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THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS



THE EPISTLE
TO THE COLOSSIANS

ANALYSIS
AND EXAMINATION NOTES

BY THE
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PREFACE.

It is hoped that these analyses and brief notes may be useful to students in schools and colleges in their preparation for examination. They are not intended to supply the place of larger text-books or of lectures, but it is hoped that they may be found valuable as a supplement to both, either as offering a convenient means of recapitulation, or as presenting the subject-matter and explanation in a different form.

While great care has been taken with regard to the selection of matter, the preparation of the detailed analysis, and the mode of presentation, little claim is made to originality of thought. Indeed, it would seem that the vast labours of Lightfoot and our other great commentators leave little to be done, and the writer's long experience as a teacher has taught him that what is now wanted is not so much an original treatise, as a simple text-book which, while it makes full use of the many valuable existing commentaries, shall endeavour to present its notes in a way most helpful to the understanding and to the memory. Use has been made, therefore, of such artifices as tabulation, inseting, italicizing, etc., to an extent perhaps unusual in works of the kind.

In cases of direct quotation, references have been given in the text of the book, but these references very inadequately represent the indebtedness of the writer to the many excellent works which have already appeared on the Epistle to the Colossians and kindred subjects. Amongst such aids he would like especially to mention the works of Lightfoot and Hort, the volume on Colossians in the Expositor's Bible, in the Speaker's Commentary, and in the Cambridge Bible, the commentaries of Sadler and Barry, and Godet's Studies on the Epistles.

While the book is specially prepared for those who are preparing for an examination upon the Epistle, the notes are complete in themselves, and it is hoped that the book may therefore not be without some value to the general reader.

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EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

I. THE EPISTLES OF THE FIRST IMPRISONMENT AT ROME.

Circumstances of the First Imprisonment of St. Paul at Rome. St. Paul, having been arrested as "a mover of sedition among the Jews" (Acts xxiv. 5), and as one who had "gone about to profane the temple" (Acts xxiv. 6), and having exercised his right of appeal to Caesar as a Roman citizen, was sent by Festus to take his trial at Rome. The circumstances of this imprisonment do not appear to have been very severe. They may be gathered from the Acts and the Epistles.

- (a) The Apostle was allowed to dwell "by himself," although bound to a soldier who guarded him (Acts xxviii. 16-20).
- (b) He was not placed in prison, but lived in a house of his own hiring (Acts xxviii. 30).
- (c) He was permitted, moreover, to receive his friends, and to preach and teach without hindrance (Acts xxviii. 31).
- (d) He had freedom to write as well as to preach, and hence we find him sending letters during his imprisonment to distant churches (Phil. i. 13, etc.).

Visit of Epaphras. From time to time during his imprisonment, St. Paul would receive visitors from distant churches; some perhaps coming on other business to the great metropolis of the world, some sent for by the Apostle himself, some coming with messages of inquiry. One such visitor was Epaphroditus, who brought affectionate gifts from the Philippian Church (Phil. iv. 18), and who took back with him the Epistle to the Philippians. Another was **Epaphras**, who came with disturbing tidings respecting some of the churches of proconsular Asia. A serious heresy—partly of Jewish, partly of Gentile origin and character (see p. 9)—was threatening the Church at Colossae, and possibly neighbouring churches also. Epaphras came, apparently, to lay the matter before the Apostle and to ask his advice. He was himself a Colossian (iv. 12), and had been the Apostle's agent in founding the Church at his native city (i. 7); he had ever striven fervently for its welfare (iv. 12, 13); his work had hitherto met with a certain amount of success, for the Christians at Colossae were well organized, and had so far been stedfast in faith (ii. 5).

Conversion of Onesimus. At the same time another Colossian had found his way to Rome and to St. Paul, viz. Onesimus, the runaway slave of Philemon, a wealthy Christian at Colossae, who was himself a very dear friend of the Apostle, to whom, indeed, he owed his conversion. How Onesimus was drawn to St. Paul we do not know. Possibly he had seen the Apostle in earlier days when Philemon had visited Ephesus. In any case the present encounter led to Onesimus being taught by St. Paul, and "transformed from a good-for-nothing slave into a faithful and beloved brother" (Lightfoot). He became

a valuable attendant upon the Apostle, but his old master had legal rights which St. Paul was too honourable to refuse to recognize, and the question with him was how to send Onesimus back to his master without fear of his receiving severe punishment.

Mission of Tychicus. St. Paul determined to deal with both difficulties—the report of Epaphras and the case of Onesimus. Epaphras himself was not returning to Colossae; indeed it would seem that his earnestness and zeal had led to his being cast into prison himself, since in Philem. 23, St. Paul calls him his “fellow-prisoner.” But Tychicus, a native of Asia, was being entrusted at this time with a circular letter to some of the churches of Asia (the Epistle ‘to the Ephesians’), and one of the cities he would probably visit (Laodicea) was very near to Colossae. The Apostle therefore decided to write to the members of the Church at Colossae a letter dealing with the threatened heresy, and encouraging to steadfastness in faith, and to send the Epistle by the hand of Tychicus. His messenger would be accompanied by Onesimus, to whom was entrusted an affectionate letter to Philemon, pleading hard for forgiveness for him who had once been a worthless slave.

The Four Epistles of the Imprisonment. The three Epistles, therefore,—to the Ephesians, the Colossians, and Philemon,—were sent at the same time. Tychicus was the bearer of the first two, Onesimus would hand over to his master the third. It is doubtful whether the Epistle to the Philippians was sent by St. Paul before or after the sending of the three Epistles to ‘Asia.’ Commentators are divided; Lightfoot argues in favour of the priority of the Philippians. Several facts

suggest that the 'three Epistles' were *late* in the first imprisonment :

- (a) The heresy at Colossae is one that would have taken some time to develop.
- (b) St. Paul seems to expect a speedy release (*Philem. 22*).
- (c) There is an absence of allusion to the old topics of "justification by faith" etc., which presumably had now become well-established truths.
- (d) In *Philippians*, however, there is greater doctrinal affinity with the earlier Epistle to the Romans, although here, too, at the time of writing the Apostle seems to be expecting early release.

The Epistles of St. Paul grouped. It may be convenient to show the general arrangement of St. Paul's Epistles. They fall into four groups :

1. *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, written probably at Corinth on the second journey, cir. A.D. 52-53.
2. *Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians*, and *Romans*, written during the third journey, cir. A.D. 56-58.
3. *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, written during the first imprisonment, cir. A.D. 62-63.
4. *1 Timothy* and *Titus*, written in the interval between the two imprisonments, prob. A.D. 65-66.
- 2 *Timothy*, written during the second imprisonment, A.D. 66 or 67.

Colosse (A.V.), **Colossae** (R.V.), or **Colassae** was situated on the banks of the Lycus, a few miles above its junction with the Maeander, of which it is a tributary. The general course of the two rivers is from east to west, the Maeander discharging into the Aegean Sea near Miletus. Near the Lycus, on opposite sides of the stream, and some ten or twelve miles west of Colossae were Hierapolis (to the north) and Laodicea (to the south). These two cities were about six miles apart, and it would have been possible to visit all three in a single day.

Colossae was in St. Paul's day a decaying city, but earlier in history it had been of some considerable importance and size. It stood on the great highway between Ephesus and the Euphrates, and had a large trade in dyed woollen goods, "giving its own name to a peculiar dye, which seems to have been some shade of purple".¹ Xenophon (cir. B.C. 400) describes it as *a great city*, populous and flourishing. Strabo, however, (B.C. 54 to A.D. 24) describes it as *a small town* in the district of which Laodicea was capital. Not many generations after St. Paul's time Colossae disappears altogether from the pages of history. There are no ruins to mark the site of Colossae, which is not strange, since earthquakes were frequent, and the river also was constantly changing its course, and depositing calcareous matter in quantities large enough to bury up ancient monuments

¹ Lightfoot.

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¹ Lightfoot.

and buildings. Laodicea and Hierapolis, being further from the stream, were less affected by these deposits. "Without doubt Colossae was the least important church to which any Epistle of St. Paul was addressed."¹ It is not mentioned in the New Testament outside the Epistle itself.

The Colossians. Colossae in New Testament times belonged politically to the Roman province of Asia; its inhabitants, however, were regarded as Phrygians. Phrygia itself is an ethnographical rather than a political term. There was no Roman province of Phrygia until considerably after the introduction of Christianity into Asia Minor. The name denoted "an extensive district, which contributed portions to several Roman provinces, and varying portions at different times" (Smith's *Bible Dictionary*).

It is clear from the Epistle that there was a considerable Jewish colony at Colossae, and this is supported by independent testimony. It may be mentioned that Antiochus the Great (cir. B.C. 200) had transplanted a considerable number of Jews from the east into Phrygia, and St. Paul may have had this in mind when he spake of God as translating the believer "into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (i. 13, 2.v.). There were Phrygians present at Jerusalem on the great day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 10), and these would, of course, have been Jews or Jewish proselytes.

The Church at Colossae. It is a little doubtful as to the time when Christianity was introduced into Colossae and its neighbour cities. It is possible that amongst those "of Phrygia" who listened to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost were some from the Lycus valley; if so, tidings of the Gospel would have been carried into Colossae at the very commencement of the Christian Church.

¹ Lightfoot.

The Church itself would seem to have been founded by Epaphras (see pp. 2, 7-9, etc.), probably acting as St. Paul's deputy during the three years' stay at Ephesus (Col. i. 7, R.V.).

Paul, himself, had twice been through Phrygia, but most commentators (though not all) are agreed that the Apostle never actually visited Colossae. The various arguments for and against are summed up in the next paragraph. Here it may simply be mentioned that on his first journey through Phrygia he was going from Lystra to Mysia and it is extremely improbable that he would turn aside to Colossae without St. Luke stating the fact; while on his second journey through Phrygia it would seem that he confined his visits to churches already founded (Acts xviii. 23).

