship the vain imaginations of their foolish hearts. What Paul means by saying to the Galatians, "When ye knew not God," is simply this: "There was a time when you did not know the will of God in Christ, but you worshipped gods of your own invention, thinking that you had to perform this or that labor." Whether you understand the "elements of the world" to mean the Law of Moses, or the religions of the heathen nations, it makes no difference. Those who lapse from the Gospel to the Law are no better off than those who lapse from grace into idolatry. Without Christ all religion is idolatry. Without Christ men will entertain false ideas about God, call their ideas what you like, the laws of Moses, the ordinances of the Pope, the Koran of the Mohammedans, or what have you.

Galatians 4:9. But now, after that ye have known God.

"Is it not amazing," cries Paul, "that you Galatians who knew God intimately by the hearing of the Gospel, should all of a sudden revert from the true knowledge of His will in which I thought you were confirmed, to the weak and beggarly elements of the Law which can only enslave you again?"

Galatians 4:9. Or rather are known of God. The Apostle turns the foregoing sentence around. He fears the Galatians have lost God altogether. "Alas," he cries, "have you come to this, that you no longer know God? What else am I to think? Nevertheless, God knows you." Our knowledge of God is rather passive than active. God knows us better than we know God. "Ye are known of God" means that God brings His Gospel to our attention, and endows us with faith and the Holy Spirit. Even in these words the Apostle denies the possibility of our knowing God by the performance of the Law. "No man knoweth who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." (Luke 10:22.) "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." (Isaiah 53:11.) The Apostle frankly expresses his surprise to the Galatians that they who had known God intimately through the Gospel, should so easily be persuaded by the false apostles to return to the weak and beggarly elements of the Law. I would not be surprised to see my church perverted by some fanatic through one or two sermons. We are no better than the apostles who had to witness the subversion of the churches which they had planted with their own hands. Nevertheless, Christ will reign to the end of the world, and that miraculously, as He did during the Dark Ages. Paul seems to think rather ill of the Law. He calls it the elements of the world, the weak and beggarly elements of the world. Was it not irreverent for him to speak that way about the holy Law of God? The Law ought to prepare the way of Christ into the hearts of men. That is the true purpose and function of the Law. But if the Law presumes to usurp the place and function of the Gospel, it is no longer the holy Law of God, but a pseudo-Gospel. If you care to amplify this matter you may add the observation that the Law is a weak and beggarly element because it makes people weak and beggarly. The Law has no power and affluence to make men strong and rich before God. To seek to be justified by the Law amounts to the same thing as if a person who is already weak and feeble should try to find strength in weakness, or as if a person with the dropsy should seek a cure by exposing himself to the pestilence, or as if a leper should go

to a leper, and a beggar to a beggar to find health and wealth. Those who seek to be justified by the Law grow weaker and more destitute right along. They are weak and bankrupt to begin with. They are by nature the children of wrath. Yet for salvation they grasp at the straw of the Law. The Law can only aggravate their weakness and poverty. The Law makes them ten times weaker and poorer than they were before. I and many others have experienced the truth of this. I have known monks who zealously labored to please God for salvation, but the more they labored the more impatient, miserable, uncertain, and fearful they became. What else can you expect? You cannot grow strong through weakness and rich through poverty. People who prefer the Law to the Gospel are like Aesop's dog who let go of the meat to snatch at the shadow of the water. There is no satisfaction in the Law. What satisfaction can there be in collecting laws with which to torment oneself and others? One law breeds ten more until their number is legion. Who would have thought it possible that the Galatians, taught as they were by that efficient apostle and teacher, Paul, could so quickly be led astray by the false apostles? To fall away from the Gospel is an easy matter because few people appreciate what an excellent treasure the knowledge of Christ really is. People are not sufficiently exercised in their faith by afflictions. They do not wrestle against sin. They live in security without conflict. Because they have never been tried in the furnace of affliction they are not properly equipped with the armor of God and know not how to use the sword of the Spirit. As long as they are being shepherded by faithful pastors, all is well. But when their faithful shepherds are gone and wolves disguised as sheep break into the fold, back they go to the weak and beggarly elements of the Law. Whoever goes back to the Law loses the knowledge of the truth, fails in the recognition of his sinfulness, does not know God, nor the devil, nor himself, and does not understand the meaning and purpose of the Law. Without the knowledge of Christ a man will always argue that the Law is necessary for salvation, that it will strengthen the weak and enrich the poor. Wherever this opinion holds sway the promises of God are denied, Christ is demoted, hypocrisy and idolatry are established.

Galatians 4:9. Whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage. The Apostle pointedly asks the Galatians whether they desire to be in bondage again to the Law. The Law is weak and poor, the sinner is weak and poor--two feeble beggars trying to help each other. They cannot do it. They only wear each other out. But through Christ a weak and poor sinner is revived and enriched unto eternal life.

03.14. Galatians 4:10-31

Chapter 4 Galatians 4:10-31 Galatians 4:10. Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. The Apostle Paul knew what the false apostles were teaching the Galatians: The observance of days, and months, and times, and years. The Jews had been obliged to keep holy the Sabbath Day, the new moons, the feast of the passover, the feast of tabernacles, and other feasts. The false apostles constrained the Galatians to observe these Jewish feasts under threat of damnation. Paul hastens to tell the Galatians that they were exchanging their Christian liberty for the weak and beggarly elements of the world.

Galatians 4:11. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.

It grieves the Apostle to think that he might have preached the Gospel to the Galatians in vain. But this statement expresses more than grief. Behind his apparent disappointment at their failure lurks the sharp reprimand that they had forsaken Christ and that they were proving themselves to be obstinate unbelievers. But he does not openly condemn them for fear that oversharp criticism might alienate them altogether. He therefore changes the tone of his voice and speaks kindly to them.

Galatians 4:12. Be as I am; for I am as ye are.

Up to this point Paul has been occupied with the doctrinal aspect of the apostasy of the Galatians. He did not conceal his disappointment at their lack of stability. He had rebuked them. He had called them fools, crucifiers of Christ, etc. Now that the more important part of his Epistle has been finished, he realizes that he has handled the Galatians too roughly. Anxious lest he should do more harm than good, he is careful to let them see that his criticism proceeds from affection and a true apostolic concern for their welfare. He is eager to mitigate his sharp words with gentle sentiments in order to win them again. Like Paul, all pastors and ministers ought to have much sympathy for their poor straying sheep, and instruct them in the spirit of meekness. They cannot be straightened out in any other way. Oversharp criticism provokes anger and despair, but no repentance. And here let us note, by the way, that true doctrine always produces concord. When men embrace errors, the tie of Christian love is broken. At the beginning of the Reformation we were honored as the true ministers of Christ. Suddenly certain false brethren began to hate us. We had given them no offense, no occasion to hate us. They knew then as they know now that ours is the singular desire to publish the Gospel of Christ everywhere. What changed their attitude toward us? False doctrine. Seduced into error by the false apostles, the Galatians refused to acknowledge St. Paul as their pastor. The name and doctrine of Paul became obnoxious to them. I fear this Epistle recalled very few from their error. Paul knew that the false apostles would misconstrue his censure of the Galatians to their own advantage and say: "So this is your Paul whom you praise so much. What sweet names he is calling you in his letter. When he was with you he acted like a father, but now he acts like a dictator." Paul knew what to expect of the false apostles and therefore he is worried. He does not know what to say. It is hard for a man to defend his cause at a distance, especially when he has reason to think that he personally has fallen into

disfavor.

Galatians 4:12. Be as I am; for I am as ye are. In beseeching the Galatians to be as he is, Paul expresses the hope that they might hold the same affection for him that he holds for them. "Perhaps I have been a little hard with you. Forgive it. Do not judge my heart according to my words." We request the same consideration for ourselves. Our way of writing is incisive and straightforward. But there is no bitterness in our heart. We seek the honor of Christ and the welfare of men. We do not hate the Pope as to wish him ill. We do not desire the death of our false brethren. We desire that they may turn from their evil ways to Christ and be saved with us. A teacher chastises the pupil to reform him. The rod hurts, but correction is necessary. A father punishes his son because he loves his son. If he did not love the lad he would not punish him but let him have his own way in everything until he comes to harm. Paul beseeches the Galatians to look upon his correction as a sign that he really cared for them. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Hebrews 12:11.) Although Paul seeks to soften the effect of his reproachful words, he does not take them back. When a physician administers a bitter potion to a patient, he does it to cure the patient. The fact that the medicine is bitter is no fault of the physician. The malady calls for a bitter medicine. Paul wants the Galatians to judge his words according to the situation that made them necessary.

Galatians 4:12. Brethren, I beseech you ... Ye have not injured me at all. Would you call it beseeching the Galatians to call them "bewitched," "disobedient," "crucifiers of Christ"? The Apostle calls it an earnest beseeching. And so it is. When a father corrects his son it means as if he were saying, "My son, I beseech you, be a good boy."

Galatians 4:12. Ye have not injured me at all.

"I am not angry with you," says Paul. "Why should I be angry with you, since you have done me no injury at all?" To this the Galatians reply: "Why, then, do you say that we are perverted, that we have forsaken the true doctrine, that we are foolish, bewitched, etc., if you are not angry? We must have offended you somehow." Paul answers: "You Galatians have not injured me. You have injured yourselves. I chide you not because I wish you ill. I have no reason to wish you ill. God is my witness, you have done me no wrong. On the contrary, you have been very good to me. The reason I write to you is because I love you." The bitter potion must be sweetened with honey and sugar to make it palatable. When parents have punished their children they give them apples, pears, and other good things to show them that they mean well.

Galatians 4:13-14. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

"You Galatians were very good to me. When I began to preach the Gospel to you in the infirmity of my flesh and in great temptation you were not at all offended. On the contrary, you were so loving, so kind, so friendly towards me, you received me like an angel, like Jesus Himself." Indeed, the Galatians are to be commended for receiving the Gospel from a man as unimposing and afflicted all around as Paul was. Wherever he preached the Gospel, Jews and Gentiles raved against him. All the influential and religious people of his day denounced him. But the Galatians did not mind it.

That was greatly to their honor. And Paul does not neglect to praise them for it. This praise Paul bestows on none of the other churches to which he wrote. St. Jerome and others of the ancient fathers allege this infirmity of Paul's to have been some physical defect, or concupiscence. Jerome and the other diagnosticians lived at a time when the Church enjoyed peace and prosperity, when the bishops increased in wealth and standing, when pastors and bishops no longer sat over the Word of God. No wonder they failed to understand Paul. When Paul speaks of the infirmity of his flesh he does not mean some physical defect or carnal lust, but the sufferings and afflictions which he endured in his body. What these infirmities were he himself explains in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 : "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." And in the eleventh chapter of the same Epistle the Apostle writes: "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck," etc. (2 Corinthians 11:23-25.) By the infirmity of his flesh Paul meant these afflictions and not some chronic disease. He reminds the Galatians how he was always in peril at the hands of the Jews, Gentiles, and false brethren, how he suffered hunger and want. Now, the afflictions of the believers always offend people. Paul knew it and therefore has high praise for the Galatians because they over looked his afflictions and received him like an angel. Christ forewarned the faithful against the offense of the Cross, saying: "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." (Matthew 11:6.) Surely it is no easy thing to confess Him Lord of all and Savior of the world who was a reproach of men, and despised of the people, and the laughing stock of the world. (Psalms 22:7.) I say, to value this poor Christ, so spitefully scorned, spit upon, scourged, and crucified, more than the riches of the richest, the strength of the strongest, the wisdom of the wisest, is something. It is worth being called blessed. Paul not only had outward afflictions but also inner, spiritual afflictions. He refers to these in 2 Corinthians 7:5-6, "Without were fightings, within were fears." In his letter to the Philippians Paul makes mention of the restoration of Epaphroditus as a special act of mercy on the part of God, "lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." Considering the many afflictions of Paul, we are not surprised to hear him loudly praising the Galatians for not being offended at him as others were. The world thinks us mad because we go about to comfort, to help, to save others while we ourselves are in distress. People tell us: "Physician, heal thyself." (Luke 4:23.) The Apostle tells the Galatians that he will keep their kindness in perpetual remembrance. Indirectly, he also reminds them how much they had loved him before the invasion of the false apostles, and gives them a hint that they should return to their first love for him.

Galatians 4:15. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?

"How much happier you used to be. And how you Galatians used to tell me that you were blessed. And how much did I not praise and commend you formerly." Paul reminds them of former and better times in an effort to mitigate his sharp reproaches, lest the false apostles should slander him and misconstrue his letter to his disadvantage and to their own advantage. Such snakes in the grass are equal to anything. They will pervert words spoken from a sincere heart and twist them to mean just the opposite of what they were intended to convey. They are like spiders that suck venom out of sweet and fragrant flowers. The poison is not in the flowers, but it is the nature of the spider to turn what is good and wholesome into poison.

Galatians 4:15. For I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. The Apostle continues his praise of the Galatians. "You did not only treat me very courteously. If it had been necessary you would have plucked out your eyes and sacrificed your lives for me." And in very fact the Galatians sacrificed their lives for Paul. By receiving and maintaining Paul they called upon their own heads the hatred and malice of all the Jews and Gentiles. Nowadays the name of Luther carries the same stigma. Whoever praises Luther is a worse sinner than an idolater, perjurer, or thief.

Galatians 4:16. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

Paul's reason for praising the Galatians is to avoid giving them the impression as if he were their enemy because he had reprimanded them. A true friend will admonish his erring brother, and if the erring brother has any sense at all he will thank his friend. In the world truth produces hatred. Whoever speaks the truth is counted an enemy. But among friends it is not so, much less among Christians. The Apostle wants his Galatians to know that just because he had told them the truth they are not to think that he dislikes them. "I told you the truth because I love you."

Galatians 4:17. They zealously affect you, but not well.

Paul takes the false apostles to task for their flattery. Satan's satellites softsoap the people. Paul calls it "by good words and fair speeches to deceive the hearts of the simple." (Romans 16:18.) They tell me that by my stubbornness in this doctrine of the Sacrament I am destroying the harmony of the church. They say it would be better if we would make some slight concession rather than cause such commotion and controversy in the Church regarding an article which is not even one of the fundamental doctrines. My reply is, cursed be any love or harmony which demands for its preservation that we place the Word of God in jeopardy!

Galatians 4:17. Yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.

"Do you Galatians know why the false apostles are so zealous about you? They expect you to reciprocate. And that would leave me out. If their zeal were right they would not mind your loving me. But they hate my doctrine and want to stamp it out. In order to bring this to pass they go about to alienate your hearts from me and to make me obnoxious to you." In this way Paul brings the false apostles into suspicion. He questions their motives. He maintains that their zeal is mere pretense to deceive the Galatians. Our Savior Christ also warned us, saying: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing." (Matthew 7:15.) Paul was considerably disturbed by the commissions and changes that followed in the wake of his preaching. He was accused of being "a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world." (Acts 24:5.) In Philippi the townspeople cried that he troubled their city and taught customs which were not lawful for them to receive. (Acts 16:20-21.) All troubles, calamities, famines, wars were laid to the charge of the Gospel of the apostles. However, the apostles were not deterred by such calumnies from preaching the Gospel. They knew that they "ought to obey God rather than men," and that it was better for the world to be upset than to be ignorant of Christ. Do you think for a moment that these reactions did not worry the apostles? They were not made of iron. They foresaw the revolutionary character of the Gospel. They also foresaw the dissensions that would creep into the Church. It was bad news for Paul when he heard that the Corinthians were denying the resurrection of the dead, that the churches he had planted were experiencing all kinds of

difficulties, and that the Gospel was being supplanted by false doctrines. But Paul also knew that the Gospel was not to blame. He did not resign his office because he knew that the Gospel he preached was the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes. The same criticism which was leveled at the apostles is leveled at us. The doctrine of the Gospel, we are told, is the cause of all the present unrest in the world. There is no wrong that is not laid to our charge. But why? We do not spread wicked lies. We preach the glad tidings of Christ. Our opponents will bear us out when we say that we never fail to urge respect for the constituted authorities, because that is the will of God. All of these vilifications cannot discourage us. We know that there is nothing the devil hates worse than the Gospel. It is one of his little tricks to blame the Gospel for every evil in the world. Formerly, when the traditions of the fathers were taught in the Church, the devil was not excited as he is now. It goes to show that our doctrine is of God, else "behemoth would lie under shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens." The fact that he is again walking about as a roaring lion to stir up riots and disorders is a sure sign that he has begun to feel the effect of our preaching.

Galatians 4:18. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.

"When I was present with you, you loved me, although I preached the Gospel to you in the infirmity of my flesh. The fact that I am now absent from you ought not to change your attitude towards me. Although I am absent in the flesh, I am with you in spirit and in my doctrine which you ought to retain by all means because through it you received the Holy Spirit."

Galatians 4:19. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. With every single word the Apostle seeks to regain the confidence of the Galatians. He now calls them lovingly his little children. He adds the simile: "Of whom I travail in birth again." As parents reproduce their physical characteristics in their children, so the apostles reproduced their faith in the hearts of the hearers, until Christ was formed in them. A person has the form of Christ when he believes in Christ to the exclusion of everything else. This faith in Christ is engendered by the Gospel as the Apostle declares in 1 Corinthians 4:15 : "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel"; and in 2 Corinthians 3:3, "Ye are the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God." The Word of God falling from the lips of the apostle or minister enters into the heart of the hearer. The Holy Ghost impregnates the Word so that it brings forth the fruit of faith. In this manner every Christian pastor is a spiritual father who forms Christ in the hearts of his hearers. At the same time Paul indicts the false apostles. He says: "I have begotten you Galatians through the Gospel, giving you the form of Christ. But these false apostles are giving you a new form, the form of Moses." Note the Apostle does not say, "Of whom I travail in birth again until I be formed in you," but "until Christ be formed in you." The false apostles had torn the form of Christ out of the hearts of the Galatians and substituted their own form. Paul endeavors to reform them, or rather reform Christ in them.

Galatians 4:20. I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice. A common saying has it that a letter is a dead messenger. Something is lacking in all writing. You can never be sure how the written page will affect the reader, because his mood, his circumstances, his affections are so changeable. It is different with the spoken word. If it is harsh and ill-timed it can always be remodeled. No wonder the Apostle expresses the wish that he could speak to the Galatians in

person. He could change his voice according to their attitude. If he saw that they were repentant he could soften the tone of his voice. If he saw that they were stubborn he could speak to them more earnestly. This way he did not know how to deal with them by letter. If his Epistle is too severe it will do more damage than good. If it is too gentle, it will not correct conditions. But if he could be with them in person he could change his voice as the occasion demanded.

Galatians 4:20. For I stand in doubt of you.

"I do not know how to take you. I do not know how to approach you by letter." In order to make sure that he leaves no stone unturned in his effort to recall them to the Gospel of Christ, he chides, entreats, praises, and blames the Galatians, trying every way to hit the right note and tone of voice.

Galatians 4:21. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

Here Paul would have closed his Epistle because he did not know what else to say. He wishes he could see the Galatians in person and straighten out their difficulties. But he is not sure whether the Galatians have fully understood the difference between the Gospel and the Law. To make sure, he introduces another illustration. He knows people like illustrations and stories. He knows that Christ Himself made ample use of parables. Paul is an expert at allegories. They are dangerous things. Unless a person has a thorough knowledge of Christian doctrine he had better leave allegories alone. The allegory which Paul is about to bring is taken from the Book of Genesis which he calls the Law. True, that book contains no mention of the Law. Paul simply follows the custom of the Jews who included the first book of Moses in the collective term, "Law." Jesus even included the Psalms.

Galatians 4:22-23. For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. This is Paul’s allegory. Abraham had two sons: Ishmael by Hagar, and Isaac by Sarah. They were both the true sons of Abraham, with this difference, that Ishmael was born after the flesh, i.e., without the commandment and promise of God, while Isaac was born according to the promise. With the permission of Sarah, Abraham took Hagar, Sarah’s bondwoman, to wife. Sarah knew that God had promised to make her husband Abraham the father of a nation, and she hoped that she would be the mother of this promised nation. But with the passage of the years her hope died out. In order that the promise of God should not be annulled by her barrenness this holy woman resigned her right and honor to her maid. This was no easy thing for her to do. She abased herself. She thought: "God is no liar. What He has promised He will perform. But perhaps God does not want me to be the mother of Abraham’s posterity. Perhaps He prefers Hagar for the honor." Ishmael was thus born without a special word or promise of God, at the mere request of Sarah. God did not command Abraham to take Hagar, nor did God promise to bless the coalition. It is evident that Ishmael was the son of Abraham after the flesh, and not after the promise. In Romans 9:1-33 St. Paul advances the same argument which he amplifies into an allegory in writing to the Galatians. There he argues that all the children of Abraham are not the children of God. For Abraham had two kinds of children, children born of the promise, like Isaac, and other children born without the promise, as Ishmael. With this argument Paul squelched the proud Jews who gloried that they were the children of God because they were the seed and the children of Abraham. Paul makes it clear enough that it takes more than an

Abrahamic pedigree to be a child of God. To be a child of God requires faith in Christ.

Galatians 4:24. Which things are an allegory.

Allegories are not very convincing, but like pictures they visualize a matter. If Paul had not brought in advance indisputable arguments for the righteousness of faith over against the righteousness of works this allegory would do little good. Having first fortified his case with invincible arguments, he can afford to inject this allegory to add impressiveness and beauty to his presentation.

Galatians 4:24-25. For these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia. In this allegory Abraham represents God. Abraham had two sons, born respectively of Hagar and Sarah. The two women represent the two Testaments. The Old Testament is Mount Sinai, the bondwoman, Hagar. The Arabians call Mount Sinai Agar. It may be that the similarity of these two names gave Paul his idea for this allegory. As Hagar bore Abraham a son who was not an heir but a servant, so Sinai, the Law, the allegorical Hagar, bore God a carnal and servile people of the Law without promise. The Law has a promise but it is a conditional promise, depending upon whether people fulfill the Law. The Jews regarded the conditional promises of the Law as if they were unconditional. When the prophets foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews stoned them as blasphemers of God. They never gave it any thought that there was a condition attached to the Law which reads: "If you keep the commandments it shall be well with thee."

Galatians 4:25. And answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. A little while ago Paul called Mount Sinai, Hagar. He would now gladly make Jerusalem the Sarah of the New Testament, but he cannot. The earthly Jerusalem is not Sarah, but a part of Hagar. Hagar lives there in the home of the Law, the Temple, the priesthood, the ceremonies, and whatever else was ordained in the Law at Mount Sinai. I would have been tempted to call Jerusalem, Sarah, or the New Testament. I would have been pleased with this turn of the allegory. It goes to show that not everybody has the gift of allegory. Would you not think it perfectly proper to call Sinai Hagar and Jerusalem Sarah? True, Paul does call Sarah Jerusalem. But he has the spiritual and heavenly Jerusalem in mind, not the earthly Jerusalem. Sarah represents that spiritual Jerusalem where there is no Law but only the promise, and where the inhabitants are free. To show that the Law has been quite abolished, the earthly Jerusalem was completely destroyed with all her ornaments, temples, and ceremonies.

Galatians 4:26. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. The earthly Jerusalem with its ordinances and laws represents Hagar and her offspring. They are slaves to the Law, sin and death. But the heavenly Jerusalem is Sarah, the free woman. This heavenly Jerusalem is the Church, that is to say the number of all believers throughout the world, having one and the same Gospel, one and the same faith in Christ, one and the same Holy Ghost, and the same sacraments. Do not mistake this one word "above" to refer to the triumphant Church in heaven, but to the militant Church on earth. In Php 3:20, the Apostle uses the phrase: "Our conversation is in heaven," not locally in heaven, but in spirit. When a believer accepts the heavenly gifts of the Gospel he is in heaven. So also in Ephesians 1:3, "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Jerusalem here means the universal Christian Church on earth. Sarah, the Church, as the bride of Christ bears free children who are not subject to the Law.

Galatians 4:27. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

Paul quotes the allegorical prophecy of Isaiah to the effect that the mother of many children must die desolately, while the barren woman shall have an abundance of children. (Isaiah 54:1.) He applies this prophecy to Hagar and Sarah, to the Law and the Gospel. The Law as the husband of the fruitful woman procreates many children. For men of all ages have had the idea that they are right when they follow after the Law and outwardly perform its requirements. Although the Law has many children, they are not free. They are slaves. As servants they cannot have a share in the inheritance, but are driven from the house as Ishmael was cast out of the house of Abraham. In fact the servants of the Law are even now barred from the kingdom of light and liberty, for "he that believeth not, is condemned already." (John 3:18.) As the servants of the Law they remain under the curse of the Law, under sin and death, under the power of the devil, and under the wrath and judgment of God. On the other hand, Sarah, the free Church, seems barren. The Gospel of the Cross which the Church proclaims does not have the appeal that the Law has for men, and therefore it does not find many adherents. The Church does not look prosperous. Unbelievers have always predicted the death of the Church. The Jews were quite certain that the Church would not long endure. They said to Paul: "As concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against." (Acts 28:22.) No matter how barren and forsaken, how weak and desolate the Church may seem, she alone is really fruitful before God. By the Gospel she procreates an infinite number of children that are free heirs of everlasting life. The Law, "the old husband," is really dead. But not all people know it, or want to know it. They labor and bear the burden and the heat of the day, and bring forth many children, children that are bastards like themselves, children born to be put out of the house like Ishmael to perish forever. Accursed be that doctrine, life, and religion which endeavors to obtain righteousness before God by the Law and its creeds. The scholastics think that the judicial and ceremonial laws of Moses were abolished by the coming of Christ, but not the moral law. They are blind. When Paul declares that we are delivered from the curse of the Law he means the whole Law, particularly the moral law which more than the other laws accuses, curses, and condemns the conscience. The Ten Commandments have no right to condemn that conscience in which Jesus dwells, for Jesus has taken from the Ten Commandments the right and power to curse us. Not as if the conscience is now insensitive to the terrors of the Law, but the Law cannot drive the conscience to despair. "There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1.) "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:36.) You will complain: "But I am not doing anything." That is right. You cannot do a thing to be delivered from the tyranny of the Law. But listen to the glad tidings which the Holy Ghost brings to you in the words of the prophet: "Rejoice, thou barren." As Christ is greater than the Law, so much more excellent is the righteousness of Christ than the righteousness of the Law. In one more respect the Law has been abolished. The civil laws of Moses do not concern us, and should not be put back in force. That does not mean that we are exempt from obedience to the civil laws under which we live. On the contrary, the Gospel commands Christians to obey government "not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." (Romans 13:5.) Neither do the ordinances of Moses or those of the Pope concern us. But because life cannot go on without some ordinances, the Gospel permits regulations to be made in the Church in regard to special days, times, places, etc., in order that the people may know upon what day, at what hour, and in what place to assemble for the Word of God. Such directions are desirable that "all things be done decently and in order." (1

Corinthians 14:40.) These directions may be changed or omitted altogether, as long as no offense is given to the weak. Paul, however, refers particularly to the abolition of the moral law. If faith alone in Christ justifies, then the whole Law is abolished without exception. And this the Apostle proves by the testimony of Isaiah, who bids the barren to rejoice because she will have many children, whereas she that has a husband and many children will be forsaken. Isaiah calls the Church barren because her children are born without effort by the Word of faith through the Spirit of God. It is a matter of birth, not of exertion. The believer too works, but not in an effort to become a son and an heir of God. He is that before he goes to work. He is born a son and an heir. He works for the glory of God and the welfare of his fellowmen.

Galatians 4:28. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. The Jews claimed to be the children of God because they were the children of Abraham. Jesus answered them, John 8:39-40, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth." And in John 8:42 : "If God were your Father, ye would love me." In other words: "You are not the children of God. If you were, you would know and love me. Brothers born and living together in the same house recognize each other. You do not recognize me. You are of your father, the devil." We are not like these Jews, the children of the bondwoman, the Law, who were cast out of the house by Jesus. We are children of the promise like Isaac, born of grace and faith unto an everlasting inheritance.

Galatians 4:29. But as that he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. This is a cheering thought. We who are born of the Gospel, and live in Christ, and rejoice in our inheritance, have Ishmael for our enemy. The children of the Law will always persecute the children of the Gospel. This is our daily experience. Our opponents tell us that everything was at peace before the Gospel was revived by us. Since then the whole world has been upset. People blame us and the Gospel for everything, for the disobedience of subjects to their rulers, for wars, plagues, and famines, for revolutions, and every other evil that can be imagined. No wonder our opponents think they are doing God a favor by hating and persecuting us. Ishmael will persecute Isaac. We invite our opponents to tell us what good things attended the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles. Did not the destruction of Jerusalem follow on the heels of the Gospel? And how about the overthrow of the Roman Empire? Did not the whole world seethe with unrest as the Gospel was preached in the whole world? We do not say that the Gospel instigated these upheavals. The iniquity of man did it. Our opponents blame our doctrine for the present turmoil. But ours is a doctrine of grace and peace. It does not stir up trouble. Trouble starts when the people, the nations and their rulers of the earth rage and take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed. (Psalm 2.) But all their counsels shall be brought to naught. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." (Psalms 2:4.) Let them cry out against us as much as they like. We know that they are the cause of all their own troubles. As long as we preach Christ and confess Him to be our Savior, we must be content to be called vicious trouble makers. "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar," so said the Jews of Paul and Silas. (Acts 17:6-7.) Of Paul they said: "We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." The Gentiles uttered similar complaints: "These men do exceedingly trouble our city." This man Luther is also accused of being a pestilent fellow who troubles the papacy and the Roman empire. If I

would keep silent, all would be well, and the Pope would no more persecute me. The moment I open my mouth the Pope begins to fume and to rage. It seems we must choose between Christ and the Pope. Let the Pope perish. Christ foresaw the reaction of the world to the Gospel. He said: "I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I, if it be already kindled?" (Luke 12:49.) Do not take the statement of our opponents seriously, that no good can come of the preaching of the Gospel. What do they know? They would not recognize the fruits of the Gospel if they saw them. At any rate, our opponents cannot accuse us of adultery, murder, theft, and such crimes. The worst they can say about us is that we have the Gospel. What is wrong with the Gospel? We teach that Christ, the Son of God, has redeemed us from sin and everlasting death. This is not our doctrine. It belongs to Christ. If there is anything wrong with it, it is not our fault. If they want to condemn Christ for being our Savior and Redeemer, that is their lookout. We are mere onlookers, watching to see who will win the victory, Christ or His opponents. On one occasion Jesus remarked: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (John 15:19.) In other words: "I am the cause of all your troubles. I am the one for whose sake you are killed. If you did not confess my name, the world would not hate you. The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." Christ takes all the blame. He says: "You have not incurred the hatred and persecutions of the world. I have. But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Galatians 4:30. Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.

Sarah’s demand that the bondwoman and her son be cast out of the house was undoubtedly a blow to Abraham. He felt sorry for his son Ishmael. The Scripture explicitly states Abraham’s grief in the words: "And the thing was very grievous in Abraham’s sight, because of his son." (Genesis 21:11.) But God approved Sarah’s action and said to Abraham: "Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called." (Genesis 21:12.) The Holy Ghost contemptuously calls the admirers of the Law the children of the bondwoman. "If you do not know your mother, I will tell you what kind of a woman she is. She is a slave. And you are slaves. You are slaves of the Law and therefore slaves of sin, death, and everlasting damnation. You are not fit to be heirs. You are put out of the house." This is the sentence which God pronounces upon the Ishmaelites, the papists, and all others who trust in their own merits, and persecute the Church of Christ. Because they are slaves and persecutors of the children of the free woman, they shall be cast out of the house of God forever. They shall have no inheritance with the children of the promise. This sentence stands forever. This sentence affects not only those popes, cardinals bishops, and monks who were notoriously wicked and made their bellies their Gods. It strikes, also, those who lived in all sincerity to please God and to merit the forgiveness of their sins through a life of self-denial. Even these will be cast out, because they are children of the bondwoman. Our opponents do not defend their own moral delinquency. The better ones deplore and abhor it. But they defend and uphold their doctrine of works which is of the devil. Our quarrel is not with those who live in manifest sins. Our quarrel is with those among them who think they live like angels, claiming that they do not only perform the Ten Commandments of God, but also the sayings of Christ, and many good works that God does not expect of them. We quarrel with them

because they refuse to have Jesus' merit count alone for righteousness. St. Bernard was one of the best of the medieval saints. He lived a chaste and holy life. But when it came to dying he did not trust in his chaste life for salvation. He prayed: "I have lived a wicked life. But Thou, Lord Jesus, hast a heaven to give unto me. First, because Thou art the Son of God. Secondly, because Thou hast purchased heaven for me by Thy suffering and death. Thou givest heaven to me, not because I earned it, but because Thou hast earned it for me." If any of the Romanists are saved it is because they forget their good deeds and merits and feel like Paul: "Not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ." (Php 3:9.) Galatians 4:31. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. With this sentence the Apostle Paul concludes his allegory of the barren Church. This sentence forms a clear rejection of the righteousness of the Law and a confirmation of the doctrine of justification. In the next chapter Paul lays special stress upon the freedom which the children of the free woman enjoy. He treats of Christian liberty, the knowledge of which is very necessary. The liberty which Christ purchased for us is a bulwark to us in our battle against spiritual tyranny. Therefore we must carefully study this doctrine of Christian liberty, not only for the confirmation of the doctrine of justification, but also for the comfort and encouragement of those who are weak in faith.

03.15. Galatians 5:1-13

Chapter 5 Galatians 5:1-13 In this chapter the Apostle Paul presents the doctrine of Christian liberty in a final effort to persuade the Galatians to give up the nefarious doctrine of the false apostles. To accomplish his purpose he adduces threats and promises, trying in every way possible to keep them in the liberty which Christ purchased for them.

Galatians 5:1. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

"Be steadfast, not careless. Lie not down and sleep, but stand up. Be watchful. Hold fast the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free." Those who loll cannot keep this liberty. Satan hates the light of the Gospel. When it begins to shine a little he fights against it with might and main. What liberty does Paul mean? Not civil liberty (for which we have the government to thank), but the liberty which Christ has procured for us. At one time the emperor was compelled to grant to the bishop of Rome certain immunities and privileges. This is civil liberty. That liberty exempts the clergy from certain public charges. Then there is also another kind of "liberty," when people obey neither the laws of God nor the laws of men, but do as they please. This carnal liberty the people want in our day. We are not now speaking of this liberty. Neither are we speaking of civil liberty. Paul is speaking of a far better liberty, the liberty "wherewith Christ hath made us free," not from material bonds, not from the Babylonian captivity, not from the tyranny of the Turks, but from the eternal wrath of God. Where is this liberty? In the conscience. Our conscience is free and quiet because it no longer has to fear the wrath of God. This is real liberty, compared with which every other kind of liberty is not worth mentioning. Who can adequately express the boon that comes to a person when he has the heart-assurance that God will nevermore be angry with him, but will forever be merciful to him for Christ’s sake? This is indeed a marvelous liberty, to have the sovereign God for our Friend and Father who will defend, maintain, and save us in this life and in the life to come. As an outgrowth of this liberty, we are at the same time free from the Law, sin, death, the power of the devil, hell, etc. Since the wrath of God has been assuaged by Christ no Law, sin, or death may now accuse and condemn us. These foes of ours will continue to frighten us, but not too much. The worth of our Christian liberty cannot be exaggerated. Our conscience must he trained to fall back on the freedom purchased for us by Christ. Though the fears of the Law, the terrors of sin, the horror of death assail us occasionally, we know that these feelings shall not endure, because the prophet quotes God as saying: "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment: but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee." (Isaiah 54:8.) We shall appreciate this liberty all the more when we bear in mind that it was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who purchased it with His own blood. Hence, Christ’s liberty is given us not by the Law, or for our own righteousness, but freely for Christ’s sake. In the eighth chapter of the Gospel of St. John, Jesus declares: "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." He only stands between us and the evils which trouble and afflict us and which He has overcome for us. Reason cannot properly evaluate this gift. Who can fully appreciate the blessing of the forgiveness of sins and of everlasting life? Our opponents claim that they also possess this liberty. But they do not. When they are put to the test all their self-confidence slips from them. What else can they expect when

they trust in works and not in the Word of God? Our liberty is founded on Christ Himself, who sits at the right hand of God and intercedes for us. Therefore our liberty is sure and valid as long as we believe in Christ. As long as we cling to Him with a steadfast faith we possess His priceless gifts. But if we are careless and indifferent we shall lose them. It is not without good reason that Paul urges us to watch and to stand fast. He knew that the devil delights in taking this liberty away from us.

Galatians 5:1. And be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

Because reason prefers the righteousness of the Law to the righteousness of faith, Paul calls the Law a yoke, a yoke of bondage. Peter also calls it a yoke. "Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10.) In this passage Paul again disparages the pernicious notion that the Law is able to make men righteous before God, a notion deeply rooted in man's reason. All mankind is so wrapped up in this idea that it is hard to drag it out of people. Paul compares those who seek to be justified by the Law to oxen that are hitched to the yoke. Like oxen that toil in the yoke all day, and in the evening are turned out to graze along the dusty road, and at last are marked for slaughter when they no longer can draw the burden, so those who seek to be justified by the Law are "entangled with the yoke of bondage," and when they have grown old and broken-down in the service of the Law they have earned for their perpetual reward God's wrath and everlasting torment. We are not now treating of an unimportant matter. It is a matter that involves everlasting liberty or everlasting slavery. For as a liberation from God's wrath through the kind office of Christ is not a passing boon, but a permanent blessing, so also the yoke of the Law is not a temporary but an everlasting affliction. Rightly are the doers of the Law called devil's martyrs. They take more pains to earn hell than the martyrs of Christ to obtain heaven. Theirs is a double misfortune. First they torture themselves on earth with self- inflicted penances and finally when they die they gain the reward of eternal damnation.

Galatians 5:2. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

Paul is incensed at the thought of the tyranny of the Law. His antagonism to the Law is a personal matter with him. "Behold, I, Paul," he says, "I who have received the Gospel not from men, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ: I who have been commissioned from above to preach the Gospel to you: I Paul say to you, If you submit to circumcision Christ will profit you nothing." Paul emphatically declares that for the Galatians to be circumcised would mean for them to lose the benefits of Christ's suffering and death. This passage may well serve as a criterion for all the religions. To teach that besides faith in Christ other devices like works, or the observance of rules, traditions, or ceremonies are necessary for the attainment of righteousness and everlasting life, is to make Christ and His salvation of no benefit to anybody. This passage is an indictment of the whole papacy. All priests, monks, and nuns--and I am now speaking of the best of them--who repose their hope for salvation in their own works, and not in Christ, whom they imagine to he an angry judge, hear this sentence pronounced against them that Christ shall profit them nothing. If one can earn the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life through one's own efforts to what purpose was Christ born? What was the purpose of His suffering and death, His resurrection, His victory over sin, death, and the devil, if men may overcome these evils by their own endeavor? Tongue cannot express, nor heart conceive what a terrible thing it is to make Christ worthless. The person

who is not moved by these considerations to leave the Law and the confidence in his own righteousness for the liberty in Christ, has a heart that is harder than stone and iron. Paul does not condemn circumcision in itself. Circumcision is not injurious to the person who does not ascribe any particular importance to it. Neither are works injurious provided a person does not attach any saving value to them. The Apostle does not say that works are objectionable, but to build one's hopes for righteousness on works is disastrous, for that makes Christ good for nothing. Let us bear this in mind when the devil accuses our conscience. When that dragon accuses us of having done no good at all, but only evil, say to him: "You trouble me with the remembrance of my past sins; you remind me that I have done no good. But this does not bother me, because if I were to trust in my own good deeds, or despair because I have done no good deeds, Christ would profit me neither way. I am not going to make him unprofitable to me. This I would do, if I should presume to purchase for myself the favor of God and everlasting life by my good deeds, or if I should despair of my salvation because of my sins."

Galatians 5:3. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. The first fault with circumcision is that it makes Christ unprofitable. The second fault is that it obligates those who are circumcised to observe the whole Law. Paul is so very much in earnest about this matter that he confirms it with an oath. "I testify," he says, "I swear by the living God." Paul's statement may be explained negatively to mean: "I testify to every man who is being circumcised that he cannot perform the Law in any point. In the very act of circumcision he is not being circumcised, and in the very act of fulfilling the Law he fulfills it not." This seems to be the simple meaning of Paul's statement. Later on in the sixth chapter he explicitly states, "They themselves which are circumcised keep not the law. The fact that you are circumcised does not mean you are righteous and free from the Law. The truth is that by circumcision you have become debtors and servants of the Law. The more you endeavor to perform the Law, the more you will become tangled up in the yoke of the Law." The truth of this I have experienced in myself and in others. I have seen many work themselves down to the bones in their hungry effort to obtain peace of conscience. But the harder they tried the more they worried. Especially in the presence of death they were so uneasy that I have seen murderers die with better grace and courage. This holds true also in regard to the church regulations. When I was a monk I tried ever so hard to live up to the strict rules of my order. I used to make a list of my sins, and I was always on the way to confession, and whatever penances were enjoined upon me I performed religiously. In spite of it all, my conscience was always in a fever of doubt. The more I sought to help my poor stricken conscience the worse it got. The more I paid attention to the regulations the more I transgressed them. Hence those that seek to be justified by the Law are much further away from the righteousness of life than the publicans, sinners, and harlots. They know better than to trust in their own works. They know that they cannot ever hope to obtain forgiveness by their sins. Paul's statement in this verse may be taken to mean that those who submit to circumcision are thereby submitting to the whole Law. To obey Moses in one point requires obedience to him in all points. It does no good to say that only circumcision is necessary, and not the rest of Moses' laws. The same reasons that obligate a person to accept circumcision also obligate a person to accept the whole Law. Thus to acknowledge the Law is tantamount to declaring that Christ is not yet come. And if Christ is not yet come, then all the Jewish ceremonies and laws concerning meats, places, and times are still in force, and Christ must be awaited as one who is still to come. The whole Scripture, however, testifies that Christ has come, that by His death He has abolished the Law,

and that He has fulfilled all things which the prophets have foretold about Him. Some would like to subjugate us to certain parts of the Mosaic Law. But this is not to be permitted under any circumstances. If we permit Moses to rule over us in one thing, we must obey him in all things.

Galatians 5:4. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Paul in this verse discloses that he is not speaking so much of circumcision as the trust which men repose in the outward act. We can hear him say: "I do not condemn the Law in itself; what I condemn is that men seek to be justified by the Law, as if Christ were still to come, or as if He alone were unable to justify sinners. It is this that I condemn, because it makes Christ of no effect. It makes you void of Christ so that Christ is not in you, nor can you be partakers of the knowledge, the spirit, the fellowship, the liberty, the life, or the achievements of Christ. You are completely separated from Him, so much so that He has nothing to do with you any more, or for that matter you with Him." Can anything worse be said against the Law? If you think Christ and the Law can dwell together in your heart, you may be sure that Christ dwells not in your heart. For if Christ is in your heart He neither condemns you, nor does He ever bid you to trust in your own good works. If you know Christ at all, you know that good works do not serve unto righteousness, nor evil works unto condemnation. I do not want to withhold from good works their due praise, nor do I wish to encourage evil works. But when it comes to justification, I say, we must concentrate upon Christ alone, or else we make Him non-effective .You must choose between Christ and the righteousness of the Law. If you choose Christ you are righteous before God. If you stick to the Law, Christ is of no use to you.

Galatians 5:4. Ye are fallen from grace. That means you are no longer in the kingdom or condition of grace. When a person on board ship falls into the sea and is drowned it makes no difference from which end or side of the ship he falls into the water. Those who fall from grace perish no matter how they go about it. Those who seek to be justified by the Law are fallen from grace and are in grave danger of eternal death. If this holds true in the case of those who seek to be justified by the moral Law, what will become of those, I should like to know, who endeavor to be justified by their own regulations and vows? They will fall to the very bottom of hell. "Oh, no," they say, "we will fly straight into heaven. If you live according to the rules of Saint Francis, Saint Dominick, Saint Benedict, you will obtain the peace and mercy of God. If you perform the vows of chastity, obedience, etc., you will be rewarded with everlasting life." Let these playthings of the devil go to the place where they came from and listen to what Paul has to say in this verse in accordance with Christ's own teaching: "He that believeth in the Son of God, hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth in him." The words, "Ye are fallen from grace," must not be taken lightly. They are important. To fall from grace means to lose the atonement, the forgiveness of sins, the righteousness, liberty, and life which Jesus has merited for us by His death and resurrection. To lose the grace of God means to gain the wrath and judgment of God, death, the bondage of the devil, and everlasting condemnation.

Galatians 5:6. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

Paul concludes the whole matter with the above statement. "You want to be justified by the Law, by circumcision, and by works. We cannot see it. To be justified by such means would make Christ of no value to us. We would be obliged to perform the whole law. We rather through the Spirit wait

for the hope of righteousness." The Apostle is not satisfied to say "justified by faith." He adds hope to faith. Holy Writ speaks of hope in two ways: as the object of the emotion, and hope as the emotion itself. In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians we have an instance of its first use: "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven," i.e., the thing hoped for. In the sense of emotion we quote the passage from the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "For we are saved by hope." As Paul uses the term "hope" here in writing to the Galatians, we may take it in either of its two meanings. We may understand Paul to say, "We wait in spirit, through faith, for the righteousness that we hope for, which in due time will be revealed to us." Or we may understand Paul to say: "We wait in Spirit, by faith for righteousness with great hope and desire." True, we are righteous, but our righteousness is not yet revealed; as long as we live here sin stays with us, not to forget the law in our members striving against the law of our mind. When sin rages in our body and we through the Spirit wrestle against it, then we have cause for hope. We are not yet perfectly righteous. Perfect righteousness is still to be attained. Hence we hope for it. This is sweet comfort for us. And we are to make use of it in comforting the afflicted. We are to say to them: "Brother, you would like to feel God’s favor as you feel your sin. But you are asking too much. Your righteousness rests on something much better than feelings. Wait and hope until it will be revealed to you in the Lord’s own time. Don’t go by your feelings, but go by the doctrine of faith, which pledges Christ to you." The question occurs to us, What difference is there between faith and hope? We find it difficult to see any difference. Faith and hope are so closely linked that they cannot be separated. Still there is a difference between them. First, hope and faith differ in regard to their sources. Faith originates in the understanding, while hope rises in the will. Secondly, they differ in regard to their functions. Faith says what is to be done. Faith teaches, describes, directs. Hope exhorts the mind to be strong and courageous. Thirdly, they differ in regard to their objectives. Faith concentrates on the truth. Hope looks to the goodness of God. Fourthly, they differ in sequence. Faith is the beginning of life before tribulation. (Hebrews 11:1-40.) Hope comes later and is born of tribulation. (Romans 5:1-21.) Fifthly, they differ in regard to their effects. Faith is a judge. It judges errors. Hope is a soldier. It fights against tribulations, the Cross, despondency, despair, and waits for better things to come in the midst of evil. Without hope faith cannot endure. On the other hand, hope without faith is blind rashness and arrogance because it lacks knowledge. Before anything else a Christian must have the insight of faith, so that the intellect may know its directions in the day of trouble and the heart may hope for better things. By faith we begin, by hope we continue. This passage contains excellent doctrine and much comfort. It declares that we are justified not by works, sacrifices, or ceremonies, but by Christ alone. The world may judge certain things to be ever so good; without Christ they are all wrong. Circumcision and the law and good works are carnal. "We," says Paul, "are above such things. We possess Christ by faith and in the midst of our afflictions we hopefully wait for the consummation of our righteousness." You may say, "The trouble is I don’t feel as if I am righteous." You must not feel, but believe. Unless you believe that you are righteous, you do Christ a great wrong, for He has cleansed you by the washing of regeneration, He died for you so that through Him you may obtain righteousness and everlasting life.

Galatians 5:6. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.

Faith must of course be sincere. It must be a faith that performs good works through love. If faith lacks love it is not true faith. Thus the Apostle bars the way of hypocrites to the kingdom of Christ on all sides. He declares on the one hand, "In Christ Jesus circumcision availeth nothing," i.e., works avail nothing, but faith alone, and that without any merit whatever, avails before God. On the other hand, the Apostle declares that without fruits faith serves no purpose. To think, "If faith justifies without works, let us work nothing," is to despise the grace of God. Idle faith is not justifying faith. In this terse manner Paul presents the whole life of a Christian. Inwardly it consists in faith towards God, outwardly in love towards our fellow-men.

Galatians 5:7. Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This is plain speaking. Paul asserts that he teaches the same truth now which he has always taught, and that the Galatians ran well as long as they obeyed the truth. But now, misled by the false apostles, they no longer run. He compares the Christian life to a race. When everything runs along smoothly the Hebrews spoke of it as a race. "Ye did run well," means that everything went along smoothly and happily with the Galatians. They lived a Christian life and were on the right way to everlasting life. The words, "Ye did run well," are encouraging indeed. Often our lives seem to creep rather than to run. But if we abide in the true doctrine and walk in the spirit, we have nothing to worry about. God judges our lives differently. What may seem to us a life slow in Christian development may seem to God a life of rapid progression in grace.

Galatians 5:7. Who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? The Galatians were hindered in the Christian life when they turned from faith and grace to the Law. Covertly the Apostle blames the false apostles for impeding the Christian progress of the Galatians. The false apostles persuaded the Galatians to believe that they were in error and that they had made little or no progress under the influence of Paul. Under the baneful influence of the false apostles the Galatians thought they were well off and advancing rapidly in Christian knowledge and living.

Galatians 5:8. This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.

Paul explains how those who had been deceived by false teachers may be restored to spiritual health. The false apostles were amiable fellows. Apparently they surpassed Paul in learning and godliness. The Galatians were easily deceived by outward appearances. They supposed they were being taught by Christ Himself. Paul proved to them that their new doctrine was not of Christ, but of the devil. In this way he succeeded in regaining many. We also are able to win back many from the errors into which they were seduced by showing that their beliefs are imaginary, wicked, and contrary to the Word of God. The devil is a cunning persuader. He knows how to enlarge the smallest sin into a mountain until we think we have committed the worst crime ever committed on earth. Such stricken consciences must be comforted and set straight as Paul corrected the Galatians by showing them that their opinion is not of Christ because it runs counter to the Gospel, which describes Christ as a meek and merciful Savior. Satan will circumvent the Gospel and explain Christ in this his own diabolical way: "Indeed Christ is meek, gentle, and merciful, but only to those who are holy and righteous. If you are a sinner you stand no chance. Did not Christ say that unbelievers are already damned? And did not Christ perform many good deeds, and suffer many evils patiently, bidding us to follow His example? You do not mean to say that your life is in accord with Christ’s precepts or example? You are a sinner. You are no good at all." Satan is to be answered in this way: The Scriptures present Christ in a twofold aspect. First, as a gift. "He of God

is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30.) Hence my many and grievous sins are nullified if I believe in Him. Secondly, the Scriptures present Christ for our example. As an exemplar He is to be placed before me only at certain times. In times of joy and gladness that I may have Him as a mirror to reflect upon my shortcomings. But in the day of trouble I will have Christ only as a gift. I will not listen to anything else, except that Christ died for my sins. To those that are cast down on account of their sins Christ must be introduced as a Savior and Gift, and not as an example. But to sinners who live in a false assurance, Christ must be introduced as an example. The hard sayings of Scripture and the awful judgments of God upon sin must be impressed upon them. Defy Satan in times of despair. Say: "O cursed Satan, you choose a nice time to talk to me about doing and working when you know very well that I am in trouble over my sins. I will not listen to you. I will listen to Christ, who says that He came into the world to save sinners. This is the true Christ and there is none other. I can find plenty of examples for a holy life in Abraham, Isaiah, John the Baptist, Paul, and other saints. But they cannot forgive my sins. They cannot save me. They cannot procure for me everlasting life. Therefore I will not have you for my teacher, O Satan."

Galatians 5:9. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

Paul's concern for them meant nothing to some of the Galatians. Many had disowned him as their teacher and gone over to the false apostles. No doubt the false apostles took every occasion to defame Paul as a stubborn and contemptuous fellow who thought nothing of disrupting the unity of the churches for no other reason than his selfish pride and jealousy. Others of the Galatians perhaps saw no harm in deviating a trifle from the doctrine of justification and faith. When they noticed that Paul made so much ado about a matter that seemed of no particular importance to them they raised their eyebrows and thought within themselves: "What if we did deviate a little from the doctrine of Paul? What if we are a little to blame? He ought to overlook the whole matter, and not make such an issue out of it, lest the unity of the churches be disturbed." To this Paul replies: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Our opponents record the same complaints about us. They put us down as contentious, ill-tempered faultfinders. But these are the crafty passes of the devil, with which he seeks to overthrow our faith. We answer with Paul: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Small faults grow into big faults. To tolerate a trifling error inevitably leads to crass heresy. The doctrine of the Bible is not ours to take or to allow liberties with. We have no right to change even a tittle of it. When it comes to life we are ready to do, to suffer, to forgive anything our opponents demand as long as faith and doctrine remain pure and uncorrupt. The Apostle James says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." This passage supports us over against our critics who claim that we disregard all charity to the great injury of the churches. We protest we desire nothing more than peace with all men. If they would only permit us to keep our doctrine of faith! The pure doctrine takes precedence before charity, apostles, or an angel from heaven. Let others praise charity and concord to the skies; we magnify the authority of the Word and faith. Charity may be neglected at times without peril, but not the Word and faith. Charity suffers all things, it gives in. Faith suffers nothing; it never yields. Charity is often deceived but is never put out because it lies nothing to lose; it continues to do well even to the ungrateful. When it comes to faith and salvation in the midst of lies and errors that parade as truth and deceive many, charity has no voice or vote. Let us not be influenced by the popular cry for charity and unity. If we do not love God and His Word what

difference does it make if we love anything at all? Paul, therefore, admonishes both teachers and hearers not to esteem lightly the doctrine of faith as if it were a toy with which to amuse oneself in idle hours.

Galatians 5:19. I have confidence in you through the Lord.

"I have taught, admonished, and reproved you enough. I hope the best for you." The question occurs to us whether Paul did well to trust the Galatians. Does not Holy Writ forbid us to trust in men? Faith trusts in God and is never wrong. Charity trusts in men and is often wrong. This charitable trust in man is necessary to life. Without it life would be impossible in the world. What kind of life would ours be if nobody could trust anybody else? True Christians are more ready to believe in men than the children of this world. Such charitable confidence is the fruit of the Spirit. Paul had such trust in the Galatians although they had forsaken his doctrine. He trusts them "through the Lord," insofar as they were in Christ and Christ in them. Once they had forsaken Christ altogether, the Apostle will trust the Galatians no longer.

Galatians 5:10. That ye will be none otherwise minded.

"Not minded otherwise than I have taught you. In other words, I have confidence that you will accept no doctrine that is contrary to the one you have learned from me."

Galatians 5:10. But be that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

Paul assumes the role of a judge and condemns the false apostles as troublers of the Galatians. He wants to frighten the Galatians with his severe judgments of the false apostles into avoiding false doctrine like a contagious disease. We can hear him say to the Galatians: "Why do you give these pestilent fellows a hearing in the first place? They only trouble you. The doctrine they bring causes your conscience only trouble." The clause, "whosoever he be," seems to indicate that the false apostles in outward appearance at least were very good and devout men. It may be that among them was some outstanding disciple of the apostles, a man of fame and authority. The Apostle must have been faced by this very situation, otherwise his vehemence would have been uncalled for. No doubt many of the Galatians were taken back with the vehemency of the Apostle. They perhaps thought: why should he be so stubborn in such small matters? Why is he so quick to pronounce damnation upon his brethren in the ministry? I cannot say it often enough, that we must carefully differentiate between doctrine and life. Doctrine is a piece of heaven, life is a piece of earth. Life is sin, error, uncleanness, misery, and charity must forbear, believe, hope, and suffer all things. Forgiveness of sins must be continuous so that sin and error may not be defended and sustained. But with doctrine there must be no error, no need of pardon. There can be no comparison between doctrine and life. The least little point of doctrine is of greater importance than heaven and earth. Therefore we cannot allow the least jot of doctrine to be corrupted. We may overlook the offenses and errors of life, for we daily sin much. Even the saints sin, as they themselves confess in the Lord’s Prayer and in the Creed. But our doctrine, God be praised, is pure, because all the articles of our faith are grounded on the Holy Scriptures.

Galatians 5:11. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offense of the cross ceased. In his great desire to recall the Galatians, Paul draws himself into the argument. He says: "Because I refuse to recognize circumcision as a factor in our salvation, I have brought upon myself the hatred and persecution of my whole nation. If I were to

acknowledge circumcision the Jews would cease to persecute me; in fact they would love and praise me. But because I preach the Gospel of Christ and the righteousness of faith I must suffer persecution. The false apostles know how to avoid the Cross and the deadly hatred of the Jewish nation. They preach circumcision and thus retain the favor of the Jews. If they had their way they would ignore all differences in doctrine and preserve unity at all cost. But their unionistic dreams cannot be realized without loss to the pure doctrine of the Cross. It would be too bad if the offense of the Cross were to cease." To the Corinthians he expressed the same conviction: "Christ sent me. . .to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." (1 Corinthians 1:17.) Here someone may be tempted to call the Christians crazy. Deliberately to court danger by preaching and confessing the truth, and thus to bring upon ourselves the hatred and enmity of the whole world, is this not madness? But Paul does not mind the enmity of the world. It made him all the bolder to confess Christ. The enmity of the world in his estimation augurs well for the success and growth of the Church, which fares best in times of persecution. When the offense of the Cross ceases, when the rage of the enemies of the Cross abates, when everything is quiet, it is a sign that the devil is the door-keeper of the Church and that the pure doctrine of God's Word has been lost. Saint Bernard observed that the Church is in best shape when Satan assaults it on every side by trickery and violence; and in worst shape when it is at peace. In support of his statement he quotes the passage from the song of Hezekiah: "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness." Paul looks with suspicion upon any doctrine that does not provoke antagonism. Persecution always follows on the heels of the Word of God as the Psalmist experienced. "I believe, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted." (Psalms 116:10.) The Christians are accused and slandered without mercy. Murderers and thieves receive better treatment than Christians. The world regards true Christians as the worst offenders, for whom no punishment can be too severe. The world hates the Christians with amazing brutality, and without compunction commits them to the most shameful death, congratulating itself that it has rendered God and the cause of peace a distinct service by ridding the world of the undesired presence of these Christians. We are not to let such treatment cause us to falter in our adherence to Christ. As long as we experience such persecutions we know all is well with the Gospel. Jesus held out the same comfort to His disciples in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven." The Church must not come short of this joy. I would not want to be at peace with the pope, the bishops, the princes, and the sectarians, unless they consent to our doctrine. Unity with them would be an unmistakable sign that we have lost the true doctrine. Briefly, as long as the Church proclaims the doctrine she must suffer persecution, because the Gospel declares the mercy and glory of God. This in turn stirs up the devil, because the Gospel shows him up for what he is, the devil, and not God. Therefore as long as the Gospel holds sway persecution plays the accompaniment, or else there is something the matter with the devil. When he is hit you will know it by the havoc he raises everywhere. So do not be surprised or offended when hell breaks loose. Look upon it as a happy indication that all is well with the Gospel of the Cross. God forbid that the offense of the Cross should ever be removed. This would be the case if we were to preach what the prince of this world and his followers would be only too glad to hear, the righteousness of works. You would never know the devil could be so gentle, the world so sweet, the Pope so gracious, and the princes so charming. But because we seek the advantage and honor of Christ, they persecute us all around.

Galatians 5:12. I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

It hardly seems befitting an apostle, not only to denounce the false apostles as troublers of the Church, and to consign them to the devil, but also to wish that they were utterly cut off--what else would you call it but plain cursing? Paul, I suppose, is alluding to the rite of circumcision. As if he were saying to the Galatians: "The false apostles compel you to cut off the foreskin of your flesh. Well, I wish they themselves were utterly cut off by the roots." We had better answer at once the question, whether it is right for Christians to curse. Certainly not always, nor for every little cause. But when things have come to such a pass that God and His Word are openly blasphemed, then we must say: "Blessed be God and His Word, and cursed be everything that is contrary to God and His Word, even though it should be an apostle, or an angel from heaven." This goes to show again how much importance Paul attached to the least points of Christian doctrine, that he dared to curse the false apostles, evidently men of great popularity and influence. What right, then, have we to make little of doctrine? No matter how nonessential a point of doctrine may seem, if slighted it may prove the gradual disintegration of the truths of our salvation. Let us do everything to advance the glory and authority of God's Word. Every tittle of it is greater than heaven and earth. Christian charity and unity have nothing to do with the Word of God. We are bold to curse and condemn all men who in the least point corrupt the Word of God, "for a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Paul does right to curse these troublers of the Galatians, wishing that they were cut off and rooted out of the Church of God and that their doctrine might perish forever. Such cursing is the gift of the Holy Ghost. Thus Peter cursed Simon the sorcerer, "Thy money perish with thee." Many instances of this holy cursing are recorded in the sacred Scriptures, especially in the Psalms, e.g., "Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell." (Psalms 55:15.)
THE DOCTRINE OF GOOD WORKS

Now come all kinds of admonitions and precepts. It was the custom of the apostles that after they had taught faith and instructed the conscience they followed it up with admonitions unto good works, that the believers might manifest the duties of love toward each other. In order to avoid the appearance as if Christianity militated against good works or opposed civil government, the Apostle also urges us to give ourselves unto good works, to lead an honest life, and to keep faith and love with one another. This will give the lie to the accusations of the world that we Christians are the enemies of decency and of public peace. The fact is we Christians know better what constitutes a truly good work than all the philosophers and legislators of the world because we link believing with doing.

Galatians 5:13. For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. In other words: "You have gained liberty through Christ, i.e., You are above all laws as far as conscience is concerned. You are saved. Christ is your liberty and life. Therefore law, sin, and death may not hurt you or drive you to despair. This is the constitution of your priceless liberty. Now take care that you do not use your wonderful liberty for an occasion of the flesh." Satan likes to turn this liberty which Christ has gotten for us into licentiousness. Already the Apostle Jude complained in his day: "There are certain men crept in unawares. . .turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness." (Jude 1:4.) The flesh reasons: "If we are without the law, we may as well indulge ourselves. Why do good, why give alms, why suffer evil when there is no law to force us to do so?" This attitude is common enough. People talk about Christian liberty and then go and cater to the desires of covetousness, pleasure, pride, envy,

and other vices. Nobody wants to fulfill his duties. Nobody wants to help out a brother in distress. This sort of thing makes me so impatient at times that I wish the swine who trampled precious pearls under foot were back once again under the tyranny of the Pope. You cannot wake up the people of Gomorrah with the gospel of peace. Even we creatures of the world do not perform our duties as zealously in the light of the Gospel as we did before in the darkness of ignorance, because the surer we are of the liberty purchased for us by Christ, the more we neglect the Word, prayer, well-doing, and suffering. If Satan were not continually molesting us with trials, with the persecution of our enemies, and the ingratitude of our brethren, we would become so careless and indifferent to all good works that in time we would lose our faith in Christ, resign the ministry of the Word, and look for an easier life. Many of our ministers are beginning to do that very thing. They complain about the ministry, they maintain they cannot live on their salaries, they whimper about the miserable treatment they receive at the hand of those whom they delivered from the servitude of the law by the preaching of the Gospel. These ministers desert our poor and maligned Christ, involve themselves in the affairs of the world, seek advantages for themselves and not for Christ. With what results they shall presently find out. Since the devil lies in ambush for those in particular who hate the world, and seeks to deprive us of our liberty of the spirit or to brutalize it into the liberty of the flesh, we plead with our brethren after the manner of Paul, that they may never use this liberty of the spirit purchased for us by Christ as an excuse for carnal living, or as Peter expresses it, 1 Peter 2:16, "for a cloak of maliciousness." In order that Christians may not abuse their liberty the Apostle encumbers them with the rule of mutual love that they should serve each other in love. Let everybody perform the duties of his station and vocation diligently and help his neighbor to the limit of his capacity. Christians are glad to hear and obey this teaching of love. When others hear about this Christian liberty of ours they at once infer, "If I am free, I may do what I like. If salvation is not a matter of doing why should we do anything for the poor?" In this crude manner they turn the liberty of the spirit into wantonness and licentiousness. We want them to know, however, that if they use their lives and possessions after their own pleasure, if they do not help the poor, if they cheat their fellow-men in business and snatch and scrape by hook and by crook everything they can lay their hands on, we want to tell them that they are not free, no matter how much they think they are, but they are the dirty slaves of the devil, and are seven times worse than they ever were as the slaves of the Pope. As for us, we are obliged to preach the Gospel which offers to all men liberty from the Law, sin, death, and God’s wrath. We have no right to conceal or revoke this liberty proclaimed by the Gospel. And so we cannot do anything with the swine who dive headlong into the filth of licentiousness. We do what we can, we diligently admonish them to love and to help their fellow-men. If our admonitions bear no fruit, we leave them to God, who will in His own good time take care of these disrespecters of His goodness. In the meanwhile we comfort ourselves with the thought that our labors are not lost upon the true believers. They appreciate this spiritual liberty and stand ready to serve others in love and, though their number is small, the satisfaction they give us far outweighs the discouragement which we receive at the hands of the large number of those who misuse this liberty. Paul cannot possibly be misunderstood for he says: "Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty." In order that nobody might mistake the liberty of which he speaks for the liberty of the flesh, the Apostle adds the explanatory note, "only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." Paul now explains at the hand of the Ten Commandments what it means to serve one another in love.

03.16. Galatians 5:14-26

Chapter 5 Galatians 5:14-26 Galatians 5:14. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

It is customary with Paul to lay the doctrinal foundation first and then to build on it the gold, silver, and gems of good deeds. Now there is no other foundation than Jesus Christ. Upon this foundation the Apostle erects the structure of good works which he defines in this one sentence: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In adding such precepts of love the Apostle embarrasses the false apostles very much, as if he were saying to the Galatians: "I have described to you what spiritual life is. Now I will also teach you what truly good works are. I am doing this in order that you may understand that the silly ceremonies of which the false apostles make so much are far inferior to the works of Christian love." This is the hall-mark of all false teachers, that they not only pervert the pure doctrine but also fail in doing good. Their foundation vitiated, they can only build wood, hay, and stubble. Oddly enough, the false apostles who were such earnest champions of good works never required the work of charity, such as Christian love and the practical charity of a helpful tongue, hand, and heart. Their only requirement was that circumcision, days, months, years, and times should be observed. They could not think of any other good works. The Apostle exhorts all Christians to practice good works after they have embraced the pure doctrine of faith, because even though they have been justified they still have the old flesh to refrain them from doing good. Therefore it becomes necessary that sincere preachers cultivate the doctrine of good works as diligently as the doctrine of faith, for Satan is a deadly enemy of both. Nevertheless faith must come first because without faith it is impossible to know what a God-pleasing deed is. Let nobody think that he knows all about this commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." It sounds short and easy, but show me the man who can teach, learn, and do this commandment perfectly. None of us heed, or urge, or practice this commandment properly. Though the conscience hurts when we fail to fulfill this commandment in every respect we are not overwhelmed by our failure to bear our neighbor sincere and brotherly love. The words, "for all the law is fulfilled in one word," entail a criticism of the Galatians. "You are so taken up by your superstitions and ceremonies that serve no good purpose, that you neglect the most important thing, love." St. Jerome says: "We wear our bodies out with watching, fasting, and labor and neglect charity, the queen of all good works." Look at the monks, who meticulously fast, watch, etc. To skip the least requirement of their order would be a crime of the first magnitude. At the same time they blithely ignored the duties of charity and hated each other to death. That is no sin, they think. The Old Testament is replete with examples that indicate how much God prizes charity. When David and his companions had no food with which to still their hunger they ate the showbread which lay-people were forbidden to eat. Christ’s disciples broke the Sabbath law when they plucked the ears of corn. Christ himself broke the Sabbath (as the Jews claimed) by healing the sick on the Sabbath. These incidents indicate that love ought to be given consideration above all laws and ceremonies.

Galatians 5:14. For all the Law is fulfilled in one word.

We can imagine the Apostle saying to the Galatians: "Why do you get so worked up over ceremonies, meats, days, places, and such things? Leave off this foolishness and listen to me. The whole Law is comprehended in this one sentence, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' God is not particularly interested in ceremonies, nor has He any use for them. The one thing He requires of you is that you believe in Christ whom He hath sent. If in addition to faith, which comes first as the most acceptable service unto God, you want to add laws, then you want to know that all laws are comprehended in this short commandment, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' " Paul knows how to explain the law of God. He condenses all the laws of Moses into one brief sentence. Reason takes offense at the brevity with which Paul treats the Law. Therefore reason looks down upon the doctrine of faith and its truly good works. To serve one another in love, i.e., to instruct the erring, to comfort the afflicted, to raise the fallen, to help one's neighbor in every possible way, to bear with his infirmities, to endure hardships, toil, ingratitude in the Church and in the world, and on the other hand to obey government, to honor one's parents, to be patient at home with a nagging wife and an unruly family, these things are not at all regarded as good works. The fact is, they are such excellent works that the world cannot possibly estimate them at their true value. It is tersely spoken: "Love thy neighbour as thyself." But what more needs to be said? You cannot find a better or nearer example than your own. If you want to know how you ought to love your neighbor, ask yourself how much you love yourself. If you were to get into trouble or danger, you would be glad to have the love and help of all men. You do not need any book of instructions to teach you how to love your neighbor. All you have to do is to look into your own heart, and it will tell you how you ought to love your neighbor as yourself. My neighbor is every person, especially those who need my help, as Christ explained in the tenth chapter of Luke. Even if a person has done me some wrong, or has hurt me in any way, he is still a human being with flesh and blood. As long as a person remains a human being, so long is he to be an object of our love. Paul therefore urges his Galatians and, incidentally, all believers to serve each other in love. "You Galatians do not have to accept circumcision. If you are so anxious to do good works, I will tell you in one word how you can fulfill all laws. 'By love serve one another.' You will never lack people to whom you may do good. The world is full of people who need your help."

Galatians 5:15. But if ye bite and devour one another take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. When faith in Christ is overthrown peace and unity come to an end in the church. Diverse opinions and dissensions about doctrine and life spring up, and one member bites and devours the other, i.e., they condemn each other until they are consumed. To this the Scriptures and the experience of all times bear witness. The many sects at present have come into being because one sect condemns the other. When the unity of the spirit has been lost there can be no agreement in doctrine or life. New errors must appear without measure and without end. For the avoidance of discord Paul lays down the principle: "Let every person do his duty in the station of life into which God has called him. No person is to vaunt himself above others or find fault with the efforts of others while lauding his own. Let everybody serve in love." It is not an easy matter to teach faith without works, and still to require works. Unless the ministers of Christ are wise in handling the mysteries of God and rightly divide the word, faith and good works may easily be confused. Both the doctrine of faith and the doctrine of good works must be diligently taught, and yet in such a way that both the doctrines stay within their God-given sphere. If we teach only words, as our opponents do, we shall lose the faith. If we only teach faith people will come to think that good works are superfluous.

Galatians 5:16. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

"I have not forgotten what I told you about faith in the first part of my letter. Because I exhort you to mutual love you are not to think that I have gone back on my teaching of justification by faith alone. I am still of the same opinion. To remove every possibility for misunderstanding I have added this explanatory note: 'Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.'" With this verse Paul explains how he wants this sentence to be understood: By love serve one another. When I bid you to love one another, this is what I mean and require, 'Walk in the Spirit.' I know very well you will not fulfill the Law, because you are sinners as long as you live. Nevertheless, you should endeavor to walk in the spirit, i.e., fight against the flesh and follow the leads of the Holy Ghost." It is quite apparent that Paul had not forgotten the doctrine of justification, for in bidding the Galatians to walk in the Spirit he at the same time denies that good works can justify. "When I speak of the fulfilling of the Law I do not mean to say that you are justified by the Law. All I mean to say is that you should take the Spirit for your guide and resist the flesh. That is the most you shall ever be able to do. Obey the Spirit and fight against the flesh."

Galatians 5:16. And ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. The lust of the flesh is not altogether extinct in us. It rises up again and again and wrestles with the Spirit. No flesh, not even that of the true believer, is so completely under the influence of the Spirit that it will not bite or devour, or at least neglect, the commandment of love. At the slightest provocation it flares up, demands to be revenged, and hates a neighbor like an enemy, or at least does not love him as much as he ought to be loved. Therefore the Apostle establishes this rule of love for the believers. Serve one another in love. Bear the infirmities of your brother. Forgive one another. Without such bearing and forbearing, giving and forgiving, there can be no unity because to give and to take offense are unavoidably human. Whenever you are angry with your brother for any cause, repress your violent emotions through the Spirit. Bear with his weakness and love him. He does not cease to be your neighbor or brother because he offended you. On the contrary, he now more than ever before requires your loving attention. The scholastics take the lust of the flesh to mean carnal lust. True, believers too are tempted with carnal lust. Even the married are not immune to carnal lusts. Men set little value upon that which they have and covet what they have not, as the poet says: "The things most forbidden we always desire, And things most denied we seek to acquire." I do not deny that the lust of the flesh includes carnal lust. But it takes in more. It takes in all the corrupt desires with which the believers are more or less infected, as pride, hatred, covetousness, impatience. Later on Paul enumerates among the works of the flesh even idolatry and heresy. The apostle's meaning is clear. "I want you to love one another. But you do not do it. In fact you cannot do it, because of your flesh. Hence we cannot be justified by deeds of love. Do not for a moment think that I am reversing myself on my stand concerning faith. Faith and hope must continue. By faith we are justified, by hope we endure to the end. In addition we serve each other in love because true faith is not idle. Our love, however, is faulty. In bidding you to walk in the Spirit I indicate to you that our love is not sufficient to justify us. Neither do I demand that you should get rid of the flesh, but that you should control and subdue it."

Galatians 5:17. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. When Paul declares that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh," he means to say that we are not to think, speak or do the things to which the flesh incites us. "I know," he says, "that the flesh courts sin. The thing for you to do is to resist the flesh by the Spirit. But if you abandon

the leadership of the Spirit for that of the flesh, you are going to fulfill the lust of the flesh and die in your sins."

Galatians 5:17. And these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

These two leaders, the flesh and the Spirit, are bitter opponents. Of this opposition the Apostle writes in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into the captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The scholastics are at a loss to understand this confession of Paul and feel obliged to save his honor. That the chosen vessel of Christ should have had the law of sin in his members seems to them incredible and absurd. They circumvent the plain-spoken statement of the Apostle by saying that he was speaking for the wicked. But the wicked never complain of inner conflicts, or of the captivity of sin. Sin has its unrestricted way with them. This is Paul's very own complaint and the identical complaint of all believers. Paul never denied that he felt the lust of the flesh. It is likely that at times he felt even the stirrings of carnal lust, but there is no doubt that he quickly suppressed them. And if at any time he felt angry or impatient, he resisted these feelings by the Spirit. We are not going to stand by idly and see such a comforting statement as this explained away. The scholastics, monks, and others of their ilk fought only against carnal lust and were proud of a victory which they never obtained. In the meanwhile they harbored within their breasts pride, hatred, disdain, self-trust, contempt of the Word of God, disloyalty, blasphemy, and other lusts of the flesh. Against these sins they never fought because they never took them for sins. Christ alone can supply us with perfect righteousness. Therefore we must always believe and always hope in Christ. "Whosoever believeth shall not be ashamed." (Romans 9:33.) Do not despair if you feel the flesh battling against the Spirit or if you cannot make it behave. For you to follow the guidance of the Spirit in all things without interference on the part of the flesh is impossible. You are doing all you can if you resist the flesh and do not fulfill its demands. When I was a monk I thought I was lost forever whenever I felt an evil emotion, carnal lust, wrath, hatred, or envy. I tried to quiet my conscience in many ways, but it did not work, because lust would always come back and give me no rest. I told myself: "You have permitted this and that sin, envy, impatience, and the like. Your joining this holy order has been in vain, and all your good works are good for nothing." If at that time I had understood this passage, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh," I could have spared myself many a day of self- torment. I would have said to myself: "Martin, you will never be without sin, for you have flesh. Despair not, but resist the flesh." I remember how Doctor Staupitz used to say to me: "I have promised God a thousand times that I would become a better man, but I never kept my promise. From now on I am not going to make any more vows. Experience has taught me that I cannot keep them. Unless God is merciful to me for Christ's sake and grants unto me a blessed departure, I shall not be able to stand before Him." His was a God-pleasing despair. No true believer trusts in his own righteousness, but says with David, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Psalms 143:2) Again, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psalms 130:3.) No man is to despair of salvation just because he is aware of the lust of the flesh. Let him be aware of it so long as he does not yield to it. The passion of lust, wrath, and other vices may shake him, but they are not to get him down. Sin may assail him, but he is not to welcome it. Yes,

the better Christian a man is, the more he will experience the heat of the conflict. This explains the many expressions of regret in the Psalms and in the entire Bible. Everybody is to determine his peculiar weakness and guard against it. Watch and wrestle in spirit against your weakness. Even if you cannot completely overcome it, at least you ought to fight against it. According to this description a saint is not one who is made of wood and never feels any lusts or desires of the flesh. A true saint confesses his righteousness and prays that his sins may be forgiven. The whole Church prays for the forgiveness of sins and confesses that it believes in the forgiveness of sins. If our antagonists would read the Scriptures they would soon discover that they cannot judge rightly of anything, either of sin or of holiness.

Galatians 5:18. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Here someone may object: "How come we are not under the law? You yourself say, Paul, that we have the flesh which wars against the Spirit, and brings us into subjection." But Paul says not to let it trouble us. As long as we are led by the Spirit, and are willing to obey the Spirit who resists the flesh, we are not under the Law. True believers are not under the Law. The Law cannot condemn them although they feel sin and confess it. Great then is the power of the Spirit. Led by the Spirit, the Law cannot condemn the believer though he commits real sin. For Christ in whom we believe is our righteousness. He is without sin, and the Law cannot accuse Him. As long as we cling to Him we are led by the Spirit and are free from the Law. Even as he teaches good works, the Apostle does not lose sight of the doctrine of justification, but shows at every turn that it is impossible for us to be justified by works. The words, "If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law," are replete with comfort. It happens at times that anger, hatred, impatience, carnal desire, fear, sorrow, or some other lust of the flesh so overwhelms a man that he cannot shake them off, though he try ever so hard. What should he do? Should he despair? God forbid. Let him say to himself: "My flesh seems to be on a warpath against the Spirit again. Go to it, flesh, and rage all you want to. But you are not going to have your way. I follow the leading of the Spirit." When the flesh begins to cut up the only remedy is to take the sword of the Spirit, the word of salvation, and fight against the flesh. If you set the Word out of sight, you are helpless against the flesh. I know this to be a fact. I have been assailed by many violent passions, but as soon as I took hold of some Scripture passage, my temptations left me. Without the Word I could not have helped myself against the flesh.

Galatians 5:19. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these.

Paul is saying: "That none of you may hide behind the plea of ignorance I will enumerate first the works of the flesh, and then also the works of the Spirit." There were many hypocrites among the Galatians, as there are also among us, who pretend to be Christians and talk much about the Spirit, but they walk not according to the Spirit; rather according to the flesh. Paul is out to show them that they are not as holy as they like to have others think they are. Every period of life has its own peculiar temptations. Not one true believer whom the flesh does not again and again incite to impatience, anger, pride. But it is one thing to be tempted by the flesh, and another thing to yield to the flesh, to do its bidding without fear or remorse, and to continue in sin. Christians also fall and perform the lusts of the flesh. David fell horribly into adultery. Peter also fell grievously when he denied Christ. However great these sins were, they were not committed to spite God, but from weakness. When their sins were brought to their attention these men did not obstinately continue

in their sin, but repented. Those who sin through weakness are not denied pardon as long as they rise again and cease to sin. There is nothing worse than to continue in sin. If they do not repent, but obstinately continue to fulfill the desires of the flesh, it is a sure sign that they are not sincere. No person is free from temptations. Some are tempted in one way, others in another way. One person is more easily tempted to bitterness and sorrow of spirit, blasphemy, distrust, and despair. Another is more easily tempted to carnal lust, anger, envy, covetousness. But no matter to which sins we are disposed, we are to walk in the Spirit and resist the flesh. Those who are Christ's own crucify their flesh. Some of the old saints labored so hard to attain perfection that they lost the capacity to feel anything. When I was a monk I often wished I could see a saint. I pictured him as living in the wilderness, abstaining from meat and drink and living on roots and herbs and cold water. This weird conception of those awesome saints I had gained out of the books of the scholastics and church fathers. But we know now from the Scriptures who the true saints are. Not those who live a single life, or make a fetish of days, meats, clothes, and such things. The true saints are those who believe that they are justified by the death of Christ. Whenever Paul writes to the Christians here and there he calls them the holy children and heirs of God. All who believe in Christ, whether male or female, bond or free, are saints; not in view of their own works, but in view of the merits of God which they appropriate by faith. Their holiness is a gift and not their own personal achievement. Ministers of the Gospel, public officials, parents, children, masters, servants, etc., are true saints when they take Christ for their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and when they fulfill the duties of their several vocations according to the standard of God's Word and repress the lust and desires of the flesh by the Spirit. Not everybody can resist temptations with equal facilities. Imperfections are bound to show up. But this does not prevent them from being holy. Their unintentional lapses are forgiven if they pull themselves together by faith in Christ. God forbid that we should sit in hasty judgment on those who are weak in faith and life, as long as they love the Word of God and make use of the supper of the Lord. I thank God that He has permitted me to see (what as a monk I so earnestly desired to see) not one but many saints, whole multitudes of true saints. Not the kind of saints the papists admire, but the kind of saints Christ wants. I am sure I am one of Christ's true saints. I am baptized. I believe that Christ my Lord has redeemed me from all my sins, and invested me with His own eternal righteousness and holiness. To hide in caves and dens, to have a bony body, to wear the hair long in the mistaken idea that such departures from normalcy will obtain some special regard in heaven is not the holy life. A holy life is to be baptized and to believe in Christ, and to subdue the flesh with the Spirit. To feel the lusts of the flesh is not without profit to us. It prevents us from being vain and from being puffed up with the wicked opinion of our own work-righteousness. The monks were so inflated with the opinion of their own righteousness, they thought they had so much holiness that they could afford to sell some of it to others, although their own hearts convinced them of unholiness. The Christian feels the unholy condition of his heart, and it makes him feel so low that he cannot trust in his good works. He therefore goes to Christ to find perfect righteousness. This keeps a Christian humble.

Galatians 5:19-20. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornification, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft ...

Paul does not enumerate all the works of the flesh, but only certain ones. First, he mentions various kinds of carnal lusts, as adultery, fornication, wantonness, etc. But carnal lust is not the

only work of the flesh, and so he counts among the works of the flesh also idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, and the like. These terms are so familiar that they do not require lengthy explanations.

IDOLATRY The best religion, the most fervent devotion without Christ is plain idolatry. It has been considered a holy act when the monks in their cells meditate upon God and His works, and in a religious frenzy kneel down to pray and to weep for joy. Yet Paul calls it simply idolatry. Every religion which worships God in ignorance or neglect of His Word and will is idolatry. They may think about God, Christ, and heavenly things, but they do it after their own fashion and not after the Word of God. They have an idea that their clothing, their mode of living, and their conduct are holy and pleasing to Christ. They not only expect to pacify Christ by the strictness of their life, but also expect to be rewarded by Him for their good deeds. Hence their best "spiritual" thoughts are wicked thoughts. Any worship of God, any religion without Christ is idolatry. In Christ alone is God well pleased. I have said before that the works of the flesh are manifest. But idolatry puts on such a good front and acts so spiritual that the sham of it is recognized only by true believers.

WITCHCRAFT This sin was very common before the light of the Gospel appeared. When I was a child there were many witches and sorcerers around who "bewitched" cattle, and people, particularly children, and did much harm. But now that the Gospel is here you do not hear so much about it because the Gospel drives the devil away. Now he bewitches people in a worse way with spiritual sorcery. Witchcraft is a brand of idolatry. As witches used to bewitch cattle and men, so idolaters, i.e., all the self-righteous, go around to bewitch God and to make Him out as one who justifies men not by grace through faith in Christ but by the works of men’s own choosing. They bewitch and deceive themselves. If they continue in their wicked thoughts of God they will die in their idolatry.

SECTS

Under sects Paul here understands heresies. Heresies have always been found in the church. What unity of faith can exist among all the different monks and the different orders? None whatever. There is no unity of spirit, no agreement of minds, but great dissension in the papacy. There is no conformity in doctrine, faith, and life. On the other hand, among evangelical Christians the Word, faith, religion, sacraments, service, Christ, God, heart, and mind are common to all. This unity is not disturbed by outward differences of station or of occupation.

DRUNKENESS, GLUTTONY

Paul does not say that eating and drinking are works of the flesh, but intemperance in eating and drinking, which is a common vice nowadays, is a work of the flesh. Those who are given to excess are to know that they are not spiritual but carnal. Sentence is pronounced upon them that they shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven. Paul desires that Christians avoid drunkenness and gluttony, that they live temperate and sober lives, in order that the body may not grow soft and sensual.

Galatians 5:21. Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in the past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. This is a hard saying, but very necessary for those false Christians and hypocrites who speak much about the Gospel, about faith, and the Spirit, yet live after the flesh. But this hard sentence is directed chiefly at the heretics who are large with their own self-importance, that they may be frightened into taking up the fight of the Spirit

against the flesh.

Galatians 5:22-23. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. The Apostle does not speak of the works of the Spirit as he spoke of the works of the flesh, but he attaches to these Christian virtues a better name. He calls them the fruits of the Spirit.

LOVE

It would have been enough to mention only the single fruit of love, for love embraces all the fruits of the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul attributes to love all the fruits of the Spirit: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind," etc. Here he lets love stand by itself among other fruits of the Spirit to remind the Christians to love one another, "in honor preferring one another," to esteem others more than themselves because they have Christ and the Holy Ghost within them.

JOY

Joy means sweet thoughts of Christ, melodious hymns and psalms, praises and thanksgiving, with which Christians instruct, inspire, and refresh themselves. God does not like doubt and dejection. He hates dreary doctrine, gloomy and melancholy thought. God likes cheerful hearts. He did not send His Son to fill us with sadness, but to gladden our hearts. For this reason the prophets, apostles, and Christ Himself urge, yes, command us to rejoice and be glad. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee." (Zechariah 9:9.) In the Psalms we are repeatedly told to be "joyful in the Lord." Paul says: "Rejoice in the Lord always." Christ says: "Rejoice, for your names are written in heaven."

PEACE

Peace towards God and men. Christians are to be peaceful and quiet. Not argumentative, not hateful, but thoughtful and patient. There can be no peace without longsuffering, and therefore Paul lists this virtue next.

LONGSUFFERING

Longsuffering is that quality which enables a person to bear adversity, injury, reproach, and makes them patient to wait for the improvement of those who have done him wrong. When the devil finds that he cannot overcome certain persons by force he tries to overcome them in the long run. He knows that we are weak and cannot stand anything long. Therefore he repeats his temptation time and again until he succeeds. To withstand his continued assaults we must be longsuffering and patiently wait for the devil to get tired of his game.

GENTLENESS

Gentleness in conduct and life. True followers of the Gospel must not be sharp and bitter, but gentle, mild, courteous, and soft-spoken, which should encourage others to seek their company. Gentleness can overlook other people’s faults and cover them up. Gentleness is always glad to give in to others. Gentleness can get along with forward and difficult persons, according to the old pagan saying: "You must know the manners of your friends, but you must not hate them." Such a gentle person was our Savior Jesus Christ, as the Gospel portrays Him. Of Peter it is recorded that

he wept whenever he remembered the sweet gentleness of Christ in His daily contact with people. Gentleness is an excellent virtue and very useful in every walk of life.

GOODNESS A person is good when he is willing to help others in their need.

FAITH In listing faith among the fruits of the Spirit, Paul obviously does not mean faith in Christ, but faith in men. Such faith is not suspicious of people but believes the best. Naturally the possessor of such faith will be deceived, but he lets it pass. He is ready to believe all men, but he will not trust all men. Where this virtue is lacking men are suspicious, forward, and wayward and will believe nothing nor yield to anybody. No matter how well a person says or does anything, they will find fault with it, and if you do not humor them you can never please them. It is quite impossible to get along with them. Such faith in people therefore, is quite necessary. What kind of life would this be if one person could not believe another person?

MEEKNESS A person is meek when he is not quick to get angry. Many things occur in daily life to provoke a person's anger, but the Christian gets over his anger by meekness.

TEMPERANCE

Christians are to lead sober and chaste lives. They should not be adulterers, fornicators, or sensualists. They should not be quarrelers or drunkards. In the first and second chapters of the Epistle to Titus, the Apostle admonishes bishops, young women, and married folks to be chaste and pure.

Galatians 5:23. Against such there is no law.

There is a law, of course, but it does not apply to those who bear these fruits of the Spirit. The Law is not given for the righteous man. A true Christian conducts himself in such a way that he does not need any law to warn or to restrain him. He obeys the Law without compulsion. The Law does not concern him. As far as he is concerned there would not have to be any Law.

Galatians 5:24. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

True believers are no hypocrites. They crucify the flesh with its evil desires and lusts. Inasmuch as they have not altogether put off the sinful flesh they are inclined to sin. They do not fear or love God as they should. They are likely to be provoked to anger, to envy, to impatience, to carnal lust, and other emotions. But they will not do the things to which the flesh incites them. They crucify the flesh with its evil desires and lusts by fasting and exercise and, above all, by a walk in the Spirit. To resist the flesh in this manner is to nail it to the Cross. Although the flesh is still alive it cannot very well act upon its desires because it is bound and nailed to the Cross.

Galatians 5:25. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. A little while ago the Apostle had condemned those who are envious and start heresies and schisms. As if he had forgotten that he had already berated them, the Apostle once more reproves those who provoke and envy others. Was not one reference to them sufficient? He repeats his admonition in order to emphasize the viciousness of pride that had caused all the trouble in the churches of Galatia, and has always caused the Church of Christ no end of difficulties. In his Epistle to Titus the Apostle states that a vainglorious man should not be ordained as a minister, for pride, as St. Augustine points out, is the mother of all heresies. Now vainglory has always been a common poison in the world. There is no

village too small to contain someone who wants to be considered wiser or better than the rest. Those who have been bitten by pride usually stand upon the reputation for learning and wisdom. Vainglory is not nearly so bad in a private person or even in an official as it is in a minister. When the poison of vainglory gets into the Church you have no idea what havoc it can cause. You may argue about knowledge, art, money, countries, and the like without doing particular harm. But you cannot quarrel about salvation or damnation, about eternal life and eternal death without grave damage to the Church. No wonder Paul exhorts all ministers of the Word to guard against this poison. He writes: "If we live in the Spirit." Where the Spirit is, men gain new attitudes. Where formerly they were vainglorious, spiteful and envious, they now become humble, gentle and patient. Such men seek not their own glory, but the glory of God. They do not provoke each other to wrath or envy, but prefer others to themselves. As dangerous to the Church as this abominable pride is, yet there is nothing more common. The trouble with the ministers of Satan is that they look upon the ministry as a stepping-stone to fame and glory, and right there you have the seed for all sorts of dissensions. Because Paul knew that the vainglory of the false Apostles had caused the churches of Galatia endless trouble, he makes it his business to suppress this abominable vice. In his absence the false apostles went to work in Galatia. They pretended that they had been on intimate terms with the apostles, while Paul had never seen Christ in person or had much contact with the rest of the apostles. Because of this they delivered him, rejected his doctrine, and boosted their own. In this way they troubled the Galatians and caused quarrels among them until they provoked and envied each other; which goes to show that neither the false apostles nor the Galatians walked after the Spirit, but after the flesh. The Gospel is not there for us to aggrandize ourselves. The Gospel is to aggrandize Christ and the mercy of God. It holds out to men eternal gifts that are not gifts of our own manufacture. What right have we to receive praise and glory for gifts that are not of our own making? No wonder that God in His special grace subjects the ministers of the Gospel to all kinds of afflictions, otherwise they could not cope with this ugly beast called vainglory. If no persecution, no cross, or reproach trailed the doctrine of the Gospel, but only praise and reputation, the ministers of the Gospel would choke with pride. Paul had the Spirit of Christ. Nevertheless there was given unto him the messenger of Satan to buffet him in order that he should not come to exalt himself, because of the grandeur of his revelations. St. Augustine’s opinion is well taken: "If a minister of the Gospel is praised, he is in danger; if he is despised, he is also in danger." The ministers of the Gospel should be men who are not too easily affected by praise or criticism, but simply speak out the benefit and the glory of Christ and seek the salvation of souls. Whenever you are being praised, remember it is not you who is being praised but Christ, to whom all praise belongs. When you preach the Word of God in its purity and also live accordingly, it is not your own doing, but God’s doing. And when people praise you, they really mean to praise God in you. When you understand this--and you should because "what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"--you will not flatter yourself on the one hand and on the other hand you will not carry yourself with the thought of resigning from the ministry when you are insulted, reproached, or persecuted. It is really kind of God to send so much infamy, reproach, hatred, and cursing our way to keep us from getting proud of the gifts of God in us. We need a millstone around our neck to keep us humble. There are a few on our side who love and revere us for the ministry of the Word, but for every one of these there are a hundred on the other side who hate and persecute us. The Lord is our glory. Such gifts as we possess we acknowledge to be the gifts of God, given to us for the good of the Church of Christ. Therefore we are not proud because of

them. We know that more is required of them to whom much is given, than of such to whom little is given. We also know that God is no respecter of persons. A plain factory hand who does his work faithfully pleases God just as much as a minister of the Word.

Galatians 5:26. Let us not be desirous of vain glory. To desire vainglory is to desire lies, because when one person praises another he tells lies. What is there in anybody to praise? But it is different when the ministry is praised. We should not only desire people to praise the ministry of the Gospel but also do our utmost to make the ministry worthy of praise because this will make the ministry more effective. Paul warns the Romans not to bring Christianity into disrepute. "Let not then your good be evil spoken of." (Romans 14:16.) He also begged the Corinthians to "give no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed." (1 Corinthians 6:3.) When people praise our ministry they are not praising our persons, but God.

Galatians 5:26. Provoking one another, envying one another.

Such is the ill effect of vainglory. Those who teach errors provoke others. When others disapprove and reject the doctrine the teachers of errors get angry in turn, and then you have strife and trouble. The sectarians hate us furiously because we will not approve their errors. We did not attack them directly. We merely called attention to certain abuses in the Church. They did not like it and became sore at us, because it hurt their pride. They wish to be the lone rulers of the church.

03.17. Galatians 6:1-18

Chapter 6 Galatians 6:1-18

Galatians 6:1. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.

If we carefully weigh the words of the Apostle we perceive that he does not speak of doctrinal faults and errors, but of much lesser faults by which a person is overtaken through the weakness of his flesh. This explains why the Apostle chooses the softer term "fault." To minimize the offense still more, as if he meant to excuse it altogether and to take the whole blame away from the person who has committed the fault, he speaks of him as having been "overtaken," seduced by the devil and of the flesh. As if he meant to say, "What is more human than for a human being to fall, to be deceived and to err?" This comforting sentence at one time saved my life. Because Satan always assails both the purity of doctrine which he endeavors to take away by schisms and the purity of life which he spoils with his continual temptations to sin, Paul explains how the fallen should be treated. Those who are strong are to raise up the fallen in the spirit of meekness. This ought to be borne in mind particularly by the ministers of the Word in order that they may not forget the parental attitude which Paul here requires of those who have the keeping of souls. Pastors and ministers must, of course, rebuke the fallen, but when they see that the fallen are sorry they are to comfort them by excusing the fault as well as they can. As unyielding as the Holy Spirit is in the matter of maintaining and defending the doctrine of faith, so mild and merciful is He toward men for their sins as long as sinners repent. The Pope’s synagogue teaches the exact opposite of what the Apostle commands. The clerics are tyrants and butchers of men’s conscience. Every small offense is closely scrutinized. To justify the cruel inquisitiveness they quote the statement of Pope Gregory: "It is the property of good lives to be afraid of a fault where there is no fault." "Our censors must be feared, even if they are unjust and wrong." On these pronouncements the papists base their doctrine of excommunication. Rather than terrify and condemn men’s consciences, they ought to raise them up and comfort them with the truth. Let the ministers of the Gospel learn from Paul how to deal with those who have sinned. "Brethren," he says, "if any man be overtaken with a fault, do not aggravate his grief, do not scold him, do not condemn him, but lift him up and gently restore his faith. If you see a brother despondent over a sin he has committed, run up to him, reach out your hand to him, comfort him with the Gospel and embrace him like a mother. When you meet a willful sinner who does not care, go after him and rebuke him sharply." But this is not the treatment for one who has been overtaken by a sin and is sorry. He must be dealt with in the spirit of meekness and not in the spirit of severity. A repentant sinner is not to be given gall and vinegar to drink.

Galatians 6:1. Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. This consideration is very much needed to put a stop to the severity of some pastors who show the fallen no mercy. St. Augustine says: "There is no sin which one person has committed, that another person may not commit it also." We stand in slippery places. If we become overbearing and neglect our duty, it is easy

enough to fall into sin. In the book entitled "The Lives of Our Fathers," one of the Fathers is reported to have said when informed that a brother had fallen into adultery: "He fell yesterday; I may fall today." Paul therefore warns the pastors not to be too rigorous and unmerciful towards offenders, but to show them every affection, always remembering: "This man fell into sin; I may fall into worse sin. If those who are always so eager to condemn others would investigate themselves they would find that the sins of others are motes in comparison to their own." "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12.) If David who was a hero of faith and did so many great things for the Lord, could fall so badly that in spite of his advanced age he was overcome by youthful lust after he had withstood so many different temptations with which the Lord had tested his faith, who are we to think that we are more stable? These object lessons of God should convince us that of all things God hates pride.

Galatians 6:2. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. The Law of Christ is the Law of love. Christ gave us no other law than this law of mutual love: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." To love means to bear another's burdens. Christians must have strong shoulders to bear the burdens of their fellow Christians. Faithful pastors recognize many errors and offenses in the church, which they oversee. In civil affairs an official has to overlook much if he is fit to rule. If we can overlook our own shortcomings and wrong-doings, we ought to overlook the shortcomings of others in accordance with the words, "Bear ye one another's burdens." Those who fail to do so expose their lack of understanding of the law of Christ. Love, according to Paul, "believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." This commandment is not meant for those who deny Christ; neither is it meant for those who continue to live in sin. Only those who are willing to hear the Word of God and then inadvertently fall into sin to their own great sorrow and regret, carry the burdens which the Apostle encourages us to bear. Let us not be hard on them. If Christ did not punish them, what right have we to do it?

Galatians 6:3. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

Again the Apostle takes the authors of sects to task for being hard-hearted tyrants. They despise the weak and demand that everything be just so. Nothing suits them except what they do. Unless you eulogize whatever they say or do, unless you adapt yourself to their slightest whim, they become angry with you. They are that way because, as St. Paul says, they "think themselves to be something," they think they know all about the Scriptures. Paul has their number when he calls them zeros. They deceive themselves with their self-suggested wisdom and holiness. They have no understanding of Christ or the law of Christ. By insisting that everything be perfect they not only fail to bear the burdens of the weak, they actually offend the weak by their severity. People begin to hate and shun them and refuse to accept counsel or comfort from them. Paul describes these stiff and ungracious saints accurately when he says of them, "They think themselves to be something." Bloated by their own silly ideas and schemes they entertain a pretty fair opinion of themselves, when in reality they amount to nothing.

Galatians 6:4. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. In this verse the Apostle continues his attack upon the vainglorious sectarians. Although this passage may be applied to any work, the Apostle has in mind particularly the work of the ministry. The trouble with these seekers after glory is that they never stop to

consider whether their ministry is straightforward and faithful. All they think about is whether people will like and praise them. Theirs is a threefold sin. First, they are greedy of praise. Secondly, they are very sly and wily in suggesting that the ministry of other pastors is not what it should be. By way of contrast they hope to rise in the estimation of the people. Thirdly, once they have established a reputation for themselves they become so chesty that they stop short of nothing. When they have won the praise of men, pride leads them on to belittle the work of other men and to applaud their own. In this artful manner they hoodwink the people who rather enjoy to see their former pastors taken down a few notches by such upstarts. "Let a minister be faithful in his office," is the apostolic injunction. "Let him not seek his own glory or look for praise. Let him desire to do good work and to preach the Gospel in all its purity. Whether an ungrateful world appreciates his efforts is to give him no concern because, after all, he is in the ministry not for his own glory but for the glory of Christ." A faithful minister cares little what people think of him, as long as his conscience approves of him. The approval of his own good conscience is the best praise a minister can have. To know that we have taught the Word of God and administered the sacraments rightly is to have a glory that cannot be taken away. The glory which the sectarians seek is quite unstable, because it rests in the whim of people. If Paul had had to depend on this kind of glory for his ministry he would have despaired when he saw the many offenses and evils following in the wake of his preaching. If we had to feel that the success of our ministry depended upon our popularity with men we would die, because we are not popular. On the contrary, we are hated by the whole world with rare bitterness. Nobody praises us. Everybody finds fault with us. But we can glory in the Lord and attend to our work cheerfully. Who cares whether our efforts please or displease the devil? Who cares whether the world praises or hates us? We go ahead "by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report." (2 Corinthians 6:8.) The Gospel entails persecution. The Gospel is that kind of a doctrine. Furthermore, the disciples of the Gospel are not all dependable. Many embrace the Gospel today and tomorrow discard it. To preach the Gospel for praise is bad business especially when people stop praising you. Find your praise in the testimony of a good conscience. This passage may also be applied to other work besides the ministry. When an official, a servant, a teacher minds his business and performs his duty faithfully without concerning himself about matters that are not in his line he may rejoice in himself. The best commendation of any work is to know that one has done the work that God has given him well and that God is pleased with his effort.

Galatians 6:5. Every man shall bear his own burden. That means: For anybody to covet praise is foolish because the praise of men will be of no help to you in the hour of death. Before the judgment throne of Christ everybody will have to bear his own burden. As it is the praise of men stops when we die. Before the eternal Judge it is not praise that counts but your own conscience. True, the consciousness of work well done cannot quiet the conscience. But it is well to have the testimony of a good conscience in the last judgment that we have performed our duty faithfully in accordance with God’s will. For the suppression of pride we need the strength of prayer. What man even if he is a Christian is not delighted with his own praise? Only the Holy Spirit can preserve us from the misfortune of pride.

Galatians 6:6. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

Now the Apostle also addresses the hearers of the Word requesting them to bestow "all good things" upon those who have taught them the Gospel. I have often wondered why all the apostles reiterated this request with such embarrassing frequency. In the papacy I saw the people give generously for the erection and maintenance of luxurious church buildings and for the sustenance of men appointed to the idolatrous service of Rome. I saw bishops and priests grow rich until they possessed the choicest real estate. I thought then that Paul's admonitions were overdone. I thought he should have requested the people to curtail their contributions. I saw how the generosity of the people of the Church was encouraging covetousness on the part of the clergy. I know better now. As often as I read the admonitions of the Apostle to the effect that the churches should support their pastors and raise funds for the relief of impoverished Christians I am half ashamed to think that the great Apostle Paul had to touch upon this subject so frequently. In writing to the Corinthians he needed two chapters to impress this matter upon them. I would not want to discredit Wittenberg as Paul discredited the Corinthians by urging them at such length to contribute to the relief of the poor. It seems to be a by-product of the Gospel that nobody wants to contribute to the maintenance of the Gospel ministry. When the doctrine of the devil is preached people are prodigal in their willing support of those who deceive them. We have come to understand why it is so necessary to repeat the admonition of this verse. When Satan cannot suppress the preaching of the Gospel by force he tries to accomplish his purpose by striking the ministers of the Gospel with poverty. He curtails their income to such an extent that they are forced out of the ministry because they cannot live by the Gospel. Without ministers to proclaim the Word of God the people go wild like savage beasts. Paul's admonition that the hearers of the Gospel share all good things with their pastors and teachers is certainly in order. To the Corinthians he wrote: "If we have sown unto you spiritual things is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" (1 Corinthians 9:11.) In the old days when the Pope reigned supreme everybody paid plenty for masses. The begging friars brought in their share. Commercial priests counted the daily offerings. From these extortions our countrymen are now delivered by the Gospel. You would think they would be grateful for their emancipation and give generously for the support of the ministry of the Gospel and the relief of impoverished Christians. Instead, they rob Christ. When the members of a Christian congregation permit their pastor to struggle along in penury, they are worse than heathen. Before very long they are going to suffer for their ingratitude. They will lose their temporal and spiritual possessions. This sin merits the severest punishment. The reason why the churches of Galatia, Corinth, and other places were troubled by false apostles was this, that they had so little regard for their faithful ministers. You cannot refuse to give God a penny who gives you all good things, even life eternal, and turn around and give the devil, the giver of all evil and death eternal, pieces of gold, and not be punished for it. The words "in all good things: are not to be understood to mean that people are to give all they have to their ministers, but that they should support them liberally and give them enough to live well.

Galatians 6:7. Be not deceived; God is not mocked. The Apostle is so worked up over this matter that he is not content with a mere admonition. He utters the threatening words, "God is not mocked." Our countrymen think it good sport to despise the ministry. They like to treat the ministers like servants and slaves. "Be not deceived," warns the Apostle, "God is not mocked." God will not be mocked in His ministers. Christ said: "He that despiseth you, despiseth me." (Luke 10:16.) To Samuel God said: "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me." (1 Samuel 8:7.) Be careful, you scoffers. God may postpone His punishment for a time, but He will find you

out in time, and punish you for despising His servants. You cannot laugh at God. Maybe the people are little impressed by the threats of God, but in the hour of their death they shall know whom they have mocked. God is not ever going to let His ministers starve. When the rich suffer the pangs of hunger God will feed His own servants. "In the days of famine they shall be satisfied." (Psalms 37:19.) Galatians 6:7. For whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

These passages are all meant to benefit us ministers. I must say I do not find much pleasure in explaining these verses. I am made to appear as if I am speaking for my own benefit. If a minister preaches on money he is likely to be accused of covetousness. Still people must be told these things that they may know their duty over against their pastors. Our Savior says: "Eating and drinking such things as they give; for the laborer is worthy of his hire." (Luke 10:7.) And Paul says elsewhere: "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple?" and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:13-14.)

Galatians 6:8. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap everlasting life. This simile of sowing and reaping also refers to the proper support of ministers. "He that soweth to the Spirit," i.e., he that honors the ministers of God is doing a spiritual thing and will reap everlasting life. "He that soweth to the flesh," i.e., he that has nothing left for the ministers of God, but only thinks of himself, that person will reap of the flesh corruption, not only in this life but also in the life to come. The Apostle wants to stir up his readers to be generous to their pastors. That the ministers of the Church need support any man with common sense can see. Though this support is something physical the Apostle does not hesitate to call it sowing to the Spirit. When people scrape up everything they can lay their hands on and keep everything for themselves the Apostle calls it a sowing to the flesh. He pronounces those who sow to the Spirit blessed for this life and the life to come, while those who sow to the flesh are accursed now and forever.

Galatians 6:9. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. The Apostle intends soon to close his Epistle and therefore repeats once more the general exhortation unto good deeds. He means to say "Let us do good not only to the ministers of the Gospel, but to everybody, and let us do it without weariness." It is easy enough to do good once or twice, but to keep on doing good without getting disgusted with the ingratitude of those whom we have benefited, that is not so easy. Therefore the Apostle does not only admonish us to do good, but to do good untiringly. For our encouragement he adds the promise: "For in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." "Wait for the harvest and then you will reap the reward of your sowing to the Spirit. Think of that when you do good and the ingratitude of men will not stop you from doing good."

Galatians 6:10. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. In this verse the Apostle summarizes his instructions on the proper support of the ministers and of the poor. He paraphrases the words of Christ: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." (John 9:4.) Our good deeds are to be directed primarily at those who share the Christian faith with us, "the household of faith," as Paul calls them, among whom the ministers rank first as objects of our well doing.

Galatians 6:11. Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. With these words the Apostle intends to draw the Galatians on. "I never," he says, "wrote such a long letter with my own hand to any of the other churches." His other epistles he dictated, and only subscribed his greetings and his signature with his own hand.

Galatians 6:12. As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

Paul once more scores the false apostles in an effort to draw the Galatians away from their false doctrine. "The teachers you have now do not seek the glory of Christ and the salvation of your souls, but only their own glory. They avoid the Cross. They do not understand what they teach." These three counts against the false apostles are of so serious a nature that no Christian could have fellowship with them. But not all the Galatians obeyed the warning of Paul. The Apostle's attack upon the false apostles was not unjustified. Neither are our attacks upon the papacy. When we call the Pope the Antichrist and his minions an evil brood, we do not slander them. We merely judge them by the touchstone of God's Word recorded in the first chapter of this Epistle: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

Galatians 6:13. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. In other words: "I shall tell you what kind of teachers you have now. They avoid the Cross, they teach no certain truths. They think they are performing the Law, but they are not. They have not the Holy Spirit and without Him nobody can keep the Law." Where the Holy Ghost does not dwell in men there dwells an unclean spirit, a spirit that despises God and turns every effort at keeping the Law into a double sin. Mark what the Apostle is saying: Those who are circumcised do not fulfill the Law. No self-righteous person ever does. To work, pray, or suffer apart from Christ is to work, pray, and to suffer in vain, "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." It does a person no good to be circumcised, to fast, to pray, or to do anything, if in his heart he despises Christ. "Why do the false apostles insist that you should be circumcised? Not for the sake of your righteousness," although they give that impression, but "that they may glory in your flesh." Now what sort of an ambition is that? Worst of all, they force circumcision upon you for no other reason than the satisfaction they get out of your submission.

Galatians 6:14. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"God forbid," says the Apostle, "that I should glory in anything as dangerous as the false apostles glory in because what they glory in is a poison that destroys many souls, and I wish it were buried in hell. Let them glory in the flesh if they wish and let them perish in their glory. As for me I glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." He expresses the same sentiment in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where he says: "We glory in tribulations"; and in the twelfth chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities." According to these expressions the glory of a Christian consists in tribulations, reproaches, and infirmities. And this is our glory today with the Pope and the whole world persecuting us and trying to kill us. We know that we suffer these things not because we are thieves and murderers, but for Christ's sake whose Gospel we proclaim. We have no reason to complain. The world, of course, looks upon us as unhappy and accursed creatures, but Christ for whose sake we suffer pronounces us blessed and bids us to rejoice. "Blessed are ye," says He, "when men shall revile

you, and persecute you. and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad." (Matthew 5:11-12.) By the Cross of Christ is not to be understood here the two pieces of wood to which He was nailed, but all the afflictions of the believers whose sufferings are Christ's sufferings. Elsewhere Paul writes: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." (Colossians 1:24.) It is good for us to know this lest we sink into despair when our opponents persecute us. Let us bear the cross for Christ's sake. It will ease our sufferings and make them light as Christ says, Matthew 11:30, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Galatians 6:14. By whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

"The world is crucified unto me," means that I condemn the world. "I am crucified unto the world," means that the world in turn condemns me. I detest the doctrine, the self-righteousness, and the works of the world. The world in turn detests my doctrine and condemns me as a revolutionary heretic. Thus the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world. The monks imagined the world was crucified unto them when they entered the monastery. Not the world, but Christ, is crucified in the monasteries. In this verse Paul expresses his hatred of the world. The hatred was mutual. As Paul, so we are to despise the world and the devil. With Christ on our side we can defy him and say: "Satan, the more you hurt me, the more I oppose you."

Galatians 6:15. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Since circumcision and uncircumcision are contrary matters we would expect the Apostle to say that one or the other might accomplish some good. But he denies that either of them do any good. Both are of no value because in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avail anything. Reason fails to understand this, "for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." (1 Corinthians 2:14.) It therefore seeks righteousness in externals. However, we learn from the Word of God that there is nothing under the sun that can make us righteous before God and a new creature except Christ Jesus. A new creature is one in whom the image of God has been renewed. Such a creature cannot be brought into life by good works, but by Christ alone. Good works may improve the outward appearance, but they cannot produce a new creature. A new creature is the work of the Holy Ghost, who imbues our hearts with faith, love, and other Christian virtues, grants us the strength to subdue the flesh and to reject the righteousness of the world.

Galatians 6:16. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy. This is the rule by which we ought to live, "that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:24.) Those who walk after this rule enjoy the favor of God, the forgiveness of their sins, and peace of conscience. Should they ever be overtaken by any sin, the mercy of God supports them.

Galatians 6:17. From henceforth let no man trouble me. The Apostle speaks these words with a certain amount of indignation. "I have preached the Gospel to you in conformity with the revelation which I received from Jesus Christ. If you do not care for it, very well. Trouble me no more. Trouble me no more."

Galatians 6:17. For I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

"The marks on my body indicate whose servant I am. If I was anxious to please men, if I approved of circumcision and good works as factors in our salvation, if I would take delight in your flesh as the false apostles do, I would not have these marks on my body. But because I am the servant of Jesus Christ and publicly declare that no person can obtain the salvation of his soul outside of Christ, I must bear the badge of my Lord. These marks were given to me against my will as decorations from the devil and for no other merit but that I made known Jesus." Of the marks of suffering which he bore in his body the Apostle makes frequent mention in his epistles. "I think," he says, "that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." (1 Corinthians 4:9.) Again, "Unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labour, working with our hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." (1 Corinthians 4:11-13.) Galatians 6:18. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. This is the Apostle’s farewell. He ends his Epistle as he began it by wishing the Galatians the grace of God. We can hear him say: "I have presented Christ to you, I have pleaded with you, I have reproved you, I have overlooked nothing that I thought might be of benefit to you. All I can do now is to pray that our Lord Jesus Christ would bless my Epistle and grant you the guidance of the Holy Ghost." The Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, who gave me the strength and the grace to explain this Epistle and granted you the grace to hear it, preserve and strengthen us in faith unto the day of our redemption. To Him, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, be glory, world without end. Amen.

Chapter 29

03A.00. COMMENTARY ON THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

COMMENTARY ON THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT BY MARTIN LUTHER.

TRANSLATED BY CHARLES A, HAY, D. D.

03A.01. Preface

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE. THE forty-third volume of the Erlangen edition of Luther's works contains his exposition of the "Sermon on the Mount". Dr. Irmischer, the editor of this edition, prefaces the volume with these remarks: "During Bugenhagen's absence Luther preached a long while for him, regularly, on the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of Matthew, beginning Nov. 9, I530. These sermons were then published, first in 1532, at Wittenberg, under Joseph Klug, in quarto; in 1533 at Marburg, in octavo; and in 1539, again in Wittenberg, in quarto, under Johann Weiss. In 1533 they were also translated into Latin by Vincent Ohsopoeus." In this Irmischer edition these sermons are thrown into the form of a running commentary, and as such they are now presented to the English reading public by the Lutheran Publication Society. When requested by a committee of this Board to translate this work, I called attention to the peculiar roughness and even fierceness of Luther's way of expressing himself and of denouncing the minions of the papacy. But the committee judged it best that Luther should be allowed to speak for himself, presuming that intelligent English readers will make due allowance for the style of speech common in that day, and for the peculiarly aggravating circumstances under which that noble man of God was called to labor. An admirable vindication of these "Asperities" appeared in the ninth volume of our excellent Quarterly Review, in 1881; it is from the pen of Revelation Dr. Morris, one of Luther's most enthusiastic admirers. CHARLES A. HAY.

Gettysburg, Feb. H, 1892.

LUTHER'S PREFACE.

IAM truly glad that my exposition of the three chapters of St. Matthew, which St. Augustine calls the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, are about to be published, hoping that by the grace of God it may help to preserve and maintain the true, sure and Christian understanding of this teaching of Christ, because these sayings and texts are so very common and so often used throughout all Christendom. For I do not doubt that I have herein presented to my friends, and all others who care for these things, the true, pure Christian meaning of the same. And it is hard to understand how the very devil himself has by his apostles so cunningly twisted and perverted especially the fifth chapter, as to make it teach the very opposite of what it means. And though Christ purposely intended thereby to antagonize all false teaching, and to exhibit the true meaning of God's commands, as he expressly says: "I am not come to destroy the law;" and takes it up piece by piece to make it perfectly clear; yet the infernal Satan has not found a single text in the Scriptures which he has more shamefully perverted, and made more error and false doctrine out of, than just this one which was by Christ himself ordered and appointed to neutralize false doctrine. This we may call a masterpiece of the devil.

First of all there have fallen upon this chapter the vulgar hogs and asses, jurists and sophists, the right hand of the pope and his Mamelukes. They have sucked this poison out of this beautiful rose, and scattered it everywhere; they have covered up Christ with it and have exalted and maintained the antichrist, namely, that Christ here does not wish everything which he teaches in the fifth

chapter to be regarded by his Christians as commanded and to be observed by them; but that much of it was given merely as advice to such as wish to become perfect, and any who wish may observe these parts; despite the fact that Christ there threatens wrathfully: — no one shall enter heaven who sets aside one of the least of these commands, — and he calls them in plain words commands.

Thus they have invented twelve gospel counsels [consilia evangelii], twelve items of good counsel in the gospel, which one may heed if he wants to be something over and above other Christians (higher and more perfect); they have thus made not only Christian salvation, yes even perfection also, dependent aside from faith upon works, but they have made these same works voluntary. That is, as I understand it, to forbid really and truly good works, which is just what these nasty revilers accuse us of doing. For they cannot deny this, and no covering and smoothing over will help them as long as this fifth chapter of Matthew abides. For their books and glosses are at hand, along with their former and present daily impenitent life that they lead in accordance with this their teaching. And the teaching of those twelve “evangelical counsels” is very common among them, viz., not to require wrong doing, not to take vengeance, to offer the other cheek, not to resist evil, to give the cloak along with the coat, to go two miles for one, to give to every one that asks, to lend to him who borrows, to pray for persecutors, to love enemies, to do good to them that hate, etc., as Christ here teaches. All this (they disgustingly say) is not commanded, and the monks at Paris honestly assign their reasons, saying, this Christian teaching would be much too hard if it were loaded with such commands as these, etc. This is the way the jurists and sophists have hitherto ruled and taught the church, so that Christ with his teaching and interpretation, has had to be their fool and juggler; and they still show no signs of repentance for this, but are eager to defend it, and to put forward again their cursed shabby canons, and to crown again their cunning pope. God grant, however, that I may live and may have to give clasps and jewels for this crown; then he, God willing, shall be called rightly crowned.

Therefore, dear brother, if you please, and have nothing better, let this my preaching serve you, in the first place, against our squires, the jurists and sophists, I mean especially the canonists, whom they themselves indeed call asses, and such they really are, so that you may keep the teaching of Christ for yourself pure in this place of Matthew, instead of their ass’s cunning and devil’s dung. In the second place also against the new jurists and sophists, namely, the factious spirits and Anabaptists, who in their crazy fashion are making new trouble out of this fifth chapter. And just as the others go too much to the left in holding nothing at all of this teaching of Christ, but have condemned and obliterated it, so do these lean too much to the right, and teach that one should have nothing of his own, should not swear, should not act as ruler or judge, should not protect or defend, should forsake wife and child, and much of such miserable stuff. So completely does the devil mix things up on both sides, that they know no difference between an earthly and a heavenly kingdom, much less what is to be taught and to be done differently in each kingdom; but we, God be thanked, can boast that we in these sermons have clearly and diligently shown and exhibited it, so that whoever hereafter errs, or will err, we are freed from all responsibility on his account, having faithfully presented our opinion for the benefit of all. Let their blood be upon their own head; our reward for this we await, namely, ingratitude, hatred, and all sorts of hostility, and we say cleo gratias.

Since we then learn and know by such abominable examples, of both papistic and factious jurists, what the devil is aiming at, and especially how he seeks to pervert this fifth chapter of St. Matthew and thereby to exterminate the pure Christian doctrine, every preacher or rector is entreated and exhorted to watch faithfully and diligently against it in the little charge committed to him, and help to preserve the true interpretation of this text. For, as long as the devil lives and the world abides, he will not cease to attack this chapter. For his object is thereby to entirely suppress good works, as has been clone in the papacy; or to instigate false good works and a feigned holiness, as he has now begun to do through the new monks and the factious spirits. And even if both the popish and the mobocratic jurists and the monks were to perish, he would still find or raise up others. For he must have such followers, and his kingdom has been governed by monks ever since the world began. Although they have not been called monks, yet their doctrine and life have been monkish, that is, they have been other than and peculiar or better than what God has commanded; as among the people of Israel were the Baalites, the idolatrous priests (camarim) and such like, and among the heathen the castrated priests (Galli) and the vestal virgins.

Therefore we can never be safe against him. For from this fifth chapter have come the pope's monks, who claim to be a perfect class, in advance of other Christians, basing their claim upon this chapter; and yet we have shown that they are full of avarice, of arrogance, and of late full of all sorts of devils. Christ, our dear Lord and Master, who has opened up to us the true meaning, desires to give it additional force for us, and besides to help us live and act accordingly. To whom be grateful praise, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever, Amen.

03A.02. Matthew 5

MARTIN LUTHER - COMMENTARY ON THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT. THE FIFTH CHAPTER OF ST. MATTHEW.

Matthew 5:1-2. And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying:

HERE the evangelist with a formal stately preface declares how Christ disposed himself for the sermon he was about to deliver; that he went upon a mountain, and sat down, and opened his mouth; so that we see he was in earnest. These are the three things, it is commonly said, that mark a good preacher; first, that he take his place; secondly, that he open his mouth and say something; thirdly, that he know when to stop. To take his place, that means that he assume a position as a master or preacher, who can and ought to do it, as one called for this purpose and not coming of his own accord, but to whom it is a matter of duty and obedience; so that he may say: “I come, not hurried hither by my own purpose and preference, but I must do it, by virtue of my office. This is said as against those who have heretofore been causing us so much vexation and tribulation, and indeed are still doing it, namely the factious spirits and fanatics, that are running up and down through the country, poisoning the people, before the pastors or those in office and authority find it out, and thus befoul one family after another until they have poisoned a whole city, and from the city a whole country. To guard against such sneaking renegades one ought not to allow any one to preach who has not been duly and officially appointed; also no one should venture, though he should be a preacher, if he hears a lying preacher in a popish or other church, who is misleading the people, to preach against him; nor should any one go about into the houses and get up private preachings, but he should remain at home and mind his own official business, or keep silent, if he neither will or can publicly take his place in the pulpit. For God does not want us to go wandering about with his word, as though we were impelled by the Holy Spirit and had to preach, and thus were seeking preaching places and corners, houses or pulpits, where we are not officially called. For even St. Paul himself, though called as an apostle by God, did not want to preach in those places where the other apostles had preached before. Therefore we are here told that Christ boldly and publicly goes up upon the mountain, when he begins his official ministry, and soon afterwards says to his disciples: “Ye are the light of the world;” and: “Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light to all that are in the house”. For the office of the ministry and the word of God are hence to shine as the sun, and not go sneaking and plotting in the dark, as in the play of blind-man’s buff; but all must be done in broad daylight, that it may be clearly seen that both preacher and hearer are sure of this, that the teaching is rightly done, and that the office has been rightly conferred, so that there is no need for concealment. Do thou likewise. If you are in office, and are commissioned to preach, take your place openly and fear nobody, that you may glory with Christ: “I spake openly to the world, * * in secret have I said nothing.” John 18:20. But you say, “How? Is no one then to teach anything except in public? Or is the head of a family not to teach his servants in his house, or to have a scholar or some one about him who recites to him?” Answer: Certainly, that is all right, and all just

in place. For every head of a family is in duty bound to teach his children and servants, or to have them taught. For he is in his house as a pastor or bishop over his household, and he is commanded to take heed what they learn, and he is responsible for them. But it is all wrong for you to do this away from your own house, and to force yourself into other houses or to neighbors, and you should not allow any such sneak to come to you and to carry on special preaching in your house for which he has no authorization. But if any one comes into a house or city let him be asked for the evidence that he is known, or let him show by letter and seal that he has been duly authorized. For one must not trust all the stragglers that boast of having the Holy Spirit, and insinuate themselves thereby here and there into the homes. In short, it means that the gospel, or the preaching of it, should not be heard in a corner, but up upon a mountain, and openly in the free daylight. That is one thing that Matthew wants to show here. The next thing is that he opens his mouth. That belongs (as above said) also to a preacher, that he do not keep his mouth shut, and not only publicly perform his official duty so that every one must keep silence and let him take his proper place as one who is divinely authorized and commanded, but also that he briskly and confidently open his mouth, that is, to preach the truth and what has been committed to him; that he be not silent or merely mumble, but bear witness, fearless and unterrified, and speak the truth out frankly, without regarding or sparing any one, no matter who or what is struck by it. For that hinders a preacher very much if he looks about him and concerns himself as to what the people do or do not like to hear, or what might occasion for him disfavor, harm or danger; but as he stands high up, upon a mountain, in a public place, and looks freely all around him, so he is also to speak freely and fear nobody, although he sees many sorts of people, and to hold no leaf before his mouth, nor to regard either gracious or wrathful lords and squires, either money, riches, honor, power, or disgrace, poverty or injury, and not to think of anything further than that he may speak what his office requires, even that for which he stands where he does. For Christ did not institute and appoint the office of the ministry that it might serve to gain money, possession, favor, honor, friendship, or that one may seek his own advantage through it, but that one should openly, freely proclaim the truth, rebuke evil, and publish what belongs to the advantage, safety and salvation of souls. For the word of God is not here for the purpose of teaching how a maid or man servant is to work in the house and earn his or her bread, or how a burgomaster is to rules a farmer to plough or make hay. In short, it neither gives nor shows temporal good things by which one maintains this life, for reason has already taught all this to every one; but its purpose is to teach how we are to attain to thai life, and it teaches thee to use the present life, and to nourish the belly here as long as it lasts; yet, so that thou mayest know where thou art to abide and live when this must come to an end.

If now the time comes for preaching of another life that we are to be concerned about, and for the sake of which we are not to regard this one as if we wanted to remain here forever, then contention and strife begin, so that the world will not endure it. If then a preacher cares more for his belly and worldly living, he does not do his duty; he stands up indeed and babbles in the pulpit, but he does not preach the truth, does not really open his mouth; if there seems to be trouble ahead he keeps quiet and avoids hitting anybody. Observe, this is why Matthew prefaces his account with the statement that Christ, as a true preacher, ascends the mountain and cheerfully opens his mouth, teaches the truth, and rebukes both false teaching and living, as we shall hear in what follows.

Matthew 5:3. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. This is a delightful, sweet and genial beginning of his sermon. For he does not come, like Moses or a teacher of law, with alarming and threatening demands; but in the most friendly manner, with enticements and allurements and pleasant promises. And indeed, if it had not been thus recorded, and if the first uttered precious words of the Lord Christ had not been given to us all, an over-curious spirit would tempt and impel everybody to run after them even to Jerusalem, yes, to the end of the world, if one might hear but a word of it all. Then there would be plenty of money forthcoming to build a good road, and every one would boastingly glory how he had heard or read the very words that the Lord Christ had spoken. O what a wonderfully happy man would he be held to be who should succeed in this! That is just the way it surely would be if we had none of our Savior's words written, although much might have been written by others; and every one would say: Yes, I hear indeed what St.

Paul and his other apostles have taught, but I would much rather hear what he himself said and preached. But now that it is so common, that every one has it written in a book, and can read it daily, nobody regards it as something special and precious. Yes, we grow tired of them and neglect them, just as if not the high Majesty of heaven, but some cobbler, had uttered them. Therefore we are duly punished for our ingratitude and contemptuous treatment of these words by getting little enough from them, and never feeling or tasting what a treasure, force and power there is in the words of Christ. But he who has grace only to recognize them as the words of God and not of man, will surely regard them as higher and more precious, and never grow tired or weary of them.

Kindly and sweet as this sermon is for Christians, who are our Lord's disciples, just so vexatious and intolerable is it for the Jews and their great saints. For he hits them a hard blow in the very beginning with these words, rejects and condemns their doctrine and preaches the direct contrary; yes, he denounces woe against their way of living and teaching, as is shown in the sixth chapter of Luke. For the substance of their teaching was this: If it goes well with a man here upon earth, he is happy and well off; that was all they aimed at, that God should give them enough upon earth, if they were pious and served him; as David says of them in Psalms 144:1-15 : "Our garners are full, affording all manner of store; our sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets; our oxen are strong to labor; there is no breaking in or going out; there is no complaining in our streets."

These they call happy people, etc.

Against all this Christ opens his mouth and says there is something else needed than having enough here upon earth; as if to say: You dear disciples, if you come to preach among the people, you will find that they all teach and believe thus: He who is rich, powerful, etc., is altogether happy; and again, he who is poor and miserable is rejected and condemned before God. For the Jews were firmly fixed in this belief: if it went well with a man, that was a proof that God was gracious to him; and the reverse. This is explained by the fact that they had many and great promises from God of temporal and bodily good things that he would bestow upon the pious. They relied upon these, and supposed that if they had this they were well off. This is the theory that underlies the book of Job. For in regard to this his friends dispute with and contend against him, and insist strongly upon it that he must have knowingly committed some great crime against God, that he

was so severely punished. Therefore he ought to confess it, be converted and become pious, then God would take away the punishment again from him, etc.

Therefore it was needful that his sermon should begin with overturning this false notion and tearing it out of their hearts, as one of the greatest hindrances to faith, that strengthens the real idol mammon in the heart. For nothing else could follow this teaching than that the people would become avaricious, and every one would care only for having plenty and a good time, without want and discomfort; and every one would have to infer: If he is happy who succeeds and has plenty, I must see to it that I am not left in the lurch. This is still to-day the common belief of the world, especially of the Turks, who completely and thoroughly rely upon it, and thence conclude that it would not be possible that they should have so much success and victory if they were not the people of God and he were not gracious towards them above all others. Among ourselves also the whole papacy believes the same thing, and their teaching and life are based upon the fact that they only have enough and besides have secured for themselves all manner of worldly property; as everybody can see. In short, this is the greatest and most widely diffused belief of religion upon earth, whereupon all men of mere flesh and blood rely, and they cannot count anything else as happiness.

Therefore he here preaches an altogether different new sermon for Christians, viz. that if it does not go well with them, if they suffer poverty and have to do without riches, power, honor and a good time, they are still to be happy and not to have a temporal, but a different, an eternal reward; that they have enough in the kingdom of heaven. Do you now say: How, must Christians then all be poor, and dare no one have money, property, honor, power, etc.? Or, what are the rich, as princes, lords, kings, to do? Must they give up all their property, honor, etc., or buy the kingdom of heaven from the poor, as some have taught?

No; it is not said that we are to buy from the poor, but we are to be ourselves poor and be found among those poor, if we are to have the kingdom of heaven. For it is said plainly and bluntly: Blessed are the poor; and yet there is another little word along with that, viz. spiritually poor, so that nothing is accomplished by any one’s being bodily poor, and having no money and property. For, outwardly to have money, property and people, is not of itself wrong, but it is God’s gift and arrangement. No one is blessed, therefore, because he is a beggar and has nowhere anything of his own; but the expression is, spiritually poor. For I said already in the beginning that Christ is here not at all treating of secular government and order, but is speaking only of what is spiritual — how one aside from and over and above that which is outward is to live before God.

It belongs to secular government that one should have money, property, honor, power, land and people, and without these it could not exist.

Therefore a lord or prince must and cannot be poor; for he must have all sorts of possessions suited to his office and rank. Therefore it is not meant that one must be poor and have nothing at all of his own. For the world could not exist in such a way that we should all be beggars and have nothing. For no head of a family could maintain his family and servants, if he himself had nothing at all. In short, to be bodily poor decides nothing. For we find many a beggar who gets bread at our door more proud and evil-disposed than any rich man, and many a miserly farmer with whom it is harder to get along than with any lord or prince.

Therefore be bodily and outwardly poor or rich, as may be your lot, God does not ask about that; and he knows that every one must be before God, that is spiritually and in his heart, poor; that is, not to place his confidence, comfort and assurance in temporal possessions, nor fix his heart upon them and make mammon his idol. David was an excellent king and had indeed his purse and his chest full of money, his barns full of grain, the country full of all sorts of goods and stores; yet along with this he had to be spiritually a poor beggar, as he sings about himself: “I am poor, and a stranger in the land, as all my fathers were.” Notice, the king who sits in the midst of such possessions, a lord over land and people, dare not call himself anything else than a stranger or a pilgrim who goes upon the highway and has no place where he can abide. That means a heart that does not cling to property and riches; but, although it has, yet it is as though it had not, as St. Paul boasts of the Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 6:10 : “As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” The meaning of all that has been said is that one is to use all temporal good and bodily necessities, whilst he lives here, not otherwise than as a stranger in a strange place, where he spends the night and leaves in the morning. He needs no more than food and lodging, and dare not say: “This is mine, here will I stay ;” nor dare he take possession of the property as tho’ of right it belonged to him; else he would soon hear the host say to him: “Friend, do you not know that you are a stranger guest here? Go your way, where you belong.” Just so here; that you have worldly goods, that is the gift of God to you for this life, and he allows you indeed to make use of it and to fill with it the worm-bag (Madensack) that you wear about your neck; but not that you fix and hang your heart upon it as though you were to live forever; but you are to be always going farther and thinking about another higher and better treasure that is your own and is to endure forever. This is roughly said for the common man, that one may learn to understand (speaking according to the Scriptures) what it means to be spiritually poor or poor before God, not to reckon outwardly as to money and property, or as to want or superfluity, since we see (as above said) that the poorest and most miserable beggars are the worst and most desperate scoundrels, and dare to commit all sorts of knavery and evil tricks, which decent, honest people, rich citizens or lords and princes, are not guilty of; on the other hand also, many saintly people that have had plenty of money, honor, land and people, and yet with so much property have been poor; but we must reckon according to the heart, that it must not be much concerned whether it has anything or nothing, much or little, and always to treat what it has as though one did not have it, and had to be ready at any time to lose it, keeping the heart always fixed upon the kingdom of heaven.

Again, he is called rich according to the Scriptures who, although not having any worldly possessions, still scrambles and scratches after them, so that he never can get enough. These are the very ones whom the gospel calls rich bellies, who amid great possessions have the very least, and are never satisfied with that which God gives them. For it looks into the heart which is sticking full of money and worldly goods, and judges accordingly, although there is nothing in the purse or money box. Again it judges him poor in heart, though he has chest, house and hearth full. Thus Christian faith moves straight forward; it regards neither poverty nor riches; it asks only how the heart stands. If there be an avaricious belly there, the man is said to be spiritually rich; and again, he is spiritually poor who does not cling to such things and can empty his heart of them, as Christ elsewhere says: “He who forsakes houses, lands, children, wife, etc., he shall have a hundred fold again, and besides eternal life,” that he may bear away their hearts from earthly good, so that they do not regard it as their treasure, and that he may comfort his own, who have to forsake it, that

they shall receive much more and better, even in this life, than what they relinquish. Not that we are to run away from property, home, wife and child, and wander about the country burdening other people, as the Anabaptist crowd does, that accuse us of not preaching the gospel aright because we keep our home and stay by wife and child. No, such crazy saints he does not want; but the true meaning is: Let a man be able in heart to leave his earthly home, his wife and child, though staying in the midst of them, nourishing himself along with them and serving them through love, as God has commanded, and yet able, if need be, to give them up at any time for God's sake. If thou art thus disposed, thou hast forsaken all things in such a way that thy heart is not taken captive, but remains pure from avarice and from clinging to other things for comfort and confidence. A rich man may properly be called spiritally poor, and need not therefore throw away his earthly possessions, except when he must needs forsake them; then let him do it in God's name, not for the reason that he would rather be away from wife, child and home, but would rather keep them as long as God grants it and is served by his so doing, and yet willing if he wishes to take them from him again. So you see what it means to be spiritually and before God poor, or spiritually to have nothing and forsake all.

Now look also at the promise that Christ adds, and says: "For of such is the kingdom of heaven." This is indeed a great, excellent, glorious promise, that we are to have a beautiful, glorious, great, eternal possession in heaven, since we are here gladly poor and regardless of earthly good. And as thou here givest up a very small matter that thou wouldst still gladly use as long and as much as thou canst have it, thou shalt instead thereof attain a crown, that thou mayest be a citizen and a lord in heaven. This ought to influence us, if we wanted to be Christians, and if we held his words to be true. But no one cares who it is that says this, and still less what he says; they let it pass through their ears in such a way that no one concerns himself about it any more nor lays it to heart. But he shows with these words that no one understands this unless he is already a true Christian. For this trait and all the rest that follow are simply fruits of faith which the Holy Spirit himself must work in the heart. Where now faith is not, there the kingdom of heaven also will be wanting, nor will spiritual poverty, meekness, etc., follow, but only sordid raking and scraping, quarreling and noisily contending for worldly goods. Therefore all pains are lost upon such worldly hearts, so that they never learn or know what spiritual poverty is, nor do they believe or care for what he says and promises about the kingdom of heaven; although for their sake he so orders and ordains it that he who will not be spiritually poor in God's name, and for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, must still be poor in the devil's name and get no thanks for it. For God has so hung the greedy to their belly that they are never satiated with their greedily gained good, nor can they ever be happy. For squire greediness is such a merry guest, who never lets any one rest; he seeks, pushes and hunts without ceasing, so that he dare not enjoy his dear treasure for an hour; as Solomon the preacher too wonders and says: "A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth and honor, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it. This is vanity, and it is an evil disease." He must always be afraid and anxiously concerned how he may keep what he has, and add to it, that it perish not, or be diminished, and is so completely tied up that he dare not cheerfully spend a penny. But if there were a heart that could be content and satisfied, it would have rest and the kingdom of heaven besides; otherwise along with great possessions, or indeed with its greediness, at must have purgatory here and there hellish fire besides, and as they say: Travel here with a barrow and there with a wheel; that is, have here trouble and anxiety and there bitter grief.

Notice, God always overrules it so that his word must remain true, and no one be saved or satisfied except Christians; and the rest, although they have everything, yet they are none the better off — indeed are not as well off, and must still be poor beggars, as far as the heart is concerned; only that the former are willingly poor and are looking forward to an imperishable eternal possession, that is to the kingdom of heaven, and are blessed children of God; but the latter are greedy for worldly good and still do not get what they want, and must besides be all the time martyrs of the devil. And there is, in short, no difference between a beggar before the door, and such a wretched greedy-gut, except that the one has nothing and can be put off with a crust of bread, whilst the other, the more he has the harder he is to fill, even though he should get all the world's money and goods in a heap.

Therefore this sermon, as I said, is of no account for the world, and answers for it no good purpose; for it insists upon being sure of its case, and will not take anything upon faith, but must see it and handle it, and says, it is better to have a sparrow in your hand than to be gaping at a crane in the air. Therefore Christ lets them go, does not want to force anybody or drag him to him by the hair; but he gives his kind counsel to all who are willing to be advised, and holds out before us the most precious promise. If thou wilt, thou hast here peace and rest in heart, and there forever what thy heart shall desire. If thou wilt not, then go along and have rather here and there all manner of misery and misfortune. For we see and know that all depends upon being satisfied and not clinging to worldly good; as many a one is whose heart God can fill, though he has only a bit of bread, so that he is cheerful and better contented than any prince or king. In short, he is a rich lord and emperor; need have no care, trouble or sorrow. That is the first part of this sermon: He who wants to have enough here and there, let him take heed that he be not greedy and avaricious, but accept and use what God gives, and earn his daily bread in faith, then he will have here his paradise and even the kingdom of heaven, as Paul says, 1 Timothy 4:8, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."

Matthew 5:4. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. As he began this sermon against the teaching and faith of the Jews (and indeed not of them alone, but of the whole world, even where it is at its best, which clings to the notion that it is well off if it only has possessions, honor, and its mammon, and it serves God only for this end), he now continues and shows the folly of what they regarded as the best, most blessed life upon earth, viz., having good, quiet days and suffering no discomfort, as some are described in Psalms 73:1-28 : "They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men." For that is the chief thing that men desire, that they may have joy and pleasure and have no trouble. Now Christ turns the leaf over, states the exact opposite, and calls those blessed that have sadness and suffering, and so throughout, all these statements are made in direct opposition to the world's way of thinking, as it would like to have it. For it does not want to suffer hunger, trouble, disgrace, contempt, injustice and violence, and those who can be free from all this it counts blessed. So that he means here to say that there must be another life than the one they seek and care for, and that a Christian must see to it that he is a sufferer and sorrow-bearer in this life. He who will not do this may indeed have a good time here, and live according to all his heart's desire, but he will have to suffer forever hereafter, as Luke says, Luke 6:25, "Woe unto you that laugh now! For ye shall mourn and weep." So it went with the rich man, Luke 16:1-31, who lived sumptuously and joyfully every day, clothed in purple and fine linen, and thought he was a great saint and well off before God because he had given him

so much that was good, though he at the same time let poor Lazarus lie daily before his door full of sores, in hunger and distress and great misery. But what kind of a judgment did he hear at last when he was lying in hell? “Remember thou in thy lifetime didst receive thy good things and Lazarus his evil things, therefore thou art now tormented and he is comforted,” etc. See, that is exactly our text: “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted;” and again, as much as to say: Those who here seek and have nothing but joy and pleasure shall weep and howl forever. Do you ask again: What then are we to do? Are those all to be damned that laugh, sing, dance, dress well, eat and drink? We surely read about kings and holy people that were cheerful and lived well. And especially Paul is a wonderful saint, who insists upon it that we be always cheerful, Php 4:4, and says, Romans 12:15, “Rejoice with them that do rejoice,” and again: “Weep with those that weep.” Observe, that seems inconsistent, to rejoice evermore and yet weep and mourn with others.

Answer: Just as I said before, that to have riches is no sin, nor is it forbidden; just so to be cheerful, to eat and drink well, is no sin, nor is it condemnatory; in like manner it is not wrong to have honor and a good name; and yet I am to be blessed if I do not have this, or can do without it, and instead of this suffer poverty, wretchedness, disgrace and persecution. So both of these things are here, and must be, to mourn and be cheerful, to eat and suffer hunger, as Paul boasts concerning himself, Php 4:11 seq.: “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased and how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” Also, 2 Corinthians 6:8 seq.: “By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as dying, and behold we live; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing,” etc.

Therefore, the meaning is: Just as not he is called spiritually poor who has no money or anything of his own, but he who does not hanker after it or put his confidence in it as if it were his kingdom of heaven: so also not he is said to mourn who is always outwardly of downcast countenance, looking gloomy and never laughing; but he who does not comfort himself with having a good time and living sumptuously, as the world does — that cares for nothing but having constant joy and pleasure, and revels in it, and does not think or care how it goes with God or the people.

Thus many excellent, great people, kings and others, that were Christians, have had to mourn and bear trouble, although they lived splendidly before the world; as David everywhere in the Psalms complains about his weeping and sorrowing. And also now I could easily give examples of great people, lords and princes, who have had the same bitter experience with reference to the precious gospel; as, now at the late diet at Augsburg and on other occasions, although they got along very well outwardly, and were clothed in princely style in silk and gold, and to all appearance were like those who walk upon roses, yet they had to be daily right among poisonous serpents, and they had to experience at heart such unheard-of arrogance, insolence and shame, so many evil tricks and words from the shameful papists, who took pleasure in embittering their hearts and as far as they could in preventing them from having a single cheerful hour, so that they had to chew the cud of inward misery and do nothing but lament before God with sighs and tears. Such people know something of what it means to mourn and be sorrowful, although they do not at once show it, but eat and drink with others, and sometimes with laughing and jesting, to conceal their sorrow. For you must not think that mourning means only weeping and lamenting, or wailing, like children and women; this is not yet the real deep grief, if it has found its way to the heart and pours itself out

through the eyes; but that is it, when the real hard blows come that strike and crush the heart, so that one cannot weep or dare complain to any one.

Therefore mourning is not a rare plant among Christians, although it makes no outward show, even if they would gladly be cheerful in Christ, and also outwardly as much as they can. For when they look at the world they must daily see and be painfully conscious of so much malice, arrogance, contempt for and blasphemy of God and his word, and besides so much misery and misfortune that the devil occasions, both in church and state, that they cannot have many cheerful thoughts, and their spiritual joy is very weak. And if they were to look at such things all the while, and did not sometimes turn their eyes away, they could never be cheerful at all; it is enough that this really happens oftener than they would wish, so that they need not go far to find it.

Therefore only begin and be a Christian, and you will soon learn what mourning means. If you cannot do better, take a wife, and settle yourself, and make a living in faith, so that you love the word of God and do what belongs to your calling; then you will soon learn, both from neighbors and in your own house, that things will not go as you would like, and you will be everywhere hindered and hedged so that you will get enough to suffer and must see what will make you sad at heart. Especially however the dear preachers must learn this thoroughly, and be daily exercised with it, so that they must take to heart all manner of envy, hatred, scorn and ridicule, ingratitude, contempt besides, and revilement, so that they are inwardly pierced and uninterruptedly tormented. But the world will have none of this mourning, therefore it seeks those callings and modes of living in which it can have a good time and need not suffer anything from anybody, as the monks' and priests' calling used to be. For it cannot endure that it should in a divinely given calling serve other people with constant care, trouble and labor, and get nothing for this but ingratitude and contempt and other malicious treatment as a reward.

Therefore when things do not go with it as it wishes, and one is scowled at by another, they can do nothing but pound away with cursing and swearing, yes, and with their fists besides, and are ready to sacrifice property and reputation, land and people. But God orders it so, that they still must not get off so easily, that they need not see or suffer any misery, and he awards to them as a recompense, because they try to avoid it, that they still must suffer, and even make this twofold greater and heavier by their wrath and impatience, and cannot have any comfort and good conscience. But Christians have this advantage, that although they mourn they shall be comforted and be blessed both here and there.

Therefore, whoever does not want to be out and out a worldling, but to have part with Christians, let him be counted in as one who helps to sigh and mourn, so that he may be comforted, as this promise tells. We read of a case of this kind in the prophecy of Ezekiel 9:1-11, how God sent six men with deadly weapons to the city of Jerusalem. But he commissioned one among them to go through the midst of the city with "a writer's inkhorn by his side," to "set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." Those thus marked were to remain alive, but the rest were all to be slain. See, this is the advantage of Christians, that although they must see only sorrow and misery in the world, yet at last it comes to pass, when the world is most secure and is moving along in full enjoyment, that the little wheel turns, and suddenly a misfortune overtakes them in which these must remain and perish, whilst the others are snatched out of it and delivered, as in the case of dear Lot at Sodom, when they

had long vexed his heart (as St. Peter says) “with their filthy conversation.” Therefore let the world now laugh and live in revelry, according to its lust and wantonness. And though you have to mourn and weep, and daily see what grieves your heart, submit and hold fast to the saying [of our text], that you may be satisfied and comfort yourself with it, and also outwardly refresh yourself and be as cheerful as you can. For those who thus mourn may properly have and take joy when they can, so that they do not utterly sink through sadness. For Christ also added these very words and promised this consolation, that they should not despond in their sorrow, or let the joy of their heart be entirely taken away and extinguished, but should mingle this mourning with consolation and refreshment, otherwise, if they never had any comfort or joy, they would have to pine and shrivel away. For no man can endure nothing but mourning; for it sucks out the very juices of the body, as the wise man says: “Grief has killed many people.” Also: “A gloomy spirit dries up the marrow in the bones.” Therefore we should not only avoid this, but we should commend and urge such people to be cheerful sometimes, if possible; or at least to moderate their grief and partly forget it.

Therefore Christ does not wish that there should be nothing but mourning and sadness here, but warns against those who will not mourn at all, who want to have only a good time and all their comfort here; and he wants to teach his Christians, if it goes badly with them and they have to mourn, that they may know that this is God’s good pleasure, and it should also be theirs, and that they should not swear, or rage, or despair, as though their God had no mercy. When this is the case, the little bitter draught is to be mixed with honey and sugar, and so made less repulsive; that is the purpose of this promise, that this is well pleasing to him, and that he calls them blessed, besides that he comforts them here, and there they shall be entirely relieved of sorrow.

Therefore bid good-bye to the world and all that harm us, in the name of their lord, the devil, and let us sing this song and be cheerful, in the name of God and Christ. For it will surely not end with them as they wish; but, although they now rejoice at our misfortune, and do much to injure us, we will still keep up good courage, and shall live to see that they will have to weep and lament when we are comforted and happy.

Matthew 5:5. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. This beatitude follows admirably upon the first when he said: Blessed are the poor in spirit, etc. For as he there promised the kingdom of heaven and an eternal inheritance, so he here adds a promise of this present life and possessions here upon earth. But how does this agree together? to be poor and to possess the land? It seems to me that the preacher has forgotten how he began. For, if one is to possess the land and worldly goods, he cannot be poor. But he does not mean to say here that to own the land and have all kinds of possessions here upon earth, means, that every one is to possess a whole country; else God would have to create more worlds; but he refers to the blessings that God bestows upon each one, that he gives to one wife, children, cattle, house and home, and what is implied in this, that he may abide in the land (where he lives) and have control of his worldly goods, as the scriptures usually speak, and it is repeatedly said in Psalm thirty-seven: “those that wait upon the Lord shall inherit the earth;” also, “such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth,” etc. Therefore, he himself adds here the gloss, that to be spiritually poor, of which he spoke before, does not mean to be a beggar, or to throw away money and goods. For he teaches here that they are to remain and dwell in the land and have to do with earthly possessions; as we shall hear bye and bye.

Now, what does it mean to be meek? Here you must, in the first place, be again reminded, that Christ is not speaking at all about the government and its official authority; for it does not belong to this to be meek (sanftmuthig, as we use the word Sanftmuth in German); for it holds the sword, that it may punish the wicked, and it has a wrath and vengeance that are called the wrath and vengeance of God; but he is speaking only of individual persons, how each one is to conduct himself towards others, aside from official position and control; as father and mother, if they do not live as father and mother towards their children, nor perform their official duty as father and mother, that is, towards those who are not called father or mother, as neighbors and others. For I have elsewhere often said that we must make a wide difference between these two, office and person. He who is known as Jack or Martin is a very different man from him who is called Elector, or Doctor, or Preacher. For here we have two different persons in one man. One, in which we are created and born, according to which we are all alike, man, woman, child, young, old, etc. But when we have now been born, God makes of you another person, makes you a child, me a father; one a master, another a servant; this one a prince, that one a citizen, etc. That means then a divine person, holding a divine office, and moves clothed with its own dignity, and is not called simply Jack or Nicholas, but a prince of Saxony, or father and master. Here he says nothing about these, but lets them move on in their office and rank, as he has ordered it; but he is speaking of the mere, single, natural person, what each is to do for himself, as a man, towards others. Therefore, if we hold official and authoritative position, we must be strict and rigid, be wrathful and punish, etc. For here we must do what God places within our reach and of his own accord commands us to do.

Beyond this, in what is unofficial, let every one learn for himself that he be mild towards everybody, that is, not to deal with and treat his neighbor unreasonably, with a hateful or revengeful spirit, like those who rush through headlong, never willing to bear anything or yield an inch, but turning the world upside down, never listening to anybody or excusing him for anything, but pile on the bundles at once and never stop to think, only how they may take vengeance and strike back again. Rulers are not hereby forbidden to punish and enforce retribution by divine authority; but also no license is here granted for a judge, burgomaster, lord or prince, who is a villain, and confounds the two persons and goes beyond his official authority through personal malice, or from envy, hatred and hostility (as often happens) under the mantle of office and legal right' as if our neighbors, under the name of the authorities, wanted to carry out something against us which they could not otherwise accomplish. And especially he is here talking again with his Jews, as he had begun, who always insisted upon it that they were not to suffer anything from a heathen and a stranger, and that they were always right if they unhesitatingly avenged themselves, and quoted for this purpose the sayings of Moses, as Deuteronomy 28:13 : "The Lord shall make thee the head and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only and not beneath," etc., which would be all right enough. But the meaning is, if God himself does this, then it is well done. For it is altogether another matter if he orders it and says: I will do it, and if we do it ourselves, without authority. What he says, that shall and must be done. What we say, that happens if it can, or perhaps it does not happen at all. Therefore you have no right to apply to yourself this promise, and take confidence from it when you want to do something which he ought to do, and you will not wait till he tells you to do it.

Observe, Christ is here rebuking those wild saints who think every one is master in the whole world and has a perfect right to bear no suffering, but only to make a racket and bluster, and with

violence to defend his own; and he teaches us that he who wishes to rule and possess his own, his property, home, etc., in peace, must be meek, so that he may overlook things and act reasonably, and suffer just as much as he can. For it cannot be otherwise but that your neighbor will sometimes take advantage of or injure you, either accidentally or through malice. If it was done accidentally, you make it no better on your part if you neither can nor will endure anything. If it was done maliciously, you only aggravate him by scratching and pounding, whilst he is laughing at you and making merry that he is worrying and vexing you, so that you still can have no peace or quietly enjoy your own.

Therefore choose one of the two, whichever you please: either to live with meekness and patience among the people and keep what you have with peace and a good conscience, or with racket and rumpus to lose your own, and besides have no peace. For this is settled, the meek shall inherit the earth. And look only yourself at those queer characters that are always quarreling and disputing about property and other matters, and yielding to nobody, but are determined to rush everything through, whether they do not squander more by quarreling and contending than they could ever gain, and at last lose land and people, house and home, with unrest and a bad conscience besides; and God adds his sanction to it, which says: “Be then not meek, so that you do not keep the land, nor enjoy your mite with peace.” But if you want to live rightly and have rest, then let your neighbor’s malice and hostility smother and extinguish itself; otherwise you cannot better please the devil, or more greatly harm yourself, than by getting up an angry racket. Have you a government over you? report the case and let them attend to it. For it is the business of the government not to permit the innocent to be much oppressed; and God will also overrule in such a way that his word and ordinance abides, and you according to this promise come to possess the land. Thus you will have peace and blessing from God, but your neighbor will have unrest, together with God’s displeasure and curse. But this sermon is intended only for those who are Christians, and believe, and know that they have their treasure in heaven, that is secure for them, and cannot be taken from them; therefore they must have enough also here, although they do not have chests and pockets full of red ducats. Since you know this, why will you let your joy be disturbed and taken from you — yes, why even make disquiet for yourself and rob yourself of this excellent promise?

Observe, you have now three points with three rich promises, so that he who is a Christian must have enough, both temporal and eternal, though he must here suffer much, both inwardly, in heart, and outwardly. Again, the worldlings, because they will not endure poverty, nor trouble, nor violence, neither have nor enjoy either the kingdom of heaven or worldly good with peace and quiet. You can read more about this in Psalm thirty-seven, which is the real commentary upon this passage, and richly describes how the meek inherit the earth and the ungodly are to be cut off.

Matthew 5:6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled .

Righteousness must here not be understood as being the Christian righteousness in general, whereby the person becomes pious and acceptable before God. For I have before said that these eight beatitudes are nothing else than a teaching about the fruits and good works of a Christian, which must be preceded by faith, as the tree and main body or sum of his righteousness and blessedness, without any work or merit, out of which these beatitudes must all grow and follow.

Therefore understand here the outward righteousness before the world, which we observe among ourselves towards others, that this is the meaning, short and simple, of these words: he is a really blessed man who perseveringly and assiduously strives to promote the general welfare and the right conduct of every one, and who helps to maintain and carry this out with word and deed, with counsel and act. This is now also an excellent beatitude, which comprehends very many good works, but which is by no means common. For instance, that we may illustrate, if a preacher wishes to be counted as hungering and thirsting for righteousness, he must be ready to instruct and help every one in his calling, that he may conduct it properly and do what belongs to it, and when he sees that there is something wanting, and things do not go right, that he be on hand, warn, rebuke, and correct as well and by such means as he can: thus that I, as a preacher, be faithful to my office, and others to theirs, that they follow my teaching and preaching, and thus on both sides the right thing is done. Where now there are such people as take a special and earnest interest in gladly doing what is right, or in being found rightly at work, these may be said to be hungering and thirsting after righteousness. If this were the case there would be no knavery or injustice, but complete righteousness and blessedness on earth. For what is the righteousness of the world else than that every one do in his calling what is due? That means that every one's rights should be duly regarded, those of the man, the woman, the child, the man servant and maid servant in the family, the citizen or the city in the land; and it all amounts to this, that those who are to oversee and rule other people execute this office with diligence, carefulness and fidelity, and that the others also faithfully and willingly render to these due service and obedience. Nor does he without cause use the phrase: "Hunger and thirst after righteousness;" he means thereby to indicate that in order to attain it one must have great earnestness, a yearning eagerness and incessant diligence: that where there is a lack of this hunger and thirst, all will amount to nothing. The reason is this; for there are too many and great hindrances, both on the part of the devil, who is everywhere blocking the way, and on the part of the world, (namely his children,) which is so wicked that it cannot endure a pious man, who wants to do right or help others to do it; but it so annoys and worries him that in the end he loses patience and is out of humor about it. For it is painful to see how shamefully people act, and reward whole-hearted kindness with ingratitude, contempt, hatred and persecution. Hence also many persons who could not bear to witness this base conduct, at last grew desperate about it and took refuge in the wilderness, fleeing from human society and becoming monks, so that the saying has often been verified: "Despair makes a monk ;" either, that one does not trust to make his own living and runs into a monastery for his stomach's sake, as the great crowd has done; or, that one despairs of the world and does not trust to remain pious in it or to help other people. But this is not hungering and thirsting after righteousness. For he who wants to preach or rule in such a way, that he allows himself to be made weary and impatient, and to scamper off into a corner, he will be slow to help other people. It is not your duty to creep into a corner or into the wilderness, but to come out briskly, if you were therein, and offer both your hands and feet and your whole body for use, and hazard everything that you have and can do; and you are to be such a man as can be hard against hard, so as not to allow himself to be frightened off or dumfounded, or be overcome by the ingratitude or malice of the world: but you should always push along and persevere as much as possible. In short, you should have such a hunger and thirst after righteousness that will never diminish or cease and cannot be satiated, so that you care for nothing else, only so that you may accomplish and maintain what is right, despising on the other hand everything that would hinder you. If one cannot

make the world altogether pious, let him do what he can. It is enough, that he has done his own duty, and has helped some, if only one or two. If the others will not follow, then let them go, in God's name. One must not run off because of the wicked, but conclude: it was not undertaken for their sake, nor for their sake was it dropped; perhaps bye and bye some of them may come to their senses, or there may be fewer of them, and they may somewhat improve. For here you have a consolatory, certain promise, with which Christ allures and attracts his Christians, that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled; that is, that they shall be delightfully rewarded for their hunger and thirst by seeing that they have not labored in vain, and that at last some have been reached who have been benefited; and it will be manifest not only here upon earth, but still more hereafter, when every one will see what such people have accomplished by their diligence and perseverance, although things do not now go as they would like, and they have nearly lost heart; as when a pious preacher has snatched so many souls out of the jaws of the devil and brought them to heaven; or a pious faithful ruler has helped many lands and people, who bear this testimony of him and praise him before the whole world.

Just the opposite, are the sham saints who out of great sanctity forsake the world and run into the wilderness, or hide themselves in corners, so that they may escape the trouble and worry that they must otherwise endure, and pay no regard to what is going on in the world; never once thinking upon it that they ought to help or advise other people with doctrine, instruction, exhortation, reproof and correction, or at least with praying and supplication to God. Yes, they are disgusted with it, and grieve over it, that other people become pious, for they want to be considered the only holy ones, so that whoever wants to get to heaven must buy from them their good works and merit. In short, they are so full of righteousness that they look contemptuously upon other poor sinners, just as the great saint Pharisee, Luke 17, intoxicated with self-sufficiency, blurts out his contempt for the poor publican, is profuse in his self-congratulations, so that he pays his respects to God, and is thankful that he alone is pious and other people bad.

Observe, these are the people against whom Christ here speaks — the proud, self-sufficient spirits that tickle themselves with and find joy and pleasure in the fact that other people are not pious, whereas they ought to pity, compassionate and help them; they cannot do anything else but despise, backbite, judge and condemn everybody; and everything must be stench and filth except what they themselves do. But; that they should go and instruct and benefit a poor faulty sinner, that they shun as they would shun the devil. Therefore they will have to hear again, how Christ exclaims about them, Luke 6:25 : "Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger." For as those shall be filled, who now hunger and thirst; so must those forever hunger, who now are so full and satiated, and yet no one can get any good from them, or boast that they have ever helped any one or led him in the right way. Now you have in a word the meaning of this beatitude, which (as above said) comprehends many good works, yes all good works, wherewith every one may live aright by himself among the people and help to give success to all sorts of offices and callings; as I have often shown elsewhere.

Matthew 5:7. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy . This is also an excellent fruit of faith, and follows well upon the preceding: he who is to help others and contribute to the common well-being and success, should also be kind and merciful — that is, that he should not be ready to raise a racket and make a disturbance if something be wanting, and things do not go as they should, whilst there is still hope of improvement. For that is one of the virtues of sham sanctity that

it can have no compassion for or mercy upon the fallible and weak, but insists upon the extremest strictness and most careful selection, and as soon as there is the slightest failure, all mercy is gone and they do nothing but fume and fret; as also St. Gregory shows how to recognize this, and say: Vera justitia compassionem habet, falsa indignationem — true holiness is merciful and compassionate, but false holiness can do nothing but be angry and rage; and yet they say: Pro zelo justitiae, (as they boast), that is, we do it through love and zeal for righteousness. For all the world is coming to see that they have been carrying on their mischievous and outrageous tricks under the beautiful, excellent semblance and cover that they were doing it for the sake of righteousness. Just as they have heretofore exhibited and are still exhibiting their hostility to and treachery against the gospel under the name of protecting the truth and exterminating heresy; they claim thereby to merit that God is to crown them for this and raise them to heaven, as those who out of great thirst and hunger for righteousness persecute, strangle and burn his saints. For they claim, forsooth, to have the name, even more than the true saints, of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and put on such a sanctimonious appearance and use such admirable words, that they think even God himself will not know any better. But the noble tree is known by its fruits. For, when they should insist upon righteousness, that both spiritual and temporal affairs be rightly conducted, they do not do it, do not think of instructing and improving any one, live themselves in constant vice, and if any one rebukes their conduct, or does not praise it and do as they wish, he must be a heretic and let himself be damned to hell. See, just so is surely every sham saint. For his selfrighteousness makes him so proud that he despises everybody else, and can have no kind, merciful heart. Therefore is this a necessary warning against these abominable saints, so that every one may take care, if he has to do with his neighbor, whom he should help and rectify in his way of living, that he still may be able to be merciful, and forgive, that it may be seen that you are honestly aiming at righteousness, and not wishing to gratify your own malice and anger, and that you are so righteous that you deal amicably and gently with him who is willing to desist from unrighteousness and become better, that you bear with and endure his fault or weakness until he comes to terms. If, however, you try all this, and still find no hope of improvement, then you may give him up and turn him over to those whose place it is to punish him. This is now one side of mercifulness, that one takes pleasure in forgiving sinners and those at fault. The other is to be beneficent also towards those who are externally in need or require help, which we call works of mercy, from Matthew 25:35. This feature too the ostentatious Jewish saints knew nothing about. For with them there was nothing but ice and frost, yes a heart hard as a block or a stone, and not an affectionate drop of blood that found pleasure in doing good to a neighbor, and no mercifulness to forgive sin; they cared and planned alone for their own belly, although another might die of hunger; so that there is much more mercifulness among open sinners than in such a saint; as it cannot be otherwise, since they praise only themselves and count themselves holy, despising every one else as of no account, and suppose that all the world must serve them and give them plenty; but they are not under obligation to give anything to or to serve anybody.

Therefore this sermon and exhortation is despised by and of no account among such saints, and finds no scholars except those who are already cleaving to and believing on Christ, who know of no holiness of their own, but who, as already described, are poor, wretched, meek, really hungering and thirsting, and so disposed that they despise nobody, but compassionately sympathize with the need of everybody else. To these applies now the comforting promise: It is well for you that are merciful, for you will find again abundant mercy, both here and hereafter, and

such mercy as inexpressibly far exceeds all human benefactions and mercifulness. For there is no comparison between our mercifulness and that of God, nor between our possessions and the eternal treasures in the kingdom of heaven; and he is so pleased with our benefactions to our neighbor that he promises us for a penny a hundred thousand ducats, if it were necessary for us, and for a drink of water the kingdom of heaven.

Now, if any one will not suffer himself to be moved by this excellent, comforting promise, let him turn the other side of the page and hear another sentence: “Woe to the unmerciful, and let them be cursed, for no mercy shall be shown to them; as now the world is full of such people, among the nobility and citizens and farmers, who so wondrously sin against the dear gospel that they not only give nothing to poor pastors and preachers, but besides take and torment, where they can, and act just as if they meant to starve it out and drive it out of the world, and notwithstanding go along quite securely, thinking that God must keep quiet about it and let them do just as they please.” But they will be struck some day, and, I fear, somebody will come who will make of me (who have given warning enough) a prophet, and he will treat them with perfect heartlessness, and besides take from them reputation and property, body and life, that God’s word may remain true, and he experience unmitigated wrath and eternal displeasure who will not show or have mercy, as St. James says: “He shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy.”

Therefore also Christ at the last day will adduce this unmercifulness as the worst injury done against himself, even all that we have done out of uncharitableness, and will himself utter the curse: “I was hungry and thirsty and ye gave me no meat, ye gave me no drink, etc. Depart ye, therefore, ye cursed, into everlasting, hellish fire,” etc. He warns and exhorts us faithfully from pure grace and mercy. Whoever will not accept this, let him choose the worse and eternal damnation. Consider the rich man, Luke 16:19 seq., who, although he saw poor Lazarus daily lying at his gate full of sores, had not charity enough to give him a bundle of straw or allow him the crumbs from under his table. But see how fearfully he was requited, that in hell he would gladly have given a hundred thousand ducats if he could only boast of having given him a thread.

