

Chapter 4

Verse 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;

Verse 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.' "

Verse 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.

Verse 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, chapter 28, verse 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.

VERSES 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." (Eph. 2:3.) Christ, however, "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." (I Pet. 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 have you 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.

Verse 5. That we might receive the adoption of sons.

Paul still has for his text Genesis 22:18, "In your 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.

Verse 6. And because ye are sons, God has 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 (Matt. 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 I 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." (I Cor. 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."

Verse 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 to 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, goes 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 knows 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 you to me?" Moses had not cried to 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, have you 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." (Ex. 14:11, 12.) But the Holy Ghost was in Moses and made intercession for him with unutterable groanings, sighings to the Lord: "O Lord, at Your 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 knows either love or hatred by all that is before them."

(Eccles. 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 to prayer." (Ps. 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.

Verse 7. Wherefore you are 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.

Verse 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.

Verse 7. 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.

VERSES 8 and 9. Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service to 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 has 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 to 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 receives not the things of the Spirit of God. (I Cor. 2:14.) "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeks 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." (Lev. 18:5.) But now comes the Gospel and says: "Because you do not do these things, you cannot live in them." The words, "You will love the Lord, your 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 10:1.)

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 has showed it to 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 has 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.

Verse 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?"

Verse 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 knows 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.

Verse 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 to eternal life.

Verse 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.

Verse 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.

Verse 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.

Verse 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 seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. 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.

Verse 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."

Verse 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.

VERSES 13, 14. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel to 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 II 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. (II Cor. 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." (Matt. 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. (Ps. 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 II Corinthians 7:6, "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 yourself." (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.

Verse 15. Where is then the blessedness ye said 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.

Verse 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.

Verse 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."

Verse 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!

Verse 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." (Matt. 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 to 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.

Verse 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."

Verse 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 I Corinthians 4:15: "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel"; and in II 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.

Verse 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.

Verse 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.

Verse 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.

VERSES 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 the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans 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.

Verse 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.

VERSES 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 bondswoman, 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 you."

Verse 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.

Verse 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 Philippians 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 has 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.

Verse 27. For it is written, Rejoice, you barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, you that travailest not: for the desolate has many more children than she which has 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, you 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." (I Cor. 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.

Verse 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 hastold you the truth." And in verse 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 to an everlasting inheritance.

Verse 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 seese 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." (Psalm 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 hates 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."

Verse 30. Nevertheless what says 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." (Gen. 21:11.) But God approved Sarah's action and said to Abraham: "Let it not be grievous in your sight because of the lad, and because of your bondwoman; in all that Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac shall your seed be called." (Gen. 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 You, Lord Jesus, have a heaven to give to me. First, because You are the Son of God. Secondly, because You have purchased heaven for me by Your suffering and death. You give heaven to me, not because I earned it, but because You have 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." (Phil. 3:9.)

Verse 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.