The various facts concerning the Church which may be gathered from the New Testament are the following:

- (a) Earliest tidings of Christianity, *possibly* on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 10).
- (b) The founding of the Church at Colossae due to the preaching of Epaphras (Col. i. 7).
- (c) The Church probably not visited by St. Paul before his first imprisonment at Rome (Col. ii. 1).
- (d) Colossae probably visited by St. Paul in the interval between the imprisonments (Philem. 22).
- (e) The Church included men of the highest as well as the lowest class—masters and slaves (Col. iii. 22, iv. 1).
Philemon, Apphia, Archippus (Philem. 1, 2), Epaphras, and Onesimus, known by name.
- (f) It had considerable vitality, its members being noted for their Christian love (Col. i. 4).
- (g) It was threatened with a very dangerous heresy (Col. ii. 4).

Had St. Paul visited Colossae? It is open to question whether St. Paul had ever visited Colossae. The balance of evidence seems to show that he had *not*, but

it is far from clear. The various considerations that have been put forward are as follows:

(a) *In favour of the Apostle having personally visited Colossae.*

1. He twice passed through Phrygia. Phrygia is, however, a vague term, and may or may not have included Colossae. His route, moreover, was to the east and north of the valley of the Lycus, —almost certainly on his first visit to the district, and very probably on his second visit also.
2. On the second visit he "went over *all the country* of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening *all the disciples*" (Acts xviii. 23). If St. Luke's "Phrygia" includes Colossae, he could hardly have failed to mention it if Paul had omitted so important a Church.
3. Timothy was with Paul in Phrygia (Acts xvi. 6). Timothy is styled 'the brother' in Col. i. 1.
4. Col. iv. 15 implies a personal knowledge of Laodiceans. If St. Paul knew Laodicea, he probably knew Colossae. And yet the salutations to Laodicea stand alone. After sending greetings from friends in Rome, the Apostle goes at once to distant friends in Laodicea, and, with the single exception of Archippus, no Colossian is mentioned, although the Epistle to Philemon implies a close personal friendship between the Apostle and the family of a wealthy Colossian.
5. Onesimus was a Colossian (iv. 9). He *may have been* attracted to St. Paul by the recollection of his earlier teaching in Colossae.

(b) *Against such a personal visit.*

1. Epaphras was the great teacher of their Church (i. 7, iv. 13) on behalf of St. Paul himself (i. 7, R.V.).
2. St. Luke speaks of the conversion of "all in Asia" as the result, not of St. Paul's visits, but of his preaching in Ephesus (Acts xix. 10).
3. St. Paul frequently speaks of *the Colossians hearing* and *himself preaching* the Gospel, but never together.
4. His knowledge of their conversion and progress seems to have been derived from others (i. 4, i. 9).

5. No incident is mentioned as having occurred during a visit to Colossae. In this respect the Epistle would stand alone if Colossae had been visited by St. Paul. (Cf. Gal. iv. 15, Phil. iv. 9, 1 Thess. i. 3.)
6. There is an absence of affectionate terms of greeting, e.g. brethren, beloved, etc. In this, again, the Epistle would stand alone if St. Paul had visited Colossae.
7. There are no salutations to individual Colossians. (There is a message, however, to Archippus.)
8. Col. ii. 1 (see note) implies that they of Colossae and Laodicea had not seen the Apostle's "face in the flesh."

On the whole it would seem that the Apostle had not himself personally founded the Colossian Church, and in further support of this may be mentioned the fact that "he never claims to be their spiritual father as he does in the cases of the Thessalonian, Corinthian, Galatian, and Philippian Churches" (Sadler).

The Heresy at Colossae. It seems perfectly clear, from the Epistle, that St. Paul is dealing with *one class only of false teachers*; there is no mention of more than one, and however different may be the nature of the various errors he attacks, he goes backwards and forwards from one to the other in such a way as to show that one set of teachers is responsible for all.

The errors of doctrine seem, however, to fall into two classes, viz.:

(a) *Those of Jewish origin*, viz. those relating to

1. The Jewish observances with respect to food.
 - ii. 16. Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink.
2. The Jewish feasts.
 - ii. 16. . . . or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.

3. The initial rite of circumcision.
 - ii. 11. Ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands.
4. The Jewish Law.
 - ii. 14 (R.V.). Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us.

(b) *Those apparently not of Jewish origin.*

1. Speculative (Gentile) philosophy of purely human origin.
 - ii. 8 (R.V.). Take heed lest there shall be any that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men . . . and not after Christ.
2. An exclusiveness which would reserve this "wisdom" for the few. This seems clear from the frequency with which St. Paul insists on the Gospel as being "for every man."
 - i. 28. Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom ; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.
3. The form taken by this speculative philosophy, viz. the interposition of a series of intermediate beings between God and the world He created.
 - i. 16. . . . whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers ;
and the consequent dethronement of the Eternal Son.
This is clearly *the great danger* at Colossae, since St. Paul is constantly stating against it the positive truth.
 - ii. 9. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.
4. The accompanying worship of angels (founded on a false humility which said that man was too vile to approach God directly).
 - ii. 18. A voluntary humility and worshipping of angels.
5. The outcome of all this in a life of rigid asceticism.
 - ii. 20. Why . . . are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not ; taste not ; handle not ; . . .) after the commandments and doctrines of men.

It would seem, then, that the heresy at Colossae represents the last phase of the old Jewish attack, side by side

with the commencement of the Gnostic ideas which were to assume more definite shape, and to seriously imperil the Church at the commencement of the second century. In earlier Epistles St. Paul had had to attack Judaizers only; in the present Epistle the Jewish element seems altogether small and insignificant by the side of the new philosophic speculations which the Apostle meets so effectively. It may be added that many commentators (*e.g.* Hort) see a difficulty in accepting Lightfoot's theory (of which the above is perhaps a brief summary) and maintain that the whole heresy was Judaic, and that Gnosticism was not the object of attack.

Gnosticism. The main features of the various Gnostic heresies of the ages a little later than the close of New Testament history may be summarized as follows:

1. Their teaching was reserved for the initiated few; the rest of the world were kept in ignorance.
2. This teaching was an attempt to account for the existence of evil, and the creation of the world.
 - (a) God is good, therefore he could not have created matter which (according to the Gnostic) is essentially evil.
 - (b) Hence between God and the world were placed various emanations—angelic orders, in a sort of descending series, the highest being only slightly less divine than God, the lowest only slightly less evil than matter itself. Hence creation is possible by the lowest of these spiritual agencies.
3. It had as its practical outcome one of two conditions of life:
 - (a) *Rigid asceticism.* If matter is evil, have as little to do with it as possible.
 - (b) *Unbridled license.* If *all* matter is evil, and you can't escape, live a life of absolute indifference to it.

These three main features—intellectual exclusiveness, mystic speculation, and ascetic rigour—belong also to the

Jewish sect of Essenes (in Palestine near the Dead Sea) and to the Therapeutae (in Egypt). Although the Essenes never appear to have left Palestine, the passages quoted in the last section show that this incipient Gnosticism of the Essenes was appearing in the churches in the valley of the Lycus.

The way St. Paul meets the Colossian Heresy.

The Apostle in his attack on this two-fold heresy, works in two ways, viz. by condemning the error itself and by actual definite teaching.

1. He meets the *intellectual exclusiveness* of these false teachers by showing that the Gospel is for all. Cf.

i. 28. Teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

i. 23. The Gospel . . . which was preached to every creature which is under heaven.

2. In opposition to their *wild theories* concerning angelic orders he proclaims the Divinity of Christ:

(a) In Whom the fulness of Divinity abides (no fractional share as in these successive orders) (i. 19, ii. 9).

(b) Who created and sustains all things (even these very angelic orders if they really exist) (i. 16).

(c) Who is head therefore of the natural creation as He is head of the spiritual creation (i. 17, 18).

(d) Who is in vital union with His Church as the head is in living union with the body (ii. 19).

3. He condemns the setting such a high value on an *ascetic rule of life*, since

(a) The old *Jewish* rules (though of God, and right in themselves) were only a shadow of things to come (ii. 17);

(b) These *later* rules are of mere human devising, and concern things that are perishable only (ii. 22);

and gives as the one grand rule of conduct the recollection of the fact that they have risen with Christ and are in living union with Him (iii. 1, etc.).

He goes further and uses many of the technical terms of the false teachers, giving them, however, an ennobled Christian significance. Amongst such 'Gnostic' terms used in the Epistle (and which are explained as they occur in the text) may be mentioned

fulness (*pleroma*) or plenitude.
 knowledge (*gnosis*).
 perfect knowledge (*epignosis*).
 wisdom (*sophia*).
 intelligence (*synesis*).
 mystery (*mysterion*).
 perfect (*teleios*).

Time and Place of Writing. From the Epistle itself, and from the Epistle to Philemon, we gather that it was written

- (a) When St. Paul was in bonds (iv. 10).
- (b) Soon after a visit from Epaphras (i. 7, 8).
- (c) When the Apostle expects release (Philem. 22).

It has been questioned whether this imprisonment was the first imprisonment at Rome or that a little earlier (and which also lasted two years) at Caesarea. On the whole, Rome seems the more likely, although it is anything but certain.

It should be noted that amongst those present with St. Paul when he wrote were Aristarchus and Luke, and these two were with him when he started for Rome (Acts xxvii. 1).

If written at Rome, and somewhat late in the imprisonment, the date of writing would be A.D. 62 or 63.

Summary of Probable Dates.

- A.D. 30: Phrygians present at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.
 52: St. Paul passes through Phrygia for the first time.
 55: St. Paul's second journey through Phrygia.
 55-57: St. Paul's long stay at Ephesus (during which in all probability Epaphras evangelized Colossae).
 58-60: St. Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea.
 61-63: St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome.
 64-66: Interval between the two imprisonments (when St. Paul may possibly have visited Colossae).
 66-67: Final imprisonment, and death of St. Paul.
 cir. 363: Council of Laodicea (condemning angel worship).

Old Testament References. There are no direct quotations in the Epistle, but there are some very close parallels between verses in the Epistle and Old Testament passages, and there are also direct allusions to Old Testament institutions.