Matthew 5:8. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God This beatitude is somewhat obscure, and not so easily understood by us who have such gross carnal hearts and minds, and it is hidden, too, from all the sophists, who should really be the most learned, so that none of them can say what it means to have a pure heart, and still less, what it means to see God; they busy themselves with mere dreams and evil thoughts, about matters of which they know nothing themselves by experience.

Therefore we must look at these words according to the Scriptures, and learn to understand them correctly. A pure heart, they fancy, means that a man runs off from the community into a corner, a monastery, or the wilderness, and does not think upon the world, nor concern himself about worldly affairs and business, but amuses himself with nothing but heavenly thoughts; they have by this fanciful teaching not only befooled and dangerously misled themselves and other people, but have committed the murderous fault of holding as unclean the doing of things and holding of positions in society that are unavoidable in the world and indeed are by God himself appointed. But the Scripture speaks of this pure heart and mind, that it is quite consistent with it that one be a husband, love his wife and children, think about them and care for them, and busy himself about other matters that belong to such a relation. For all this God has ordained. But what God has

ordained, that cannot be impure — yes, it is the very purity with which we see God. Thus, when a judge acts in his official capacity and condemns a criminal to death, that is not his office and work, but God's. Therefore it is a good, pure and holy work (if he be indeed a Christian) which he could not do if he had not already a pure heart. Also, that must be called a pure work and heart, although a man or maid-servant in the house performs a dirty, filthy task, as hauling manure, or washing and cleaning children.

Therefore it is a shameful perversion when one pays so little attention to the relations that are embraced in the ten commandments, and gapes after other, special, showy works; just as if God had not as pure a mouth or eyes as we, or as pure a heart and hand when he makes both man and woman: how should then such works or thoughts make an impure heart? But thus they shall become blind and fools who despise the word of God and measure purity only by the outward mask and display of works, and meanwhile have to make mischief with their own wandering thoughts, and stand gaping to climb up to heaven and feel after God, until in the effort they break their own necks.

Therefore, let us understand rightly what Christ means by a pure heart; and notice again, that this sermon was principally aimed at and sharply directed against the Jews. For, as they wanted to have no suffering, but coveted a life of ease, pleasure and joy, and would not hunger, nor be merciful, but to be self-satisfied and the only pious ones, besides judging and despising others; so their holiness, too, was this, that they must be outwardly clean, in body, skin, hair, clothes and food, so that not even a little spot dare be upon their clothing. And if any one touched a dead body, or had a scab or the itch upon his person, he dared not approach other people; that they regarded as purity. But that is not what constitutes being pure, said he; but those I praise who take pains to be of a pure heart, as he says, Matthew 23:25 : "Ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within are full of extortion and excess." Also: "Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness;" just as is the case with our clergy at present, altho' they lead outwardly a decent life, and conduct the public worship with such formality and display that it is something beautiful to see. But he does not ask for such purity, but wants to have the heart pure, though it be one who is outwardly a scullion in the kitchen, black, sooty and begrimed, and doing all sorts of dirty work.

What then is a pure heart? or in what does it consist? Answer: It is easily told, and you need not climb to heaven nor run into a monastery after it and make it out with your own thoughts; but be guarded against all such thoughts as you call your own, as against so much mud and filth, and know, that a monk in the monastery, when he is sitting in his deepest contemplativeness, and thinking of his Lord God, as he paints and imagines him to himself, is sitting (if you will pardon me) in the dirt, not up to his knees, but over head and ears. For he is following his own notions, without any word of God, which is simply lying and delusion; as the Scriptures everywhere testify. But that is a pure heart, that is ever on the lookout for God's word, and takes this in place of its own thoughts. For only that is pure before God, yes purity itself, through which everything that comes in contact with it and belongs to it is and is called pure. So with a common rough mechanic, a cobbler or a smith, who sits at home, though he be personally unclean and sooty, or smells badly on account of being blackened and soiled, and thinks: My God has made me a man and given me a house, wife and child, and ordered me to love them, and with my labor to nourish them, etc. Now observe, he is making a heart matter of it with God, and, although outwardly he stinks, inwardly he

is perfectly fragrant before God. But if he gets to be highly pure, so that he also embraces the gospel and believes on Christ (without which indeed that purity cannot be), then he is pure through and through, inwardly at heart towards God, and outwardly towards everything that is under him upon earth, so that everything that he is and does, whether he goes, stands, eats and drinks, etc., is pure to him, and nothing can make him impure; so when he looks at his own wife or sports with her, as the patriarch Isaac, Genesis 26:8, which to a monk is disgusting and makes him impure. For there he has the word of God, and knows that God has given her to him. But if he forsook his wife and took up another, or neglected his trade or office and injured or worried other people, he would be no longer pure; for that would be against the command of God. As long, however, as he is faithful in these two particulars, namely, in the word of faith towards God, by which the heart becomes pure, and in the word of the knowledge of what he is to do towards his neighbor in his calling, everything is pure to him, even if with his fists and his whole body he is busy with dirt. A poor servant girl, if she does what she ought to, and along with it is a Christian, she is before God in heaven a beautiful, pure maid, so that all the angels applaud her and love to look at her. On the other hand, the very strictest Carthusian, though he fasts and castigates himself to death, does nothing but weep for pure devotion, and never thinks about the world, and yet is without faith in Christ and love towards his neighbor, is a mere stench and pollution, both inside and outside, so that both God and the angels abominate and are disgusted with him. So you see how all depends upon the word of God, so that what is comprehended in and moves with that, must all be called clean, pure and snow-white as to God and man. Therefore St. Paul says, Titus 1:15 : “To the pure all things are pure,” and again: “Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure.”

Why so? Because both their mind and conscience are impure. How can that be? For they say they know God, but with works they deny it; for it is these that are abominable in the sight of God, etc. Observe how the apostle paints them in horrible colors, and how he denounces the great Jewish saints. For, take as an example a Carthusian monk, who thinks, if he lives after his strict rule, in obedience, in poverty, unmarried, cut off from the world, he is in every respect pure. What else is that than their own way of thinking, aside from the word of God and faith, originating in their own heart? In this way they consider themselves alone pure, and other people impure. That St. Paul calls an impure mind, that is, everything that they think and imagine.

Since now this notion and thinking is impure, everything that they do accordingly must also be impure for them, and as their mind is so is also their conscience, so that, though they should and could be useful to other people, they have a conscience that takes its hue from their way of thinking and is tied up with their hoods, cloisters and rules: they think if for a minute they should neglect this routine to serve their neighbor and have anything to do with others, they would have committed the most heinous sin and have quite polluted themselves. That all comes of not recognizing the word of God and his creatures, although as St. Paul says, “with their mouths they profess that they do.” For if they knew how and for what purpose they had been created by God, they would not despise these callings in society, nor set up so highly their own standard, but they would acknowledge these as the works and creatures of God to be pure, and would honor them, and themselves gladly abide in them and be helpful to their neighbor. That would then be to recognize God aright, both in his word and in his creatures, and to keep pure both heart and conscience, which thus believes and reasons: What God does and orders, that must be pure and good, for he makes nothing impure, and sanctifies everything through the word that he has affixed

to all callings and creatures.

Therefore guard yourself against all your own thoughts, if you wish to be pure before God, and see to it that your heart is established and fixed upon the word of God, then you are pure over and above all Carthusians and saints in the world. When I was young, they gloried in this proverb: Love to be alone and your heart will stay pure; and they quoted in proof a saying of St. Bernard, who said whenever he was among the people he befouled himself — as we read in the lives of the fathers of a hermit, who would not have any one come near him or talk with anybody, and said: “The angels cannot come to him who moves among men.” We read also of two others who would not let their mother see them; and as she often watched her opportunity and once took them by surprise, they presently closed the door and left her standing without a long while weeping, until they, finally persuaded her to go away and wait until they would see each other in a future life.

Behold, that was called a noble deed, and the height of sanctity and most perfect purity. But what was it? There is the word of God: “Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother.” Had they regarded that as holy and pure, they would have shown their mother and their neighbor all honor, love and friendship: on the contrary, following their own notions and self-chosen holiness, they cut themselves off from them, and by their very attempt to be the purest they most shamefully defiled themselves before God; just as though the most desperate scoundrels could not have such thoughts and put on such an appearance that one would have to say: “These are living saints, they can despise the world and hold intercourse only with spirits; “ — yes, with spirits from the bottom of hell. The angels like nothing better, than when we familiarly handle the word of God; with such they love to dwell. Therefore let the angels be undisturbed up there in heaven, and look for them here below, upon earth, in your neighbor, father and mother, child and others, that you may do to them what God has commanded, and the angels will not be far away from you.

I speak thus, that one may learn in this matter of purity to order himself aright, and not go so far to hunt for it as the monks do, who have thrown it quite out of the world and stuck it in a corner or into a hood; all of which is stench and filth, and the true harboring-place of the devil; but let it be where God has placed it, namely in the heart that clings to God’s word, and uses its calling and all creatures in accordance therewith, in such a way that both the entire purity of faith toward God is embraced therein, also outwardly shown in this life, and everything is done in obedience to the word and command of God, whether it be bodily clean or unclean. So I have said above, concerning a judge who has to condemn a man to death, and thus shed blood and pollute himself with it, which a monk holds to be an abominably unclean deed; but the Scripture calls this serving God; as St. Paul, Romans 13:1-4, calls “the higher powers” that “bear the sword,” “the minister of God ;” and it is not their work and command but his, that he lays upon them and demands from them. Now you have the meaning of a pure heart that acts in accordance with the clean and pure word of God.

What is however their reward, or what does he promise them? It is this, that they shall see God. A glorious title and a splendid treasure! But what does it mean to see God? The monks have here again their dreams, that it means to sit in the cells and meditate heavenward, and lead a contemplative life — so they call it, and have written many books about it. But it will never do to call that seeing God, when you come harping on your own notions and scrambling heavenward; as the sophists and our factious spirits and crazy saints insist upon measuring and mastering God

and his word and works by their own brains: but it is this, if thou hast a true faith that Christ is thy Savior, etc., then thou seest at once that thou hast a gracious God. For faith leads thee up, and opens for thee the heart and will of God, where thou beholdest nothing but superabundant grace and love. That is exactly what it means, to see God, not with bodily eyes, (for with these no one can see him in this life,) but with faith, that beholds his paternal, friendly heart, in which there is no wrath or disfavor. For he who regards him as wrathful, does not see him aright, but has drawn a veil and cover, yes, a dark cloud, over his face. But to behold his face, as the Scripture expresses it, means to recognize him aright as a gracious, benevolent father, upon whom one can rely for everything good; and this comes only through faith in Christ.

Accordingly also, if thou livest in thy calling after the word and command of God, with thy husband, wife, child, neighbor and friend, thou canst see what is the mind of God in regard to these relations, and canst conclude that he is pleased, as that is not thine own dream, but his word and command, that never belies or deceives us. Now it is a most excellent thing, and a treasure above all that one can think or wish, to know that one is standing and living aright towards God: in such a way, that not only the heart can comfort itself with the assurance of his grace and glory in it, but that one can know that his external walk and conversation is pleasing in his sight; whence it follows that he can cheerfully and heartily do and suffer everything and let nothing alarm or dishearten him. None of these things can they do who do not have this faith and a pure heart that is guided only by God’s word; as all the monks have openly taught that no man can know whether he is in a gracious state or not; and it serves them just right, that, because they despise faith and real godly works, and seek a purity of their own devising, they must never see God, nor know how they stand with him. For if you ask some one, who has most diligently observed his hours for prayer, held his masses daily, and fasted, whether he is sure too that God is pleased with this, he must say he does not know that, and is doing it all at a venture; if it succeeds, let it succeed. It is not possible for any one to say anything else. For no one can boastingly say: God gave me this hood, or ordered me to wear it; he commanded me to hold this mass, etc. We have all been groping in this blindness hitherto, when we were doing so many so-called good works, making contributions, fasting, praying rosaries, and yet we never dared to say: This work is well pleasing to God; I am sure of this, and will die upon it. Therefore no one can say that in all his doing and living he has ever seen God. Or if any one should presumptuously glorify such works, and think that God must regard them favorably and reward them, that would mean seeing not God, but the devil in place of God. For there is no word of God for that, but it is all devised by men, grown out of their own hearts. Therefore it can nevermore make any heart sure or satisfied, but it remains hidden under presumption until the last hour comes, when it all vanishes and drives into despair, and so it never comes to pass that one sees the face of God. But he who lays hold upon the word of God and abides in the faith, can maintain his stand before God and look upon him as his gracious Father, and need not fear that God is standing behind him with a club; is sure that God is looking graciously and smilingly upon him, together with all the angels and saints in heaven. See, that is what Christ means by this word, that only those behold God who have this pure heart; whereby he cuts off and sets aside all other sorts of purity, so that, where this kind is not, although otherwise everything be pure in a man, it avails nothing before God, and he can never see God. On the other hand, if the heart is pure, everything is pure, and it matters not if outwardly everything be impure, yes, even if the body is full of sores, scabs and leprosy all over.

Matthew 5:9. Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.

Here the Lord honors with a high title and excellent praise those who find pleasure in diligently trying to make peace, not only so far as they are themselves concerned, but also among other people, that they may help to settle ugly and tangled disputes, endure contention, guard against and prevent war and bloodshed; which is indeed a great virtue, but very rare in the world and among the sham saints. For those who are not Christians are both liars and murderers, like their father, the devil. Therefore they serve no other purpose than to create strife, contention, war, etc.; as we now find among the priests, bishops and princes hardly anything but bloodhounds, who by many tokens have abundantly shown, that there is nothing they would rather see than that we should all swim in blood. Thus, if a prince becomes angry, he thinks at once that he must begin a war; then he inflames and incites everybody, until there has been so much warring and shedding of blood that he begins to be sorry for it, and gives a thousand ducats for the souls of those that were slain. These are nothing but bloodhounds; they cannot rest until they have taken vengeance and sated their rage, until they have dragged their land and people into wretchedness and misery; and yet they want to be called Christian princes and have a good cause.

There is more needed to begin a war than that you have a good cause. For although we are not forbidden here to carry on a war, as above said, that Christ here does not mean to detract anything from the powers that be and their official authority, but is teaching only individual people who wish to lead for themselves a Christian life; yet it is not right that a prince determines to have a war with his neighbor, even though (I say) he has a good cause and his neighbor is in the wrong; but the meaning is: Blessed are the peacemakers; so that he who wants to be a Christian and a child of God, not only does not begin war and strife, but helps and advises for peace, wherever he can, although there was reason and cause enough for going to war. It is enough, if one has tried his best for peace and all avails nothing, that one acts on the defensive, to protect land and people.

Therefore not Christians, but the children of the devil are those to be called, the quarrelsome fellows, who rush to their rapiers and jerk their sword from its sheath for a word; still more, however, those who now persecute the gospel, and cause its preachers to be innocently burned or murdered, who have done them no harm, but only good, and have served them with body and soul. But of these we say nothing now, but of those only who maintain that they are right and have a good cause, and think that they, as high and princely persons, ought not to suffer, although other people would suffer.

It is also meant here, if injustice and violence are done to you, that it is not right for you to consult your own foolish head, and begin right away to take vengeance and strike back; but you are to think over it and try to bear it and have peace. If that will not answer, and you cannot endure it, you have law and governmental authority in the land, where you can seek relief in a regular way. For the powers that be are ordained to guard against this injustice and punish it. Therefore he who injures you, sins not only against you, but rather against the authority itself, for the order and command to keep the peace was given to it and not to you. Therefore let your judge, whose business it is, avenge and punish this, for against him your opponent has done the wrong. If you, however, take vengeance into your own hands, you do still greater wrong, for you make yourself guilty of the same sin as he who sins against the powers that be, and interferes with their office;

and by so doing you put your own good cause in the wrong. For the common saying is: “He who strikes back is in the wrong, and striking back makes a quarrel.”

Notice now this is one thing that Christ here demands against the revengeful and uproarious; and he calls those peacemakers, in the first place, who help to make peace among the people, as pious princes, counselors or jurists, and persons in authority, who hold their governmental position for the sake of peace. In the second place, pious citizens and neighbors, who by their salutary good counsel adjust, harmonize and settle contention and strife (that has been occasioned by bad, poisonous tongues) between husband and wife, or among neighbors; as St. Augustine boasted of his mother, Monica, that when she saw two at outs she always spoke the best on both sides, and whatever of good she heard about the one party that she brought to the other, but whatever of evil she heard that she kept quiet, or mildened it as much as she could, and thus she often effected a reconciliation. For it is among the women particularly that the shameful vice of slander is prevalent, often so that great trouble is occasioned through an evil tongue. To this those bitter and poisonous brides of the devil largely contribute, who if they hear a word about anybody give it a point and edge, and intense bitterness against others, so that sometimes wretchedness and murder are the result. This all comes from the fact that there is naturally sticking to us the shameful, devilish filth, that every one likes to hear and tell the worst about his neighbor, and is tickled if he sees a fault in some one else. If a woman were as beautiful as the sun, and had any mark or little spot upon her body, one should forget everything else and look only for the spot, and talk about that. So, if some one were the most renowned for honor and virtue, yet a poisonous tongue shall come along and say she had been seen once laughing with somebody, and so defame her as to eclipse all her praise and honor. Such are real poisonous spiders that can suck nothing but poison out of a beautiful, lovely rose, and ruin both the flower and the sap, whilst a little bee sucks nothing but honey out of it and leaves the roses uninjured. That is the way those act, who discern nothing in other people, unless there is something faulty or impure in them, which they can blame; on the other hand, what there is good in them, they do not see; for men have many virtues which the devil cannot destroy, and yet he hides or defaces them that they shall not be seen. So, in the case of a woman, though she be very full of faults and have no other virtue, yet she is a creature of God, and can at least carry water and wash clouts; and there is no person upon earth so bad that there is not something in him that one must praise. How is it, then, that we leave out of view the good and feast our eyes upon what is impure, as if we took delight (by your leave) in looking only at a man’s behind, when God himself has covered the uncomely parts of the body, and (as Paul says, 1 Corinthians 12:24) “has given more abundant honor to that part which lacked?” And we are such a filthy set, that we seek only after that which is dirty and stinks, and wallow in it like hogs.

See, those too are real children of the devil, who himself gets his name from doing that, so that he is called diabolus, that is, a disgracer and reviler, who finds his pleasure in this, that he puts us most completely to shame, and embitters us among ourselves, so that he may occasion only murder and misery, and allow no peace or concord between brethren and neighbors, husband and wife.

I once heard of a case of this kind, of two married persons who lived together in such love and harmony that they were the town’s talk, and when the devil could not hinder this in any way, he sent an old hag to the woman, who told her that her husband was going with another woman and meant to kill her; she thus embittered her heart against her husband, and advised her to conceal a

knife about her person, that she might get ahead of him. When she had accomplished this, she went to the husband and told him the same about her, that she meant to murder him, and in proof of it (said she) he would find at night a knife beside her in bed. That he then found, and cut off her head with it. Whether this be true or not, it shows at all events what wicked, poisonous tongues can do, even between those who heartily love each other, so that they may properly be called devil's- months or female devils, as he, the devil, diabolus, signifies nothing else than a bitter, poisonous, evil mouth.

Therefore be on your guard against such as these, that you pay no attention to them, and learn to put the best construction upon, or even to conceal, what you hear about your neighbor, so that you may make and keep peace and harmony; then you can be called with all honor a child of God before all the world and the angels in heaven. You should let yourself be drawn and attracted by this honor — yes, you should run after it, if that were possible for you, even to the end of the world, and gladly give for it all that you have. Now you have it here offered to you and spread before you for nothing, do not need to do or give anything for it, except that if you want to be a child of God, that you also show yourself to be that, and do the works of your Father towards your neighbor. For thus has our Lord Christ done for us when he reconciled us to the Father and secured his favor, and still daily intercedes for us and pleads our cause. Do thou likewise, that thou mayest be a pacificator and mediator between thy neighbors, and carry the best to both sides, but withhold the bad, that the devil has inspired, or explain it as well as you can. If you come to Margaret, do as was said of Monica, the mother of Augustine, and say: O, dear M., why are you so bitter? She surely don't mean it ill; I see nothing else about her but that she would like to be your dear sister, etc. In like manner, if you meet with Catharine, do the same with her. Then as a true child of God you would have effected on both sides a peace, as far as you could. But if you will or must speak of the evil, then do as Christ has taught you. Do not carry it to others, but go to him who has done the wrong and exhort him to do better; not in such a way that you make a display of it when you come, and expose the person concerned; that you speak when you should be silent, and be silent when you should speak. This is one and the first way that you should deal alone between yourself and your neighbor. If, however, you must tell it to others, if the other course does not answer, then tell it to those whose duty it is to punish, father and mother, master or mistress, burgomaster and judge, etc. That is the right and regular course to pursue, that what is wrong may be done away or punished. Otherwise, if you spread it among other people, the person remains unbenefited, and the evil unrebuked, and will besides be reported abroad by yourself and others, so that it will be on everybody's tongue.

Notice how a pious physician does with a sick child; he does not run about among the people and herald it abroad, but he goes to the child and examines his pulse, or whatever is necessary, not that he may gratify his pleasure at the child's expense, or make fun of him, but with the good and kind intention of helping him. So we read of the holy patriarch Joseph, Genesis 37:2; Genesis 37:10, who was with his brothers, by the cattle, and when they were badly reported of, he went and told it to their father, as their master, in whose place it was to look into the matter and punish them, for they would not hear him. But you may say: Why then do you yourself publicly attack the pope and others, and do not keep the peace? Answer: One must advise and help all he can for peace, and keep silence as well as he can. But, when the sin is public, and becomes too widely spread, or does public injury (as the pope's teaching), then it is no longer right to be silent, but to

protest and rebuke, especially for me and others, who are in public office, whose duty it is to teach and warn everybody. For the command and duty has been laid upon me, as a preacher and doctor, who am to watch that no one is misled, so that I may give account of this at the last judgment. So St. Paul, Acts 20:28, commands the preachers, that they are to watch and guard the whole flock against the wolves that would appear among them, etc. So it becomes me to rebuke those who sin publicly, that they may do better, just as a judge must publicly convict and punish the evil-doers by virtue of his office. For we have said it often enough that Christ is not speaking here of a public office, but of all Christians in general, according as we are all alike before God.

Matthew 5:10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

I have said above that these statements and promises must all be understood as matters of faith, and as said concerning things that are not seen nor heard, and they have no reference to outward appearances. For how can those be said to be prosperous and blessed outwardly who are poor and mourn, and besides must suffer all sorts of persecution, which things the whole world and reason call adversity, and which they teach to avoid? Therefore whoever wants to have the blessedness and the good things that Christ here speaks of, he must lift up his heart above all senses and reason, and not judge himself by his feelings, but must argue thus: Am I poor, then am I not poor. Poor I am outwardly, according to the flesh, but before God in faith I am rich. So, when he feels sad, dejected and worried, he must not judge accordingly and say he is an unhappy man, but he must turn about and say: I feel sadness, indeed, misery and inward sorrow, but nevertheless I am blessed, cheerful and comfortably fixed upon the word of God. Just the opposite of this is the case, too, in the world, so that those who are called rich and happy are not so. For Christ utters his woe against them, and calls them unhappy, although it appears as if they were well off and succeeding admirably. Therefore they should raise their thoughts above riches and a good time which they are enjoying, and should say: I am indeed rich and live in the midst of enjoyment, but alas for me if I have nothing else than this! For amid all this there must assuredly be abundant misery, wretchedness and sorrow, that will overtake me before I am aware of it. The same is true of all these sayings, that every one of them has a different aspect before the world from that it wears according to these words.

Now we have hitherto treated nearly all the parts of a Christian mode of living and the spiritual fruits of faith in these two aspects: First, as to his person, that he is poor, sad, miserable, suffers want and hunger, and along with this, towards others is a useful, beneficent, merciful, peaceable man, and does nothing but good works. Here he now adds the last, how he is treated for all this — that although he is full of good works, even towards enemies and evil men, he must get this reward from the world, that he is persecuted, and lose body, life and everything for it.

Therefore, if you wish to be a Christian, consider this well, that you may be unterrified, and not on that account become out of heart and impatient, but be cheerful and content with it all, and know that you are not badly off when this happens to you. For the same thing happened to himself and all the saints, (as is soon hereafter stated,) and to those who wish to be Christians it is for this reason thus foretold, that they shall and must suffer persecution. Therefore you must make your choice. You have two ways open before you, either towards heaven and eternal life, or towards hell; either with Christ or with the world. But you must know this: If you live so that you will have a

good time here, and no persecution, then you will not get to heaven with Christ, and the converse; and you must, in short, either let Christ and heaven go, or choose this, that you will suffer all manner of persecution and evil treatment in the world. In a word, he who will have Christ, must forfeit personal ease, life, goods, honor, the favor of the world, and not be frightened at contemptuous treatment, ingratitude or persecution. The reason is this: The devil is a wicked, wrathful spirit, and neither can nor will endure it that a man enters the kindom of God. If any one undertakes to do this, he throws himself in his way, and stirs up and tries all the opposition against him that he can.

Therefore, if you wish to be a child of God, get ready for persecution, as the wise man says, and Paul in 2 Timothy 3:12 : “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Also Christ himself: “the disciple is not above his Master. Have they persecuted me? they will also persecute you.” It cannot be otherwise, therefore it is said: “Blessed are those that are persecuted for righteousness’ sake;” so that one may know with what to console himself. For otherwise it is a trying, unhappy condition, outwardly viewed, and has a bad influence, to be sitting constantly in bodily and pecuniary danger. But when faith takes hold, he can lift himself above it all and think: Now Christ has nevertheless said that I am blessed and well off. Because he has said it, I let this be my comfort and it gives me great delight. The word shall enlarge my heart — yea, make it greater than heaven and earth. For what are all that persecute me contrasted with this man or his word? Is it one or two that are persecuting us? Those who are on our side, who encourage, console and congratulate us, are many more, yes ten thousand angels to one of them, together with all the saints, who side with Christ and God himself. Therefore we must not let this word lie so cold and simple, but inflate it well and magnify it, and set it in opposition to all persecution; thus we will see and learn that all our suffering is to be despised as nothing at all, in contrast with this great consolation and eternal blessing. But he adds significantly this expression: “for righteousness’ sake;” to show that it is not enough to be persecuted if this be wanting. For the devil and bad people must also endure persecution and one scoundrel often quarrels with another, and they are not mutually friendly; as one murderer persecutes another, a Turk makes war upon a Tartar, but these are not for that reason happy; but it is true only of those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake; as also Peter, 1 Peter 4:15, says: “Let no one among you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evil-doer,” etc.

Therefore it all amounts to nothing for any one without this [i.e., righteousness] to boast and make an ado about great suffering; as the graceless monks have misled the poor people whom they have led out to punishment for their evil-doing, and have told them for their comfort that they were paying for their sin by their death. But do you beware of the death that is to atone for your sin. For this belongs to the bottom of hell.

There must first be righteousness and the death of Christ the Lord.

Therefore see to it, that you have in the first place a real divine cause for the sake of which you must suffer persecution, and are really sure of it, so that your conscience can safely rest upon it, even if the whole world were opposed to you. Therefore, first of all, the word of God must be confidently and firmly grasped, so that no doubt or hesitation can arise from that source. As, if now the emperor, bishops or princes wanted to forbid married life, liberty to eat, using both forms in the sacrament, etc., and would persecute you on that account: then you must see to it, that your heart

is sure of the matter and firmly convinced that the word of God has made these things free and unforbidden, yes, commands us to make a serious matter of them and stake even life upon them. Thus you can confidently say: this cause is not mine, but it is that of my Lord Christ. For I have not concocted it out of my own head, nor have I undertaken or begun it of my own accord, or at the advice or suggestion of any one else; but I have received it from the mouth of Christ, brought down and announced from heaven, who never belies or deceives me, but is himself pure truth and righteousness. Upon the word of this man I will venture to suffer, to do and leave undone whatever is befitting, and his word, by itself, shall avail more to comfort and strengthens my heart, than the raging and threatening of all devils and of the world can avail to terrify me. For what does it amount to, if a prince or emperor is foolishly furious in his rage, and threatens with sword, fire or the gallows, if my Savior on the contrary, friendly communes with my heart and comforts me with these assurances that I am blessed, and in hearty sympathy with my God in heaven, and all the heavenly host and holy beings call me blessed? If my heart and mind are in such a state that I can suffer for the sake of his word and work, why should I allow myself to be frightened by these wretched people, who indeed rage and foam in hostility against God, but who suddenly vanish like smoke or like poor soap-bubbles? As the prophet Isaiah says, Isaiah 51:12 sq.: “I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth,” etc., that is, he is everlasting and almighty who comforts thee and has pleasure in thee: when they all shall have vanished he will still be sitting above there, and thou too. Why will you then care more for the threatening and fuming of a miserable, stinking maggot-bag, than for this divine consolation and approbation? You should rather thank God, and be heartily glad of. it, that you are worthy to suffer thus, as the apostles went forth (Acts 5:41) “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”

See, are we not now highly blessed with these words, if we only accept it with loving gratitude? for there is no lack of persecution. And we have along with it the great advantage, that our enemies themselves cannot condemn our cause, and must confess (no thanks to them for it) that it is right and the truth; but there is this wanting in the matter, that we should teach it, for they will not learn or accept from us, what has never happened or been heard of before. Therefore, what we suffer on this account is a holy, blessed suffering, as they must themselves bear witness, and it is now no longer a human, but a real devilish persecution, so that they say we must and shall not call it the word of God, but must hold our tongue and not preach, unless we first go and fall at the feet of the Pope, and submit to be judged as it may please him and his minions.

Therefore let us suffer, so much the more willingly and joyfully, everything that they can do against us, because we have the strong, sure consolation, and great, glorious satisfaction, that our teaching and cause are confirmed by their own mouth; besides that, we hear in this place the excellent charming promise that we shall be well rewarded in heaven, and are to rejoice and exult in this, as those who do not need to look forward to heaven, but have it already; and they with their persecuting only the more help us thitherward, yes, actually drive us toward heaven. Now see, whether these simple, short words cannot give as much courage as the whole world can do, and inspire more comfort and joy than all the suffering and torment that our enemies can inflict upon us; if we do not hastily skim over them, but heartily appropriate them and duly consider them. This we have to say as to the persecution that is carried on by actual violence and affects person or

property, when Christians are seized and tortured, burned, hanged and massacred; as happens now, and has happened heretofore. Beyond this there is another kind of persecution which is called defamation, disgracing, putting to shame, which concerns our honor and good name, in which way Christians above all others have to suffer. Of this Christ now further treats.

Matthew 5:11. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake . This is also a great, severe persecution, and (as above said) the real suffering of Christians, that they are most bitterly and poisonously slandered and defamed. For, although other people too must suffer persecution, so that they are violently and unjustly treated; yet men are satisfied with allowing them to retain their honor and good name. This is therefore still no real Christian suffering. For to this it is not enough that all manner of tortures and torments are imposed upon them; but along with this their name must be most shamefully spit upon and slandered, so that the world loudly boasts, when it murders the Christians, that it has executed the worst scoundrels, whom the earth could no longer carry, and that it has done God the greatest and most acceptable service, as Christ says, John 16:2; so that there is no name upon earth so slandered and disgraced as that of a Christian, and no people so bitterly opposed and attacked by such malicious, poisonous tongues as the Christians.

They are showing this now thoroughly in their treatment of the dear gospel and its preachers, by such slanderous abuse, lying, deception, evil artifices, and malicious misrepresentations, that one would rather die ever so often than endure these poisonous, malicious darts. Here comes the Pope hurling his thunderbolts and damning us under nine hells, as children of the very worst devil. In like manner his hangers-on, bishops and princes, are raging and roaring with such an abominable vilifying and reviling as to strike one through and through, so that one: would at last have to become weary, and be no longer able to endure it, if we had not a stronger and mightier consolation than all their malice and rage amounts to. Therefore we let them rage and defame, that they may plague themselves and have the scorching misery with their poisonous insatiable hatred and envy. But we are well satisfied and in good spirits. If they are determined to be very angry and rage, we can, on the other hand, laugh and be cheerful.

Therefore I say again: Let him who wants to be a Christian know that he must expect to suffer such persecution from poisonous, wicked, slanderous tongues, especially where they can do nothing with their fists, that he may let all the world sharpen their tongues upon him, and aim at him, sting and strike him, and he on the other hand only defiantly despise all this, and besides laugh in God’s name, and let them rage in the name of their god, the devil, in the comfortable assurance (as above said) that our cause is right, and is God’s own, which they must themselves confirm, although they indeed condemn us, and yet say it is the truth; besides, our heart and conscience before God are assured that we are teaching aright. For we are not teaching out of our own head and reason or wisdom, nor are we seeking our own advantage, property or honor thereby before the world; but we preach and praise only God’s word and his doings. On the other hand they, our enemies, glory in nothing but their own works, merits and holiness, and us, who do not practice these things with them, they persecute on that account. For they do not persecute us as if we were adulterers, robbers or thieves, etc.; they can indeed tolerate amongst them the most desperate scoundrels and villains; but they raise a terrible hue and cry, because we will not approve their doctrine and life, and praise only the gospel, Christ, faith and really good works, and thus suffer not for ourselves, but everything for the sake of Christ the Lord. Therefore we will sing

the whole tune with them, and we will show them that our head is harder than theirs. For, in a word, they must let the man alone, whether they like it or not.

Matthew 5:12. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.

These are surely sweet, comforting words, that ought to make our heart cheerful and courageous against all sorts of persecution. Ought one not to regard as dearer and of more account the word and consolation of the dear Lord, than that of an impotent maggot-bag, or the raging, threatening, excommunicating, cursing and thundering of the abominable Pope, even if he were to pour out upon us the very dregs and whole hell of his wrath and cursing, like a cloudburst; because I hear that Christ my Lord is so heartily pleased, and orders me to be myself happy along with it, besides he promises me such an excellent reward, that the kingdom of heaven shall be mine and everything that Christ has, along with all saints and all Christendom; in short, such a treasure and consolation that I ought not to exchange it for all the world's possessions, joy and music, although every leaf and blade of grass were a tongue that sang my praises. For here it is not a Christian that calls one blessed, yes, not an angel, but the Lord of all the angels, at whose feet both they and all creatures must fall and offer supplication. Therefore they, along with all other creatures, even the very leaves and grass, must cheerfully join in singing about me and dancing in my praise. And what on the other hand are they who slander and curse me but mere nits and lousy fellows (pardon the expression), yes, much more infamous than can be told. Even if all creatures, the leaves and blades of grass in the forest, and the grains of sand along the sea-shore, were so many tongues to rebuke and annihilate them, what would all that be in contrast with the single word of this man? For his voice sounds so clearly that heaven and earth must be filled and resound with it, whilst on the other hand the slobbery, hoarse scratching and coughing of his enemies are no longer heard.

See, thus we ought to learn a little how to use and take advantage of these words, that do not stand here in vain, but were spoken and written to strengthen and comfort us, with which he as our dear Master and faithful Shepherd or Bishop, equips us to be unterrified and well prepared to suffer, if they impose upon us all manner of torment and misfortune for his sake, both by words and deeds, and that we may despise all that is offensive to us, and condemn it despite our reason and heart.

For, if we are led by our own thoughts and feelings, we have a hard time of it, and it hurts that one should serve, help, advise and benefit the world and everybody, and get no thanks for it but the very worst, most bitter hatred, and cursed, poisonous tongues, so that, if flesh and blood were to rule here, it would soon say: If I am to get nothing else for this, then let who will cling to the gospel and be a Christian, and let the devil henceforth help the world, if it will have it so. Hence too everybody is now complaining and crying — the gospel is making much discord, strife and disturbance in the world, and everything is worse since it has been published than it was before, when every thing moved along quietly, and there was no persecution, and the people lived together as good friends and neighbors. But this is what it means: If you will not have the gospel or be a Christian, then go and be a worldling, and nobody will persecute you, and you will be a friend of the world. But if you will have the gospel and Christ, then you must expect to have trouble, contention and persecution wherever you go.

Reason: because the devil won't allow it to be otherwise, or cease to egg the people on against the gospel, so that all the world is incensed against it; just as now farmers, citizens, noblemen, princes and lords, who are hostile to the gospel from sheer wantonness, and do not themselves know why.

Therefore I make this reply to these idle talkers and grumblers: There neither can nor ought to be a peaceful, quiet state of things. For how could it be so where the devil is ruling, and is a deadly enemy to the gospel? And this, indeed, not without reason, for it hurts him in his kingdom, so that he feels it; and if he would let it move on unhindered, his kingdom would soon be totally destroyed. But if he is to resist and hinder it, then he must rally all his art and power, and stir up against it whatever he can. Therefore do not hope for any peace and quietness as long as Christ and his gospel are in the midst of the devil's kingdom. And woe upon the pleasant and comfortable time that used to be, and upon those who now wish to have it back again! For this is a sure sign that the devil is ruling with great power, and no Christ is here; as I, alas! am concerned, lest it be so again, and the gospel be taken away from us Germans all too soon, which is what these noisy fellows are struggling for. But we have this assurance, that it is not our fault that things are not going right. For we would be heartily glad if everything went right, and have done our part by teaching, exhorting, beseeching, entreating and yielding, even towards our enemies, offering them peace, and everything that we ought to do; yet we accomplish nothing, except that they persecute, slander and abuse us most shamefully, and cannot cease until they may cool their rage in our blood. As it will not there fore be otherwise, we let them go on at last with their threatening, raging and defaming, and take to ourselves the comfort of which we have heard, assured, that they cannot accomplish what they desire unless they first have hurled Christ from heaven, and made him, with all that he has said, a liar. "For thus persecuted they the prophets that were before you." You are not alone (he means to say) in suffering thus. Look about you and count backward to all the holy fathers that ever lived before you, and you will find that they were served the same way. What special treatment do you expect? Is he to change his plan on your account? He had to suffer it in the case of his dear patriarchs and prophets, that they were persecuted and slain, besides being persecuted and traduced by everybody, and made the mock of the world, as we see in the Scriptures, that it was a common proverb, if one wishes to name a prophet, one names for them a fool; as in the history of Jehu, 2 Kings 9:11, they said of a prophet: "Wherefore came this mad fellow to thee?" And Isaiah shows, Isaiah 57:4, how they "made a wide mouth and drew out the tongue" against him. But what did they gain thereby? For now the dear prophets and saints have honor and praise in all the world, and besides are ruling forever with Christ the Lord; but they are an abominable stench and are accursed. This you are to expect for yourselves (says Christ) assuredly, that you shall be rewarded as they are, only more abundantly and gloriously than you can believe, or even dare to desire. For you belong to the same company.

See, this is surely an excellent, precious Preacher and faithful Master, who omits nothing that serves to strengthen and console, both by word and promise, besides by the example and testimony of all the saints and of himself; and with this agree all the angels in heaven and all creatures. What more, then, should we have and desire? Should we not in consideration of such consolation, for his sake patiently endure the wrath and insolence of the world and the devil? What would we do, if we had not a righteous divine cause, and such excellent assurances, and still had to suffer like other people who have no consolation? For it cannot be in the world that one need

not suffer anything, and there must be (as above said) some suffering on account of the gospel, that the pious may thereby be tested and helped to their promised consolation, joy and blessedness; but the wicked and despisers or enemies of the gospel be punished and damned.

Thus now, has Christ hitherto prepared and instructed his Christians, how they are to live and suffer in the world, and especially those who are to hold public office in the Church; although even aside from this, every Christian ought to be always ready to stand by himself, where it is necessary, to confess his Lord, and to represent his faith, and be always ready-armed against the world, the devil, the mob, and whatever may be arrayed against him. Now he goes further, and means to commit to them the office, and teach them how to administer it; afterward also to lay upon their lips what and how they are to preach. For with these characteristics a Christian is entirely perfect if he personally lives right and suffers variously because of this, if he afterwards also properly administers his office, in which he is to serve and help others. Thus he now adds:

Matthew 5:13. Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. With the word salt he indicates (as above said) what their office is to be. For salt is not salt for itself; it cannot salt itself; but this is the use of it, that one salts meat with it, and other things needed in the kitchen, so that they retain their taste, re main fresh, and do not decay. So, says he, Ye are also salt; not that which belongs to the kitchen, but that with which this flesh, which is the whole world, may be salted. This is indeed a glorious office, and a great, excellent honor, that God should call them his salt, and adds, that they are to salt everything that is upon earth. But to be this a man is needed, who is ready, as Christ has hitherto taught, to be poor, wretched, thirsty, meek, etc., and to suffer all kinds of persecution, reviling and defamation. If this be wanting, the man will never be a preacher who will do the right kind of salting, but he will be a savorless salt, that is of no manner of use. For it is asking a great deal, and heaping it on too heavily, that the poor fishermen or any poor despised man should be called before God a salt of the earth, and undertake to lay hold and salt everything that is of human kind upon earth. Reason and nature cannot do it; for it grows weary of it, and cannot bear that it must get from it only disgrace, shame and misfortune, and would soon say: Let the devil salt the world for me.

Therefore our holy fathers, bishops, monks and hermits have acted shrewdly in neglecting preaching and attending to other matters, or have withdrawn from intercourse with the people; for they saw that it costs too much to sit in constant danger of losing honor, property and life, and they thought, we will hand it over to others, and meanwhile creep into corners and serve God, having a good time. Hence it is a difficult matter to be an apostle or preacher, and fill such an office; yes, impossible, judging according to flesh and blood. But there must be such people as do it willingly for the sake of God and Christ the Lord, who does not wish to force any one to it or drive him with commands. For to be a Christian demands a willing heart; he who does not heartily desire it had better let it alone. But our joyful and defiant confidence is this, when we are in trouble, the world and the devil looking askance at us, and doing us all the harm they can, that he says to us: Ye are the salt of the earth. When this word shines into the heart, so that a man can rely upon it, and be absolutely sure that he is God’s salt, then let him be wrathful and malicious who will not laugh. I can be more confident and boast more upon his single word than they upon all their power, swords and guns. For because he recognizes me as being that, and gives the evidence of it through his word, all the angels in heaven, yes, sun and moon, together with all creatures, must confirm it and

stand by us against the world and the devil. And even if that were not so, we would still have enough in his single word, that he thus names and baptizes us. That they must let stand; and we will surely be before them in honor as long as Christ and his word endures.

Now it is easy to understand how it is with this salting, namely, that one must stand up and say: everything that is born and lives upon earth, is of no account, it is rotten and corrupt before God. For, because he says bluntly and plainly, they shall be a salt of the earth, that is, as to everything that the world is; then it must follow, that everything that is in the world, and is called flesh, or mankind, must be rebuked and thoroughly salted, so that we condemn the sanctity, the wisdom and the divine worship of all the world, self-devised, aside from the word of God, as coming from the devil and belonging to the pit of hell, if it do not hold to Christ alone. This is then a harsh style of preaching; it makes us disagreeable to the world, and deserves that men get angry at us and strike us in the mouth. For the world could easily endure that we preach aright about Christ and all the articles of the faith; but it we want to lay hold of them and salt them by showing that their wisdom and sanctity are of no account, yes, are blind and damned, this it cannot and will not endure, and it charges the preachers with not being able to do anything but scolding and biting; it blames us with having disturbed society and created discord, with having maligned the clergy and good works. But what can we do about it? If we are to salt, it must bite. And although they denounce us as biters, we know that it has to be so, and Christ has ordered this, and he means that the salt shall be sharp and bite away, as we shall hear. So St. Paul also does constantly; he rebukes the whole world and denounces all its living and acting, if there be no faith in Christ; and Christ says, John 16:8, “when the Holy Ghost comes, he shall reprove the world of sin,” etc., that is, he shall attack everything that he finds in the world, shall make no exception or difference, shall not rebuke some and praise others, or punish only thieves and scoundrels: but he will seize all, all in a mass, one with another, whether one be great, small, pious, wise, holy, or whatever he may be; in short, everything that is not Christ. For the Holy Ghost does not need to come into the world or send preachers into the world that he may exhibit and punish outwardly gross sins, adultery, murder, etc., which the world itself can very well know and punish; but that which it regards as the most precious, and in which it is at its best, claiming to be pious and holy, and meaning thereby to serve God.

Therefore it is all wrong, that some now sophistically assert that it is enough that a preacher tell every one what is right, and simply preach the gospel, but that one dare not touch the Pope, the bishops, princes and other ranks or persons, whereby much discord and contention are occasioned; but the real meaning is: If you will preach the gospel and be of use to the people, you must be sharp and rub the salt into the wounds, that is, must show the opposite and rebuke what is not right, as now the mass, monkery, indulgences, etc., and everything that is connected with them, so that these scandals are removed and no one is thereby deceived. Therefore we must keep on here with our salting, that we may protest and leave no room for its coming back again or being sneakingly introduced; for this will happen, if the salting is not diligently kept up, as used to be the case in Christendom, so that miserable rotten human teaching ruled and ruined everything; which would not have been the case, if the salt had remained. For there would have been no lack of sound doctrine, because by the grace of God still the Scriptures, the gospel, the sacraments, the pulpits remained in the Church, if only the bishops and preachers had attended to this, and had employed these means for salting with them whatever is of the old Adam.

Therefore Christ here exhorts and warns the disciples so diligently that they see to it that this salting is always attended to, and says: If the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it then be salted? Salt that has lost its savor means that which has lost its strength and sharpness, and no longer seasons or bites; that is, when the office in Christendom deteriorates so that one ceases to reprove the people, and does not show them their misery and their inability, nor insist upon repentance and self-knowledge, lets them live along as if they were pious and all right, and thus allows their wrong notions of self-righteousness and self-chosen worship to prevail so long, until the true doctrine concerning faith is entirely wrecked, and Christ is lost, and things come to such a pass that there is no help for it. This he foresaw as here intimated, and he predicted the future danger, even the injury and corruption of Christendom, that this salting or official rebuking would be neglected, and instead of it there would arise a swarm of parties and sects, when every one would herald his own hobby as a true doctrine and worship, when all this is nothing else than worldy, carnal notions, originating in our own head and reason, wherewith we tickle ourselves and thus actually rot in them, as in a mass of natural, stinking, rotten flesh, upon which salting and rebuking are thrown away. From this you see how much importance is attached to this matter, so that Christ with good reason treats of it here, before all the rest, and commends it so earnestly. For without this Christendom cannot exist, and Christ cannot endure, nor can there be proper thinking or living: so that there is indeed no great injury or corruption of Christendom, except where the salt, wherewith everything else should be seasoned and salted, has lost its savor. And this happens so easily. For it is a poison of such a kind that it is pleasant to take, and exactly suits the old Adam. For he does not like to stand in such danger, risk life and limb or suffer persecution, disgrace and defamation.

Hence our bishops and clergy are the shrewdest people upon earth, in this matter, (though they are not good enough to be called salt that has lost its savor, but are the very devil himself, for they do not at all attend to their bishop’s office, but are themselves the greatest persecutors); for the), preach in such a way, as to keep out of danger, and have money and property, besides honor and power; for whoever has to rebuke the world at large, emperors, kings, princes, wise men, learned men, and say that their way of living is damned before God, he must have his head taken off. But if I act the hypocrite before them, and say they are all right, then I go scot free, keep my favor and honor, etc., and meantime flatter myself that I mean nevertheless along with this to preach the gospel. But despite all that, I have become salt that has lost its savor. For in that way I let the people stick in their own old crazy notion and carnality, so that they go to the devil, and I at the head of them. This office thus encounters many temptations and hindrances, both on the right and left, so that many keep silence either through fear of the danger of harm and persecution, or for the sake of honor, property or enjoyment.

Besides, we are weak, lazy and averse to this duty, so that we are easily led to neglect it, and grow weary, when we see that things do not go as we like, and it looks as though it were of no use, and the people act contemptuously, yes, even become worse the more we rebuke them.

Therefore we must be firmly set against all this, and have respect only to the command of Christ, who imposes this office upon us, and means that we are to open our mouths promptly, and rebuke what is to be rebuked; paying no attention to our own danger, inconvenience or advantage and enjoyment, neither to the malice and contempt of other people, and take comfort from the fact that he makes us his salt, and will support us in doing our duty. And he commands us confidently to

salt, without giving heed to it or allowing ourselves to be alarmed about it, whether the world will not endure it, and consequently persecute us; nor are we to despair although, as we think, we are accomplishing nothing. For what he commands us to do, we should be pleased and satisfied with, and let him decide what and how much he may accomplish through us. If the people will not hear or accept it, we are nevertheless salt, and have done our official duty. Then we can with all honor and cheerfulness stand before the bar of God and testify that we have faithfully told every man his duty, and have stuck nothing under the bench, so that they have no excuse, as if they did not understand, and it had not been told them. But those who allow themselves to be scared, and are silent for the sake of favor, honor or worldly good, they will have at the last day to hear it said of them: This was our preacher, and he did not tell us of it; and he will not excuse them, although they say: Lord, they would not hear. For Christ will say in reply: Do you not know that I commanded you to salt, and diligently warned you to do it; ought you not to have feared my word more than them? This ought in all conscience to alarm us. For here you hear the sentence that he pronounces upon all such salt that has lost its savor, and says:

Matthew 5:13. “It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.” That is as much as to say: They shall not have a good time of it even here upon earth, but shall be completely rejected by Christ as those who no longer belong to him, and shall never be his preachers nor belong to Christendom, wholly cast out and robbed of all fellowship in heaven and with all saints; although they may retain the name, and are held in high honor by the people as the best preachers and holiest people upon earth; as was the case in the papacy at the time when it was the most pious and holy, (not as now, when it has grown to be a worldly imperialism and a spiritual devils’ government,) when the pope himself preached and ruled the churches, and had everything admirably arranged, and brought under settled rules and regulations, (as St. Gregory did, and some before and after him,)which all the world held to be the best government, and the holiest form of worship that could be established upon earth, and yet it was all of no account. For there was no salt there, by which this should have been brought to the test of the word of God, and should have been rebuked, as being our own self-devised holiness; but all the world praised and sanctioned it, and thus gave encouragement to those who were arrogantly presumptuous and trusted in it, as if they were leading a truly blessed life and were a holy class; as it also praises and exalts St. Gregory himself, so that, although he was a holy man (as I regard him) yet he accomplished no good by his teaching, and yet made so fair a show that no one can find fault with it, so that, if they could now bring back matters and restore them to what they were, nobody would dare say a word against it, or he would have to be called the vilest heretic that ever was. This is now one part of the warning, namely, if the salt have lost its savor it is no longer of any use. The other part sounds still more terrible, when he pronounces the sentence upon it, that we are to let it be “cast out and trodden under foot of men.” If the true salt, that is the true interpretation of Scripture, has disappeared, by which the whole world should be rebuked, and which should let nothing avail but only simple faith in Christ, then it is all over, and all our teaching and rebuking does no more good. For God has already rejected and damned both the teaching and the living, the master and the pupil. In short, if this point concerning Christ be not insisted upon, that we are justified and saved through him alone, and if we do not hold all else, aside from him as damned, all resistance and restraint is at an end, yes, there is no measure or limit of all heresy and error, of all sects and parties, when everybody invents and scatters abroad something peculiar of his own; as used to be the case among us under the Pope, when no monk could have a dream without

dragging it into the pulpit, and making a special divine service out of it, and no lies were so shameful that they were not accepted, if only any one ventured to take them into the pulpit; until at last things went so far that not only Christ was lost, but God besides, and they themselves believed hardly a single article of the faith any more, so that I may say that in a hundred years there were few Popes that believed a single article; just as it is now in German countries, among those with whom the article concerning Christ has disappeared and one factious party and error after the other has arisen: when one denies the sacrament, another baptism and other articles, and many become altogether Epicurean, who believe nothing at all, just like the Popes and their cardinals at Rome, and so at last become nothing but swine and kine, and die like these.

Therefore, I have always exhorted, just as Christ here does, that the salt remain salt, and lose not its savor, that is, that we urgently insist upon the principal article of the faith. For if this be neglected, not one part can rightly remain, and all is lost; there is no faith or understanding any more, so that no one can give right instruction or advice. In short, one must let everybody trample upon him, that is (as above said,) no bacchanalian or jackass is so contemptible, but that if he can only invent something new, everybody will run after him and believe it. For what have not the abominable monks hitherto dared brazenfacedly to preach, and beguile the people with their brotherhoods, little prayers, rosaries, yes, with their scabby hoods, that they put upon the dead, and therewith promise them heaven? What is that else, than to let every body trample upon you, and be at the mercy of every preacher of lies? This comes from the devil's getting possession of the heart and totally ruining it with his rotten, damnable doctrines and superstition, so that Christ is gone, and the knowledge of him is lost. For if I cling to this, that Christ alone is my righteousness and holiness, no monk will ever persuade or mislead me by his hood, rosary, this or that work and childish human notion. For through faith I am a judge of all imaginable conditions and ways of living, so that I can condemn everything that offers to show me anything else that is to avail before God. But if I neglect this, and let the treasure go, and am instructed to seek elsewhere and otherwise to be pious, to conciliate God and atone for sin, then I am already prepared for all sorts of snares and nets of the devil, and to let myself be led as he pleases; then presently comes some one who preaches to me: If you want to be pious and serve God, then put on a hood, pray daily so many rosaries, burn so many little candles to St. Anna: then I fall in with this like a blind man and everybody's fool and prisoner, and do everything I am told, so completely that I cannot defend myself from even the most trifling mistake.

See, Christ has himself here foretold this, and given warning that so it would be; and no one has ever lived who knew just how to be on his guard against it. And if we are not now wide awake, and do not take good care that we firmly hold this article, then it will happen to us also, that we hold no article properly and purely, nor cease to err and create factious parties until it is all over, and no preaching or teaching will be of use any more, but we shall stay swine and kine; as it is, alas! already among the great mass, because of our despising the gospel and being ungrateful for it.

Matthew 5:14-15. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candle-slick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. This is the other part of the office which he commits to the clear apostles; that they are to be called, and to be a light of the world, namely to instruct souls and point them to eternal life; by this he subjects the whole world to the apostles, that it is to be and must be enlightened through them, and concludes that it all, with everything that it can do, is nothing but

darkness and blindness. For if it without this had a light that could enlighten its (as it indeed thinks it has,)why did he need the apostles for this? Now see, if this is not a high, excellent office, and an honor above all honor, that everybody in the world, whether called kings, princes, lords, learned men, wise men, holy men, must sit down, and the apostles stand up, and all must let their wisdom, holiness, etc., be rebuked and condemned, as those who do not know what to teach or how to live, or how they are off with God. But here comes master Pope with his ugly bishops, who want to be called the vicegerents of Christ, and of the apostles; who undertake to master the word of Christ, and depreciate the apostles, where they drivel that it was not enough that the apostles preached, and that the Holy Ghost sent forth light through them, but we must hear and heed the councils of the holy fathers, and the ordinances of the Popes, who have taught much more and better. But we are to know that Christ is not such a juggler who talks with half words; but, because he calls them a light of the world, their teaching alone must avail and be sufficient to enlighten all the world, so that one needs no other light;.yes, that what is apart from their teaching is nothing but darkness. Although they may shine long with their lantern, it is after all nothing but mere laws devised by men concerning external things which without their help everybody understands, and could easily himself discover and make so that one ought in fact to call them not lux mundi [light of the world,] but lex Dei [law of God], as those who undertake to govern God him self and his Christendom with their laws, just as if they were much better than the apostles. They obscure thus the light of the apostles with their blind doctrine, with which they cannot properly rebuke or instruct any man's conscience; as we see in all the books of the Pope, and of all the universities, and so they cannot be called either salt or light. For when they do their best, they rebuke the gross, external things that have already been condemned by secular law and the light of reason. But the really hard knots and principal things, as unbelief, false sanctity, they take no notice of, yes, are themselves in them over head and ears. Therefore their teaching is sheer nonsense, and besides darkness and blindness, not to be able to see anything higher to salt and to enlighten than how one is to eat flesh or fish, to dress and behave this or that way.

Therefore, it surely is and remains the office of the apostles alone both to rebuke aright the real internal vices, and again to heal, comfort and cheer up all poor distressed consciences, and allow no one to go unrebuked in wrong-doing or uninstructed and unencouraged in what is good. Therefore Christ also here appoints and consecrates them as preachers, that we shall and must hear them alone, and admit no other factious spirits whom the devil brings in alongside of them, who claim to be the salt and light, yes, even to lord it over Christ, and scream out, the doctrine of faith amounts to nothing, one must aim higher, and otherwise afflict one's self, so that one suffers and mortifies himself: which, if one looks at it on all sides, is nothing but being taught about our own doing, and yet never amounts to showing what is unbelief and rebuking the real arrogant vices that are sticking in that same doctrine, with which they set themselves up as salt and light; they do not stop with the calling and command which he here gives to the apostles and says: Ye shall be the light; at this alone we aim, that we may be sure of this, and confidently say, that Christ has consecrated us to this, and has made it the duty of Christians to salt and shine by virtue of our office and by divine command. For this is also for this reason necessary, because Christ means that this office shall be exercised not secretly or in only one place, but openly, throughout the world; and he shows them plainly enough, what they have to expect from the world, when he says: "a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and set it under a bushel," etc. That is as much as to say: He who wants to be a light must see to it that he do not creep into a

corner, but stand forth publicly and be not afraid. For so it goes, as we said before, that those who are called to be apostles, and shine, do not like to come to the front, allow themselves to be frightened off by threats, danger, persecution, or are befooled with friendship, favor, honor and worldly good, so that they do not come forward and open their mouths, but creep into corners, hide behind the hills, and shut up their whistles. So it is with our clergy who sit in office; and they are ordered to stand up before Christendom and publicly shine with their teaching; but they hide it under the bench, yes, have become worse than that, for they are the very ones that persecute the word, and want to put out the light, and only stir up against it emperors, kings and the whole world; at the same time they sit in the house and want to rule alone the church, have possession of pulpit, baptism, sacrament, and everything that belongs to the calling and office. But this is what the apostles predicted, that shepherds should become wolves, and Antichrist should sit in the temple of God, and exalt himself above everything that is called God and is worshipped. In contrast with these are the other factious spirits, who have no calling to this office, who might well remain at home in the corner; they want to push themselves in everywhere and be the only ones to shine, so that everybody must hear them and look to them. But these, too, seek only thereby their own honor, and they preach only so long as the people hang on to them and they need fear no danger. But if they were to stand as true preachers, to whom the office is entrusted, and steadily shine in public, letting no wind or weather frighten or silence them, they would soon disappear and let nobody be found at home. So the dear office of the ministry has to be treated on both sides, that either those neglect it who should exercise it, or those want to exercise it who have not been called to it; and so it is never properly attended to, except when Christ provides such persons as he here describes and has prepared beforehand, as above.

He means now here to say: If you wish to be my preachers, you must be really prepared to take your place publicly and stand up before the world, as upon a high mountain, that you may be readily seen and openly heard, concealing nothing or hiding it under the bench, that you ought to preach, neither keeping silence or speaking out of love to any one; but, as you are the light, shining openly and free, without regard to honor or shame, wealth or poverty, hatred or favor, death or life; and know that you are serving me, who has appointed you to be the light. Such would then be the right kind of people, who do not let themselves be bent to the one side or to the other; as Psalms 45:1-17 : says concerning the office of the ministry: “The scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness,” etc. This is the virtue and glory of the gospel and its preachers. For all other teachings are free from danger, they all preach what people like to hear and what is agreeable to reason, they need not fear that any one will persecute them. But this teaching is everywhere opposed, because it will come to the front and show that the light and teaching of the world is of no account; then they try in every way to obscure for us this light, and push it into a corner, or throw it under a bushel, so that we may drop our teaching, or recant and let ourselves be bent and interpreted as they may please. But we will not let ourselves be driven from our position, but will continue to be a city upon a hill, and the light upon the candlestick in the house. For he who has made us the light will surely keep us as such. Therefore he now concludes:

Matthew 5:16. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

See how earnestly he urges the exhortation, which he would have no need to do, if there were not great danger and occasion for it; and it is as much as to say: They will try to obscure your light, and will not endure it; but only be bold and in good heart against them, so that you may accomplish only this much, that you do not creep under the bushel, but perform honestly the duties of your office, then I will see to it that they shall not thus obscure it. For this is certain, so long as a Christian preacher stands in his lot and does his duty, and can despise the world's abuse and persecution, the office too must remain, and the gospel cannot fall, because there are still those remaining who hold to it; as there must be some abiding evermore, even to the last day. That is to say, however: "That they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven," is spoken after the manner of St. Matthew, who is in the habit of speaking in this way of works. For he, together with the other two evangelists, Mark and Luke, does not in his gospel treat so fully and profoundly upon the great subject of Christ as St John and St. Paul. Therefore they speak and exhort much about good works; as indeed both should in Christendom be insisted upon, yet each in proportion to its nature and dignity: that one should first and most of all hold forth faith and Christ, and afterwards inculcate works. Since now the evangelist John has most thoroughly and powerfully discussed the main topic, and is rightly therefore regarded as the highest and foremost evangelist: Matthew, Luke and Mark have treated and strongly urged the other side, so that it should not be forgotten; so that in this matter they are better than John, and he again in the other. But you must not look at what is said and taught about works in such a way as to separate faith from them, as they are docked by our blind teachers: but always connect them with faith, so that they are incorporated with it, spring from faith and move with it, and are praised and called good be. cause of it; as I have often taught. So also here, when he says: that they may see your good works, you must not regard them as mere trifling works, without faith, as the good works of our clergy have hitherto been; but as such works that faith performs, and that cannot be done without faith. For by good works here he means the practicing, illustrating and confessing the teaching concerning Christ, and suffering for doing it. For he speaks of those works with which we shine. But shining is the proper office of faith or teaching, whereby we help others also to believe.

Therefore it is works of the highest and best character, just those from which it must necessarily follow, as he here says, that our heavenly Father is honored and praised. For this teaching or preaching takes from us all the glamour of holiness, and says, there is nothing good in us whereof we can boast. And besides, it interests the conscience, how it is to deal with God, exhibits to it the grace and mercy of God, and the entire Christ: that is, it truly reveals and praises God, which is also the true sacrifice and worship.

These works are to be the first and most important, that are followed also by those that are called works of love, in daily life and outward treatment of our neighbor; these shine also, but only in so far as they are begun and carried on in faith.

Now you can yourself conclude that St. Matthew here is not to be understood concerning the common works which every one is to do towards his neighbor, from love, of which he speaks in Matthew 25:1-46; but chiefly of the true Christian work, namely correct teaching, insisting upon faith and showing how to strengthen and keep it, whereby we testify that we are true Christians. For the others are not so reliable, since even sham Christians can bedeck and hide themselves under great, beautiful works of love. But to teach and confess Christ truly is not possible without faith; as St. Paul says, 1 Corinthians 12:3 : "No one can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Ghost."

For no sham Christian or factious spirit can understand this doctrine; how much less can he properly preach and confess it, although he uses the words and echoes them, and yet does not adhere to them or let them be clear? — preaching always in such a way that one sees he does not understand it, smears his slobber over it, by which he steals the honor from Christ and appropriates it to himself. For this alone is the surest work of a true Christian, if he so praises and preaches Christ that the people learn this, how they are nothing and Christ is everything. In short, it is such a work that is done not with reference to one or two, when it remains hidden as other works; but publicly before the whole world to shine and let itself be seen, and alone for this reason is also persecuted. (For other works they can very well endure.) Therefore it is properly called such a work by which our Father is recognized and praised. This the other less important works cannot attain to, that have to do only with our fellow-men, and belong to the second table of the law. These have to do with the first three great commandments that refer to God's honor, name and word; and besides they must be well tested and purified by persecution and suffering, that they may endure; also be defamed before the world that they may remain free from the desire of personal honor, and from arrogance, and be so much the more praised before God, as his honor and praise are thereby assailed [i.e. by works courting self-praise, personal honor, etc.]. Therefore, too, they stand most securely, so that God the more vigorously defends them, and makes them effective over against the violent persecutions of the world. Therefore we should give these works the decided preference as by far the most important, and afterward perform the others also as between ourselves and our fellow-men, that so both may have their due — that we first of all constantly teach and insist upon faith, and then live accordingly, and thus everything that we do is of faith; as I have always taught.

Matthew 5:17. Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; [am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

Because Christ the Lord entrusted and strongly commended the office to the apostles, he now goes further and himself begins both to salt and to shine as an example for them, that they may know what they are to preach; and attacks both the teaching and the life of the Jews, to rebuke and to reform their wrong notions and doings; although here, as I have said, he does not treat of the great principal doctrine of faith; but first he begins below, and rightly explains and extols the law, which was greatly obscured and perverted by their Pharisees and Scribes. For that is also a very important matter, that one should make the teaching of God's commands clear and set them forth correctly. But it is a sharp, unendurable salt, that he attacks and condemns these people as neither teaching nor living aright, and finds fault with them in everything, who were yet the very best and holiest, who were daily teaching the commands of God, and were exercising themselves in holy worship, etc., so that no one could rebuke them; he gave them thereby occasion to fiercely exclaim against him, and to accuse him of wishing to undermine and destroy the law which God had given, etc.' just as the Pope and his crowd cry out against us, and denounce us as heretics who forbid the doing of good works. So he foresaw very well that he would be thus charged, and that his teaching would be interpreted in this way. Therefore he anticipates with a preface and explanation that it is not his intention to undermine the law; but that he is here for the very purpose of rightly teaching and confirming it against those who would weaken it by their teaching. For there was surely need of such a statement, on account of the high reputation that they had, and in view of the excellent show that they knew how to make and dress up, that they alone were the people of

God, that they had so many prophets and holy fathers, that whoever ventured to rebuke them would have to hear at once: Who art thou, that thou wilt be alone wise and blame everybody, as though our fathers and we have all been in error, who have the word of God and preach it? Just as the whole world is now howling at us, and saying we condemn the holy fathers and the whole Church that surely cannot err, because it is ruled by the Holy Ghost, etc. Because thou art blaming our doctrine and life, this is a sign that thou condemnest both the law and the prophets, the fathers and the whole people. To this now Christ replies: No, I will surely not destroy the law or the prophets, but I hold them in honor and insist upon their observance more earnestly and diligently than you do; yes, so earnestly that heaven and earth shall pass away before I will allow a letter or the smallest tittle to perish or to have been written in vain; yes, I will still further say, that whosoever despises the very least commandment or teaches otherwise, he shall on account of this very smallest thing in the kingdom of heaven be rejected, although he rightly kept all the rest. Therefore we agree upon this point, that we are strictly to teach and observe Moses and the prophets; but the point now is, since we both are required to and wish to teach the law (as also now both parties, viz. the Pope together with the other crowds, and we appeal to the same Scriptures, exalt at the same time the one gospel and word of God), that one may be sure which side rightly holds and interprets the Scriptures or the laws of God, or which does not. About this there is dispute. Here I must salt and rebuke. For the Jews with their glosses have perverted and corrupted the law: and I have come to set things right again; just as we have had to attack the preachings of the Pope, that have corrupted for us the Scriptures with their stench and filth.

He does not thereby deny that they are the people of God, and have the law, the fathers and the prophets; just as we do not deny or condemn the Christians, baptism, gospel, that were under the Pope, but we say, it is the right baptism, gospel, etc., that we have. But we fight against accepting what they have daubed over them, and approving of the way in which they interpret and pervert them, and have defiled the pure doctrine with their nasty and maggoty, yes devilish appendage of their hoods, tonsures, indulgences, purgatory, sacrificial masses, etc. Here we have to salt and work, that we may clear out this stench and make things clean. So it appears that just those who are really destroying the law and the Scriptures adorn themselves with the beautiful name of the Scriptures, the gospel, the Christian Church, etc., and, under this pretense, bring in their maggots, and have so corrupted the church as to rob it of its value; and then they make an ado about us, that we are assailing the Christian Church, the holy fathers, good works, etc.

He now says: I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it; that is, I will not bring another or a new law, but will take the Scriptures that you have and properly extol them, and explain them in such a way that you may know how we are to demean ourselves. For the Gospel or the preach-lug of Christ does not bring a new doctrine which neutralizes or changes the law; but just that (as St. Paul says) which was promised before in the Scriptures and by the prophets. We accept, therefore, from those who are with us the very same Scriptures, baptism, sacraments, etc., which they have, and do not wish to propose anything new or better. But this we do for the sole purpose that the same may be rightly preached and treated, and that whatever does not accord with it may be taken out of the way.

St. Augustine explains the word “fulfill” in two ways; first, that fulfilling the law means when one adds to the law what it lacks; and secondly, when one fulfills it by working and living. But the first explanation is wrong. For the law is in itself so rich and perfect that one need add nothing to it. For

the apostles themselves had to prove the gospel and the preaching concerning Christ out of the Old Testament. Therefore no one, not even Christ himself, can improve the law. For what can be devised or taught higher than the teaching of the first commandment: Thou shalt love God with all thy heart, etc.? He does this, however, that he gives in addition to the law and the doctrine his grace and Spirit, so that one may do and fulfill what the law demands; but that does not mean adding anything to the law. And so he is here not speaking about that, but of the fulfilling that is done by teaching; just as he defines destroying, not as acting against the law by works, but as detracting from the law by teaching. Therefore we have the same truth here that St. Paul utters in Romans 3:31 : “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law,” namely, that he does not mean to bring another doctrine, as though the former one were no longer to avail; but he means to preach and extol the same properly, to show the real kernel and meaning of it, that they may learn what the law is and demands, over against the glosses of the Pharisees, which they have inserted, and have preached only the shells or husks of it. Just as we may say to our papistic friends: we do not wish to abolish your gospel or preach it differently, but to clean it off and polish it, as a mirror that is dimmed and soiled by your filth, so that nothing more than the name of the gospel is left, but no one could rightly see anything in it: so the Jewish teachers kept the text of the law, but with their additions so corrupted it that no correct understanding or use of it could remain.

Matthew 5:18. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. That is, I insist upon it, that it must all be taught and held pure and entire, and not the least part of it be done away; whereby he shows that he found it far otherwise, namely, that both doctrine and life had not been rightly conducted. Therefore he must (as here follows) take in hand both of these and thoroughly salt them, that there may be a purification. So also must we teach that we do not allow a letter to be detached from the gospel, but say:

Everything must be taught, believed and held purely. He thus intimates that he is about to preach a sharp sermon, and will not lie under the charge that he means to destroy the law; but will turn the attack from himself upon them, and prove how they have weakened and destroyed the law, and for this have daubed their glosses over it. Just as our papistic neighbors have done with the gospel and the Scriptures, when they utterly ignored the most important topic, justification by faith; also, they have withheld one form from the sacrament and concealed the words of the sacrament; yes, they have so coarsely misrepresented, that they have preached these commandments which Christ here announces, not as necessary statutes, but as merely good counsels, directly contrary to these words and stipulations, that sooner heaven and earth must pass away than that one of the least of these be not observed. Thereupon he at once passes an earnest sentence upon such preachers, as follows:

Matthew 5:19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall leach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and leach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

I will be so positive about these (says he) that I not only will not break any of them; but whoever is a preacher, and annuls or ignores the very smallest part, let him know that he is not a preacher of mine, but is damned and shall be turned out of heaven. For that he says, he shall be called the

least in the kingdom of heaven, is nothing else than that he shall not be in the kingdom of heaven; but, as he holds it to be a small matter that he despises God's command, so shall he also be despised and rejected.

All the preachers of the gospel must also be prepared to make the same boast before all the world; as we can confidently challenge our opponents to show us a passage or article of the Scriptures that we suppress or do not rightly preach. For they themselves had to testify at the Diet of Augsburg that our confession is purely scriptural, and not opposed to any article of the faith. But they are making a great ado about this only, that we do not also hold their peculiar notions that the Councils and Popes have sanctioned, and we are to be damned because we do not like their nasty maggots and rotten human trifles.

Although we have always shown ourselves ready to work with them, and indeed could still do it, if they would allow us the liberty and diversity, that it is not necessary to salvation nor contrary to the gospel, whether one omits anything or shares in it to please them, as any other free, unnecessary thing, that neither helps nor hinders us; as when, for instance, in the carnival season one shares in the mummery. But this they will not admit; and so we cannot do otherwise, nor give up Christ our Savior (who has shown and bestowed upon us more kindness through his dear suffering and death, than the Pope, Franciscus, Dominicus, or any saint) for the sake of their rotten notions that can benefit or help nobody. If they would grant us this liberty, we would try to observe everything with them that they demand of us, and even better than they do themselves. But because they are not satisfied with this, but want to compel us to forsake Christ and the pure doctrine which they themselves cannot find fault with, we despise them, as condemned and rejected by Christ, with both their doctrine and life, as those who not only corrupt but absolutely nullify a word or command of God, in that they shamelessly teach that it is not necessary to love God with all the heart; also, that one honors his parents, if he wants to go into a monastery or give to the Church his money with which he might keep his parents; so also, any one may desert his espoused bride and go into a monastery. In short, everything that the Lord here demands according to the command of God, they have declared to be unnecessary, as though this were merely good advice or works of supererogation, etc. Hence you see what an excellent sort of Christian teachers and holy people they are, who dare to annul and destroy recklessly all the commands of God, and yet want to go scot free, and venture to require it of us, yes, with threats and force try to drive us to hold their human nonsense to be necessary, and, if we do not accept and praise this, they assail us with horrible edicts and all sorts of furious rage. Now calculate for yourself what Christ will say to it, since he here pronounces so severe a sentence, that he shall have no part in his kingdom who breaks one of the least of these commandments, although he teaches and keeps all the rest exactly. Where do you think is the place for them, except in the glowing fire of hell, where it is the deepest? For there never has risen such a shameful people upon earth, who so shamelessly treated the word of God, which they know to be right, and still wish to be held in honor as Christians that are leaders. Therefore beware of them, and let no one be frightened by their damning, persecution and raging. For here we have the consolation that those who teach purely and truly the word of God, and adhere to that, shall be great with Christ in the kingdom of heaven, although that crowd curses them to the bottom of hell.

I omit, however, here to say how the law must be fulfilled, so that no letter or tittle of it pass, etc., whilst we still teach that no man can fulfill it. For I have said that Christ is here speaking particularly

not concerning the life, but concerning the doctrine; and he is not discussing the great subject what he is and what he gives to us, namely, that we cannot be justified or saved by the works of the law, but thereby only come to the knowledge of ourselves, how we are not able to fulfill properly a tittle of it of ourselves. And although after we have become Christians by baptism and faith, we do as much as we can, we still can never thereby stand before God; but must always humbly find our way to Christ, who has most purely and perfectly fulfilled it all, and bestows himself with his fulfillment of it upon us, so that through him we may stand before God, and the law cannot hold us guilty or condemn us. So that it is true that all must come to pass and be fulfilled even to the smallest tittle; but only by this one man, of which enough is said elsewhere.

Matthew 5:20. For I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven .

Here you see how he plunges in and antagonizes not ordinary people, but the very best in the whole nation, who were the true kernel and quintessence, and shone before the rest like the sun, so that there was no more highly esteemed class nor more honorable name among the people than that of the Pharisees and Scribes; and if one wanted to name a holy man, he would have to name a Pharisee; just as among us the Carthusians or hermits were called: as the disciples of Christ no doubt themselves believed that there was no greater holiness to be found than among these, and they least of all expected that he would assail these people. Nor did he venture at once to mention names, and blame certain persons among them, but the whole class; and he rebukes also not certain evil practices or sins, but their righteousness and holy living; so completely, indeed, that he denies and closes the kingdom of heaven against them, and condemns them at once to hell fire. Just as if he now said: All priests and monks, and all that are called spiritual, without exception, are eternally damned to hell, with all their system, where it is the best. Who could hear or endure such a sermon? That is now one thing that he acknowledges, that they have a righteousness, and lead a correct, honorable life; and yet he so completely rejects it, that if it be not better than that, it is already condemned, and all is lost that one can accomplish by it.

Secondly, notice, that he is treating of those who wish to get to heaven, and who seriously think about another life, which the other great rude mass do not regard, nor do they ask about God and his word, to whom everything that we say about the gospel is preached in vain. But these are preached to, that they may know, that such righteousness is false, which one must salt and rebuke, as that with which they deceive both themselves and others. and lead to hell from the right road, and that they may consider, on the other hand, what the true piety is which the law demands; as Christ now presently will show.

Matthew 5:21. Ye have heard that it was said to them of olden time, Thou shall not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment.

Here he takes up several of the Ten Command merits, to explain them properly, and shows how the Pharisees and Scribes gave no further explanation of them and attached no further significance to them than lies in the mere words, as referring to external gross works. So, in the first place, in this fifth commandment they saw nothing more than the word kill, that means strike dead with the hand; and they let the people stop short with that, as if nothing further were here forbidden, and as if besides a convenient shield were provided, so that they would not be guilty of the killing, though one handed over another person to death. So, when they delivered Christ to the

heathen Pilate, they would not defile their hands with blood, that they might continue to be pure and holy; and they were so strict, that they would not even go into the palace of the judge; and yet it was they alone who caused his death, and forced Pilate against his will that he had to kill him. Yet they acted as if they were entirely clean and innocent, so that they even blamed the apostles in regard to it, and said: “You intend to bring this man’s blood upon us;” as though they should say:

It was not we, but the heathen, that killed him. So we read about king Saul in 1 Samuel 18:25. He disliked David, and would gladly have killed him; but as he wanted to be holy, he thought he would not kill him himself, but send him among the Philistines, that he might be killed there, and his hand not be defiled with his blood.

See, that is the beautiful Pharisee holiness, that can make itself clean, and stay pious, if it only does not slay with its own hand, although the heart is sticking full of wrath, hatred and envy, and secret evil and murderous designs, and the tongue besides full of cursing and blasphemy; just as is the case with the holiness of our papists, who have become real masters in this business; and, that their holiness may not be rebuked nor they be bound by the words of Christ, they have come handsomely to his assistance, and have deduced twelve counsels from his words, that Christ has not commanded all this as necessary, but has left it at the option of every one to be observed as good advice, whoever wishes to merit something special above others; that it is instruction altogether superfluous, that one can easily dispense with. But if you ask them for what reason they have invented these recommendations, or how they prove them, they say: Why, if one should teach thus that would mean nimis onerativum legis christianae, that is, Christian people would be too heavily burdened; as those at Paris have openly and boldly written against me. Yes, truly, a beautiful reason and a grievous burden, that a Christian should be friendly towards his neighbor, and not let him be in need, as every one wishes to be treated. And because they think it too burdensome, it must not be said to have been commanded, but left at every one’s option to be clone or not as one may choose; but he who cannot or will not do it shall not be burdened with it. Thus we are to twist the mouth of Christ, master his words, and make out of them whatever we please. But he will not allow himself to be deceived in this way, nor will he recall his sentence that he has here pronounced saying: whosoever has not a better piety, shall find heaven shut against him, and be damned, and as follows afterwards, also, he shall be deserving of hell fire who says to his brother, Thou fool; from which we may easily conclude whether it was recommended or commanded. And here they have also discovered a little gloss, to help their lies, and thus they say, it was indeed commanded to refrain from anger and spite in the heart, but not from the tokens of wrath, that is, as we say in German, to forgive, but not to forget, and to have the idea that you will not be angry or do anything bad, and yet withhold all kindness from your neighbor and bestow upon him no good word or token of friendship. Here ask of God himself and Christ, why he did not withhold this kindness from those who crucified him, reviled and most shamefully blasphemed him, but prayed for them and said: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, although they were the most shameless villains, who deserved the fiercest wrath and punishment. Yes, if he had been angry at us in that way, who were his enemies and practiced all manner of idolatry and ungodliness, he would have had to stay up there in heaven and not shed his blood and die for us, but say after the manner of this little gloss: I will forgive, indeed, but I will not forget. Meanwhile we should all have continued to be the devil’s own, and no man could have escaped going to hell. In short, it is absolutely a disgraceful, cursed little gloss, and in fact a sin and a shame, that any one

in Christendom has dared to teach this, in the face of such a clear and open text; yet they have daubed all their books full of these lies, and are trying now besides brazenfacedly to defend them. But hereby we are to see and recognize our Pharisees and hyprocrites, with their great sanctity, which they profess with many special works, but at the same time without hesitation transgress the commands of God and also teach others to do the same; as Christ here and elsewhere depicts them.

It is indeed true, that one must be angry, if those do it whose duty it is, and if the anger does not go farther than to rebuke sin and what is evil; as, when one sees another sin, admonishes and warns him, that he may refrain from it, etc. That is a Christian and brotherly, yes, a fatherly anger. For you see in the case of pious parents, that they do not punish their children in such a way that they mean to do them harm or injury, but that badness may be repressed and evil averted; so also the powers that be are to be wrathful and punish. Here it is indeed right that one should have no anger in his heart, and yet must show signs and tokens of anger, since both the word and the fist are rough and sharp, but the heart remains sweet and friendly and knows of no spite. In short, it is the anger of love that wishes harm to no one, but is a friend of the person, whilst hostile to the sin, as even nature may teach every one. But it will not do to abuse this as a shield, and hide and dress up under it spite and envy in the heart against our neighbor; as those knavish saints do and teach. So Jesus now takes up this command, and means to say this: You have thus heard from the Pharisees how Moses commanded, and of old it was thus taught: Thou shalt not kill, etc. Therewith you tickle yourselves and deck yourselves out, take on airs as those who diligently teach, and observe the laws of God as they are taught from Moses, and were received by them of olden time; you take your stand and insist upon it: There is Moses, he says, Thou shalt not kill. You hold on to that word, and won't let it mean anything else than just as it sounds in the plainest sense, so that the simple-minded must say: "It is true; that's the way it stands in the book;" thus you darken the word with your continual bawling and your foul glosses, so that one does not see what the words really contain and mean. For do you think that he is speaking only of the fist where he says:

Thou shalt not kill? What does he mean by you? Not only your hand, foot, tongue, or any other single member; but all that you are, body and soul.

Just as when I say to any one: You shall not do this; I speak not with the fist, but with the whole person. Yes, even if I should say: Thy fist shall not do it, I mean not the hand alone, but the whole person to whom the hand belongs; for the hand alone would do nothing if the whole body with all its members did not cooperate.

Therefore, Thou shalt not kill, is as much as to say: You may find as many ways to kill as you have members of the body, by your hand, tongue, heart, by signs and gestures, by angrily looking at any one, by begrudging him his life, by your eyes or even by your ears — if you don't like to hear him spoken of, that all means killing. For then your heart and all there is about you is so disposed that you would be glad if he were already dead, and although meanwhile your hand is quiet, your tongue is silent, your eyes and ears are muffled, yet your heart is full of murder and manslaughter.

03A.02. Matthew 5 contd

Matthew 5:22. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment,' and whosoever shall say to his brothel; Raca, shall be in danger of the council,, but whosoever shall say: Thou fool, shall be in danger of hellfire.

Behold, this is the true light, that shows the true meaning of this commandment, and that puts to shame their foul gloss, as a dark lantern in contrast with the bright sun, and it now shines with such a different appearance, that they are presently amazed and say, That is teaching with authority, and not as their scribes. Although this explanation is clear enough, and elsewhere often treated of, we must yet here for the sake of the text expand the words a little. In the first place he says: He who is angry with his brother is in danger of the judgment; that is, he has merited the same punishment that is inflicted upon a murderer, namely, that he should be condemned to death. For he repeats the very words that stand in the text, Leviticus 24:17 (which he now himself has quoted): He that killeth any man shall surely be put to death. Because now he who is angry with his brother comes under the same sentence, he is also properly called a murderer. In the second and third statement: Whosoever saith to his brother, Rata, or, Thou fool, is in danger of the council and of hell fire, he means the same thing as to be in danger of the judgment, namely, that he is in danger of being put to death. But he mentions three particulars, to show how the punishment becomes greater and more severe the more the sin continues and reveals itself. For he speaks as in a process before the court, when a criminal is to be punished. As namely, when one has committed murder, he is in danger of the judgment, that is, he is brought before the court, indicted, and a charge is brought against him, as one who has caused death. That is the first grade or step towards death; yet the sentence has not yet been passed, so that he still may have room to vindicate himself and be acquitted. Secondly, when however the sentence has been passed that he is to die, then he is in danger of the council, so that a consultation is held concerning him, what kind of punishment is to be meted out to him; then he is again nearer to death, so that he cannot escape. Thirdly, when the sentence of death has now been passed, and all has been determined upon, he is handed over to the executioner, that he may take him away and perform his official duty. So he indicates by these steps, how one sinks deeper and deeper into punishment; just as he who is to be executed draws steadily nearer and nearer to death. Therefore, it is as if it were said: He who is angry in heart is already deserving of death before God; but he who goes further and says: Raca, or, Thou fool, has already had sentence pronounced upon him, etc. In short, he is already damned to hell fire who is angry with his brother. But he who says Raca, deserves to go still deeper into hell; still deeper, however, he who kills also with words and fist. So the punishment and condemnation is entirely one and the same, and yet the same is heavier and more severe as the sin progresses and breaks out more fiercely. As to the meaning of Raca, we are told that it signifies all sorts of indications that show our anger against our neighbor: as when one neither speaks to or looks at him; or when one is pleased and secretly rejoices when it goes ill with him; or where one in any way shows that he would be really glad if his neighbor would be utterly ruined; as there are now many of these poisonous, wretched creatures,

that array themselves most bitterly against us, both publicly and by secret and treacherous practices, as those who would most gladly hear that we were all exterminated, and yet they pose as holy Christian people. The other phrase: Thou fool, means not only the various indications [above mentioned] but all the words that come from a bad, poisonous heart, that is hostile to its neighbor. Otherwise, if they come from a kind, motherly heart, there is no sin. For one may indeed rebuke and scold with words, as St. Paul calls his Galatians fools, and Christ says to his disciples: O fools, and slow of heart to believe; yes, not only this, but we must also be angry and wear a stern and forbidding exterior. For this is all a godly anger and vexation at the wrong, not at the person, but for the benefit of our neighbor. In short, it is a necessary anger, that cannot be dispensed with in any house, in any city and government, yes, in any pulpit. For should father, mother, judge and preacher haul in mouth and fist, and neither rebuke nor restrain the evil, government and Christianity and everything would go to destruction through the wickedness of the world. So that the meaning here is: hate the cause, yet love the person; as the jurists very well say, if they only would make the right use of it.

Matthew 5:23-24. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

He makes a long sermon over this command, which looks indeed like an easy text, but the vice [here rebuked] is very wide-spread and common, especially among high, mighty, wise people, as at the courts of kings, lords and princes, and those who are anything, or can accomplish anything upon earth, they are most deeply involved in it, and yet must not be blamed with it. For it wears a very specious appearance, and nothing can dress itself up so handsomely and adorn itself with the appearance of sanctity, wherewith many people deceive themselves and others; and they do not see how they are at heart hostile to their neighbor, or cherish a secret spite against him, and nevertheless want to be pious, serve God, ands as he here says, go to the altar and bring a sacrifice, supposing that it is all right with them. This is the way of it; they put on a handsome appearance and stand under the cover of what is called zelus justitiae [a zeal for justice,] a virtue that loves justice and is indignant at evil and cannot tolerate it; just as the sword and ruling authority are appointed to administer righteousness and punish wickedness; as also father and mother, master and mistress, must become angry and punish. Here comes now the pious villain, puts on his little robe and says he does it out of love for righteousness, and has good and reasonable cause for what he does: as now princes and others are brim-full of poison, hatred and envy against our people, live on in this spirit, make no conscience of it, and the whole thing is nothing but “indulgencies” and “relics.” For they cover themselves with the beautiful excuse, that they say they are hostile to heresy, and they make a great virtue out of its a holy zeal and a love for the truth; and there is at bottom nothing but a shameful, poisonous hatred and spite, that cannot otherwise show and gratify itself. For I know, and may well say, that all our opponents (except our dear lord the Emperor, personally, who has not been correctly informed about us,) neither have nor know any reason why they should hate and be hostile to us, except mere envy and mischief. For they make no charge against us of any wrong-doing, that we are scamps or scoundrels, or have injured them in any way; they know too, and have had to confess it, that our doctrine is the exact truth; yet they are so full of poison that they would bear with the world full of nothing but desperate villains rather than with us and ours. So there are many excellent,

honorable, learned and otherwise upright people, who are so filled with anger, envy and hatred, and are so embittered by it, that they are unconscious of it, and are fully satisfied that they are doing it by virtue of their office or for the sake of righteousness. For their excuse is too plausible, and so delusive that no one dare accuse them of being anything else than upright, pious people. So their hearts at last become hardened, they strengthen and harden themselves in the poisonous vice, and sin against the Holy Ghost. For it is a two-fold wickedness; first that the heart is full of anger, hatred and envy; secondly, that it is not acknowledged to be sin or evil, but is to be called virtue, which is equivalent to smiting God on the mouth and making him out a liar.

Notice, for this reason Christ warns so diligently that every one be specially careful at this point lest he be deceived by this hypocrisy and false appearance. For no one believes how such a simple statement can be so far-reaching and affect such great people. For by these words, as he says: “If thou bring thy gift to the altar” he shows clearly that he is speaking of those who serve God, and claim to be the true children of God, and are reputed to be the best of all. What is wrong with them, then? Nothing, except that their heart is sticking full of hatred and envy. Dear friend, of what account is it that you are incessantly fasting and praying, giving all your money for God’s sake, and castigating yourself to death, and doing ever so many good works, more than all the Carthusians, whilst at the same time you ignore the command of God that he wishes to be obeyed? That you make no conscience of reviling and calumniating others, and yet wish to present a great sacrifice? Just as if one had caused war and murder, and had shed much blood, and afterward paid a thousand ducats for having masses said for those who were killed; or if some one had stolen a great sum of money, and then would give alms for God’s sake. Thus they deceive God (yes, themselves) with the pretty pretense, that he must now regard them as genuine living saints.

Therefore he says now: Do you wish to serve God and present an offering, and have you injured any one, or do you cherish anger against your neighbor? then know at once that God will not accept your offering, but lay it right down, and drop everything and go first of all and be reconciled with your brother. By this he means now all works that one can do to serve or praise God (for in those days there was no better work than to offer sacrifice); and he rejects it entirely, and commands that it be dropped at once, unless your heart first assures you that you are reconciled with your neighbor and do not know of cherishing any ill-will. If this be done, then come (says he), and offer thy gift. This he adds, so that no one should think that he wishes to reject or despise such a gift. For it was not an evil act, but one ordered and commanded by God; but that is evil, and utterly spoils it all, that they disregard the higher commands of God and despise them. That is making an abuse of sacrifices against your neighbor.

There is also an abuse in regard to this matter that is of more consequence — that one seeks thereby to be saved, to atone for sin, and to rely upon it and have confidence before God; of this we treat elsewhere. In itself it is a good work; just as all other works of public worship, as praying and fasting, are not to be despised or neglected, where their intention and use are proper, namely, that one does not do them thereby to merit heaven, and when the heart is all right towards our neighbor, and thus both faith and love are pure and right. But if thou prayest and fastest, and yet along with this speakest evil of thy neighbor, defamest and slanderest people, thy mouth indeed speaks holy words and eats nothing; but it meanwhile pollutes and defiles itself with thy neighbor, against the command of God.

Therefore he rebukes and forbids such fasting in Isaiah 58:3, wherewith they mortified their bodies and made pretense of great devotion, and he says: Behold in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labors. Ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high, etc. And he further teaches how we are to fast properly: Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens and to let the oppressed go free, etc. Break thy bread to the hungry, and when thou seest the naked, cover him, etc. Here you see how he is chiefly concerned about our love for our neighbor.

Matthew 5:25-26. Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily,/say unto thee, Thou shall by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. In the previous text he preached to him who had injured his neighbor or was angry at him: but here he tells how he is to act who is injured; and he carries out the figure that he had introduced, namely the usual course taken before a court, when two parties are opposed to one another, one accusing, the other being accused, and the judge pronouncing sentence and punishing the guilty party; and he means only to say that he who injures another should peaceably become reconciled with him; that the other, however, should consent to be reconciled and cheerfully forgive. This is now also a fine point, and here many can very nicely cover over and adorn their scoundrelism, by saying that they will gladly forgive, but not forget. For there is ever the pretense at hand, of which I have spoken, that anger against the wrong is reasonable, and they think they are acting with good reason, and all is right and proper.

Therefore he warns here again, and shows that in this commandment not only is wrath forbidden, but it is also commanded that we are cheerfully to forgive and forget the harm that has been done to us: as God has done with us, and still does, when he forgives sin, that he blots it out of the record altogether and remembers it no more; yet not so that one must or can in such measure forget it, that one dared never think of it again; but in such a way that you can have just as friendly a heart towards your neighbor as before he injured you. But if the stump remains in your heart, so that you are not as friendly and kind towards him as before, then it cannot be said that you have forgotten, not even that you have heartily forgiven, and you are still the knave who comes before the altar with his gift and means to serve God, whilst his heart is yet sticking full of anger, envy and hatred. But very few people pay regard to this; they all wear the beautiful mask, they do not see how their heart stands in relation to this command, which in short tolerates no wrath or ill-will against one’s neighbor.

It is true, as above said, that anger there must and shall be; but take care that it be properly applied, and remember that thou art commanded not to be angry on thine own account; but for the sake of thine office and of God, and that thou must not confound the two, thy person and office. For thine own person thou must not cherish anger against any one, however badly thou art injured; but where thine office requires it, there must thou be angry, even though no harm has been done to thy person. Thus a pious judge is angry at a criminal to whom he wishes no harm for his own person’s sake, and whom he would rather leave unpunished, and his wrath proceeds from a heart in which there is nothing but love towards his neighbor, and it is only the evil deed that is to be punished that must bear the wrath. But if thy brother has done something against thee and angered thee, and asks thy forgiveness, and ceases to do evil; then the anger also must subside.

Whence comes then the secret spite that thou nevertheless art still cherishing in thy heart, when the cause and occasion of the anger is gone, and instead thereof other acts appear showing that the man is converted and has become a totally different man, and has become a new tree, with new fruits, who now loves and honors thee supremely, so that he blames and rebukes himself on thy account? Thou must before God and all the world be a desperate man, if thou dost not again show thyself thus towards him and heartily forgive him, so that the sentence is properly pronounced against thee that is threatened here.

Matthew 5:27-30. Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shall not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee.' for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. This is a bit of salt against the teaching of the Pharisees; he treats in it of two things — first of adultery, then of cutting off. Concerning adultery, they had given the literal meaning to the fifth commandment, and taught thus: There is nothing more forbidden than the real act of adultery; and they did not regard it as a sin if they were at heart inflamed with lust and evil desire towards another, and also outwardly revealed this with ugly words and immodest gestures, and this did no harm to their sanctity if they only did otherwise good works, diligently sacrificed and prayed, etc. That was not teaching the commands of God, but perverting them; it was not making the people pious, but only worse; it was giving room and permission for all sorts of sin and unchastity. But here you hear a different master, who shows their sanctity to be sin and shame, and throws true light upon this commandment, and decides that adultery is committed also with eyes, ears, mouth, yes most of all with the heart; as when one looks at a woman, or sports with her, yes thinks of her lustfully.

Now see how matters must have stood among this people, and what kind of people Christ had to deal with, since not only the great, common crowd, but those who stood above other people and ought to teach and control them, not only permit such things, but do them themselves, and increase the occasion for adultery, and yet wish to be counted pious if they only do not actually commit adultery; although it is easy to calculate how pious and chaste people can be for works' sake, if so much allowance be made, and they can carry it so far as to have their heart full of eager lust, that also reveals itself by all sorts of signs, words and gestures towards each other.

What else can then follow but the act itself, if opportunity offers? Or, how is he therefore so much the more pious, although he cannot perform the deed that he would like to accomplish and is unceasingly lusting after it in his heart? Just as a wretch can wish to see his master dead, although he is lying in prison, and would like to kill him himself, if he could only get at him: are we therefore not to call him a murderer, or even to count him pious? But do you say: If that be true, that also with a look adultery can be committed, what are we then to do? Men and women must live together and have daily intercourse. Or are we to run out of the world, or punch out ears and eyes, and have our heart torn out? Answer: Christ does not here forbid that we are to live together, eat, drink, yes, even laugh and be merry; that is all still free of harm, if only the one feature be wanting, that means, to lust after her. It is true, the Jews try to help themselves out in this way, by saying there is no sin, if one loves another with thoughts and signs; just as they do not regard it as

sin to be angry with a neighbor and be hostile to him at heart; so that one must not condemn the whole nation and so many holy people, as if they were all murderers and adulterers. Therefore they must apologize for these commandments, that one is not to interpret them so strictly; but, as our learned men have said: These may be good counsels for the perfect, but nobody is bound by them; and they have gone so far in this matter that there has been great disputing and doubting, whether bad conduct with a whore, outside of marriage, is even a sin; and it is in fact now in Italy among respectable people counted an honor, so that one almost regards those as holy who go no farther than this. Again, however, there are those who have narrowed it down altogether too much, and want to be so very holy, that they forbid even looking at any one, and have taught that all association of male and female persons is to be avoided.

Hence come the excellent saints that have run away from the world into the wilderness and into monasteries, so that they may shut themselves off from all seeing and hearing, from all dealing and fellowship with the world. But Christ states the opposite of both these extremes; he will not let the command of God be so twisted; and such counsel be given in the matter as to give a loose rein to unchastity and villainy. For he says in plain and clear words that he who looks at a woman with evil desire is an adulterer, and sentences him besides to hell-fire, when he says it is better that one should put out his eye than that the whole body should be cast into hell. And he also does not want such saints as run away from mankind. For if that were to be the rule, the ten commandments would nowhere be needed. For if I am in the wilderness, separated from everybody else, no one can thank me for not committing adultery, murdering and stealing; and I still may think meanwhile that I am holy and have violated none of the ten commandments, which however have been given by God for the very reason that he may teach us how we are to live aright in the world with reference to our neighbor. For we are not so made that we are to run away from one another, but are to live together and share both good and evil. For as we are men, we must also help to bear all sorts of human misfortunes and the curse that has fallen upon us, and so prepare ourselves that we can live among bad people, so that every one may there prove his holiness and not let himself be made impatient, so that he flees away. For we must live upon earth among thorns and thistles, in a state of affairs that abounds in temptation, opposition and trouble. And you have not helped yourself in the least though you have run away from the multitude, and yet carry along with you the same bad companion, that is the lust and evil passion that adheres to flesh and blood. For you surely cannot deny your father and mother, though you are alone and locked up, nor can you throw away your flesh and blood from you and let it lie. The command is not to lift your foot and run away; but abide in your lot, bravely to stand and contend against all manner of temptation, and patiently to force your way through and conquer.

Therefore Christ is a true Master, who teaches you not to run away from people, nor to change your place; but to lay hands upon yourself, and cast from you the eye or the hand that offends you, that is, to remove the occasion of sinning, which is the evil lust and desire that sticks in yourself and comes out of your heart. If this be out of the way, you can easily without sin be among the people and have intercourse with everybody.

Therefore he says plainly (as above said): If thou lookest upon a woman to lust after her, thou hast committed adultery with her in thy heart. He does not forbid your looking at her; for he is speaking to those who must live in the world among the people, as the whole previous teaching of this chapter and also that which follows abundantly shows. But he means that we are to separate from

each other the looking and the lusting.

You may look, indeed, at any woman or man; but only be careful that there be no lusting. For to this end God has ordained that every one should have his own wife or her own husband, so that every one may properly gratify both lust and desire. If you do not go beyond this you have his sanction, and he adds his blessing to it, and is satisfied with it, as his ordinance and creature. But if you go beyond this, and are not satisfied with what God has given you, but go lusting and gaping after others, then you have already gone too far, and have confounded the two, so that the looking is spoiled by the lusting. This is also the chief cause of adultery, that is always apt to happen when one does not regard God's word in reference to his wife, as that which God gives him and blesses, but at the same time he fixes his gaze upon another woman; then soon the heart goes after the eyes, so that lust also and desire are added, which I ought to have for my wife alone. Aside from this, flesh and blood is overcurious, so that it is soon discontented with and tired of that which it has, is gaping after something else, and the devil adds his promptings, so that one sees nothing in his wife but what is faulty and fails to see what is good and praiseworthy. Hence it comes to pass that every other woman is more beautiful and better in my eyes than my own wife; yes, many a one who has a really beautiful, pious wife, allows himself to be so blinded, that he dislikes her, and attaches himself to an ugly, shameful piece.

Therefore this would be the true art and strongest safeguard against this sin (as I have elsewhere more fully explained, of marriage and wedded life), if every one would learn rightly to regard his spouse according to the word of God, which is the most precious treasure and beautiful ornament that one can find in a man or woman, and would mirror himself in it; then he would love and esteem his spouse as a divine gift and treasure, and would think thus if he sees another (even if she were prettier than his own): Is she pretty? well, she is not so very pretty, and if she were the prettiest on earth, I have at home a more beautiful ornament in my wife that God has given me, and has adorned with his word above all others, even though she be not beautiful in body, or be otherwise defective. For if I look at all the women in the world, I find no one of whom I can boast as I can of mine with a good conscience: This one God has bestowed upon me and placed within my arms, and I know that he and all angels are heartily pleased if I cling to her with love and fidelity. Why should I then despise this precious divine gift, and devote myself to another, in whom I find no such treasure and ornament?

See, I could easily look at all women, and talk with them, laugh and be merry in such a way that still there should be no lust and desire on my part, and I would not let any one seem to be so beautiful or desirable to me, that I would act contrary to God's word and command; and though I was tempted by flesh and blood, yet I did not need to consent, nor allow myself to be overcome, but I had to contend bravely against it and conquer through the word of God, and to live in the world in such a way that no one's wickedness could make me wicked, and no enticement could make me an adulterer. But because one does not see or regard this word of God, it has easily happened, that one becomes tired of his spouse and averse to her, and prefers another and cannot resist the lust and desire. For he does not know the art, that he can rightly regard his spouse according to the beauty and ornament with which God has clothed her for him; he sees no further than according to the eyes, as his wife appears to him ill-shaped or faulty, and another prettier and better. So you understand when looking at a woman is sin, or is not sin, namely, that one is not to look at another as every one is to look at his wife.

Yet we are not here to span the bow too tightly, as if one were to be damned because, when tempted, he feels that this lust and desire towards another begins to arise. For I have often said that it is profitable to live in flesh and blood without sinful, evil inclination, not only in this matter, but also against every commandment. Therefore moralists have made this distinction, with which I concur: that an evil thought, without assent, is not a mortal sin. It is not possible, if some one has offended you, that your heart should not feel, or be moved, and begin to heave to take vengeance. But that is not yet criminal, if it only does not determine and proceed to do harm, but resists this inclination. So also in this case; it is not possible to prevent the devil from shooting into the heart evil thoughts and lust. But then take care that thou dost not allow such arrows to stick there and grow fast, but tear them out and throw them away, and do as long ago was taught by one of the ancients, who said: “I cannot prevent a bird from flying over my head; but I can easily prevent it from making a nest in my hair, or biting off my nose.” Thus it is not in our power to prevent this or some other temptation, so that thoughts do not occur to us: if we only stop with their occurring to us, so that we do not admit them, although they knock for admittance, and prevent their taking root, lest they might lead to consent and a purpose to sin. But nevertheless it is still sin, but it is included in the common forgiveness, because we cannot live in the flesh without committing many sins, and every one must have his devil; as also St. Paul complains about the sin (Romans 7:17) that dwells in him, and says, that he finds in his flesh no good thing, etc.

That, however, some have here raised the question, and pointedly asked whether it is sinful for a man to desire to marry a woman or for a woman to desire to marry a man, is silly, and both questions are contrary to Scripture and to nature. For when should people marry, if they would not have desire and love for one another? Yes, that is the reason why God has given this eager desire to bride and bridegroom, otherwise every one would flee from and avoid marriage. Thus he has also commanded in the Scriptures, that both, man and woman, should love each other, and he shows that he is greatly pleased when husband and wife are well adapted to each other. Therefore this desire and love must surely not be lacking, and it is very fortunate and agreeable if it only lasts a long while. For without this, trouble comes, both from the flesh that one soon becomes tired of this state, and is unwilling to bear the discomfort that comes with it; and also from the devil, who cannot bear to see two married people treating each other with true affection, and does not rest until he gives occasion to impatience, strife, hatred and bitterness between them; so that it is an art not alone necessary, but also difficult, and peculiar to Christians, to love one’s wife or husband properly, so that one may bear the faults of the other and all sorts of carnal misfortune. At first it all goes very well, so that for love (as it is said) they are ready to eat each other up; but when the novelty is over, then comes the devil with satiety, and tries to rob you too much of desire in this direction, and excite it too much in another.

Let this suffice for the topic of lust and desire. But what are we to say about the way Christ spans the bow when he says that we are to pluck out the eye and cut off the hand if it offends us? Are we then to cripple ourselves, make ourselves lame and blind? Then we would have to take our own life, and every one become a self murderer. For if we must throw away everything that offends us, we would have first of all to tear out our heart. But what else would that be than to destroy all nature and the creatures of God. Answer: here you see clearly that Christ in this chapter is speaking not at all of mere worldly affairs, and that all such expressions that occur here and there in the Gospel (such as to deny one’s self, hate one’s soul, forsake everything, etc.,) do not belong

at all to the sphere of secular affairs or the civil government, nor are to be understood according to the statutes of the old Saxons, as the jurists call them, to pluck out eyes, to cut off the hand, and such like; or how could this life and civil government endure? But he is speaking here of spiritual life and spiritual affairs, in which one does not externally, corporeally, and in the sight of the world, throw away his eye or his hand, deny himself and forsake all things, but in his heart and in God's sight. For he is not teaching how to use the fist or the sword, or to control life and property, but only the heart and conscience before God; therefore we are not at all to apply his words in the sense of the legal terms or those of secular government. In this way he speaks also in Matthew 19:12, about castrating, where he alludes to three kinds of castrated ones or eunuchs. The first and second are such as are eunuchs naturally or are made such by the hands of men; these the world and the jurists call castrated. But the third kind are such as have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake; these are called castrated, not externally, in their body, but in heart or spiritually; not in a worldly sense or manner, but (as he says) for heaven's sake. For with worldly matters he has nothing to do. Thus also here, we are spiritually to tear out eyes, hand, heart, and let everything go, that it may not offend us; and yet live in this world, where we cannot do without any of these things. This is now what is here meant: If thou feelest that thou art looking at a woman with an evil desire, then tear out that same eye or sight (as being forbidden by God) not of the body, but of the heart, from which lustful desire comes; then thou hast rightly plucked it out. For if the evil desire is out of the heart, then the eye will not sin, nor offend thee, and thou lookest now upon that woman with the same bodily eyes, but without desire; thou wilt be just as if thou hadst not seen her. For the eye of which Christ speaks, which was there before, and is called the eye of lust or desire, is no longer there, although the bodily eye remains uninjured. Thus he speaks also about the castrated. If the heart has resolved to live chastely without marriage (if it has grace) then it has made itself a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake, and does not need to injure any member of the body. In short, it is such a castrating and plucking out that neither a fist nor a hangman can do, but the word of God in the heart.

Therefore those are fools who transfer these and similar sayings from the spiritual to the secular sphere, as if Christ had taught what was contrary to secular rule, yes, contrary to the natural order of things. Therefore some have made such fools of themselves that, through impatience and despair of being able to fight against flesh and blood, they have gone so far as to help [i.e. castrate?] themselves, so that the bishops in the councils had to forbid the practice. That all comes of a misunderstanding, that they do not distinguish between the ruling and doctrine of Christ and of the world; they abide by the gross conception of castration, so that they think no further than how the world designates and understands it in its sphere: whilst Christ himself excludes this understanding of it, and takes it away, and distinguishes those who are castrated by nature or by human hands (whether by their own or those of others,) and contrasts them with those who are castrated neither by men's hands nor by nature; whereby he clearly shows that he is speaking alone of spiritual castration, since the body with all its members is entire and uninjured, and yet has not sexual desire as others have, which cannot be cut out of flesh and blood, even though one were to rob himself of his natural members: as they say themselves, that such eunuchs or castrated persons have more desire for or love to women than any others; therefore also great kings (or queens) have preferred such persons as chamberlains, on account of the great fidelity and love they have for women. But it appears also, that Christ often on other occasions used this expression: "If thine eye, or hand, or foot, offend thee." For they are applied elsewhere in the

gospel, also to other matters, in such a way that he used it as a common saying, and applied it as a common comparison to all kinds of sin, that one should not yield to the occasion and inclination to sin; here, however, it is significantly applied to a particular case, namely, to adultery, so that the command is to pluck out the eye that is about to offend us by evil desire: for adultery is commonly occasioned by looking, and comes into the heart through the eyes, if one does not resist the temptation. Thus he employs the same words with reference to another mode of giving offense, (Matthew 18:8 sq.) so that he calls it an offending eye or hand, if a preacher and teacher, or a lord and tyrant, seeks to mislead thee from the truth and true doctrine; and he bids thee to tear it out and cast it from thee, so that one may say: Thou art it is true my eye or hand, my master or ruler; but if thou wishest to turn me from the truth to false faith, or to compel me to do evil, I will not follow thee, etc.

Matthew 5:31-32. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Here we see clearly how they wrested this commandment, giving room and liberty enough to violate it, and yet not counting their conduct sinful, if they only did not make too glaring an exhibition of it by open adultery; for they were permitted, if one disliked his wife and wanted to be rid of her, and had become fond of another woman, that he might leave her and court another that better pleased him; and, although the latter had another husband, they could easily induce him to dismiss his wife, so that he had to put her away, and yet she should not be said to be taken by violence. Thus it was also a small matter among them, whether one had had sexual intercourse with another woman, so that he thereby took her to wife; as they at any rate wanted to have more than one wife; and they had indeed brought things to such a pass that every one without qualms of conscience acted in the matter of marriage and divorce just as he pleased. Therefore, Jesus takes up also this matter of divorce, rebukes and condemns their knavery and abuse of the permitted divorce, to instruct their consciences how one is properly to proceed in this matter, so that one does not go too far and act contrary to the commandment. He touches upon it here, however, only in a few words; for afterwards, in the nineteenth chapter, he discusses it more at large.

How are we now, however, to proceed in matters pertaining to marriage and divorce? I have said that we are to leave this in the hands of the jurists, and committed to the secular government, because marriage is quite a secular, external thing, as wife, child, house and home, and other things that belong to the authority of the government, as this is altogether subject to the reason, Genesis I. Therefore, what the civil authority and wise people determine and ordain in reference to this matter according to right and reason, with that we should be content. For also Christ does not here appoint or ordain anything as a jurist or ruler, in external matters; but only as a preacher he instructs the consciences so that we rightly use the law concerning divorce, not for knavery and personal wantonness, contrary to the command of God. Therefore we will not here go any further than to see how the matter stood among them, and how those should conduct themselves who wish to be Christians; for with those who are not Christians we have nothing to do (as those who must be governed not with the Gospel but with compulsion and punishment), so that we may keep our office pure, and not grasp after more than is committed to us. In Deuteronomy 24:1; Deuteronomy 24:4 we read: “When a man hath taken a wife and married her, and it come to pass

that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand," etc.; but a prohibition is at once appended to this, that the same man (if he afterwards would like to have her again) "may not take her again to be his wife," etc. Now, this law they soon learned, and bravely abused, so that every one easily discarded and dismissed his wife, when he was tired of her, and longed for another (though Moses allowed such dismissal only when he found "some uncleanness in her" on account of which they could not well remain together); and they took such liberties in this matter that they themselves saw that their custom was blameworthy and quite too wanton, and they therefore asked Christ, Matthew 19:3 : "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" He gives them an answer, too, and reads them a sharp text besides, which they had never heard before, and concludes just as here, that both he who gives the bill of divorcement (except for fornication), and marries another, commits adultery, and decides that she also commits adultery who marries another. (For otherwise she could not commit adultery, if she remained unmarried.)

Thereby he not only rebukes them for acting wantonly in the matter of divorcement, but teaches that they should not practice divorcement at all, or, if they do, both parties should remain unmarried, and concludes that divorcing is always a cause of adultery. To their question, "Why did Moses then allow such divorcement?" he answers: "Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses suffered you to put away your wives." Not that it was commendable or well done; but that you are such vile and rude people, that it is better to allow this than that you do worse, cause misery or murder, or live together in perpetual hatred, discord and enmity: as it yet might even be advisable (if the temporal authorities should so order it), on account of some queer, self-willed, stubborn people, who are never satisfied with anything, and are not at all adapted for mar-tied life, that they should be allowed to separate from one another. For government cannot otherwise be carried on; on account of the badness of the people one must often yield something, though it be not well done, lest something worse may happen.

Thus it is now settled, that those who want to be Christians are not to be divorced, but each to retain his or her spouse, and bear and experience good and evil with the same, although he or she may be strange, peculiar and faulty; or, if there be a divorce, that the parties remain unmarried; and that it will not do to make a free thing out of marriage, as if it were in our power to do with it, changing and exchanging, as we please; but it is just as Jesus says: "What God has joined together let not man put asunder." For trouble here is owing solely to the fact that men do not regard marriage according to God's word as his work and ordinance, do not pay regard to his will, that he has given to every one his spouse, to keep her, and to endure for his sake the discomforts that married life brings with it; they regard it as nothing else than a mere human, secular affair, with which God has nothing to do. Therefore one soon becomes tired of it, and if it does not go as we wish, we soon begin to separate and change. Then God nevertheless so orders it, that we thereby make it no better; as it then generally happens, if one wants to change and improve matters, and no one wants to carry his cross, but have everything perfectly convenient and without discomfort, that he gets an exchange in which he finds twice or ten times more discomfort, not alone in this matter but in all others. For it cannot be otherwise upon earth; there must daily much inconvenience and discomfort occur in every house, city and country; and there is no condition upon earth in which one must not have much to endure that is painful, both from those that belong to him, as wife, child, servants, subjects, and externally from neighbors and all kinds of accidental

mishaps. When now one sees and feels this, he is soon tired of his condition and discontented with it, or breaks out with impatience, scolding and cursing; and if he cannot avoid or get rid of this annoyance, he will change his condition, thinks every one's condition and state better than his own, and when he has been long changing about he finds he has been going farther and faring worse. For to change is soon and easily done; but to improve is doubtful and rare. This was the case, too, with the Jews in their marriage changings and divorces.

Therefore in this matter we ought to do as we have always taught and exhorted: If one wants to undertake anything that he wishes to be blessed and successful, also in temporal affairs, as in marrying, remaining at home, accepting a position, etc., that he appeal to God and seek counsel from him who is to give it, and whose it is. For it is not a trifling gift of God, if one gets a pious, tolerably good wife: why should you not then pray to him that he may cause it to turn out well? For the first eager and curious desire will not accomplish this, or give permanence, if he does not add his blessing and give success, and help to bear the occasional discomfort. Therefore, those who do not do this, but rush into things of their own accord, as if they needed no help from God, and do not learn to adapt themselves to circumstances, they deservedly realize in them a real purgatory and hellish torment, without the devil's help; and because they bear no trouble with patience, but have selected just what suited them best, and want to set aside and ignore the article that is called forgiveness of sin; they have as a reward a restless, impatient heart, and so must suffer double misfortune and get no thanks for it. But we have said enough of this elsewhere. But you ask: Is there then no reason for which there may be separation and divorce between man and wife? Answer: Christ states here and in Matthew 19:9, only this one, which is called adultery, and he quotes it from the law of Moses, which punishes adultery with death. Since now death alone dissolves marriages and releases from the obligation, an adulterer is already divorced not by man but by God himself, and not only cut loose from his spouse, but from this life. For by adultery he has divorced himself from his wife, and has dissolved the marriage, which he has no right to do; and he has thereby made himself worthy of death, in such a way that he is already dead before God, although the judge does not take his life. Because now God here divorces, the other party is fully released, so that he or she is not bound to keep the spouse that has proved unfaithful, however much he or she may desire it. For we do not order or forbid this divorcing, but we ask the government to act in this matter, and we submit to what the secular authorities ordain in regard to it. Yet, our advice would be to such as claim to be Christians, that it would be much better to exhort and urge both parties to remain together, and that the innocent party should become reconciled to the guilty (if humbled and reformed) and exercise forgiveness in Christian love; unless no improvement could be hoped for, or the guilty person who had been pardoned and restored to favor persisted in abusing this kindness, and still continued in leading a public, loose life, and took it for granted that one must continue to spare and forgive him. In such ease I would not advise or order that mercy should be shown, but would rather help to have such a person scourged or imprisoned. For to make a misstep once is still to be forgiven, but to sin presuming upon mercy and forgiveness is not to be endured. For, as before said, we know already that it is not right to compel one to take back again a public whore or adulterer, if he is unwilling to do it, or out of disgust cannot do it. For we read of Joseph, Matthew 1:18 sq., that although he was a pious man, yet he was not willing "to take unto him Mary his espoused wife" (when he saw that she was pregnant); and was praised because "he was minded to put her away privily," and not lodge complaint against her and have her executed, as he might well have done. In addition to this

cause of divorce there is still another: if one of a married couple forsakes the other, as when one through sheer petulance deserts the other. So, if a heathen woman were married to a Christian, or, as now sometimes happens, that one of the parties is evangelical and the other not (concerning which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 7:13), whether in such a case divorce would be right? There Paul concludes: If the one party is willing to remain, the other should not break the engagement; although they are not of one faith, the faith should not dissolve the marriage tie. But if it happens that the other party absolutely will not remain, then let him or her depart; and thou art not under any obligation to follow. But if a fellow deserts his wife without her knowledge or consent, forsakes house, home, wife and child, stays away two or three years, or as long as he pleases (as now often happens), and when he has run his riotous course and squandered his substance and wants to come home again and take his old place, that the other party must be under obligation to wait for him as long as he chooses, and then take up with him again: such a fellow ought not only to be forbidden house and home, but should be banished from the country, and the other party, if the renegade has been summoned and long enough waited for, should be heartily pronounced free. For such a one is much worse than a heathen and unbeliever, and is less to be endured than a miserable adulterer, who, though he once fell, can still reform again and be faithful as before to his wife; but this one treats marriage just as he pleases, does not feel himself under any obligation to abide as husband and father with wife and children and perform his duty toward them, but holds himself sure of a safe reception if the notion takes him to return. But this is the state of the case: He who wishes to have wife and child must stay with them, share with them good and evil, as long as he lives; or if he will not, that we teach him that he must do it or be entirely separated from wife, house and home. But where these causes do not exist, their other defects and faults are not to be counted a hindrance or lead to a divorce, such as quarrels or other mishaps. But if parties are divorced (says St. Paul), then let them on both sides remain unmarried.

Let this suffice for what is said on this subject in the text, for I have elsewhere written enough about it. The chief safeguard against such divorce and other domestic trouble is (as I have said) that every one learn to bear with patience common faults and mishaps in his condition and surroundings, and to overlook them in his wife, and be assured that we cannot have everything just right as we would have it. Why you cannot have it otherwise or better in your own body, and must put up with all sorts of filth and disagreeableness that it daily causes you; so that if you were to throw away everything that is unclean about it, you would have to begin with the belly that nourishes you and has to keep you alive.

If now you can endure this in your body, so that it makes a stench for you before you are aware of it, or begins to suppurate and ulcerate, so that there is no purity in your skin, and you make due allowance for all this; yes, you show all the more care and love for it by waiting upon it, washing it, enduring and helping where anything is wanting; why should you not do it here in the case of your own spouse whom God has given you, in whom you have a still greater treasure and whom you have more cause to lover For there ought to be such love among Christians as that of each member of the body towards every other (as St. Paul often remarks), when one kindly regards the faults of another, himself sympathizes with them, endures and removes them, and does all he can to help his neighbor.

Therefore, our principal duty is nothing else than simple forgiveness of sin, both in ourselves and toward others; so that, as Christ in his kingdom without intermission is bearing with and forgiving

all manner of faults, so also we among ourselves bear and forgive in all conditions and in all things. May God allot to him who will not do this, that he may never have rest, and make his single misfortune or plague ten times worse.

Matthew 5:33-37. Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old lime, Thou shall not forswear thyself, but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths: Bug I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne: nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city oaf the great King. Neither shall thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair black or while. But let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatever is more than these cometh of evil. This text has been spun out with many glosses, and many a queer notion and error has been drawn from it, so that many great doctors have been worried about it, and could not become reconciled to the blunt prohibition here that we are to "Swear not at all," but "let your communication be Yea, yea, and Nay, nay." So that some have stretched their conscience so tightly, that one doubts whether one ought to take a solemn oath not to avenge himself when he is set free from prison, or whether we are by an oath to make peace and a treaty with the Turks or unbelievers, etc. Now we cannot deny that Christ himself and St. Paul often took an oath; besides, it is said, in the Scriptures, that those are praised who swear by his name; so that also here we must make a distinction, so that we rightly understand the text. But we have been told sufficiently, that Christ does not wish here to interfere with the secular authority and ordinance, nor to detract at all from the powers that be; but he is preaching here only for the individual Christians, how they are to conduct themselves in their ordinary life.

Therefore we are to regard the swearing as forbidden in exactly the same sense as above the killing and the looking upon or desiring a woman.

Killing is right, and yet it is also wrong; to desire a man or a woman is sin, and it is not sin; but in this way, that we rightly distinguish both, namely, that it is said to you and to me: if you kill, you do wrong; if you look at a woman to desire her, you do wrong. But to a judge he says: If you do not punish and kill, you shall yourself be punished; likewise to a married man or woman: If you do not cleave to your spouse, you do wrong. So both are right, that one is to kill and not to kill, to be and not to be with a woman; namely, that you do not be wrathful or kill, or look lovingly upon a woman, unless you are specially authorized by God's word or command to do so. If you are wrathful, however, when God commands you, or if you have a wife according to the word of God, then each is right; for what God says and commands is a very different thing from when you do it of your own accord. As you have understood that, so understand this also; that the prohibition here is, "Swear not at all," just as he has entirely forbidden killing, so that there may be no wrath in the heart; in like manner, that we shall keep so aloof from man and woman as not to be looking at them, or thinking upon them to desire them. And it would be a dangerous sermon if we were to apply it to the exercise of governmental authority or to married life, and were to say to the judge, Thou shalt not become indignant, or give practical proof of wrath; or to a wedded pair, Thou shalt not look upon or love thy wife or husband: but we must turn about here and teach the opposite, saying: Thou judge shalt be angry and punish; and every one shall have and love his spouse. How then does Christ say one must desire no woman, and have no wrath in his heart? Answer, as said above, he is speaking of the woman that God has not given you, and of the wrath that is not demanded of you, that you are not to have. But if it is demanded of you, then it is no longer yours, but it is God's wrath, and no longer your desire, but that which is given and ordained by God; for

you have God's word for it that you shall love your spouse and not desire any other. Thus also in regard to swearing; we must see to it, if we have God's word for it or not. That he here insists so much upon the prohibition, that he does also in opposition to their false teachers, who preached in this way, that taking an oath and swearing, although done needlessly and without the word of God, was not sin; yes, they had made a distinction (as Christ here shows) how one might swear freely, and what oaths should be valid or not; as, that one might readily swear by heaven, or by Jerusalem, or by his head; that those were little oaths, and did not have much validity, if only the name of God were not invoked; they had indeed at last carried it so far that a mere yea or nay was of no account, and they held that it mattered nothing if they did not do anything which they had not sworn to do; just as they had taught in regard to killing, that one should not consider a secret anger and spite as sin; the same also, if one were hostile to his wife, had no desire for her or love for her, but had desire for another and proved this by looking at her and sporting with her, and by other signs.

Against such impure saints he began to preach, and says: If you do not become different and more pious you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. The matter of swearing must not be treated as you are doing, who make it right and valid where and when you choose; but the command is, You are not to swear at all, neither by the temple, nor by Jerusalem, nor by your head, as little as by God himself; but let your dealings with each other be yea and nay, and abide by that. For that is an abuse of the name of God, if one to the yea or nay adds oaths and swearing, as if a mere yea and nay were not valid or binding unless the name of God were added. There is also a further abuse, that people swear so thoughtlessly, as is now so commonly done, when they use the name of God with almost every word. That must all be strictly forbidden; as also cursing that is done in God's name, if it must not be done. For cursing is just like swearing, both being good and bad. For we read in Scripture that often holy people have cursed; thus, Noah curses his one son, Ham, and the patriarch Jacob pronounced an evil blessing and a curse upon his three sons, Reuben, Levi and Simeon, also Moses against Korah; yes, Christ himself bitterly curses in the psalter his Judas, and in the Gospel the false teachers; and Paul, Galatians 1:9, curses all teachers who preach otherwise (even if it were an angel from heaven), that they shall be anathema, that is, condemned and cursed by God; as if we should say: Let God oppose them and totally destroy them, and give them no mercy or good fortune. So the time may come when one must curse, or do wrong.

Thus, that we should now ask God's blessing upon pope, bishops and princes and wish them success, whilst they with malicious schemes and wicked plottings are seeking to shed the blood of pious people and to throw Germany into confusion; that Christians should not do, but should and must say in regard to it: Dear Lord, curse, and hurl all their scheming to the bottom of hell. Hence, no one can rightly pray the Lord's prayer without implying a curse. For, when he prays: Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, etc., he must gather up in a mass everything that is antagonistic, and say: Cursed, execrated, disgraced be all other names, and rent asunder and destroyed be all kingdoms that are opposed to thee, gone to ruin be all hostile schemes, wisdom and purposes, etc.

This, however, is the distinction: Of himself no one is to curse or swear, unless he has God's word for it, that he must curse or swear. For, as above said, where it is done in accordance with the word of God, then it is all right to swear, to be angry, to desire one's wife, etc. But it is in accordance with the word of God, if he orders me to do it by virtue of my office and on his account,

or demands it through those who are in office. Thus, that we may understand it by an illustration, if it should happen that thou art imprisoned, and in the hands of the authorities, and they would demand of thee an oath not to seek for vengeance against them; or, if a prince demands an oath of allegiance; or a judge demands an oath from a witness; then it is your duty to take the oath. For there stands the word, that thou shalt obey the powers that be. For God has so ordained and established government, that one must be under obligations to another, so that all questionable matters may be adjusted, decided and settled by the use of the oath, as the epistle to the Hebrews teaches. But do you say: Yes, but here stands a different word, that Christ says:

Thou shalt not swear. Answer, as above said concerning killing and being angry: Thou, thou shalt not do it, as for thyself. Here, however, it is not thou that swearest, but the judge who orders thee to do it, and it amounts to the same thing as if he did it himself, and thou art now the mouth of the judge. Now Christ here neither commands nor forbids anything to the government, but lets it take its own course as it is bound to do; but he forbids you to swear of your own account, arbitrarily or from habit; just as he forbids to draw the sword, yet does not thereby prevent your being obedient to the government, if your prince had need of your services, or would summon you to go to war; for then you are bound to enter heartily into the work of the war, and it is no longer your hand or sword, but that of the government; and you are not doing it yourself, but your prince, to whom God has committed it. Thus we speak also in similar cases. As, if it should come to pass, that we would make a treaty and concord with our enemies or the Turks, then the emperor and princes could both give and take an oath, although the Turk swears by the devil or his Mahomet, whom he regards and worships as his God, but we worship our Lord Christ and swear by him. Thus you have now a cause, for which it is right to swear, namely, the necessity of taking an oath from obedience to the government, to confirm the truth or to endure things for the sake of peace and harmony. The other reason is love, though it be not demanded by the powers that be, but is done out of kindness to a neighbor, etc., just as also love is wrathful and rebukes, when it sees a neighbor sin or go astray; as Christ teaches in Matthew 18:15. For it cannot laugh at this or praise what is evil. Thus I may very well show love to the wife of another man, if she be in need or distress, that I may help her out of it; that is not a carnal, forbidden love, but one that is Christian, brotherly, that springs not from my own lust or indiscretion, but because of my neighbor’s need; and it has the sanction of God’s word, which says: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

Accordingly, if I see any one in spiritual need and danger, weak in faith, or conscientiously fearful, or seriously doubting, and so forth, then I am not alone to comfort, but to asseverate besides, to strengthen his conscience by saying: As sure as God lives and Christ died, so surely this is the truth and the word of God. There an oath is so needful that we cannot do without it. For by that the true doctrine is established, the erring and timid conscience is instructed and comforted, and delivered from the devil. Therefore in such a case you may swear just as hard as you can. Thus Christ and Paul swore, and called God to witness. Thus an oath is suited to every threatening or promise that a Christian preacher preaches, both in alarming hardened sinners and comforting the timid. In the same way, if one is to vindicate his neighbor or rescue his honor in opposition to bad, malicious tongues, one may also say: Before the dear God you are wrongly accusing him, etc. For this is to use God’s name aright, to the honor of God and the truth, and for our neighbor’s benefit and salvation. For in such a case you have the word and command hovering over you, that orders you to love your neighbor, to rebuke the disorderly, to comfort the sad, etc.; and because it is

commanded it cannot be wrong, yes, it even urges you to swear, and you do wrong if you neglect to do it. In short, if you have the word of God [on your side], then may God give you grace right away to swear, to rebuke, to be angry, and to do all that you can. But whatever is aside from this, not commanded, nor for your neighbor's need or advantage, in that case you should do none of these things. For God wants nothing at all that you do of your own ,notion, without his sanction, be it what it may, even if one could raise the dead.

Much less will he tolerate it, that one should abuse his name, appealing to it when there is no need or occasion for it, or that one daily at home and every where else use it improperly, as is now done, when men swear with all they say, especially in beer-houses, so that it were well if this were strictly forbidden and punished. Thus you have a proper, clear understanding of this matter, so that one need not vex himself in vain in regard to this text and make a purgatory out of it when there is none.

Now Christ says: I say to you, Swear not at all, neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by Jerusalem. Here we see, the city was held in high esteem and honor, so that they swore by it; and he confirms this, and calls it a city of God, and it is elsewhere also called the holy city. It was holy, however, for this reason, that God's word was there, and through that God himself dwelt there; and it was a good custom, and no doubt inaugurated by good people, that the city was so highly esteemed, (as the prophet Isaiah also gloriously praises it), not for its own sake, but on account of the word.

Accordingly we may well call every city holy that has the word of God, and boast that God is really there. But that he says: Thou shalt not swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black, that he says concerning his creature, not concerning the use we make of it: For he does not mean to say that we cannot powder our hair that it may become black or some other color; but that it is not in our power to bring out a hair that is white or black, nor can we prevent it from becoming thus or otherwise. But when it has grown, then we can cut it off altogether or burn it; just as we can to some extent change one created thing by means of another, but we cannot take any part in having it created so or otherwise. Thus he makes our own head a sanctuary, as that which is not of our work or power, but the gift and creature of God. That he now concludes: "Let your speech be Yea, yea; Nay, nay," etc., that he plainly addresses to such as have no command or occasion to swear. For (as was said) of his own accord no one should swear at all. But when these two features are added, command or necessity, then you are not asked to swear for yourself; for you do it not of your own accord, but on his account who demands it of you, namely, your governmental authority, or the need of your neighbor, or God's command.

Matthew 5:38-42. Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coal, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee logo a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. This text also has been the occasion of much inquiry and error to nearly all the teachers who have not known how to distinguish rightly between secular and spiritual matters, between the kingdom of Christ and of the world. For when these two are confounded and not clearly and accurately separated, these matters can never be correctly understood in Christendom, as I have often said and shown. Now

we have thus far heard nothing else than that Christ directed his teaching against the Pharisees, who were misleading the people, both by their teaching and their way of living, and were misinterpreting and perverting God's command in such a way that the outcome was only sham saints, as it is to this day. For we find always among the preachers some (if not the majority) such Jewish saints, who teach nothing more than about sin and piety in external works. As now in previous passages he rebuked and rejected their teaching and false interpretation, he here also takes up the passage, that stands recorded in the law of Moses, for those to whom was committed governmental authority, and who were to punish with the sword, that they should and had to take eye for eye and tooth for tooth; in such a way, that they sinned just as heavily if they failed to use the commanded sword and punishment, as did the others who seized the sword and took revenge themselves, without command: as in former passages, he who did not dwell and abide with his wife, to whom he had been married, sinned just as much as he who dwelt unmarried with another woman. That they now had perverted and confounded, so that they applied to themselves this text, that was meant only for the authorities, and they interpreted it in such a way, that also every one might take vengeance upon his own responsibility, take eye for eye, etc., just as they had confounded matters in other passages, and applied to themselves the being angry, which belongs to and was enjoined upon the authorities; also they had torn away from its connection with married life the carnal desire; in the same way, too, they had perverted swearing, aside from its proper use in time of need and for purposes of love, to their own trivial habit and other abuses.

Now comes Christ and overturns this perverted, false notion and theory, gives the authorities their due, but teaches his Christians, so distinctly as individuals, aside from official position and authority, how they are to live, personally, that they desire no revenge, and that they be so disposed, if one smites them on one cheek, that they may be ready, if necessary, to turn to him the other also, and not only refrain from taking revenge with the fist, but also in heart, with their thoughts and all their faculties. In short, he calls for a heart that is not impatient, revengeful or disposed to break the peace. This is now a righteousness very different from what they taught and held, and yet they wanted to deck themselves out with texts from Moses, that one might readily avenge himself and offer resistance, if he were violently attacked, because it stands in the text: An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, etc.

Now many people have stumbled at this saying, and not only the Jews, but even Christians, have stumbled at it. For it seemed to them too strict and hard, that one must not resist evil at all, since we must have law and punishment among us; and some have quoted in opposition the example of Christ, John 18:23, when he was smitten on the one cheek, before the priest Annas, and yet did not offer the other, but asserted his innocence and rebuked the servant of the priest, which seems in violation of this text.

Therefore they said that it was not necessary to turn the other cheek to the smiter, and they came to the relief of the text in this way, that it is enough that one is ready at heart to offer also the other; which may not be untruthfully said, but was not rightly understood. For they suppose that to offer the other cheek to the smiter means that one must say to him: See, thou hast this cheek too, and smite me again; or that we are to throw the cloak to him who wants to take the coat. If that were the meaning, then we would have to give up at last house and home, wife and child. Therefore we say that here no more is intended than that every Christian is taught that he must be willing and patient to suffer whatever is necessary, and not seek revenge or strike back. But still the question

and dispute here remain, whether one is to suffer all sorts of things from everybody, and in no case make any resistance; also if we are not to contend or complain before the court, or to claim or demand one's own. For if this were absolutely forbidden, there would be a strange state of affairs, so that one would have to submit to everybody's caprice and insolence, and no one could be safe from another, or keep anything, and at last there would thus be no government at all. To answer this, thou must always observe this main point, that Christ is preaching for his Christians alone, and means to teach them what kind of people they are to be, in contrast with the carnal notions and thoughts which then were still cleaving to the apostles, who supposed that he would establish a new government and empire, and give them places in it, so that they might rule as lords, and bring into subjection to them their enemies and the evil world; as indeed flesh and blood always wishes and seeks in the gospel that it may have its rule, honor and advantage, and have nothing to suffer; after this, too, the pope has hankered, and has come to rule in such a way that his establishment has become a mere secular government, and one so dreaded that the whole world has to be subject to him. So we now see, too, that all the world is seeking its own in the gospel [is selfishly using the gospel], and thus so many sects and parties arise, that aim at nothing else than how they can push themselves forward and make masters of themselves, and crush out others; as Munzer began with his peasants, and as others have shown who imitated his example. And even real Christians are tempted in the same way, when they see things going so badly in the world, even in their own sphere, so that they feel like laying hold and managing things. But it ought not to be so, and no one should think that God wants to let us govern and rule with secular law and punishment; but the deportment of Christians should be totally different from this, so that they have nothing to do with such things or even to care about them, but should let those to whom such things are committed care for the division of property, trading, punishing, protecting, etc., and be content with their disposal of them; as Christ teaches: Give to Caesar the things which are Caesar's. For we are transferred to a different, higher sphere, which is a divine, eternal kingdom, where we need none of the things that belong to the world, but every one is in Christ a lord for himself, both over devil and world, as has been told elsewhere.

Those now who are part of this same secular administration, must necessarily have control of right and punishment, and observe the distinction of rank, of persons, dispose of and divide property, so that all things are well-ordered, and every one may know what he is to do and have; and no one should interfere in the office of another, nor impose upon another, or take what belongs to him. For these things we have lawyers, who are to teach this and manage such matters. But the gospel has nothing to do with such things, but teaches how the heart is to stand related to God; and in all such matters it should be so disposed that it remains pure, and does not stumble upon a false righteousness. This distinction mark and observe carefully, as being the very foundation principle in accordance with which we can easily answer such questions, so that you may see what Christ is speaking about, and who are the people to whom he is preaching, namely, concerning spiritual matters and life, and for his Christians, how they are to live before God and in the world, and conduct themselves so that their heart may cleave to God, and have no concern about worldly government, authority, power, punishment, anger, revenge, etc.

If now one asks whether a Christian's to go to law, or defend himself, etc., then answer simply: No. For a Christian is such a person who has nothing to do with such worldly affairs and law, and belongs to such a kingdom or government in which the only current rule is, as we pray: Forgive us

our debts as we forgive our debtors. Here there should be nothing but mutual love and service, even towards those who do not love us, but are hostile to us, and do us harm and injury, etc. Therefore he says to such that they shall not resist evil, and even not seek revenge, but that they should turn the other cheek to him who strikes them, etc. And then there is another question, whether a Christian may be a man in a secular position and conduct the office and work of a ruler or judge, in such a way that the two persons or two kinds of office are joined in one man, and he thus be a Christian and a prince, judge, lord, servant, maid, which are merely worldly persons, for they belong to the sphere of the world. To this we answer: Yes. For God has Himself ordained and appointed this worldly sphere and these distinctions, and has besides confirmed and praised them by his word. For otherwise this life could not endure, and we are included in them, yes, born in them, before we became Christians. Therefore we must remain in them, too, as long as we are here upon earth; but only so far as our outward, worldly life and condition are concerned.

Therefore it is not indeed possible to ignore these secular relations, for a Christian must be some kind of a worldly person, because he, at least as to body and property, is under the emperor; but as to his own person, according to his spiritual life, he is only under Christ, and not under the authority of the emperor or of any man. And yet externally he is subject to and under obligations to him, in so far as he is in a civil position or office, has house and home, wife and child; for all such things are of the emperor.

Therefore he must necessarily do what he commands him, and what is required by such an external life, and does wrong, if he should have house, wife, child, servants, and would not nourish or protect them, if necessary; and it would not suffice for him to say that he was a Christian, and had to forsake everything or let it be taken from him, etc.; but he must be told:

You are now under the control of the emperor, where you do not count as a Christian, but as a father, lord, prince, etc. A Christian you are, as to your own person, but as to your servant you are another person, and are bound to protect him.

See, we are now speaking of a Christian in relation, not of him as a Christian, but as bound in this life to another person, whom he has under or over him, or also alongside of him, as lord, lady, wife, child, neighbor, etc., when one is bound to defend, shield and protect another, if he can.

Therefore it would not be right to teach here to turn the other cheek and to throw away the cloak after the coat. For that would be just playing the fool, as was said of a cranky saint, who allowed the lice to nibble at him, and would not kill any of them on account of this text, asserting that one must suffer and not resist evil. Are you a prince, judge, lord, lady, etc., and do you have people under you, and want to know what is becoming in you? Then you do not need to inquire of Christ, but consult the law of the emperor or of your state, which will soon tell you how you are to conduct yourself towards your inferiors and protect them. What kind of a foolish mother would she be, who would not defend her child against a wolf or a dog and deliver it, and then say: A Christian must not defend himself? Ought we not to teach her by a good flogging, and say: Are you a mother? then do a mother’s duty, that is committed to you, and which Christ has not abrogated, but much rather confirmed.

Thus we read of many holy martyrs, who under infidel emperors and lords have gone forth to war, when summoned, and in all good conscience have struck right and left and killed, just as others,

so that in this respect there was no difference between Christians and heathen; and yet they did nothing contrary to this text. For they did it not as Christians, for their own person, but as obedient members and subjects, under obligation to secular person and authority. But if you are free and not obligated to such secular authority, then you have here a different rule, as a different person.

Therefore only learn the difference between the two persons that a Christian must carry at the same time upon earth, because he lives among other people and must use the goods of the world and of the emperor, just as well as the heathen. For he has the same blood and flesh that he must maintain, not through the spiritual authority but through the land and soil that belongs to the emperor, etc., until he is bodily removed altogether out of this life into another. If now this is properly distinguished, just how far the personality of the Christian and that of the man of the world extends, you can nicely explain all these sayings and apply them properly where they belong, so that one may not mix and confound them together as the pope has clone with his teaching and ruling. This is now what we have to say of the person who is obligated toward other persons under secular rule, which is called that of father, mother, lord and lady, etc. But how is it, if only your own person is concerned, so that injury or injustice is done to yourself, whether it is proper then to oppose this with violence and defend one's self?

Answer: No. For here even the principles of the world and of the emperor themselves teach: Striking back provokes quarrels, and he who strikes back invokes injury. For by so doing he becomes obnoxious to judicial authority and loses his right; just as in other cases, as when some one robs or steals from you, you have no right to steal or rob from him and forcibly to take anything from him. But we are generally disposed to avenge ourselves quickly, before one has time to look about himself. But this ought not so to be. But if you are not willing or able to endure it, then you may go before the judge with him and there maintain your cause. For he allows it to happen that you in the ordinary way demand and take your rights, but so that you are careful not to have a revengeful heart. So a judge may properly punish and put to death, and yet he is forbidden thereby to have hatred or a spirit of vengeance in his heart; as it often happens, that one abuses his office to gratify his own caprice. If now, however, this does not occur, and you simply seek to protect and maintain yourself properly against violence and abuse, not to avenge yourself or injure your neighbor, then you do no wrong; for when the heart is pure then all is right and well done. But there is danger here, for the reason that the world, along with flesh and blood, is evil, and it always seeks its own, and nevertheless wears a plausible appearance and conceals the scoundrel. So it is not forbidden to go to law and lodge complaint against injustice, violence, etc., if only the heart be not faulty, but equally patient as before, and one is doing it only to maintain what is right and not give place to what is wrong, and from sincere love for righteousness; as I gave an illustration above from the case of Joseph, the holy, who complained of his brothers to their father, when they had done something wrong and an evil report had gone abroad about them; and he is praised for this, for he did it not out of an evil heart, that he wanted to betray them, or wanted to create strife, as they regarded it, and in consequence became hostile to him; but he did it out of a friendly, brotherly heart, for their good. For he did not like to see that they should be the objects of an evil report, so that it could not be said that he sought revenge or meant harm, but did it for their good, and suffered in consequence of their blaming him with mischief. This we read, too, in the Gospel, Matthew 18, in the parable of the servant to whom his lord forgave all his debt, and he was not willing to forgive his fellow-servant a small debt, that the other servants were very sorry, and told

this to their master, not because they were revengeful or glad of his misfortune, but kept fist, heart and mouth quiet, so that they did not swear, or carry slanderous reports to others, but brought the matter before their master, whose business it was to punish, and they sought what was right, but with a truly Christian heart, as those who were under obligation to their master to be true to him; for so it should necessarily be, whether in a house or in a city: if a pious, faithful servant or subject sees another do wrong or injury to his master, that he report it to him and shield him from harm; in like manner, a pious citizen, if he see violence and harm done to his neighbor, that he help and defend him. These are all secular transactions which Christ has not forbidden, but rather sanctioned.

03A.03. Matthew 6

THE SIXTH CHAPTER OF ST. MATTHEW.

Matthew 6:1-4. Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

Hitherto the Lord Christ was rebuking the false teachings and interpretations of Scripture, by which the people had been led only to avoid sinning with the fist, the heart meanwhile remaining internally entirely impure; and he showed and clearly exhibited the true meaning of the Scriptures and of the law. Now he assails their way of living, after denouncing their teaching, and rebukes their good works, and shows that they have nothing good, neither in doctrine nor works, although they were daily teaching and doing good works, as holy people, so that they were regarded as the best kernel of the whole Jewish people, and as the holiest on earth, and the whole world had to look to them as its mirror and pattern, according to which they should live: as we have hitherto known how to look for the true doctrine and life nowhere else than among our spiritual pastors and monks; and yet these are now rebuked by the Gospel, so that every one sees that they have neither taught nor lived aright, but have misled and deceived themselves and the people.

Now it is truly a mortifying preaching that comes into the world in such a way as to let these holy people have no claim to anything right or good; whereby it will merit to be opposed and not tolerated in the world. But the Holy Ghost does not shrink on this account, but goes on, as it is his of-rice, wherever he comes, to rebuke both; as indeed both need to be rebuked. For this is true, where the teaching is not right, there it is impossible that the life, which must be directed and controlled by it, should be right and good; but what one does in accordance with it, those are bye-paths and deviations, and so much the worse because at the same time there remains the semblance and the notion that it is the true, divine teaching which points and leads towards heaven, and the works have the name of being good, and yet they look no further than to the fist: as they supposed it was enough, and well done, if they only did the works, gave many alms, fasted and prayed, no matter how their heart stood towards God; and besides they were defiled by the shameful trait that they were doing it all only to be seen by the people and get honor and glory by it from the people; for that reason Christ here rebukes and utterly rejects it. And first of all he rebukes their alms, which is still the best among all external works. For it means nothing else than to help the poor and needy; and it embraces not only giving a piece of bread to a beggar before the door, but all sorts of kind deeds and all good works done to a neighbor. For the little word alms is taken from the Greek word ejlehmosu>nh which means mercy; as we also generally call them works of mercy. Whence also the Scriptures praise these works above all others, even those done towards God, as sacrificing, praying, etc.; as Christ himself says through the prophet Hosea: I

have delight in mercy and not in sacrifice. So also in Isaiah 58, he finds fault with their grieving him by fasting and scourging their bodies, and demands these works, that they are to do good to the poor, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, etc. How does it then happen, that he here rebukes the Pharisees on account of such a good work? Answer: He does not rebuke the work, but their purpose and aim in doing it. For the deed would be in itself good, but it is spoiled by their smearing their filth over it, because they seek only their own glory and honor before the people by it, and do it not for the sake of God or their neighbor. Therefore he pronounces a short, sharp judgment, that all such alms, however great, many and costly they may be, are in vain and of no account. But who believes that this vice and fault is so common in the world, and especially in the case of the best, and how few there are of those who without this seeking for worldly honor or favor are doing good works?

Take all the alms given in the whole papacy, and count up as many as you can find, that are not given with this intention. Yes, the world will never get to understand what it really means to give alms. For we are all inclined that way, if the people would not begin to praise us, or to show us honor, gratitude or favor, every one would soon draw back his hand. For if the pope had said to the princes and founders [of monasteries, etc.]:

Gentlemen, I will not give you a penny for all your foundations and alms, etc., what do you suppose they would have given for churches and other institutions? They would not have had a stone hauled or laid in position; as we now see, because we teach correctly and exhort to these works, so that we are to give for God's sake, from a pure, simple heart, without any seeking for our own honor or merit, etc., now nobody wants to give a cent. But hitherto, when they had praise and honor for doing it, it snowed with alms, endowments and wills; and yet this had something to do with it, that men believed they were meriting heaven thereby; nevertheless, that was not the real reason, but it was just what Christ here says, that it was a great thing in the eyes of the people, and was praised. Otherwise they would not have cared for it, so as to do it for the sake of God and the kingdom of heaven. This we can readily understand by the fact, as said above, that if we persuade and urge the people most earnestly to perform such good works, and represent it in the most attractive way that we can, as something heartily pleasing to God, along with all the angels in heaven, and that God will reward it a hundred fold: still nobody will touch it. What is the defect in our plea? Simply this, that one is no longer to get for it praise and honor, gratitude and praise before the world. Because the head is cut off, the body will not follow any more. But if the head were to become alive again, then things would soon move on again as they used to do, when this was the way it went. If a rich prince gave so much to a monastery, then they all came and said: Deo gratias! and they promised to merit it [God's favor] with their prayers and divine worship. That had to be proclaimed in all pulpits, and all the world had to say: O, that is a splendid deed! That is the way it was done everywhere in all the papacy; although there may have been a few whom God found honest. See, this is a sure indication that this was done only so as to merit thereby gratitude, honor and praise. In addition to this you have also this evidence, that these saints soon become angry and withhold their gifts, if they experience ingratitude or contempt. For if they did not do it for the reason mentioned, they would not become angry at this, or for that reason cease, but they would continue and say: I did not begin it for that purpose, and for this reason I will not cease; but for God's honor and pleasure I will do it, even though no one gives me a good word for it. But if you come scratching along after this fashion: I have done so much for him, and it is forgotten

already, and there's no gratitude in the people, etc., I would gladly take out my heart and give it to some one; but since I see that it has to be lost, and he shows himself so ungrateful, and all my labor and trouble go for nothing, I'll let him have hell fire before I give him a cent or a crust of bread; see, there the scamp peeps out, and you show by your own words why you are doing it, namely, that people are to worship and celebrate you, and honor you as a god; as we now see in the case of some great miserly bishops, how they can rage and scold, if one is not always thanking them, or saying what they like to hear, so that they even insult princes and lords with it, and want to blame everybody.

See, this is the shameful perversion of good works, and the common fault in all the world, that nobody does anything good without such a design. For the world cannot get out of the crazy notion, nor tolerate and overcome ingratitude. That is where the monks come from, who ran off into the wilderness, because they were too weak to endure this, that they should be in the world, help and do good to everybody, and get as their reward nothing but contempt, harm, disgrace and ingratitude. But what devil tells you to do a good work with the expectation of meriting the honor and favor of the world, which is uncertain and can soon fall away and be changed, and not to have a better object in view, namely God, for then it cannot be lost, as he will richly repay you, both now and hereafter? And you are served exactly right; since you are such a rogue, and aim at nothing else than to be worshipped by the people, and make a god of yourself; he can very well let the world and the devil deal with you, so as to take your godhead from you and throw it into the dirt, where it ought to lie. For, as you try to sit on God's throne and appropriate the honor that belongs to him, he very properly hurls you down again, so that complete disgrace is all the thanks you get for the stolen honor.

Therefore, it is a miserable business, as to the world [in its relation to almsgiving]: whether it is professedly pious or wicked, in either case it is worthless. For it will either be an open devil, with evil works; or it will be God himself, with good works. It is intolerable, in either case. Therefore no one can do a good work unless he is a Christian. For if he does it as a man, then he does it not for the honor of God, but of himself and for his own benefit; or, if he pretends it is for God's honor, this is a malodorous lie.

Thus Christ now means to teach how one is rightly to give alms, and says:

If thou givest alms, do not have a trumpet sounded before thee, and have it loudly reported, so that a whole town must know it and talk about it; just as among us, when a charitable distribution is made, all the bells are rung; but, if you give alms, do it so that your left hand does not know what your right hand does. That is just what St. Paul says in Romans 12:8 and elsewhere: He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity. But to give with simplicity means that one does not seek thereby his own honor, favor, gratitude, or reward, and is not influenced by any one, whether he be unthankful or not; but he gives away freely what he wishes to give; just as God gives daily, and causes his sun to shine, regardless of the thankful or unthankful, just as if he saw nobody. That is a simple heart and intention, which neither seeks nor desires anything else than only God's will and honor.

These simple alms we do not find among the worldly. For their giving is of such a character, that the right hand gives, but the left hand takes That is called — givers, takers — as the children mockingly call each other; yes, given in such a way that one takes ten times as much in place of

what he gives, as, where one gives a drop of water and takes a cask of wine. For the world gives in such a way that it will have the honor that is immeasurably greater than all money and property, and buys thee with a trifle, so that it may have in thee a perpetual captive, with body and life, and whatever thou hast, yes, and God himself besides.

Therefore says Christ: If thou givest alms with the right hand, take care that thou dost not seek to take more with thy left hand; but hold it behind thee, and do not let it know anything about it; so that it means given with simplicity, and not taken, or given in such a way that one must owe thee ten times as much, and celebrate and worship thee as an idol; as our young squires now do — if they have served some with a ducat or two, they want to have him so bought and under such obligations to them, that he must let everything be gold that they say and do, and dare not say a word to them except what they like to hear. My good friend, if you can sell your bits at that rate, you are not a poor tradesman, by any means.

Therefore let every one know how to guard against this vice, and watch himself closely that he be not also found among these. For there are but few people that are aware of it, and it deceives also even those who suppose they are very pious and full of good works, and are yet in this way twice as bad as others; thus God is specially hostile to this vice, and can less endure it than that one should openly rob his neighbor and do him wrong, than to give in this way, and so shamefully spoil the good work, so that you make of yourself an idol, and you more securely bind and hold your neighbor than any one else. But that is the way it goes; where the true doctrine lies prostrate, and yet everybody professes great piety, there these good works follow, that have nothing but a vain show, and do twice as much harm as open evil works. But some one may say: What is to come of it, that he says that alms are to be secret? Is it objectionable for one to let it be proclaimed and shown to those who are to take and receive it? Answer: No; you must see what Christ has in view, for he is looking at the heart and intention, namely, if it is given or bestowed so that honor and glory are sought by it, then it is of no value before God, although many poor may thereby be helped. But to give alms in secret means where the heart does not expose itself, or seek honor and name from it; but is so disposed that it gives away freely, without regarding whether it may have any show or praise before the people; yes, if besides it is despised and abused by everybody, thus it is called secret and done alone before God, even though it takes place openly before all the world. For it is covered over by this simplicity of the heart that does not inquire or care about the issue, let God decide, let come from it gratitude or ingratitude, good or evil. For thus I do not see it, though others may see it; thus I and others in our preacher’s office must do, so that we do not concern ourselves whether we thereby please the people or not; yes, must rather expect for it contempt, ingratitude, persecution, and all sorts of misfortune. For every good work must expect this, and by it be tried and proved, that it may endure and be found upright; which is not the case with the other hypocritical sham work. In short, he who means to be a Christian must not want to do, or omit any good work, out of regard for others, but only in order to serve God with his office, calling, money, goods, or whatever he has or can do, and honor him so far as he can, although he may never merit any thanks thereby upon earth. For it is also impossible that a pious man should be here rewarded for the very smallest work that he does, even if he were crowned with gold and received a whole kingdom. Therefore he should look for nothing more than getting his bread and butter for it, and expect no reward from the world, that is not worthy to recompense a good work, or indeed to recognize and honor a real Christian; and if it even knows him, it is not

so good as to thank him. Because, therefore, it is not undertaken out of regard for the world, it ought not to be omitted on its account; but it should be commended to God, who will abundantly reward it; not secretly, but openly, before the whole world and all angels.

If we do not so understand and feel in this matter, we cannot perform any really good work; but we become impatient, discontented, and allow ourselves to be overcome by the shameful ingratitude of the world, so that thereby this good work is ruined and lost; and it then appears that we meant to do it not for God's sake, but for the sake of the people. And as for myself, I would long ago have given the world its walking-papers and let it go to the devil, rather than let it hear a word from me. But it is no concern of hers, but of our dear Father in heaven; out of love for him, and for his praise and honor, we will preach and do good, because all else in the world is hostile to him and most shamefully despises and reviles him, and does all it can to oppose and vex him; and we take our comfort from the fact that he yet lives if all the world perishes; and because he has declared and promised that he will properly recompense and reward it, he surely will not lie to us. Then try it, and you will find that it will not fail you. This, at first, in a general way, is what we have to say in regard to almsgiving and all other good works, how a Christian is to be disposed in heart in regard to them, etc.

Matthew 6:5-6. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.

Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Along with almsgiving, or doing good to our neighbor, it is also our Christian duty to pray. For, just as the necessities of the present life demand that we do good to our neighbor and sympathize with him in his need (for that is why we live together upon earth, so that one may serve and help the other); so, because we are daily exposed in this life to all manner of danger and need, that we cannot avoid or turn aside, we must also ever call upon God and seek for help, both for ourselves and every one else. But as proper almsgiving is a rare thing in the world, not only because of the common robbing and stealing that abound in the world, as no one does good to his neighbor, and everybody scratches on his own dung-pile, and does not ask how his neighbor gets along; but also because if they do a good deed, they seek only their own interests thereby; so that thus the world is nothing else than a set of robbers and thieves, both on the right and left, both bodily and spiritually, both in bad works and good; just so now is praying a rare thing, that no one does but Christians, and yet it was such a common thing in the world, especially among the Jews, as Christ here shows, in synagogues and at the corners of the streets, and now in so many churches, monasteries, nunneries, etc., muttering and bawling day and night with singing and reading, so that the world is everywhere full of it, and there is no lack of this work, and yet taken altogether it is not worth a cent. For since Christ here rebukes and rejects all their praying, who were nevertheless so diligently practicing it, only that they might be seen of men and get glory; how much more is the praying of our ecclesiastics to be condemned, who seek nothing else thereby than that they may fill their bellies, and not one of them would say a pater noster if he did not get pay for it. And when they have done their best, they have mumbled over a bagfull of words, or intoned them, without heart, sense or faith, just like bells or organs; they have gotten thereby the

honor and glory of being the only ones that pray; but that the others, as occupied with worldly affairs, cannot pray or serve God, and they must pray in our stead, so that we may make lords of them by our money and goods. But how necessary prayer is, is not to be told here; we ought indeed ourselves to feel this, since we live in flesh and blood that are full of all sorts of evil tendencies; besides, we have the world around us and against us, that causes us much misery and affliction, and manifold trouble; and in addition the devil is everywhere around us, who originates innumerable sects, parties and heresies, and drives us to unbelief, despair, etc., so that there is no end to this, and we have no rest, because we are surrounded by these enemies who do not cease until they have stricken us down, for we as single poor men are much too weak for so many enemies. Therefore God says in the prophet Zechariah 12:10, that he will give to his own "the spirit of grace and of supplication," wherewith they may be sustained during their present exposure, and guard and defend themselves against the evil, harmful spirit. Therefore it is the special work of Christians, who have the Spirit of God, that they be not weary and idle, but pray without ceasing, as Christ elsewhere teaches. But now comes the test, that it be a genuine prayer and not a hypocritical one, as theirs was, and ours has hitherto been. Therefore Christ begins by teaching them how to pray aright, and shows how they are to go about it, namely, that they should not stand and pray openly upon the streets, but should pray at home, alone, in their chamber, in secret, etc.: that is, that they should first of all lay aside the false desire to pray for the sake of the appearance and reputation, or anything of that kind. Not that we are forbidden to pray upon the street or openly; for a Christian is not bound to any place, and may pray anywhere, upon the street, in the field, or in church; but merely, that it must not be done with reference to the people, to get honor and profit from it, just as he forbids sounding a trumpet or bells at alms-giving — not for that reason, but he rebukes the addition and the false motive with these words: that they may be seen of men.

Thus it is also not commanded as necessary that we must go into a closet and shut the door; although it is suitable for one to be alone when he wishes to pray, as he can pour out his prayer to God free and unhindered, and use words and gestures that he could not in the presence of others. For although prayer can take place in the heart without any word or outward indication, yet this helps to stir up and enkindle the spirit; but the heart should, aside from this, be praying almost without intermission. For a Christian (as above said) has the spirit of supplication always present within him, so that his heart is perpetually engaged in supplication and prayer to God, whether he is eating, drinking, laboring, etc. For his whole life is devoted to the dissemination of the name, honor, and kingdom of God, so that whatever he does must contribute to this. But yet (I say) in addition to this we must also pray outwardly; both individually, that each person use a benediction or a Lord's Prayer, or the Creed, or a psalm, in the morning, in the evening, at table, and when he has time, and collectively, when they come together, handle the word of God, and thereupon thank him and call upon him in view of the common need. This has to be done openly, and time and place are set apart for this purpose, when the people assemble; this is a precious method of prayer, and a strong defense against the devil and his wiles, for then the whole Christian community combines with one accord, and the more earnest the effort, the sooner the prayer is heard, and the more efficient it is: as it is even now doing much good, averting and hindering many artifices of the devil, that he would otherwise employ through his agents, so that surely what is now left secure, both in ecclesiastical and secular affairs, is preserved through prayer. But what are the needful elements and characteristics for constituting a real prayer, I have often elsewhere said and

treated of, namely, to repeat in a word, that we are urged to it, first, by the command of God, who has strictly enjoined it upon us to pray; then, his promise, in which he assures that he will hear us; thirdly, our contemplation of our need and misery, which so oppresses and burdens us that we greatly need to carry this straight to God, and pour it out before him, as he has commanded; fourthly, that we upon this word and promise of God pray with true faith, in full confidence that he will hear and help us; and all this in the name of Christ, through whom our prayer is acceptable to the Father, and for whose sake he gives us every grace and blessing. This Christ shows also here with the word: Pray to thy Father in secret, etc., and afterwards more distinctly, where he says: Our Father who art in heaven, etc. For this amounts to saying that our prayer is to be addressed to God as to our gracious, kind Father, not as to a tyrant or angry judge, etc. Now no one can do that unless he has the word of God, that he wishes to have us call him Father, and that as a Father he has promised to hear and help us, and that he have this faith in his heart, so that he cheerfully dare call God his Father, and pray with hearty confidence, and rely upon this prayer, as assuredly heard, and await help. But there were none of these elements in that Pharisaic prayer, for they thought no further than how the work was to be done, so that they might be looked upon as holy people, who like to pray; or like our monks and priests, so that they may fill their belly by it. Yes, they are so far from holding that they ought to pray with such faith, that they have regarded it as a folly and presumption that one should congratulate himself upon the certainty that his prayer is acceptable to God and heard by him; and thus, although they prayed, they counted everything as a pure venture, and thereby grievously angered God by unbelief and abuse of his name, against the first and second commandments.

Therefore learn here that no true prayer can be offered without this faith. Do you, however, feel weak and timid? for flesh and blood always hinder faith, as if you were not worthy or fit and in earnest to pray; or do you doubt whether God has heard you, because you are a sinner? then cling to the word and say: Though I am a sinner and unworthy, yet I have the command of God, that tells me to pray, and his promise that he will graciously hear me, not because of my worthiness, but for the sake of the Lord Christ. By this means you can drive away the thoughts and doubts, and cheerfully kneel down and pray, not regarding your worthiness or unworthiness, but your need and his word upon which he tells you to build; especially since he has placed before you and put into your mouth the words how and what you are to pray for (as follows), so that you joyously send up these prayers through him, and can lay them in his bosom, that he may lay them by his own worthiness before the Father.

Matthew 6:7-13. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

He rebuked above their wrong intention in prayer, as they sought their own honor and profit among the people even in doing that which was directed to God alone, calling upon him and beseeching him for help in our need and temptation. Here he is rebuking this perversion of prayer, that they suppose it is praying if one uses many words and vain repetitions, and he calls it a heathenish

method, a trifling useless prattle, as of those who suppose they will otherwise not be heard. For he saw very well that this would be the case, and that such an abuse would continue in Christendom, as it existed among them already at that time, so that prayer would be made a mere work, that would be valued in proportion to its size and length, as if thereby it were admirably done, and thus instead of a true prayer there was a mere prattle and babbling, of which the heart knew nothing.

Thus, as we see, it was carried on in monasteries, nunneries and the whole ecclesiastical crowd, that seem to have had nothing else to do in their calling than to weary themselves daily so many hours, and at night besides, with singing and reading their Horas; and the more of this they could do, the holier and greater worship they called it. And yet among them all there was not one that uttered a real prayer from his heart: but they were all filled with the heathenish notion that one must tire God and one's self with crying and muttering, as if he neither could nor would otherwise hear; and they have thereby accomplished nothing else than to waste their time and punish themselves like asses, with their praying.

Therefore they have themselves said that there is no harder work than to pray; and that is in fact true, if you aim to make a work or labor out of your praying, imposing upon your body to read or sing so many hours continuously, so that any day laborer would rather choose to thresh for a whole (lay, than only to move his mouth for two or three hours one after another, or look straight into a book. In short their prayer was not a sighing or desire of the heart, but a mere force-work of the mouth or tongue: so that if a monk has been reading or muttering his Horas for forty years, he has not prayed from his heart for an hour during all that time. For they never think of presenting their wants before God in their prayers, but they think only that they must do it, and God must regard this trouble and toil. But the Christian's prayer, which is offered in faith upon the promise of God, and presents before him from the heart its need, that is easy, and occasions no labor. For faith soon tells what it wants, yes, with a sigh that the heart utters and that cannot be reached or uttered in words, as Paul says. The Christian prays, and because he knows that God hears him, he does not need to prate everlastingly. Thus the saints in the Scriptures prayed, as Elijah, Elisha, David and others, with short, but strong and powerful words; as we see in the Psalms, in which there is hardly one that has a prayer of more than five or six verses. Therefore the old fathers have very properly said, there is no use in many long prayers, but they praise the short ejaculatory prayers, in which one lifts a sigh heavenward with a word or two; which one can do very often when he is reading, writing, or doing some other work. But the others, who make only a huge labor out of it, can never pray with satisfaction or with devotion, but they are glad when they are through with their babbling; for it must be so, if one prays without faith and with no feeling of need, thus there can be no heart in it: but if the heart is not in it, and the body is to do the work, then it becomes difficult and vexatious; as we see also in secular labor: he who does anything unwillingly, how difficult and disagreeable it is; but on the contrary, if the heart is cheerful and willing, then it takes no notice of the work. So also it is here; if one is in earnest about it, and takes pleasure in prayers then he neither knows nor feels any labor or troubles but looks only at his needs and has finished singing or praying the words before he knows what he is about. In short, one should pray short, but often and strongly; for God does not ask how much and long one has prayed, but how good it is and how it comes from the heart.

Therefore Christ now says: Your Heavenly Father knows what you need before you ask for it; as if he would say: What are you about, that you think to overwhelm him with your long babbling, so

that he may give you what you need? You do not need to convince him with words, or instruct him at length; for he knows beforehand better what you need than you do yourselves. Just as if you were to come before a prince or a judge who knew your case better than you could describe it to him, and you would undertake to make a long story to inform him about it, he would rightly laugh at you, or rather be offended at you. Yes, we do not know, says St. Paul, how we are to pray; so that, if he hears us and gives us something, he gives it above what we can understand or hope for. Therefore sometimes he lets us ask for something that he does not soon give, or indeed does not give at all, as knowing very well what we need or what would be useful to us or not; what we ourselves do not see, and at last must ourselves confess that it would not have been good for us if he had given to us in accordance with our prayer. Therefore we need not teach him or prescribe with our long babbling what and how he is to give to us: for he will give in such a way that his name may be hallowed and his kingdom and his will may be advanced and promoted, etc. But do you say: Why then does he let us pray and present our need, and does not give it to us unasked, since he knows and sees all our need better than we do? He gives surely to the whole world daily so much good freely, as sun, rain, corn, money, body, life, etc., which no one asks or is grateful for; as he knows that they cannot get along for a single day without light, eating and drinking; why does he then tell us to pray for these things?

Answer: He does not require it, indeed, for the reason that we are to teach him this with our praying, viz., what he is to give us, but in order that we may acknowledge and confess what kind of blessings he is bestowing upon us, and yet much more he can and will give; so that we by our praying are rather instructing ourselves than him. For thereby I am turned about, that I do not go along like the ungodly that never acknowledge this or offer thanks for it; and my heart is thus turned to him and aroused, so that I praise and thank him, and have recourse to him in time of need and look for help from him; and the effect of all this is that I learn more and more to acknowledge what kind of a God he is; and because I address my supplications to him, he is the more disposed to answer me abundantly.

See, this is now a genuine supplicant, not like those other useless talkers, who babble indeed a great deal, but never acknowledge this. But he knows that what he has is the gift of God, and he says from his heart: Lord, I know that I cannot of myself produce or get a piece of my daily bread, or shield myself against any kind of need or misfortune; therefore I will await it and beseech it from thee, as thou dost teach me, and dost promise to give me, as he who is ready with favors regardless of my thoughts, and who anticipates my need.

See, such acknowledgment in prayer is pleasing to God, and is the true, highest and most precious worship which we can render to him; for thereby the honor and gratitude that are due are given to him. This the others do not do, but they seize and devour all the gifts of God, just as hogs; they appropriate one country, city, house, after another; never think of paying any regard to God; want meanwhile to be holy with their great intonations and babbling in the churches. But a Christian heart, that learns out of the word of God, that we have everything from God and nothing from ourselves, such a heart accepts this in faith and familiarizes itself with it, so that it can look to him for everything and expect it from him. Thus praying teaches us, so that we recognize both ourselves and God, and learn what we need and whence we are to seek for it and get it. Thus there is developed an excellent, sensible man, who can readily adapt himself to all circumstances.

Christ, having thus rebuked and rejected these false and useless prayers, proceeds himself to give an excellent brief form, how and what we are to pray, that embraces all kinds of wants that are to drive us to prayer, so that we can daily remind ourselves of them in such short words, and no one may be excused, as though he did not know how or what he is to pray; and it is a very good practice especially for ordinary people, children and house servants, to pray the whole of the Lord's prayer daily, morning and evening and at table, and also at other times, so that one may present to God in it all our needs in general. Since, however, the Lord's Prayer is sufficiently expounded in the Catechism and elsewhere, I will add no further comments at present.

It is, however, as has often been said, surely the very best prayer that was ever uttered upon earth, or that any one could conceive, since God the Father gave it through his Son, and laid it upon his lips; so that we dare not doubt that it is extremely pleasing to him. He admonishes us at the very beginning, both concerning his command and his promise, in the word: "Our Father," etc., as the one who demands from us this honor, that we are to ask from him, as a child from its father, and he wants us to have the confidence that he will gladly give us what we need; and this is further also a part of it, that we glory in being his children through Christ; and thus we come in accordance with his command and promise, and in the name of the Lord Christ, and appear before him with all confidence.

Now, the first, second and third petitions refer to the highest benefits that we receive from him: namely, first, because he is our Father, that he may have his honor from us, and his name be held in high honor in all the world.

Herewith I gather into one heap all sorts of false belief and worship, the whole of hell, all sin and blasphemy, and pray that he may put a stop to the abominable belief of the pope, the Turks, the factious spirits and heretics, all of whom desecrate and abuse his name, or under his name seek their own honor. There are indeed but few words, but their meaning is as wide as the world, against all false doctrine and life. Secondly, after we have his word and true doctrine and worship, that also his kingdom may be and remain in us, that is, that he may control us in this doctrine and life, and thereby protect and preserve us against all the power of the devil and of his kingdom, and that all the kingdoms that rage against it may go to destruction, so that this kingdom may stand. And, thirdly, that not our will, nor that of any man, but alone his will may be done, and that what he thinks and advises may succeed, in opposition to all designs and undertakings of the world and whatever may strive against this will and counsel, even if the whole world masses itself and struggles to maintain its antagonistic cause. These are the three most important topics. In the other four petitions we find ourselves confronted by the need that daily meets us on our own account, with reference to this poor, weak, temporal life. Therefore we pray, in the first place, that he may give us our daily bread, that is, everything that is needful for the preservation of this life: food, a healthy body, good weather, house, home, wife, child, good government, peace, and that he may preserve us from all manner of calamity, sickness, pestilence, dear times, war, insurrection, etc. Then, that he may forgive us our trespasses, and not regard the shameful misuse of and ingratitude for the blessings which he daily so richly bestows upon us, and that he may not for this reason refuse and deny us these or punish us with the disfavor that we deserve; but graciously forgive us, although we, who are called Christians and his children, do not live as we should.

Thirdly, because we are living upon earth, in the midst of all manner of temptation and vexation, where we are assaulted on every side, so that we are hindered, and are tempted not alone outwardly by the world and the devil, but also inwardly by our own flesh, so that we cannot live as we should, nor be able to endure for a day amid so much danger and temptation; we pray therefore that amid this danger and need he may sustain us, so that we are not thereby overcome and ruined. And, finally, that he may at last wholly deliver us from all evil, and when the time comes, that we are to pass out of this life, may grant us a gracious, happy dying hour. Thus we have laid upon his bosom briefly all our bodily and spiritual need, and in a few words have gathered up a world of meaning. But there is in the text a small appendage that closes the prayer, as with a common grateful confession; which is this: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. These are the proper titles and names that belong to God alone. For these three things he has reserved for himself, that is, to govern, to judge, and to glory. No one has a right to rule or have supremacy except God alone, or those to whom he has entrusted it, through whom as his servants he exercises the control. Likewise no man has a right to judge another, or to be angry and punish, except he who holds the office by divine appointment. For it is not a natural right of men, but one given by God.

These are the two, that he here calls the kingdom, or the sovereignty, so that all authority may be his; and then, the power, that is, the result of the deciding, exsecutio, so that he can punish, hold the wicked in subjection and protect the pious. For he who punishes, does it in God's stead, and it is all owing to his power that one handles justice, protects and sustains.

Therefore let no one avenge himself or punish, for it is not his office or sphere, and it does not avail; as he says: Vengeance is mine, I will repay; and elsewhere he threatens: He who takes the sword, shall perish by the sword. So also the glory, or honor, is alone God's own, so that no one may boast of anything, of his wisdom, holiness or ability, except through him and from him. For, that I honor a king or prince and call him Gracious Lord, or bend the knee before him, this is not done on account of his person, but on God's account, as he is sitting in majesty in God's stead. So, when I show honor to father and mother, or to those who are in their stead, I do this not to man, but to the divine office, and I honor God in them; thus, where there is authority and power, to this is due honor and glory. And thus his kingdom, power and glory prevail in the whole world, so that he alone rules, punishes and is glorified in the divine offices and estates, as father, mother, master, judge, prince, king, emperor, etc., although the devil, through his agents, opposes himself and aims to hold the authority and power, exercise vengeance and punishment and monopolize all the glory. Therefore we pray also especially for his name, his kingdom and his will, as those that alone should avail, and that all other names, kingdoms, power and will may go to destruction; and we thus confess that he is the highest in all these three respects, but the others are his instruments, by which he acts and accomplishes these things.

Matthew 6:14-15. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. That is a remarkable addition, but a very precious one; and any one may well wonder how he happens to add such an appendix to this particular petition: Forgive us our trespasses, etc., whilst he might just as well have added also such a fragment to one of the others, and have said: Give us our daily bread, as we give to our children; or, Lead us not into temptation, as we tempt no one; Deliver us from evil, as we rescue and deliver our neighbor; and yet no petition has anything

added to it except this one. And it looks besides as if the forgiveness of sins was gained and merited by our forgiving: what would then become of our doctrine that forgiveness comes alone through Christ and is received by faith? Answer to the first: He meant especially to state this petition in such a way, and to link the forgiveness of sin to our forgiving, so that hereby he would obligate the Christians to love each other, and to make this their main and foremost duty, next to faith and the reception of forgiveness, to be constantly forgiving their neighbor; so that, as we live in faith toward him, so also towards our neighbor in love, that we do not vex or injure others, but think that we always forgive although we are injured (as this must often happen in this life); or we are to know that we are also not forgiven. For if anger and ill-will be present, this spoils the whole prayer, so that one cannot pray or wish any of the former petitions. See, this means the making of a firm and strong bond, by which we are held together, so that we do not become disunited, and create divisions, parties and sects, instead of our coming before God, to pray and get what we need: but we are to forbear with one another through love, and remain of one accord. If this be the ease, the Christian man is perfect, as both believing and loving aright. What other faults he may have, these are consumed in the prayer, and all is forgiven and cancelled. But how does he attach in these words forgiveness to our doing when he says: If you forgive your neighbor, you shall be forgiven, and again, etc.? Does not that make forgiveness depend upon faith? Answer: The forgiveness of sin, as I have often said elsewhere, occurs in two ways; first, through the Gospel and the word of God, which is received internally in the heart before God, through faith; secondly, externally, by works, of which 2 Peter 1:10 says, when he is teaching about good works: Dear brethren, be diligent to make your calling and election sure, etc. Here he means, that we are to make this sure, that we have faith and the forgiveness of sin, that is, that we show the works, so that one may tell the tree by the fruits, and that it may be manifest that it is a good and not an evil tree. For where there is true faith, there assuredly good works will follow. In this way a man is both inwardly and outwardly pious and upright, both before God and man. For this is the result and the fruit, with which I make myself and others sure that I am a true believer; which I cannot otherwise know or see. So also here the external forgiveness which I practically show is a sure sign that I have the divine forgiveness of my sins. Again, if this is not shown towards my neighbor, then I have a sure proof that I am not forgiven before God, but am still in unbelief. See, this is the twofold forgiveness; one internal in the heart, that clings alone to the word of God; and one external, that breaks forth, and assures us that we have the internal one.

Thus we distinguish works from faith, as an internal and external righteousness; but in such a way that the internal is there first, as the root and stem from which the good works as the fruit must grow; the external, however, their witness, and as Peter says, certifcatio, an assurance that the other is certainly there. For he who has not the internal righteousness, he does none of the external works. Again, if the external signs and proofs be wanting, I cannot be sure of the former, but am deceiving both myself and others. But if I see and feel that I am gladly forgiving my neighbor, then I can conclude and say: I do not this work naturally, but I feel myself through the grace of God disposed otherwise than before. This is a short answer to the twaddle of the sophists. But this is also true, that this work, as he here calls it, is not a mere work like others that we do of ourselves; for faith is not thereby overlooked. For he takes this work and plants a promise upon it, so that one might honestly call it a sacrament, thereby to strengthen faith. Just as baptism too is to be regarded as a work that I do, when I baptize or am baptized; but because God’s word is associated with it, it is not a mere work, as that which itself avails or effects something: but a

divine word and token upon which faith rests.

Thus also, our prayer, as our work, would not avail or effect anything; but its efficacy comes from this, that it is done in accordance with his command and promise, so that it may well be regarded as a sacrament, and rather as a divine work than as one of our own.

I say this for this reason, because the sophists look at the works that we do, only by themselves, aside from God's word and promise. Therefore, when they hear and read these passages that refer to works, they must indeed say that man merits this by his doing. But the Scriptures teach thus: that we are not to look to ourselves, but to God's word and promise, and cling to this by faith, so that, if you do a work prompted by the word and promise, then you have a sure proof that God is gracious to you; in such a way that your own work, that God has now taken to himself, is to be to you a sure proof of forgiveness, etc.

Now God has provided various ways, modes and manners, through which we obtain grace and the forgiveness of sins; as, first, baptism and the sacrament; also (as just said) prayer; also absolution; and here our forgiveness; so that we are richly provided for, and can find grace and mercy everywhere. For where would you seek it nearer than with your neighbor, with whom you are daily living, and have daily occasion to practice this forgiveness? For it cannot be that you are not much and often offended: so that we have not only in church or with the priest, but in the midst of our life, a daily sacrament or baptism, one brother with another, and every one at home in his house. For if you take hold of the promise through this work, you have the very thing that you get in baptism. How could God be more richly gracious to us than by hanging about our neck such a common baptism, and binding it to the Lord's prayer, which [baptism] every one realizes in himself when he prays and forgives his neighbor? So that no one has cause to complain or to excuse himself, that he cannot bring himself to it, and it is too high and far off for him, or too heavy and dear, since it is brought home to him and his neighbor, right before his door, yes, put into his bosom.

See, if you look at it, not with reference to the work itself, but with reference to the word which is associated with it, you find it an excellent, precious treasure, so that it is no longer your work but a divine sacrament; and it is a powerful consolation that you can attain to the grace of forgiving your neighbor, although you may not be able to come to other sacraments. This ought to induce you willingly to do this work from the heart, and to be thankful to God that you are worthy of this grace: you ought surely to run after this to the end of the world, and spend all your means for it; as we used to do for the fictitious indulgences. He who will not receive this must be a shameful, cursed man, especially if he hears of and recognizes this grace, and yet remains so crooked and stubborn that he will not forgive, whereby he at once loses both baptism and sacrament and everything else. For they are all linked together, so that he who has one should have them all, or retain none. For he who has been baptized ought also to receive the sacrament; and he who receives the sacrament must also pray; and he who prays must also forgive, etc. If you do not forgive, you have here a fearful sentence, that your sins also shall not be forgiven, although you are among Christians and are enjoying the sacrament and other blessings; but these will be all the more injurious and condemnatory for you. And that Christ may the more incite us to do this, he has employed kind, friendly words, saying: If ye forgive men their trespasses, etc. He does not say: their wickedness and villainy, or perverseness and vice, etc. For by a trespass he means such a sin as is committed rather through weakness or ignorance than from malice. Why does he thus

minimize and reduce the sin of our neighbor — for we often see that many a one sins deliberately, from sheer wickedness and an evil will? He does it for the reason that he wishes to allay your anger, and soften you, that you may willingly forgive, and he is more concerned to make your heart sweet and friendly than to make the sin as great as it is in itself. For before God it is and must be so great, that it deserves eternal condemnation, and excludes from heaven, even though it be a small sin, and only a fault, if one does not acknowledge, and ask your pardon for it. But he does not mean that the sin should be thus regarded by you and me, whose prerogative it is not to punish sin, but to forgive it; so that you should think thus: Although your neighbor has done something against you through malice, yet he is still misled, taken captive and blinded by the devil.

Therefore you ought to be so pious as to rather pity him, who is overcome by the devil, so that it may be called a great, unpardonable sin, on the part of the devil who has put him up to it, but on the part of your neighbor, a failure and fault; as Christ also himself has done toward us, when he prayed on the cross: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. That was making our sin small and of little account, which is yet in itself the very greatest that was ever committed on earth. For what greater sin can be committed than most shamefully to torture and kill the only-begotten Son of God?

Yet you must so interpret this error and fault that your neighbor who has sinned against you may acknowledge it, and request forgiveness and desire to reform. For I have elsewhere said that there are two kinds of sin; one that is confessed, which no one should leave unforgiven; the other which is defended — this one none can forgive, for it will not be regarded as sin or accepted as forgiveness. Therefore, also Christ, Matthew 18:18, where he is speaking of forgiveness or the keys, places both side by side, binding and loosing; to show that one cannot absolve the sin which one will not acknowledge to be sin or have forgiven, but must bind it in the depth of hell; but on the other hand, those which are confessed we are to absolve and raise to heaven, etc.

Just as it is with the office of the keys, so is it also with each Christian in regard to his neighbor; who, although he should be ready to forgive every one that injures him, yet, if any one will not acknowledge and refrain from sin, but besides will continue in it, you cannot forgive him; and this not on your account, but on his, because he will not have forgiveness. But so soon as he acknowledges his guilt and asks forgiveness, everything must be granted, and the absolution follow promptly. For since he rebukes himself and forsakes his sins, so that no sin any longer adheres to him, I should the rather pass them by; if he however himself clings to them, and will not forsake them, I cannot take them from him, but must let him lie in them, making for himself out of a pardonable sin an unpardonable one. In short, if he will not recognize himself, we must burden his conscience as heavily as possible and show no mercy, as he will perversely be the devil's own. On the other hand, if he confesses his sin, and seeks your pardon, and you refuse to forgive, then you have laden it upon yourself, so that it will condemn you too.

Thus Christ intends also that the sin be confessed, inasmuch as he still calls it a transgression; he does not mean to deny that it is wrong, or to impose it upon you to sanction it as properly done, or treat it as right or good; only if it have become pardonable, and of so small an account as to be called only a fault, that you then say to your neighbor: Although I cannot praise it, and it is wrong, yet, since you acknowledge your error and your heart is now changed, and you have no ill-will against me, I will also gladly overlook it as a fault and oversight, and will forget my anger.

If you now are thus disposed towards your neighbor, God will also show himself again towards you with a sweet friendly heart, and he will make your great, heavy sin that you have committed against him, and are still committing, of such small account that he calls it only a fault, if you acknowledge it and pray for forgiveness, as he is more inclined to forgive than we can expect him to be. Now you should offer your body and life to God for such a heart, and seek for it to the end of the world; as they used to seek for it in the papacy, and worried themselves for it with many kinds of works. Now there is here such a heart offered to you, presented and given altogether gratuitously, just as baptism, the gospel and all its blessings; and you get more than you with all your works and those of all men could acquire. For here you have the sure promise that cannot belie or deceive you, that all your sins, however many or great they may be, shall be before him as small as human daily weaknesses, which he will not count or remember so far as you have faith in Christ. For just as other sacraments originate in and operate through the Lord Christ; so also, that our prayer is heard and we have certain forgiveness; that we have not deserved it, but all is acquired through him and bestowed upon us; so that he always remains the sole Mediator, through whom we have everything, so that also the forgiveness based upon this work avails alone through him. So you see now why Christ added this appendage to the prayer, so that he might thereby unite us the more closely together, and preserve his followers in unity of spirit, both in faith and love, so that we do not allow ourselves to be separated on account of any sin or fault, that we may not lose faith and everything else. For it cannot be otherwise than that many offenses will daily occur amongst us in all callings and kinds of business, when we are saying and doing towards one another what one does not like to hear or endure, and give occasion to wrath and contention. For we still have our flesh and blood, that acts after its own fashion, and easily lets slip an evil word, or an angry sign or deed, by which love is wounded, in such a way that there must be much forgiveness among Christians; as we also incessantly need forgiveness from God, and must always cling to the prayer: Forgive us, as we forgive; unless we are such ungodly people, that we always more readily see a mote in our neighbor’s eye than the beam in our own, and throw our sins behind us. For, if we should look at ourselves daily from morning till evening, we should find so many cleaving to us that we should forget other people, and be glad that we could engage in prayer.

Matthew 6:16-18. Moreover when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. As he rebuked their almsgiving and praying, so does he here rebuke their fasting. For these are about the three good works that comprehend all the rest: the first, all kinds of good deeds toward our neighbor; the second, that we are concerned about all manner of needs, both those of others and our own, and bring them before God; the third, that we mortify our body.

But, as they had shamefully abused both almsgiving and praying, so that they thereby sought not God’s honor but their own glory; so did they also abuse and pervert fasting, not to keep their own body under constraint and in discipline, nor to praise and thank God; but to be seen of men, and have a name, so that people would have to be astonished, and say: O these are excellent saints, who do not live like other common people, but go about in gray coats, hanging their heads, looking sad and pale, etc. If these do not get to heaven, what will become of the rest of us? But he does

not mean to have fasting in itself rejected or despised, just as little as he rejects almsgiving and praying, but he rather confirms these, and teaches how to use them aright: so he means to properly restore fasting, so that it be rightly used and properly understood, as should be the case with a good work.

It originated among the Jews, when Moses commanded them to fast about fourteen consecutive days, in the autumn, at the feast of expiation. That was the common fast, which they all observed at the same time. In addition the Pharisees had their special fasts, so that they did something more and were counted more holy than others. For that fast was not appointed that they might thereby be seen and observed by others, since it was kept by all the people; and what is common to all, with that no one can specially distinguish himself. Therefore they had to undertake many special fasts, that they might be seen, as much higher and more spiritual than common people; hence they also boast in the gospel against Christ: Why do the disciples of the Pharisees fast so often, and thy disciples do not fast? etc.

Besides, they assumed distinguishing attitudes and marks by which it should be known when they were fasting; they disfigured their faces, so that they did not wash or anoint themselves, but looked sad and gloomy, and put on such a wonderful earnestness that men had to talk and sing about it, etc.

Now comes Christ and demolishes this fasting, and teaches the direct contrary, and says: If you wish to fast, then fast in such a way that you do not have a sad countenance; but wash and anoint your face, so that you appear merry and cheerful, as on a holiday, so that no difference is noticeable between your fasting and keeping holiday. For it was customary among the Jews for them to sprinkle their bodies with aromatic water and anoint their heads, so that their whole person was fragrant when they were keeping a holiday or wanted to be cheerful. If you fast in this way, between yourself and your Father alone, then you have fasted rightly, so that it pleases him; but not as if it were forbidden on a fast day to wear poor clothes or go unwashed; but the notion is rejected that it is to be done for the sake of the reputation, and in order to make people open their eyes at your peculiar way of doing it. Indeed we often read of how they fasted, putting on sackcloth and casting ashes on their heads; as in the case of the king of Nineveh and the whole city. But that was another kind of fasting that their need and misery taught them.

Now, we have copied from the Jews our great fasting season, and at first kept fourteen days; then we became holier, and stretched this out to four weeks, until at last it was drawn out to forty days; but, not content with that, we have set apart besides two days in every week throughout the year for fasting, the Friday and Saturday; finally the four golden or compulsory fasts; these were yet all common or general fasts: besides this, the advent season found some special saints who made a fast out of that, aside from what the monks in monasteries observed; and then every one selected some special saints in addition to the general fasts, until the result was that all of this was of no account if each one did not make his own fast.

Now such fasting as this all taken together is not worth a penny. For the primitive fathers may indeed have meant it well and observed the fasts properly; but it soon was overdone and ruined by the filth, so that it was of no account. And it got what it deserved. For as this wonderful multiplication of fasts was mere human trifling, so it soon degenerated into shameful abuse. For I may honestly say that I never saw a genuine fast in the papacy, in what they call fasting. For what

kind of a fast is that for me, when they prepare a meal at noon of costly fish, excellently spiced, more and better than for two or three other meals, and the strongest drink besides, and spend an hour or three at it until they have filled their belly full? And that was a common thing and a trifle even among the very strictest monks. But the holy fathers, the bishops, abbots and other prelates got at it in earnest at once with ten and twenty courses, and at night took so much refreshment that several threshers could have fed for three days upon it. It may well be that some prisoners, or poor and sickly people, have had to fast through poverty; but I know of no one who fasted for the sake of devotion, and still less now. But now these, my dear papists, have all become good Lutherans, so that none of them thinks any more about fasting; but meanwhile they let our poor pastors have hunger and trouble and hold a real daily fast in their stead.

Since then this fasting has turned out to be a great deal worse than that of the Jews and Pharisees, who did honestly and truly fast, only that they sought their own honor thereby; but ours under the name of fasting has become a mere feasting, and is no fast, but a mockery of God and of the people; besides having the disgraceful addition of making a distinction in the kinds of food, and forbidding the use of some, so that they call only that fasting if one abstains from the use of meat, but meanwhile have the best fish with excellent condiments and spices and the strongest wine; therefore I have advised, and do still advise, that we trample such fasting under our feet as an abominable mockery of God; so that it vexes me that men should carry on and endure this blasphemy in Christendom, and deceive God with the mask of calling such a life of high living and bellyfilling a fast and a good work. This is now a gross, shameless, disgraceful deception, which does not need the Scriptures for a rebuke, but every peasant, yes a child of seven years, can comprehend and understand. But they have also added the still more disgraceful abuse (which ruins even true fasting), that they sought thereby great merit before God, as thereby to atone for sin and propitiate God; so they impose this fasting as penance in absolution. That is really fasting in the name of all the devils, smiting Christ in the mouth and trampling him under foot: so that so far as abuse is concerned, if something bad must be done, I would sooner allow that one should guzzle to repletion; and I would rather see a gorged sow, if I have to look at filth, than such a saint who fasts most strictly on water and bread. The teaching and books of all the monks, the papal bulls, all the pulpits, are still full of this abomination, so that they know nothing of any other fasting when they are doing their very best. I will say nothing about their magnifying the gross, shameful, lying fasts of which we have spoken, and their thereby establishing and confirming the worship of the saints; and no one has been found to say a word against these abuses. Therefore I still assert that all my life long I never saw in all the papacy a fast that was a truly Christian one; but only disgraceful fasting and feasting, instead of real fasting, and, along with that, sheer idolatry and hypocrisy, whereby God was insulted and the people deceived. Therefore let us learn here what it means to fast aright.

There are two kinds of fasts that are good and commendable; one may be called a secular or civil fast, ordered by the government, as any other ordinance or command of the authorities, not demanded as a good work or a divine service. For that I would like to see, and would advise and help to bring it about, that the emperor or prince should issue the order that for one or two days in the week no meat should be eaten or sold, as a good useful ordinance for the country, so that everything should not be gobbled up, as is now done, until at last dear times must come and nothing is to be had. After that, I would be glad if at certain times, once a week, or as might be

thought best, people did not have a meal in the evening, except a bit of bread and a drink, so that everything is not consumed with incessant gormandizing and swilling, as we Germans do, and that we should learn to live temperately, especially the young, plump, strong people. But that should be an entirely secular matter, subject to the temporal authority. In addition to this there should be also a general spiritual fast, which we Christians should observe, and it would be a good arrangement to hold a general fast a few days before Easter, Whitsuntide and Christmas, and thus distribute the fasts through the year. But by all means not for the purpose of making an act of worship out of it, to merit something by it, or to propitiate God; but as an external Christian discipline and exercise for the young and simple people, that they may learn to adapt themselves to the times, and to make the needful distinctions throughout the year; as we have hitherto kept the four ember-weeks, that every one was guided by. For we must distinguish and mark off certain times for the rude common crowd, as fast and feast days, for preaching and commemorating the principal events of the life of Christ; in such a way that thereby no special divine service is aimed at, but only a memorial day, whereby one can divide up the whole year and tell what special time it is. So I would have no objection to people fasting on every Friday evening throughout the whole year, setting it apart as a day to be distinctly marked. But such fasting I neither can nor will inaugurate, unless it were beforehand harmoniously agreed upon. See, thus the Christian Church would have plenty of fasting to do, so that they could not blame us for despising and entirely refusing to fast. But this is also still not the real Christian fasting that Christ has in view, which has special reference to each person in particular, and which, if it is to deserve the name of true Christian fasting, must be done thus, not merely by not eating in the evening, which is only a part of it, and the very least part; but it consists in your disciplining and restraining your body. This relates not only to eating, drinking, sleeping, etc., but also to being idle, indulging in sports, and everything that pleases and pampers the body.

True fasting means quitting and refraining from all such things, and solely in order to curb and humiliate the flesh; as the Scriptures inculcate fasting, and call it affligere animam, to mortify the body, etc., so that it renounce voluptuousness, high living, pleasure. This was the fasting of the primitive fathers; they ate nothing the whole day, went about sorrowing, and denied the body everything, so far as nature would allow it. This fasting we now meet with rarely, especially among our spiritual monks and priests. For the Carthusians, who claim to lead the strictest lives, do not practice it, although they make some pretence of doing it, by wearing a dress of haircloth; but they gormandize, nevertheless, and cram their belly full of the best food and drink, and without any care live most luxuriously.

No; it does not mean thus to quibble and deceive, but it demands the mortification of the body, and withholding from it all that pleases and gratifies it; and even if they did really fast aright, yet they would still make a devilish abuse of it by basing their holiness upon it and claiming to get something special from God by it, etc. Therefore, we are not to build anything upon it, although our fasting may be of the very best kind. For there may be a secret scoundrel lurking behind it, against faith or love; as also the prophet Isaiah, 58:3, (as quoted above) rebukes the fasting, by which they mortified their bodies, but at the same time cheated and oppressed their debtors, etc. Thus Christ also rejected the fasting of the Pharisees; not that they did not honestly fast, but because they sought thereby their own glory and honor, etc.

Therefore, very much is needed to make fasting a truly good work, and pleasing to God. For he cannot at all endure it that you pay your court to him with your fasting as a great saint, and yet at the same time cherish hatred and wrath against your neighbor, etc.; but if you want to fast properly, bear in mind that you are first to be a pious man, and have both genuine faith and love. For this business has to do not with God or our neighbor, but with our own body, etc. But nobody wants to do this.

Therefore, I may well say, that I have never seen any real fasting. For there has been nothing but half and fragmentary fasting, and a miserable deception, when they, for appearance sake, break off a meal, but nevertheless daily tickle the body; except that now in the case of some pious preachers and pastors in the villages and elsewhere, who have to do it from necessity, and besides suffer reproach, ridicule and all manner of annoyance, and get from no one as much as a piece of bread. With these there is neither pleasure, nor show, nor easy times; these are they who wander in the world, whom no one knows, of whom the world is not worthy (as is said in the epistle to the Hebrews 11:38). But the Carthusian monks and our insurrectionary rabble in their robes of haircloth and their gray coats, at these we are to look with amazement, and say: O, what holy people are these! How hard it is for them to go about so shabbily clothed; and yet they are always guzzling and swilling their belly full.

See, that I call the real fasting of Christians, if one mortifies the whole body and forces it, with all the five senses, to relinquish and do without everything that ministers to its ease, whether this be done willingly or by compulsion, (yet that one gladly assents to this and endures it), whether one eats fish or flesh; but nothing more than sheer need requires, so that the body is not thereby injured or incapacitated, but held under constraint and at work, so that it does not become idle, or lazy and lewd. But such fasting as this I do not presume to require, nor will I impose it upon any one. For every one must here look to himself, and judge his own feelings, for we are not all alike, so that one cannot set up a general rule; but every one, in proportion as he is strong, and feels what his own flesh requires, must in such proportion afflict or relieve it. For the intention here is to antagonize lust and the excitement of the flesh, and not nature itself, and it is not limited by any rule or measure of time or place; but it is to be steadily applied, if necessary, so that we hold the body in check, and habituate it to endure discomfort, if it become necessary to do it; and it is to be used according to the discretion of every one, so that no one may undertake to measure it off by rules, as the pope has done; just as we cannot measure off prayers, but let them be free, if any one’s devotion suggests or demands them; nor can we apply it to the almsgiving, to whom, or when, or how much we are to give, as if forced by necessity and law. This is the extent of the general law for all Christians, and it is commended that every one live temperately, soberly and discreetly, not for a day or a year, but daily and continually, which the Scriptures call sobrietatem, living soberly; so that, although they cannot observe all the principal fasts, yet do this much that they are moderate in eating, drinking, sleeping, and in all the needs of the body, that it may minister to what is necessary and not to what is superfluous and capricious, and not live here as if we were only to eat and drink, to dance and be merry. If, however, sometimes through weakness we are guilty of some excess, that will have to be reckoned under the head of forgiveness of sins, as other daily failings. But first of all see to it that you are in advance pious and a true Christian, and are not thinking to render a service to God through this fasting; but serving God must be simply faith in Christ and love to your neighbor, so that you do just what is your duty. If this be not

the case with you, then rather let the fasting alone. For fasting is meant only to be imposed upon the body to cut off outwardly its lust and the occasions for lusting; just as faith does the same inwardly in the heart. Let this be enough said about fasting.

Now we must look also at the words that Christ appends to all of these things, almsgiving, praying and fasting — that they are to be secret, then will our Father, who seeth in secret, reward us openly. For it is a necessary comforting assurance for Christians who do these works uprightly, since in the world their works are maligned and so covered up and concealed that no ungodly person can see them; and even if he sees them, yet with eyes open he does not acknowledge them. Thus, take ourselves for example, what good we do through the grace of God, that no one sees, and the whole world denounces us as those who pray, fast, and despise and forbid all good works, and occasion only misfortune and discord. But how we pray, both openly and secretly, that they are not to see, even if they hear it and are standing alongside, and would like to attack us publicly, as we are helping to keep the peace and do good, etc. For God has so ordained it, as the Scriptures say, that no ungodly person shall see the glory of God, that is, everything that God says and does; as also Isaiah says, Isaiah 6:10 : Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, etc. And so it is with us, both in our doctrine and life. For I suppose our gospel is not hidden, in itself, but so noised abroad that they all see and hear it; else they would not so furiously rage against it; yet they cannot see it, and it must be called among them not the gospel, but a damnable heresy. So also they do not see its fruits in us and our good works that we show towards them, as our enemies, and humble ourselves most completely before them, offer them peace and everything that is good, and besides faithfully pray for them: yet they are not worthy to recognize this, but must for this very reason so much the more horribly persecute us. Thus they also do not see our fasting, how our preachers willingly endure hunger and trouble, that they may serve the people, etc. But when they fast along with a good, fat collations and three or four courses, that is a splendid feat and great holiness; just as our praying must be considered as nothing in contrast with their babbling and howling in the churches.

See, thus, the entire Christian life must be and remain hidden, and cannot attain to any notoriety nor have any show and display before the world.

Therefore be satisfied, and do not worry about it, though it be concealed, and indeed covered up and buried, so that no one sees or regards it, and be content that your Father up there in heaven sees it; he has sharp eyes and can see very far off, although it be covered by great, dark clouds, and buried deep in the earth; in such a way that the life of all Christians is intended alone for the eyes of God. For that is at all events the outcome of it all; we may live as we will, and do as well as we can, yet we still cannot please the world, nor do what seems right to it or worthy of praise, and it does not really deserve to be helped and benefited.

Therefore we must also again give it its walking-papers and send it home to the devil, and confidently defy it with such rhymes as: “Let the world go, it has a poor show,” etc. It is enough that we are acting to please him who sees what we do; and we will neither do nor leave undone anything to please them, God helping us, whether they thank or abuse, are angry or laugh; we will not at any rate make it otherwise than it has always been.

Why should we then strive after the honor or gratitude that cannot be obtained? No, we will commend it to the scoundrels that wear rosaries about their necks, are bellowing day and night in the choir, are gormandizing on nothing but fish and stinking oil, etc., and are doing nothing but lost works; these shall gain the honor and glory from the world, as they deserve them both, and they belong together, as cattle and a stable, with the devil behind. For as the works are, so shall also the priests be, that one villain may praise another. That is one part of the consolation, that we know that the world is not worthy of us; but we have another One in heaven, who beholds us and our works. The other part is, that he says: “Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly;” that it will not only be seen, but also rewarded; and not in secret, but openly, that the whole world may see, along with its own perpetual disgrace. Therefore let him dispose of it; he will bring it to light, so that it is not kept in the dark, and [he will do it] on earth and in the presence of the people; as also the thirty-seventh Psalm comfortably teaches: “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.” See how the dear martyrs were so shamefully murdered, and yet they now so shine forth that all the world in contrast is a mere stench. So John Huss before our day was condemned, with unheard of brutality, and his name (as they supposed) was forever obliterated; yet now he shines forth with such honor that his cause and teaching must be praised before the whole world, and the matter of the pope lies in the dirt most ignominiously.

Then let us now be shoveled under and stay hidden; the time will come when God will draw us forth, that our cause must shine before the eyes of all the world, even yet in this life, but still more gloriously at that day when some poor man will step forth with his fruits and good works, and put to shame the whole papacy and the world, so that his cause will be perfect light and clearness, but the other nothing but filth; only so that we cling to the word of Christ, and do not care or be worried about it that we are now befouled and thrown into the dark before the world: but look to him and do everything for his sake. For God’s work and word cannot lag behind, but must come forth to the light, however deeply it is covered up and buried; so that I have often myself wondered, when I looked at the papacy, how the devil through the pope’s abominations has thrown the dear gospel into a dung-pile and puddle, and covered it up so completely that I thought it would not be possible for the truth ever to come forth again amid such perversions of masses, purgatory and numberless other abominations: yet it had to come forth, just when it lay the deepest, and they were thinking that they had settled the matter for ever. The same thing happened to Christ himself; when they had put him under ground and supposed they had covered him up so deeply that nobody would ever mention him again, then he blazes forth and shines by his word so brightly that they all had to go under for ever. Therefore we ought also to feel safe, for we have his word, so that our doctrine and works must come to the light and be praised before the eyes of all the world; although now they are concealed; unless God himself must stay in the dark. See, this is the comforting assurance, given to us as an admonition, that we are to exercise ourselves in really good works, and not worry ourselves because they are not observed by the world, for it is too blind; and just as little as it recognizes God, just so little does it recognize his word and works; and it will never come to see how grand a thing it is to be a baptized child, or a Christian who receives the Lord’s Supper and gladly hears the word of God; but has to look at it as a mere water-bath, or a bit of bread, and a useless talk. So also it does not see what he is doing who rightly fasts or prays. Therefore we commend it to him who can see it, and hope that he will put to shame the blind, crazy saints, with their pompous, hypocritical display by which they are now darkening the life and works of

Christians.

Matthew 6:19-21 : “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” He has been thus far rebuking their false interpretations of the ten commandments, and purifying and cleansing the befouled and obscured doctrine; then he taught the nature of real good works in contrast with their false, pretended good works; in such a way that we may rightly understand the ten commandments and do really good deeds. Now he begins to warn against the temptations that beset this doctrine, and continues in this strain almost until the eighth chapter, and means to set forth the whole matter most admirably, as a skilled master, who omits nothing that may serve to keep us in the true doctrine and life.

First of all he takes up the beautiful, great vice that is called avarice. For these are about the two worst plagues that always make their appearance, if we preach the gospel and try to live accordingly: first, false preachers, who corrupt the doctrine; then squire avarice, who hinders right living; as we see now, since the gospel is preached again, that the people have become much more avaricious than before, they rake and scrape together as if they were almost dying from hunger; they formerly groped in blindness, as if stupefied, listened to the preaching of irresponsible dreamers, and gave by the score what was demanded, so that they neither saw nor knew what was being taken from them; but now, since their eyes are opened, that they know how they ought to live and perform really good works, they watch their pennies so closely, and are as avaricious, as if each one would like to monopolize the treasures of the world: so that I cannot otherwise explain it, or tell whence it comes, except that it must be a temptation from the very devil himself, who always interjects this abominable vice along with the light of the gospel, to hinder it. For the gospel gives us the consolation that we not only are there to live forever, but are also here to have enough to eat, as we read in the eighth Psalm: that Christ is to be a King and Lord over all the world, and have in his hand all sheep and oxen, and all the beasts upon earth, so that he will not let us die of hunger. Now, this we know; and yet we ourselves are much more deeply immersed in avarice and care for daily food than before, and are all the time short of funds and out of pocket, and cannot give for the glory of God the tenth part of what we used to cram down the throat of the devil.

Christ taught the same thing in many other places, and announced it beforehand. As, when he sent out his apostles to preach, his chief care and admonition were that they should beware of these two things, false teaching and avarice; and he strictly charged them that they should take no provision with them on the way, nor be concerned about what they should eat and drink, so that (as above said) the two most injurious things in Christendom, by which it is greatly perverted, are: spiritually, the faith by false doctrine, bodily, the fruits by avarice. Therefore there is need here of preaching and warning, when we have decided upon doctrine and life, that we take due care to adhere to it and not be diverted from it by false interpretations of Scripture; and then to beware of avarice that it do not secretly ensnare and get possession of us, so that we do not aim only at temporal things, to have enough here, as if that were all. For it is a dangerous, insinuating vice, and can put on an attractive appearance and start beautiful thoughts, so that it even deceives Christians, and no one can be sure of being safe against it. For when they see how ill it goes with them in the world, that is ever imposing upon them, and begrudging them even a bit of bread, so

that they for its sake must nearly die of hunger; how the poor preachers are now left to endure trouble and want; they are so tempted that they consider how they may get and accumulate something, so that they may stay in the world, until at last they actually become involved in worldly care and avarice, and through this let their ministerial office fall and lie, and some even let go the gospel altogether.

See, for this reason Christ now begins with many words to preach against the great idol mammon, and paints it in the most detestable colors, so that one should by all means be on his guard against it; and he says, in the first place: Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through, etc. Here he gives to the treasures upon earth three burrowers, rust, moths and thieves; these are scandalous watchmen when they are set over treasures. Now God has wisely ordained that where a treasure is there must such fellows be that watch it; just as commonly the sparrows or rats and mice with the corn. For it is not worth anything better, since we do not rightly use money and property, but through sheer avarice scrape it together for ourselves, and no one gives or grants it to another. But this means not only the moths and rust that devour clothes or iron and brass; nor mice and rats, that can be caught in traps; also, not the mere thieves that secretly empty the coffers, but also the great living moths and public thieves, as the great corrupters and profligates at court, that can empty bins and purse for a prince, and at last strip him of all that he has; so also in cities, not only those who creep into a citizen's house, but who with cunning secrecy suck out the city's resources by usury and extortion in the market and wherever they can; so that, in short, wherever there is money and property there must also moths and thieves be, eager for it; and everything in the world is full of these rats and mice, wherever people live together. For what else than such a rust or moth is an unfaithful counselor at court, or an officer who does nothing but nibble away at a prince's money or property as long as it lasts? As there are now many of these hypocrites, who with daily, heavy, unnecessary and useless expenses make the princes poor, and who do not care whether a prince is prospering or going to ruin, if they can only be masters of his money and manage things as they please. Thus also, in all towns and villages we find everything full of rats and moths, both great and small, secret and public, as shoemakers, cobblers, tailors, butchers, bakers, brewers and saloon-keepers, and other trades, workmen and day-laborers. Yes, in every house, he who has a lazy, unfaithful servant or maid, what else has he than a weevil, that devours more for him than if he had his floor full of rats and mice? Now see what a fine god mammon is, who has no better protectors and courtiers about him than mere moths and rust, so that if one has been gathering treasures for a long while, yet there must be so much devouring by this kind of hangers-on that no one who ought to enjoy it is glad or takes pleasure in it; and not many treasures of great men and princes have ever been well invested, but they have generally been wasted through wars, or devoured by these miserable cankers, or otherwise uselessly squandered or destroyed.

Therefore, those are best off who have not many treasures, for they have not many rats to feed, and need not be afraid of thieves.

How, then, are we to have no treasures at all, and are all hereby condemned who gather treasures upon earth? Surely that cannot be the case. For, if everybody would do as you and I do, to-morrow nobody would have anything in house and home. The lords and princes must acquire and have provision for land and people. For to this end God has created gold and silver and given them mines. Thus we read in the Scriptures that Moses taught the king that he should not have too

many horses, too much gold and silver, etc. Thereby he admits that he may gather treasures moderately; as also King Solomon himself boasts [that he has gathered treasures], and the patriarch Joseph gathered so much that he made all Egypt the king's own, with its corn, money, property, cattle, and the very bodies of the people besides, as complete vassals; thus Abraham, too, had many sheep and much gold and silver with which he traded. What shall we say to it then, that he here so clearly forbids us to gather treasures? since he himself (if we wanted to reckon with him)had a fund, because Judas held the bag, and yet there was always a balance on hand, so that they never wanted for anything when he sent forth the disciples, as they themselves said. Why, then, does he here forbid this, and say that they shall take no money, nor scrip, nor shoes with them?

Answer: It has been said above, often enough, that Christ in this sermon teaches a single person or a Christian man; and that a man of the world and a Christian are to be kept quite distinct. For a Christian does not mean a male or female, young or old person, lord, servant, emperor, prince, farmer, citizen, nor anything that is part of the world and may be known by a worldly designation; he has no person or mask, and should neither have nor know anything in the world, but be satisfied with his treasure in heaven. He who does not properly make this distinction cannot rightly understand these sayings; as our sophists and fanatics, who mix and confound these things together. A prince may very well be a Christian, but as a Christian he is not to rule; and in so far as he rules he is called not a Christian, but a prince. The person is a Christian, but the office or princeship has nothing to do with his Christianity. For, so far as he is a Christian, the gospel teaches him that he is to injure no one, not to punish or take revenge, but to forgive everybody, and to endure whatever injury or injustice is done to him. That is (I say) the lesson of a Christian. But that would not constitute a good government, if you would preach in that way to the prince; but he must speak thus: My Christianity is something between God and myself, that has its own rules, how I am to live with reference to him; but besides this I have in the world another office or rank, that I am a prince. This person does not stand related to God, but the relation is between me and my land and people, etc. In this respect the question is not how you are to live towards God, and what you are to do and suffer for yourself; let that be for your person as a Christian, that has nothing to do with land and people. But your princely person must do none of these things or have anything to do with them; but think how it may manage the government, keep and protect justice and peace, punish the wicked.

See, in this way both ranks or offices are rightly divided, and yet in one person, and so to speak are contradictory, so that one person shall at the same time suffer everything, and not suffer; but in such a way that to each office its own appropriate experience is applied: namely, as said above: If it affects me as a Christian, then I am to endure it; but if it affects me as a secular person, which is not between God and me, but bound to land and people, (whom I am commanded to help and protect, and the sword is placed in my hand for this purpose,)then it is not suffering that is called for, but the opposite. So every man upon earth has two persons: one for himself, bound to no one, but to God alone; aside from that, a secular one, with which he is bound to others; as we must be mixed together in this life, as a husband or householder with wife and child; who, although he is a Christian, must nevertheless not suffer it from those related to him that they practice knavery or reckless behavior in the house, but he must resist and punish wrong-doing, so that they must conduct themselves properly, etc. If you rightly apprehend this difference, then it is easy to

understand the teaching of Christ. For he is speaking here, and in all his sermons, not about how a secular person is to do and live; but how you are to live uprightly towards God as a Christian, who has not to concern himself about the world, but only about the life to come.

Thus I say also in regard to this text: My person, that is called a Christian, is not to care for or lay up money; but I am to be heartily devoted to God only. But externally I may and am to use temporal good for my body, and, as to other people, so far as relates to my secular person, I may gather money and treasures; yet not too much, so that I do not make an avaricious belly out of myself, that cares only for itself, and can never be filled. For a secular person must have money, corn and provision for his land, people, or others that belong to him. Thus, if one could rule in such a way as the patriarch Joseph in Egypt, so that all the storehouses and vessels should be full of food, and could manage the country in such a way that all its need would be provided for, from which provision one could help the people, advance to them and distribute among them, if necessary; that would be an excellent treasure and an admirable and Christian use of worldly goods. For what a prince gathers, he gathers not for himself, but as a person belonging to all, yes, as a common father of the whole land. For we must not all be beggars, but every one provide so much for himself, that he can maintain himself and not impose upon others, and, besides, he should help others, and thus one should contribute to others when it is necessary.

Thus every city should lay up as much as it can for the common need; yes, every parish should have a common treasury for the poor. That would not be unfair, but should be called laying up Christian treasures. For it is not such a treasure as ministers to avarice and lust; as the world does, and as our priests hitherto have gathered money, and with no other purpose than to find their pleasure with it, and to play with the florins like the little girls with their dolls. But when necessity calls for it, when others are to be helped, then there’s nobody at home. These are the devil’s treasures, against which Christ is here speaking, that we are not to lay up treasures upon earth, that is for one’s self and for his own pleasure; in such a way that the heart does not become avaricious, and cling to the temporal mammon, but seek for and lay up another treasure in heaven. But outwardly and secularly you may lay up as much as you can with God and honorably; not for your own satisfaction and avariciousness, but for the need of other people. He who thus accumulates shall have blessing and indulgence besides, as a pious Christian. But those who are thus avariciously scraping together, so that they cannot cease, and yet do not let any one enjoy it, so that they dare not themselves make a cheerful use of it, with them it shall happen, as is here said, that moth and rust and thieves shall consume, so that as it came so shall it go; although it also often happens, on the other hand, that even where things have been properly gathered, they are nevertheless consumed in this way. For no better treatment can be expected on earth for temporal good at any rate. If this now happens to those who lay up treasures rightly, how much rather to those who seek nothing else than the money, not the use, advantage and fruit of the money. For it is here so denounced that moth and rust must attack it and consume it, and it be stolen, so that no one can succeed who thus avariciously rakes and scrapes together; and although a farmer has gathered a great deal, he still must not use it, that does not become him, but he must bury it, so that it does not benefit him or any one else, otherwise the worms gnaw and bite at it, or it falls to the share of the public servants or scoundrels at court, so that it may not be better spent.

Thus now Christ is trying with these words to reason us out of the idea of thus avariciously grasping after mammon, and he speaks about it so contemptuously that he could not make it more odious to us. For what sort of a god is that, who cannot do so much as to defend himself against moth and rust, but must let himself be daily gnawed at and consumed, and lie there to be plundered by everybody, so that everything that comes along feasts upon him, and every thief steals him, etc. That is vexatious, to have such a helpless god, subject to moth, rust and thieves, who yet rules the whole world. Therefore we ought to be ashamed of ourselves, that we are such people as to be clinging to such a moth-eaten treasure and placing all our confidence upon it. Since you know this, (he means to say), do not set your heart upon it, so that you lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth; but be satisfied with what God here gives you, and hold it liable to be lost or taken from you. For that is all that can be expected; especially if you wish to be a Christian, and confess or preach your Lord, you must be always expecting to be snapped at and cast out, as one that has challenged the world and all the devils. If you are to be really consistent, you must be courageous enough to despise all their treasures and goods, and be assured of another, better treasure.

Therefore he says: Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, that is, let the world have its moth-eaten treasures, liable to be robbed and stolen, that are of no more value than that the world may take pleasure and comfort in them. But you that are not of the world, but belong to heaven, and are purchased for heaven by my blood, so that you may have another eternal treasure that is prepared and appointed for you, do not let your heart here be entrapped: but, if your office and worldly calling are such that you must have to do with earthly treasure, do not cling to it or serve it But let it be your aim to gain those treasures that are laid up for you in heaven. For those are true treasures that neither moth nor rust can reach, and they are altogether safe against everything that can devour or steal. For they are so deposited that they always remain whole and ready, and are so guarded that no one can break through after them.

Let him now who wants to be a Christian apply this stimulus and this logic to himself. For it ought to please an avaricious fellow, and make his heart laugh, when one shows him such a treasure that no rust can corrupt and no thief steal. But the world is said not to regard this, because it neither sees it nor feels after it, but continues clinging to the gold and silver that it sees glittering, although it knows and sees that it is not secure for an hour against rust and thieves. But we are not preaching to these. He who will not adhere to Christ, and shape his course with reference to the invisible treasure, let him go his way; we will not drag any hither by main force. But take notice, if your time comes that you must go hence, then call upon your treasure that you have laid up, and upon which you have relied for consolation, and see what you have in it, and what it can help you. But it happens, as is written in Psalms 76:5 : Dormierunt somnum suum omnes viri divitiarum, et nihil invenerunt in manibus suis — the full-bellied rich that served mammon, when they were to die, found nothing at all. That is indeed a terrible thing, that those who have served mammon their whole life long, and have done injustice and wrong unto many for its sake, and have despised the word of God, yet in the time of need could not have a hair-breadth of enjoyment. Then for the first time their eyes are opened so that they look into another world, and go groping about for what they have gathered as a provision, yet they find nothing, and are left to pass away empty in disgrace; then they become so anxious and afraid that they in consequence forget what they have laid up, and they find nothing also in heaven; and there happens to them just what Christ says, in Luke

12:19, about the rich man who once had a grand good harvest, so that he meant to pull down his barns and build greater, and thought to have a good time, and said: “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.” Notice, that is the little song of the farmers, that all greedy bellies sing; but what follows? “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: and whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” So he both loses this treasure [his soul], and must be robbed of his gathered goods, and so disgracefully that he knows not who shall get them. For this is the way of the world, since one rarely sees great treasures divinely gathered, so that they dare not spend them as they would like to do, or have them benefit some one, but they must be scattered in such a way that no one knows what has become of them; as! have already often observed, especially in the case of great, rich, ignorant priests, who have left large possessions, that, however, soon disappeared after their death, or fell to the share of those who gave them no thanks for them, but recklessly squandered and shamefully destroyed them. And especially if a war occurs, then the devil has it all his own way, so that they fall into the hands of the fire-eaters, for whom they never were intended, and who besides pile upon the people for them all sorts of misery.

Therefore, if some one has long been laying up, and any one asks him who is to get it, he has to say that he does not know; and it usually does not turn out as he expected. Therefore he is a great fool, that he risks all his comfort and well-being upon it, and plagues himself with great care and anxiety all his life long, and yet does not know for whom he has gathered it; yet nobody considers this. For man’s blindness and wickedness are too great, and the world will still be the world, and have the bother, that it may serve the moth-eaten treasure; and if it has long served, and has angered God, then it must have as its reward that God at last cannot help it, and lets it have the disappointment coupled with insult and injury. That it cannot prevent, as little as fire can be prevented from burning, or water from extinguishing. Therefore let them only go their way, and know that you are taught, as a Christian, to think where you ought to have and find your treasure, where it is safe for you, and always abides, and cannot be displaced or become another’s; and meanwhile use this world’s goods and make the best of it, as a passing possession. And if you thus gather treasures with God and with honor, then he will also see to it that it remains, if it ought to remain, so that it is nevertheless not lost, but well used, and that much good is done with it.

Christ now ends this with a proverb, and says: Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also. That is as much as saying what we Germans say of a greedy belly: Money is his heart; that is, if he only has money, that is his joy and comfort, in short, his God. Again, if he has nothing, that is his death; there there is no heart, no joy, no comfort. Therefore he means to say: Beware, and test your own heart, and know assuredly that your heart will be where your treasure is; as we are else wont to say, what is dear to a man, that is his God. For his heart draws him thitherward, is occupied about it day and night; he sleeps and wakes with it, whether it be money and property, pleasure or honor, etc. Therefore observe your own heart, and you will soon find what is sticking in it, and where your treasure is. For this may readily be felt, if you have as great a pleasure and diligence in hearing the word of God and living accordingly, and in securing that life, as you have in gathering and storing away money and property.

For, if my heart be so disposed (and also proves itself such, where it can be proved)that I would rather lose not only money and property, but also my neck, rather than to forsake or despise the gospel, and to do wrong or violence to my neighbor for my own benefit, I can conclude that money

and property are not my heart's treasure, although I am also gathering and saving; but having freely exposed them to danger and hazard, I am striving for another treasure, in heaven, namely, that hidden in the word of God.

Again, however, if it be the case with you that you let others preach and teach and exhort as they will, and you go along, thinking that you have enough, and live in style; never ask whether you are doing right or wrong by your neighbor, if you only have your own, and make your calculation so that with one penny you may gather twos yes ten, and have no concern about God's word and preachers, and about the world with its laws, then you can also understand that your treasure is not above in heaven, but remains with the moth and rust; so completely, that you would rather auger God and the world before you would lose a penny, and give up anything for its sake: as now peasants, citizens, noblemen everywhere shamelessly talk and live, who for the sake of a penny venture to dare defy the government of God in the Church and in the world, so that this saying may remain true and practically convict them, since they will not hear nor be instructed. For it cannot be otherwise, even if we worry long about it and would gladly see it otherwise. Therefore it is best, if we have told it to them, that we let them go their way, and despise and laugh at them as much as they do at us. For God says in the second Psalm that he can laugh too, and laugh so that they will have bitter weeping; that means that he will speak with them in his wrath and will alarm them in his sore displeasure.

Matthew 6:22-23. "The light of the body is the eye: if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" That is a warning, that we must not allow ourselves to be deceived by the beautiful color and appearance with which avarice can adorn itself and conceal the villain. For, as I have said, there is no vice among all the natural vices that more readily deceives people and does greater harm both to the gospel and to its fruits. For it hinders wherever it can the preaching of the gospel and its being kept among the people; and although the gospel be preached, the preachers who have fallen under the power of avarice are of no account, so that both are thereby injured, the people who are to hear it, and those who ought to preach it; so that those who indeed have it will not support the preachers, and let them die for hunger, so far as they are concerned; and as the preachers see this, they take special pains not to live at the mercy of the people. These are then more dangerous enemies than the others. For, although a peasant becomes avaricious, and gives nothing to support the gospel, a preacher can still be provided for; although his support is very meager. But when the preachers themselves become involved in it, the gospel is no longer to their taste, so that they should suffer or venture anything for its sake; but they will lay their plans accordingly, so that their belly does not lack, and they will preach what will please the people and bring the money.

Therefore St. Paul calls this a peculiar vice, a worship of idols or idolatry, that is in direct opposition to the faith, which is the true worship or honoring of God. For it makes mammon and the impotent penny its God and Lord; what it wills, that he does; thus he lives and preaches, and is completely owned and captured by it, so that he no longer asks after the word of God and does not hazard a penny on its account.

Now Christ can do nothing more against all this than to rebuke this vice and warn those against it who are willing to be warned; and this is indeed necessary. For even the pious can hardly prevent

their being deceived by it. But others move along serenely, as though completely swallowed up by it, notwithstanding what we preach and declare. The Jews, too, were such a set, immersed in their avarice, so he had to be all the time rebuking them; and all the prophets, when they were holding forth about the faith, were perpetually rebuking and denouncing avarice, against their preachers and false prophets as well as against the mass of the people. But it was of no avail, except in the case of a few who would be thereby influenced, for whose sake Christ and we all must still preach, and let the others go their way, since they will be of the devil's party.

Now Christ used this saying more than once as a common saying, not only in reference to avarice, but also in reference to other matters, especially as to doctrine. For in matters of doctrine it occurs that the factious spirits and lying preachers pretend that they are heartily and truly in earnest, and seek the honor of God and the salvation of souls, so that no one boasts and asseverates as vigorously as they do. To these he utters the warning:

Beware, that your eye be single and not evil; that is, that your way of thinking and your boasting is right, and not secretly evil, and that you are not deceiving yourselves with false notions and thoughts. For it is commonly these people that the devil bewitches, and just as when a man lies in a dream or sleep, and is so completely stupefied that he cannot see that he is dreaming; but he does not think or know anything else than that it is really happening so, and he is so sure of it that he could not feel anything more sure; and yet it is nothing else than a dream, which soon vanishes, and when he awakens it is all gone; and although it seems to him sometimes that it is a dream, or that he is dreaming of a dream, yet he is ensnared, so that he cannot extricate himself, or become master of his senses. So those people are also ensnared, who insist so confidently upon it that their cause is the pure truth, so that they may swear everything upon it, and yet it is all nothing but dreams and the thoughts of crack-brained people. Therefore it is a dangerous thing if one does not cling closely and simply to God's word, and allows himself to be led away from it to the thoughts of men that have an excellent appearance and soon captivate, so that he who falls within their influence cannot afterwards extricate himself from it. For he does not know anything else but that it is the real word of God, and he adheres so firmly to it that he cannot be persuaded to abate a jot or tittle of it; as we see that some have lost their necks for it. But this is not the place to develop this thought. For here he applies the saying to the common vice of avarice, which, although it is gross and external, yet there is no vice in reference to doctrine that can so adorn itself and wear so beautiful a covering, so that it must not be called avarice, but be seen and praised, as though one were heartily opposed to the vice, and no one were so mild, kind and merciful; and yet he does not himself see that his heart deceives him, and that he is altogether immersed in avarice.

We must therefore examine the text a little farther, and exhibit it plainly in illustrations, although it is not possible to comprehend in how many ways the evil eye can contort and help itself; [we do this] in order that one may learn to be on his guard against such influences. For this is also a common temptation among Christians, so that no one believes that so few people are free from it; for the heathen and others are guilty of it in its grossest forms, so that one can easily recognize it.

Christ's now saying: "The eye is the light of the body," is a reference to the natural body. If it had no eye, no sun would be of any use, although it might shine a hundred times so brightly. Therefore the body has no other light that may lead and direct it, than the eye; because one can see with it,

we need not be afraid that he will drive alongside of the bridge into the Elbe, or go through hedges and bushes, or rush into the fire or among the spears; for the light guards him against danger and harm. But he who has no eye must go forward, and stumbles over wood and stones until he falls and breaks his neck or is drowned in the water; for there is no light there, but total darkness. So (he means to say) it is in the matter of Christianity, especially with avarice. Here take care that your spiritual body has an eye, that is, an upright, good intention and understanding, that you may know how you believe and live, and do not deceive yourself with false notions and darkness. Thus, for example, if you thus reason: “I will work and do something, that I may gain something and maintain myself with wife and child, with God and honor; and if God grants that I may also thereby serve and help my neighbor, that! will gladly do;” see, that is the light or the spiritual eye, from the word of God, that shows you what belongs to your calling, and indicates to you how you are to fill it and live in it. For this is right, and has to be, since the body lives here, so that every one may do something that he may support himself and keep house. But now beware that this eye does not become evil and deceive you; that you do this with a simple intention, and have only this purpose, to work and do what your calling requires to meet the necessities of yourself and your neighbor, and not under this pretense to seek something else, namely how you may thereby gratify you avarice. For flesh and blood is a master in misusing this light and employing it as a pretense. So, if it now happens that you have procured some means of living that you are fond of, and are only concerned how you can keep it and increase it, and, if you have a gulden, would like to have ten more: see, here the evil eye comes creeping in, that looks not only at the means of living and the necessary possession, but also at its avarice, and can still adorn itself [with the pretense] that it is not seeking avarice, but is doing what God has ordered it to do, and is accepting what God gives.

Well, here no one can look into your heart and judge you; but beware yourself that your eye is not evil. For it happens very easily, and there is a strong inclination to it, especially when one sees how profitable it is; love is thirsty and is never satiated, and nature besides is strongly disposed that way: so whores and scoundrels come together, and things go as they ought to, as we say: Occasio facit furem, money makes villains. Therefore Christ warns his own so diligently. For the world is a great whore-house, and quite merged in this vice: and we ourselves must live in it, and these examples and incitements tempt us, so that we are in great danger and have to be well upon our guard that we do not let the devil ride us.

If now your eye is single, (says Christ), your whole body is light; that is, all that you are doing and living in your outward deportment, in accordance with your office and calling, that is all upright, moving in accordance with God’s word, with the proper intention, so that it shines like the sun, before God and man, and it stands well before all the world; and all that you do is excellent, and you can use worldly good with a good conscience, as having been honestly and divinely acquired, etc. Again, if your eye is evil, so that you do not act in these things as required by God and your office, but leave the track and are concerned only to gratify your lust and love for money; then your whole body is dark, and everything that you do is condemned by God and lost, although you are called a pious man before the world. For the body lets itself be led with its whole external movement and life as a blind person, and cannot go or live otherwise than as the eye directs.

Thus he means to warn us and charge every one conscientiously to see to it how his mind and heart are disposed, so that he do not flatter himself with the beautiful and yet false idea that he has a good, honest reason, and a real good right to rake and scrape together in this way, and impose

upon God, so that he does not observe the scoundrel; as though he said: You may adorn yourself as you will; but if you deceive God, then you have deceived a wise, shrewd, and besides an experienced man. But take care that you are not deceiving yourself, and that your light does not become an evil eye that makes your whole life dark and abominable in the sight of God; for he has a clear, sharp sight, and will not allow himself to be deceived by your extra coat of paint. And he concludes this warning with a threat, to alarm, so that we may not so readily make use of that plausible, invented notion, and says: But if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! That is, although you may invent such plausible ideas, as that you do not mean to accumulate through avarice, as the others, but intend to do it in such a way that you can defend it before God and the world, so that it must not be called avarice, and yet you live just the same, and make thus for yourself a light of your own in your heart; but see to it just here that this light is not also darkness, not alone that it is sheer avarice in your heart, but also that you mean to conceal it as with the light, so that it is not to be called avarice, and thus there is a double darkness, much greater than before.

Just as that was a great darkness under the papacy that completely extinguished the light of Christian doctrine, so that they taught nothing else than to take away sin and be saved by works, etc. But when they besides at once defended this and boasted of it that it was the true divine doctrine, and that he who denied this was a heretic, and was forbidding the worship of God and all good works, etc., then there was the blackness of darkness, so that they adorned this darkness and error with the name of truth, and thus made the darkness greater by the superadded light; just as if one knows the devil, that it is the devil, and makes a god of him. That means to cover darkness with darkness and yet claim that it is bright and luminous, yes, the very sun itself.

Thus Christ now concludes: If the opinion and doctrine that one regards as light is itself darkness, how great must the other darkness be which this brings with it; namely, that one practices this doctrine, and lives accordingly. Thus here, he whom avarice has mastered, so that he rakes and scrapes, he has already a darkness in his heart. But if he goes on, and flatters himself that it is not to be called avarice, and silences his conscience, so as not to be rebuked, that is now a real, thick, double darkness. Just as a fool, who claims to be sensible and not chargeable with folly, is properly called a great, big fool; or an ugly strumpet, who claims to be pretty and adorns herself with her nasty trumpery; that is only making things blacker and worse; and in fact all men are so disposed, that no one wants to have his sin rebuked; but all try to cover their tracks, so as to get approbation and praise, and thus out of one bad sin they make two.

Now when this happens in spiritual affairs, then the great murderous harm is done. For those in this calling cannot easily do things moderately, but, when it comes to dealing with the gospel, they are apt to overdo it with their charities. Again, if they apostatize from the gospel, then there is no end to their avarice; as it used to be hitherto: when they' began to give, it fairly snowed with gifts, to churches, public worship and ecclesiastical establishments; as in old times the emperors and princes with good intentions gave whole districts of country for such purposes, and endowed such institutions; but now again hardly anybody gives a penny, and they are avariciously gobbling up everything, as if they were afraid of dying with hunger. This is the way the monks, priests and prebendaries used to do, whom no one could satisfy with gifts. If one had gathered two, three or four fiefs, he would want to have as many more; and yet they all wore the same mask:

Though I would have enough with one prebend, parish or bishoprick, yet something more is needed that I may honorably fill my station as a prince, nobleman, or some other prelate. Then he makes use of all possible means to rake and scrape together all that he can get, and all for the purpose of honorably filling his place; and yet the light is kindled [it is now pretended] that he must not be said to be acting avariciously, but doing it all for the maintenance of his rank. So easily one can find a little gloss with which to kindle a light for the devil; and if one has no other resort, it will have to be this, that one says: “I will gather my money together in such a way that I may afterwards provide for masses and public worship, or give alms for the maintenance of the poor,” etc. That is kindling a great, beautiful light; then a man may worry himself to death and always say: “I mean it well; and the simple-minded man, our Lord God, is capitally hoodwinked, so that he cannot see or notice these cunning tricks, and I’ll get into his heaven before he is aware of it.” But I have also seen many who have thus hoarded, so that guldens by the thousand lay stored up, but afterwards they died off with their property, so that no one knew what had become of it; for it was gained by avarice, it had to be left in avarice, devoured by moth and rust, and never be put to proper use. This I mention as an example from which one may see how skillfully Squire Avarice can adorn himself and put on pious airs if he has occasion for it; and yet, in fact, he is a two-fold scoundrel and liar. For what does God care for it, that you mean to lead a splendid, knightly life, so that he should be pleased for you to act avariciously, contrary to his command, and live in such a way as if you wanted to get everything for yourself, to display your splendor and pride, and afterward say that you are doing it for God’s sake, and for the honor of the Church, and mean to pay for it with benefices and church-services. Just as if some one were to break into your house and open your coffers and take what he could find, and would afterward say he meant to give some of it for alms: ah, that would be a beautiful sacrifice! The right thing is: If you want to give to God, give him of what is; your own; for he says: I hate sacrifices that come from robbery. If you have, give what you choose; if you have not, then you are excused. But if you are avariciously scraping together so that you may be able to give, and pretend that you are doing it with that intention, then you are not in earnest, but it is a light that you have yourself taken from the dark lantern wherewith to deceive God and the people.

Thus I might go through all ranks and conditions, and show how men dress themselves up so that avarice takes on the name of a virtue, and mammon is praised and honored as a god. But who is to tell all that the farmers at market, the citizens in towns, the nobleman in office and on his estate, are everywhere doing? The one example that I have given is enough to show clearly and distinctively the darkness that is thick enough to be felt, and also to judge the others accordingly. What are we to think now of the great mass of the nobility that are now undertaking to deal in nearly all kinds of business, even with iron and nails? We must not call this all avarice; but, as God has given it, every one may seek his means of living as best he can, so that he may honorably fill his station, etc. That is also a little light that makes them stock-blind, so that it prevents them from seeing anything at all; whilst yet in ordinary worldly justice it is so ordered that every one may carry on his business and trade so that still his neighbor may also have a chance to get along and maintain himself. But now nobody can do anything for these griffins and lions that monopolize all kinds of business, and besides want to be called pious and honorable people. But (as was said) who can imagine what a multitude of such tricks are now employed in all ranks and trades? For what is the world, but a great wide sea of all wickedness and scoundrelism, concealed under a covering and color of good that cannot be understood? Especially now in this last age, which is a

sign that it cannot long endure, and is going to destruction. For the tendency is, as we say: the older, the stingier; the longer, the worse; and everybody is becoming so avaricious, that almost nobody can get to eat and drink on account of others, although God gives everything in abundance. But that is the reward of the ingratitude and contempt that is shown towards the gospel, as I have said: He who apostatizes from the gospel must be so possessed by the devil that he cannot be avaricious enough: just as, on the other hand, he who has the gospel in his heart becomes mild, so that he not only ceases to rake and scrape together, but gives and risks everything, as much as he ought to and can.

Well, we must still let the world be the world, and although it for a long while avariciously gathers everything for itself, it must nevertheless go back upon itself and leave everything for us; or, if we still must suffer poverty and trouble in the midst of it, we still have no evil portion, as Isaac and Jacob among their brethren. Through us they have gained worldly property and complete freedom from the oppression and burdens of the papacy, so that they may do what they please. That is the portion of Ishmael, a flask with water, that Abraham hung about his neck, and let him go. But we have a different portion, that is called spiritual good and heavenly blessing: and are thus well provided for. Their great possessions that they have we gladly renounce, and would not have them if they would throw them after us; on the other hand, they do not want the spiritual blessings that we have. So we will hold possession of the real territory, and the inheritance that is ours forever, and we will let them boast of their portion that will soon fade away, and rob themselves for its sake of our inheritance, which we would still be glad to share with them. If they, however, rob us of their portion, we have always so much that we can readily recover from the loss. But let us beware of this, that we do not fall into the false light, along with the world, that is the evil eye, that extinguishes the true light and makes of it a twofold darkness; and see to it that avarice does not perplex you with that sweet notion and beautiful coloring, that you mean to bring yourself or your children into a high, honorable position, and give them a great deal only to better and exalt their position; for thus avarice is the longer the less satisfied, but is always reaching out for something higher and beyond, and nobody is satisfied with his place; but, he who is a citizen would like to be a knight; a nobleman would like to be a prince, and so forth; a prince would like to travel like the emperor. But do you wish to travel like a Christian? then beware of this notion as of the very worst darkness, and conduct your business in such a way, if God, through his blessing, gives you success, that your neighbor also alongside of you may provide for himself and have pleasure in you, so that you may lend him a helping hand. For if you let the evil eye deceive you, then you have already lost the word of God, as driven out by that light, and one thick darkness is added to the other, that makes you totally blind and obdurate, so that nothing more can be done for you.

Matthew 6:24 . No man can serve two masters; for either he will hale the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Here he pronounces a most fearful sentence against the avaricious: first of all against his Jews, who were the real avaricious bellies, and yet wanted to be holy and very devout, like our priests and ecclesiastics, he means to say: “You think you are all right, and are serving God with great earnestness, and are yet, along with that, avaricious scoundrels, so that you are doing all this for mammon’s sake, although you are also serving God.” But this is the statement: No man can serve two masters at the same time. If you wish to be the servants of God, then you cannot serve mammon. Here he means two masters who are opposed to one another, not those who reign with

one another. For that is not self-contradictory, if I serve my prince or the emperor and God besides; for it passes regularly from one to the other, so that if I obey the lowest one I am obeying the highest also. Just as the head of a family sends his wife or children to the servants, and through them commands these what they are to do: there is no multiplicity, but it is all one lord and from one master. But God and the devil, that means two masters, that are opposed to one another and issue contradictory orders.

God says: Thou shalt not be avaricious, nor have any other God; but the devil, on the contrary, says: You may be avaricious and serve mammon.

Reason itself teaches this, that it is not sufferable to serve two antagonistic masters at the same time; although the world can skillfully do it, and this is called in German, carrying the tree on both shoulders, and blowing hot and cold from the same mouth; as when a nobleman serves a prince, and accepts hire from him, and betrays and sells him to another and accepts money also there, and watches what the weather promises to be, if it will rain here, so that the sun may shine there, and thus betrays and makes merchandise of both. But there is no serving, in all this, and even reason must say that such people are traitors and scoundrels. For how would you like it if you should have a servant who would accept wages from you and would be looking with one eye towards some one else, and not be at all concerned about your affairs; but, if something should go wrong to-day or to-morrow, would scamper off to the other and leave you in the lurch?

Therefore it is right to say: He who is a good servant and wants to serve faithfully, must not cling to two masters, but speak thus: “I have my support from this master, him will I serve as long as I am with him, will do the best I can for him and not concern myself about any one else.” But if he wants to pilfer here, and steal there, then he’s ready for the hangman. For one should kill the hens that eat at home and lay their eggs elsewhere. Thus did the Jews also; they supposed that God should regard them as great saints, and be well satisfied if they sacrificed in the temple and slaughtered their calves and cows, although they meanwhile were acting avariciously wherever they could, until they carried on their merchandizing before and in the temple, and set up their money-changing tables, so that materials could be promptly furnished and no one should leave without sacrificing.

Against these Christ now pronounces this sentence, so that no one may undertake to be the servant of God and mammon. It is not possible to maintain his service, which he has established, if you are determined to be avaricious after mammon. For the worship of God means that you cleave to his word alone and make everything bend to that. He who will live according to that, and be consistent, must at once renounce mammon. For this is sure: as soon as a preacher or pastor becomes avaricious he is no longer of any use, and cannot preach any thing good. For he must be on his guard and dare not rebuke any one, allows himself to have his mouth stopped by presents, so that he may let the people do what they please, avoids making any one angry, especially the great and powerful: and thus neglects his duty and office that requires him to rebuke the wicked. Thus also, if a burgomaster or judge or any one who holds an office is to execute his office and see to it that it is rightly administered, he must not be much concerned about how rich he may become and derive benefit from it. Is he, however, a servant of mammon, he allows himself to be bribed with presents, so that he becomes blind and no longer sees how the people live. For he thinks: Am I to punish this one or that one? then I will make enemies and may thereby lose what is

mine, etc. And although he has an excellent service, and is occupying the office that God has ordered and given to him, he still cannot administer and exercise it; this is the work of mammon, that has taken possession of his heart. So it goes now in the world everywhere, so that it supposes it to be a small matter and no great danger with regard to mammon; and it flatters itself with the beautiful, sweet thought, that it can still serve God; but this is a miserable deception by which the devil blinds a person, so that he no longer attends to his official duty, and becomes absorbed in avarice; and this solely for the reason that he fears that he will not receive honor, gifts, or presents.

Therefore Christ (as above said) pronounces a strict sentence that one should not deceive himself with such thoughts and count this a small matter; but should know that he who for the sake of mammon, money or pleasure, or honor or favor, does not administer his office as he should, will not be recognized by God as his servant, but as his enemy, as we will hear; but he who wishes to be found in God's service, and to execute his office properly, so that he may think, with a manly heart, that he can despise the world with its mammon; but this not as an outgrowth of his own evil heart, but as a gift from heaven, with prayer that God, who has bestowed upon you this office, may also give you grace to administer it; and enable you to believe that you have and can do nothing nobler and better on earth than the service that you are to render to him, and not be much concerned as to whether you suffer harm through it or get into trouble; and comfort yourself with this, that you are serving a great Master who can easily make you enjoy your loss, which is better than that you should lose the eternal treasure for the sake of the small temporal good that at any rate cannot help you. For if you are to choose a master, would you not much rather serve the living God than the powerless dead knave?

See, thus every Christian does who has God's word, that he may so honor and observe it, and not care whether the world is thereby vexed or fails to get any advantage from it; but he thinks thus: There is purse and pocket, house and home, etc.; out here is my Christ: if am now to leave and give up one, then I will let all that go, so that I may keep my Christ. That is what Christ means when he says one cannot serve two masters. For it will happen sooner or later that they will conflict, and one must yield to the other. Therefore there is no use for you to flatter yourself that you mean to keep them both as masters; but you must soon decide to leave one or the other.

Therefore the stress lies here on the little word, serve. To have money and property, wife, child, house and home, this is not sinful; but you must not let this be your master, but you must make it serve you, and you be its master; as we say of an honest, excellent, well-disposed man: He is master of his money; not so subservient to it and held captive by it as a stingy greedy-belly, who would rather let God's word go, and everything else, holding back both hand and mouth, than to run any risk with his money. That is a womanly, childish and servile heart, that despises and neglects the eternal treasure for the sake of the scaly mammon which it cannot use or enjoy; yet lives along securely meanwhile, thinks it can attend to God's word at any time, keeps on accumulating as much as it can, so as not to miss a penny for God's sake, until it sinks more and more deeply into avarice, gets farther and farther from God's word, and finally opposes it altogether. For Christ used hard language and spoke very plainly when he said: "Either he will hate the one and love the other; or he will hold to the one and despise the other." That is as much as to say: The shameful love of mammon makes enemies to God; as some of our priests publicly say: That would indeed be an excellent way of teaching, but it does harm; therefore it is objected to, and not unreasonably (as they think), for it does give occasion to trouble. But mammon is a capital

god; he does no harm in the kitchen or in the purse. Therefore here love and friendship come to an issue over the words: “he will hate the one and love the other.” For there are two masters, that are opposed to each other, and cannot peaceably dwell together in one heart, as little as two owners in one house; so that when the test comes that one must serve and hold to the one, then one must anger the other or leave him. Thus one becomes the enemy of God, as a matter of course, because he loves money and property. This is the precious fruit of the service of mammon; as can especially now be seen, since avarice has gained such complete control, that there is a perfect leprosy of avarice among the nobility, peasants, civilians, priests and laymen. Is not that a great piece of sanctity and a beautiful virtue, that one takes the best part of man from God and gives it to mammon? For that is certainly the highest service, to which the heart is sincerely devoted, which the whole body and all the members hanker after; as Christ said above: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” For what one loves, that he will assuredly run after, that he will be glad to talk about, that has all his heart and his thoughts; hence also Augustine says: “Deus meus, amor meus,” what I love, that is my god. From this you see what kind of people those are to whom Christ applies this title — that they are the enemies of God, who yet feign such great display of serving him, as his best friends; but at heart they are nothing else than real devil’s saints, who heartily hate and persecute God and his word and work. For that is truly to hate God, if one hates his word. This is the way of it: If one rebukes a man for avarice and unbelief, and holds before him the first commandment: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” that is, thou shalt not incline thy heart, desire and love, to any one else than to me; and he will not hear or endure that rebuke; but begins to rebel and rage against it, until he is quite embittered against it in heart, with rankling hatred against the word and its preachers. Therefore there is in the text of the ten commandments such a word of threatening: “I am a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children of them that hate me,” etc., by whom he means these very greedy-bellies and mammon-servers, as the Scriptures call avarice idolatry or the worship of idols. Yet they want (as above said) to be praised as the greatest saints, and as enemies of idolatry and heretics, and by no means to have it said that they hate God. But this is the proof against them that they cannot hear or see the word of God, when it attacks their avarice, and want to be wholly unreproved; and the more one rebukes and threatens them, the more they laugh and mock, and do what they please against God and every one else.

See now, is not this a shameful evil and an abominable sin, that ought to alarm us and make us heartily hostile to mammon, ask God’s protection against it, and flee from it as from the devil? For who would not dread falling into it, and hearing this decision concerning himself that he is to be called an enemy of God, who not only depises him, but wishes that God and his word did not exist, that he might only have his free pleasure and will, to God’s annoyance and vexation. For reckon yourself what will happen to such a man, and what kind of a person he is loading upon himself, so that at last it will be quite too heavy for him. And they are indeed very well punished (as the text says), by the fact that they are such miserable people, that their heart, desire, love and pleasure are set upon the out-house, when they ought to be in heaven and set upon that which is God’s. How could a man more completely disgrace himself than by turning his consolation away from God, who gives him everything that is good, and well deserves to have our good will, and posting himself behind the devil and taking delight in his stench and hell, and even becoming so hellishly wicked that he not only despises the word of God, but becomes so murderously opposed to it that he wishes there were no God? That is the gratitude that he receives from these greedy-bellies, to

whom he daily gives bodily life, sun and moon, and the treasures that they have. But they will find out what they gain thereby, and they have it in part already, so that they must be constantly devouring the devil's stench and filth. That is one part of the text, spoken of mammon: "Either he will hate the one and love the other;" the other is: "or, he will hold to the one (that is, God) and despise the other." Here he does not merely say: "He will love the one;" but he shows the deed and work of love by the word: "hold to." For he who is to love God and his word, will not find it so very small a matter, but often very hard to do, and the love will become such as the devil will often make sour and bitter. Therefore it is necessary that we be able to hold and hang fast to God's word, and do not let ourselves be torn loose from it, although our own flesh and the example of the whole world, and the devil besides, oppose it and endeavor to take it from us; and he must needs be a man and have knightly courage that can resist so many enemies; yes, there must be a great fiery zeal of love, that is burning so brightly that one can give up everything, house and home, wife and child, honor and property, body and life, yes, despise it too, and trample it under foot, so that he only may preserve the treasure, which he still does not see, and which is despised in the world, but only offered in the mere word and believed on in the heart.

Yet he does not mean thereby that we are not to have money and property, or, if we have it, to throw it away; as some fools among the philosophers, and cranky saints among Christians have taught and done. For he grants that you may be rich, but he does not want you to fix your love upon that; as David taught and proved by his own example: "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." Psalms 62:10. That is such a state of mind that, in the midst of money and property given by God, can keep the heart free (which the world cannot do), and if it seeks to entice the heart to itself (as the beautiful florins and shining silver goblets and jewels bewitchingly smile), and to bear it away from God, then he can trample it under foot, and so completely despise it as the world clings to it, and on the contrary despises the heavenly treasure. In short, a man must be mammon's master, so that it must lie at his feet; but he must be subject to no one, nor have any one as his master except the word of God. But this is preached to the little flock that believe in Christ, and hold his word to be true; with the others it amounts to nothing.

Matthew 6:25. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment! The Lord expatiates here in delivering a strong denunciation of this ruinous vice, because (as said above) it commonly pushes its way in violently along with the gospel, and fiercely assails not only the world but also Christians; especially, however, those who are to preach the word of God and expose themselves to all sorts of danger on its account, who are despised and oppressed by the world, so that they so far as the flesh is concerned have good reason for anxiety. For he who wishes to be a Christian and confess his Lord, he makes the devil (who is a prince of the world) his enemy.

Therefore he assails and seizes him, not through the word and faith, but through that which is under his kingdom and power. Now we have our worthless body, flesh and blood, still in his kingdom; that he can indeed torment, and cast into prison, rob of food, and drink, and clothes, so that we, with all we have, must always be in this danger. Flesh and blood, on the other hand, thinks how it can also manage to hold its place securely and escape danger. Thus the temptation arises that is called care for a livelihood; though the world does not consider it a temptation, but rather considers it a virtue, and it praises these people that can scheme for great property and

honor, etc. And here you learn what it means to serve mammon, namely, to care for life and our body, what we are to eat and drink, to have about us and to put on; that is, to think only of this life, how we may become rich here, may gather and heap up money and property, as if we were to remain here forever. For this is not sin, nor serving mammon, that we eat and drink, and clothe ourselves, as the needs of this life and of the body require, so that it may have its food and clothing; also, it is no sin to seek and gain food; but [it is sinful] to be careful about it, that is, to set the heart's comfort and confidence upon it. For care does not inhere in the garment or in the food, but right in the heart; that cannot let it go, it will hanker after it; as we say: Goods give courage, etc., so that caring means hankering after it with the heart. For what the heart does not intend and love, that I am not concerned about; and again, what I care for, that I must have a heart for.

Yet you must not press the text too closely, as though it meant to forbid caring for anything at all. For every office or calling carries with it the duty of caring for that which belongs to it, especially where one is placed over others; as St. Paul says, Romans 12:8, concerning spiritual offices in Christendom: He that ruleth, let him do it with diligence. Thus the head of a family must care for his children and domestics, that they be well trained and do what they should; and if he neglects this he does wrong. In the same way it is the care of a preacher or a pastor that the preaching and the sacraments are rightly attended to; that he comfort the distressed and sick, rebuke the wicked, pray for all kind of needy ones, etc. For he is commanded to wait upon and direct souls. Thus a prince and other persons in authority must care for the secular government, that it is rightly administered, as their office requires. In like manner also subjects are to care that they faithfully render and accomplish their obedience; servants and maids, that they properly serve their masters and guard their interests, etc.

Christ is not here speaking of this kind of care; for there is an official care that is to be carefully distinguished from avarice. For that is not concerned about itself, but about its neighbor; it does not seek its own, yes, it even neglects its own, and is indifferent about it, and serves another, so that it is called a care of love, which is godlike and Christian, not that of selfishness or of mammon, which is both against faith and lover and it is the very thing that hinders the official care. For he who is in love with his money and caring for his own advantage will not pay much attention to his neighbor or his office, which involves his neighbor. As we saw heretofore in our ecclesiastics, who were not at all concerned about properly caring for souls, but their whole aim was that the world should contribute enough to them; and what did not bring them in any money, that they neglected, so that not one of them would as much as say a Paler noster for another without pay. But a pious pastor cares only for this, that he may rightly administer his office, that souls may be benefited thereby; is not concerned about it, that he does not gain much by it, yes, has to suffer much for it, bite himself with snakes, have the world and the devil as his enemies, lets God see to it that he gets enough to eat, etc.; but consoles himself with another treasure (for the sake of which he does all this,) in that life, which is so great that all that he here suffers is quite too small in comparison, etc.

Because now he has forbidden this care of avarice and mammon worship as idolatrous and making men enemies to God, he continues, by adding many illustrations and comparisons, so that he may make avarice all the more odious to us, and endeavors to depict it in such hateful colors that we will feel like spitting upon it, and says, first of all: Is not life more than food? that is, you can and must entrust God with your life, of body and soul, and it is not within your power to continue it

for a single hour; what fools then you are that you will not entrust to him your body's nourishment, that he may procure eating and drinking for you? For how can one imagine greater folly than for one to be painfully solicitous about getting food and drink, and having no care about getting body and life or retaining them for an hour? — just as if one should be careful to adorn his house beautifully, and did not know who was to live in it; or, how he might prepare much and excellent food in the kitchen, and should have no one who was about to eat it. Just so it is that we act with our avariciousness, that we care for the least and never think of the most important. That is really unnecessary and superfluous, yes, foolish care. And though we should care a great deal about our bodily life, there would be nothing gained by that, for it is not for a moment within our power; just as little as if any one were to worry himself to death, how the grain is to grow in the field, which he has not sowed; or where the silver is to lie in the mine, that he has not put there.

Since then, in the whole matter of our life we must dismiss care, and this, without our thinking or doing anything about it, is hourly maintained by God; why should we worry about little things as if he neither could nor would give us food and covering? We ought to be ashamed that anyone should say of us that we are guilty of such folly. Yet our conduct, especially that of the great, rich bellies, is nothing else than that of the fools, that are ever caring only to have their kitchens full, and have an abundance provided, and yet have no table or guests; or who have many luxurious beds provided and have no one to occupy them; just as if a shoemaker should do nothing else all his life but fill his shop with shoelasts, and never think about where he would get leather to make a shoe; ought we not to march him out of the country as a crank and a fool?

See, Christ thus shows us what foolish people we are, so that we might well spit upon ourselves; and nevertheless we live along in this blindness, although it is perfectly plain, that we cannot take care of our bodily life, and if we did care for that we would just thereby have to become Christians and think: See, I do not even have my own life in my hand for a moment. Since then I must entrust my bodily life to God, why shall I then doubt and care how the belly may be nourished for a day or two? Just as if I had a rich father who would gladly present me with a thousand florins, and I would not trust him to give me a penny when I need it.

Matthew 6:26-27. Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, not gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

Here he adds an illustration and a comparison to the exhortation in mockery, ridicule and contempt of the wretched avarice and belly-care, so that he may drive us away from it, and remind us what we ourselves are, so that we may be heartily ashamed of ourselves, since we are far nobler and better than the birds, as we are lords not only of the birds, but of all living creatures, and all things are given to us for service and created for our sake: and yet we have not so much faith as to trust that we may sustain ourselves with all these things that God has given and provided for us: whilst he is daily giving their food and nourishment to the smallest birds, yes, to the very smallest worms, as our servants, without their caring or thinking at all about it, yet they do not gather anything or lay up in store; they neither sow, nor if it be sowed can they gather it in. Is it not now a shameful disgrace, that we, for whom God has given and provided all creatures, and for whom he causes so much to grow every year, so that we have enough annually to sow, and very much more to reap, cannot trust our belly to him without care and avarice? For if anybody ought to care and gather, it

should be done by the little birds; since they cannot do that, and might think when summer is coming: See, now all the world is sowing its grain, so that in summer they may again gather it in; now, or in harvest, everybody is harvesting and accumulating, and as all do not have a little grain to sow or to gather in, where are we throughout the year, especially in the cold winter, to get anything to eat, when everything has been housed and nothing is left in the fields? What would we men do if we for a single summer had nothing to sow? Yes, if we did not know of provision for a fortnight, how would all the world then become desperate, as if we would all have to die of hunger? Now the little birds fly in the air summer and winter, sing and are happy, never worry or care at all, though they do not know where they are to get food tomorrow: and we miserable, greedy bellies, never cease caring, although we have barns and store-houses full, and see grain growing in the fields so abundantly.

See, thus he makes the birds masters and teachers, so that a weak little sparrow must stand in the gospel, to our great, lasting disgrace, as teacher and preacher of the very wisest man, and hold this daily before our eyes and ears; as though he wished to say to us: See, miserable man, you have house and home, money and property, and every year your field full of grain and growth of all kinds, more than you need; yet you have no peace, and are always caring lest you may die of hunger; and if you do not see provision and know that it is before you, you cannot trust God, that he will give you food for one day; whilst there are such multitudes of us, not one of whom is all his life-time ever anxiously concerned, and yet God daily nourishes us. In short, we have as many masters and preachers as there are little birds in the air, that put us to shame with their living example, so that we ought to be ashamed, and not venture to lift up our eyes if we hear a bird singing, that is proclaiming heavenward God’s praise and our disgrace; yet we are so obdurate that we pay no attention to it, although we hear this preached and sung daily on every hand.

Yes, see what else they do, the dear little birds; how entirely free from care they live, and look for their food alone from the hand of God. If we cage them, that they shall sing, and give them plenty to eat, so that they ought to think: Now I have enough, so that I need not care where I will get anything to eat; for I now have a rich master, and my barns are full, etc.; that they do not do, but they would much rather be free in the air, are fatter too, and sing better and more sweetly Laudes and matins, early in the morning, before they eat; and yet not one of them knows of a little grain in store; they make a beautiful, long Benedicite, and let our Lord God take care, even when they have little ones that they have to feed. Therefore, when you hear a nightingale, you hear the cutest preacher, who reminds you of this gospel, not with poor, mere words, but with the living act and example, because it sings the whole night long, and screams itself nearly to death, and is merrier in the grove than if it is cooped up in a cage, where we have to attend to it with all diligence, and where it seldom thrives or remains alive; as if it were to say: I would much rather be in the kitchen of the Lord, who has made heaven and earth, and is himself cook and host, and daily feeds and nourishes innumerable little birds out of his hand, and has not just a sack full, but heaven and earth full of little grains.

Thus Christ now speaks: Since you daily see how your heavenly Father feeds the little birds in the field, without their having any care; cannot you then trust hint so much that he will also feed you, because he is your Father, and calls you his children? Should he not much rather care for you whom he has made his children, and to whom he gives his word and all creatures, than for the little birds, that are not his children, but your servants? And yet he holds them in such high esteem that

he daily feeds them, as if he had only these to care for; and he takes pleasure in it, that they quite without care fly about and sing, as if they should say: I sing and am cheerful, and yet I know not of a little grain that I am to eat; my bread is not yet baked, my grain is not yet sowed; but I have a rich master who cares for me, while I sing or sleep; he can give me more than all men and I could get with our caring.

Since now the birds understand the art of trusting him so completely, and throwing off care from themselves upon God, we, who are his children, should much rather do it. Therefore it is an excellent illustration that puts us all to shame, so that we, who are people endowed with reason, and besides have the Scriptures at hand, do not have so much wisdom as to imitate the birds, and must daily hear ourselves disgraced before God and the people, as often as we hear little birds sing. But man has become crazy and foolish, since he fell away from God's word and command, so that henceforth there is no creature living that is not wiser than he; and a little finch, that can neither speak nor read, is his teacher and master in the Scriptures, although he has the whole Bible and his reason to help him. This is the first illustration; to this he appends a saying taken from our own experience, and shows that our caring is useless and accomplishes nothing: Who is there among you, (says he,) who can add one cubit to his stature, although he is concerned about it? If a man should never grow to full size except through his own caring, how large would we grow? or, of what avail would it be for a little dwarf to worry himself to death how he might become larger? What do you accomplish by caring where you are to get food and clothing? just as if it stood in your power to make your body as stout and as tall as you wished. Your body with all its members is of definite size, and has its length and breadth, so that you cannot make it otherwise, and you are defied to make it a hair's-breadth taller. What a fool then you are, that you are concerned about that which is not within your power, and which is already limited both as to time and extent, viz. how long your bodily life shall last, and cannot trust him that he will procure for you also both food and clothing as long as you have to live here, etc.!

Matthew 6:28-30. And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Here you have another illustration and comparison, in which the little flowers of the field, that are trampled upon and eaten by the cattle, must also become our teachers and masters, so that our disgrace may become still greater. For see how they grow up, so beautifully ornamented with colors, and yet not one of them cares and thinks how it is to grow, or what kind of color it is to have, but it lets God care for this; and, without any care or effort on its part, God clothes it with such beautiful, lovely colors, that Christ says that Solomon in all his glory was not as beautiful as one of these; yes, no empress, with her whole retinue, with all her gold, pearls and jewels. For he cannot name any king who was richer, more glorious, and more splendidly adorned than Solomon: yet the king, with all his grand display and splendor, is nothing in comparison with a rose or pink or violet in the field. Thus our Lord God can adorn whom he will adorn, so that it deserves to be called adorned, and no man can make or paint such a color, and wish for or get another still more beautiful adornment; and if we should beautify them with gold and satin, they still would say: I would rather that my Master up there in heaven should adorn me, who adorns the little birds, than all the tailors and embroiderers on earth.

Since now he clothes and adorns so many flowers with such various colors, and each has its own dress, and outranks with it all worldly splendor, why cannot we confide in him that he will also clothe us? For what are the flowers and grass upon the field in comparison with us? Or, for what were they created except to stand there for a day or two, and exhibit themselves, and then to wither and become hay; or, as Christ says, to be cast into the oven, so that one may burn them and heat the oven? Yet our Lord God holds these perishable and insignificant things in such estimation, and bestows so much expense upon them, that he adorns them more splendidly than any king upon earth, though they do not need this ornamentation, and it is even lost upon them, as they soon perish along with the flower. But we, his highest creatures, on whose account he has made all else, and to whom he gives everything, and who are of such account to him that this life is not to be the end of us, but after this life he means to give to us eternal life; should not we have so much confidence in him, that he will clothe us as he clothes the flowers of the field and the birds of the air with manifold beautiful colors and feathers? That is putting the case as so dishonorable for us, and depicting our unbelief as so disgraceful, that he could not make it more contemptible. But it is the [fault of the] miserable devil and the terrible fall that we made, that we must see the whole world full of these illustrations of the birds against us, who with their example and appearance rebuke our unbelief, and become our highest Doctores, sing and preach to us, and smile at us so lovingly, that we should only believe; yet we live on, let ourselves be preached and sung to, and keep on avariciously raking together; but [it is] to our eternal shame and disgrace that every little flower testifies against us and condemns our unbelief before God and all creatures until the judgment day. Therefore he now concludes this sermon before his Christians.

Matthew 6:31-32. Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Since you daily see these illustrations in everything that lives and grows out of the earth, how God nourishes and feeds it and most beautifully clothes and adorns it: be induced to lay aside care and unbelief, and consider that you are Christians and not heathen. For such caring and avarice belong to the heathen, who do not know God, or ask about him, and it is real idolatry, as St. Paul says, and as was said also above, where he calls it serving mammon.

Therefore no greedy-belly is a Christian, although he was baptized; but he has surely lost Christ, and has become a heathen. For the two cannot endure each other, to be avaricious and full of care and to believe; one must exclude the other. Now there is nothing more shameful before God and all creatures, for Christians who hear and know the word of God, than that they can be said to be like the heathen who do not believe that God nourishes them and gives them everything, and thus fall away from God, deny the faith, and pay no regard either to his word or to these manifest illustrations. This is a hard sentence that reasonably ought to alarm every one. For it is a prompt conclusion, that a professed Christian should either reflect, and leave off caring avariciously, or know that he is no Christian, but ten times worse than a heathen.

Besides, (he says,)since you are Christians, you dare not doubt as to your Father’s knowing very well that you need all this; namely, that you have a belly that needs eating and drinking, and a body that needs to be clothed. If he did not know it, then you would have cause to care and to think how you might nourish yourselves; but now that he knows it, he will not neglect you. For he is

so kind that he gladly attends to it, and especially for you Christians, because (as was said) he cares also for the birds of the air.

Therefore drop the care, for at any rate you gain nothing by it. It does not depend upon your caring, but upon his knowing and caring. If nothing grew in the field before we cared for it, we would all have died in our cradles, and nothing could grow after night when we are lying asleep; yes, if we were all to worry ourselves to death, no stalk would grow in the field for our caring; we must ourselves see and comprehend that God gives everything without our caring for it; yet we are such godless people that we will not cease our caring and avarice, nor allow God alone to have the care, to whom alone it belongs, as to a father for his children.

Matthew 6:33 Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. The Lord saw very well, as I said, that none among the outward, gross vices so outrageously counteracts the gospel, and hinders [the progress of] God's kingdom, as avarice. For as soon as a preacher lays his plans for becoming rich, he no longer rightly administers his office; for his heart is ensnared by the care for the means of living, as in a net, as St. Paul calls it, so that he can no longer teach and rebuke, as and where he should; concerned lest he might lose favor and friendship among those from whom he can secure it: allows himself to be misled, so that he keeps silent, and misleads other people too; not through heresy, but through his own belly, which is his idol. For he who wants to be the right kind of a preacher, and faithfully perform his duty, must retain and assert his liberty unterrifiedly to tell the truth, without respect of persons, and rebuking if necessary great and small, rich, poor, powerful, friend and foe. This avarice does not do. For it fears, if it should offend many people or good friends, it would find itself in want of bread. Hence it draws in its whistles and keeps silence. In the same way also the mass of the people, who are not preachers, but who should hear the word of God, and help to further the kingdom of God, every one in his own station and mode of living, are not willing to run any risk or to be prepared for or endure any want, for the sake of the gospel; but they look out for it, first of all, that they have enough, and that their belly is provided for, no matter whether the gospel keeps up or lags behind; thus they go along, raking and scraping, as well as they can, giving the preachers nothing, even besides taking from them what they may have.

Thus it goes according to the devil's wishes, so that no one wants to preach or hear any more, and thus both the doctrine and its fruits in the hearts of the people disappear, and the kingdom of God falls entirely away. This is alone the work of the abominably devilish mammon. See, that is the reason why the Lord Christ so faithfully warns his own against it by such a long sermon. And in order that we may the better guard ourselves against it, he prescribes in these words a very powerful remedy, how we are to treat it, so that we do not need to care; and that we may yet have enough, yes, a much greater and more excellent treasure than mammon can give us, and than we can get through our caring, and this remedy is, to seek the kingdom of God. But it is very important that it should be deeply impressed upon our heart what the kingdom of God is, and what it imparts. For if we could be made to understand this, so that we would rightly apprehend and could in our heart measure and weigh how great and precious a treasure it is in contrast with mammon or the kingdom of the world, that is, everything upon earth, then we would spit upon mammon. For what more would you have, although you should have the possessions and the power of the king of France, and of the Turkish emperor besides, than a beggar before the door has with his scraps? For the only thing we have to do is daily to fill our belly; we can't do anything more with all our

worldly goods and glory; and the poorest beggar has as much of this as the mightiest emperor, yes, his broken victuals taste much better and do him more good than the splendid, royal meal does to the latter. That is the whole of it, and no one gets any more from it, and in a little while we must say good-bye to it all, and we cannot prolong our life with it for a single hour when the time comes.

Hence it is a poor, miserable, yes a nasty, stinking kingdom.

What is, however, on the contrary, the kingdom of God, or of the Lord Christ? Count that up for yourself, and say, what is the creature in comparison with the Creator, and the world in comparison with God? For if all heaven and earth were mine alone, what would I have as over against God? Not as much as a little drop of water or a particle of dust in comparison with the entire ocean; besides, it is such a treasure as cannot cease or diminish and become smaller; so that both as to its greatness and durability it cannot be measured or comprehended by any human heart or senses; and shall I so shamefully reject and give up God and his kingdom, that I may take this dirty, deadly belly-kingdom in preference to that divine, imperishable one that gives me eternal life, righteousness, peace, joy and salvation? And everything that I here in time seek and desire I am to have in this one eternally, and everything immeasurably more glorious and superabundant than what I can obtain here upon earth with great difficulty, care and labor; and before I can get it, and can accomplish what I want, I must go away and let everything lie. Is that not a great, shameful folly and blindness, that we do not see this? Yes, a stubborn wickedness of the world, possessed by the devil, that it will not be instructed or give heed when we preach this to it?

Therefore Christ wishes with these words to stir us up, and to say: if you wish to be properly careful and solicitous about having always enough, then seek for that treasure that is called the kingdom of God. Do not be concerned for the temporal, perishable treasure that is destroyed by moth and rust, as he said before. You have a very different treasure in heaven, which I am pointing out to you; care and seek for that, and contemplate what you have in that, and you will easily forget the other. For it is a treasure of such a kind that will sustain you forever, and cannot be lost or taken away, so that because the treasure is enduring and you clinging to it, you must also endure, even though you have not a penny from the world.

It has often been told what the kingdom of God is, namely, most briefly, that it does not consist in external things, eating and drinking, etc., nor other works which we can do; but in this, that we believe in Jesus Christ, who is the head and sole king in this kingdom, in and through whom we have everything, so that no sin, death and misfortune can injure him who abides in it [the kingdom], but he has eternal life, joy and salvation, which here begin in this faith, but in the last day will be revealed and eternally completed.

What now does it mean to seek this kingdom? or how do we attain to it?

What way must we take? One points in this direction, another in that.

Thus, the pope teaches: Go to Rome and get an indulgence, confess and do penance, read or hear mass, put on a hood, and practice long public worship and a severe, strict life. That is the way we always used to run, just as we were told, as silly and foolish people, and all wanted to find the kingdom of God; but we found just the kingdom of the devil. For there are many ways here, but one and all are aside from the only [true] one, which is to believe in Christ and to diligently apply

and use the gospel, upon which faith rests, with preaching, hearing, reading, singing, meditating, and in every possible way, so that one may always at heart be growing and becoming stronger, and give outward evidence by his fruits, so that he may be always promoting it and leading many others to it; as we (thank God) are now doing, and there are still many besides, both preachers and other Christians, who with all diligence are busily urging it on, so that they subordinate all that they have, and would be ready to lose it all, rather than let go of the word. No monk, nun or priest does or understands this, although they boast that they are God's servants and espoused to Christ. For they all miss the only right way, and ignore the gospel; they know neither God nor Christ and his kingdom. For he who wants to know and find it must not seek for it after his own notion, but hear his word, as the foundation and corner-stone, and see whither he directs you and how he interprets it. Now .his word about his kingdom is this: He who believes and is baptized shall be saved. This word was not spun out of our heads, nor did it grow out of the heart of any man; but it descended from heaven, and was proclaimed by the mouth of God, so that we may be perfectly sure and not miss the right way. Where now this is practiced, both among preachers and hearers, so that the word and sacraments are diligently employed, where men live accordingly and persevere in so doing, so that it becomes known among the people, and the young people are drawn in and taught: that is what we mean by seeking and promoting and being properly concerned about the kingdom of God.

What is the meaning of his adding: And his righteousness? The kingdom has also a righteousness; it is, however, a different righteousness from that of the world, as it is also a different kingdom. This means now the righteousness that is by faith, that is efficient and active through good works; in this way, that the gospel with me is a very serious matter, and I diligently hear and practice it, and am actually living in accordance with it, and am not a trifling gossip or a hypocrite, who lets it in at one ear and out at the other; but I am one who gives practical proof that the kingdom is here, as St. Paul says, 1 Corinthians 4:20 : The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. That we call the gospel with its fruits, that is, doing good works, with diligence and fidelity attending to one's business or office, and suffering variously for it. For he calls righteousness in general the whole life of a Christian with reference to God and man, as the tree with its fruits; but not meaning that it is therefore entirely perfect, but always improving; as he here bids his disciples be always seeking, as those who have not yet actually seized it, nor have already completely learned and lived it. For in the kingdom of Christ it is with us half sin and half holiness. For whatever of faith and of Christ is in us, that is altogether pure and perfect, as not of our own, but of Christ, who through faith is ours, and lives and works in us. But what is still our own, that is altogether sin, yet under and in Christ covered over and obliterated through forgiveness of sin, besides daily through the same grace of the Spirit mortified, until we are entirely dead to this life.

See, this belongs to the righteousness of this kingdom, that it be upright and no hypocrisy. For it is set over against those who talk and boast indeed about the gospel, but have nothing of it in their life. For it is in fact a hard thing to preach the word of God and do good to everybody and suffer all kinds of misfortunes besides; but for that reason it is called the righteousness of God. For the world does not relish it, that it should do right and suffer harm for it; this is not a part of its way of ruling. For there it is not right that he who does right should be punished or suffer violence, but should receive gratitude and some good as his reward. But our reward is not stored away for us upon earth, but in heaven: there we will find it.

Now he who knows this, and will do accordingly, will have enough to do, so that he has no need to seek other ways; and he will probably forget also avarice and the cares of mammon. For the world will make it so sour for him that he will not care much for life and temporal good, but he will become so tired of it that he will have to be hourly looking and hoping for death. This is the exhortation by which he points us from temporal good to eternal treasure, so that we may not esteem this good in comparison with the one that we have in heaven, etc. Along with this he gives also a promise and a consolation, so that we are not to think that he will therefore not give us anything at all upon earth and let us die of hunger, because we have so much to suffer from the world that neither gives nor wishes us anything, and we are hourly expecting that all we have shall be taken from us; but we must know that we are still also here to have what we need for the requirements of this life. Therefore he says: Seek first the kingdom of God, then all these things shall be added unto you; that is, you shall have besides to eat and to drink and to wear, as an addition, without any care of your own, yes, just in order that you may not care for those things and for God's sake risk everything; and it will come to you so that you will not know whence it comes, as our daily experience teaches us. For God still has so much in the world that he can also feed his own, since he feeds all the little birds and worms, and clothes the lilies of the field, as we have heard, yes, since he gives and lets grow so much for us wicked fellows: so that the world nevertheless must let us eat and drink with it, although this vexes it.

What more shall we now desire, if we know this, if we have and handle God's word, and every one does as he should, so that we have enough to eat and to drink and wear, and get just as much ourselves as a king or emperor, namely, that we feed our belly, except that he to suit his rank must have more and grander things, but still does not enjoy anything more; and my bread feeds me just as well, and my clothes cover and warm me just as well as his royal meal and his gold and silver pieces. For how should it be possible that he should die of hunger who serves God faithfully, and advances his kingdom, since he gives in such superfluity to the whole world? There would have to be no more bread upon earth, or the heavens not be able to rain any more, if a Christian should die of hunger; yes, God himself must first have died of hunger.

Since now he has been creating and giving in such superabundance, besides has so certainly promised that he will give enough and so give before we look for or know it: why will you then torment yourself with that hateful caring and avarice? Surely the Scriptures (especially the Psalms) are full of such passages, that he will feed the pious in the time of famine, and never has "seen his seed begging bread." He will not prove a liar in your ease, if you can only believe. If now the world, as it is, noblemen, peasants and civilians, does not do it, he will still find people, or other means, through which he can give, and more than they can now take from you.

Matthew 6:34. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Care for this (he means to say,) how you may keep with you the kingdom of God, and renounce the other care so completely that you be not concerned about the morrow. For when the morrow comes it will bring its own care; as we say: Comes the day, so comes also the counsel. For our caring accomplishes nothing at any rate, though I care for only one day; and experience teaches that often two or three days slip away from us sooner than today; and he to whom God is propitious and gives success, can often without trouble and care accomplish more in an hour than

some one else in four whole days with great trouble and care; and if he has been long at work and taken great pains, making it wearisome to himself, another might have accomplished it in an hour; so that no one can do anything except when the time comes that God gives, granted without our caring; and it is in vain that you try to anticipate and by your caring (as you suppose) do great things. For our Lord God understands the art of secretly shortening and lengthening time for us, so that to one an hour may become a fortnight, and again in such a way that one with long labor and toil gains nothing more than another with short and easy labor; as one can plainly see daily, that there are many who by hard, constant labor scarcely gain their daily bread, and others without special labor have so arranged and ordered their affairs that all moves easily and they succeed. God does everything in such a way that our caring does not necessarily have the blessing. For we will not wait, so that these good things may come to us from God, but we want to find them ourselves before the gift comes from God.

See how it is in the mines, where men are busily digging and seeking; it still often happens, that where one hopes to find the most ore, and where it seems as if it was all to become gold, there nothing is found, or it breaks off suddenly and disappears. Again, in other places, that are regarded as failures and neglected, there are unexpectedly the richest results; and one, who has invested all his property there, gets nothing; another from a beggar becomes a lord; and afterwards, those who have accumulated many thousand guldens before the end of ten years again become beggars, and it does not often happen that these large possessions reach to the third heir. In short, the motto should be: Not sought, but bestowed; not found, but providential, if success and blessing is to come with it. But we would like to make it so that it would come as we plan; but that amounts to nothing; for he thinks, on the other hand: You shall not get it so, or at least not keep it long and enjoy it. For I have myself known many persons who ran their hands into pockets full of guldens, and groschens were beneath their notice; but afterwards they would have been glad if they could have found as many pennies.

Since you now see that there is no use in it, and your caring does not avail, why do you not let it alone and turn your thoughts upon having the kingdom of God? For he will give to you; but not because of your caring, even though you should work. For such care accomplishes nothing; but the care does that belongs to your office; and to the kingdom of God it belongs that you do what is commanded you, preach and propagate the word of God, serve your neighbor according to your calling, and take what God gives you. For those are the best possessions that are not thought about, but are bestowed and providential; and what we have acquired by our caring or are proposing to keep, will be likely first of all to fail us and go to ruin, as often happens to the rich bellies, whose grain and other stores often for their great care are ruined; and it is a great grace that God does not let us care for it how the grain grows in the field, but gives it to us, whilst we are lying and sleeping; else we would ourselves ruin it for us by our caring and would get nothing.

Therefore he now says: Why will you be concerned about more than the present day, and load upon yourself the trouble of two days? Be content with what the present day imposes upon you; to-morrow will bring something else for you. For he calls it an evil or plague that we are compelled to support ourselves by the sweat of our brow, and that we must have other providential daily cares, misfortunes and dangers; as, if something be stolen from you, or some other harm befall you; also, if you become sick, or your domestics, etc., as it happens in this life that we must daily expect and see such trouble. Endure this evil, trouble and misfortune, and do be content with it, for

that is enough for you to bear; and drop the anxiety, by which you only make the trouble greater and heavier than it is in itself; and look at these illustrations, that God never made any one rich through his anxious care, whilst many of them are most anxiously caring and yet have nothing. But this indeed he does, if he sees that one is diligently and faithfully attending to his duty, and taking care to do that so as to please God, and lets God care for its success, him he abundantly blesses. For it stands written, Proverbs 10:4 : “The hand of the diligent maketh rich.” For he wants none of those who neither care nor work, like the lazy gormandizing bellies, as if they had only to sit and wait for him to send a roasted goose into their mouth; but his command is, that we honestly lay hold and work, then he will be on hand with his blessing and give enough. Let this suffice about this sermon.

03A.04. Matthew 7

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. Matthew 7:1-29

Matthew 7:1. Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. In the previous chapter we heard how the Lord Christ, in accordance with the doctrine of really good works, delivered a long sermon as a warning against avarice, as something that greatly hinders the kingdom of God, both in doctrine and life, and does deadly harm in Christendom. Here he now begins to warn further against another thing that is also a great, ruinous vice, and is called self-conceited-wisdom, that judges and blames everybody. For where these two vices rule, there the gospel cannot abide. For the effect of avarice is either that the preachers keep silence, or that the hearers pay no regard to the gospel, which thus through contempt is disregarded. But if selfish-wisdom be conjoined with avarice, then every one claims to be the best preacher and himself master; no one will hear or learn from others. Then come sects and parties that falsify and corrupt the word so that it cannot remain pure, and thus again the gospel with its fruits is undermined. This is what he here now calls judging or passing sentence, when every one is satisfied only with what he does himself, and whatever others do must stink. A beautiful, gracious virtue! and the tip-top man whom we call Mr. Selfconceit, who is not liked either by Cod or the world, and yet is to be found everywhere.

But, lest we may stumble at this preaching and misunderstand it, if hereby it were altogether forbidden to judge and pass sentence, it is clear from what has often been said above, that Christ is preaching here only to his disciples, and is not at all speaking of the judgment or punishment that must occur in the world; as father and mother at home among the children and servants must judge, rebuke, and also chastise, if they will not do right.

Thus, a prince or a judge, if he means to discharge his duty properly, cannot do otherwise than to judge and punish. That belongs to secular government, which has nothing to do with us. Therefore we will not interfere with how things should go in that sphere. But here we are speaking of another kingdom, that does not indeed weaken or annul the other, namely, spiritual life and being among Christians; here it is forbidden for one to judge and condemn another. For there it occurs that the devil always mixes in and carries on his business, so that every one thinks well of himself, and believes that his way alone must avail and be the best, and blames and nullifies everything that is not measured by his standard. This is now in secular affairs a supreme folly, and may be tolerated, though it is wrong, for it is so gross that every one understands it; as when a harlot imagines herself prettier than all others, and what she sees in others does not please her; or that a young fool will be so handsome and smart, that he does not know his like; and then, among the wise and learned, where this is very much in vogue, so that no one admits the value of anything that another knows or does, and every one claims to be the only one that can do everything better, and finds fault with everybody. Everybody sees and understands this very well; yet everywhere is this Mr. Selfconceit, who knows himself to be so smart, that he can bridle the horse by the tail, when all the rest of the world must bridle it by the mouth. But when this occurs among us in spiritual affairs, and

the devil sows his seed in the kingdom of Christ, so that it takes hold both of doctrine and life, then comes serious trouble. In the matter of doctrine the result is, that, although God has given and entrusted it to some one to preach the gospel, others are found, even among the disciples, who assume to know it ten times better than he, and the gospel must have the worry and misfortune to be judged by everybody, and every one becomes a doctor, and claims to be himself a master in doe-trine; just as happened to Moses, Numbers 16, when Korah with his crowd rose up against him and said: “Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy. Should God speak alone through Moses and Aaron?” — just as they say now: Should we not just as well have the Spirit and understand the Scriptures as others? Then there is at once another doctrine dished up and sects started, and judging begins and denouncing, and especially the shameful slandering that one party most bitterly blames and misrepresents the other; as we learn now very well through experience. Hence follows the deadly harm that Christendom is divided and the pure doctrine everywhere suffers wreck. This Christ dreaded, yes not only dreaded, but also foretold that such would be the case. For nothing else can be made out of the world, even if we were to preach ourselves to death. Therefore, wherever the gospel flourishes, there parties and sects must follow, that again spoil and check it. The reason is: the devil must sow his seed among the good seed, and where God builds a church, he builds a chapel or a tabernacle alongside. For Satan wants to be always among the children of God, as the Scriptures say. Therefore Christ means hereby to warn his apostles and sincere preachers to guard themselves diligently against this vice, and to see to it that they do not let it come in to create separation and disunion, especially in doctrine; as though he meant to say: If you wish to be my disciples, then let your understanding and opinions in doctrine be alike and of one kind, so that no one may wish to be master, and know something new or better, and judge or condemn the rest; and do not pay special regard to persons, but abide by what I command you to preach, and be of one accord, so that one does not despise the other, or start something new.

Yet understand it so, that still it is not forbidden to him who is officially appointed to preach, to judge in regard to doctrine, besides also in regard to life. For it is his official duty publicly to rebuke what is not in accordance with the true doctrine, just for the reason that he may not allow sects to enter and arise; in like manner, when he sees that one is not living aright, that he also rebuke and warn. For he is there for the reason that he may look into this, and he must answer for it. Yes, every Christian, if he sees his neighbor doing wrong, is bound to reprove him and put him on his guard. And this cannot be done without judging. But all this is done by virtue of one’s office or authority, about which Christ is not here speaking; as has been sufficiently stated. But this is forbidden, that every one take his own way for it and make a doctrine and spirit of his own, and imagine himself to be Mr. Extrawise and undertake to master and rebuke everybody, nothing of which has been committed to him. These are the ones whom Christ here rebukes. For he means that nothing should be undertaken or done from one’s own notion without being commanded, especially as to the judging of other people. That I now call judging in doctrine, one of the highest, most disgraceful and dangerous vices upon earth, from which all the factious spirits have arisen, and of which hitherto monks, priests, and all that were in the papacy, were guilty of, when every one asserted that his matter was the best and denounced others; of which there is now no need to speak. The other kind of judging is that regarding the life, when one blames and condemns the life and works of another, and is not pleased with anything that others do; that is indeed a widely diffused, common vice. Now we are under strict orders, so that, just as in regard to doctrine we are

to be of one mind and understanding or faith: so also we are to be disposed alike and to have the same sort of heart in external life, although that cannot be all of the same kind as in the case of faith. For, since there are many kinds of callings, the works of them must be unlike and of various kinds. Besides, in this life, that is in itself of various kinds, we find also faults of many kinds, as, some very strange, irascible, impatient people; as it cannot but be among Christian people, since our old Adam is not yet dead, and the flesh is always striving against the spirit.

Here comes in play now a virtue which is called tolerantia and remissio peccatorum, so that one bears with another, has patience with and forgives him; as St. Paul so beautifully teaches, Romans 15:10, We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves; just as Christ says here: Judge not, etc., so that those who have high and better gifts in Christendom, (as some must have, especially the preachers,)still they may not take on any different airs or think themselves any better than those who do not have them: so that in spiritual matters no one should lord it over others. Externally there must be a difference, a prince higher and better than a farmer, a preacher more learned than an ordinary mechanic; thus a master cannot be a servant, a mistress be a maid, etc., but nevertheless in this distinction the hearts are to be similarly disposed and pay no regard to that dissimilarity. This is done if I bear with my neighbor, although he be of a lower rank and have fewer gifts than I, and I am just as well pleased with his work, in attending as my house-servant to my horse, as with my own, being a preacher or ruler of land and people, although mine is better and of more importance than his. For I must not look at the outward masks, but that he lives in the same faith and in Christ, and has just as much from the grace, baptism and sacrament, although I have a different, higher work and office. For God is all the same, who does and gives all this, and is just as much pleased with the smallest as with the very greatest. In contrast with this there is ruling in the world the praiseworthy, beautiful virtue of which St. Paul speaks, that every one pleases himself, as, if a man comes along in the devil’s name, and cannot look at his own vices, but only at those of others; which adheres to us all by nature, and of which we cannot be rid, even though we are baptized, so that we are fond of beautifying and adorning ourselves and seeing what is good in ourselves, and flattering ourselves with it as if it were our own; and, in order that we may alone be beautiful, we do not look at that which is good in our neighbor; but, leaving that out of view, if we notice a little pimple, we fill our eyes with it, and make it so large, that we see nothing good on account of it, although he may have eyes like a falcon and a face like an angel. Just as if I saw some one in a golden garment, and there were perhaps a seam or a white thread drawn through it, and I would thereupon look amazed, as if it were on that account to be despised, and I on the other hand congratulate myself upon my coarse blouse, with a golden patch upon it. So we do not look at our own vices, of which we are full, yet cannot see anything good in other people. If now this natural evil habit finds its way among Christians, there we begin to judge, so that I readily despise and condemn another if he stumbles a little or is faulty, and he again does the same to me, measures me with the same measure, (as Christ here says,) seeks for and rebukes also only the worst that he can find about me.

Thereby love is quite suppressed, and there remains only a biting and devouring of one another until they entirely eat each other up and altogether lose their Christianity. The same is the case if one looks at the life of another, and will not look at himself, then one soon finds something that displeases him; another finds the same also in us; just as the heathen complain about affairs

among them, that no one sees what he carries on his own back, but he who comes after him sees it very well; that is, no one sees where he himself is lacking, but he soon sees it in another. If one looks at other people in this way, the only result is a slandering and judging of one another. The devil instigates this among Christians, and carries it on to such an extent that there is nothing left among them but harsh judging in regard to the way of living, as also in regard to doctrine; so that the kingdom of Christ (which is a harmonious and peaceable kingdom, both in doctrine and life) is divided, and in place of it the spirit of sectism, arrogance and contempt prevails.

Therefore it is highly necessary that we be warned to learn and habituate ourselves to bear with, cover over and adorn our neighbor's faults, if we have attended to our own official duty, whether it be preaching and publicly rebuking, or fraternally exhorting (of which Matthew 18:1-35 teaches); and if I see anything in my neighbor that does not altogether please me, that I turn and look at myself, when I will also find much that does not please other people, and which I would be glad to have excused and borne with; thus the itching will soon subside that tickles itself and is amused at the faults of others, and Mr. Self-conceit will scamper off and drop his judging. Yes, you will be glad, so that you may soon settle the matter with your neighbor and first of all say: Lord, forgive me my debt; and then say to your neighbor: If you have sinned against me, or I against you, now let us forgive each other. But if you see that he is quite too discourteous, and will not cease without your rebuking him, then go and tell him himself about it, as it is now and often has been said, (Matthew 18:1-35) that he may reform and desist. That is not judging and condemning, but fraternally exhorting to betterment, and in this way the exhortation would be made in a peaceable way, according to God's command. Otherwise, with your tickling, ridiculing and mocking, you only embitter your neighbor against you, and harden him, and you yourself become much worse than he is, and twice as great a sinner, by withdrawing your love from him and taking pleasure in his sin, and besides you expose yourself to the judgment of God, and condemn him whom God has not condemned, and thus invoke upon yourself so much the heavier judgment, which Christ here gives warning of, and you deserve that God should the more surely condemn you.

See, this shameful evil all comes, as St. Paul says, from our pleasing ourselves, playing and toying with our gifts as if they were our own; but seeing nothing in another except where he is faulty, and thus becoming entirely blind, so that we see neither ourselves nor our neighbor aright. When we should look into our own bosom and see first wherein we fail, that we do not do; but we have a blearness before our eyes, so that we think ourselves good-looking, if we observe a gift in ourselves that our neighbor has not, and by that very thing are spoiled, and we also do not see in our neighbor what is good in him, for we should always find as much of that as we now see of his faults. We should also be pleased with what is good in him and make due allowance, if there be some faultiness in it; as we please ourselves and readily apologize for ourselves. In short, it is the worst vice and a devilish pride, that we are self-satisfied and merry if we see or feel a good trait in ourselves, and do not thank God for it, but become proud, and despise others, and have our eyes so completely filled with it that we do not care what else we do, thinking we are all right: we plunder and rob God thus of his honor, make an idol out of ourself, and do not see our trouble that we thereby occasion; for we would have enough else upon us, if we would look at it aright, as Revelation 3:17, says to a bishop who thought himself more learned than others: Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. For although it is true that thy gift is

greater than that of another; as it must be, since thine office is different, higher and greater: but with the disgraceful addendum that thou displayest thyself in it, and thus pleasest thyself, thou dost totally ruin it, and makest the same high ornament viler than the faults of all others. For the greater the gifts are, the more disgracefully are they perverted if you make an idol out of them, just as if you were to mix poison with excellent malmsey-wine. Thus you have now hit it admirably well, that you judge another on account of a small fault, and fall yourself with your selfesteem into the grievous sin; that you are ungrateful to God, yes, enthrone yourself in his place in your heart, and interfere with his jurisdiction, where one sin is weightier than those of all other men; besides, you become insolent toward your neighbor and so thoroughly blind that you no longer can know or look at God, your neighbor, or yourself.

What else do you accomplish by this judging than that you invoke the judgment of God against yourself? So that he reasonably must say to you: I did not bestow these gifts upon you in order that you might despise your neighbor and serve yourself with them, but that you should serve your neighbor, who is poor and frail, and me. But you go on, and never once thank me for them, as if all had sprung from your own heart, and you employ my own gift against me and your neighbor, and make a tyrant of yourself, a jailor and judge against your neighbor., whom you ought in love to bear with, to improve and to lift up if he should fall. What will you then answer when he thus will address you (as he here gives you timely notice), except that this sentence is justly pronounced against you, that you are making not a mote, as you perhaps see in your neighbor’s eye, (as Christ here says,) but a great beam out of a little mote.

I will say nothing about the fact that, with this wretched judging you are not only culpable on account of the act itself; but it usually happens that he who thus judges is himself a greater sinner than others; so that, if he were to go back and read his own record and register, how he has lived from his youth up, he would hear a story that would make him shudder, and which he would be glad to have unnoticed by other people. But now every one takes it for granted that he is pious, and wants to forget all the past, and blame and condemn a poor man who has once sinned.

Thus he is involved in a double calamity, that he disregards his earliest life and forgets what he was; he does not think how it would have grieved him if he had been ridiculed and condemned. That is one sin, that he is ungrateful, and has forgotten the forgiveness of sins, the grace and all the goodness of God. The other, that he loses his piety and sets in array against himself all his former sins, by the very fact that he makes a display of himself in his piety, and becomes seven times worse than before.

For, do you not think that God can lay a list before your nose, and present not only your crimes and the sins of your youth, but also your whole life that you have regarded as excellent? as now the recluse life of the monks; how will you then stand and answer for daily blaspheming and crucifying his Son with your masses and other idolatries? That’s the way it goes, if we forget what we have been, we may then well judge others. But the orders are: Jack, take yourself by your own nose, and reach into your own bosom; if you want to seek and judge a scamp you’ll find the greatest scamp upon earth, so that you will readily forget other people and be glad at once to let them alone. For you will never find in another as much sin as in yourself. For if you do see many in another, you see only a year or two; in yourself, however, your whole life, especially the dark spots of which others know nothing, so that you must be ashamed of yourself. See, that would be a good

cure for the shameful vice, that you do not please yourself but pray God to forgive you and others.

Secondly, that, although you see something bad in your neighbor, you are not on that account to despise and condemn him; but on the other hand to see his good things, and with your own good things and gifts to help, cover over, adorn and advise him; and you should know that, although you were the holiest and most pious, yet you would become the very worst if you judge another. For your gifts were not bestowed upon you that you may tickle yourself with them, but that you may help your neighbor with them, if he needs it, so that with your strength you may bear his weakness, may cover and adorn his sin and shame with your piety and honor, as God through Christ has done to you and still does daily. If you will not do that, and will tickle yourself with them and despise others: then know this, if another in your presence has a mote in his eye, you towards him, before God, have a beam in your own. So you see why Christ speaks so sharply against this vice and pronounces the strict sentence: He who judges, shall be judged; as is also reasonable.

For, since you interfere with God's judgment, and condemn those whom God has not condemned, you give him reason again to damn you to hell with your whole life, although you had been ever so pious, and to raise to honor the neighbor whom you judged and condemned, and besides also to make him a judge over you, and cause him to find ten times as much in you to condemn as you found in him. So you have made a pretty muss of it, that you have angered and turned against you both God and your neighbor; and thus you lose at the same time both the grace of God and Christian life, and become worse than a heathen, who knows nothing about God.

Matthew 7:3-5. Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beans that is in thine own eye? Or how will thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold a beam is in thine own eye! Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shall thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. In order that he may the more diligently warn us to guard against this vice, he uses a simple comparison and sets it clearly before us, saying that every one who judges his neighbor has a great beam in his eye, whilst he who is judged has only a mote; that he is ten times more deserving of judgment and condemnation, for the very reason that he condemns others. This is indeed a terrible, dreadful sentence. Where are now the factious spirits and Messrs. Wiseacres, who are great at mastering and finding fault with the Bible, and can do nothing else than to judge us and others? — when there is yet nothing to blame, or perhaps they discover a mote in us, for which they bitterly accuse us; as now the papists revile. When they try their best, and adduce great reason for judging and condemning us, this is the greatest, that some of ours hold ecclesiastical properties; or they accuse us of not fasting, and of whatever else that has any semblance of involving some faults. But they cannot notice their beam, that they persecute the gospel, murder the innocent on account of it, whilst they are themselves the great arch-robbers and thieves of monasteries and church properties. For what robberies are not now committed by pope, bishops and princes? they are doing as they please with all the spiritual establishments; but [they maintain] that no one else is a real bishop, nor has his own with God and honor, and holds his seat as a thief and a robber: and yet all [with them] must be excellent, and not be called stolen or robbed. But, that we do not fast, or so strictly observe their style of righteousness, which they yet do not themselves observe, this must be alone evil, and all their sin and shame be pious and honorable. Thus it is throughout the world, that everywhere a beam judges the mote, and a great rogue condemns a small one.

Now it is true that we are not without faults, yes, no Christian will get so far as to be without a mote. Pot St. Paul himself could not do it, as he complains in the seventh of Romans; and all Christendom must daily pray:

Forgive us our debts, and it confesses the article of the Creed that is called the forgiveness of sins. But these beam-carriers and mote-judges will not endure this article, and will have everything so pure that there may be no want or fault in it; and as soon as they see anything of this kind, they fall to judging and condemning, as if they were so holy as not to need any forgiveness of sins or any praying; they want to reform the Lord's Prayer and obliterate the chief article of the Creed, whilst they are completely full of blindness and devils, and have heart-grief over the motes of other people; and among ourselves, if we too become foolish, those who are full of vices and wickedness cannot cease looking at and condemning the small vices of others, so that the beam is master and judge of the mote. But he who is a Christian must know (and will surely himself feel) that we cannot get along so faultlessly, without the mote, and the article of the forgiveness of sins must daily rule in us. Therefore one can easily excuse the faults of other people, and include them in the Lord's Prayer, when he says: Forgive us, as we forgive, etc., especially if he sees that one loves and esteems the word, and does not despise or abuse it. For where that is, there is the kingdom of Christ and full forgiveness, by which the mote is consumed. Therefore we should not despise or condemn any one, if we observe this; or we shall also make of our own mote a beam, so that we also do not receive forgiveness, because we are not willing to forgive others.

Thus you say: Shall I then not rebuke if I see that wrong is done, or am I to call it right and sanction it? Or am I to be pleased that they seize the monastic properties, or live so coarsely, do not pray, or fast, etc. No; that is not what I mean. For he confesses here that there is a mote, and that it is to be taken away. But he teaches you how to go about it properly. I must say it is indeed not pleasant, the mote in the eye; but that I must see to it first of all that I do not have a beam in my own eye and first take that out.

First make the rogue in your own breast pious, then add to this, that the small one also becomes pious. For it is of no account that the great thieves hang the small ones, (as we say,)and great rogues condemn the little ones.

If the pope with his followers would begin here and they would first sweep before their own door, that they would not themselves be arch-thieves and scoundrels, we would also have to follow suit, or suffer for it. But now they will not let go their beam, and will have it unrebuked, and they condemn us because we still have a mote, and do not keep ourselves as pure as we should; and the result is, that the great heretic, the pope, condemns the other little heretics, and the great thieves, that are openly and continually stealing and robbing, must make the little thieves pious, and hang and pay for them. This perverted business shall not exist in my kingdom (says Christ), but thus [it shall be], that you first make pious the great rogue that you will find in your own skin, if you properly look at yourself; afterwards, if you have accomplished this, you can easily make pious a little rogue. But you will be astonished at the trouble you will find with the great rogue, so that I may readily become security to you, and give my head as a pledge, that you will never get so far as to remove the mote from another's eye, and must say: Must I first deal with other people and make them pious? Why, I cannot make myself pious, or become rid of the beam; and thus your brother's mote will not be apt to be disturbed by you. See, this is what Christ means to say, that

one should gladly forgive another and patiently bear with him, and all should show humility towards one another; as it would necessarily be if we would obey this teaching. Thus everything would move along nicely in Christendom, in true harmony, and God would be with us. But the devil prevents it from coming to this by means of his adherents and rebellious spirit. And it ought to make us dread this vice, that he holds up before us such a dreadful decision, as I have said, that always he who judges has before God a beam in his eye; and the other, who is judged, only a mote. Now the beam is immeasurably a greater sin than the mote, that is, such a sin as completely condemns us, and for which there is no mercy. For however great otherwise our sins and faults may be, he can forgive them all; as he shows by this, that he calls the sin of the neighbor a mote. But this is the shameful addition and vileness, that ruins everything, that you judge and condemn another on account of his faults, and do not forgive as you wish that God should forgive you; you go along and will not see this beam, thinking that you are without sin. But if you know yourself (as was said), you would also avoid judging your neighbor, and thus also your beam would be small and be called a mote, and attain forgiveness of sin, and you would also gladly forgive and bear with and excuse the mote of another, in view of the fact that God forgives and excuses your beam for you. But it is rightly called a beam in the eye, that makes a man completely stone and cataract-blind, and which the world cannot see or judge. Yes, it is adorned with such a show that the world supposes it to be a splendid affair and great holiness; and just as Christ before said concerning the evil eye, that the avaricious kindle for themselves a light, and imagine a happy thought, that it must not be called greediness, but divine worship; so it is here also, that those who have the beam will forsooth have no beam or be rebuked, as being blind and miserable people, but praised as those who with true Christian intent judge the doctrine and life of others: as the factious spirits can admirably boast and swear that they do not teach otherwise out of any pride or envy, but they seek only God’s glory and their neighbor’s welfare, they make it so beautiful and clear, and their humility and regard for God’s honor is so great that they see nothing else than that. Thus it is also in life, if people begin to judge and blame one another; then we see the same covering-over and boasting; I do it not from enmity to the person, but from love for righteousness. The person I am favorable to, but the cause I oppose. That tickles then so gently under the beautiful show, that one is never aware of any beam. But it is all wrong for you to judge and decide yourself, as you choose, without the word and command of God, and then call it God’s honor and righteousness; but it is a devilish addition, that ornaments itself with such a covering and beautifies itself. For here you hear that God will not allow us to undertake to be judges, either in doctrine or life; but where judging or rebuking is necessary, that those do it who are officially commanded to do it, preachers, pastors in spiritual affairs, and civil authorities in worldly government; or a brother with a brother, solely from brotherly love, that bears with and corrects the faults of our neighbor.

Matthew 7:6. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. The Lord Christ has now nearly finished his instructions in regard to the fruits and works that follow his teaching, and now begins a warning or exhortation to put us on our guard against other teaching; as he also exhorts his apostles, when he sends them forth to preach, and says: Behold, I send you forth as sheep among wolves; therefore be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves. For a Christian, who is to minister the word of God and preach, and confess it in his life, truly lives in a dangerous calling, on account of the people, and has great reason for impatience, since the world is so dreadfully wicked, and he lives in it as among serpents and all sorts of vermin. Therefore says he: Beware

that ye east not your holy things before swine and dogs. For they might trample them under foot, or turn against and rend you; meaning thereby to show and teach them that whenever they come and preach in public before the masses, they will also find dogs and swine, that do nothing else than trample upon the gospel and then also persecute the preachers. Who are they then that trample upon our holy things and turn against us? This happens now again in two things, doctrine and life. For first of all the false teachers do it, who take and learn our gospel from us and thus get our jewel and precious treasure, in which we have been baptized, live and boast ourselves, etc., and then go to their own haunts and begin to preach against us, and turn their snouts and teeth against us; as now our swarm of sectaries, that formerly kept very still when the pope was raging and ruling, so that one did not hear them peep; but now, since we opened the way and with great danger to ourselves freed them from the tyranny of the pope, and they have heard our doctrine and can imitate us in preaching, they go and turn against us and are our worst enemies upon earth, and nobody has preached as badly as we, without whom they would have known nothing about it.

Secondly, in the matter of living it is all the same, especially among us, where people despise or have become tired of the gospel, and it has already gone so far that they will hardly sustain a preacher any more; especially squire Greedy-jack in the country, who monopolizes all the property and supports the preachers in such a way that they lose all appetite for preaching, and he makes servants out of them, so that they must preach and do what he chooses. He is followed by Squire Skinflint in town, and Mr. Everybody, who act as if t. hey did not want to have any gospel or word of God, and yet owe to us their freedom from the tyranny of the pope and all other good things that they have. But now they would like to drive us along with the gospel out of the country, or to starve us.

Well, we cannot make it otherwise, we must endure it, that these snakes, dogs and hogs are about us, that are abusing the gospel, both as to teaching and living; and where there are preachers of the right kind, they must always be treated in this way. For this is the fortune of the gospel in the world; and if it ever happens again, (as I have often predicted, and fear it may only too soon happen,) that such people as the popes and bishops reign, then it will be completely put out of the way and trampled under foot, and its preachers will be gone. For the gospel must be everybody’s floor-doth, so that all the world may walk over it and trample upon it, together with its preachers and disciples.

What are we now to do about it? Cast it not (says Christ) before swine and dogs. Yes, dear Lord, they already have it. For, since it is publicly preached, we cannot prevent their falling in with it and seizing it. But they still do not really have it, and we’ll prevent them (thank God!) from getting that which is holy; the shells and husks they may indeed have, that is, carnal liberty; but let none of them, whether dog or hog, a greedy-jack, or miser, or peasant, get a letter of the gospel, although he may read all the books, and hear all the sermons, and have the notion that he thoroughly understands it.

Therefore the right thing for us to do, as Christ here teaches, is for us, when we see such a hog or dog before us, to separate ourselves from him as we do from these factious spirits, and to have no fellowship with them, and administer no sacrament to them, impart no gospel consolation to them, but show them that they are not to enjoy anything of Christ: our treasure. If we do this, we have

completely withheld from them the pearls and that which is holy. For no skin-flint or boor, fanatic or captious spirit, shall get the gospel and Christ from me unless he beforehand asks me about it and coincides with me, so that I, or any proper preacher, may say yes to it. For he who has the gospel aright, must surely hold it with us and be of one mind, in case we are sure, in advance, that we have the true gospel and the pearls. Therefore he must surely not trample us under foot as Squire Greedy-jack, nor condemn us as the sectaries, nor despise us as the peasants, in towns and villages; but hold the dear word in honor, as well as all that preach and gladly hear it. If not, let us regard them as hogs and dogs, and tell them that they shall get nothing from us; meanwhile let them read and hear and call themselves evangelical, if they will, as I have to do with some miserly fellows and towns. For this is certain, he who despises the ministerial office will not have much regard for the gospel.

Since then they trample under foot the preachers and pastors, and treat them more shamefully than the peasants do their swine, we take back again to ourselves our pearls, and we will see what they will have of the gospel without any thanks to us. If you can trample God's word and his preachers under foot, he can trample you too under foot. This now Christ means to say: If you see that people will despise your preaching and trample it under foot, then have no fellowship with them and get away from them; as he also says in the eighteenth of Matthew: If he neglect to hear thee and the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican; in such a way that we say to them that they are not Christians, but damned heathen, and we will not have anything preached to them or let them have any part of our good things, as Peter, in the eighth of Acts, says to Simon Magus. This is the way that I do, and all that preach the gospel in earnest, lest we make ourselves partakers of their sins. For God will not have us to play the hypocrite in this way with our sectaries, as if they were right in their teaching; but we must regard them as enemies, as separated from them with gospel, baptism, sacrament and all their way of teaching and living. Thus we must also say to our own people, if they wish to have part in the gospel, that they must everywhere not despise us, but give practical proof that they are in earnest with it, and at least that they hold the word and sacrament in honor and submit to it with humility.

Yes, (they say,) in this way they want to get into power again, and put themselves again into a position of authority, like that hitherto occupied by the pope; this would be unendurable, and we might rather have remained under the pope. Answer: Yes, indeed, I have myself been much concerned lest that may be the result. But the way that they are taking, by despising and trampling upon them [the preachers of the word] is not the way to accomplish what they are aiming at, viz.: to prevent the tyranny of the pastors, but just the right beginning to effect it. For if these are out of the way, whom they have trampled under foot and driven off, they will still not be able to be without pastors or preachers. For Christ will maintain his rule in the world, so that still his gospel, baptism, sacrament must abide.

Although no prince were willing to protect it, he will do it, since the Father has placed him at his right hand, and means that he is to be Lord. Even if they now drive off all the pastors, they will not hurl Christ from his throne.

Therefore this will happen to them: because they will not have nor endure the upright, pious preachers, God will make for them others who will force them and tyrannize over them, worse than before.

Therefore they are on the right track, our Greedy-jacks and others, who put their heads together and think they will silence us and compel us to submit to them, not knowing that another One is sitting up there who reigns supreme, and says: If you will not have right preachers, then have the devil With his preachers, who preach lies to you; these you must accept, and besides be ruled and tormented by them; as those parts of our Germany are now already suffering, where they not only refuse the gospel but are persecuting it, so that they have all their corners full of sectaries, fanatics and anabaptists, and cannot prevent it. But the right way to prevent this is to embrace the gospel earnestly and faithfully, beseech God that he may send true, faithful workmen into his harvest; then there need be no fear. For these preachers would not oppress or force us, or do us any harm in body or soul, but help everybody and do all the good possible; as has been learned in regard to ourselves, who may well boast before God and the world, that we have not sought any authority or advantage for ourselves, but have served all the world with our body and life; we have neither encumbered nor harmed anybody, but have gladly helped everybody, also in temporal things, and besides have suffered for it manifold danger, violence and persecution. But, since they don't want us any more, may God grant that others come after us who will treat them differently, oppress, torment and skin them, so that they may see what they had in us, and they must suffer it from those whom they now do not look at and would not like to have as stable servants. For they deserve nothing better than to have these tyrants whom they must fear, as they had the pope; he was the right sort of a ruler for them. Our cranky princes, too, have already learned it, and think they would like to be rid of compulsion and no longer fear the pope; they begin to protect the priests, but not for their sake, but that they may force them into subjection to themselves, so that they may live by their favor, and they protect them in such fashion that they should rather come over to us, whom they regard as enemies, than to allow themselves to be plucked by them, under the name of protection. But it cannot be otherwise, and they are both rightly served. But it must not be so among Christians, but upright, pious people should hold their pastors and preachers in high honor, with all humility and love, for the sake of Christ and his word, and have great regard for them as a precious gift and jewel, bestowed by God, better than all worldly treasures and possessions, in like manner also true, pious preachers will seek with all fidelity nothing else than the advantage and welfare of all people, without burdening them at all either in their consciences, or even outwardly in temporal affairs or bodily matters. But let him who despises them know that he is no Christian, and has again lost the treasure. We preach to and exhort everybody who will give heed to and join with us; but those who will not, and yet with the semblance and name of the gospel or Christian fellowship despise us, and will tread us under foot, against these we employ the artifice of letting them have the semblance, but in fact taking all back to ourselves, so that they have nothing at all left. For we are commanded to separate ourselves from them, although we are not glad to do it, and would rather that they should remain with us; but as they will not, we must let them go, and not on their account let our treasure perish or be trodden under foot by them.

Matthew 7:7-11. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them which ask him?

After the Lord Christ had taught his disciples, and established the office of the ministry, so that they might know what they were to preach and how they were to live, he here adds an exhortation to prayer; he means hereby to teach that prayer next to preaching is the principal work of a Christian, as something always belonging to a sermon; and to show that nothing is more necessary in Christendom, (because we have so many temptations and hindrances,) than that we continue without ceasing in prayer, that God may give his grace and Spirit, that the gospel may become efficient and be in constant use by ourselves and others. Therefore God in the prophet Zechariah (as above quoted) promised that he would pour out upon Christians a spirit of grace and of supplication; he comprehends thus in these two things the whole of Christianity.

Thus he now means to say: I have instructed you, that you may know how you ought to live aright and against what you should be on your guard.

Now a necessary part of this is that you also pray, and confidently persevere with seeking and knocking, not becoming sluggish or weary in regard to it. For there will be need of begging, seeking and knocking. For although both doctrine and practice have rightly begun, yet there will be no want of faults and offenses, that daily hinder and obstruct us, so that we cannot advance, and against which we continually contend with all our powers, but without any stronger defense than prayer, so that if we do not use this it is not possible for us to maintain our ground and remain Christians; as we can see very plainly now what kind of hindrances resist the progress of the gospel; but we see, too, that we are not making much account of prayer, and taking it for granted that this warning and exhortation does not apply to us, and that we do not now need to pray, since the useless chattering and muttering of rosaries and other idolatrous little prayers has ceased; which is not a good sign, and it is to be feared that much misfortune will overtake us that we might have been able to prevent.

Therefore every Christian should heed this exhortation, first, as a command, just as well as the previous statement: Judge not, etc., is a command, and he should know that he is in duty bound to practice this Christian work, and not to do as that peasant, who said that he gave his preacher grain, so that he should pray for him; as some think: Of what account is my prayer? If I do not pray, others do; so that we should not think it does not concern us, or that it depends upon our choice, about which I have often more fully treated elsewhere.

Secondly, you have here the consolatory promise and rich assurance which he adds concerning prayer, that one may see that it is of consequence to him, and may learn to regard our prayer as clear and precious before God, since he so earnestly exhorts us to engage in it, so kindly invites and promises that we shall not ask in vain; and if we had no other cause or inducement than this friendly, rich word, this ought to be enough to drive us to do it. I will be silent as to how earnestly he exhorts and commands [us to engage in it] and how heartily we need it.

Besides, as if this were not enough, as we aside from this, for own great need’s sake, should ourselves engage in it, he adds a most beautiful comparison (the more to stimulate us) of every father in reference to his son, who although he may be a worthless wretch, yet, if he ask for a fish, he will not give him a serpent, etc. Hence he infers this comforting word: If ye can do this, who are not of a good sort, and have not a vein in you that is good towards God, how then should not God, your Heavenly Father, whose nature is altogether good, not also give to you what is good if you ask him for it? This is the very highest appeal wherewith he ought to or can persuade any one to

prayer, if we only would look at these words and lay them to heart.

Now what the need is, for which he gives this exhortation, and which should urge us to pray, has been mentioned, so that, if we have the word of God, and have made a good beginning, both in doctrine and practice, then there cannot fail to occur temptation and opposition, not of one kind only but of thousands of kinds. For, in the first place, there is our own flesh, the old rotten sack, that is soon apathetic, inattentive, and disinclined to the word of God and a good life, so that we are always lacking in wisdom and the word of God, faith, love, patience, etc. This is the first enemy that is daily hanging about our neck so heavily that he is always dragging us in that direction.

Then comes the other enemy, the world, that begrudges us the dear word and faith, and will have no patience with us, however weak we may be; it falls upon us and condemns us for what we do, seeks to take from us what we have, so that we can have no peace with it. These are already two great temptations that inwardly hinder us and outwardly seek to drive us off.

Therefore we have no more to do than a]ways to cry to God, that he may strengthen and further his word in us, and restrain the persecutors and sectaries, so that it be not smothered. The third enemy is now the strongest of all, the very devil, who has the great double advantage that we are not good by nature, and besides are weak in faith and spirit; he gets thus within my own castle and contends against me; he has in addition the world to aid him, so that he stirs up ugly crowds against me, through whom he shoots his poisonous, fiery darts upon me, that he may weary me, so that the word in me may be again smothered and extinguished, and he rule again as he ruled before, and prevent himself from being driven out. See, these are three misfortunes that oppress us heavily enough and lie upon our neck, and will not cease whilst we have life and breath. Therefore we have constant reason to pray and to call. Therefore he adds these words: Ask, seek, knock; to show that we do not yet have everything, but that we are in such a condition that there is failure and want everywhere. For if we had it all we would not need to beg or seek; if we were even in heaven already, we would not need to knock.

Now these are the chief temptations in regard to the serving of God and the keeping of his word. Next we have the common, temporal need of this life upon earth; as that we are to pray that he may grant us gracious peace, good government, and protect us from all kinds of trouble, sickness, pestilence, famine, bloodshed, storms, etc. For you have not yet got beyond the reach of death, nor eaten up all your daily bread, so that you need not pray that he may daily give it to you. Also, thus you have to pray for the secular authority, and against all kinds of vices, that the people may not rob and steal so from one another, since you must daily see that everywhere such shameful conduct abounds. In addition to all this you have at home your wife, child and domestics to be governed; there you will have your hands full. For he who has to observe and carry out in his whole life both Christian and civil righteousness, has undertaken more than one man’s work and ability.

What shall we now do? Here we are involved in such manifold great needs and hindrances that we cannot escape, if we should violently shut the door against them. How can I prevent my dying, who am so lazy and indifferent to the word of God and all that is good? or prevent the world from keeping up such a rumpus and racket, and the devil from raging? and how prevent there being so much trouble and misfortune? Now the dear Lord Christ knows this very well. Therefore he means to show us a precious, good remedy, as a kind, faithful physician, and teaches us what we are to

do about this, as though he should say: The world is so mad, and undertakes to rid itself of this with wisdom and reason; seeks so many means and ways, help and counsel, how it may escape from these perplexities. But this is the only shortest, surest way, that you go into a little chamber, or into a corner, and there open your heart and pour [out] your desires before God with lamentation and sighing and assured confidence, that he, as your faithful, heavenly Father, will help and counsel in such perplexities; just as we read in Isaiah 37:1-38 about king Hezekiah: When the enemy with a great army was lying before the city, and he was so besieged and outnumbered, that no help nor counsel, to human appearance, was to be hoped for, in addition to which the enemy most insolently defied him, and mocked at his misfortune, and wrote him a letter full of blasphemy, so that he well-nigh despaired; then the pious king did nothing else than to go up into the temple, lay the letter before the altar, fall down and heartily pray. Then he was soon heard and helped. But then we worry and frets and have the greatest trouble to bring ourselves to do it, and we miserably perplex ourselves, making martyrs of ourselves with our caring and thinking, trying to take our neck from the yoke and be rid of it. For it is a bad, cunning devil that rides me as well as others, and has often played these tricks upon me, when I was tempted or worried, whether in spiritual or secular affairs. He quickly interferes and brings it about that one wears himself out with his trouble; thereby he drags us away from prayer and confuses us to such an extent that one does not think of it, and before one begins to pray, one has already half worried himself to death. For he knows very well what prayer can accomplish, therefore he restrains and disturbs us as much as he can, so that we do not have recourse to it at all.

Therefore we ought to learn to take these words rightly to heart, and accustom ourselves to it, so soon as any trouble and need appears, only at once to fall upon our knees and lay the need before God, according to this exhortation and promise; then we should be helped, so that we need not worry ourselves with our own thoughts about seeking help. For it is a very precious remedy, which assuredly helps, and never fails, if it be only applied. But how to pray aright has been shown above and elsewhere sufficiently. For here we are speaking only of the power of prayer and of what should urge us to it. The most important thing is that you only at first look at the word of God that may instruct you what you are heartily to believe, so that you are sure of this, that your faith, gospel and Christ are right, and that your calling is pleasing to God; then you will soon see the devil against you, and feel that there is lacking everywhere, internally in faith and externally in your calling, that everything threatens to go wrong, and temptations are swarming on every hand: if you feel this, then be wise and prevail upon your heart to begin at once to pray and say: Dear Lord, I surely have thy word, and am in the calling that pleases thee, that I know.

Now thou seest how much I need everywhere, so that I know of no help except in thee; help thou, therefore, since thou hast commanded that we are to pray, seek and knock, and then we shall certainly receive, find and have what we desire.

If you will accept it thus and accustom yourself confidently to pray, and do not receive, then come and call me a liar. If he does not give at the minute, he will still give you so much that meanwhile your heart will experience comfort and strength, till the time that he gives more abundantly than you would have hoped. For this is also a good feature of prayer, if one habitually practices it, and thus meditates upon the word that he has promised, that the heart becomes continually stronger, and more firmly confides, and finally obtains much more than otherwise. This I could clearly prove by my own example and that of other pious people. For I tried it too, and many people with me,

especially at the time when the devil wanted to devour us, at the Diet at Augsburg, and everything stood bad enough, and was in such a turmoil that all the world supposed things would be turned topsy-turvy, as some had insolently threatened, and the swords had already been drawn and the rifles loaded. But God so helped through our prayers, and opened the way, that those screamers, with their scratching and threatening, were completely put to shame, and a good peace and a gracious year was given to us, such as had not been for many a day, and such as we could not have hoped for. If now another danger and need arises, we will pray again and he must again help and deliver, although he may let us meanwhile suffer a little and be oppressed, so that he may the more strengthen us, and we be driven the more earnestly to pray. For what sort of a prayer would it be, if the need were not here and did not oppress us until we felt it? That one rightly feels his need helps to make his prayer the stronger. Therefore let every one learn by no means to despise his prayer, not doubting that it will assuredly be heard, and in due time he shall receive what he desires. But why Christ uses so many words, that he puts it in three ways: Ask and it shall be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you, when it was enough to use one; it is easy to see (as has been said,) that he thereby means the more strongly to exhort us to pray. For he knows that we are timid, and we are afraid to present our need to God, as unworthy, unfit, etc.; we feel the need, indeed, but cannot express it; we think God is so great and we so insignificant, that we dare not pray, which is also a great hindrance from the devil that does great harm to prayer. Therefore he entices us away from that bashfulness and hesitation, so that we have no doubt at all, but only draw near confidently and boldly. For although I am unworthy, I am still his creature; and because he has made me worthy to be his creature, I am also worthy to take what he has promised to me and so freely offered. In short, if I am unworthy, he and his promise are not unworthy. Upon this, only venture it promptly and confidently, and lay it with all joy and assurance upon his bosom. But first of all see to it that you truly believe in Christ, and are in your right place, that pleases God, not as the world, that pays no regard to its place, and is only planning day and night to practice its vices and scoundrelism.

One might however interpret the three statements in this way, that he repeats the same thing in other words to indicate perseverance in prayer, concerning which St. Paul exhorts in Romans 12:1-21 : Continue instant in prayer; as though he said: It is not enough to begin and give a sigh, and say the prayer and then go your way: but, just as the need is, so should the prayer be. For it does not once take hold of you and then go away, but it hangs on and falls about your neck again, and will not let go. Do the same also, so that you always pray, and besides seek and knock, and do not let go; just as the example of the widow teaches in Luke 18:1-43, who would not let go of her judge, with persevering entreaty, and so pertinaciously that he was overpowered, and had to help her ungraciously. How much more (Christ there infers) will God give to us if he sees that we do not cease praying, but keep on knocking and knocking, so that he must hear; especially because he has promised it, and shows that he has pleasure in such perseverance. Therefore, as the need is always knocking, so do you continue to knock, and do not cease, because you have his word; so he will have to say: Well, then go, and have what you desire. Of this St. James says in his epistle, that the prayer of the righteous man availeth much, if it is earnestly pressed, and he quotes for this the example of Elijah the prophet from the Scriptures, etc. Thus God also does it for the reason that he drives you not only simply to pray but to knock, so that he means to try whether you can keep a firm hold, and to teach you that your prayer is not for that reason unpleasant or unanswered, although he delays and lets you often seek and knock, etc.

Matthew 7:12. Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that mere should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. With these words he now concludes his teaching, given in these three chapters, and gathers them all up in a little bundle in which one can find it all, and every one can put it in his bosom and keep it well; as if he said: Would you like to know what I have preached, and what Moses and all the prophets teach you? then I will tell you in a very few words, and state it so that you dare not complain of its being too long or hard to keep. For it is such a sermon that one can stretch out far and wide, and also make short; and all teaching and preaching flow out from it and spread themselves, and here they come together again. How could it be expressed more briefly and clearly than in these words? except that the world and our old Adam prevent us from catching his meaning and contrasting our life with this teaching; we let it go into one ear and out at the other. Were we always to hold it in contrast with our living and doing, we would not live so rudely and be so neglectful, but always have enough to do, and become our own masters and teach what we ought to do, so that we would not need to run after holy living and works, and would also not need many jurists and lawbooks for this purpose. For it is briefly stated and easily learned, if only we were diligent and earnest to do and live accordingly.

Thus, that we may see it in plain illustrations, there is surely no one who would like to be robbed, and if he asks his own heart about it, he must say that he really would not like that. Why does he not then conclude that he should not rob another? As, if you see at market that everybody makes his goods as dear as he chooses, that he wants to give for thirty pennies what is not worth ten, and you ask him: My friend, would you like to be treated that way? then he cannot be so coarse and unreasonable, but must say: I would buy it at its market value, and what would be reasonable and right, so that I be not overreached. See, there is your heart that tells you truly how you would like to be treated, and your conscience that concludes that you should also do thus to others, and it can properly teach you how you are to deal with your neighbor in buying and selling and all sorts of dealing; all of which belongs to the seventh commandment: Thou shalt not steal. The same in regard to the other commandments: If you have a wife, daughter or maid, you would not like to have her disgraced or badly spoken about, but you want to have her honored and well treated and highly spoken of by everybody. Why then are you so perverse as to hanker after another man’s wife and yourself put her to shame; or to refrain from honoring her when you should do it, and to find pleasure in traducing and slandering? Also, you would not like to be injured by any one, or badly spoken of, or any thing of that kind; why do you not here yourself keep to the rule and measure that you demand and will have from others, and why do you soon judge, blame and condemn another if he does not do it to you, and yet will not yourself act according to your own rule? Thus go through all the commands of the second table, and you will find that this is the real stun of all the preaching that we can do; as he himself says here.

Therefore it is well called a short sermon; but again, if we were to spread it out through all its applications, it is so far-reaching that there would be no end to it; for we cannot count up all that will be done upon earth till the last day; and he is a splendid master who can compress and embrace in a summary such a long, diffuse sermon, so that every one can take it home with him, and daily remind himself of it, as written in his own heart, yes, in all his living and doing (as we shall hear further on) and see where he has been wanting in his whole life. And I believe too that its force would be felt and its fruits realized if we would only accustom ourselves to remember it, and not be so very indolent and careless. For I do not think that any one is so coarse, or so

wicked, if he would bear this in mind, that he would still shun it or take offense at it; and it is surely a wise device that Christ puts it in such a way that he takes no other illustration than ourselves, and he applies it in the closest possible way, laying it upon our heart, body and life, and all our members, so that no one need go far after it or spend much trouble or cost upon it; but he has laid the book in your own bosom, and besides so clear that you need no glasses to understand Moses and the law, so that you are your own Bible, master, doctor and preacher. He gives you such directions that you need only to look at them to find how the book reaches through all your doings, words, thoughts, heart, body and soul. Regulate yourself only according to that, and you will be wise and learned enough, above all jurists, art and books.

So, to take a rough illustration, are you a mechanic, you find the Bible lying in your workshop, in your hand, in your heart, that teaches you and preaches to you how you are to deal with your neighbor. Look only at your tool, your needle, your thimble, your beer-cask, your wares, your scales, your yard-stick, and you read this motto written upon them; so that you cannot look in any direction that it does not stare at you, and no one thing is so small, with which you daily have to do, that does not constantly say this to you, if you will hear it, and there is no lack of preaching. For you have just as many preachers as you have dealings, wares, tools and other apparatus in your house and home. That is always calling to you:

Dear friend, deal with me towards your neighbor just as you would like you neighbor to deal with you in his line of business.

See, thus would this teaching be written upon everything that we look at, and enstamped upon our whole life, if we only had ears that were willing to hear and eyes that were willing to see; and it is so richly preached to us that no one can excuse himself as not knowing it or not having it sufficiently told and preached to him. But we are like the adders that stop their ears and become deaf if we attempt to charm them; we will not see or hear what is written in our own heart and thoughts, and we rush ahead recklessly: Ha, what do others concern me! I can do with my own what I choose, and sell my goods as dear as I can; who will hinder me, etc.? as Squires Skin-flint and Gag do at market; and if one rebukes and threatens them by the word of God, they merely laugh and ridicule and only harden themselves in their wickedness. But we do not preach to these, nor does Christ, and he will have nothing to do with them, and just as completely despises them as they do [him], and he will let them go to the devil. But those that want to be pious, and still fear God and think how they will live and act, must know that they are not to deal with and handle their property as they may wish, as though they were themselves masters of everything: but they are bound to do what is right and orderly, for which reason we have laws of the land and of the city. For so every one wishes to be dealt with by his neighbor; therefore he should do likewise, both taking and giving good wares. This is his seriously meant command, and he will not allow any liberty or arbitrariness to be made out of it, as if one could do it or not without sin; and he will insist upon it, however much the world may view it as an insult and despise it. If you do it not, he will deal with you according to your own measure, and it will come home to you, so that you will have no blessing in what you have gained contrary to this teaching, but all trouble and sorrow, and your children after you. For he will have his command kept, or there shall be no good or success enjoyed.

Secondly, it is not only brought so close home (as now stated)that we must see it in everything that occurs; but it is also presented in such a way that one has to blush at his own conduct. For there is no one who would like to do a base act so that other people should see it, and no one is as ready to sin publicly before the people as if it occurred secretly, so that no one sees it. Thus Christ means to set us here as witnesses against ourselves, and to make us afraid of ourselves, so that if we do wrong our conscience will oppose us with this command, as a perpetual witness, and say: See, what are you doing? This you ought to sell at such a price, according to common fair usage; now you are asking too much. Also, these wares you would not like to take from some one else, as you are depreciating or misrepresenting them, etc. How you should be vexed if some one would give you for a gulden what would be worth hardly ten groschen? so that, if you have a drop of honest blood in your body, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. For if some one else would do it you would call him a thief and a scoundrel. Why, then, are you not ashamed of yourself, as not some one else but you yourself must thus blame yourself, condemned by your own conscience? But that is all very well for a hard, shameless forehead, that feels no disgrace before the people, before itself, still less before God. But if another does it to you then you can readily cry out: Is not this a sin and a shame, and cunningly stolen from the purse? You can easily see a thief and scoundrel in another; but the one who hides in your own breast, and whom you can easily catch and feel, him you will not see.

O, how many such fellows there are in all trades and occupations, that live along securely, deceiving and cheating the people, wherever they can, and yet not willing to be counted thieves and scoundrels, if they only do it secretly and smartly. But if everybody was to give back what he has stolen and robbed in his business or trade, few people would retain anything; yet they live along as pious people, because they cannot be publicly criminated and punished, and they imagine too that they have not sinned; and if they look about themselves, every corner of the house and home is full of thievery, and God is witness that they do not have a gulden or two in the house that has not been stolen; and yet all this must not be called stealing.

Yes, if it were only stealing, and not also murder besides, for with bad, injurious wares, food or drink, people are made weak and sick, etc., and not only robbed of their money, but also of their health, so that many a one eats and drinks, so that he afterwards must pine away and often die in consequence of it. My good friend, is not that just the same as if you were to break into his house or chest, or to strike him a deadly wound? — only it goes by a different name.

If you were not so wicked and shameless, you should be ashamed of yourself when your conscience says this to you, and holds this saying before you so that you must reflect; yes, it would make you so fearful that you would not be able to stay anywhere on account of it. For it is a burden that is always oppressing and disturbing, yes is always condemning, as a perpetual witness against ourselves, so that it cannot possibly be borne. That would then soon teach you that you must quit plundering and stealing, and such things that you would not like to have done to you by some one else, etc. Thus accustom yourself then to look a little at this saying, and practice it upon yourself, then you will have a daily preacher in your heart, in whatever way you may be dealing with your neighbor; thereby you can readily learn to understand every commandment and the whole law, and to govern and conduct yourself in your intercourse with others, so that you may well decide accordingly what is right and wrong in the world. But do you say: How does he say that this is the law and the prophets? The Scriptures of the law and the prophets contain much more

than this. For the Scriptures have the doctrine of faith and the promises, of which nothing is said here. Answer: Christ names here the law and the prophets in direct contrast with the gospel or the promise. For he is not preaching here about the important article, namely, concerning faith in Christ, but only of good works. For those are two different kinds of preaching; we must preach them both, but each in its proper time and place. That you see also clearly in the text, in the words where he says: Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, that do ye unto them likewise. Thereby he shows that his preaching now extends no further than to the dealings which people have with us and we with them, and says nothing about the grace of Christ which we receive from God. Therefore he now means to say: If one is to preach about good life and works, which we are to practice in dealing with our neighbor, then you will find in all the law and the prophets nothing else than what this saying teaches you. Therefore he uses the words: the people, and: that do ye to them, etc., to indicate that he is speaking only about the commandments of the second table. And this is the best in the saying, viz., that he does not say: Other people shall do it to you; but: Ye shall do it to other people. For every one would like others to do good to him, and there are many scoundrels and bad fellows who would have no objection to other people being good and doing good to them; but they will not do it to anybody: as now our peasants imagine it is wrong and great oppression that they are to give fair measure; and yet they can loudly cry and complain that they are robbed or are taxed. But these are nothing but vile reptiles. Some, however, are a little better, who say: I would take my turn and gladly do what I ought, if other people would first do it to me. But this saying puts it in this way. Do thou what thou wouldst have from another. Thou shalt begin, and be the first, if thou wilt that others should do it to thee; or, if they will not, do thou it nevertheless. For if thou wilt not be good, and do good, before thou seest it in another, nothing will come of it. If others will not, thou art none the less obliged to do it, according to the law, and what is acknowledged to be right, as thou wouldst be glad to have done to thee. He who wants to be good must not regard the example of other people; and it will not do for you to say: He deceived me, and I must befoul him again; but because you do not like it, do not do it to him, and begin with that which you wish to be done to you. Thus you may then influence other people through your example, so that they will do good again to you, even those who before did you harm. But if you do not do it yourself, you have as your reward that no one does good to you; and you are served right, before God and the people.