Parallel Passages:

- Col. ii. 22: "after the commandments and doctrines of men." (Cf. Isaiah xxix. 13. Quoted by our Lord, Mk. vii. 6, 7.)
 Col. ii. 11: "the circumcision made without hands." (Cf. Deut. xxx. 6. The Lord thy God will circumcise *thine heart*, etc.)
 Col. iii. 25: "there is no respect of persons." (Cf. Deut. x. 17. The Lord your God . . . regardeth not persons.)
 Col. iv. 5, 6: "Walk in wisdom . . . let your speech be always with grace." (Cf. Eccles. x. 12. The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious.)

Allusion to O.T. Institutions:

- The Mosaic Law.* Col. ii. 14: "The handwriting of ordinances that was against us."
Circumcision. Col. ii. 11: "Ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands."
The law with regard to meats and drinks. Col. ii. 16: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink."
The Jewish feasts. Col. ii. 16: "in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days."

The Epistle in the Prayer-Book. The Epistle to the Colossians is used in the Prayer-Book in the following instances in addition to the occasions on which it is read as one of the ordinary Second Lessons for the day.

1. AS FURNISHING THE SPECIAL SECOND LESSON :

(a) Col. ii. 8-18. *The Festival of the Circumcision.*

This passage teaches us that we were circumcised in Christ "with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."

2. AS FURNISHING THE "EPISTLE FOR THE DAY":

(a) Col. iii. 12-17. *The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.*

This passage seems intended as a continuation of the Epistle for the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity (Col. i. 3-12), which it is required to follow when there are twenty-seven Sundays after Trinity.¹ The Collect prays for God's household, the Church; the Epistle shows the duties of members of the Church to one another.

(b) Col. iii. 1-7. *Easter Day.*

This passage shows the duties which naturally follow from our having "risen with Christ."

(c) Col. i. 3-12. *Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.*

The Collect prays that we may be delivered from the bands of our sins; the Epistle speaks of the readiness of God to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light.

3. IN THE MARRIAGE SERVICE :

(a) Col. iii. 19. *The duty of the husband.*

"Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them."

(b) Col. iii. 18. *The duty of the wife.*

"Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord."

¹ Evan Daniel.

We may also mention one or two less definite allusions,
e.g.:

- (a) *Collect for Ascension Day.* "So we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell." (Cf. Col. iii. 1-3.)
- (b) *Collect for the first Sunday in Lent.* "Our flesh being subdued to the Spirit." (Cf. Col. iii. 5.)
- (c) *Baptismal Service.* "Grant that the old Adam in this child may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in him." (Cf. Col. ii. 12, iii. 9, 10.)
- (d) *Exhortation in the Visitation of the Sick.* "There should be no greater comfort to Christian persons than to be made like unto Christ by suffering patiently." (Cf. Col. i. 24.)
"Our door to enter into eternal life is gladly to die with Christ; that we may rise again from death, and dwell with Him in everlasting life." (Cf. Col. iii. 1-4.)

3. THE CREED IN THE EPISTLE.

In an Epistle so essentially dogmatic as the Epistle to the Colossians, it is not surprising that we should find authority for most of the articles of our Christian faith. It may be useful if we show here how far the teaching of the Epistle has been embodied in the Nicene Creed.

I believe in one God the Father Almighty,

Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible :

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,

The only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds,

God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father ;

By Whom all things were made,

I. 2. Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father.

III. 17 (R.V.). Giving thanks to God the Father.

Since the Father made all things by the Son, as stated later in the Creed, the present clause is illustrated by I. 16 quoted below.

I. 3. Our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. 13. His dear Son.

I. 15. Who is . . . , the first-born of every creature.

I. 17. He is before all things.

I. 15. Who is the image of the invisible God.

I. 19. It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.

II. 9. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head.

I. 17. *HE IS* before all things.

I. 16 (R.V.). In Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers ; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him.

Who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven,

And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man,

And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.

He suffered

And was buried,

And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures,

And ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father.

And He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead :

Whose kingdom shall have no end.

I. 14. In Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

II. 14. Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us.

II. 9. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head *bodily*.

I. 22. In the body of His flesh.

I. 20. And having made peace *through the blood of His cross*.

II. 14. Nailing it to *His cross*.

I. 14. In Whom we have redemption *through His blood*.

I. 22. In the body of His flesh *through death*.

I. 24. Who now . . . fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.

II. 12. Buried *with Him* in baptism.

II. 12. Ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, Who hath raised Him from the dead.

I. 18. The first-born *from the dead*.

III. 1. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

IV. 1. Ye also have a Master in heaven. (Cf. III. 24. Ye serve the Lord Christ.)

III. 4. When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.

I. 13. The kingdom of His dear Son.

I. 12. The inheritance of the saints in light.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, etc.

There is very little directly referable to the Holy Spirit, but cf.

I. 8. Who also declared unto us your love *in the Spirit*.

I. 9. Wisdom and *spiritual* understanding.

And I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church.

This is emphasized in a number of passages. Cf.

I. 18. He is the Head of the body, the Church.

I. 24. For His body's sake, which is the Church.

III. 15. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called *in one body*.

I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins,

II. 12, 13. Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, Who hath raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

See also I. 14 and I. 20.

And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the life of the world to come.

III. 4. When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.

I. 5. The hope which is laid up for you in heaven.

I. 12. The inheritance of the saints in light.

III. 24. Ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance.

4. THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS AND THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS COMPARED.

These two Epistles, sent at the same time to churches not very far apart (both were, indeed, to be read by the same church, if the usually received explanation of iv. 16 be correct), and dealing with subjects somewhat similar, have much in common, and throw considerable light each upon the other. The student is strongly recommended to read the present Epistle with that to the Ephesians before him. While the special object of each is always present and dictates the particular phrasing of the passage, the parallel reading is always helpful; sometimes Colossians *supplements*, sometimes *it is supplemented by* Ephesians; sometimes an obscure passage in the one is made clearer by the context of a similar passage in the other.

The main points of resemblance may be briefly summarized thus:

1. *Similarity of time and occasion of sending.*

(a) St. Paul is in bonds.

Eph. vi. 20. For which I am an ambassador in bonds.

Col. iv. 18. Remember my bonds.

(b) Tychicus is his messenger.

Eph. vi. 21, 22. But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.

Col. iv. 7, 8. ~~All my state shall~~ Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts.

2. *Similarity of plan in the Epistle.*

BRIEF ANALYSIS OF EPHESIANS.	BRIEF ANALYSIS OF COLOSSIANS.
(1) Introduction. Salutation. Thanksgiving. Prayer.	(1) Introduction. Salutation. Thanksgiving. Prayer.
(2) Doctrinal Section. The Gospel for the Gentiles. The Unity of the Body which has Christ for its Head.	(2) Doctrinal Section. The Gospel for the Gentiles. The Greatness of Christ the Head of the Body.
(3) Practical Section. Duty arising from the Unity of the Church. Application to Husband and wife, Child and parent, Master and slave. Concluding exhortation to watchfulness and prayer.	(3) Practical Section. Duty arising from vital union with the Head. Application to Husband and wife, Child and parent, Master and slave. Concluding exhortation to watchfulness and prayer.
(4) Conclusion. Mission of Tychicus. Benediction.	(4) Conclusion. Mission of Tychicus. Salutations. Benediction.

3. *Similarity of detail extending even to the language used.*

This is admirably and very fully shown in the Cambridge Bible, pp. 29-31. A few of the more striking coincidences may be mentioned here.

Eph. i. 7	compared with Col. i. 14.
i. 17, 18	,, i. 9.
ii. 1	,, ii. 13.
ii. 11	,, ii. 11 and 13.
iii. 6-9	,, i. 25-27.
iv. 15, 16	,, ii. 19.
iv. 22-24	,, iii. 9, 10.

Eph. v. 15, 16	compared with Col. iv. 5.
v. 19-20	„ iii. 16, 17.
v. 22-vi. 9	„ iii. 18-iv. 1.
vi. 18-20	„ iv. 2-4.
vi. 21, 22	„ iv. 7-8.

The chief point of difference in the two Epistles is that the Epistle to the Colossians (attacking a grave heresy) has, for its central idea, “the Divinity of Christ,” the greatness of the Head of the Church; the Epistle to the Ephesians presents another aspect of the same truth, viz. “the unity of the Church” of which Christ is the Head.

5. BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

Notices of St. Paul in the Epistle. The notices of the Apostle are mainly confined to his Apostolic call, his connection with the Colossians themselves, his situation at the time of writing, and the circumstances under which his letter was to be carried to Colossae. The following are the details:

(a) *His Apostolic call.* It was

1. through the will of God, not for any personal merit (i. 1),
2. to proclaim the Gospel (i. 23),
3. more especially the mystery, long hidden, now revealed, viz. "Christ in you (*i.e.* in you Gentiles), the hope of glory" (i. 25-28),
4. which he proclaims with earnest labour (i. 28, 29),
5. in order to present every man perfect in Christ (i. 28).

(b) *His present condition.* He is

1. in bonds, on behalf of the Gospel (iv. 3),
2. comparatively alone (iv. 11), having with him, (when Tychicus and Onesimus shall have departed),
 - (a) *of the circumcision*, Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus (called Justus),
 - (b) *of the uncircumcision*, Epaphras, Luke, Demas.

(c) *His relation to the Colossians.*

1. He does not appear to have seen them personally (ii. 1),
2. Epaphras having laboured at Colossae as his minister (i. 7).
3. He has suffered much for them, as for Gentiles generally (i. 24).
4. He is with them now in spirit (ii. 5),
5. having heard (i. 4) from Epaphras (i. 8) of their faith and love.

6. They are the subject of his constant thanksgiving and prayer (i. 3, 9).
7. and (with those of Laodicea, etc.) of his constant anxiety also (ii. 1, 2).
8. He entreats their prayer for himself and Timothy that God will "open a door" for them (iv. 3).

(d) *The circumstances under which the letter is sent.*

1. Tychicus sent to tell them of the Apostle, and to comfort their hearts (iv. 7, 8).
2. Onesimus sent also, who is one of themselves (iv. 9).
3. The letter is signed by St. Paul himself (iv. 18),
4. and incidentally mentions another letter, "the Epistle from Laodicea" (iv. 16).