Matthew 7:13-14. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is lite way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

He has now ended his sermon, our dear Lord, and finally concludes the same sermon with several warnings to equip us against all kinds of hindrances and vexations, both in doctrine and life, that we meet with in the world. For of a truth the teaching has been beautiful and precious, at the same time widely spread out and also briefly enough condensed, in a single word, so that it can readily be told and understood; but then comes the trouble and the labor to put it in practice; and it is indeed a difficult and hard life to be a Christian or pious, for that will not be sweet for us; as that good girl said: Much belongs to honor; yes, indeed, and still much more to a Christian life. This is what our dear Lord is here thinking of, that it may seem desirable and occur to them: I would indeed like to live in that way; but a great deal is required for that. Yes, I say that too (says he), therefore I warn you, be careful, and do not mind if it is a little sour and difficult; for it cannot be

otherwise in the world. This a Christian must know, and he must be prepared for it, so that he does not allow himself to be hindered or vexed, if the whole world lives otherwise, and he must by no means adapt himself to the course of the great mass, as Moses also prohibited already in the twenty-third of Exodus:

Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil, etc., as though he should say:

Offenses you will always find existing in the world; as also Christ here says: The way to destruction is broad and very many are walking upon it; and the gate is very wide, so that crowds pass through it. That is the great offense that startles a great many people, and causes them to apostatize, yes, it has greatly perplexed the prophets and the holy people; as David in the Psalms often laments, especially in Psalms 73:1-28, at length: I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm.

They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. In short, they are fortunate upon earth (says he)and become rich, have house and home full, live in luxury and do just what they please. But what do I do, on the other hand? I must be pious and suffer, and am plagued daily and chastened every morning, that is, if I slightly transgress, he is quickly behind me with the rod. That is what I get for it. There everything is in honor and joy; therefore all the world falls in with them, everybody praises and congratulates. As we saw under the papacy; if any one only put on a priest’s robe, him all the world had to praise and honor; everybody contributed to this, and she was a happy mother who bore him. And it is just the same now: He who only is an enemy to us is held in high honor and esteem among them, let him live as he may. That was a great cross to the dear fathers, that they had to see this success and wickedness in the world, so that every one highly regarded it and ran after it, and they were to be pious and have nothing with it but misfortune, and suffer contempt and persecution from everybody.

Christ wishes to show this also, and to warn his own that every one should so live in the world as if he were alone, and regard his word and preaching as the very greatest thing upon earth, so that he would think thus:

Although I see that my neighbor and the whole city, yes the whole world lives differently, and all that are great, noble, rich, princes and lords, side with it; yet I have an associate who is greater than they all, namely Christ and his word. Therefore, though I am alone, I am yet not alone. For, because I have the word of God, I have Christ with me, together with all the dear angels and all the saints from the beginning of the world; so that really there is a greater crowd and more glorious procession about me than there could now be in the whole world; only, that it is not visible to mortal eye, and I must see and bear the vexation that so many people fall away from me, or live and act in hostility to me.

You must firmly hold on to this, if you expect to endure; otherwise this vexation will carry you away, if you are influenced by how other people live and believe. For the Turks hence conclude, as their strongest argument [against us]: Do you suppose that God is so cruel as to condemn a great world? In like manner also the papists: Yes, do you think that what you bring forth from your corner is the only right thing, and that the whole world is damned? Should so many popes, bishops, holy fathers, kings and princes altogether have erred, etc.? They insist so doggedly upon this that no man can tear them away from it, and they conclude most assuredly that our doctrine is

not right; and their only argument is: There are many of us, there are few of them; we are pious, learned, wise, God's people, occupy the apostles' seat, etc., therefore we cannot be in error. Christ has surely not forsaken his church nor God his people. It is not possible, that God will damn so many people for the sake of a few; for he has not created heaven in vain. But against all this Christ teaches thus: Only out with your eyes, or turn them the other way, so that you don't by any means look at the great crowd, but only at God's word; and be assured that it cannot be otherwise than that the way to destruction is broad, and the gate wide, and many going upon it; and again, the gate to life is narrow and the way strait, and very few going upon it. Therefore it is of no avail that the Turk and pope boast about those of their faith: We are many and have long believed as we do; therefore: it must be right. For Christ bluntly asserts the contrary, and he calls that the way to destruction that is broad and well traveled, and warns that we should not be worried because there are so few of us and the other crowd is so large. But it is very hard to digest this little mouthful, if one rightly feels it, so that I have myself often choked at it, and thought:

We are such a little, poor company, despised and damned by all that is high and great upon earth; ought we then to be boastful and defiant against all the world, to assert that our side alone is right, and to decide in regard to all of them that pope, bishop, and all that adhere to them, belong to the devil? Yet we must get over this, and conclude: I know that my cause is right, though the whole world should talk otherwise.

How must the dear virgin Mary have felt when the angel came and brought her the message that she was to be mother of the Highest? Who then was about her that believed this, or stood by her? Ought she to have taken it into the account that there were the daughters of so many rich, noble, great lords and princes there, and should God not have known how to find any other one for this high duty, to which no virgin had ever been called but herself, a poor, unknown, despised maiden? Also, how did the patriarch Abraham act, when he had to go forth from Chaldaea, and travel alone, as if he alone were a Christian and all the world condemned? But he had to give himself no concern about that, nor look around upon others, but had to speak thus: "How God manages with the whole world, I will let him see to that; but I will stick to his word and follow that, although I see all the world going differently;" as also Mary must have thought: "What God will do with others, that I will let him care for; but I will abide by the word that I hear, and that tells me what he will do to me." So we must also conclude:

I see that the pope, bishops, princes, sectaries, civilians, and peasants, do as they please, despise and ridicule us with the greatest assurance, so that I might say: Do you then think that you alone are right against all of them? But go along pope, princes, learned men, and all the world; I know that the doctrine is right, and that it is the word of God: I will abide by that, whatever may happen.

Thus Christ now means to say: I have given you this instruction, so that you may see how extremely few people agree with you, and how many will teach and live to the contrary, so that it will greatly perplex you; but be firm, and do not let it worry you, and know that it cannot be otherwise, and remember that I told you beforehand that the gate to life is strait and the way narrow; but the other broad and wide, etc. Therefore pay no attention to that, but hear what I say to you, and follow me. For I, with all the saints, have taken the narrow way; you must take it too, if you would come to me; let the others go their wide way. For you will see how narrow the pit will be into which they will have to go; on the other hand ye, who now must go by the narrow way through

the strait gate, will come into a beautiful space, as large and wide as heaven and earth.

Now, what makes then the way so narrow and small? No one does but the very devil, the world and just our own flesh, which is lazy, resists and refuses, and will not move forward, to trust God and rely upon his word, cannot bear the world's contempt, poverty, perils, etc. In short, it likes also to travel the broad road, therefore it makes this path for us sour and difficult.

Then comes the world, that persecutes us, hangs, murders, burns and drowns, because we will not go with it in the broad way; and if it can do no worse it slanders and abuses us most poisonously, drives us out with sword, fire, and water: so that it is a hard battle, to stand there and fight against our own flesh, so that one may trust God, love his neighbor, live chastely, and abide in his lot; and if we do all this in a hard struggle, then the world must come too with its persecuting and reviling us as the worst criminals upon earth, just to make our life hard.

Along with this comes the devil himself and torments the heart with evil thoughts, unbelief, fear, dread, despair, makes out of our good deeds sin and shame, and yet we have to remain among these enemies and exposed to their assaults. Under these circumstances one may be vexed and tempted to apostatize and say: I see indeed that those have rest and a good time, pass their clays in quiet peace, and have the same glory and honor of being the true servants of God: why shall I then alone suffer myself to be so wretchedly persecuted, vexed and abused? Where they all stay, there will I stay too. The ancients have admirably depicted this in the legend of the Knight Tondalo (except that they did not rightly apply it, and interpreted it of purgatory or the punishment of souls after this life,) how he had to pass over a small bridge that was scarcely as broad as a hand, with a burden on his back, and under him a sulphurous pool full of dragons, and besides there was one coming towards him to whom he had to give place. That coincides well with this statement. For a Christian leads a life as hard as if he were walking upon a narrow path, yes, upon nothing but razors; thus the devil is beneath us in the world, he is incessantly snapping at us with his jaws, that he may drive us into impatience, despair and murmuring against God; besides the world opposes us and it neither will yield to us nor let us pass by, and our flesh hangs about our neck; so that we are crowded on every side, and the way in itself is so narrow, that of itself there would be trouble enough even if there were no danger or hindrance in the way: yet we must go through or fall into the hands of the world and the devil.

Therefore reflect and act accordingly: if you will be a Christian, let it be so. For things will remain as they are: you will not make the way any broader, and must observe that a few go here, and the great crowd there. But let this be your comfort, first, that God is with you; then, that after you have gotten through you will come into a beautiful, wide place. For if you only adhere to the word and act according to it, not according to sight, then he is assuredly with you, and so effectively that your spirit will overcome the flesh, the world and the devil, so that he can accomplish nothing through your flesh, nor through the world, nor of himself. For the word upon which you rely through faith is too strong for him, although it appears little and we do not see it. But he knows very well what it can do, as he has often tested it and felt what a force and power it is, if one believes in it.

Therefore the prophet so confidently boasts in Psalms 118:1-29 : "The Lord is on my side: I will not fear: what can man do unto me? They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns; for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the Lord helped me," etc. See, he too has nothing else than the word and faith, that

the Lord is with him, whom he still does not see; but he feels indeed the world and the flesh that make his way narrow and embitter his life. Yet he remains firm, finds his satisfaction in the fact that the Lord is with him and approves his course, and he is sure that he will be on the Lord's side and conquer, though all the world should oppose him.

We must also avail ourselves of this consolation, that we learn to make for ourselves out of the strait gate and narrow way a wide space, and out of the little company a great crowd, so that we do not stare at what we see, but through faith and the word look at the invisible, namely, that Christ himself and all the heavenly host are with me, and have gone the very same way, and in a beautiful long procession have preceded me to heaven, and that all Christendom till the last day are still traveling the same road. For where he goes and stays, there they must all go and stay. Thus our way becomes light and easy, so that we confidently pass through; as Christ also invites thither and says: Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavyladen, I will give you rest; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light; as if he meant to say: Do not be grieved by what I lay upon you in the world. For it is a yoke and a burden to the flesh, and is called a narrow way and a strait gate; but only adhere to me and I will make it very easy and pleasant for you, and give you so much strength that you can easily go that way; and not only so, but you shall also experience that it will become lovely and sweet for you. For this is certainly true, if we rightly look at both sides, that believers have the advantage, so that they ought not willingly to exchange with the ungodly. Although these live in luxury and those must suffer much; yet these trouble and worry themselves ten times as much as we do, with their poisonous, restless hatred, and with so many fruitless schemes, how they may harm us, and all sorts of evil practices and tricks, with which they criminate themselves, so that they still have no good conscience nor a real cheerful hour, and they are their own devil here upon earth; and yet they do not accomplish anything more thereby against us, than to befoul and oppress us somewhat, as much as God allows them. But those who believe in Christ do not need these cares and troubles, and can still have a cheerful heart and conscience. Although we are somewhat distressed, and the devil annoys us: yet he must again refrain, and we are refreshed by the word, so that our burden and distress become sweet and we have only half a torment, outwardly in the external man; but they are doubly tormented by the devil, they have their hell both here and there, with perpetual torment and unrest of conscience, of murder and blood, so that they cannot have any cheerful, good thoughts toward God, although outwardly they may have a little joy and pleasure. So they are rightly served, as the Scripture says: Duplici contritione conteres eos Domine, Lord, destroy them with double destruction.

See, thus the Lord means with all fidelity both to have us warned and comforted, so that we do not care if our life is embittered, and we must see and feel so much vexation in the world, because if we look at it aright, it is only half-embittered, and through Christ, on whom we believes everything in our heart becomes sweet and conduces to life and eternal joy. What harms it then, if the old Adam is somewhat worried about it?

Matthew 7:15. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Hitherto the Lord has been correctly presenting both doctrine and life, and warning against that which is contrary to it, and injures or hinders. In addition to that he now also adds a warning, so that we beware lest, whilst all is right both in doctrine and practice, teachers may secretly arise

among us who under the name and semblance of genuine preachers and of the gospels may introduce something else, and pervert and ruin both the doctrine and life. For it cannot be otherwise than that the true, pure teaching of the gospel must on every hand be attacked by the devil in all sorts of ways, both externally and internally, as Christ taught from the beginning of this sermon: that he who means to be a Christian must consider this; that he will have as enemies, first, those who are outside of Christendom, who will oppose, hate and injure him, striking and throttling him, or at least reviling, cursing and condemning; and it is settled that he who has no haters, revilers, and persecutors is not a Christian, or at least has not yet proved his Christianity by outward act and confession. For, as soon as he makes a profession, the world becomes his enemy, and if it can it will surely kill him for it. These are now open enemies and outside of Christendom, that every one can see and readily feel. But in addition to these (Christ means to say here), you will have another kind of enemies that are not without and deny the doctrine, but who grow up among you, bear and boast of your name — these, first of all, do the great harm. For the others, though they make a great ado, cannot do more than take body and goods; but my heart and my faith they cannot take from me by violence. But these are not after body and goods, but let me keep what I have; but they cunningly reach after the doctrine, that they may take the treasure itself out of my heart, namely, the dear word, on account of which we suffer persecution from those enemies. This is indeed a lamentable business, that those who are called our brethren, and profess also the Christian doctrine, set themselves up against us and under the same name set aside the true doctrine and introduce another; as St. Paul also warns his Ephesians, and predicts (Acts 20:1-38): Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, etc. That is (I say) especially a lamentable thing that those should do it who are among us and of us, whom we regard as upright, and against whom we cannot protect ourselves until they have begun to do harm. This is the persecution in Christendom that was predicted throughout the Scriptures, and has lasted in fact from the beginning of the world. For so it was with Moses among his people, yes, Jacob, Isaac and Abraham in their families, and Adam, who had only two sons, yet one of them had to instigate mischief. And I think we have now had sufficient experience of it ourselves. How many there were who at first held with us and began [to follow] the gospel against the pope, so that it seemed as though we would have the whole world with us? But just when we were about to carry everything before us, our own people fall to work and do us more harm than all the princes, kings and emperors could have done. Well, what shall we do about it?

They do us great injury, and besides strengthen our enemies against us, who cry out, There one can see what our teaching is, since we are not a unit among ourselves, and the Holy Ghost cannot be with us, since we ourselves persecute, abuse and revile one another, etc. We must endure this, that the enemies be strengthened by this scandal, and we be weakened and reviled, and thus have both our enemies and our brethren against us, so that in fact there is no greater tribulation in Christendom, in external matters, so far as our teaching is concerned.

Since now we must always expect this, and cannot avoid it, Christ gives us along with this sermon both a consolation and a warning. The consolation is, that we are not to be alarmed, or to trouble ourselves to death in regard to this wretched tribulation, as we see and feel it, that we who confess the word of God are not a unit among ourselves; but, taught by his word, say thus in response to it: That I knew very well before, when I wanted to be a Christian, that it would be just as my Lord Christ beforehand predicted, that I must have two kinds of enemies, both from without and also

from within, from my own dearest friends and brethren. Therefore this shall not frighten me off and make me apostatize from the doctrine, as if it were to be wrong for the reason that those set themselves against me who have been my brethren. Why, Christ himself had Judas, his betrayer, with him, and what he taught and did was not false or wrong because his dearest disciple deserted him and did the mischief. Therefore, we must not mind our Judases. But the warning is, that we should certainly expect this and diligently take care and be on our guard that these parties do not deceive us, but we must arm ourselves against them and learn to know them. For by his saying:

Beware, he means to teach that we are not to be yielding or impatient, but to open our eyes, be wakeful, cautious and wise. For against those external enemies we need nothing more than patience, that we may suffer what they lay upon us, and be firm; but here it avails not to suffer, or yield, but to beware and see to it that I do not entrust a word even to my brother in confidence, but look with sharp, wakeful eyes only at the word, and trust no man who is now with me, who to-day can preach with me, but tomorrow perhaps against me. And no one should think himself safe, as not needing this exhortation. For it is such a dangerous, subtle temptation, that even the most spiritually minded have trouble enough to avoid being deceived by it. But the rest, that are secure and careless, cannot at all prevent their being misled. Therefore he does not without reason add the word: Beware. For the semblance and name is too attractive, so that no one can recognize it (as we shall hear) who does not have the correct understanding of the word of God, and besides with all diligence gives heed to it, and lets it be his supreme care to hold it pure and undiluted. For see how he depicts them, the false teachers, according to their appearance and aspect. In the first place he gives the name, that they are called and are prophets, that is teachers and preachers; and are proud of it that they are not otherwise called or regarded, have just the same ministerial office, the same Scriptures, and the same God whom they boast of as the others; and yet they are false prophets. For he is speaking here of those who preach by virtue of their office. For the others, who act without official authority, are not fit to be called false prophets; but tramps and scamps, that ought to be turned over to the rabble, and are not to be endured, (even if they do teach aright,) when they want to interfere with the office and sphere of others, in violation of established order; or secretly and thievishly to creep into corners, where no one unauthorized ought to offer a sermon of his own, or to insinuate himself, although he may hear and know that the public preaching is false, as he is not responsible for that. For God established this office, as others, so that we are not to act contrary to it; but he who does not rightly discharge it will have to answer for himself, and will surely find his judge.

Secondly, says he, that they come in sheep’s clothing, so that one cannot blame them, nor outwardly distinguish them from other true preachers.

These two things it is that do harm, that they hold the true office, and besides come with such beautiful attire and semblance, that one cannot say anything else than that they are true, pious preachers, who seek every one’s welfare; as they charmingly profess, and can swear to it, handling only the name and word of God. This spreads very rapidly and hurries the people violently along, like a flood, so that one cannot resist it. For who is there among the rabble that can or dare set himself against these and rebuke them? Yes, who knows how to guard himself against them, since they come with God’s name and word (as they boast)? But Christ herewith warns us against both, so that we are not to be influenced by the fact that they hold the office, although this is necessary, and belongs to a preacher; but no one is thereby assured that he is therefore to

believe him, as if he could not in the office be a scoundrel: as it is not unusual in the world that there be in all offices and grades in society many scamps and low fellows that abuse their position. They may be called prophets indeed (says Christ); but beware, and see to it that they are not false prophets. In like manner, be not misled, if they come in sheep's clothing with the precious name and semblance. For here you are told that under that there may behidden a ravening wolf. Therefore beware again that the sheep's clothing do not deceive you. For they must all wear that beautiful covering and semblance if they are to deceive the people. And this is just the difference between these secret and the other open enemies. For the latter rush in among us openly, so that every one readily knows them; but these come among us in the same office that we have, employ also the same Scriptures and words for appearance sake; but they come (says Christ,) of their own accord; that is, although they have the office, yet they bring the word and doctrine that God has not entrusted to them, nor did he send them for that, but their own dreams and devil's doctrine, adorned with God's name. Therefore be especially warned against the sheep's clothing, so that you trust no one, however great a show he makes, but look only at the word, whether he rightly handles that, or under cover of it is selling his own wares.

See, if we would now accept this warning, and regulate ourselves according to the words of Christ, we could easily guard ourselves against all false prophets and preachers. But that they are so rapidly multiplying is owing to the fact that we who hear the true gospel do not earnestly accept it, do not take care that we truly have and hold it; move along in such a sleepy, lazy way, as if we could not go astray. That is the reason why we are deceived by this excellent show and semblance, before we are aware of it. For as soon as another new teacher comes and begins, then the word: attendite, beware, is forgotten, with which we ought to be equipped, and we ought so to hear every one as though we did not hear him, but were looking at and attending to the word alone. Those are trifling, unsettled spirits, that look only into the preachers' mouths, and suddenly run after them, through curiosity that makes them eager for novelties, so that they think: O, I heard that one before, now I must hear this one too, he is a fine, learned, holy man, etc. There the devil has already gained a foothold, and ensnared them before they are aware of it, drives and leads them as he pleases, from one conspiracy into another; as St. Paul says of these (Ephesians 4:14) that they are like a reed, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. If today or tomorrow some one else up. pears, they rush after and listen to him. The reason is, they have no certain understanding in their heart of God's word, have little regard besides for the gospel; think, if they have heard it once or twice, that they know it and now have it all: they are soon tired of it, open their eyes and ears if some one comes that brings something new; and it happens with them, as with Adam and Eve, misled by the serpent; who gazed at the forbidden tree and imagined these beautiful thoughts against the word of God: Why should we not eat just from this tree? because thus eager and curious, so that they became tired of all the other trees in the whole of Paradise and gazed only at this one, etc. But if it were a serious matter with us in regard to the gospel, and we were carefully living so as to keep the treasure pure and clean, we would not be so easily deceived. For I hope indeed that no factious spirit shall so easily upset me, because I know that the gospel is true, and I would not like to lose it. But if some one comes in beautiful sheep's clothing, I will not look at his mask, as if I wanted to hear something else or new: but [I ask] whether he agrees with my gospel. If not, then thank God, I am thoroughly assured that he is a false prophet and a ravening wolf under his sheep's clothing.

Thus the devilish spirits have the twofold advantage, that we are such heedless, secure and frivolous people, and they can trick themselves out in the beautiful wool of the sheep. For by sheep's clothing he means not bad conduct and gross sin, as of the heathen and unchristian people; but the excellent name and reputation of real Christians, that have holy baptism, sacrament, Christ, and everything that belongs to Christ. They must bring all this along. For no one must come along and say: This I say; but thus:

Dear friends, this Christ says, here you have God's word and the Scriptures, this you must believe, if you wish to be saved; he who teaches otherwise deceives you, etc.; they make use of the precious name of Christ, and God, and the awful, grand words: God's honor, truth, eternal salvation, and whatever other words like these thereto belonging. If now any one hears these excellent words, and is so earnestly exhorted in view of his soups salvation and destruction, he becomes alarmed, and surrenders himself at once, if he is not well furnished and decided against it. For it cuts like a sharp razor, and strikes through body and soul. That is a part of the sheep's clothing.

Besides, they embellish themselves with wonderful works and ways, go about in gray coats, look morose, and lead a hard, strict life with fasting, bodily mortification's, hard couches, etc., and do not live at all like other ordinary people. That makes again a great impression, and captivates the people admirably, so that they fall in by crowds; and such a villain with a single sermon can mislead a whole city that has had the word of God for a long while, and make them forget in an hour what they have heard for ten years; so that even I, if I wished, would easily undertake in two or three sermons to preach my people back again into the papacy, and get up new pilgrimages and masses, by means of this show and special sanctity. For the rabble is, as was said, easily thereby persuaded, and at any rate curious and eager to hear what is new.

See, thus must they embellish themselves, both in doctrine and practice, so that they employ the same words that we hear, and along with this lead a beautiful attractive life; as now our anabaptist sectaries, in fact, mislead many people by crying out that we do not have the real gospel, because one may see that it yields no fruit, and the people continue to be bad, proud, avaricious, etc.; that there must be something more than the mere word and letter: the Spirit must do it, and they must honestly strive to live better; if it were the word of God it would surely also produce fruit. Then they go on and say they have the true understanding, and the right fruits and life. If a simple, inexperienced man hears this, he says: O, that is really so! lets himself thus be carried away by the taking words: Spirit, and fruits of the Spirit. Then they go further, and say: He who wants to be a Christian must not share in civil authority, or bear a sword, or have anything of his own, as it is with us; but he is a true Christian who proves it by his works, forsakes everything, does not accept any secular authority and rule; dresses in a gray coat; suffers hunger and sorrow, etc. These they call fruits of the Spirit. See, these are nothing but sheep's clothing; with these they carry away crowds of the poor people. Who can now recognize the wolf under this and guard against him?

Answer: I know no other counsel than, as I have said, that every one first see to it that he is sure of his case and of the doctrine, and have so settled it in his heart that he can adhere to the doctrine, although he see everybody upon earth teaching and living otherwise. For he who wishes to get along safely must absolutely not look at any outward marks in Christendom and shape his course after them, but must look alone to the word that shows the true way of living that avails before

God. As, for example, the principal topic and sum of the Christian doctrine is this, that God has sent and given his Son, Christ, and alone through him forgives us all our sins, justifies and saves us. That you are to cling to, and nothing else. Then, if you look about you, you will see a great variety of dissimilar personalities and modes of living, that one is a man, woman, master, servant, prince, subject, rich, poor, representing the various callings or offices that are in the world, and all so mixed up together that I can see nothing that has a peculiar appearance [about any of them]. But as I am so settled in mind, and know that main topic in which I have the whole summed up, my heart concludes thus: Suppose I see a husband or a girl, master or servant, learned man or layman, clothed in gray or red, fasting or eating, looking grave or laughing; what have I to do with that? In short, what that difference is that I see [in them], that is all the same to me. For I understand this, that a maid in a red dress, or a prince in his golden garment, can be just as good a Christian as a beggar in a gray coat or a monk in a woolen or hair shirt, and I am with such an understanding safe against all sorts of external masks. But he who does not hold this main truth, or know how to regulate everything by it, cannot avoid being deceived by these masks, when he sees one happy with his wife and children, or splendidly and richly dressed, etc., and another looking demure, fasting much, barefoot, and in a gray cowl, and he concludes at once: O, that is a holy man! the others are of no account; and keeps gaping thus after the masks, out of humor; is not smart enough to say: Can there be a rogue lying hidden under the gray coat? as a Christian can conclude and say: Dear monk, if you wear your gray coat not of necessity, but with the peculiar notion that you will be regarded by others as something peculiar, then you are a desperate, double scoundrel, making the people gape by your pretended sanctity; otherwise you would have to say: If a farmer, who is ploughing or manuring upon his field is just as good a Christian as I, and will get to heaven, what do I want with my peculiar way of living?

But, as I have said, the great common mass hankers after these masks that fill their eyes and make a special show, so that it amounts to nothing if one preaches long against them. And we are besides naturally inclined to this doctrine and works. For it is well pleasing to reason, which always likes to deal with God with its own works. Thus it happens that the devil through these teachers prompts and agitates until he has quite persuaded us. But we who want to go safely must before anything else see to it, as I have always taught, that we are firmly rooted in our main point, concerning Christ; then we can correctly judge concerning all outward masks and styles, and the Spirit will duly teach and lead us. Thus every one will find enough real good works to do in his calling, if he wants to be pious, so that he need not seek for anything special.

For, are you a prince, judge, husband, servant, maid, etc., and are you to practice and prove your faith, to fill your place and calling properly, and do what is right: then you will surely get so much to do and to work, that no Carthusian will have a harder order to work for than you. For what sort of great trouble and hard work is that, for him to wear a gray coat or hood, or walk in wooden shoes, or mortify his body a little, if he be somewhat strict, and yet along with that live without care and worry, and have enough to gormandize and guzzle? But this one must eat his daily bread in the sweat of his face and with hard work, and must let not alone his body but rather his heart be plagued by the wicked world and his neighbors, and expect and endure all misfortune, discord and affliction; so that a true citizen’s calling, conducted in a Christian way, is more than a ten-fold Carthusian order; except that it does not make a show, like the monk, who wears a hood, is separated from the people, etc., and yet, if we open our eyes and rightly compare the two, even

reason must come to the same conclusion. Thus also a prince, although he wears golden chains and a cloak of marten fur, but is pious, yet he is under the marten cloak such a plagued and miserable man, that you cannot find his like in any monastery. Thus go through all offices and callings. If you find a pious man or woman, you need not look there for a monk or a nun; for he or she is already monk or nun enough, and is living in a harder order than all the hood and tonsure wearers; yes, it is all tomfoolery before God with all the monks and hermits, in contrast with a pious child, servant or maid, who is obedient to duty. Only do what a pious man or woman ought to do, there you have a rule that is harder to follow than the rules, hoods and tonsures of St. Francis and of all the monks, which cover rather a scoundrel than a pious Christian. But proud reason will not look at this, but disregards it and thinks: O that is a common affair, that every one may have at home! gapes after something else that is strange and odd, looks in wonder, follows the continual bawling; which is all a mere false show, with which they come along and so dress up their trifling way of living as to put contempt upon all else that are God's ordinances and callings, as if they were of no account. But it is all owing to this, that we do not take hold of the word of God with real earnestness, or we would soon say: Let the Carthusians come on, and the Anabaptists, the devil himself or his mother, they could not make better callings or ways of living than God has made.

Therefore we must count every calling as excellent, high, divine, whether it be that of a pious husband, servant, maid or faithful laborer, and could thus rightly judge according to the word about all works and callings, and every one could rightly teach and live, and everything would move along splendidly. Those would be the right callings which God has ordered and established, and which he approves; and if God granted that we could bring it to pass that a city would have many of these pious citizens, women, children, masters, servants and maids, we should have heaven upon earth, and would need no monasteries, and should have no need of fasting, or praying and singing all day long in the churches, but simply of doing what their various offices and callings require.

Thus you see what the kinds of sheep's clothing are with which they set the people gaping. But what are they inside and in fact? Nothing else (says Christ) than ravening wolves. That is what they seek, the desperate scamps, that they with a beautiful show of doctrine and life may ruin and destroy souls. Not outwardly, as the tyrants and persecutors, who destroy life and property; also, not as the preachers, who publicly preach against us and condemn our doctrine, etc.: but inwardly, that they secretly tear away the treasure of our heart, which has now become the throne or kingdom and dwelling-place of God. That is, all their scoundrelism that they so adorn with doctrine and life, aims at destroying the faith and the foundation article concerning Christ; as now the Anabaptists outwardly bear our name, and indeed acknowledge that we have the gospel, with the word and preaching; but there follows (they say) no fruit. Just with this word: No fruit, they turn the attention of the people from faith to works, and they push aside the main thing, which is faith in Christ, and they lead us away so that we are to look alone at the fruits; if these appear, then it is the true gospel, and vive versa; and their whole teaching is nothing else than that one must do his utmost and make a display with the fruits, have no private property, forsake everything, etc.; fall back again upon their works, and place their confidence in them, as thereby to be saved. And what is the worst, they do not teach the true fruits, which the gospel teaches and demands after faith, but what they dream about and imagine; say nothing about how every one is to follow his calling properly and faithfully, and abide in it, but just the contrary; lead the people away from these

callings, teach them to forsake them as worldly, and run away from them, and look at something that is peculiar; look morose, live severely, stop eating, drinking, dressing like other people, let themselves be tortured and killed willingly and when not required. Else (say they) the gospel yields no fruit in you, and you are still no Christian, although you have long been believing, etc. And these their dreams they adorn with the Scriptures and quotations from the gospel, though Christ never taught or required this, neither by word nor example, that we are to run away from the community, forsake everything, have nothing of our own, except when it becomes necessary that we must either do this or give up his word. Therefore you must not forsake these things before he orders you, or you are forced to do it. If it comes to that, then say: Before I will forsake Christ and the gospel, rather may go wife, child, body and goods, sun, moon, and all creatures. But apart from necessity you have God's command, that you are to love your neighbor, serve and help him with body and goods, in like manner to love and rule your wife, child, domestics, not run off from them and desert them, as these [fanatics] do, against the word and ordinance of God, altogether without necessity, and yet they want to boast of the great fruits of the gospel, as special saints.

Learn thus to recognize these spirits, as they under the sheep's clothing inwardly raven, and take away the faith, lead you from Christ back upon yourself, and call this fruits of the gospel, which they themselves imagine, by which they destroy the real fruits. That is what these ravening wolves are in sheep's clothing that have always been injuring Christianity. Hitherto they have been called monks; now they are Anabaptists, as a new sort of monks; in old times they were Pelagians, Ishmaelites, Esauites, Canaanites. For this faith has continued since the beginning of the world; and although these Anabaptists may get out of the way, others will certainly come. In short, monkery will endure as long as the world stands, although With other new names and methods. For all that go about getting up something peculiar, beyond faith and ordinary callings, these are and remain monks, although they do not use the same kind of style, clothing or methods. It is true we can easily be on our guard against these that go about with hood and tonsure; for they are now sufficiently marked, so that every one knows them. But beware of the new monks, that do not wear hoods, but yet start some other odd notions, pretend great devotion and sanctity, with demure looks, gray coats, and a strict mode of living; they say, one must not wear satin or silk, red or variegated clothes, just as those monks also taught, so that still it is monkery all the same, only with a different mask. Therefore, the artists have hit it exactly, when they paint the devil in a monk's hood with his devil's claws sticking out below. For he has been doing nothing else from the beginning of the world than to mislead the world by monkery.

Matthew 7:16-20. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Since the Lord Christ has warned his followers to hold firmly to his doctrine, and to beware of their being misled by others who under sheep's clothing are ravening wolves: he now instructs them also, as an additional warning, how they are to recognize them by their fruits, and he uses art illustration in plain, simple words that even a child can understand. For no one is so simple as not to know that a thorn-bush bears no figs or grapes, etc. But however simple the words are, yet no one sees how much they mean unless he diligently considers the word of God. But it all depends

upon this, that we understand what he means by a good or bad tree or fruit. For it is easily said: This is a fig-tree or a thistle, a good apple or a sour wild plum, and with the eyes and reason it can be easily seen and understood; but as Christ here uses it, there is no other way to explain it except by spiritual comprehension, according to God's word. For we heard above how these same false teachers employ such semblances and smooth words, that reason cannot judge them, or guard itself against them. Yes, it is just that kind of doctrine and life that grows out of reason and suits it, and is naturally pleasing to us, because it teaches about our own doing and working, which we understand and can do. By a good tree that brings forth good fruit is meant, in short, one who lives and conducts his walk and conversation according to the word of God, pure and simple. For he means to tell hereafter also of many who have heard the word of God, and also say: Lord, Lord, and besides have done many wonderful works, and yet are false and hypocritical. Therefore we must here completely silence reason and follow the word of God alone, and then infer, if we wish to judge about life and works, that we may know what God's word calls a good tree or good fruits. For this is too much for reason, (as I said,) if it sees a man who wears nothing but a gray coat, fasts every week, as the Pharisee in the gospel, yes who also does wonderful works and miracles, that he should not be a good tree with good fruits. For it cannot look any higher, or think and understand any better, is badly caught by it, so that it concludes he who leads a different life from other people, he must be a peculiar, holy man; she sees not, the blind fool, that these works are all still far, far from the word of God. And if you now ask: Whence do you know that these works are so precious as you make them out to be? it can give no other answer than: I think so. There, go to the dogs with your thinking, if I am to trust my soul's salvation upon it. The rule is: you must know, and not imagine or think, and you must have a sure basis and evidence from the word of God, so that he is satisfied, and you can say: The work is well done, the calling is well pleasing to God, that I know; not according to my own light or star, so that it appears good or evil to me; but that is decided by the word and command of God. It does not seem to me that a husband, or wife, or prince, or judge is as holy as one who creeps into corners or goes into the wilderness: but it does not avail to decide according to my thinking; and although some one should exercise devils and do all the miracles that the apostles did, I would rather be servant to a shoemaker or a dishwasher according to God's word, and I will consider this calling superior to your thinking, even if you could raise the dead. Therefore adhere to it that bringing forth good fruits means that kind of life and good works that are in the line of God's word and command.

Thus these words — by their fruits ye shall know them — are given as a token and set as a sign whereby they can be judged and recognized. If we are deceived, it is no one's fault but our own. For he has not left us in doubt, but has drawn the picture clear and distinct. If you cannot judge them (says he,)because of their sheep's clothing, then observe their fruits and works, whether these are upright and good.

Yes, (you say,) how am I to recognize these? they too may themselves be deceptive. Answer: You surely know what God's commands are; then see whether they agree with them. For I will assuredly warrant you that no captious spirit will come without making it perfectly sure and leaving a stench behind him that one may see that the devil has been there; and there has never yet a false doe-trine or heresy made its appearance without bringing the characteristic mark along with it which he here indicates, that it has proposed other works than those which God has commanded and ordained. That now the world is misled is owing entirely to its following wild reason and

neglecting the word of God, paying no attention to what he commands and gaping after the pretenders, if it only sees something odd.

He who wishes to judge rightly here, let him do as Christ teaches, and set before himself their works and fruits, and contrast them with the word or command of God, and he will soon see how these coincide. Look at the very holiest Carthusian monk with his strict order, and St. Paul on the other hand with the ten commandments, and you will see that St. Paul preaches in this style: If you have Christ through faith, then let every one be obedient and subject to the authorities, and exercise love toward one another in all callings. See, there you have a true mirror of a Christian life, according to God's command and ordinance. In contrast with this comes that factious spirit and says: O that is of no account! There are many bad people in the [different] callings, and it is all a worldly matter, etc.; ah, we must seek something better. So he goes along and makes something peculiar and odd, comes parading along in a hood or a gray coat; that must now be a grand life and a perfect calling. But if you are firmly rooted in God's word, you can soon judge and say: Where has God commanded you to get special callings and works in opposition to the common callings that he has ordained? I know very well that there are many bad fellows and pious people in all callings; but what concern is that of mine how they abuse them? I will still abide by the word that teaches me that such callings are good, although there are bad people in them. That is what I look at and regulate myself by; and because the calling is good, the works and fruits, performed according to the word of God, just as the calling demands, must also be right and good. But because your calling has no word of God for it, the works, done in the calling, cannot be good, and both tree and fruit are rotten and of no use.

Thus you have a sure judgment, that cannot deceive you, as Christ teaches you, to know them by their fruits. For I have also read about all the heretics and fanatics, and have found that they one and all every time put forth something different from what God had ordered and commanded, one on this subject and another on that. One forbade to eat all kinds of food; another marriage; the third denounced the civil authority; and each one took up something peculiar to himself, so that they all must walk in this track.

Therefore it lies (as I have said), entirely in this, that one properly knows and holds the definition, what Christ calls good works or fruits, namely, that a good work is that which is ordered or commanded by the word of God and is covered by that command. As a married woman who is pious and deports herself rightly can say this and boast that her calling is commanded by God and has the right, pure, unadulterated word of God, and heartily pleases God. Therefore her works are all good fruits; so that one is to judge and decide a thing to be good not because we think so, but because God says so and pronounces it good. Adhere to this, and you cannot go astray as they must do. For the judgment stands, that they cannot teach any proper fruits. God also thinks the same way about this, so that they must preach nothing else than about purely invented juggleries; and, because they despise real fruits and works, as not having any special show about them, he too despises their foul works that they put forth with great show, and presume to do things better than he has done.

It is a proverb, invented by the priests, and I think the devil himself mocked them with it: When our Lord God made a priest the devil was looking on, and wanted to imitate him, and he made the tonsure too broad and it turned out a monk; therefore they are the devil's creatures. That is said by

way of a joke, but it is nevertheless the pure truth. For where the devil sees that God orders obedience and love to one another, and constitutes an excellent, spiritual little assemblage, he cannot refrain from building his chapel or beer. shop alongside of the church, and also afterwards teaching his monkery, poverty, gray coats, etc., so that always the monks are the devil's priests; for they preach the doctrine of devils (as Paul also calls it) wrought out of their own imaginings, and they claim to be wiser than God and to do his work better than he does.

Therefore Christ now means to say: If you wish to know and judge them, keep to the pure word of God, that you may be sure what the right fruits are and see how they accord with them: thus you will surely find that they teach and practice otherwise than as God has commanded; from that you can certainly also test the tree, that it is not good; and they consider this a coarse, childish comparison. Can one gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles? Yes, very well, (they think)should not we be able to do that?

Why one may gather pure sugar from them. For these works are by far more valuable, according to their notion, than those God has ordered. But look at the two kinds of trees, the vine or fig-tree, and in contrast the thorn-bush or thistle. Thistles and thorns may also bloom, but what kind of fruit do they produce? But the fig-tree, however, is such a simple tree, makes no boast of its fruits or leaves, puts forth no leaves before the fruit is at hand, but before you are aware it produces fruit. So also the vine, it is more completely destitute of show and glory than any other tree, a mere thin, weak wood; yet it bears the very sweetest grapes, better than any other growth, whilst other trees plume themselves upon their leaves and flowers, so that one should think that they would yield pure sugar; and yet they produce nothing but these sour fruits that are of no use. Thus also here these have the show and make a racket with their boasting of special works as if they alone were doing it: and when the bloom is over, there are nothing but medlars that are quite full of stones, neither nourishing nor feeding anybody, or thistle heads that only prick or scratch if one takes hold of them. For if one contrasts with them the command of God, whether God has commanded and ordered these works, and whether they have been done for the service and benefit of a neighbor, it is seen that they are of no account and only hinder the real good works. Again, as to the other callings, they make no show, do not shine and glitter, and yet they yield the very finest, best fruits, and cause the greatest benefit upon earth, but [they do this] before God, and before those who are enlightened through spiritual eyes, so that they can rightly look at and judge the matter.

Therefore he now speaks thus: Can one also gather figs from thorns? As if he would say: It may bloom beautifully, but wait a little, and see when the time comes to gather the fruit what you will find then. For nothing more will come of it than that people are thereby deceived that have been waiting for large, valuable fruit, and yet find nothing which they or others can comfort themselves with or enjoy; besides the harm is done, that even the very highest reason is deceived and misled by this phantom, gotten up by the devil, which has not God's word and sound understanding, but follows its own notion and devotion and supposes if this pleases it, this must also please God; but it should be turned the other way, so that I am glad to hear what pleases him, although there are vexatious things in all God's callings, and besides there are many bad people in them that injure these fruits, just like miserable worms. And this comparison he concludes with a common saying which he was fond of using elsewhere: Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and an evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. But what is the need of teaching this in so many words? Who does not know this already? Why a blind man could tell it by the bush; and he thinks us such fools that we

don’t know this? Well, he who knows it, let him know it; but we are willing to learn it and remain Christ’s scholars. For, as was said, it is not such an easy art to decide in regard to this doing, of which Christ is speaking. But this saying serves to comfort and strengthen such as are in those callings that reason does not consider desirable or respectable, so that there is much vexation in them and much evil is done in them, by which many people are startled, so that they are considered dangerous, as if one could not easily serve God in them, etc.; with this St. Augustine worried and plagued himself greatly, even when he was already a great doctor, so that he would have been glad to see everything right, and to separate from the callings what was bad, and the Pelagian heretics made him a great deal of trouble with this matter: as nearly all the heretics have aimed at making things perfectly pure, and, (pardon the expression) have totally befouled them. But why need we go far to find it? It is here admirably put, and in a few words: The calling that God has created and ordained, and the man who moves and lives in this calling according to the word of God, he can produce nothing but good fruits. With that you can now console your heart against these thoughts: Alas, this or that one has put me into this calling!

There is nothing but disgust and trouble in it! This has often assailed me in regard to my office, and it still does, so that, if it were not for the word of God, I would long since have foresworn the preaching of a sermon, and would have given good-bye to the world; as the monks used to do. But that is the work of the devil himself, who makes every one’s calling so burdensome to him, and so blinds proud reason that it cannot recognize the office and work that God assigns to us and which is heartily pleasing to him, and thus it ruins its own calling and fruits. For it would surely be a good tree and a good calling; but reason does not see it and stands in its own light, so that it cannot bring forth good fruits.

Therefore learn to look at your calling thus according to this saying, so that you may thence conclude: Now I know, thank God, that I am in a good, happy calling, that pleases God; although it is vexatious to the flesh, has much trouble and dissatisfaction, all that I will cheerfully endure. For here I have the consolation that Christ says: A good tree yields good fruit, in all callings comprehended in God’s word, although they are despised and depreciated by the world and the special saints. On the other hand, I hear the decision, that every evil tree brings forth evil fruit: so that when I see the holiest Carthusian, I see a worthless, evil tree, although he makes a fine display and has not so much worry and opposition. For the devil does not embitter and burden him as he does the true, divine callings. Therefore those callings and works they are well pleased with. But just as little as I can see in my calling that my fruit is good, just so little also can he see that his calling and fruit is evil and of no value; and this saying must be inverted among them, and read thus: An evil tree brings forth good fruit, and a good tree brings forth evil fruit; so that, in short, here reason cannot judge, nor see the goodness of its calling and its works, or derive joy or pleasure from them; but it praises the opposite. For, if we could see it, we should move along in constant joy, and should suffer and endure everything with a cheerful heart that God lays upon us, assured that because the tree is good its fruits must also be good; so that if a pious farming servant hauls a wagonload of manure to the field he is hauling a load of valuable figs and grapes; but [this he does] in the sight of God, not in our eyes, who do not believe, hence every one becomes tired of his calling and gapes after another. That is now what Christ means when he con-eludes so bluntly and directly: A good tree brings forth good fruit, and the opposite; and, to make it still stronger, he adds with seeming superfluity, and says: A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, and an evil tree

cannot bring forth good fruit. How, cannot a servant or a maid be a scoundrel? Cannot a man or a woman commit adultery? Cannot a prince be a tyrant, or a preacher be an impostor? You have said the same yourself. Where are we to look for scamps and scoundrels except in the various trades and callings? Answer; Yes, that is only too true; but in that case he is no longer a good tree, for he goes beyond his calling and lives in opposition to God's command. But if he abides in his calling or office, and does what this demands, he cannot be an evil tree. Therefore says he: Only be careful to remain a good tree and I will warrant you that what you do cannot be evil. For the works that God has ordered must have the praise that they cannot be called evil.

What better thing could we now desire than to have this praise and testimony from Christ himself, against all factious spirits and such as make special claims to sanctity, that we know that we are in such a calling in which we cannot do evil, if we live in accordance with God's word and do what is our duty. Yes, even if something evil should intervene, if we overdo things not purposely or willfully, but through ignorance or weakness, this must also be good and pardoned. In short you cannot spoil it, because you are in the divine office and word, only abide in that and it cannot be evil; or, although it would otherwise be sin, yet it must not be called evil, but be covered over and forgiven; so richly shall you be blessed through the word of God. Just as a fig-tree, or other tree, although it sometimes bears a worm-eaten fruit, yet this is still a good fruit, after its kind, without prickle or thorn; yes, rather than have no fruit at all, it must have fruit that is worm-eaten, yet innocently so; thus all the works of a Christian are of a good kind, because the tree is good, and he so lives that he would gladly bring forth only good fruit, although sometimes through the weakness of the flesh, or some other hindrance, something evil slips in. On the other hand, those thorn-bushes and thistles, if they should do their best, cannot bring forth any good fruit that may be called a good apple or fig. And no Carthusian or barefooted monk, if he should pray and torture himself to death, could say a Lord's Prayer that God would call good or do any good work; but the more he would do, and worry himself to do good works, the worse he would make it. For it is decided: A thistle bears no figs, and a thorn-bush no grapes; and in short: an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. That sounds like severe and strict denunciation of all selfconstituted orders and callings, that they cannot do a single good work; and on the other hand like admirably comforting us, so that we who live according to God's word cannot do evil.

Thereupon he now concludes: Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is cut off and cast into the fire. There you have the decision stated that shall be proclaimed in regard to all who teach and maintain their own works, aside from the word of God, who mean to accomplish and effect it that their cause must ever abide and think that God must spare them, as valuable trees and plants, and fence them in and take the best care of them: but do not perceive what a sentence has been pronounced against them, so that he has already detected the kind and marked it on the tree, as Christ elsewhere says, and that they are fit for nothing but the fire of hell. For it stands written: Every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up, etc. This he has now spoken through comparisons, and as in parabolis or dark words. Now he goes further and means to explain what he meant thereby, and he adds the right comment, with clear, plain words, and says:

Matthew 7:21. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. That is, just those who serve me, and regard their way of worship as the very best, and are earnestly concerned about entering

into the kingdom of heaven, and think they have it before all others, against these I will shut heaven. That is a terrible decision, that no one is farther down in hell than the greatest devotees, that is the most holy monks; as the devil also has made a proverb, and himself made a mock of his saints, as a scoundrel who himself cannot conceal his villainy, so that it is said: Hell is paved with the tonsures of priests and monks. That is just what he says here, that those who claim to be the greatest saints shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Why? For they say: Lord, Lord, (says he,)but they do not the will of my Father which is in heaven. How is this? Are they not doing the will of God, when they are serving God night and day, and besides are working miracles, as is presently said? What shall become of the other great crowd if these are not to be saved? Answer: You hear very plainly that he says No to this, and makes a distinction between saying: Lord, Lord, and doing the will of his Father; and he says; I do not want those who solemnly cry:

Lord, Lord, and come with their great devotion, as if I must lift them to heaven; but those I want who do my Father's will. They hope and presume that they will not only get to heaven, but will also by their merit bring others in, and will have high seats and receive special crowns, etc; as they confidently boast: Shall not a Carthusian merit more, and have a higher grade in heaven than a mere layman or a married woman? Else what does he gain in the monastery with his strict disciplines, etc.? But it is not:

Carthusians or servants of God enter heaven, but those who do the will of God. For to do the will of God does not mean to put on hoods or wear gray coats, and to run off from the community into monasteries, etc., for the scriptures have not a word about that; but it means this, that Christ has preached and taught, namely, that we believe in Christ, and be found in that calling that has [the sanction of] God's word, and do in it what he has commanded. Turn to the ten commandments and see how St. Paul out of these teaches those in all callings, how inferiors are to render fidelity and obedience to superiors, the others to love and serve each other, etc., and every one to be faithful in his office. There you find nothing about priestliness or monkery, gray coats, or other specialties. He now who lives in this way, he does the will of God, which he has himself indicated. These are fit for heaven, not those who neglect the word of God, and yet have meant to serve God with great earnestness and devotion, so that they say over and over again: Lord, Lord, whilst the rest of us hardly say it once. For these same persons are always busier and livelier in their worship than the real Christians; but since they have done their own will, they may also seek another Lord who may hear them and open heaven for them.

Therefore he means hereby to warn us again to be careful not to be misled by these who offer such great splendid worship (although they may even work miracles); but be content with what he calls good, so that everything is done in accordance with his command, although it makes no display, nor is pleasing to reason, because we have the test, that no factious spirit can be content with that, nor teach or bring forth good fruit, but they are busied merely with their own thoughts, spun out of their own head. These are now the first whom Christ rejects, that come and make the world full of forms of worship; as he predicted about them in Matthew 24:23 : For there shall arise false Christ's and false prophets and shall say: Lo here is Christ, or there, and shall deceive many. Then others shall come who not only say: Lord, Lord, but also do great wonders and signs. Concerning this he now adds:

Matthew 7:22-23. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

These are now high, excellent people, and yet they are shamefully deceived and altogether unexpectedly go to hell. The others of whom he has just been speaking, go to the same place as a genial crowd, unless they are at the very last converted; as I hope that, nevertheless, many of them have been saved on their death-bed, converted from that error. But these claim to be sure of heaven, begin to call God to account, and say: Are we not to be saved? Surely we have preached in thy name and done so many wonderful works.

How can this now be, that they do wonderful works, and besides in the name of Christ, and yet can be counted among false Christians and damned, wicked people? I always thought, as it is also true, that God gives no sign or testimony to confirm lies, as Moses says, Deuteronomy 18:20, etc.: “If a prophet shall presume to speak in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak — and if thou say in thy heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken.” And yet here the contrary is stated, that they do miracles in his name, and yet are false, wicked people.

First, this may be an answer, that they were once real Christians and truly preached and did wonderful works, but afterwards became apostates. For this is the very devil’s [work], (against which also St. Paul warns his Corinthians,) if a Christian begins to feel that he is in advance of others, and has superior understanding, wisdom, and other gifts, so that he is selfsatisfied and becomes proud, and he turns out to be such a man as shells himself out of the grain and nothing is left but the empty husk; he thinks nevertheless that he is pious and well off; as there have been many such people, and there are still many such. For it is an extremely dangerous thing, if God endows a man with high, excellent gifts, that he do not become proud, but continue humble. Thus we read about an ancient father in the wilderness, who had a peculiar gift to exorcise devils, and helped many people, so that all the world ran after him and regarded him almost as a God. Then he began to be tempted by the vain honor, and when he felt that, he besought God to guard him and not let him fall into [the sin of] pride. Then God let him be possessed and plagued by the devil for four weeks, so that he lost all his reputation, and everybody said: See, he helped others, now he lies there and cannot help himself! Thus he was rid of the temptation and remained humble. I give this as an example, to show how dangerous a thing it is with great, high gifts, and how pride is always apt to attach itself to them; as we see also in gross outward things, yes, in the beggar’s staff of temporal possessions and authority. in short, God’s gifts are so grandly noble, but we are so befouled, that we cannot avoid becoming proud and taking on airs if we are conscious of them; on the other hand, of becoming desperate if we do not have them. That (I say) would be indeed an answer, but we will not press it here, although it is fair. For the principal thought is that he is here speaking of false prophesying and wonder-working as he says also in Matthew 24:24 : For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect; and St. Paul says of Antichrist, 2 Thessalonians 2:9. Who will come with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, etc., because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; so that assuredly false miracles must be performed in Christendom, and the false

Christians must regard them as real, true miracles.

Now that has been abundantly verified in the papacy; although in Turkey there are many of these priests and peculiar saints. One need only read. their books and legends, especially those written by the monks, what a hotch-potch it is, brim-full of wonders; that are all however nothing but lies and knavery. How have people nowadays been fooled with so many pilgrimages to the valley of the Grim, to Eichen, to Treves, etc., and I have myself seen some monks, shameless, bad fellows and reckless men, who nevertheless exorcised the devil and played with him as with a child. But who could relate all the knavery and raising of the devil that has been practiced under the holy name of Christ, of Mary, of the holy cross, St. Cyprian, etc., all of which the monks have carried on with vigor, and all the world has fallen in with them and no one dared peep against it. There was no pope or bishop that would preach against it, but all helped it along; and if any body resisted it, he was overwhelmed and silenced with violence; as not long ago bishop Ernst, of Saxony once pulled down such a devil's chapel; but he had to suffer for it, so that he fell sick in consequence and was glad to rebuild it. Along with this devil-raising business there have now been started and confirmed purgatory, masses for the dead, and worship of all saints, pilgrimages, monasteries, churches and chapels. Yes, many have also prophesied about future times, as Liechtenberg and others; but all this has been done by the devil, that he might endorse his abominable lies, and bewitch the people and hold them captive in error, so that no one could escape him. For that is a small matter for the devil, to let himself be driven out, if he chooses, by a bad fellow, and yet remain unexercised; for by that very performance he more completely possesses and ensnares the people with the shameful deception. Thus he can also guess at what is future, as a shrewd, experienced spirit; although he commonly mocks the people with his prophesying, and juggles in such a way that one may interpret him in various ways, and however it turns out he still has hit it; as he used to do in ancient times by his heathenish priests. Thus the people then are infatuated and bounce in: O here God lives! Here one sees and touches the miracles and signs! They cannot reckon that the devil does it only for the purpose of deceiving and misleading the people; and they do not think, the fools, that Christ clearly foretold all this and faithfully warned us against it through himself and his apostles. But it had to be so, and we have been rightly served, because we despised the word of God and did not take into the account that we must lose Christ and accept the miracles of the devil; and it was just real sport for the devil, whereby he ruled with full power in Christendom, as he sought to do.

Since we have now seen this, and alas quite too often experienced how great harm the devil has done through these lying spirits and false miracles, we should be made wise and not (as those before us have done) let the word of Christ lie and be spoken in vain, so that it may not go with us as it went with them. For it is a sermon, yes a prediction, written as a warning; but alas too late for those who lived before us; but early enough for us, if we will only heed it, so that we do not care how they boast of the signs and wonders that Mary and other saints have done, and dress them up beautifully wherewith to lead us away from the word; but to be so wise, since we hear this warning that these false miracles must occur, as not to believe in any mere miracles. For he faithfully and earnestly warned, as he was speaking of these wonderful works, Matthew 24:25 : "Behold, I have told you before;" as though he would say: Beware, and heed my warning; otherwise you will surely be misled. For you have my word, so that you know what is the will of my Father. Contrast these two together. Here you have my doctrine, which shows you how you ought

to live and act: there you see the miracles that stand opposed to this doctrine, so that you can decide thus: Since I see there such excellent signs, and on the contrary have here the doctrine and the warning besides, I will first see to it what the miracles tend to, and will carefully examine whether they really serve to strengthen my faith in the word, namely, that Christ died for me, that I through him may before God become pious and be saved; then, that I may pursue my calling and faithfully attend to the same. Thus I learn the opposite fact, that they want thereby to strengthen and confirm their silly notion, and teach thus: Run to this or that saint, creep into a hood, etc., there so many miracles and wonders daily occur, there is such a holy order, etc. That means led away from Christ, from my church, pulpit, baptism and sacrament, that I should adhere to, also from my calling and the works demanded of me.

Therefore I will not hear or know it, even though an angel should come from heaven and awaken the dead before my eyes. For Christ has taught and warned me thus: Cling to my word, pulpit and sacrament; where this is, there you will find me. Abide there, you need not go or seek any farther; I will not come any nearer to you than where my gospel, baptism, office of the ministry is, through which I enter your heart and speak with you. Also, that he says: Be thou father or mother, prince, master, subject, and obedient, etc., and abide in thy calling, there thou hearest him speak, and present in person. Why do you then still run, as a senseless man, to stock and stone, where no word of God is preached, and yet through the devil's miracles open wide your eyes as though Christ would be there where his word is not!

See, thus they should have done against the papists, who come crowding with their custom, fathers, councils, and so many wonders and miracles, by which they want to have their matter confirmed, and should have answered only in a few words: Well, let us hold the two in contrast; there I have the word of Christ, of that I am sure, and it is most powerfully confirmed, through all the world: and you show me on the other hand your doctrine and miracles, that lead one to rosaries, pilgrimages, worship of saints, masses, monkery and other peculiar self-chosen works. There is nothing about Christ, nor faith, baptism, sacrament, obedience, and good works which I am to do in my calling towards my neighbor, as Christ teaches me; but just the contrary. Therefore they cannot be true miracles, but both the doctrine and the miracles are a delusion of the devil.

Thus we could readily know and judge all false miracles, and say: Miracles hither, miracles thither, I do not care for them, though you were to raise the dead before my eyes. For all that can be deceptive: but God's word does not deceive me. For the devil can readily befool and bewitch the people, so that he holds a man awhile as dead and then lets him come to himself again, as if he were awaked from the dead; or he can ruin one's eye or other member and then restore it again, so that one should think it was done by a miracle. Thus God decrees also that truly real miracles may occur as the punishment of those who pay no regard to the truth, as St. Paul says, and as a warning to others. For there is such excessive disregard for his word and such ingratitude, that no wrath is sufficient to punish it; as will be the case with us again, if the world stands long, who have sinned to such a degree that it must become much worse with all kinds of error and wonders. For since the world absolutely will despise the word, and not hear it, and gape after something else: he will send it enough so that it may be led astray into the depth of all error; as was hitherto the case, when in all churches, monasteries, schools, nothing else was preached and taught, all books were stuffed full of these lying miracles, and with no other reason than that these miracles had occurred; as if it had not been sufficiently predicted that this should happen, and the people be deceived

thereby, so that even the elect should hardly be saved from the error; and those are rightly served who so easily let themselves be misled and will not heed this warning. For he gave the word, how we are to believe and live, and besides confirmed it with miracles enough. He means to let that be enough, and stop there, and do nothing else; but they want to get up a different new doctrine and better callings against God's word and the true miracles.

Therefore Christ now says: I will pay no regard to it, although they boast:

Lord, have we not in thy name done many wonderful works; but will pronounce this sentence upon them: I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, etc. How so, dear Lord? Are not the signs and wonders here, so that we cannot deny it? Yes, (he will say,) why then have you neglected my word, confirmed by my miracles, and have gotten up something else of which I know nothing, and have controlled the world according to your notion and have followed that? Because then you have despised my word, and have not done my Father's will, I will also not know you or have any mercy. They are mistaken about this now upon earth, supposing that they shall be the nearest to God; but they will find it out all too suddenly. This is now the right meaning of this text, so that he is speaking of false miracles, which the false teachers perform to establish their doctrine, whom he will not know, neither with their miracles nor prophesying, etc. But in regard to this it is now earnestly asserted (and I do not know if this is the proper place for the discussion of it) that God sometimes allows real miracles to be performed by bad people, which God does through them; as Caiaphas, the high priest, prophesied, John 11:50, and Balaam, Numbers 24:17, who uttered the most beautiful announcement concerning Christ, as Moses himself says, that the Holy Ghost entered into him, and he had to prophesy against his will, as also Caiaphas; and it cannot be denied that also Judas, as an apostle of Christ, did many miracles, as well as the other apostles and disciples. What shall we say to this? St. John himself answers, when he says concerning Caiaphas: Because he was high-priest that year he prophesied. For this can easily happen, that such a person, being in public office, or a ruling person, prophesies or works miracles and does a great deal of good, bringing many people to God; and yet the person himself may not be pious, and be going to the devil. Thus, a preacher is in a public calling and an official person, and if we look at it aright, such a person performs the very greatest work, miracle and wonder that happens on earth. For through his office, word and sacrament that he applies to you he brings you to faith, saves you from the devil's power and from eternal death, and leads you to heaven and eternal life; which is far above all external signs and wonders, and yet he may still be himself an unbelieving, bad man.

Therefore in this matter we must always look to the word of God, and judge according to that, not according to the person. Now you have heard above concerning those miracles that are performed in order to confirm something else than God's word, of which there is nothing in the Scriptures. But here are those miracles that relate to something that God has spoken and confirmed. Thus, the prophecy of the high-priest Caiaphas announced that Christ with his death should redeem the world, etc. This was a true, precious prophecy, although his motive was poisonous and evil.

Thus also the prophet Balaam, although he was a villain, yet he predicts truly, as a prophet, concerning God's people and Christ, and God speaks through him. If now a preacher properly administers his office, and in virtue of it performs miracles, we should hear him. But if he wanted to get off the track and go another way, to start something else, aside from his office, he would no

longer be a true but a false prophet. Thus, also, if the apostle Judas preached and performed miracles, who belonged to the devil, as Christ says, it was done by virtue of the apostolic office, to establish Christ, so that thereby the people might believe on him. In accordance with this, judge concerning all who hold an office in Christendom. For they are not all Christians, or pious people, who are in office and preach. God does not ask about that; but let the person be as it may, the office is still right and good, and does not belong to man, but to God himself. Thus, Caiaphas prophesies not as Caiaphas, a murderer and bad fellow, but as a high-priest. So, the pastor or preacher baptizes and brings to eternal life, not as Mr. John Pommer, but as a pastor. For to honor and confirm the office God causes this to be done. Since now Judas is in the right public office, which Christ has appointed, therefore the office is honored in him, not the person. For this is also the case in worldly affairs, as Solomon says in Proverbs 16:10 : Divinatio in labiis regis, a divine sentence is in the lips of the king; that is, everything that the authorities order, is right, and God confirms it.

Therefore if they condemn criminals and punish them officially, that is God's judgment, which he utters in heaven above and will have executed, although it otherwise, aside from the office, is forbidden. Thus the Scriptures make all who are in the sacred office prophets or predictors, although personally they are often villains and tyrants; as Solomon again says, Proverbs 8:15 : "By me kings reign;" that is, their law and sentence is my law and sentence, and all that they do officially, if they rightly rule; and yet nevertheless for the most part in the world there are great scoundrels among them, that boldly make a bad use of their position and power; yet, if they remain in their office, and do what right demands, it is all God's business. It is just the same, to use an humble comparison, as when a prince or lord gives orders to a servant, or sends forth his ambassadors, that one hears and honors them, although they are bad fellows: not for their own sake, but for the sake of their lord, whose office and command they bring with them, etc.

Since now God does this in secular, affairs, much more will he insist upon it in spiritual affairs, so that his office and service shall be efficient and effective. Therefore, as was said, it is a purely miraculous event, if a pastor preaches or baptizes, in so far as he properly administers the gospel and baptism, whether he be pious or wicked; and if he himself, as not being a Christian, does not have the treasure, yet he receives it who accepts the word and believes. If now these miracles and wonders are effected through the ministerial office, so that thereby souls are redeemed from sin, death and the devil; how much more can it be done with small, external miracles, in corporeal matters, that do not affect the soul?

Therefore we must here also carefully distinguish the two things, office and person, so that we do not reject the office for the sake of the person; as commonly happens, if one be pious, there are twenty of them wicked: but we must inquire carefully whether the office and the miracle tend and serve to praise and confirm the doctrine, so that one may believe on Christ, and whether they harmonize with what he has spoken, commanded and established, if you see that, then say: This sermon is right, though the person may be of no account. The miracle I will accept, but as to the person I will not ask, etc. If that be not the case, thou must not accept or believe it, the miracle may be ever so great, and the person ever so holy and excellent. But here are also many bishops, preachers, and those in other offices, who suppose that God must regard their persons, and they are thereby misled, as I said above. Therefore it will be of no avail for them to boast at the last day and say: Lord, we have surely in thy name done wonderful works. For God did not bestow this

upon them for the sake of their person, but of their office, and he did the works not for their sake personally, but in view of their office, to confirm it. This is now said concerning public officials, by whom signs and wonders are performed, some of whom are pious, and some wicked, which neither detracts from the office nor adds to it. But what do you say about those who perform miracles and prophesy and are yet not in office? as we read in Luke 9:1-62 of some who performed miracles and yet were not Christ's disciples, so that the apostles told Christ of it and said: Master, we saw one who drove out devils in thy name, and we rebuked him; for he did not follow thee. But he answered: Do not hinder him; for he who is not against us is for us, etc. Now that was a single person to whom the office had not been entrusted by Christ, and yet he says they should not hinder him, and he adds the reason, Mark 9:39 :

There is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me. Answer: That is true, as I have said, that God does not allow miracles to be done by bad men, unless they are in public office; because God does not give miracles on account of their person, but of their office. But if real miracles are done by a single person, that person must certainly be pious, as some are, who have special revelations, through dreams, visions, etc.; but these miracles must have the tendency to praise and further Christ and the gospel.

Thus you have two kinds of miracles that are good and honest, first, those which are done by pious persons who are Christians; then also those done by wicked persons, who yet are in office and teach correctly; but that we are always to judge according to this sure test, which is to be applied to all kinds of persons, whether pious or impious, in office or out of office, whether the miracles have the tendency to praise Christ and to strengthen your faith. But if you discover that they are pointing you in a different direction, as to go upon pilgrimages, pray to saints, deliver souls from purgatory, and in short, to rely upon your works and establish a righteousness of your own; then say: If you would perform all miracles for me, so that I could see and make sure of them, I would still not believe you; for Christ has sufficiently warned me against that. This rule God himself stated through Moses in Deuteronomy 13:1-3 : "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spoke unto thee, saying: Let us go after other gods which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, etc." There he stated also the causam finalem, by which one can recognize them and proceed aright. If they try to persuade you to establish a different divine worship, that is, not to adhere to the one, pure doctrine, but to begin something else alongside of it, then we are not to believe, although it snows miracles. And he explains it further, and says: For the Lord your God proveth you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. As though he were to say: He wants to test you, how firmly you hold to the doctrine that has already been established and is in vogue. In short, our orders are to accept no wonders or miracles, however great and numerous they may be, that are opposed to the well-established doctrine. For we have the command of God, who has given it from heaven:

Hear ye him, Christ alone ye are to hear. Besides we have also this warning, that false prophets shall come, and perform great miracles, but all of them lead the wrong way, from Christ to something else. Therefore there is no other way to avoid this than to be well-grounded in the doctrine and keep it constantly in view; thus we can properly judge everything according to that, whether it is taught by the gospel or your faith, which you repeat every day, which declares: I

believe on Christ alone, who died for me, etc., or whatever else it is.

Now, we have been warned enough, whoever is willing to heed it. But it avails nevertheless little with the great mass, as it availed but little heretofore; and I verily believe that if some one would arise here today and perform only one miracle, great crowds would fall in with it. For that is the way of the senseless crowd, when one puts forth something new before it and makes it stare, that it drops everything, word and doctrine, and gapes after that, although one should yell himself to death against it: as it has allowed itself heretofore to be fooled and led by the nose with coarse, palpable lies and unblushing fraud, whenever a villain has turned up and lied about a new relic, new pilgrimages, etc., and it has run after these things like crazy. This comes of the shameful overcuriousness and surfeit of our flesh and blood, along with the very devil himself, so that always the signs and wonders, especially those that are false, prove more attractive than even the genuine. For, that Christ and his apostles and others have performed miracles, that one does not see and regard; but that any one drives out a devil, that beats all. Well, he who will not take warning, and wants to be deceived, dare not lay the blame upon us.

Matthew 7:24-27. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came; and the winds blew, and beat upon that house,, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house,, and it fell: and great was the fall of it. That is the conclusion and the end of it, upon which it all depends: He who not only hears this sermon with his ears, but who does it, he is a wise man. For the doctrine is indeed good and excellent, but it is not preached in order to be heard, but that it be applied to practical life; and especially because we are always exposed to danger from false prophets and wonderworkers, so that we may reflect, and accept this doctrine and warning, since we hear and have it, both teachers and scholars. For if one wants to postpone it till the hour comes when death and the devil come storming in upon us, with his rain-storms and tempests, then it has been put off too long. Therefore we are not bidden only to hear and become able, but to do and struggle.

Those also hear it who say: Lord, Lord, as heretofore the pope, bishops, and kings and all the world have heard, and the mass-priests and monks have daily read, sung, and intoned: but none has done it or preached it; but they have clung to their false worship and false miracles, and have encouraged others to do the same. Therefore, although they have heard much, and have also performed miracles, yet they have not done the will of God. For they do not continue in the doctrine of Christ and real good works, but they fall back upon their own works, done without faith and love, so that among all the monks and priests not a single genuine work is to be found. For they do none of them to serve or help their neighbor, but seek only their own thereby, and thus are entirely without faith, love and patience. Therefore among them nothing at all is done, as Christ says, although they hear the true doctrine; for it takes no hold upon them, for their hearts are nothing but mere sand. But they nevertheless (as was said) have much to do and to teach, even more than the true preachers and Christians; by this too they lead the people astray. For a hermit or a Carthusian seems to be doing much more, with his strict spiritual living and doing, than St. Paul or any true preacher or Christian. For the external masks of special works and divine worship make people stare so that an ordinary Christian life makes no show in comparison. Therefore they

are not lacking in doing, teaching and believing. But here is the difference (says Christ,) that they hear my teaching indeed, but they will do nothing except what they have themselves invented; on that track I cannot keep them, so that they would do what I teach them. If we Christians were as diligent in our works as they are in theirs, we should be altogether saints. But neither side amounts to anything. We are lazy and idle; they do quite too much, but of real works they do none at all. Thus we still have the advantage (thank God!)that we have begun a little to believe and love, and are upon the right track, however slowly we move.

He closes this now with a beautiful comparison, how it will finally be with both of these: He who hears and practices my teaching is an excellent, prudent builder, who does not build upon the sand, but seeks first a strong rock as a foundation. If he has this, he builds upon it, so that it may stand firm and endure. When then storms and showers come, around and above, and waters underneath (the wind meanwhile howling) seek to soften the earth and overturn the building, it stands against these immovable, as if to defy them all. But he who places his building upon sand will find that it stands only till the waters wash it away and the wind overturns it, so that it lies upon a heap or falls to pieces of itself. With this comparison he means to warn us faithfully, so that we take good care to hold firmly to his doctrine and not let Christ be taken out of our heart as our only sure foundation and cornerstone of our salvation, as St.

Paul and St. Peter (from Isaiah 28:1-29) call him. If we stand founded and built upon that, we will surely abide unmoved, and can let the world and the devil, with all false teachers and captious spirits pour down upon us hail and slags, and beset and assail us with all sorts of danger and trouble. This confidence and security those miserable, foolish people cannot have. For they are not standing upon the rock, that is, upon the doctrine concerning Christ, but upon the drifting sand of their own imaginings and dreams. Therefore, when trouble comes, so that they have to struggle with the devil and death, they feel how they have rested their confidence upon loose sand, and their callings and works cannot endure; as I have myself seen and known many of these poor people, especially in monasteries, who have deeply felt this, so that at last they became crazy through fright and timidity of conscience, and some continued in perpetual despair! The reason was, that they had built upon their own doing, devotion and good intentions, and knew nothing about Christ. That was just the kind of a structure for the devil, that he could joyfully overturn and throw all into a heap.

St. Bernard himself had also to feel and acknowledge this, who had nevertheless led a very strict life, with praying, fasting, bodily mortification, etc., so that he was deficient in no respect, and served as an example for all others, so that I know of no one among the monks who wrote or lived better than he. Yet, when he came to die, he had himself to pronounce this judgment upon his entire holy life: O, I lived a damnable life, and spent my life shamefully! Ah, how so, dear St. Bernard? You were surely a pious monk all your life. Is then chastity, obedience, your preaching, fasting, praying, not an admirable thing? No (says he,) it is all lost and belongs to the devil. There comes the wind and rain, and throws foundation, basis and building all into a heap, so that he would have had to be eternally damned, by his own judgment, if he had not turned about, and, made wiser by his loss, deserted monkery, seized upon another foundation and clung to Christ, and been kept in the faith that the children use in their prayers, when he said: “Although I am not worthy of eternal life, nor can attain it by my own merit, yet my Lord Christ has a double right to it, once as Lord and heir to it, inherited from eternity; secondly, attained through his suffering and

death. The first he retains for himself; the other he bestows upon me," etc.

Thus all the monks and priests, and all that claimed to be holy, that were ever saved, had to creep out of their hoods and all their works, and cling to Christ; although it went very hard with them. For it is very difficult for a man who has spent his whole life in this self-made holiness, and has depended upon it, to tear himself loose from it in an hour and cast himself upon Christ. Therefore he warns and exhorts us to lay hold of and practice his teaching whilst we have the time, before the last agonies overtake us.

Thus our dear Lord has now completed this beautiful sermon. Now the evangelist states in conclusion how the whole world had to testify that this was a very different style of preaching from any they had heard before, and to which they had been accustomed.

Matthew 7:28-29. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Thereby the evangelist shows what kind of preachers and teachers the scribes had been, namely, that [their teaching] had been a mere cold, vain, idle babbling; that they had not urged or insisted upon God's commands with earnestness or energy; just as our rag-washers have hitherto upon the pulpit been driveling about nothing else than purgatory, indulgences, hoods, rosaries, lighting of candles. But he took hold quite differently, showed what they had never heard before, the true doctrine and life, and rebuked vices in such a way that they all felt that the man taught with authority, and everything had life and a voice, as if it had hands and feet, and they had to say that this was preaching with authority, whilst that of the others was vain, empty, yes a mere dead wish-wash. Therefore our papists now act shrewdly in that they are ashamed of their filthy rags, and keep silence [in regard to those other topics] and begin also to preach a little, after us and our books, about faith and good works; although they still twist and butcher it, as not being really in earnest about preaching right, or having grace to be able to understand it.

There remains yet at the end one question to be treated of, because we heard in this sermon that Christ insisted so strenuously upon works, when he says: The poor shall inherit the kingdom of heaven; the merciful shall obtain mercy; also, those shall be rewarded in heaven who suffer persecution for his sake; and what is said about this at the end of the fifth chapter: If you love those who love you, what kind of reward shall you have? and in the sixth chapter concerning alms, fasting and praying: Thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward you openly, etc.; from which sayings the senseless, false preachers conclude that we get to heaven and are saved by our own working and doing, and thereupon they build upon this their endowments, monasteries, pilgrimages, masses, etc.

Although, however, this question is somewhat sharp, and belongs rather to the university, among the learned, than to the pulpit, before ordinary, simple-minded people; yet, as it occurs so often in our text, we must not overlook it altogether, but must have something to say about it. For it is very necessary that every one should have some idea of the difference between grace and merit. For the two do not accord with one another. If one is preaching grace, he surely cannot be preaching merit; and what is grace cannot be merit, else grace would not be grace, says St. Paul in Romans 11:6. There is no doubt about that. Therefore, he who confounds these two confuses the people and misleads both himself and those who hear him.

Well, we will ignore for the present the sharp answer, and discuss this question in the plainest way that we can; and in the first place we must distinctly remember this, that there is a great difference between faith, or essential Christianity, and its fruits, as I have often said. For, according to the Christian name and nature one is not different from another; all have at once the same treasure and the same kind of possessions. For St. Peter has no different or better baptism than St. Paul, and a child born yesterday no inferior baptism to that of John the Baptist or St. Peter and all the apostles; thus they have also no other, better Christ than the least Christian.

If we now look at this, there avails no merit, or difference. For the least Christian receives just as well the same body and blood of Christ in the sacrament, and when he hears the gospel he hears the very same word of God that Peter and Paul heard and preached. Also, no saint can pray another or better paler noster, or pronounce and confess a creed and ten commandments different from those prayed daily by me and every child. That is now so plain that every one can easily understand it; so that in what entitles us to be called Christians there is no inequality or preference of persons, but one is just like the other, man, woman, young, old, learned, unlearned, noble, ignoble, princes peasant, master and servant, great and small saint, as there is only one kind of Christ and creed: just as the sun in the heavens is of one kind towards everybody, shines upon a peasant as well as upon a king; upon a blind man as well as upon one who sees well; upon the sow upon the street as upon the most beautiful woman upon earth, and shines as readily upon a thorn as upon a rose, upon filth as upon purple, and it is the very same sun that shines upon the poorest beggar as upon the greatest king or emperor. But thereafter, if we begin to consider external matters and what we are doing, as that I, who am a Christian and baptized, am in addition to this also a preacher, whilst I could be a Christian without that; then the inequality begins and it extends to the various distinctions among Christians; not as Christians, or as to the nature of Christianity, but as to its fruits. Thus I am a preacher, that is, such a Christian who is to present the word to the people, to comfort the distressed, to instruct the erring and ignorant, etc. And this one is the head of a family or a mechanic, who is to rule his house, attend to his business, provide for his wife and children.

There is a man, different from you and me; yet I must say: He is just as much a Christian, and gets as much from baptism, the grace of God and eternal life, as I and all the others, and is no less in Christ than I; and there is here no difference between women or men, etc. Yet the woman’s work is different from that of the man, that of a servant from that of his master, that of a preacher from that of a civilian; likewise, a child compared with its father, a scholar or disciple with the teacher, each of them having his own work or fruits; and thus everywhere there is a difference in external circumstances, whilst yet all are at the same time Christians and one according to the inner life. For there is no more than one Christianity and only one natural condition of all men. That we see too in the heavens (says St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:41,) that there are so many kinds of stars, and differing from one another, one great, the other small, one shining clearly, the other dimly, and yet there is but one sun in our heavens. In this respect they are all alike, that all stand in one heavens and have one kind of sun; and yet they are unlike as to size and brightness. Thus it is also upon earth (says St. Paul, further,)not all flesh is the same flesh, but there is one flesh of man, another of beasts, another of birds. In the fact that they are flesh they are all alike, and one has his members, head, heart, stomach, etc., just as well as the others; yet there is a great difference between men, beasts, birds and fishes.

If now you wish to speak about a Christian, or to depict him, you must paint him so that he is in no wise different from others, and one must be in all respects as the others. For you must not describe him as a man or woman, a preacher or layman, prince or beggar, mechanic or Carthusian monk. For these distinctions have nothing to do with him; but so far as his essential character is concerned, he is just as good and holy as Peter and Paul, and no one is any more and better than he. For if St. Peter were better than I, as to the true essentials of Christianity, he would have to have a better Christ, gospel and baptism than I. But because the great treasure that we have is altogether one and the same, we must in this respect be all alike and no one must be raised above the other. It may well be that one does more and greater things than another, as, that St. Peter raised persons from the dead. But thereby, that he does miracles which I do not, he is indeed a greater, brighter star than I in the heavens, but not a different kind of star, and he has no other heavens. St. Paul did and labored more than all the other apostles; but he did not for this reason have a better apostolic office, nor did he preach a different and better Christ. This is what we now say about merit. If we are speaking about that which concerns the essence of Christianity [or the Christian life] according to which we are all equal, how we become pious be. fore God, and attain forgiveness of sins and eternal life, here all our merit is totally excluded, and we must neither hear nor know anything about it. For you have not at all deserved the gospel, or Christ, or baptism, but it is a pure grant, freely given; so that our sins are gratuitously forgiven, we become God's children and are assigned to heaven without our doing anything towards it. And here we contend against the abomination of the sophists who so greatly exalt our works, that we thereby secure a gracious God, and merit heaven. Yes, they venture shamelessly to say that a man even in mortal sins can do so much of his own accord, and perform such acts of devotion or accomplish such good works that he may thereby allay and propitiate the wrath of God. That means hurling the roof to the ground, quite upsetting the foundation, building salvation upon nothing but water, driving Christ entirely from his throne and setting up our works instead. For it must follow from that, that we have no need at all of baptism, of Christ, or gospel, or faith, because even when in mortal sin I find so much virtue and power in me that I can extricate myself by my own works and merit forgiveness of the same and eternal life. From this you see that God is slandered and blasphemed by all that they drivel about merit, on the subject about which we are now disputing, how and whereby we are to attain to the grace of God and eternal life. Yet they are not satisfied with teaching this shameful blasphemy of God; but they are actually fighting for it and denouncing us as heretics on account of it. This every one can now readily understand, that one of these two must be false: either that we cannot by our doing merit grace, or Christ with his baptism must be of no account and nothing; and Christ must have acted like a fool, to let himself be martyred and shed his blood so dearly, and to have undergone so much, in order to acquire and bestow upon us what was not at all necessary and what we already have by ourselves. Therefore, although they revile us as heretics on this account, that we do not agree with them about this merit of works, we will gladly submit to their calling us heretics and leave the matter in the hands of God our judge; but only the more firmly resist them and reply to them that they are not heretics, but the very worst blasphemers of God that the sun ever shone upon, who most shamefully deny and curse Christ, as Peter prophesied about them, and as the epistle to the Hebrews says, they smite Christ on the mouth and trample him under foot, with his baptism, sacrament and entire gospel, and what God has given us through him. And I would really like to hear what they could say to it, the miserable people: If they assert that we by our works can begin by securing grace, and when this is done,

and so much is merited, that we. over and above the first grace (as they call it), merit in addition the kingdom of heaven and eternal salvation; what does one then merit by the other subsequent works? For I will suppose that a papist has done his mass or other work in grace, and has thereby merited the kingdom of heaven, as such an excellent work that is worthy of eternal life, which they call meritum de condigno; what will he then merit by the works and masses that he does next day and afterwards in the same grace? Then they begin, (as they do not know what else to say,) and make essentiale and accidentale premium, and say: These following works enable one to merit something additional, as a little gift into the bargain, which God gives to us over and above eternal life. Is this true? then I am to understand that the first works are the best, but the others are not so good. Otherwise they must merit just the same; yet commonly the following works are accustomed to be better, because they are now more diligently practiced.

Since now the last works do not merit the kingdom of heaven, the first must also not merit it; or, if they are equally good, and every work can merit this, then God must build as many heavens as the good works that are done; and where would our Lord God at last get so many heavens as to pay for every good work? Those are really smart people, that can measure it off so smoothly and accurately. But what shall we say? All that they say is nothing but lies and deception, for there is not a word of it true; first, that any one can merit grace by any work of his own, much less if one is lying in mortal sin; and then, although a man were in grace by works (as they say), that these works, done in grace, should be so precious as to merit the kingdom of heaven. For there stands Christ and asserts the contrary with dear, plain words. Luke 17:10 : “When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.”

Therefore we ought to hold fast to our doctrine, so that we never allow any work to put in a claim for securing the favor and grace of God, delivering from sin and entitling to heaven. For this, in short, my merit is to be nothing; and if one should want to use it in that way, I must trample it under foot, and damn it to the devil himself in hell, as something that would hinder my faith and lead me to deny Christ. For here the truth stands, that God has bestowed all this gratuitously, out of pure grace, in that he sends his Son and lets him die for me, and announce and give this to me, commanding me only to believe this and be baptized in it. My works have nothing to do with this, but it is a pure gift, granted from heaven and brought to me by Christ. Therefore let all merit in this matter be entirely thrown away, and let us conclude that one cannot secure grace and the forgiveness of sin in any other way, manner or measure than by the word of God concerning Christ, and receiving it by faith. And that God may hear us, why should we boast of our merit, since they themselves and all the saints must daily pray, in the Lord’s prayer, as long as we live: Forgive us our debts, etc.? And the desperate saints dare unblushingly to say that a man, though lying in mortal sin, can prepare himself for grace and afterwards also merit everlasting life. But how do you account for it that there are so many passages concerning merit and reward? To this we reply now, for the benefit of the simpleminded, that these are merely for a consolation to Christians. For if you now have become a Christian, and have a gracious God and forgiveness of sins, both of those past and of those that you are daily committing [I say to you], that you must do and suffer much on account of your faith and your baptism. For the devil himself, together with the world and the flesh, will besiege you and on every hand torment you, as has been abundantly shown in these three chapters, so that you may feel as if the world was too narrow for you. Now if [our Savior] would allow us to be thus perplexed, without word or consolation, we should be led to despair and

to say: Who is willing to be a Christian, preach, or do good works? He sees surely how it goes with them, and the world tramples upon them, reviles and abuses them, treats them cunningly and wickedly, and finally robs them of honor, property and life itself; and he [my Savior] calls me nothing else than poor, distressed, hungry, soft-hearted, peaceable, afflicted and persecuted: is it always to be so, and never different?

Then he must talk out, encourage and comfort, and say: You are now in grace and the children of God; although you must now suffer for that in the world, do not be alarmed at that, but hold on, and do not let yourselves be made weary or weak whatever you may see, but let every one do just what he should. If he suffers on that account, it will not harm him, and he may know that the kingdom of heaven is his, and he shall be richly repaid. Ah, how paid? Why we have it already, through Christ, without and in advance of all our doing. Thus, as St. Paul says, that God will make a great, bright star out of you, and grant you a special gift, even in this life. For a Christian can even here upon earth accomplish so much with God through his prayers and works, that he may spare an entire land, prevent wars, famines, pestilence, etc.; not that the work on account of its worthiness is so valuable, but for this reason, that he has promised it, for our invigoration and consolation, so that we are not to think that our works, plagues and misery are lost and forgotten.

Now there is here no merit, by which we are to earn grace, or our baptism, Christ and heaven (of which they speak when they are talking of merit); but it all refers to the fruits of Christianity. For Christ says also (as we have seen) in this sermon nothing about how we become Christians, but only about the works and fruits which no one can do unless he is already a Christian, and in grace; as the words prove, that they must endure poverty, misery, persecution, just for the reason that they are Christians and have the kingdom of heaven, etc. If we now speak of those fruits that follow being in grace and having forgiveness of sin, we may consent to speak of a merit and reward; but we object to calling those works of ours the chief good, which must be there beforehand, and without which they could not be performed, or be pleasing to God. If now we only insist upon this point, that there is no merit but only pure grace [by which we are saved], then we will not object to giving the name to the fruits that follow; but, so that one does not falsely pervert those passages, and refer them contrary to the Scriptures to our meriting grace, but interprets them properly, as intended, to comfort Christians, especially amid suffering and hostility, when one feels and it seems as if our life, suffering and doing, were in vain and accomplishing nothing; as the Scriptures everywhere console, where they exhort to perseverance in good works, as in Jeremiah 31:16 : Est merces operi tuo, thy work is not in vain; also, St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:58 : Labor vester non est inanis in domino, your labor is not in vain in the Lord. For, if we had not this consolation, we could not endure this wretchedness, persecution and misery, that we should do so much good, and let our teaching and preaching be rewarded with sheer ingratitude and disgrace; and would have at last to cease from doing and suffering what was plainly our duty. But God means to arouse and confirm us by this beautiful promise, so that we pay no regard to the ingratitude, hatred, envy and contempt of the world, but regard him who says: “I am thy God. If the world will not thank you, and robs you of honor, property, and even of life on that account, then cling to me and take comfort from this, that I have a heaven, and so much in it that I can easily recompense you, and ten times more than can now be taken from you;” so that we can have this answer for the world: Well, if it will not treat us with favor, let it go along with its favor, and all that it has; I did not begin anything on its account, and I will henceforth neither do nor omit anything on

its account. But I will do and suffer everything for his sake who gives me such rich promises, and says:

Although you have already, aside from this, all treasure in heaven through Christ, and more than enough; yet I will give you still more, as additional, so that you shall have the kingdom of heaven fully revealed, and you shall visibly behold Christ in everlasting glory and joy, (whom you now have in faith), so much the more as you now suffer and labor.

Here are applicable the charming passages and exhortations, such as Hebrews 10:35 : Magnum habetis remunerationem, etc. Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward; and Christ, in Matthew 19:29 : “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.” Thus he speaks also here: Merces vestra magna est in coelo, you shall be well rewarded in heaven; by which he shows that they already have the kingdom of heaven, and yet shall have it so much the more glorious when it now is revealed.

See, if we turn these passages in this direction, they are rightly used, so that they have no reference to our confiding in our works contrary to faith, but to the consolation of Christians and believers; and if the sophists had aimed their talk about merit in this direction, it would have been all right. But they based their own work-holiness and monkery upon it, so that God should thereby regard them as peculiar saints, and sell heaven for these, and should give them the highest seats, as those with whom common Christians were not to be compared; and they acted indeed not unwisely in the matter, for that did not bring poverty, misery, mourning, persecution, but money, property, honor, and no order was established for the purpose of using in it the word of Christ, sacrament, faith, love and patience; but only with their hoods, and rigid, peculiar mode of living, they want to be highly esteemed and exalted before God, as those who need no Christ or faith. In this way now we admit that Christians have merit and reward with God; not for the purpose of becoming children of God and heirs of eternal life; but for the consolation of believers who already have this, that they may know that he will not let that be unrewarded that they suffer here for Christ’s sake; but, if they suffer and labor much, then he will specially adorn them at the last day, more and more gloriously than others, as stars especially great in comparison with others. Thus St. Paul will shine forth bright and clear above others most splendidly. That does not mean forgiveness of sins, or meriting heaven, but compensation for suffering with so much the greater glory. But we will not suffer the matter to stand where they put it; for that is to slander and blaspheme Christ, God and the Holy Ghost, and everything that God has given us by them, and we would rather be denounced as heretics and scoundrels, and be burned with fire, than give up or deny this treasure: but we will also insist upon this consolation even if we must suffer for it all trouble, shame and persecution. For this will be the result at any rate. The devil will not agree to this, or accord with us; but means to maintain the pope’s doe-trine and bring us to believe as he believes; and as he sees that we won’t do it, he lays himself out against us with all his might. For he knows very well, if this point is settled, that Christ and the forgiveness of sins are a perfectly free gift, that any one can count it off on his fingers and conclude that the papacy with its masses, monkery, purgatory, worship of saints, etc., must be nothing, and all will fall to pieces of its own accord.

Now learn to answer in this way about those passages that refer to merit and reward. I hear indeed that Christ says: Blessed are the poor, for they shall have the kingdom of heaven; and, Blessed are ye when ye suffer persecution for my sake; for great is your reward in heaven, etc. But he does not thereby teach me to rest my salvation upon that, but gives me a promise that is to be a comfort to me in my sufferings and in my Christian life. You must not confound these things for me and mix the two together, nor make my merit out of that which God gives me in Christ through baptism and the gospel. For we are not here told that we can merit that, and that we need no Christ and baptism for it; but that those who are Christ's disciples, to whom he has here preached, and who must undergo all manner of suffering for his sake, may know how they are to comfort themselves, because they have a hard time of it on earth, namely, that they because of this shall have everything so much the more abundantly in heaven; and he who does and suffers the most shall be so much the more gloriously recompensed. For although (as I said) in Christ all are alike, and grace is bestowed equally upon all, and brings full salvation to every one, as the highest, most common possession, so that he who has Christ has all: yet there will be a difference in the brightness and the glory with which we shall be adorned and shine; just as in this life there is a difference in the gifts, so that one labors and suffers more than another; but in that life it will all be manifest, so that all the world shall see what each one has done, and shall have so much the greater glory, at which the whole heavenly host will rejoice. Let this be enough about that.

God preserve us in his grace, revealed in Christ. Amen.

04. Part 1 - Letter to Pope Leo X

CONCERNING CHRISTIAN LIBERTY by MARTIN LUTHER LETTER OF MARTIN LUTHER TO POPE LEO X

Among those monstrous evils of this age with which I have now for three years been waging war, I am sometimes compelled to look to you and to call you to mind, most blessed father Leo. In truth, since you alone are everywhere considered as being the cause of my engaging in war, I cannot at any time fail to remember you; and although I have been compelled by the causeless raging of your impious flatterers against me to appeal from your seat to a future council--fearless of the futile decrees of your predecessors Pius and Julius, who in their foolish tyranny prohibited such an action--yet I have never been so alienated in feeling from your Blessedness as not to have sought with all my might, in diligent prayer and crying to God, all the best gifts for you and for your see. But those who have hitherto endeavoured to terrify me with the majesty of your name and authority, I have begun quite to despise and triumph over. One thing I see remaining which I cannot despise, and this has been the reason of my writing anew to your Blessedness: namely, that I find that blame is cast on me, and that it is imputed to me as a great offence, that in my rashness I am judged to have spared not even your person.

Now, to confess the truth openly, I am conscious that, whenever I have had to mention your person, I have said nothing of you but what was honourable and good. If I had done otherwise, I could by no means have approved my own conduct, but should have supported with all my power the judgment of those men concerning me, nor would anything have pleased me better, than to recant such rashness and impiety. I have called you Daniel in Babylon; and every reader thoroughly knows with what distinguished zeal I defended your conspicuous innocence against Silvester, who tried to stain it. Indeed, the published opinion of so many great men and the repute of your blameless life are too widely famed and too much reverenced throughout the world to be assailable by any man, of however great name, or by any arts. I am not so foolish as to attack one whom everybody praises; nay, it has been and always will be my desire not to attack even those whom public repute disgraces. I am not delighted at the faults of any man, since I am very conscious myself of the great beam in my own eye, nor can I be the first to cast a stone at the adulteress.

I have indeed inveighed sharply against impious doctrines, and I have not been slack to censure my adversaries on account, not of their bad morals, but of their impiety. And for this I am so far from being sorry that I have brought my mind to despise the judgments of men and to persevere in this vehement zeal, according to the example of Christ, who, in His zeal, calls His adversaries a generation of vipers, blind, hypocrites, and children of the devil. Paul, too, charges the sorcerer with being a child of the devil, full of all subtlety and all malice; and defames certain persons as evil workers, dogs, and deceivers. In the opinion of those delicate-eared persons, nothing could be more bitter or intemperate than Paul’s language. What can be more bitter than the words of the prophets? The ears of our generation have been made so delicate by the senseless multitude of

flatterers that, as soon as we perceive that anything of ours is not approved of, we cry out that we are being bitterly assailed; and when we can repel the truth by no other pretence, we escape by attributing bitterness, impatience, intemperance, to our adversaries. What would be the use of salt if it were not pungent, or of the edge of the sword if it did not slay? Accursed is the man who does the work of the Lord deceitfully.

Wherefore, most excellent Leo, I beseech you to accept my vindication, made in this letter, and to persuade yourself that I have never thought any evil concerning your person; further, that I am one who desires that eternal blessing may fall to your lot, and that I have no dispute with any man concerning morals, but only concerning the word of truth. In all other things I will yield to any one, but I neither can nor will forsake and deny the word. He who thinks otherwise of me, or has taken in my words in another sense, does not think rightly, and has not taken in the truth. Your see, however, which is called the Court of Rome, and which neither you nor any man can deny to be more corrupt than any Babylon or Sodom, and quite, as I believe, of a lost, desperate, and hopeless impiety, this I have verily abominated, and have felt indignant that the people of Christ should be cheated under your name and the pretext of the Church of Rome; and so I have resisted, and will resist, as long as the spirit of faith shall live in me. Not that I am striving after impossibilities, or hoping that by my labours alone, against the furious opposition of so many flatterers, any good can be done in that most disordered Babylon; but that I feel myself a debtor to my brethren, and am bound to take thought for them, that fewer of them may be ruined, or that their ruin may be less complete, by the plagues of Rome. For many years now, nothing else has overflowed from Rome into the world--as you are not ignorant--than the laying waste of goods, of bodies, and of souls, and the worst examples of all the worst things. These things are clearer than the light to all men; and the Church of Rome, formerly the most holy of all Churches, has become the most lawless den of thieves, the most shameless of all brothels, the very kingdom of sin, death, and hell; so that not even antichrist, if he were to come, could devise any addition to its wickedness.

Meanwhile you, Leo, are sitting like a lamb , like Daniel in the midst of lions, and, with Ezekiel, you dwell among scorpions. What opposition can you alone make to these monstrous evils? Take to yourself three or four of the most learned and best of the cardinals. What are these among so many? You would all perish by poison before you could undertake to decide on a remedy. It is all over with the Court of Rome; the wrath of God has come upon her to the uttermost. She hates councils; she dreads to be reformed; she cannot restrain the madness of her impiety; she fills up the sentence passed on her mother, of whom it is said, "We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed; let us forsake her." It had been your duty and that of your cardinals to apply a remedy to these evils, but this gout laughs at the physician’s hand, and the chariot does not obey the reins. Under the influence of these feelings, I have always grieved that you, most excellent Leo, who were worthy of a better age, have been made pontiff in this. For the Roman Court is not worthy of you and those like you, but of Satan himself, who in truth is more the ruler in that Babylon than you are.

Oh, would that, having laid aside that glory which your most abandoned enemies declare to be yours, you were living rather in the office of a private priest or on your paternal inheritance! In that glory none are worthy to glory, except the race of Iscariot, the children of perdition. For what happens in your court, Leo, except that, the more wicked and execrable any man is, the more

prosperously he can use your name and authority for the ruin of the property and souls of men, for the multiplication of crimes, for the oppression of faith and truth and of the whole Church of God? Oh, Leo! in reality most unfortunate, and sitting on a most perilous throne, I tell you the truth, because I wish you well; for if Bernard felt compassion for Eugenius III, formerly abbot of St. Anastasius his Anastasius at a time when the Roman see, though even then most corrupt, was as yet ruling with better hope than now, why should not we lament, to whom so much further corruption and ruin has been added in three hundred years? Is it not true that there is nothing under the vast heavens more corrupt, more pestilential, more hateful, than the Court of Rome? She incomparably surpasses the impiety of the Turks, so that in very truth she, who was formerly the gate of heaven, is now a sort of open mouth of hell, and such a mouth as, under the urgent wrath of God, cannot be blocked up; one course alone being left to us wretched men: to call back and save some few, if we can, from that Roman gulf.

Behold, Leo, my father, with what purpose and on what principle it is that I have stormed against that seat of pestilence. I am so far from having felt any rage against your person that I even hoped to gain favour with you and to aid you in your welfare by striking actively and vigorously at that your prison, nay, your hell. For whatever the efforts of all minds can contrive against the confusion of that impious Court will be advantageous to you and to your welfare, and to many others with you. Those who do harm to her are doing your office; those who in every way abhor her are glorifying Christ; in short, those are Christians who are not Romans.

But, to say yet more, even this never entered my heart: to inveigh against the Court of Rome or to dispute at all about her. For, seeing all remedies for her health to be desperate, I looked on her with contempt, and, giving her a bill of divorcement, said to her, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still," giving myself up to the peaceful and quiet study of sacred literature, that by this I might be of use to the brethren living about me.

While I was making some advance in these studies, Satan opened his eyes and goaded on his servant John Eccius, that notorious adversary of Christ, by the unchecked lust for fame, to drag me unexpectedly into the arena, trying to catch me in one little word concerning the primacy of the Church of Rome, which had fallen from me in passing. That boastful Thraso, foaming and gnashing his teeth, proclaimed that he would dare all things for the glory of God and for the honour of the holy apostolic seat; and, being puffed up respecting your power, which he was about to misuse, he looked forward with all certainty to victory; seeking to promote, not so much the primacy of Peter, as his own pre-eminence among the theologians of this age; for he thought it would contribute in no slight degree to this, if he were to lead Luther in triumph. The result having proved unfortunate for the sophist, an incredible rage torments him; for he feels that whatever discredit to Rome has arisen through me has been caused by the fault of himself alone.

Suffer me, I pray you, most excellent Leo, both to plead my own cause, and to accuse your true enemies. I believe it is known to you in what way Cardinal Cajetan, your imprudent and unfortunate, nay unfaithful, legate, acted towards me. When, on account of my reverence for your name, I had placed myself and all that was mine in his hands, he did not so act as to establish peace, which he could easily have established by one little word, since I at that time promised to be silent and to make an end of my case, if he would command my adversaries to do the same. But that man of pride, not content with this agreement, began to justify my adversaries, to give

them free licence, and to order me to recant, a thing which was certainly not in his commission. Thus indeed, when the case was in the best position, it came through his vexatious tyranny into a much worse one. Therefore whatever has followed upon this is the fault not of Luther, but entirely of Cajetan, since he did not suffer me to be silent and remain quiet, which at that time I was entreating for with all my might. What more was it my duty to do?

Next came Charles Miltitz, also a nuncio from your Blessedness. He, though he went up and down with much and varied exertion, and omitted nothing which could tend to restore the position of the cause thrown into confusion by the rashness and pride of Cajetan, had difficulty, even with the help of that very illustrious prince the Elector Frederick, in at last bringing about more than one familiar conference with me. In these I again yielded to your great name, and was prepared to keep silence, and to accept as my judge either the Archbishop of Treves, or the Bishop of Naumburg; and thus it was done and concluded. While this was being done with good hope of success, lo! that other and greater enemy of yours, Eccius, rushed in with his Leipsic disputation, which he had undertaken against Carlstadt, and, having taken up a new question concerning the primacy of the Pope, turned his arms unexpectedly against me, and completely overthrew the plan for peace. Meanwhile Charles Miltitz was waiting, disputations were held, judges were being chosen, but no decision was arrived at. And no wonder! for by the falsehoods, pretences, and arts of Eccius the whole business was brought into such thorough disorder, confusion, and festering soreness, that, whichever way the sentence might lean, a greater conflagration was sure to arise; for he was seeking, not after truth, but after his own credit. In this case too I omitted nothing which it was right that I should do.

I confess that on this occasion no small part of the corruptions of Rome came to light; but, if there was any offence in this, it was the fault of Eccius, who, in taking on him a burden beyond his strength, and in furiously aiming at credit for himself, unveiled to the whole world the disgrace of Rome.

Here is that enemy of yours, Leo, or rather of your Court; by his example alone we may learn that an enemy is not more baneful than a flatterer. For what did he bring about by his flattery, except evils which no king could have brought about? At this day the name of the Court of Rome stinks in the nostrils of the world, the papal authority is growing weak, and its notorious ignorance is evil spoken of. We should hear none of these things, if Eccius had not disturbed the plans of Miltitz and myself for peace. He feels this clearly enough himself in the indignation he shows, too late and in vain, against the publication of my books. He ought to have reflected on this at the time when he was all mad for renown, and was seeking in your cause nothing but his own objects, and that with the greatest peril to you. The foolish man hoped that, from fear of your name, I should yield and keep silence; for I do not think he presumed on his talents and learning. Now, when he sees that I am very confident and speak aloud, he repents too late of his rashness, and sees--if indeed he does see it--that there is One in heaven who resists the proud, and humbles the presumptuous.

Since then we were bringing about by this disputation nothing but the greater confusion of the cause of Rome, Charles Miltitz for the third time addressed the Fathers of the Order, assembled in chapter, and sought their advice for the settlement of the case, as being now in a most troubled and perilous state. Since, by the favour of God, there was no hope of proceeding against me by

force, some of the more noted of their number were sent to me, and begged me at least to show respect to your person and to vindicate in a humble letter both your innocence and my own. They said that the affair was not as yet in a position of extreme hopelessness, if Leo X., in his inborn kindliness, would put his hand to it. On this I, who have always offered and wished for peace, in order that I might devote myself to calmer and more useful pursuits, and who for this very purpose have acted with so much spirit and vehemence, in order to put down by the strength and impetuosity of my words, as well as of my feelings, men whom I saw to be very far from equal to myself--I, I say, not only gladly yielded, but even accepted it with joy and gratitude, as the greatest kindness and benefit, if you should think it right to satisfy my hopes.

Thus I come, most blessed Father, and in all abasement beseech you to put to your hand, if it is possible, and impose a curb to those flatterers who are enemies of peace, while they pretend peace. But there is no reason, most blessed Father, why any one should assume that I am to utter a recantation, unless he prefers to involve the case in still greater confusion. Moreover, I cannot bear with laws for the interpretation of the word of God, since the word of God, which teaches liberty in all other things, ought not to be bound. Saving these two things, there is nothing which I am not able, and most heartily willing, to do or to suffer. I hate contention; I will challenge no one; in return I wish not to be challenged; but, being challenged, I will not be dumb in the cause of Christ my Master. For your Blessedness will be able by one short and easy word to call these controversies before you and suppress them, and to impose silence and peace on both sides--a word which I have ever longed to hear.

Therefore, Leo, my Father, beware of listening to those sirens who make you out to be not simply a man, but partly a god, so that you can command and require whatever you will. It will not happen so, nor will you prevail. You are the servant of servants, and more than any other man, in a most pitiable and perilous position. Let not those men deceive you who pretend that you are lord of the world; who will not allow any one to be a Christian without your authority; who babble of your having power over heaven, hell, and purgatory. These men are your enemies and are seeking your soul to destroy it, as Isaiah say, "My people, they that call thee blessed are themselves deceiving thee." They are in error who raise you above councils and the universal Church; they are in error who attribute to you alone the right of interpreting Scripture. All these men are seeking to set up their own impieties in the Church under your name, and alas! Satan has gained much through them in the time of your predecessors. In brief, trust not in any who exalt you, but in those who humiliate you. For this is the judgment of God: "He hath cast down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble." See how unlike Christ was to His successors, though all will have it that they are His vicars. I fear that in truth very many of them have been in too serious a sense His vicars, for a vicar represents a prince who is absent. Now if a pontiff rules while Christ is absent and does not dwell in his heart, what else is he but a vicar of Christ? And then what is that Church but a multitude without Christ? What indeed is such a vicar but antichrist and an idol? How much more rightly did the Apostles speak, who call themselves servants of a present Christ, not the vicars of an absent one!

Perhaps I am shamelessly bold in seeming to teach so great a head, by whom all men ought to be taught, and from whom, as those plagues of yours boast, the thrones of judges receive their sentence; but I imitate St. Bernard in his book concerning Considerations addressed to Eugenius, a book which ought to be known by heart by every pontiff. I do this, not from any desire to teach,

but as a duty, from that simple and faithful solicitude which teaches us to be anxious for all that is safe for our neighbours, and does not allow considerations of worthiness or unworthiness to be entertained, being intent only on the dangers or advantage of others. For since I know that your Blessedness is driven and tossed by the waves at Rome, so that the depths of the sea press on you with infinite perils, and that you are labouring under such a condition of misery that you need even the least help from any the least brother, I do not seem to myself to be acting unsuitably if I forget your majesty till I shall have fulfilled the office of charity. I will not flatter in so serious and perilous a matter; and if in this you do not see that I am your friend and most thoroughly your subject, there is One to see and judge. In fine, that I may not approach you empty-handed, blessed Father, I bring with me this little treatise, published under your name, as a good omen of the establishment of peace and of good hope. By this you may perceive in what pursuits I should prefer and be able to occupy myself to more profit, if I were allowed, or had been hitherto allowed, by your impious flatterers. It is a small matter, if you look to its exterior, but, unless I mistake, it is a summary of the Christian life put together in small compass, if you apprehend its meaning. I, in my poverty, have no other present to make you, nor do you need anything else than to be enriched by a spiritual gift. I commend myself to your Paternity and Blessedness, whom may the Lord Jesus preserve for ever. Amen.

Wittenberg, 6th September, 1520.

04. Part 2 - Beginning of the Treatise

BEGINNING OF THE TREATISE

Christian faith has appeared to many an easy thing; nay, not a few even reckon it among the social virtues, as it were; and this they do because they have not made proof of it experimentally, and have never tasted of what efficacy it is. For it is not possible for any man to write well about it, or to understand well what is rightly written, who has not at some time tasted of its spirit, under the pressure of tribulation; while he who has tasted of it, even to a very small extent, can never write, speak, think, or hear about it sufficiently. For it is a living fountain, springing up into eternal life, as Christ calls it in John 4:1-54.

Now, though I cannot boast of my abundance, and though I know how poorly I am furnished, yet I hope that, after having been vexed by various temptations, I have attained some little drop of faith, and that I can speak of this matter, if not with more elegance, certainly with more solidity, than those literal and too subtle disputants who have hitherto discoursed upon it without understanding their own words. That I may open then an easier way for the ignorant--for these alone I am trying to serve--I first lay down these two propositions, concerning spiritual liberty and servitude:-- A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to every one.

Although these statements appear contradictory, yet, when they are found to agree together, they will make excellently for my purpose. They are both the statements of Paul himself, who says, "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all" (1 Corinthians 9:19), and "Owe no man anything, but to love one another" (Romans 13:8). Now love is by its own nature dutiful and obedient to the beloved object. Thus even Christ, though Lord of all things, was yet made of a woman; made under the law; at once free and a servant; at once in the form of God and in the form of a servant.

Let us examine the subject on a deeper and less simple principle. Man is composed of a twofold nature, a spiritual and a bodily. As regards the spiritual nature, which they name the soul, he is called the spiritual, inward, new man; as regards the bodily nature, which they name the flesh, he is called the fleshly, outward, old man. The Apostle speaks of this: "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). The result of this diversity is that in the Scriptures opposing statements are made concerning the same man, the fact being that in the same man these two men are opposed to one another; the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh (Galatians 5:17).

We first approach the subject of the inward man, that we may see by what means a man becomes justified, free, and a true Christian; that is, a spiritual, new, and inward man. It is certain that absolutely none among outward things, under whatever name they may be reckoned, has any influence in producing Christian righteousness or liberty, nor, on the other hand, unrighteousness or slavery. This can be shown by an easy argument.

What can it profit the soul that the body should be in good condition, free, and full of life; that it should eat, drink, and act according to its pleasure; when even the most impious slaves of every kind of vice are prosperous in these matters? Again, what harm can ill-health, bondage, hunger, thirst, or any other outward evil, do to the soul, when even the most pious of men and the freest in the purity of their conscience, are harassed by these things? Neither of these states of things has to do with the liberty or the slavery of the soul. And so it will profit nothing that the body should be adorned with sacred vestments, or dwell in holy places, or be occupied in sacred offices, or pray, fast, and abstain from certain meats, or do whatever works can be done through the body and in the body. Something widely different will be necessary for the justification and liberty of the soul, since the things I have spoken of can be done by any impious person, and only hypocrites are produced by devotion to these things. On the other hand, it will not at all injure the soul that the body should be clothed in profane raiment, should dwell in profane places, should eat and drink in the ordinary fashion, should not pray aloud, and should leave undone all the things above mentioned, which may be done by hypocrites.

And, to cast everything aside, even speculation, meditations, and whatever things can be performed by the exertions of the soul itself, are of no profit. One thing, and one alone, is necessary for life, justification, and Christian liberty; and that is the most holy word of God, the Gospel of Christ, as He says, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me shall not die eternally" (John 11:25), and also, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36), and, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

Let us therefore hold it for certain and firmly established that the soul can do without everything except the word of God, without which none at all of its wants are provided for. But, having the word, it is rich and wants for nothing, since that is the word of life, of truth, of light, of peace, of justification, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of virtue, of grace, of glory, and of every good thing. It is on this account that the prophet in a whole Psalm (Psalm cxix, and in many other places, sighs for and calls upon the word of God with so many groanings and words.

Again, there is no more cruel stroke of the wrath of God than when He sends a famine of hearing His words (Amos 8:11), just as there is no greater favour from Him than the sending forth of His word, as it is said, "He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions" (Psalms 107:20). Christ was sent for no other office than that of the word; and the order of Apostles, that of bishops, and that of the whole body of the clergy, have been called and instituted for no object but the ministry of the word. But you will ask, What is this word, and by what means is it to be used, since there are so many words of God? I answer, The Apostle Paul (Romans 1:1-32) explains what it is, namely the Gospel of God, concerning His Son, incarnate, suffering, risen, and glorified, through the Spirit, the Sanctifier. To preach Christ is to feed the soul, to justify it, to set it free, and to save it, if it believes the preaching. For faith alone and the efficacious use of the word of God, bring salvation. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9); and again, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4), and "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). For the word of God cannot be received and honoured by any works, but by faith alone. Hence it is clear that as the soul needs the word alone for life and justification, so it is justified by faith alone, and not by any works. For if it could be

justified by any other means, it would have no need of the word, nor consequently of faith. But this faith cannot consist at all with works; that is, if you imagine that you can be justified by those works, whatever they are, along with it. For this would be to halt between two opinions, to worship Baal, and to kiss the hand to him, which is a very great iniquity, as Job says. Therefore, when you begin to believe, you learn at the same time that all that is in you is utterly guilty, sinful, and damnable, according to that saying, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and also: "There is none righteous, no, not one; they are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Romans 3:10-12). When you have learnt this, you will know that Christ is necessary for you, since He has suffered and risen again for you, that, believing on Him, you might by this faith become another man, all your sins being remitted, and you being justified by the merits of another, namely of Christ alone.

Since then this faith can reign only in the inward man, as it is said, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10); and since it alone justifies, it is evident that by no outward work or labour can the inward man be at all justified, made free, and saved; and that no works whatever have any relation to him. And so, on the other hand, it is solely by impiety and incredulity of heart that he becomes guilty and a slave of sin, deserving condemnation, not by any outward sin or work. Therefore the first care of every Christian ought to be to lay aside all reliance on works, and strengthen his faith alone more and more, and by it grow in the knowledge, not of works, but of Christ Jesus, who has suffered and risen again for him, as Peter teaches (1 Peter 5:1-14) when he makes no other work to be a Christian one. Thus Christ, when the Jews asked Him what they should do that they might work the works of God, rejected the multitude of works, with which He saw that they were puffed up, and commanded them one thing only, saying, "This is the work of God: that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent, for Him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:27, John 6:29).

Hence a right faith in Christ is an incomparable treasure, carrying with it universal salvation and preserving from all evil, as it is said, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). Isaiah, looking to this treasure, predicted, "The consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined (verbum abbreviatum et consummans), in the midst of the land" (Isaiah 10:22-23). As if he said, "Faith, which is the brief and complete fulfilling of the law, will fill those who believe with such righteousness that they will need nothing else for justification." Thus, too, Paul says, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10). But you ask how it can be the fact that faith alone justifies, and affords without works so great a treasure of good things, when so many works, ceremonies, and laws are prescribed to us in the Scriptures? I answer, Before all things bear in mind what I have said: that faith alone without works justifies, sets free, and saves, as I shall show more clearly below.

Meanwhile it is to be noted that the whole Scripture of God is divided into two parts: precepts and promises. The precepts certainly teach us what is good, but what they teach is not forthwith done. For they show us what we ought to do, but do not give us the power to do it. They were ordained, however, for the purpose of showing man to himself, that through them he may learn his own impotence for good and may despair of his own strength. For this reason they are called the Old Testament, and are so. For example, "Thou shalt not covet," is a precept by which we are all

convicted of sin, since no man can help coveting, whatever efforts to the contrary he may make. In order therefore that he may fulfil the precept, and not covet, he is constrained to despair of himself and to seek elsewhere and through another the help which he cannot find in himself; as it is said, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help" (Hosea 13:9). Now what is done by this one precept is done by all; for all are equally impossible of fulfilment by us.

Now when a man has through the precepts been taught his own impotence, and become anxious by what means he may satisfy the law--for the law must be satisfied, so that no jot or tittle of it may pass away, otherwise he must be hopelessly condemned--then, being truly humbled and brought to nothing in his own eyes, he finds in himself no resource for justification and salvation.

Then comes in that other part of Scripture, the promises of God, which declare the glory of God, and say, "If you wish to fulfil the law, and, as the law requires, not to covet, lo! believe in Christ, in whom are promised to you grace, justification, peace, and liberty." All these things you shall have, if you believe, and shall be without them if you do not believe. For what is impossible for you by all the works of the law, which are many and yet useless, you shall fulfil in an easy and summary way through faith, because God the Father has made everything to depend on faith, so that whosoever has it has all things, and he who has it not has nothing. "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all" (Romans 11:32). Thus the promises of God give that which the precepts exact, and fulfil what the law commands; so that all is of God alone, both the precepts and their fulfilment. He alone commands; He alone also fulfils. Hence the promises of God belong to the New Testament; nay, are the New Testament.

Now, since these promises of God are words of holiness, truth, righteousness, liberty, and peace, and are full of universal goodness, the soul, which cleaves to them with a firm faith, is so united to them, nay, thoroughly absorbed by them, that it not only partakes in, but is penetrated and saturated by, all their virtues. For if the touch of Christ was healing, how much more does that most tender spiritual touch, nay, absorption of the word, communicate to the soul all that belongs to the word! In this way therefore the soul, through faith alone, without works, is from the word of God justified, sanctified, endued with truth, peace, and liberty, and filled full with every good thing, and is truly made the child of God, as it is said, "To them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). From all this it is easy to understand why faith has such great power, and why no good works, nor even all good works put together, can compare with it, since no work can cleave to the word of God or be in the soul. Faith alone and the word reign in it; and such as is the word, such is the soul made by it, just as iron exposed to fire glows like fire, on account of its union with the fire. It is clear then that to a Christian man his faith suffices for everything, and that he has no need of works for justification. But if he has no need of works, neither has he need of the law; and if he has no need of the law, he is certainly free from the law, and the saying is true, "The law is not made for a righteous man" (1 Timothy 1:9). This is that Christian liberty, our faith, the effect of which is, not that we should be careless or lead a bad life, but that no one should need the law or works for justification and salvation.

Let us consider this as the first virtue of faith; and let us look also to the second. This also is an office of faith: that it honours with the utmost veneration and the highest reputation Him in whom it believes, inasmuch as it holds Him to be truthful and worthy of belief. For there is no honour like that reputation of truth and righteousness with which we honour Him in whom we believe. What

higher credit can we attribute to any one than truth and righteousness, and absolute goodness? On the other hand, it is the greatest insult to brand any one with the reputation of falsehood and unrighteousness, or to suspect him of these, as we do when we disbelieve him.

Thus the soul, in firmly believing the promises of God, holds Him to be true and righteous; and it can attribute to God no higher glory than the credit of being so. The highest worship of God is to ascribe to Him truth, righteousness, and whatever qualities we must ascribe to one in whom we believe. In doing this the soul shows itself prepared to do His whole will; in doing this it hallows His name, and gives itself up to be dealt with as it may please God. For it cleaves to His promises, and never doubts that He is true, just, and wise, and will do, dispose, and provide for all things in the best way. Is not such a soul, in this its faith, most obedient to God in all things? What commandment does there remain which has not been amply fulfilled by such an obedience? What fulfilment can be more full than universal obedience? Now this is not accomplished by works, but by faith alone. On the other hand, what greater rebellion, impiety, or insult to God can there be, than not to believe His promises? What else is this, than either to make God a liar, or to doubt His truth--that is, to attribute truth to ourselves, but to God falsehood and levity? In doing this, is not a man denying God and setting himself up as an idol in his own heart? What then can works, done in such a state of impiety, profit us, were they even angelic or apostolic works? Rightly hath God shut up all, not in wrath nor in lust, but in unbelief, in order that those who pretend that they are fulfilling the law by works of purity and benevolence (which are social and human virtues) may not presume that they will therefore be saved, but, being included in the sin of unbelief, may either seek mercy, or be justly condemned. But when God sees that truth is ascribed to Him, and that in the faith of our hearts He is honoured with all the honour of which He is worthy, then in return He honours us on account of that faith, attributing to us truth and righteousness. For faith does truth and righteousness in rendering to God what is His; and therefore in return God gives glory to our righteousness. It is true and righteous that God is true and righteous; and to confess this and ascribe these attributes to Him, this it is to be true and righteous. Thus He says, "Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30). And so Paul says that Abraham’s faith was imputed to him for righteousness, because by it he gave glory to God; and that to us also, for the same reason, it shall be imputed for righteousness, if we believe (Romans 4:1-25). The third incomparable grace of faith is this: that it unites the soul to Christ, as the wife to the husband, by which mystery, as the Apostle teaches, Christ and the soul are made one flesh. Now if they are one flesh, and if a true marriage--nay, by far the most perfect of all marriages--is accomplished between them (for human marriages are but feeble types of this one great marriage), then it follows that all they have becomes theirs in common, as well good things as evil things; so that whatsoever Christ possesses, that the believing soul may take to itself and boast of as its own, and whatever belongs to the soul, that Christ claims as His.

If we compare these possessions, we shall see how inestimable is the gain. Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation; the soul is full of sin, death, and condemnation. Let faith step in, and then sin, death, and hell will belong to Christ, and grace, life, and salvation to the soul. For, if He is a Husband, He must needs take to Himself that which is His wife’s, and at the same time, impart to His wife that which is His. For, in giving her His own body and Himself, how can He but give her all that is His? And, in taking to Himself the body of His wife, how can He but take to Himself all that is hers? In this is displayed the delightful sight, not only of communion, but of a prosperous warfare,

of victory, salvation, and redemption. For, since Christ is God and man, and is such a Person as neither has sinned, nor dies, nor is condemned, nay, cannot sin, die, or be condemned, and since His righteousness, life, and salvation are invincible, eternal, and almighty,--when I say, such a Person, by the wedding-ring of faith, takes a share in the sins, death, and hell of His wife, nay, makes them His own, and deals with them no otherwise than as if they were His, and as if He Himself had sinned; and when He suffers, dies, and descends to hell, that He may overcome all things, and since sin, death, and hell cannot swallow Him up, they must needs be swallowed up by Him in stupendous conflict. For His righteousness rises above the sins of all men; His life is more powerful than all death; His salvation is more unconquerable than all hell.

Thus the believing soul, by the pledge of its faith in Christ, becomes free from all sin, fearless of death, safe from hell, and endowed with the eternal righteousness, life, and salvation of its Husband Christ. Thus He presents to Himself a glorious bride, without spot or wrinkle, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word; that is, by faith in the word of life, righteousness, and salvation. Thus He betrothes her unto Himself "in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies" (Hosea 2:19-20). Who then can value highly enough these royal nuptials? Who can comprehend the riches of the glory of this grace? Christ, that rich and pious Husband, takes as a wife a needy and impious harlot, redeeming her from all her evils and supplying her with all His good things. It is impossible now that her sins should destroy her, since they have been laid upon Christ and swallowed up in Him, and since she has in her Husband Christ a righteousness which she may claim as her own, and which she can set up with confidence against all her sins, against death and hell, saying, "If I have sinned, my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned; all mine is His, and all His is mine," as it is written, "My beloved is mine, and I am His" (Song of Solomon 2:16). This is what Paul says: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," victory over sin and death, as he says, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law" (1 Corinthians 15:56-57). From all this you will again understand why so much importance is attributed to faith, so that it alone can fulfil the law and justify without any works. For you see that the First Commandment, which says, "Thou shalt worship one God only," is fulfilled by faith alone. If you were nothing but good works from the soles of your feet to the crown of your head, you would not be worshipping God, nor fulfilling the First Commandment, since it is impossible to worship God without ascribing to Him the glory of truth and of universal goodness, as it ought in truth to be ascribed. Now this is not done by works, but only by faith of heart. It is not by working, but by believing, that we glorify God, and confess Him to be true. On this ground faith alone is the righteousness of a Christian man, and the fulfilling of all the commandments. For to him who fulfils the first the task of fulfilling all the rest is easy.

Works, since they are irrational things, cannot glorify God, although they may be done to the glory of God, if faith be present. But at present we are inquiring, not into the quality of the works done, but into him who does them, who glorifies God, and brings forth good works. This is faith of heart, the head and the substance of all our righteousness. Hence that is a blind and perilous doctrine which teaches that the commandments are fulfilled by works. The commandments must have been fulfilled previous to any good works, and good works follow their fulfillment, as we shall see.

But, that we may have a wider view of that grace which our inner man has in Christ, we must know that in the Old Testament God sanctified to Himself every first-born male. The birthright was of great value, giving a superiority over the rest by the double honour of priesthood and kingship. For

the first-born brother was priest and lord of all the rest.

Under this figure was foreshown Christ, the true and only First-born of God the Father and of the Virgin Mary, and a true King and Priest, not in a fleshly and earthly sense. For His kingdom is not of this world; it is in heavenly and spiritual things that He reigns and acts as Priest; and these are righteousness, truth, wisdom, peace, salvation, etc. Not but that all things, even those of earth and hell, are subject to Him--for otherwise how could He defend and save us from them?--but it is not in these, nor by these, that His kingdom stands.

So, too, His priesthood does not consist in the outward display of vestments and gestures, as did the human priesthood of Aaron and our ecclesiastical priesthood at this day, but in spiritual things, wherein, in His invisible office, He intercedes for us with God in heaven, and there offers Himself, and performs all the duties of a priest, as Paul describes Him to the Hebrews under the figure of Melchizedek. Nor does He only pray and intercede for us; He also teaches us inwardly in the spirit with the living teachings of His Spirit. Now these are the two special offices of a priest, as is figured to us in the case of fleshly priests by visible prayers and sermons. As Christ by His birthright has obtained these two dignities, so He imparts and communicates them to every believer in Him, under that law of matrimony of which we have spoken above, by which all that is the husband’s is also the wife’s. Hence all we who believe on Christ are kings and priests in Christ, as it is said, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

These two things stand thus. First, as regards kingship, every Christian is by faith so exalted above all things that, in spiritual power, he is completely lord of all things, so that nothing whatever can do him any hurt; yea, all things are subject to him, and are compelled to be subservient to his salvation. Thus Paul says, "All things work together for good to them who are the called" (Romans 8:28), and also, "Whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ’s" (1 Corinthians 3:22-23). Not that in the sense of corporeal power any one among Christians has been appointed to possess and rule all things, according to the mad and senseless idea of certain ecclesiastics. That is the office of kings, princes, and men upon earth. In the experience of life we see that we are subjected to all things, and suffer many things, even death. Yea, the more of a Christian any man is, to so many the more evils, sufferings, and deaths is he subject, as we see in the first place in Christ the First-born, and in all His holy brethren. This is a spiritual power, which rules in the midst of enemies, and is powerful in the midst of distresses. And this is nothing else than that strength is made perfect in my weakness, and that I can turn all things to the profit of my salvation; so that even the cross and death are compelled to serve me and to work together for my salvation. This is a lofty and eminent dignity, a true and almighty dominion, a spiritual empire, in which there is nothing so good, nothing so bad, as not to work together for my good, if only I believe. And yet there is nothing of which I have need--for faith alone suffices for my salvation--unless that in it faith may exercise the power and empire of its liberty. This is the inestimable power and liberty of Christians. Nor are we only kings and the freest of all men, but also priests for ever, a dignity far higher than kingship, because by that priesthood we are worthy to appear before God, to pray for others, and to teach one another mutually the things which are of God. For these are the duties of priests, and they cannot possibly be permitted to any unbeliever. Christ has obtained for us this favour, if we believe in Him: that just as we are His brethren and

co-heirs and fellow-kings with Him, so we should be also fellow-priests with Him, and venture with confidence, through the spirit of faith, to come into the presence of God, and cry, "Abba, Father!" and to pray for one another, and to do all things which we see done and figured in the visible and corporeal office of priesthood. But to an unbelieving person nothing renders service or work for good. He himself is in servitude to all things, and all things turn out for evil to him, because he uses all things in an impious way for his own advantage, and not for the glory of God. And thus he is not a priest, but a profane person, whose prayers are turned into sin, nor does he ever appear in the presence of God, because God does not hear sinners. Who then can comprehend the loftiness of that Christian dignity which, by its royal power, rules over all things, even over death, life, and sin, and, by its priestly glory, is all-powerful with God, since God does what He Himself seeks and wishes, as it is written, "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them"? (Psalms 145:19). This glory certainly cannot be attained by any works, but by faith only. From these considerations any one may clearly see how a Christian man is free from all things; so that he needs no works in order to be justified and saved, but receives these gifts in abundance from faith alone. Nay, were he so foolish as to pretend to be justified, set free, saved, and made a Christian, by means of any good work, he would immediately lose faith, with all its benefits. Such folly is prettily represented in the fable where a dog, running along in the water and carrying in his mouth a real piece of meat, is deceived by the reflection of the meat in the water, and, in trying with open mouth to seize it, loses the meat and its image at the same time.

Here you will ask, "If all who are in the Church are priests, by what character are those whom we now call priests to be distinguished from the laity?" I reply, By the use of these words, "priest," "clergy," " spiritual person," "ecclesiastic," an injustice has been done, since they have been transferred from the remaining body of Christians to those few who are now, by hurtful custom, called ecclesiastics. For Holy Scripture makes no distinction between them, except that those who are now boastfully called popes, bishops, and lords, it calls ministers, servants, and stewards, who are to serve the rest in the ministry of the word, for teaching the faith of Christ and the liberty of believers. For though it is true that we are all equally priests, yet we cannot, nor, if we could, ought we all to, minister and teach publicly. Thus Paul says, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1). This bad system has now issued in such a pompous display of power and such a terrible tyranny that no earthly government can be compared to it, as if the laity were something else than Christians. Through this perversion of things it has happened that the knowledge of Christian grace, of faith, of liberty, and altogether of Christ, has utterly perished, and has been succeeded by an intolerable bondage to human works and laws; and, according to the Lamentations of Jeremiah, we have become the slaves of the vilest men on earth, who abuse our misery to all the disgraceful and ignominious purposes of their own will.

Returning to the subject which we had begun, I think it is made clear by these considerations that it is not sufficient, nor a Christian course, to preach the works, life, and words of Christ in a historic manner, as facts which it suffices to know as an example how to frame our life, as do those who are now held the best preachers, and much less so to keep silence altogether on these things and to teach in their stead the laws of men and the decrees of the Fathers. There are now not a few persons who preach and read about Christ with the object of moving the human affections to sympathise with Christ, to indignation against the Jews, and other childish and womanish

absurdities of that kind.

Now preaching ought to have the object of promoting faith in Him, so that He may not only be Christ, but a Christ for you and for me, and that what is said of Him, and what He is called, may work in us. And this faith is produced and is maintained by preaching why Christ came, what He has brought us and given to us, and to what profit and advantage He is to be received. This is done when the Christian liberty which we have from Christ Himself is rightly taught, and we are shown in what manner all we Christians are kings and priests, and how we are lords of all things, and may be confident that whatever we do in the presence of God is pleasing and acceptable to Him. Whose heart would not rejoice in its inmost core at hearing these things? Whose heart, on receiving so great a consolation, would not become sweet with the love of Christ, a love to which it can never attain by any laws or works? Who can injure such a heart, or make it afraid? If the consciousness of sin or the horror of death rush in upon it, it is prepared to hope in the Lord, and is fearless of such evils, and undisturbed, until it shall look down upon its enemies. For it believes that the righteousness of Christ is its own, and that its sin is no longer its own, but that of Christ; but, on account of its faith in Christ, all its sin must needs be swallowed up from before the face of the righteousness of Christ, as I have said above. It learns, too, with the Apostle, to scoff at death and sin, and to say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:55-57). For death is swallowed up in victory, not only the victory of Christ, but ours also, since by faith it becomes ours, and in it we too conquer.

Let it suffice to say this concerning the inner man and its liberty, and concerning that righteousness of faith which needs neither laws nor good works; nay, they are even hurtful to it, if any one pretends to be justified by them.

04. Part 3 - Conclusion of the Treatise

CONCLUSION OF THE TREATISE And now let us turn to the other part: to the outward man. Here we shall give an answer to all those who, taking offence at the word of faith and at what I have asserted, say, "If faith does everything, and by itself suffices for justification, why then are good works commanded? Are we then to take our ease and do no works, content with faith?" Not so, impious men, I reply; not so. That would indeed really be the case, if we were thoroughly and completely inner and spiritual persons; but that will not happen until the last day, when the dead shall be raised. As long as we live in the flesh, we are but beginning and making advances in that which shall be completed in a future life. On this account the Apostle calls that which we have in this life the firstfruits of the Spirit (Romans 8:23). In future we shall have the tenths, and the fullness of the Spirit. To this part belongs the fact I have stated before: that the Christian is the servant of all and subject to all. For in that part in which he is free he does no works, but in that in which he is a servant he does all works. Let us see on what principle this is so.

Although, as I have said, inwardly, and according to the spirit, a man is amply enough justified by faith, having all that he requires to have, except that this very faith and abundance ought to increase from day to day, even till the future life, still he remains in this mortal life upon earth, in which it is necessary that he should rule his own body and have intercourse with men. Here then works begin; here he must not take his ease; here he must give heed to exercise his body by fastings, watchings, labour, and other regular discipline, so that it may be subdued to the spirit, and obey and conform itself to the inner man and faith, and not rebel against them nor hinder them, as is its nature to do if it is not kept under. For the inner man, being conformed to God and created after the image of God through faith, rejoices and delights itself in Christ, in whom such blessings have been conferred on it, and hence has only this task before it: to serve God with joy and for nought in free love. But in doing this he comes into collision with that contrary will in his own flesh, which is striving to serve the world and to seek its own gratification. This the spirit of faith cannot and will not bear, but applies itself with cheerfulness and zeal to keep it down and restrain it, as Paul says, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin" (Romans 7:22-23), and again, "I keep under my body, and bring it unto subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:27), and "They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24).

These works, however, must not be done with any notion that by them a man can be justified before God--for faith, which alone is righteousness before God, will not bear with this false notion--but solely with this purpose: that the body may be brought into subjection, and be purified from its evil lusts, so that our eyes may be turned only to purging away those lusts. For when the soul has been cleansed by faith and made to love God, it would have all things to be cleansed in like manner, and especially its own body, so that all things might unite with it in the love and praise of God. Thus it comes that, from the requirements of his own body, a man cannot take his ease, but is compelled on its account to do many good works, that he may bring it into subjection. Yet

these works are not the means of his justification before God; he does them out of disinterested love to the service of God; looking to no other end than to do what is well-pleasing to Him whom he desires to obey most dutifully in all things. On this principle every man may easily instruct himself in what measure, and with what distinctions, he ought to chasten his own body. He will fast, watch, and labour, just as much as he sees to suffice for keeping down the wantonness and concupiscence of the body. But those who pretend to be justified by works are looking, not to the mortification of their lusts, but only to the works themselves; thinking that, if they can accomplish as many works and as great ones as possible, all is well with them, and they are justified. Sometimes they even injure their brain, and extinguish nature, or at least make it useless. This is enormous folly, and ignorance of Christian life and faith, when a man seeks, without faith, to be justified and saved by works. To make what we have said more easily understood, let us set it forth under a figure. The works of a Christian man, who is justified and saved by his faith out of the pure and unbought mercy of God, ought to be regarded in the same light as would have been those of Adam and Eve in paradise and of all their posterity if they had not sinned. Of them it is said, "The Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15). Now Adam had been created by God just and righteous, so that he could not have needed to be justified and made righteous by keeping the garden and working in it; but, that he might not be unemployed, God gave him the business of keeping and cultivating paradise. These would have indeed been works of perfect freedom, being done for no object but that of pleasing God, and not in order to obtain justification, which he already had to the full, and which would have been innate in us all. So it is with the works of a believer. Being by his faith replaced afresh in paradise and created anew, he does not need works for his justification, but that he may not be idle, but may exercise his own body and preserve it. His works are to be done freely, with the sole object of pleasing God. Only we are not yet fully created anew in perfect faith and love; these require to be increased, not, however, through works, but through themselves. A bishop, when he consecrates a church, confirms children, or performs any other duty of his office, is not consecrated as bishop by these works; nay, unless he had been previously consecrated as bishop, not one of those works would have any validity; they would be foolish, childish, and ridiculous. Thus a Christian, being consecrated by his faith, does good works; but he is not by these works made a more sacred person, or more a Christian. That is the effect of faith alone; nay, unless he were previously a believer and a Christian, none of his works would have any value at all; they would really be impious and damnable sins.

True, then, are these two sayings: "Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works"; "Bad works do not make a bad man, but a bad man does bad works." Thus it is always necessary that the substance or person should be good before any good works can be done, and that good works should follow and proceed from a good person. As Christ says, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matthew 7:18). Now it is clear that the fruit does not bear the tree, nor does the tree grow on the fruit; but, on the contrary, the trees bear the fruit, and the fruit grows on the trees. As then trees must exist before their fruit, and as the fruit does not make the tree either good or bad, but on the contrary, a tree of either kind produces fruit of the same kind, so must first the person of the man be good or bad before he can do either a good or a bad work; and his works do not make him bad or good, but he himself makes his works either bad or good.

We may see the same thing in all handicrafts. A bad or good house does not make a bad or good builder, but a good or bad builder makes a good or bad house. And in general no work makes the workman such as it is itself; but the workman makes the work such as he is himself. Such is the case, too, with the works of men. Such as the man himself is, whether in faith or in unbelief, such is his work: good if it be done in faith; bad if in unbelief. But the converse is not true that, such as the work is, such the man becomes in faith or in unbelief. For as works do not make a believing man, so neither do they make a justified man; but faith, as it makes a man a believer and justified, so also it makes his works good.

Since then works justify no man, but a man must be justified before he can do any good work, it is most evident that it is faith alone which, by the mere mercy of God through Christ, and by means of His word, can worthily and sufficiently justify and save the person; and that a Christian man needs no work, no law, for his salvation; for by faith he is free from all law, and in perfect freedom does gratuitously all that he does, seeking nothing either of profit or of salvation--since by the grace of God he is already saved and rich in all things through his faith--but solely that which is well-pleasing to God.

So, too, no good work can profit an unbeliever to justification and salvation; and, on the other hand, no evil work makes him an evil and condemned person, but that unbelief, which makes the person and the tree bad, makes his works evil and condemned. Wherefore, when any man is made good or bad, this does not arise from his works, but from his faith or unbelief, as the wise man says, "The beginning of sin is to fall away from God"; that is, not to believe. Paul says, "He that cometh to God must believe" (Hebrews 11:6); and Christ says the same thing: "Either make the tree good and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt" (Matthew 12:33),--as much as to say, He who wishes to have good fruit will begin with the tree, and plant a good one; even so he who wishes to do good works must begin, not by working, but by believing, since it is this which makes the person good. For nothing makes the person good but faith, nor bad but unbelief.

It is certainly true that, in the sight of men, a man becomes good or evil by his works; but here "becoming" means that it is thus shown and recognised who is good or evil, as Christ says, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). But all this stops at appearances and externals; and in this matter very many deceive themselves, when they presume to write and teach that we are to be justified by good works, and meanwhile make no mention even of faith, walking in their own ways, ever deceived and deceiving, going from bad to worse, blind leaders of the blind, wearying themselves with many works, and yet never attaining to true righteousness, of whom Paul says, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:5, 2 Timothy 3:7).

He then who does not wish to go astray, with these blind ones, must look further than to the works of the law or the doctrine of works; nay, must turn away his sight from works, and look to the person, and to the manner in which it may be justified. Now it is justified and saved, not by works or laws, but by the word of God--that is, by the promise of His grace--so that the glory may be to the Divine majesty, which has saved us who believe, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, by the word of His grace. From all this it is easy to perceive on what principle good works are to be cast aside or embraced, and by what rule all teachings put

forth concerning works are to be understood. For if works are brought forward as grounds of justification, and are done under the false persuasion that we can pretend to be justified by them, they lay on us the yoke of necessity, and extinguish liberty along with faith, and by this very addition to their use they become no longer good, but really worthy of condemnation. For such works are not free, but blaspheme the grace of God, to which alone it belongs to justify and save through faith. Works cannot accomplish this, and yet, with impious presumption, through our folly, they take it on themselves to do so; and thus break in with violence upon the office and glory of grace.

We do not then reject good works; nay, we embrace them and teach them in the highest degree. It is not on their own account that we condemn them, but on account of this impious addition to them and the perverse notion of seeking justification by them. These things cause them to be only good in outward show, but in reality not good, since by them men are deceived and deceive others, like ravening wolves in sheep’s clothing.

Now this leviathan, this perverted notion about works, is invincible when sincere faith is wanting. For those sanctified doers of works cannot but hold it till faith, which destroys it, comes and reigns in the heart. Nature cannot expel it by her own power; nay, cannot even see it for what it is, but considers it as a most holy will. And when custom steps in besides, and strengthens this pravity of nature, as has happened by means of impious teachers, then the evil is incurable, and leads astray multitudes to irreparable ruin. Therefore, though it is good to preach and write about penitence, confession, and satisfaction, yet if we stop there, and do not go on to teach faith, such teaching is without doubt deceitful and devilish. For Christ, speaking by His servant John, not only said, "Repent ye," but added, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). For not one word of God only, but both, should be preached; new and old things should be brought out of the treasury, as well the voice of the law as the word of grace. The voice of the law should be brought forward, that men may be terrified and brought to a knowledge of their sins, and thence be converted to penitence and to a better manner of life. But we must not stop here; that would be to wound only and not to bind up, to strike and not to heal, to kill and not to make alive, to bring down to hell and not to bring back, to humble and not to exalt. Therefore the word of grace and of the promised remission of sin must also be preached, in order to teach and set up faith, since without that word contrition, penitence, and all other duties, are performed and taught in vain.

There still remain, it is true, preachers of repentance and grace, but they do not explain the law and the promises of God to such an end, and in such a spirit, that men may learn whence repentance and grace are to come. For repentance comes from the law of God, but faith or grace from the promises of God, as it is said, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17), whence it comes that a man, when humbled and brought to the knowledge of himself by the threatenings and terrors of the law, is consoled and raised up by faith in the Divine promise. Thus "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalms 30:5). Thus much we say concerning works in general, and also concerning those which the Christian practises with regard to his own body.

Lastly, we will speak also of those works which he performs towards his neighbour. For man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body, in order to work on its account, but also for all men on earth; nay, he lives only for others, and not for himself. For it is to this end that he brings his own

body into subjection, that he may be able to serve others more sincerely and more freely, as Paul says, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord" (Romans 14:7-8). Thus it is impossible that he should take his ease in this life, and not work for the good of his neighbours, since he must needs speak, act, and converse among men, just as Christ was made in the likeness of men and found in fashion as a man, and had His conversation among men.

Yet a Christian has need of none of these things for justification and salvation, but in all his works he ought to entertain this view and look only to this object--that he may serve and be useful to others in all that he does; having nothing before his eyes but the necessities and the advantage of his neighbour. Thus the Apostle commands us to work with our own hands, that we may have to give to those that need. He might have said, that we may support ourselves; but he tells us to give to those that need. It is the part of a Christian to take care of his own body for the very purpose that, by its soundness and well-being, he may be enabled to labour, and to acquire and preserve property, for the aid of those who are in want, that thus the stronger member may serve the weaker member, and we may be children of God, thoughtful and busy one for another, bearing one another’s burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ.

Here is the truly Christian life, here is faith really working by love, when a man applies himself with joy and love to the works of that freest servitude in which he serves others voluntarily and for nought, himself abundantly satisfied in the fulness and riches of his own faith.

Thus, when Paul had taught the Philippians how they had been made rich by that faith in Christ in which they had obtained all things, he teaches them further in these words: "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Php 2:1-4). In this we see clearly that the Apostle lays down this rule for a Christian life: that all our works should be directed to the advantage of others, since every Christian has such abundance through his faith that all his other works and his whole life remain over and above wherewith to serve and benefit his neighbour of spontaneous goodwill. To this end he brings forward Christ as an example, saying, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death" (Php 2:5-8). This most wholesome saying of the Apostle has been darkened to us by men who, totally misunderstanding the expressions "form of God," "form of a servant," "fashion," "likeness of men," have transferred them to the natures of Godhead and manhood. Paul’s meaning is this: Christ, when He was full of the form of God and abounded in all good things, so that He had no need of works or sufferings to be just and saved--for all these things He had from the very beginning--yet was not puffed up with these things, and did not raise Himself above us and arrogate to Himself power over us, though He might lawfully have done so, but, on the contrary, so acted in labouring, working, suffering, and dying, as to be like the rest of men, and no otherwise than a man in fashion and in conduct, as if He were in want of all things and had nothing of the form of God; and yet all this He did for our sakes, that He might serve us, and that all the

works He should do under that form of a servant might become ours.

Thus a Christian, like Christ his Head, being full and in abundance through his faith, ought to be content with this form of God, obtained by faith; except that, as I have said, he ought to increase this faith till it be perfected. For this faith is his life, justification, and salvation, preserving his person itself and making it pleasing to God, and bestowing on him all that Christ has, as I have said above, and as Paul affirms: "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Galatians 2:20). Though he is thus free from all works, yet he ought to empty himself of this liberty, take on him the form of a servant, be made in the likeness of men, be found in fashion as a man, serve, help, and in every way act towards his neighbour as he sees that God through Christ has acted and is acting towards him. All this he should do freely, and with regard to nothing but the good pleasure of God, and he should reason thus:--

Lo! my God, without merit on my part, of His pure and free mercy, has given to me, an unworthy, condemned, and contemptible creature all the riches of justification and salvation in Christ, so that I no longer am in want of anything, except of faith to believe that this is so. For such a Father, then, who has overwhelmed me with these inestimable riches of His, why should I not freely, cheerfully, and with my whole heart, and from voluntary zeal, do all that I know will be pleasing to Him and acceptable in His sight? I will therefore give myself as a sort of Christ, to my neighbour, as Christ has given Himself to me; and will do nothing in this life except what I see will be needful, advantageous, and wholesome for my neighbour, since by faith I abound in all good things in Christ.

Thus from faith flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a cheerful, willing, free spirit, disposed to serve our neighbour voluntarily, without taking any account of gratitude or ingratitude, praise or blame, gain or loss. Its object is not to lay men under obligations, nor does it distinguish between friends and enemies, or look to gratitude or ingratitude, but most freely and willingly spends itself and its goods, whether it loses them through ingratitude, or gains goodwill. For thus did its Father, distributing all things to all men abundantly and freely, making His sun to rise upon the just and the unjust. Thus, too, the child does and endures nothing except from the free joy with which it delights through Christ in God, the Giver of such great gifts.

You see, then, that, if we recognize those great and precious gifts, as Peter says, which have been given to us, love is quickly diffused in our hearts through the Spirit, and by love we are made free, joyful, all-powerful, active workers, victors over all our tribulations, servants to our neighbour, and nevertheless lords of all things. But, for those who do not recognise the good things given to them through Christ, Christ has been born in vain; such persons walk by works, and will never attain the taste and feeling of these great things. Therefore just as our neighbour is in want, and has need of our abundance, so we too in the sight of God were in want, and had need of His mercy. And as our heavenly Father has freely helped us in Christ, so ought we freely to help our neighbour by our body and works, and each should become to other a sort of Christ, so that we may be mutually Christs, and that the same Christ may be in all of us; that is, that we may be truly Christians. Who then can comprehend the riches and glory of the Christian life? It can do all things, has all things, and is in want of nothing; is lord over sin, death, and hell, and at the same time is the obedient and useful servant of all. But alas! it is at this day unknown throughout the world; it is neither preached nor sought after, so that we are quite ignorant about our own name,

why we are and are called Christians. We are certainly called so from Christ, who is not absent, but dwells among us--provided, that is, that we believe in Him and are reciprocally and mutually one the Christ of the other, doing to our neighbour as Christ does to us. But now, in the doctrine of men, we are taught only to seek after merits, rewards, and things which are already ours, and we have made of Christ a taskmaster far more severe than Moses. The Blessed Virgin beyond all others, affords us an example of the same faith, in that she was purified according to the law of Moses, and like all other women, though she was bound by no such law and had no need of purification. Still she submitted to the law voluntarily and of free love, making herself like the rest of women, that she might not offend or throw contempt on them. She was not justified by doing this; but, being already justified, she did it freely and gratuitously. Thus ought our works too to be done, and not in order to be justified by them; for, being first justified by faith, we ought to do all our works freely and cheerfully for the sake of others.

St. Paul circumcised his disciple Timothy, not because he needed circumcision for his justification, but that he might not offend or contemn those Jews, weak in the faith, who had not yet been able to comprehend the liberty of faith. On the other hand, when they contemned liberty and urged that circumcision was necessary for justification, he resisted them, and would not allow Titus to be circumcised. For, as he would not offend or contemn any one’s weakness in faith, but yielded for the time to their will, so, again, he would not have the liberty of faith offended or contemned by hardened self-justifiers, but walked in a middle path, sparing the weak for the time, and always resisting the hardened, that he might convert all to the liberty of faith. On the same principle we ought to act, receiving those that are weak in the faith, but boldly resisting these hardened teachers of works, of whom we shall hereafter speak at more length.

Christ also, when His disciples were asked for the tribute money, asked of Peter whether the children of a king were not free from taxes. Peter agreed to this; yet Jesus commanded him to go to the sea, saying, "Lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them for Me and thee" (Matthew 17:27). This example is very much to our purpose; for here Christ calls Himself and His disciples free men and children of a King, in want of nothing; and yet He voluntarily submits and pays the tax. Just as far, then, as this work was necessary or useful to Christ for justification or salvation, so far do all His other works or those of His disciples avail for justification. They are really free and subsequent to justification, and only done to serve others and set them an example.

Such are the works which Paul inculcated, that Christians should be subject to principalities and powers and ready to every good work (Titus 3:1), not that they may be justified by these things--for they are already justified by faith--but that in liberty of spirit they may thus be the servants of others and subject to powers, obeying their will out of gratuitous love.

Such, too, ought to have been the works of all colleges, monasteries, and priests; every one doing the works of his own profession and state of life, not in order to be justified by them, but in order to bring his own body into subjection, as an example to others, who themselves also need to keep under their bodies, and also in order to accommodate himself to the will of others, out of free love. But we must always guard most carefully against any vain confidence or presumption of being justified, gaining merit, or being saved by these works, this being the part of faith alone, as I have

so often said.

Any man possessing this knowledge may easily keep clear of danger among those innumerable commands and precepts of the Pope, of bishops, of monasteries, of churches, of princes, and of magistrates, which some foolish pastors urge on us as being necessary for justification and salvation, calling them precepts of the Church, when they are not so at all. For the Christian freeman will speak thus: I will fast, I will pray, I will do this or that which is commanded me by men, not as having any need of these things for justification or salvation, but that I may thus comply with the will of the Pope, of the bishop, of such a community or such a magistrate, or of my neighbour as an example to him; for this cause I will do and suffer all things, just as Christ did and suffered much more for me, though He needed not at all to do so on His own account, and made Himself for my sake under the law, when He was not under the law. And although tyrants may do me violence or wrong in requiring obedience to these things, yet it will not hurt me to do them, so long as they are not done against God. From all this every man will be able to attain a sure judgment and faithful discrimination between all works and laws, and to know who are blind and foolish pastors, and who are true and good ones. For whatsoever work is not directed to the sole end either of keeping under the body, or of doing service to our neighbour--provided he require nothing contrary to the will of God--is no good or Christian work. Hence I greatly fear that at this day few or no colleges, monasteries, altars, or ecclesiastical functions are Christian ones; and the same may be said of fasts and special prayers to certain saints. I fear that in all these nothing is being sought but what is already ours; while we fancy that by these things our sins are purged away and salvation is attained, and thus utterly do away with Christian liberty. This comes from ignorance of Christian faith and liberty. This ignorance and this crushing of liberty are diligently promoted by the teaching of very many blind pastors, who stir up and urge the people to a zeal for these things, praising them and puffing them up with their indulgences, but never teaching faith. Now I would advise you, if you have any wish to pray, to fast, or to make foundations in churches, as they call it, to take care not to do so with the object of gaining any advantage, either temporal or eternal. You will thus wrong your faith, which alone bestows all things on you, and the increase of which, either by working or by suffering, is alone to be cared for. What you give, give freely and without price, that others may prosper and have increase from you and your goodness. Thus you will be a truly good man and a Christian. For what to you are your goods and your works, which are done over and above for the subjection of the body, since you have abundance for yourself through your faith, in which God has given you all things?

We give this rule: the good things which we have from God ought to flow from one to another and become common to all, so that every one of us may, as it were, put on his neighbour, and so behave towards him as if he were himself in his place. They flowed and do flow from Christ to us; He put us on, and acted for us as if He Himself were what we are. From us they flow to those who have need of them; so that my faith and righteousness ought to be laid down before God as a covering and intercession for the sins of my neighbour, which I am to take on myself, and so labour and endure servitude in them, as if they were my own; for thus has Christ done for us. This is true love and the genuine truth of Christian life. But only there is it true and genuine where there is true and genuine faith. Hence the Apostle attributes to charity this quality: that she seeketh not her own.

We conclude therefore that a Christian man does not live in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbour, or else is no Christian: in Christ by faith; in his neighbour by love. By faith he is carried upwards above himself to God, and by love he sinks back below himself to his neighbour, still always-abiding in God and His love, as Christ says, "Verily I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1:51).

Thus much concerning liberty, which, as you see, is a true and spiritual liberty, making our hearts free from all sins, laws, and commandments, as Paul says, "The law is not made for a righteous man" (1 Timothy 1:9), and one which surpasses all other external liberties, as far as heaven is above earth. May Christ make us to understand and preserve this liberty. Amen.

Finally, for the sake of those to whom nothing can be stated so well but that they misunderstand and distort it, we must add a word, in case they can understand even that. There are very many persons who, when they hear of this liberty of faith, straightway turn it into an occasion of licence. They think that everything is now lawful for them, and do not choose to show themselves free men and Christians in any other way than by their contempt and reprehension of ceremonies, of traditions, of human laws; as if they were Christians merely because they refuse to fast on stated days, or eat flesh when others fast, or omit the customary prayers; scoffing at the precepts of men, but utterly passing over all the rest that belongs to the Christian religion. On the other hand, they are most pertinaciously resisted by those who strive after salvation solely by their observance of and reverence for ceremonies, as if they would be saved merely because they fast on stated days, or abstain from flesh, or make formal prayers; talking loudly of the precepts of the Church and of the Fathers, and not caring a straw about those things which belong to our genuine faith. Both these parties are plainly culpable, in that, while they neglect matters which are of weight and necessary for salvation, they contend noisily about such as are without weight and not necessary.

How much more rightly does the Apostle Paul teach us to walk in the middle path, condemning either extreme and saying, "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth" (Romans 14:3)! You see here how the Apostle blames those who, not from religious feeling, but in mere contempt, neglect and rail at ceremonial observances, and teaches them not to despise, since this "knowledge puffeth up." Again, he teaches the pertinacious upholders of these things not to judge their opponents. For neither party observes towards the other that charity which edifieth. In this matter we must listen to Scripture, which teaches us to turn aside neither to the right hand nor to the left, but to follow those right precepts of the Lord which rejoice the heart. For just as a man is not righteous merely because he serves and is devoted to works and ceremonial rites, so neither will he be accounted righteous merely because he neglects and despises them.

It is not from works that we are set free by the faith of Christ, but from the belief in works, that is from foolishly presuming to seek justification through works. Faith redeems our consciences, makes them upright, and preserves them, since by it we recognise the truth that justification does not depend on our works, although good works neither can nor ought to be absent, just as we cannot exist without food and drink and all the functions of this mortal body. Still it is not on them that our justification is based, but on faith; and yet they ought not on that account to be despised or neglected. Thus in this world we are compelled by the needs of this bodily life; but we are not

hereby justified. "My kingdom is not hence, nor of this world," says Christ; but He does not say, "My kingdom is not here, nor in this world." Paul, too, says, "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh" (2 Corinthians 10:3), and "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Galatians 2:20). Thus our doings, life, and being, in works and ceremonies, are done from the necessities of this life, and with the motive of governing our bodies; but yet we are not justified by these things, but by the faith of the Son of God. The Christian must therefore walk in the middle path, and set these two classes of men before his eyes. He may meet with hardened and obstinate ceremonialists, who, like deaf adders, refuse to listen to the truth of liberty, and cry up, enjoin, and urge on us their ceremonies, as if they could justify us without faith. Such were the Jews of old, who would not understand, that they might act well. These men we must resist, do just the contrary to what they do, and be bold to give them offence, lest by this impious notion of theirs they should deceive many along with themselves. Before the eyes of these men it is expedient to eat flesh, to break fasts, and to do in behalf of the liberty of faith things which they hold to be the greatest sins. We must say of them, "Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind" (Matthew 15:14). In this way Paul also would not have Titus circumcised, though these men urged it; and Christ defended the Apostles, who had plucked ears of corn on the Sabbath day; and many like instances. Or else we may meet with simple-minded and ignorant persons, weak in the faith, as the Apostle calls them, who are as yet unable to apprehend that liberty of faith, even if willing to do so. These we must spare, lest they should be offended. We must bear with their infirmity, till they shall be more fully instructed. For since these men do not act thus from hardened malice, but only from weakness of faith, therefore, in order to avoid giving them offence, we must keep fasts and do other things which they consider necessary. This is required of us by charity, which injures no one, but serves all men. It is not the fault of these persons that they are weak, but that of their pastors, who by the snares and weapons of their own traditions have brought them into bondage and wounded their souls when they ought to have been set free and healed by the teaching of faith and liberty. Thus the Apostle says, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth" (1 Corinthians 8:13); and again, "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. It is evil for that man who eateth with offence" (Romans 14:14, Romans 14:20).

Thus, though we ought boldly to resist those teachers of tradition, and though the laws of the pontiffs, by which they make aggressions on the people of God, deserve sharp reproof, yet we must spare the timid crowd, who are held captive by the laws of those impious tyrants, till they are set free. Fight vigorously against the wolves, but on behalf of the sheep, not against the sheep. And this you may do by inveighing against the laws and lawgivers, and yet at the same time observing these laws with the weak, lest they be offended, until they shall themselves recognise the tyranny, and understand their own liberty. If you wish to use your liberty, do it secretly, as Paul says, "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God" (Romans 14:22). But take care not to use it in the presence of the weak. On the other hand, in the presence of tyrants and obstinate opposers, use your liberty in their despite, and with the utmost pertinacity, that they too may understand that they are tyrants, and their laws useless for justification, nay that they had no right to establish such laws.

Since then we cannot live in this world without ceremonies and works, since the hot and inexperienced period of youth has need of being restrained and protected by such bonds, and since every one is bound to keep under his own body by attention to these things, therefore the minister of Christ must be prudent and faithful in so ruling and teaching the people of Christ, in all these matters, that no root of bitterness may spring up among them, and so many be defiled, as Paul warned the Hebrews; that is, that they may not lose the faith, and begin to be defiled by a belief in works as the means of justification. This is a thing which easily happens, and defiles very many, unless faith be constantly inculcated along with works. It is impossible to avoid this evil, when faith is passed over in silence, and only the ordinances of men are taught, as has been done hitherto by the pestilent, impious, and soul-destroying traditions of our pontiffs and opinions of our theologians. An infinite number of souls have been drawn down to hell by these snares, so that you may recognise the work of antichrist. In brief, as poverty is imperilled amid riches, honesty amid business, humility amid honours, abstinence amid feasting, purity amid pleasures, so is justification by faith imperilled among ceremonies. Solomon says, "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?" (Proverbs 6:27). And yet as we must live among riches, business, honours, pleasures, feastings, so must we among ceremonies, that is among perils. Just as infant boys have the greatest need of being cherished in the bosoms and by the care of girls, that they may not die, and yet, when they are grown, there is peril to their salvation in living among girls, so inexperienced and fervid young men require to be kept in and restrained by the barriers of ceremonies, even were they of iron, lest their weak minds should rush headlong into vice. And yet it would be death to them to persevere in believing that they can be justified by these things. They must rather be taught that they have been thus imprisoned, not with the purpose of their being justified or gaining merit in this way, but in order that they might avoid wrong-doing, and be more easily instructed in that righteousness which is by faith, a thing which the headlong character of youth would not bear unless it were put under restraint.

Hence in the Christian life ceremonies are to be no otherwise looked upon than as builders and workmen look upon those preparations for building or working which are not made with any view of being permanent or anything in themselves, but only because without them there could be no building and no work. When the structure is completed, they are laid aside. Here you see that we do not contemn these preparations, but set the highest value on them; a belief in them we do contemn, because no one thinks that they constitute a real and permanent structure. If any one were so manifestly out of his senses as to have no other object in life but that of setting up these preparations with all possible expense, diligence, and perseverance, while he never thought of the structure itself, but pleased himself and made his boast of these useless preparations and props, should we not all pity his madness and think that, at the cost thus thrown away, some great building might have been raised?

Thus, too, we do not contemn works and ceremonies--nay, we set the highest value on them; but we contemn the belief in works, which no one should consider to constitute true righteousness, as do those hypocrites who employ and throw away their whole life in the pursuit of works, and yet never attain to that for the sake of which the works are done. As the Apostle says, they are "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). They appear to wish to build, they make preparations, and yet they never do build; and thus they continue in a show of godliness, but never attain to its power.

Meanwhile they please themselves with this zealous pursuit, and even dare to judge all others, whom they do not see adorned with such a glittering display of works; while, if they had been imbued with faith, they might have done great things for their own and others' salvation, at the same cost which they now waste in abuse of the gifts of God. But since human nature and natural reason, as they call it, are naturally superstitious, and quick to believe that justification can be attained by any laws or works proposed to them, and since nature is also exercised and confirmed in the same view by the practice of all earthly lawgivers, she can never of her own power free herself from this bondage to works, and come to a recognition of the liberty of faith.

We have therefore need to pray that God will lead us and make us taught of God, that is, ready to learn from God; and will Himself, as He has promised, write His law in our hearts; otherwise there is no hope for us. For unless He himself teach us inwardly this wisdom hidden in a mystery, nature cannot but condemn it and judge it to be heretical. She takes offence at it, and it seems folly to her, just as we see that it happened of old in the case of the prophets and Apostles, and just as blind and impious pontiffs, with their flatterers, do now in my case and that of those who are like me, upon whom, together with ourselves, may God at length have mercy, and lift up the light of His countenance upon them, that we may know His way upon earth and His saving health among all nations, who is blessed for evermore. Amen. In the year of the Lord 1520.

Chapter 38

04A.00. LUTHER'S LITTLE INSTRUCTION BOOK

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04A.01. Part 1

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS The Simple Way a Father Should Present Them to His Household
A. The First Commandment You must not have other gods.

Q. What does this mean?

A. We must fear, love, and trust God more than anything else.

B. The Second Commandment You must not misuse your God's name.

Q. What does this mean?

A. We must fear and love God, so that we will not use His name to curse, swear, cast a spell, lie or deceive, but will use it to call upon Him, pray to Him, praise Him and thank Him in all times of trouble.

C. The Third Commandment You must keep the Sabbath holy.

Q. What does this mean?

A. We must fear and love God, so that we will not look down on preaching or God's Word, but consider it holy, listen to it willingly, and learn it.

D. The Fourth Commandment You must honor your father and mother. (So that things will go well for you and you will live long on earth).

Q. What does this mean?

A. We must fear and love God, so that we will neither look down on our parents or superiors nor irritate them, but will honor them, serve them, obey them, love them and value them.

E. The Fifth Commandment You must not kill.

Q. What does this mean?

A. We must fear and love God, so that we will neither harm nor hurt our neighbor's body, but help him and care for him when he is ill.

F. The Sixth Commandment You must not commit adultery.

Q. What does this mean?

A. We must fear and love God, so that our words and actions will be clean and decent and so that everyone will love and honor their spouses.

G. The Seventh Commandment You must not steal.

Q. What does this mean?

A. We must fear and love God, so that we will neither take our neighbor's money or property, nor acquire it by fraud or by selling him poorly made products, but will help him improve and protect his property and career.

H. The Eighth Commandment You must not tell lies about your neighbor.

Q. What does this mean?

A. We must fear and love God, so that we will not deceive by lying, betraying, slandering or ruining our neighbor's reputation, but will defend him, say good things about him, and see the best side of everything he does.

I. The Ninth Commandment You must not desire your neighbor's house.

Q. What does this mean?

A. We must fear and love God, so that we will not attempt to trick our neighbor out of his inheritance or house, take it by pretending to have a right to it, etc. but help him to keep and improve it.

J. The Tenth Commandment You must not desire your neighbor's wife, servant, maid, animals or anything that belongs to him.

Q. What does this mean?

A. We must fear and love God, so that we will not release his cattle, take his employees from him or seduce his wife, but urge them to stay and do what they ought to do.

K. The Conclusion to the Commandments Q. What does God say to us about all these commandments?

A. This is what He says: "I am the Lord Your God. I am a jealous God. I plague the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who hate me with their ancestor's sin. But I make whole those who love me for a thousand generations."

Q. What does it mean?

A. God threatens to punish everyone who breaks these commandments. We should be afraid of His anger because of this and not violate such commandments. But He promises grace and all good things to those who keep such commandments. Because of this, we, too, should love Him, trust Him, and willingly do what His commandments require.

04A.02. Part 2

THE CREED The Simple Way a Father Should Present it to His Household I. THE FIRST ARTICLE: ON CREATION I believe in God the Almighty Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Q. What does this mean?

A. I believe that God created me, along with all creatures. He gave to me: body and soul, eyes, ears and all the other parts of my body, my mind and all my senses and preserves them as well. He gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and land, wife and children, fields, animals and all I own. Every day He abundantly provides everything I need to nourish this body and life. He protects me against all danger, shields and defends me from all evil. He does all this because of His pure, fatherly and divine goodness and His mercy, not because I've earned it or deserved it. For all of this, I must thank Him, praise Him, serve Him and obey Him. Yes, this is true!

II. THE SECOND ARTICLE: ON REDEMPTION And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried, descended to Hell, on the third day rose again from the dead, ascended to Heaven and sat down at the right hand of God the Almighty Father. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

Q. What does this mean?

A. I believe that Jesus Christ is truly God, born of the Father in eternity and also truly man, born of the Virgin Mary. He is my Lord! He redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, bought and won me from all sins, death and the authority of the Devil. It did not cost Him gold or silver, but His holy, precious blood, His innocent body — His death! Because of this, I am His very own, will live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him righteously, innocently and blessedly forever, just as He is risen from death, lives and reigns forever. Yes, this is true.

III. THE THIRD ARTICLE: ON BECOMING HOLY

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the community of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and an everlasting life. Amen.

Q. What does this mean?

A. I believe that I cannot come to my Lord Jesus Christ by my own intelligence or power. But the Holy Spirit call me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as He calls, gathers together, enlightens and makes holy the whole Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus in the one, true faith. In this Church, He generously forgives each day every sin committed by me and by every believer. On the last day, He will raise me and all the dead from the grave. He will give eternal life to me and to all who believe in Christ.

Yes, this is true!

04A.03. Part 3

THE LORD'S PRAYER THE OUR FATHER The Simple Way a Father Should Present it to His Household

I. INTRODUCTION Our Father, Who is in Heaven.

Q. What does this mean?

A. In this introduction, God invites us to believe that He is our real Father and we are His real children, so that we will pray with trust and complete confidence, in the same way beloved children approach their beloved Father with their requests.

II. THE FIRST REQUEST May Your name be holy.

Q. What does this mean?

A. Of course, God's name is holy in and of itself, but by this request, we pray that He will make it holy among us, too.

Q. How does this take place?

A. When God's Word is taught clearly and purely, and when we live holy lives as God's children based upon it. Help us, Heavenly Father, to do this! But anyone who teaches and lives by something other than God's Word defiles God's name among us. Protect us from this, Heavenly Father!

III. THE SECOND REQUEST Your Kingdom come.

Q. What does this mean?

A. Truly God's Kingdom comes by itself, without our prayer. But we pray in this request that it come to us as well.

Q. How does this happen?

A. When the Heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that we believe His holy Word by His grace and live godly lives here in this age and there in eternal life.

IV. THE THIRD REQUEST May Your will be accomplished, as it is Heaven, so may it be on Earth.

Q. What does this mean?

A. Truly, God's good and gracious will is accomplished without our prayer. But we pray in this request that is be accomplished among us as well.

Q. How does this happen?

A. When God destroys and interferes with every evil will and all evil advice, which will not allow God's Kingdom to come, such as the Devil's will, the world's will and will of our bodily desires. It also happens when God strengthens us by faith and by His Word and keeps living by them faithfully until the end of our lives. This is His will, good and full of grace.

V. THE FOURTH REQUEST Give us our daily bread today.

Q. What does this mean?

A. Truly, God gives daily bread to evil people, even without our prayer. But we pray in this request that He will help us realize this and receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

Q. What does "Daily Bread" mean?

A. Everything that nourishes our body and meets its needs, such as: Food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, yard, fields, cattle, money, possessions, a devout spouse, devout children, devout employees, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors and other things like these.

VI. THE FIFTH REQUEST And forgive our guilt, as we forgive those guilty of sinning against us.

Q. What does this mean?

A. We pray in this request that our Heavenly Father will neither pay attention to our sins nor refuse requests such as these because of our sins and because we are neither worthy nor deserve the things for which we pray. Yet He wants to give them all to us by His grace, because many times each day we sin and truly deserve only punishment. Because God does this, we will, of course, want to forgive from our hearts and willingly do good to those who sin against us.

VII. THE SIXTH REQUEST And lead us not into temptation.

Q. What does this mean?

A. God tempts no one, of course, but we pray in this request that God will protect us and save us, so that the Devil, the world and our bodily desires will neither deceive us nor seduce us into heresy, despair or other serious shame or vice, and so that we will win and be victorious in the end, even if they attack us.

VIII. THE SEVENTH REQUEST But set us free from the Evil One.

Q. What does this mean?

A. We pray in this request, as a summary, that our Father in Heaven will save us from every kind of evil that threatens body, soul, property and honor. We pray that when at last our final hour has come, He will grant us a blessed death, and, in His grace, bring us to Himself from this valley of tears.

IX. AMEN.

Q. What does this mean?

A. That I should be certain that such prayers are acceptable to the Father in Heaven and will be granted, that He Himself has commanded us to pray in this way and that He promises to answer us. Amen. Amen. This means: Yes, yes it will happen this way.

04A.04. Part 4

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM HOLY BAPTISM, THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM The Simple Way a Father Should Present it to His Household

I.

Q. WHAT IS BAPTISM?

A. Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water contained within God's command and united with God's Word.

Q. Which Word of God is this?

A. The one which our Lord Christ spoke in the last chapter of Matthew: "Go into all the world, teaching all heathen nations, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

II.

Q. WHAT DOES BAPTISM GIVE? WHAT GOOD IS IT?

A. It gives the forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the Devil, gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, just as God's words and promises declare.

Q. What are these words and promises of God?

A. Our Lord Christ spoke one of them in the last chapter of Mark: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; but whoever does not believe will be damned."

III.

Q. HOW CAN WATER DO SUCH GREAT THINGS?

A. Water doesn't make these things happen, of course. It is God's Word, which is with and in the water. Because, without God's Word, the water is plain water and not baptism. But with God's Word it is a Baptism, a grace-filled water of life, a bath of new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul said to Titus in the third chapter: "Through this bath of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit, which He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that we, justified by the same grace are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying."

IV.

Q. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF SUCH A WATER BAPTISM?

A. It means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance, and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, in turn, a new person daily come forth and rise from death again. He will live forever before God in righteousness and purity.

Q. Where is this written?

A. St. Paul says to the Romans in chapter six: “We are buried with Christ through Baptism into death, so that, in the same way Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, thus also must we walk in a new life.”+

04A.05. Part 5

HOW TO TEACH ONE TO CONFESS HOW ONE SHOULD TEACH THE UNEDUCATED TO CONFESS

I.

Q. WHAT IS CONFESSION?

A. Confession has two parts:

First, a person admits his sin Second, a person receives absolution or forgiveness from the confessor, as if from God Himself, without doubting it, but believing firmly that his sins are forgiven by God in Heaven through it.

II.

Q. WHICH SINS SHOULD PEOPLE CONFESS?

A. When speaking to God, we should plead guilty to all sins, even those we don’t know about, just as we do in the “Our Father,” but when speaking to the confessor, only the sins we know about, which we know about and feel in our hearts.

Q. Which are these?

A. Consider here your place in life according to the Ten Commandments. Are you a father? A mother? A son? A daughter? A husband? A wife? A servant? Are you disobedient, unfaithful or lazy? Have you hurt anyone with your words or actions? Have you stolen, neglected your duty, let things go or injured someone?

04A.06. Part 6

THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR The Simple Way a Father Should Present it to his Household

I.

Q. WHAT IS THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR?

A. It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under bread and wine for us Christians to eat and to drink, established by Christ Himself.

II.

Q. WHERE IS THAT WRITTEN?

A. The holy apostles Matthew, Mark and Luke and St. Paul write this: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the night on which He was betrayed, took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to His disciples and said: “Take! Eat! This is My body, which is given for you. Do this to remember Me!” In the same way He also took the cup after supper, gave thanks, gave it to them, and said: “Take and drink from it, all of you! This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you to forgive sins. This do, as often as you drink it, to remember Me!”

III.

Q. WHAT GOOD DOES THIS EATING AND DRINKING DO?

A. These words tell us: “Given for you” and “Shed for you to forgive sins.” Namely, that the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are given to us through these words in the sacrament. Because, where sins are forgiven, there is life and salvation as well.

IV.

Q. HOW CAN PHYSICAL EATING AND DRINKING DO SUCH GREAT THINGS?

A. Of course, eating and drinking do not do these things. These words, written here, do them: “given for you” and “shed for you to forgive sins.”

These words, along with physical eating and drinking are the important part of the sacrament. Anyone who believes these words has what they say and what they record, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

V.

Q. WHO, THEN, RECEIVES SUCH A SACRAMENT IN A WORTHY WAY?

A. Of course, fasting and other physical preparations are excellent disciplines for the body. But anyone who believes these words, “Given for you,” and “Shed for you to forgive sins,” is really worthy and well prepared. But whoever doubts or does not believe these words is not worthy and

is unprepared, because the words, “for you” demand a heart that fully believes.

04A.07. Appendix

MORNING & EVENING DEVOTIONS

DEVOTIONS How a Father Should Teach His Household to Conduct Morning and Evening Devotions.

MORNING DEVOTIONS As soon as you get out of bed in the morning, you should bless yourself with the sign of the Holy Cross and say: May the will of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be done!

Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, say the creed and pray the Lord's Prayer. If you wish, you may then pray this little prayer as well: My Heavenly Father, I thank You, through Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, that You kept me safe from all evil and danger last night. Save me, I pray, today as well, from every evil and sin, so that all I do and the way that I live will please you. I put myself in your care, body and soul and all that I have. Let Your holy Angels be with me, so that the evil enemy will not gain power over me. Amen.

After that, with joy go about your work and perhaps sing a song inspired by the Ten Commandments or your own thoughts. THE EVENING DEVOTIONS When you go to bed in the evening, you should bless yourself with the sign of the Holy Cross and say: May the will of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be done!

Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, say the creed and pray the Lord's Prayer. If you wish, then you may pray this little prayer as well: My Heavenly Father, I thank You, through Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, that You have protected me, by Your grace. Forgive, I pray, all my sins and the evil I have done. Protect me, by Your grace, tonight. I put myself in your care, body and soul and all that I have. Let Your holy angels be with me, so that the evil enemy will not gain power over me. Amen.

After this, go to sleep immediately with joy.

How a Father Should Teach His Household to say Grace and Return Thanks at Meals: The children and servants should come to the table modestly and with folded hands and say:

All eyes look to you, O Lord, and You give everyone food at the right time.

You open Your generous hands and satisfy the hunger of all living things with what they desire.

NOTE: "What they desire" means that all animals get so much to eat, that they are happy and cheerful. Because, worry and greed interferes with such desires.

After this, pray the Lord's Prayer and the following prayer:

Lord God, Heavenly Father, bless us and these gifts, which we receive from Your generous hand, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

05.0.1. Living as Husband and Wife

Martin Luther

Living as Husband and Wife (Vom Ehelichen Leben. WA 10 II, 275-305)

05.1. Prayer

Prayer

Jesus

How I dread preaching on the estate of marriage! I am reluctant to do it because I am afraid if I once get really involved in the subject it will make a lot of work for me and for others. The shameful confusion wrought by the accursed papal law has occasioned so much distress, and the lax authority of both the spiritual and the temporal swords has given rise to so many dreadful abuses and false situations, that I would much prefer neither to look into the matter nor to hear of it. But timidity is no help in an emergency; I must proceed. I must try to instruct poor bewildered consciences, and take up the matter boldly. This sermon is divided into three parts.

05.2. Part One

Part One

05.3. Sex life is created by God

Sex life is created by God In the first part we shall consider which persons may enter into marriage with one another. In order to proceed aright let us direct our attention to Genesis 1:1-31 [Genesis 1:27], “So God created man . . . male and female he created them.” From this passage we may be assured that God divided mankind into two classes, namely, male and female, or a he and a she. This was so pleasing to him that he himself called it a good creation [Genesis 1:31]. Therefore, each one of us must have the kind of body God has created for us. I cannot make myself a woman, nor can you make yourself a man; we do not have that power. But we are exactly as he created us: I a man and you a woman. Moreover, he wills to have his excellent handiwork honored as his divine creation, and not despised. The man is not to despise or scoff at the woman or her body, nor the woman the man. But each should honor the other’s image and body as a divine and good creation that is well-pleasing unto God himself. In the second place, after God had made man and woman he blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply” [Genesis 1:28]. From this passage we may be assured that man and woman should and must come together in order to multiply. Now this ordinance is just as inflexible as the first, and no more to be despised and made fun of than the other, since God gives it his blessing and does something over and above the act of creation. Hence, as it is not within my power not to be a man, so it is not my prerogative to be without a woman. Again, as it is not in your power not to be a woman, so it is not your prerogative to be without a man. For it is not a matter of free choice or decision but a natural and necessary thing, that whatever is a man must have a woman and whatever is a woman must have a man. For this word which God speaks, “Be fruitful and multiply,” is not a command. It is more than a command, namely, a divine ordinance which it is not our prerogative to hinder or ignore. Rather, it is just as necessary as the fact that I am a man, and more necessary than sleeping and waking, eating and drinking, and emptying the bowels and bladder. It is a nature and disposition just as innate as the organs involved in it. Therefore, just as God does not command anyone to be a man or a woman but creates them the way they have to be, so he does not command them to multiply but creates them so that they have to multiply. And wherever men try to resist this, it remains irresistible nonetheless and goes its way through fornication, adultery, and secret sins, for this is a matter of nature and not of choice. In the third place, from this ordinance of creation God has himself exempted three categories of men, saying in Matthew 19:1-30 [Matthew 19:12], “There are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.” Apart from these three groups, let no man presume to be without a spouse. And whoever does not fall within one of these three categories should not consider anything except the estate of marriage. Otherwise it is simply impossible for you to remain righteous. For the Word of God which created you and said, “Be fruitful and multiply,” abides and rules within you; you can by no means ignore it, or you will be bound to commit heinous sins without end.

Don’t let yourself be fooled on this score, even if you should make ten oaths, vows, covenants, and adamantine or ironclad pledges. For as you cannot solemnly promise that you will not be a

man or a woman (and if you should make such a promise it would be foolishness and of no avail since you cannot make yourself something other than what you are), so you cannot promise that you will not produce seed or multiply, unless you belong to one of the three categories mentioned above. And should you make such a promise, it too would be foolishness and of no avail, for to produce seed and to multiply is a matter of God's ordinance, not your power. From this you can now see the extent of the validity of all cloister vows. No vow of any youth or maiden is valid before God, except that of a person in one of the three categories which God alone has himself excepted. Therefore, priests, monks, and nuns are duty-bound to forsake their vows whenever they find that God's ordinance to produce seed and to multiply is powerful and strong within them. They have no power by any authority, law, command, or vow to hinder this which God has created within them. If they do hinder it, however, you may be sure that they will not remain pure but inevitably besmirch themselves with secret sins or fornication. For they are simply incapable of resisting the word and ordinance of God within them. Matters will take their course as God has ordained. As to the first category, which Christ calls "eunuchs who have been so from birth," these are the ones whom men call impotent, who are by nature not equipped to produce seed and multiply because they are physically frigid or weak or have some other bodily deficiency which makes them unfit for the estate of marriage. Such cases occur among both men and women. These we need not take into account, for God has himself exempted them and so formed them that the blessing of being able to multiply has not come to them. The injunction, "Be fruitful and multiply," does not apply to them; just as when God creates a person crippled or blind, that person is not obligated to walk or see, because he cannot.

I once wrote down some advice concerning such persons for those who hear confession. It related to those cases where a husband or wife comes and wants to learn what he should do: his spouse is unable to fulfill the conjugal duty, yet he cannot get along without it because he finds that God's ordinance to multiply is still in force within him. Here they have accused me of teaching that when a husband is unable to satisfy his wife's sexual desire she should run to somebody else. Let the topsy-turvy liars spread their lies. The words of Christ and his apostles were turned upside down; should they not also turn my words topsy-turvy? To whose detriment it will be they shall surely find out.

What I said was this: if a woman who is fit for marriage has a husband who is not, and she is unable openly to take unto herself another – and unwilling, too, to do anything dishonorable since the pope in such a case demands without cause abundant testimony and evidence, she should say to her husband, "Look, my dear husband, you are unable to fulfill your conjugal duty toward me; you have cheated me out of my maidenhood and even imperiled my honor and my soul's salvation; in the sight of God there is no real marriage between us. Grant me the privilege of contracting a secret marriage with your brother or closest relative, and you retain the title of husband so that your property will not fall to strangers. Consent to being betrayed voluntarily by me, as you have betrayed me without my consent."

I stated further that the husband is obligated to consent to such an arrangement and thus to provide for her the conjugal duty and children, and that if he refuses to do so she should secretly flee from him to some other country and there contract a marriage. I gave this advice at a time when I was still timid. However, I should like now to give sounder advice in the matter, and take a firmer grip on the wool of a man who thus makes a fool of his wife. The same principle would apply

if the circumstances were reversed, although this happens less frequently in the case of wives than of husbands. It will not do to lead one's fellowman around by the nose so wantonly in matters of such great import involving his body, goods, honor, and salvation. He has to be told to make it right. The second category, those who Christ says "have been made eunuchs by men" [Matthew 19:12], the castrates, are an unhappy lot, for though they are not equipped for marriage, they are nevertheless not free from evil desire. They seek the company of women more than before and are quite effeminate. It is with them as the proverb says, "He who cannot sing always insists upon singing." Thus, they are plagued with a desire for women, but are unable to consummate their desire. Let us pass them by also; for they too are set apart from the natural ordinance to be fruitful and multiply, though only by an act of violence. The third category consists of those spiritually rich and exalted persons, bridled by the grace of God, who are equipped for marriage by nature and physical capacity and nevertheless voluntarily remain celibate. These put it this way, "I could marry if I wish, I am capable of it. But it does not attract me. I would rather work on the kingdom of heaven, 1:e., the gospel, and beget spiritual children." Such persons are rare, not one in a thousand, for they are a special miracle of God. No one should venture on such a life unless he be especially called by God, like Jeremiah [Jeremiah 16:2], or unless he finds God's grace to be so powerful within him that the divine injunction, "Be fruitful and multiply," has no place in him.

Beyond these three categories, however, the devil working through men has been smarter than God, and found more people whom he has withdrawn from the divine and natural ordinance, namely, those who are enmeshed in a spider web of human commands and vows and are then locked up behind a mass of iron bolts and bars. This is a fourth way of resisting nature so that, contrary to God's implanted ordinance and disposition, it does not produce seed and multiply – as if it were within our power and discretion to possess virginity as we do shoes and clothing! If men are really able to resist God's word and creation with iron bars and bolts, I should hope that we would also set up iron bars so thick and massive that women would turn into men or people into sticks and stones. It is the devil who thus perpetrates his monkey-tricks on the poor creature, and so gives vent to his wrath.

05.4. Whom you are allowed to marry

Whom you are allowed to marry In the fourth place, let us now consider which persons may enter into marriage with one another, so that you may see it is not my pleasure or desire that a marriage be broken and husband and wife separated. The pope in his canon law has thought up eighteen distinct reasons for preventing or dissolving a marriage, nearly all of which I reject and condemn. Indeed, the pope himself does not adhere to them so strictly or firmly but what one can rescind any of them with gold and silver. Actually, they were only invented in order to be a net for gold and a noose for the soul, 2 Peter 2:1-22 [2 Peter 2:14]. In order to expose their folly we will take a look at all eighteen of them in turn. The first impediment is blood relationship. Here they have forbidden marriage up to the third and fourth degrees of consanguinity. If in this situation you have no money, then even though God freely permits it you must nevertheless not take in marriage your female relative within the third and fourth degrees, or you must put her away if you have already married her. But if you have the money, such a marriage is permitted. Those hucksters offer for sale women who never have been their own. So that you can defend yourself against this tyranny, I will now list for you the persons whom God has forbidden, Leviticus 18:1-30 [Leviticus 18:6-13], namely, my mother, my stepmother; my sister, my stepsister; my child's daughter or stepdaughter; my father's sister; my mother's sister. I am forbidden to marry any of these persons. From this it follows that first cousins may contract a godly and Christian marriage, and that I may marry my stepmother's sister, my father's stepsister, or my mother's stepsister. Further, I may marry the daughter of my brother or sister, just as Abraham married Sarah. None of these persons is forbidden by God, for God does not calculate according to degrees, as the jurists do, but enumerates directly specific persons. Otherwise, since my father's sister and my brother's daughter are related to me in the same degree, I would have to say either that I cannot marry my brother's daughter or that I may also marry my father's sister. Now God has forbidden my father's sister, but he has not forbidden my brother's daughter, although both are related to me in the same degree. We also find in Scripture that with respect to various stepsisters there were not such strict prohibitions. For Tamar, Absalom's sister, thought she could have married her stepbrother Amnon, 2 Samuel 13:1-39 [2 Samuel 13:13]. The second impediment is affinity or relationship through marriage. Here too they have set up four degrees, so that after my wife's death I may not marry into her blood relationship, where my marriage extends up to the third and fourth degrees - unless money comes to my rescue! But God has forbidden only these persons, namely, my father's brother's wife; my son's wife; my brother's wife; my stepdaughter; the child of my stepson or stepdaughter; my wife's sister while my wife is yet alive [Leviticus 18:14-18]. I may not marry any of these persons; but I may marry any others, and without putting up any money for the privilege. For example, I may marry the sister of my deceased wife or fiancée; the daughter of my wife's brother; the daughter of my wife's cousin; and any of my wife's nieces, aunts, or cousins. In the Old Testament, if a brother died without leaving an heir, his widow was required to marry his closest relative in order to provide her deceased husband with an heir [Deuteronomy 25:5-9]. This is no longer commanded, but neither is it forbidden. The third impediment is spiritual relationship. If I sponsor a girl at baptism or confirmation, then neither I nor my son may marry her, or her mother,

or her sister - unless an appropriate and substantial sum of money is forthcoming! This is nothing but pure farce and foolishness, concocted for the sake of money and to befuddle consciences. Just tell me this: isn't it a greater thing for me to be baptized myself than merely to act as sponsor to another? Then I must be forbidden to marry any Christian woman, since all baptized women are the spiritual sisters of all baptized men by virtue of their common baptism, sacrament, faith, Spirit, Lord, God, and eternal heritage [Ephesians 4:4-6].

Why does not the pope also forbid a man to retain his wife if he teaches her the gospel? For whoever teaches another becomes that person's spiritual father. St. Paul boasts in 1 Corinthians 4:1-21 [1 Corinthians 4:15] that he is the father of all of them, saying, "I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel." According to this he could not have taken a wife in Corinth; neither could any apostle in the whole world have taken a wife from among those whom he taught and baptized. So away with this foolishness; take as your spouse whomsoever you please, whether it be godparent, godchild, or the daughter or sister of a sponsor, or whoever it may be, and disregard these artificial, money-seeking impediments. If you are not prevented from marrying a girl by the fact that she is a Christian, then do not let yourself be prevented by the fact that you baptized her, taught her, or acted as her sponsor. In particular, avoid that monkey business, confirmation, which is really a fanciful deception. I would permit confirmation as long as it is understood that God knows nothing of it, and has said nothing about it, and that what the bishops claim for it is untrue. They mock our God when they say that it is one of God's sacraments, for it is a purely human contrivance. The fourth impediment is legal kinship; that is, when an unrelated child is adopted as son or daughter it may not later marry a child born of its adoptive parents, that is, one who is by law its own brother or sister. This is another worthless human invention. Therefore, if you so desire, go ahead and marry anyway. In the sight of God this adopted person is neither your mother nor your sister, since there is no blood relationship. She does work in the kitchen, however, and supplements the income; this is why she has been placed on the forbidden list! The fifth impediment is unbelief; that is, I may not marry a Turk, a Jew, or a heretic. I marvel that the blasphemous tyrants are not in their hearts ashamed to place themselves in such direct contradiction to the clear text of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:1-40 [1 Corinthians 7:12-13], where he says, "If a heathen wife or husband consents to live with a Christian spouse, the Christian should not get a divorce:" And St. Peter, in 1 Peter 3:1-22 [1 Peter 3:1], says that Christian wives should behave so well that they thereby convert their non-Christian husbands; as did Monica, the mother of St. Augustine.

Know therefore that marriage is an outward, bodily thing, like any other worldly undertaking. Just as I may eat, drink, sleep, walk, ride with, buy from, speak to, and deal with a heathen, Jew, Turk, or heretic, so I may also marry and continue in wedlock with him. Pay no attention to the precepts of those fools who forbid it. You will find plenty of Christians – and indeed the greater part of them – who are worse in their secret unbelief than any Jew, heathen, Turk, or heretic. A heathen is just as much a man or a woman – God's good creation – as St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. Lucy, not to speak of a slack and spurious Christian. The sixth impediment is crime. They are not in agreement as to how many instances of this impediment they should devise. However, there are actually these three: if someone lies with a girl, he may not thereafter marry her sister or her aunt, niece, or cousin; again, whoever commits adultery with a woman may not marry her after her husband's death; again, if a wife (or husband) should murder her spouse for love of another, she may not

subsequently marry the loved one. Here it rains fools upon fools. Don't you believe them, and don't be taken in by them; they are under the devil's whip. Sins and crimes should be punished, but with other penalties, not by forbidding marriage. Therefore, no sin or crime is an impediment to marriage. David committed adultery with Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, and had her husband killed besides. He was guilty of both crimes; still he took her to wife and begot King Solomon by her [2 Samuel 11:1-27] – and without giving any money to the pope!

I must pursue this subject a bit further. These wise guys posit the hypothetical case of a man who sins with his wife's mother or sister. Had this happened before the marriage it would have been a crime which would prevent and break up the proposed marriage. Since it happened subsequent to the marriage, however, for the sake of the wife – who is innocent in the matter – the marriage may not be dissolved. Nevertheless, the husband's punishment is to be that he shall live with his wife but have no power to demand of her the conjugal duty. See what the devil through his fools does with the estate of marriage! He puts husband and wife together, and then says, "Be neither man nor woman." As well put fire and straw together and bid them not to burn! If one were to impose upon the pope a command one-tenth as hard as this, how he would rage and storm, and howl about unlawful authority! Away with the big fools. You just let marriage remain free, as God instituted it. Punish sins and crimes with other penalties, not through marriage and fresh sins. The seventh impediment they call public decorum, respectability. For example, if my fiancée should die before we consummate the marriage, I may not marry any relative of hers up to the fourth degree, since the pope thinks and obviously dreams that it is decent and respectable for me to refrain from so doing – unless I put up the money, in which case the impediment of public decorum vanishes. Now you have heard a moment ago that after my wife's death I may marry her sister or any of her relatives except for her mother and her daughter. You stick to this, and let the fools go their way. The eighth impediment is a solemn vow, for example where someone has taken the vow of chastity, either in or out of the cloister. Here I offer this advice: if you would like to take a wise vow, then vow not to bite off your own nose; you can keep that vow. If you have already taken the monastic vow, however, then, as you have just heard, you should yourself consider whether you belong in those three categories which God has singled out. If you do not feel that you belong there, then let the vows and the cloister go. Renew your natural companionships without delay and get married, for your vow is contrary to God and has no validity, and say, "I have promised that which I do not have and which is not mine." The ninth impediment is error, as if I had been wed to Catherine but Barbara lay down with me, as happened to Jacob with Leah and Rachel [Genesis 29:23-25]. One may have such a marriage dissolved and take the other to wife. The tenth impediment is condition of servitude. When I marry one who is supposed to be free and it turns out later that she is a serf, this marriage too is null and void. However, I hold that if there were Christian love the husband could easily adjust both of these impediments so that no great distress would be occasioned. Furthermore, such cases never occur today, or only rarely, and both might well be combined in one category: error. The eleventh impediment is holy orders, namely, that the tonsure and sacred oil are so potent that they devour marriage and unsex a man. For this reason a subdeacon, a deacon, and a priest have to forego marriage, although St. Paul commanded that they may and should be married, 2 Timothy 3:1-17 [1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 3:12], Titus 1:1-16 [Titus 1:6]. But I have elsewhere written so much about this that there is no need to repeat it here. Their folly has been sufficiently exposed; how much help this impediment has been to those in holy orders is obvious to all. The twelfth impediment is coercion, that is, when I have to take Grete

to be my wife and am coerced into it either by parents or by governmental authority. That is to be sure no marriage in the sight of God. However, such a person should not admit the coercion and leave the country on account of it, thus betraying the girl or making a fool of her, for you are not excused by the fact that you were coerced into it. You should not allow yourself to be coerced into injuring your neighbor but should yield your life rather than act contrary to love. You would not want anybody to injure you, whether he was acting under coercion or not. For this reason I could not declare safe in the sight of God a man who leaves his wife for such a cause. My dear fellow, if someone should compel you to rob me or kill me, would it therefore be right? Why do you yield to a coercion which compels you to violate God's commandment and harm your neighbor? I would freely absolve the girl however, for, as we will hear later, you would be leaving her through no fault of her own.

How about a situation where a man is so attached to a girl that she is bestowed upon him at the point of a gun? Does the principle of coercion apply here? It does not, because the girl understands that coercion is involved, and is therefore not being deceived. In this case it is indeed proper that he be compelled to keep her, because of the fact that he has ruined her. For Moses wrote that whoever lies with a girl shall keep her or, in the event that her father is unwilling, pay money in accordance with her father's demand, Exodus 22:1-31 [Exodus 22:16-17]. The thirteenth impediment is betrothal, that is, if I am engaged to one girl but then take another to wife. This is a widespread and common practice in which many different solutions have also been attempted. In the first place, if such an engagement occurs without the knowledge and consent of the father and mother, or of the guardians, then let the [fiancée's] father decide which girl is to remain as the wife. If she is betrayed it is her own fault, for she should know that a child is supposed to be subordinate and obedient to its father, and not become engaged without his knowledge. In this way, obedience to parental authority will put a stop to all these secret engagements which occasion such great unhappiness. Where this course is not followed, however, I am of the opinion that the man should stick to the first girl. For having given himself to her he no longer belongs to himself. He was therefore incapable of promising to the second girl something that already belonged to the first and was not his own.

If he does so nonetheless and carries on to the point where he begets children by her, then he should stick with her. For she too has been betrayed, and would suffer even greater injury than the first girl were he to leave her. He has therefore sinned against them both. The first girl, however, is able to recover from the injury done her because she is yet without children. She should therefore out of love yield to the second girl and marry someone else; she is free from the man because he jilted her and gave himself to another. The man himself though should be made to suffer punishment and make amends to the first girl, for what he gave away really belonged to her. The fourteenth impediment is the one touched on already, when a husband or wife is unfit for marriage. Among these eighteen impediments this one is the only sound reason for dissolving a marriage. Yet it is hedged about by so many laws that it is difficult to accomplish with the ecclesiastical tyrants.

There are still four more impediments, such as episcopal prohibition, restricted times, custom, and defective eyesight and hearing. It is needless to discuss them here. It is a dirty rotten business that a bishop should forbid me a wife or specify the times when I may marry, or that a blind and dumb person should not be allowed to enter into wedlock. So much then for this foolishness at present in

the first part.

(The sixth commandment)

(Lucas Cranach – The Ten Commandments)

05.5. Part Two

Part Two

05.6. Divorce and new marriage

Divorce and new marriage In the second part, we shall consider which persons may be divorced. I know of three grounds for divorce. The first, which has just been mentioned and was discussed above, is the situation in which the husband or wife is not equipped for marriage because of bodily or natural deficiencies of any sort. Of this enough has already been said. The second ground is adultery. The popes have kept silent about this; therefore we must hear Christ, Matthew 19:1-30 [Matthew 19:3-9]. When the Jews asked him whether a husband might divorce his wife for any reason, he answered, "'Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one"? What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.' They said to him, 'Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?' He said to them, 'For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.'"

Here you see that in the case of adultery Christ permits the divorce of husband and wife, so that the innocent person may remarry. For in saying that he commits adultery who marries another after divorcing his wife, "except for unchastity," Christ is making it quite clear that he who divorces his wife on account of unchastity and then marries another does not commit adultery. The Jews, however, were divorcing their wives for all kinds of reasons whenever they saw fit, even though no unchastity was involved. That covers so much ground that they themselves thought it was going too far. They therefore inquired of Christ whether it was right; they were tempting him to see what he would say concerning the law of Moses.

Now in the law of Moses God established two types of governments; he gave two types of commandments. Some are spiritual, teaching righteousness in the sight of God, such as love and obedience; people who obeyed these commandments did not thrust away their wives and never made use of certificates of divorce, but tolerated and endured their wives' conduct. Others are worldly, however, drawn up for the sake of those who do not live up to the spiritual commandments, in order to place a limit upon their misbehavior and prevent them from doing worse and acting wholly on the basis of their own maliciousness. Accordingly, he commanded them, if they could not endure their wives, that they should not put them to death or harm them too severely, but rather dismiss them with a certificate of divorce. This law, therefore, does not apply to Christians, who are supposed to live in the spiritual government. In the case of some who live with their wives in an un-Christian fashion, however, it would still be a good thing to permit them to use this law, just so they are no longer regarded as Christians, which after all they really are not.

Thus it is that on the grounds of adultery one person may leave the other, as Solomon also says in Proverbs 18:1-24, "He that keepeth an adulteress is a fool." We have an example of this in Joseph too. In Matthew 1:1-25 [Matthew 1:19] the gospel writer praises him as just because he did not put

his wife to shame when he found that she was with child, but was minded to divorce her quietly. By this we are told plainly enough that it is praiseworthy to divorce an adulterous wife. If the adultery is clandestine, of course, the husband has the right to follow either of two courses. First, he may rebuke his wife privately and in a brotherly fashion, and keep her if she will mend her ways. Second, he may divorce her, as Joseph wished to do. The same principle applies in the case of a wife with an adulterous husband. These two types of discipline are both Christian and laudable. But a public divorce, whereby one is enabled to remarry, must take place through the investigation and decision of the civil authority so that the adultery may be manifest to all – or, if the civil authority refuses to act, with the knowledge of the congregation, again in order that it may not be left to each one to allege anything he pleases as a ground for divorce.

You may ask: What is to become of the other party if he too is perhaps unable to lead a chaste life? Answer: It was for this reason that God commanded in the law [Deuteronomy 22:22-24] that adulterers be stoned, that they might not have to face this question. The temporal sword and government should therefore still put adulterers to death, for whoever commits adultery has in fact himself already departed and is considered as one dead. Therefore, the other may remarry just as though his spouse had died, if it is his intention to insist on his rights and not show mercy to the guilty party. Where the government is negligent and lax, however, and fails to inflict the death penalty, the adulterer may betake himself to a far country and there remarry if he is unable to remain continent. But it would be better to put him to death, lest a bad example be set.

Some may find fault with this solution and contend that thereby license and opportunity is afforded all wicked husbands and wives to desert their spouses and remarry in a foreign country. Answer: Can I help it? The blame rests with the government. Why do they not put adulterers to death? Then I would not need to give such advice. Between two evils one is always the lesser, in this case allowing the adulterer to remarry in a distant land in order to avoid fornication. And I think he would be safer also in the sight of God, because he has been allowed to live and yet is unable to remain continent. If others also, however, following this example desert their spouses, let them go. They have no excuse such as the adulterer has, for they are neither driven nor compelled. God and their own conscience will catch up to them in due time. Who can prevent all wickedness? Where the government fails to inflict the death penalty and the one spouse wishes to retain the other, the guilty one should still in Christian fashion be publicly rebuked and caused to make amends according to the gospel, after the manner provided for the rebuking of all other manifest sins, Matthew 18:1-35 [Matthew 18:15-17]. For there are no more than these three forms of discipline on earth among men: private and brotherly, in public before the congregation according to the gospel, and that inflicted by the civil government. The third case for divorce is that in which one of the parties deprives and avoids the other, refusing to fulfill the conjugal duty or to live with the other person. For example, one finds many a stubborn wife like that who will not give in, and who cares not a whit whether her husband falls into the sin of unchastity ten times over. Here it is time for the husband to say, “If you will not, another will; the maid will come if the wife will not.” Only first the husband should admonish and warn his wife two or three times, and let the situation be known to others so that her stubbornness becomes a matter of common knowledge and is rebuked before the congregation. If she still refuses, get rid of her; take an Esther and let Vashti go, as King Ahasuerus did [Esther 1:12-22; Esther 2:1-17].

Here you should be guided by the words of St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 7:1-40 [1 Corinthians 7:4-5], “The husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does; likewise the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does. Do not deprive each other, except by agreement,” etc. Notice that St. Paul forbids either party to deprive the other, for by the marriage vow each submits his body to the other in conjugal duty. When one resists the other and refuses the conjugal duty she is robbing the other of the body she had bestowed upon him. This is really contrary to marriage, and dissolves the marriage. For this reason the civil government must compel the wife, or put her to death. If the government fails to act, the husband must reason that his wife has been stolen away and slain by robbers; he must seek another. We would certainly have to accept it if someone’s life were taken from him. Why then should we not also accept it if a wife steals herself away from her husband, or is stolen away by others? In addition to these three grounds for divorce there is one more which would justify the sundering of husband and wife, but only in such a way that they must both refrain from remarrying or else become reconciled. This is the case where husband and wife cannot get along together for some reason other than the matter of the conjugal duty. St. Paul speaks of this in 1 Corinthians 7:1-40 [1 Corinthians 7:10-11], “Not I but the Lord gives charge to the married that the wife should not separate from her husband. But if she does, let her remain single, or else be reconciled to her husband. Likewise, the husband should not divorce his wife.” Solomon complains much in the Proverbs about such wives, and says he has found a woman more bitter than death [Ecclesiastes 7:26]. One may also find a rude, brutal, and unbearable husband.

Now if one of the parties were endowed with Christian fortitude and could endure the other’s ill behavior, that would doubtless be a wonderfully blessed cross and a right way to heaven. For an evil spouse, in a manner of speaking, fulfils the devil’s function and sweeps clean him who is able to recognize and bear it. If he cannot, however, let him divorce her before he does anything worse, and remain unmarried for the rest of his days. Should he try to say that the blame rests not upon him but upon his spouse, and therefore try to marry another, this will not do, for he is under obligation to endure evil, or to be released from his cross only by God, since the conjugal duty has not been denied him. Here the proverb applies, “He who wants a fire must endure the smoke.”

What about a situation where one’s wife is an invalid and has therefore become incapable of fulfilling the conjugal duty? May he not take another to wife? By no means. Let him serve the Lord in the person of the invalid and await His good pleasure. Consider that in this invalid God has provided your household with a healing balm by which you are to gain heaven. Blessed and twice blessed are you when you recognize such a gift of grace and therefore serve your invalid wife for God’s sake. But you may say: I am unable to remain continent. That is a lie. If you will earnestly serve your invalid wife, recognize that God has placed this burden upon you, and give thanks to him, then you may leave matters in his care. He will surely grant you grace, that you will not have to bear more than you are able. He is far too faithful to deprive you of your wife through illness without at the same time subduing your carnal desire, if you will but faithfully serve your invalid wife.

05.7. Part Three

Part Three

05.8. Living as husband and wife

Living as husband and wife In the third part, in order that we may say something about the estate of marriage which will be conducive toward the soul's salvation, we shall now consider how to live a Christian and godly life in that estate. I will pass over in silence the matter of the conjugal duty, the granting and the withholding of it, since some filth-preachers have been shameless enough in this matter to rouse our disgust. Some of them designate special times for this, and exclude holy nights and women who are pregnant. I will leave this as St. Paul left it when he said in 1 Corinthians 7:1-40 [1 Corinthians 7:9], "It is better to marry than to burn;" and again [in 1 Corinthians 7:2], "To avoid immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband." Although Christian married folk should not permit themselves to be governed by their bodies in the passion of lust, as Paul writes to the Thessalonians [1 Thessalonians 4:5], nevertheless each one must examine himself so that by his abstention he does not expose himself to the danger of fornication and other sins. Neither should he pay any attention to holy days or work days, or other physical considerations.

What we would speak most of is the fact that the estate of marriage has universally fallen into such awful disrepute. There are many pagan books which treat of nothing but the depravity of womankind and the unhappiness of the estate of marriage, such that some have thought that even if Wisdom itself were a woman one should not marry. A Roman official was once supposed to encourage young men to take wives (because the country was in need of a large population on account of its incessant wars). Among other things he said to them, "My dear young men, if we could only live without women we would be spared a great deal of annoyance; but since we cannot do without them, take to yourselves wives," etc. He was criticized by some on the ground that his words were ill-considered and would only serve to discourage the young men. Others, on the contrary, said that because Metellus was a brave man he had spoken rightly, for an honorable man should speak the truth without fear or hypocrisy. So they concluded that woman is a necessary evil, and that no household can be without such an evil. These are the words of blind heathen, who are ignorant of the fact that man and woman are God's creation. They blaspheme his work, as if man and woman just came into being spontaneously! I imagine that if women were to write books they would say exactly the same thing about men. What they have failed to set down in writing, however, they express with their grumbling and complaining whenever they get together.

Every day one encounters parents who forget their former misery because, like the mouse, they have now had their fill. They deter their children from marriage but entice them into priesthood and nunnery, citing the trials and troubles of married life. Thus do they bring their own children home to the devil, as we daily observe; they provide them with ease for the body and hell for the soul.

Since God had to suffer such disdain of his work from the pagans, he therefore also gave them their reward, of which Paul writes in Romans 1:1-32 [Romans 1:24-28], and allowed them to fall into immorality and a stream of uncleanness until they henceforth carnally abused not women but

boys and dumb beasts. Even their women carnally abused themselves and each other. Because they blasphemed the work of God, he gave them up to a base mind, of which the books of the pagans are full, most shamelessly crammed full. In order that we may not proceed as blindly, but rather conduct ourselves in a Christian manner, hold fast first of all to this, that man and woman are the work of God. Keep a tight rein on your heart and your lips; do not criticize his work, or call that evil which he himself has called good. He knows better than you yourself what is good and to your benefit, as he says in Genesis 1:1-31 [Genesis 2:18], “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” There you see that he calls the woman good, a helper. If you deem it otherwise, it is certainly your own fault, you neither understand nor believe God’s word and work. See, with this statement of God one stops the mouths of all those who criticize and censure marriage. For this reason young men should be on their guard when they read pagan books and hear the common complaints about marriage, lest they inhale poison. For the estate of marriage does not set well with the devil, because it is God’s good will and work. This is why the devil has contrived to have so much shouted and written in the world against the institution of marriage, to frighten men away from this godly life and entangle them in a web of fornication and secret sins. Indeed, it seems to me that even Solomon, although he amply censures evil women, was speaking against just such blasphemers when he said in Proverbs 18:1-24 [Proverbs 18:22], “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord.” What is this good thing and this favor? Let us see. The world says of marriage, “Brief is the joy, lasting the bitterness.” Let them say what they please; what God wills and creates is bound to be a laughingstock to them. The kind of joy and pleasure they have outside of wedlock they will be most acutely aware of, I suspect, in their consciences. To recognize the estate of marriage is something quite different from merely being married. He who is married but does not recognize the estate of marriage cannot continue in wedlock without bitterness, drudgery, and anguish; he will inevitably complain and blaspheme like the pagans and blind, irrational men. But he who recognizes the estate of marriage will find therein delight, love, and joy without end; as Solomon says, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing,” etc. [Proverbs 18:22].

Now the ones who recognize the estate of marriage are those who firmly believe that God himself instituted it, brought husband and wife together, and ordained that they should beget children and care for them. For this they have God’s word, Genesis 1:1-31 [Genesis 1:28], and they can be certain that he does not lie. They can therefore also be certain that the estate of marriage and everything that goes with it in the way of conduct, works, and suffering is pleasing to God. Now tell me, how can the heart have greater good, joy, and delight than in God, when one is certain that his estate, conduct, and work is pleasing to God? That is what it means to find a wife. Many have wives, but few find wives. Why? They are blind; they fail to see that their life and conduct with their wives is the work of God and pleasing in his sight. Could they but find that, then no wife would be so hateful, so ill-tempered, so ill-mannered, so poor, so sick that they would fail to find in her their heart’s delight and would always be reproaching God for his work, creation, and will. And because they see that it is the good pleasure of their beloved Lord, they would be able to have peace in grief, joy in the midst of bitterness, happiness in the midst of tribulations, as the martyrs have in suffering.

We err in that we judge the work of God according to our own feelings, and regard not his will but our own desire. This is why we are unable to recognize his works and persist in making evil that

which is good, and regarding as bitter that which is pleasant. Nothing is so bad, not even death itself, but what it becomes sweet and tolerable if only I know and am certain that it is pleasing to God. Then there follows immediately that of which Solomon speaks, “He obtains favor from the Lord” [Proverbs 18:22].

Now observe that when that clever harlot, our natural reason (which the pagans followed in trying to be most clever), takes a look at married life, she turns up her nose and says, “Alas, must I rock the baby, wash its diapers, make its bed, smell its stench, stay up nights with it, take care of it when it cries, heal its rashes and sores, and on top of that care for my wife, provide for her, labor at my trade, take care of this and take care of that, do this and do that, endure this and endure that, and whatever else of bitterness and drudgery married life involves? What, should I make such a prisoner of myself? O you poor, wretched fellow, have you taken a wife? Fie, fie upon such wretchedness and bitterness! It is better to remain free and lead a peaceful, carefree life; I will become a priest or a nun and compel my children to do likewise.”

What then does Christian faith say to this? It opens its eyes, looks upon all these insignificant, distasteful, and despised duties in the Spirit, and is aware that they are all adorned with divine approval as with the costliest gold and jewels. It says, “O God, because I am certain that thou hast created me as a man and hast from my body begotten this child, I also know for a certainty that it meets with thy perfect pleasure. I confess to thee that I am not worthy to rock the little babe or wash its diapers, or to be entrusted with the care of the child and its mother. How is it that I, without any merit, have come to this distinction of being certain that I am serving thy creature and thy most precious will? O how gladly will I do so, though the duties should be even more insignificant and despised. Neither frost nor heat, neither, drudgery nor labor, will distress or dissuade me, for I am certain that it is thus pleasing in thy sight.” A wife too should regard her duties in the same light, as she suckles the child, rocks and bathes it, and cares for it in other ways; and as she busies herself with other duties and renders help and obedience to her husband. These are truly golden and noble works. This is also how to comfort and encourage a woman in the pangs of childbirth, not by repeating St. Margaret legends and other silly old wives’ tales but by speaking thus, “Dear Crete, remember that you are a woman, and that this work of God in you is pleasing to him. Trust joyfully in his will, and let him have his way with you. Work with all your might to bring forth the child. Should it mean your death, then depart happily, for you will die in a noble deed and in subservience to God. If you were not a woman you should now wish to be one for the sake of this very work alone, that you might thus gloriously suffer and even die in the performance of God’s work and will. For here you have the word of God, who so created you and implanted within you this extremity.” Tell me, is not this indeed (as Solomon says [Proverbs 18:22]) “to obtain favor from the Lord,” even in the midst of such extremity?

Now you tell me, when a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other mean task for his child, and someone ridicules him as an effeminate fool – though that father is acting in the spirit just described and in Christian faith – my dear fellow you tell me, which of the two is most keenly ridiculing the other? God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling – not because that father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith. Those who sneer at him and see only the task but not the faith are ridiculing God with all his creatures, as the biggest fool on earth. Indeed, they are only ridiculing themselves; with all their cleverness they are nothing but devil’s fools.

St. Cyprian, that great and admirable man and holy martyr, wrote that one should kiss the newborn infant, even before it is baptized, in honor of the hands of God here engaged in a brand new deed. What do you suppose he would have said about a baptized infant? There was a true Christian, who correctly recognized and regarded God's work and creature. Therefore, I say that all nuns and monks who lack faith, and who trust in their own chastity and in their order, are not worthy of rocking a baptized child or preparing its pap, even if it were the child of a harlot. This is because their order and manner of life has no word of God as its warrant. They cannot boast that what they do is pleasing in God's sight, as can the woman in childbirth, even if her child is born out of wedlock.

I say these things in order that we may learn how honorable a thing it is to live in that estate which God has ordained. In it we find God's word and good pleasure, by which all the works, conduct, and sufferings of that estate become holy, godly, and precious so that Solomon even congratulates such a man and says in Proverbs 5:1-23 [Proverbs 5:18], "Rejoice in the wife of your youth," and again in Ecclesiastes 11:1-10 [Ecclesiastes 9:9], "Enjoy life with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life." Doubtless, Solomon is not speaking here of carnal pleasure, since it is the Holy Spirit who speaks through him. He is rather offering godly comfort to those who find much drudgery in married life. This he does by way of defense against those who scoff at the divine ordinance and, like the pagans, seek but fail to find in marriage anything beyond a carnal and fleeting sensual pleasure.

Conversely, we learn how wretched is the spiritual estate of monks and nuns by its very nature, for it lacks the word and pleasure of God. All its works, conduct, and sufferings are un-Christian, vain, and pernicious, so that Christ even says to their warning in Matthew 15:1-39 [Matthew 15:9], "In vain do they worship me according to the commandments of men." There is therefore no comparison between a married woman who lives in faith and in the recognition of her estate, and a cloistered nun who lives in unbelief and in the presumptuousness of her ecclesiastical estate, just as God's ways and man's ways are beyond compare, as He says in Isaiah 55:1-13 [Isaiah 55:9], "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways." It is a great blessing for one to have God's word as his warrant, so that he can speak right up and say to God, "See, this thou hast spoken, it is thy good pleasure." What does such a man care if it seems to be displeasing and ridiculous to the whole world?

Small wonder that married folk for the most part experience little but bitterness and anguish. They have no knowledge of God's word and will concerning their estate, and are therefore just as wretched as monks and nuns since both lack the comfort and assurance of God's good pleasure. This is why it is impossible for them to endure outward bitterness and drudgery, for it is too much for a man to have to suffer both inward and outward bitterness. If they inwardly fail to realize that their estate is pleasing in the sight of God, bitterness is already there; if they then seek an outward pleasure therein, they fail to find it. Bitterness is joined with bitterness, and thence arises of necessity the loud outcry and the writings against women and the estate of marriage.

God's work and ordinance must and will be accepted and borne on the strength of God's word and assurance; otherwise they do damage and become unbearable. Therefore, St. Paul tempers his words nicely when he says, 1 Corinthians 7:1-40 [1 Corinthians 7:28], "Those who marry will have worldly troubles," that is, outward bitterness. He is silent on the inner, spiritual delight, however,

because outward bitterness is common to both believers and unbelievers; indeed, it is characteristic of the estate of marriage. No one can have real happiness in marriage who does not recognize in firm faith that this estate together with all its works, however insignificant, is pleasing to God and precious in his sight. These works are indeed insignificant and mean; yet it is from them that we all trace our origin, we have all had need of them. Without them no man would exist. For this reason they are pleasing to God who has so ordained them, and thereby graciously cares for us like a kind and loving mother.

Observe that thus far I have told you nothing of the estate of marriage except that which the world and reason in their blindness shrink from and sneer at as a mean, unhappy, troublesome mode of life. We have seen how all these shortcomings in fact comprise noble virtues and true delight if one but looks at God's word and will, and thereby recognizes its true nature. I will not mention the other advantages and delights implicit in a marriage that goes well – that husband and wife cherish one another, become one, serve one another, and other attendant blessings – lest somebody shut me up by saying that I am speaking about something I have not experienced, and that there is more gall than honey in marriage. I base my remarks on Scripture, which to me is surer than all experience and cannot lie to me. He who finds still other good things in marriage profits all the more, and should give thanks to God. Whatever God calls good must of necessity always be good, unless men do not recognize it or perversely misuse it.

I therefore pass over the good or evil which experience offers, and confine myself to such good as Scripture and truth ascribe to marriage. It is no slight boon that in wedlock fornication and unchastity are checked and eliminated. This in itself is so great a good that it alone should be enough to induce men to marry forthwith, and for many reasons. The first reason is that fornication destroys not only the soul but also body, property, honor, and family as well. For we see how a licentious and wicked life not only brings great disgrace but is also a spendthrift life, more costly than wedlock, and that illicit partners necessarily occasion greater suffering for one another than do married folk. Beyond that it consumes the body, corrupts flesh and blood, nature, and physical constitution. Through such a variety of evil consequences God takes a rigid position, as though he would actually drive people away from fornication and into marriage. However, few are thereby convinced or converted.

Some, however, have given the matter thought and so learned from their own experience that they have coined an excellent proverb, "Early to rise and early to wed; that should no one ever regret." Why? Well because from that there come people who retain a sound body, a good conscience, property, and honor and family, all of which are so ruined and dissipated by fornication, that, once lost, it is well-nigh impossible to regain them – scarcely one in a hundred succeeds. This was the benefit cited by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:1-40 [1 Corinthians 7:2], "To avoid immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband." The estate of marriage, however, redounds to the benefit not alone of the body, property, honor, and soul of an individual, but also to the benefit of whole cities and countries, in that they remain exempt from the plagues imposed by God. We know only too well that the most terrible plagues have befallen lands and people because of fornication. This was the sin cited as the reason why the world was drowned in the Deluge, Genesis 6:1-22 [Genesis 6:1-13], and Sodom and Gomorrah were buried in flames, Genesis 19:1-38 [Genesis 19:1-24]. Scripture also cites many other plagues, even in the case of holy men such as David [2 Samuel 11:1-27; 2 Samuel 12:1-31], Solomon [1 Kings 11:1-13], and

Samson [Judges 16:1-21]. We see before our very eyes that God even now sends more new plagues.

Many think they can evade marriage by having their fling for a time, and then becoming righteous. My dear fellow, if one in a thousand succeeds in this, that would be doing very well. He who intends to lead a chaste life had better begin early, and attain it not with but without fornication, either by the grace of God or through marriage. We see only too well how they make out every day. It might well be called plunging into immorality rather than growing to maturity. It is the devil who has brought this about, and coined such damnable sayings as, “One has to play the fool at least once”; or, “He who does it not in his youth does it in his old age”; or, “A young saint, an old devil.” Such are the sentiments of the poet Terence and other pagans. This is heathenish; they speak like heathens, yea, like devils.

It is certainly a fact that he who refuses to marry must fall into immorality. How could it be otherwise, since God has created man and woman to produce seed and to multiply? Why should one not forestall immorality by means of marriage? For if special grace does not exempt a person, his nature must and will compel him to produce seed and to multiply. If this does not occur within marriage, how else can it occur except in fornication or secret sins? But, they say, suppose I am neither married nor immoral, and force myself to remain continent? Do you not hear that restraint is impossible without the special grace? For God’s word does not admit of restraint; neither does it lie when it says, “Be fruitful and multiply” [Genesis 1:28]. You can neither escape nor restrain yourself from being fruitful and multiplying; it is God’s ordinance and takes its course.

Physicians are not amiss when they say: If this natural function is forcibly restrained it necessarily strikes into the flesh and blood and becomes a poison, whence the body becomes unhealthy, enervated, sweaty, and foul-smelling. That which should have issued in fruitfulness and propagation has to be absorbed within the body itself. Unless there is terrific hunger or immense labor or the supreme grace, the body cannot take it; it necessarily becomes unhealthy and sickly. Hence, we see how weak and sickly barren women are. Those who are fruitful, however, are healthier, cleanlier, and happier. And even if they bear themselves weary – or ultimately bear themselves out – that does not hurt. Let them bear themselves out. This is the purpose for which they exist. It is better to have a brief life with good health than a long life in ill health. But the greatest good in married life, that which makes all suffering and labor worthwhile, is that God grants offspring and commands that they be brought up to worship and serve him. In all the world this is the noblest and most precious work, because to God there can be nothing dearer than the salvation of souls. Now since we are all duty bound to suffer death, if need be, that we might bring a single soul to God, you can see how rich the estate of marriage is in good works. God has entrusted to its bosom souls begotten of its own body, on whom it can lavish all manner of Christian works. Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel. In short, there is no greater or nobler authority on earth than that of parents over their children, for this authority is both spiritual and temporal. Whoever teaches the gospel to another is truly his apostle and bishop. Mitre and staff and great estates indeed produce idols, but teaching the gospel produces apostles and bishops. See therefore how good and great is God’s work and ordinance!

Here I will let the matter rest and leave to others the task of searching out further benefits and advantages of the estate of marriage. My purpose was only to enumerate those which a Christian can have for conducting his married life in a Christian way, so that, as Solomon says, he may find his wife in the sight of God and obtain favor from the Lord [Proverbs 18:22]. In saying this I do not wish to disparage virginity, or entice anyone away from virginity into marriage. Let each one act as he is able, and as he feels it has been given to him by God. I simply wanted to check those scandalmongers who place marriage so far beneath virginity that they dare to say: Even if the children should become holy [1 Corinthians 7:14], celibacy would still be better. One should not regard any estate as better in the sight of God than the estate of marriage. In a worldly sense celibacy is probably better, since it has fewer cares and anxieties. This is true, however, not for its own sake but in order that the celibate may better be able to preach and care for God's word, as St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:1-40 [1 Corinthians 7:32-34]. It is God's word and the preaching which make celibacy – such as that of Christ and of Paul – better than the estate of marriage. In itself, however, the celibate life is far inferior.

Finally, we have before us one big, strong objection to answer. Yes, they say, it would be a fine thing to be married, but how will I support myself? I have nothing; take a wife and live on that, etc. Undoubtedly, this is the greatest obstacle to marriage; it is this above all which prevents and breaks up marriage and is the chief excuse for fornication. What shall I say to this objection? It shows lack of faith and doubt of God's goodness and truth. It is therefore no wonder that where faith is lacking, nothing but fornication and all manner of misfortune follow. They are lacking in this, that they want to be sure first of their material resources, where they are to get their food, drink, and clothing [Matthew 6:31]. Yes, they want to pull their head out of the noose of Genesis 3:1-24 [Genesis 3:19], "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread." They want to be lazy, greedy rascals who do not need to work. Therefore, they will get married only if they can get wives who are rich, beautiful, pious, kind – indeed, wait, we'll have a picture of them drawn for you.

Let such heathen go their way; we will not argue with them. If they should be lucky enough to obtain such wives the marriages would still be un-Christian and without faith. They trust in God as long as they know that they do not need him, and that they are well supplied. He who would enter into wedlock as a Christian must not be ashamed of being poor and despised, and doing insignificant work. He should take satisfaction in this: first, that his status and occupation are pleasing to God; second, that God will most certainly provide for him if only he does his job to the best of his ability, and that, if he cannot be a squire or a prince, he is a manservant or a maidservant.

God has promised in Matthew 6:1-34 [Matthew 6:25, Matthew 6:33], "Do not be anxious about what you shall eat, drink, and put on; seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well." Again Psalms 37:1-40 [Psalms 37:25] says, "I have been young and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, or his children begging bread." If a man does not believe this, is it any wonder that he suffers hunger, thirst, and cold, and begs for bread? Look at Jacob, the holy patriarch, who in Syria had nothing and simply tended sheep; he received such possessions that he supported four wives with a large number of servants and children, and yet he had enough. Abraham, Isaac, and Lot also became rich, as did many other holy men in the Old Testament.

Indeed, God has shown sufficiently in the first chapter of Genesis how he provides for us. He first created and prepared all things in heaven and on earth, together with the beasts and all growing things, before he created man. Thereby he demonstrated how he has laid up for us at all times a sufficient store of food and clothing, even before we ask him for it. All we need to do is to work and avoid idleness; then we shall certainly be fed and clothed. But a pitiful unbelief refuses to admit this. The unbeliever sees, comprehends, and feels all the same that even if he worries himself to death over it, he can neither produce nor maintain a single grain of wheat in the field. He knows too that even though all his storehouses were full to overflowing, he could not make use of a single morsel or thread unless God sustains him in life and health and preserves to him his possessions. Yet this has no effect upon him. To sum the matter up: whoever finds himself unsuited to the celibate life should see to it right away that he has something to do and to work at; then let him strike out in God's name and get married. A young man should marry at the age of twenty at the latest, a young woman at fifteen to eighteen; that's when they are still in good health and best suited for marriage. Let God worry about how they and their children are to be fed. God makes children; he will surely also feed them. Should he fail to exalt you and them here on earth, then take satisfaction in the fact that he has granted you a Christian marriage, and know that he will exalt you there; and be thankful to him for his gifts and favors. With all this extolling of married life, however, I have not meant to ascribe to nature a condition of sinlessness. On the contrary, I say that flesh and blood, corrupted through Adam, is conceived and born in sin, as Psalms 51:1-19 [Psalms 51:5] says. Intercourse is never without sin; but God excuses it by his grace because the estate of marriage is his work, and he preserves in and through the sin all that good which he has implanted and blessed in marriage.

05A.01. A Mighty Fortress is Our God"

"A Mighty Fortress is Our God’’

1. A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing; Our helper He, amid the flood Of mortal ills prevailing; For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe; His craft and power are great, And, armed with cruel hate, On Earth is not his equal.

2. Did we in our own strength confide, Our striving would be losing; Were not the right Man on our side, The Man of God’s own choosing;

Dost ask who that may be?

Christ Jesus, it is He;

Lord Sabaoth, His name, From age to age the same, And He must win the battle.

3. And though this world, with devils filled, Should threaten to undo us, We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us; The Prince of Darkness grim -- We tremble not for him; His rage we can endure, For lo, his doom is sure, On little word shall fell him.

4. That word above all earthly powers, No thanks to them, abideth. The Spirit and the gifts are ours Though Him who with us sideth;

Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also; The body they may kill;

God’s truth abideth still, His kingdom us forever.

05A.01. All Praise to Thee, Eternal God

All Praise to Thee, Eternal God 1. All praise to Thee, eternal God, Who, clothed in garb of flesh and blood, Dost take a manger for Thy throne, While worlds on worlds are Thine alone.

Hallelujah!

2. Once did the skies before Thee bow; A virgin’s arms contain Thee now, While angels, who in Thee rejoice, Now listen for Thine infant voice.

Hallelujah!

3. A little Child, Thou art our Guest That weary ones in Thee may rest;

Forlorn and lowly is Thy birth That we may rise to heaven from earth.

Hallelujah!

4. Thou comest in the darksome night To make us children of the light, To make us in the realms divine, Like Thine own angels, round Thee shine.

Hallelujah!

5. All this for us Thy love hath done; By This to Thee our love is won; For this our joyful songs we raise And shout our thanks in ceaseless praise.

Hallelujah!

Hymn #80 from The Handbook to The Lutheran Hymnal.

Text: John 1:14 Author: Martin Luther, 1524, cento Translated by: unknown, 1858 Titled: Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ Based on Latin sequence, 11th century, German, st. 1, 1370

Chapter 57

05A.01. Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands"

"Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands"

1. Christ Jesus lay in death’s strong bands, For our offenses given; But now at God’s right hand He stands And brings us life from heaven;

Therefore let us joyful be And sing to God right thankfully Loud songs of hallelujah!

Hallelujah!

2. No son of man could conquer Death, Such mischief sin had wrought us, For innocence dwelt not on earth, And therefore Death had brought us Into thraldom from of old And ever grew more strong and bold And kept us in his bondage. Hallelujah!

3. But Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, To our low state descended, The cause of Death He has undone, His power forever ended, Ruined all his right and claim And left him nothing but the name,-- His sting is lost forever.

Hallelujah!

4. It was a strange and dreadful strife When Life and Death contended; The victory remained with Life, The reign of Death was ended;

Holy Scripture plainly saith That Death is swallowed up by Death, His sting is lost forever.

Hallelujah!

5. Here the true Paschal Lamb we see, Whom God so freely gave us;

He died on the accursed tree-- So strong His love!--to save us.

See, His blood doth mark our door;

Faith points to it, Death passes o’er, And Satan cannot harm us.

Hallelujah!

6. So let us keep the festival Whereto the Lord invites us;

Christ is himself the Joy of all, The Sun that warms and lights us. By His grace He doth impart Eternal sunshine to the heart; The night of sin is ended.

Hallelujah!

7. Then let us feast this Easter Day On Christ, the Bread of heaven; The Word of Grace hath purged away The old and evil leaven.

Christ alone our souls will feed, He is our meat and drink indeed;

Faith lives upon no other.

Hallelujah!

Hymn #195 from The Handbook to The Lutheran Hymnal

Text: Acts 2:24 Author: Martin Luther, 1524, cento Translated by: Richard Massic, 1854, alt.

Titled: Christ lag in Todesbanden Tune: Latin melody, c. 1100

05A.01. Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice"

"Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice"

1. Dear Christians, one and all, rejoice, With exultation springing, And, with united heart and voice, And holy rapture singing, Proclaim the wonders God hath done, How His right arm the victory won;

Right dearly it hath cost him.

2. Fast bound in Satan’s chains I lay.

Death brooded darkly o’er me.

Sin was my torment night and day. In sin my mother bore me.

Yea, deep and deeper still I fell.

Life had become a living hell, So firmly sin possessed me.

3. My own good works availed me naught, No merit they attaining.

Free will against God’s judgment fought, Dead to all good remaining. My fears increased till sheer despair Left naught but death to be my share. The pains of hell I suffered.

4. But God beheld my wretched state Before the world’s foundation.

And, mindful of His mercies great, He planned my soul’s salvation. A father’s heart He turned to me, Sought my redemption fervently.

He gave His dearest Treasure.

5. He spoke to His beloved Son:

’Tis time to have compassion.

Then go, bright Jewel of My crown, And bring to man salvation; From sin and sorrow set him free.

Slay bitter death for him that he May live with Thee forever.

6. This Son obeyed His Father’s will, Was born of virgin mother. And God’s good pleasure to fulfil, He came to be my Brother. No garb of pomp or power He wore, A servant’s form, like mine, He bore, To lead the devil captive.

7. To me He spake: Hold fast to Me, I am thy Rock and Castle;

Thy ransom I Myself will be, For thee I strive and wrestle; For I am with thess, I am thine, And evermore thou shalt be mine. The foe shall not divide us.

8. The foe shall shed my precious blood, Me of My life bereaving.

All this I suffer for thy good Be steadfast and believing.

Life shall from death the victory win. My innocence shall bear thy sin; So art thou blest forever.

9. Now to My Father I depart, The Holy Spirit sending And heavenly wisdom to impart My help to thee extending.

He shall in trouble comfort thee, Teach thee to know and follow Me, And in all truth shall guide thee.

10. What I have done and taught, teach thou, My ways forsake thou never. So shall My kingdom flourish now And God be praised forever.

Take heed lest men with base alloy The heavenly treasure should destroy. This counsel I bequeath thee.

Written in 1523, this was Martin Luther’s First Hymn, Richard Massie, Translator.

Text Transcribed From The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal, pp. 277-8.

05A.01. Flung to the Heedless Winds"

"Flung to the Heedless Winds"

1. Flung to the heedless winds Or on the waters cast, The martyrs’ ashes, watched, Shall gathered be at last. And from that scattered dust, Around us and abroad, Shall spring a plenteous seed Of witnesses for God.

2. The Father hath received Their latest living breath, And vain is Satan’s boast Of victory in their death.

Still, still, though dead, they speak, And, trumpet-tongued, proclaim To many a wakening land The one availing Name.

259 from the Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal

Text: Acts 7:59 Author: Martin Luther, 1523 st. 9 Translated by: John A. Messenger, 1843 Titled: Ein neues Lied wir heben an

Tune: Denby Composer: Charles J. Dale, 1904

Chapter 60

05A.01. From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee"

"From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee"

1. From depths of woe I cry to Thee, Lord, hear me, I implore Thee.

Bend down Thy gracious ear to me, My prayer let come before Thee.

If Thou rememberest each misdeed, If each should have its rightful meed, Who may abide Thy presence?

2. Thy love and grace alone avail To blot out my transgression; The best and holiest deeds must fail To break sin’s dread oppression.

Before Thee none can boasting stand, But all must fear Thy strict demand And live alone by mercy.

3. Therefore my hope is in the Lord And not in mine own merit;

It rests upon His faithful Word To them of contrite spirit That He is merciful and just; This is my comfort and my trust. His help I wait with patience.

4. And though it tarry till the night And till the morning waken, My heart shall never doubt His might Nor count itself forsaken. Do thus, O ye of Israel’s seed, Ye of the Spirit born indeed;

Wait for your God’s appearing.

5. Though great our sins and sore our woes, His grace much more aboundeth; His helping love no limit knows, Our utmost need it soundeth. Our shepherd good and true is He, Who will at last His Israel free From all their sin and sorrow.

Title: 329 from The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal Text: Psalms 130:1-8 Author: Martin Luther Translated by: Catherine Winkworth, 1863, alt.

Titled: Aus tiefer Not schrei’ ich zu dir Tune: Aus tiefer Not 1st Published in: Johann Walther’s "Gesangbuechlein"

Town: Wittenberg, 1524

05A.01. From Heaven Above to Earth I Come"

"From Heaven Above to Earth I Come"

1. "From heaven above to earth I come To bear good news to every home;

Glad tidings of great joy I bring, Whereof I now will say and sing:

2. "To you this night is born a child Of Mary, chosen virgin mild; This little child, of lowly birth, Shall be the joy of all the earth.

3. "This is the Christ, our God and Lord, Who in all need shall aid afford;

He will Himself your Savior be From all your sins to set you free.

4. "He will on you the gifts bestow Prepared by God for all below, That in His kingdom, bright and fair, You may with us His glory share.

5. "These are the tokens ye shall mark: The swaddling-clothes and manger dark;

There ye shall find the Infant laid By whom the heavens and earth were made."

6. Now let us all with gladsome cheer Go with the shepherds and draw near To see the precious gift of God, Who hath His own dear Son bestowed.

7. Give heed, my heart, lift up thine eyes!

What is it in yon manger lies? Who is this child, so young and fair? The blessed Christ-child lieth there.

8. Welcome to earth, Thou noble Guest, Through whom the sinful world is blest!

Thou com’st to share my misery;

What thanks shall I return to Thee?

9. Ah, Lord, who hast created all, How weak art Thou, how poor and small, That Thou dost choose Thine infant bed Where humble cattle lately fed!

10. Were earth a thousand times as fair, Beset with gold and jewels rare, It yet were far too poor to be A narrow cradle, Lord, for Thee.

11. For velvets soft and silken stuff Thou hast but hay and straw so rough, Whereon Thou, King, so rich and great, As ’twere Thy heaven, art throned in state.

12. And thus, dear Lord, it pleaseth Thee To make this truth quite plain to me, That all the world’s wealth, honor, might, Are naught and worthless in Thy sight.

13. Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child, Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled, Within my heart, that it may be A quiet chamber kept for Thee.

14. My heart for very joy doth leap, My lips no more can silence keep;

I, too, must sing with joyful tongue That sweetest ancient cradle-song:

15. Glory to God in highest heaven, Who unto us His Son hath given!

While angels sing with pious mirth A glad new year to all the earth.

Notes: #85 in _The Handbook to The Lutheran Hymnal_ Text: Luke 2:1-18 Author: Martin Luther, 1535 Tune: Vom Himmel hoch, da komm’ ich her Translated by: Catherine Winkworth, 1855, alt.

1st published in: "Geistliche Lieder" Leipzig, 1539

05A.01. If God Had Not Been on Our Side"

"If God Had Not Been on Our Side"

1. If God had not been on our side And had not come to aid us, The foes with all their power and pride Would surely have dismayed us; For we, His flock, would have to fear The threat of men both far and near Who rise in might against us.

2. Their furious wrath, did God permit, Would surely have consumed us And as a deep and yawning pit With life and limb entombed us.

Like men o’er whom dark waters roll Their wrath would have engulfed our soul And, like a flood, o’erwhelmed us.

3. Blest be the Lord, who foiledtheir threat That they could not devour us; Our souls, like birds, escaped their net, They could not overpower us. The snare is boken--we are free! Our help is ever, Lord, in Thee, Who madest earth and heaven.

Notes:

267 from the Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal Text: Psalms 124:1-8 Author: Martin Luther, 1524 Translated by: composite Titled: War’ Gott nicht mit uns diese Zeit Tune: War’ Gott nicht mit uns 1st Published in: "Gesangbuch"

Town: Wittenberg, 1537

05A.01. In Peace and Joy I Now Depart"

"In Peace and Joy I Now Depart"

1. In peace and joy I now depart At God’s disposing; For full of comfort is my heart,

Soft reposing. So the Lord hath promised me, And death is but a slumber.

2. ’Tis Christ that wrought this work for me, My faithful Savior, Whom Thou hast made mine eyes to see By Thy favor.

Now I know He is my Life, My Help in need and dying.

3. Him Thou hast unto all set forth Their great Salvation And to His kingdom called the earth,

Every nation, By Thy dear and wholesome Word, In every place resounding.

4. He is the Hope and saving Light Of lands benighted; By Him are they who dwelt in night Fed and lighted.

He is Israel’s Praise and Bliss, Their Joy, Reward, and Glory.

Notes:

Text: Luke 2:29-32 Author: Martin Luther, 1524 Titled: Mit Fried’ und Freud’ ich fahr’ dahin Translated by: Leonard W. Bacon, 1884, alt.

1st appeared in: Geistliches Gesangbuchlein Wittenberg, 1524

05A.01. Isaiah, Mighty Seer, in Days of Old"

"Isaiah, Mighty Seer, in Days of Old"

1. Isaiah, mighty seer, in days of old The Lord of all in Spirit did behold High on a lofty throne, in splendor bright, With flowing train that filled the Temple quite.

Above the throne were stately seraphim, Six wings had they, these messengers of Him. With twain they veiled their faces, as was meet, With twain in reverent awe they hid their feet, And with the other twain aloft they soared, One to the other called and praised the Lord:

"Holy is God, the Lord of Sabaoth!

Holy is God, the Lord of Sabaoth!

Holy is God, the Lord of Sabaoth!

Behold, His glory filleth all the earth!" The beams and lintels trembled at the cry, And clouds of smoke enwrapped the throne on high.

Notes:

249 from The Handbook to The Lutheran Hymnal Text: Isaiah 6:1-4 Author: Martin Luther, 1526 Translated by: composite Titled: Jessia, dem Propheten, das gescha Tune: Jessia, dem Propheten Composer: Martin Luther, 1526

05A.01. Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word"

"Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word"

1. Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word;

Curb those who fain by craft and sword Would wrest the Kingdom from Thy Son And set at naught all He hath done.

2. Lord Jesus Christ, Thy power make known, For Thou art Lord of lords alone;

Defend Thy Christendom that we May evermore sing praise to Thee.

3. O Comforter of priceless worth.

Send peace and unity on earth.

Support us in our final strife And lead us out of death to life.

Notes:

TLH #261

Text: John 8:31 Author: Martin Luther, 1541 Translated by: Catherine Winkworth, 1863 Titled: Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort Tune: Erhalt uns, Herr 1st Published in: Geistliche Lieder Town: Wittenberg, 1543

05A.01. May God Bestow on Us His Grace"

"May God Bestow on Us His Grace"

1. May God bestow on us His grace, With blessings rich provide us, And may the brightness of His face To life eternal guide us That we His saving health may know, His gracious will and pleasure, And also to the heathen show Christ’s riches without measure And unto God convert them.

2. Thine over all shall be the praise And thanks of every nation, And all the world with joy shall raise The voice of exultation; For Thou shalt judge the earth, O Lord, Nor suffer sin to flourish;

Thy people’s pasture is Thy Word Their souls to feed and nourish, In righteous paths to keep them.

3. Oh, let the people praise Thy worth, In all good works increasing; The land shall plenteous fruit bring forth, Thy Word is rich in blessing. May God the Father, God the Son, And God the Spirit bless us!

Let all theworld praise Him alone, Let solemn awe possess us.

Now let our hearts say, Amen.

Notes:

500 from Handbook to the The Lutheran Hymnal Text: Psalms 67:1-7 Author: Martin Luther, 1524 Translated by: Richard Massie, 1851, alt.

Titled: Es woll’ uns Gott genadig sein Tune: Es woll’ uns Gott genadig sein 1st Published in: Deutsch Kirchenamt, Strassburg, 1525

05A.01. O Lord, Look Down from Heaven, Behold"

"O Lord, Look Down from Heaven, Behold"

1. O Lord, look down from heaven, behold And let Thy pity waken:

How few are we within Thy Fold, Thy saints by men forsaken!

True faith seems quenched on every hand, Men suffer not Thy Word to stand;

Dark times have us o’ertaken.

2. With fraud which they themselves invent Thy truth they have confounded; Their hearts are not with one consent On Thy pure doctrine grounded.

While they parade with outward show, They lead the people to and fro, In error’s maze astounded.

3. May God root out all heresy And of false teachers rid us Who proudly say: "Now, where is he That shall our speech forbid us? By right or might we shall prevail;

What we determine cannot fail;

We own no lord and master."

4. Therefore saith God, "I must arise, The poor My help are needing; To Me ascend My people’s cries, And I have heard their pleading. For them My saving Word shall fight And fearlessly and sharply smite, The poor with might defending."

5. As silver tried by fire is pure From all adulteration, So through God’s Word shall men endure Each trial and temptation. Its light beams brighter through the cross, And, purified from human dross, It shines through every nation.

6. Thy truth defend, O God, and stay This evil generation; And from the error of their way Keep Thine own congregation. The wicked everywhere abound And would Thy little flock confound; But Thou art our Salvation.

Notes:

260 for the Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal Text: Psalms 12:1-8 Author: Martin Luther, 1523 Translated by: composite Titled: Ach Gott vom Himmel, sieh darein Tune: Ach Gott vom Himmel 1st Published in: "Enchiridion"

Town: Erfurt, 1524

05A.01. O Lord, We Praise Thee"

"O Lord, We Praise Thee"

1. O Lord, we praise Thee, bless Thee, and adore Thee, In thanksgiving bow before Thee.

Thou with Thy body and Thy blood didst nourish Our weak souls that they may flouish:

O Lord, have mercy! May Thy body, Lord, born of Mary, That our sins and sorrows did carry, And Thy blood for us plead In all trial, fear, and need:

O Lord, have mercy!

2. Thy holy body into death was given, Life to win for us in heaven. No greater love than this to Thee could bind us; May this feast thereof remind us!

O Lord, have mercy!

Lord, Thy kindness did so constrain Thee That Thy blood should bless and sustain me.

All our debt Thou hast paid;

Peace with God once more is made:

O Lord, have mercy.

3. May God bestow on us His grace and favor To please Him with our behavior And live as brethren here in love and union Nor repent this blest Communion!

O Lord, have mercy!

Let not Thy good Spirit forsake us;

Grant that heavenly-minded He make us;

Give Thy Church, Lord, to see Days of peace and unity:

O Lord, have mercy!

Notes:

313 from The Handbook to The Lutheran Hymnal Text: Psalms 118:1 Author: unknown, c. 1400, St. 1 Author: Martin Luther, 1524, St. 2 & 3 Translated by: composite Titled: Gott sei gelobet und gebenedeiet Tune: Gott sei gelobet German melody, c. 1400

05A.01. Our Father, Thou in Heaven Above"

"Our Father, Thou in Heaven Above"

1. Our Father, Thou in heaven above, Who biddest us to dwell in love, As brethren of one family, To cry in every need to Thee, Teach us no thoughtless word to say, But from our inmost heart to pray.

2. Thy name be hallowed. Help us, Lord, In purity to keep Thy Word, That to the glory of thy name We walk before Thee free from blame.

Let no false doctrine us pervert;

All poor, deluded souls convert.

3. Thy kingdom come. Thine let it be In time and in eternity.

Let Thy good Spirit e’er be nigh Our hearts with graces to supply.

Break Satan’s power, defeat his rage;

Preserve Thy Church from age to age.

4. Thy gracious will on earth be done As ’tis in heaven before Thy throne;

Obedience in our weal and woe And patience in all grief bestow.

Curb flesh and blood and every ill That sets itself against Thy will.

5. Give us this day our daily bread And let us all be clothed and fed. From war and strife be our Defense, From famine and from pestilence, That we may live in godly peace, Free from all care and avarice.

6. Forgive our sins, Lord, we implore, Remove from us their burden sore, As we their trespasses forgive Who by offenses us do grieve.

Thus let us dwell in charity And serve our brother willingly.

7. Into temptation lead us not. When evil foes against us plot And vex our souls on every hand, Oh, give us strength that we may stand Firm in the faith, a well-armed host, Through comfort of the Holy Ghost!

8. From evil, Lord, deliver us; The times and days are perilous.

Redeem us from eternal death, And when we yield our dying breath, Console us, grant us calm release, And take our souls to Thee in peace.

9. Amen, that is, So shall it be.

Confirm our faith and hope in Thee That we may doubt not, but believe What here we ask we shall receive.

Thus in Thy name and at Thy word We say: Amen. Oh, hear us, Lord! Amen.

Notes:

458 from the Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal Text: Matthew 6:9 ff.

Author: Martin Luther Translated by: composite Titled: Vater unser im Himmelreich Tune: Vater unser 1st Published in: "Geistliche Lieder"

Town: Leipzig, 1539

05A.01. Savior of the Nations, Come"

"Savior of the Nations, Come" By St. Ambrose Translated into German by Dr. Martin Luther, 1483-1546 Text From: THE HANDBOOK TO THE LUTHERAN HYMNAL (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1942), p. 78 1. Savior of the nations, come, Virgin’s Son, make here Thy home!

Marvel now, O heaven and earth, That the Lord chose such a birth.

2. Not by human flesh and blood, By the Spirit of our God, Was the Word of God made flesh--Woman’s Offspring, pure and fresh.

3. Wondrous birth! O wondrous Child Of the Virgin undefiled!

Though by all the world disowned, Still to be in heaven enthroned.

4. From the Father forth He came And returneth to the same, Captive leading death and hell--High the song of triumph swell!

5. Thou, the Father’s only Son, Hast o’er sin the victory won.

Boundless shall Thy kingdom be; When shall we its glories see?

6. Brightly doth Thy manger shine, Glorious is its light divine.

Let not sin o’ercloud this light;

Ever be our faith thus bright.

7. Pra8se to God the Father sing, Praise to God the Son, our King, Praise to God the Spirit be Ever and eteranally.

Notes:

TLH #95 Text: John 1: 14 Author: St. Ambrose, +397 (German version, Martin Luther) Translated by: William M. Reynolds, 1860, alt.

Titled: Veni, Redemptor gentium Tune: Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland 1st Published in: Geistliches Gesangbuchlein Town: Wittenberg, 1524, ad.

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E-mail: smithre@mail.ctsfw.edu Surface Mail: 6600 N. Clinton St.,Ft. Wayne, IN 46825 USA Phone: (260) 481-2123 Fax: (260) 481-2126

05A.01. Thou who art Three in Unity"

"Thou who art Three in Unity" by Martin Luther, 1483-1546 Text From: EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN HYMN-BOOK (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927), p. 252 1. Thou who art Three in unity, True God from all eternity, The sun is fading from our sight, Shine Thou on us with heavenly light. 2. We praise Thee with the dawning day, To Thee at even also pray; With our poor song we worship Thee Now, ever, and eternally. 3. Let God the Father be adored, And God the Son, the only Lord, And God the Holy Spirit be Adored throughout eternity! _____ Notes: Hymn #266 from The Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-book Author: Martin Luther, 1543 Translated by: Richard Massie From the Latin of St. Ambrose _____ This text was converted to ascii format for Project Wittenberg by Cindy A. Beesley and is in the public domain. You may freely distribute, copy or print this text. Please direct any comments or suggestions to: Rev. Robert E. Smith of the Walther Library at Concordia Theological Seminary. E-mail: smithre@mail.ctsfw.edu Surface Mail: 6600 N. Clinton St.,Ft. Wayne, IN 46825 USA Phone: (260) 481-2123 Fax: (260) 481-2126

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05A.01. We All Believe in One True God"

"We All Believe in One True God"

1. We all believe in one true God, Who created earth and heaven, The Father, who to us in love Hath the right of children given.

He both soul and body feedeth, All we need He doth provide us;

He through snares and perils leadeth, Watching that no harm betide us.

He careth for us day and night, All things are governed by His might.

2. We all believe in Jesus Christ, His own Son, our Lord, possessing An equal Godhead, throne, and might, Source of every grace and blessing.

Born of Mary, virgin mother, By the power of the Spirit, Made true man, our elder Brother, That the lost might life inherit; Was crucified for sinful men And raised by God to life again.

3. We all confess the Holy Ghost, Who sweet grace and comfort giveth And with the Father and the Son In eternal glory liveth; Who the Church, His own creation, Keeps in unity of spirit.

Here forgiveness and salvation Daily come through Jesus’ merit.

All flesh shall rise, and we shall be In bliss with God eternally. Amen.

TLH #251, first tune Text: Nicene Creed Author: Martin Luther, 1525 Translated by: composite Titled: Wir glauben all’ an einen Gott

05A.01. We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost"

"We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost"

1. We now implore the Holy Ghost For the true faith, which we need the most, That in our last moments He may befriend us And, as homeward we journey, attend us.

Lord, have mercy.

2. Shine in our hearts, O most precious Light, That we Jesus Christ may know aright, Clinging to our Savior, whose blood hath bought us. Who again to our homeland hath brought us.

Lord, have mercy.

3. Thou sacred Love, grace on us bestow, Set our hearts with heavenly fire aglow That with hearts united we love each other, Of one mind, in peace with every brother.

Lord, have mercy!

4. Thou highest Comfort in every need, Grant that neither shame nor death we heed, That e’en then our courage may never fail us When the Foe shall accuse and assail us.

Lord, have mercy!

Notes:

231 from The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal Text: John 16:13 Author: unknown, stanza 1 Author: Martin Luther, stanzas 2-4, 1524 Translated by: composite Titled: Nun bitten wir den Heiligen Geist Tune: Nun bitten wir Sacred melody, c. 1100

05B.00. Selected Prayers

Selected Prayers of Martin Luther:

Luther’s Morning Prayer

Luther’s Evening Prayer

A Sacristy Prayer, from Dr. Martin Luthers Werke, Weimar: Hermann Boehlaus Nachfolger, 1909, bd. 43, pp.513, trans. by James Kellerman.

http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-luther.html#sw-cclib

05B.01. Luther's Morning Prayer

Luther’s Morning Prayer From: Luther’s Little Instruction Book (The Small Catechism of Martin Luther) Appendix 1: Devotions Translated by Robert E. Smith July 11, 1994 My Heavenly Father, I thank You, through Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, that You kept me safe from all evil and danger last night. Save me, I pray, today as well, from every evil and sin, so that all I do and the way that I live will please you. I put myself in your care, body and soul and all that I have. Let Your holy Angels be with me, so that the evil enemy will not gain power over me. Amen.

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05B.02. Luther's Evening Prayer

Luther’s Evening Prayer

From: Luther’s Little Instruction Book (The Small Catechism of Martin Luther) Appendix 1: Devotions Translated by Robert E. Smith July 11, 1994 My Heavenly Father, I thank You, through Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, that You have protected me, by Your grace. Forgive, I pray, all my sins and the evil I have done. Protect me, by Your grace, tonight. I put myself in your care, body and soul and all that I have. Let Your holy angels be with me, so that the evil enemy will not gain power over me. Amen.

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05B.03. A Sacristy Prayer

A Sacristy Prayer by Martin Luther Translated From: _Dr. Martin Luthers Werke_, (Weimar: Hermann Boehlaus Nachfolger, 1909), Band 43, pp. 513. Translated by James Kellerman Lord God, You have appointed me as a Bishop and Pastor in Your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked Your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon You: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon You Word.

Use me as Your instrument -- but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.

Chapter 78

06.00A The Bondage of the Will

De Servo Arbitrio "On the Enslaved Will" Or The Bondage of the Will By Dr. Martin Luther Table of Contents

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06.01 Atherton's Preface

PREFACE BY

HENRY ATHERTON, Minister of Grove Chapel, Camberwell, S. E. AND General Secretary of The Sovereign Grace Union. THIS EXCELLENT WORK of that eminent servant of God, Martin Luther-one of the noble Reformers is acknowledged to be one of the greatest, if not the greatest of Luther's productions. Luther himself considered it his best publication.

I had purposed writing a short account of each of the Opponents-Erasmus and Luther-who come before us in the book, and of the controversy, but from lack of time owing to many calls, and wishing to get the volume into the hands of lovers of Luther as soon as possible, I had to forego this privilege.

I believe I have succeeded in producing the best English edition of this Masterpiece of Luther that has been published. Cole's translation has been used with slight alterations from Vaughan. My task has been a difficult one, especially as I am ignorant of the German Language. Luther's Scriptural quotations are of course in the German Tongue, and as he often seemed to quote them from memory and as no references to verses, and sometimes none to chapters are given, and sometimes the wrong name of the Book is given, English Concordances have been of very little help to me, and often no use at all; yet I trust this edition will prove a success in spite of my handicaps.

Although Luther used certain words that I should not employ, yet I have adhered faithfully to his own phraseology as translated by Cole. Luther speaks for himself. This book is most needful at the present day. The teachings of many so-called Protestants are more in accordance with the Dogmas of the Papists, or the ideas of Erasmus, than with the Principles of the Reformers; they are more in harmony with the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent than with any Protestant or Reformed Confessions of Faith.

If the Lord should be pleased to open the eyes and understanding of some of these so-called Protestants to whom I have referred-through the perusal of this work of the great Reformer-Luther-enabling them to see that they are at present believing and teaching awful delusions contrary to the Word of God, and the Protestant Reformed Religion, and causing them to return to The Old Paths, the labours of "THE SOVEREIGN GRACE UNION" will not have been in vain. The labour involved in the preparation of this work for publication in its present form has been enjoyable, although it has often been carried out in much pain, and sometimes during sleepless nights. I rejoice in being able to issue it, and do earnestly pray that the Lord will bless it to the Ingathering of His Elect, and to the maintenance of His Cause and Truth in the days in which our lot has been cast.

Grove Chapel Parsonage,

Camberwell Grove, S.E.S.

June, 1931.

06.02 Translator's Preface

PREFACE BY THE TRANSLATOR. THE Translator has long had it in meditation, to present the British Church with an English version of a choice Selection from the Works of that great Reformer, MARTIN LUTHER: and in November last, he issued Proposals for such a publication. He considers it however necessary to state, that this Treatise on the BONDAGE OF THE WILL, formed no part of his design when those Proposals were sent forth. But receiving, subsequently, an application from several Friends to undertake the present Translation, he was induced not only to accede to their request, but also to acquiesce in the propriety of their suggestion, that this work should precede those mentioned in the Proposals. The unqualified encomium bestowed upon it by a Divine so eminent as the late Reverend AUGUSTUS MONTAGUE TOPLADY, who considered it a masterpiece of polemical composition, had justly impressed the minds of those friends with a correct idea of the value of the Treatise; and it was their earnest desire that the plain sentiments and forcible arguments of Luther upon the important subject which it contained, should be presented to the Church, unembellished by any superfluous ornament, and unaltered from the original, except as to their appearance in an English version. In short, they wished to see a correct and faithful Translation of LUTHER ON THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL-without note or comment! In this wish, the Translator fully concurred: and having received and accepted the application, he sat down to the work immediately: which was, on Monday, December 23rd, 1822. As it respects the character of the version itself-the Translator, after much consideration of the eminence of his Author as a standard authority in the Church of God, and the importance of deviating from the original text in any shape whatever, at last decided upon translating according to the following principle; to which, it is his design strictly to adhere in every future translation with which he may present the public-to deliver FAITHFULLY the MIND of LUTHER; retaining LITERALLY, as much of his own WORDING, PHRASEOLOGY, and EXPRESSION, as could be admitted into the English version.-With what degree of fidelity he has adhered to this principle in the present work, the public are left to decide. The addition of the following few remarks shall suffice for observation.

1. The Work is translated from Melancthon’s Edition, which he published immediately after Luther’s death.

2. The division-heads of the Treatise, which are not distinctively expressed in the original, are so expressed in the Translation, to facilitate the Reader’s view of the whole work and all its parts. The Heads are these-Introduction, Preface, Exordium, Discussion part the First, part the Second, part the Third, and Conclusion.

3. The subdividing Sections of the matter, which, in the original, are distinguished by a very large capital at the commencement, are, in the Translation, for typographical reasons, distinguished by Sections I, II, III, IV, &c.

4. The Quotations from the Diatribe, are, in the Translation, preceded and followed by a dash and inverted commas: but with this distinction-where Erasmus’ own words are quoted in the original the commas are double; but single, where the substance of his sentiments only is quoted. The

reader will observe, however, that this distinction was not adopted till after the first three sheets were printed: which will account for all the quotations, in those sheets, being preceded and followed by double commas. Though it is presumed, there will be no difficulty in discovering which are Erasmus' own words, and which are his sentiments in substance only.

5. The portions of Scripture adduced by Luther, are, in some instances, translated from his own words, and not given according to our English version. This particular was attended to, in those few places where Luther's reading varies a little from our version, as being more consistent with a correct Translation of the author, but not with any view to favour the introduction of innovated and diverse readings of the Word of God. With these few and brief preliminary observations, the Translator presents this profound Treatise of the immortal Luther on the Bondage of the Will to the Public. And he trusts he has a sincere desire, that his own labour may prove to be, in every respect, a faithful Translation: and that the work itself may be found, under the Divine blessing, to be-an invaluable acquisition to the Church-"a sharp threshing instrument having teeth" for the exposure of subtlety and error-a banner in defence of the truth-and a means of edification and establishment to all those, who are willing to come to the light to have their deeds made manifest, and to be taught according to the oracles of God!

HENRY COLE.

London, March, 1823.

06.03 Introduction

INTRODUCTION.

Martin Luther, to the venerable D. Erasmus of Rotterdam, wishing Grace and Peace in Christ. THAT I have been so long answering your DIATRIBE on FREE-WILL, venerable Erasmus, has happened contrary to the expectation of all, and contrary to my own custom also. For hitherto, I have not only appeared to embrace willingly opportunities of this kind for writing, but even to seek them of my own accord. Some one may, perhaps, wonder at this new and unusual thing, this forbearance or fear, in Luther, who could not be roused up by so many boasting taunts, and letters of adversaries, congratulating Erasmus on his victory and singing to him the song of Triumph-What that Maccabee, that obstinate assertor, then, has at last found an Antagonist a match for him, against whom he dares not open his mouth! But so far from accusing them, I myself openly concede that to you, which I never did to any one before:-that you not only by far surpass me in the powers of eloquence, and in genius, (which we all concede to you as your desert, and the more so, as I am but a barbarian and do all things barbarously,) but that you have damped my spirit and impetus, and rendered me languid before the battle; and that by two means. First, by art: because, that is, you conduct this discussion with a most specious and uniform modesty; by which you have met and prevented me from being incensed against you. And next, because, on so great a subject, you say nothing but what has been said before: therefore, you say less about, and attribute more unto "Free-will," than the Sophists have hitherto said and attributed: (of which I shall speak more fully hereafter.) So that it seems even superfluous to reply to these your arguments, which have been indeed often refuted by me; but trodden down, and trampled under foot, by the incontrovertible Book of Philip Melancthon "Concerning Theological Questions:" a book, in my judgment, worthy not only of being immortalized, but of being included in the ecclesiastical canon: in comparison of which, your Book is, in my estimation, so mean and vile, that I greatly feel for you for having defiled your most beautiful and ingenious language with such vile trash; and I feel an indignation against the matter also, that such unworthy stuff should be borne about in ornaments of eloquence so rare; which is as if rubbish, or dung, should he carried in vessels of gold and silver. And this you yourself seem to have felt, who were so unwilling to undertake this work of writing; because your conscience told you, that you would of necessity have to try the point with all the powers of eloquence; and that, after all, you would not be able so to blind me by your colouring, but that I should, having torn off the deceptions of language, discover the real dregs beneath. For, although I am rude in speech, yet, by the grace of God, I am not rude in understanding. And, with Paul, I dare arrogate tomyself understanding and with confidence derogate it from you; although I willingly, and deservedly, arrogate eloquence and genius to you, and derogate it from myself.

Wherefore, I thought thus-If there be any who have not drank more deeply into, and more firmly held my doctrines, which are supported by such weighty Scriptures, than to be moved by these light and trivial arguments of Erasmus, though so highly ornamented, they are not worthy of being healed by my answer. Because, for such men, nothing could be spoken or written of enough, even

though it should be in many thousands of volumes a thousands times repeated: for it is as if one should plough the seashore, and sow seed in the sand, or attempt to fill a cask, full of holes, with water. For, as to those who have drank into the teaching of the Spirit in my books, to them, enough and an abundance has been administered, and they at once contemn your writings. But, as to those who read without the Spirit, it is no wonder if they be driven to and fro, like a reed, with every wind. To such, God would not have said enough, even if all his creatures should be converted into tongues. Therefore it would, perhaps, have been wisdom, to have left these offended at your book, along with those who glory in you and decree to you the triumph.

Hence, it was not from a multitude of engagements, nor from the difficulty of the undertaking, nor from the greatness of your eloquence, nor from a fear of yourself; but from mere irksomeness, indignation, and contempt, or (so to speak) from my judgment of your Diatribe, that my impetus to answer you was damped. Not to observe, in the mean time, that, being ever like yourself, you take the most diligent care to be on every occasion slippery and pliant of speech; and while you wish to appear to assert nothing, and yet, at the same time, to assert something, more cautious than Ulysses, you seem to be steering your course between Scylla and Charybdis. To meet men of such a sort, what, I would ask, can be brought forward or composed, unless any one knew how to catch Proteus himself? But what I may be able to do in this matter, and what profit your art will be to you, I will, Christ cooperating with me, hereafter shew. This my reply to you, therefore, is not wholly without cause. My brethren in Christ press me to it, setting before me the expectation of all; seeing that the authority of Erasmus is not to be despised, and the truth of the Christian doctrine is endangered in the hearts of many. And indeed, I felt a persuasion in my own mind, that my silence would not be altogether right, and that I was deceived by the prudence or malice of the flesh, and not sufficiently mindful of my office, in which I am a debtor, both to the wise and to the unwise; and especially, since I was called to it by the entreaties of so many brethren. For although our cause is such, that it requires more than the external teacher, and, beside him that planteth and him that watereth outwardly, has need of the Spirit of God to give the increase, and, as a living Teacher, to teach us inwardly living things, (all which I was led to consider;) yet, since that Spirit is free, and bloweth, not where we will, but where He willeth, it was needful to observe that rule of Paul, "Be instant in season, and out of season." (2 Timothy 4:2) For we know not at what hour the Lord cometh. Be it, therefore, that those who have not yet felt the teaching of the Spirit in my writings, have been overthrown by that Diatribe-perhaps their hour was not yet come. And who knows but that God may even condescend to visit you, my friend Erasmus, by me His poor weak vessel; and that I may (which from my heart I desire of the Father of mercies through Jesus Christ our Lord) come unto you by this Book in a happy hour, and gain over a dearest brother. For although you think and write wrong concerning "Free-will," yet no small thanks are due unto you from me, in that you have rendered my own sentiments far more strongly confirmed, from my seeing the cause of "Free-will" handled by all the powers of such and so great talents, and so far from being bettered, left worse than it was before which leaves an evident proof, that "Free-will" is a downright lie; and that, like the woman in the gospel, the more it is taken in hand by physicians, the worse it is made. Therefore the greater thanks will be rendered to you by me, if you by me gain more information, as I have gained by you more confirmation. But each is the gift of God, and not the work of our own endeavours. Wherefore, prayer must be made unto God, that He would open the mouth in me, and the heart in you and in all; that He would be the Teacher in the midst of us, who may in us speak and hear. But from you, my friend Erasmus, suffer me to obtain the grant of this request;

that, as I in these matters bear with your ignorance, so you in return, would bear with my want of eloquent utterance. God giveth not all things to each; nor can we each do all things. Or, as Paul saith, "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:4) It remains, therefore, that these gifts render a mutual service; that the one, with his gift, sustain the burden and what is lacking in the other; so shall we fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2)

06.04 Erasmus' Preface Reviewed (Sections 1)

ERASMUS' PREFACE REVIEWED.

Sect. 1.-FIRST of all, I would just touch upon some of the heads of your PREFACE; in which, You somewhat disparage our cause and adorn your own. In the first place, I would notice your censuring in me, in all your former books, an obstinacy of assertion; and saying, in this book,-"that you are so far from delighting in assertions, that you would rather at once go over to the sentiments of the skeptics, if the inviolable authority of the Holy Scriptures, and the decrees of the church, would permit you: to which authorities You willingly submit yourself in all things, whether you follow what they prescribe, or follow it not."-These are the principles that please you.

I consider, (as in courtesy bound,) that these things are asserted by you from a benevolent mind, as being a lover of peace. But if any one else had asserted them, I should, perhaps, have attacked him in my accustomed manner. But, however, I must not even allow you, though so very good in your intentions, to err in this opinion. For not to delight in assertions, is not the character of the Christian mind: nay, he must delight in assertions, or he is not a Christian. But, (that we may not be mistaken in terms) by assertion, I mean a constant adhering, affirming, confessing, defending, and invincibly persevering. Nor do I believe the term signifies any thing else, either among the Latins, or as it is used by us at this day. And moreover, I speak concerning the asserting of those things, which are delivered to us from above in the Holy Scriptures. Were it not so, we should want neither Erasmus nor any other instructor to teach us, that, in things doubtful, useless, or unnecessary; assertions, contentions, and strivings, would be not only absurd, but impious: and Paul condemns such in more places than one. Nor do you, I believe, speak of these things, unless, as a ridiculous orator, you wish to take up one subject, and go on with another, as the Roman Emperor did with his Turbot; or, with the madness of a wicked writer, you wish to contend, that the article concerning "Free-will" is doubtful, or not necessary. Be skeptics and academics far from us Christians; but be there with us assertors twofold more determined than the stoics themselves. How often does the apostle Paul require that assurance of faith; that is, that most certain, and most firm assertion of Conscience, calling it (Romans 10:10), confession, "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation?" And Christ also saith, "Whosoever confesseth Me before men, him will I confess before My Father." (Matthew 10:32) Peter commands us to "give a reason of the hope" that is in us. (1 Peter 3:15) But why should I dwell upon this; nothing is more known and more general among Christians than assertions. Take away assertions, and you take away Christianity. Nay, the Holy Spirit is given unto them from heaven, that He may glorify Christ, and confess Him even unto death; unless this be not to assert-to die for confession and assertion. In a word, the Spirit so asserts, that He comes upon the whole world and reproves them of sin (John 16:8) thus, as it were, provoking to battle. And Paul enjoins Timothy to reprove, and to be instant out of season. (2 Timothy 4:2) But how ludicrous to me would be that reprover, who should neither really believe that himself, of which he reproved, nor constantly assert it!-Why I would send him to Anticyra, to be cured. But I am the greatest fool, who thus lose words and time upon that, which is clearer than the sun. What Christian would bear that assertions should be contemned?

This would be at once to deny all piety and religion together; or to assert, that religion, piety, and every doctrine, is nothing at all. Why therefore do you too say, that you do not delight in assertions, and that you prefer such a mind to any other? But you would have it understood that you have said nothing here concerning confessing Christ, and His doctrines.-I receive the admonition. And, in courtesy to you, I give up my right and custom, and refrain from judging of your heart, reserving that for another time, or for others. In the mean time, I admonish you to correct your tongue, and your pen, and to refrain henceforth from using such expressions. For, how upright and honest soever your heart may be, your words, which are the index of the heart, are not so. For, if you think the matter of "Free-will" is not necessary to be known, nor at all concerned with Christ, you speak honestly, but think wickedly: but, if you think it is necessary, you speak wickedly, and think rightly. And if so, then there is no room for you to complain and exaggerate so much concerning useless assertions and contentions: for what have they to do with the nature of the cause?

Chapter 83

06.05 Erasmus' Scepticism (Sections 2 - 6)

ERASMUS' SCEPTICISM.

Sect. 2.-BUT what will you say to these your declarations, when, be it remembered, they are not confined to "Free-will" only, but apply to all doctrines in general throughout the world-that, "if it were permitted you by the inviolable authority of the sacred Writings and decrees of the church, you would go over to the sentiments of the Sceptics?"-

What an all-changeable Proteus is there in these expressions, "inviolable authority" and "decrees of the church!" As though you could have so very great a reverence for the Scriptures and the church, when at the same time you signify, that you wish you had the liberty of being a Skeptic! What Christian would talk in this way? But if you say this in reference to useless and doubtful doctrines, what news is there in what you say? Who, in such things, would not wish for the liberty of the skeptical profession? Nay, what Christian is there who does not actually use this liberty freely, and condemn all those who are drawn away with, and captivated by ever opinion? Unless you consider all Christians to be such (as the term is generally understood) whose doctrines are useless, and for which they quarrel like fools, and contend by assertions. But if you speak of necessary things, what declaration more impious can any one make, than that he wishes for the liberty of asserting nothing in such matters? Whereas, the Christian will rather say this-I am so averse to the sentiments of the Sceptics, that wherever I am not hindered by the infirmity of the flesh, I will not only steadily adhere to the Sacred Writings every where, and in all parts of them, and assert them, but I wish also to be as certain as possible in things that are not necessary, and that lie without the Scripture; for what is more miserable than uncertainty.

What shall we say to these things also, where you add-"To which authorities I submit my opinion in all things; whether I follow what they enjoin, or follow it not."-

What say you, Erasmus? Is it not enough that you submit your opinion to the Scriptures? Do you submit it to the decrees of the church also? What can the church decree, that is not decreed in the Scriptures? If it can, where then remains the liberty and power of judging those who make the decrees? As Paul, 1 Corinthians 14:1-40, teaches "Let others judge." Are you not pleased that there should be any one to judge the decrees of the church, which, nevertheless, Paul enjoins? What new kind of religion and humility is this, that, by our own example, you would take away from us the power of judging the decrees of men, and give it unto men without judgment? Where does the Scripture of God command us to do this?

Moreover, what Christian would so commit the injunctions of the Scripture and of the church to the winds,-as to say "whether I follow them, or follow them not?" You submit yourself, and yet care not at all whether you follow them or not. But let that Christian be anathema, who is not certain in, and does not follow, that which is enjoined him. For how will he believe that which he does not follow?-Do you here, then, mean to say, that following is understanding a thing certainly, and not doubting of it at all in a skeptical manner? If you do, what is there in any creature which any one

can follow, if following be understanding, and seeing and knowing perfectly? And if this be the case, then it is impossible that any one should, at the same time, follow some things, and not follow others: whereas, by following one certain thing, God, he follows all things; that is, in Him, whom whoso followeth not, never followeth any part of His creature. In a word, these declarations of yours amount to this-that, with you, it matters not what is believed by any one, any where, if the peace of the world be but undisturbed; and if every one be but allowed, when his life, his reputation, or his interest is at stake, to do as he did, who said, "If they affirm, I affirm, if they deny, I deny:" and to look upon the Christian doctrines as nothing better than the opinions of philosophers and men: and that it is the greatest of folly to quarrel about, contend for, and assert them, as nothing can arise therefrom but contention, and the disturbance of the public peace: "that what is above us, does not concern us." This, I say, is what your declarations amount to.-Thus, to put an end to our fightings, you come in as an intermediate peace-maker, that you may cause each side to suspend arms, and persuade us to cease from drawing swords about things so absurd and useless.

What I should cut at here, I believe, my friend Erasmus, you know very well. But, as I said before, I will not openly express myself. In the mean time, I excuse your very good intention of heart; but do you go no further; fear the Spirit of God, who searcheth the reins and the heart, and who is not deceived by artfully contrived expressions. I have, upon this occasion, expressed myself thus, that henceforth you may cease to accuse our cause of pertinacity or obstinacy. For, by so doing, you only evince that you hug in your heart a Lucian, or some other of the swinish tribe of the Epicureans; who, because he does not believe there is a God himself, secretly laughs at all those who do believe and confess it. Allow us to be assertors, and to study and delight in assertions: and do you favour your Sceptics and Academics until Christ shall have called you also. The Holy Spirit is not a Skeptic, nor are what he has written on our hearts doubts or opinions, but assertions more certain, and more firm, than life itself and all human experience.

Sect. 3.-Now I come to the next head, which is connected with this; where you make a "distinction between the Christian doctrines," and pretend that some are necessary, and some not necessary." You say, that "some are abstruse, and some quite clear." Thus you merely sport the sayings of others, or else exercise yourself, as it were, in a rhetorical figure. And you bring forward, in support of this opinion, that passage of Paul, Romans 11:33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and goodness of God!" And also that of Isaiah 40:13, "Who hath holpen the Spirit of the Lord, or who hath been His counselor?"

You could easily say these things, seeing that, you either knew not that you were writing to Luther, but for the world at large, or did not think that you were writing against Luther: whom, however, I hope you allow to have some acquaintance with, and judgment in, the Sacred Writings. But, if you do not allow it, then, behold, I will also twist things thus. This is the distinction which I make; that I also may act a little the rhetorician and logician-God, and the Scripture of God, are two things; no less so than God, and the Creature of God. That there are in God many hidden things which we know not, no one doubts: as He himself saith concerning the last day: "Of that day knoweth no man but the Father." (Matthew 24:36) And (Acts 1:7) "It is not yours to know the times and seasons." And again, "I know whom I have chosen," (John 13:18) And Paul, "The Lord knoweth them that are His," (2 Timothy 2:19). And the like.

But, that there are in the Scriptures some things abstruse, and that all things are not quite plain, is a report spread abroad by the impious Sophists by whose mouth you speak here, Erasmus. But they never have produced, nor ever can produce, one article whereby to prove this their madness. And it is with such scare-crows that Satan has frightened away men from reading the Sacred Writings, and has rendered the Holy Scripture contemptible, that he might cause his poisons of philosophy to prevail in the church. This indeed I confess, that there are many places in the Scriptures obscure and abstruse; not from the majesty of the thing, but from our ignorance of certain terms and grammatical particulars; but which do not prevent a knowledge of all the things in the Scriptures. For what thing of more importance can remain hidden in the Scriptures, now that the seals are broken, the stone rolled from the door of the sepulcher, and that greatest of all mysteries brought to light, Christ made man: that God is Trinity and Unity: that Christ suffered for us, and will reign to all eternity? Are not these things known and proclaimed even in our streets? Take Christ out of the Scriptures, and what will you find remaining in them?

All the things, therefore, contained in the Scriptures; are made manifest, although some places, from the words not being understood, are yet obscure. But to know that all things in the Scriptures are set in the clearest light, and then, because a few words are obscure, to report that the things are obscure, is absurd and impious. And, if the words are obscure in one place, yet they are clear in another. But, however, the same thing, which has been most openly declared to the whole world, is both spoken of in the Scriptures in plain words, and also still lies hidden in obscure words. Now, therefore, it matters not if the thing be in the light, whether any certain representations of it be in obscurity or not, if, in the mean while, many other representations of the same thing be in the light. For who would say that the public fountain is not in the light, because those who are in some dark narrow lane do not see it, when all those who are in the Open market place can see it plainly?

Sect. 4.-WHAT you adduce, therefore, about the darkness of the Corycian cavern, amounts to nothing; matters are not so in the Scriptures. For those things which are of the greatest majesty, and the most abstruse mysteries, are no longer in the dark corner, but before the very doors, nay, brought forth and manifested openly. For Christ has opened our understanding to understand the Scriptures, Luke 24:45. And the Gospel is preached to every creature. (Mark 16:15, Colossians 1:23) "Their sound is gone out into all the earth." (Psalms 19:4) And "All things that are written, are written for our instruction." (Romans 15:4) And again, "All Scripture is inspired from above, and is profitable for instruction." (2 Timothy 3:16)

Therefore come forward, you and all the Sophists together, and produce any one mystery which is still abstruse in the Scriptures. But, if many things still remain abstruse to many, this does not arise from obscurity in the Scriptures, but from their own blindness or want of understanding, who do not go the way to see the all-perfect clearness of the truth. As Paul saith concerning the Jews, 2 Corinthians 3:15. "The veil still remains upon their heart." And again, "If our gospel be hid it is hid to them that are lost, whose heart the god of this world hath blinded." (2 Corinthians 4:3-4) With the same rashness any one may cover his own eyes, or go from the light into the dark and hide himself, and then blame the day and the sun for being obscure. Let, therefore, wretched men cease to impute, with blasphemous perverseness, the darkness and obscurity of their own heart to the all-clear Scriptures of God.

You, therefore, when you adduce Paul, saying, "His judgments are incomprehensible," seem to make the pronoun His (ejus) refer to Scripture (Scriptura). Whereas Paul does not say, The judgments of the Scripture are incomprehensible, but the judgments of God. So also Isaiah 40:13, does not say, Who has known the mind of the Scripture, but, who has known "the mind of the Lord?" Although Paul asserts that the mind of the Lord is known to Christians: but it is in those things which are freely given unto us: as he saith also in the same place, 1 Corinthians 2:10, 1 Corinthians 2:16. You see, therefore, how sleepily you have looked over these places of the Scripture: and you cite them just as aptly as you cite nearly all the passages in defense of "Free-will." In like manner, your examples which you subjoin, not without suspicion and bitterness, are nothing at all to the purpose. Such are those concerning the distinction of Persons: the union of the Divine and human natures: the unpardonable sin: the ambiguity attached to which, you say, has never been cleared up.-If you mean the questions of Sophists that have been agitated upon those subjects, well. But what has the all-innocent Scripture done to you, that you impute the abuse of the most wicked of men to its purity? The Scripture simply confesses the Trinity of God, the humanity of Christ, and the unpardonable sin. There is nothing here of obscurity or ambiguity. But how these things are the Scripture does not say, nor is it necessary to be known. The Sophists employ their dreams here; attack and condemn them, and acquit the Scripture.-But, if you mean the reality of the matter, I say again, attack not the Scriptures, but the Arians, and those to whom the Gospel is hid, that, through the working of Satan, they might not see the all-manifest testimonies concerning the Trinity of the Godhead, and the humanity of Christ. But to be brief. The clearness of the Scripture is twofold; even as the obscurity is twofold also. The one is external, placed in the ministry of the word; the other internal, placed in the understanding of the heart. If you speak of the internal clearness, no man sees one iota in the Scriptures, but he that hath the Spirit of God. All have a darkened heart; so that, even if they know how to speak of, and set forth, all things in the Scripture, yet, they cannot feel them nor know them: nor do they believe that they are the creatures of God, nor any thing else: according to that of Psalms 14:1. "The fool hath said in his heart, God is nothing." For the Spirit is required to understand the whole of the Scripture and every part of it. If you speak of the external clearness, nothing whatever is left obscure or ambiguous; but all things that are in the Scriptures, are by the Word brought forth into the clearest light, and proclaimed to the whole world.

Sect. 5.-BUT this is still more intolerable,-Your enumerating this subject of "Free-will" among those things that are "useless, and not necessary;" and drawing up for us, instead of it, a "Form" of those things which you consider "necessary unto Christian piety." Such a form as, certainly, any Jew or any Gentile utterly ignorant of Christ, might draw up. For of Christ you make no mention in one iota. As though you thought, that there may be Christian piety without Christ, if God be but worshipped with all the powers as being by nature most merciful.

What shall I say here, Erasmus? To me, you breathe out nothing but Lucian, and draw in the gorging surfeit of Epicurus. If you consider this subject "not necessary" to Christians, away, I pray you, out of the field; I have nothing to do with you. I consider it necessary.

If, as you say, it be "irreligious," if it be "curious," if it be "superfluous," to know, whether or not God foreknows any thing by contingency; whether our own will does any thing in those things which pertain unto eternal salvation, or is only passive under the work of grace; whether or not we do, what we do of good or evil, from necessity, or rather from being passive; what then, I ask, is

religious; what is grave; what is useful to be known? All this, Erasmus, is to no purpose whatever. And it is difficult to attribute this to your ignorance, because you are now old, have been conversant with Christians, and have long studied the Sacred Writings: therefore you leave no room for my excusing you, or having a good thought concerning you. And yet the Papists pardon and put up with these enormities in you: and on this account, because you are writing against Luther: otherwise, if Luther were not in the case, they would tear you in pieces tooth and nail. Plato is a friend; Socrates is a friend; but Truth is to be honoured above all. For, granting that you have but little understanding in the Scriptures and in Christian piety, surely even an enemy to Christians ought to known what Christians consider useful and necessary, and what they do not. Whereas you, a theologian, a teacher of Christians, and about to draw up for them a "Form" of Christianity, not only in your skeptical manner doubt of what is necessary and useful to them, but go away into the directly opposite, and, contrary to your own principles, by an unheard of assertion, declare it to be your judgment, that those things are "not necessary:" whereas, if they be not necessary, and certainly known, there can remain neither God, nor Christ, nor Gospel, nor Faith, nor any thing else, even of Judaism, much less of Christianity! In the name of the Immortal God, Erasmus, what an occasion, yea, what a field do you open for acting and speaking against you! What could you write well or correctly concerning "Free-will," who confess, by these your declarations, so great an ignorance of the Scripture and of Godliness? But I draw in my sails: nor will I here deal with you in my words (for that perhaps I shall do hereafter) but in your own.

Sect. 6.-THE "Form" of Christianity set forth by you, among other things, has this-"That we should strive with all our powers, have recourse to the remedy of repentance, and in all ways try to gain the mercy of God; without which, neither human will, nor endeavour, is effectual." Also, "that no one should despair of pardon from a God by nature most merciful."-

These statements of yours are without Christ, without the Spirit, and more cold than ice: so that, the beauty of your eloquence is really deformed by them. Perhaps a fear of the Popes and those tyrants, extorted them from you their miserable vassal, lest you should appear to them a perfect atheist. But what they assert is this-That there is ability in us; that there is a striving with all our powers; that there is mercy in God; that there are ways of gaining that mercy; that there is a God, by nature just, and most merciful, &c.-But if a man does not know what these powers are; what they can do, or in what they are to be passive; what their efficacy, or what their inefficacy is; what can such an one do? What will you set him about doing?

"It is irreligious, curious, and superfluous, (you say) to wish to know, whether our own will does any thing in those things which pertain unto eternal salvation, or whether it is wholly passive under the work of grace."-But here, you say the contrary: that it is Christian piety to "strive with all the powers;" and that, "without the mercy of God the will is ineffective."

Here you plainly assert, that the will does something in those things which pertain unto eternal salvation, when you speak of it as striving: and again, you assert that it is passive, when you say, that without the mercy of God it is ineffective. Though, at the same time, you do not define how far that doing, and being passive, is to be understood: thus, designedly keeping us in ignorance how far the mercy of God extends, and how far our own will extends; what our own will is to do, in that which you enjoin, and what the mercy of God is to do. Thus, that prudence of yours, carries you along; by which, you are resolved to hold with neither side, and to escape safely through Scylla

and Charybdis; in order that, when you come into the open sea, and find yourself overwhelmed and confounded by the waves, you may have it in your power, to assert all that you now deny, and deny all that you now assert.

06.06 The Necessity of Knowing God (Sections 7 - 8)

THE NECESSITY OF KNOWING GOD AND HIS POWER.

Sect. 7.-BUT I will set your theology before your eyes by a few similitudes.-What if any one, intending to compose a poem, or an oration, should never think about, nor inquire into his abilities, what he could do, and what he could not do, nor what the subject undertaken required; and should utterly disregard that precept of Horace, "What the shoulders can sustain, and what they must sink under;" but should precipitately dash upon the undertaking and think thus-I must strive to get the work done; to inquire whether the learning I have, the eloquence I have, the force of genius I have, be equal to it, is curious and superfluous:-Or, it any one, desiring to have a plentiful crop from his land, should not be so curious as to take the superfluous care of examining the nature of the soil, (as Virgil curiously and in vain teaches in his Georgics,) but should rush on at once, thinking of nothing but the work, and plough the seashore, and cast in the seed wherever the soil was turned up, whether sand or mud:-Or if any one, about to make war, and desiring a glorious victory, or intending to render any other service to the state, should not be so curious as to deliberate upon what it was in his power to do; whether the treasury could furnish money, whether the soldiers were fit, whether any opportunity offered; and should pay no regard whatever to that of the historian, "Before you act, there must be deliberation, and when you have deliberated, speedy execution;" but should rush forward with his eyes blinded, and his ears stopped, only exclaiming war! war! and should be determined on the undertaking:-What, I ask you, Erasmus, would you think of such poets, such husbandmen, such generals, and such heads of affairs? I will add also that of the Gospel-If any one going to build a tower, sits not down first and counts the cost, whether he has enough to finish it,-What does Christ say of such an One? (Luke 14:28-32).

Thus you also enjoin us works only. But you forbid us to examine, weigh, and know, first, our ability, what we can do, and what we cannot do, as being curious, superfluous, and irreligious. Thus, while with your over-cautious prudence you pretend to detest temerity, and make a show of sobriety, you go so far, that you even teach the greatest of all temerity. For, although the Sophists are rash and mad in reality while they pursue their curious inquiries, yet their sin is less enormous than yours; for you even teach and enjoin men to be mad, and to rush on with temerity. And to make your madness still greater, you persuade us, that this temerity is the most exalted and Christian piety, sobriety, religious gravity, and even salvation. And you assert, that if we exercise it not, we are irreligious, curious, and vain: although you are so great an enemy to assertions. Thus, in steering clear of Charybdis, you have, with excellent grace, escaped Scylla also. But into this state you are driven by your confidence in your own talents. You believe, that you can by your eloquence, so impose upon the understandings of all, that no one shall discover the design which you secretly hug in your heart, and what you aim at in all those your pliant writings. But God is not mocked, (Galatians 6:7) upon whom it is not safe to run.

Moreover, had you enjoined us this temerity in composing poems, in preparing for fruits, in conducting wars or other undertakings, or in building houses; although it would have been

intolerable, especially in so great a man, yet you might have been deserving of some pardon, at least from Christians, for they pay no regard to these temporal things. But when you enjoin Christians themselves to become rash workers, and charge them not to be curious about what they can do and what they cannot do, in obtaining eternal salvation; this, evidently, and in reality, is the sin unpardonable. For while they know not what or how much they can do, they will not know what to do; and if they know not what to do, they cannot repent when they do wrong; and impenitence is the unpardonable sin: and to this, does that moderate and skeptical theology of yours lead us.

Therefore, it is not irreligious, curious, or superfluous, but essentially wholesome and necessary, for a Christian to know, whether or not the will does any thing in those things which pertain unto Salvation. Nay, let me tell you, this is the very hinge upon which our discussion turns. It is the very heart of our subject. For our object is this: to inquire what "Free-will" can do, in what it is passive, and how it stands with reference to the grace of God. If we know nothing of these things, we shall know nothing whatever of Christian matters, and shall be far behind all People upon the earth. He that does not feel this, let him confess that he is no Christian. And he that despises and laughs at it, let him know that he is the Christian’s greatest enemy. For, if I know not how much I can do myself, how far my ability extends, and what I can do God-wards; I shall be equally uncertain and ignorant how much God is to do, how far His ability is to extend, and what He is to do toward me: whereas it is "God that worketh all in all." (1 Corinthians 12:6) But if I know not the distinction between our working and the power of God, I know not God Himself. And if I know not God, I cannot worship Him, praise Him, give Him thanks, nor serve Him; for I shall not know how much I ought to ascribe unto myself, and how much unto God. It is necessary, therefore, to hold the most certain distinction, between the power of God and our power, the working of God and our working, if we would live in His fear.

Hence you see, this point, forms another part of the whole sum of Christianity; on which depends, and in which is at stake, the knowledge of ourselves, and the knowledge and glory of God. Wherefore, friend Erasmus, your calling the knowledge of this point irreligious, curious, and vain, is not to be borne in you. We owe much to you, but we owe all to the fear of God. Nay you yourself see, that all our good is to be ascribed unto God, and you assert that in your Form of Christianity: and in asserting this, you certainly, at the same time assert also, that the mercy of God alone does all things, and that our own will does nothing, but is rather acted upon: and so it must be, otherwise the whole is not ascribed unto God. And yet, immediately afterwards, you say, that to assert these things, and to know them, is irreligious, impious, and vain. But at this rate a mind, which is unstable in itself, and unsettled and inexperienced in the things of godliness, cannot but talk.

Sect. 8.-ANOTHER part of the sum of Christianity is, to know, whether God foreknows any thing by contingency, or whether we do all things from necessity. This part also you make to be irreligious, curious, and vain, as all the wicked do: the devils , and the damned also, make it detestable and execrable. And you shew your wisdom in keeping yourself clear from such questions, wherever you can do it. But however, you are but a very poor rhetorician and theologian, if you pretend to speak of "Free-will" without these essential parts of it. I will therefore act as a whetstone, and though no rhetorician myself, will tell a famed rhetorician what he ought to do-If, then, Quintilian, purposing to write on Oratory, should say, "In my judgment, all that superfluous nonsense about invention, arrangement, elocution, memory, pronunciation, need not

be mentioned; it is enough to know, that Oratory, is the art of speaking well"-would you not laugh at such a writer? But you act exactly like this: for pretending to write on "Free-will," you first throw aside, and cast away, the grand substance and all the parts of the subject on which you undertake to write. Whereas, it is impossible that you should know what "Free-will" is, unless you know what the human will does, and what God does or foreknows. Do not your rhetoricians teach, that he who undertakes to speak upon any subject, ought first to show, whether the thing exist; and then, what it is, what its parts are, what is contrary to it, connected with it, and like unto it, &c.? But you rob that miserable subject in itself, "Free will," of all these things: and define no one question concerning it, except this first, viz., whether it exist: and even this with such arguments as we shall presently see: and so worthless a book on "Free-will" I never saw, excepting the elegance of the language. The Sophists, in reality, at least argue upon this point better than you, though those of them who have attempted the subject of "Free-will," are no rhetoricians; for they define all the questions connected with it: whether it exists, what it does, and how it stands with reference to, &c.: although they do not effect what they attempt. In this book, therefore, I will push you, and the Sophists together, until you shall define to me the power of "Free-will," and what it can do: and I hope I shall so push you, (Christ willing) as to make you heartily repent that you ever published your Diatribe.

06.07 The Sovereignty of God (Sections 9 - 27)

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

Sect. 9.-THIS, therefore, is also essentially necessary and wholesome for Christians to know: That God foreknows nothing by contingency, but that He foresees, purposes, and does all things according to His immutable, eternal, and infallible will. By this thunderbolt, "Free-will" is thrown prostrate, and utterly dashed to pieces. Those, therefore, who would assert "Free-will," must either deny this thunderbolt, or pretend not to see it, or push it from them. But, however, before I establish this point by any arguments of my own, and by the authority of Scripture, I will first set it forth in your words. Are you not then the person, friend Erasmus, who just now asserted, that God is by nature just, and by nature most merciful? If this be true, does it not follow that He is immutably just and merciful? That, as His nature is not changed to all eternity, so neither His justice nor His mercy? And what is said concerning His justice and His mercy, must be said also concerning His knowledge, His wisdom, His goodness, His will, and His other Attributes. If therefore these things are asserted religiously, piously, and wholesomely concerning God, as you say yourself, what has come to you, that, contrary to your own self, you now assert, that it is irreligious, curious, and vain, to say, that God foreknows of necessity? You openly declare that the immutable will of God is to be known, but you forbid the knowledge of His immutable prescience. Do you believe that He foreknows against His will, or that He wills in ignorance? If then, He foreknows, willing, His will is eternal and immovable, because His nature is so: and, if He wills, foreknowing, His knowledge is eternal and immovable, because His nature is so. From which it follows unalterably, that all things which we do, although they may appear to us to be done mutably and contingently, and even may be done thus contingently by us, are yet, in reality, done necessarily and immutably, with respect to the will of God. For the will of God is effective and cannot be hindered; because the very power of God is natural to Him, and His wisdom is such that He cannot be deceived. And as His will cannot be hindered, the work itself cannot be hindered from being done in the place, at the time, in the measure, and by whom He foresees and wills. If the will of God were such, that, when the work was done, the work remained but the will ceased, (as is the case with the will of men, which, when the house is built which they wished to build, ceases to will, as though it ended by death) then, indeed, it might be said, that things are done by contingency and mutability. But here, the case is the contrary; the work ceases, and the will remains. So far is it from possibility, that the doing of the work or its remaining, can be said to be from contingency or mutability. But, (that we may not be deceived in terms) being done by contingency, does not, in the Latin language, signify that the work itself which is done is contingent, but that it is done according to a contingent and mutable will-such a will as is not to be found in God! Moreover, a work cannot be called contingent, unless it be done by us unawares, by contingency, and, as it were, by chance; that is, by our will or hand catching at it, as presented by chance, we thinking nothing of it, nor willing any thing about it before.

Sect. 10.-I COULD wish, indeed, that we were furnished with some better term for this discussion, than this commonly used term, necessity, which cannot rightly be used, either with reference to the

human will, or the divine. It is of a signification too harsh and ill-suited for this subject, forcing upon the mind an idea of compulsion, and that which is altogether contrary to will; whereas, the subject which we are discussing, does not require such an idea: for Will, whether divine or human, does what it does, be it good or evil, not by any compulsion but by mere willingness or desire, as it were, totally free. The will of God, nevertheless, which rules over our mutable will, is immutable and infallible; as Boëtius sings, "Immovable Thyself, Thou movement giv'st to all." And our own will, especially our corrupt will, cannot of itself do good; therefore, where the term fails to express the idea required, the understanding of the reader must make up the deficiency, knowing what is wished to be expressed-the immutable will of God, and the impotency of our depraved will; or, as some have expressed it, the necessity of immutability, though neither is that sufficiently grammatical, or sufficiently theological.

Upon this point, the Sophists have now laboured hard for many years, and being at last conquered, have been compelled to retreat. All things take place from the necessity of the consequence, (say they) but not from the necessity of the thing consequent. What nothingness this amounts to, I will not take the trouble to show. By the necessity of the consequence, (to give a general idea of it) they mean this-If God wills any thing, that same thing must, of necessity be done; but it is not necessary that the thing done should be necessary: for God alone is necessary; all other things cannot be so, if it is God that wills. Therefore, (say they) the action of God is necessary, where He wills, but the act itself is not necessary; that is, (they mean) it has not essential necessity. But what do they effect by this playing upon words? Only this, that the act itself is not necessary, that is, it has not essential necessity. This is no more than saying, the act is not God Himself. This, nevertheless, remains certain, that if the action of God is necessary, or if there is a necessity of the consequence, every thing takes place of necessity, how much soever the act be not necessary; that is, be not God Himself, or have not essential necessity. For, if I be not made of necessity, it is of little moment with me, whether my existence and being be mutable or not, if, nevertheless, I, that contingent and mutable being, who am not the necessary God, am made.

Wherefore, their ridiculous play upon words, that all things take place from the necessity of the consequence, but not from the necessity of the thing consequent, amounts to nothing more than this-all things take place of necessity, but all the things that do take place are not God Himself. But what need was there to tell us this? As though there were any fear of our asserting, that the things done were God Himself, or possessed divine or necessary nature. This asserted truth, therefore, stands and remains invincible-that all things take place according to the immutable will of God! which they call the necessity of the consequence. Nor is there here any obscurity or ambiguity. In Isaiah he saith, "My counsel shall stand, and My will shall be done." (Isaiah 46:10.) And what schoolboy does not under-stand the meaning of these expressions, "Counsel," "will," "shall be done," "shall stand?"

Sect. 11.-BUT why should these things be abstruse to us Christians, so that it should be considered irreligious, curious, and vain, to discuss and know them, when heathen poets, and the very commonalty, have them in their mouths in the most frequent use? How often does Virgil alone make mention of Fate? "All things stand fixed by law immutable." Again, "Fixed is the day of every man." Again, "If the Fates summon you." And again, "If thou shalt break the binding chain of Fate." All this poet aims at, is to show, that in the destruction of Troy, and in raising the Roman empire,

Fate did more than all the devoted efforts of men. In a word, he makes even their immortal gods subject to Fate. To this, even Jupiter and Juno must, of necessity, yield. Hence they made the three Parcae immutable, implacable, and irrevocable in decree. [See Note l]

Those men of wisdom knew that which the event itself, with experience, proves; that no man's own counsels ever succeeded but that the event happened to all contrary to what they thought. Virgil's Hector says, "Could Troy have stood by human arm, it should have stood by mine." Hence that common saying was on every one's tongue, "God's will be done." Again, "If God will, we will do it." Again, "Such was the will of God." "Such was the will of those above." "Such was your will," says Virgil. Whence we may see, that the knowledge of predestination and of the prescience of God, was no less left in the world than the notion of the divinity itself. And those who wished to appear wise, went in their disputatious so far, that, their hearts being darkened, they became fools," (Romans 1:21-22) and denied, or pretended not to know, those things which their poets, and the commonalty, and even their own consciences, held to be universally known, most certain, and most true.

Sect. 12.-I OBSERVE further, not only how true these things are (concerning which I shall speak more at large hereafter out of the Scriptures) but also how religious, pious, and necessary it is to know them; for if these things be not known there can be neither faith, nor any worship of God: nay, not to know them, is to be in reality ignorant of God, with which ignorance salvation, it is well known, cannot consist. For if you doubt, or disdain to know that God foreknows and wills all things, not contingently, but necessarily and immutably, how can you believe confidently, trust to, and depend upon His promises? For when He promises, it is necessary that you should be certain that He knows, is able, and willing to perform what He promises; otherwise, you will neither hold Him true nor faithful; which is unbelief, the greatest of wickedness, and a denying of the Most High God! And how can you be certain and secure, unless you are persuaded that He knows and wills certainly, infallibly, immutably, and necessarily, and will perform what He promises? Nor ought we to be certain only that God wills necessarily and immutably, and will perform, but also to glory in the same; as Paul, (Romans 3:4) "Let God be true, but every man a liar." And again, "For the word of God is not without effect." (Romans 9:6) And in another place, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His." (2 Timothy 2:19) And, "Which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." (Titus 1:2) And, "He that cometh, must believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that hope in Him." (Hebrews 11:6)

If, therefore, we are taught, and if we believe, that we ought not to know the necessary prescience of God, and the necessity of the things that are to take place, Christian faith is utterly destroyed, and the promises of God and the whole Gospel entirely fall to the ground; for the greatest and only consolation of Christians in their adversities, is the knowing that God lies not, but does all things immutably, and that His will cannot be resisted, changed, or hindered.

Sect. 13.-Do you now, then, only observe, friend Erasmus, to what that most moderate, and most peace-loving theology of yours would lead us. You call us off, and forbid our endeavouring to know the prescience of God, and the necessity that lies on men and things, and counsel us to leave such things, and to avoid and disregard them; and in so doing, you at the same time teach us your rash sentiments; that we should seek after an ignorance of God, (which comes upon us of its own accord, and is engendered in us), disregard faith, leave the promises of God, and account the

consolations of the Spirit and the assurances of conscience, nothing at all! Such counsel scarcely any Epicure himself would give!

Moreover, not content with this, you call him who should desire to know such things, irreligious, curious, and vain; but him who should disregard them, religious, pious, and sober. What else do these words imply, than that Christians are irreligious, curious, and vain? And that Christianity is a thing of nought, vain, foolish, and plainly impious? Here again, therefore, while you wish by all means to deter us from temerity, running, as fools always do, directly into the contrary, you teach nothing but the greatest temerity, impiety, and perdition. Do you not see, then, that in this part, your book is so impious, blasphemous, and sacrilegious, that its like is not any where to be found.

I do not, as I have observed before, speak of your heart; nor can I think that you are so lost, that from your heart, you wish these things to be taught and practiced. But I would shew you what enormities that man must be compelled unknowingly to broach, who undertakes to support a bad cause. And moreover, what it is to run against divine things and truths, when, in mere compliance with others and against our own conscience, we assume a strange character and act upon a strange stage. It is neither a game nor a jest, to undertake to teach the sacred truths and godliness: for it is very easy here to meet with that fall which James speaks of, "he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all." (James 2:10) For when we begin to be, in the least degree, disposed to trifle, and not to hold the sacred truths in due reverence, we are soon involved in impieties, and overwhelmed with blasphemies: as it has happened to you here, Erasmus-May the Lord pardon, and have mercy upon you! That the Sophists have given birth to such numbers of reasoning questions upon these subjects, and have intermingled with them many unprofitable things, many of which you mention, I know and confess, as well as you: and I have inveighed against them much more than you have. But you act with imprudence and rashness, when you liken the purity of the sacred truths unto the profane and foolish questions of the impious, and mingle and confound it with them. "They have defiled the gold with dung, and changed the good colour," (Lamentations 4:1, as Jeremiah saith.) But the gold is not to be compared unto, and cast away with the dung; as you do it. The gold must be wrested from them, and the pure Scripture separated from their dregs and filth; which it has ever been my aim to do, that the divine truths may be looked upon in one light, and the trifles of these men in another. But it ought not to be considered of any service to us, that nothing has been effected by these questions, but their causing us to favour them less with the whole current of our approbation, if, nevertheless, we still desire to be wiser than we ought. The question with us is not how much the Sophists have effected by their reasonings, but how we may become good men, and Christians. Nor ought you to impute it to the Christian doctrine that the impious do evil. That is nothing to the purpose: you may speak of that somewhere else, and spare your paper here.

Sect. 14.-UNDER your third head, you attempt to make us some of those very modest and quiet Epicureans. With a different kind of advice indeed, but no better than that, with which the two forementioned particulars are brought forward:-"Some things (you say) are of that nature, that, although they are true in themselves, and might be known, yet it would not be prudent to prostitute them to the ears of every one."-

Here again, according to your custom, you mingle and confound every thing, to bring the sacred things down to a level with the profane, without making any distinction whatever: again falling into

the contempt of, and doing an injury to God. As I have said before, those things which are either found in the sacred Writings, or may be proved by them, are not only plain, but wholesome; and therefore may be, nay, ought to be, spread abroad, learnt, and known. So that your saying, that they ought not to be prostituted to the ears of every one, is false: if, that is, you speak of those things which are in the Scripture: but if you speak of any other things, they are nothing to me, and nothing to the purpose: you lose time and paper in saying any thing about them.

Moreover, you know that I agree not with the Sophists in any thing: you may therefore spare me, and not bring me in at all as connected with their abuse of the truth. You had, in this book of yours, to speak against me. I know where the Sophists are wrong, nor do I want you for my instructor, and they have been sufficiently inveighed against by me: this, therefore, I wish to be observed once for all, whenever you shall bring me in with the Sophists, and disparage my side of the subject by their madness. For you do me an injury; and that you know very well.

Sect. 15.-NOW let us see your reasons for giving this advice-'you think, that, although it may be true, that God, from His nature, is in a beetle's hole, or even in a sink, (which you have too much holy reverence to say yourself, and blame the Sophists for talking in such a way) no less than in Heaven, yet it would be unreasonable to discuss such a subject before the multitude.'-

First of all, let them talk thus, who can talk thus. We do not here argue concerning what are facts in men, but concerning justice and law: not that we may live, but that we may live as we ought. Who among us lives and acts rightly? But justice and the doctrine of law are not therefore condemned: but rather they condemn us. You fetch from afar these irrelevant things, and scrape together many such from all quarters, because you cannot get over this one point, the prescience of God: and since you cannot overthrow it in any way, you want, in the mean time, to tire out the reader with a multiplicity of empty observation. But of this, no more. Let us return to the point.

What then is your intention, in observing that there are some things which ought not to be spoken of openly? Do you mean to enumerate the subject of "Free-will" among those things? If you do, the whole that I have just said concerning the necessity of knowing what "Free-will" is, will turn round upon you. Moreover, if so, why do you not keep to your own principles, and have nothing to do with your Diatribe? But, if you do well in discussing "Free-will," why do you speak against such discussion? and if it is a bad subject, why do you make it worse? But if you do not enumerate it among those things, then, you leave your subject-point; and like an orator of words only, talk about those irrelevant things that have nothing to do with the subject.

Sect. 16.-NOR are you right in the use of this example; nor in condemning the discussion of this subject before the multitude, as useless-that God is in a beetle's hole and even in a sink! For your thoughts concerning God are too human. I confess indeed, that there are certain fantastical preachers, who, not from any religion, or fear of God, but from a desire of vain-glory, or from a thirst after some novelty, or from impatience of silence, prate and trifle in the lightest manner. But such please neither God nor men, although they assert that God is in the Heaven of Heavens. But when there are grave and pious preachers, who teach in modest, pure, and sound words; they, without any danger, nay, unto much profit, speak on such a subject before the multitude. Is it not the duty of us all to teach, that the Son of God was in the womb of the Virgin, and proceeded forth from her belly? And in what does the human belly differ from any other unclean place? Who, moreover, may not describe it in filthy and shameless terms? But such persons we justly

condemn; because, there are numberless pure words, in which we speak of that necessary subject, even with decency and grace. The body also of Christ Himself was human, like ours. Than which body, what is more filthy? But shall we, therefore, not say what Paul saith, that God dwelt in it bodily? (Colossians 2:9) What is more unclean than death? What more horrible than hell? Yet the prophet glorieth that God was with him in death, and left him not, in hell. (Psalms 16:10, Psalms 139:8) The pious mind, therefore, is not shocked at hearing that God was in death and in hell: each of which is more horrible, and more loathsome, than either a hole or a sink. Nay, since the Scripture testifies that God is every where, and fills all things, such a mind, not only says that He is in those places, but will, of necessity learn and know that He is there. Unless we are to suppose that if I should at any time be taken and cast into a prison or a sink, (which has happened to many saints,) I could not there call upon God, or believe that He was present with me, until I should come into some ornamented church. If you teach us that we are thus to trifle concerning God, and if you are thus offended at the places of His essential presence, by and by you will not even allow that He dwells with us in Heaven. Whereas, "the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain Him," (1 Kings 8:27); or, they are not worthy. But, as I said before, you, according to your custom, thus maliciously point your sting at our cause, that you may disparage and render if hateful, because you find it stands against you insuperable, and invincible.

Sect. 17.-IN the example concerning confession and satisfaction, it is wonderful to observe with what dexterous prudence you proceed. Throughout the whole, according to your custom, you move along on the tiptoe of caution, lest you should seem, neither plainly to condemn my sentiments nor to oppose the tyranny of the Popes: a path which you found to be by no means safe. Therefore, throwing off, in this matter, both God and conscience, (for what are these things to Erasmus? What has he to do with them? What profit are they to him?) you rush upon the external bugbear, and attack the commonalty.

-'That they, from their depravity, abuse the preaching of a free confession and of satisfaction, to an occasion of the flesh. But, nevertheless, (you say) by the necessity of confessing, they are, in a measure, restrained.'-

O memorable and excellent speech! Is this teaching theology? To bind souls by laws, and, (as Ezekiel saith, xiii. 18,) to hunt them to death, which are not bound by God! Why, by this speech you bring upon us the universal tyranny of the laws of the Popes, as useful and wholesome; because, that by them also the depravity of the commonalty is restrained. But I will not inveigh against this place as it deserves. I will descant upon it thus briefly-A good theologian teaches, that the commonalty are to be restrained by the external power of the sword, where they do evil: as Paul teaches. (Romans 13:1-4) But their consciences are not to be fettered by false laws, that they might be tormented with sins where God wills there should be no sins at all. For consciences are bound by the law of God only. So that, that intermediate tyranny of Popes, which falsely terrifies and murders the souls within, and vainly wearies the bodies without is to be taken entirely out of the way. Because, although it binds to confession and other things, outwardly, yet the mind is not, by these things restrained, but exasperated the more into the hatred both of God and men. And in vain does it butcher the body by external things, making nothing but hypocrites.-So that tyrants, with laws of this kind, are nothing else but ravening wolves, robbers, and plunderers of souls. And yet you, an excellent counselor of souls, recommend these to us again: that is, you are an advocate for these most barbarous soul-murderers, who fill the world with hypocrites, and with

such as blaspheme God and hate Him in their hearts, in order that they may restrain them a little from outward sin. As though there were no other way of restraining, which makes no hypocrites, and is wrought without any destroying of consciences.

Sect. 18.-HERE you produce similitudes (in which you aim at appearing to abound, and to use very appropriately); that is,-'that there are diseases, which may be borne with less evil than they can be cured: as the leprosy, &c.' You add, moreover, the example of Paul, who makes a distinction between those things that are lawful, and those that are not expedient. "It is lawful (you say) to speak the truth; but, before every one, at all times, and in every way, it is not expedient."-

How copious an orator! And yet you understand nothing of what you are saying. In a word, you treat this discussion, as though it were some matter between you and me only, about the recovering of some money that was at stake, or some other trivial thing, the loss of which, as being of much less consideration than the general peace of the community, ought not so to concern any one, but that he may yield, act and suffer upon the occasion, in any way that may prevent the necessity of the whole world being thrown into a tumult. Wherein, you plainly evince, that this peace and tranquility of the flesh, are, with you, a matter of far greater consideration than faith, than conscience, than salvation, than the Word of God, than the glory of Christ, than God Himself! Wherefore, let me tell you this; and I entreat you to let it sink deep into your mind-I am, in this discussion, seeking an object solemn and essential; nay, such, and so great, that it ought to be maintained and defended through death itself; and that, although the whole world should not only be thrown into tumult and set in arms thereby, but even if it should be hurled into chaos and reduced to nothing.-If you cannot receive this, or if you are not affected by it, do you mind your own business, and allow us to receive it and to be affected by it, to whom it is given of God.

For, by the grace of God, I am not so great a fool or madman, as to have desired to sustain and defend this cause so long, with so much fortitude and so much firmness, (which you call obstinacy) in the face of so many dangers of my life, so much hatred, so many traps laid for me; in a word, in the face of the fury of men and devils-I have not done this for money, for that I neither have nor desire; nor for vain-glory, for that, if I wished, I could not obtain in a world so enraged against me, nor for the life for my body, for that cannot be made sure of for an hour.-Do you think, then, that you only have a heart that is moved by these tumults? Yet, I am not made of stone, nor was I born from the Marpesian rocks. But since it cannot be otherwise, I choose rather to be battered in temporal tumult, happy in the grace of God, for God's word's sake, which is to be maintained with a mind incorrupt and invincible, than to be ground to powder in eternal tumult, under the wrath of God and torments intolerable! May Christ grant, what I desire and hope, that your heart may not be such-but certainly your words imply, that, with Epicurus, you consider the Word of God and a future life, to be mere fables. For, in your instructions, you would have us, for the sake of the Popes, the heads, and the peace of the community, to put off, upon an occasion, and depart from the all-certain word of God: whereas, if we put off that, we put off God, faith, salvation and all Christianity together. How far different from this is the instruction of Christ: that, we should rather despise the whole world!

Sect. 19.-BUT you say these things, because you either do not read or do not observe, that such is most constantly the case with the word of God, that because of it, the world is thrown into tumult. And that Christ openly declares: "I came not (says He) to send peace but a sword." (Matthew

10:34) And in Luke, "I came to send fire upon the earth." (Luke 12:49) And Paul, (2 Corinthians 6:5) "In tumults," &c. And the Prophet, in the Second Psalm, abundantly testifies the same: declaring, that the nations are in tumult, the people roaring, the kings rising up, and the princes conspiring against the Lord and against His Christ. As though He had said, multitude, height, wealth, power, wisdom, righteousness, and whatever is great in the world, sets itself against the word of God.

Look into the Acts of the Apostles, and see what happened in the world on account of the word of Paul only (to say nothing of the other apostles): how he alone throws both the Gentiles and Jews into commotion: or, as the enemies themselves express it, "turns the world upside down." (Acts 17:6) Under Elijah, the kingdom of Israel was thrown into commotion: as king Ahab complains. (1 Kings 18:17) What tumult was there under the other prophets, while they are all either killed at once or stoned to death; while Israel is taken captive into Assyria, and Judah also to Babylon! Was all this peace? The world and its god (2 Corinthians 4:4) cannot and will not bear the Word of the true God: and the true God cannot and will not keep silence. While, therefore, these two Gods are at war with each other, what can there be else in the whole world, but tumult?

Therefore, to wish to silence these tumults, is nothing else, than to wish to hinder the Word of God, and to take it out of the way. For the Word of God, wherever it comes, comes to change and to renew the world. And even heathen writers testify, that changes of things cannot take place, without commotion and tumult, nor even without blood. It therefore belongs to Christians, to expect and endure these things, with a stayed mind: as Christ says, "When ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be not dismayed, for these things must first come to pass, but the end is not yet." (Matthew 24:6) And as to myself, if I did not see these tumults, I should say the Word of God was not in the world. But now, when I do see them, I rejoice from my heart, and fear them not: being surely persuaded, that the kingdom of the Pope, with all his followers, will fall to the ground: for it is especially against this, that the word of God, which now runs, is directed.

I see indeed, my friend Erasmus, that you complain in many books of these tumults, and of the loss of peace and concord; and you attempt many means whereby to afford a remedy, and (as I am inclined to believe) with a good intention. But this gouty foot laughs at your doctoring hands. For here, in truth, as you say, you sail against the tide; nay, you put out fire with straw. Cease from complaining, cease from doctoring; this tumult proceeds, and is carried on, from above, and will not cease until it shall make all the adversaries of the word as the dirt of the streets. Though I am sorry that I find it necessary to teach you, so great a theologian, these things, like a disciple, when you ought to be a teacher of others. Your excellent sentiment, then, that some diseases may be borne with less evil than they can be cured applies here: which sentiment you do not appositely use. Rather call these tumults, commotions, perturbations, seditions, discords, wars, and all other things of the same kind with which the world is shaken and tossed to and fro on account of the Word of God,-the diseases. These things, I say, as they are temporal, are borne with less evil than inveterate and evil habits; by which all souls must be destroyed if they be not changed by the word of God: which being taken away, eternal good, God, Christ, and the Spirit, must be taken away with it. But how much better is it to lose the whole world, than to lose God the Creator of the world, who can create innumerable worlds again, and is better than infinite worlds? For what are temporal things when compared with eternal? This leprosy of temporal things, therefore, is rather to be borne, than that every soul should be destroyed and eternally damned, and the world kept in

peace, and preserved from these tumults, by their blood and perdition: whereas, one soul cannot be redeemed with the price of the whole world!

You certainly have command of elegant and excellent similitudes, and sentiments: but, when you are engaged in sacred discussions, you apply them childishly, nay, pervertedly: for you crawl upon the ground, and enter in thought into nothing above what is human. Whereas, those things which God works, are neither puerile, civil, nor human, but divine; and they exceed human capacity. Thus, you do not see, that these tumults and divisions increase throughout the world, according to the counsel, and by the operation of God; and therefore, you fear lest heaven should tumble about our ears. But I, by the grace of God, see these things clearly; because, I see other tumults greater than these that will arise in the age to come in comparison of which, these appear but as the whispering of a breath of air, or the murmuring of a gentle brook.

Sect. 20.-BUT, the doctrine concerning the liberty of confession and satisfaction, you either deny, or know not that there is the Word of God.-And here arises another inquiry. But we know, and are persuaded, that there is a Word of God, in which the Christian liberty is asserted, that we might not suffer ourselves to be ensnared into bondage by human traditions and laws. This I have abundantly shewn elsewhere. But if you wish to enter the lists, I am prepared to discuss the point with you, and to fight it out. Though upon these subjects I have books extant not a few.

But,-"the laws of the Popes (you say,) may at the same time be borne with and observed, in charity; if perchance thus, eternal salvation by the word of God, and the peace of the world, may together consist, without tumult."-

I have said before, that cannot be. The prince of this world will not allow the Pope and his high priests, and their laws to be observed in liberty, but his design is, to entangle and bind consciences. This the true God will not bear. Therefore, the Word of God, and the traditions of men, are opposed to each other with implacable discord; no less so, than God Himself and Satan; who each destroy the works and overthrow the doctrines of the other, as regal kings each destroying the kingdom of the other. "He that is not with Me (saith Christ) is against Me." (Luke 11:23) And as to-"a fear that many who are depravedly inclined, will abuse this liberty"- This must be considered among those tumults, as a part of that temporal leprosy which is to be borne, and of that evil which is to be endured. But these are not to be considered of so much consequence, as that, for the sake of restraining their abuse, the word of God should be taken out of the way. For if all cannot be saved, yet some are saved; for whose sake the word of God is sent; and these, on that account, love it the more fervently, and assent to it the more solemnly. For, what evils did not impious men commit before, when there was no word? Nay, what good did they do? Was not the world always drowned in war, fraud, violence, discord, and every kind of iniquity? For if Micah (Micah 7:4) compares the best among them to a thorn hedge, what do you suppose he would call the rest? But now the Gospel is come, men begin to impute unto it, that the world is evil. Whereas, the truth is, that by the good Gospel, it is more manifest how evil it was, while, without the Gospel, it did all its works in darkness. Thus also the illiterate attribute it to learning, that, by its flourishing, their ignorance becomes known. This is the return we make for the word of life and salvation!-And what fear must we suppose there was among the Jews, when the Gospel freed all from the law of Moses? What occasion did not this great liberty seem to give to evil men? But yet, the Gospel was not, on that account, taken away; but the impious were left, and it was preached to the pious, that

they might not use their liberty to an occasion of the flesh. (Galatians 5:13)

Sect. 21.-NOR is this part of your advice, or your remedy, to any purpose, where you say-"It is lawful to speak the truth but it is not expedient, either before every one, or at all times, or in every manner." And ridiculously enough, you adduce Paul, where he says, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient."-(1 Corinthians 6:12) But Paul does not there speak of teaching doctrine or the truth; as you would confound his words, and twist them which way you please. On the contrary, he will have the truth spoken every where, at all times, and in every manner. So that he even rejoices that Christ is preached even through envy and strife. Nay, he declares in plain words, that he rejoices, let Christ be preached in any way. (Php 1:15-18)

Paul is speaking of facts, and the use of doctrine: that is, of those, who, seeking their own, had no consideration of the hurt and offence given to the weak. Truth and doctrine, are to be preached always, openly, and firmly, and are never to be dissembled or concealed; for there is no offence in them; they are the staff of uprightness.-And who gave you the power, or committed to you, the right, of confining the Christian doctrine to persons, places, times, and causes, when Christ wills it to be proclaimed, and to reign freely, throughout the world? For Paul saith, "the Word of God is not bound," (2 Timothy 2:9) but Erasmus bounds the word. Nor did God give us the word that it should be had with respect of places, persons, or times: for Christ saith, "Go ye out into the whole world,": He does not say, as Erasmus does,-go to this place and not to that. Again, "Preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15) He does not say-preach it to some and not to others. In a word, you enjoin, in the administration of the word of God, a respect of persons, a respect of places, a respect of customs, and a respect of times: whereas, the one and especial part of the glory of the word consists in this,-that, as Paul saith, there is, with it, no respect of persons; and that God is no respecter of persons. You see therefore, again, how rashly you run against the Word of God, as though you preferred far before it, your own counsel and cogitations.

Hence, if we should demand of you that you would determine for us, the times in which, the persons to whom, and the manner in which, the truth is to be spoken, when would you come to an end? The world would sooner compute the termination of time and its own end, than you would settle upon any one certain rule. In the meantime, where would remain the duty of teaching? Where that of teaching the soul? And how could you, who know nothing of the nature of persons, times, and manner, determine upon any rule at all? And even if you should know them perfectly, yet you could not know the hearts of men. Unless, with you, the manner, the time, and the person be this:-teaching the truth so, that the Pope be not indignant, Caesar be not enraged, and that many be not offended and made worse! But what kind of counsel this is, you have seen above.-I have thus rhetorically figured away in these vain words, lest you should appear to have said nothing at all.

How much better is it for us wretched men to ascribe unto God, who knoweth the hearts of all men, the glory of determining the manner in which, the persons to whom, and the times in which the truth is to be spoken. For He knows what is to be spoken to each, and when, and how it is to be spoken. He then, determines that His Gospel which is necessary unto all, should be confined to no place, no time; but that it should be preached unto all, at all times and in all places. And I have already proved, that those things which are handed down to us in the Scriptures, are such, that they are quite plain and wholesome, and of necessity to be proclaimed abroad; even as you

yourself determined in your Paraclesis was right to be done; and that, with much more wisdom than you advise now. But let those who would not that souls should be redeemed, such as the Pope and his adherents-let it be left to them to bind the Word of God, and hinder men from life and the kingdom of heaven, that they might neither enter in themselves nor suffer others to enter:-to whose fury you, Erasmus, by this advice of yours, are perniciously subservient.

Sect. 22.-OF the same stamp with this, is that prudence of yours also, with which you next give it as your advice-'that, if any thing were settled upon, in the councils, that was wrong, it ought not to be openly confessed: lest, a handle should be thereby afforded, for contemning the authority of the fathers.'-

This, indeed, is just what the Pope wished you to say! And he hears it with greater pleasure than the Gospel itself, and will be a most ungrateful wretch, if he do not honour you in return, with a cardinal's cap together with all the revenues belonging to it. But in the mean time, friend Erasmus, what will the souls do that shall be bound and murdered by that iniquitous statute? Is that nothing to you? But however, you always think, or pretend to think, that human statutes can be observed together with the Word of God, without peril. If they could, I would at once go over to this your sentiment. But if you are yet in ignorance, I tell you again, that human statutes cannot be observed together with the Word of God: because, the former bind consciences, the latter looses them. They are directly opposed to each other, as water to fire. Unless, indeed, they could be observed in liberty; that is, not to bind the conscience. But this the Pope wills not, nor can he will it, unless he wishes his kingdom to be destroyed and brought to an end: for that stands only in ensnaring and binding those consciences, which the Gospel pronounces free. The authority of the fathers, therefore, is to be accounted nought: and those statutes which have been wrongly enacted, (as all have been that are not according to the Word of God) are to be rent in sunder and cast away: for Christ is better than the authority of the fathers. In a word, if it be concerning the Word of God that you think thus, you think impiously; if it be concerning other things, your verbose disputing about your sentiment is nothing to me: I am disputing concerning the Word of God!

Sect. 23.-IN the last part of your Preface, where you deter us from this kind of doctrine, you think your victory is almost gained.

"What (you say) can be more useless than that this paradox should be proclaimed openly to the world-that whatever is done by us, is not done by Free-will, but from mere necessity. And that of Augustine also-that God works in us both good and evil: that He rewards His good works in us, and punishes His evil works in us." (You are mightily copious here in giving, or rather, in expostulating concerning a reason.) "What a flood-gate of iniquity (you say) would these things, publicly proclaimed, open unto men! What bad man would amend his life! Who would believe that he was loved of God! Who would war against his flesh!"

I wonder, that in so great vehemency, and contending zeal, you did not remember our main subject, and say-where then would be found "Free-will." My friend, Erasmus! here, again, I also say, if you consider that these paradoxes are the inventions of men, why do you contend against them? Why are you so enraged? Against whom do you rail? Is there any man in the world, at this day, who has inveighed more vehemently against the doctrines of men, than Luther! This admonition of yours, therefore, is nothing to me! But if you believe that those paradoxes are the words of God, where is your countenance, where is your shame, where is, I will not say your

modesty, but that fear of, and that reverence which is due to the true God, when you say, that nothing is more useless to be proclaimed than that Word of God! What! shall your Creator, come to learn of you His creature, what is useful, and what not useful to be preached? What! did that foolish and unwise God, know not what is necessary to be taught, until you His instructor prescribed to Him the measure, according to which He should be wise, and according to which He should command? What! did He not know before you told Him, that that which you infer would be the consequence of this His paradox? If, therefore, God willed that such things should be spoken of and proclaimed abroad, without regarding what would follow,-who art thou that forbiddest it? The apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, discourses on these same things, not "in a corner," but in public and before the whole world, and that with a freely open mouth, nay in the harshest terms, saying, "whom He will He hardeneth." (Romans 9:18) And again, "God, willing to shew forth His wrath," &c. (Romans 9:22) What is more severe, that is to the flesh, than that word of Christ "Many are called but few chosen?" (Matthew 22:14) And again, "I know whom I have chosen?" (John 13:18) According to your judgment then, all these things are such, that nothing can be more uselessly spoken; because that by these things, impious men may fall into desperation, hatred, and blasphemy.

Here then, I see, you suppose that the truth and the utility of the Scripture are to be weighed and judged of according to the opinion of men, nay, of men the most impious; so that, what pleases them or seems bearable, should be deemed true, divine, and wholesome: and what has the contrary effect upon them, should at once be deemed useless, false, and pernicious. What else do you mean by all this, than that the words of God should depend on, stand on, and fall by, the will and authority of men? Whereas the Scripture, on the contrary saith, that all things stand and fall by the will and authority of God: and in a word, that "all the earth keeps silence before the face of the Lord." (Habakkuk 2:20) He who could talk as you do, must imagine that the living God is nothing but a kind of trifling and inconsiderate pettifogger declaiming on a certain rostrum, whose words you may if you be disposed, interpret, understand, and refute as you please, because He merely spoke as He saw a set of impious men to be moved and affected.

Here you plainly discover how much your advice above,-'that the majesty of the judgments of God should be reverenced,'-was from your heart! There, when we were speaking of the doctrines of the Scripture only, where there was no need of reverencing things abstruse and hidden, because there were no such doctrines, you awed us, in the most religious terms, with the darkness of the Corycian cavern, lest we should rush forward with too much curiosity; so that, by the awe, you well nigh frightened us from reading the Scriptures altogether; (to the reading of which Christ and His apostles urge and persuade us, as well as you do yourself elsewhere.) But here, where we are come not to the doctrines of the Scripture, nor to the Corycian cavern only, but to the very, and greatly to be reverenced secrets of the divine Majesty, viz., why He works thus?-here, as they say, you burst open all bars and rush in; all but, openly blaspheming! What indignation against God do you not discover, because you cannot see His reason why, and His design in this His counsel! Why do you not here frame, as an excuse, obscurity and ambiguity? Why do you not restrain yourself, and deter others from prying into these things which God wills should be hidden from us, and which He has not delivered to us in the Scriptures? It is here the hand is to be laid upon the mouth, it is here we are to reverence what lies hidden, to adore the secret counsels of the divine Majesty, and to exclaim with Paul, "Who art thou, O man, that contendest with God?" (Romans

9:20)

Sect. 24.-"WHO (you say) will endeavour to amend his life?"-I answer, No man! no man can! For your self-amenders without the Spirit, God regardeth not, for they are hypocrites. But the Elect, and those that fear God, will be amended by the Holy Spirit; the rest will perish unamended. Nor does Augustine say, that the works of none, nor that the works of all are crowned, but the works of some. Therefore, there will be some, who shall amend their lives.

"Who will believe (you say) that he is loved of God?"-I answer, no man will believe it! No man can! But the Elect shall believe it; the rest shall perish without believing it, filled with indignation and blaspheming, as you here describe them. Therefore, there will be some who shall believe it. And as to your saying that-"by these doctrines the flood-gate of iniquity is thrown open unto men"-be it so. They pertain to that leprosy of evil to be borne, spoken of before. Nevertheless, by the same doctrines, there is thrown open to the Elect and to them that fear God, a gate unto righteousness,-an entrance into heaven-a way unto God! But if, according to your advice, we should refrain from these doctrines, and should hide from men this Word of God, so that each, deluded by a false persuasion of salvation, should never learn to fear God, and should never be humbled, in order that through this fear he might come to grace and love; then, indeed, we should shut up your flood-gate to purpose! For in the room of it, we should throw open to ourselves and to all, wide gates, nay, yawning chasms and sweeping tides, not only unto iniquity, but unto the depths of hell! Thus, we should not enter into Heaven ourselves, and them that were entering in we should hinder.

-"What utility therefore (you say) is there in, or necessity for proclaiming such things openly, when so many evils seem likely to proceed therefrom?"-

I answer. It were enough to say-God has willed that they should be proclaimed openly: but the reason of the divine will is not to be inquired into, but simply to be adored, and the glory to be given unto God: who, since He alone is just and wise, doth evil to no one, and can do nothing rashly or inconsiderately, although it may appear far otherwise unto us. With this answer those that fear God are content. But that, from the abundance of answering matter which I have, I may say a little more than this, which might suffice;-there are two causes which require such things to be preached. The first is, the humbling of our pride, and the knowledge of the grace of God. The second is, Christian faith itself.

First, God has promised certainly His grace to the humbled: that is, to the self-deploring and despairing. But a man cannot be thoroughly humbled, until he comes to know that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, counsel, endeavours, will, and works, and absolutely depending on the will, counsel, pleasure, and work of another, that is, of God only. For if, as long as he has any persuasion that he can do even the least thing himself towards his own salvation, he retain a confidence in himself and do not utterly despair in himself, so long he is not humbled before God; but he proposes to himself some place, some time, or some work, whereby he may at length attain unto salvation. But he who hesitates not to depend wholly upon the good-will of God, he totally despairs in himself, chooses nothing for himself, but waits for God to work in him; and such an one, is the nearest unto grace, that he might be saved.