Archippus is mentioned at the end of the Epistle.

iv. 17. And say ye to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

He is also mentioned by St. Paul in Philem. 2, where he is styled "our fellow-soldier," and connected with Philemon and his wife Apphia in such a way as to suggest that he was their son. It is not clear from Col. iv. 17 whether he was at the time at Colossae or at Laodicea (Philem. 2 suggests Colossae), but at one of the two cities he held some high office in the Church ("the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord"). Jerome, amongst others, believed that he was overseer of the Church at Colossae.

Either because of Archippus having been newly appointed, or because of some falling off in zeal on his part, the Apostle considers it necessary to warn him of the greatness of his charge and to exhort him to renewed and constant effort. (See also note on iv. 17.)

Aristarchus joins with the Apostle in sending greeting to the Colossian Church.

iv. 10. Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you.

He is apparently included amongst those who are "of the circumcision," *i.e.* Jewish converts. He is mentioned also in the Epistle to Philemon and in several places in the Acts. He was a Macedonian of Thessalonica (Acts xxvii. 2), and accompanied St. Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts xix. 29). We first read of him as being with the Apostle at Ephesus during the riot of Demetrius. Later on he accompanied St. Paul into 'Asia' again (Acts xx. 4), waiting for the Apostle at Troas (v. 5). He

was with St. Paul during his voyage to Rome (Acts xxvii. 2), and the allusion to him in Colossians and Philemon shows that he was with the Apostle during the first imprisonment. For the term fellow-prisoner (lit. fellow-prisoner-of-war) see note on iv. 10.

Barnabas mentioned only as the cousin of Mark.

iv. 10. Marcus, sister's son to (R.V. the cousin of) Barnabas.

Barnabas, *i.e.* "the son of consolation," was the surname given by the Apostles to Joses, a Levite of Cyprus, a wealthy convert who, in the early days of the Church, gave over his wealth to the common fund (Acts iv. 36, 37). It was Barnabas who introduced the newly-converted Saul of Tarsus to the Apostles. With Saul he carried relief to Judaea during the famine foretold by Agabus. He was Paul's companion during the first missionary journey. The two Apostles disagreed, however, over the conduct of Mark, Paul refusing to take Mark a second time with him. The Apostles parted, Barnabas taking his cousin with him to his native island of Cyprus. There is no later notice of him in the New Testament (see, however, 1 Cor. ix. 6), but an epistle is extant (possibly of the 2nd century) which bears his name.

Demas is mentioned by name only, as sending greetings to Colossae.

iv. 14. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you.

That he was a Gentile (not of the circumcision) appears from v. 11. His name is given in a similar connection in Philem. 24. At a later period (during St. Paul's second imprisonment) he is mentioned as having deserted the Apostle and gone to Thessalonica, "having loved his present world" (2 Tim. iv. 10). It is possible that the bare mention of his name in the present Epistle, while Luke is styled "beloved," may be an indication that he had begun to show signs of faltering in his service.

The name is probably a shortened form of Demetrius.

Epaphras is mentioned only in the Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon.

He was a Colossian.

iv. 12. Epaphras, who is one of you,

and it was to him, apparently, that the evangelization of Colossae and the neighbouring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis was directly due—Epaphras, in all probability, acting as St. Paul's representative during his long stay at Ephesus (Acts xix. 10). Cf.

Col. i. 7 (R.V.). Even as ye learned of Epaphras our beloved fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf (*marg. on your behalf*), who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

He continued affectionately solicitous for the churches he had founded.

Col. iv. 12 (R.V.). . . . always striving for you in his prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness, that he hath much labour for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis.

This earnest zeal for the churches led him, when a serious heresy was threatening, to come to Rome and lay the matter before the Apostle. The Epistle to the Colossians was the outcome of that visit. He is also noticed as joining in the concluding greetings, where Paul gives him the title (unusual in the Epistles), "servant of Christ Jesus."

The name Epaphras is a shortened form of Epaphroditus, but Epaphras is not to be confounded with the Epaphroditus of Phil. ii. 25. (See note on iv. 12.)

Jesus Justus sends greeting from Rome to Colossae. He was a convert from Judaism. Jesus is a common Jewish name. (See note on iv. 11.)

iv. 11 (R.V.). . . . and Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision: these only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, that have been a comfort unto me.

The name is not given in the list in the Epistle to Philemon, and beyond the fact that he remained a comfort to the Apostle in Rome when almost all 'of the circumcision' had seceded, we know nothing of him.

Luke. (Luke = Lucas = Lucanus?)

iv. 14. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you.

Luke, the writer of the Gospel which bears his name, and of the book of the Acts of the Apostles, was the companion of St. Paul during the greater part of his Christian life. He first appears with the Apostle at Troas (Acts xvi. 10), very soon after St. Paul had suffered from a severe attack (Gal. iv. 13) of the malady which he calls the "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. xii. 7). This fact, together with the expression "beloved physician" in the present Epistle, leaves little room for doubt that he was the Apostle's faithful medical attendant. He seems to have been himself active in preaching the Gospel (2 Cor. viii. 18, "the brother whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the churches"). The present passage and Philem. 24 show that Luke was with St. Paul in his first imprisonment, while from 2 Tim. iv. 11 ("Only Luke is with me"), we gather that he alone of all the Apostle's usual companions of travel was with him in the second imprisonment.

Marcus. The Latin form of the name Mark.

iv. 10. Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to (R.V. *Mark, the cousin of*) Barnabas

(touching whom ye received commandments : if he come unto you, receive him ;).

Mark (in full, John Mark, see Acts xii. 25) is the writer of the Gospel which bears his name. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey as far as Perga ; his turning back at Perga, and the desire of Barnabas (his cousin) to take him again on the second journey, led to the separation of the two Apostles, and the selection of Silas as the companion of St. Paul. The weakness of Mark was evidently forgiven, as some twenty years later we find him the companion of St. Paul in his first imprisonment (Col. iv. 10). A visit of Mark to Colossae was in contemplation, and the Apostle adds a word of recommendation. As it would seem from 2 Tim. iv. 11 that Mark was, during St. Paul's second imprisonment, with Timothy at Ephesus, the proposed visit to Colossae in all probability took place. That the old weakness was quite forgiven is clear from

2 Tim. iv. 11. Take Mark and bring him with thee ; for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

Nymphas (possibly the name is feminine—Nympha) was an influential Laodicean Christian, in whose house the brethren were accustomed to assemble for worship. He seems to have been personally known to St. Paul ; and the nearness of Laodicea to Ephesus, where Paul lived some years, makes such personal knowledge very probable.

iv. 15. Salute . . . Nymphas, and the Church that is in his house.

See note on iv. 15.

Onesimus is associated by St. Paul with Tychicus as the bearer of tidings concerning himself to the Colossians.

iv. 9. With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.

From the verse above we gather that he was a Colossian, and a tried Christian convert. From the Epistle to Philemon we learn that he was Philemon's slave. He had escaped from his master and fled to Rome. There he had been brought under the influence of St. Paul, had been converted, and had become a much-valued attendant upon the Apostle (Philem. 13). Paul takes advantage from the mission of Tychicus to Asia to send back Onesimus to his master at Colossae, together with a personal letter to Philemon pleading on his behalf, and a warm recommendation of Onesimus (Col. iv. 10) in the Epistle to the Colossian Church.

Timotheus (= Timothy) is associated by St. Paul with himself in the opening of the Epistle.

i. 1. Paul, . . . and Timotheus our brother.

He is similarly mentioned in all the Epistles of the first imprisonment, except the circular letter to "the Ephesians." There is no further notice of him in the Epistle, but it may be mentioned that he was the most beloved of all St. Paul's sons in the faith. He was converted by the Apostle (probably on his first journey) at Lystra; was taken as companion on the second journey, and was again with the Apostle during (probably throughout) the third journey. He was with him during the first imprisonment at Rome; was left at Ephesus, in the interval between the two imprisonments, in charge of the Church there; was still at Ephesus in the second imprisonment until his presence at Rome was earnestly solicited by the Apostle shortly before his death.

Tychicus, the bearer of the Epistle to the Colossians, and of the circular letter to "the Ephesians."

Col. iv. 7. All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord: whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate (R.V. *that ye may know our estate*) and comfort your hearts.

Eph. iv. 21, 22. Almost verbally identical with the above.

Tychicus was a companion of St. Paul during a part of his third missionary journey (Acts xx. 4), not however proceeding to Jerusalem, but being left behind in Asia. The present Epistle shows that he was with the Apostle in the first imprisonment, and was sent to the Colossians with the Epistle itself, at the same time that he was the bearer of a circular letter to the Churches of Asia. He is mentioned twice in later Epistles; in Titus iii. 12, where a possible visit to Crete is notified, and in 2 Tim. iv. 12, where St. Paul states that Tychicus has been sent to Ephesus. Tychicus was probably a native of proconsular Asia (Acts xx. 4).

Summary. The foregoing names may be thus tabulated as an assistance to the memory:

i. *Christians at Rome.*

(a) **Paul and Timothy.**

(b) *Converts from Judaism.*

• **Aristarchus.**

Marcus.

Jesus Justus.

(c) *Gentile converts.*

Epaphras.

Luke.

Demas.

2. *At Laodicea.*

Nymphas (? *Nympha*).

3. *Either at Colossae or Laodicea.*

Archippus.

4. *The bearers of the letter.*

Tychicus (bearer also of *Ephesians*).

Onesimus (bearer also of *Philemon*).

6. GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

Colossae. See p. 5.

Hierapolis is mentioned only in Col. iv. 13. It was about ten or twelve miles west of Colossae, a few miles north of the Lycus and in its valley. It was an important city, with medicinal baths and a trade in dyed wools. It advanced in importance as Colossae declined. Considerable ruins still exist.