These things, therefore, are openly proclaimed for the sake of the Elect: that, being by these means humbled and brought down to nothing, they might be saved. The rest resist this humiliation; nay, they condemn the teaching of self-desperation; they wish to have left a little something that they may do themselves. These secretly remain proud, and adversaries to the grace of God. This, I say, is one reason-that those who fear God, being humbled, might know, call upon, and receive the grace of God. The other reason is-that faith is, in things not seen. Therefore, that there might be room for faith, it is necessary that all those things which are believed should be hidden. But they are not hidden more deeply, than under the contrary of sight, sense, and experience. Thus, when God makes alive, He does it by killing; when He justifies, He does it by bringing in guilty: when He exalts to Heaven, He does it by bringing down to hell: as the Scripture saith, "The Lord killeth and maketh alive, He bringeth down to the grave and raiseth up, " (1 Samuel 2:6); concerning which, there is no need that I should here speak more at large, for those who read my writings, are well acquainted with these things. Thus He conceals His eternal mercy and loving-kindness behind His eternal wrath: His righteousness, behind apparent iniquity. This is the highest degree of faith-to believe that He is merciful, who saves so few and damns so many; to believe Him just, who according to His own will, makes us necessarily damnable, that He may seem, as Erasmus says, 'to delight in the torments of the miserable, and to be an object of hatred rather than of love.' If, therefore, I could by any means comprehend how that same God can be merciful and just, who carries the appearance of so much wrath and iniquity, there would be no need of faith. But now, since that cannot be comprehended, there is room for exercising faith, while such things are preached and openly proclaimed: in the same manner as, while God kills, the faith of life is exercised in death. Suffice it to have said thus much upon your PREFACE. In this way, we shall more rightly consult for the benefit of those who dispute upon these paradoxes, than according to your way: whereby, you wish to indulge their impiety by silence, and a refraining from saying any thing: which is to no profit whatever. For if you believe, or even suppose these things to be true, (seeing they are paradoxes of no small moment,) such is the insatiable desire of mortals to search into secret things, and the more so the more we desire to keep them secret, that, by this admonition of yours, you will absolutely make them public; for all will now much more desire to know whether these paradoxes be true or not: thus they will, by your contending zeal, be so roused to inquiry, that not one of us ever afforded such a handle for making them known, as you yourself have done by this over-religious and zealous admonition. You would have acted much more prudently, had you said nothing at all about being cautious in mentioning these paradoxes, if you wished to see your desire accomplished. But, since you do not directly deny that they are true, your aim is frustrated: they cannot be concealed: for, by their appearance of truth, they will draw all men to search into them. Therefore, either deny that they are true altogether, or else hold your own tongue first, if you wish others to hold theirs.

Sect. 25.-AS to the other paradox you mention,-that, 'whatever is done by us, is not done by Free-will, but from mere necessity'-

Let us briefly consider this, lest we should suffer any thing most perniciously spoken, to pass by unnoticed. Here then, I observe, that if it be proved that our salvation is apart from our own strength and counsel, and depends on the working of God alone, (which I hope I shall clearly prove hereafter, in the course of this discussion,) does it not evidently follow, that when God is not present with us to work in us, every thing that we do is evil, and that we of necessity do those

things which are of no avail unto salvation? For if it is not we ourselves, but God only, that works salvation in us, it must follow, whether or no, that we do nothing unto salvation before the working of God in us.

But, by necessity, I do not mean compulsion; but (as they term it) the necessity of immutability, not of compulsion; that is, a man void of the Spirit of God, does not evil against his will as by violence, or as if he were taken by the neck and forced to it, in the same way as a thief or cut-throat is dragged to punishment against his will; but he does it spontaneously, and with a desirous willingness. And this willingness and desire of doing evil he cannot, by his own power, leave off, restrain, or change; but it goes on still desiring and craving. And even if he should be compelled by force to do any thing outwardly to the contrary, yet the craving will within remains averse to, and rises in indignation against that which forces or resists it. But it would not rise in indignation, if it were changed, and made willing to yield to a constraining power. This is what we mean by the necessity of immutability:-that the will cannot change itself, nor give itself another bent; but rather the more it is resisted, the more it is irritated to crave; as is manifest from its indignation. This would not be the case if it were free, or had a "Free-will." Ask experience, how hardened against all persuasion they are, whose inclinations are fixed upon any one thing. For if they yield at all, they yield through force, or through something attended with greater advantage; they never yield willingly. And if their inclinations be not thus fixed, they let all things pass and go on just as they will. But again, on the other hand, when God works in us, the will, being changed and sweetly breathed on by the Spirit of God, desires and acts, not from compulsion, but responsively, from pure willingness, inclination, and accord; so that it cannot be turned another way by any thing contrary, nor be compelled or overcome even by the gates of hell; but it still goes on to desire, crave after, and love that which is good; even as before, it desired, craved after, and loved that which was evil. This, again, experience proves. How invincible and unshaken are holy men, when, by violence and other oppressions, they are only compelled and irritated the more to crave after good! Even as fire, is rather fanned into flames than extinguished, by the wind. So that neither is there here any willingness, or "Free-will," to turn itself into another direction, or to desire any thing else, while the influence of the Spirit and grace of God remain in the man. In a word, if we be under the god of this world, without the operation and Spirit of God, we are led captives by him at his will, as Paul saith. (2 Timothy 2:26) So that, we cannot will any thing but that which he wills. For he is that "strong man armed," who so keepeth his palace, that those whom he holds captive are kept in peace, that they might not cause any motion or feeling against him; otherwise, the kingdom of Satan, being divided against itself, could not stand; whereas, Christ affirms it does stand. And all this we do willingly and desiringly, according to the nature of will: for if it were forced, it would be no longer will. For compulsion is (so to speak) unwillingness. But if the "stronger than he" come and overcome him, and take us as His spoils, then, through the Spirit, we are His servants and captives (which is the royal liberty) that we may desire and do, willingly, what He wills.

Thus the human will is, as it were, a beast between the two. If God sit thereon, it wills and goes where God will: as the Psalm saith, "I am become as it were a beast before thee, and I am continually with thee." (Psalms 73:22-23) If Satan sit thereon, it wills and goes as Satan will. Nor is it in the power of its own will to choose, to which rider it will run, nor which it will seek; but the riders themselves contend, which shall have and hold it.

Sect. 26.-AND now, what if I prove from your own words, on which you assert the freedom of the will, that there is no such thing as "Free-will" at all! What if I should make it manifest that you unknowingly deny that, which, with so much policy, you labour to affirm. And if I do not this, actually, I vow that I will consider all that I advance in this book against you, revoked; and all that your Diatribe advances against me, and aims at establishing, confirmed.

You make the power of "Free-will" to be-'that certain small degree of power, which, without the grace of God, is utterly ineffective.' Do you not acknowledge this?-Now then, I ask and demand of you, if the grace of God be wanting, or, if it be taken away from that certain small degree of power, what can it do of itself? 'It is ineffective (you say) and can do nothing of good.' Therefore, it cannot do what God or His grace wills. And why? because we have now separated the grace of God from it; and what the grace of God does not, is not good. And hence it follows, that "Free-will," without the grace of God is, absolutely, not FREE; but, immutably, the servant and bond-slave of evil; because, it cannot turn itself unto good. This being determined, I will allow you to make the power of "Free-will," not only a certain small degree of power, but to make it evangelical if you will, or, if you can, to make it divine: provided that, you add to it this doleful appendage-that, without the grace of God, it is ineffective. Because, then you will at once take from it all power: for, what is ineffective power, but plainly, no power at all?

Therefore, to say, that the will is FREE, and that it has indeed power, but that it is ineffective, is what the sophists call 'a direct contrariety.' As if one should say, "Free-will" is that which is not free. Or as if one should term fire cold, and earth hot. For if fire had the power of heat, yea of the heat of hell, yet, if it did not burn or scorch, but were cold and produced cold, I should not call it fire, much less should I term it hot; unless, indeed, you were to mean an imaginary fire, or a fire represented in a picture.-But if we call the power of "Free-will" that, by which a man is fitted to be caught by the Spirit, or to be touched by the grace of God, as one created unto eternal life or eternal death, may be said to be; this power, that is, fitness, or, (as the Sophists term it) 'disposition-quality,' and 'passive aptitude,' this I also confess. And who does not know, that this is not in trees or beasts? For, (as they say) Heaven was not made for geese.

Therefore, it stands confirmed, even by your own testimony, that we do all things from necessity, not from "Free-will:" seeing that, the power of "Free-will" is nothing, and neither does, nor can do good, without grace. Unless you wish efficacy to bear a new signification, and to be understood as meaning perfection: that is, that "Free-will" can, indeed, will and begin, but cannot perfect: which I do not believe: and upon this I shall speak more at large hereafter.

It now then follows, that Free-will is plainly a divine term, and can be applicable to none but the divine Majesty only: for He alone "doth, (as the Psalm sings) what He will in Heaven and earth." (Psalms 135:6) Whereas, if it be ascribed unto men, it is not more properly ascribed, than the divinity of God Himself would be ascribed unto them: which would be the greatest of all sacrilege. Wherefore, it becomes Theologians to refrain from the use of this term altogether, whenever they wish to speak of human ability, and to leave it to be applied to God only. And moreover, to take this same term out of the mouths and speech of men; and thus to assert, as it were, for their God, that which belongs to His own sacred and holy Name. But if they must, whether or no, give some power to men, let them teach, that it is to be called by some other term than Free-will"; especially since we know and clearly see, that the people are miserably deceived and seduced by that term,

taking and understanding it to signify something far different from that which Theologians mean and understand by it, in their discussions. For the term, "Free-will," is by far too grand, copious, and full: by which, the people imagine is signified (as the force and nature of the term requires) that power, which can freely turn itself as it will, and such a power as is under the influence of, and subject to no one. Whereas, if they knew that it was quite otherwise, and that by that term scarcely the least spark or degree of power was signified, and that, utterly ineffective of itself, being the servant and bond-slave of the devil, it would not be at all surprising if they should stone us as mockers and deceivers, who said one thing and meant something quite different; nay, who left it uncertain and unintelligible what we meant. For "he who speaks sophistically (the wise man saith) is hated," and especially if he does so in things pertaining to godliness, where eternal salvation is at stake.

Since, therefore, we have lost the signification of so grand a term and the thing signified by it, or rather, never had them at all, (which the Pelagians may heartily wish had been the case, being themselves illuded by this term,) why do we so tenaciously hold an empty word, to the peril and mockery of the believing people? There is no more wisdom in so doing, than there is in kings and potentates retaining, or claiming and boasting of, empty titles of kingdoms and countries, when they are at the same time mere beggars, and any thing but the possessors of those kingdoms and countries. But however, this is bearable, since they deceive and mock no one thereby, but only feed themselves on vanity without any profit. But here, is a peril of salvation, and the most destructive mockery. Who would not laugh at, or rather hold up to hatred, that most untimely innovator of terms, who, contrary to all established use, should attempt to introduce such a mode of speaking, as by the term ’beggar,’ to have understood, ’wealthy;’ not because such an one has any wealth himself, but because some king may, perchance, give him his wealth? And what if such an one should really do this, not by any figure of speech, as by periphrasis or irony, but in plain serious meaning? In the same way, speaking of one ’sick unto death,’ he may wish to be understood as meaning, one in ’perfect health:’ giving this as his reason, because the one may give the other his health. So also, he may, by ’illiterate idiot,’ mean ’most learned;’ because some other may perchance give him his learning. Of precisely the same nature.

EXORDIUM.

Sect. 28.-AT your entrance, then, upon the disputation, you promise-’that you will go according to the Canonical Scriptures: and that, because Luther is swayed by the authority of no other writer whatever’-

Very well! I receive your promise! But however, you do not make the promise on this account, because you judge that these same writers are of no service to your subject; but that you might not enter upon a field of labour in vain. For you do not, I know, quite approve of this audacity of mine, or, by what other term soever you choose to designate this my mode of discussion. For you say-’so great a number of the most learned men, approved by the consent of so many ages, has no little weight with you. Among whom were, some of the most extensively acquainted with the sacred writings, and also some of the most holy martyrs, many renowned for miracles, together with the more recent theologians, and so many colleges, councils, bishops, and popes: so that, in a word, on your side of the balance are (you say) learning, genius, multitude, greatness, highness, fortitude, sanctity, miracles, and what not!-But that, on my side, are only a Wycliffe and a

Laurentius Valla (although Augustine also, whom you pass by, is wholly on my side), who in comparison with the others, are of no weight whatever; that Luther, therefore, stands alone, a private individual, an upstart, with his followers, in whom there is neither that learning nor that genius, nor multitude, nor magnitude, nor sanctity, nor miracles. 'For they have not ability enough (you say) to cure a lame horse. They make a show of Scripture, indeed; concerning which, however, they are as much in doubt as those on the other side of the question. They boast of the Spirit also, which however, they never show forth.'-And many other things, which, from the length of your tongue, you are able to enumerate in great profusion. But these things have no effect upon us, for we say to you, as the wolf did to the nightingale, which he devoured, "You are Sound, and that's all!"-"They say (you observe,) and upon this only, they would have us believe them."

I confess, my friend Erasmus, that you may well be swayed by all these. These had such weight with me for upwards of ten years, that I think no other mortal was ever so much under their sway. And I myself thought it incredible that this Troy of ours, which had for so long a time, and through so many wars stood invincible, could ever be taken. And I call God for a record upon my soul, that I should have continued so, and have been under the same influence even unto this day, had not an urging conscience and an evidence of things, forced me into a different path. And you may easily imagine that my heart was not of stone; and that, if it had been of stone, it would at least have been softened in struggling against so many tides, and being dashed to and fro by so many waves, when I was daring that, which, if I accomplished, I saw that the whole authority of those whom you have just enumerated, would be poured down upon my head like an overwhelming flood. But this is not a time for setting forth a history of my own life or works; nor have I undertaken this discussion for the purpose of commending myself, but that I might exalt the grace of God. What I am, and with what spirit and design I have been led to these things, I leave to Him who knows, that all this is carrying on according to his own Free-will, not according to mine: though even the world itself ought to have found that out already. And certainly, by this Exordium of yours, you throw me into a very offensive situation, out of which, unless I speak in favour of myself, and to the disparagement of so many fathers, I shall not easily extricate myself. But I will do it in a few words.-According to your own judgment of me, then, I stand apart from all such learning, talents, multitude, authority, and every thing else of the kind.

Now, if I were to demand of you these three things, What is the Manifestation of the Spirit? What are Miracles? What is Sanctification? As far as I have known you from your letters and books, you would appear so great a novice and ignoramus that you would not be able to give three syllables of explanation. Or, if I should put it to you closely, and demand of you, which one among all those of whom you boast, you could to a certainty bring forth, either as being or having been a saint, or as having possessed the Spirit, or as having wrought miracles, I apprehend you would have hot work of it, and all in vain. You bring forth many things that have been handed about in common use and in public sermons; but you do not credit, how much of their weight and authority they lose, when they are brought to the judgment of conscience. There is an old proverb, "Many were accounted saints on earth, whose souls are now in hell!"

Sect. 29.-BUT we will grant you, if you please 'that they were all saints, that they all had the Spirit, that they all wrought miracles' (which, however, you do not require.) But tell me this-was any one of them made a saint, did any one of them receive the Spirit or work miracles, in the name, or by virtue of "Free-will," or to confirm the doctrine of "Free-will"? Far be such a thought (you will say,)

but in the name, and by virtue of Jesus Christ, and for the confirmation of the doctrine of Christ, all these things were done. Why then do you bring forward the sanctity, the spirit, ’and the miracles of these, in confirmation of the doctrine of "Free-will,"’ for which they were not wrought and given? Their miracles, Spirit, and sanctity, therefore, belong to us who preach Jesus Christ, and not the ability and works of men. And now, what wonder if those who were thus holy, spiritual, and wonderful for miracles, were sometimes under the influence of the flesh, and spoke and wrought according to the flesh; since that happened, not once only, to the very apostles under Christ Himself. For you do not deny, but assert, that "Free-will" does not belong to the Spirit, or to Christ, but is human; so that, the Spirit who is promised to glorify Christ, cannot preach "Free will." If, therefore, the fathers have at any time preached "Free-will," they have certainly spoken from the flesh, (seeing they were men,) not from the Spirit of God; much less did they work miracles for its confirmation. Wherefore, your allegation concerning the sanctity, the Spirit, and the miracles of the fathers is nothing to the purpose, because "Free-will " is not proved thereby, but the doctrine of Jesus Christ against the doctrine of "Free-will." But come, shew forth still, you that are on the side of "Free-will," and assert that a doctrine of this kind is true, that is, that it proceeds from the Spirit of God-shew forth still, I say, the Spirit, still work miracles, still evidence sanctity. Certainly you who make the assertion owe this to us, who deny these things. The Spirit, sanctity, and miracles ought not to be demanded of us who maintain the negative, but from you who assert in the affirmative. The negative proposes nothing, is nothing, and is bound to prove nothing, nor ought to be proved: it is the affirmative that ought to be proved. You assert the power of "Free-will" and the human cause: but no miracle was ever seen or heard of, as proceeding from God, in support of a doctrine of the human cause, only in support of the doctrines of the divine cause. And we are commanded to receive no doctrine whatever, that is not first proved by signs from on high. (Deuteronomy 18:15-22) Nay, the Scripture calls man "vanity," and "a lie:" which is nothing less than saying, that all human things are vanities and lies. Come forward then! come forward! I say, and prove, that your doctrine, proceeding from human vanity and a lie, is true. Where is now your shewing forth the Spirit! Where is your sanctity! Where are your miracles! I see your talents, your erudition, and your authority; but those things God has given alike unto all the world! But however, we will not compel you to work great miracles, nor "to cure a lame horse," lest you should plead, as an excuse, the carnality of the age. Although God is wont to confirm His doctrines by miracles, without any respect to the carnality of the age: nor is He at all moved, either by the merits or demerits of a carnal age, but by pure mercy and grace, and a love of souls which are to be confirmed, by solid truth, unto their glory. But we give you the choice of working any miracles, as small an one as you please. But come! I, in order to irritate your Baal into action, insult, and challenge you to create even one frog, in the name, and by virtue of "Free-will;" of which, the Gentile and impious Magi in Egypt, could create many. I will not put you to the task of creating lice; which, neither could they produce. But I will descend a little lower yet. Take even one flea, or louse, (for you tempt and deride our God by your ’curing of the lame horse,’) and if, after you have combined all the powers, and concentrated all the efforts both of your god and your advocates, you can, in the name and by virtue of "Free-will," kill it, you shall be victors; your cause shall be established; and we also will immediately come over and adore that god of yours, that wonderful killer of the louse. Not that I deny, that you could even remove mountains; but it is one thing to say, that a certain thing was done by "Free-will," and another to prove it.

And, what I have said concerning miracles, I say also concerning sanctity.-If you can, out of such a series of ages, men, and all the things which you have mentioned, shew forth one work, (if it be but the lifting a straw from the earth,) or one word, (if it be but the syllable MY,) or one thought of "Free-will," (if it be but the faintest sigh,) by which men applied themselves unto grace, or by which they have merited the Spirit, or by which they have obtained pardon, or by which they have prevailed with God even in the smallest degree, (I say nothing about being sanctified thereby,) again, I say, you shall be victors, and we vanquished; and that, as I repeat, in the name and by virtue of "Free-will." For what things soever are wrought in men by the power of divine creation, are supported by Scripture testimonies in abundance. And certainly, you ought to produce the same: unless you would appear such ridiculous teachers, as to spread abroad throughout the world, with so much arrogance and authority, doctrines concerning that, of which you cannot produce one proof. For such doctrines will be called mere dreams, which are followed by nothing: than which, nothing can be more disgraceful to men of so many ages, so great, so learned, so holy, and so miraculous! And if this be the case, we shall rank even the stoics before you: for although they took upon them to describe such a wise man as they never saw, yet they did attempt to set forth some part of the character. But you cannot set forth any thing whatever, not even the shadow of your doctrine. The same also I observe concerning the Spirit. If you can produce one out of all the assertors of "Free-will," who ever had a strength of mind and affection, even in the smallest degree, so as, in the name and by virtue of "Free-will," to be able to disregard one farthing, or to be willing to be without one farthing, or to bear one word or sign of injury, (I do not speak of the stoical contempt of riches, life, and fame,) again, the palm of victory shall be yours, and we, as the vanquished, will willingly pass under the spear. And these proofs you, who with such trumpeting mouths sound forth the power of "Free-will," are bound to produce before us. Or else, again, you will appear to be striving to give establishment to a nothing: or to be acting like him, who sat to see a play in an empty theatre.

Sect. 30.-BUT I will easily prove to you the contrary of all this:-that such holy men as you boast of, whenever they approach God, either to pray or to do, approach Him, utterly forgetful of their own "Free-will" and despairing of themselves, crying unto Him for pure grace only, feeling at the same time that they deserve everything that is the contrary. In this state was Augustine often; and in the same state was Bernard, when, at the point of death, he said, "I have lost my time, because I have lived wrong." I do not see, here, that there was any power spoken of which could apply itself unto Grace, but that all power was condemned as being only averse; although those same saints, at the time when they disputed concerning "Free-will," spoke otherwise. And the same I see has happened unto all, that, when they are engaged in words and disputations, they are one thing; but another, when they come to experience and practice. In the former, they speak differently from what they felt before; in the latter, they feel differently from what they spoke before. But men, good as well as bad, are to be judged of, more from what they feel, than from what they say. But we will indulge you still further. We will not require miracles, the Spirit, and sanctity. We return to the doctrine itself. We only require this of you:-that you would at least explain to us, what work, what word, what thought, that power of "Free-will" can move, attempt, or perform, in order to apply itself unto grace. For it is not enough to say, there is! there is! there is a certain power of "Free-will!" For what is more easily said than this? Nor does such a way of proceeding become men the most learned, and the most holy, who have been approved by so many ages, but must be called baby-like (as we say in a German proverb.) It must be defined, what that power is, what it can do,

in what it is passive, and what takes place. To give you an example (for I shall press you most homely) this is what is required:-Whether that power must pray, or fast, or labour, or chastise the body, or give alms; or what other work of this kind it must do, or attempt. For if it be a power it must do some kind of work. But here you are more dumb than Seriphian frogs and fishes. And how should you give the definition, when, according to your own testimony, you are at an uncertainty about the power itself, at difference among each other, and inconsistent with yourselves? And what must become of the definition, when the thing to be defined has no consistency in itself? But be it so, that since the time of Plato, you are at length agreed among yourselves concerning the power itself; and that its work may be defined to be praying, or fasting, or something of the same kind, which perhaps, still lies undiscovered in the ideas of Plato. Who shall certify us that such is truth, that it pleases God, and that we are doing right, in safety? Especially when you yourselves assert that there is a human cause which has not the testimony of the Spirit, because of its having been handled by philosophers, and having existed in the world before Christ came, and before the Spirit was sent down from heaven. It is most certain, then, that this doctrine was not sent down from heaven with the Spirit, but sprung from the earth long before: and therefore, there is need of weighty testimony, whereby it may be confirmed to be true and sure.

We will grant, therefore, that we are private individuals and few, and you public characters and many; we ignorant, and you the most learned: we stupid, and you the most acute: we creatures of yesterday, and you older than Deucalion; we never received, and you approved by so many ages; in a word, we sinners, carnal, and dolts, and you awe-striking to the very devils for your sanctity, spirit, and miracles.-Yet allow us the right at least of Turks and Jews, to ask of you that reason for your doctrine, which your favourite Peter has commanded you to give. We ask it of you in the most modest way: that is, we do not require it to be proved by sanctity, by the Spirit, and by miracles, (which however, we could do in our own right, seeing that you yourselves require that of others): nay, we even indulge you so far, as not to require you to produce any example of a work, a word, or a thought, in confirmation of your doctrine but only to explain to us the doctrine itself, and merely to tell us plainly, what you would have to be understood by it, and what the form of it is. If you will not, or cannot do this, then let us at least attempt to set forth an example of it ourselves. For you are as bad as the Pope himself, and his followers, who say, "You are to do as we say, but not to do, as we do." In the same manner you say, that that power requires a work to be done: and so, we shall be set on to work, while you remain at your ease. But will you not grant us this, that the more you are in numbers, the longer you are in standing, the greater you are, the farther you are on all accounts superior to us, the more disgraceful it is to you, that we, who in every respect are as nothing in your eyes, should desire to learn and practice your doctrine, and that you should not be able to prove it, either by any miracle, or by the killing of a louse, or by any the least motion of the Spirit, or by any the least work of sanctity, nor even to bring forth any example of it, either in work or word? And further, (a thing unheard of before) that you should not be able to tell us plainly of what form the doctrine is, and how it is to be understood?-O excellent teachers of "Free-will!" What are you, now, but "Sound only!" Who now, Erasmus, are they who "boast of the Spirit but shew it not forth?" Who "say only, and then wish men to believe them?" Are not your friends they, who are thus extolled to the skies, and who can say nothing, and yet, boast of, and exact such great things?

We entreat, therefore, you and yours, my friend Erasmus, that you will allow us to stand aloof and tremble with fear, alarmed at the peril of our conscience; or, at least, to wave our assenting to a doctrine, which, as you yourself see, even though you should succeed to the utmost, and all your arguments should be proved and established, is nothing but an empty term, and a sounding of these syllables-'There is a power of "Free-will!"'-There is a power of "Free-will!"-Moreover, it still remains an uncertainty among your own friends themselves, whether it be a term even, or not: for they differ from each other, and are inconsistent with themselves. It is most iniquitous, therefore, nay, the greatest of miseries, that our consciences, which Christ has redeemed by His blood, should be tormented by the ghost of one term, and that, a term which has no certainty in it. And yet, if we should not suffer ourselves to be thus tormented, we should be held as guilty of unheard-of pride, for disregarding so many fathers of so many ages, who have asserted "Free-will." Whereas, the truth is, as you see from what has been said, they never defined any thing what ever concerning "Free-will": but the doctrine of "Free-will" is erected under the covering, and upon the basis of their name: of which, nevertheless, they can shew no form, and for which, they can fix no term: and thus they delude the world with a term, that is a lie!

Sect. 31.-AND here, Erasmus, I call to your remembrance your own advice. You just now advised-'that questions of this kind be omitted; and that, Christ crucified be rather taught, and those things which suffice unto Christian piety'-but this, we are now seeking after and doing. What are we contending for, but that the simplicity and purity of the Christian doctrine should prevail, and that those things should be left and disregarded, which have been invented, and introduced with it, by men? But you who give this advice, do not act according to it yourself: nay you act contrary to it: you write Diatribes: you exalt the decrees of the Popes: you honour the authority of man: and you try all means to draw us aside into these strange things and contrary to the Holy Scriptures: but you consider not the things that are necessary, how that, by so doing we should corrupt the simplicity and sincerity of the Scriptures, and confound them with the added inventions of men. From which, we plainly discover, that you did not give us that advice, from your heart; and that you write nothing seriously, but take it for granted that you can, by the empty bulls of your words, turn the world as you please. Whereas you turn them no where: for you say nothing whatever but mere contradictions, in all things, and every where. So that he would be most correct, who should call you, the very Proteus himself, or Vertumnus: or should say with Christ, 'Physician, heal thyself.'-'The teacher, whose own faults his ignorance prove, has need to hide his head!'-

Until, therefore, you shall have proved your affirmative, we stand fast in our negative. And in the judgment, even of all that company of saints of whom you boast, or rather, of the whole world, we dare to say, and we glory in saying, that it is our duty not to admit that which is nothing, and which cannot, to a certainty, be proved what it is. And you must all be possessed of incredible presumption or of madness, to demand that to be admitted by us, for no other reason, than because you, as being many, great, and of long standing, choose to assert that, which you yourselves acknowledge to be nothing. As though it were a conduct becoming Christian teachers, to mock the miserable people, in things pertaining to godliness, with that which is nothing, as if it were a matter that essentially concerned their salvation. Where is that former acumen of the Grecian talent, which heretofore, at least covered lies under some elegant semblage of truth-it now lies in open and naked words! Where is that former dexterously laboured Latinity-it now thus

deceives, and is deceived, by one most empty term! But thus it happens to the senseless, or the malicious readers, of books: all those things which were the infirmities of the fathers or of the saints, they make to be of the highest authority: the fault, therefore, is not in the authors, but in the readers. It is as though one relying on the holiness and the authority of St. Peter, should contend that all that St. Peter ever said was true: and should even attempt to persuade us that it was truth, when, (Matthew 16:22) from the infirmity of the flesh, he advised Christ not to suffer. Or that: where he commanded Christ to depart from him out of the ship. (Luke 5:8) And many other of those things, for which he was rebuked of Christ.

Men of this sort are like unto them, who, for the sake of ridicule, idly say, that all things that are in the Gospel are not true. And they catch hold of that, (John 8:48): where the Jews say unto Christ, "Do we not say well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" Or that: "He is guilty of death." Or that: "We found this fellow perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar." These, do the same thing as those assertors of "Free-will," but for a different end, and not willfully, but from blindness and ignorance; for they, so catch at that which the fathers, falling by the infirmity of the flesh, have said in favour of "Free-will," that they even oppose it to that which the same fathers have elsewhere, in the power of the Spirit, said against "Free-will": nay, they so urge and force it, that the better is made to give way to the worse. Hence it comes to pass, that they give authority to the worse expressions, because they fall in with their fleshly mind; and take it from the better, because they make against their fleshly mind. But why do we not rather select the better? For there are many such in the fathers.-To produce an example. What can be more carnally, nay, what more impiously, sacrilegiously, and blasphemously spoken, than that which Jerome is wont to say-'Virginity peoples heaven, and marriage, the earth.' As though the earth, and not heaven, was intended for the patriarchs, the apostles, and Christian husbands. Or, as though heaven was designed for gentile vestal virgins, who are without Christ. And yet, these things and others of the same kind, the Sophists collect out of the fathers that they may procure unto them authority, carrying all things more by numbers than by judgment. As that disgusting carpenter of Constance did, who lately made that jewel of his, the Stable of Augeas, a present to the public, that there might be a something to cause nausea and vomit in the pious and the learned.

Sect. 32.-AND now, while I am making these observations, I will reply to that remark of yours, where you say-'that it is not to be believed, that God would overlook an error in His Church for so many ages, and not reveal to any one of His saints that, which we contend for as being the grand essential of the Christian doctrine'- In the first place, we do not say that this error was overlooked of God in His Church, or in any one of His Saints. For the Church is ruled by the Spirit of God, and the Saints are led by the Spirit of God. (Romans 8:14) And Christ is with His Church even unto the end of the world. (Matthew 28:20) And the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15) These things, I say, we know; for the Creed which we all hold runs thus, "I believe in the holy Catholic Church;' so that, it is impossible that she can err even in the least article. And even if we should grant, that some of the Elect are held in error through the whole of their life; yet they must, of necessity, return into the way of truth before their death; for Christ says, (John 10:28) "No one shall pluck them out of My hand." But this is the labour, this the point-whether it can be proved to a certainty, that those, whom you call the church, were the Church; or, rather, whether, having been in error throughout their whole life, they were at last brought back before death. For this will not easily be proved, if God suffered all those most learned men whom you adduce, to remain in error

through so long a series of ages-Therefore, God suffered His Church to be in error.

But, look at the people of Israel: where, during so many kings and so long a time, not one king is mentioned who never was in error. And under Elijah the Prophet, all the people and every thing that was public among them, had so gone away into idolatry, that he thought that he himself was the only one left: whereas, while the kings, the princes, the prophets, and whatever could be called the people or the Church of God was going to destruction, God was reserving to Himself "seven thousand." (Romans 11:4) But who could see these or know them to be the people of God? And who, even now, dares to deny that God, under all these great men, (for you make mention of none but men in some high office, or of some great name,) was reserving to Himself a Church among the commonalty, and suffering all those to perish after the example of the kingdom of Israel? For it is peculiar to God, to restrain the elect of Israel, and to slay their fat ones: but, to preserve the refuse and remnant of Israel, (Psalms 78:31; Isaiah 1:9, Isaiah 10:20-22, Isaiah 11:11-16)

What happened under Christ Himself, when all the Apostles were offended at Him, when He was denied and condemned by all the people, and there were only a Joseph, a Nicodemus, and a thief upon the cross preserved? Were they then said to be the people of God? There was, indeed, a people of God remaining, but it was not called the people of God; and that which was so called,

was not the people of God. And who knows who are the people of God, when throughout the whole world, from its origin, the state of the church was always such, that those were called the people and saints of God who were not so while others among them, who were as a refuse, and were not called the people and saints of God, were the People and Saints of God? as is manifest in the histories of Cain and Abel, of Ishmael and Isaac, of Esau and Jacob.

Look again at the age of the Arians, when scarcely five catholic bishops were preserved throughout the whole world, and they, driven from their places, while the Arians reigned, every where bearing the public name and office of the church. Nevertheless, under these heretics, Christ preserved His Church: but so, that it was the least thought or considered to be the Church.

Again, shew me, under the kingdom of the Pope, one bishop discharging his office. Shew me one council in which their transactions were, concerning the things pertaining to godliness, and not rather, concerning gowns, dignities, revenues, and other baubles, which they could not say, without being mad, pertained to the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless they are called the church, when all, at least who live as they do, must be reprobates and any thing but the church. And yet, even under them Christ preserved His Church, though it was not called the Church. How many Saints must you imagine those of the inquisition have, for some ages, burnt and killed, as John Huss and others, in whose time, no doubt, there lived many holy men of the same spirit!

Why do you not rather wonder at this, Erasmus, that there ever were, from the beginning of the world, more distinguished talents, greater erudition, more ardent pursuit among the world in general than among Christians or the people of God? As Christ Himself declares, "The children of this world are wiser than the children of light." (Luke 16:8) What Christian can be compared (to say nothing of the Greeks) with Cicero alone for talents, for erudition, or for indefatigability? What shall we say, then, was the preventive cause that no one of them was able to attain unto grace, who certainly exerted "Free-will" with its utmost powers? Who dares say, that there was no one among them who contended for truth with all his efforts? And yet we must affirm that no one of them all

attained unto it. Will you here too say, it is not to be believed, that God would utterly leave so many great men, throughout such a series of ages, and permit them to labour in vain? Certainly, if "Free-will" were any thing, or could do any thing, it must have appeared and wrought something in those men, at least in some one instance. But it availed nothing, nay it always wrought in the contrary direction. Hence by this argument only, it may be sufficiently proved, that "Free-will" is nothing at all, since no proof of it can be produced even from the beginning of the world to the end!

Sect. 33.-BUT to return-What wonder, if God should leave all the elders of the church to go their own ways, who thus permitted all the nations to go their own ways, as Paul saith, Acts 14:16; Acts 17:30?-But, my friend Erasmus, THE CHURCH OF GOD INDEED, IS NOT SO COMMON A THING AS THIS TERM, CHURCH OF GOD: NOR ARE THE SAINTS OF GOD INDEED, EVERY WHERE TO BE FOUND LIKE THE TERM, SAINTS OF GOD. THEY ARE PEARLS AND PRECIOUS JEWELS, WHICH THE SPIRIT DOES NOT CAST BEFORE SWINE; BUT WHICH, (AS THE SCRIPTURE EXPRESSES IT,) HE KEEPS HIDDEN, THAT THE WICKED SEE NOT THE GLORY OF GOD! Otherwise, if they were openly known of all, how could it come to pass that they should be thus vexed and afflicted in the world? As Paul saith, (1 Corinthians 2:8) "Had they known Him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

I do not say these things, because I deny that those whom you mention are the saints and church of God; but because it cannot be proved, if any one should deny it, that they really are saints, but must be left quite in uncertainty; and because, therefore, the position deduced from their holiness, is not sufficiently credible for the confirmation of my doctrine. I call them saints, and look upon them as such: I call them the church, and look upon them as such-according to the law of Charity, but not according to the law of Faith. That is, charity, which always thinks the best of every one, and suspects not, but believeth and presumes all things for good concerning its neighbour, calls every one who is baptized, a saint. Nor is there any peril if she err, for charity is liable to err; seeing that she is exposed to all the uses and abuses of all; an universal handmaid, to the good and to the evil, to the believing and to the unbelieving, to the true and to the false.-But faith, calls no one a saint but him who is declared to be so by the judgment of God, for faith is not liable to be deceived. Therefore, although we ought all to be looked upon as saints by each other by the law of charity, yet no one ought to be decreed a saint by the law of faith, so as to make it an article of faith that such or such an one is a Saint. For in this way, that adversary of God, the Pope, canonized his minions whom he knows not to be saints, setting himself in the place of God. (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

All that I say concerning those saints of yours, or rather, ours, is this:-that since they have spoken differently from each other, those should rather be selected who have spoken the best: that is, who have spoken in defense of Grace, and against "Free-will": and those left, who, through the infirmity of the flesh, have borne witness of the flesh rather than of the Spirit. And also, that those who are inconsistent with themselves, should be selected and caught at, in those parts of their writings where they speak from the Spirit, and left, where they savour of the flesh. This is what becomes a Christian reader, and a 'clean beast dividing the hoof and chewing the cud.' (Leviticus 11:3, Deuteronomy 14:6) Whereas now, laying aside judgment, we swallow down all things together, or, what is worse, by a perversion of judgment, we cast away the best and receive the worst, out of the same authors; and moreover, affix to those worst parts, the title and authority of their sanctity; which sanctity, they obtained, not on account of "Free-will" or the flesh, but on account of the best

things, even of the Spirit only.

Sect. 34.-BUT as you say-"what therefore shall we do? The Church is hidden, the Saints are unknown! What, and whom shall we believe? Or, as you most sharply dispute, who will certify us? How shall we search out the Spirit? If we look to erudition, all are rabbins! If we look to life, all are sinners! If we look to the Scripture, they each claim it as belonging to them! But however, our discussion is not so much concerning the Scripture (which is not itself sufficiently clear,) but concerning the sense of the Scripture. And though there are men of every order at hand, yet, as neither numbers, nor erudition, nor dignity, is of any service to the subject, much less can paucity, ignorance, and mean rank avail any thing."-

Well then! I suppose the matter must be left in doubt, and the point of dispute remain before the judge so that, we should seem to act with policy if we should go over to the sentiments of the Sceptics. Unless, indeed, we were to act as you wisely do, for you pretend that you are so much in doubt, that you professedly desire to seek and learn the truth; while, at the same time, you cleave to those who assert "Freewill," until the truth be made glaringly manifest. But no! I here in reply to you observe, that you neither say all, nor nothing. For we shall not search out the Spirit by the arguments of erudition, of life, of talent, of multitude, of dignity, of ignorance, of inexperience, of paucity, or of meanness of rank. And yet, I do not approve of those, whose whole resource is in a boasting of the Spirit. For I had the last year, and have still, a sharp warfare with those fanatics who subject the Scriptures to the interpretation of their own boasted spirit. On the same account also, I have hitherto determinately set myself against the Pope, in whose kingdom, nothing is more common, or more generally received than this saying:-'that the Scriptures are obscure and ambiguous, and that the Spirit, as the Interpreter, should be sought from the apostolical see of Rome!' than which, nothing could be said that was more destructive; for by means of this saying, a set of impious men have exalted themselves above the Scriptures themselves; and by the same, have done whatever pleased them; till at length, the Scriptures are absolutely trodden under foot, and we compelled to believe and teach nothing but the dreams of men that are mad. In a word, that saying is no human invention, but a poison poured forth into the world by a wonderful malice of the devil himself, the prince of all demons.

We hold the case thus:-that the spirits are to be tried and proved by a twofold judgment. The one, internal; by which, through the Holy Spirit, or a peculiar gift of God, any one may illustrate, and to a certainty, judge of, and determine on, the doctrines and sentiments of all men, for himself and his own personal salvation concerning which it is said. (1 Corinthians 2:15) "The spiritual man judgeth all things, but he himself is judged of no man." This belongs to faith, and is necessary for every, even private, Christian. This, we have above called, 'the internal clearness of the Holy Scripture.' And it was this perhaps to which they alluded, who, in answer to you said, that all things must be determined by the judgment of the Spirit. But this judgment cannot profit another, nor are we speaking of this judgment in our present discussion; for no one, I think, doubts its reality. The other, then, is the external judgment; by which, we judge, to the greatest certainty, of the spirits and doctrines of all men; not for ourselves only, but for others also, and for their salvation. This judgment is peculiar to the public ministry of the Word and the external office, and especially belongs to teachers and preachers of the Word. Of this we make use, when we strengthen the weak in faith, and when we refute adversaries. This is what we before called, 'the external clearness of the Holy Scripture.' Hence we affirm that all spirits are to be proved in the face of the

church, by the judgment of Scripture. For this ought, above all things, to be received, and most firmly settled among Christians:-that the Holy Scriptures are a spiritual light by far more clear than the sun itself, especially in those things which pertain unto salvation or necessity.

Sect. 35.-BUT, since we have been persuaded to the contrary of this, by that pestilent saying of the Sophists, 'the Scriptures are obscure and ambiguous;' we are compelled, first of all, to prove that first grand principle of ours, by which all other things are to be proved: which, among the Sophists, is considered absurd and impossible to be done.

First then, Moses saith, (Deuteronomy 17:8) that, 'if there arise a matter too hard in judgment, men are to go to the place which God shall choose for His name, and there to consult the priests, who are to judge of it according to the law of the Lord.'

He saith, "according to the law of the Lord"-but how will they judge thus, if the law of the Lord be not externally most clear, so as to satisfy them concerning it? Otherwise, it would have been sufficient, if he had said, according to their own spirit. Nay, it is so in every government of the people, the causes of all are adjusted according to laws. But how could they be adjusted, if the laws were not most certain, and absolutely, very lights to the people? But if the laws were ambiguous and uncertain, there would not only be no causes settled, but no certain consistency of manners. Since, therefore, laws are enacted that manners may be regulated according to a certain form, and questions in causes settled, it is necessary that that, which is to be the rule and standard for men in their dealings with each other, as the law is, should of all things be the most certain and most clear. And if that light and certainty in laws, in profane administrations where temporal things only are concerned, are necessary, and have been, by the goodness of God, freely granted to the whole world; how shall He not have given to Christians, that is to His own Elect, laws and rules of much greater light and certainty, according to which they might adjust and settle both themselves and all their causes? And that more especially, since He wills that all temporal things should, by His, be despised. And "if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven," how much more shall He clothe us? (Matthew 6:30)-But, let us proceed, and drown that pestilent saying of the Sophists, in Scriptures.

Psalms 19:8, saith, "The commandment of the Lord is clear (or pure), enlightening the eyes." And surely, that which enlightens the eyes, cannot be obscure or ambiguous!

Again, Psalms 119:130, "The door of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." Here, it is ascribed unto the words of God, that they are a door, and something open, which is quite plain to all and enlightens even the simple.

Isaiah 8:20, sends all questions "to the law and to the testimony;" and threatens that if we do not this, the light of the east shall be denied us. In Malachi 2:7, commands, 'that they should seek the law from the mouth of the priest, as being the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.' But a most excellent messenger indeed of the Lord of Hosts he must be, who should bring forth those things, which were both so ambiguous to himself and so obscure to the people, that neither he should know what he himself said, nor they what they heard! And what, throughout the Old Testament, in the 119th Psalm especially, is more frequently said in praise of the Scripture, than that, it is itself a most certain and most clear light? For Psalms 119:105, celebrates its clearness thus: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my paths." He does not say only-thy Spirit is a lamp unto my

feet; though he ascribes unto Him also His office, saying, "Thy good Spirit shall lead me into the land of uprightness." (Psalms 143:10) Thus the Scripture is called a "way" and a "path:" that is from its most perfect certainty.

Sect. 36. NOW let us come to the New Testament. Paul saith, (Romans 1:2) that the Gospel was promised "by the Prophets in the Holy Scriptures." And, (Romans 3:21) that the righteousness of faith was testified "by the law and the Prophets." But what testimony is that, if it be obscure? Paul, however, throughout all his epistles makes the Gospel, the word of light, the Gospel of clearness; and he professedly and most copiously sets it forth as being so, 2 Cor. 3 and 4; where he treats most gloriously concerning the clearness both of Moses and of Christ.

Peter also saith, (2 Peter 1:19) "And we certainly have more surely the word of prophecy; unto which, ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place." Here Peter makes the Word of God a clear lamp, and all other things darkness: whereas, we make obscurity and darkness of the Word.

Christ also often calls Himself, the "light of the world;" (John 8:12. John 9:5) and John the Baptist, a "burning and a shining light," (John 5:35) Certainly, not on account of the holiness of his life, but on account of the word which he ministered. In the same manner Paul calls the Philippians shining "lights of the world." (Php 2:15), because (says he,) ye "hold forth the word of life." (Php 2:16) For life without the word is uncertain and obscure. And what is the design of the apostles in proving their preaching by the Scriptures? Is it that they may obscure their own darkness by still greater darkness? What was the intention of Christ, in teaching the Jews to "search the Scriptures" (John 5:39) as testifying of Him? Was it that He might render them doubtful concerning faith in Him? What was their intention, who having heard Paul, searched the Scriptures night and day, "to see if these things were so?" (Acts 17:11) Do not all these things prove that the Apostles, as well as Christ Himself, appealed to the Scriptures as the most clear testimonies of the truth of their discourses? With what face then do we make them ’obscure?’ Are these words of the Scripture, I pray you, obscure or ambiguous: "God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). "The Word was made flesh." (John 1:14) and all those other words which the whole world receives as articles of faith? Whence then, did they receive them? Was it not from the Scriptures? And what do those who at this day preach? Do they not expound and declare the Scriptures? But if the Scripture which they declare, be obscure, who shall certify us that their declaration is to be depended on? Shall it be certified by another new declaration? But who shall make that declaration?-And so we may go on ad infinitum. In a word, if the Scripture be obscure or ambiguous, what need was there for its being sent down from heaven? Are we not obscure and ambiguous enough in ourselves, without an increase of it by obscurity, ambiguity, and darkness being sent down unto us from heaven? And if this be the case, what will become of that of the apostle, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction?" (2 Timothy 3:16) Nay, Paul, thou art altogether useless, and all those things which thou ascribest unto the Scripture, are to be sought for out of the fathers approved by a long course of ages, and from the Roman see! Wherefore, thy sentiment must be revoked, where thou writest to Titus, (Titus 1:9) ’that a bishop ought to be powerful in doctrine, to exhort and to convince the gainsayers, and to stop the mouths of vain talkers, and deceivers of minds.’ For how shall he be powerful, when thou leavest him the Scriptures in obscurity-that is, as arms of tow and feeble straws, instead of a sword? And Christ must also, of necessity, revoke His word where He falsely

promises us, saying, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist," (Luke 21:15) For how shall they not resist when we fight against them with obscurities and uncertainties? And why do you also, Erasmus, prescribe to us a form of Christianity, if the Scriptures be obscure to you! But I fear I must already be burdensome, even to the insensible, by dwelling so long and spending so much strength upon a point so fully clear; but it was necessary, that that impudent and blasphemous saying, 'the Scriptures are obscure,' should thus be drowned. And you, too, my friend Erasmus, know very well what you are saying, when you deny that the Scripture is clear, for you at the same time drop into my ear this assertion: 'it of necessity follows therefore, that all your saints whom you adduce, are much less clear.' And truly it would be so. For who shall certify us concerning their light, if you make the Scriptures obscure? Therefore they who deny the all-clearness and all-plainness of the Scriptures, leave us nothing else but darkness.

Sect. 37.-BUT here, perhaps, you will say-all that you have advanced is nothing to me. I do not say that the Scriptures are every where obscure (for who would be so mad?) but that they are obscure in this, and the like parts.-I answer: I do not advance these things against you only, but against all who are of the same sentiments with you. Moreover, I declare against you concerning the whole of the Scripture, that I will have no one part of it called obscure: and, to support me, stands that which I have brought forth out of Peter, that the word of God is to us a "lamp shining in a dark place." (2 Peter 1:19) But if any part of this lamp do not shine, it is rather a part of the dark place than of the lamp itself. For Christ has not so illuminated us, as to wish that any part of His word should remain obscure, even while He commands us to attend to it: for if it be not shiningly plain, His commanding us to attend to it is in vain.

Wherefore, if the doctrine concerning "Free-will" be obscure and ambiguous, it does not belong unto Christians and the Scriptures, and is, therefore to be left alone entirely, and classed among those "old wives' fables" (1 Timothy 4:7) which Paul condemns in contentious Christians. But if it do belong unto Christians and the Scriptures, it ought to be clear, open, and manifest, and in every respect like unto all the other most evident articles of faith. For all the articles of faith which belong unto Christians ought to be such, as may not only be most evident to themselves but so defended by manifest and clear Scriptures against the adversaries, as to stop the mouths of them all, that they shall not be able in any thing to gainsay. And this Christ has promised us, saying, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist." But if our mouth be weak in this part, that the adversaries are able to resist, His saying, that no adversary shall be able to resist our mouth, is false. In the doctrine of "Free-will," therefore, we shall either have no adversaries, (which will be the case if it belong not unto us;) or, if it belong unto us, we shall have adversaries indeed, but such as will not be able to resist. But concerning the inability of our adversaries to resist, (as that particular falls in here,) I would, by the way, observe that it is thus:-It does not mean, that they are forced to yield with the heart, or to confess, or be silent. For who can compel men against their will to yield, confess their error, and be silent? 'What (saith Augustine), is more loquacious than vanity?' But what is meant by their mouths being stopped, their not having a word to gainsay, and their saying many things, and yet, in the judgment of common sense, saying nothing, will be best illustrated by examples. When Christ, put the Sadducees to silence by proving the resurrection from the dead, out of that Scripture of Moses. (Matthew 22:23-32) "I am the God of Abraham, &c., God is not the God of the dead but of the living;" (Exodus 3:6) this they were not

able to resist, nor had they a word to gainsay. But did they, therefore, cease from their opinion? And how often did he, by the most evident Scriptures and arguments, so confute the Pharisees, that the very people saw them to be confuted openly, and they themselves felt it. Nevertheless, they still perseveringly continued His adversaries.

Stephen, (Acts 6:10) so spoke, that, according to the testimony of Luke, "they could not resist the spirit and the wisdom with which he spake." But what did they? Did they yield? No! from their shame of being overcome and their inability to resist, they became furious, and shutting their eyes and ears they suborned false witnesses against him. (Acts 6:11-13)

Behold how the same apostle, standing in the council, confutes his adversaries, while he enumerates to that people the mercies of God unto them from their beginning, and proves to them, that God never commanded a temple to be built unto Him: (for it was upon that point they then held him as guilty, and that was the subject in dispute.) At length however, he grants, that there was a temple built under Solomon. But then he takes up the point in this way: "but the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." And to prove this, he brings forward Isaiah the prophet, Isaiah 66:1, "What is the house that ye build unto Me?" And, tell me, what could they here say against a Scripture so manifest? Yet still, not at all moved by it, they stood fixed in their own opinion. Wherefore, he then launches forth on them saying, "Ye uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, &c." (Acts 7:51) He saith, "ye do resist," although they were not able to resist. But let us come to our own times. John Huss preached thus against the Pope from Matthew 16:18 -'The gates of hell shall not prevail against my church. Is there there any obscurity or ambiguity? But the gates of hell do prevail against the Pope and his, for they are notorious throughout the world of their open impiety and iniquities. Is there any obscurity here either? ERGO: THE POPE AND HIS, ARE NOT THE CHURCH CONCERNING WHICH CHRIST SPEAKS.'-What could they gainsay here? How could they resist the mouth that Christ had given him? Yet, they did resist, and persist until they had burnt him: so far were they from yielding to Him, in heart. And this is the kind of resistance to which Christ alludes when He saith, "Your adversaries shall not be able to resist." (Luke 21:15) He says they are "adversaries;" therefore they will resist, for otherwise, they would not remain adversaries, but would become friends, And yet He says, they "shall not be able to resist." What is this else but saying-though they resist, they shall not be able to resist?

If therefore, I also shall be enabled so to refute the doctrine of "Free-will, " that the adversaries shall not be able to resist, although they persist in their opinion, and go on to resist contrary to their conscience, I shall have done enough. For I know well, by experience, how unwilling every one is to be overcome; and (as Quintillian says,) 'that there is no one, who would not rather appear to know, than to be taught.' Although, now-a-days all men, in all places, have this proverb on their tongue, but more from use, or rather abuse, than from heart-reality-'I am willing to learn, and I am ready to follow what is better, when I am taught it by admonition: I am man, and liable to err.' Because, under this mask, this fair semblance of humility, they can with plausible confidence say; 'I am not fully satisfied of it.' 'I do not comprehend it.' 'He does violence to the Scriptures.' 'He asserts so obstinately.' And they nestle under this confidence, taking it for granted, that no one would ever suspect, that souls of so much humility could, ever pertinaciously resist and determinately impugn the known truth. Hence their not yielding in heart, is not to be imputed to their malice, but to the obscurity and duplicity of their arguments. In the same manner did the

philosophers of the Greeks, act; who, that the one might not appear to give up to the other, though evidently confuted, began, as Aristotle records, to deny first principles. In the same way we would mildly persuade ourselves and others, that there are in the world many good men, who would willingly embrace the truth, if there were but one who could plainly shew which it is; and that, it is not to be supposed, that so many learned men, in such a course of ages, were all in error, and did not know that truth.-As though we knew not, that the world is the kingdom of Satan, where, in addition to the natural blindness that is engendered in our flesh, and those most wicked spirits also which have dominion over us, we grow hardened in that very blindness, and are bound in a darkness, no longer human, but devilish.

Sect. 38.-BUT you ask-"if then the Scripture be quite clear, why have men of renowned talent, through so many ages, been blind upon this point?" I answer: they have been thus blind, to the praise and glory of "Free-will;" in order that, that highly boasted-of 'power,' by which a man is 'able to apply himself unto those things that pertain unto eternal salvation,' might be eminently displayed; that very exalted power, which neither sees those things which it sees, nor hears those things which it hears, and much less, understands and seeks after them. For to this power, applies that which Christ and the evangelists so often bring forward out of Isaiah 6:9, "Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive." What is this else but saying, that "Free-will," or the human heart, is so bound by the power of Satan, that, unless it be quickened up in a wonderful way by the Spirit of God, it cannot of itself see or hear those things which strike against the eyes and ears so manifestly, as to be as it were palpable by the hand? So great is the misery and blindness of the human race! Thus also the Evangelists themselves, when they wondered how it could be that the Jews were not won over by the works and words of Christ, which were evidently incontrovertible and undeniable, satisfied themselves from that place of the Scripture, where it is shewn, that man, left to himself, seeing seeth not, and hearing heareth not. And what can be more monstrous! "The light (saith Christ) shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." (John 1:5) Who could believe this? Who hath heard the like-that the light should shine in darkness, and yet, the darkness still remain darkness, and not be enlightened!

Wherefore, it is no wonder in divine things, that through so many ages, men renowned for talent remained blind. It might have been a wonder in human things, but in divine things, it would rather have been a wonder if there had been one here and there that did not remain blind: that they all remained utterly blind alike, is no wonder at all. For what is the whole human race together, without the Spirit, but the kingdom of the devil (as I have said) and a confused chaos of darkness? And therefore it is, that Paul, (Ephesians 6:12) calls the devils, "the rulers of this darkness." And, (1 Corinthians 2:8) he saith, that none of the princes of this world knew the wisdom of God. What then must he think of the rest, who asserts that the princes of this world are the slaves of darkness? For by princes, he means those greatest and highest ones, whom you call 'men renowned for talent.' And why were all the Arians blind? Were there not among them men renowned for talent? Why was Christ foolishness to the nations? Are there not among the nations men renowned for talent? "God (saith Paul) knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain," (1 Corinthians 3:20) He chose not to say "of men," as the text to which he refers has it, but would point to the first and greatest among men, that from them we might form a judgment of the rest.-But upon these points more at large, perhaps, hereafter.

Suffice it thus to have premised, in Exordium, that the Scriptures are most clear, and that by them, our doctrines can be so defended that the adversaries cannot resist: but those doctrines that cannot be thus defended, are nothing to us, for they belong not unto Christians. But if there be any who do not see this clearness, and are blind, or offend under this sun, they, if they be wicked, manifest how great that dominion and power of Satan is over the sons of men, when they can neither hear nor comprehend the all-clear words of God, but are as one cheated by a juggler, who is made to think that the sun is a cold cinder, or to believe that a stone is gold. But if they fear God, they are to be numbered among those elect, who, to a certain degree, are led into error that the power of God may be manifest in us, without which, we can neither see nor do any thing whatever. For the not comprehending the words of God, does not arise, as you pretend, from weakness of mind; nay, nothing is better adapted to the receiving of the words of God, than a weakness of the mind; for it was on account of these weak ones, and to these weak ones, that Christ came, and it is to them he sends His Word. But it is the wickedness of Satan enthroned and reigning in our weakness, and resisting the Word of God:-for if Satan did not do this, a whole world of men might be converted by one Word of God once heard, nor could there be need of more.

Sect. 39.-BUT why do I go on enlarging? Why do I not conclude this discussion with this Exordium, and give my sentence against you in your own words, according to that saying of Christ, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned?" (Matthew 12:37) For you say that the Scripture is not quite clear upon this point. And then, suspending all declaration of your own sentiment, you discuss each side of the subject, what may be said for, and what against, and nothing else whatever do you do, in the whole of this book of yours; which, for that very reason, you wished to call DIATRIBE (The Collation) rather than APOPHASIS (The Denial), or something of that kind; because, you wrote with a design to collect all things, and to assert nothing. But if the Scripture be not quite clear upon this point, why do those of whom you boast, not only remain blind to their side of the subject, but rashly and as fools, define and assert "Free-will," as though proved by a certain and all-sure testimony of Scripture,-that numberless series of the most learned men, I mean, whom the consent of so many ages has approved, even unto this day, and many of whom, in addition to an admirable acquaintance with the Sacred Writings, a piety of life commends?-Some have given, by their blood, a testimony of that doctrine of Christ, which they had defended by Scriptures. If you say what you say, from your heart, it is surely a settled point with you, that "Free-will" has assertors, who are endowed with a wonderful understanding in the sacred writings, and who even gave testimony of that doctrine by their blood. If this be true, they certainly had clear Scripture on their side, else, where would be their admirable understanding in the Sacred Writings? Moreover, what lightness and temerity of spirit must it be, to shed ones blood for a matter uncertain and obscure? This is not to be the martyrs of Christ, but the martyrs of devils!

Now then, do you just set the matter before you, and weigh it in your mind, and say, to which of the two you consider the greater credit should be given; to the prejudices of so many learned men, so many orthodox divines, so many saints, so many martyrs, so many theologians old and recent, so many colleges, so many councils, so many bishops and high-priest Popes, who were of opinion that the Scriptures are quite clear, and who (according to you) confirmed the same by their writings and by their blood; or to your own private judgment, who deny that the Scriptures are quite clear, and who, perhaps, never spent one single tear or sigh for the doctrine of Christ, in the whole of

your life? If you believe they were right in their opinion, why do you not follow them in it? If you do not believe they were right, why do you boast of them with such a trumpeting mouth, and such a torrent of language, as though you would overwhelm us head and ears with a certain storm or flood of eloquence? Which flood, however, will the more heavily rush back upon your own head, whilst my Ark is borne along in safety on the top of the waters! Moreover, you attribute to so many and great men, the utmost folly and temerity. For when you speak of them as being men of the greatest understanding in the Scripture, and as having asserted it by their pen, by their life, and by their death; and yet at the same time contend yourself, that the same Scripture is obscure and ambiguous, this is nothing less than making those men most ignorant in understanding, and most stupid in assertion. Thus I, their poor private despiser, do not pay them such an ill compliment, as you do, their public flatterer.

Sect. .-HERE, therefore, I hold you fast in a last-pinch syllogism (as they say). For either the one or the other of your assertions must be false. Either that, where you say, 'those men were admirable for their understanding in the Sacred Writings, for their life, and for their martyrdom;' or that, where you say, that 'the Scriptures are not quite clear.' But since you are drawn more this latter way, that is, to believe that the Scriptures are not quite clear, (for this is what you harp upon throughout the whole of your book), it remains evident, that it was either from your own natural inclination towards them, or for the sake of flattering them, but by no means from seriousness, that you called those men, 'men of the greatest understanding in the Scripture, and martyrs of Christ;' merely in order that you might blind the eyes of the inexperienced commonalty, and make work for Luther by loading his cause with empty words, odium, and contempt. But, however, I aver that neither of your assertions are true, and that both are false. For, first of all, I aver, that the Scriptures are quite clear: and next, that those men, as far as they asserted "Free-will," were most ignorant of the Sacred Writings: and moreover, that they neither asserted it by their life, nor by their death, but by their pen only; and that, while their heart was traveling another road.

Wherefore this small part of the Disputation I conclude thus.-By the Scripture, as being obscure, nothing ever has hitherto, nor ever can be defined concerning "Free-will;" according to your own testimony. Moreover, nothing has ever been manifested in confirmation of "Free-will," in the lives of all the men from the beginning of the world; as we have proved above. To teach, then, a something which is neither described by one word within the Scriptures, nor evidenced by one fact without the Scriptures, is that, which does not belong to the doctrines of Christians, but to the very fables of Lucian. Except, however, that Lucian, as he amuses only with ludicrous stories from wit and policy) deceives and injures no one. But these friends of ours, in a matter of importance which concerns eternal salvation, madly trifle to the perdition of souls innumerable.

Thus I might here have concluded the whole of this discussion, even with the testimony of my adversaries making for me, and against themselves. For no proof can be more decisive, than the very confession and testimony of the guilty person again

06.08 EXORDIUM.

EXORDIUM.

Sect. 28.—AT your entrance, then, upon the disputation, you promise—'that you will go according to the Canonical Scriptures: and that, because Luther is swayed by the authority of no other writer whatever'—

Very well! I receive your promise! But however, you do not make the promise on this account, because you judge that these same writers are of no service to your subject; but that you might not enter upon a field of labour in vain. For you do not, I know, quite approve of this audacity of mine, or, by what other term soever you choose to designate this my mode of discussion. For you say—'so great a number of the most learned men, approved by the consent of so many ages, has no little weight with you. Among whom were, some of the most extensively acquainted with the sacred writings, and also some of the most holy martyrs, many renowned for miracles, together with the more recent theologians, and so many colleges, councils, bishops, and popes: so that, in a word, on your side of the balance are (you say) learning, genius, multitude, greatness, highness, fortitude, sanctity, miracles, and what not!—But that, on my side, are only a Wycliffe and a Laurentius Valla (although Augustine also, whom you pass by, is wholly on my side), who in comparison with the others, are of no weight whatever; that Luther, therefore, stands alone, a private individual, an upstart, with his followers, in whom there is neither that learning nor that genius, nor multitude, nor magnitude, nor sanctity, nor miracles. 'For they have not ability enough (you say) to cure a lame horse. They make a show of Scripture, indeed; concerning which, however, they are as much in doubt as those on the other side of the question. They boast of the Spirit also, which however, they never show forth.'—And many other things, which, from the length of your tongue, you are able to enumerate in great profusion. But these things have no effect upon us, for we say to you, as the wolf did to the nightingale, which he devoured, "You are Sound, and that's all!"—"They say (you observe,) and upon this only, they would have us believe them."

I confess, my friend Erasmus, that you may well be swayed by all these. These had such weight with me for upwards of ten years, that I think no other mortal was ever so much under their sway. And I myself thought it incredible that this Troy of ours, which had for so long a time, and through so many wars stood invincible, could ever be taken. And I call God for a record upon my soul, that I should have continued so, and have been under the same influence even unto this day, had not an urging conscience and an evidence of things, forced me into a different path. And you may easily imagine that my heart was not of stone; and that, if it had been of stone, it would at least have been softened in struggling against so many tides, and being dashed to and fro by so many waves, when I was daring that, which, if I accomplished, I saw that the whole authority of those whom you have just enumerated, would be poured down upon my head like an overwhelming flood. But this is not a time for setting forth a history of my own life or works; nor have I undertaken this discussion for the purpose of commending myself, but that I might exalt the grace of God. What I am, and with what spirit and design I have been led to these things, I leave to Him who

knows, that all this is carrying on according to his own Free-will, not according to mine: though even the world itself ought to have found that out already. And certainly, by this Exordium of yours, you throw me into a very offensive situation, out of which, unless I speak in favour of myself, and to the disparagement of so many fathers, I shall not easily extricate myself. But I will do it in a few words.—According to your own judgment of me, then, I stand apart from all such learning, talents, multitude, authority, and every thing else of the kind.

Now, if I were to demand of you these three things, What is the Manifestation of the Spirit? What are Miracles? What is Sanctification? As far as I have known you from your letters and books, you would appear so great a novice and ignoramus that you would not be able to give three syllables of explanation. Or, if I should put it to you closely, and demand of you, which one among all those of whom you boast, you could to a certainty bring forth, either as being or having been a saint, or as having possessed the Spirit, or as having wrought miracles, I apprehend you would have hot work of it, and all in vain. You bring forth many things that have been handed about in common use and in public sermons; but you do not credit, how much of their weight and authority they lose, when they are brought to the judgment of conscience. There is an old proverb, "Many were accounted saints on earth, whose souls are now in hell!"

Sect. 29.—BUT we will grant you, if you please ’that they were all saints, that they all had the Spirit, that they all wrought miracles’ (which, however, you do not require.) But tell me this—was any one of them made a saint, did any one of them receive the Spirit or work miracles, in the name, or by virtue of "Free-will," or to confirm the doctrine of "Free-will"? Far be such a thought (you will say,) but in the name, and by virtue of Jesus Christ, and for the confirmation of the doctrine of Christ, all these things were done. Why then do you bring forward the sanctity, the spirit, ’and the miracles of these, in confirmation of the doctrine of "Free-will,"’ for which they were not wrought and given? Their miracles, Spirit, and sanctity, therefore, belong to us who preach Jesus Christ, and not the ability and works of men. And now, what wonder if those who were thus holy, spiritual, and wonderful for miracles, were sometimes under the influence of the flesh, and spoke and wrought according to the flesh; since that happened, not once only, to the very apostles under Christ Himself. For you do not deny, but assert, that "Free-will" does not belong to the Spirit, or to Christ, but is human; so that, the Spirit who is promised to glorify Christ, cannot preach "Free will." If, therefore, the fathers have at any time preached "Free-will," they have certainly spoken from the flesh, (seeing they were men,) not from the Spirit of God; much less did they work miracles for its confirmation. Wherefore, your allegation concerning the sanctity, the Spirit, and the miracles of the fathers is nothing to the purpose, because "Free-will " is not proved thereby, but the doctrine of Jesus Christ against the doctrine of "Free-will." But come, shew forth still, you that are on the side of "Free-will," and assert that a doctrine of this kind is true, that is, that it proceeds from the Spirit of God—shew forth still, I say, the Spirit, still work miracles, still evidence sanctity. Certainly you who make the assertion owe this to us, who deny these things. The Spirit, sanctity, and miracles ought not to be demanded of us who maintain the negative, but from you who assert in the affirmative. The negative proposes nothing, is nothing, and is bound to prove nothing, nor ought to be proved: it is the affirmative that ought to be proved. You assert the power of "Free-will" and the human cause: but no miracle was ever seen or heard of, as proceeding from God, in support of a doctrine of the human cause, only in support of the doctrines of the divine cause. And we are commanded to receive no doctrine whatever, that is not first proved by signs from on high.

(Deuteronomy 18:15-22) Nay, the Scripture calls man "vanity," and "a lie:" which is nothing less than saying, that all human things are vanities and lies. Come forward then! come forward! I say, and prove, that your doctrine, proceeding from human vanity and a lie, is true. Where is now your shewing forth the Spirit! Where is your sanctity! Where are your miracles! I see your talents, your erudition, and your authority; but those things God has given alike unto all the world! But however, we will not compel you to work great miracles, nor "to cure a lame horse," lest you should plead, as an excuse, the carnality of the age. Although God is wont to confirm His doctrines by miracles, without any respect to the carnality of the age: nor is He at all moved, either by the merits or demerits of a carnal age, but by pure mercy and grace, and a love of souls which are to be confirmed, by solid truth, unto their glory. But we give you the choice of working any miracles, as small an one as you please. But come! I, in order to irritate your Baal into action, insult, and challenge you to create even one frog, in the name, and by virtue of "Free-will;" of which, the Gentile and impious Magi in Egypt, could create many. I will not put you to the task of creating lice; which, neither could they produce. But I will descend a little lower yet. Take even one flea, or louse, (for you tempt and deride our God by your 'curing of the lame horse,') and if, after you have combined all the powers, and concentrated all the efforts both of your god and your advocates, you can, in the name and by virtue of "Free-will," kill it, you shall be victors; your cause shall be established; and we also will immediately come over and adore that god of yours, that wonderful killer of the louse. Not that I deny, that you could even remove mountains; but it is one thing to say, that a certain thing was done by "Free-will," and another to prove it.

And, what I have said concerning miracles, I say also concerning sanctity.—If you can, out of such a series of ages, men, and all the things which you have mentioned, shew forth one work, (if it be but the lifting a straw from the earth,) or one word, (if it be but the syllable MY,) or one thought of "Free-will," (if it be but the faintest sigh,) by which men applied themselves unto grace, or by which they have merited the Spirit, or by which they have obtained pardon, or by which they have prevailed with God even in the smallest degree, (I say nothing about being sanctified thereby,) again, I say, you shall be victors, and we vanquished; and that, as I repeat, in the name and by virtue of "Free-will." For what things soever are wrought in men by the power of divine creation, are supported by Scripture testimonies in abundance. And certainly, you ought to produce the same: unless you would appear such ridiculous teachers, as to spread abroad throughout the world, with so much arrogance and authority, doctrines concerning that, of which you cannot produce one proof. For such doctrines will be called mere dreams, which are followed by nothing: than which, nothing can be more disgraceful to men of so many ages, so great, so learned, so holy, and so miraculous! And if this be the case, we shall rank even the stoics before you: for although they took upon them to describe such a wise man as they never saw, yet they did attempt to set forth some part of the character. But you cannot set forth any thing whatever, not even the shadow of your doctrine. The same also I observe concerning the Spirit. If you can produce one out of all the assertors of "Free-will," who ever had a strength of mind and affection, even in the smallest degree, so as, in the name and by virtue of "Free-will," to be able to disregard one farthing, or to be willing to be without one farthing, or to bear one word or sign of injury, (I do not speak of the stoical contempt of riches, life, and fame,) again, the palm of victory shall be yours, and we, as the vanquished, will willingly pass under the spear. And these proofs you, who with such trumpeting mouths sound forth the power of "Free-will," are bound to produce before us. Or else, again, you will appear to be striving to give establishment to a nothing: or to be acting like

him, who sat to see a play in an empty theatre.

Sect. 30.—BUT I will easily prove to you the contrary of all this:—that such holy men as you boast of, whenever they approach God, either to pray or to do, approach Him, utterly forgetful of their own "Free-will" and despairing of themselves, crying unto Him for pure grace only, feeling at the same time that they deserve everything that is the contrary. In this state was Augustine often; and in the same state was Bernard, when, at the point of death, he said, "I have lost my time, because I have lived wrong." I do not see, here, that there was any power spoken of which could apply itself unto Grace, but that all power was condemned as being only averse; although those same saints, at the time when they disputed concerning "Free-will," spoke otherwise. And the same I see has happened unto all, that, when they are engaged in words and disputations, they are one thing; but another, when they come to experience and practice. In the former, they speak differently from what they felt before; in the latter, they feel differently from what they spoke before. But men, good as well as bad, are to be judged of, more from what they feel, than from what they say. But we will indulge you still further. We will not require miracles, the Spirit, and sanctity. We return to the doctrine itself. We only require this of you:—that you would at least explain to us, what work, what word, what thought, that power of "Free-will" can move, attempt, or perform, in order to apply itself unto grace. For it is not enough to say, there is! there is! there is a certain power of "Free-will!" For what is more easily said than this? Nor does such a way of proceeding become men the most learned, and the most holy, who have been approved by so many ages, but must be called baby-like (as we say in a German proverb.) It must be defined, what that power is, what it can do, in what it is passive, and what takes place. To give you an example (for I shall press you most homely) this is what is required:—Whether that power must pray, or fast, or labour, or chastise the body, or give alms; or what other work of this kind it must do, or attempt. For if it be a power it must do some kind of work. But here you are more dumb than Seriphian frogs and fishes. And how should you give the definition, when, according to your own testimony, you are at an uncertainty about the power itself, at difference among each other, and inconsistent with yourselves? And what must become of the definition, when the thing to be defined has no consistency in itself? But be it so, that since the time of Plato, you are at length agreed among yourselves concerning the power itself; and that its work may be defined to be praying, or fasting, or something of the same kind, which perhaps, still lies undiscovered in the ideas of Plato. Who shall certify us that such is truth, that it pleases God, and that we are doing right, in safety? Especially when you yourselves assert that there is a human cause which has not the testimony of the Spirit, because of its having been handled by philosophers, and having existed in the world before Christ came, and before the Spirit was sent down from heaven. It is most certain, then, that this doctrine was not sent down from heaven with the Spirit, but sprung from the earth long before: and therefore, there is need of weighty testimony, whereby it may be confirmed to be true and sure.

We will grant, therefore, that we are private individuals and few, and you public characters and many; we ignorant, and you the most learned: we stupid, and you the most acute: we creatures of yesterday, and you older than Deucalion; we never received, and you approved by so many ages; in a word, we sinners, carnal, and dolts, and you awe-striking to the very devils for your sanctity, spirit, and miracles.—Yet allow us the right at least of Turks and Jews, to ask of you that reason for your doctrine, which your favourite Peter has commanded you to give. We ask it of you in the most modest way: that is, we do not require it to be proved by sanctity, by the Spirit, and by

miracles, (which however, we could do in our own right, seeing that you yourselves require that of others): nay, we even indulge you so far, as not to require you to produce any example of a work, a word, or a thought, in confirmation of your doctrine but only to explain to us the doctrine itself, and merely to tell us plainly, what you would have to be understood by it, and what the form of it is. If you will not, or cannot do this, then let us at least attempt to set forth an example of it ourselves. For you are as bad as the Pope himself, and his followers, who say, "You are to do as we say, but not to do, as we do." In the same manner you say, that that power requires a work to be done: and so, we shall be set on to work, while you remain at your ease. But will you not grant us this, that the more you are in numbers, the longer you are in standing, the greater you are, the farther you are on all accounts superior to us, the more disgraceful it is to you, that we, who in every respect are as nothing in your eyes, should desire to learn and practice your doctrine, and that you should not be able to prove it, either by any miracle, or by the killing of a louse, or by any the least motion of the Spirit, or by any the least work of sanctity, nor even to bring forth any example of it, either in work or word? And further, (a thing unheard of before) that you should not be able to tell us plainly of what form the doctrine is, and how it is to be understood?—O excellent teachers of "Free-will!" What are you, now, but "Sound only!" Who now, Erasmus, are they who "boast of the Spirit but shew it not forth?" Who "say only, and then wish men to believe them?" Are not your friends they, who are thus extolled to the skies, and who can say nothing, and yet, boast of, and exact such great things?

We entreat, therefore, you and yours, my friend Erasmus, that you will allow us to stand aloof and tremble with fear, alarmed at the peril of our conscience; or, at least, to wave our assenting to a doctrine, which, as you yourself see, even though you should succeed to the utmost, and all your arguments should be proved and established, is nothing but an empty term, and a sounding of these syllables—'There is a power of "Free-will!"'—There is a power of "Free-will!"—Moreover, it still remains an uncertainty among your own friends themselves, whether it be a term even, or not: for they differ from each other, and are inconsistent with themselves. It is most iniquitous, therefore, nay, the greatest of miseries, that our consciences, which Christ has redeemed by His blood, should be tormented by the ghost of one term, and that, a term which has no certainty in it. And yet, if we should not suffer ourselves to be thus tormented, we should be held as guilty of unheard-of pride, for disregarding so many fathers of so many ages, who have asserted "Free-will." Whereas, the truth is, as you see from what has been said, they never defined any thing what ever concerning "Free-will": but the doctrine of "Free-will" is erected under the covering, and upon the basis of their name: of which, nevertheless, they can shew no form, and for which, they can fix no term: and thus they delude the world with a term, that is a lie!

Sect. 31.—AND here, Erasmus, I call to your remembrance your own advice. You just now advised—'that questions of this kind be omitted; and that, Christ crucified be rather taught, and those things which suffice unto Christian piety'—but this, we are now seeking after and doing. What are we contending for, but that the simplicity and purity of the Christian doctrine should prevail, and that those things should be left and disregarded, which have been invented, and introduced with it, by men? But you who give this advice, do not act according to it yourself: nay you act contrary to it: you write Diatribes: you exalt the decrees of the Popes: you honour the authority of man: and you try all means to draw us aside into these strange things and contrary to the Holy Scriptures: but you consider not the things that are necessary, how that, by so doing we

should corrupt the simplicity and sincerity of the Scriptures, and confound them with the added inventions of men. From which, we plainly discover, that you did not give us that advice, from your heart; and that you write nothing seriously, but take it for granted that you can, by the empty bulls of your words, turn the world as you please. Whereas you turn them no where: for you say nothing whatever but mere contradictions, in all things, and every where. So that he would be most correct, who should call you, the very Proteus himself, or Vertumnus: or should say with Christ, 'Physician, heal thyself.'—'The teacher, whose own faults his ignorance prove, has need to hide his head!'—

Until, therefore, you shall have proved your affirmative, we stand fast in our negative. And in the judgment, even of all that company of saints of whom you boast, or rather, of the whole world, we dare to say, and we glory in saying, that it is our duty not to admit that which is nothing, and which cannot, to a certainty, be proved what it is. And you must all be possessed of incredible presumption or of madness, to demand that to be admitted by us, for no other reason, than because you, as being many, great, and of long standing, choose to assert that, which you yourselves acknowledge to be nothing. As though it were a conduct becoming Christian teachers, to mock the miserable people, in things pertaining to godliness, with that which is nothing, as if it were a matter that essentially concerned their salvation. Where is that former acumen of the Grecian talent, which heretofore, at least covered lies under some elegant semblage of truth—it now lies in open and naked words! Where is that former dexterously laboured Latinity—it now thus deceives, and is deceived, by one most empty term! But thus it happens to the senseless, or the malicious readers, of books: all those things which were the infirmities of the fathers or of the saints, they make to be of the highest authority: the fault, therefore, is not in the authors, but in the readers. It is as though one relying on the holiness and the authority of St. Peter, should contend that all that St. Peter ever said was true: and should even attempt to persuade us that it was truth, when, (Matthew 16:22) from the infirmity of the flesh, he advised Christ not to suffer. Or that: where he commanded Christ to depart from him out of the ship. (Luke 5:8) And many other of those things, for which he was rebuked of Christ.

Men of this sort are like unto them, who, for the sake of ridicule, idly say, that all things that are in the Gospel are not true. And they catch hold of that, (John 8:48): where the Jews say unto Christ, "Do we not say well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" Or that: "He is guilty of death." Or that: "We found this fellow perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar." These, do the same thing as those assertors of "Free-will," but for a different end, and not willfully, but from blindness and ignorance; for they, so catch at that which the fathers, falling by the infirmity of the flesh, have said in favour of "Free-will," that they even oppose it to that which the same fathers have elsewhere, in the power of the Spirit, said against "Free-will": nay, they so urge and force it, that the better is made to give way to the worse. Hence it comes to pass, that they give authority to the worse expressions, because they fall in with their fleshly mind; and take it from the better, because they make against their fleshly mind. But why do we not rather select the better? For there are many such in the fathers.—To produce an example. What can be more carnally, nay, what more impiously, sacrilegiously, and blasphemously spoken, than that which Jerome is wont to say—'Virginity peoples heaven, and marriage, the earth.' As though the earth, and not heaven, was intended for the patriarchs, the apostles, and Christian husbands. Or, as though heaven was designed for gentile vestal virgins, who are without Christ. And yet, these things and others of the

same kind, the Sophists collect out of the fathers that they may procure unto them authority, carrying all things more by numbers than by judgment. As that disgusting carpenter of Constance did, who lately made that jewel of his, the Stable of Augeas, a present to the public, that there might be a something to cause nausea and vomit in the pious and the learned.

Sect. 32.—AND now, while I am making these observations, I will reply to that remark of yours, where you say—'that it is not to be believed, that God would overlook an error in His Church for so many ages, and not reveal to any one of His saints that, which we contend for as being the grand essential of the Christian doctrine'— In the first place, we do not say that this error was overlooked of God in His Church, or in any one of His Saints. For the Church is ruled by the Spirit of God, and the Saints are led by the Spirit of God. (Romans 8:14) And Christ is with His Church even unto the end of the world. (Matthew 28:20) And the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15) These things, I say, we know; for the Creed which we all hold runs thus, "I believe in the holy Catholic Church;' so that, it is impossible that she can err even in the least article. And even if we should grant, that some of the Elect are held in error through the whole of their life; yet they must, of necessity, return into the way of truth before their death; for Christ says, (John 10:28) "No one shall pluck them out of My hand." But this is the labour, this the point—whether it can be proved to a certainty, that those, whom you call the church, were the Church; or, rather, whether, having been in error throughout their whole life, they were at last brought back before death. For this will not easily be proved, if God suffered all those most learned men whom you adduce, to remain in error through so long a series of ages—Therefore, God suffered His Church to be in error.

But, look at the people of Israel: where, during so many kings and so long a time, not one king is mentioned who never was in error. And under Elijah the Prophet, all the people and every thing that was public among them, had so gone away into idolatry, that he thought that he himself was the only one left: whereas, while the kings, the princes, the prophets, and whatever could be called the people or the Church of God was going to destruction, God was reserving to Himself "seven thousand." (Romans 11:4) But who could see these or know them to be the people of God? And who, even now, dares to deny that God, under all these great men, (for you make mention of none but men in some high office, or of some great name,) was reserving to Himself a Church among the commonalty, and suffering all those to perish after the example of the kingdom of Israel? For it is peculiar to God, to restrain the elect of Israel, and to slay their fat ones: but, to preserve the refuse and remnant of Israel, (Psalms 78:31; Isaiah 1:9, Isaiah 10:20-22, Isaiah 11:11-16)

What happened under Christ Himself, when all the Apostles were offended at Him, when He was denied and condemned by all the people, and there were only a Joseph, a Nicodemus, and a thief upon the cross preserved? Were they then said to be the people of God? There was, indeed, a people of God remaining, but it was not called the people of God; and that which was so called, was not the people of God. And who knows who are the people of God, when throughout the whole world, from its origin, the state of the church was always such, that those were called the people and saints of God who were not so while others among them, who were as a refuse, and were not called the people and saints of God, were the People and Saints of God? as is manifest in the histories of Cain and Abel, of Ishmael and Isaac, of Esau and Jacob.

Look again at the age of the Arians, when scarcely five catholic bishops were preserved throughout the whole world, and they, driven from their places, while the Arians reigned, every

where bearing the public name and office of the church. Nevertheless, under these heretics, Christ preserved His Church: but so, that it was the least thought or considered to be the Church.

Again, shew me, under the kingdom of the Pope, one bishop discharging his office. Shew me one council in which their transactions were, concerning the things pertaining to godliness, and not rather, concerning gowns, dignities, revenues, and other baubles, which they could not say, without being mad, pertained to the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless they are called the church, when all, at least who live as they do, must be reprobates and any thing but the church. And yet, even under them Christ preserved His Church, though it was not called the Church. How many Saints must you imagine those of the inquisition have, for some ages, burnt and killed, as John Huss and others, in whose time, no doubt, there lived many holy men of the same spirit!

Why do you not rather wonder at this, Erasmus, that there ever were, from the beginning of the world, more distinguished talents, greater erudition, more ardent pursuit among the world in general than among Christians or the people of God? As Christ Himself declares, "The children of this world are wiser than the children of light." (Luke 16:8) What Christian can be compared (to say nothing of the Greeks) with Cicero alone for talents, for erudition, or for indefatigability? What shall we say, then, was the preventive cause that no one of them was able to attain unto grace, who certainly exerted "Free-will" with its utmost powers? Who dares say, that there was no one among them who contended for truth with all his efforts? And yet we must affirm that no one of them all attained unto it. Will you here too say, it is not to be believed, that God would utterly leave so many great men, throughout such a series of ages, and permit them to labour in vain? Certainly, if "Free-will" were any thing, or could do any thing, it must have appeared and wrought something in those men, at least in some one instance. But it availed nothing, nay it always wrought in the contrary direction. Hence by this argument only, it may be sufficiently proved, that "Free-will" is nothing at all, since no proof of it can be produced even from the beginning of the world to the end!

Sect. 33.—BUT to return—What wonder, if God should leave all the elders of the church to go their own ways, who thus permitted all the nations to go their own ways, as Paul saith, Acts 15:17, Acts 17:30?—But, my friend Erasmus, THE CHURCH OF GOD INDEED, IS NOT SO COMMON A THING AS THIS TERM, CHURCH OF GOD: NOR ARE THE SAINTS OF GOD INDEED, EVERY WHERE TO BE FOUND LIKE THE TERM, SAINTS OF GOD. THEY ARE PEARLS AND PRECIOUS JEWELS, WHICH THE SPIRIT DOES NOT CAST BEFORE SWINE; BUT WHICH, (AS THE SCRIPTURE EXPRESSES IT,) HE KEEPS HIDDEN, THAT THE WICKED SEE NOT THE GLORY OF GOD! Otherwise, if they were openly known of all, how could it come to pass that they should be thus vexed and afflicted in the world? As Paul saith, (1 Corinthians 2:8) "Had they known Him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

I do not say these things, because I deny that those whom you mention are the saints and church of God; but because it cannot be proved, if any one should deny it, that they really are saints, but must be left quite in uncertainty; and because, therefore, the position deduced from their holiness, is not sufficiently credible for the confirmation of my doctrine. I call them saints, and look upon them as such: I call them the church, and look upon them as such—according to the law of Charity, but not according to the law of Faith. That is, charity, which always thinks the best of every one, and suspects not, but believeth and presumes all things for good concerning its neighbour, calls every one who is baptized, a saint. Nor is there any peril if she err, for charity is liable to err;

seeing that she is exposed to all the uses and abuses of all; an universal handmaid, to the good and to the evil, to the believing and to the unbelieving, to the true and to the false.—But faith, calls no one a saint but him who is declared to be so by the judgment of God, for faith is not liable to be deceived. Therefore, although we ought all to be looked upon as saints by each other by the law of charity, yet no one ought to be decreed a saint by the law of faith, so as to make it an article of faith that such or such an one is a Saint. For in this way, that adversary of God, the Pope, canonized his minions whom he knows not to be saints, setting himself in the place of God. (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

All that I say concerning those saints of yours, or rather, ours, is this:—that since they have spoken differently from each other, those should rather be selected who have spoken the best: that is, who have spoken in defense of Grace, and against "Free-will": and those left, who, through the infirmity of the flesh, have borne witness of the flesh rather than of the Spirit. And also, that those who are inconsistent with themselves, should be selected and caught at, in those parts of their writings where they speak from the Spirit, and left, where they savour of the flesh. This is what becomes a Christian reader, and a 'clean beast dividing the hoof and chewing the cud.' (Leviticus 11:3, Deuteronomy 14:6) Whereas now, laying aside judgment, we swallow down all things together, or, what is worse, by a perversion of judgment, we cast away the best and receive the worst, out of the same authors; and moreover, affix to those worst parts, the title and authority of their sanctity; which sanctity, they obtained, not on account of "Free-will" or the flesh, but on account of the best things, even of the Spirit only.

Sect. 34.—BUT as you say—"what therefore shall we do? The Church is hidden, the Saints are unknown! What, and whom shall we believe? Or, as you most sharply dispute, who will certify us? How shall we search out the Spirit? If we look to erudition, all are rabbins! If we look to life, all are sinners! If we look to the Scripture, they each claim it as belonging to them! But however, our discussion is not so much concerning the Scripture (which is not itself sufficiently clear,) but concerning the sense of the Scripture. And though there are men of every order at hand, yet, as neither numbers, nor erudition, nor dignity, is of any service to the subject, much less can paucity, ignorance, and mean rank avail any thing."—

Well then! I suppose the matter must be left in doubt, and the point of dispute remain before the judge so that, we should seem to act with policy if we should go over to the sentiments of the Sceptics. Unless, indeed, we were to act as you wisely do, for you pretend that you are so much in doubt, that you professedly desire to seek and learn the truth; while, at the same time, you cleave to those who assert "Freewill," until the truth be made glaringly manifest. But no! I here in reply to you observe, that you neither say all, nor nothing. For we shall not search out the Spirit by the arguments of erudition, of life, of talent, of multitude, of dignity, of ignorance, of inexperience, of paucity, or of meanness of rank. And yet, I do not approve of those, whose whole resource is in a boasting of the Spirit. For I had the last year, and have still, a sharp warfare with those fanatics who subject the Scriptures to the interpretation of their own boasted spirit. On the same account also, I have hitherto determinately set myself against the Pope, in whose kingdom, nothing is more common, or more generally received than this saying:—'that the Scriptures are obscure and ambiguous, and that the Spirit, as the Interpreter, should be sought from the apostolical see of Rome!' than which, nothing could be said that was more destructive; for by means of this saying, a set of impious men have exalted themselves above the Scriptures themselves; and by the same,

have done whatever pleased them; till at length, the Scriptures are absolutely trodden under foot, and we compelled to believe and teach nothing but the dreams of men that are mad. In a word, that saying is no human invention, but a poison poured forth into the world by a wonderful malice of the devil himself, the prince of all demons.

We hold the case thus:—that the spirits are to be tried and proved by a twofold judgment. The one, internal; by which, through the Holy Spirit, or a peculiar gift of God, any one may illustrate, and to a certainty, judge of, and determine on, the doctrines and sentiments of all men, for himself and his own personal salvation concerning which it is said. (1 Corinthians 2:15) "The spiritual man judgeth all things, but he himself is judged of no man." This belongs to faith, and is necessary for every, even private, Christian. This, we have above called, 'the internal clearness of the Holy Scripture.' And it was this perhaps to which they alluded, who, in answer to you said, that all things must be determined by the judgment of the Spirit. But this judgment cannot profit another, nor are we speaking of this judgment in our present discussion; for no one, I think, doubts its reality. The other, then, is the external judgment; by which, we judge, to the greatest certainty, of the spirits and doctrines of all men; not for ourselves only, but for others also, and for their salvation. This judgment is peculiar to the public ministry of the Word and the external office, and especially belongs to teachers and preachers of the Word. Of this we make use, when we strengthen the weak in faith, and when we refute adversaries. This is what we before called, 'the external clearness of the Holy Scripture.' Hence we affirm that all spirits are to be proved in the face of the church, by the judgment of Scripture. For this ought, above all things, to be received, and most firmly settled among Christians:—that the Holy Scriptures are a spiritual light by far more clear than the sun itself, especially in those things which pertain unto salvation or necessity.

Sect. 35.—BUT, since we have been persuaded to the contrary of this, by that pestilent saying of the Sophists, 'the Scriptures are obscure and ambiguous;' we are compelled, first of all, to prove that first grand principle of ours, by which all other things are to be proved: which, among the Sophists, is considered absurd and impossible to be done.

First then, Moses saith, (Deuteronomy 17:8) that, 'if there arise a matter too hard in judgment, men are to go to the place which God shall choose for His name, and there to consult the priests, who are to judge of it according to the law of the Lord.'

He saith, "according to the law of the Lord"—but how will they judge thus, if the law of the Lord be not externally most clear, so as to satisfy them concerning it? Otherwise, it would have been sufficient, if he had said, according to their own spirit. Nay, it is so in every government of the people, the causes of all are adjusted according to laws. But how could they be adjusted, if the laws were not most certain, and absolutely, very lights to the people? But if the laws were ambiguous and uncertain, there would not only be no causes settled, but no certain consistency of manners. Since, therefore, laws are enacted that manners may be regulated according to a certain form, and questions in causes settled, it is necessary that that, which is to be the rule and standard for men in their dealings with each other, as the law is, should of all things be the most certain and most clear. And if that light and certainty in laws, in profane administrations where temporal things only are concerned, are necessary, and have been, by the goodness of God, freely granted to the whole world; how shall He not have given to Christians, that is to His own Elect, laws and rules of much greater light and certainty, according to which they might adjust and settle both themselves

and all their causes? And that more especially, since He wills that all temporal things should, by His, be despised. And "if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven," how much more shall He clothe us? (Matthew 6:30)—But, let us proceed, and drown that pestilent saying of the Sophists, in Scriptures.

Psalms 19:8, saith, "The commandment of the Lord is clear (or pure), enlightening the eyes." And surely, that which enlightens the eyes, cannot be obscure or ambiguous!

Again, Psalms 119:130, "The door of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." Here, it is ascribed unto the words of God, that they are a door, and something open, which is quite plain to all and enlightens even the simple.

Isaiah 8:20, sends all questions "to the law and to the testimony;" and threatens that if we do not this, the light of the east shall be denied us. In Malachi 2:7, commands, 'that they should seek the law from the mouth of the priest, as being the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.' But a most excellent messenger indeed of the Lord of Hosts he must be, who should bring forth those things, which were both so ambiguous to himself and so obscure to the people, that neither he should know what he himself said, nor they what they heard! And what, throughout the Old Testament, in Psalms 119:1-176 especially, is more frequently said in praise of the Scripture, than that, it is itself a most certain and most clear light? For Psalms 119:1-5, celebrates its clearness thus: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my paths." He does not say only—thy Spirit is a lamp unto my feet; though he ascribes unto Him also His office, saying, "Thy good Spirit shall lead me into the land of uprightness." (Psalms 143:10) Thus the Scripture is called a "way" and a "path:" that is from its most perfect certainty.

Sect. 36. NOW let us come to the New Testament. Paul saith, (Romans 1:2) that the Gospel was promised "by the Prophets in the Holy Scriptures." And, (Romans 3:21) that the righteousness of faith was testified "by the law and the Prophets." But what testimony is that, if it be obscure? Paul, however, throughout all his epistles makes the Gospel, the word of light, the Gospel of clearness; and he professedly and most copiously sets it forth as being so, 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 and 2 Corinthians 4:1-18; where he treats most gloriously concerning the clearness both of Moses and of Christ.

Peter also saith, (2 Peter 1:19) "And we certainly have more surely the word of prophecy; unto which, ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place." Here Peter makes the Word of God a clear lamp, and all other things darkness: whereas, we make obscurity and darkness of the Word.

Christ also often calls Himself, the "light of the world;" (John 8:12, John 9:5) and John the Baptist, a "burning and a shining light," (John 5:35) Certainly, not on account of the holiness of his life, but on account of the word which he ministered. In the same manner Paul calls the Philippians shining "lights of the world." (Php 2:16), because (says he,) ye "hold forth the word of life." (Php 2:16) For life without the word is uncertain and obscure. And what is the design of the apostles in proving their preaching by the Scriptures? Is it that they may obscure their own darkness by still greater darkness? What was the intention of Christ, in teaching the Jews to "search the Scriptures" (John 5:39) as testifying of Him? Was it that He might render them doubtful concerning faith in Him? What was their intention, who having heard Paul, searched the Scriptures night and day, "to see if

these things were so?" (Acts 17:11) Do not all these things prove that the Apostles, as well as Christ Himself, appealed to the Scriptures as the most clear testimonies of the truth of their discourses? With what face then do we make them 'obscure?' Are these words of the Scripture, I pray you, obscure or ambiguous: "God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). "The Word was made flesh." (John 1:14) and all those other words which the whole world receives as articles of faith? Whence then, did they receive them? Was it not from the Scriptures? And what do those who at this day preach? Do they not expound and declare the Scriptures? But if the Scripture which they declare, be obscure, who shall certify us that their declaration is to be depended on? Shall it be certified by another new declaration? But who shall make that declaration?—And so we may go on ad infinitum. In a word, if the Scripture be obscure or ambiguous, what need was there for its being sent down from heaven? Are we not obscure and ambiguous enough in ourselves, without an increase of it by obscurity, ambiguity, and darkness being sent down unto us from heaven? And if this be the case, what will become of that of the apostle, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction?" (2 Timothy 3:16) Nay, Paul, thou art altogether useless, and all those things which thou ascribest unto the Scripture, are to be sought for out of the fathers approved by a long course of ages, and from the Roman see! Wherefore, thy sentiment must be revoked, where thou writest to Titus, (Titus 1:9) 'that a bishop ought to be powerful in doctrine, to exhort and to convince the gainsayers, and to stop the mouths of vain talkers, and deceivers of minds.' For how shall he be powerful, when thou leavest him the Scriptures in obscurity—that is, as arms of tow and feeble straws, instead of a sword? And Christ must also, of necessity, revoke His word where He falsely promises us, saying, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist," (Luke 21:15) For how shall they not resist when we fight against them with obscurities and uncertainties? And why do you also, Erasmus, prescribe to us a form of Christianity, if the Scriptures be obscure to you! But I fear I must already be burdensome, even to the insensible, by dwelling so long and spending so much strength upon a point so fully clear; but it was necessary, that that impudent and blasphemous saying, 'the Scriptures are obscure,' should thus be drowned. And you, too, my friend Erasmus, know very well what you are saying, when you deny that the Scripture is clear, for you at the same time drop into my ear this assertion: 'it of necessity follows therefore, that all your saints whom you adduce, are much less clear.' And truly it would be so. For who shall certify us concerning their light, if you make the Scriptures obscure? Therefore they who deny the all-clearness and all-plainness of the Scriptures, leave us nothing else but darkness.

Sect. 37.—BUT here, perhaps, you will say—all that you have advanced is nothing to me. I do not say that the Scriptures are every where obscure (for who would be so mad?) but that they are obscure in this, and the like parts.—I answer: I do not advance these things against you only, but against all who are of the same sentiments with you. Moreover, I declare against you concerning the whole of the Scripture, that I will have no one part of it called obscure: and, to support me, stands that which I have brought forth out of Peter, that the word of God is to us a "lamp shining in a dark place." (2 Peter 1:19) But if any part of this lamp do not shine, it is rather a part of the dark place than of the lamp itself. For Christ has not so illuminated us, as to wish that any part of His word should remain obscure, even while He commands us to attend to it: for if it be not shiningly plain, His commanding us to attend to it is in vain.

Wherefore, if the doctrine concerning "Free-will" be obscure and ambiguous, it does not belong unto Christians and the Scriptures, and is, therefore to be left alone entirely, and classed among those "old wives' fables" (1 Timothy 4:7) which Paul condemns in contentious Christians. But if it do belong unto Christians and the Scriptures, it ought to be clear, open, and manifest, and in every respect like unto all the other most evident articles of faith. For all the articles of faith which belong unto Christians ought to be such, as may not only be most evident to themselves but so defended by manifest and clear Scriptures against the adversaries, as to stop the mouths of them all, that they shall not be able in any thing to gainsay. And this Christ has promised us, saying, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist." But if our mouth be weak in this part, that the adversaries are able to resist, His saying, that no adversary shall be able to resist our mouth, is false. In the doctrine of "Free-will," therefore, we shall either have no adversaries, (which will be the case if it belong not unto us;) or, if it belong unto us, we shall have adversaries indeed, but such as will not be able to resist. But concerning the inability of our adversaries to resist, (as that particular falls in here,) I would, by the way, observe that it is thus:—It does not mean, that they are forced to yield with the heart, or to confess, or be silent. For who can compel men against their will to yield, confess their error, and be silent? 'What (saith Augustine), is more loquacious than vanity?' But what is meant by their mouths being stopped, their not having a word to gainsay, and their saying many things, and yet, in the judgment of common sense, saying nothing, will be best illustrated by examples. When Christ, put the Sadducees to silence by proving the resurrection from the dead, out of that Scripture of Moses. (Matthew 22:23-32) "I am the God of Abraham, &c., God is not the God of the dead but of the living;" (Exodus 3:6) this they were not able to resist, nor had they a word to gainsay. But did they, therefore, cease from their opinion? And how often did he, by the most evident Scriptures and arguments, so confute the Pharisees, that the very people saw them to be confuted openly, and they themselves felt it. Nevertheless, they still perseveringly continued His adversaries.

Stephen, (Acts 6:10) so spoke, that, according to the testimony of Luke, "they could not resist the spirit and the wisdom with which he spake." But what did they? Did they yield? No! from their shame of being overcome and their inability to resist, they became furious, and shutting their eyes and ears they suborned false witnesses against him. (Acts 6:11-13)

Behold how the same apostle, standing in the council, confutes his adversaries, while he enumerates to that people the mercies of God unto them from their beginning, and proves to them, that God never commanded a temple to be built unto Him: (for it was upon that point they then held him as guilty, and that was the subject in dispute.) At length however, he grants, that there was a temple built under Solomon. But then he takes up the point in this way: "but the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." And to prove this, he brings forward Isaiah the prophet, lxvi. 1, "What is the house that ye build unto Me?" And, tell me, what could they here say against a Scripture so manifest? Yet still, not at all moved by it, they stood fixed in their own opinion. Wherefore, he then launches forth on them saying, "Ye uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, &c." (Acts 7:51) He saith, "ye do resist," although they were not able to resist. But let us come to our own times. John Huss preached thus against the Pope from Matthew 16:18—'The gates of hell shall not prevail against my church. Is there there any obscurity or ambiguity? But the gates of hell do prevail against the Pope and his, for they are notorious throughout the world of their open impiety and iniquities. Is there any obscurity here either?

ERGO: THE POPE AND HIS, ARE NOT THE CHURCH CONCERNING WHICH CHRIST SPEAKS.'—What could they gainsay here? How could they resist the mouth that Christ had given him? Yet, they did resist, and persist until they had burnt him: so far were they from yielding to Him, in heart. And this is the kind of resistance to which Christ alludes when He saith, "Your adversaries shall not be able to resist." (Luke 21:15) He says they are "adversaries;" therefore they will resist, for otherwise, they would not remain adversaries, but would become friends, And yet He says, they "shall not be able to resist." What is this else but saying—though they resist, they shall not be able to resist?

If therefore, I also shall be enabled so to refute the doctrine of "Free-will, " that the adversaries shall not be able to resist, although they persist in their opinion, and go on to resist contrary to their conscience, I shall have done enough. For I know well, by experience, how unwilling every one is to be overcome; and (as Quintillian says,) 'that there is no one, who would not rather appear to know, than to be taught.' Although, now-a-days all men, in all places, have this proverb on their tongue, but more from use, or rather abuse, than from heart-reality—'I am willing to learn, and I am ready to follow what is better, when I am taught it by admonition: I am man, and liable to err.' Because, under this mask, this fair semblance of humility, they can with plausible confidence say; 'I am not fully satisfied of it.' 'I do not comprehend it.' 'He does violence to the Scriptures.' 'He asserts so obstinately.' And they nestle under this confidence, taking it for granted, that no one would ever suspect, that souls of so much humility could, ever pertinaciously resist and determinately impugn the known truth. Hence their not yielding in heart, is not to be imputed to their malice, but to the obscurity and duplicity of their arguments. In the same manner did the philosophers of the Greeks, act; who, that the one might not appear to give up to the other, though evidently confuted, began, as Aristotle records, to deny first principles. In the same way we would mildly persuade ourselves and others, that there are in the world many good men, who would willingly embrace the truth, if there were but one who could plainly shew which it is; and that, it is not to be supposed, that so many learned men, in such a course of ages, were all in error, and did not know that truth.—As though we knew not, that the world is the kingdom of Satan, where, in addition to the natural blindness that is engendered in our flesh, and those most wicked spirits also which have dominion over us, we grow hardened in that very blindness, and are bound in a darkness, no longer human, but devilish.

Sect. 38.—BUT you ask—"if then the Scripture be quite clear, why have men of renowned talent, through so many ages, been blind upon this point?" I answer: they have been thus blind, to the praise and glory of "Free-will;" in order that, that highly boasted-of 'power,' by which a man is 'able to apply himself unto those things that pertain unto eternal salvation,' might be eminently displayed; that very exalted power, which neither sees those things which it sees, nor hears those things which it hears, and much less, understands and seeks after them. For to this power, applies that which Christ and the evangelists so often bring forward out of Isaiah vi. 9, "Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive." What is this else but saying, that "Free-will," or the human heart, is so bound by the power of Satan, that, unless it be quickened up in a wonderful way by the Spirit of God, it cannot of itself see or hear those things which strike against the eyes and ears so manifestly, as to be as it were palpable by the hand? So great is the misery and blindness of the human race! Thus also the Evangelists themselves, when they wondered how it could be that the Jews were not won over by the works and words of Christ,

which were evidently incontrovertible and undeniable, satisfied themselves from that place of the Scripture, where it is shewn, that man, left to himself, seeing seeth not, and hearing heareth not. And what can be more monstrous! "The light (saith Christ) shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." (John 1:5) Who could believe this? Who hath heard the like—that the light should shine in darkness, and yet, the darkness still remain darkness, and not be enlightened!

Wherefore, it is no wonder in divine things, that through so many ages, men renowned for talent remained blind. It might have been a wonder in human things, but in divine things, it would rather have been a wonder if there had been one here and there that did not remain blind: that they all remained utterly blind alike, is no wonder at all. For what is the whole human race together, without the Spirit, but the kingdom of the devil (as I have said) and a confused chaos of darkness? And therefore it is, that Paul, (Ephesians 6:12) calls the devils, "the rulers of this darkness." And, (1 Corinthians 2:8) he saith, that none of the princes of this world knew the wisdom of God. What then must he think of the rest, who asserts that the princes of this world are the slaves of darkness? For by princes, he means those greatest and highest ones, whom you call 'men renowned for talent.' And why were all the Arians blind? Were there not among them men renowned for talent? Why was Christ foolishness to the nations? Are there not among the nations men renowned for talent? "God (saith Paul) knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain," (1 Corinthians 3:20) He chose not to say "of men," as the text to which he refers has it, but would point to the first and greatest among men, that from them we might form a judgment of the rest.—But upon these points more at large, perhaps, hereafter.

Suffice it thus to have premised, in Exordium, that the Scriptures are most clear, and that by them, our doctrines can be so defended that the adversaries cannot resist: but those doctrines that cannot be thus defended, are nothing to us, for they belong not unto Christians. But if there be any who do not see this clearness, and are blind, or offend under this sun, they, if they be wicked, manifest how great that dominion and power of Satan is over the sons of men, when they can neither hear nor comprehend the all-clear words of God, but are as one cheated by a juggler, who is made to think that the sun is a cold cinder, or to believe that a stone is gold. But if they fear God, they are to be numbered among those elect, who, to a certain degree, are led into error that the power of God may be manifest in us, without which, we can neither see nor do any thing whatever. For the not comprehending the words of God, does not arise, as you pretend, from weakness of mind; nay, nothing is better adapted to the receiving of the words of God, than a weakness of the mind; for it was on account of these weak ones, and to these weak ones, that Christ came, and it is to them he sends His Word. But it is the wickedness of Satan enthroned and reigning in our weakness, and resisting the Word of God:—for if Satan did not do this, a whole world of men might be converted by one Word of God once heard, nor could there be need of more.

Sect. 39.—BUT why do I go on enlarging? Why do I not conclude this discussion with this Exordium, and give my sentence against you in your own words, according to that saying of Christ, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned?" (Matthew 12:37) For you say that the Scripture is not quite clear upon this point. And then, suspending all declaration of your own sentiment, you discuss each side of the subject, what may be said for, and what against, and nothing else whatever do you do, in the whole of this book of yours; which, for that very reason, you wished to call DIATRIBE (The Collation) rather than APOPHASIS (The Denial), or something of that kind; because, you wrote with a design to collect all things, and to

assert nothing. But if the Scripture be not quite clear upon this point, why do those of whom you boast, not only remain blind to their side of the subject, but rashly and as fools, define and assert "Free-will," as though proved by a certain and all-sure testimony of Scripture,—that numberless series of the most learned men, I mean, whom the consent of so many ages has approved, even unto this day, and many of whom, in addition to an admirable acquaintance with the Sacred Writings, a piety of life commends?—Some have given, by their blood, a testimony of that doctrine of Christ, which they had defended by Scriptures. If you say what you say, from your heart, it is surely a settled point with you, that "Free-will" has assertors, who are endowed with a wonderful understanding in the sacred writings, and who even gave testimony of that doctrine by their blood. If this be true, they certainly had clear Scripture on their side, else, where would be their admirable understanding in the Sacred Writings? Moreover, what lightness and temerity of spirit must it be, to shed ones blood for a matter uncertain and obscure? This is not to be the martyrs of Christ, but the martyrs of devils!

Now then, do you just set the matter before you, and weigh it in your mind, and say, to which of the two you consider the greater credit should be given; to the prejudices of so many learned men, so many orthodox divines, so many saints, so many martyrs, so many theologians old and recent, so many colleges, so many councils, so many bishops and high-priest Popes, who were of opinion that the Scriptures are quite clear, and who (according to you) confirmed the same by their writings and by their blood; or to your own private judgment, who deny that the Scriptures are quite clear, and who, perhaps, never spent one single tear or sigh for the doctrine of Christ, in the whole of your life? If you believe they were right in their opinion, why do you not follow them in it? If you do not believe they were right, why do you boast of them with such a trumpeting mouth, and such a torrent of language, as though you would overwhelm us head and ears with a certain storm or flood of eloquence? Which flood, however, will the more heavily rush back upon your own head, whilst my Ark is borne along in safety on the top of the waters! Moreover, you attribute to so many and great men, the utmost folly and temerity. For when you speak of them as being men of the greatest understanding in the Scripture, and as having asserted it by their pen, by their life, and by their death; and yet at the same time contend yourself, that the same Scripture is obscure and ambiguous, this is nothing less than making those men most ignorant in understanding, and most stupid in assertion. Thus I, their poor private despiser, do not pay them such an ill compliment, as you do, their public flatterer.

Sect. 40.—HERE, therefore, I hold you fast in a last-pinch syllogism (as they say). For either the one or the other of your assertions must be false. Either that, where you say, 'those men were admirable for their understanding in the Sacred Writings, for their life, and for their martyrdom;' or that, where you say, that 'the Scriptures are not quite clear.' But since you are drawn more this latter way, that is, to believe that the Scriptures are not quite clear, (for this is what you harp upon throughout the whole of your book), it remains evident, that it was either from your own natural inclination towards them, or for the sake of flattering them, but by no means from seriousness, that you called those men, 'men of the greatest understanding in the Scripture, and martyrs of Christ;' merely in order that you might blind the eyes of the inexperienced commonalty, and make work for Luther by loading his cause with empty words, odium, and contempt. But, however, I aver that neither of your assertions are true, and that both are false. For, first of all, I aver, that the Scriptures are quite clear: and next, that those men, as far as they asserted "Free-will," were most

ignorant of the Sacred Writings: and moreover, that they neither asserted it by their life, nor by their death, but by their pen only; and that, while their heart was traveling another road.

Wherefore this small part of the Disputation I conclude thus.—By the Scripture, as being obscure, nothing ever has hitherto, nor ever can be defined concerning "Free-will;" according to your own testimony. Moreover, nothing has ever been manifested in confirmation of "Free-will," in the lives of all the men from the beginning of the world; as we have proved above. To teach, then, a something which is neither described by one word within the Scriptures, nor evidenced by one fact without the Scriptures, is that, which does not belong to the doctrines of Christians, but to the very fables of Lucian. Except, however, that Lucian, as he amuses only with ludicrous stories from wit and policy) deceives and injures no one. But these friends of ours, in a matter of importance which concerns eternal salvation, madly trifle to the perdition of souls innumerable.

Thus I might here have concluded the whole of this discussion, even with the testimony of my adversaries making for me, and against themselves. For no proof can be more decisive, than the very confession and testimony of the guilty person again

06.09a Discussion: First Part (Sections 41 - 59)

DISCUSSION.

FIRST PART.

Sect. 41.-AND, first of all, let us begin regularly with your definition: according to which, you define "Free-will" thus,

-"Moreover I consider Free-will in this light: that it is a power in the human will, by which, a man may apply himself to those things which lead unto eternal salvation, or turn away from the same."- With a great deal of policy indeed, you have here stated a mere naked definition, without declaring any part of it, (as all others do); because, perhaps, you feared more shipwrecks than one. I therefore am compelled to state the several parts myself. The thing defined itself, if it be closely examined, has a much wider extent than the definition of it: and such a definition, the Sophists would call faulty: that is, when the definition does not fully embrace the thing defined. For I have shown before, that "Free-will" cannot be applied to any one but to God only. You may, perhaps, rightly assign to man some kind of will, but to assign unto him "Free-will" in divine things, is going too far. For the term "Free-will," in the judgment of the ears of all, means, that which can, and does do God-ward, whatever it pleases, restrainable by no law and no command. But you cannot call him Free, who is a servant acting under the power of the Lord. How much less, then, can we rightly call men or angels free, who so live under the all-overruling command of God, (to say nothing of sin and death,) that they cannot consist one moment by their own power.

Here then, at the outset, the definition of the term, and the definition of the thing termed, militate against each other: because the term signifies one thing, and the thing termed is, by experience, found to be another. It would indeed be more properly termed "Vertible-will," or "Mutable-will." For in this way Augustine, and after him the Sophists, diminished the glory and force of the term, free; adding thereby this detriment, that they assign vertibility to "Free-will." And it becomes us thus to speak, lest, by inflated and lofty terms of empty sound, we should deceive the hearts of men. And, as Augustine also thinks, we ought to speak according to a certain rule, in sober and proper words; for in teaching, simplicity and propriety of argumentation is required, and not highflown figures of rhetorical persuasion.

Sect. 42.-BUT that we might not seem to delight in a mere war of words, we cede to that abuse, though great and dangerous, that "Free-will means "Vertible-will." We will cede also that to Erasmus, where he makes "Free-will" ’a power of the human will:’ (as though angels had not a "Free-will" too, merely because he designed in this book to treat only on the "Free-will" of men!) We make this remark, otherwise, even in this part, the definition would be too narrow to embrace the thing defined.

We come then to those parts of the definition, which are the hinge upon which the matter turns. Of these things some are manifest enough; the rest shun the light, as if conscious to themselves that they had every thing to fear: because, nothing ought to be expressed more clearly, and more

decisively, than a definition; for to define obscurely, is the same thing as defining nothing at all. The clear parts of the definition then are these:-'power of human will:' and 'by which a man can:' also, 'unto eternal salvation.' But these are Andabatae:-'to apply:' and, 'to those things which lead:' also, 'to turn away.' What shall we divine that this 'to apply' means? And this 'to turn away,' also? And also what these words mean, 'which pertain unto eternal salvation?' Into what dark corner have these withdrawn their meaning? I seem as if I were engaged in dispute with a very Scotinian, or with Heraclitus himself, so as to be in the way of being worn out by a twofold labour. First, that I shall have to find out my adversary by groping and feeling about for him in pits and darkness, (which is an enterprise both venturous and perilous,) and if I do not find him, to fight to no purpose with ghosts, and beat the air in the dark. And, secondly, if I should bring him out into the light, that then, I shall have to fight with him upon equal ground, when I am already worn out with hunting after him.

I suppose, then, what you mean by the 'power of the human will' is this:-a power, or faculty, or disposition, or aptitude, to will or not to will, to choose or refuse, to approve or disapprove, and what other actions soever belong to the will. Now then, what it is for this same power 'to apply itself,' or 'to turn away,' I do not see: unless it be the very, willing or not willing, choosing or refusing, approving or disapproving; that is, the very action itself of the will. But may we suppose, that this power is a kind of medium, between the will itself and the action itself; such as, that by which the will itself allures forth the action itself of willing or not willing, or by which the action itself of willing or not willing is allured forth? Any thing else beside this, it is impossible for one to imagine or think of. And if I am deceived, let the fault be my author's who has given the definition, not mine who examine it. For it is justly said among lawyers, 'his words who speaks obscurely, when he can speak more plainly, are to be interpreted against himself.' And here I wish to know nothing of our moderns and their subtleties, for we must come plainly to close quarters in what we say, for the sake of understanding and teaching. And as to those words, 'which lead unto eternal salvation,' I suppose by them are meant the words and works of God, which are offered to the human will, that it might either apply itself to them, or turn away from them. But I call both the Law and the Gospel the words of God. By the Law, works are required; and by the Gospel, faith. For there are no other things which lead either unto the grace of God, or unto eternal salvation, but the word and the work of God: because grace or the spirit is the life itself, to which we are led by the word and the work of God.

Sect. 43.-BUT this life or salvation is an eternal matter, incomprehensible to the human capacity: as Paul shews, out of Isaiah, (1 Corinthians 2:9) "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." For when we speak of eternal life, we speak of that which is numbered among the chiefest articles of our faith. And what "Freewill" avails in this article Paul testifies, (1 Corinthians 2:10) Also: "God (saith he) hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." As though he had said, the heart of no man will ever understand or think of any of those things, unless the Spirit shall reveal them; so far is it from possibility, that he should ever apply himself unto them or seek after them.

Look at experience. What have the most exalted minds among the nations thought of a future life, and of the resurrection? Has it not been, that the more exalted they were in mind, the more ridiculous the resurrection and eternal life have appeared to them? Unless you mean to say, that those philosophers and Greeks at Athens, who, (Acts 17:18) called Paul, as he taught these

things, a "babbler" and a "setter forth of strange gods," were not of exalted minds. Portius Festus, (Acts 26:24) calls out that Paul is "mad," on account of his preaching eternal life. What does Pliny bark forth, Book vii.? What does Lucian also, that mighty genius? Were not they men wondered at? Moreover to this day there are many, who, the more renowned they are for talent and erudition, the more they laugh at this article; and that openly, considering it a mere fable. And certainly, no man upon earth, unless imbued with the Holy Spirit, ever secretly knows, or believes in, or wishes for, eternal salvation, how much soever he may boast of it by his voice and by his pen. And may you and I, friend Erasmus, be free from this boasting leaven. So rare is a believing soul in this article!-Have I got the sense of this definition?

Sect. 44. - UPON the authority of Erasmus, then, "Free-will," is a power of the human will, which can, of itself, will and not will to embrace the word and work of God, by which it is to be led to those things which are beyond its capacity and comprehension. If then, it can will and not will, it can also love and hate. And if it can love and hate, it can, to a certain degree, do the Law and believe the Gospel. For it is impossible, if you can will and not will, that you should not be able by that will to begin some kind of work, even though, from the hindering of another, you should not be able to perfect it. And therefore, as among the works of God which lead to salvation, death, the cross, and all the evils of the world are numbered, human will can will its own death and perdition. Nay, it can will all things while it can will the embracing of the word and work of God. For what is there that can be any where beneath, above, within, and without the word and work of God, but God Himself? And what is there here left to grace and the Holy Spirit? This is plainly to ascribe divinity to "Free-will." For to will to embrace the Law and the Gospel, not to will sin, and to will death, belongs to the power of God alone: as Paul testifies in more places than one.

Wherefore, no one, since the Pelagians, has written more rightly concerning "Free-will" than Erasmus. For I have said above, that "Free-will" is a divine term, and signifies a divine power. But no one hitherto, except the Pelagians, has ever assigned to it that power. Hence, Erasmus by far outstrips the Pelagians themselves: for they assign that divinity to the whole of "Free-will," but Erasmus to the half of it only. They divide "Free-will" into two parts; the power of discerning, and the power of choosing; assigning the one to reason, and the other to will; and the Sophists do the same. But Erasmus, setting aside the power of discerning, exalts the power of choosing alone, and thus makes a lame, half-membered "Free-will," God himself! What must we suppose then he would have done, had he set about describing the whole of "Free-will."

But, not contented with this, he outstrips even the philosophers. For it has never yet been settled among them, whether or not any thing can give motion to itself; and upon this point, the Platonics and Peripatetics are divided in the whole body of philosophy. But according to Erasmus, "Freewill" not only of its own power gives motion to itself, but ’applies itself’ to those things which are eternal; that is, which are incomprehensible to itself! A new and unheard-of definer of "Freewill," truly, who leaves the philosophers, the Pelagians, the Sophists, and all the rest of them, far behind him! Nor is this all. He does not even spare himself, but dissents from, and militates against himself, more than against all the rest together. For he had said before, that ’the human will is utterly ineffective without grace:’ (unless perhaps this was said only in joke!) but here, where he gives a serious definition, he says, that ’the human will has that power by which it can effectively apply itself to those things which pertain unto eternal salvation;’ that is, which are incomparably beyond that power. So that, in this part, Erasmus outstrips even himself!

Sect. 45.-DO you see, friend Erasmus, that by this definition, you (though unwittingly I presume,) betray yourself, and make it manifest that you either know nothing of these things whatever, or that, without any consideration, and in a mere air of contempt, you write upon the subject, not knowing what you say nor whereof you affirm? And as I said before, you say less about, and attribute more to "Free-will," than all others put together; for you do not describe the whole of "Free-will," and yet you assign unto it all things. The opinion of the Sophists, or at least of the father of them, Peter Lombard, is far more tolerable: he says, '"Free-will" is the faculty of discerning, and then choosing also good, if with grace, but evil if grace be wanting.' He plainly agrees in sentiment with Augustine, that '"Freewill," of its own power, cannot do any thing but fall, nor avail unto any thing but to sin.' Wherefore Augustine also, Book ii., against Julian, calls "Free-will" 'under bondage,' rather than 'free.'-But you make the power of "Free-will" equal in both respects: that it can, by its own power, without grace, both apply itself unto good, and turn itself from evil. For you do not imagine how much you assign unto it, by this pronoun itself, and by itself, when you say 'can apply itself:' for you utterly exclude the Holy Spirit with all His power, as a thing superfluous and unnecessary. Your definition, therefore, is condemnable even by the Sophists; who, were they not so blinded by hatred and fury against me, would be enraged at your book rather than at mine. But now, as your intent is to oppose Luther, all that you say is holy and catholic, even though you speak against both yourself and them,-so great is the patience of holy men! Not that I say this, as approving the sentiments of the Sophists concerning "Free-will," but because I consider them more tolerable, for they approach nearer to the truth. For though they do not say, as I do, that "Free-will" is nothing at all, yet since they say that it can of itself do nothing without grace, they militate against Erasmus, nay, they seem to militate against themselves, and to be tossed to and fro in a mere quarrel of words, being more earnest for contention than for the truth, which is just as Sophists should be. But now, let us suppose that a Sophist of no mean rank were brought before me, with whom I could speak upon these things apart, in familiar conversation, and should ask him for his liberal and candid judgment in this way:-'If any one should tell you, that that was free, which of its own power could only go one way, that is, the bad way, and which could go the other way indeed, that is, the right way, but not by its own power, nay, only by the help of another-could you refrain from laughing in his face, my friend?'-For in this way, I will make it appear, that a stone, or a log of wood has "Freewill," because it can go upwards and downwards; although, by its own power, it can go only downwards, but can go upwards only by the help of another. And, as I said before, by meaning at the same time the thing itself, and also something else which may be joined with it or added to it, I will say, consistently with the use of all words and languages-all men are no man, and all things are nothing!

Thus, by a multiplicity of argumentation, they at last make "Free-will," free by accident; as being that, which may at some time be set free by another. But our point in dispute is concerning the thing itself, concerning the reality of "Free-will." If this be what is to be solved, there now remains nothing, let them say what they will, but the empty name of "Free-will." The Sophists are deficient also in this-they assign to "Free-will," the power of discerning good from evil. Moreover, they set light by regeneration, and the renewing of the Spirit, and give that other external aid, as it were, to "Freewill:" but of this hereafter.-Let this be sufficient concerning the definition. Now let us look into the arguments that are to exalt this empty thing of a TERM.

Sect. 46.-FIRST of all, we have that of Ecclesiasticus xv. 15-18.-"God from the beginning made man, and left him in the hand of his own counsel. He gave him also His commandments, and His precepts: saying, If thou wilt keep My commandments, and wilt keep continually, the faith that pleaseth Me, they shall preserve thee. He hath set before thee fire and water; and upon which thou wilt, stretch forth thine hand. Before man is life and death, good and evil; and whichsoever pleaseth him, shall be given unto him."-

Although I might justly refuse this book, yet, nevertheless, I receive it; lest I should, with loss of time, involve myself in a dispute concerning the books that are received into the canon of the Hebrews: which canon you do not a little reproach and deride, when you compare the Proverbs of Solomon, and the Love-song, (as, with a double-meaning sneer, you call it,) with the two books Esdras and Judith, the History of Susannah, of the Dragon, and the Book of Esther, though they have this last in their canon, and according to my judgment, it is much more worthy of being there, than any one of those that are considered not to be in the canon. But I would briefly answer you here in your own words, 'The Scripture, in this place, is obscure and ambiguous;' therefore, it proves nothing to a certainty. But however, since I stand in the negative, I call upon you to produce that place which declares, in plain words, what "Free-will" is, and what it can do. And this perhaps you will do by about the time of the Greek Calends.-In order to avoid this necessity, you spend many fine sayings upon nothing; and moving along on the tip-toe of prudence, cite numberless opinions concerning "Free-will," and make of Pelagius almost an Evangelist. Moreover, you vamp up a four-fold grace, so as to assign a sort of faith and charity even to the philosophers. And also that new fable, a three-fold law; of nature, of works, and of faith, so as to assert with all boldness, that the precepts of the philosophers agree with the precepts of the Gospel. Again, you apply that of Psalms 4:6. "The light of Thy countenance is settled upon us," which speaks of the knowledge of the very countenance of the Lord, that is, of faith, to blinded reason. All which things together, if taken into consideration by any Christian, must compel him to suspect, that you are mocking and deriding the doctrines and religion of Christians: For to attribute these things as so much ignorance to him, who has illustrated all our doctrines with so much diligence, and stored them up in memory, appears to me very difficult indeed. But however, I will here abstain from open exposure, contented to wait until a more favourable opportunity shall offer itself. Although I entreat you, friend Erasmus, not to tempt me in this way like one of those who say-who sees us? For it is by no means safe in so great a matter, to be continually mocking every one with Vertumnities of words. But to the subject.

Sect. 47. - OUT of the ONE opinion concerning "Free-will" you make THREE. You say-'that THE FIRST OPINION, of those who deny that man can will good without special grace, who deny that it can begin, who deny that it can make progress, perfect, &c., seems to you severe, though it may be VERY PROBABLE.' And this you prove, as leaving to man the desire and the effort, but not leaving what is to be ascribed to his own power. 'That THE SECOND OPINION of those who contend, that "Free-will" avails unto nothing but to sin, and that grace alone works good in us, &c. is more severe still.' And THIRDLY 'that the opinion of those who say that "Free-will" is an empty term, for that God works in us both good and evil, is most severe. And, that, it is against these last that you profess to write.'- Do you know what you are saying, friend Erasmus? You are here making three different opinions as if belonging to three different sects: because you do not know that it is the same subject handled by us same professors of the same sect, only by different

persons, in a different way and in other words. But let me just put you in remembrance, and set before you the yawning inconsiderateness, or stupidity of your judgment.

How does that definition of "Free-will," let me ask you, which you gave us above, square with this first opinion which you confess to be, 'very probable?' For you said that "Free-will" is a power of the human will, by which a man can apply himself unto good;' whereas here, you say and approve the saying, that 'man, without grace, cannot will good!' The definition, therefore, affirms what its example denies. And hence there are found in your "Free-will" both a YEA and a NAY:" so that, in one and the same doctrine and article, you approve and condemn us, and approve and condemn yourself. For do you think, that to 'apply itself to those things which pertain unto eternal salvation,' which power your definition assigns to "Free-will," is not to do good, when, if there were so much good in "Free-will," that it could apply itself unto good, it would have no need of grace? Therefore, the "Free-will" which you define is one, and the "Free-will" you defend is another. Hence then, Erasmus, outstripping all others, has two "Free-wills;" and they, militating against each other!

Sect. 48.-BUT, setting aside that "Freewill" which the definition defines, let us consider that which the opinion proposes as contrary to it. You grant, that man, without special grace, cannot will good: (for we are not now discussing what the grace of God can do, but what man can do without grace:) you grant, then, that "Free-will" cannot will good. This is nothing else but granting that it cannot 'apply itself to those things which pertain unto eternal salvation,' according to the tune of your definition. Nay, you say a little before, 'that the human will after sin, is so depraved, that having lost its liberty, it is compelled to serve sin, and cannot recall itself into a better state.' And if I am not mistaken, you make the Pelagians to be of this opinion. Now then I believe, my Proteus has here no way of escape: he is caught and held fast in plain words:-' that the will, having lost its liberty, is tied and bound a slave to sin.' O noble Free-will! which, having lost its liberty, is declared by Erasmus himself, to be the slave of sin! When Luther asserted this, 'nothing was ever heard of so absurd;' 'nothing was more useless than that this paradox should be proclaimed abroad!' So much so, that even a Diatribe must be written against him! But perhaps no one will believe me, that these things are said by Erasmus. If the Diatribe be read in this part, it will be admired: but I do not so much admire it. For he who does not treat this as a serious subject, and is not interested in the cause, but is in mind alienated from it, and grows weary of it, cold in it, and disgusted with it, how shall not such an one everywhere speak absurdities, follies, and contrarieties, while, as one drunk or slumbering over the cause, he belches out in the midst of his snoring, It is so! it is not so! just as the different words sound against his ears? And therefore it is, that rhetoricians require a feeling of the subject in the person discussing it. Much more then does theology require such a feeling, that it may make the person vigilant, sharp, intent, prudent, and determined.

If therefore "Free-will" without grace, when it has lost its liberty, is compelled to serve sin and cannot will good, I should be glad to know, what that desire is, what that endeavour is, which that first 'probable opinion' leaves it. It cannot be a good desire or a good endeavour, because it cannot will good, as the opinion affirms, and as you grant. Therefore, it is an evil desire and an evil endeavour that is left, which, when the liberty is lost, is compelled to serve sin.-But above all, what, I pray, is the meaning of this saying: 'this opinion leaves the desire and the endeavour, but does not leave what is to be ascribed to its own power.' Who can possibly conceive in his mind what this means? If the desire and the endeavour be left to the power of "Free-will," how are they not ascribed to the same? If they be not ascribed to it, how can they be left to it? Are then that desire

and that endeavour before grace, left to grace itself that comes after, and not to "Free-will" so as to be at the same time left, and not left, to the same "Free-will?" If these things be not paradoxes, or rather enormities, then pray what are enormities?

Sect. 49.-BUT perhaps the Diatribe is dreaming this, that between these two 'can will good' and 'cannot will good' there may be a medium; seeing that, to will is absolute, both in respect of good, and evil. So that thus, by a certain logical subtlety, we may steer clear of the rocks, and say, in the will of man there is a certain willing, which cannot indeed will good without grace, but which, nevertheless, being without grace, does not immediately will nothing but evil, but is a sort of mere abstracted willing, vertible, upwards unto good by grace, and downwards unto evil by sin. But then, what will become of that which you have said, that, 'when it has lost its liberty it is compelled to serve sin?' What will become of that desire and endeavour which are left? Where will be that power of 'applying itself to those things which pertain unto eternal salvation?' For that power of applying itself unto salvation, cannot be a mere willing, unless the salvation itself be said to be a nothing. Nor, again, can that desire and endeavour be a mere willing; for desire must strive and attempt something, (as good perhaps,) and cannot go forth into nothing, nor be absolutely inactive. In a word, which way soever the Diatribe turns itself, it cannot keep clear of inconsistencies and contradictory assertions; nor avoid making that very "Free-will" which it defends, as much a bond-captive as it is a bond-captive itself. For, in attempting to liberate "Free-will," it is so entangled, that it is bound, together with "Free-will," in bonds indissoluble.

Moreover, it is a mere logical figment that in man there is a medium, a mere willing, nor can they who assert this prove it; it arose from an ignorance of things and an observance of terms. As though the thing were always in reality, as it is set forth in terms; and there are with the Sophists many such misconceptions. Whereas the matter rather stands as Christ saith, "He that is not with Me is against Me." (Matthew 12:30) He does not say, He that is not with Me is yet not against Me, but in the medium. For if God be in us, Satan is from us, and it is present with us to will nothing but good. But if God be not in us, Satan is in us, and it is present with us to will evil only, Neither God nor Satan admit of a mere abstracted willing in us; but, as you yourself rightly said, when our liberty is lost we are compelled to serve sin: that is, we will sin and evil, we speak sin and evil, we do sin and evil.

Behold then! invincible and all-powerful truth has driven the witless Diatribe to that dilemma, and so turned its wisdom into foolishness, that whereas, its design was to speak against me, it is compelled to speak for me against itself; just in the same way as "Free-will" does any thing good; for when it attempts so to do, the more it acts against evil the more it acts against good. So that the Diatribe is, in saying, exactly what "Freewill" is in doing. Though the whole Diatribe itself, is nothing else but a notable effort of "Free-will," condemning by defending, and defending by condemning: that is, being a twofold fool, while it would appear to be wise.

This, then, is the state of the first opinion compared with itself:-it denies that a man can will any thing good; but yet that a desire remains; which desire, however, is not his own!

Sect. 50.-NOW let us compare this opinion with the remaining two. The next of these, is that opinion 'more severe still,' which holds, that "Free-will" avails unto nothing but to sin. And this indeed is Augustine's opinion, expressed, as well in many other places, as more especially, in his book "Concerning the Spirit and the Letter;" in (if I mistake not) the fourth or fifth chapter, where he

uses those very words. The third, is that ’most severe’ opinion; that "Free-will" is a mere empty term, and that every thing which we do, is done from necessity under the bondage of sin.-It is with these two that the Diatribe conflicts.

I here observe, that perhaps it may be, that I am not able to discuss this point intelligibly, from not being sufficiently acquainted with the Latin or with the German. But I call God to witness, that I wish nothing else to be said or to be understood by the words of the last two opinions than what is said in the first opinion: nor does Augustine wish any thing else to be understood, nor do I understand any thing else from his words, than that which the first opinion asserts: so that, the three opinions brought forward by the Diatribe are with me nothing else than my one sentiment. For when it is granted and established, that "Free-will," having once lost its liberty, is compulsively bound to the service of sin, and cannot will any thing good: I, from these words, can understand nothing else than that "Free-will" is a mere empty term, whose reality is lost. And a lost liberty, according to my grammar, is no liberty at all. And to give the name of liberty to that which has no liberty, is to give it an empty term. If I am wrong here, let him set me right who can. If these observations be obscure or ambiguous, let him who can, illustrate and make them plain. I for my part, cannot call that health which is lost, health; and if I were to ascribe it to one who was sick, I should think I was giving him nothing else than an empty name, But away with these enormities of words. For who would bear such an abuse of the manner of speaking, as that we should say a man has "Free-will," and yet at the same time assert, that when that liberty is once lost, he is compulsively bound to the service of sin, and cannot will any thing good? These things are contrary to common sense, and utterly destroy the common manner of speaking. The Diatribe is rather to be condemned, which in a drowsy way, foists forth its own words without any regard to the words of others. It does not, I say, consider what it is, nor how much it is to assert, that man, when his liberty is lost, is compelled to serve sin and cannot will any thing good. For if it were at all vigilant or observant, it would plainly see, that the sentiment contained in the three opinions is one and the same, which it makes to be diverse and contrary. For if a man, when he has lost his liberty, is compelled to serve sin, and cannot will good, what conclusion concerning him can be more justly drawn, than that he can do nothing but sin, and will evil? And such a conclusion, the Sophists themselves would draw, even by their syllogisms. Wherefore, the Diatribe, unhappily, contends against the last two opinions, and approves the first; whereas, that is precisely the same as the other two; and thus again, as usual, it condemns itself and approves my sentiments, in one and the same article.

Sect. 51.-LET us now come to that passage in Ecclesiasticus, and also with it compare that first ’probable opinion.’ The opinion saith, ’Freewill cannot will good.’ The passage in Ecclesiasticus is adduced to prove, that "Free-will" is something, and can do something. Therefore, the opinion which is to be proved by Ecclesiasticus, asserts one thing; and Ecclesiasticus, which is adduced to prove it, asserts another. This is just as if any one, setting about to prove that Christ was the Messiah, should adduce a passage which proves that Pilate was governor of Syria, or any thing else equally discordant. It is in the same way that "Free-will" is here proved. But, not to mention my having above made it manifest, that nothing clear or certain can be said or proved concerning "Free-will," as to what it is, or what it can do, it is worth while to examine the whole passage thoroughly.

First he saith, "God made man in the beginning.' Here he speaks of the creation of man; nor does he say any thing, as yet, concerning either "Free-will" or the commandments.

Then he goes on, "and left him in the hand of his own counsel." And what is here? Is "Freewill" built upon this? But there is not here any mention of commandments, for the doing of which "Free-will" is required; nor do we read any thing of this kind in the creation of man. If any thing be understood by "the hand of his own counsel," that should rather be understood which is in Genesis i. and ii.: that man was made lord of all things that he might freely exercise dominion over them: and as Moses saith, "Let us make man, and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea:" nor can any thing else be proved from those words: for it is in these things only that man may act of his own will, as being subject unto him. And moreover, he calls this man's counsel, in contradiction as it were to the counsel of God. But after this, when He has said, that man was made and left thus in the hand of his own counsel-he adds,

"He added moreover His commandments and His precepts." Unto what did He add them? Certainly unto that counsel and will of man, and over and above unto that constituting of His dominion over other things. By which commandments He took from man the dominion over one part of His creatures, (that is, over the tree of knowledge of good and evil,) and willed rather that he should not be free.-Having added the commandments, He then comes to the will of man towards God and towards the things of God.

"If thou wilt keep the commandments they shall preserve thee," &c. From this part, therefore, "If thou wilt," begins the question concerning "Free-will." So that, from Ecclesiasticus we learn, that man is constituted as divided into two kingdoms.-The one, is that in which he is led according to his own will and counsel, without the precepts and the commandments of God: that is, in those things which are beneath him. Here he has dominion and is lord, as "left in the hand of his own counsel." Not that God so leaves him to himself, as that He does not co-operate with him; but He commits unto him the free use of things according to his own will, without prohibiting him by any laws or injunctions. As we may say, by way of similitude, the Gospel has left us in the hands of our own counsel, that we may use, and have dominion over all things as we will. But Moses and the Pope left us not in that counsel, but restrained us by laws, and subjected us rather to their own will.-But in the other kingdom, he is not left in the hand of his own counsel, but is directed and led according to the Will and Counsel of God. And as, in his own kingdom, he is led according to his own will, without the precepts of another; so, in the kingdom of God, he is led according to the precepts of another, without his own will. And this is what Ecclesiasticus means, when he says, "He added moreover His commandments and His precepts: saying, If thou wilt," &c.

If, therefore, these things be satisfactorily clear, I have made it fully evident, that this passage of Ecclesiasticus does not make for "Freewill," but directly against it: seeing that, it subjects man to the precepts and will of God, and takes from him his "Free-will." But if they be not satisfactorily clear, I have at least made it manifest, that this passage cannot make for "Freewill;" seeing that, it may be understood in a sense different from that which they put upon it, that is, in my sense already stated, which is not absurd, but most holy and in harmony with the whole Scripture. Whereas, their sense militates against the whole Scripture, and is fetched from this one passage only, contrary to the tenor of the whole Scripture. I stand therefore, secure in the good sense, the negative of "Free-will," until they shall have confirmed their strained and forced affirmative.

When, therefore, Ecclesiasticus says, "If thou wilt keep the commandments, and keep the faith that pleaseth Me, they shall preserve thee," I do not see that "Free-will" can be proved from those words. For, "if thou wilt," is a verb of the subjunctive mood, which asserts nothing: as the logicians say, 'a conditional asserts nothing indicatively:' such as, if the devil be God, he is deservedly worshipped: if an ass fly, an ass has wings, so also, if there be "Free-will," grace is nothing at all. Therefore, if Ecclesiasticus had wished to assert "Free-will," he ought to have spoken thus:-man is able to keep the commandments of God, or, man, has the power to keep the commandments.

Sect. 52.-BUT here the Diatribe will sharply retort-"Ecclesiasticus by saying, "if thou wilt keep," signifies that there is a will in man, to keep, and not to keep: otherwise, what is the use of saying unto him who has no will, "if thou wilt?" Would it not be ridiculous if any were to say to a blind man, if thou wilt see, thou mayest find a treasure? Or, to a deaf man, if thou wilt hear, I will relate to thee an excellent story? This would be to laugh at their misery" -

I answer: These are the arguments of human reason, which is wont to shoot forth many such sprigs of wisdom. Wherefore, I must dispute now, not with Ecclesiasticus, but with human reason concerning a conclusion; for she, by her conclusions and syllogisms, interprets and twists the Scriptures of God just which way she pleases. But I will enter upon this willingly, and with confidence, knowing, that she can prate nothing but follies and absurdities; and that more especially, when she attempts to make a shew of her wisdom in these divine matters.

First then, if I should demand of her how it can be proved, that the freedom of the will in man is signified and inferred, wherever these expressions are used, 'if thou wilt,' 'if thou shalt do,' 'if thou shalt hear;' she would say, because the nature of words, and the common use of speech among men, seem to require it. Therefore, she judges of divine things and words according to the customs and things of men; than which, what can be more perverse; seeing that, the former things are heavenly, the latter earthly. Like a fool, therefore, she exposes herself, making it manifest that she has not a thought concerning God but what is human.

But, what if I prove, that the nature of words and the use of speech even among men, are not always of that tendency, as to make a laughing stock of those to whom it is said, 'if thou wilt,' 'if thou shalt do it.' 'if thou shalt hear?'-How often do parents thus play with their children, when they bid them come to them, or do this or that, for this purpose only, that it may plainly appear to them how unable they are to do it, and that they may call for the aid of the parent's hand? How often does a faithful physician bid his obstinate patient do or omit those things which are either injurious to him or impossible, to the intent that, he may bring him, by an experience, to the knowledge of his disease or his weakness? And what is more general and common, than to use words of insult or provocation, when we would show either enemies or friends, what they can do and what they cannot do?

I merely go over these things, to shew Reason her own conclusions, and how absurdly she tacks them to the Scriptures: moreover, how blind she must be not to see, that they do not always stand good even in human words and things. But the case is, if she see it to be done once, she rushes on headlong, taking it for granted, that it is done generally in all the things of God and men, thus making, according to the way of her wisdom, of a particularity an universality.

If then God, as a Father, deal with us as with sons, that He might shew us who are in ignorance our impotency, or as a faithful physician, that He might make our disease known unto us, or that He might insult His enemies who proudly resist His counsel; and for this end, say to us by proposed laws (as being those means by which He accomplishes His design the most effectually) 'do,' 'hear,' 'keep,' or, 'if thou wilt,' 'if thou wilt do,' 'if thou wilt hear;' can this be drawn herefrom as a just conclusion-therefore, either we have free power to act, or God laughs at us? Why is this not rather drawn as a conclusion-therefore, God tries us, that by His law He might bring us to a knowledge of our impotency, if we be His friends; or, He thereby righteously and deservedly insults and derides us, if we be His proud enemies.' For this, as Paul teaches, is the intent of the divine legislation. (Romans 3:20; Romans 5:20. Galatians 3:19, Galatians 3:24) Because human nature is blind, so that it knows not its own powers, or rather its own diseases. Moreover, being proud, it self-conceitedly imagines, that it knows and can do all things. To remedy which pride and ignorance, God can use no means more effectual than His proposed law: of which we shall say more in its place: let it suffice to have thus touched upon it here, to refute this conclusion of carnal and absurd wisdom:-'if thou wilt'-therefore thou art able to will freely. The Diatribe dreams, that man is whole and sound, as, to human appearance, he is in his own affairs; and therefore, from these words, 'if thou wilt,' 'if thou wilt do,' 'if thou wilt hear,' it pertly argues, that man, if his will be not free, is laughed at. Whereas, the Scripture describes man as corrupt and a captive; and added to that, as proudly contemning and ignorant of his corruption and captivity: and therefore, by those words, it goads him and rouses him up, that he might know, by a real experience, how unable he is to do any one of those things.

Sect. 53.-BUT I will attack the Diatribe itself. If thou really think, O Madam Reason! that these conclusions stand good, 'If thou wilt-therefore thou hast a free power,' why dost thou not follow the same thyself? For thou sayest, according to that 'probable opinion,' that "Free-will" cannot will any thing good. By what conclusion then can such a sentiment flow from this passage also, 'if thou wilt keep,' when thou sayest that the conclusion flowing from this, is, that man can will and not will freely? What! can bitter and sweet flow from the same fountain? Dost thou not here much more deride man thyself, when thou sayest, that he can keep that, which he can neither will nor choose? Therefore, neither dost thou, from thy heart, believe that this is a just conclusion, 'if thou wilt-therefore thou hast a free power,' although thou contendest for it with so much zeal, or, if thou dost believe it, then thou dost not, from thy heart, say, that that opinion is 'probable,' which holds that man cannot will good. Thus, reason is so caught in the conclusions and words of her own wisdom, that she knows not what she says, nor concerning what she speaks: nay, knows nothing but that which it is most right she should know-that "Free-will" is defended with such arguments as mutually devour, and put an end to each other; just as the Midianites destroyed each other by mutual slaughter, when they fought against Gideon and the people of God. Judges 7.

Nay, I will expostulate more fully with this wisdom of the Diatribe. Ecclesiasticus does not say, 'if thou shalt have the desire and the endeavour of keeping,' (for this is not to be ascribed to that power of yours, as you have concluded) but he says, "if thou wilt keep the commandments they shall preserve thee." Now then, if we, after the manner of your wisdom, wish to draw conclusions, we should infer thus:-therefore, man is able to keep the commandments. And thus, we shall not here make a certain small degree of desire, or a certain little effort of endeavour to be left in man, but we shall ascribe unto him the whole, full, and abundant power of keeping the commandments.

Otherwise, Ecclesiasticus will be made to laugh at the misery of man, as commanding him to ’keep,’ who, he knows, is not able to ’keep.’ Nor would it have been sufficient if he had supposed the desire and the endeavour to be in the man, for he would not then have escaped the suspicion of deriding him, unless he had signified his having the full power of keeping. But however, let us suppose that that desire and endeavour of "Free-will" are a real something. What shall we say to those, (the Pelagians, I mean) who, from this passage, have denied grace in toto, and ascribed all to "Free-will?" If the conclusion of the Diatribe stand good, the Pelagians have evidently established their point. For the words of Ecclesiasticus speak of keeping, not of desiring or endeavouring. If, therefore, you deny the Pelagians their conclusion concerning keeping, they, in reply, will much more rightly deny you your conclusion concerning endeavouring. And if you take from them the whole of "Free-will," they will take from you your remnant particle of it: for you cannot assert a remnant particle of that, which you deny in toto. In what degree soever, therefore, you speak against the Pelagians, who from this passage ascribe the whole to "Freewill," in the same degree, and with much more determination, shall we speak against that certain small remnant desire of your "Free-will." And in this, the Pelagians themselves will agree with us, that, if their opinion cannot be proved from this passage, much less will any other of the same kind be proved from it: seeing, that if the subject be to be conducted by conclusions, Ecclesiasticus, above all makes the most forcibly for the Pelagians: for he speaks in plain words concerning keeping only, "If thou wilt keep the commandments:" nay, he speaks also concerning faith, "If thou wilt keep the faith:" so that, by the same conclusion, keeping the faith ought also to be in our power, which, however, is the peculiar and precious gift of God. In a word, since so many opinions are brought forward in support of "Free-will," and there is no one that does not catch at this passage of Ecclesiasticus in defence of itself; and since they are diverse from, and contrary to each other, it is impossible but that they must make Ecclesiasticus contradictory to, and diverse from themselves in the self same words; and therefore, they can from him prove nothing. Although, if that conclusion of yours be admitted, it will make for the Pelagians against all the others; and consequently, it makes against the Diatribe; which, in this passage, is stabbed by its own sword!

Sect. 54.-BUT, as I said at first, so I say here: this passage of Ecclesiasticus is in favour of no one of those who assert "Free-will," but makes against them all. For that conclusion is not to be admitted, ’If thou wilt-therefore thou art able;’ but those words, and all like unto them, are to be understood thus:-that by them man is admonished of his impotency; which, without such admonitions, being proud and ignorant, he would neither know nor feel. For he here speaks, not concerning the first man only, but concerning any man: though it is of little consequence whether you understand it concerning the first man, or any others. For although the first man was not impotent, from the assistance of grace, yet, by this commandment, God plainly shews him how impotent he would be without grace. For if that man, who had the Spirit, could not by his new will, will good newly proposed, that is, obedience, because the Spirit did not add it unto him, what can we do without the Spirit toward the good that is lost! In this man, therefore, it is shewn, by a terrible example for the breaking down of our pride, what our "Free-will" can do when it is left to itself, and not continually moved and increased by the Spirit of God. He could do nothing to increase the Spirit who had its first-fruits, but fell from the first-fruits of the Spirit. What then can we who are fallen, do towards the first-fruits of the Spirit which are taken away? Especially, since Satan now reigns in us with full power, who cast him down, not then reigning in him, but by temptation alone! Nothing can be more forcibly brought against "Free-will," than this passage of Ecclesiasticus,

considered together with the fall of Adam. But we have no room for these observations here, an opportunity may perhaps offer itself elsewhere. Meanwhile, it is sufficient to have shewn, that Ecclesiasticus, in this place, says nothing whatever in favour of "Free-will" (which nevertheless they consider as their principal authority), and that these expressions and the like, 'if thou wilt,' 'if thou hear,' 'if thou do,' shew, not what men can do, but what they ought to do!

Sect. 55.-ANOTHER passage is adduced by our Diatribe out of Genesis 4:7.: where the Lord saith unto Cain, "Under thee shall be the desire of sin, and thou shalt rule over it."-"Here it is shewn (saith the Diatribe) that the motions of the mind to evil can be overcome, and that they do not carry with them the necessity of sinning."-

These words, 'the motions of the mind to evil can be overcomes' though spoken with ambiguity, yet, from the scope of the sentiment, the consequence, and the circumstances, must mean this:-that "Free-will," has the power of overcoming its motions to evil; and that, those motions do not bring upon it the necessity of sinning. Here, again; what is there excepted which is not ascribed unto "Free-will?" What need is there of the Spirit, what need of Christ, what need of God, if "Free-will" can overcome the motions of the mind to evil! And where, again, is that 'probable opinion' which affirms, that "Free-will" cannot so much as will good? For here, the victory over evil is ascribed unto that, which neither wills nor wishes for good. The inconsiderateness of our Diatribe is really-too-too bad!

Take the truth of the matter in a few words. As I have before observed, by such passages as these, it is shewn to man what he ought to do, not what he can do. It is said, therefore, unto Cain, that he ought to rule over his sin, and to hold its desires in subjection under him. But this he neither did nor could do, because he was already pressed down under the contrary dominion of Satan.-It is well known, that the Hebrews frequently use the future indicative for the imperative: as in Exodus 20:1-17. "Thou shalt, have none other gods but Me," "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and in numberless other instances of the same kind. Otherwise, if these sentences were taken indicatively, as they really stand, they would be promises of God; and as He cannot lie, it would come to pass that no man could sin; and then, as commands, they would be unnecessary; and if this were the case, then our interpreter would have translated this passage more correctly thus:-"let its desire be under thee, and rule thou over it," (Genesis 4:7) Even as it then ought also to be said concerning the woman, "Be thou under thy husband, and let him rule over thee," (Genesis 3:16) But that it was not spoken indicatively unto Cain is manifest from this:-it would then have been a promise. Whereas, it was not a promise; because, from the conduct of Cain, the event proved the contrary.

Sect. 56. - THE third passage is from Moses, (Deuteronomy 30:19) "I have set before thy face life and death, choose what is good, &c."-"What words (says the Diatribe) can be more plain? It leaves to man the liberty of choosing."-

I answer: What is more plain, than, that you are blind? How, I pray, does it leave the liberty of choosing? Is it by the expression 'choose'?-Therefore, as Moses saith 'choose,' does it immediately come to pass that they do choose? Then, there is no need of the Spirit. And as you so often repeat and inculcate the same things, I shall be justified in repeating the same things also.-If there be a liberty of choosing, why has the 'probable opinion' said that "Freewill" cannot will good? Can it choose not willing or against its will? But let us listen to the similitude,-

-"It would be ridiculous to say to a man standing in a place where two ways met, Thou seest two roads, go by which thou wilt, when one only was open."-

This, as I have before observed, is from the arguments of human reason, which thinks, that a man is mocked by a command impossible: whereas I say, that the man, by this means, is admonished and roused to see his own impotency. True it is, that we are in a place where two ways meet, and that one of them only is open, yea rather neither of them is open. But by the law it is shewn how impossible the one is, that is, to good, unless God freely give His Spirit; and how wide and easy the other is, if God leave us to ourselves. Therefore, it would not be said ridiculously, but with a necessary seriousness, to the man thus standing in a place where two ways meet, 'go by which thou wilt,' if he, being in reality impotent, wished to seem to himself strong, or contended that neither way was hedged up.

Wherefore, the words of the law are spoken, not that they might assert the power of the will, but that they might illuminate the blindness of reason, that it might see that its own light is nothing, and that the power of the will is nothing. "By the law (saith Paul) is the knowledge of sin," (Romans 3:20): he does not say-is the abolition of, or the escape from sin. The whole nature and design of the law is to give knowledge only, and that of nothing else save of sin, but not to discover or communicate any power whatever. For knowledge is not power, nor does it communicate power, but it teaches and shows how great the impotency must there be, where there is no power. And what else can the knowledge of sin be, but the knowledge of our evil and infirmity? For he does not say-by the law comes the knowledge of strength or of good. The whole that the law does, according to the testimony of Paul, is to make known sin. And this is the place, where I take occasion to enforce this my general reply:-that man, by the words of the law, is admonished and taught what he ought to do, not what he can do: that is, that he is brought to know his sin, but not to believe that he has any strength in himself. Wherefore, friend Erasmus, as often as you throw in my teeth the Words of the law, so often I throw in yours that of Paul, "By the law is the knowledge of sin,"-not of the power of the will. Heap together, therefore, out of the large Concordances all the imperative words into one chaos, provided that, they be not words of the promise but of the requirement of the law only, and I will immediately declare, that by them is always shewn what men ought to do, not what they can do, or do do. And even common grammarians and every little school-boy in the street knows, that by verbs of the imperative mood, nothing else is signified than that which ought to be done, and that, what is done or can be done, is expressed by verbs of the indicative mood.

Thus, therefore, it comes to pass, that you theologians, are so senseless and so many degrees below even school-boys, that when you have caught hold of one imperative verb you infer an indicative sense, as though what was commanded were immediately and even necessarily done, or possible to be done. But how many slips are there between the cup and the lip! So that, what you command to be done, and is therefore quite possible to be done, is yet never done at all. Such a difference is there, between verbs imperative and verbs indicative, even in the most common and easy things. Whereas you, in these things which are as far above those, as the heavens are above the earth, so quickly make indicatives out of imperatives, that the moment you hear the voice of him commanding, saying, "do," "keep," "choose," you will have, that it is immediately kept, done, chosen, or fulfilled, or, that our powers are able so to do.

Sect. 57.-IN the fourth place, you adduce from Deuteronomy xxx. many passages of the same kind which speak of choosing, of turning away from, of keeping; as, 'If thou shalt keep,' 'if thou shalt turn away from,' 'if thou shalt choose.'-"All these expressions (you say) are made use of preposterously if there be not a "Free-will" in man unto good"-

I answer: And you, friend Diatribe, preposterously enough also conclude from these expressions the freedom of the will. You set out to prove the endeavour and desire of "Free-will" only, and you have adduced no passage which proves such an endeavour. But now, you adduce those passages, which, if your conclusion hold good, will ascribe all to "Free-will."

Let me here then again make a distinction, between the words of the Scripture adduced, and the conclusion of the Diatribe tacked to them. The words adduced are imperative, and they say nothing but what ought to be done. For, Moses does not say, 'thou hast the power and strength to choose.' The words 'choose,' 'keep,' 'do,' convey the precept 'to keep,' but they do not describe the ability of man. But the conclusion tacked to them by that wisdom-aping Diatribe, infers thus:-therefore, man can do those things, otherwise the precepts are given in vain. To whom this reply must be made:-Madam Diatribe, you make a bad inference, and do not prove your conclusion, but the conclusion and the proof merely seem to be right to your blind and inadvertent self. But know, that these precepts are not given preposterously nor in vain; but that proud and blind man might, by them, learn the disease of his own impotency, if he should attempt to do what is commanded. And hence your similitude amounts to nothing where you say.

-"Otherwise it would be precisely the same, as if any one should say to a man who was so bound that he could only stretch forth his left arm,-Behold! thou hast on thy right hand excellent wine, thou hast on thy left poison; on which thou wilt stretch forth thy hand"-

These your similitudes I presume are particular favourites of yours. But you do not all the while see, that if the similitudes stand good, they prove much more than you ever purposed to prove, nay, that they prove what you deny and would have to be disproved:-that "Free-will" can do all things. For by the whole scope of your argument, forgetting what you said, 'that "Free-will" can do nothing without grace,' you actually prove that "Free-will" can do all things without grace. For your conclusions and similitudes go to prove this:-that either "Free-will" can of itself do those things which are said and commanded, or they are commanded in vain, ridiculously, and preposterously. But these are nothing more than the old songs of the Pelagians sung over again, which even the Sophists have exploded, and which you have yourself condemned. And by all this your forgetfulness and disorder of memory, you do nothing but evince how little you know of the subject, and how little you are affected by it. And what can be worse in a rhetorician, than to be continually bringing forward things wide of the nature of the subject, and not only so, but to be always declaiming against his subject and against himself?

Sect. 58.-WHEREFORE I observe, finally, the passages of Scripture adduced by you are imperative, and neither prove any thing, nor determine any thing concerning the ability of man, but enjoin only what things are to be done, and what are not to be done. And as to your conclusions or appendages, and similitudes, if they prove any thing they prove this:-that "Free-will" can do all things without grace. Whereas this you did not undertake to prove, nay, it is by you denied. Wherefore, these your proofs are nothing else but the most direct confutations.

For, (that I may, if I can, rouse the Diatribe from its lethargy) suppose I argue thus-If Moses say, 'Choose life and keep the commandment', unless man be able to choose life and keep the commandment, Moses gives that precept to man ridiculously.-Have I by this argument proved my side of the subject, that "Free-will" can do nothing good, and that it has no external endeavour separate from its own power? Nay, on the contrary, I have proved, by an assertion sufficiently forcible, that either man can choose life and keep the commandment as it is commanded, or Moses is a ridiculous law-giver? But who would dare to assert that Moses was a ridiculous law-giver? It follows therefore, that man can do the things that are commanded. This is the way in which the Diatribe argues throughout, contrary to its own purposed design; wherein, it promised that it would not argue thus, but would prove a certain endeavour of "Freewill;" of which however, so far from proving it, it scarcely makes mention in the whole string of its arguments; nay, it proves the contrary rather; so that it may itself be more properly said to affirm and argue all things ridiculously. And as to its making it, according to its own adduced similitude, to be ridiculous, that a man 'having his right arm bound, should be ordered to stretch forth his right hand when he could only stretch forth his left.'-Would it, I pray, be ridiculous, if a man, having both his arms bound, and proudly contending or ignorantly presuming that he could do any thing right or left, should be commanded to stretch forth his hand right and left, not that his captivity might be derided, but that he might be convinced of his false presumption of liberty and power, and might be brought to know his ignorance of his captivity and misery? The Diatribe is perpetually setting before us such a man, who either can do what is commanded, or at least knows that he cannot do it. Whereas, no such man is to be found. If there were such an one, then indeed, either impossibilities would be ridiculously commanded, or the Spirit of Christ would be in vain. The Scripture, however, sets forth such a man, who is not only bound, miserable, captive, sick, and dead, but who, by the operation of his lord, Satan, to his other miseries, adds that of blindness: so that he believes he is free, happy, at liberty, powerful, whole, and alive. For Satan well knows that if men knew their own misery he could retain no one of them in his kingdom: because, it could not be, but that God would immediately pity and succour their known misery and calamity: seeing that, He is with so much praise set forth, throughout the whole Scripture as, being near unto the contrite in heart, that Isaiah 61:1-3, testifies, that Christ was sent "to preach the Gospel to the poor, and to heal the broken hearted."

Wherefore, the work of Satan is, so to hold men, that they come not to know their misery, but that they presume that they can do all things which are enjoined. But the work of Moses the legislator is the contrary, even that by the law he might discover to man his misery, in order that he might prepare him, thus bruised and confounded with the knowledge of himself, for grace, and might send him to Christ to be saved. Wherefore, the office of the law is not ridiculous, but above all things serious and necessary.

Those therefore who thus far understand these things, understand clearly at the same time, that the Diatribe, by the whole string of its arguments effects nothing whatever; that it collects nothing from the Scriptures but imperative passages, when it understands, neither what they mean nor wherefore they are spoken; and that, moreover, by the appendages of its conclusions and carnal similitudes it mixes up such a mighty mass of flesh, that it asserts and proves more than it ever intended, and argues against itself. So that there were no need to pursue particulars any further, for the whole is solved by one solution, seeing that the whole depends on one argument. But

however, that it may be drowned in the same profusion in which it attempted to drown me, I will proceed to touch upon a few particulars more.

Sect. 59.-THERE is that of Isaiah 1:19, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the fat of the land:"-'Where, (according to the judgment of the Diatribe,) if there be no liberty of the will, it would have been more consistent, had it been said, If I will, if I will not.' The answer to this may be plainly found in what has been said before. Moreover, what consistency would there then have been, had it been said, 'If I will, ye shall eat the fat of the land?' Does the Diatribe from its so highly exalted wisdom imagine, that the fat of the land can be eaten contrary to the will of God? Or, that it is a rare and new thing, that we do not receive of the fat of the land but by the will of God. So also, that of Isaiah 30:21. "If ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come."-"To what purpose is it (saith the Diatribe) to exhort those who are not in any degree in their own power? It is just like saying to one bound in chains, Move thyself to this place."-

Nay, I reply, to what purpose is it to cite passages which of themselves prove nothing, and which, by the appendage of your conclusion, that is, by the perversion of their sense, ascribe all unto "Free-will," when a certain endeavour only was to be ascribed unto it, and to be proved?

-"The same may be said (you observe) concerning that of Isaiah 45:20. "Assemble yourselves and come." "Turn ye unto me and ye shall be saved." And that also of Isaiah 52:1-2. "Awake! awake!" "shake thyself from the dust," "loose the bands of thy neck." And that of Jeremiah 15:199. "If thou wilt turn, then will I turn thee; and if thou shalt separate the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth." And Malachi more evidently still, indicates the endeavour of "Free-will" and the grace that is prepared for him who endeavours, "Turn ye unto Me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord.' (Malachi 3:7)

Chapter 88

06.09b Discussion: First Part (Sections 60 - 74)

Sect. 60.-IN these passages, our friend Diatribe makes no distinction whatever, between the voice of the Law and the voice of the Gospel: because, forsooth, it is so blind and so ignorant, that it knows not what is the Law and what is the Gospel. For out of all the passages from Isaiah, it produces no one word of the law, save this, 'If thou wilt;' all the rest is Gospel, by which, as the word of offered grace, the bruised and afflicted are called unto consolation. Whereas, the Diatribe makes them the words of the law. But, I pray thee, tell me, what can that man do in theological matters, and the Sacred Writings, who has not even gone so far as to know what is Law and what is Gospel, or, who, if he does know, condemns the observance of the distinction between them? Such an one must confound all things, heaven with hell, and life with death; and will never labour to know any thing of Christ. Concerning which, I shall put my friend Diatribe a little in remembrance, in what follows.

Look then, first, at that of Jeremiah and Malachi "If thou wilt turn, then will I turn thee:" and, "turn ye unto me, and I will turn unto you." Does it then follow from "turn ye"-therefore, ye are able to turn? Does it follow also from "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart"-therefore, thou art able to love with all thine heart? If these arguments stand good, what do they conclude, but that "Free-will" needs not the grace of God, but can do all things of its own power? And then, how much more right would it be that the words should be received as they stand-'If thou shalt turn, then will I also turn thee?' That is;-if thou shalt cease from sinning, I also will cease from punishing; and if thou shalt be converted and live well, I also will do well unto thee in turning away thy captivity and thy evils. But even in this way, it does not follow, that man can turn by his own power, nor do the words imply this; but they simply say, "If thou wilt turn;" by which, a man is admonished of what he ought to do. And when he has thus known and seen what he ought to do but cannot do, he would ask how he is to do it, were it not for that Leviathan of the Diatribe (that is, that appendage, and conclusion it has here tacked on) which comes in and between and says,-'therefore, if man cannot turn of his own power, "turn ye" is spoken in vain:' But, of what nature all such conclusion is, and what it amounts to, has been already fully shewn.

It must, however, be a certain stupor or lethargy which can hold, that the power of "Free-will" is confirmed by these words "turn ye," "if thou wilt turn," and the like, and does not see, that for the same reason, it must be confirmed by this Scripture also, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart," seeing that, the meaning of Him who commands and requires is the same in both instances. For the loving of God, is not less required than our conversion, and the keeping of all the commandments; because, the loving of God is our real conversion. And yet, no one attempts to prove "Free-will" from that command 'to love,' although from those words "if thou wilt," "if thou wilt hear," "turn ye", and the like, all attempt to prove it. If therefore from that word, "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," it does not follow that "Free-will" is any thing or can do anything, it is certain that it neither follows from these words, "if thou wilt," "if thou wilt hear," "turn ye," and the like, which either require less, or require with less force of importance, than these words "Love God!" "Love the Lord!"

Whatever, therefore, is said against drawing a conclusion in support of "Free-will" from this word "love God," the same must be said against drawing a conclusion in support of "Free-will" from every other word of command or requirement. For, if by the command ’to love,’ the nature of the law only be shewn, and what we ought to do, but not the power of the will or what we can do, but rather, what we cannot do, the same is shewn by all the other Scriptures of requirement. For it is well known, that even the schoolmen, except the Scotinians and moderns, assert, that man cannot love God with all his heart. Therefore, neither can he perform any one of the other precepts, for all the rest, according to the testimony of Christ, hang on this one. Hence, by the testimony even of the doctors of the schools, this remains as a settled conclusion:-that the words of the law do not prove the power of "Free-will," but shew what we ought to do, and what we cannot do.

Sect. 61.-BUT our friend Diatribe, proceeding to still greater lengths of inconsiderateness, not only infers from that passage of Malachi 3:7, "turn ye unto me," an indicative sense, but also, goes on with zeal to prove therefrom, the endeavour of "Free-will," and the grace prepared for the person endeavouring.

Here, at last, it makes mention of the endeavour and by a new kind of grammar, ’to turn,’ signifies, with it, the same thing as ’to endeavour:’ so that the sense is, "turn ye unto me," that is, endeavour ye to turn; "and I will turn unto you," that is, I will endeavour to turn unto you: so that, at last, it attributes an endeavour even unto God, and perhaps, would have grace to be prepared for Him upon His endeavouring: for if turning signify endeavouring in one place, why not in every place?