Laodicea was also in the Lycus valley, on the opposite bank to Hierapolis, and about six miles distant from it. It was a wealthy and important city, the capital of the district in which it was. Like Colossae and Hierapolis it had a considerable trade in dyed wools, to which allusion may be intended in the "white raiment" of Rev. iii. 18. In times subsequent to the New Testament history it became "a Christian city of eminence, the see of a bishop, and a meeting-place of councils." At one of these councils it is interesting to note that prohibitions were directed against *Judaizing*, against the *invocation and the worship of angels*, and against the *joining in Jewish festivals*, and obedience to the laws concerning *Jewish meats*. All these touch upon the very points against which St. Paul is writing in the Epistle to the Colossians. Considerable ruins of the city still exist. Laodicea appears twice in the Bible story :

(a) *In the Epistle to the Colossians :*

1. There was a Christian congregation there, a section (at least) of which met in the house of Nymphas (Col. iv. 15).
2. Archippus may have been the chief pastor (Col. iv. 17).
3. Epaphras had probably been the founder of the church (Col. iv. 13).
4. The Laodiceans had received an Epistle from St. Paul—either the Epistle to the Ephesians, (which seems to have been a circular letter), or an Epistle which is lost. An Epistle is extant professing to be the Epistle to the Laodiceans, but it is undoubtedly a forgery.

(b) *In the Apocalypse* (Rev. iii. 14-22). From this passage we gather

1. That the Church was rich in temporal wealth (Rev. iii. 17),
2. but that it was miserable and poor in its works, the result of luke-warmness (Rev. iii. 16, 17).

Lycus. A small tributary of the Maeander, having on or near its banks Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea.

Maeander. A river of Asia Minor flowing east and west and discharging into the Aegean Sea near Miletus.

Scythia. The Scythians, an ignorant, barbaric tribe, dwelt on the north of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea, stretching thence into Asia. "They were regarded by the ancients as standing extremely low in intelligence and civilization."

SHORT ANALYSIS OF THE EPISTLE.

I. Introduction (i. 1-12).

- (a) Opening salutation (i. 1, 2).
- (b) Thanksgiving (i. 3-8).
- (c) Prayer for further progress (i. 9-12).

II. Doctrinal Section (i. 12—ii. 23).

A. *Dogmatic* (i. 12—ii. 23).

- (a) The work of the Father (i. 12, 13).
- (b) The Office and Person of the Son (i. 13-20).
- (c) Personal applications (i. 21—ii. 3).

1. To the Colossians (i. 21-23).

2. To St. Paul (i. 23-29).

3. To St. Paul in his relation to the Colossians (ii. 1-3).

B. *Polemic* (ii. 4—iii. 4).

- (a) General warning against deceivers (ii. 4-8).
- (b) Warning against speculative error (ii. 8-15).
- (c) Warning against practical error (ii. 16—iii. 4).

III. Practical Section (iii. 5—iv. 6).

- (a) General exhortations (iii. 5-17).
- (b) Special application to the Christian household (iii. 18—iv. 1).

1. Wives and husbands (iii. 18, 19).

2. Children and parents (iii. 20, 21).

3. Slaves and masters (iii. 22—iv. 1).

- (c) Concluding exhortations to prayer and watchfulness (iv. 2-6).

IV. Conclusion (iv. 7-18).

- (a) The mission of Tychicus and Onesimus (iv. 7-9).
- (b) Salutations and messages to Colossae and Laodicea (iv. 10-18).

DETAILED ANALYSIS.

The Revised Version is used throughout.

The large headings correspond with those of the Short Analysis, p. 32.

I. INTRODUCTION (i. 1-12).

A. Opening Salutation (i. 1, 2). The Epistle is sent

1. From

(a) *Paul*

1. an Apostle of Christ Jesus,

2. whose Apostleship is through God's will, not through personal merit,

(b) *Timothy*, a brother in the faith,

2. to the brethren in Colossae, who are

(a) *holy*, set apart to God,

(b) *faithful*,

3. with the Apostolic blessing :

(a) *Grace*,

(b) *Peace*, the fruit of grace, } from God the Father.

B. Thanksgiving (i. 3-8).

1. To Whom given (3).

God the Father of Jesus Christ.

2. Its cause (4-7).

(a) Their *faith* in Christ Jesus.

(b) Their *love* to all God's people.

(c) Their *hope* in the life to come. This hope

1. kindled their faith and love,

2. was itself revealed when they first heard the Gospel,
which is

(a) the word of truth,

(b) universal,

(c) rich in fruit,

(d) ever increasing in them and in the world.

3. **Its immediate occasion** (8). The visit of Epaphras to Rome, Epaphras himself being
- (a) the dear fellow-servant of the Apostle and Timothy,
 - (b) the preacher at Colossae on their behalf,
 - (c) the bringer of the welcome tidings of the Colossians' spiritual love.

C. **Prayer for further progress** (i. 9-12).

1. **The earnestness of the prayer** (9). Unceasing since the good news came.
2. **The object of the prayer** (9-12).
- (a) *Their higher spiritual discernment* (9, 10).
 - 1. Knowledge—to understand God's will.
 - 2. Wisdom and understanding—truly spiritual (not wisdom falsely so called).
 - (b) *Its outcome in life and character* (10, 11).
 - 1. Conduct worthy of their calling—so as to win God's favour.
 - 2. A life faithful in good works—being nurtured by the knowledge of God. (But see note.)
 - 3. Strength—the best human copy of the Divine power which is its source.
 - 4. Endurance and longsuffering—not merely uncomplaining but joyful.
 - (c) *Its accompaniment of a thankful heart*—since the Father is the source of their spiritual emancipation (12).

II. DOCTRINAL SECTION (i. 12—ii. 23).

II. A. DOGMATIC (i. 12—ii. 3).

A. **The Work of the Father** (i. 12, 13). Three things said of the Father :

- 1. He fitted them to receive the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light ;
 - 2. He freed them from the tyranny of sin ;
 - 3. He translated them to the kingdom of the Son of His love ;
- these blessings having been enjoyed by Apostle and Colossians alike,

B. The Office and Person of the Son (i. 13-20).

(a) **Office** (13, 14, 20). The work of God's Son, the Ruler of this Kingdom, viewed in three lights:

1. *Redemption* (Christ having paid the ransom).
2. *Forgiveness of sins*.
3. *Reconciliation of man to God* (v. 20, see below).

(b) **Person** (15-20).

1. **In relation to the Father.**

He is "the perfect image, the visible representation"¹ of the invisible God.

2. **In relation to created things.** He is

(a) *the Head of the Natural Creation.* Since

1. He is begotten before time began.
2. In and through Him, the Eternal Word, were created all things
in heaven and earth,
visible and invisible,
including the various angelic orders, whatever man chooses to call them.
3. Unto Him as the goal all creation is tending.
4. HE IS—existent before all things, and independent of all things.
5. In Him the whole Universe is held together.

(b) *the Head of the New Spiritual Creation*—the Church.
Since

1. He is the Head—the Church is the Body.
2. He is the Source of its life—being the Firstborn from the dead.

(c) *Hence the Head of all—natural and spiritual*—the reason for this Pre-eminence being the Father's good pleasure

1. that *in Him* the Fulness of the Divinity should permanently abide;
2. that *by Him* the Universe should be reconciled to God,
(a) the blood of the Cross being the means of securing peace,
(b) God's purpose being to restore all things both in heaven and in earth.

¹ Lightfoot.

C. Personal Applications (i. 21—ii. 3).

- (a) **To the Colossians (21-23).** It is God's pleasure that *they* shall share in this blessing.
1. *Their former state (21).* They were
 - (a) estranged from God,
 - (b) with hostile hearts, as shown in their evil deeds.
 2. *The means employed for their reconciliation (22—parenthetic).*
 - (a) The Body of Christ.
 - (b) Yea, His Flesh, which died on the Cross.
 3. *The object secured (22)—that God might present them to Himself*
 - (a) holy,
 - (b) without blemish,
 - (c) unaccusable, even though under the eye of an omniscient God.
 4. *The necessary condition on their part (23).* There is *one* condition, viz. :
 - (a) *Positive*—Continuance in the faith,
 1. grounded, as on a solid foundation,
 2. settled, steadfast.
 - (b) *Negative*—No departure from the hope of the Gospel
 1. which is universal,
 2. of which Paul was called to be a minister.
- (b) **To St. Paul (23-29).**
1. *His share in the great work (23).* He has been made a minister of this glorious Gospel.
 2. *His sufferings (24).* He rejoices in them for three reasons:
 - (a) They are on the Gentile Colossians' behalf.
 - (b) They supplement the afflictions of Christ Himself. (See note on i. 24.)
 - (c) Thus the Apostle's *flesh* suffers for the sake of his Master's *Spiritual Body*, the Church.
 3. *His Divine appointment (25).* His ministry described :
 - (a) It is a *Divine Stewardship*.
 - (b) It is especially on behalf of the *Gentiles*.
 - (c) Its object is to *proclaim fully* the Word of God.
 4. *His message (26, 27).*
 - (a) The nature of the message.—It is a **mystery**, *i.e.*
 1. previously hid from all ages and generations,
 2. now manifested to God's holy people.

- (b) The greatness of the message.—It is
1. rich in its blessings,
 2. glorious as a revelation of God.
- (c) The message itself.—It is
 Christ, not the Saviour of Jews alone, but **Christ dwelling in you Gentiles also, Christ your hope of glory.**
5. *His aim* (28).
- (a) To warn and teach *every man*.
 - (b) To embrace in his teaching *the whole message*.
- With this ultimate object :
- (c) To present every man *perfect* in Christ. (See note.)
6. *His earnest labour* (29).
- (a) **He** puts forth every effort, like a spiritual athlete ;
 - (b) yet it is **God** Who works in him, giving him
 1. the energy itself,
 2. the results which follow.
- (c) **To St. Paul in his relation to the Colossian and neighbouring Churches** (ii. 1-3). St. Paul would have them understand
1. *how great is his struggle and anxiety*
 - (a) for the Colossians,
 - (b) for them at Laodicea,
 - (c) for all, who like them, have never yet seen him personally ;
 2. *the end for which he yearns*, viz. that they may be
 - (a) encouraged and strengthened in heart,
 - (b) bound together in love,
 - (c) partakers of all the wealth which the firm conviction of an understanding mind brings with it,
 - (d) brought to perfect knowledge of the mystery of God, which is :
Christ, in Whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.

II. B. POLEMIC (ii. 4—iii. 4).

A. **General Warning against deceivers** (ii. 4-8).

1. **The warning itself** (4)—against those who would lead them astray by false reasoning.

2. **Three considerations to support the warning (5-8).**(a) *The thought of the Apostle (5).* He is

1. absent in flesh, yet
2. present with them in spirit;

while he finds joy in observing

1. their orderly array,
2. the solid front their faith presents to the foe.

(b) *The memory of their first hearing of the Gospel (6, 7).* He appeals to them under several metaphors—

1. to *walk* in Christ, as they were taught,
2. being *rooted* in Him firmly,
3. and *built* in Him and *strengthened* in faith from day to day;

while their hearts abound in thankfulness to God.

(c) *The evil design of the false teachers (8),* who aim at carrying them away captive. (Merged into next section.)**B. Warning against speculative error (ii. 8-15).**1. **The false teaching condemned (8).**(a) *Positively:*

1. This boasted philosophy is *vain and misleading*.
2. It substitutes the *traditions of men* for the truth of God.
3. It is an *elementary discipline*, fit only for children.

(b) *Negatively:* It is *not after Christ*.2. **The truth stated (9-15).**(a) **The doctrine of the Incarnation (9, 10).** Christ is

1. *Perfect God*—in Him the fulness of the Godhead permanently abides.
2. *Perfect Man*—since the Godhead has united itself with man by taking a human body.

Hence He is

3. *the Head of all spiritual beings*, call them what you will;

and hence again

4. every Christian is *complete in Him*, being filled with His fulness.

(b) **The true circumcision of the New Dispensation.** The *Sacrament of Baptism* is superior to the old legal *rite of Circumcision*.

1. In itself (11):

- (a) It is not material, made with hands, but is *spiritual*.
- (b) It puts off not a part of the body, but *the whole body with all its carnal affections*.
- (c) It is not of Moses, but of *Christ*.

Hence it is superior in "its *character*, its *extent*, its *Author*."¹

2. In the blessings it brings (12-15)—to Gentiles as well as Jews.

- (a) *A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness (12).*

1. *The Baptismal sign and grace.* They were buried with Christ to their old selves when they passed into the water.

They were raised again from that water to a regenerate life.

2. *The requirement on their part.* Faith in the working of God, Who raised Christ from the dead.

- (b) *Life with Christ (13).*

1. *Their old condition.*

They lived a life of sin, and this was death.

Their heart was carnal and uncircumcised.

2. *The glorious change.*

God quickened them into life with Christ.

- (c) *Forgiveness of sins (14-15);* and here the Apostle identifies himself with his Gentile readers.

1. *The universality of the forgiveness.* Our great debt to God has **all** been paid.

2. *The nature of the debt.* It was a **bond** which

(a) was signed by ourselves,

(b) pledged us to fulfil the law of ordinances,

(c) was therefore our tyrant, since fulfilment was impossible.

¹ Lightfoot.

3. *The cancelling of the debt.* We have been freed from this debt by Christ, Who
 - (a) cancelled the bond,
 - (b) put it out of sight,
 - (c) nay, went further, and destroyed it altogether by nailing it to the Cross.
4. *The consequent triumph of Christ,* the Cross of suffering being His triumphal car.
 - (a) Having at His Incarnation cast aside all the powers of evil (but see note);
 - (b) as a mighty victor He displayed them to the world,
 - (c) leading them in triumph on the Cross.
 - (d) *Emancipation from a burdensome yoke of ordinances* (16). (See following section.)

C. Warning against practical error (ii. 16—iii. 4).

1. A double warning (16-19).

(a) *Against Judaic heresy—*not to allow themselves to be taken to task (16, 17)

1. in the matter of eating and drinking,
2. with regard to their non-observance of any

feast-day,	<i>i.e.</i>	one of the	annual	festivals.
new moon,	„	„	monthly	„
Sabbath,	„	„	weekly	holy-days.

Reason for (a).

All these old legal requirements are the *shadow*, the real *substance* belongs to the Gospel of Christ.

(b) *Against heresy not Judaic—*not to allow themselves to be robbed of their prize (*i.e.* the prize of eternal life which they were in a fair way of winning) (18, 19).

1. *The bait with which they were tempted to turn aside.*
 - (a) **An affection of humility**, as shown in
 - (b) **a worshipping of angels** (as intercessors between God and man).
2. *The true character of their tempters.*
 - (a) **Visionaries**—loving to dwell on their alleged manifestations and revelations. (See note.)
 - (b) Men affecting humility yet **puffed up with excessive pride**, their minds being unregenerate, unspiritual.

(c) Men substituting inferior spiritual agencies for the one True Head, Who is the only source of the vitality of the Body giving it

<i>nourishment,</i>	}	through joints and ligaments;
<i>unity and compactness,</i>		

spiritual growth,—the increase which is of God.

2. A double principle of action (ii. 20—iii. 4).

(a) They died with Christ—Let them remember what that death should mean (20-23). It should mean *the end of all these carnal restrictions*.

Five reasons given for freeing themselves from rigid ascetic restrictions. Such restrictions are

1. rudimentary. The Colossians died to this rudimentary discipline when they died with Christ.
2. worldly. But the Colossians are no longer citizens of the world.
3. trivial. For "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch," refers to things which are *perishable* and quite unimportant.
4. of human origin, as the prophet forewarned, in language which Christ repeated.
5. useless. For even the good that they lay claim to in
 - (a) the officious parade of devotion,
 - (b) the affectation of humility,
 - (c) the severe treatment of the body,
 is a *show* of wisdom merely, it is of *no real value in checking indulgence of the flesh*.

(b) They rose with Christ—Let them remember what that rising should mean. Let them act as men can only act who have "risen with Christ" (iii. 1-4).

Four thoughts suggested to make them centre their aims in heaven.

1. *The thought of Christ*, Who is *in* heaven, seated on God's right hand.
2. *The contrast of things heavenly and earthly*. If their thoughts are not on heavenly things, they must be on the inferior things which are upon earth.
3. *The memory of their death to the world*, and therefore to all worldly things.

4. *The thought of their risen life,*
 (a) hidden now with Christ, and seemingly inglorious,
 (b) glorious hereafter, when Christ Who is our life shall be manifested.

III. PRACTICAL (iii. 5—iv. 6).

A. **General Exhortations** (iii. 5-17), based on the double principle of action, "Death to the world, life with Christ in God."

1. **Death to the world should mean death to passion and sensual indulgence** (5-11).

(a) **General rule** (5). Mortify your whole carnal self.

(b) **Enumeration of various forms of evil** (5-11).

1. *Violation of Seventh and Tenth Commandments* (5-7).

(a) *Actions*—fornication, uncleanness;

(b) *States of heart*—passion, evil desire; covetousness, which is idolatry.

Reasons given for mortifying the tendency to these:

(a) Such vices bring God's wrath on the offender.

(b) They belong to the unregenerate life, to which *ye have died*.

2. *Violation of the Sixth and Ninth Commandments* (8-11).

anger, wrath, malice;

slander, filthy abuse, lying.

Reasons given for mortifying these (and indeed all) evil tendencies:

(a) Ye have put off the old man, and put on the new.

(b) This new man is renewed from day to day unto

1. higher knowledge of God,

2. greater likeness to Him.

(c) In this regenerate life all artificial distinctions vanish in a common brotherhood, *e.g.* distinctions which are

racial, Jew or Greek,

ritual, circumcision or uncircumcision,

intellectual, Barbarian, Scythian, . . .
social, bond or free,
 while Christ permeates everything, being all,
 and in all.

2. Life with Christ should mean the birth and development of Christian virtues (12-17).

(a) **The Christian's high calling (12).** He is

1. the elect of God,
2. set apart to God's service,
3. beloved of God.

(b) **Enumeration of Christian virtues (12-15).**

1. *Virtues of the individual Christian (12).*

A heart of compassion, prompting

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|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| (a) kindness—to others, | } | in its outward bearing. |
| (b) humility—in itself, | | |
| (c) meekness, | | |
| (d) long-suffering, | | |

2. *Social virtues (13).*

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|---|
| (a) mutual forbearance, |
| (b) forgiveness whenever a cause of complaint arises. |

Reason for (b). Christ forgave you, so do ye also forgive others.

3. *The one virtue, which is the bond of perfectness (14).*

Put on **love**, over and above all these, containing them, and holding them together.

4. *The arbiter, when doubt arises (15).*

Let the **peace of Christ** rule as umpire in your hearts for

- | |
|---|
| (a) to it ye were called ; |
| (b) ye were called, moreover, in <i>one</i> body, therefore one spirit should animate the body. |

5. *The crowning virtue of thanksgiving (15).*

(c) **The Christian's general duty and attitude (16, 17) with regard**

1. *to himself personally.* Let the Word of Christ be his inward monitor

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|--|
| (a) in its inexhaustible wealth, |
| (b) in its supply of every kind of wisdom. |

2. *to his brother Christians.* Let there be mutual teaching and admonition
- (a) by means of
1. psalms,
 2. hymns,
 3. spiritual songs of all kinds ;
- (b) such singing to be
1. imbued with the Divine Grace,
 2. from the heart and not the lips alone,
 3. a service to God Himself.
3. *to God.* Every word and act of the Christian is to be
- (a) performed in the name of the Lord Jesus,
- (b) accompanied by thanksgiving to God the Father through Him.

B. Special application to the Christian Household (iii. 18—iv. 1).

The above principle is, above all, to be carried out in the Christian home ; and with regard to the various social relationships it embraces.

1. Wives and Husbands (18-19).

- (a) *Wives.* Be in loyal subjection to your husbands, for ye have a higher incentive even than earthly marriage, viz. your common union with Christ.
- (b) *Husbands.* Be loving.
Be not harsh or irritable.

2. Children and Parents (20-21).

- (a) *Children.* Be obedient to your parents in all things (in all things, that is, which are not against the law of God), for this is well-pleasing in the Lord.
- (b) *Fathers (i.e. Parents, generally).*
Avoid irritating your children by being too exacting, lest they become discouraged and spiritless.