Again, it says, that from Jeremiah 15:19, "If thou shalt separate the precious from the vile," not the endeavour only, but the liberty of choosing is proved; which, before, it declared was ’lost,’ and changed into a ’necessity of serving sin.’ You see, therefore, that in handling the Scriptures the Diatribe has a "Free-will" with a witness: so that, with it, words of the same kind are compelled to prove endeavour in one place, and liberty in another, just as the turn suits.

But, to away with vanities, the word TURN is used in the Scriptures in a twofold sense, the one legal, the other evangelical. In the legal sense, it is the voice of the exactor and commander, which requires, not an endeavour, but a change in the whole life. In this sense Jeremiah frequently uses it, saying, "Turn ye now every one of you from his evil way:" and, "Turn ye unto the Lord:" in which, he involves the requirement of all the commandments; as is sufficiently evident. In the evangelical sense, it is the voice of the divine consolation and promise, by which nothing is demanded of us, but in which the grace of God is offered unto us. Of this kind is that of Psalms 126:1, "When the Lord shall turn again the captivity of Zion;" and that of Psalms 116:7, "Turn again into thy rest, O my soul." Hence, Malachi, in a very brief compendium, has set forth the preaching both of the law and of grace. It is the whole sum of the law, where he saith, "Turn ye unto me;" and it is grace, where he saith, "I will turn unto you." Wherefore, as much as "Free-will" is proved from this word, "Love the Lord," or from any other word of particular law, just so much is it proved from this word of summary law,

"TURN YE." It becomes a wise reader of the Scriptures, therefore, to observe what are words of the law and what are words of grace, that he might not be involved in confusion like the unclean Sophists, and like this sleepily-yawning Diatribe.

Sect. 62. NOW observe, in what way the Diatribe handles that single passage in Ezekiel 18:23, "As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live." In the first place-"if (it says) the expressions "shall turn away," "hath done," "hath committed," be so often repeated in this chapter, where are they who deny that man can do any thing?"-

Only remark, I pray, the excellent conclusion! It set out to prove the endeavour and the desire of "Free-will," and now it proves the whole work, that all things are fulfilled by "Free-will! "Where now, I pray, are those who need grace and the Holy Spirit? For it pertly argues thus: saying, 'Ezekiel says, "If the wicked man shall turn away, and shall do righteousness and judgment, he shall live." Therefore, the wicked man does that immediately and can do it.' Whereas Ezekiel is signifying, what ought to be done, but the Diatribe understands it as being done, and having been done. Thus teaching us, by a new kind of grammar, that ought to be is the same as having been, being exacted the same as being performed, and being required the same as being rendered. And then, that voice of the all-sweet Gospel, "I desire not the death of a sinner," &c., it perverts thus:-"Would the righteous Lord deplore that death of His people which He Himself wrought in them? If, therefore, He wills not our death, it certainly is to be laid to the charge of our own will, if we perish. For, what can you lay to the charge of Him, who can do nothing either of good or evil?"

It was upon this same string that Pelagius harped long ago, when he attributed to "Free-will" not a desire nor an endeavour only, but the power of doing and fulfilling all things. For as I have said before, these conclusions prove that power, if they prove any thing; so that, they make with equal, nay with more force against the Diatribe which denies that power of "Free-will," and which attempts to establish the endeavour only, than they do, against us who deny "Free-will" altogether.-But, to say nothing of the ignorance of the Diatribe, let us speak to the subject.

It is the Gospel voice, and the sweetest consolation to miserable sinners, where Ezekiel saith, "I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather, that he should be converted and live," and it is in all respects like unto that of Psalms 30:5; "For His wrath is but for a moment, in His willingness is life." And that of Psalms 36:7, "How sweet is thy loving-kindness, O God." Also, "For I am merciful," And that of Christ, (Matthew 11:28) "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And also that of Exodus 20:6, "I will shew mercy unto thousands of them that love me." And what is more than half of the Holy Scripture, but mere promises of grace, by which, mercy, life, peace, and salvation, are extended from God unto men? And what else is the whole word of promise but this:-"I desire not the death of a sinner?" Is not His saying, "I am merciful," the same as saying, I am not angry, I am unwilling to punish, I desire not your death, My will is to pardon, My will is to spare? And if there were not these divine promises standing, by which consciences, afflicted with a sense of sin and terrified at the fear of death and judgment might be raised up, what place would there be for pardon or for hope! What sinner would not sink in despair! But as "Free-will" is not proved from any of the other words of mercy, of promise, and of comfort, so neither is it from this:-"I desire not the death of a sinner," &c. But our friend Diatribe, again making no distinction between the words of the law, and the words of the promise, makes this passage of Ezekiel the voice of the law, and expounds it thus:-"I desire not the death of a sinner:" that is, I desire not that he should sin unto death, or should become a sinner guilty of death; but rather, that he should be converted from sin, if he have committed any, and thus live. For if it do not expound the passage thus, it will make nothing to its purpose. But this is utterly to destroy and

take away that most sweet place of Ezekiel, "I desire not the death." If we in our blindness will read and understand the Scriptures thus, what wonder if they be ’obscure and ambiguous.’ Whereas God does not say, "I desire not the sin of man, but, I desire not the death of a sinner," which manifestly shews that He is speaking of the punishment of sin, of which the sinner has a sense on account of his sin, that is, of the fear of death; and that He is raising up and comforting the sinner lying under this affliction and desperation, that He might not "break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax," but raise him to the hope of pardon and salvation, in order that he might be further converted, that is, by the conversion unto salvation from the fear of death, and that he might live, that is, might be in peace and rejoice in a good conscience. And this is also to be observed, that as the voice of the law is not pronounced but upon those who neither feel nor know their sins, as Paul saith, "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" (Romans 3:20) so, the word of grace does not come but unto those, who, feeling their sins, are distressed and exercised with desperation. Therefore, in all the words of the law, you will find sin to be implied while it shews what we ought to do; as on the contrary, in all the words of the promise, you will find the evil to be implied under which the sinners, or those who are raised up, labour: as here, "I desire not the death of a sinner," clearly points out the death and the sinner, both the evil itself which is felt, and the sinner himself who feels it. But by this, ’Love God with all thine heart,’ is shewn what good we ought to do, not what evil we feel, in order that we might know, how far we are from doing good.

Sect. 63.-NOTHING, therefore, could be more absurdly adduced in support of "Free-will" than this passage of Ezekiel, nay, it makes with all possible force directly against "Free-will." For it is here shewn, in what state "Free-will" is, and what it can do under the knowledge of sin, and in turning itself from it:-that is, that it can only go on to worse, and add to its sins desperation and impenitency, unless God soon come in to help, and to call back, and raise up by the word of promise. For the concern of God in promising grace to recall and raise up the sinner, is itself an argument sufficiently great and conclusive, that "Free-will," of itself, cannot but go on to worse, and (as the Scripture saith) ’fall down to hell:’ unless, indeed, you imagine that God is such a trifler, that He pours forth so great an abundance of the words of promise, not from any necessity of them unto our salvation, but from a mere delight in loquacity! Wherefore, you see, that not only all the words of law stand against "Free-will," but also, that all the words of the promise utterly confute it; that is, that, the whole Scripture makes directly against it.

Hence, you see, this word, "I desire not the death of a sinner," does nothing else but preach and offer divine mercy to the world, which none receive with joy and gratitude but those who are distressed and exercised with the fears of death, for they are they in whom the law has now done its office, that is, in bringing them to the knowledge of sin. But they who have not yet experienced the office of the law, who do not yet know their sin nor feel the fears of death, despise the mercy promised in that word.

Sect. 64.-BUT, why it is, that some are touched by the law and some are not touched, why some receive the offered grace and some despise it, that is another question which is not here treated on by Ezekiel; because, he is speaking of THE PREACHED AND OFFERED MERCY OF GOD, not of that SECRET AND TO BE FEARED WILL OF GOD, who, according to His own counsel, ordains whom, and such as He will, to be receivers and partakers of the preached and offered mercy: which WILL, is not to be curiously inquired into, but to be adored with reverence as the most profound SECRET of the divine Majesty, which He reserves unto Himself and keeps hidden

from us, and that, much more religiously than the mention of ten thousand Corycian caverns. But since the Diatribe thus pertly argues-"Would the righteous Lord deplore that death of His people, which He Himself works in them? This would seem quite absurd"-

I answer, as I said before,-we are to argue in one way, concerning the WILL OF GOD preached, revealed, and offered unto us, and worshipped by us; and in another, concerning GOD HIMSELF not preached, not revealed, not offered unto us, and worshipped by us. In whatever, therefore, God hides Himself and will be unknown by us, that is nothing unto us' and here, that sentiment' stands good-'What is above us, does not concern us.' And that no one might think that this distinction is my own, I follow Paul, who, writing to the Thessalonians concerning Antichrist, saith, (2 Thessalonians 2:4) "that he should exalt himself above all that is God, as preached and worshipped:" evidently intimating, that any one might be exalted above God as He is preached and worshipped, that is, above the word and worship of God, by which He is known unto us and has intercourse with us. But, above God not worshipped and preached, that is, as He is in our own nature and majesty, nothing can be exalted, but all things are under His powerful hand.

God, therefore, is to be left to remain in His own Nature and Majesty; for in this respect, we have nothing to do with Him, nor does He wish us to have, in this respect, anything to do with Him: but we have to do with Him, as far as He is clothed in, and delivered to us by, His Word; for in that He presents Himself unto us, and that is His beauty and His glory, in which the Psalmist celebrates Him as being clothed. Wherefore, we say, that the righteous God does not 'deplore that death of His people which He Himself works in them;' but He deplores that death which He finds in His people, and which He desires to remove from them. For GOD PREACHED desires this:-that, our sin and death being taken away, we might be saved; "He sent His word and healed them." (Psalms 107:20) But GOD HIDDEN IN MAJESTY neither deplores, nor takes away death, but works life and death and all things: nor has He, in this Character, defined Himself in His Word, but has reserved unto Himself, a free power over all things. But the Diatribe is deceived by its own ignorance, in not making a distinction between GOD PREACHED and GOD HIDDEN: that is, between the word of God and God Himself. God does many things which He does not make known unto us in His word: He also wills many things which He does not in His word make known unto us that He wills. Thus, He does not 'will the death of a sinner,' that is, in His word; but He wills it by that will inscrutable. But in the present case, we are to consider His word only, and to leave that will inscrutable; seeing that, it is by His word, and not by that will inscrutable, that we are to be guided; for who can direct himself according to a will inscrutable and incomprehensible? It is enough to know only, that there is in God a certain will inscrutable: but what, why, and how far that will wills, it is not lawful to inquire, to wish to know, to be concerned about, or to reach unto-it is only to be feared and adored!

Therefore it is rightly said, 'if God does not desire our death, it is to be laid to the charge of our own will, if we perish:' this, I say, is right, if you speak of GOD PREACHED. For He desires that all men should be saved, seeing that, He comes unto all by the word of salvation, and it is the fault of the will which does not receive Him: as He saith. (Matthew 23:37) "How often would I have gathered thy children together, and thou wouldest not!" But WHY that Majesty does not take away or change this fault of the will IN ALL, seeing that, it is not in the power of man to do it; or why He lays that to the charge of the will, which the man cannot avoid, it becomes us not to inquire, and though you should inquire much, yet you will never find out: as Paul saith, (Romans 9:20) "Who art thou

that repliest against God!"-Suffice it to have spoken thus upon this passage of Ezekiel. Now let us proceed to the remaining particulars.

Sect. 65.-THE Diatribe next argues-"If what is commanded be not in the power of every one, all the numberless exhortations in the Scriptures, and also all the promises, threatenings, expostulations, reproofs, asseverations, benedictions and maledictions, together with all the forms of precepts, must of necessity stand coldly useless."- The Diatribe is perpetually forgetting the subject point, and going on with that which is contrary to its professed design: and it does not see, that all these things make with greater force against itself than against us. For from all these passages, it proves the liberty and ability to fulfil all things, as the very words of the conclusion which it draws necessarily declare: whereas, its design was, to prove 'that "Free-will" is that, which cannot will any thing good without grace, and is a certain endeavour that is not to be ascribed to its own powers.' But I do not see that such an endeavour is proved by any of these passages, but that as I have repeatedly said already, that only is required which ought to be done' unless it be needful to repeat it again, as often as the Diatribe harps upon the same string, putting off its readers with a useless profusion of words.

About the last passage which it brings forward out of the Old Testament, is that of Deuteronomy 30:11-14. "This commandment which I command thee this day, is not above thee, neither is it far off. Neither is it in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who of us shall ascend up into heaven and bring it down unto us, that we may hear it and do it. But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." The Diatribe contends-'that it is declared by this passage, that what is commanded is not only placed in us, but is down-hill work, that is, easy to be done, or at least, not difficult.'-

I thank the Diatribe for such wonderful erudition! For if Moses so plainly declare, that there is in us, not only an ability, but also a power to keep all the commandments with ease, why have I been toiling all this time! Why did I not at once produce this passage and assert "Free-will" before the whole world! What need now of Christ! What need of the Spirit! We have now found a passage which stops the mouths of all, and, which not only plainly asserts the liberty of the will, but teaches that the observance of all the commandments is easy!-What need was there for Christ to purchase for us, even with His own blood, the Spirit, as though necessary, in order that He might make the keeping of the commandments easy unto us, when we were already thus qualified by nature! Nay, here, the Diatribe itself recants its own assertions, where it affirmed, that '"Freewill" cannot will any thing good without grace,' and now affirms, that "Free-will" is of such power, that it can, not only will good, but keep the greatest, nay, all the commandments, with ease.

Only observe, I pray, what a mind does, where the heart is not in the cause, and how impossible it is that it should not expose itself! And can there still be any need to confute the Diatribe? Who can more effectually confute it, than it confutes itself! This truly, is that beast that devours itself! How true is the proverb, that 'A liar should have a good memory!'

I have already spoken upon this passage of Deuteronomy, I shall now treat upon it briefly; if indeed, there be any need so far to set aside Paul, who, Romans 10:5-11, so powerfully handles this passage.-You can see nothing here to be said, nor one single syllable to speak, either of the ease or difficulty, of the power or impotency of "Free-will" or of man, either to keep or not to keep the commandments. Except that those, who entangle the Scriptures in their own conclusions and

cogitations, make them obscure and ambiguous to themselves, that they might thus make of them what they please. But, if you cannot turn your eyes this way, turn your ears, or feel out what I am about to say with your hands.-Moses saith, "it is not above thee," "neither is it far from thee," "neither is it in heaven," "neither is it beyond the sea." Now, what is the meaning of this, "above thee?" What, of this "far from thee?" What, of this "in heaven?" What, of this "beyond the sea?" Will they then make the most commonly used terms, and even grammar so obscure unto us, that we shall not be able to speak any thing to a certainty, merely that they might establish their assertion, that the Scriptures are obscure?

According to my grammar, these terms signify neither the quality nor the quantity of human powers, but the distance of places only. For "above thee" does not signify a certain power of the will, but a certain place which is above us. So also "far from thee," "in heaven," "beyond the sea," do not signify any thing of ability in man, but a certain place at a distance above us, or on our right hand, or on our left hand, or behind us, or over against us. Some one may perhaps laugh at me for disputing in so plain a way, thus setting, as it were, a ready-marked-out lesson before such great men, as though they were little boys learning their alphabet, and I were teaching them how to put syllables together-but what can I do, when I see darkness to be sought for in a light so clear, and those studiously desiring to be blind, who boastingly enumerate before us such a series of ages, so much talent, so many saints, so many martyrs, so many doctors, and who with so much authority boast of this passage, and yet will not deign to look at the syllables, or to command their cogitations so far, as to give the passage of which they boast one consideration? Let the Diatribe now go home and consider, and say, how it can be, that one poor private individual should see that, which escaped the notice of so many public characters, and of the greatest men of so many ages. This passage surely, even in the judgment of a school-boy, proves that they must have been blind not very unfrequently!

What therefore does Moses mean by these most plain and clear words, but, that he has worthily performed his office as a faithful law-giver; and that therefore, if all men have not before their eyes and do not know all the precepts which are enjoined, the fault does not rest with him; that they have no place left them for excuse, so as to say, they did not know, or had not the precepts, or were obliged to seek them elsewhere; that if they do not keep them, the fault rests not with the law, or with the law-giver, but with themselves, seeing that the law is before them, and the law-giver has taught them; and that they have no place left for excusation of ignorance, only for accusation of negligence and disobedience? It is not, saith he, necessary to fetch the laws down from heaven, nor from lands beyond the sea, nor from afar, nor can you frame as an excuse, that you never had them nor heard them, for you have them nigh unto you; they are they which God hath commanded, which you have heard from my mouth, and which you have had in your hearts and in your mouths continually; you have heard them treated on by the Levites in the midst of you, of which this my word and book are witnesses; this, therefore only remains-that you do them.-What, I pray you, is here attributed unto "Free-will?" What is there, but the ’demanding that it would do the laws which it has, and the taking away from it the excuse of ignorance and the want of the laws?

These passages are the sum of what the Diatribe brings forward out of the Old Testament in support of "Free-will," which being answered, there remains nothing that is not answered at the same time, whether it have brought forward, or wished to bring forward more; seeing that, it could bring forward nothing but imperative, or conditional, or optative passages, by which is signified, not

what we can do, or do do, (as I have so often replied, to the so often repeating Diatribe) but what we ought to do, and what is required of us, in order that we might come to the knowledge of our impotency, and that there might be wrought in us the knowledge of our sin. Or, if they do prove any thing, by means of the appended conclusions and similitudes invented by human reason, they prove this:-that "Free-will" is not a certain small degree of endeavour or desire only, but a full and free ability and power to do all things, without the grace of God, and without the Holy Spirit.

Thus, nothing less is proved by the whole sum of that copious, and again and again reiterated and inculcated argumentation, than that which was aimed at to be proved, that is, the PROBABLE OPINION; by which, "Free-will" is defined to be of that impotency, 'that it cannot will any thing good without grace, but is compelled into the service of sin; though it has an endeavour, which, nevertheless, is not to be ascribed to its own powers.'-A monster truly! which, at the same time, can do nothing by its own power, and yet, has an endeavour within its own power: and thus, stands upon the basis of a most manifest contradiction!

Sect. 66.-We now come to the NEW TESTAMENT, where again, are marshalled up in defence of that miserable bondage of "Free-will," an host of imperative sentences, together with all the auxiliaries of carnal reason, such as, conclusions, similitudes, &c., called in from all quarters. And if you ever saw represented in a picture, or imagined in a dream, a king of flies attended by his forces armed with lances and shields of straw or hay, drawn up in battle array against a real and complete army of veteran warriors-it is just thus, that the human dreams of the Diatribe are drawn up in battle array against the hosts of the words of God!

First of all, marches forth in front, that of Matthew 23:37-39, as it were the Achilles of these flies, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, and thou wouldest not."-"If all things be done from necessity (says the Diatribe) might not Jerusalem here have justly said in reply to the Lord, Why dost thou weary thyself with useless tears? If thou didst not will that we should kill the prophets, why didst thou send them? Why dost thou lay that to our charge, which, from will in thee, was done of necessity by us?"-thus the Diatribe.-

I answer: Granting in the mean time that this conclusion and proof of the Diatribe is good and true, what, I ask, is proved thereby?-that 'probable opinion,' which affirms that "Freewill" cannot will good? Nay, the will is proved to be free, whole, and able to do all things which the prophets have spoken; and such a will the Diatribe never intended to prove. But let the Diatribe here reply to itself. If "Free-will" cannot will good, why is it laid to its charge, that it did not hear the prophets, whom, as they taught good, it could not hear by its own powers? Why does Christ in useless tears weep over those as though they could have willed that, which He certainly knew they could not will? Here, I say, let the Diatribe free Christ from the imputation of madness, according to its 'probable opinion,' and then my opinion is immediately set free from that Achilles of the flies. Therefore, that passage of Matthew either forcibly proves "Free-will" altogether, or makes with equal force against the Diatribe itself, and strikes it prostrate with its own weapon! But I here observe as I have observed before, that we are not to dispute concerning that SECRET WILL of the divine Majesty; and that, that human temerity, which, with incessant perverseness, is ever leaving those things that are necessary, and attacking and trying this point, is to be called off and driven back, that it employ not itself in prying into those secrets of Majesty which it is impossible to attain unto, seeing that, they dwell in that light which is inaccessible; as Paul witnesseth. (1

Timothy 6:16) But let the man acquaint himself with the God Incarnate, or, as Paul saith, with Jesus crucified, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge-but hidden! for in Him, there is an abundance both of that which he ought to know, and of that which he ought not to know.

[See Note l] The God Incarnate, then, here speaks thus-"I WOULDand THOU WOULDST NOT!" The God Incarnate,-I say, was sent for this purpose-that He might desire, speak, do, suffer, and offer unto all, all things that are necessary unto salvation, although He should offend many, who, being either left or hardened by that secret will of Majesty, should not receive Him thus desiring, speaking, doing, and offering: as John 1:5, saith, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." And again, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." (John 1:11) It belongs also to this same God Incarnate, to weep, to lament, and to sigh over the perdition of the wicked, even while that will of Majesty, from purpose, leaves and reprobates some, that they might perish. Nor does it become us to inquire why He does so, but to revere that God who can do, and wills to do, such things. Nor do I suppose that any one will cavillingly deny, that that will which here saith, "How often would I!" was displayed to the Jews, even before God became Incarnate; seeing that, they are accused of having slain the prophets, before Christ, and having thus resisted His will. For it is well known among Christians, that all things were done by the prophets in the name of Christ to come, who was promised that He should become Incarnate: so that, whatever has been offered unto men by the ministers of the word from the foundation of the world, may be rightly called, the Will of Christ.

Sect. 67.-BUT here Reason, who is always very knowing and loquacious, will say,-This is an excellently invented scape-gap; that, as often as we are pressed close by the force of arguments, we might run back to that to-be-revered will of Majesty, and thus silence the disputant as soon as he becomes troublesome; just as astrologers, do, who, by their invented epicycles, elude all questions concerning the motion of the whole heaven.-

I answer: It is no invention of mine, but a command supported by the Holy Scriptures. Paul, (Romans 9:19) speaks thus: "Why therefore doth God find fault; for who hath resisted His will? Nay, but O man, who art thou that contendest with God?" "Hath not the potter power?" And so on. And before him, Isaiah 58:2, "Yet they seek Me daily, and desire to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice, and desire to approach unto God." From these words it is, I think, sufficiently manifest that it is not lawful for men to search into that will of Majesty. And this subject is of that nature, that perverse men are here the most led to pry into that to-be-revered will, and therefore, there is here the greatest reason why they should be exhorted to silence and reverence. In other subjects, where those things are handled for which we can give a reason, and for which we are commanded to give a reason, we do not this. And if any one still persist in searching into the reason of that will, and do not choose to hearken to our admonition, we let him go on, and, like the giants, fight against God; while we look on to see what triumph he will gain, persuaded in ourselves, that he will do nothing, either to injure our cause or to advance his own. For it will still remain unalterable, that he must either prove that "Free-will" can do all things, or that the Scriptures which he adduces must make against himself. And, which soever of the two shall take place, he vanquished, lies prostrate, while we as conquerors "stand upright!"

Sect. 68.-ANOTHER passage is that of Matthew 19:17, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."-"With what face, (says the Diatribe,) can "if thou wilt" be said to him who has not a Free-will?'- To which I reply:-Is, therefore, the will, according to this word of Christ, free? But you wish to prove, that "Free-will" cannot will any thing good; and that, without grace, it of necessity serves sin. With what face, then, do you now make will wholly free? The same reply will be made to that also-"If thou wilt be perfect," "If any one will come after me," "He that will save his life," "If ye love me," "If Ye shall continue." In a word, as I said before, (to ease the Diatribe's labour in adducing such a load of words) let all the conditional ifs and all the imperative verbs be collected together.-"All these precepts (says the Diatribe) stand coldly useless, if nothing be attributed to the human will. How ill does that conjunctive if accord with mere necessity?"-

I answer: If they stand coldly useless, it is your fault that they stand coldly useless, who, at one time, assert that nothing is to be attributed to "Free-will," while you make "Free-will" unable to will good, and who, on the contrary, here make the same "Free-will" able to will all good; nay, you thus make them to stand as nothing at all: unless, with you, the same words stand coldly useless and warmly useful at the same time, while they at once assert all things and deny all things.

I wonder how any author can delight in repeating the same things so continually, and to be as continually forgetting his subject design: unless perhaps, distrusting his cause, he wishes to overcome his adversary by the bulk of his book, or to weary him out with the tedium and toil of reading it. By what conclusion, I ask, does it follow, that will and power must immediately take place as often as it is said, 'If thou wilt,' 'If any one will,' 'If thou shalt?' Do we not most frequently imply in such expressions impotency rather, and impossibility? For instance.-If thou wilt equal Virgil in singing, my friend Mevius, thou must sing in another strain.-If thou wilt surpass Cicero, friend Scotus, instead of thy subtle jargon, thou must have the most exalted eloquence. If thou wilt stand in competition with David, thou must of necessity produce Psalms like his. Here are plainly signified things impossible to our own powers, although, by divine power, all these things may be done. So it is in the Scriptures, that by such expressions, it might be shewn what we cannot do ourselves, but what can be done in us by the power of God.

Moreover, if such expressions should be used in those things which are utterly impossible to be done, as being those which God would never do, then, indeed, they might rightly be called either coldly useless, or ridiculous, because they would be spoken in vain. Whereas now, they are so used, that by them, not only the impotency of "Free-will" is shewn, by which no one of those things can be done, but it is also signified, that a time will come when all those things shall be done, but by a power not our own, that is, by the divine power; provided that, we fully admit, that in such expressions, there is a certain signification of things possible and to be done: as if any one should interpret them thus:-"If thou wilt keep the commandments, (that is, if thou shalt at any time have the will to keep the commandments, though thou wilt have it, not of thyself, but of God, who giveth it to whom He will,) they also shall preserve thee."

But, to take a wider scope.-These expressions, especially those which are conditional, seem to be so placed also, on account of the Predestination of God, and to involve that as being unknown to us. As if they should speak thus:-"If thou desire," "If thou wilt:" that is, if thou be such with God, that he shall deign to give thee this will to keep the commandments, thou shalt be saved. According to which manner of speaking, it is given us to understand both truths.-That we can do nothing

ourselves; and that, if we do any thing, God works that in us. This is what I would say to those, who will not be content to have it said, that by these words our impotency only is shewn, and who will contend, that there is also proved a certain power and ability to do those things which are commanded. And in this way, it will also appear to be truth, that we are not able to do any of the things which are commanded, and yet, 'that we are able to do them all: that is, speaking of the former, with reference to our own powers, and of the latter, with reference to the grace of God.

Sect. 69.-THE third particular that moves the Diatribe is this:-"How there can be (it observes) any place for mere necessity there, where mention is so frequently made of good works and of bad works, and where there is mention made of reward, I cannot understand; for neither nature nor necessity can have merit."- Nor can I understand any thing but this:-that that 'probable opinion,' asserts 'mere necessity' where it affirms that "Free-will" cannot will any thing good, and yet, nevertheless, here attributes to it even 'merit.' Hence, "Free-will" gains ground so fast, as the book and argumentation of the Diatribe increases, that now, it not only has an endeavour and desire of its own, 'though not by its own powers,' nay, not only wills good and does good, but also merits eternal life according to that saying of Christ, (Matthew 5:12) "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." "Your reward," that is, the reward of "Free-will." For the Diatribe so understands this passage, that Christ and the Spirit of God are nothing. For what need is there of them, if we have good works and merit by "Free-will!" I say these things, that we may see, that it is no rare thing for men of exalted talent, to be blind in a matter which is plainly manifest even to one of a thick and uninformed understanding; and that we may also see, how weak, arguments drawn from human authority are in divine things, where the authority of God alone avails. But we have here to speak upon two things. First, upon the precepts of the New Testament. And next, upon merit. We shall touch upon each briefly, having already spoken upon them more fully elsewhere. The New Testament, properly, consists of promises and exhortations, even as the Old, properly, consists of laws and threatenings. For in the New Testament, the Gospel is preached; which is nothing else than the word, by which, are offered unto us the Spirit, grace; and the remission of sins obtained for us by Christ crucified; and all entirely free, through the mere mercy of God the Father, thus favouring us unworthy creatures, who deserve damnation rather than any thing else. And then follow exhortations, in order to animate those who are already justified, and who have obtained mercy, to be diligent in the fruits of the Spirit and of righteousness received, to exercise themselves in charity and good works, and to bear courageously the cross and all the other tribulations of this world. This is the whole sum of the New Testament. But how little Erasmus understands of this matter is manifest from this:-it knows not how to make any distinction between the Old Testament and the New, for it can see nothing any where but precepts, by which, men are formed to good manners only. But what the new-birth is, the new-creature, regeneration, and the whole work of the Spirit, of all this it sees nothing whatever. So that, I am struck with wonder and astonishment, that the man, who has spent so much time and study upon these things, should know so little about them. This passage therefore, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven," agrees as well with "Free-will" as light does with darkness. For Christ is there exhorting, not "Free-will," but His apostles, (who were not only raised above "Free-will" in grace, and justified, but were stationed in the ministry of the Word, that is, in the highest degree of grace,) to endure the tribulations of the world. But we are now disputing about "Free-will," and that particularly, as it is without Grace; which, by laws and threats, or the Old Testament, is instructed in the knowledge of itself only, that it might flee to the promises presented

to it in the New Testament.

Sect. 70.-AS to merit, or a proposed reward, what is it else but a certain promise? But that promise does not prove that we can do any thing; it proves nothing more than this:-if any one shall do this thing or that, he shall then have a reward. Whereas, our subject inquiry is, not what reward is to be given, or how it is to be given, but, whether or not we can do those things, for the doing of which the reward is to be given. This is the point to be settled and proved. Would not these be ridiculous conclusions?-The prize is set before all that run in the race: therefore, all can so run as to obtain.-If Cæsar shall conquer the Turks, he shall gain the kingdom of Syria: therefore, Cæsar can conquer, and does conquer the Turks.-If "Free-will" shall gain dominion over sin, it shall be holy before the Lord: therefore "Free-will' is holy before the Lord. But away with things so stupid and openly absurd: (except that, "Free-will' deserves to be proved what it is by arguments so excellent) let us rather speak to this point:-'that necessity, has neither merit nor reward.' If we speak of the necessity of compulsion, it is true: if we speak of the necessity of immutability, it is false. For who would bestow a reward upon, or ascribe merit to, an unwilling workman? But with respect to those who do good or evil willingly, even though they cannot alter that necessity by their own power, the reward or punishment follows naturally and necessarily: as it is written "thou shalt render unto every man according to his works." (Proverbs 24:12) It naturally follows-if thou remain under water, thou wilt be suffocated; if thou swim out, thou wilt be saved. To be brief: As it respects merit or reward, you must speak, either of the worthiness or of the consequence. If you speak of the worthiness, there is no merit, no reward. For if "Free-will" cannot of itself will good, but wills good by grace alone, (for we are speaking of "Free-will" apart from grace and inquiring into the power which properly belongs to each) who does not see, that that good will, merit, and reward, belong to grace alone. Here then, again, the Diatribe dissents from itself, while it argues from merit the freedom of the will; and with me, against whom it fights, it stands in the same condemnation as ever; that is, its asserting that there is merit, reward, and liberty, makes the same as ever directly against itself; seeing that, it asserted above, that it could will nothing good, and undertook to prove that assertion.

If you speak of the consequence, there is nothing either good or evil which has not its reward. And here arises an error, that, in speaking of merits and rewards, we agitate opinions and questions concerning worthiness, which has not existence, when we ought to be disputing concerning consequences. For there remains, as a necessary consequence the judgment of God and a hell for the wicked, even though they themselves neither conceive nor think of such a reward for their sins, nay, they utterly detest it; and, as Peter saith, execrate it. (2 Peter 2:10-14) In the same manner, there remains a kingdom for the just, even though they themselves neither seek it nor think of it; seeing that, it was prepared for them by their Father, not only before they themselves existed, but before the foundation of the world. Nay, if they should work good in order to obtain the Kingdom, they never would obtain it, but would be numbered rather with the wicked, who, with an evil and mercenary eye, seek the things of self even in God. Whereas, the sons of God, do good with a free-will, seeking no reward, but the glory and will of God only; ready to do good, even if (which is impossible) there were neither a Kingdom nor a hell.

These things are, I believe, sufficiently confirmed even from that saying of Christ only, which I have just cited, Matthew 25:34, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world."-How can they merit that, which is theirs, and

prepared for them before they had existence? So that we might much more rightly say, the kingdom of God merits us its possessors; and thus, place the merit where these place the reward, and the reward where these place the merit. For the kingdom is not merited, but before prepared: and the sons of the kingdom are before prepared for the kingdom, but do not merit the kingdom for themselves: that is, the kingdom merits the sons, not the sons the kingdom. So also hell more properly merits and prepares its sons, seeing that, Christ saith, "Depart, ye cursed, into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matthew 25:41)

Sect. 71.-BUT, says the Diatribe-"what then mean all those Scriptures which promise a kingdom and threaten hell? Why is the word reward so often repeated in the Scriptures; as, "Thou hast thy reward," "I am thy exceeding great reward?" Again, "Who rendereth unto every man according to his work;" and Paul, Romans 2:6, "Who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for eternal life," and many of the same kind?" (Romans 2:6-7)-

It is answered: By all these passages, the consequence of reward is proved and nothing else, but by no means the worthiness of merit: seeing that, those who do good, do it not from a servile and mercenary principle in order to obtain eternal life, but they seek eternal life, that is, they are in that way, in which they shall come unto and find eternal life. So that seeking, is striving with desire, and pursuing with ardent diligence, that, which always leads unto eternal life. And the reason why it is declared in the Scriptures, that those things shall follow and take place after a good or bad life, is, that men might be instructed, admonished, awakened, and terrified. For as "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20) and an admonition of our impotency, and as from that, it cannot be inferred that we can do any thing ourselves; so, by these promises and threats, there is conveyed an admonition, by which we are taught, what will follow sin and that impotency made known by the law; but there is not, by them, any thing of worthiness ascribed unto our merit

Wherefore, as the words of the law are for instruction and illumination, to teach us what we ought to do, and also what we are not able to do; so the words of reward, while they signify what will be hereafter, are for exhortation and threatening, by which the just are animated, comforted, and raised up to go forward, to persevere, and to conquer; that they might not be wearied or disheartened either in doing good or in enduring evil; as Paul exhorts his Corinthians, saying, "Be ye steadfast, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58) So also God supports Abraham, saying "I am thy exceeding great reward." (Genesis 15:1) Just in the same manner as you would console any one, by signifying to him, that his works certainly pleased God, which kind of consolation the Scripture frequently uses; nor is it a small consolation for any one to know, that he so pleases God, that nothing but a good consequence can follow, even though it seem to him impossible.

Sect. 72.-TO this point pertain all those words which are spoken concerning the hope and expectation, that those things which we hope for will certainly come to pass. For the pious do not hope because of these words themselves, nor do they expect such things because they hope for them. So also the wicked by the words of threatening, and of a future judgment, are only terrified and cast down that they might cease and abstain from sin, and not become proud, secure, and hardened in their sins. But if Reason should here turn up her nose and say-Why does God will these things to be done by His words, when by such words nothing is effected, and when the will can turn itself neither one way nor the other? Why does He not do what He does without the Word,

when He can do all things without the Word? For the will is of no more power, and does no more with the Word, if the Spirit to move within be wanting; nor is it of less power, nor does it do less without the Word, if the Spirit be present, seeing that, all depends upon the power and operation of the Holy Spirit.

I answer: Thus it pleaseth God-not to give the Spirit without the Word, but through the Word; that He might have us as workers together with Him, while we sound forth in the Word without, what He alone works by the breath of His Spirit within, wheresoever it pleaseth Him; which, nevertheless, He could do without the Word, but such is not His will. And who are we that we should inquire into the cause of the divine will? It is enough for us to know, that such is the will of God; and it becomes us, bridling the temerity of reason, to reverence, love, and adore that will. For Christ, (Matthew 11:25-26) gives no other reason why the Gospel is hidden from the wise, and revealed unto babes, than this:-So it pleased the Father! In the same manner also, He might nourish us without bread; and indeed He has given a power which nourishes us without bread, as Matthew 4:4, saith, "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by the Word of God:" but yet, it hath pleased Him to nourish us by His Spirit within, by means of the bread, and instead of the bread used without.

It is certain, therefore, that merit cannot be proved from the reward, at least out of the Scriptures; and that, moreover, "Free-will" cannot be proved from merit, much less such a "Free-will" as the Diatribe set out to prove, that is, 'which of itself cannot will any thing good!' And even if you grant merit, and add to it, moreover, those usual similitudes and conclusions of reason, such as, 'it is commanded in vain,' 'the reward is promised in vain,' 'threatenings are denounced in vain,' if there be no "Free-will:" all these, I say, if they prove any thing, prove this:-that "Free-will" can of itself do all things. But if it cannot of itself do all things, then that conclusion of reason still remains-therefore, the precepts are given in vain, the promises are made in vain, and the threatenings are denounced in vain.

Thus, the Diatribe is perpetually arguing against itself, as often as it attempts to argue against me. For God alone by His Spirit works in us both merit and reward, but He makes known and declares each, by His external Word, to the whole world; to the intent that, His power and glory and our impotency and vileness might be proclaimed even among the wicked, the unbelieving, and the ignorant, although those alone who fear God receive these things into their heart, and keep them faithfully; the rest despise them.

Sect. 73.-IT would be too tedious to repeat here each imperative passage which the Diatribe enumerates out of the New Testament, always tacking to them her own conclusions, and vainly arguing, that those things which are so said are 'to no purpose,' are 'superfluous,' are 'coldly useless,' are 'ridiculous,' are 'nothing at all,' if the will be not free. And I have already repeatedly observed, even to disgust, that nothing whatever is effected by such arguments; and that if any thing be proved, the whole of "Free-will" is proved. And this is nothing less than overthrowing the Diatribe altogether; seeing that, it set out to prove such a "Free-will" as cannot of itself do good, but serves sin; and then goes on to prove such a "Free-will" as can do all things; thus, throughout, forgetting and not knowing itself.

It is mere cavillation where it makes these remarks-"By their fruits, saith the Lord, 'ye shall know them.' (Matthew 7:16, Matthew 7:20) He calls works fruits, and He calls them ours, but they are

not ours if all things be done by necessity."-

I pray you, are not those things most rightly called ours, which we did not indeed make ourselves, but which we received from others? Why should not those works be called ours, which God has given unto us by His Spirit? Shall we then not call Christ ours, because we did not make Him, but only received Him? Again: if we made all those things which are called ours-therefore, we made our own eyes, we made our own hands, we made our own feet: unless you mean to say, that our eyes, our hands, and our feet are not called our own! Nay, "What have we that we did not receive," saith Paul. (1 Corinthians 4:7) Shall we then say, that those things are either not ours, or else we made them ourselves? But suppose they are called our fruits because we made them, where then remain grace and the Spirit?-Nor does He say, "By their fruits, which are in a certain small part their own, ye shall know them." This cavillation rather is ridiculous, superfluous, to no purpose, coldly useless, nay, absurd and detestable, by which the holy words of God are defiled and profaned. In the same way also is that saying of Christ upon the cross trifled with, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34) Here, where some assertion might have been expected which should make for "Free-will," recourse is again had to conclusions-"How much more rightly (says the Diatribe) would He have excused them on this ground-because they have not a Free-will, nor can they if they willed it, do otherwise."-

No! nor is that "Free-will" which ’cannot will any thing good,’ concerning which we are disputing, proved by this conclusion either; but that "Free-will" is proved by it which can do all things; concerning which no one disputes, to except the Pelagians.

Here, where Christ openly saith, "they know not what they do," does He not testify that they could not will good? For how can you will that which you do not know? You certainly cannot desire that of which you know nothing! What more forcible can be advanced against "Free-will", than that it is such a thing of nought, that it not only cannot will good, but cannot even know what evil it does, and what good is? Is there then any obscurity in this saying, "they know not what they do?" What is there remaining in the Scriptures which may not, upon the authority of the Diatribe, declare for "Free-will," since this word of Christ is made to declare for it, which is so clearly and so directly against it? In the same easy way any one might affirm that this word declares for "Free-will"-"And the earth was without form and void:" (Genesis 1:2) or this, "And God rested on the seventh day:" (Genesis 2:2) or any word of the same kind. Then, indeed, the Scriptures; would be obscure and ambiguous, nay, would be nothing at all. But to dare to make use of the Scriptures in this way, argues a mind that is in a signal manner, a contemner both of God and man, and that deserves no forbearance whatever.

Sect. 74.-AGAIN the Diatribe receives that word of John 1:12, "To them gave He power to become the sons of God," thus-"How can there be power given unto them, to become the sons of God, if there be no liberty in our will?"- This word also, is a hammer that beats down "Free-will," as is nearly the whole of the evangelist John, and yet, even this is brought forward in support of "Free-will." Let us, I pray you, just took into this word. John is not speaking concerning any work of man, either great or small but concerning the very renewal and transformation of the old man who is a son of the devil, into the new man who is a son of God. This man is merely passive (as the term is used), nor does he do any thing, but is wholly made: and John is speaking of being made: he saith we are made the sons of God by a power given unto us from above, not by the power of

"Free-will" inherent in ourselves.

Whereas, our friend Diatribe here concludes, that "Free-will" is of so much power, that it makes us the sons of God; if not, it is prepared to aver, that the word of John is ridiculous and stands coldly useless. But who ever so exalted "Freewill" as to assign unto it the power of making us the sons of God, especially such a "Free-will as cannot even will good, which "Free-will" it is that the Diatribe has taken upon itself to establish? But let this conclusion be gone after the rest which have been so often repeated; by which, nothing else is proved, if any thing be proved at all, than that which the Diatribe denies-that "Free-will" can do all things. The meaning of John is this.-That by the coming of Christ into the world by His Gospel, by which grace was offered, but not works required, a full opportunity was given to all men of becoming the sons of God, if they would believe. But as to this willing and this believing on His name, as "Free-will" never knew it nor thought of it before, so much less could it then do it of its own power. For how could reason then think that faith in Jesus as the Son of God and man was necessary, when even at this day it could neither receive nor believe it, though the whole Creation should cry out together-there is a certain person who is both God and man! Nay it is rather offended at such a saying, as Paul affirms. (1 Corinthians 1:17-31) so far is it from possibility that it should either will it, or believe it.

John, therefore, is preaching, not the power of "Free-will," but the riches of the kingdom of God offered to the world by the Gospel; and signifying at the same time, how few there are who receive it; that is, from the enmity of the "Free-will" against it; the power of which is nothing else than this:-Satan reigning over it and causing it to reject grace, and the Spirit which fulfils the law. So excellently do its ’endeavour’ and ’desire’ avail unto the fulfilling of the law. But we shall hereafter shew more fully what a thunderbolt this passage of John is against "Freewill." Yet I am not a little astonished that passages which make so signally and so forcibly against "Free-will" are brought forward by the Diatribe in support of "Free-will;" whose stupidity is such, that it makes no distinction whatever between the promises, and the words of the law: for it most ridiculously sets up "Free-will" by the words of the law, and far more absurdly still confirms it by the words of the promise. But how this absurdity is, may be immediately solved, if it be but considered with what an unconcerned and contemptuous mind the Diatribe is here disputing: With whom, it matters not, whether grace stand or fall, whether "Free-will" lie prostrate or sit in state, if it can but, by words of vanity, serve the turn of tyrants, to the odium of the cause!

Chapter 89

06.09c Discussion: First Part (Sections 75)

Sect. 75.-AFTER this, it comes to Paul also, the most determined enemy to "Free-will," and even he is dragged in to confirm "Free-will;" "Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and patience, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance?"-(Romans 2:4)-"How (says the Diatribe) can the despising of the commandment be imputed where there is not a Free-will? How can God invite to repentance, who is the author of impenitence? How can the damnation be just, where the judge compels unto evil doing?"-

I answer: Let the Diatribe see to these questions itself. What are they unto us! The Diatribe said according to that 'probable opinion.' 'that "Free-will" cannot will good, and is of necessity compelled to serve sin.' How, therefore, can the despising of the commandment be charged on the will, if it cannot will good, and has no liberty, but is necessarily compelled to the service of sin? How can God invite to repentance who is the author of the reason why it cannot repent, while it leaves, or does not give grace to, that, which cannot of itself will good? How can the damnation be just, where the judge, by taking away his aid, compels the wicked man to be left in his wickedness who cannot of his own power do otherwise?

All these conclusions therefore recoil back upon the head of the Diatribe. Or, if they prove any thing, as I said, they prove that "Free-will" can do all things: which, however, is denied by the Diatribe and by all. Thus these conclusions of reason torment the Diatribe, throughout all the passages of Scripture: seeing that, it must appear ridiculous and coldly useless, to enforce and exact with so much vehemence, when there is no one to be found who can perform: for the apostle's intent is, by means of these threats, to bring the impious and proud to a knowledge of themselves and of their impotency, that he might prepare them for grace when humbled by the knowledge of sin. And what need is there to speak of, singly, all those parts which are brought forward out of Paul, seeing that, they are only a collection of imperative or conditional passages, or of those by which Paul exhorts Christians to the fruits of faith? Whereas the Diatribe, by its appended conclusions, forms to itself a power of "Free-will," such and so great, which can, without grace, do all things which Paul in his exhortations prescribes. Christians, however, are not led by "Free-will," but by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14): and to be led, is not to lead, but to be impelled, as a saw or an axe is impelled by a carpenter. And that no one might doubt whether or not Luther asserted things so absurd, the Diatribe recites his own words; which, indeed, I acknowledge. For I confess that that article of Wycliffe, 'all things take place from necessity, that is, from the immutable will of God, and our will is not compelled indeed, but it cannot of itself do good,' was falsely condemned by the Council of Constance, or that conspiracy or cabal rather. Nay the Diatribe itself defends the same together with me, while it asserts, 'that Free-will cannot by its own power will any thing good,' and that, it of necessity serves sin: although in furnishing this defence, it all the while designs the direct contrary.

Suffice it to have spoken thus in reply to the FIRST PART of the Diatribe, in which it has endeavoured to establish "Free-will." Let us now consider the latter part in which our arguments

are refuted, that is, those by which "Free-will" is utterly overthrown.-Here you will see, what the smoke of man can do, against the thunder and lightning of God!

Chapter 90

06.10a Discussion: Second Part (Sections 76 - 92)

DISCUSSION.

SECOND PART.

Sect. 76.-THE Diatribe, having thus first cited numberless passages of Scripture, as it were a most formidable army in support of "Free-will," in order that it might inspire courage into the confessors and martyrs, the men saints and women saints on the side of "Free-will," and strike terror into all the fearful and trembling deniers of, and transgressors against "Free-will," imagines to itself a poor contemptible handful only standing up to oppose "Free-will:" and therefore it brings forward no more than two Scriptures, which seem to be more prominent than the rest, to stand up on their side: intent only upon slaughter, and that, to be executed without much trouble. The one of these passages is from Exodus 9:13, "The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh:" the other is from Malachi 1:2-3, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Paul has explained at large both these passages in the Romans 9:11-17. But, according to the judgment of the Diatribe, what a detestable and useless discussion has he made of it! So that, did not the Holy Spirit know a little something of rhetoric, there would be some danger, lest, being broken at the outset by such an artfully managed show of contempt, he should despair of his cause, and openly yield to "Free-will" before the sound of the trumpet for the battle. But, however, I, as a recruit taken into the rear of those two passages, will display the forces on our side. Although, where the state of the battle is such, that one can put to flight ten thousand, there is no need of forces. If therefore, one passage shall defeat "Free-will," its numberless forces will profit it nothing.

Sect. 77.-IN this part of the discussion, then, the Diatribe has found out a new way of eluding the most clear passages: that is, it will have that there is, in the most simple and clear passages, a trope. And as, before, when speaking in defence of "Free-will," it eluded all the imperative and conditional sentences of the law by means of conclusions tacked, and similitudes added to them; so now, where it designs to speak against us, it twists all the words of the divine promise and declaration just which way it pleases, by means of a trope which it has invented; thus, being everywhere an incomprehensible Proteus! Nay, it demands with a haughty brow, that this permission should be granted it, saying, that we ourselves, when pressed closely, are accustomed to get off by means of invented tropes: as in these instances:-"On which thou wilt, stretch forth thine hand:" (Exodus 8:5) that is, grace shall extend thine hand on which it will. "Make you a new heart:" (Ezekiel 18:31) that is, grace shall make you a new heart: and the like. It seems, therefore, an indignity offered, that Luther should be allowed to give forth an interpretation so forced and twisted, and that it should not be far more allowable to follow the interpretations of the most approved doctors.

You see then, that here, the contention is not for the text itself, no, nor for conclusions and similitudes, but for tropes and interpretations. When then shall we ever have any plain and pure text, without tropes and conclusions, either for or against "Free-will?" Has the Scriptures no such texts anywhere? And shall the cause of "Freewill" remain for ever in doubt, like a reed shaken with

the wind, as being that which can be supported by no certain text, but which stands upon conclusions and tropes only, introduced by men mutually disagreeing with each other? But let our sentiment rather be this:-that neither conclusion nor trope is to be admitted into the Scriptures, unless the evident strife of the particulars, or the absurdity of any particular as militating against an article of faith, require it: but, that the simple, pure, and natural meaning of the words is to be adhered to, which is according to the rules of grammar, and to that common use of speech which God has given unto men. For if every one be allowed, according to his own lust, to invent conclusions and tropes in the Scriptures, what will the whole Scripture together be, but a reed shaken with the wind, or a kind of Vertumnus? Then, in truth, nothing could, to a certainty, be determined on or proved concerning any one article of faith, which you might not subject to cavillation by means of some trope. But every trope ought to be avoided as the most deadly poison, which is not absolutely required by the Scriptures itself.

See what happened to that trope-inventor, Origen, in expounding the Scriptures. What just occasion did he give the calumniator Porphery, to say, ’those who favour Origen, can be no great friends to Hieronymus.’ What happened to the Arians by means of that trope, according to which, they made Christ God nominally? What happened in our own times to those new prophets concerning the words of Christ, "This is my body?" [See Note l] One invented a trope in the word "this," another in the word "is," another in the word "body." I have therefore observed this:-that all heresies and errors in the Scriptures, have not arisen from the simplicity of the words, as is the general report throughout the world, but from men not attending to the simplicity of the words, and hatching tropes and conclusions out of their own brain. For example. "On which soever thou wilt, stretch forth thine hand." I, as far as I can remember, never put upon these words so violent an interpretation, as to say, ’grace shall extend thine hand on which soever it will:’ "Make yourselves a new heart," ’that is, grace shall make you a new heart, and the like;’ although the Diatribe traduces me thus in a public work, from being so carried away with, and illuded by its own tropes and conclusions, that it knows not what it says about any thing. But I said this:-that by the words, ’stretch forth thine hand,’ simply taken as they are, without tropes or conclusions, nothing else is signified than what is required of us in the stretching forth of our hand, and what we ought to do; according to the nature of an imperative expression, with grammarians, and in the common use of speech. But the Diatribe, not attending to this simplicity of the word, but with violence adducing conclusions and tropes, interprets the words thus:-"Stretch forth thine hand;" that is, thou art able by thine own power to stretch forth thine hand. "Make you a new heart," that is, ye are able to make a new heart. ’Believe in Christ,’ that is, ye are able to believe in Christ. So that, with it, what is spoken imperatively, and what is spoken indicatively, is the same thing; or else, it is prepared to aver, that the Scripture is ridiculous and to no purpose. And these interpretations, which no grammarian will bear, must not be called, in Theologians, violent or invented, but the productions of the most approved doctors received by so many ages. But it is easy for the Diatribe to admit and follow tropes in this part of the discussion, seeing that, it cares not at all whether what is said be certain or uncertain. Nay, it aims at making all things uncertain; for its design is, that the doctrines concerning "Free-will" should be left alone, rather than searched into. Therefore, it is enough for it, to be enabled in any way to avoid those passages by which it finds itself closely pressed. But as for me, who am maintaining a serious cause, and who am inquiring what is, to the greatest certainty, the truth, for the establishing of consciences, I must act very differently. For me, I say, it is not enough that you say there may be a trope here: but I must inquire, whether there ought to

be, or can be a trope there. For if you cannot prove that there must, of necessity, be a trope in that passage, you will effect nothing at all. There stands there this word of God-"I will harden the heart of Pharaoh." (Exodus 4:21, Romans 9:17-18) If you say that it can be understood or ought to be understood thus:-I will permit it to be hardened: I hear you say, indeed, that it may be so understood. And I hear this trope used by every one, 'I destroyed you, because I did not correct you immediately when you began to do wrong.' But here, there is no place for that interpretation. We are not here inquiring, whether that trope be in use; we are not inquiring whether any one can use it in that passage of Paul: but this is the point of inquiry-whether or not it be sure and safe to use this passage plainly as it stands, and whether Paul would have it so used. We are not inquiring into the use of an indifferent reader of this passage, but into the use of the author Paul himself.

What will you do with a conscience inquiring thus?-Behold God, as the Author, saith, "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh:" the meaning of the word "harden" is plain and well known. But a man, who reads this passage, tells me, that in this place, 'to harden,' signifies 'to give an occasion of becoming hardened,' because, the sinner is not immediately corrected. But by what authority does he this? With what design, by what necessity, is the natural signification of this passage thus twisted? And suppose the reader and interpreter should be in error, how shall it be proved that such a turn ought to be given to this passage? It is dangerous, nay, impious, thus to twist the Word of God, without necessity and without authority. Would you then comfort a poor soul thus labouring, in this way?-Origen thought so and so. Cease to search into such things, because they are curious and superfluous. But he would answer you, this admonition should have been given to Moses or Paul before they wrote, and so also to God Himself, for it is they who vex us with these curious and superfluous Scriptures.

Sect. 78.-THIS miserable scape-gap of tropes, therefore, profits the Diatribe nothing. But this Proteus of ours must here be held fast, and compelled to satisfy us fully concerning the trope in this passage; and that, by Scriptures the most clear, or by miracles the most evident. For as to its mere opinion, even though supported by the laboured industry of all ages, we give no credit to that whatever. But we urge on and press it home, that there can be here no trope whatever, but that the Word of God is to be understood according to the plain meaning of the words. For it is not given unto us (as the Diatribe persuades itself to turn the words of God backwards and forwards according to our own lust: if that were the case, what is there in the whole Scripture, that might not be resolved into the philosophy of Anaxagoras-'that any thing might be made from any thing?' And thus I will say, "God created the heavens and the earth:" that is, He stationed them, but did not make them out of nothing. Or, "He created the heavens and the earth;" that is, the angels and the devils; or the just and the wicked. Who, I ask, if this were the case, might not become a theologian at the first opening of a book?

Let this, therefore, be a fixed and settled point:-that since the Diatribe cannot prove, that there is a trope in these our passages which it utterly destroys, it is compelled to cede to us, that the words are to be understood according to their plain meaning; even though it should prove, that the same trope is contained in all the other passages of Scripture, and used in common by every one. And by the gaining of this one point, all our arguments are at the same time defended, which the Diatribe designed to refute; and thus, its refutation is found to effect nothing, to do nothing, and to be nothing.

Whenever, therefore, this passage of Moses, "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh," is interpreted thus:-My long-suffering, by which I bear with the sinner, leads, indeed, others unto repentance, but it shall render Pharaoh more hardened in iniquity:-it is a pretty interpretation, but it is not proved that it ought to be so interpreted. But I am not content with what is said, I must have the proof. And that also of Paul, "He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth, "(Romans 9:18) is plausibly interpreted thus:-that is, God hardens when He does not immediately punish the sinner; and he has mercy when He immediately invites to repentance by afflictions.-But how is this interpretation proved? And also that of Isaiah 63:17, "Why hast Thou made us to err from Thy ways and hardened our heart from Thy fear?" Be it so, that Jerome interprets it thus from Origen:-He is said to 'make to err' who does not immediately recall from error. But who shall certify us that Jerome and Origen interpret rightly? It is, therefore, a settled determination with me, not to argue upon the authority of any teacher whatever, but upon that of the Scripture alone. What Origens and Jeromes does the Diatribe, then, forgetting its own determination, set before us! especially when, among all the ecclesiastical writers, there are scarcely any who have handled the Holy Scriptures less to the purpose, and more absurdly, than Origen and Jerome. In a word: this liberty of interpretation, by a new and unheard-of kind of grammar, goes to confound all things. So that, when God saith, "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh," you are to change the persons and understand it thus:-Pharaoh hardens himself by My long-suffering. God hardeneth our hearts;-that is, we harden ourselves by God's deferring the punishment. Thou, O Lord, has made us to err;-that is, we have made ourselves to err by Thy not punishing us. So also, God's having mercy, no longer signifies His giving grace, or showing mercy, or forgiving sin, or justifying, or delivering from evil, but, on the contrary, signifies bringing on evil and punishing. In fact, by these tropes matters will come to this:-you may say, that God had mercy upon the children of Israel when He sent them into Assyria and to Babylon; because, He there punished the sinners, and there invited them, by afflictions, to repentance: and that, on the other hand, when He delivered them and brought them back, He had not then mercy upon them, but hardened them; that is, by His long-suffering and mercy He gave them an occasion of becoming hardened. And also, God's sending the Saviour Christ into the world, will not be said to be the mercy, but the hardening of God; because, by this mercy, He gave men an occasion of hardening themselves. On the other hand, His destroying Jerusalem, and scattering the Jews even unto this day, is His having mercy on them; because, He punishes the sinners and invites them to repentance. Moreover, His carrying the saints away into heaven at the day of judgment, will not be in mercy, but in hardening; because, by His long-suffering, He will give them an occasion of abusing it. But His thrusting the wicked down to hell, will be His mercy; because, He punishes the sinners.-Who, I pray you, ever heard of such examples of the mercy and wrath of God as these? And be it so, that good men are made better both by the long-suffering and by the severity of God; yet, when we are speaking of the good and the bad promiscuously, these tropes, by an utter perversion of the common manner of speaking, will make, out of the mercy of God His wrath, and His wrath out of His mercy; seeing that, they call it the wrath of God when He does good, and His mercy when He afflicts.

Moreover, if God be said then to harden, when He does good and endures with long-suffering, and then to have mercy when He afflicts and punishes, why is He more particularly said to harden Pharaoh than to harden the children of Israel, or than the whole world? Did He not do good to the children of Israel? Does He not do good to the whole world? Does He not bear with the wicked? Does He not rain upon the evil and upon the good? Why is He rather said to have mercy upon the

children of Israel than upon Pharaoh? Did He not afflict the children of Israel in Egypt, and in the desert?-And be it so, that some abuse, and some rightly use, the goodness and the wrath of God; yet, according to your definition, to harden, is the same as, to indulge the wicked by long-suffering and goodness; and to have mercy, is, not to indulge, but to visit and punish. Therefore, with reference to God, He, by His continual goodness, does nothing but harden; and by His perpetual punishment, does nothing but shew mercy.

Sect. 79.-BUT this is the most excellent statement of all-'that God is said to harden, when He indulges sinners by long-suffering; but to have mercy upon them, when He visits and afflicts, and thus, by severity, invites to repentance.'-

What, I ask, did God leave undone in afflicting, punishing, and calling Pharaoh to repentance? Are there not, in His dealings with him, ten plagues recorded? If, therefore, your definition stand good, that shewing mercy, is punishing and calling the sinner immediately, God certainly had mercy upon Pharaoh! Why then does not God say, I will have mercy upon Pharaoh? Whereas He saith, "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh." For, in the very act of having mercy upon him, that is, (as you say) afflicting and punishing him, He saith, "I will harden" him; that is, as you say, I will bear with him and do him good. What can be heard of more enormous! Where are now your tropes? Where are your Origens? Where are your Jeromes? Where are all your most approved doctors whom one poor creature, Luther, daringly contradicts?-But at this rate the flesh must unawares impel the man to talk, who trifles with the words of God, and believes not their solemn importance! The text of Moses itself, therefore, incontrovertibly proves, that here, these tropes are mere inventions and things of nought, and that by those words, "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh," something else is signified far different from, and of greater importance than, doing good, or affliction and punishment; because, we cannot deny, that both were tried upon Pharaoh with the greatest care and concern. For what wrath and punishment could be more instant, than his being stricken by so many wonders and with so many plagues, that, as Moses himself testifies, the like had never been? Nay, even Pharaoh himself, repenting, was moved by them more than once; but he was not effectually moved, nor did he persevere. And what long-suffering or goodness of God could be greater, than His taking away the plagues so easily, hardening his sin so often, so often bringing back the good, and so often taking away the evil? Yet neither is of any avail, He still saith, "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh!" You see, therefore, that even if your hardening and mercy, that is, your glosses and tropes, be granted to the greatest extent, as supported by use and by example, and as seen in the case of Pharaoh, there is yet a hardening that still remains; and that the hardening of which Moses speaks must, of necessity, be one, and that of which you dream, another.

Sect. 80.-BUT since I have to fight with fiction-framers and ghosts, let me turn to ghost-raising also. Let me suppose (which is an impossibility) that the trope of which the Diatribe dreams avails in this passage; in order that I may see, which way the Diatribe will elude the being compelled to declare, that all things take place according to the will of God alone, and from necessity in us; and how it will clear God from being Himself the author and cause of our becoming hardened.-For if it be true that God is then said to "harden" when He bears with long-suffering, and does not immediately punish, these two positions still stand firm.

First, that man, nevertheless, of necessity serves sin. For when it is granted that "Free-will" cannot will any thing good, (which kind of Free-will the Diatribe undertook to prove) then, by the goodness of a long-suffering God, it becomes nothing better, but of necessity worse.-Wherefore, it still remains that all that we do, is done from necessity. And next, that God appears to be just as cruel in this bearing with us by His long-suffering, as He does by being preached, as willing to harden, by that will inscrutable. For when He sees that, "Free-will" cannot will good, but becomes worse by His enduring with long-suffering; by this very long-suffering He appears to be most cruel, and to delight in our miseries; seeing that, He could remedy them if He willed, and might not thus endure with long-suffering if He willed, nay, that He could not thus endure unless He willed; for who can compel Him against His will? That will, therefore, without which nothing is done, being admitted, and it being admitted also, that "Free-will" cannot will any thing good, all is advanced in vain that is advanced, either in excusation of God, or in accusation of "Free-will." For the language of "Free-will" is ever this:-I cannot, and God will not. What can I do! If He have mercy upon me by affliction, I shall be nothing benefited, but must of necessity become worse, unless He give me His Spirit. But this He gives me not, though He might give it me if He willed. It is certain, therefore, that He wills, not to give.

Sect. 81.-NOR do the similitudes adduced make any thing to the purpose, where it is said by the Diatribe-"As under the same sun, mud is hardened and wax melted; as by the same shower, the cultivated earth brings forth fruit, and the uncultivated earth thorns; so, by the same long-suffering of God, some are hardened and some converted."-

For, we are not now dividing "Free-will" into two different natures, and making the one like mud, the other like wax; the one like cultivated earth, the other like uncultivated earth; but we are speaking concerning that one "Free-will" equally impotent in all men; which, as it cannot will good, is nothing but mud, nothing but uncultivated earth. Nor does Paul say that God, as the potter, makes one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour, out of different kinds of clay, but He saith, "Out of the same lump, &c." (Romans 9:21) Therefore, as mud always becomes harder, and uncultivated earth always becomes more thorny; even so "Free-will," always becomes worse, both under the hardening sun of long-suffering, and under the softening shower of rain.

If, therefore, "Free-will" be of one and the same nature and impotency in all men, no reason can be given why it should attain unto grace in one, and not in another; if nothing else be preached to all, but the goodness of a long-suffering and the punishment of a mercy-shewing God. For it is a granted position, that "Free-will" in all, is alike defined to be, 'that which cannot will good.' And indeed, if it were not so, God could not elect any one, nor would there be any place left for Election; but for "Free-will" only, as choosing or refusing the long-suffering and anger of God. And if God be thus robbed of His power and wisdom to elect, what will there be remaining but that idol Fortune, under the name of which, all things take place at random! Nay, we shall at length come to this: that men may be saved and damned without God's knowing anything at all about it; as not having determined by certain election who should be saved and who should be damned; but having set before all men in general His hardening goodness and long-suffering, and His mercy shewing correction and punishment, and left them to choose for themselves whether they would be saved or damned; while He, in the mean time, should be gone, as Homer says, to an Ethiopian feast!

It is just such a God as this that Aristotle paints out to us; that is, who sleeps Himself, and leaves every one to use or abuse His long-suffering and punishment just as He will. Nor can reason, of herself, form any other judgment than the Diatribe here does. For as she herself snores over, and looks with contempt upon, divine things; she thinks concerning God, that He sleeps and snores over them too; not exercising His wisdom, will, and presence, in choosing, separating, and inspiring, but leaving the troublesome and irksome business of accepting or refusing His long-suffering and His anger, entirely to men. This is what we come to, when we attempt, by human reason, to limit and make excuses for God, not revering the secrets of His Majesty, but curiously prying into them-being lost in the glory of them, instead of making one excuse for God, we pour forth a thousand blasphemies! And forgetting ourselves, we prate like madmen, both against God and against ourselves; when we are all the while supposing, that we are, with a great deal of wisdom, speaking both for God and for ourselves.

Here then you see, what that trope and gloss of the Diatribe, will make of God. And moreover, how excellently consistent the Diatribe is with itself; which before, by its one definition, made "Free-will" one and the same in all men: and now, in the course of its argumentation, forgetting its own definition, makes one "Free-will" to be cultivated and the other uncultivated, according to the difference of works, of manners, and of men: thus making two different "Free-wills"; the one, that which cannot do good, the other, that which can do good, and that by its own powers before grace: whereas, its former definition declared, that it could not, by those its own powers, will any thing good whatever. Hence, therefore, it comes to pass, that while we do not ascribe unto the will of God only, the will and power of hardening, shewing mercy, and doing all things; we ascribe unto "Freewill" itself the power of doing all things without grace; which, nevertheless, we declared to be unable to do any good whatever without grace. The similitudes, therefore, of the sun and of the shower, make nothing at all to the purpose. The Christian would use those similitudes more rightly, if he were to make the sun and the shower to represent the Gospel, as Psalms 19:1-14 does, and as does also Hebrews 6:7; and were to make the cultivated earth to represent the elect, and the uncultivated the reprobate; for the former are, by the word, edified and made better, while the latter are offended and made worse. Or, if this distinction be not made, then, as to "Free-will" itself, that, is in all men uncultivated earth and the kingdom of Satan.

Sect. 82.-BUT let us now inquire into the reason why this trope was invented in this passage.-"It appears absurd (says the Diatribe) that God, who is not only just but also good, should be said to have hardened the heart of a man, in order that, by his iniquity, He might shew forth His own power. The same also occurred to Origen; who confesses, that the occasion of becoming hardened was given of God, but throws all the fault upon Pharaoh. He has, moreover, made a remark upon that which the Lord saith, "For this very purpose have I raised thee up." He does not say, (he observes) For this very purpose have I made thee: otherwise, Pharaoh could not have been wicked, if God had made him such an one as he was, for God beheld all His works, and they were "very good"-thus the Diatribe.

It appears then, that one of the principal causes why the words of Moses and of Paul are not received, is their absurdity. But against what article of faith does that absurdity militate? Or, who is offended at it? It is human Reason that is offended; who, being blind, deaf, impious, and sacrilegious in all the words and works of God, is, in the case of this passage, introduced as a judge of the words and works of God. According to the same argument of absurdity, you will deny

all the Articles of Faith: because, it is of all things the most absurd, and as Paul saith, foolishness to the Gentiles, and a stumbling-block to the Jews, that God should be man, the son of a virgin, crucified, and sitting at the right hand of His Father: it is, I say, absurd to believe such things. Therefore, let us invent some tropes with the Arians, and say, that Christ is not truly God. Let us invent some tropes with the Manichees, and say, that He is not truly man, but a phantom introduced by means of a virgin; or a reflection conveyed by glass, which fell, and was crucified. And in this way, we shall handle the Scriptures to excellent purpose indeed!

After all, then, the tropes amount to nothing; nor is the absurdity avoided. For it still remains absurd, (according to the judgment of reason,) that that God, who is just and good, should exact of "Free-will" impossibilities and that, when "Freewill" cannot will good and of necessity serves sin, that sin should yet be laid to its charge and that, moreover, when He does not give the Spirit, He should, nevertheless, act so severely and unmercifully, as to harden, or permit to become hardened: these things, Reason will still say, are not becoming a God good and merciful. Thus, they too far exceed her capacity; nor can she so bring herself into subjection as to believe, and judge, that the God who does such things, is good; but setting aside faith, she wants, to feel out, and see, and comprehend how He can be good, and not cruel. But she will comprehend that, when this shall be said of God:-He hardens no one, He damns no one; but He has mercy upon all, He saves all; and He has so utterly destroyed hell, that no future punishment need be dreaded. It is thus that Reason blusters and contends, in attempting to clear God, and to defend Him as just and good. But faith and the Spirit judge otherwise; who believe, that God would be good, even though he should destroy all men. And to what profit is it, to weary ourselves with all these reasonings, in order that we might throw the fault of hardening upon "Free-will"! Let all the "Free-will" in the world, do all it can with all its powers, and yet, it never will give one proof, either that it can avoid being hardened where God gives not His Spirit, or merit mercy where it is left to its own powers. And what does it signify whether it be hardened, or deserve being hardened, if the hardening be of necessity, as long as it remains in that impotency, in which, according to the testimony of the Diatribe, it cannot will good? Since, therefore, the absurdity is not taken out of the way by these tropes; or, if it be taken out of the way, greater absurdities still are introduced in their stead, and all things are ascribed unto "Free-will"; away with such useless and seducing tropes, and let us cleave close to the pure and simple Word of God!

Sect. 83.-AS to the other point-'that those things which God has made, are very good: and that God did not say, for this purpose have I made thee, but "For this purpose have I raised thee up."'-

I observe, first of all, that this, Gen. 1, concerning the works of God being very good, was said before the fall of man. But it is recorded directly after, in Genesis 3:1-24 how man became evil,-when God departed from him and left him to himself. And from this one man thus corrupt, all the wicked were born, and Pharaoh also: as Paul saith, "We were all by nature the children of wrath even as others." (Ephesians 2:8). Therefore God made Pharaoh wicked; that is, from a wicked and corrupt seed: as He saith in the Proverbs 16:4, "God hath made all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil:" that is, not by creating evil in them, but fly forming them out of a corrupt seed, and ruling over them. This therefore is not a just conclusion-God made man wicked: therefore, he is not wicked. For how can he not be wicked from a wicked seed? As Psalms 51:5, saith, "Behold I was conceived in sin." And Job 14:4, "Who can make that clean which is conceived from unclean seed?" For although God did not make sin, yet, He ceases not to form

and multiply that nature, which, from the Spirit being withdrawn, is defiled by sin. And as it is, when a carpenter makes statues of corrupt wood; so such as the nature is, such are the men made, when God creates and forms them out of that nature. Again: If you understand the words, "They were very good," as referring to the works of God after the fall, you will be pleased to observe, that this was said, not with reference to us, but with reference to God. For it is not said, Man saw all the things that God had made, and behold they were very good. Many things seem very good unto God, and are very good, which seem unto us very evil, and are considered to be very evil. Thus, afflictions, evils, errors, hell, nay, all the very best works of God, are, in the sight of the world, very evil, and even damnable. What is better than Christ and the Gospel? But what is more execrated by the world? And therefore, how those things are good in the sight of God, which are evil in our sight, is known only unto God and unto those who see with the eyes of God; that is, who have the Spirit. But there is no need of argumentation so close as this, the preceding answer is sufficient.

Sect. 84.-BUT here, perhaps, it will be asked, how can God be said to work evil in us, in the same way as He is said to harden us, to give us up to our own desires, to cause us to err, &c.?

We ought, indeed, to be content with the Word of God, and simply to believe what that saith; seeing that, the works of God are utterly unspeakable. But however, in compliance with Reason, that is, human foolery, I will just act the fool and the stupid fellow for once, and try, by a little babbling, if I can produce any effect upon her.

First, then, both Reason and the Diatribe grant, that God works all in all; and that, without Him, nothing is either done or effective, because He is Omnipotent; and because, therefore, all things come under His Omnipotence, as Paul saith to the Ephesians.

Now then, Satan and man being fallen and left of God, cannot will good; that is, those things which please God, or which God wills; but are ever turned the way of their own desires, so that they cannot but seek their own. This, therefore, their will and nature, so turned from God, cannot be a nothing: nor are Satan and the wicked man a nothing: nor are the nature and the will which they have a nothing, although it be a nature corrupt and averse. That remnant of nature, therefore, in Satan and the wicked man, of which we speak, as being the creature and work of God, is not less subject to the divine omnipotence and action, than all the rest of the creatures and works of God.

Since, therefore, God moves and does all in all, He necessarily moves and does all in Satan and the wicked man. But He so does all in them, as they themselves are, and as He finds them: that is, as they are themselves averse and evil, being carried along by that motion of the Divine Omnipotence, they cannot but do what is averse and evil. Just as it is with a man driving a horse lame on one foot, or lame on two feet; he drives him just so as the horse himself is; that is, the horse moves badly. But what can the man do? He is driving along this kind of horse together with sound horses; he, indeed, goes badly, and the rest well; but it cannot be otherwise, unless the horse be made sound.

Here then you see, that, when God works in, and by, evil men, the evils themselves are inwrought, but yet, God cannot do evil, although He thus works the evils by evil men; because, being good Himself He cannot do evil; but He uses evil instruments, which cannot escape the sway and motion of His Omnipotence. The fault, therefore, is in the instruments, which God allows not to remain action-less; seeing that, the evils are done as God Himself moves. Just in the same

manner as a carpenter would cut badly with a saw-edged or broken-edged axe. Hence it is, that the wicked man cannot but always err and sin; because, being carried along by the motion of the Divine Omnipotence, he is not permitted to remain motionless, but must will, desire, and act according to his nature. All this is fixed certainty, if we believe that God is Omnipotent!

It is, moreover, as certain, that the wicked man is the creature of God; though being averse and left to himself without the Spirit of God, he cannot will or do good. For the Omnipotence of God makes it, that the wicked man cannot evade the motion and action of God, but, being of necessity subject to it, he yields; though his corruption and aversion to God, makes him that he cannot be carried along and moved unto good. God cannot suspend His Omnipotence on account of his aversion, nor can the wicked man change his aversion. Wherefore it is, that he must continue of necessity to sin and err, until he be amended by the Spirit of God. Meanwhile, in all these, Satan goes on to reign in peace, and keeps his palace undisturbed under this motion of the Divine Omnipotence.

Sect. 85.-BUT now follows the act itself of hardening, which is thus:-The wicked man (as we have said) like his prince Satan, is turned totally the way of selfishness, and his own; he seeks not God, nor cares for the things of God; he seeks his own riches, his own glory, his own doings, his own wisdom, his own power, and, in a word, his own kingdom; and wills only to enjoy them in peace. And if any one oppose him or wish to diminish any of these things, with the same aversion to God under which he seeks these, with the same is he moved, enraged, and roused to indignation against his adversary. And he is as much unable to overcome this rage, as he is to overcome his desire of self-seeking; and he can no more avoid this seeking, than he can avoid his own existence; and this he cannot do, as being the creature of God, though a corrupt one. The same is that fury of the world against the Gospel of God. For, by the Gospel, comes that "stronger than he," who overcomes the quiet possessor of the palace, and condemns those desires of glory, of riches, of wisdom, of self-righteousness, and of all things in which he trusts. This very irritation of the wicked, when God speaks and acts contrary to what they willed, is their hardening and their galling weight. For as they are in this state of aversion from the very corruption of nature, so they become more and more averse, and worse and worse, as this aversion is opposed or turned out of its way. And thus, when God threatened to take away from the wicked Pharaoh his power, he irritated and aggravated him, and hardened his heart the more, the more He came to him with His word by Moses, making known His intention to take away his kingdom and to deliver His own people from his power: because He did not give him His Spirit within, but permitted his wicked corruption, under the dominion of Satan, to grow angry, to swell with pride, to burn with rage, and to go on still in a certain secure contempt.

Sect. 86.-LET no one think, therefore, that God, where He is said to harden, or to work evil in us (for to harden is to do evil), so does the evil as though He created evil in us anew, in the same way as a malignant liquor-seller, being himself bad, would pour poison into, or mix it up in, a vessel that was not bad, where the vessel itself did nothing but receive, or passively accomplish the purpose of the malignity of the poison-mixer. For when people hear it said by us, that God works in us both good and evil, and that we from mere necessity passively submit to the working of God, they seem to imagine, that a man who is good, or not evil himself, is passive while God works evil in him: not rightly considering that God, is far from being inactive in all His creatures, and never suffers any one of them to keep holiday. But whoever wishes to understand these things let him think

thus:-that God works evil in us, that is, by us, not from the fault of God, but from the fault of evil in us:-that is, as we are evil by nature, God, who is truly good, carrying us along by His own action, according to the nature of His Omnipotence, cannot do otherwise than do evil by us, as instruments, though He Himself be good; though by His wisdom, He overrules that evil well, to His own glory and to our salvation.

Thus God, finding the will of Satan evil, not creating it so, but leaving it while Satan sinningly commits the evil, carries it along by His working, and moves it which way He will; though that will ceases not to be evil by this motion of God. In this same way also David spoke concerning Shimei. "Let him curse, for God hath bidden him to curse David." (2 Samuel 16:10). How could God bid to curse, an action so evil and virulent! There was no where an external precept to that effect. David, therefore, looks to this:-the Omnipotent God saith and it is done: that is, He does all things by His external word. Wherefore, here, the divine action and omnipotence, the good God Himself, carries along the will of Shimei, already evil together with all his members, and before incensed against David, and, while David is thus opportunely situated and deserving such blasphemy, commands the blasphemy, (that is, by his word which is his act, that is, the motion of his action), by this evil and blaspheming instrument.

Sect. 87.-IT is thus God hardens Pharaoh-He presents to his impious and evil will His word and His work, which that will hates; that is, by its engendered and natural corruption. And thus, while God does not change by His Spirit that will within, but goes on presenting and enforcing; and while Pharaoh, considering his own resources, his riches and his power, trusts to them from the same naturally evil inclination; it comes to pass, that being inflated and uplifted by the imagination of his own greatness on the one hand, and swollen into a proud contempt of Moses coming in all humility with the unostentatious word of God on the other, he becomes hardened; and then, the more and more irritated and chafed, the more Moses advances and threatens: whereas, this his evil will would not, of itself, have been moved or hardened at all. But as the omnipotent Agent moved it by that His inevitable motion, it must of necessity will one way or the other.-And thus, as soon as he presented to it outwardly, that which naturally irritated and offended it, then it was, that Pharaoh could not avoid becoming hardened; even as he could not avoid the action of the Divine Omnipotence, and the aversion or enmity of his own will.

Wherefore, the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart by God, is wrought thus,:-God presents outwardly to his enmity, that which he naturally hates; and then, He ceases not to move within, by His omnipotent motion, the evil will which He there finds. He, from the enmity of his will, cannot but hate that which is contrary to him, and trust to his own powers; and that, so obstinately, that he can neither hear nor feel, but is carried away, in the possession of Satan, like a madman or a fury.

If I have brought these things home with convincing persuasion, the victory in this point is mine. And having exploded the tropes and glosses of men, I understand the words of God simply; so that, there is no necessity for clearing God or accusing Him of iniquity. For when He saith, "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh," He speaks simply: as though He Should say, I will so work, that the heart of Pharaoh shall be hardened: or, by My operation and working, the heart of Pharaoh shall be hardened. And how this was to be done, we have heard:-that is, by My general motion, I will so move his very evil will, that he shall go on in his course and lust of willing, nor will I cease to move it, nor can I do otherwise. I will, nevertheless, present to him My word and work; against which,

that evil impetus will run; for he, being evil, cannot but will evil while I move him by the power of My Omnipotence.

Thus God with the greatest certainty knew, and with the greatest certainty declared, that Pharaoh would be hardened; because, He with the greatest certainty knew, that the will of Pharaoh could neither resist the motion of His Omnipotence, nor put away its own enmity, nor receive its adversary Moses; and that, as that evil will still remained, he must, of necessity, become worse, more hardened, and more proud, while, by his course and impetus, trusting to his own powers, he ran against that which he would not receive, and which he despised.

Here therefore, you see, it is confirmed even by this very Scripture, that "Free-will" can do nothing but evil, while God, who is not deceived from ignorance nor lies from iniquity, so surely promises the hardening of Pharaoh; because, He was certain, that an evil will could will nothing but evil, and that, as the good which it hated was presented to it, it could not but wax worse and worse.

Sect. 88.-IT now then remains, that perhaps some one may ask-Why then does not God cease from that motion of His Omnipotence, by which the will of the wicked is moved to go on in evil, and to become worse? I answer: this is to wish that God, for the sake of the wicked, would cease to be God; for this you really desire, when you desire His power and action to cease; that is, that He should cease to be good, lest the wicked should become worse.

Again, it may be asked-Why does He not then change, in His motion, those evil wills which He moves? This belongs to those secrets of Majesty, where "His judgments are past finding out." Nor is it ours to search into, but to adore these mysteries. If "flesh and blood" here take offence and murmur, let it murmur, but it will be just where it was before. God is not, on that account, changed! And if numbers of the wicked be offended and "go away," yet, the elect shall remain! The same answer will be given to those who ask-Why did He permit Adam to fall? And why did He make all of us to be infected with the same sin, when He might have kept him, and might have created us from some other seed, or might first have cleansed that, before He created us from it?-

God is that Being, for whose will no cause or reason is to be assigned, as a rule or standard by which it acts; seeing that, nothing is superior or equal to it, but it is itself the rule of all things. For if it acted by any rule or standard, or from any cause or reason, it would be no longer the will of GOD. Wherefore, what God wills, is not therefore right, because He ought or ever was bound so to will; but on the contrary, what takes place is therefore right, because He so wills. A cause and reason are assigned for the will of the creature, but not for the will of the Creator; unless you set up, over Him, another Creator.

Sect. 89.-BY these arguments, I presume, the trope-inventing Diatribe, together with its trope, are sufficiently confuted. Let us, however, come to the text itself, for the purpose of seeing, what agreement there is between the text and the trope. For it is the way with all those who elude arguments by means of tropes, to hold the text itself in sovereign contempt, and to aim only, at picking out a certain term, and twisting and crucifying it upon the cross of their own opinion, without paying any regard whatever, either to circumstance, to consequence, to precedence, or to the intention or object of the author. Thus the Diatribe, in this passage, utterly disregarding the intention of Moses and the scope of his words, tears out of the text this term, "I will harden," and makes of it just what it will, according to its own lust: not at all considering, whether that can be

again inserted so as to agree and square with the body of the text. And this is the reason why the Scripture was not sufficiently clear to those most received and most learned men of so many ages. And no wonder, for even the sun itself would not shine, if it should be assailed by such arts as these. But (to say nothing about that, which I have already proved from the Scriptures, that Pharaoh cannot rightly be said to be hardened, 'because, being borne with by the long-suffering of God, he was not immediately punished,' seeing that, he was punished by so many plagues;) if hardening be 'bearing with divine long-suffering and not immediately punishing;' what need was there that God should so many times promise that He would then harden the heart of Pharaoh when the signs should be wrought, who now, before those signs were wrought, and before that hardening, was such, that, being inflated with his success, prosperity and wealth, and being borne with by the divine long-suffering and not punished, inflicted so many evils on the children of Israel? You see, therefore, that this trope of yours makes not at all to the purpose in this passage; seeing that, it applies generally unto all, as sinning because they are borne with by the divine long-suffering. And thus, we shall be compelled to say, that all are hardened, seeing that, there is no one who does not sin; and that, no one sins, but he who is borne with by the divine long-suffering. Wherefore, this hardening of Pharaoh, is another hardening, independent of that general hardening as produced by the long-suffering of the divine goodness.

Sect. 90.-THE more immediate design of Moses then is, to announce, not so much the hardening of Pharaoh, as the veracity and mercy of God; that is, that the children of Israel might not distrust the promise of God, wherein He promised, that He would deliver them. (Exodus 6:1). And since this was a matter of the greatest moment, He foretells them the difficulty, that they might not fall away from their faith; knowing, that all those things which were foretold must be accomplished in the order in which, He who had made the promise, had arranged them. As if He had said, I will deliver you, indeed, but you will with difficulty believe it; because, Pharaoh will so resist, and put off the deliverance. Nevertheless, believe ye; for the whole of his putting off shall, by My way of operation, only be the means of My working the more and greater miracles to your confirmation in faith, and to the display of My power; that henceforth, ye might the more steadily believe Me upon all other occasions. In the same way does Christ also act, when, at the last supper, He promises His disciples a kingdom. He foretells them numberless difficulties, such as, His own death and their many tribulations; to the intent that, when it should come to pass, they might afterwards the more steadily believe. And Moses by no means obscurely sets forth this meaning, where he saith, "But Pharaoh shall not send you away, that many wonders might be wrought in Egypt." And again, "For this purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew in thee My power; that My name might be declared throughout all the earth." (Exodus 9:16; Romans 9:17). Here, you see that Pharaoh was for this purpose hardened, that he might resist God and put off the redemption; in order that, there might be an occasion given for the working of signs, and for the display of the power of God, that He might be declared and believed on throughout all the earth. And what is this but shewing, that all these things were said and done to confirm faith, and to comfort the weak, that they might afterwards freely believe in God as true, faithful, powerful, and merciful? Just as though He had spoken to them in the kindest manner, as to little children, and had said, Be not terrified at the hardness of Pharaoh, for I work that very hardness Myself; and I, who deliver you, have it in My own hand. I will only use it, that I may thereby work many signs, and declare My Majesty, for the furtherance of your faith. And this is the reason why Moses generally after each plague repeats, "And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, so that he would not let the people go; as the Lord had

spoken." (Exodus 7:13, Exodus 7:22; Exodus 8:15, Exodus 8:32; Exodus 9:12, etc.). What is the intent of this, "as the Lord had spoken," but, that the Lord might appear true, who had foretold that he should be hardened?-Now, if there had been any vertibility or liberty of will in Pharaoh, which could turn either way, God could not with such certainty have foretold his hardening. But as He promised, who could neither be deceived nor lie, it of certainty and of necessity came to pass, that he was hardened: which could not have taken place, had not the hardening been totally apart from the power of man, and in the power of God alone, in the same manner as I said before; viz. from God being certain, that He should not omit the general operation of His Omnipotence in Pharaoh, or on Pharaoh's account; nay, that He could not omit it.

Moreover, God was equally certain, that the will of Pharaoh; being naturally evil and averse, could not consent to the word and work of God, which was contrary to it, and that, therefore, while the impetus of willing was preserved in Pharaoh by the Omnipotence of God, and while the hated word and work was continually set before his eyes without, nothing else could take place in Pharaoh, but offence and the hardening of his heart. For if God had then omitted the action of His Omnipotence in Pharaoh, when He set before him the word of Moses which he hated, and the will of Pharaoh might be supposed to have acted alone by its own power, then, perhaps, there might have been room for a discussion, which way it had power to turn. But now, since it was led on and carried away by its own willing, no violence was done to its will, because it was not forced against its will, but was carried along, by the natural operation of God, to will naturally just as it was by nature, that is, evil; and therefore, it could not but run against the word, and thus become hardened. Hence we see, that this passage makes most forcibly against "Freewill"; and in this way-God who promised could not lie, and if He could not lie, then Pharaoh could not but be hardened.

Sect. 91.-BUT let us also look into Paul, who takes up this passage of Moses, Romans 9:1-33. How miserably is the Diatribe tortured with that part of the Scripture! Lest it should lose its hold of "Freewill," it puts on every shape. At one time it says, 'that there is a necessity of the consequence, but not a necessity of the thing consequent.' At another, 'that there is an ordinary will, or will of the sign, which may be resisted; and a will of decree, which cannot be resisted.' At another, 'that those passages adduced from Paul do not contend for, do not speak about, the salvation of man.' In one place it says 'that the prescience of God does impose necessity:' in another, 'that it does not impose necessity.' Again, in another place it asserts, 'that grace prevents the will that it might will, and then attends it as it proceeds and brings it to a happy issue.' Here it states, 'that the first cause does all things itself:' and directly afterwards, 'that it acts by second causes, remaining itself inactive.' By these and the like sportings with words, it does nothing but fill up its time, and at the same time obscure the subject point from our sight, drawing us aside to something else. So stupid and doltish does it imagine us to be, that it thinks we feel no more interested in the cause than it feels itself. Or, as little children, when fearing the rod or at play, cover their eyes with their hands, and think, that as they see nobody themselves, nobody sees them; so the Diatribe, not being able to endure the brightness, nay the lightning of the most clear Scriptures, pretending by every kind of maneuver that it does not see, (which is in truth the case) wishes to persuade us that our eyes are also so covered that we cannot see. But all these maneuvers, are but evidences of a convicted mind rashly struggling against invincible truth. That figment about 'the necessity of the consequence, but not the necessity of the thing consequent,'

has been before refuted. Let then Erasmus invent and invent again, cavil and cavil again, as much as he will-if God foreknew that Judas would be a traitor, Judas became a traitor of necessity; nor was it in the power of Judas nor of any other creature to alter it, or to change that will; though he did what he did willingly, not by compulsion; for that willing of his was his own work; which God, by the motion of His Omnipotence, moved on into action, as He does everything else.-God does not lie, nor is He deceived. This is a truth evident and invincible. There are no obscure or ambiguous words here, even though all the most learned men of all ages should be so blinded as to think and say to the contrary. How much soever, therefore, you may turn your back upon it, yet, the convicted conscience of yourself and all men is compelled to confess, that, IF GOD BE NOT DECEIVED IN THAT WHICH HE FOREKNOWS, THAT WHICH HE FOREKNOWS MUST, OF NECESSITY, TAKE PLACE. If it were not so, who could believe His promises, who would fear His threatenings, if what He promised or threatened did not of necessity take place! Or, how could He promise or threaten, if His prescience could be deceived or hindered by our mutability! This all-clear light of certain truth manifestly stops the mouths of all, puts an end to all questions, and forever settles the victory over all evasive subtleties.

We know, indeed, that the prescience of man is fallible. We know that an eclipse does not therefore take place, because it is foreknown; but, that it is therefore foreknown, because it is to take place. But what have we to do with this prescience? We are disputing about the prescience of God! And if you do not ascribe to this, the necessity of the consequent foreknown, you take away faith and the fear of God, you destroy the force of all the divine promises and threatenings, and thus deny divinity itself. But, however, the Diatribe itself, after having held out for a long time and tried all things, and being pressed hard by the force of truth, at last confesses my sentiment: saying-

Sect. 92.-"THE question concerning the will and predestination of God, is somewhat difficult. For God wills those same things which He foreknows. And this is the substance of what Paul subjoins, "Who hath resisted His will," if He have mercy on whom He will, and harden whom He will? For if there were a king who could effect whatever he chose, and no one could resist him, he would be said to do whatsoever he willed. So the will of God, as it is the principal cause of all things which take place, seems to impose a necessity on our will."-Thus the Diatribe. At last then I give thanks to God for a sound sentence in the Diatribe! Where now then is "Free-will"?-But again this slippery eel is twisted aside in a moment, saying,

-"But Paul does not explain this point, he only rebukes the disputer; "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God!" (Romans 9:20)-

O notable evasion! Is this the way to handle the Holy Scriptures, thus to make a declaration upon ones own authority, and out of ones own brain, without a Scripture, without a miracle, nay, to corrupt the most clear words of God? What! does not Paul explain that point? What does he then? 'He only rebukes the disputer,' says the Diatribe. And is not that rebuke the most complete explanation? For what was inquired into by that question concerning the will of God? Was it not this-whether or not it imposed a necessity on our will? Paul, then, answers that it is thus:-"He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." (Romans 9:15-16, Romans 9:18). Moreover, not content with this explanation, he introduces those who murmur against this

explanation in their defence of "Free-will," and prate that there is no merit allowed, that we are damned when the fault is not our own, and the like, and stops their murmuring and indignation: saying, "Thou wilt say then, Why doth He yet find fault? for who hath resisted His will?" (Romans 9:19). Do you not see that this is addressed to those, who, hearing that the will of God imposes necessity on us, say, "Why doth He yet find fault?" That is, Why does God thus insist, thus urge, thus exact, thus find fault? Why does He accuse, why does He reprove, as though we men could do what He requires if we would? He has no just cause for thus finding fault; let Him rather accuse His own will; let Him find fault with that; let Him press His requirement upon that; "For who hath resisted His will?" Who can obtain mercy if He wills not? Who can become softened if He wills to harden? It is not in our power to change His will, much less to resist it, where He wills us to be hardened; by that will, therefore, we are compelled to be hardened, whether we will or no.

If Paul had not explained this question, and had not stated to a certainty, that necessity is imposed on us by the prescience of God, what need was there for his introducing the murmurers and complainers saying, That His will cannot be resisted? For who would have murmured or been indignant, if he had not found necessity to be stated? Paul’s words are not ambiguous where he speaks of resisting the will of God. Is there any thing ambiguous in what resisting is, or what His will is? Is it at all ambiguous concerning what he is speaking, when he speaks concerning the will of God? Let the myriads of the most approved doctors be blind; let them pretend, if they will, that the Scriptures are not quite clear, and that they tremble at a difficult question; we have words the most clear which plainly speak thus: "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth:" and also, "Thou wilt say to me then, Why doth He yet complain, for who hath resisted His will?" The question, therefore, is not difficult; nay, nothing can be more plain to common sense, than that this conclusion is certain, stable, and true:-if it be pre-established from the Scriptures, that God neither errs nor is deceived; then, whatever God foreknows, must, of necessity, take place. It would be a difficult question indeed, nay, an impossibility, I confess, if you should attempt to establish, both the prescience of God, and the "Free-Will" of man. For what could be more difficult, nay a greater impossibility, than to attempt to prove, that contradictions do not clash; or that a number may, at the same time, be both nine and ten? There is no difficulty on our side of the question, but it is sought for and introduced, just as ambiguity and obscurity are sought for and violently introduced into the Scriptures. The apostle, therefore, restrains the impious who are offended at these most clear words, by letting them know, that the divine will is accomplished, by necessity in us; and by letting them know also, that it is defined to a certainty, that they have nothing of liberty or "Free-will" left, but that all things depend upon the will of God alone. But he restrains them in this way:-by commanding them to be silent, and to revere the majesty of the divine power and will, over which we have no control, but which has over us a full control to do whatever it will. And yet it does us no injury, seeing that it is not indebted to us, it never received any thing from us, it never promised us any thing but what itself pleased and willed.

06.10b Discussion: Second Part (Sections 93 - 113)

Sect. 93.-THIS, therefore, is not the place, this is not the time for adoring those Corycian caverns, but for adoring the true Majesty in its to-be-feared, wonderful, and incomprehensible judgments; and saying, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10). Whereas, we are no where more irreverent and rash, than in trespassing and arguing upon these very inscrutable mysteries and judgments. And while we are pretending to a great reverence in searching the Holy Scriptures, those which God has commanded to be searched, we search not; but those which He has forbidden us to search into, those we search into and none other; and that with an unceasing temerity, not to say, blasphemy. For is it not searching with temerity, when we attempt to make the all-free prescience of God to harmonize with our freedom, prepared to derogate prescience from God, rather than lose our own liberty? Is it not temerity, when He imposes necessity upon us, to say, with murmurings and blasphemies, "Why doth He yet find fault? for who hath resisted His will?" (Romans 9:19). Where is the God by nature most merciful? Where is He who "willeth not the death of a sinner?" Has He then created us for this purpose only, that He might delight Himself in the torments of men? And many things of the same kind, which will be howled forth by the damned in hell to all eternity. But however, natural Reason herself is compelled to confess, that the living and true God must be such an one as, by His own liberty, to impose necessity on us. For He must be a ridiculous God, or idol rather, who did not, to a certainty, foreknow the future, or was liable to be deceived in events, when even the Gentiles ascribed to their gods 'fate inevitable." And He would be equally ridiculous, if He could not do and did not all things, or if any thing could be done without Him. If then the prescience and omnipotence of God be granted, it naturally follows, as an irrefragable consequence that we neither were made by ourselves, nor live by ourselves, nor do any thing by ourselves, but by His Omnipotence. And since He at the first foreknew that we should be such, and since He has made us such, and moves and rules over us as such, how, I ask, can it be pretended, that there is any liberty in us to do, in any respect, otherwise than He at first foreknew and now proceeds in action!

Wherefore, the prescience and Omnipotence of God, are diametrically opposite to our "Free-will." And it must be, that either God is deceived in His prescience and errs in His action, (which is impossible) or we act, and are acted upon, according to His prescience and action.-But by the Omnipotence of God, I mean, not that power by which He does not many things that He could do, but that actual power by which He powerfully works all in all, in which sense the Scripture calls Him Omnipotent. This Omnipotence and prescience of God, I say, utterly abolishes the doctrine of "Free-will." No pretext can here be framed about the obscurity of the Scripture, or the difficulty of the subject-point: the words are most clear, and known to every school-boy; and the point is plain and easy and stands proved by judgment of common sense; so that the series of ages, of times, or of persons, either writing or teaching to the contrary, be it as great as it may, amounts to nothing at all.

Sect. 94.-BUT it is this, that seems to give the greatest offence to common sense or natural reason,-that the God, who is set forth as being so full of mercy and goodness, should, of His mere

will, leave men, harden them, and damn them, as though He delighted in the sins, and in the great and eternal torments of the miserable. To think thus of God, seems iniquitous, cruel, intolerable; and it is this that has given offence to so many and great men of so many ages. And who would not be offended? I myself have been offended more than once, even unto the deepest abyss of desperation; nay, so far, as even to wish that I had never been born a man; that is, before I was brought to know how healthful that desperation was, and how near it was unto grace. Here it is, that there has been so much toiling and labouring, to excuse the goodness of God, and to accuse the will of man. Here it is, that distinctions have been invented between the ordinary will of God and the absolute will of God: between the necessity of the consequence, and the necessity of the thing consequent: and many other inventions of the same kind. By which, nothing has ever been effected but an imposition upon the un-learned, by vanities of words, and by "oppositions of science falsely so called." For after all, a conscious conviction has been left deeply rooted in the heart both of the learned and the unlearned, if ever they have come to an experience of these things; and a knowledge, that our necessity, is a consequence that must follow upon the belief of the prescience and Omnipotence of God. And even natural Reason herself, who is so offended at this necessity, and who invents so many contrivances to take it out of the way, is compelled to grant it upon her own conviction from her own judgment, even though there were no Scripture at all. For all men find these sentiments written in their hearts, and they acknowledge and approve them (though against their will) whenever they hear them treated on.-First, that God is Omnipotent, not only in power but in action (as I said before): and that, if it were not so, He would be a ridiculous God.-And next, that He knows and foreknows all things, and neither can err nor be deceived. These two points then being granted by the hearts and minds of all, they are at once compelled, from an inevitable consequence, to admit,-that we are not made from our own will, but from necessity: and moreover, that we do not what we will according to the law of "Free-will," but as God foreknew and proceeds in action, according to His infallible and immutable counsel and power. Wherefore, it is found written alike in the hearts of all men, that there is no such thing as "Free-will"; though that writing be obscured by so many contending disputations, and by the great authority of so many men who have, through so many ages, taught otherwise. Even as every other law also, which, according to the testimony of Paul, is written in our hearts, is then acknowledged when it is rightly set forth, and then obscured, when it is confused by wicked teachers, and drawn aside by other opinions.

Sect. 95.-I NOW return to Paul. If he does not, Rom. ix., explain this point, nor clearly state our necessity from the prescience and will of God; what need was there for him to introduce the similitude of the "potter," who, of the "same lump" of clay, makes "one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?" (Romans 9:21). What need was there for him to observe, that the thing formed does not say to him that formed it, "Why hast thou made me thus?" (Romans 9:20). He is there speaking of men; and he compares them to clay, and God to a potter. This similitude, therefore, stands coldly useless, nay, is introduced ridiculously and in vain, if it be not his sentiment, that we have no liberty whatever. Nay, the whole of the argument of Paul, wherein he defends grace, is in vain. For the design of the whole epistle is to shew, that we can do nothing, even when we seem to do well; as he in the same epistle testifies, where he says, that Israel which followed after righteousness, did not attain unto righteousness; but that the Gentiles which followed not after it did attain unto it. (Romans 9:30-31). Concerning which I shall speak more at large hereafter, when I produce my forces. The fact is, the Diatribe designedly keeps back the

body of Paul’s argument and its scope, and comfortably satisfies itself with prating upon a few detached and corrupted terms. Nor does the exhortation which Paul afterwards gives, Romans 11:1-36, at all help the Diatribe; where he saith, "Thou standest by faith, be not high-minded;" (Romans 11:20), again, "and they also, if they shall believe, shall be grafted in, &c. (Romans 11:23);" for he says nothing there about the ability of man, but brings forth imperative and conditional expressions; and what effect they are intended to produce, has been fully shewn already. Moreover, Paul, there anticipating the boasters of "Free-will," does not say, they can believe, but he saith, "God is able to graft them in again.." (Romans 11:23). To be brief: The Diatribe moves along with so much hesitation, and so lingeringly, in handling these passages of Paul, that its conscience seems to give the lie to all that it writes. For just at the point where it ought to have gone on to the proof, it for the most part, stops short with a ’But of this enough;’ ’But I shall not now proceed with this;’ ’But this is not my present purpose;’ ’But here they should have said so and so;’ and many evasions of the same kind; and it leaves off the subject just in the middle; so that, you are left in uncertainty whether it wished to be understood as speaking on "Free-will," or whether it was only evading the sense of Paul by means of vanities of words. And all this is being just in its character, as not having a serious thought upon the cause in which it is engaged. But as for me I dare not be thus cold, thus always on the tip-toe of policy, or thus move to and fro as a reed shaken with the wind. I must assert with certainty, with constancy, and with ardour; and prove what I assert solidly, appropriately, and fully.

Sect. 96.-AND now, how excellently does the Diatribe preserve liberty in harmony with necessity, where it says-"Nor does all necessity exclude "Free-will." For instance: God the Father begets a son, of necessity; but yet, He begets him willingly and freely, seeing that, He is not forced."-

Am I here, I pray you, disputing about compulsion and force? Have I not said in all my books again and again, that my dispute, on this subject, is about the necessity of immutability? I know that the Father begets willingly, and that Judas willingly betrayed Christ. But I say, this willing, in the person of Judas, was decreed to take place from immutability and certainty, if God foreknew it. Or, if men do not yet understand what I mean,-I make two necessities: the one a necessity of force, in reference to the act; the other a necessity of immutability in reference to the time. Let him, therefore, who wishes to hear what I have to say, understand, that I here speak of the latter, not of the former: that is, I do not dispute whether Judas became a traitor willingly or unwillingly, but whether or not it was decreed to come to pass, that Judas should will to betray Christ at a certain time infallibly predetermined of God! But only listen to what the Diatribe says upon this point-"With reference to the immutable prescience of God, Judas was of necessity to become a traitor; nevertheless, Judas had it in his power to change his own will."-

Dost thou understand, friend Diatribe, what thou sayest? (To say nothing of that which has been already proved, that the will cannot will any thing but evil.) How could Judas change his own will, if the immutable prescience of God stand granted! Could he change the prescience of God and render it fallible!

Here the Diatribe gives it up, and, leaving its standard, and throwing down its arms, runs from its post, and hands over the discussion to the subtleties of the schools concerning the necessity of the consequence and of the thing consequent: pretending-’that it does not wish to engage in the discussion of points so nice.’- A step of policy truly, friend Diatribe!-When you have brought the

subject-point into the midst of the field, and just when the champion-disputant was required, then you shew your back, and leave to others the business of answering and defining. But you should have taken this step at the first, and abstained from writing altogether. 'He who ne'er proved the training-field of arms, let him ne'er in the battle's brunt appear.' For it never was expected of Erasmus that he should remove that difficulty which lies in God's foreknowing all things, and our, nevertheless, doing all things by contingency: this difficulty existed in the world long before ever the Diatribe saw the light: but yet, it was expected that he should make some kind of answer, and give some kind of definition. Whereas he, by using a rhetorical transition, drags away us, knowing nothing of rhetoric, along with himself, as though we were here contending for a thing of nought, and were engaged in quibbling about insignificant niceties; and thus, nobly betakes himself out of the midst of the field, bearing the crowns both of the scholar and the conqueror. But not so, brother! There is no rhetoric of sufficient force to cheat an honest conscience. The voice of conscience is proof against all powers and figures of eloquence. I cannot here suffer a rhetorician to pass on under the cloak of dissimulation. This is not a time for such maneuvering. This is that part of the discussion, where matters come to the turning point. Here is the hinge upon which the whole turns. Here, therefore, "Free-will" must be completely vanquished, or completely triumph. But here you, seeing your danger, nay, the certainty of the victory over "Free-will," pretend that you see nothing but argumentative niceties. Is this to act the part of a faithful theologian? Can you feel a serious interest in your cause, who thus leave your auditors in suspense, and your arguments in a state that confuses and exasperates them, while you, nevertheless, wish to appear to have given honest satisfaction and open explanation? This craft and cunning might, perhaps, be borne with in profane subjects, but in a theological subject, where simple and open truth is the object required, for the salvation of souls, it is utterly hateful and intolerable!

Sect. 97.-THE Sophists also felt the invincible and insupportable force of this argument, and therefore they invented the necessity of the consequence and of the thing consequent. But to what little purpose this figment is, I have shewn already. For they do not all the while observe, what they are saying, and what conclusions they are admitting against themselves. For if you grant the necessity of the consequence, "Free-will" lies vanquished and prostrate, nor does either the necessity, or the contingency of the thing consequent, profit it anything. What is it to me if "Free-will" be not compelled, but do what it does willingly? It is enough for me, that you grant, that it is of necessity, that it does willingly what it does; and that, it cannot do otherwise if God foreknew it would be so.

If God foreknew, either that Judas would be a traitor, or that he would change his willing to be a traitor, whichsoever of the two God foreknew, must, of necessity, take place, or God will be deceived in His prescience and prediction, which is impossible. This is the effect of the necessity of the consequence, that is, if God foreknows a thing, that thing must of necessity take place; that is, there is no such thing as "Free-will." This necessity of the consequence, therefore, is not 'obscure or ambiguous;' so that, even if the doctors of all ages were blinded, yet they must admit it, because it is so manifest and plain, as to be actually palpable. And as to the necessity of the thing consequent, with which they comfort themselves, that is a mere phantom, and is in diametrical opposition to the necessity of the consequence. For example: The necessity of the consequence is, (so to set it forth,) God foreknows that Judas will be a traitor-therefore it will certainly and infallibly come to pass, that Judas shall be a traitor. Against this necessity of the

consequence, you comfort yourself thus:-But since Judas can change his willing to betray, therefore, there is no necessity of the thing consequent. How, I ask you, will these two positions harmonize, Judas is able to will not to betray, and, Judas must of necessity will to betray? Do not these two directly contradict and militate against each other? But he will not be compelled, you say, to betray against his will. What is that to the purpose? You were speaking of the necessity of the thing consequent; and saying, that that need not, of necessity, follow, from the necessity of the consequence; you were not speaking of the compulsive necessity of the thing consequent. The question was, concerning the necessity of the thing consequent, and you produce an example concerning the compulsive necessity of the thing consequent. I ask one thing, and you answer another. But this arises from that yawning sleepiness, under which you do not observe, what nothingness that figment amounts to, concerning the necessity of the thing consequent.

Suffice it to have spoken thus to the former part of this SECOND PART, which has been concerning the hardening of Pharaoh, and which involves, indeed, all the Scriptures, and all our forces, and those invincible. Now let us proceed to the remaining part concerning Jacob and Esau, who are spoken of as being "not yet born." (Romans 9:11).

Sect. 98.-THIS place the Diatribe evades by saying-'that it does not properly pertain to the salvation of man. For God (it says) may will that a man shall be a servant, or a poor man; and yet, not reject him from eternal salvation.'-

Only observe, I pray you, how many evasions and ways of escape a slippery mind will invent, which would flee from the truth, and yet cannot get away from it after all. Be it so, that this passage does not pertain to the salvation of man, (to which point I shall speak hereafter), are we to suppose, then, that Paul who adduces it, does so, for no purpose whatever? Shall we make Paul to be ridiculous, or a vain trifler, in a discussion so serious? But all this breathes nothing but Jerome, who dares to say, in more places than one, with a supercilious brow and a sacrilegious mouth, 'that those things are made to be of force in Paul, which, in their own places, are of no force.' This is no less than saying, that Paul, where he lays the foundation of the Christian doctrine, does nothing but corrupt the Holy Scriptures, and delude believing souls with sentiments hatched out of his own brain, and violently thrust into the Scriptures.-Is this honouring the Holy Spirit in Paul, that sanctified and elect instrument of God! Thus, when Jerome ought to be read with judgment, and this saying of his to be numbered among those many things which that man impiously wrote, (such was his yawning inconsiderateness, and his stupidity in understanding the Scriptures), the Diatribe drags him in without any judgment; and not thinking it right, that his authority should be lessened by any mitigating gloss whatever, takes him as a most certain oracle, whereby to judge of, and attemper the Scriptures. And thus it is; we take the impious sayings of men as rules and guides in the Holy Scripture, and then wonder that it should become 'obscure and ambiguous;' and that so many fathers should be blind in it; whereas, the whole proceeds from this impious and sacrilegious Reason.

Sect. 99.-LET him, then, be anathema who shall say, 'that those things which are of no force in their own places are made to be of force in Paul.' This, however, is only said, it is not proved. And it is said by those, who understand neither Paul, nor the passages adduced by him, but are deceived by terms; that is, by their own impious interpretations of them. And if it be allowed that this passage, Genesis 25:21-23 is to be understood in a temporal sense (which is not the true

sense) yet it is rightly and effectually adduced by Paul, when he proves from it, that it was not of the "merits" of Jacob and Esau, "but of Him that calleth," that it was said unto Rebecca, "the elder shall serve the younger." (Romans 9:11-16).

Paul is argumentatively considering, whether or not they attained unto that which was said of them, by the power or merits of "Free-will"; and he proves, that they did not; but that Jacob attained unto that, unto which Esau attained not, solely by the grace "of Him that calleth." And he proves that, by the incontrovertible words of the Scripture: that is, that they were "not yet born:" and also, that they had "done neither good nor evil." This proof contains the weighty sum of his whole subject point: and by the same proof, our subject point is settled also. The Diatribe, however, having dissemblingly passed over all these particulars, with an excellent rhetorical fetch, does not here argue at all upon merit, (which, nevertheless, it undertook to do, and which this subject point of Paul requires), but cavils about temporal bondage, as though that were at all to the purpose;-but it is merely that it might not seem to be overthrown by the all-forcible words of Paul. For what had it, which it could yelp against Paul in support of "Free-will"? What did "Free-will" do for Jacob, or what did it do against Esau, when it was already determined, by the prescience and predestination of God, before either of them was born, what should be the portion of each; that is, that the one should serve, and the other rule? Thus the rewards were decreed, before the workmen wrought, or were born. It is to this that the Diatribe ought to have answered. Paul contends for this:-that neither had done either good or evil: and yet, that by the divine sentence, the one was decreed to be servant, the other lord. The question here, is not, whether that servitude pertained unto salvation, but from what merit it was imposed on him who had not deserved it. But it is wearisome to contend with these depraved attempts to pervert and evade the Scripture.

Sect. 100.-BUT however, that Moses does not intend their servitude only, and that Paul is perfectly right, in understanding it concerning eternal salvation, is manifest from the text itself. And although this is somewhat wide of our present purpose, yet I will not suffer Paul to be contaminated with the calumnies of the sacrilegious. The oracle in Moses is thus-"Two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels, and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." (Genesis 25:23).

Here, manifestly, are two people distinctly mentioned. The one, though the younger, is received into the grace of God; to the intent that, he might overcome the other; not by his own strength, indeed, but by a favouring God: for how could the younger overcome the elder unless God were with him!

Since, therefore, the younger was to be the people of God, it is not only the external rule or servitude which is there spoken of, but all that pertains to the spirit of God; that is, the blessing, the word, the Spirit, the promise of Christ, and the everlasting kingdom. And this the Scripture more fully confirms afterwards, where it describes Jacob as being blessed, and receiving the promises and the kingdom.

All this Paul briefly intimates, where he saith, "The elder shall serve the younger:" and he sends us to Moses, who treats upon the particulars more fully. So that you may say, in reply to the sacrilegious sentiment of Jerome and the Diatribe, that these passages which Paul adduces have more force in their own place than they have in his Epistle. And this is true also, not of Paul only,

but of all the Apostles; who adduce Scriptures as testimonies and assertions of their own sentiments. But it would be ridiculous to adduce that as a testimony, which testifies nothing, and does not make at all to the purpose. And even if there were some among the philosophers so ridiculous as to prove that which was unknown, by that which was less known still, or by that which was totally irrelevant to the subject, with what face can we attribute such kind of proceeding to the greatest champions and authors of the Christian doctrines, especially, since they teach those things which are the essential articles of faith, and on which the salvation of souls depends? But such a face becomes those who, in the Holy Scriptures, feel no serious interest whatever.

Sect. 101.-AND with respect to that of Malachi which Paul annexes, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated;" (Malachi 1:2-3). that, the Diatribe perverts by a threefold contrivance. The first is - "If (it says) you stick to the letter, God does not love as we love, nor does He hate any one: because, passions of this kind do not pertain unto God."-

What do I hear! Are we now inquiring whether or not God loves and hates, and not rather why He loves and hates? Our inquiry is, from what merit it is in us that He loves or hates. We know well enough, that God does not love or hate as we do; because, we love and hate mutably, but He loves and hates from an eternal and immutable nature; and hence it is, that accidents and passions do not pertain unto Him. And it is this very state of the truth, that of necessity proves "Free-will" to be nothing at all; seeing that, the love and hatred of God towards men is immutable and eternal; existing, not only before there was any merit or work of "Free-will," but before the worlds were made; and that, all things take place in us from necessity, accordingly as He loved or loved not from all eternity. So that, not the love of God only, but even the manner of His love imposes on us necessity. Here then it may be seen, how much its invented ways of escape profit the Diatribe; for the more it attempts to get away from the truth, the more it runs upon it; with so little success does it fight against it! But be it so, that your trope stands good-that the love of God is the effect of love, and the hatred of God the effect of hatred. Does, then, that effect take place without, and independent of, the will of God? Will you here say also, that God does not will as we do, and that the passion of willing does not pertain to Him? If then those effects take place, they do not take place but according to the will of God. Hence, therefore, what God wills, that He loves and hates. Now then, tell me, for what merit did God love Jacob or hate Esau, before they wrought, or were born? Wherefore it stands manifest, that Paul most rightly adduces Malachi in support of the passage from Moses: that is, that God therefore called Jacob before he was born, because He loved him; but that He was not first loved by Jacob, nor moved to love him from any merit in him. So that, in the cases of Jacob and Esau, it is shewn-what ability there is in our "Free-will"!

Sect. 102.-THE second contrivance is this: -'that Malachi does not seem to speak of that hatred by which we are damned to all eternity, but of temporal affliction: seeing that, those are reproved who wished to destroy Edom.'-

This, again, is advanced in contempt of Paul, as though he had done violence to the Scriptures. Thus, we hold in no reverence whatever, the majesty of the Holy Spirit, and only aim at establishing our own sentiments. But let us bear with this contempt for a moment, and see what it effects. Malachi, then, speaks of temporal affliction. And what if he do? What is that to your purpose? Paul proves out of Malachi, that that affliction was laid on Esau without any desert, by the hatred of God only: and this he does, that he might thence conclude, that there is no such

thing as "Free-will." This is the point that makes against you, and it is to this you ought to have answered. I am arguing about merit, and you are all the while talking about reward; and yet, you so talk about it, as not to evade that which you wish to evade; nay, in your very talking about reward, you acknowledge merit; and yet, pretend you do not see it. Tell me, then, what moved God to love Jacob, and to hate Esau, even before they were born? But however, the assertion, that Malachi is speaking of temporal affliction only, is false: nor is he speaking of the destroying of Edom: you entirely pervert the sense of the prophet by this contrivance. The prophet shews what he means, in words the most clear.-He upbraids the Israelites with ingratitude: because, after God had loved them, they did not, in return, either love Him as their Father, or fear Him as their Lord. (Malachi 1:6). That God had loved them, he proves, both by the Scriptures, and by facts: viz. in this:-that although Jacob and Esau were brothers, as Moses records Genesis 25:21-28, yet He loved Jacob and chose him before he was born, as we have heard from Paul already; but that, He so hated Esau, that He removed away his dwelling into the desert; that moreover, he so continued and pursued that hatred, that when He brought back Jacob from captivity and restored him, He would not suffer the Edomites to be restored; and that, even if they at any time said they wished to build, He threatened them with destruction. If this be not the plain meaning of the prophet's text, let the whole world prove me a liar.-Therefore the temerity of the Edomites is not here reproved, but, as I said before, the ingratitude of the sons of Jacob; who do not see what God has done, for them, and against their brethren the Edomites; and for no other reason, than because, He hated the one, and loved the other.

How then will your assertion stand good, that the prophet is here speaking of temporal affliction, when he testifies, in the plainest words, that he is speaking of the two people as proceeding from the two patriarchs, the one received to be a people and saved, and the other left and at last destroyed? To be received as a people, and not to be received as a people, does not pertain to temporal good and evil only, but unto all things. For our God is not the God of temporal things only, but of all things. Nor does God will to be thy God so as to be worshipped with one shoulder, or with a lame foot, but with all thy might, and with all thy heart, that He may be thy God as well here, as hereafter, in all things, times, and works.

Sect. 103.-THE third contrivance is-'that, according to the trope interpretation of the passage, God neither loves all the Gentiles, nor hates all the Jews; but, out of each people, some. And that, by this use of the trope, the Scripture testimony in question, does not at all go to prove necessity, but to beat down the arrogance of the Jews.'-The Diatribe having opened this way of escape, then comes to this-'that God is said to hate men before they are born, because, He foreknows that they will do that which will merit hatred: and that thus, the hatred and love of God do not at all militate against "Free-will"'-And at last, it draws this conclusion-'that the Jews were cut off from the olive tree on account of the merit of unbelief, and the Gentiles grafted in on account of the merit of faith, according to the authority of Paul; and that, a trope is held out to those who are cut off, of being grafted in again, and a warning given to those who are grafted in, that they fall not off.'- May I perish if the Diatribe itself knows what it is talking about. But, perhaps, this is also a rhetorical fetch; which teaches you, when any danger seems to be at hand, always to render your sense obscure, lest you should be taken in your own words. I, for my part, can see no place whatever in this passage for those trope-interpretations, of which the Diatribe dreams, but which it cannot establish by proof. Therefore, it is no wonder that this testimony does not make against it, in the

trope-interpreted sense, because, it has no such sense.

Moreover, we are not disputing about cutting off and grafting in, of which Paul here speaks in his exhortations. I know that men are grafted in by faith, and cut off by unbelief; and that they are to be exhorted to believe that they be not cut off. But it does not follow, nor is it proved from this, that they can believe or fall away by the power of "Free-will," which is now the point in question. We are not disputing about, who are the believing and who are not; who are Jews and who are Gentiles; and what is the consequence of believing and falling away; that pertains unto exhortation. Our point in dispute is, by what merit or work they attain unto that faith by which they are grafted in, or unto that unbelief by which they are cut off. This is the point that belongs to you as the teacher of "Free-will." And pray, describe to me this merit.

Paul teaches us, that this comes to them by no work of theirs, but only according to the love or the hatred of God: and when it is come to them, he exhorts them to persevere, that they be not cut off. But this exhortation does not prove what we can do, but what we ought to do.

I am compelled thus to hedge in my adversary with many words, lest he should slip away from, and leave the subject point, and take up any thing but that: and in fact, to hold him thus to the point, is to vanquish him. For all that he aims at, is to slide away from the point, withdraw himself out of sight, and take up any thing but that, which he first laid down as his subject design.

Sect. 104.-THE next passage which the Diatribe takes up is that of Isaiah 45:9, "Shall the clay say to Him that fashioneth it, what makest Thou?" And that of Jeremiah 18:6, "Behold as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in Mine hand." Here the Diatribe says again-"these passages are made to have more force in Paul, than they have in the places of the prophets from which they are taken; because, in the prophets they speak of temporal affliction, but Paul uses them, with reference to eternal election and reprobation."-So that, here again, temerity or ignorance in Paul, is insinuated. But before we see how the Diatribe proves, that neither of these passages excludes "Free-will," I will make this remark:-that Paul does not appear to have taken this passage out of the Scriptures, nor does the Diatribe prove that he has. For Paul usually mentions the name of his author, or declares that he has taken a certain part from the Scriptures; whereas, here, he does neither. It is most probable, therefore, that Paul uses this general similitude according to his spirit in support of his own cause, as others have used it in support of theirs. It is in the same way that he uses this similitude. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump'" which, 1 Corinthians 5:6, he uses to represent corrupt morals: and applies it in another place (Galatians 5:9) to those who corrupt the Word of God: so Christ also speaks of the "leaven of Herod" and "of the Pharisees." (Mark 8:15; Matthew 16:6).

Supposing, therefore, that the prophets use this similitude, when speaking more particularly of temporal punishment; (upon which I shall not now dwell, lest I should be too much occupied about irrelevant questions, and kept away from the subject point,) yet Paul uses it, in his spirit, against "Free-will." And as to saying that the liberty of the will is not destroyed by our being as clay in the hand of an afflicting God, I know not what it means, nor why the Diatribe contends for such a point: for, without doubt, afflictions come upon us from God against our will, and impose upon us the necessity of bearing them, whether we will or no: nor is it in our power to avert them: though we are exhorted to bear them with a willing mind.

Sect. 105.-BUT it is worth while to hear the Diatribe make out, how it is that the argument of Paul does not exclude "Free-will" by that similitude: for it brings forward two absurd objections: the one taken from the Scriptures, the other from Reason. From the Scriptures it collects this objection.

-When Paul, 2 Timothy 2:20, had said, that "in a great house there are vessels of gold and silver, wood and earth, some to honour and some to dishonour," he immediately adds, "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, &c." (2 Timothy 2:21)-Then the Diatribe goes on to argue thus:-"What could be more ridiculous than for any one to say to an earthen chamber-convenience, If thou shalt purify thyself, thou shalt be a vessel unto honour? But this would be rightly said to a rational earthen vessel, which can, when admonished, form itself according to the will of the Lord."-By these observations it means to say, that the similitude is not in all respects applicable, and is so mistaken, that it effects nothing at all.

I answer: (not to cavil upon this point:)-that Paul does not say, if any one shall purify himself from his own filth, but "from these;" that is, from the vessels unto dishonour: so that the sense is, if any one shall remain separate, and shall not mingle himself with wicked teachers, he shall be a vessel unto honour. Let us grant also that this passage of Paul makes for the Diatribe just as it wishes: that is, that the similitude is not effective. But how will it prove, that Paul is here speaking on the same subject as he is in Romans 9:11-23, which is the passage in dispute? Is it enough to cite a different passage without at all regarding whether it have the same or a different tendency? There is not (as I have often shewn) a more easy or more frequent fall in the Scriptures, than the bringing together different Scripture passages as being of the same meaning. Hence, the similitude in those passages, of which the Diatribe boasts, makes less to its purpose than our similitude which it would refute. But (not to be contentious), let us grant, that each passage of Paul is of the same tendency; and that a similitude does not always apply in all respects; (which is without controversy true; for otherwise, it would not be a similitude, nor a translation, but the thing itself; according to the proverb, 'A similitude halts, and does not always go upon four feet;') yet the Diatribe errs and transgresses in this:-neglecting the scope of the similitude, which is to be most particularly observed, it contentiously catches at certain words of it: whereas, 'the knowledge of what is said, (as Hilary observes,) is to be gained from the scope of what is said, not from certain detached words only.' Thus, the efficacy of a similitude depends upon the cause of the similitude. Why then does the Diatribe disregard that, for the purpose of which Paul uses this similitude, and catch at that, which he says is unconnected with the purport of the similitude? That is to say, it is an exhortation where he saith, "If a man purge himself from these;" but a point of doctrine where he saith, "In a great house, there are vessels of gold, &c." So that, from all the circumstances of the words and mind of Paul, you may understand that he is establishing the doctrine concerning the diversity and use of vessels. The sense, therefore, is this:-seeing that so many depart from the faith, there is no comfort for us but the being certain that "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And let every one that calleth upon the name of the Lord depart from evil." (2 Timothy 2:19). This then is the cause and efficacy of the similitude-that God knows His own! Then follows the similitude-that there are different vessels, some to honour and some to dishonour. By this it is proved at once, that the vessels do not prepare themselves, but that the Master prepares them. And this is what Paul means, where he saith, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, &c." (Romans 9:21). Thus, the similitude of Paul stands most effective: and that to prove, that there is no such thing as "Free-will" in the sight of

God.

After this, follows the exhortation: "If a man purify himself from these," &c. and for what purpose this is, may be clearly collected from what we have said already. It does not follow from this, that the man can purify himself. Nay, if any thing be proved hereby it is this:-that "Free-will" can purify itself without grace. For he does not say, if grace purify a man; but, "if a man purify himself." But concerning imperative and conditional passages, we have said enough. Moreover, the similitude is not set forth in conditional, but in indicative verbs-that the elect and the reprobate, are as vessels of honour and of dishonour. In a word, if this fetch stand good, the whole argument of Paul comes to nothing. For in vain does he introduce vessels murmuring against God as the potter, if the fault plainly appear to be in the vessel, and not in the potter. For who would murmur at hearing him damned, who merited damnation!

Sect. 106.-THE other absurd objection, the Diatribe gathers from Madam Reason; who is called, Human Reason-that the fault is not to be laid on the vessel, but on the potter: especially, since He is such a potter, who creates the clay as well as attempers it.-"Whereas, (says the Diatribe) here the vessel is cast into eternal fire, which merited nothing: except that it had no power of its own."- In no one place does the Diatribe more openly betray itself, than in this. For it is here heard to say, in other words indeed, but in the same meaning, that which Paul makes the impious to say, "Why doth He yet complain? for who hath resisted His will?" (Romans 9:19). This is that which Reason cannot receive, and cannot bear. This is that, which has offended so many men renowned for talent, who have been received through so many ages. Here they require, that God should act according to human laws, and do what seems right unto men, or cease to be God! 'His secrets of Majesty, say they, do not better His character in our estimation. Let Him render a reason why He is God, or why He wills and does that, which has no appearance of justice in it. It is as if one should ask a cobbler or a collar-maker to take the seat of judgment.'

Thus, flesh does not think God worthy of so great glory, that it should believe Him to be just and good, while He says and does those things which are above that, which the volume of Justin and the fifth book of Aristotle's Ethics, have defined to be justice. That Majesty which is the Creating Cause of all things, must bow to one of the dregs of His creation: and that Corycian cavern must, vice versa, fear its spectators. It is absurd that He should condemn him; who cannot avoid the merit of damnation. And, on account of this absurdity, it must be false, that "God has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and hardens whom He will." (Romans 9:18). He must be brought to order. He must have certain laws prescribed to Him, that he damn not any one but him, who, according to our judgment, deserves to be damned. And thus, an effectual answer is given to Paul and his similitude. He must recall it, and allow it to be utterly ineffective: and must so attemper it, that this potter (according to the Diatribe's interpretation) make the vessel to dishonour from merit preceding: in the same manner in which He rejected some Jews on account of unbelief, and received Gentiles on account of faith. But if God work thus, and have respect unto merit, why do those impious ones murmur and expostulate? Why do they say, "Why doth He find fault? for who hath resisted His will?" (Romans 9:19). And what need was there for Paul to restrain them? For who wonders even, much less is indignant and expostulates, when any one is damned who merited damnation? Moreover where remains the power of the potter to make what vessel He will, if, being subject to merit and laws, He is not permitted to make what He will, but is required to make what He ought? The respect of merit militates against the power and liberty of making what

He will: as is proved by that "good man of the house," who, when the workmen murmured and expostulated concerning their right, objected in answer, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"-These are the arguments, which will not permit the gloss of the Diatribe to be of any avail.

Sect. 107.-BUT let us, I pray you, suppose that God ought to be such an one, who should have respect unto merit in those who are to be damned. Must we not, in like manner; also require and grant, that He ought to have respect unto merit in those who are to be saved? For if we are to follow Reason, it is equally unjust, that the undeserving should be crowned, as that the undeserving should be damned. We will conclude, therefore, that God ought to justify from merit preceding, or we will declare Him to be unjust, as being one who delights in evil and wicked men, and who invites and crowns their impiety by rewards.-And then, woe unto you, sensibly miserable sinners, under that God! For who among you can be saved!

Behold, therefore, the iniquity of the human heart! When God saves the undeserving without merit, nay, justifies the impious with all their demerit, it does not accuse Him of iniquity, it does not expostulate with Him why He does it, although it is, in its own judgment, most iniquitous; but because it is to its own profit, and plausible, it considers it just and good. But when He damns the undeserving, this, because it is not to its own profit, is iniquitous; this is intolerable; here it expostulates, here it murmurs, here it blasphemes!

You see, therefore, that the Diatribe, together with its friends, do not, in this cause, judge according to equity, but according to the feeling sense of their own profit. For, if they regarded equity, they would expostulate with God when He crowned the undeserving, as they expostulate with Him when He damns the undeserving. And also, they would equally praise and proclaim God when He damns the undeserving, as they do when He saves the undeserving; for the iniquity in either instance is the same, if our own opinion be regarded:-unless they mean to say, that the iniquity is not equal, whether you laud Cain for his fratricide and make him a king, or cast the innocent Abel into prison and murder him! [See Note l]

Since, therefore, Reason praises God when He saves the undeserving, but accuses Him when He damns the undeserving; it stands convicted of not praising God as God, but as a certain one who serves its own profit; that is, it seeks, in God, itself and the things of itself, but seeks not God and the things of God. But if it be pleased with a God who crowns the undeserving, it ought not to be displeased with a God who damns the undeserving. For if He be just in the one instance, how shall He not be just in the other? seeing that, in the one instance, He pours forth grace and mercy upon the undeserving, and in the other, pours forth wrath and severity upon the undeserving?-He is, however, in both instances, monstrous and iniquitous in the sight of men; yet just and true in Himself. But, how it is just, that He should crown the undeserving, is incomprehensible now, but we shall see when we come there, where it will be no longer believed, but seen in revelation face to face. So also, how it is just, that He should damn the undeserving, is incomprehensible now, yet, we believe it, until the Son of Man shall be revealed!

Sect. 108.-THE Diatribe, however, being itself bitterly offended at this similitude of the "potter' and the "clay," is not a little indignant, that it should be so pestered with it. And at last it comes to this. Having collected together different passages of Scripture, some of which seem to attribute all to man, and others all to grace, it angrily contends-'that the Scriptures on both sides should be

understood according to a sound interpretation, and not received simply as they stand: and that, otherwise, if we still so press upon it that similitude, it is prepared to press upon us, in retaliation, those subjunctive and conditional passages; and especially, that of Paul, "If a man purify himself from these." This passage (it says) makes Paul to contradict himself, and to attribute all to man, unless a sound interpretation be brought in to make it clear. And if an interpretation be admitted here, in order to clear up the cause of grace, why should not an interpretation be admitted in the similitude of the potter also, to clear up the cause of "Free-will?"-

I answer: It matters not with me, whether you receive the passages in a simple sense, a twofold sense, or a hundred-fold sense. What I say is this: that by this sound interpretation of yours, nothing that you desire is either effected or proved. For that which is required to be proved, according to your design is, that "Free-will" cannot will good. Whereas, by this passage, "If a man purify himself from these," as it is a conditional sentence, neither any thing nor nothing is proved, for it is only an exhortation of Paul. Or, if you add the conclusion of the Diatribe, and say, 'the exhortation is in vain, if a man cannot purify himself;' then it proves, that "Free-will" can do all things without grace. And thus the Diatribe explodes itself.

We are waiting, therefore, for some passage of the Scripture, to shew us that this interpretation is right; we give no credit to those who hatch it out of their own brain. For, we deny, that any passage can be found which attributes all to man. We deny that Paul contradicts himself, where he says, "If a man shall purify himself from these." And we aver, that both the contradiction and the interpretation which exhorts it, are fictions; that they are both thought of, but neither of them proved. This, indeed, we confess, that, if we were permitted to augment the Scriptures by the conclusions and additions of the Diatribe, and to say, 'if we are not able to perform the things which are commanded, the precepts are given in vain;' then, in truth, Paul would militate against himself, as would the whole Scripture also: for then, the Scripture would be different from what it was before, and would prove that "Free-will" can do all things. What wonder, however, if he should then contradict himself again, where he saith, in another place, that "God worketh all in all!" (1 Corinthians 12:6).

But, however, the Scripture in question, thus augmented, makes not only against us, but against the Diatribe itself, which defined "Free-will" to be that, 'which cannot will any thing good.' Let, therefore, the Diatribe clear itself first, and say, how these two assertions agree with Paul:-'Free-will cannot will any thing good,' and also, 'If a man purify himself from these: therefore, man can purify himself, or it is said in vain.'-You see, therefore, that the Diatribe, being entangled and overcome by that similitude of the potter, only aims at evading it; not at all considering in the meantime, how its interpretation militates against its subject point, and how it is refuting and laughing at itself.

Sect. 109.-BUT as to myself, as I said before, I never aimed at any kind of invented interpretation. Nor did I ever speak thus: 'Stretch forth thine hand; that is, grace shall stretch it forth.' All these things, are the Diatribe's own inventions Concerning me, to the furtherance of its own cause. What I said was this:-that there is no contradiction in the words of the Scripture, nor any need of an invented interpretation to clear up a difficulty. But that the assertors of "Free-will" willfully stumbled upon plain ground, and dream of contradictions where there are none. For example: There is no contradiction in these Scriptures, "If a man purify himself," and, "God worketh all in all." Nor is it

necessary to say, in order to explain this difficulty, God does something and man does something. Because, the former Scripture is conditional, which neither affirms or denies any work or power in man, but simply shews what work or power there ought to be in man. There is nothing figurative here; nothing that requires an invented interpretation; the words are plain, the sense is plain; that is, if you do not add conclusions and corruptions, after the manner of the Diatribe: for then, the sense would not be plain: not, however, by its own fault, but by the fault of the corruptor. But the latter Scripture, "God worketh all in all," (1 Corinthians 12:6), is an indicative passage; declaring, that all works and all power are of God. How then do these two passages, the one of which says nothing of the power of man, and the other of which attributes all to God, contradict each other, and not rather sweetly harmonize. But the Diatribe is so drowned, suffocated in, and corrupted with, that sense of the carnal interpretation, 'that impossibilities are commanded in vain,' that it has no power over itself; but as soon as it hears an imperative or conditional word, it immediately tacks to it its indicative conclusions:-a certain thing is commanded: therefore, we are able to do it, and do do it, or the command is ridiculous. On this side it bursts forth and boasts of its complete victory: as though it held it as a settled point, that these conclusions, as soon as hatched in thought, were established as firmly as the Divine Authority. And hence, it pronounces with all confidence, that in some places of the Scripture all is attributed to man: and that, therefore, there is a contradiction that requires interpretation. But it does not see, that all this is the figment of its own brain, no where confirmed by one iota of Scripture. And not only so, but that it is of such a nature, that if it were admitted, it would confute no one more directly than itself: because, if it proved any thing, it would prove that "Free-will" can do all things: whereas, it undertook to prove the directly contrary.

Sect. 110.-IN the same way also it so continually repeats this:-"If man do nothing, there is no place for merit, and where there is no place for merit, there can be no place either for punishment or for reward."-

Here again, it does not see, that by these carnal arguments, it refutes itself more directly than it refutes us. For what do these conclusions prove, but that all merit is in the power of "Free-will?" And then, where is any room for grace? Moreover, supposing "Free-will" to merit a certain little, and grace the rest, why does "Free-will" receive the whole reward? Or, shall we suppose it to receive but a certain small portion of reward? Then, if there be a place for merit, in order that there might be a place for reward, the merit must be as great as the reward. But why do I thus lose both words and time upon a thing of nought? For, even supposing the whole were established at which the Diatribe is aiming, and that merit is partly the work of man, and partly the work of God; yet it cannot define that work itself, what it is, of what kind it is, or how far it is to extend; therefore, its disputation is about nothing at all. Since, therefore, it cannot prove any one thing which it asserts, nor establish its interpretation nor contradiction, nor bring forward a passage that attributes all to man; and since all are the phantoms of its own cogitation, Paul's similitude of the "potter" and the "clay," stands unshaken and invincible-that it is not according to our "Free-will," what kind of vessels we are made. And as to the exhortations of Paul, "If a man purify himself from these," and the like, they are certain models, according to which, we ought to be formed; but they are not proofs of our working power, or of our desire. Suffice it to have spoken thus upon these points, the HARDENING OF PHARAOH, the CASE OF ESAU, and the SIMILITUDE OF THE POTTER.

Sect. 111.-THE Diatribe at length comes to THE PASSAGES CITED BY LUTHER AGAINST "FREE-WILL," WITH THE INTENT TO REFUTE THEM. The first passage, is that of Genesis 6:3, "My Spirit shall not always remain in man; seeing that he is flesh." This passage it confutes, variously. First, it says, 'that flesh, here, does not signify vile affection, but infirmity.' Then it augments the text of Moses, 'that this saying of his, refers to the men of that age, and not to the whole race of men: as if he had said, in these men.' And moreover, 'that it does not refer to all the men, even of that age; because, Noah was excepted,' And at last it says, 'that this word has, in the Hebrew, another signification; that it signifies the mercy, and not the severity, of God; according to the authority of Jerome.' By this it would, perhaps, persuade us, that since that saying did not apply to Noah but to the wicked, it was not the mercy, but the severity of God that was shewn to Noah, and the mercy, not the severity of God that was shewn to the wicked. But let us away with these ridiculing vanities of the Diatribe: for there is nothing which it advances, which does not evince that it looks upon the Scriptures as mere fables. What Jerome here triflingly talks about, is nothing at all to me; for it is certain that he cannot prove any thing that he says. Nor is our dispute concerning the sense of Jerome, but concerning the sense of the Scripture. Let that perverter of the Scriptures attempt to make it appear, that the Spirit of God signifies indignation.-I say, that he is deficient in both parts of the necessary two-fold proof. First, he cannot produce one passage of the Scripture, in which the Spirit of God is understood as signifying indignation: for, on the contrary, kindness and sweetness are every where ascribed to the Spirit. And next, if he should prove that it is understood in any place as signifying indignation, yet, he cannot easily prove, that it follows of necessity, that it is so to be received in this place. So also, let him attempt to make it appear, that "flesh," is here to be understood as signifying infirmity; yet, he is as deficient as ever in proof. For where Paul calls the Corinthians "carnal," he does not signify infirmity, but corrupt affection, because, he charges them with "strife and divisions;' which is not infirmity, or incapacity to receive "stronger" doctrine, but malice and that "old leaven," which he commands them to "purge out." (1 Corinthians 3:3; 1 Corinthians 5:7) But let us examine the Hebrew.

Sect. 112.-"MY Spirit shall not always judge in man; for he is flesh." These are, verbatim, the words of Moses: and if we would away with our own dreams, the words as they there stand, are, I think, sufficiently plain and clear. And that they are the words of an angry God, is fully manifest, both from what precedes, and from what follows, together with the effect-the flood! The cause of their being spoken, was, the sons of men taking unto them wives from the mere lust of the flesh, and then, so filling the earth with violence, as to cause God to hasten the flood, and scarcely to delay that for "an hundred and twenty years," (Genesis 6:1-3) which, but for them, He would never have brought upon the earth at all. Read and study Moses, and you will plainly see that this is his meaning. But it is no wonder that the Scriptures should be obscure, or that you should be enabled to establish from them, not only a free, but a divine will, where you are allowed so to trifle with them, as to seek to make out of them a Virgilian patch-work. And this is what you call, clearing up difficulties, and putting an end to all dispute by means of an interpretation! But it is with these trifling vanities that Jerome and Origen have filled the world: and have been the original cause of that pestilent practice-the not attending to the simplicity of the Scriptures.

It is enough for me to prove, that in this passage, the divine authority calls men "flesh;" and flesh, in that sense, that the Spirit of God could not continue among them, but was, at a decreed time, to be taken from them. And what God meant when He declared that His Spirit should not "always

judge among men," is explained immediately afterwards, where He determines "an hundred and twenty years" as the time that He would still continue to judge.

Here He contrasts "spirit" with "flesh:" shewing that men being flesh, receive not the Spirit: and He, as being a Spirit, cannot approve of flesh: 'wherefore it is, that the Spirit, after "an hundred and twenty years," is to be withdrawn. Hence you may understand the passage of Moses thus-My Spirit, which is in Noah and in the other holy men, rebukes those impious ones, by the word of their preaching, and by their holy lives, (for to "judge among men," is to act among them in the office of the word; to reprove, to rebuke, to beseech them, opportunely and importunely,) but in vain: for they, being blinded and hardened by the flesh, only become the worse the more they are judged.-And so it ever is, that wherever the Word of God comes forth in the world, these men become the worse, the more they hear of it. And this is the reason why wrath is hastened, even as the flood was hastened at that time: because, they now, not only sin, but even despise grace: as Christ saith, "Light is come into the world, and men hate the light." (John 3:19)

Since, therefore, men, according to the testimony of God Himself, are "flesh," they can savour of nothing but flesh; so far is it from possibility that "Free-will" should do any thing but sin. And if, even while the Spirit of God is among them calling and teaching, they only become worse, what will they do when left to themselves without the Spirit of God!

Sect. 113.-NOR is it at all to the purpose, your saying,-'that Moses is speaking with reference to the men of that age'-for the same applies unto all men; because, all are flesh; as Christ saith, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." (John 3:6) And how deep a corruption that is, He Himself shews in the same chapter, where He saith, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Let, therefore, the Christian know, that Origen and Jerome, together with all their train, perniciously err, when they say, that "flesh" ought not, in these passages, to be understood as meaning 'corrupt affection:' because, that of 1 Corinthians 3:3, "For ye are yet carnal," signifies ungodliness. For Paul means, that there are some among them still ungodly: and moreover, that even the saints, in as far as they savour of carnal things, are "carnal," though justified by the Spirit. In a word; you may take this as a general observation upon the Scriptures.-Wherever mention is made of "flesh" in contradistinction to "spirit," you may there, by "flesh," understand every thing that is contrary to spirit: as in this passage, "The flesh profiteth nothing." (John 6:63) But where it is used abstractedly, there you may understand the corporal state and nature: as "They twain shall be one flesh," (Matthew 19:5) "My flesh is meat indeed," (John 6:55) "The Word was made flesh," (John 1:14) In such passages, you may make a figurative alteration in the Hebrew, and for 'flesh,' say 'body'. For in the Hebrew tongue, the one term "flesh" embraces in signification our two terms, 'flesh' and 'body.' And I could wish that these two terms had been distinctively used throughout the Canon of the Scripture.-Thus then, I presume, my passage Genesis 6:1-22 still stands directly against "Free-will:" since "flesh" is proved to be that which Paul declares, Romans 8:5-8, cannot be subject to God, as we may there see; and since the Diatribe itself asserts, 'that it cannot will any thing good.'

06.10c Discussion: Second Part (Sections 114 - 130)

Sect. 114.-ANOTHER passage is that of Genesis 8:21, "The thought and imagination of man's heart, is evil from his youth." And that also Genesis 6:5, "Every imagination of man's heart is only evil continually." These passages it evades thus:-"The proneness to evil which is in most men, does not, wholly, take away the freedom of the will."- Does God, I pray you, here speak of 'most men,' and not rather of all men, when, after the flood, as it were repenting, He promises to those who were then remaining, and to those who were to come, that He would no more bring a flood upon the earth "for man's sake:" assigning this as the reason:-because man is prone to evil! As though He had said, If I should act according to the wickedness of man, I should never cease from bringing a flood. Wherefore, henceforth, I will not act according to that which he deserves, &c. You see, therefore, that God, both before and after the flood, declares that man is evil: so that what the Diatribe says about 'most men,' amounts to nothing at all.

Moreover, a proneness or inclination to evil, appears to the Diatribe, to be a matter of little moment; as though it were in our own power to keep ourselves upright, or to restrain it: whereas the Scripture, by that proneness, signifies the continual bent and impetus of the will, to evil. Why does not the Diatribe here appeal to the Hebrew? Moses says nothing there about proneness. But, that you may have no room for cavillation, the Hebrew, (Genesis 6:5), runs thus:-"CHOL IETZER MAHESCHEBOTH LIBBO RAK RA CHOL HAIOM:" that is, "Every imagination of the thought of the heart is only evil all days." He does not say, that he is intent or prone to evil; but that, evil altogether, and nothing but evil, is thought or imagined by man throughout his whole life. The nature of his evil is described to be that, which neither does nor can do any thing but evil, as being evil itself: for, according to the testimony of Christ, an evil tree can bring forth none other than evil fruit. (Matthew 7:17-18). And as to the Diatribe's pertly objecting-"Why was time given for repentance, then, if no part of repentance depend on Free-will, and all things be conducted according to the law of necessity."-

I answer: You may make the same objection to all the precepts of God; and say, Why does He command at all, if all things take place of necessity? He commands, in order to instruct and admonish, that men, being humbled under the knowledge of their evil, might come to grace, as I have fully shewn already.-This passage, therefore, still remains invincible against the freedom of the will!

Sect. 115.-THE third passage is that in Isaiah 40:2.-"She hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins."-"Jerome (says the Diatribe) interprets this concerning the divine vengeance, not concerning His grace given in return for evil deeds."-

I hear you.-Jerome says so: therefore, it is true!-I am disputing about Isaiah, who here speaks in the clearest words, and Jerome is cast in my teeth; a man, (to say no worse of him) of neither judgment nor application. Where now is that promise of ours, by which we agreed at the outset, 'that we would go according to the Scriptures, and not according to the commentaries of men?' The whole of this chapter of Isaiah, according to the testimony of the evangelists, where they

mention it as referring to John the Baptist, "the voice of one crying," speaks of the remission of sins proclaimed by the Gospel. But we will allow Jerome, after his manner, to thrust in the blindness of the Jews for an historical sense, and his own trifling vanities for an allegory; and, turning all grammar upside down, we will understand this passage as speaking of vengeance, which speaks of the remission of sins.-But, I pray you, what vengeance is fulfilled in the preaching of Christ? Let us, however, see how the words run in the Hebrew.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, (in the vocative) or, My people (in the objective) saith your God."-He, I presume, who commands to "comfort," is not executing vengeance! It then follows.

"Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry unto her." (Isaiah 40:1-2).-"Speak ye to the heart" is a Hebraism, and signifies to speak good things, sweet things, and alluring things. Thus, Shechem, Genesis 34:3, speaks to the heart of Dinah, whom he defiled: that is, when she was heavy-hearted, he comforted her with tender words, as our translator has rendered it. And what those good and sweet things are, which are commanded to be proclaimed to their comfort, the prophet explains directly afterwards: saying,

"That her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins."-"Her warfare," (militia,) which our translators have rendered "her evil," (malitia), is considered by the Jews, those audacious grammarians, to signify an appointed time. For thus they understand that passage Job 7:1. "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?" that is, his time is determinately appointed. But I receive it simply, and according to grammatical propriety, as signifying "warfare." Wherefore, you may understand Isaiah, as speaking with reference to the race and labour of the people under the law, who are, as it were, fighting on a platform. Hence Paul compares both the preachers and the hearers of the word to soldiers: as in the case of Timothy, 2 Timothy 2:3, whom he commands to be "a good soldier," and to "fight the good fight." And, 1 Corinthians 9:24, he represents them as running "in a race:" and observes also, that "no one is crowned except he strive lawfully." He equips the Ephesians and Thessalonians with arms, Ephesians 6:10-18. And he glories, himself, that he had "fought the good fight," 2 Timothy 4:7.: with many like instances in other places. So also at 1 Samuel 2:22, it is in the Hebrew, "And the sons of Eli slept with the women who fought (militantibus) at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation:" of whose fighting, Moses makes mention in Exodus. And hence it is, that the God of that people is called the "Lord of Sabaoth:" that is, the Lord of warfare and of armies.

Isaiah, therefore, is proclaiming, that the warfare of the people under the law, who are pressed down under the law as a burthen intolerable, as Peter saith, Acts 15:7-10, is to be at an end; and that they being freed from the law, are to be translated into the new warfare of the Spirit. Moreover, this end of their most hard warfare, and this translation to the new and all-free warfare, is not given unto them on account of their merit, seeing that, they could not endure it; nay, it is rather given unto them on account of their demerit; for their warfare is ended, by their iniquities being freely forgiven them. The words are not ’obscure or ambiguous’ here. He saith, that their warfare was ended, by their iniquities being forgiven them: manifestly signifying, that the soldiers under the law, did not fulfill the law, and could not fulfill it: and that they only carried on a warfare of sin, and were soldier-sinners. As though God had said, I am compelled to forgive them their sins, if I would have My law fulfilled by them; nay, I must take away My law entirely when I forgive them;

for I see they cannot but sin, and the more so the more they fight; that is, the more they strive to fulfill the law by their own powers. For in the Hebrew, "her iniquity is pardoned" signifies, its being done in gratuitous good-will. And it is thus that the iniquity is pardoned; without any merit, nay, under all demerit; as is shewn in what follows, "for she hath received at the Lord’s hand double for all her sins. "-That is, as I said before, not only the remission of sins, but an end of the warfare: which is nothing more or less than this:-the law being taken out of the way, which is "the strength of sin," and their sin being pardoned, which is "the sting of death," they reign in a two-fold liberty by the victory of Jesus Christ: which is what Isaiah means when he says, "from the hand of the Lord:" for they do not obtain it by their own powers, or on account of their own merit, but they receive it from the conqueror and giver, Jesus Christ. And that which is, according to the Hebrew, "in all her sins," is, according to the Latin, "for all her sins," or, "on account of all her sins." As in Hosea 12:12, "Israel served in a wife:" that is, "for a wife." And so also in Psalms 59:3, "They lay in wait in my soul;" that is, "for my soul." Isaiah therefore is here pointing out to us those merits of ours, by which we imagine we are to obtain the two-fold liberty; that of the end of the law-warfare, and that of the pardon of sin; making it appear to us, that they were nothing but sins, nay, all sins. Could I, therefore, suffer this most beautiful passage, which stands invincible against "Free-will," to be thus bedaubed with Jewish filth cast upon it by Jerome and the Diatribe?-God forbid! No! My Isaiah stands victor over "Free-will"; and clearly shews, that grace is given, not to merits or to the endeavours of "Free-will," but to sins and demerits; and that "Free-will" with all its powers, can do nothing but carry on a warfare of sin; so that, the very law which it imagines to be given as a help, becomes intolerable to it, and makes it the greater sinner, the longer it is under its warfare.

Sect. 116.-BUT as to the Diatribe disputing thus-"Although sin abound by the law, and where sin has abounded, grace much more abound; yet it does not therefore follow, that man, doing by God’s help what is pleasing to Him, cannot by works morally good, prepare himself for the favour of God."-

Wonderful! Surely the Diatribe does not speak this out of its own head, but has taken it out of some paper or other, sent or received from another quarter, and inserted it in its book! For it certainly can neither see nor hear the meaning of these words! If sin abound by the law, how is it possible that a man can prepare himself by moral works, for the favour of God? How can works avail any thing, when the law avails nothing? Or, what else is it for sin to abound by the law, but for all the works, done according to the law, to become sins?-But of this elsewhere. But what does it mean when it says, that man, assisted by the help of God, can prepare himself by moral works? Are we here disputing concerning the divine assistance, or concerning "Free-will"? For what is not possible through the divine assistance? But the fact is, as I said before, the Diatribe cares nothing for the cause it has taken up, and therefore it snores and yawns forth such words as these. But however, it adduces Cornelius the centurion, Acts 10:31, as an example: observing-’that his prayers and alms pleased God before he was baptized, and before he was inspired by the Holy Spirit.’

I have read Luke upon the Acts too, and yet I never perceived from one single syllable, that the works of Cornelius were morally good without the Holy Spirit, as the Diatribe dreams. But on the contrary, I find that he was "a just man and one that feared God:" for thus Luke calls him. But to call a man without the Holy Spirit, "a just man and one that feared God," is the same thing as calling Baal, Christ!

Moreover, the whole context shews, that Cornelius was "clean" before God, even upon the testimony of the vision which was sent down from heaven to Peter, and which reproved him. Are then the righteousness and faith of Cornelius set forth by Luke in such words and attending circumstances, and do the Diatribe and its Sophists remain blind with open eyes, or see the contrary, in a light of words and an evidence of circumstances so clear? Such is their want of diligence in reading and contemplating the Scriptures: and yet, they must brand them with the assertion that they are 'obscure and ambiguous.' But grant it, that he was not as yet baptized, nor had as yet heard the word concerning Christ risen from the dead:-does it therefore follow, that He was without the Holy Spirit? According to this, you will say that John the Baptist and his parents, the mother of Christ, and Simeon, were without the Holy Spirit!-But let us take leave of such thick darkness!

Sect. 117.-THE fourth passage is that of Isaiah in the same chapter. "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of it as the flower of grass: the grass is withered, the flower of grass is fallen: because the Spirit of the Lord hath blown upon it." (Isaiah 40:6-7).- This Scripture appears to my friend Diatribe, to be treated with violence, by being dragged in as applicable to the causes of grace, and "Free-will." Why so, I pray? 'Because, (it says), Jerome understands "spirit" to signify indignation, and "flesh" to signify the infirm condition of man, which cannot stand against God.' Here again the trifling vanities of Jerome are cast in my teeth instead of Isaiah. And I find I have more to do in fighting against that wearisomeness, with which the Diatribe with so much diligence (to use no harsher term) wears me out, than I have in fighting against the Diatribe itself. But I have given my opinion upon the sentiment of Jerome already.

Let me beg permission of the Diatribe to compare this gentleman with himself. He says 'that "flesh," signifies the infirm condition of man; and "spirit," the divine indignation.' Has then the divine indignation nothing else to "wither" but that miserable infirm condition of man, which it ought rather to raise up?

This, however, is more excellent still. 'The "flower of grass," is the glory which arises from the prosperity of corporal things.' The Jews gloried in their temple, their circumcision, and their sacrifices, and the Greeks in their wisdom. Therefore, the "flower of grass," is the glory of the flesh, the righteousness of works, and the wisdom of the world.-How then are righteousness and wisdom called by the Diatribe, 'corporal things?' And after all, what have these to do with Isaiah, who interprets his own meaning in his own words, saying, "Surely the people is grass?" He does not say; Surely the infirm condition of man is grass, but "the people;" and affirms it with an asseveration. And what is the people? Is it the infirm condition of man only? But whether Jerome, by 'the infirm condition of man' means the whole creation together, or the miserable lot and state of man only, I am sure I know not. Be it, however, which it may, he certainly makes the divine indignation to gain a glorious renown and a noble spoil, from withering a miserable creation or a race of wretched men, and not rather, from scattering the proud, pulling down the mighty from their seat, and sending, the rich empty away: as Mary sings! (Luke 1:51-53).

Sect. 118.-BUT let us dispatch these hobgoblins of glosses, and take Isaiah's words as they are. "The people (he saith) is grass." "People" does not signify flesh merely, or the infirm condition of human nature, but it comprehends every thing that there is in people-the rich, the wise, the just, the saints. Unless you mean to say, that the pharisees, the elders, the princes, the nobles, and the

rich men, were not of the people of the Jews! The "flower of grass" is rightly called their glory, because it was in their kingdom, their government, and above all, in the law, in God, in righteousness, and in wisdom, that they gloried: as Paul shews, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31 and Romans 9:1-33.

When, therefore, Isaiah saith, "All flesh," what else does he mean but all "grass," or, all "people?" For he does not say "flesh" only, but "all flesh." And to "people" belong soul, body, mind, reason, judgment, and whatever is called or found to be most excellent in man. For when he says "all flesh is grass," he excepts nothing but the spirit which withereth it. Nor does he omit any thing when he says, "the people is grass." Speak, therefore, of "Free-will," speak of anything that can be called the highest or the lowest in the people,-Isaiah calls the whole "flesh and grass!" Because, those three terms "flesh," "grass," and "people," according to his interpretation who is himself the writer of the book, signify in that place, the same thing.

Moreover, you yourself affirm, that the wisdom of the Greeks and the righteousness of the Jews which were withered by the Gospel, were "grass" and "the flower of grass." Do you then think, that the wisdom which the Greeks had was not the most excellent? and that the righteousness which the Jews wrought was not the most excellent? If you do, shew us what was more excellent. With what assurance then is it, that you, Philip-like, flout and say,

-"If any one shall contend, that that which is most excellent in the nature of man, is nothing else but "flesh;" that is, that it is impious, I will agree with him, when he shall have proved his assertion by testimonies from the Holy Scripture?"-

You have here Isaiah, who cries with a loud voice that the people, devoid of the Spirit of the Lord, is "flesh;" although you will not understand him thus. You have also your own confession, where you said, (though unwittingly perhaps), that the wisdom of the Greeks was "grass," or the glory of grass; which is the same thing as saying, it was "flesh."-Unless you mean to say, that the wisdom of the Greeks did not pertain to reason, or to the EGEMONICON, as you say, that is, the principal part of man. If, therefore, you will not deign to listen to me, listen to yourself; where, being caught in the powerful trap of truth, you speak the truth.

You have moreover the testimony of John, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6). You have, I say, this passage, which makes it evidently manifest, that what is not born of the Spirit, is flesh: for if it be not so, the distinction of Christ could not subsist, who divides all men into two distinct divisions, "flesh" and "spirit." This passage you floutingly pass by, as if it did not give you the information you want, and betake yourself somewhere else, as usual; just dropping as you go along an observation, that John is here saying, that those who believe are born of God, and are made the sons of God, nay, that they are gods, and new creatures. You pay no regard, therefore, to the conclusion that is to be drawn from this division, but merely tell us at your ease, what persons are on one side of the division: thus confidently relying upon your rhetorical maneuver, as though there were no one likely to discover an evasion and dissimulation so subtlely managed.

Sect. 119.-IT is difficult to refrain from concluding, that you are, in this passage, crafty and double-dealing. For he who treats of the Scriptures with that prevarication and hypocrisy which you practice in treating of them, may have face enough to pretend, that he is not as yet fully

acquainted with the Scriptures, and is willing to be taught; when, at the same time, he wills nothing less, and merely prates thus, in order to cast a reproach upon the all-clear light of the Scriptures, and to cover with the best cloak his determinate perseverance in his own opinions. Thus the Jews, even to this day, pretend, that what Christ, the Apostles, and the whole church have taught, is not to be proved by the Scriptures. The papists too pretend, that they do not yet fully understand the Scriptures; although the very stones speak aloud the truth. But perhaps you are waiting for a passage to be produced from the Scriptures, which shall contain these letters and syllables, 'The principal part of man is flesh:' or, 'That which is most excellent in man is flesh:' otherwise, you will declare yourself an invincible victor. Just as though the Jews should require, that a portion be produced from the prophets, which shall consist of these letters, 'Jesus the son of the carpenter, who was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem, is the Messiah the Son of God!'

Here, where you are closely put to it by a plain sentence, you challenge us to produce letters and syllables. In another place, where you are overcome both by the sentence and by the letters too, you have recourse to 'tropes,' to 'difficulties,' and to 'sound interpretations.' And there is no place, in which you do not invent something whereby to contradict the Scriptures. At one time, you fly to the interpretations of the Fathers: at another, to absurdities of Reason: and when neither of these will serve your turn, you dwell on that which is irrelevant or contingent: yet with an especial care, that you are not caught by the passage immediately in point. But what shall I call you? Proteus is not half a Proteus compared with you! Yet after all you cannot get off. What victories did the Arians boast of, because these syllables and letters, HOMOOUSIOS, were not to be found in the Scriptures? Considering it nothing to the purpose, that the same thing could be most effectually proved in other words. But whether or not this be a sign of a good, (not to say pious,) mind, and a mind desiring to be taught, let impiety or iniquity itself be judge.

Take your victory, then; while we, as the vanquished confess, that these characters and syllables, 'That, which is most excellent in man is nothing but flesh,' is not to be found in the Scriptures. But just behold what a victory you have gained, when we most abundantly prove, that though it is not found in the Scriptures, that one detached portion, or 'that which is most excellent,' or the 'principal part,' of man is flesh, but that the whole of man is flesh! And not only so, but that the whole people is flesh! And further still, that the whole human race is flesh! For Christ saith, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Do you here set about your difficulty-solving, your trope-inventing, and searching for the interpretations of the Fathers; or, turning quite another way, enter upon a dissertation on the Trojan war, in order to avoid seeing and hearing this passage now adduced.

We do not believe only, but we see and experience, that the whole human race is "born of the flesh;" and therefore, we are compelled to believe upon the word of Christ, that which we do not see; that the whole human race "is flesh." Do we now then give the Sophists any room to doubt and dispute, whether or not the principal (egemonica) part of man be comprehended in the whole man, in the whole people, in the whole race of men? We know, however, that in the whole human race, both the body and soul are comprehended, together with all their powers and works, with all their vices and virtues, with all their wisdom and folly, with all their righteousness and unrighteousness! All things are "flesh;" because, all things savour of the flesh, that is, of their own; and are, as Paul saith, Without the glory of God, and the Spirit of God! (Romans 3:23; Romans 8:5-9).

Sect. 120.-AND as to your saying-"Yet every affection of man is not flesh. There is an affection called, soul: there is an affection called, spirit: by which, we aspire to what is meritoriously good, as the philosophers aspired: who taught, that we should rather die a thousand deaths than commit one base action, even though we were assured that men would never know it, and that God would pardon it."-

I answer: He who believes nothing certainly, may easily believe and say any thing. I will not ask you, but let your friend Lucian ask you, whether you can bring forward any one out of the whole human race, let him be two-fold or seven-fold greater than Socrates himself, who ever performed this of which you speak, and which you say they taught. Why then do you thus babble in vanities of words? Could they ever aspire to that which is meritoriously good, who did not even know what good is?

If I should ask you for some of the brightest examples of your meritorious good, you would say, perhaps, that it was meritoriously good when men died for their country, for their wives and children, and for their parents; or when they refrained from lying, or from treachery; or when they endured exquisite torments, as did Q. Scevola, M. Regulus, and others. But what can you point out in all those men, but an external shew of works. For did you ever see their hearts? Nay, it was manifest from the very appearance of their works, that they did all these things for their own glory; so much so, that they were not even ashamed to confess, and to boast, that they sought their own glory. For the Romans, according to their own testimonies, did whatever they did of virtue or valour, from a thirst after glory. The same did the Greeks, the same did the Jews, the same do all the race of men. But though this be meritoriously good before men, yet, before God, nothing is less meritoriously good than all this; nay, it is most impious, and the greatest of sacrilege; because, they did it not for the glory of God, nor that they might glorify God, but with the most impious of all robbery. For as they were robbing God of His glory and taking it to themselves, they never were farther from meritorious good, never more base, than when they were shining in their most exalted virtues. How could they do what they did for the glory of God, when they neither knew God nor His glory? Not, however, because it did not appear, but because the "flesh" did not permit them to see the glory of God, from their fury and madness after their own glory. This, therefore, is that right-ruling ’spirit,’ that ’principal part of man, which aspires to what is meritoriously good’-it is a plunderer of the divine glory, and an usurper of the divine Majesty! and then the most so, when men are at the highest of their meritorious good, and the most glittering in their brightest virtues! Deny, therefore, if you can, that these are "flesh" and carried away by an impious affection. But I do not believe, that the Diatribe can be so much offended at the expression, where man is said to be, either "flesh" or "spirit;" because a Latin would here say, Man is either carnal or spiritual. For this particularity, as well as many others, must be granted to the Hebrew tongue, that when it says, Man is "flesh" or "spirit," its signification is the same as ours is, when we say, Man is carnal or spiritual. The same signification which the Latins also convey, when they say, ’The wolf is destructive to the folds,’ ’Moisture is favourable to the young corn:’ or when they say, ’This fellow is iniquity and evil itself.’ So also the Holy Scripture, by a force of expression, calls man "flesh;" that is, carnality itself; because it savours too much of, nay, of nothing but, those things which are of the flesh: and "spirit," because he savours of, seeks, does, and can endure, nothing but those things which are of the spirit.

Unless, perhaps, the Diatribe should still make this remaining query-Supposing the whole of man to be "flesh," and that which is most excellent in man to be called "flesh," must therefore that which is called "flesh" be at once called ungodly?-I call him ungodly who is without the Spirit of God. For the Scripture saith, that the Spirit was therefore given, that He might justify the ungodly. And as Christ makes a distinction between the spirit and the flesh, saying, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and adds, that that which is born of the flesh "cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3-6), it evidently follows, that whatsoever is flesh is ungodly, under the wrath of God, and a stranger to the kingdom of God. And if it be a stranger to the kingdom of God, it necessarily follows, that it is under the kingdom and spirit of Satan. For there is no medium between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan; they are mutually and eternally opposed to each other.

These are the arguments that prove, that the most exalted virtues among the nations, the highest perfections of the philosophers, and the greatest excellencies among men, appear indeed, in the sight of men, to be meritoriously virtuous and good, and are so called; but that, in the sight of God, they are in truth "flesh," and subservient to the kingdom of Satan: that is, ungodly, sacrilegious, and, in every respect, evil!

Sect. 121.-BUT pray let us suppose the sentiment of the Diatribe to stand good-'that every affection is not "flesh;" that is, ungodly; but is that which is called good and sound spirit.'-Only observe what absurdity must hence follow; not only with respect to human reason, but with respect to the Christian religion, and the most important Articles of Faith. For if that which is most excellent in man be not ungodly, nor utterly depraved, nor damnable, but that which is flesh only, that is the grosser and viler affections, what sort of a Redeemer shall we make Christ? Shall we rate the price of His blood so low as to say, that it redeemed that part of man only which is the most vile, and that the most excellent part of man has power to work its own salvation, and does not want Christ? Henceforth then, I must preach Christ as the Redeemer, not of the whole man, but of his vilest part; that is, of his flesh; but that the man himself is his own redeemer, in his better part! Have it, therefore, which way you will. If the better part of man be sound, it does not want Christ as a Redeemer. And if it does not want Christ, it triumphs in a glory above that of Christ: for it takes care of the redemption of the better part itself, whereas Christ only takes care of that of the vile part. And then, moreover, the kingdom of Satan will come to nothing at all, for it will reign only in the viler part of man, because the man himself will rule over the better part. So that, by this doctrine of yours, concerning 'the principal part of man,' it will come to pass, that man will be exalted above Christ and the devil both: that is, he will be made God of gods, and Lord of lords!-Where is now that 'probable opinion' which asserted 'that "Free-will" cannot will any thing good?' It here contends, 'that it is a principal part, meritoriously good, and sound; and that, it does not even want Christ, but can do more than God Himself and the devil can do, put together!

I say this, that you may again see, how eminently perilous a matter it is to attempt sacred and divine things, without the Spirit of God, in the temerity of human reason. If, therefore, Christ be the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, it follows, that the whole world is under sin, damnation, and the devil. Hence your distinction between the principal parts, and the parts not principal, profits you nothing: for the world, signifies men, savouring of nothing but the things of the world, throughout all their faculties.

Sect. 122.-"IF the whole man, (says the Diatribe) even when regenerated by faith, is nothing else but "flesh," where is the "spirit" born of the Spirit? Where is the child of God? Where is the new-creature? I want information upon these points."-Thus the Diatribe Where now! Where now! my very dear friend, Diatribe! What dream now! You demand to be informed, how the "spirit" born of the Spirit can be "flesh." Oh how elated, how secure of victory do you insultingly put this question to me, as though it were impossible for me to stand my ground here.-All this while, you are abusing the authority of the Ancients: for they say 'that there are certain seeds of good implanted in the minds of men. But, however, whether you use, or whether abuse, the authority of the Ancients, it is all one to me: you will see by and by what you believe, when you believe men prating out of their own brain, without the Word of God. Though perhaps your care about religion does not give you much concern, as to what any one believes; since you so easily believe men, without at all regarding, whether or not that which they say be certain or uncertain in the sight of God. And I also wish to be informed, when I ever taught that, with which you so freely and publicly charge me. Who would be so mad as to say, that he who is "born of the Spirit," is nothing but "flesh?"

I make a manifest distinction between "flesh" and "spirit," as things that directly militate against each other; and I say, according to the divine oracles, that the man who is not regenerated by faith "is flesh;" but I say, that he who is thus regenerated; is no longer flesh, excepting as to the remnants of the flesh, which war against the first fruits of the Spirit received. Nor do I suppose you wish to attempt to charge me, invidiously, with any thing wrong here; if you do, there is no charge that you could more iniquitously bring against me. But you either understand nothing of my side of the subject, or else you find yourself unequal to the magnitude of the cause; by which you are, perhaps, so overwhelmed and confounded, that you do not rightly know what you say against me, or for yourself. For where you declare it to be your belief, upon the authority of the ancients, 'that there are certain seeds of good implanted in the minds of men, you must surely quite forget yourself; because, you before asserted, 'that "Free-will" cannot will any thing good.' And how 'cannot will any thing good,' and 'certain seeds of good' can stand in harmony together, I know not. Thus am I perpetually compelled to remind you of the subject-design with which you set out; from which you with perpetual forgetfulness depart, and take up something contrary to your professed purpose.

Sect. 123.-ANOTHER passage is that of Jeremiah 10:23, "I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."-This passage (says the Diatribe) rather applies "to the events of prosperity, than to the power of Free-will."-

Here again the Diatribe, with its usual audacity, introduces a gloss according to its own pleasure, as though the Scripture were fully under its control. But in order to any one's considering the sense and intent of the prophet, what need was there for the opinion of a man of so great authority!-Erasmus says so! it is enough! it must be so! If this liberty of glossing as they lust, be permitted the adversaries, what point is there which they might not carry? Let therefore Erasmus shew us the validity of this gloss from the scope of the context, and we will believe him.

I, however, will shew from the scope of the context, that the prophet, when he saw that he taught the ungodly with so much earnestness in vain, was at once convinced, that his word could avail nothing unless God should teach them within; and that, therefore, it was not in man to hear the

Word of God, and to will good. Seeing this judgment of God, he was alarmed, and asks of God that He would correct him, but with judgment, if he had need to be corrected; and that he might not be given up to His divine wrath with the ungodly, whom he suffered to be hardened and to remain in unbelief. But let us suppose that the passage is to be understood concerning the events of adversity and prosperity, what will you say, if this gloss should go most directly to overthrow "Free-will?" This new evasion is invented, indeed, that ignorant and lazy deceivers may consider it satisfactory. The same which they also had in view who invented that evasion, 'the necessity of the consequence.' And so drawn away are they by these newly-invented terms, that they do not see that they are, by these evasions, ten-fold more effectually entangled and caught than they would have been without them.-As in the present instance: if the event of these things which are temporal, and over which man, Genesis 1:26-30, was constituted lord, be not in our own power, how, I pray you, can that heavenly thing, the grace of God, which depends on the will of God alone, be in our own power? Can that endeavour of "Free-will" attain unto eternal salvation, which is not able to retain a farthing or a hair of the head? When we have no power to obtain the creature, shall it be said that we have power to obtain the Creator? What madness is this! The endeavouring of man, therefore, unto good or unto evil, when applied to events, is a thousandfold more enormous; because, he is in both much more deceived, and has much less liberty, than he has in striving after money, or glory, or pleasure. What an excellent evasion is this gloss, then, which denies the liberty of man in trifling and created events, and preaches it up in the greatest and divine events? This is as if one should say, Codrus is not able to pay a groat, but he is able to pay thousands of thousands of pounds! I am astonished that the Diatribe, having all along so inveighed against that tenet of Wycliffe, 'that all things take place of necessity,' should now itself grant, that events come upon us of necessity.

-"And even if you do (says, the Diatribe) forcedly twist this to apply to "Free-will," all confess that no one can hold on a right course of life without the grace of God. Nevertheless, we still strive ourselves with all our powers: for we pray daily, 'O Lord my God, direct my goings in Thy sight.' He, therefore, who implores aid, does not lay aside his own endeavours."- The Diatribe thinks, that it matters not what it answers, so that it does not remain silent with nothing to say; and then, it would have what it does say to appear satisfactory; such a vain confidence has it in its own authority. It ought here to have proved, whether or not we strive by our own powers; whereas, it proved, that he who prays attempts something. But, I pray, is it here laughing at us, or mocking the papists? For he who prays, prays by the Spirit; nay, it is the Spirit Himself that prays in us (Romans 8:26-27). How then is the power of "Free-will" proved by the strivings of the Holy Spirit? Are "Free-will" and the Holy Spirit, with the Diatribe, one and the same thing? Or, are we disputing now about what the Holy Spirit can do? The Diatribe, therefore, leaves me this passage of Jeremiah uninjured and invincible; and only produces the gloss out of its own brain. I also can 'strive by my own powers:' and Luther, will be compelled to believe this gloss,-if he will!

Sect. 124.-THERE is that passage of Proverbs 16:1, Proverbs 16:9, also, "It is of man to prepare the heart, but of the Lord to govern the tongue, "which the Diatribe says-'refers to events of things.'- As though this the Diatribe's own saying would satisfy us, without any farther authority. But however, it is quite sufficient, that, allowing the sense of these passages to be concerning the events of things, we have evidently come off victorious by the arguments which we have just advanced: 'that, if we have no such thing as Freedom of Will in our own things and works, much

less have we any such thing in divine things and works.’ But mark the great acuteness of the Diatribe-"How can it be of man to prepare the heart, when Luther affirms that all things are carried on by necessity?"-

I answer: If the events of things be not in our power, as you say, how can it be in man to perform the causing acts? The same answer which you gave me, the same receive yourself! Nay, we are commanded to work the more for this very reason, because all things future are to us uncertain: as saith Ecclesiastes, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening hold not thine hand: for thou knowest not: which shall prosper, either this or that" (Ecclesiastes 11:6). All things future, I say, are to us uncertain, in knowledge, but necessary in event. The necessity strikes into us a fear of God that we presume not, or become secure, while the uncertainty works in us a trusting, that we sink not in despair.

Sect. 125.-BUT the Diatribe returns to harping upon its old string-’that in the book of Proverbs, many things are said in confirmation of "Free-will": as this, "Commit thy works unto the Lord." Do you hear this (says the Diatribe,) thy works?’-

Many things in confirmation! What because there are, in that book, many imperative and conditional verbs, and pronouns of the second person! For it is upon these foundations that you build your proof of the Freedom of the Will. Thus, "Commit"-therefore thou canst commit thy works: therefore thou doest them. So also this passage, "I am thy God," (Isaiah 41:10), you will understand thus:-that is, Thou makest Me thy God. "Thy faith hath saved thee" (Luke 7:50): do you hear this word "thy?" therefore, expound it thus: Thou makest thy faith: and then you have proved "Freewill." Nor am I here merely game-making; but I am shewing the Diatribe, that there is nothing serious on its side of the subject. This passage also in the same chapter, "The Lord hath made all things for Himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil," (Proverbs 16:4), it modifies by its own words, and excuses God as having never created a creature evil.’- As though I had spoken concerning the creation, and not rather concerning that continual operation of God upon the things created; in which operation, God acts upon the wicked; as we have before shewn in the case of Pharaoh. But He creates the wicked, not by creating wickedness or a wicked creature; (which is impossible) but, from the operation of God, a wicked man is made, or created, from a corrupt seed; not from the fault of the Maker, but from that of the material. Nor does that of "The heart of the king is in the Lord’s hand: He inclineth it whithersoever He will," (Proverbs 21:1), seem to the Diatribe to imply force.-"He who inclines (it observes) does not immediately compel."- As though we were speaking of compulsion, and not rather concerning the necessity of Immutability. And that is implied in the inclining of God: which inclining, is not so snoring and lazy a thing, as the Diatribe imagines, but is that most active operation of God, which a man cannot avoid or alter, but under which he has, of necessity, such a will as God has given him, and such as he carries along by his motion: as I have before shewn.

Moreover, where Solomon is speaking of "the king’s heart," the Diatribe thinks-’that the passage cannot rightly be strained to apply in a general sense: but that the meaning is the same as that of Job, where he says, in another place, "He maketh the hypocrite to reign, because of the sins of the people."’ At last, however, it concedes, that the king is inclined unto evil by God: but so, ’that He permits the king to be carried away by his inclination, in order to chastise the people.’-

I answer: Whether God permit, or whether He incline, that permitting or inclining does not take place without the will and operation of God: because, the will of the king cannot avoid the action of the omnipotent God: seeing that, the will of all is carried along just as He wills and acts, whether that will be good or evil. And as to my having made out of the particular will of the king, a general application; I did it, I presume, neither vainly nor unskillfully. For if the heart of the king, which seems to be of all the most free, and to rule over others, cannot will good but where God inclines it, how much less can any other among men will good! And this conclusion will stand valid, drawn, not from the will of the king only, but from that of any other man. For if any one man, how private soever he be, cannot will before God but where God inclines, the same must be said of all men. Thus in the instance of Balaam, his not being able to speak what he wished, is an evident argument from the Scriptures, that man is not in his own power, nor a free chooser and doer of what he does: were it not so, no examples of it could subsist in the Scriptures.

Sect. 126.-THE Diatribe after this, having said that many such testimonies, as Luther collects, may be collected out of the book of Proverbs; but which, by a convenient interpretation, may stand both for and against "Free-will"; adduces at last that Achillean and invincible weapon of Luther, "Without me ye can do nothing," &c. (John 15:5).

I too, must laud that notable champion-disputant for "Free-will," who teaches us, to modify the testimonies of Scripture just as it serves our turn, by convenient interpretations, in order to make them appear to stand truly in confirmation of "Free-will"; that is, that they might be made to prove, not what they ought, but what we please; and who merely pretends a fear of one Achillean Scripture, that the silly reader, seeing this one overthrown, might hold all the rest in utter contempt. But I will just look on and see, by what force the full-mouthed and heroic Diatribe will conquer my Achilles; which hitherto, has never wounded a common soldier, nor even a Thersites, but has ever miserably dispatched itself with its own weapons.

Catching hold of this one word "nothing," it stabs it with many words and many examples; and, by means of a convenient interpretation, brings it to this; that "nothing," may signify that which is in degree and imperfect. That is, it means to say, in other words, that the Sophists have hitherto explained this passage thus.-"Without me ye can do nothing;" that is, perfectly. This gloss, which has been long worn out and obsolete, the Diatribe, by its power of rhetoric, renders new; and so presses it forward, as though it had first invented it, and it had never been heard of before, thus making it appear to be a sort of miracle. In the mean time, however, it is quite self-secure, thinking nothing about the text itself, nor what precedes or follows it, whence alone the knowledge of the passage is to be obtained. But (to say no more about its having attempted to prove by so many words and examples, that the term "nothing" may, in this passage, be understood as meaning 'that which is in a certain degree, or imperfect,' as though we were disputing whether or not it may be, whereas, what was to be proved is whether or not it ought to be, so understood;) the whole of this grand interpretation effects nothing, if it affect any thing, but this:-the rendering of this passage of John uncertain and obscure. And no wonder, for all that the Diatribe aims at, is to make the Scriptures of God in every place obscure, to the intent that it might not be compelled to use them; and the authorities of the Ancients certain, to the intent that it might abuse them;-a wonderful kind of religion truly, making the words of God to be useless, and the words of man useful!

Sect. 127.-BUT it is most excellent to observe how well this gloss, "nothing" may be understood to signify 'that which is in degree," consists with itself: yet the Diatribe says,-'that in this sense of the passage, it is most true that we can do nothing without Christ: because, He is speaking of evangelical fruits, which cannot be produced but by those who remain in the vine, which is Christ.'-

Here the Diatribe itself confesses, that fruit cannot be produced but by those who remain in the vine: and it does the same in that 'convenient interpretation,' by which it proves, that "nothing" is the same as in degree, and imperfect. But perhaps, its own adverb 'cannot,' ought also to be conveniently interpreted, so as to signify, that evangelical fruits can be produced without Christ in degree and imperfectly. So that we may preach, that the ungodly who are without Christ can, while Satan reigns in them, and wars against Christ, produce some of the fruits of life: that is, that the enemies of Christ may do something for the glory of Christ.-But away with these things.

Here however, I should like to be taught, how we are to resist heretics, who, using this rule throughout the Scriptures, may contend that nothing and not are to be understood as signifying that which is imperfect. Thus-Without Him "nothing" can be done; that is a little.-"The fool hath said in his heart there is not a God;" that is, there is an imperfect God.-"He hath made us, and not we ourselves;" that is, we did a little towards making ourselves. And who can number all the passages in the Scripture where 'nothing' and 'not' are found? Shall we then here say that a 'convenient interpretation' is to be attended to? And is this clearing up difficulties-to open such a door of liberty to corrupt minds and deceiving spirits? Such a license of interpretation is, I grant, convenient to you who care nothing whatever about the certainty of the Scripture; but as for me who labour to establish consciences, this is an inconvenience; than which, nothing can be more inconvenient, nothing more injurious, nothing more pestilential. Hear me, therefore, thou great conqueress of the Lutheran Achilles! Unless you shall prove, that 'nothing' not only may be, but ought to be understood as signifying a 'little,' you have done nothing by all this profusion of words or examples, but fight against fire with dry straw. What have I to do with your may be, which only demands of you to prove your ought to be? And if you do not prove that, I stand by the natural and grammatical signification of the term, laughing both at your armies and at your triumphs. Where is now that 'probable opinion' which determined, 'that "Free-will" can will nothing good?' But perhaps, the 'convenient interpretation' comes in here, to say, that 'nothing good' signifies, something good-a kind of grammar and logic never before heard of; that nothing, is the same as something: which, with logicians, is an impossibility, because they are contradictions. Where now then remains that article of our faith; that Satan is the prince of the world, and, according to the testimonies of Christ and Paul, rules in the wills and minds of those men who are his captives and servants? Shall that roaring lion, that implacable and ever-restless enemy of the grace of God and the salvation of man, suffer it to be, that man, his slave and a part of his kingdom, should attempt good by any motion in any degree, whereby he might escape from his tyranny, and that he should not rather spur and urge him on to will and do the contrary to grace with all his powers? especially, when the just, and those who are led by the Spirit of God, and who will and do good, can hardly resist him, so great is his rage against them?

You who make it out, that the human will is a something placed in a free medium, and left to itself, certainly make it out, at the same time, that there is an endeavour which can exert itself either way; because, you make both God and the devil to be at a distance, spectators only, as it were, of this mutable and "Free-will"; though you do not believe, that they are impellers and agitators of that

bondage will, the most hostilely opposed to each other. Admitting, therefore, this part of your faith only, my sentiment stands firmly established, and "Free-will" lies prostrate; as I have shewn already.-For, it must either be, that the kingdom of Satan in man is nothing at all, and thus Christ will be made to lie; or, if his kingdom be such as Christ describes, "Free-will" must be nothing but a beast of burden, the captive of Satan, which cannot be liberated, unless the devil be first cast out by the finger of God. From what has been advanced I presume, friend Diatribe, thou fully understandest what that is, and what it amounts to, where thy Author, detesting the obstinate way of assertion in Luther, is accustomed to say-'Luther indeed pushes his cause with plenty of Scriptures; but they may all by one word, be brought to nothing.' Who does not know, that all Scriptures may, by one word, be brought to nothing? I knew this full well before I ever heard the name of Erasmus. But the question is, whether it be sufficient to bring a Scripture, by one word, to nothing. The point in dispute is, whether it be rightly brought to nothing, and whether it ought to be brought to nothing. Let a man consider these points, and he will then see, whether or not it be easy to bring Scriptures to nothing, and whether or not the obstinacy of Luther be detestable. He will then see, that not one word only is ineffective, but all the gates of hell cannot bring them to nothing!

Sect. 128.-WHAT, therefore, the Diatribe cannot do in its affirmative, I will do in the negative; and though I am not called upon to prove the negative, yet I will do it here, and will make it by the force of argument undeniably appear, that "nothing," in this passage, not only may be but ought to be understood as meaning, not a certain small degree, but that which the term naturally signifies. And this I will do, in addition to that invincible argument by which I am already victorious; viz.. 'that all terms are to be preserved in their natural signification and use, unless the contrary shall be proved:' which the Diatribe neither has done, nor can do.-First of all then I will make that evidently manifest, which is plainly proved by Scriptures neither ambiguous nor obscure,-that Satan, is by far the most powerful and crafty prince of this world; (as I said before,) under the reigning power of whom, the human will, being no longer free nor in its own power, but the servant of sin and of Satan, can will nothing but that which its prince wills. And he will not permit it to will any thing good: though, even if Satan did not reign over it, sin itself, of which man is the slave, would sufficiently harden it to prevent it from willing good.

Moreover, the following part of the context itself evidently proves the same: which the Diatribe proudly sneers at, although I have commented upon it very copiously in my Assertions. For Christ proceeds thus, John 15:6, "Whoso abideth not in me, is cast forth as a branch and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." This, I say, the Diatribe, in a most excellent rhetorical way, passed by; hoping that the intent of this evasion would not be comprehended by the shallow-brained Lutherans. But here you see that Christ, who is the interpreter of His own similitude of the vine and the branch, plainly declares what He would have understood by the term "nothing"-that man who is without Christ, "is cast forth and is withered." And what can the being "cast forth and withered" signify but the being delivered up to the devil, and becoming continually worse and worse; and surely, becoming worse and worse, is not doing or attempting any thing good. The withering branch is more and more prepared for the fire the more it withers. And had not Christ Himself thus amplified and applied this similitude, no one would have dared so to amplify and apply it. It stands manifest, therefore, that "nothing," ought, in this place, to be understood in its proper signification, according to the nature of the term.

Sect. 129.-LET us now consider the examples also, by which it proves, that "nothing" signifies, in some places, 'a certain small degree:' in order that we may make it evident, that the Diatribe is nothing, and effects nothing in this part of it: in which, though it should do much, yet it would effect nothing:-such a nothing is the Diatribe in all things, and in every way.

It says-"Generally, he is said to do nothing, who does not achieve that, at which he aims; and yet, for the most part, he who attempts it, makes some certain degree of progress in the attempt."-

I answer: I never heard this general usage of the term: you have invented it by your own license. The words are to be considered according to the subject-matter, (as they say,) and according to the intention of the speaker.-No one calls that 'nothing' which he does in attempting, nor does he then speak of the attempt but of the effect: it is to this the person refers when he says, he does nothing, or he effects nothing; that is, achieves and accomplishes nothing. But supposing, your example to stand good, (which however it does not) it makes more for me than for yourself. For this is what I maintain and would invincibly establish, that "Free-will" does many things, which, nevertheless, are "nothing" before God. What does it profit, therefore, to attempt, if it effect nothing at which it aims? So that, let the Diatribe turn which way it will, it only runs against, and confutes itself which generally happens to those, who undertake to support a bad cause. With the same unhappy effect does it adduce that example out of Paul, "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God who giveth the increase." (1 Corinthians 3:7).-"That (says the Diatribe,) which is of the least moment, and useless of itself, he calls nothing."-

Who?-Do you, pretend to say, that the ministry of the word is of itself useless, and of the least moment, when Paul everywhere, and especially 2 Corinthians 3:6-9, highly exalts it, and calls it the ministration "of life," and "of glory?" Here again you neither consider the subject matter, nor the intention of the speaker. As to the gift of the increase, the planter and waterer are certainly 'nothing;' but as to the planting and sowing, they are not 'nothing;' seeing that, to teach and to exhort, are the greatest work of the Spirit in the Church of God. This is the intended meaning of Paul, and this his words convey with satisfactory plainness. But be it so, that this ridiculous example stands good; again, it stands in favour of me. For what I maintain is this: that "Free-will" is 'nothing,' that is, is useless of itself (as you expound it) before God; and it is concerning its being nothing as to what it can do of itself that we are now speaking: for as to what it essentially is in itself, we know, that an impious will must be a something, and cannot be a mere nothing.

Sect. 130.-THERE is also that of 1 Corinthians 13:2. "If I have not charity I am nothing:" Why the Diatribe adduces this as an example I cannot see, unless it seeks only numbers and forces, or thinks that we have no arms at all, by which we can effectually wound it. For he who is without charity, is, truly and properly, 'nothing' before God. The same also we say of "Free-will." Wherefore, this example also stands for us against the Diatribe. Or, can it be that the Diatribe does not yet know the argument ground upon which I am contending?-I am not speaking about the essence of nature, but the essence of grace (as they term it.) I know, that "Free-will" can by nature do something; it can eat, drink, beget, rule, &c. Nor need the Diatribe laugh at me as having prating frenzy enough to imply, when I press home so closely the term 'nothing,' that "Free-will" cannot even sin without Christ: whereas Luther, nevertheless says, 'that "Free-will" can do nothing but sin '-but so it pleases the wise Diatribe to play the fool in a matter so serious. For I say, that man without the grace of God, remains, nevertheless, under the general Omnipotence of an acting

God, who moves and carries along all things, of necessity, in the course of His infallible motion; but that the man's being thus carried along, is nothing; that is, avails nothing in the sight of God, nor is considered any thing else but sin. Thus in grace, he that is without love, is nothing. Why then does the Diatribe, when it confesses itself, that we are here speaking of evangelical fruits, as that which cannot be produced without Christ, turn aside immediately from the subject point, harp upon another string, and cavil about nothing but natural works and human fruits? Except it be to evince, that he who is devoid of the truth, is never consistent with himself. So also that of John 3:27, "A man can receive nothing except it were given him from above."

John is here speaking of man, who is now a something, and denies that this man can receive any thing; that is, the Spirit with His gifts; for it is in reference to that he is speaking, not in reference to nature. For he did not want the Diatribe as an instructor to teach him, that man has already eyes nose, ears, mouth, hands, mind, will, reason, and all things that belong to man.-Unless the Diatribe believes, that the Baptist, when he made mention of man, was thinking of the 'chaos' of Plato, the 'vacuum' of Leucippus, or the 'infinity' of Aristotle, or some other nothing, which, by a gift from heaven, should at last be made a something.-Is this producing examples out of the Scripture, thus to trifle designedly in a matter so important! And to what purpose is all that profusion of words, where it teaches us, 'that fire, the escape from evil, the endeavour after good, and other things are from heaven,' as though there were any one who did not know, or who denied those things? We are now talking about grace, and, as the Diatribe itself said, concerning Christ and evangelical fruits; whereas, it is itself, making out its time in fabling about nature; thus dragging out the cause, and covering the witless reader with a cloud. In the mean time, it does not produce one single example as it professed to do, wherein 'nothing,' is to be understood as signifying some small degree. Nay, it openly exposes itself as neither understanding nor caring what Christ or grace is, nor how it is, that grace is one thing and nature another, when even the Sophists of the meanest rank know, and have continually taught this difference in their schools, in the most common way. Nor does it all the while see, that every one of its examples make for me, and against itself. For the word of the Baptist goes to establish this:-that man can receive nothing unless it be given him from above; and that, therefore, "Free-will" is nothing at all.

Thus it is, then, that my Achilles is conquered-the Diatribe puts weapons into his hand, by which it is itself dispatched, naked and weapon-less. And thus it is also that the Scriptures, by which that obstinate assertor Luther urges his cause, are, 'by one word, brought to nothing.'

06.10d Discussion: Second Part (Sections 131 - 134)

Sect. 131.-After this, it enumerates a multitude of similitudes: by which, it effects nothing but the drawing aside the witless reader to irrelevant things, according to its custom, and at the same time leaves the subject point entirely out of the question. Thus,-"God indeed preserves the ship, but the mariner conducts it into harbour: wherefore, the mariner does not do nothing."-This similitude makes a difference of work: that is, it attributes that of preserving to God, and that of conducting to the mariner. And thus, if it prove any thing, it proves this:-that the whole work of preserving is of God, and the whole work of conducting of the mariner. And yet, it is a beautiful and apt similitude.

Thus, again-"the husbandman gathers in the increase, but it was God that gave it."-Here again, it attributes different operations to God and to man: unless it mean to make the husbandman the creator also, who gave the increase. But even supposing the same works be attributed to God and to man-what do these similitudes prove? Nothing more, than that the creature co-operates with the operating God! But are we now disputing about co-operation, and not rather concerning the power and operation of "Free-will," as of itself! Whither therefore has the renowned rhetorician betaken himself? He set out with the professed design to dispute concerning a palm; whereas all his discourse has been about a gourd! 'A noble vase was designed by the potter; why then is a pitcher produced at last?'

I also know very well, that Paul co-operates with God in teaching the Corinthians, while he preaches without, and God teaches within; and that, where their works are different. And that, in like manner, he co-operates with God while he speaks by the Spirit of God; and that, where the work is the same. For what I assert and contend for is this:-that God, where He operates without the grace of His Spirit, works all in all, even in the ungodly; while He alone moves, acts on, and carries along by the motion of His omnipotence, all those things which He alone has created, which motion those things can neither avoid nor change, but of necessity follow and obey, each one according to the measure of power given of God:-thus all things, even the ungodly, co-operate with God! On the other hand, when He acts by the Spirit of His grace on those whom He has justified, that is, in His own kingdom, He moves and carries them along in the same manner; and they, as they are the new creatures, follow and co-operate with Him; or rather, as Paul saith, are led by Him. (Romans 8:14, Romans 8:30) But the present is not the place for discussing these points. We are not now considering, what we can do in co-operation with God, but what we can do of ourselves: that is, whether, created as we are out of nothing, we can do or attempt any thing of ourselves, under the general motion of God's omnipotence, whereby to prepare ourselves unto the new Creation of the Spirit.-This is the point to which Erasmus ought to have answered, and not to have turned aside to a something else!

What I have to say upon this point is this:-As man, before he is created man, does nothing and endeavours nothing towards his being made a creature; and as, after he is made and created, he does nothing and endeavours nothing towards his preservation, or towards his continuing in his creature-existence, but each takes place alone by the will of the omnipotent power and goodness

of God, creating us and preserving us, without ourselves; but as God, nevertheless, does not work in us without us, seeing we are for that purpose created and preserved, that He might work in us and that we might co-operate with Him, whether it be out of His kingdom under His general omnipotence, or in His kingdom under the peculiar power of His Spirit;-so, man, before he is regenerated into the new creation of the kingdom of the Spirit, does nothing and endeavours nothing towards his new creation into that kingdom, and after he is re-created does nothing and endeavours nothing towards his perseverance in that kingdom; but the Spirit alone effects both in us, regenerating us and preserving us when regenerated, without ourselves; as James saith, "Of His own will begat He us by the word of His power, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures,"-(James 1:18) (where he speaks of the renewed creation:) nevertheless, He does not work in us without us, seeing that He has for this purpose created and preserved us, that He might operate in us, and that we might co-operate with Him: thus, by us He preaches, shews mercy to the poor, and comforts the afflicted.-But what is hereby attributed to "Free-will?" Nay, what is there left it but nothing at all? And in truth it is nothing at all!

Sect. 132.-READ therefore the Diatribe in this part through five or six pages, and you will find, that by similitudes of this kind, and by some of the most beautiful passages and parables selected from the Gospel and from Paul, it does nothing else but shew us, that innumerable passages (as it observes) are to be found in the Scriptures which speak of the co-operation and assistance of God: from which, if I should draw this conclusion-Man can do nothing without the assisting grace of God: therefore, no works of man are good-it would on the contrary conclude, as it has done by a rhetorical inversion-"Nay, there is nothing that man cannot do by the assisting grace of God: therefore, all the works of man can be good. For as many passages as there are in the Holy Scriptures which make mention of assistance, so many are there which confirm "Free-will;" and they are innumerable. Therefore, if we go by the number of testimonies, the victory is mine."- Do you think the Diatribe could be sober or in its right senses when it wrote this? For I cannot attribute it to malice or iniquity: unless it be that it designed to effectually wear me out by perpetually wearying me, while thus, ever like itself, it is continually turning aside to something contrary to its professed design. But if it is pleased thus to play the fool in a matter so important, then I will be pleased to expose its voluntary fooleries publicly. In the first place, I do not dispute, nor am I ignorant, that all the works of man may be good, if they be done by the assisting grace of God. And moreover that there is nothing which a man might not do by the assisting grace of God. But I cannot feel enough surprise at your negligence, who, having set out with the professed design to write upon the power of "Free-will," go on writing upon the power of grace. And moreover, dare to assert publicly, as if all men were posts or stones, that "Free-will" is established by those passages of Scripture which exalt the grace of God. And not only dare to do that, but even to sound forth encomiums on yourself as a victor most gloriously triumphant! From this very word and act of yours, I truly perceive what "Free-will" is, and what the effect of it is-it makes men mad! For what, I ask, can it be in you that talks at this rate, but "Free-will!" But just listen to your own conclusions.-The Scripture commends the grace of God: therefore, it proves "Free-will."-It exalts the assistance of the grace of God: therefore, it establishes "Free-will." By what kind of logic did you learn such conclusions as these? On the contrary, why not conclude thus?-Grace is preached: therefore, "Free-will" has no existence. The assistance of grace is exalted: therefore, "Free-will" is abolished. For, to what intent is grace given? Is it for this: that "Freewill," as being of sufficient power itself, might proudly display and sport grace on fair-days, as a superfluous ornament!

Wherefore, I will invert your order of reasoning, and though no rhetorician, will establish a conclusion more firm than yours.-As many places as there are in the Holy Scriptures which make mention of assistance, so many are there which abolish "Free-will:" and they are innumerable. Therefore, if we are to go by the number of testimonies, the victory is mine. For grace is therefore needed, and the assistance of grace is therefore given, because "Free-will" can of itself do nothing; as Erasmus himself has asserted according to that 'probable opinion' that "Free-will" 'cannot will any thing good.' Therefore, when grace is commended, and the assistance of grace declared, the impotency of "Free-will" is declared at the same time.-This is a sound inference-a firm conclusion-against which, not even the gates of hell will ever prevail!

Sect. 133.-HERE, I bring to a conclusion, THE DEFENCE OF MY SCRIPTURES WHICH THE DIATRIBE ATTEMPTED TO REFUTE; lest my book should be swelled to too great a bulk: and if there be anything yet remaining that is worthy of notice, it shall be taken into THE FOLLOWING PART; WHEREIN, I MAKE MY ASSERTIONS. For as to what Erasmus says in his conclusion-'that, if my sentiments stand good, the numberless precepts, the numberless threatenings, the numberless promises, are all in vain, and no place is left for merit or demerit, for rewards or punishments; that moreover, it is difficult to defend the mercy, nay, even the justice of God, if God damn sinners of necessity; and that many other difficulties follow, which have so troubled some of the greatest men, as even to utterly overthrow them,'- To all these things I have fully replied already. Nor will I receive or bear with that moderate medium, which Erasmus would (with a good intention, I believe,) recommend to me;-'that we should grant some certain little to "Free-will;" in order that, the contradictions of the Scripture, and the difficulties before mentioned, might be the more easily remedied.'-For by this moderate medium, the matter is not bettered, nor is any advantage gained whatever. Because, unless you ascribe the whole and all things to "Free-will," as the Pelagians do, the 'contradictions' in the Scriptures are not altered, merit and reward are taken entirely away, the mercy and justice of God are abolished, and all the difficulties which we try to avoid by allowing this 'certain little ineffective power' to "Free-will," remain just as they were before; as I have already fully shewn. Therefore, we must come to the plain extreme, deny "Free-will" altogether, and ascribe all unto God! Thus, there will be in the Scriptures no contradictions; and if there be any difficulties, they will be borne with, where they cannot be remedied.

Sect. 134.-THIS one thing, however, my friend Erasmus, I entreat of you-do not consider that I conduct this cause more according to my temper, than according to my principles. I will not suffer it to be insinuated, that I am hypocrite enough to write one thing and believe another. I have not (as you say of me) been carried so far by the heat of defensive argument, as to 'deny here "Free-will" altogether for the first time, having conceded something to it before.' Confident I am, that you can find no such concession any where in my works. There are questions and discussions of mine extant, in which I have continued to assert, down to this hour, that there is no such thing as "Free-will;" that it is a thing formed out of an empty term; (which are the words I have there used). And I then thus believed and thus wrote, as overpowered by the force of truth when called and compelled to the discussion. And as to my always conducting discussions with ardour, I acknowledge my fault, if it be a fault: nay, I greatly glory in this testimony which the world bears of me, in the cause of God: and may God Himself confirm the same testimony in the last day! Then, who more happy than Luther-to be honoured with the universal testimony of his age, that he did

not maintain the Cause of Truth lazily, nor deceitfully, but with a real, if not too great, ardour! Then shall I be blessedly clear from that word of Jeremiah, "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully!" (Jeremiah 48:10). But if I seem to be somewhat more severe than usual upon your Diatribe-pardon me. I do it not from a malignant heart, but from concern; because I know, that by the weight of your name you greatly endanger this cause of Christ: though, by your learning, as to real effect, you can do nothing at all. And who can always so temper his pen as never to grow warm? For even you, who from a show of moderation grow almost cold in this book of yours, not infrequently hurl a fiery and gall-dipped dart: so much so, that if the reader were not very liberal and kind, he could not but consider you virulent. But however, this is nothing to the subject point. We must mutually pardon each other in these things; for we are but men, and there is nothing in us that is not touched with human infirmity.

Chapter 94

06.11a Discussion: Third Part (Sections 135 - 152)

DISCUSSION.

THIRD PART.

WE are now arrived at the LAST PART OF THIS DISCUSSION. Wherein I am, as I proposed, to bring forward my forces against "Free-will." But I shall not produce them all, for who could do that within the limited of this small book, when the whole Scripture, in every letter and iota, stands on my side? Nor is there any necessity for so doing; seeing that, "Free-will" already lies vanquished and prostrate under a two-fold overthrow.-The one where I have proved, that all those things, which it imagined made for itself, make directly against itself.-The other, where I have made it manifest, that those Scriptures which it attempted to refute, still remain invincible.-If, therefore, it had not been vanquished by the former, it is enough if it be laid prostrate by the one weapon or the other. And now, what need is there that the enemy, already dispatched by the one weapon or the other, should have his dead body stabbed with a number of weapons more? In this part, therefore, I shall be as brief as the subject will allow: and from such numerous armies, I shall produce only two champion-generals with a few of their legions-Paul, and John the Evangelist!

Sect. 135.-PAUL, writing to the Romans, thus enters upon his argument, against Free-will, and for the grace of God. "The wrath of God (saith he) is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." (Romans 1:18)-

Dost thou hear this general sentence "against all men,"-that they are all under the wrath of God? And what is this but declaring, that they all merit wrath and punishment? For he assigns the cause of the wrath against them-they do nothing but that which merits wrath; because they are all ungodly and unrighteous, and hold the truth in unrighteousness. Where is now the power of "Freewill" which can endeavour any thing good? Paul makes it to merit the wrath of God, and pronounces it ungodly and unrighteous. That, therefore, which merits wrath and is ungodly, only endeavours and avails against grace, not for grace. But some one will here laugh at the yawning inconsiderateness of Luther, for not looking fully into the intention of Paul. Some one will say, that Paul does not here speak of all men, nor of all their doings; but of those only who are ungodly and unrighteous, and who, as the words themselves describe them, "hold the truth in unrighteousness;" but that, it does not hence follow, that all men are the same.

Here I observe, that in this passage of Paul, the words "against all ungodliness of men" are of the same import, as if you should say,-against the ungodliness of all men. For Paul, in almost all these instances, uses a Hebraism: so that, the sense is,-all men are ungodly and unrighteous, and hold the truth in unrighteousness; and therefore, all merit wrath. Hence, in the Greek, there is no relative which might be rendered ’of those who,’ but an article, causing the sense to run thus, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, holding the truth in unrighteousness." So that this may be taken as an epithet, as it were, applicable to all men as "holding the truth in unrighteousness:" even as it is an epithet where it is

said, "Our Father which art in heaven:" which might in other words be expressed thus: Our heavenly Father, or Our Father in heaven. For it is so expressed to distinguish those who believe and fear God. But these things might appear frivolous and vain, did not the very train of Paul's argument require them to be so understood, and prove them to be true. For he had said just before, "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Romans 1:16). These words are surely neither obscure or ambiguous, "to the Jew first and also to the Greek:" that is, the Gospel of the power of God is necessary unto all men, that, believing in it, they might be saved from the wrath of God revealed. Does he not then, I pray you, who declares, that the Jews who excelled in righteousness, in the law of God, and in the power of "Free-will," are, without difference, destitute and in need of the power of God, by which they might be saved, and who makes that power necessary unto them, consider that they are all under wrath? What men then will you pretend to say are not under the wrath of God, when you are thus compelled to believe, that the most excellent men in the world, the Jews and Greeks, were so? And further, whom among those Jews and Greeks themselves will you except, when Paul subjects all of them, included in the same word, without difference, to the same sentence? And are we to suppose that there were no men, out of these two most exalted nations, who 'aspired to what was meritoriously good?' Were there none among them who thus aspired with all the powers of their "Free-will?" Yet Paul makes no distinction on this account, he includes them all under wrath, and declares them all to be ungodly and unrighteous. And are we not to believe that all the other Apostles each one according to the work he had to do, included all other nations under this wrath, in the same way of declaration?

Sect. 136.-THIS passage of Paul, therefore, stands firmly and forcibly urging-that "Freewill," even in its most exalted state, in the most exalted men, who were endowed with the law, righteousness, wisdom, and all the virtues, was ungodly and unrighteous, and merited the wrath of God; or the argument of Paul amounts to nothing. And if it stand good, his division leaves no medium: for he makes those who believe the Gospel to be under the salvation, and all the rest to be under the wrath of God: he makes the believing to be righteous, and the unbelieving to be ungodly, unrighteous, and under wrath. For the whole that he means to say is this:-The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel, that it might be by faith. But God would be wanting in wisdom, if He should reveal righteousness unto men, when they either knew it already or had 'some seeds' of it themselves. Since, however, He is not wanting in wisdom, and yet reveals unto men the righteousness of salvation, it is manifest, that "Free-will" even in the most exalted of men, not only has wrought, and can work no righteousness, but does not even know what is righteous before God.-Unless you mean to say, that the righteousness of God is not revealed unto these most exalted of men, but to the most vile!-But the boasting of Paul is quite the contrary-that he is a debtor, both to the Jews and to the Greeks, to the wise and to the unwise, to the Greeks and to the barbarians.

Wherefore Paul, comprehending, in this passage, all men together in one mass, concludes that they are all ungodly, unrighteous, and ignorant of the righteousness of faith: so far is it from possibility, that they can will or do any thing good. And this conclusion is moreover confirmed from this:-that God reveals the righteousness of faith to them, as being ignorant and sitting in darkness: therefore, of themselves, they know it not. And if they be ignorant of the righteousness of salvation, they are certainly under wrath and damnation: nor can they extricate themselves

therefrom, nor endeavour to extricate themselves: for how can you endeavour, if you know neither what you are to endeavour after, nor in what way, nor to what extent, you are to endeavour?

Sect: 137.-WITH this conclusion both the thing itself and experience agree. For shew me one of the whole race of mankind, be he the most holy and most just of all men, into whose mind it ever came, that the way unto righteousness and salvation, was to believe in Him who is both God and man, who died for the sins of men and rose again, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father, that He might still that wrath of God the Father which Paul here says is revealed from heaven?

Look at the most eminent philosophers! What ideas had they of God! What have they left behind them in their writings concerning the wrath to come! Look at the Jews instructed by so many wonders and so many successive Prophets! What did they think of this way of righteousness? They not only did not receive it, but so hated it, that no nation under heaven has more atrociously persecuted Christ, unto this day. And who would dare to say, that in so great a people, there was not one who cultivated "Free-will," and endeavoured with all its power? How comes it to pass, then, that they all endeavour in the directly opposite, and that that which was the most excellent in the most excellent men, not only did not follow this way of righteousness, not only did not know it, but even thrust it from them with the greatest hatred, and wished to away with it when it was published and revealed? So much so, that Paul saith, this way was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles foolishness." (1 Corinthians 1:23).

Since, therefore, Paul speaks of the Jews and Gentiles without difference, and since it is certain that the Jews and Gentiles comprehend the principal nations under heaven, it is hence certain, that "Free-will" is nothing else than the greatest enemy to righteousness and the salvation of man: for it is impossible, but that there must have been some among the Jews and Gentile Greeks who wrought and endeavoured with all the powers of "Free-will;" and yet, by all that endeavouring, did nothing but carry on a war against grace. Do you therefore now come forward and say, what "Free-will" can endeavour towards good, when goodness and righteousness themselves are a "stumbling-block" unto it, and "foolishness." Nor can you say that this applies to some and not to all. Paul speaks of all without difference, where he says, "to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Gentiles foolishness:" nor does he except any but believers. "To us, (saith he,) who are called, and saints, it is the power of God and wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)). He does not say to some Gentiles, to some Jews; but plainly, to the Gentiles and to the Jews, who are "not of us." Thus, by a manifest division, separating the believing from the unbelieving, and leaving no medium whatever. And we are now speaking of Gentiles as working without grace: to whom Paul saith, the righteousness of God is "foolishness," and they abhor it.-This is that meritorious endeavour of "Free-will" towards good!

Sect. 138.-SEE, moreover, whether Paul himself does not particularize the most exalted among the Greeks, where he saith, that the wisest among them "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened;" that "they became wise in their own conceits:" that is, by their subtle disputations. (Romans 1:21). Does he not here, I pray you, touch that, which was the most exalted and most excellent in the Greeks, when he touches their "imaginations?" For these comprehend their most sublime and exalted thoughts and opinions; which they considered as solid wisdom. But he calls that their wisdom, as well in other places "foolishness," as here "vain imagination;" which, by its endeavouring, only became worse; till at last they worshipped an idol in

their own darkened hearts, and proceeded to the other enormities, which he afterwards enumerates.

If therefore, the most exalted and devoted endeavours and works in the most exalted of the nations be evil and ungodly, what shall we think of the rest, who are, as it were, the commonalty, and the vilest of the nations? Nor does Paul here make any difference between those who are the most exalted, for he condemns all the devotedness of their wisdom, without any respect of persons. And if he condemn their very works and devoted endeavours, he condemns those who exert them, even though they strive with all the powers of "Free-will." Their most exalted endeavour, I say, is declared to be evil-how much more then the persons themselves who exert it! So also, just afterwards, he rejects the Jews, without any difference, who are Jews "in the letter" and not "in the spirit." "Thou (saith he) honourest God in the letter, and in the circumcision." Again, "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly." Romans 1:27-29.

What can be more manifest than the division here made? The Jew outwardly, is a transgressor of the law! And how many Jews must we suppose there were, without the faith, who were men the most wise, the most religious, and the most honourable, who aspired unto righteousness and truth with all the devotion of endeavour? Of these the apostle continually bears testimony:-that they had "a zeal of God," that they "followed after righteousness," that they strove day and night to attain unto salvation, that they lived "blameless:" and yet they are transgressors of the law, because they are not Jews "in the spirit," nay they determinately resist the righteousness of faith. What conclusion then remains to be drawn, but that, "Free-will" is then the worst when it is the best; and that, the more it endeavours, the worse it becomes, and the worse it is! The words are plain-the division is certain-nothing can be said against it.

Sect. 139.-BUT let us hear Paul, who is his own interpreter. In the third chapter, drawing up, as it were, a conclusion, he saith, "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin." (Romans 3:9). Where is now "Free-will!" All, saith he, both Jews and Greeks are under sin! Are there any 'tropes' or 'difficulties' here? What would the 'invented interpretations' of the whole world do against this all-clear sentence? He who says "all," excepts none. And he who describes them all as being "under sin," that is, the servants of sin, leaves them no degree of good whatever. But where has he given this proof that "they are all, both Jews and Gentiles, under sin?" Nowhere, but where I have already shewn: viz., where he saith, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." This he proves to them afterwards from experience: shewing them, that being hated of God, they were given up to so many vices, in order that they might be convinced from the fruits of their ungodliness, that they willed and did nothing but evil. And then, he judges the Jews also separately; where he saith, that the Jew "in the letter," is a transgressor of the law: which he proves, in like manner, from the fruits, and from experience: saying, "Thou who declarest that a man should not steal, stealest thyself: thou who abhorrest idols, committest sacrilege." Thus excepting none whatever, but those who are Jews "in the spirit."

Sect. 140.-BUT let us see how Paul proves his sentiments out of the Holy Scriptures: and whether the passages which he adduces 'are made to have more force in Paul, than they have in their own places.' "As it is written, (saith he,) There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are all

together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one," &c. (Romans 3:10-23).

Here let him that can, produce his 'convenient interpretation,' invent 'tropes,' and pretend that the words 'are ambiguous and obscure!' Let him that dares, defend "Free-will" against these damnable doctrines! Then I will at once give up all and recant, and will myself become a confessor and assertor of "Free-will." It is certain, that these words apply to all men: for the prophet introduces God, as looking down from heaven upon men and pronouncing this sentence upon them. So also Psalms 14:2-3. "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God. But they are all gone out of the way," &c. And that the Jews might not imagine that this did not apply to them by anticipation, and asserts, that it applied to them most particularly: saying, "We know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law." (Romans 3:19). And his intention is the same, where he saith, "To the Jew first and also to the Greek."

You hence hear, that all the sons of men, all that are under the law, that is, the Gentiles as well as the Jews, are accounted before God ungodly; not understanding, not seeking after God, no, not even one of them; being all gone out of the way and become unprofitable. And surely, among all the "children of men," and those who are "under the law," those must also be numbered who are the best and most laudable, who aspire after that which is meritorious and good, with all the powers of "Free-will;" and those also of whom the Diatribe boasts as having the sense and certain seeds of good implanted in them;-unless it means to contend that they are the "children" of angels!

How then can they endeavour toward good, who are all, without exception, ignorant of God, and neither regard nor seek after God? How can they have a power able to attain unto good, who all, without exception, decline from good and become utterly unprofitable? Are not the words most clear? And do they not declare this,-that all men are ignorant of God and despise God, and then, turn unto evil and become unprofitable unto good? For Paul is not here speaking of the ignorance of seeking food, or the contempt of money, but of the ignorance and contempt of religion and of godliness. And that ignorance and contempt, most undoubtedly, are not in the "flesh," that is, (as you interpret it,) 'the inferior and grosser affections,' but in the most exalted and most noble powers of man, in which, righteousness, godliness, the knowledge and reverence of God, ought to reign; that is, in the reason and in the will; and thus, in the very power of "Free-will," in the very seed of good, in that which is the most excellent in man! Where are you now, friend Erasmus! you who promised 'that you would freely acknowledge, that the most excellent faculty in man is "flesh," that is, ungodly, if it should be proved from the Scriptures?' Acknowledge now, then, when you hear, that the most excellent faculty in man is not only ungodly, but ignorant of God, existing in the contempt of God, turned to evil, and unable to turn towards good. For what is it to be "unrighteous," but for the will, (which is one of the most noble faculties in man,) to be unrighteous? What is it to understand nothing either of God or good, but for the reason (which is another of the most noble faculties in man) to be ignorant of God and good, that is, to be blind to the knowledge of godliness? What is it to be "gone out of the way," and to have become unprofitable, but for men to have no power in one single faculty, and the least power in their most noble faculties, to turn unto good, but only to turn unto evil! What is it not to fear God, but for men to be in all their faculties, and most of all in their noblest faculties, contemners of all the things of God, of His words, His works, His laws, His precepts, and His will! What then can reason propose, that is right, who is thus blind and ignorant? What can the will choose that is good, which is thus evil and

impotent? Nay, what can the will pursue, where the reason can propose nothing, but the darkness of its own blindness and ignorance? And where the reason is thus erroneous, and the will averse, what can the man either do or attempt, that is good!

Sect. 141.-BUT perhaps some one may, here sophistically observe-though the will be gone out of the way, and the reason be ignorant, as to the perfection of the act, yet the will can make some attempt, and the reason can attain to some knowledge by its own powers; seeing that, we can attempt many things which we cannot perfect; and we are here speaking, of the existence of a power, not of the perfection of the act.-

I answer: The words of the Prophet comprehend both the act and the power. For his saying, man seeks not God, is the same as if he had said, man cannot seek God: which you may collect from this.-If there were a power or ability in man to will good, it could not be, but that, as the motion of the Divine Omnipotence could not suffer it to remain actionless, or to keep holiday, (as I before observed) it must be moved forth into act in some men, at least, in some one man or other, and must be made manifest so as to afford an example. But this is not the case. For God looks down from heaven, and does not see even one who seeks after Him, or attempts it. Wherefore it follows, that that power is nowhere to be found, which attempts, or wills to attempt, to seek after Him; and that all men "are gone out of the way."

Moreover if Paul be not understood to speak at the same time of impotency, his disputation will amount to nothing. For Paul’s whole design is, to make grace necessary unto all men. Whereas, if they could make some sort of beginning themselves, grace would not be necessary. But now, since they cannot make that beginning, grace is necessary. Hence you see that "Free-will" is by this passage utterly abolished, and nothing meritorious or good whatever left in man: seeing that, he is declared to be unrighteous, ignorant of God, a contemner of God, averse to God, and unprofitable in the sight of God. And the words of the prophet are sufficiently forcible both in their own place, and in Paul who adduces them. Nor is it an inconsiderable assertion, when man is said to be ignorant of, and to despise God: for these are the fountain springs of all iniquities, the sink of all sins, and the hell of all evils. What evil is there not, where there are ignorance and contempt of God? In a word, the whole kingdom of Satan in men, could not be defined in fewer or more expressive words than by saying-they are ignorant of and despise God! For there is unbelief, there is disobedience, there is sacrilege, there is blasphemy against God, there is cruelty and a want of mercy towards our neighbour, there is the love of self in all the things of God and man!-Here you have a description of the glory and power of "Free-will!"

Sect. 142.-PAUL however proceeds; and testifies, that he now expressly speaks with reference to all men, and to those more especially who are the greatest and most exalted: saying, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight." (Romans 3:19-20).

How, I pray you, shall every mouth be stopped, if there be still a power remaining by which we can do something? For one might then say to God-That which is here in the world is not altogether nothing. There is that here which you cannot damn: even that, to which you yourself gave the power of doing something. The mouth of this at least will not be stopped, for it cannot be obnoxious to you.-For if there be any sound power in "Free-will", and it be able to do something, to say that the whole world is obnoxious to, or guilty before God, is false; for that power, whose

mouth is not to be stopped, cannot be an inconsiderable thing, or a something in one small part of the world only, but a thing most conspicuous, and most general throughout the whole world. Or, if its mouth be to be stopped, then it must be obnoxious to, and guilty before God, together with the whole world. But how can it rightly be called guilty, if it be not unrighteous and ungodly; that is, meriting punishment and vengeance?

Let your friends, I pray you, find out, by what 'convenient interpretation' that power of man is to be cleared from this charge of guilt, by which the whole world is declared guilty before God; or by what contrivance it is to be excepted from being comprehended in the expression "all the world." These words-"They are all gone out of the way, there is none righteous, no not one," are mighty thunderclaps and riving thunder-bolts; they are in reality that hammer breaking the rock in pieces mentioned by Jeremiah; by which, is broken in pieces every thing that is, not in one man only, nor in some men, nor in a part of men, but in the whole world, no one man being excepted: so that the whole world ought, at those words, to tremble, to fear, and to flee away. For what words more awful or fearful could be uttered than these-The whole world is guilty; all the sons of men are turned out of the way, and become unprofitable; there is no one that fears God; there is no one that is not unrighteous; there is no one that understandeth; there is no one that seeketh after God!

Nevertheless, such ever has been, and still is, the hardness and insensible obstinacy of our hearts, that we never should of ourselves hear or feel the force of these thunder-claps or thunder-bolts, but should, even while they were sounding in our ears, exalt and establish "Free-will" with all its powers in defiance of them, and thus in reality fulfill that of Malachi 1:4, "They build, but I will throw down!" With the same power of words also is this said-"By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight."-"By the deeds of the law" is a forcible expression; as is also this, "The whole world;" and this, "All the children of men." For it is to be observed, that Paul abstains from the mention of persons, and mentions their ways only: that is, that he might comprehend all persons, and whatever in them is most excellent. Whereas, if he had said the commonalty of the Jews, or the Pharisees, or certain of the ungodly, are not justified, he might have seemed to leave some excepted, who, from the power of "Free-will" in them, and by a certain aid from the law, were not altogether unprofitable. But now, when he condemns the works of the law themselves, and makes them unrighteous in the sight of God, it becomes manifest, that he condemns all who were mighty in a devoted observance of the law and of works. And none devotedly observed the law and works but the best and most excellent among them, nor did they thus observe them but with their best and most exalted faculties; that is, their reason and their will.

If therefore, those, who exercised themselves in the observance of the law and of works with all the devoted striving and endeavouring both of reason and of will, that is, with all the power of "Free-will," and who were assisted by the law as a divine aid, and were instructed out of it, and roused to exertion by it; if, I say, these are condemned of impiety because they are not justified, and are declared to be flesh in the sight of God, what then will there be left in the whole race of mankind which is not flesh, and which is not ungodly? For all are condemned alike who are of the works of the law: and whether they exercise themselves in the law with the utmost devotion, or moderate devotion, or with no devotion at all, it matters nothing. None of them could do any thing but work the works of the law, and the works of the law do not justify: and if they do not justify, they prove their workmen to be ungodly, and leave them so: and if they be ungodly, they are guilty, and merit the wrath of God! These things are so clear, that no one can open his mouth against them.

Sect. 143.-BUT many elude and evade Paul, by saying, that he here calls the ceremonial works, works of the law; which works, after the death of Christ, were dead.

I answer: This is that notable error and ignorance of Jerome which, although Augustine strenuously resisted it, yet, by the withdrawing of God and the prevailing of Satan, has found its way throughout the world, and has continued down to this day. By means of which, it has come to pass, that it has been impossible to understand Paul, and the knowledge of Christ has, consequently, been obscured. Therefore, if there had been no other error in the church, this one might have been sufficiently pestilent and powerful to destroy the Gospel: for which, Jerome, if peculiar grace did not interpose, has deserved hell rather than heaven: so far am I from daring to canonize him, or call him a saint! But however, it is not truth that Paul is here speaking of the ceremonial works only: for if that be the case, how will his argument stand good, whereby he concludes, that all are unrighteous and need grace? But perhaps you will say-Be it so, that we are not justified by the ceremonial works, yet one might be justified by the moral works of the Decalogue. By this syllogism of yours then, you have proved, that to such, grace is not necessary. If this be the case, how very useful must that grace be, which delivers us from the ceremonial works only, the easiest of all works, which may be extorted from us through mere fear or self-love! And this, moreover, is erroneous-that ceremonial works are dead and unlawful, since the death of Christ. Paul never said any such thing. He says, that they do not justify, and that they profit the man nothing in the sight of God, so as to make him free from unrighteousness. Holding this truth, any one may do them, and yet do nothing that is unlawful. Thus, to eat and to drink are works, which do not justify or recommend us to God; and yet, he who eats and drinks does not, therefore, do that which is unlawful.

These men err also in this.-The ceremonial works, were as much commanded and exacted in the old law, and in the Decalogue, as the moral works: and therefore, the latter had neither more nor less force than the former. For Paul is here speaking, principally, to the Jews, as he saith, Romans 1:1-32 : wherefore, let no one doubt, that by the works of the law here, all the works of the whole law are to be understood. For if the law be abrogated and dead, they cannot be called the works of the law; for an abrogated or dead law, is no longer a law; and that Paul knew full well. Therefore, he does not speak of the law abrogated, when he speaks of the works of the law, but of the law in force and authority: otherwise, how easy would it have been for him to say, The law is now abrogated? And then, he would have spoken openly and clearly. But let us bring forward Paul himself, who is the best interpreter of himself. He saith, Galatians 3:10, "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them." You see that Paul here, where he is urging the same point as he is in his epistle to the Romans, and in the same words, speaks, wherever he makes mention of the works of the law, of all the laws that are written in the Book of the Law. And what is still more worthy of remark, Paul himself cites Moses, who curses those that continue not in the law; whereas, he himself curses those who are of the works of the law; thus adducing a testimony of a different scope from that of his own sentiment; the former being in the negative, the latter in the affirmative. But this he does, because the real state of the case is such in the sight of God, that those who are the most devoted to the works of the law, are the farthest from fulfilling the law, as being without the Spirit, who only is the fulfiller of the law, which such may attempt to fulfill by their own powers, but they will effect nothing after all. Wherefore, both

declarations are truth-that of Moses, that they are accursed who continue not in the works of the law; and that of Paul, that they are accursed who are of the works of the law. For both characters of persons require the Spirit, without which, the works of the law, how many and excellent soever they may be, justify not, as Paul saith; wherefore neither character of persons continue in all things that are written, as Moses saith.

Sect. 144.-IN a word: Paul by this division of his, fully confirms that which I maintain. For he divides law-working men into two classes, those who work after the spirit, and those who work after the flesh, leaving no medium whatever. He speaks thus: "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Romans 3:20). What is this but saying, that those whose works, profit them not, work the works of the law without the Spirit, as being themselves flesh; that is, unrighteous and ignorant of God. So, Galatians 3:2, making the same division, he saith, "received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Again Romans 3:21, "but now, the righteousness of God is manifest without the law." And again Romans 3:28, "We conclude, therefore, that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law." From all which it is manifest and clear, that in Paul, the Spirit is set in opposition to the works of the law, as well as to all other things which are not spiritual, including all the powers of, and every thing pertaining to the flesh. So that, the meaning of Paul, is evidently the same as that of Christ, John 3:6, that every thing which is not of the Spirit is flesh, be it never so specious, holy and great, nay, be they works of the divine law the most excellent, and wrought by all the powers imaginable; for the Spirit of Christ is wanting; without which, all things are nothing short of being damnable.

Let it then be a settled point, that Paul, by the works of the law, means not the ceremonial works, but the works of the whole law; then, this will be a settled point also, that in the works of the law, every thing is condemned that is without the Spirit. And without the Spirit, is that power of "Free-will," (for that is the point in dispute),-that most exalted faculty in man! For, to be "of the works of the law," is the most exalted state in which man can be. The apostle, therefore, does not say, who are of sins, and of ungodliness against the law, but who are "of the works of the law;" that is, who are the best of men, and the most devoted to the law: and who are, in addition to the power of "Free-will," even assisted, that is, instructed and roused into action, by the law itself.

If therefore "Free-will" assisted by the law and exercising all its powers in the law, profit nothing and justify not, but be left in sin and in the flesh, what must we suppose it able to do, when left to itself without the law!

"By the law (saith Paul) is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20). Here he shews how much, and how far the law profits:-that "Free-will" is of itself so blind, that it does not even know what is sin, but has need of the law for its teacher. And what can that man do towards taking away sin, who does not even know what is sin? All that he can do, is, to mistake that which is sin for that which is no sin, and that which is no sin for that which is sin. And this, experience sufficiently proves. How does the world, by the medium of those whom it accounts the most excellent and the most devoted to righteousness and piety, hate and persecute the righteousness of God preached in the Gospel, and brand it with the name of heresy, error, and every opprobrious appellation, while it boasts of and sets forth its own works and devices, which are really sin and error, as righteousness and wisdom? By this Scripture, therefore, Paul stops the mouth of "Free-will" where he teaches, that by the law its sin is discovered unto it, of which sin it was before ignorant; so far is

he from conceding to it any power whatever to attempt that which is good.

Sect. 145.-AND here is solved that question of the Diatribe so often repeated throughout its book-"if we can do nothing, to what purpose are so many laws, so many precepts, so many threatenings, and so many promises?"-

Paul here gives an answer: "By the law is the knowledge of sin." His answer is far different from that which would enter the thoughts of man, or of "Free-will." He does not say, by the law is proved "Free-will," because it co-operates with it unto righteousness. For righteousness is not by the law, but, "by the law is the knowledge of sin:" seeing that, the effect, the work, and the office of the law, is to be a light to the ignorant and the blind; such a light, as discovers to them disease, sin, evil, death, hell, and the wrath of God; though it does not deliver from these, but shews them only. And when a man is thus brought to a knowledge of the disease of sin, he is cast down, is afflicted, nay despairs: the law does not help him, much less can he help himself. Another light is necessary, which might discover to him the remedy. This is the voice of the Gospel, revealing Christ as the Deliverer from all these evils. Neither "Free-will" nor reason can discover Him. And how should, it discover Him, when it is itself dark and devoid even of the light of the law, which might discover to it its disease, which disease, in its own light it seeth not, but believes it to be sound health. So also in Galatians 3, treating on the same point, he saith, "Wherefore then serveth the law?" To which he answers, not as the Diatribe does, in a way that proves the existence of "Free-will," but he saith, "it was added because of transgressions, until the Seed should come, to whom the promise was made." (Galatians 3:19). He saith, "because of transgressions;" not, however, to restrain them, as Jerome dreams; (for Paul shews, that to take away and to restrain sins, by the gift of righteousness, was that which was promised to the Seed to come;) but to cause transgressions to abound, as he saith Romans 5:20, "The law entered that sin might abound." Not that sins were not committed and did not abound without the law, but they were not known to be transgressions and sins of such magnitude; for the most and greatest of them, were considered to be righteousnesses. And while sins are thus unknown, there is no place for remedy, or for hope; because, they will not submit to the hand of the healer, considering themselves to be whole, and not to want a physician. Therefore, the law is necessary, which might give the knowledge of sin; in order that, he who is proud and whole in his own eyes, being humbled down into the knowledge of the iniquity and greatness of his sin, might groan and breathe after the grace that is laid up in Christ.

Only observe, therefore, the simplicity of the words-"By the law is the knowledge of sin;" and yet, these alone are of force sufficient to confound and overthrow "Free-will" altogether. For if it be true, that of itself, it knows not what is sin, and what is evil, as the apostle saith here, and Romans 7:7-8, "I should not have known that concupiscence was sin, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet," how can it ever know what is righteousness and good? And if it know not what righteousness is, how can it endeavour to attain unto it? We know not the sin in which we were born, in which we live, in which we move and exist, and which lives, moves, and reigns in us; how then should we know that righteousness which is without us, and which reigns in heaven? These works bring that miserable thing "Free-will" to nothing-nothing at all!

Sect. 146.-THE state of the case, therefore, being thus, Paul speaks openly with full confidence and authority, saying, "But now the righteousness of God is manifest without the law, being

witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe in Him: (for there is no difference, for all have sinned and are without the glory of God:) being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in His blood, &c." (Romans 3:22-26).

Here Paul speaks forth very thunder-bolts against "Free-will." First, he saith, "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested." Here he marks the distinction between the righteousness of God, and the righteousness of the law: because, the righteousness of faith comes by grace, without the law. His saying, "without the law," can mean nothing else, but that Christian righteousness exists, without the works of the law: inasmuch as the works of the law avail nothing, and can do nothing, toward the attainment unto it. As he afterwards saith, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Romans 3:28). The same also he had said before, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight." (Romans 3:20). From all which it is most clearly manifest, that the endeavour and desire of "Free-will" are a nothing at all. For if the righteousness of God exist without the law, and without the works of the law, how shall it not much rather exist without "Free-will'! especially, since the most devoted effort of "Free-will" is, to exercise itself in moral righteousness, or the works of that law, from which its blindness and impotency derive their 'assistance!' This word "without," therefore abolishes all moral works, abolishes all moral righteousness, abolishes all preparations unto grace. In a word, scrape together every thing you can as that which pertains to the ability of "Free-will," and Paul will still stand invincible saying,-the righteousness of God is "without" it!

But, to grant that "Free-will" can, by its endeavour, move itself in some direction, we will say, unto good works, or unto the righteousness of the civil or moral law; yet, it is not moved toward the righteousness of God, nor does God in any respect allow its devoted efforts to be worthy unto the attainment of this righteousness: for He saith, that His righteousness availeth without the works of the law. If therefore, it cannot move itself unto the attainment of the righteousness of God, what will it be profited, if it move itself by its own works and endeavours, unto the attainment of (if it were possible) the righteousness of angels! Here, I presume, the words are not 'obscure or ambiguous,' nor is any place left for 'tropes' of any kind. Here Paul distinguishes most manifestly the two righteousnesses; assigning the one to the law, the other to grace; and declares that the latter is given without the former, and without its works; and that the former justifies not, nor avails anything, without the latter. I should like to see, therefore, how "Free-will" can stand, or be defended, against these Scriptures!

Sect. 147.-ANOTHER thunder-bolt is this-The apostle saith, that the righteousness of God is manifested and avails, "unto all and upon all them that believe" in Christ: and that, "there is no difference." (Romans 3:21-22).-

Here again, he divides in the clearest words, the whole race of men into two distinct divisions. To the believing he gives the righteousness of God, but takes it from the unbelieving. Now, no one, I suppose, will be madman enough to doubt, whether or not the power or endeavour of "Free-will" be a something that is not faith in Christ Jesus. Paul then denies that any thing which is not this faith, is righteous before God. And if it be not righteous before God, it must be sin. For there is with God no medium between righteousness and sin, which can be as it were a neuter-neither

righteousness nor sin. Otherwise the whole argument of Paul would amount to nothing: for it proceeds wholly upon this distinct division-that whatever is done and carried on by men, must be in the sight of God, either righteousness or sin: righteousness, if done in faith; sin, if faith be wanting. With men, indeed, things pass thus.-All cases in which men, in their intercourse with each other, neither owe any thing as a due, nor do any thing as a free benefit, are called medium and neuter. But here the ungodly man sins against God, whether he eat, or whether he drink, or whatever he do; because, he abuses the creature of God by his ungodliness and perpetual ingratitude, and does not, at any one moment, give glory to God from his heart.

Sect. 148.-THIS also, is no powerless thunder-bolt where the apostle says, "All have sinned and are without the glory of God: for there is no difference." (Romans 3:23).

What, I pray you, could be spoken more clearly? Produce one of your "Free-will" workmen, and say to me-does this man, sin in this his endeavour? If he does not sin, why does not Paul except him? Why does he include him also without difference? Surely he that saith "all," excepts no one in any place, at any time, in any work or endeavour. If therefore you except any man, for any kind of devoted desire or work,-you make Paul a liar; because he includes that "Free-will"-workman or striver, among all the rest, and in all that he saith concerning them; whereas, Paul should have had some respect for this person, and not have numbered him among the general herd of sinners!

There is also that part, where he saith, that they are "without the glory of God."

You may understand "the glory of God" here two ways, actively and passively. For Paul writes thus from his frequent use of Hebraisms. "The glory of God," understood actively, is that glory by which God glories in us; understood passively, it is that glory by which we glory in God. But it seems to me proper, to understand it now, passively. So, "the faith of Christ," is, according to the Latin, the faith which Christ has; but, according to the Hebrew, "the faith of Christ," is the faith which we have in Christ. So, also, "the righteousness of God," signifies, according to the Latin, the righteousness which God has; but according to the Hebrews, it signifies the righteousness which we have from God and before God. Thus also "the glory of God," we understand according to the Latin, not according to the Hebrew; and receive it as signifying, the glory which we have from God and before God; which may be called, our glory in God. And that man glories in God who knows, to a certainty, that God has a favour unto him, and deigns to look upon him with kind regard; and that, whatever he does pleases God, and what does not please him, is borne with by Him and pardoned.

If therefore, the endeavour or desire of "Free-will" be not sin, but good before God, it can certainly glory; and in that glorying, say with confidence,-This pleases God, God favours this, God looks upon and accepts this, or at least, bears with it and pardons it. For this is the glorying of the faithful in God: and they that have not this, are rather confounded before God. But Paul here denies that these men have this; saying, that they are all entirely without this glory. This also experience itself proves.-Put the question to all the exercisers of "Free-will" to a man, and see if you can shew me one, who can honestly, and from his heart, say of any one of his devoted efforts and endeavours,-This pleases God! If you can bring forward a single one, I am ready to acknowledge myself overthrown, and to cede to you the palm. But I know there is not one to be found. And if this glory be wanting, so that the conscience dares not say, to a certainty, and with confidence,-this pleases God, it is certain that it does not please God. For as a man believes, so it is unto him:

because, he does not, to a certainty, believe that he pleases God; which, nevertheless, it is necessary to believe; for to doubt of the favour of God, is the very sin itself of unbelief; because, He will have it believed with the most assuring faith that He is favourable. Therefore, I have convinced them upon the testimony of their own conscience, that "Free-will," being "without the glory of God," is, with all its powers, its devoted strivings and endeavours, perpetually under the guilt of the sin of unbelief. And what will the advocates of "Free-will" say to that which follows, "being justified freely by His grace?" (Romans 3:24). What is the meaning of the word "freely?" What is the meaning of "by His grace?" How will merit, and endeavour, accord with freely-given righteousness? But, perhaps, they will here say-that they attribute to "Free-will" a very little indeed, and that which is by no means the 'merit of worthiness' (meritum condignum!) These, however, are mere empty words: for all that is sought for in the defence of "Free-will," is to make place for merit. This is manifest: for the Diatribe has, throughout, argued and expostulated thus,

-"If there be no freedom of will, how can there be place for merit? And if there be no place for merit, how can there be place for reward? To whom will the reward be assigned, if justification be without merit?

Paul here gives you an answer.-That there is no such thing as merit at all; but that all who are justified are justified "freely;" that this is ascribed to no one but to the grace of God.-And when this righteousness is given, the kingdom and life eternal are given with it! Where is your endeavouring now? Where is your devoted effort? Where are your works? Where are your merits of "Free-will?" Where is the profit of them all put together? You cannot here make, as a pretence, 'obscurity and ambiguity:' the facts and the works are most clear and most plain. But be it so, that they attribute to "Free-will" a very little indeed, yet they teach us that by that very little we can attain unto righteousness and grace. Nor do they solve that question, Why does God justify one and leave another? in any other way, than by asserting the freedom of the will, and saying, Because, the one endeavours and the other does not: and God regards the one for his endeavouring, and despises the other for his not endeavouring; lest, if he did otherwise, He should appear to be unjust. And notwithstanding all their pretence, both by their tongue and pen, that they do not profess to attain unto grace by 'the merit of worthiness' (meritum condignum) nor call it the merit of worthiness, yet they only mock us with a term, and hold fast their tenet all the while. For what is the amount of their pretence that they do not call it 'the merit of worthiness,' if nevertheless they assign unto it all that belongs to the merit of worthiness?-saying, that he in the sight of God attains unto grace who endeavours, and he who does not endeavour, does not attain unto it? Is this not plainly making it to be the merit of worthiness? Is it not making God a respecter of works, of merits, and of persons to say that one man is devoid of grace from his own fault, because he did not endeavour after it, but that another, because he did endeavour after it, has attained unto grace, unto which he would not have attained, if he had not endeavoured after it? If this be not 'the merit of worthiness,' then I should like to be informed what it is that is called 'the merit of worthiness.' In this way you may play a game of mockery upon all words; and say, it is not indeed the merit of worthiness, but is in effect the same as the 'merit of worthiness.'-The thorn is not a bad tree, but is in effect the same as a bad tree!-The fig is not a good tree, but is in effect the same as a good tree!-The Diatribe is not, indeed, impious, but says and does nothing but what is impious!

Sect. 149.-IT has happened to these assertors of "Free-will" according to the old proverb, 'Striving dire Scylla's rock to shun, they 'gainst Charybdis headlong run.' For devotedly striving to dissent

from the Pelagians, they begin to deny the ’merit of worthiness;’ whereas, by the very way in which they deny it, they establish it more firmly than ever. They deny it by their word and pen, but establish it in reality, and in heart-sentiment: and thus, they are worse than the Pelagians themselves: and that, on two accounts. First, the Pelagians plainly, candidly, and ingenuously, assert the ’merit of worthiness;’ thus calling a boat a boat, and a fig a fig; and teaching what they really think. Whereas, our "Free-will" friends, while they think and teach the same thing, yet mock us with lying words and false appearances, as though they dissented from the Pelagians; when the fact is quite the contrary. So that, with respect to their hypocrisy, they seem to be the Pelagians’ strongest opposers, but with respect to the reality of the matter, and their heart-tenet, they are twice-dipped Pelagians. And next, under this hypocrisy, they estimate and purchase the grace of God at a much lower rate than the Pelagians themselves. For these assert, that it is not a certain little something in us by which we attain unto grace, but whole, full, perfect, great, and many, devoted efforts and works. Whereas, our friends declare, that it is a certain little something, almost a nothing, by which we deserve grace.

If therefore there must be error, they err with more honesty and less pride, who say, that the grace of God is purchased at a great price, and who account it dear and precious, than those who teach, that it may be purchased at that which is very little, and inconsiderable, and who account it cheap and contemptible. But however, Paul pounds both in pieces in one mortar, by one word, where he saith, that all are "justified freely;" and again that they are justified "without the law" and "without the works of the law." And he who asserts that the justification must be free in all who are justified, leaves none excepted who work, deserve, or prepare themselves; he leaves no work which can be called ’merit of congruity’ or ’merit of worthiness;’ and by the one hurling of this thunder-bolt, he dashes in pieces both the Pelagians with their ’whole merit,’ and the Sophists with their ’very little merit.’ For a free justification allows of no workmen: because, a free gift, and a work-preparation, are manifestly in opposition to each other.

Moreover, the being justified through grace, will not allow of respect unto the worthiness of any person: as the apostle saith also afterwards, chap. xi., "If by grace then it is no more of works: otherwise, grace is no more grace." (Romans 11:6). He saith the same also, "Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." (Romans 4:4). Wherefore, my Paul stands an invincible destroyer of "Free-will," and lays prostrate two armies by one word. For if we be justified "without works," all works are condemned, whether they be very little, or very great. He excepts none, but thunders alike against all.

Sect. 150.-HERE you may see the yawning inconsiderateness of all our friends, and what it profits a man to rely upon the ancient fathers, who have been approved through the series of so many ages. Were they not also all alike blind to, nay rather, did they not disregard, the most clear and most manifest words of Paul? Pray what is there that can be spoken clearly and plainly in defence of grace, against "Free-will," if the argument of Paul be not clear and plain? He proceeds with a glow of argument, and exalts grace against works; and that, in words the most clear and most plain; saying, that we are "justified freely," and that grace is no more grace, if it be sought by works. Thus most manifestly excluding all works in the matter of justification, to the intent that, he might establish grace only and free justification. And yet we, in all this light, still seek after darkness; and when we cannot ascribe unto ourselves great things, and all things, we endeavour to ascribe unto ourselves a something ’in degree,’ ’a very little;’ merely that, we might maintain our

tenet, that justification through the grace of God is not "free" and "without works."-As though he who declares, that greater things, and all things profit us nothing unto justification, does not much more deny that things 'in degree,' and things 'very little,' profit us nothing also: particularly when he has settled the point, that we are justified by grace alone without any works whatever, and therefore, without the law itself, in which are comprehended all works, great and little, works of 'congruity' and works of 'worthiness.'

Go now then and boast of the authorities of the ancients, and depend on what they say; all of whom you see, to a man, disregarded Paul, that most plain and most clear teacher; and, as it were, purposely shunned this morning star, yea, this sun rather, because, being wrapped up in their own carnal reason, they thought it absurd that no place should be left to merit.

Sect. 151.-LET us now bring forward that example of Abraham which Paul afterwards adduces. "If (saith he) Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." (Romans 4:2-3).

Mark here again, I pray you, the distinction of Paul, where he is shewing the two-fold righteousness of Abraham.-The one, is of works; that is, moral and civil; but he denies that he was justified by this before God, even though he were justified by it before men. Moreover, by that righteousness, "he hath whereof to glory" before men, but is all the while himself without the glory of God. Nor can any one here say, that they are the works of the law, or of ceremonies, which are here condemned; seeing that, Abraham existed so many years before the law. Paul plainly speaks of the works of Abraham, and those his best works. For it would be ridiculous to dispute, whether or not any one were justified by evil works.

If therefore, Abraham be righteous by no works whatever, and if both he himself and all his works be left under sin, unless he be clothed with another righteousness, even with the righteousness of faith, it is quite manifest, that no man can do any thing by works towards his becoming righteous: and moreover, that no works, no devoted efforts, no endeavours of "Free-will," avail any thing in the sight of God, but are all judged to be ungodly, unrighteous, and evil. For if the man himself be not righteous, neither will his works or endeavours be righteous: and if they be not righteous, they are damnable, and merit wrath. The other righteousness is that of faith; which consists, not in any works, but in the favour and imputation of God through grace. And mark how Paul dwells upon the word "imputed;" how he urges it, repeats it, and inculcates it.-"Now (saith he) to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," Romans 4:4-5), according to the purpose of the grace of God. Then he adduces David, saying the same thing concerning the imputation through grace. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin," &c. (Romans 4:6-8). In this chapter, he repeats the word "impute" above ten times. In a word, he distinctively sets forth "him that worketh," and "him that worketh not," leaving no medium between them. He declares, that righteousness is not imputed "to him that worketh," but asserts that righteousness is imputed "to him that worketh not," if he believe! Here is no way by which "Free-will," with its devoted efforts and endeavours, can escape or get off: it must be numbered with "him that worketh," or with "him that worketh not." If it be numbered with "him that worketh," you hear that righteousness is not imputed unto it; if it be numbered with "him that worketh not, but believeth" in

God, righteousness is imputed unto it. And then, it will not be the power of "Free-will," but the new creature by faith. But if righteousness be not imputed unto it, being "him that worketh," then, it becomes manifest, that all its works are nothing but sins, evils, and impieties before God. Nor can any Sophist here snarl, and say, that, although man be evil, yet his work may not be evil. For Paul speaks not of the man simply, but of "him that worketh," to the very intent that, he might declare in the plainest words, that the works and devoted efforts themselves of man are condemned, whatever they may be, by what name soever they may be called, or under what form soever they may be done. He here also speaks of good works; because, the points of his argument are, justification, and merits. And when he speaks of "him that worketh," he speaks of all workers and of all their works; but more especially of their good and meritorious works. Otherwise, his distinction between "him that worketh," and "him that worketh not," will amount to nothing.

Sect. 152.-I HERE omit to bring forward those all-powerful arguments drawn from the purpose of grace, from the promise, from the force of the law, from original sin, and from the election of God; of which, there is no one that would not of itself utterly overthrow "Free-will." For if grace come by the purpose of God, or by election, it comes of necessity, and not by any devoted effort or endeavour of our own; as I have already shown. Moreover, if God promised grace before the law, as Paul argues here, and in his epistle to the Galatians also, then it does not come by works or by the law; otherwise, it would be no longer a promise. And so also faith, if works were of any avail, would come to nothing: by which, nevertheless, Abraham was justified before the law was given. Again, as the law is the strength of sin, and only discovers sin, but does not take it away, it brings the conscience in guilty before God. This is what Paul means when he saith, "the law worketh wrath." (Romans 4:15). How then can it be possible, that righteousness should be obtained by the law? And if we derive no help from the law, how can we derive any help from the power of "Free-will" alone?

Moreover, since we all lie under the same sin and damnation of the one man Adam, how can we attempt any thing which is not sin and damnable? For when he saith "all," he excepts no one; neither the power of "Free-will," nor any workman; whether he work or work not, attempt or attempt not, he must of necessity be included among the rest in the "all." Nor should we sin or be damned by that one sin of Adam, if the sin were not our own: for who could be damned for the sin of another, especially in the sight of God? Nor is the sin ours by imitation, or by working; for this would not be the one sin of Adam; because, then, it would not be the sin which he committed, but which we committed ourselves;-it becomes our sin by generation.-But of this in some other place.-Original sin itself, therefore, will not allow of any other power in "Free-will," but that of sinning and going on unto damnation.

These arguments, I say, I omit to bring forward, both because they are most manifest and most forcible, and because I have touched upon them already. For if I wished to produce all those parts of Paul which overthrow "Free-will," I could not do better, than go through with a continued commentary on the whole of his epistle, as I have done on the third and fourth chapters. On which, I have dwelt thus particularly, that I might shew all our "Free-will" friends their yawning inconsiderateness, who so read Paul in these all-clear parts, as to see any thing in them but these most powerful arguments against "Free-will;" and that I might expose the folly of that confidence which they place in the authority and writings of the ancient teachers, and leave them to consider with what force the remaining most clear arguments must make against them, if they should be

handled with care and judgment.

06.11b Discussion: Third Part (Sections 153 - 166)

Sect. 153.-As to myself, I must confess, I am more than astonished, that, when Paul so often uses those universally applying words "all," "none," "not," "not one," "without," thus, "they are all gone out of the way, there is none that doeth good, no not one;" all are sinners and condemned by the one sin of Adam; we are justified by faith "without" the law; "without" the works of the law; so that, if any one wished to speak otherwise so as to be more intelligible, he could not speak in words more clear and more plain;-I am more than a astonished, I say, how it is, that words and sentences, contrary and contradictory to these universally applying words and sentences, have gained so much ground; which say,-Some are not gone out of the way, are not unrighteous, are not evil, are not sinners, are not condemned: there is something in man which is good and which endeavours after good: as though that man, whoever he be, who endeavours after good, were not comprehended in this one word "all," or "none," or "not."

I could find nothing, even if I wished it, to advance against Paul, or to reply in contradiction to him: but should be compelled to acknowledge that the power of my "Free-will," together with its endeavours, is comprehended in those "alls," and "nones," of whom Paul here speaks; if, that is, no new kind of grammar or new manner of speech were introduced.

Moreover, if Paul had used this mode of expression once, or in one place only, there might have been room for imagining a trope, or for taking hold of and twisting some detached terms. Whereas, he uses it perpetually both in the affirmative and in the negative: and so expresses his sentiments by his argument and by his distinctive division, in every place and in all parts, that not the nature of his words only and the current of his language, but that which follows and that which precedes, the circumstances, the scope, and the very body of the whole disputation, all compel us to conclude, according to common sense, that the meaning of Paul is,-that out of the faith of Christ there is nothing but sin and damnation.

It was thus that we promised we would refute "Free-will," so that all our adversaries should not be able to resist: which, I presume, I have effected, even though they shall not so far acknowledge themselves vanquished, as to come over to my opinion, or to be silent: for that is not in my power: that is the gift of the Spirit of God!

Sect. 154.-BUT however, before we hear the Evangelist John, I will just add the crowning testimony from Paul: and I am prepared, if this be not sufficient, to oppose Paul to "Free-will" by commenting upon him throughout. Where he divides the human race into two distinctive divisions, "flesh" and "spirit," he speaks thus-"They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, do mind the things of the Spirit," (Romans 8:5). As Christ also does, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," (John 3:6). That Paul here calls all carnal who are not spiritual, is manifest, both from the division itself and the opposition of spirit to flesh, and from the very words of Paul himself, where he adds, "But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His" (Romans 8:9). What else is the meaning of "But ye

are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwell in you," but, that those who have not the "Spirit," are, necessarily, in the "flesh?" And if any man be not of Christ, what else is he but of Satan? It is manifest, therefore, that those who are devoid of the Spirit, are "in the flesh," and under Satan.

Now let us see what his opinion is concerning the endeavour and the power of "Free-will" in the carnal, who are in the flesh. "They cannot please God." Again, "The carnal mind is death." Again, "The carnal mind is enmity against God," And again, "It is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be." (Romans 8:5-8). Here let the advocate for "Free-will" answer me-How can that endeavour toward good "which is death," which "cannot please God," which "is enmity against God," which "is not subject to God," and "cannot" be subject to him? Nor does Paul mean to say, that the carnal mind is dead and inimical to God; but that, it is death itself, enmity itself which cannot possibly be subject to the law of God or please God, as he had said just before, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did," &c. (Romans 8:3). But I am very well acquainted with that fable of Origen concerning the three-fold affection; the one of which he calls 'flesh,' the other 'soul,' and the other 'spirit,' making the soul that medium affection, vertible either way, towards the flesh or towards the spirit. But these are merely his own dreams; he speaks them forth only, but does not prove them. Paul here calls every thing "flesh" that is without the "Spirit," as I have already shewn. Therefore, those most exalted virtues of the best men are in the flesh; that is, they are dead, and at enmity against God; they are not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be; and they please not God. For Paul does not only say that such men are not subject, but that they cannot be subject. So also Christ saith, "An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit." (Matthew 7:17). And again, "How can ye being evil speak that which is good," (Matthew 12:34). Here you see, we not only speak that which is evil, but cannot speak that which is good. And though He saith in another place, that we who are evil know how to give good gifts unto our children, (Matthew 6:11), yet He denies that we do good, even when we give good gifts; because those good gifts which we give are the creatures of God; but we ourselves not being good, cannot give those good gifts well. For He is speaking unto all men; nay, even unto His own disciples. So that these two sentiments of Paul, that the just man liveth "by faith," (Romans 1:17), and that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin," (Romans 14:23), stand confirmed: the latter of which follows from the former. For if there be nothing by which we are justified but faith only, it is evident that those who are not of faith, are not justified. And if they be not justified, they are sinners. And if they be sinners, they are evil trees and can do nothing but sin and bring forth evil fruit-Wherefore, "Free-will" is nothing but the servant of sin, of death, and of Satan, doing nothing, and being able to do or attempt nothing, but evil!

Sect. 155.-ADD to this that example, Romans 10:20, taken out of Isaiah, "I was found of them that sought Me not, I was made manifest unto them that asked not for Me." He speaks this with reference to the Gentiles:-that it was given unto them to hear and know Christ, when before, they could not even think of Him, much less seek Him, or prepare themselves for Him by the power of "Free-will." From this example it is sufficiently evident, that grace comes so free, that no thought concerning it, or attempt or desire after it, precedes. So also Paul-when he was Saul, what did he do by that exalted power of "Free-will?" Certainly, in respect of reason, he intended that which was best and most meritoriously good. But by what endeavours did he come unto grace? He did not only not seek after it, but received it even when he was furiously maddened against it! On the

other hand, he saith of the Jews "The Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained unto the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel which followed after the law of righteousness hath not attained unto the law of righteousness" (Romans 9:30-31). What has any advocate for "Free-will" to mutter against this? The Gentiles when filled with ungodliness and every vice, receive righteousness freely from a mercy-shewing God: while the Jews, who follow after righteousness with all their devoted effort and endeavour, are frustrated. Is this not plainly saying, that the endeavour of "Free-will" is all in vain, even when it strives to do the best; and that "Freewill," of itself, can only fall back and grow worse and worse? Nor can any one say, that the Jews did not follow after righteousness with all the power of "Free-will." For Paul himself bears this testimony of them, "That they had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge," (Romans 10:2). Therefore, nothing which is attributed to "Free-will" was wanting to the Jews; and yet, it attained unto nothing, nay unto the contrary of that after which they strove. Whereas, there was nothing in the Gentiles which is attributed to "Free-will," and they attained unto the righteousness of God. And what is this but a most manifest example from each nation, and a most clear testimony of Paul, proving that grace is given freely to the most undeserving and unworthy, and is not attained unto by any devoted efforts, endeavours, or works, either small or great, of any men, be they the best and most meritorious, or even of those who have sought and followed after righteousness with all the ardour of zeal?

Sect. 156.-NOW let us come to JOHN, who is also a most copious and powerful subverter of "Free-will."

He, at the very first outset, attributes to "Free-will" such blindness, that it cannot even see the light of the truth: so far is it from possibility, that it should endeavour after it. He speaks thus, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." (John 1:5). And directly afterwards, "He was in the world, and the world knew Him not; He came unto His own, and His own knew Him not." (John 1:10-11).

What do you imagine he means by "world?" Will you attempt to separate any man from being included in this term, but him who is born again of the Holy Spirit? The term "world" is very particularly used by this apostle; by which he means, the whole race of men. Whatever, therefore, he says of the "world," is to be understood of the whole race of men. And hence, whatever he says of the "world," is to be understood also of "Free-will," as that which is most excellent in man. According to this apostle, then, the "world" does not know the light of truth; the "world" hates Christ and His; the "world" neither knows nor sees the Holy Spirit; the whole "world" is settled in enmity; all that is in the "world," is "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." "Love not the world." "Ye (saith He) are not of the world." "The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil."

All these and many other like passages are proclamations of what "Free-will' is-'the principal part' of the world, ruling the empire of Satan! For John also himself speaks of the world by antithesis; making the "world" to be, every thing in the world which is not translated into the kingdom of the Spirit. So also Christ saith to the apostles, "I have chosen you out of the world, and ordained you," &c, (John 15:16). If therefore, there were any in the world, who, by the powers of "Free-will, "endeavoured so as to attain unto good, (which would be the case if "Free-will" could do any thing) John certainly ought, in reverence for these persons, to have softened down the term, lest, by a

word of such general application, he should involve them in all those evils of which he condemns the world. But as he does not this, it is evident that he makes "Free-will" guilty of all that is laid to the charge of the world: because, whatever the world does, it does by the power of "Free-will": that is, by its will and by its reason, which are its most exalted faculties.-He then goes on,

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on His Name. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12-13).

Having finished this distinctive division, he rejects from the kingdom of Christ, all that is "of blood," "of the will of the flesh," and "of the will of man." By "blood," I believe, he means the Jews; that is, those who wished to be the children of the kingdom, because they were the children of Abraham and of the Fathers; and hence, gloried in their "blood." By "the will of the flesh," I understand the devoted efforts of the people, which they exercised in the law and in works: for "flesh" here signifies the carnal without the Spirit, who had indeed a will, and an endeavour, but who, because the Spirit was not in them, were carnal. By "the will of man," I understand the devoted efforts of all generally, that is, of the nations, or of any men whatever, whether exercised in the law, or without the law. So that the sense is-they become the sons of God, neither by the birth of the flesh, nor by a devoted observance of the law, nor by any devoted human effort whatever, but by a Divine birth only.

If therefore, they be neither born of the flesh, nor brought up by the law, nor prepared by any human discipline, but are born again of God, it is manifest, that "Free-will" here profits nothing. For I understand "man," to signify here, according to the Hebrew manner of speech, any man, or all men; even as "flesh," is understood to signify, by antithesis, the people without the Spirit: and "the will of man," I understand to signify the greatest power in men, that is, that ’principal part,’ "Free-will." But be it so, that we do not dwell thus upon the signification of the words, singly; yet, the sum and substance of the meaning is most clear;-that John, by this distinctive division, rejects every thing that is not of Divine generation; since he says, that men are made the sons of God none otherwise than by being born of God; which takes place, according to his own interpretation-by believing on His name! In this rejection therefore, "the will of man," or "Free-will," as it is not of divine generation, nor faith, is necessarily included. But if "Free-will" avail any thing, "the will of man" ought not to be rejected by John, nor ought men to be drawn away from it, and sent to faith and to the new birth only; lest that of Isaiah should be pronounced, against him, "Woe unto you that call good evil." Whereas now, since he rejects alike all "blood," "the will of the flesh," and "the will of man," it is evident, that "the will of man" avails nothing more towards making men the sons of God, than "blood" does, or the carnal birth. And no one doubts whether or not the carnal birth makes men the sons of God; for as Paul saith, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God;" (Romans 9:8), which he proves by the examples of Ishmael and Esau.

Sect. 157.-THE same John, introduces the Baptist speaking thus of Christ, "And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." (John 1:16).

He says, that grace is received by us out of the fullness of Christ-but for what merit or devoted effort? "For grace," saith He; that is, of Christ; as Paul also saith, "The grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." (Romans 5:15).-Where is

now the endeavour of "Free-will" by which grace is obtained! John and Paul here saith, that grace is not only not received for any devoted effort of our own, but even for the grace of another, or the merit of another, that is "of one Man Jesus Christ." Therefore, it is either false, that we receive our grace for the grace of another, or else it is evident, that "Free-will" is nothing at all; for both cannot consist-that the grace of God, is both so cheap, that it may be obtained in common and every where by the 'little endeavour' of any man; and at the same time so dear, that it is given unto us only in and through the grace of one Man, and He so great! And I would also, that the advocates for "Free-will" be admonished in this place, that when they assert "Free-will," they are deniers of Christ. For if I obtain grace by my own endeavours, what need have I of the grace of Christ for the receiving of my grace? Or, what do I want when I have gotten the grace of God? For the Diatribe has said, and all the Sophists say, that we obtain grace, and are prepared for the reception of it, by our own endeavours; not however according to 'worthiness,' but according to 'congruity.' This is plainly denying Christ: for whose grace, the Baptist here testifies, that we receive grace. For as to that fetch about 'worthiness' and 'congruity,' I have refuted that already, and proved it to be a mere play upon empty words, while the 'merit of worthiness' is really intended; and that, to a more impious length than ever the Pelagians themselves went, as I have already shewn. And hence, the ungodly Sophists, together with the Diatribe, have more awfully denied the Lord Christ who bought us, than ever the Pelagians, or any heretics have denied Him. So far is it from possibility, that grace should allow of any particle or power of "Free-will!" But however, that the advocates for "Free-will" deny Christ, is proved, not by this Scripture only, but by their own very way of life. For by their "Free-will," they have made Christ to be unto them no longer a sweet Mediator, but a dreaded Judge, whom they strive to please by the intercessions of the Virgin Mother, and of the Saints; and also, by variously invented works, by rites, ordinances, and vows; by all which, they aim at appeasing Christ, in order that He might give them grace. But they do not believe, that He intercedes before God and obtains grace for them by His blood and grace; as it is here said, "for grace." And as they believe, so it is unto them! For Christ is in truth, an inexorable judge to them, and justly so; for they leave Him, who is a Mediator and most merciful Saviour, and account His blood and grace of less value than the devoted efforts and endeavours of their "Free-will!"

Sect. 158.-Now let us hear an example of "Free-will."-Nicodemus is a man in whom there is every thing that you can desire, which "Free-will" is able to do. For what does that man omit either of devoted effort, or endeavour? He confesses Christ to be true, and to have come from God; he declares His miracles; he comes by night to hear Him, and to converse with Him. Does he not appear to have sought after, by the power of "Free-will," those things which pertain unto piety and salvation? But mark what shipwreck he makes. When he hears the true way of salvation by a new-birth to be taught by Christ, does he acknowledge it, or confess that he had ever sought after it? Nay, he revolts from it, and is confounded; so much so, that he does not only say he does not understand it, but heaves against it as impossible-"How (says he) can these things be?" (John 3:9). And no wonder: for who ever heard, that man must be born again unto salvation "of water and of the Spirit?" (John 3:5). Who ever thought, that the Son of God must be exalted, "that whosoever should believe in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life?" (John 3:15). Did the greatest and most acute philosophers ever make mention of this? Did the princes of this world ever possess this knowledge? Did the "Free-will" of any man ever attain unto this, by endeavours? Does not Paul confess it to be "wisdom hidden in a mystery," foretold indeed by the Prophets, but revealed by the Gospel? So that, it was secret and hidden from the world. In a word: Ask

experience: and the whole world, human reason itself, and in consequence, "Free-will" itself is compelled to confess, that it never knew Christ, nor heard of Him, before the Gospel came into the world. And if it did not know Him, much less could it seek after Him, search for Him, or endeavour to come unto Him. But Christ is "the way" of truth, life, and salvation. It must confess, therefore, whether it will or no, that, of its own powers, it neither knew nor could seek after those things which pertain unto the way of truth and salvation. And yet, contrary to this our own very confession and experience, like madmen we dispute in empty words, that there is in us that power remaining, which can both know and apply itself unto those things which pertain unto salvation! This is nothing more or less than saying, that Christ the Son of God was exalted for us, when no one could ever have known it or thought of it; but that, nevertheless, this very ignorance is not an ignorance, but a knowledge of Christ; that is, of those things which pertain unto salvation. Do you not yet then see and palpably feel out, that the assertors of "Free-will" are plainly mad, while they call that knowledge, which they themselves confess to be ignorance? Is this not to "put darkness for light?" (Isaiah 5:20). But so it is, though God so powerfully stop the mouth of "Free-will" by its own confession and experience, yet even then, it cannot keep silence and give God the glory.

Sect. 159.-AND now farther, as Christ is said to be "the way, the truth, and the life," (John 14:6), and that, by positive assertion, so that whatever is not Christ is not the way but error, is not the truth but a lie, is not the life but death, it of necessity follows, that "Free-will," as it is neither Christ nor in Christ, must be bound in error, in a lie, and in death. Where now will be found that medium and neuter-that the power of "Free-will," which is not in Christ, that is, in the way, the truth, and the life, is yet not, of necessity, either error, or a lie, or death? For if all things which are said concerning Christ and grace were not said by positive assertion, that they might be opposed to their contraries; that is, that out of Christ there is nothing but Satan, out of grace nothing but wrath, out of the light nothing but darkness, out of the life nothing but death-what, I ask you, would be the use of all the Writings of the Apostles, nay, of the whole Scripture? The whole would be written in vain; because, they would not fix the point, that Christ is necessary (which, nevertheless, is their especial design) and for this reason,-because a medium would be found out, which of itself, would be neither evil nor good, neither of Christ nor of Satan, neither true nor false, neither alive nor dead, and perhaps, neither any thing nor nothing; and that would be called, 'that which is most excellent and most exalted' in the whole race of men!

Take it therefore which way you will.-If you grant that the Scriptures speak in positive assertion, you can say nothing for "Free-will," but that which is contrary to Christ: that is, you will say, that error, death, Satan, and all evils, reign in Him. If you do not grant that they speak in positive assertion, you weaken the Scriptures, make them to establish nothing, not even to prove that Christ is necessary. And thus, while you establish "Free-will," you make Christ void, and bring the whole Scripture to destruction. And though you may pretend, verbally, that you confess Christ; yet, in reality and in heart, you deny Him. For if the power of "Free-will" be not a thing erroneous altogether, and damnable, but sees and wills those things which are good and meritorious, and which pertain unto salvation, it is whole, it wants not the physician Christ, nor does Christ redeem that part of man.-For what need is there for light and life, where there is light and life already?

Moreover, if that power be not redeemed, the best part in man is not redeemed, but is of itself good and whole. And then also, God is unjust if He damn any man; because, He damns that which is the most excellent in man, and whole; that is, He damns him when innocent. For there is no man

who has not "Free-will." And although the evil man abuse this, yet this power itself, (according to what you teach) is not so destroyed, but that it can, and does endeavour towards good. And if it be such, it is without doubt good, holy, and just: wherefore, it ought not to be damned, but to be distinctly separated from the man who is to be damned. But this cannot be done, and even if it could be done, man would then be without "Free-will," nay, he would not be man at all, he would neither have merit nor demerit, he could neither be damned nor saved, but would be completely a brute, and no longer immortal. It follows therefore, that God is unjust who damns that good, just, and holy power, which, though it be in an evil man, does not need Christ as the evil man does.

Sect. 160.-BUT let us proceed with John. "He that believeth on Him, (saith he) is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18).

Tell me!-Is "Free-will" included in the number of those that believe, or not? If it be, then again, it has no need of grace; because, of itself, it believes on Christ-whom, of itself it never knew nor thought of! If it be not, then it is judged already and what is this but saying, that it is damned in the sight of God? But God damns none but the ungodly: therefore, it is ungodly. And what godliness can that which is ungodly endeavour after? For I do not think that the power of "Free-will" can be excepted; seeing that, he speaks of the whole man as being condemned.

Moreover, unbelief is not one of the grosser affections, but is that chief affection seated and ruling on the throne of the will and reason; just the same as its contrary, faith. For to be unbelieving, is to deny God, and to make him a liar; "If we believe not we make God a liar," (1 John 5:10). How then can that power, which is contrary to God, and which makes Him a liar, endeavour after that which is good? And if that power be not unbelieving and ungodly, John ought not to say of the whole man that he is condemned already, but to speak thus,-Man, according to his 'grosser affections,' is condemned already; but according to that which is best and 'most excellent,' he is not condemned; because, that endeavours after faith, or rather, is already believing.

Hence, where the Scripture so often saith, "All men are liars," we must, upon the authority of "Free-will," on the contrary say-the Scripture rather, lies; because, man is not a liar as to his best part, that is, his reason and will, but as to his flesh only, that is, his blood and his grosser part: so that that whole, according to which he is called man, that is, his reason and his will, is sound and holy. Again, there is that of the Baptist, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:36). We must understand "upon him" thus:-that is, the wrath of God abideth upon the 'grosser affections' of the man: but upon that power of "Free-will," that is, upon his will and his reason, abide grace and everlasting life.

Hence, according to this, in order that "Free-will" might stand, whatever is in the Scriptures said against the ungodly, you are, by the figure synecdoche, to twist round to apply to that brutal part of man, that the truly rational and human part might remain safe. I have therefore, to render thanks to the assertors of "Free-will;" because, I may sin with all confidence; knowing that, my reason and will, or my "Free-will," cannot be damned, because it cannot be destroyed by my sinning, but for ever remains sound, righteous, and holy. And thus, happy in my will and reason, I shall rejoice that my filthy and brutal flesh is distinctly separated from me, and damned; so far shall I be from wishing Christ to become its Redeemer!-You see, here, to what the doctrine of "Free-will" brings

us-it denies all things, divine and human, temporal and eternal; and with all these enormities, makes a laughing-stock of itself!

Sect. 161. - AGAIN, the Baptist saith, "A man can receive nothing, except it were given him from above." (John 3:27).

Let not the Diatribe here produce its forces, where it enumerates all those things which we have from heaven. We are now disputing, not about nature, but about grace: we are inquiring, not what we are upon earth, but what we are in heaven before God. We know that man was constituted lord over those things which are beneath himself; over which, he has a right and a Free-will, that those things might do, and obey as he wills and thinks. But we are now inquiring whether he has a "Free-will" over God, that He should do and obey in those things which man wills: or rather, whether God has not a Free-will over man, that he should will and do what God wills, and should be able to do nothing but what He wills and does. The Baptist here says, that he "can receive nothing, except it be given him from above."-Wherefore, "Free-will" must be a nothing at all!

Again, "He that is of the earth, is earthly and speaketh of the earth, He that cometh from heaven is above all." (John 3:31).

Here again, he makes all those earthly, who are not of Christ, and says that they savour and speak of earthly things only, nor does he leave any medium characters. But surely, "Free-will" is not "He that cometh from heaven." Wherefore it must of necessity, be "he that is of the earth," and that speaks of the earth and savours of the earth. But if there were any power in man, which at any time, in any place, or by any work, did not savour of the earth, the Baptist ought to have excepted this person, and not to have said in a general way concerning all those who are out of Christ, that they are of the earth, and speak of the earth. So also afterwards, Christ saith, "Ye are of the world, I am not of the world. Ye are from beneath, I am from above." (John 8:23). And yet, those to whom He spoke had "Free-will," that is, reason and will; but still He says, that they are "of the world." But what news would He have told, if He had merely said, that they were of the world, as to their ’grosser affections?’ Did not the whole world know this before? Moreover, what need was there for His saying that men were of the world, as to that part in which they are brutal? For according to that, beasts are also of the world.

Sect. 162.-AND now what do those words of Christ, where He saith, "No one can come unto Me except My Father which hath sent Me draw him," (John 6:44), leave to "Free-will?" For He says it is necessary, that every one should hear and learn of the Father Himself, and that all must be "taught of God." Here, indeed, He not only declares that the works and devoted efforts of "Free-will" are of no avail, but that even the word of the Gospel itself, (of which He is here speaking,) is heard in vain, unless the Father Himself speak within, and teach and draw. "No one can," "No one can (saith He) come:" by which, that power, whereby man can endeavour something towards Christ, that is, towards those things which pertain unto salvation, is declared to be a nothing at all. Nor does that at all profit "Free-will," which the Diatribe brings forward out of Augustine, by way of casting a slur upon this all-clear and all-powerful Scripture-’that God draws us, in the same way as we draw a sheep, by holding out to it a green bough.’ By this similitude he would prove, that there is in us a power to follow the drawing of God. But this similitude avails nothing in the present passage. For God holds out, not one of His good things only, but many, nay, even His Son, Christ Himself; and yet no man follows Him, unless the Father hold Him forth

otherwise within, and draw otherwise!-Nay, the whole world follows the Son whom He holds forth! But this similitude harmonizes sweetly with the experience of the godly, who are now made sheep, and know God their Shepherd. These, living in, and being moved by, the Spirit, follow wherever God wills, and whatever He holds out to them. But the ungodly man comes not unto Him, even when he hears the word, unless the Father draw and teach within: which He does by shedding abroad His Spirit. And where that is done, there is a different kind of drawing from that which is without: there, Christ is held forth in the illumination of the Spirit, whereby the man is drawn unto Christ with the sweetest of all drawing: under which, he is passive while God speaks, teaches, and draws, rather than seeks or runs of himself.

Sect. 163.-I WILL produce yet one more passage from John, where, he saith, "The Spirit shall reprove the world of sin, because they believe not in me." (John 16:9).

You here see, that it is sin, not to believe in Christ: And this sin is seated, not in the skin, nor in the hairs of the head, but in the very reason and will. Moreover, as Christ makes the whole world guilty from this sin, and as it is known by experience that the world is ignorant of this sin, as much so as it is ignorant of Christ, seeing that, it must be revealed by the reproof of the Spirit; it is manifest, that "Free-will," together with its will and reason, is accounted a captive of this sin, and condemned before God. Wherefore, as long as it is ignorant of Christ and believes not in Him, it can will or attempt nothing good, but necessarily serves that sin of which it is ignorant. In a word: Since the Scripture declares Christ everywhere by positive assertion and by antithesis, (as I said before), in order that, it might subject every thing that is without the Spirit of Christ, to Satan, to ungodliness, to error, to darkness, to sin, to death, and to the wrath of God, all the testimonies concerning Christ must make directly against "Free-will;" and they are innumerable, nay, the whole of the Scripture. If therefore our subject of discussion is to be decided by the judgment of the Scripture, the victory, in every respect, is mine; for there is not one jot or tittle of the Scripture remaining, which does not condemn the doctrine of "Free-will" altogether! But if the great theologians and defenders of "Free-will" know not, or pretend not to know, that the Scripture every where declares Christ by positive assertion and by antithesis, yet all Christians know it, and in common confess it. They know, I say, that there are two kingdoms in the world mutually militating against each other.-That Satan reigns in the one, who, on that account is by Christ called "the prince of this world," (John 12:31), and by Paul "the God of this world;" (2 Corinthians 4:4), who, according to the testimony of the same Paul, holds all captive according to his will, who are not rescued from him by the Spirit of Christ: nor does he suffer any to be rescued by any other power but that of the Spirit of God: as Christ testifies in the parable of "the strong man armed" keeping his palace in peace.-In the other kingdom Christ reigns: which kingdom, continually resists and wars against that of Satan: into which we are translated, not by any power of our own, but by the grace of God, whereby we are delivered from this present evil world, and are snatched from the power of darkness. The knowledge and confession of these two kingdoms, which thus ever mutually war against each other with so much power and force, would alone be sufficient to confute the doctrine of "Free-will:" seeing that, we are compelled to serve in the kingdom of Satan, until we be liberated by a Divine Power. All this, I say, is known in common among Christians, and fully confessed in their proverbs, by their prayers, by their pursuits, and by their whole lives.

Sect. 164.-I OMIT to bring forward that truly Achillean Scripture of mine, which the Diatribe proudly passes by untouched-I mean, that which Paul teaches, Romans 7:1-25 and Galatians 5:1-26, that

there is in the saints, and in the godly, so powerful a warfare between the spirit and the flesh, that they cannot do what they would. From this warfare I argue thus:-If the nature of man be so evil, even in those who are born again of the Spirit, that it does not only not endeavour after good, but is even averse to, and militates against good, how should it endeavour after good in those who are not born again of the Spirit, and who are still in the "old man," and serve under Satan? Nor does Paul there speak of the 'grosser affections' only, (by means of which, as a common scape-gap, the Diatribe is accustomed to get out of the way of all the Scriptures,) but he enumerates among the works of the flesh heresy, idolatry, contentions, divisions, &c.; which he describes as reigning in those most exalted faculties; that is, in the reason and the will. If therefore, flesh with these affections war against the Spirit in the saints, much more will it war against God in the ungodly, and in "Free-will." Hence, Romans 8:7, he calls it "enmity against God."-I should like, I say, to see this argument of mine overturned, and "Free-will" defended against it. As to myself, I openly confess, that I should not wish "Free-will" to be granted me, even if it could be so, nor anything else to be left in my own hands, whereby I might endeavour something towards my own salvation. And that, not merely because in so many opposing dangers, and so many assaulting devils, I could not stand and hold it fast, (in which state no man could be saved, seeing that one devil is stronger than all men;) but because, even though there were no dangers, no conflicts, no devils, I should be compelled to labour under a continual uncertainty, and to beat the air only. Nor would my conscience, even if I should live and work to all eternity, ever come to a settled certainty, how much it ought to do in order to satisfy God. For whatever work should be done, there would still remain a scrupling, whether or not it pleased God, or whether He required any thing more; as is proved in the experience of all justiciaries, and as I myself learned to my bitter cost, through so many years of my own experience. But now, since God has put my salvation out of the way of my will, and has taken it under His own, and has promised to save me, not according to my working or manner of life, but according to His own grace and mercy, I rest fully assured and persuaded that He is faithful, and will not lie, and moreover great and powerful, so that no devils, no adversities can destroy Him, or pluck me out of His hand. "No one (saith He) shall pluck them out of My hand, because My Father which gave them Me is greater than all." (John 10:27-28). Hence it is certain, that in this way, if all are not saved, yet some, yea, many shall be saved; whereas by the power of "Free-will," no one whatever could be saved, but all must perish together. And moreover, we are certain and persuaded, that in this way, we please God, not from the merit of our own works, but from the favour of His mercy promised unto us; and that, if we work less, or work badly, He does not impute it unto us, but, as a Father, pardons us and makes us better.-This is the glorying which all the saints have in their God!

Sect. 165.-AND if you are concerned about this,-that it is difficult to defend the mercy and justice of God, seeing that, He damns the undeserving, that is, those who are for that reason ungodly, because, being born in iniquity, they cannot by any means prevent themselves from being ungodly, and from remaining so, and being damned, but are compelled from the necessity of nature to sin and perish, as Paul saith, "We all were the children of wrath, even as others," (Ephesians 2:3), when at the same time, they were created such by God Himself from a corrupt seed, by means of the sin of Adam,-

Here God is to be honoured and revered, as being most merciful towards those, whom He justifies and saves under all their unworthiness: and it is to be in no small degree ascribed unto His

wisdom, that He causes us to believe Him to be just, even where He appears to be unjust. For if His righteousness were such, that it was considered to be righteousness according to human judgment, it would be no longer divine, nor would it in any thing differ from human righteousness. But as He is the one and true God, and moreover incomprehensible and inaccessible by human reason, it is right, nay, it is necessary, that His righteousness should be incomprehensible: even as Paul exclaims, saying, "Oh the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33). But they would be no longer "past finding out" if we were in all things able to see how they were righteous. What is man, compared with God! What can our power do, when compared with His power! What is our strength, compared with His strength! What is our knowledge compared with His wisdom! What is our substance, compared with His substance! In a word, what is all that we are, compared with all that He is!

If then we confess, even according to the teaching of nature, that human power, strength, wisdom, knowledge, substance, and all human things together, are nothing when compared with the divine power, strength, wisdom, knowledge, and substance, what perverseness must it be in us to attack the righteousness and judgments of God only, and to arrogate so much to our own judgment, as to wish to comprehend, judge, and rate, the divine judgments! Why do we not, here in like manner say at once-What! is our judgment nothing, when compared with the divine judgments!-But ask reason herself if she is not, from conviction, compelled to confess, that she is foolish and rash for not allowing the judgments of God to be incomprehensible, when she confesses that all the other divine things are incomprehensible? In every thing else we concede to God a Divine Majesty; and yet, are ready to deny it to His judgments! Nor can we for a little while believe, that He is just, even when He promises that it shall come to pass, that when He shall reveal His glory, we shall all see, and palpably feel, that He ever was, and is,-just!

Sect. 166.-BUT I will produce an example that may go to confirm this faith, and to console that "evil eye" which suspects God of injustice.-Behold! God so governs this corporal world in external things, that, according to human reason and judgment, you must be compelled to say, either that there is no God, or that God is unjust: as a certain one saith, 'I am often tempted to think there is no God.' For see the great prosperity of the wicked, and on the contrary the great adversity of the good; according to the testimony of the proverbs, and of experience the parent of all proverbs. The more abandoned men are, the more successful! "The tabernacles of robbers (saith Job) prosper." And Psalms 73:1-28, complains, that the sinners of the world abound in riches. Is it not, I pray you, in the judgment of all, most unjust, that the evil should be prosperous, and the good afflicted? Yet so it is in the events of the world. And here it is, that the most exalted minds have so fallen, as to deny that there is any God at all; and to fable, that fortune disposes of all things at random: such were Epicurus and Pliny. And Aristotle, in order that he might make his 'First-cause Being' free from every kind of misery, is of opinion, that he thinks of nothing whatever but himself; because he considers, that it must be most irksome to him, to see so many evils and so many injuries. But the Prophets themselves, who believed there is a God, were tempted still more concerning the injustice of God, as Jeremiah, Job, David, Asaph, and others. And what do you suppose Demosthenes and Cicero thought, who, after they had done all they could, received no other reward than a miserable death? And yet all this, which is so very much like injustice in God, when set forth in those arguments which no reason or light of nature can resist, is most easily cleared up

by the light of the Gospel, and the knowledge of grace: by which, we are taught, that the wicked flourish in their bodies, but lose their souls! And the whole of this insolvable question is solved in one word-There is a life after this life: in which will be punished and repaid, every thing that is not punished and repaid here: for this life is nothing more than an entrance on, and a beginning of, the life which is to come!

If then even the light of the Gospel, which stands in the word and in the faith only, is able to effect so much as with ease to do away with, and settle, this question which has been agitated through so many ages and never solved; how do you suppose matters will appear, when the light of the word and of faith shall cease, and the essential Truth itself shall be revealed in the Divine Majesty? Do you not suppose that the light of glory will then most easily solve that question, which is now insolvable by the light of the word and of grace, even as the light of grace now easily solves that question, which is insolvable by the light of nature?

Let us therefore hold in consideration the three lights-the light of nature, the light of grace, and the light of glory; which is the common, and a very good distinction. By the light of nature, it is insolvable how it can be just, that the good man should be afflicted and the wicked should prosper: but this is solved by the light of grace. By the light of grace it is insolvable, how God can damn him, who, by his own powers, can do nothing but sin and become guilty. Both the light of nature and the light of grace here say, that the fault is not in the miserable man, but in the unjust God: nor can they judge otherwise of that God, who crowns the wicked man freely without any merit, and yet crowns not, but damns another, who is perhaps less, or at least not more wicked. But the light of glory speaks otherwise.-That will shew, that God, to whom alone belongeth the judgment of incomprehensible righteousness, is of righteousness most perfect and most manifest; in order that we may, in the meantime, believe it, being admonished and confirmed by that example of the light of grace, which solves that, which is as great a miracle to the light of nature!

06.12 Conclusion: (Sections 167 - 168)

CONCLUSION

Sect. 167.-I SHALL here draw this book to a conclusion: prepared if it were necessary to pursue this Discussion still farther. Though I consider that I have now abundantly satisfied the godly man, who wishes to believe the truth without making resistance. For if we believe it to be true, that God fore-knows and fore-ordains all things; that He can be neither deceived nor hindered in His Prescience and Predestination; and that nothing can take place but according to His Will, (which reason herself is compelled to confess;) then, even according to the testimony of reason herself, there can be no "Free-will"-in man,-in angel,-or in any creature!

Hence:-If we believe that Satan is the prince of this world, ever ensnaring and fighting against the kingdom of Christ with all his powers; and that he does not let go his captives without being forced by the Divine Power of the Spirit; it is manifest, that there can be no such thing as-"Free-will!"

Again:-If we believe that original sin has so destroyed us, that even in the godly who are led by the Spirit, it causes the utmost molestation by striving against that which is good; it is manifest, that there can be nothing left in a man devoid of the Spirit, which can turn itself towards good, but which must turn towards evil!

Again:-If the Jews, who followed after righteousness with all their powers, ran rather into unrighteousness, while the Gentiles who followed after unrighteousness attained unto a free righteousness which they never hoped for; it is equally manifest, from their very works, and from experience, that man, without grace, can do nothing but will evil!

Finally:-If we believe that Christ redeemed men by His blood, we are compelled to confess, that the whole man was lost: otherwise, we shall make Christ superfluous, or a Redeemer of the grossest part of man only,-which is blasphemy and sacrilege!

Sect. 168.-AND now, my friend Erasmus, I entreat you for Christ’s sake to perform what you promised. You promised ’that you would willingly yield to him, who should teach you better than you knew.’ Lay aside all respect of persons. You, I confess, are great and adorned with many, and those the most noble, gifts of God; (to say nothing of the rest,) with talent, with erudition, and with eloquence to a miracle. Whereas I, have nothing and am nothing, excepting that, I glory in being almost a Christian! In this, moreover, I give you great praise, and proclaim it-you alone in pre-eminent distinction from all others, have entered upon the thing itself; that is, the grand turning point of the cause; and, have not wearied me with those irrelevant points about popery, purgatory, indulgences, and other like baubles, rather than causes, with which all have hitherto tried to hunt me down,-though in vain! You, and you alone saw, what was the grand hinge upon which the whole turned, and therefore you attacked the vital part at once; for which, from my heart, I thank you. For in this kind of discussion I willingly engage, as far as time and leisure permit me. Had those who have heretofore attacked me done the same, and would those still do the same, who are now boasting of new spirits, and new revelations, we should have less sedition and

sectarianism, and more peace and concord.-But thus has God, by the instrumentality of Satan, avenged our ingratitude! But however, if you cannot manage this cause otherwise than you have managed it in this Diatribe, do, I pray you, remain content with your own proper gift. Study, adorn, and promote literature and languages, as you have hitherto done, to great advantage, and with much credit. In which capacity, you have rendered me also a certain service: so much so, that I confess myself to be much indebted to you: and in that character, I certainly venerate, and honestly respect you. But as to this our cause:-to this, God has neither willed, nor given it you, to be equal: though I entreat you not to consider this as spoken in arrogance. No! I pray that the Lord may, day by day, make you as much superior to me in these matters, as you are superior to me in all others. And it is no new thing for God to instruct a Moses by a Jethro, or to teach a Paul by an Ananias. And as to what you say,-"You have greatly mist the mark after all, if you are ignorant of Christ."-You yourself, if I mistake not, know what that is. But all will not therefore err, because you or I may err. God is glorified in His saints in a wonderful way! So that, we may consider those saints who are the farthest from sanctity. Nor is it an unlikely thing, that you, as being man, should not rightly understand, nor with sufficient diligence weigh, the Scriptures, or the sayings of the Fathers: under which guides, you imagine you cannot miss the mark. And that such is the case, is quite manifest from this:-your saying that you do not assert but collect. No man would write thus, who was fully acquainted with and well understood his subject. On the contrary I, in this book of mine, have collected thing, but have asserted, and still do assert: and I wish none to become judges, but all to yield assent.-And may the Lord, whose cause this is illuminate you, and make you a vessel to honour and to glory.-Amen!

FINIS.

1525.

06.13 Appendix: Judgment of Erasmus of Rotterdam

MARTIN LUTHER’S JUDGMENT OF ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM.

TO A CERTAIN FRIEND.

Grace and peace in Christ,

I RECEIVED your last letter gladly, my excellent friend, because I believe you wish well to, and are concerned for, the state of the Christian cause. And I wish and pray, that the Lord would perfect that which he hath begun in you.

I am grieved at hearing, that among you also this cruel persecution is carried on against Christ. But it will come to this:-either that cruel tyrant will change his fury of his own accord, or you will change it for him, and that shortly.

Concerning Predestination, I knew long ago, that Mosellanus agrees with Erasmus: for he is an Erasmian altogether. My fixed opinion is, however, that Erasmus knows less about Predestination, (or rather pretends to know) than even the schools of the Sophists have known. Nor have I any need to fear a fall, while I maintain my sentiments unchanged. Erasmus is not to be dreaded on this point, nor indeed on any essential point of Christianity. Truth is more powerful than eloquence; the Spirit is far above human talent; faith is beyond all erudition; and, as Paul saith, "the foolishness of God is wiser than men!" (1 Corinthians 1:25). The eloquence of Cicero, was often overthrown by inferior eloquence, in the discussion of public causes. Julian, was more eloquent than Augustine. In a word, the victory is in the hands of lying eloquence!-As it is written, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, that thou mightest still the enemy and avenger" (Psalms 8:2; Matthew 21:16).

I will not provoke Erasmus, nor will I even when provoked once or twice, return the blow. And yet I do not think he shews his wisdom in directing the powers of his eloquence against me. For I fear he will not find in Luther a Faber of Picardy, nor be able to exult over me, as he does over him, where he says, ’All congratulate me upon my victory over the Gaul.’ But however, if he will enter the lists with me, he shall find, that Christ fears neither the powers of the air, nor the gates of hell. And I, a most weak-tongued babe will meet the all-eloquent Erasmus with confidence, caring nothing for his authority, his name, or his reputation. I know well what is in the man; seeing that, I am well acquainted with the thoughts of Satan; though I expect he will daily manifest more and more that disposition towards me which he fosters in his heart.

I express myself thus plainly, that you might have no fear or concern on my account, nor be frightened at the great and swelling words of others. I wish you to salute Mosellanus in my name: for I am not therefore ill-affected towards him, because he leans to the side of Erasmus rather than to mine.

Nay tell him to stand by Erasmus firmly: for the time will come, when he will think otherwise. In the meantime, the weakness of an excellent heart is to be borne with. And may you also prosper in the

Lord.

Wirtemberg, 1522.

06.14 Appendix: Martin Luther to Nicolas Armsdoff

MARTIN LUTHER TO NICOLAS ARMSDOFF

CONCERNING ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM.

Grace and peace in Christ.

I THANK you, my excellent friend, that you give me so candidly your opinion on my book. I care not at all that the Papists are offended: I did not write on their account, for they are not worth my writing or speaking in Consideration of them any more. God has given them up to a reprobate mind; so that they even fight against that, which they know to be the truth. My cause was heard at Augsberg, before the emperor Charles, and the whole world, and found to be irreprehensible, and to contain sound doctrine. Moreover, my Confession and Apology are made public, and set in the open light throughout the world. By these, I have answered an infinity of my adversaries' books, and all the lies of the Papists past, present and to come!

I have confessed Christ before this wicked and adulterous generation, and I doubt not but that He will also confess me before His Father, and the holy angels. My light is set on a candlestick!-Let him that seeth it, see it more clearly still; let him that is blind, be blinder still; let him that is just, be juster still; let him that is filthy, be filthier still;-their blood be upon themselves;-I am clean from their blood! I have declared to the unrighteous his unrighteousness, and he will not be converted;-let him therefore die in his sins;-I have saved my own soul! There is no need, therefore, that I should write, or care to write on their account, any farther. And as to your advice, that that grammarian or vocabularian whom you call the Erasmian plagiary should be held in contempt, and that Erasmus himself should rather be answered: know, that I have held him in sufficient contempt already: for I have not read one page of his writings. Jonas answered him once, although I was much against his doing it; and advised him, according to your opinion, to hold him in contempt. For I know the man well, from his skin to his heart, that he is not worthy of being spoken to, or dealt with, by any good man; such a hypocrite is he, and so full of reprobate envy and malevolence.

Moreover, you know my usual way of over throwing writers of this stamp-by holding them in silent contempt. For how many books of Eccius, Faber, Emser, Cochles, and many others, who seemed to be as mountains in labour, and about to bring forth I know not what wonders, have I myself, by my silence only, so utterly brought to nothing that no memory of them is left. Cato calls such pettifoggers, and allows all their pratings to pass by unnoticed: whereas, if he had at all considered them worthy of being noticed and answered, they might have procured to themselves a lasting fame. And there is a trite, but true proverb,- Full well I know, that if with dung embroiled,

Conqu'or or conquer'd, still I am besoiled. But here is my glorying.-Whatever could be brought against me from the Scriptures and from the fathers, has been produced and published: and now, all the glorying they have left, is in slanders, lies, and calumnies. And why should I envy them that, when they have no power or desire whatever to be renowned for any other virtues! Your judgment of Erasmus I much admire: wherein you say plainly, that he has no other basis wherein to build his

doctrine but the favour of men; and attribute to him, moreover, ignorance and malice. And if you could but convey this judgment of yours with conviction to the minds of men in general, you would in truth, like another stripling David, by this one blow, lay our boasting Goliath prostrate, and at the same time, eradicate the whole of his sect. For what is more vain, more fallacious, in all things, than the applause of men, especially in things spiritual! For, as the Psalms testify, "There is no help in them:" again, "All men are liars." If therefore Erasmus be nothing but vanity, and rest alone on vanity and a lie, what need is there to reply to him at all? He himself, together with all his vanity, will at length vanish like smoke, if we but treat him as I have treated those former scare-crows and pettifoggers, whom, by my silence only, I have committed to utter oblivion.

I at one time attributed to him a singular kind of inconsistency and vain-talking, for he seemed to treat on sacred and serious things with the greatest unconcern; and on the contrary, to pursue baubles, vanities, and things laughable and ridiculous with the utmost avidity; though an old man, and a theologian; and that, in an age, the most industrious and laborious. So that I really thought, that what I had heard many men of wisdom and gravity say, was true-that Erasmus was actually mad. When I first wrote against his Diatribe, and was compelled to weigh his words, (as John says "try the Spirits,") being disgusted at his inconsiderateness in a subject of so much importance; in order that I might rouse up the cold and doltish disputer, I goaded him as if in a snoring sleep; calling him a disciple, at one time, of Epicurus, at another, of Lucian, and then again, declaring him to be of the opinion of the sceptics; supposing, that by these means he might, perhaps, be roused up to enter upon the subject with more feeling. But all was in vain. I only irritated the viper, so as to cause him at last to give birth to his VIPERASPIS, an offspring worthy of, and exactly like, its parent. But however, he proudly omitted to say one single word to the subject point. So that, from that time, I have despaired of his theology altogether.

Now, however, I am quite of your opinion, that it was not inconsiderateness in him, but as you say, real ignorance and malice. For he was unacquainted with our doctrines, or the doctrines of Christianity; he knew them, but from policy would not know them. And though he may not understand, nor indeed can understand, those doctrines which are peculiar to our fraternity, and which we maintain against the synagogue of the Pope, yet he cannot be ignorant of those which are held in common by us and the church under the Pope; because, he writes on these very largely, or rather, laughs at them.-Such as, the Trinity of the Divine Persons, the Divinity and humanity of Christ, sin, the redemption of the human race, the resurrection of the dead, eternal life, and the like: he knows, I say, that these things are taught and believed even by many ungodly and false Christians. But the truth is, he hates all the doctrines together. Nay, there can be no doubt in the mind of a true believer, who has the Spirit in his nostrils, that his mind is alienated from, and utterly hates all religion together; and especially, the religion of Christ. Many proofs of this are scattered here and there. And it will come to pass by and by, that alike the mole, he will throw up some dirt, that will shew where and what he is, and prove his own destruction.

He published lately, among his other works, his CATECHISM, a production evidently of Satanic subtlety. For, with a purpose full of craft, he designs to take children and youths at the outset, and to infect them with his poisons, that they might not afterwards be eradicated from them; just as he himself, in Italy and at Rome, so sucked in his doctrines of sorcerers and of devils that now all remedy is too late. But who would bear with this method of bringing up children, or the weak in faith, which Erasmus proposes to us? The tender and inexperienced mind is to be formed at first

by certain, plain, and necessary principles, which it may firmly believe. Because, it is necessary that every one who would learn, should believe: for what will he ever learn, who either doubts himself, or is taught to doubt? But this new catechist of ours, aims only at rendering his catechumens, and the doctrines of faith, suspicious. For at the very outset, laying aside all solid foundation, he does nothing but set before them those heresies and offences of opinions, by which the Church has been troubled from the beginning. So that in fact, he would make it appear, that there has been nothing certain in the Christian religion. And if an inexperienced mind be from the very beginning poisoned by principles and questions of this kind, what else can it be expected to think of or do, but, either to withdraw itself secretly from, or, if it dare, to hold the Christian religion in utter detestation, as a pest to mankind?

He imagines however, all the while, that no one will discover the craft of this design. As though we had not in the Scriptures numberless examples of these bug-bears of the devil. It was thus the serpent dealt with Eve. He first entangled her in doubts, and brought her to suspect the reality of the precept of God concerning the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and when he had brought her to a stand-still of doubt, overthrew and destroyed her.-Unless Erasmus considers this to be a mere fable also!

It is with the same serpent-like attack that he creeps upon, and deceives, simple souls; saying-'How is it, that there have been so many sects and errors in this one true religion, (as it is believed to be?) How is it, that there have been so many creeds? Why, in the Apostles' Creed, is the Father called God, the Son not God, but Lord, and the Spirit neither God nor Lord, but Holy?' And so on.-Who I would ask troubles inexperienced souls, whom he undertakes to instruct, with questions like these, but the devil himself? Who would dare to speak thus upon a creed of faith, but the very mouth and instrument of the devil?-Here you have the Plot, the Execution, and the catastrophic End, of a soul-murdering tragedy! But behold, I am here almost carried into a refutation of his catechism; whereas, I merely intended to shew you, why I thought it better not to answer this viper at all:-because, he will most effectually refute himself in the minds of all godly and good men. The like game also he played on the apostle Paul, in his preface to the Romans; (to say nothing about his paraphrases, or his mad vagaries [paraphroneses,] to use his own term;) where he speaks of the praises of Paul in that way, that no simple reader whatever who is unacquainted with rhetoric, could be more effectually drawn away, and beaten off, from reading and studying Paul: so confused, intricate, self-contradictory, diverse, and disgusting, does he represent him to be: so that, the reader must of necessity believe the epistle to be the production of some mad man: so far is it from possibility, that he should consider it to be profitable. And among the rest of his sharp-razor cuts, he could not receive, without venting his spleen, even this:-'that Peter should call Christ Man, and say nothing of His Godhead.'-A notable annotation truly! And most appropriately applicable to the passage! And then as to his METHOD, with all its twistings and windings, what is it but a holding up Christ, and every thing done by Him, to derision? Who could gather any thing from this Method but a disgust at, nay a hatred of, attending to a religion so confused and perplexed, and perhaps after all, merely fabulous?

Who, moreover, ever spoke in so much disdain and contempt (not to say enmity) of the apostle and evangelist John, who, among Christians is held to be of the highest authority after Christ?-'He merely scolds little children except it be when he considers a man to be a dolt or a logger-head.'-Christians ever speak of the Apostles with reverence and fear: whereas, this fellow

would teach us to speak of them with profane pride and contempt. And this is the first step towards speaking profanely of God Himself, whose the Apostles are. Nay, it is the same as saying in contempt of the Holy Spirit, (whose the words of the Apostles are,) that He merely scolds little children!

Numberless things of this kind are to be found in Erasmus; or rather, this is his whole character in theology. And this many others have observed before me, and still do observe daily more and more: nor does he cease to go on and to publish daily his annotations more and more grossly, for his "judgment now for a long time lingereth not," and his "damnation slumbereth not." This is also a notable instance of the piety of Erasmus!-In his letter upon 'Christian philosophy,' which is published with his New Testament, and used in common throughout all the churches, when he had propounded the question,-'Why Christ, so great a teacher, descended from heaven, when there are many things taught even among the heathens which are precisely the same, if not more perfect;'-he answers, 'Christ came (which I doubt not but he believed most Erasmianly) from heaven, that He might exemplify those things more perfectly and more fully than any of the saints before Him!'

Thus, this miserable renewer of all things, Christ , (for so He reproaches the Lord of glory) has lost the glory of a Redeemer, and becomes only one more holy than others.-This sentiment could not be expressed in ignorance, but must have been designed and willful; because, even those who do not truly believe, know, and every where confess, that Christ descended from heaven to redeem us men from sin and death. This was the sentiment that first alienated my mind from Erasmus. From that moment, I began to suspect him of being a plain Democritus or Epicurus, and a crafty derider of Christ: for he every where intimates to his fellow Epicureans, his hatred against Christ: though he does it in words so figurative and insidious, that he leaves himself a clue for raging most furiously against those Christians, who, from being offended at his suspicious and double meaning words, will not interpret them as standing in favour of their Christ.-As though Erasmus himself had an all-free prerogative throughout the world, of speaking on divine things with obliquity and craft, and had all men so under his thumb, that they must interpret all his obliquities and crafty maneuvers, as having an upright and honest intent!

Why does he not rather speak openly and plainly? Why does he always deal in these crafty and ensnaring figures of speech? So great a rhetorician and theologian ought not only to know, but to act according to, that which Fabius says, 'An ambiguous word should be avoided as a rock.' Where it happens now and then inadvertently, it may be pardoned: but where it is sought for designedly and purposely, it deserves no pardon whatever, but justly merits the abhorrence of every one. For to what does this hateful double-tongued way of speaking tend? It only furnishes an opportunity of disseminating and fostering in safety the seeds of every heresy, under the cover of words and letters that have a shew of Christian faith. And thus, while religion is believed to be taught and defended, it is, in reality, utterly destroyed, and subverted from its foundation before it is understood.

Wherefore, all are perfectly in the right who interpret his suspicions and insidious words against himself. Nor is any notice to be taken of him when he cries out calumny! calumny! because his words are not fairly and candidly interpreted. Why does he himself ever avoid fair words, and designedly express himself in those which are unfair? For it is an unheard-of kind of tyranny to

wish to have the whole human race so under his thumb, that they should be compelled to understand fairly what he says insidiously and dangerously, and thus cede to him the prerogative of expressing himself insidiously. No! Let him rather be reduced to order, and commanded to bow to the whole human race; that is, by abstaining from that profane and double-tongued vertibility of speech and vain-talking, and by avoiding, as Paul saith, "profane and vain babblings." For this it was, that even the public laws of the Roman empire condemned this manner of speaking, and punished it thus.-They commanded, 'that the words of him who should speak obscurely, when he could speak more plainly, should be interpreted against himself.' And Christ also, condemned that wicked servant who excused himself by an evasion; and interpreting his own words against himself, said, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant." For if in religion, in laws, and in all weighty matters, we should be allowed to express ourselves ambiguously and insidiously, what could follow but that utter confusion of Babel, where no one could understand another! This would be, to learn the language of eloquence, and in so doing, to lose the language of nature!

Moreover, if this license should prevail, I might 'conveniently' interpret all that the whole herd of heretics ever said, nay all that the devil himself ever did or said, or could say or do, to all eternity. Where then would be the power of refuting the heretics and the devil? Where would be that wisdom of the Lord Christ, which all the adversaries shall not be able to resist? What would become of logic, the instructor of teaching rightly? What would become of rhetoric, the faculty of persuading? Nothing would be taught, nothing would be learned, no persuasion could be carried home, no consolation would be given, no fear would be wrought: because, nothing would be spoken or heard that was certain.

When, therefore, Erasmus lightly and ridiculously says of John the Evangelist, 'that he merely scolds babes,' he is to be adjudged immediately a disciple of Epicurus or Democritus, and to be addressed thus-Learn to speak of Majesty with more reverence. Some noted jesters have, indeed, sometimes spoken of princes thus irreverently, and fool-like, but not always with impunity. But if any one else of a sound mind and judgment had done the same, he might, perhaps, have lost his head, for the crime of insulted majesty.

Thus, when Erasmus says, 'Peter addresses Christ as Man, and says nothing of His Divinity,' he is to be condemned of Arianism and heresy: because, he could have omitted this insidious observation altogether, in a matter where the divine Majesty is eminently concerned, or have spoken more reverently: for the words plainly imply, that the Arians do not like that Christ should be called God, but consider it better that He should be called man only. And how conveniently soever they may be interpreted in favour of the Divinity of Christ; yet, as they stand and are read according to their plain meaning, especially since their author is suspicious, they offend Christian minds: because, they have not one plain meaning, and may be more easily understood to favour the Arians, than the orthodox.

Hence Jerome, writing of the Arians of his time who taught in the same artful way, says, 'Their priests say one thing, and their people understand another.' In like manner, there was no necessity for observing to Christians on that passage, that Peter did not call Christ, God; though in truth he did not omit to call Christ, God. Nor is it enough to pretend, 'that he called Him man only, on account of the common multitude:' for though he did call Him Man, yet, he did not therefore omit to

call Him God, except that he did not pronounce these three letters, GOD: but this Erasmus rigidly deems was necessary: by so doing, however, he does nothing here, as well as in every other place, but lay snares, without any cause whatever, to entrap the inexperienced, and to render our religion suspicious. That Carpisian, whoever he was, justly condemns him as a favourer of the Arians in his preface to Hilary, where he has said, 'We dare to call the Holy Spirit, God, which the ancients did not dare to do.' And when, having been faithfully admonished, he ought to have acknowledged his high-flown figures of speech, and his Arianisms, and to have corrected them, he not only did not do that, but even inveighed against the admonition, as a calumny proceeding from Satan, and laughed at the Divinity twofold more than ever-such a confidence has he in his pliability of speech, and his circumlocutive evasions. Nevertheless, he very seriously confesses the Trinity, and would not by any means whatever be thought to deny the Trinity of the God-head, but only wishes to say, that the curiosity (which he afterwards requests will be 'conveniently interpreted' diligence) of the moderns, has received and dared many things from the Scriptures which the ancients dared not.-As though the Christian religion rested on the authority of men: (for this is what he would persuade us to.) And what is this, but considering all religion together to be a mere fable!

Here, although the Carpisian be in many things of no weight whatever, and ever an enemy to Luther, yet Erasmus, from an unheard-of pride, thinks all men together to be mere stocks and stones; who neither understand any subject, nor see through the meaning of any words. Read that observation of his, and say, if you do not discover the incarnate devil! This observation fixes in me a determination (let others do as they please) not to believe Erasmus, even if he should openly confess in plain words,-that Christ is God. But I would address to him that sophistical saying of Chrysippus, 'If you lie, you lie even when you speak the truth.' For what need was there, if he in verity believed that the Holy Spirit is God, to say, 'We dare to call the Holy Spirit, God, which the ancients did not dare to do?' What need was there to use this vertible word 'dare,' that it might apply both to the praise and dispraise of these same moderns, when we received this doctrine from the ancients, and did not 'dare' to receive it first? But however, it is a stark lie, to say, that the ancients did not first 'dare' to call the Holy Spirit, God:-unless by ancients, according to one of his very beautiful figures of speech, he means Democritus and Epicurus: or unless, he means God, materially, that is, these three letters, GOD! But to what purpose is all this hateful maneuvering, but to make of a gnat an elephant, as a stumbling-block to the inexperienced, and to intimate, that the Christian religion is a nothing it all! and that, for no other reason, than because these three Letters, GOD, are not written in every place, where he considers they ought to have been written! In the same manner his fathers, the Arians, made numberless quibbles, because these letters HOMOUSIOS, and INNASCIBILIS, were not found in the Sacred Writings: considering it nothing to the purpose, that the same thing could be solidly proved in substance. And where the name God was written, they were ready with their gloss to elude the truth, by contending, that it did not mean God in reality, but God by appellation. So that, you can do nothing with these vipers, whether you speak to them by the Scriptures, or without the Scriptures. This is the way of the malice of Satan. When he cannot deny the fact, he turns to demanding certain particular terms, which he himself prescribes. And thus the devil himself may say, even to Christ-Although Thou speakest the truth, yet since Thou dost not speak it in the terms which I think requisite, Thou sayest nothing at all: and I wish the truth to be spoken in no words whatever.-This is like Marcolfus, who wished to be hung upon a tree chosen by himself, and yet wished to choose no tree at all. But of this elsewhere, if the Lord shall give me leisure, and length of life. For it is my determination to leave behind me my true

and faithful testimony concerning Erasmus: and thus, to expose Luther to be bitten and stung by these vipers, but not to be utterly torn in pieces and destroyed!-

I now return to my observation upon my liberty which I have asserted; giving it as my sentiments, that the tyranny of Erasmus which he would exercise by means of circumlocutive evasions, is not to be borne, but that he is to be judged openly, out of his own mouth. Where he speaks as an Arian, let him be judged an Arian; where he speaks as a Lucian, let him be judged a Lucian; where he speaks as a Gentile, let him be judged a Gentile; unless he repent and cease to defend such ways of expressing himself. For instance. In one of his epistles on the Incarnation of the Son of God, he uses a most abominable term, calling it 'the intercourse of God with the Virgin'-here he is to be judged, a horrible blasphemer of God and the Virgin! Nor does it make him at all better, his afterwards expounding 'intercourse' as applying to the form of the Christian doctrine. Why did he not speak of the form of Christian doctrine? For he well knew, that by this word, 'intercourse,' Christians could not but be greatly offended-and let him be judged ungodly who would not be offended at a term so abominably obscene in a matter so sacred: knowing that, an ambiguous expression of such a nature, is always taken in its worst sense, even though we be not ignorant, that the term may have another meaning. If it take place from inadvertency, it may be pardoned: if from design and willfulness, it is to be condemned, as I said, without mercy. For to hold a doctrine of faith is arduous, and a divine work, even when delivered in proper, evident, and certain words. How then shall it be held, if it be delivered in ambiguous, doubtful, and oblique words!

St. Augustine says, 'philosophers ought to speak freely on difficult points, fearing no offence: but we (says he) must speak to a certain rule.' And therefore, he blames the use of the term fortune, or fate, both in himself and others. For even though the person may by fortune mean the divine mind, the agent of all things, from which nature is known to be distinctly different, and thus may not think impiously, yet, says he, 'Let him hold his sentiment, but correct his expression. And even to suppose that Augustine did not say this, and never had any certain rule according to which he expressed himself, yet nature will tell us, that every profession, sacred as well as profane, uses certain terms of its own, and avoids all ambiguities. For even common tradesmen, either reprove or condemn, or hold up to ridicule, the man who speaks of his own trade in the technical terms (as they are called) peculiar to the trade of another. With how much greater force will this apply to things sacred, where certain salvation, or eternal perdition is the consequence, and where all must be taught in certain and proper terms! Let us, if we must do it, trifle with ambiguities in other things that are of no moment, as nuts, apples, pence, and other things which are the toys of children and of fools: but in religion, and weighty matters of state, let us shun, with all possible care, an ambiguity, as we would shun death or the devil! Our king of ambiguity, however, sits upon his ambiguous throne in security, and destroys us stupid Christians with a double destruction. First, it is his will, and it is a great pleasure to him, to offend us by his ambiguous words: and indeed he would not like it, if we stupid blocks were not offended. And next, when he sees that we are offended, and have run against his insidious figures of speech, and begin to exclaim against him, he then begins to triumph and rejoice that the desired prey has been caught in his snares. For now, having found an opportunity of displaying his rhetoric, he rushes upon us with all his powers and all his noise, tearing us, flogging us, crucifying us, and sending us farther than hell itself; saying, that we have understood his words calumniously, virulently, satanically; (using the worst terms he can find;) whereas, he never meant them to be so understood. In the exercise of this

wonderful tyranny, (and who would think that this Madam ambiguity could make so much ado, or who could suppose that any one would be so great a madman as to have so much confidence in a vain figure of speech?) he not only compels us to put up with his all-free prerogative of using ambiguities, but binds us down to the necessity of keeping silence. He plainly designs all the while, and wishes us to be offended, that he, and his herd of Epicureans with him, may have a laugh at us as fools: but on the other hand, he does not like to hear that we are offended, lest it should appear that we are true Christians. Thus must we suffer wounds without number, and yet, not utter a groan or a sigh!

We Christians, however, who are to judge, not meats and drinks only, but angels and the whole world, and who actually judge, even now, not only do not bear with this tyranny of ambiguities, but on the contrary, oppose to it our liberty of pronouncing a two-fold condemnation. The first is, as I have already observed, we condemn all the ambiguous expressions of Erasmus, and interpret them against himself: as Christ saith, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant." Again, "By thine own words shalt thou be condemned: for wherefore hast thou spoken against thine own soul?" "Thy blood be upon thine own head." The second condemnation is, we condemn and curse again and again his glosses and 'convenient interpretations,' by which, he not only does not correct his ungodly expressions, but even defends them: that is, he laughs at us twice as much in his after interpretations, as he does in his first expressions. For example: He says, that by 'the intercourse of God with the Virgin' he does not mean a common intercourse, but another kind of marriage between God and the Virgin, where the angel Gabriel is the bridegroom, and the Holy Spirit performs the act of consummation. Only observe what this fellow, by his interpretation, would have us to hear and understand Christ to be. And he says these things, that he might defend the filthiness and obscenity of his expression in the face of offended Christians, and laugh at them all the while; and thus, he forces upon us this offensive term, when he knows very well, that this mystery of the most holy Incarnation, cannot be explained to the mind of man by all the obscene and ambiguous words of the whole world: but how it is understood by the Epicureans, I dare not, for horror, imagine. Why do we not call the conversation of God with Moses and the other prophets, 'intercourse' also, and make the angels bridegrooms, and the Holy Spirit the consummator of the act, or make of it something still more obscene? Moreover, here is the impious idea of sex introduced, to perfect this monstrous derision of saying, that God had 'intercourse with the Virgin;'-in order that, the whole might be made a fable, like that wherein Mars is said to have had intercourse with Rhea, and Jupiter with Semele; and that Christianity might be reduced to a level with one of the fabulous stories of old, and men represented as fools and pitiable madmen for believing such a story to be serious and true, not considering what turpitudes and obscenities were the objects of their faith and worship! And therefore, Christians, that stupid set of creatures, were to be admonished by means of figures like these, to begin to doubt, and then, from doubting to depart from the faith; that thus, religion might be utterly destroyed before any one could be aware of it. This is the verification of that parable, Matthew 13:1-58 where the enemy is represented as sowing tares in the night, and going his way. Thus, we Christians are sleeping in security: and even if we were not sleeping, those bewitching Syrens, by their honey of speech, would soon lull us to sleep, and bring a cloud of night over our eyes. In the meantime, are sown those tares of figurative and insidious words: and yet when Sacramentarians, Donatists, Arians, Anabaptists, Epicureans, &c. are sprung up, we ask-How is it that our Lord's field hath tares? They, however, who have sown them, are gone away; that is, they so paint and set

themselves off by their 'convenient interpretations,' and withdraw themselves from sight, that they seem as if they had sown nothing but wheat. Thus the enemy slides away, and is off in safety, and crowned with honour and applause, and appears to be a friend, when he is in truth the greatest of enemies. This is the way with the strange woman, Prov. 30 who, "when she has eaten, wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness!"

Thus have I replied to your letter, my friend Armsdorff, though perhaps I have been too long and tedious. But I wished to shew you, why I judged it best not to answer Erasmus any farther. I am moreover abundantly engaged in teaching, confirming, correcting, and governing my flock. And my work of translating the Bible, alone requires the devotion of my whole time: from which work, Satan with all his might endeavours to withdraw me, as he has done upon former occasions; that be might get me to leave the best things, to follow after those which are nothing but vain and empty vapours. For my Bondage of the Will proves to you how difficult a task it is to cope with that proteus Erasmus, on account of his vertibility and slipperiness of speech; in which alone is all his confidence. He never remains in one position, but, with the deepest craft, evades every blow, and is like an irritated hornet.

Whereas, miserable I, am compelled to stand my ground in one position, and that upon unequal ground, as "a sign to be spoken against." For whatever Luther writes, is condemned before ten years are at an end. Luther is the only one who writes from envy, from pride, from bitterness, and in a word, at the instigation of Satan himself; but all who write against him, write under the influence of the Holy Spirit!

Before my time, it required a great to-do, and an enormous expense, to canonize a dead monk. But now, there is no easier way for canonizing even living Neroes and Caligulas, than the declaration of hatred against Luther. Only let a man hate and bravely curse Luther, and that, immediately, makes him a saint, equal almost to our holy Lord, the servant of the servants of God. But who could ever believe that hatred against Luther would be attended with so much power and advantage? It fills the coffers of very beggars; nay, it introduces obscure moles and bats to the favour of princes and of kings; it procures prebendaries and dignities; it procures bishoprics; it procures the reputation of wisdom and of learning to the most consummate asses; it procures to petty teachers of grammar, the authority of writing books; nay, it procures the crown of victory and of glory, eternal in the heavens! Nay, happy are all who hate Luther, for they obtain, by that one vile and easy service, those great and mighty things, which none of the most excellent of men could ever obtain with all their wisdom and their virtues; no, not even Christ himself, with all His own miracles, and the miracles of His apostles and all His saints!

Thus are the Scriptures fulfilled.-Blessed are ye who persecute Luther, for yours is the kingdom of heaven! Blessed are ye who curse and say all manner of evil against Luther; rejoice and be exceeding glad in that day, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the apostles, the holy bishops, John Huss, and others who were before Luther!-Wherefore, I feel more and more persuaded, that I shall act rightly by answering Erasmus no farther: but I will leave my testimony concerning him, even for his own sake, that he might hereafter be unburdened from that concern which, as he complains, is completely death to him: viz., that he is commonly called a Lutheran. But, as Christ liveth, they do him a great injury who call him a Lutheran, and I will defend him against his enemies for I can bear a true and faithful testimony, that he is no Lutheran, but

Erasmus himself! And if I could have my will, Erasmus should be exploded from our schools altogether: for if he be not pernicious, he is certainly useless: because he, in truth, discusses and teaches nothing. Nor is it at all advisable to accustom Christian youth to the diction of Erasmus: for they will learn to speak and think of nothing with gravity and seriousness, but only to laugh at all men as babblers and vain-talkers. In a word, they will learn nothing, but to play the fool! And from this levity and vanity they will, by, degrees, grow tired of religion, till at last they will abhor and profane it! Let him be left to the Papists only, who are worthy of such an apostle, and whose lips relish his dainties! May our Lord Jesus Christ, whom, according to my faith, Peter did not omit to call GOD; by whose power I know, and am persuaded, that I have often been delivered from death, and by faith in whom I have undertaken and hitherto accomplished all these things which excite the wonder even of my enemies; may this same Jesus guard and deliver us unto the end-for He is the Lord our God!-To whom alone, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever and ever! Amen!

Footnotes:

Note for Sect. 11. <l >-It is important to observe that the Doctrine of Predestination, or of God's Decree, is a doctrine very different in comparison to the doctrine of Fate held by many of the Pagan Philosophers; and Luther's Necessity of Immutability is not to be confused with the Absolute Necessity which they imposed upon their own God or gods.

Note for Sect. 66 <l >.-Here Luther's explanation of Matthew 23:1-39 is to be read with discretion. Although God and Christ have two distinct wills, their wills are not contrary to one another. An accurate exposition of this passage can be found in Calvin's Commentaries, found below.-

We must attend likewise to the other part of this accusation, that God, notwithstanding the obstinate rebellion of his ancient people, was not all at once so much offended by it, as to lay aside a father's love and a mother's anxiety, since he did not cease to send prophets after prophets in uninterrupted succession; as in our own day, though he has experienced a marvelous depravity in the world, he still continues to dispense his grace. But these words contain still deeper instruction, namely, that the Jews, as soon as the Lord gathered them together, immediately left him. Hence came dispersions so frequent, that they scarcely remained at rest for a single moment under the wings of God, as we see in the present day a certain wildness in the world, which has indeed existed in all ages; and, therefore, it is necessary that God should recall to himself those who are wandering and going astray. But this is the crowning point of desperate and final depravity, when men obstinately reject the goodness of God, and refuse to come under his wings.

I said formerly that Christ speaks here in the person of God, and my meaning is, that this discourse belongs properly to his eternal Godhead; for he does not now speak of what he began to do since he was manifested in the flesh, (1 Timothy 2:16,) but of the care which he exercised about the salvation of his people from the beginning. Now we know that the Church was governed by God in such a manner that Christ, as the Eternal Wisdom of God, presided over it. In this sense Paul says, not that God the Father was tempted in the wilderness, but that Christ himself was tempted, (1 Corinthians 10:9.)

Again, when the sophists seize on this passage, to prove free will, and to set aside the secret predestination of God, the answer is easy. "God wills to gather all men," say they; "and therefore

all are at liberty to come, and their will does not depend on the election of God." I reply: The will of God, which is here mentioned, must be judged from the result. For since by his word he calls all men indiscriminately to salvation, and since the end of preaching is, that all should betake themselves to his guardianship and protection, it may justly be said that he wills to gather all to himself. It is not, therefore, the secret purpose of God, but his will, which is manifested by the nature of the word, that is here described; for, undoubtedly, whomsoever he efficaciously wills to gather, he inwardly draws by his Spirit, and does not merely invite by the outward voice of man. If it be objected, that it is absurd to suppose the existence of two wills in God, I reply, we fully believe that his will is simple and one; but as our minds do not fathom the deep abyss of secret election, in accommodation to the capacity of our weakness, the will of God is exhibited to us in two ways. And I am astonished at the obstinacy of some people, who, when in many passages of Scripture they meet with that figure of speech (anqrwpopaqeia) which attributes to God human feelings, take no offense, but in this case alone refuse to admit it. But as I have elsewhere treated this subject fully, that I may not be unnecessarily tedious, I only state briefly that, whenever the doctrine, which is the standard of union, is brought forward, God wills to gather all, that all who do not come may be inexcusable. And you would not. This may be supposed to refer to the whole nation, as well as to the scribes; but I rather interpret it in reference to the latter, by whom the gathering together, was chiefly prevented. For it was against them that Christ inveighed throughout the whole of the passage; and now, after having addressed Jerusalem in the singular number, it appears not without reason that he immediately used the plural number. There is an emphatic contrast between God’s willing and their not willing; for it expresses the diabolical rage of men, who do not hesitate to contradict God.

Note for Sect. 77. <l >-See the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 29, for an accurate explanation of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. See also Mr. John Calvin’s "The Best Method of Obtaining Concord, Provided the Truth Be Sought Without Contention." in volume 2 of his Tracts.

Note for Sect. 107. <l >-Two things should be noted regarding the Doctor’s response to the Diatribe at this point:

That the Diatribe associates Damnation and Predestination to Damnation (or Reprobation) in such a way as to make the cause of the one necessarily to be the cause of the other. Thus, if Predestination to Damnation be absolute, and without a deserving as its cause, then the Diatribe will falsely allege that we speak of Damnation as being absolute and without any deserving cause. Luther does not affirm that Damnation is absolute in the sense that men will be damned who do not deserve to be damned, but shows that even permitting the Diatribe’s wicked reasoning and lying accusations, it is still confounded by its own arguments, which reveal that all of Erasmus’ concerns are really man-centered, seeing he is willing that God should call that Good which is not, although he will not have God call that Evil which is not-both which are alike wicked, and neither of which is ever done by God, albeit his Predestination to Life and Predestination to Damnation be both of them absolute and in no way based on a foreseen deserving of anything in man or angel so predestinated.

That in the refutation, Luther could have easily put off these arguments by the assertion used nowadays, that Predestination to Damnation is based on foreseen deserving of sin, however,

Luther never brings in any such arguments, which, with other texts, lead one to conclude that Dr. Luther was an orthodox Supralapsarian with regard to the absoluteness and the order of the Decree.

07.0.0 The Large Catechism

The Large Catechism by Dr. Martin Luther Translated by F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau

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07.1.0 Preface

Preface A Christian, Profitable, and Necessary Preface and Faithful, Earnest Exhortation of Dr. Martin Luther to All Christians, but Especially to All Pastors and Preachers, that They Should Daily Exercise Themselves in the Catechism, which is a Short Summary and Epitome of the Entire Holy Scriptures, and that They May Always Teach the Same.

We have no slight reasons for treating the Catechism so constantly [in sermons] and for both desiring and beseeching others to teach it, since we see to our sorrow that many pastors and preachers are very negligent in this, and slight both their office and this teaching; some from great and high art [giving their mind, as they imagine, to much higher matters], but others from sheer laziness and care for their paunches, assuming no other relation to this business than if they were pastors and preachers for their bellies' sake, and had nothing to do but to [spend and] consume their emoluments as long as they live, as they have been accustomed to do under the Papacy.

And although they have now everything that they are to preach and teach placed before them so abundantly, clearly, and easily, in so many [excellent and] helpful books, and the true Sermones per se loquentes, Dormi secure, Paratos et Thesauros, as they were called in former times; yet they are not so godly and honest as to buy these books, or even when they have them, to look at them or read them. Alas! they are altogether shameful gluttons and servants of their own bellies who ought to be more properly swineherds and dog-tenders than care-takers of souls and pastors.

And now that they are delivered from the unprofitable and burdensome babbling of the Seven Canonical Hours, oh, that, instead thereof, they would only, morning, noon, and evening, read a page or two in the Catechism, the Prayer-book, the New Testament, or elsewhere in the Bible, and pray the Lord's Prayer for themselves and their parishioners, so that they might render, in return, honor and thanks to the Gospel, by which they have been delivered from burdens and troubles so manifold, and might feel a little shame because like pigs and dogs they retain no more of the Gospel than such a lazy, pernicious, shameful, carnal liberty! For, alas! as it is, the common people regard the Gospel altogether too lightly, and we accomplish nothing extraordinary even though we use all diligence. What, then, will be achieved if we shall be negligent and lazy as we were under the Papacy?

To this there is added the shameful vice and secret infection of security and satiety, that is, that many regard the Catechism as a poor, mean teaching, which they can read through at one time, and then immediately know it, throw the book into a corner, and be ashamed, as it were, to read in it again.

Yea, even among the nobility there may be found some louts and scrimps, who declare that there is no longer any need either of pastors or preachers; that we have everything in books, and every one can easily learn it by himself; and so they are content to let the parishes decay and become desolate, and pastors and preachers to suffer distress and hunger a plenty, just as it becomes crazy Germans to do. For we Germans have such disgraceful people, and must endure them.

But for myself I say this: I am also a doctor and preacher, yea, as learned and experienced as all those may be who have such presumption and security; yet I do as a child who is being taught the Catechism, and every morning, and whenever I have time, I read and say, word for word, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms, etc. And I must still read and study daily, and yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain a child and pupil of the Catechism, and am glad so to remain. And yet these delicate, fastidious fellows would with one reading promptly be doctors above all doctors, know everything and be in need of nothing. Well, this, too, is indeed a sure sign that they despise both their office and the souls of the people, yea, even God and His Word. They do not have to fall, they are already fallen all too horribly, they would need to become children, and begin to learn their alphabet, which they imagine that they have long since outgrown.

Therefore I beg such lazy paunches or presumptuous saints to be persuaded and believe for God's sake that they are verily, verily! not so learned or such great doctors as they imagine; and never to presume that they have finished learning this [the parts of the Catechism], or know it well enough in all points, even though they think that they know it ever so well. For though they should know and understand it perfectly (which, however, is impossible in this life), yet there are manifold benefits and fruits still to be obtained, if it be daily read and practised in thought and speech; namely, that the Holy Ghost is present in such reading and repetition and meditation, and bestows ever new and more light and devoutness, so that it is daily relished and appreciated better, as Christ promises, Matthew 18:20 : Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.

Besides, it is an exceedingly effectual help against the devil, the world, and the flesh and all evil thoughts to be occupied with the Word of God, and to speak of it, and meditate upon it, so that Psalms 1:1-6 declares those blessed who meditate upon the law of God day and night. Undoubtedly, you will not start a stronger incense or other fumigation against the devil than by being engaged upon God's commandments and words, and speaking, singing, or thinking of them. For this is indeed the true holy water and holy sign from which he flees, and by which he may be driven away.

Now, for this reason alone you ought gladly to read, speak, think and treat of these things if you had no other profit and fruit from them than that by doing so you can drive away the devil and evil thoughts. For he cannot hear or endure God's Word; and God's Word is not like some other silly prattle, as that about Dietrich of Berne, etc., but as St. Paul says, Romans 1:16, the power of God. Yea, indeed, the power of God which gives the devil burning pain, and strengthens, comforts, and helps us beyond measure.

And what need is there of many words ? If I were to recount all the profit and fruit which God's Word produces, whence would I get enough paper and time? The devil is called the master of a thousand arts. But what shall we call God's Word, which drives away and brings to naught this master of a thousand arts with all his arts and power? It must indeed be the master of more than a hundred thousand arts. And shall we frivolously despise such power, profit, strength, and fruit -- we, especially, who claim to be pastors and preachers? If so, we should not only have nothing given us to eat, but be driven out, being baited with dogs, and pelted with dung, because we not only need all this every day as we need our daily bread but must also daily use it against the daily and unabated attacks and lurking of the devil, the master of a thousand arts.

And if this were not sufficient to admonish us to read the Catechism daily, yet we should feel sufficiently constrained by the command of God alone, who solemnly enjoins in Deuteronomy 6:6 ff. that we should always meditate upon His precepts, sitting, walking, standing, Lying down, and rising, and have them before our eyes and in our hands as a constant mark and sign. Doubtless He did not so solemnly require and enjoin this without a purpose; but because He knows our danger and need, as well as the constant and furious assaults and temptations of devils, He wishes to warn, equip, and preserve us against them, as with a good armor against their fiery darts and with good medicine against their evil infection and suggestion.

Oh, what mad, senseless fools are we that, while we must ever live and dwell among such mighty enemies as the devils are, we nevertheless despise our weapons and defense, and are too lazy to look at or think of them!

And what else are such supercilious, presumptuous saints, who are unwilling to read and study the Catechism daily, doing than esteeming themselves much more learned than God Himself with all His saints, angels [patriarchs], prophets, apostles, and all Christians For inasmuch as God Himself is not ashamed to teach these things daily, as knowing nothing better to teach, and always keeps teaching the same thing, and does not take up anything new or different, and all the saints know nothing better or different to learn, and cannot finish learning this, are we not the finest of all fellows to imagine, if we have once read or heard it, that we know it all, and have no further need to read and learn, but can finish learning in one hour what God Himself cannot finish teaching, although He is engaged in teaching it from the beginning to the end of the world, and all prophets, together with all saints, have been occupied with learning it and have ever remained pupils, and must continue to be such ?

For it needs must be that whoever knows the Ten Commandments perfectly must know all the Scriptures, so that, in all affairs and cases, he can advise, help, comfort, judge, and decide both spiritual and temporal matters and is qualified to sit in judgment upon all doctrines, estates, spirits, laws, and whatever else is in the world. And what, indeed, is the entire Psalter but thoughts and exercises upon the First Commandment? Now I know of a truth that such lazy paunches and presumptuous spirits do not understand a single psalm, much less the entire Holy Scriptures; and yet they pretend to know and despise the Catechism, which is a compend and brief summary of all the Holy Scriptures.

Therefore I again implore all Christians, especially pastors and preachers, not to be doctors too soon, and imagine that they know everything (for imagination and cloth unshrunk [and false weights] fall far short of the measure), but that they daily exercise themselves well in these studies and constantly treat them; moreover, that they guard with all care and diligence against the poisonous infection of such security and vain imagination, but steadily keep on reading, teaching, learning, pondering, and meditating, and do not cease until they have made a test and are sure that they have taught the devil to death and have become more learned than God Himself and all His saints.

If they manifest such diligence, then I will promise them, and they shall also perceive, what fruit they will obtain, and what excellent men God will make of them, so that in due time they themselves will acknowledge that the longer and the more they study the Catechism, the less they know of it, and the more they find yet to learn; and then only, as hungry and thirsty ones, will they

truly relish that which now they cannot endure because of great abundance and satiety. To this end may God grant His grace! Amen.

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