3. Slaves and Masters (22—iv. 1).

- (a) *Slaves.* Be obedient to those who are your masters in this life of the flesh, and let your service be

1. *constant*—in all things ;
2. *loyal and sincere*—not with eye service, as merely wishing to please men, but in sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord ;
3. *diligent and faithful*, as labouring for the Lord rather than for men.

For

1. it is from the Lord ye will receive the recompense of a glorious inheritance ;
2. it is indeed the Lord Christ Whom ye serve ;
3. God is no respecter of persons—he who does wrong, whether master or slave, will be punished for the wrong.

(b) *Masters.* Be just and equitable to your slaves,
for ye also have a Master in heaven.

C Concluding exhortations (iv. 2-6). The Apostle concludes with exhortations to

1. **prayer and thanksgiving (2-4).** Their prayer is to be
 - (a) *unceasing*,
 - (b) *watchful*,
 - (c) *accompanied by thanksgiving* ;
 while they are asked especially to pray *for the Apostle and his companions*
 - (a) that God will open a door for the Word,
 - (b) that so the mystery of Christ (for which Paul is in bonds) may be proclaimed,
 - (c) and thus the Apostle's special mission may be faithfully fulfilled ;
2. **watchfulness (5, 6)** in behaviour and speech. They are to
 - (a) *act wisely* towards those outside the Church's pale,
 - (b) *seize every opportunity*, buy up every moment as it comes,
 - (c) let their speech be
 1. *in grace*,
 2. not corrupt or flavourless, but "*seasoned with salt*," so that they may give a proper answer to every man.

IV. CONCLUSION (iv. 7-18).

A. The mission of Tychicus (7-9).

1. **Tychicus himself (7)**. He is
 - (a) the *beloved brother*,
 - (b) the Apostle's faithful *minister* and *fellow-servant* in the Lord.
2. **His mission (7-9)**:
 - (a) To make known the Apostle's affairs.
 - (b) To comfort the hearts of the Colossians.
3. **His companion (9)**: *Onesimus*, who is
 - (a) the faithful and beloved brother,
 - (b) one of themselves.

B. Concluding salutations to Colossae and Laodicea (10-18).

1. Salutations sent from

- (a) *those of the circumcision (10-11)*, viz.
 1. **Aristarchus**, Paul's fellow-prisoner.
 2. **Mark**, the cousin of Barnabas.
 - (a) St. Paul has already sent instructions concerning him,
 - (b) and now reiterates his exhortation to them to welcome Mark if he visits them.
 3. **Jesus**, called **Justus**.
 These alone *of the circumcision* have worked loyally in spreading the kingdom of God, and so have been a comfort to the Apostle.
- (b) *those of the uncircumcision (12-14)*, viz.
 1. **Epaphras**, one of themselves. Three things said of him:
 - (a) He is a bond-servant of Christ.
 - (b) He ever strives in prayer for them that
 1. they may stand perfect in faith;
 2. they may have perfect assurance in all the will of God.
 - (c) He labours not merely for *Colossae*, but for *Laodicea* and *Hierapolis* also.
 2. **Luke**, the beloved physician.
 3. **Demas**.

2. Salutations sent to

1. the brethren in Laodicea, especially
2. Nymphas (? Nympha), and
3. the Church in their (? her) house.

3. Two messages (16-17):

(a) *Concerning the Epistle.*

1. The present Epistle is to be read
 - (a) first by the Colossians,
 - (b) then by the Church of the Laodiceans.
2. The Colossians are to read the Epistle from Laodicea.

(b) *Concerning Archippus.* They are to give this message:
Take heed to the ministry thou hast received in the Lord, that thou discharge it fully and faithfully.

4. Concluding salutation (18):

1. The Apostle signs the Epistle himself.
2. He reminds the Colossians of his bonds.
3. He gives his benediction, "Grace be with you."

PRINCIPAL ALTERATIONS IN THE REVISED VERSION.

CHAPTER I.

A. V.

R. V.

*[The phrases correspond to the
italicised portions of the text.]*

1. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ <i>by</i> the will of God, and <i>Timotheus</i> our brother,	through Timothy
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BRIEF NOTES ON THE TEXT.

MANY of the difficulties of the Text have been explained in the detailed Analysis, which the student is strongly recommended to read side by side with the following notes, and with the principal alterations made in the Revised Version and emphasized on the pages opposite the notes.

1. **an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.** In almost all his Epistles St. Paul opens with the assertion of his Divinely-given commission. The exceptions are the Epistles to the *Thessalonians*, the *Philippians*, and to *Philemon*, the absence of the title of authority in these three Epistles being accounted for by the specially affectionate relationship between the writer and his readers.

Timotheus=Timothy. For the connection of St. Paul and Timothy see p. 28.

Timothy is associated with St. Paul in the opening words of six Epistles. Of these, three (*Philippians*, *Colossians*, and *Philemon*) were written during the First Imprisonment at Rome. The other Epistle of this imprisonment (*Ephesians*) was in all probability a circular letter sent to several churches, personal greetings being accordingly omitted.

our brother, rather, *the brother*. Notice that Timothy is not called an apostle. The title, however, is not restricted in the N.T. to the Twelve with St. Paul. It is given to Barnabas (Acts xiv. 4), and probably was shared by many. (Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 7 with 1 Cor. xv. 5.) It denoted the first order in the Church. (1 Cor. xii. 28.) It is significant, however, that where Paul joins himself directly with Timothy he drops the title "apostle"; cf. Phil. i. 1, Paul and Timotheus the servants of Jesus Christ.

We have, therefore, in the opening verse, two signs of the humility of the great Apostle of the Gentiles:

- (a) *His renunciation of all personal merit*,—he is an Apostle "through the will of God."
- (b) *His association of Timothy with himself*, although Timothy was not of Apostolic rank.

2. To the saints and faithful brethren
in Christ which are at *Colosse*: Grace be
unto you, and peace, from God our
Father *and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Colossæ

omit

3. We give thanks to God *and* the
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying
always for you,

omit

2. **saints**, R.V. *margin*. "holy." The word "saints" = those set apart, consecrated to God, not those necessarily of peculiarly holy lives. In his earlier Epistles St. Paul addresses himself to "the Church," *i.e.* to the community as a whole. In the later Epistles, including the three Epistles (to Churches) of the First Imprisonment, he addresses himself to "the Saints," *i.e.* to the individuals composing the community. There are other signs in St. Paul's Epistles of more affectionate expressions replacing in later years the more authoritative words of early Epistles.

faithful brethren. "Faithful" may denote either

(a) *trusting*, *i.e.* having faith or trust.

(b) *trustworthy*, *i.e.* true to their trust.

Lightfoot prefers the latter. St. Paul is writing to a church threatened with heresy. "He wishes it to be understood that when he speaks of 'the Saints,' he means the true and steadfast members of the brotherhood."

in Christ, as the branch in the Vine, the member in the Body, the body itself in living union with its Head.

Colosse, properly *Colossae*, as in R.V., or *Colassae*.

Grace . . . and peace, St. Paul's usual opening benediction. In his latest Epistles the word "mercy" is added.

Grace means (1) love that condescends,

(2) the gifts which such love bestows,

(3) the effects of those gifts in beautifying character.¹

from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The last five words should be omitted, as in the R.V., on the best manuscript authority. They were probably inserted from the parallel passage in Ephesians. This is, then, the only instance in which the opening blessing is coupled with the name of the Father alone.

3. **We give thanks.** St. Paul almost invariably commences his Epistles with thanksgiving for the good results already shown in the church he is addressing. This thanksgiving is generally followed, as in this instance, by a prayer for further grace.

to God and the Father, better, to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (a quite exceptional form of words with St. Paul).

The name 'God' is frequently used alone of 'the Father.' All three Persons of the Blessed Trinity are alike God, but the Father is the Fountain of Godhead. Christ is *God of God*. (Nicene Creed.)

¹ Expositor.

4. *Since we heard* of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love, which ye have to all the saints,

having heard

5. *For* the hope which is laid up for you in *heaven*, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth *of the gospel*;

because of
the heavens

6. *Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit*, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth :

of the gospel, which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing.

We give thanks . . . praying always for you, *i.e.* "always, when we pray for you, our prayer is coupled with thanksgiving."

The Apostle throughout the Epistle recommends a similar practice on the part of the Colossians themselves. (See ii. 7.)

4. **Since we heard, *i.e.*** from Epaphras. Cf. i. 8, "Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit."

Probably St. Paul had never seen the Colossians. (See p. 7.) This verse, however, while it bears out the suggestion does not *prove* it. The reference is clearly to *recent* tidings.

faith . . . hope . . . love. The triad of Christian graces, each supplementary to the other two,—faith stimulated by hope, and finding its expression in love.

Cf. 1 Cor. xiii. 13 (R.V.), Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three.

So 1 Thess. i. 3, Your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope.

Faith rests on the past,
Hope looks to the future,
Love works in the present.¹

faith . . . love. St. Paul's ideal Christian is the man who has faith in God, and love to his fellowman.

faith in Christ Jesus, the preposition denoting either

- (1) the sphere in which their faith moves,
- (2) the object of their faith.

Lightfoot (against many commentators) prefers the former.

5. **for the hope,** etc. Either (1) We give thanks for the hope, having heard of your faith and love; or (more likely) (2) We have heard of your faith and love, which ye hold fast for the hope's sake.

the hope, etc. 'Hope' here denotes 'the *object* of their hope,' *i.e.* their future resurrection and enjoyment of eternal blessing.

This is "laid up in heaven," since Christ has already ascended thither, where He ever lives to make intercession.

whereof ye heard before, *i.e.* at their conversion. Since then there had been the sound of heresy in Colossae.

the word of the truth of the gospel, as distinct from the "false doctrine," which it is the object of this Epistle to condemn and refute.

¹ Lightfoot.

7. As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is *for you* a faithful minister of Christ ; on our behalf

6. **which is come unto you**, etc. Notice carefully the Revised Version rendering. St. Paul notes two characteristics of the Gospel:

- (a) its universality,
- (b) its fruitfulness.

By these it is to be known from false so-called gospels.

Its universality. "False gospels are local and special. Heresies are provincial or national; truth is catholic."¹

Its fruitfulness, R.V. "bearing fruit and increasing." Its fruitfulness is therefore shown in two ways:

- (a) it bears the fruit of holy lives,
- (b) it is ever securing fresh adherents.

in all the world. St. Paul uses this strong figure of speech to signify that wherever in the world the Gospel is preached it bears this double fruitage.

It is surprising, however, how much of the then known world had already been reached by the Gospel message, *e.g.* places as far apart as Mesopotamia and Rome (Acts ii. 9, 10), Ethiopia (Acts viii. 27), and Illyricum (Rom. xv. 19).

the grace of God, to the Gentile as well as Jew, a synonym with St. Paul for the Gospel (Lightfoot), cf. Acts xx. 24; 2 Cor. vi. 1.

in truth, *i.e.* not in the perverted form in which the heretics among you proclaim their so-called gospel.

7. **Epaphras.** See p. 25.

fellow-servant, a title given by St. Paul to Epaphras and Tychicus only. (See iv. 7.) In Philem. 23, Epaphras is styled the Apostle's "fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus."

minister of Christ. Minister=Gk. *diakonos* (=deacon). The title was afterwards reserved in the Church for the lowest order in the Christian ministry. In its ordinary usage it would mean simply a 'servant,' as here, 'a servant of Christ.'

for you, R.V. 'on our behalf.' The reading is doubtful.

(a) *for you* (A.V.), *i.e.* 'on *your* behalf,' would mean 'for your benefit.'

(b) *on our behalf* (R.V.) would mean 'as our representative.' Epaphras was probably sent by St. Paul to evangelize Colossae during his long stay at Ephesus. Cf.

Acts xix. 10. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwell in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

¹Speaker.

8. Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

9. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all *wisdom and spiritual understanding*;

spiritual wisdom and understanding

8. love in the Spirit. Cf.

Gal. v. 22. The fruit of the Spirit is love.

9. for this cause, *i.e.* in consequence of the good report we have received of your faith and love.

do not cease to pray for you. See Analysis, p. 34.

The object of the Apostle's prayer is twofold :

- (1) that they may be filled with the perfect knowledge of God's will ;
- (2) that this knowledge may find expression in their life and character.

Either of these graces is incomplete without the other. Knowledge without practice, morality without intelligence, are equally valueless. "Morality has a basis which makes it vigorous and permanent only when it rests on a knowledge of God's will."¹

to pray . . . and to desire. The Gk. word for 'prayer' is the more general, for 'desire' more specific.

To pray = To direct one's thoughts in various forms of worship.

To desire (R.V., To make request) = To ask, to entreat.

filled with the knowledge of His will. 'Knowledge' = perfect knowledge. All the Epistles of the First Imprisonment contain a similar petition. In the present Epistle, however, it is repeated again and again ; cf.

- i. 10. increasing in the knowledge of God.
- ii. 2. (R.V.) that they may know the mystery of God.
- iii. 10. (R.V.) the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge, etc.

One cannot help seeing in it a protest against the spurious claim to knowledge of the heretical teachers at Colossae. The Colossians are to be

- (a) filled, *i.e.* to receive their knowledge in no stinted measure, as these false teachers, who only 'revealed' to the initiated few.
- (b) with perfect knowledge, *i.e.* not with a so-called 'knowledge' which was false, valueless, speculative.
- (c) of His will, *i.e.* not having for its object the various imaginary intermediate beings between God and man, but His will, which is to influence man's life.

wisdom and spiritual understanding ; better (as R.V.), "spiritual wisdom and understanding." It is not easy to distinguish between the two words, but

wisdom is more general and theoretical,

understanding is more special and practical.

¹ Expositor.

10. That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing *in* the knowledge of God ; *marg. by*

"*Wisdom*" is the grasp of principles, more especially the knowledge of God's will.

"*Understanding*" is the application of our wisdom in matters of detail; the applying of principles in action.

Each of these is *spiritual*, *i.e.* the gift of the Holy Spirit. Cf.

Is. xi. 2. The spirit of wisdom and understanding.

Again, a protest against false teachers; their "wisdom" was not "spiritual."

all wisdom. Notice the frequent repetition of "all" and similar words—a favourite usage with St. Paul. Cf. "filled," "full knowledge," "all wisdom," "all pleasing," "every good work," "all might," "all patience."

10. walk—"conduct yourselves," "behave," "live." Cf.

Eph. v. 15. See then that ye *walk* circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.

3 St. John 4. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children *walk* in truth.

worthy of the Lord. *worthy* = worthily; *of the Lord* = of Jesus Christ, as generally in St. Paul's Epistles.

To walk "worthy of Christ" is to walk "as becomes faithful Christians"; to walk in Christ's footsteps.

unto all pleasing, *i.e.* so as to please Christ in everything—to meet His every wish, to anticipate His wishes. The Greek word was used generally in a bad sense of obsequious cringing and flattery. It is here ennobled by its associations. Cf.

1 Thess. ii. 4. So we speak—not as pleasing men, but God.

So also

Col. iii. 22. Not with eye-service, as menpleasers.

being fruitful in every good work. The "walk worthy in Christ" will show itself in deeds of righteousness.

increasing in the knowledge of God. "Knowledge" = full knowledge, as in v. 9. The reading is doubtful, either

(a) *in the knowledge* (A.V. and R.V.), *i.e.* ever growing towards the perfect knowledge of God. Cf. the language of the Confirmation Prayer:

"Daily increase in them . . . the spirit of knowledge."

(b) *by the knowledge* (R.V. *margin*), *i.e.* nurtured by the knowledge of God, as the young plant is nurtured by dew or rain. (Lightfoot.)

11. Strengthened with all might, according to *his glorious power*, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; the might of his glory

12. Giving thanks unto the Father, which *hath made* us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: made

the knowledge of God, which is "life eternal." This "life" begins here, as knowledge begins here. It is perfect hereafter. Cf.

John xvii. 3. This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, etc.

1 Cor. xiii. 12. Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

11. **strengthened with all might.** (R.V., power). It is interesting to notice that vv. 9-11 contain a prayer for no less than five of the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit, viz. those italicized in

"The spirit of *wisdom* and *understanding*, the spirit of counsel and *ghostly strength*, the spirit of *knowledge* and *true godliness*, and . . . of Thy holy fear."

The ideas rather than the words correspond.

according to His glorious power. Notice R.V., "The power communicated to the faithful corresponds to, and is a function of, the Divine might whence it comes." (Lightfoot.)

unto all patience and long-suffering. Archbishop Trench distinguishes thus:

patience = bearing the *ill-will of persons*.

long-suffering = bearing *evil things*, such as pain, or distress, which God may send.

Lightfoot explains

patience = *endurance* = the temper which does not easily succumb under suffering. *Its opposite is 'cowardice' or 'despondency.'*

long-suffering = the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong. *Its opposite is 'wrath' or 'revenge.'*

with joyfulness. Bishop Barry remarks: "The words here form a climax:

Patience struggles and endures,

long-suffering endures without a struggle,

joyfulness endures and glories in suffering."

12. **Giving thanks.** Two explanations have been given of this phrase:

(a) *As referring to the Colossians.* St. Paul is exhorting them to give thanksgiving to the Father as the crowning point of Christian effort. Cf. ii. 7, "abounding therein with thanksgiving."

(b) (less probable) *as referring to St. Paul himself*, carrying on the idea of v. 9, "We . . . do not cease to pray for you . . . giving thanks," etc.

13. Who *hath delivered* us from the power of darkness, and *hath translated* us into the kingdom of *his dear Son* : delivered translated the Son of his love

unto the Father, Who is the ultimate source of all blessing, for of *Him* are both the Son and the Spirit. Cf.

John iii. 16. God so loved the world, that He *gave* His only-begotten Son, etc.

John iii. 34. God *giveth* not the Spirit by measure, etc.

hath made, R.V. "made." It refers to a past, definite act of God, and all these blessings are the present possessions of faithful Christians. The words "made," "delivered," "translated," refer either to

- (a) the moment when the sacrifice of Christ was completed, or
- (b) the time when each believer was brought into union with Christ, *i.e.* at his baptism.

It does not follow that every baptized Christian is *now* "meet to be a partaker," etc., but God has done His part, and it remains with man to continue in the condition of fitness in which he has been placed. Cf.

"I heartily thank our heavenly Father that *He hath called me to this state of salvation*, and I pray unto God to give me His grace *that I may continue in the same* unto my life's end." (Catechism.)

meet = fit, competent.

meet to be partakers of the inheritance. lit. "competent for the parcel (or portion) of the lot." There is allusion here either

- (1) to the division of Canaan amongst the Israelites, or
- (2) to the division of an ordinary inheritance by lot.

The former is more probable. Cf.

1 Chron. xvi. 18. Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, *the lot of your inheritance.*

Our word "inheritance" suggests "death," but such an idea is absent from the verse. The "inheritance" is *enjoyed here* as well as hereafter, and St. Paul is emphasizing the fact that *we do not deserve* to obtain it, *God makes us fit* to share in it.

in light = "in the kingdom of light," Christ's kingdom, as opposed to "the tyranny of darkness" in the next verse. Cf.

Eph. v. 8. Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.

1 Peter ii. 9. Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.

13. **hath delivered**, rather "delivered," *i.e.* rescued, as a powerful victor. See note above on "hath made."

14. In whom we have *redemption* our redemption
through his blood, even the forgiveness
of sins:

the power of darkness, *i.e.* the tyranny of the powers of evil.

The same words are used by our Lord. Cf.

Luke xxii. 53. This is your hour, and *the power of darkness.*

It is noticeable that they are quoted by St. Luke, the companion of St. Paul.

hath translated us, rather, "translated" (see above on v. 12). The practice recalled by the words is that of the transferring or transporting of whole peoples to distant lands by arbitrary conquerors. Cf.

2 Kings xvii. 6. The King of Assyria . . . carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor, etc.

God, as a mighty conqueror, is represented as having rescued us from the tyranny of the powers of evil, and having transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Cf.

"Baptism, wherein I was made . . . an inheritor of *the kingdom of heaven.*"

His dear Son, better, as in R.V., "The Son of His Love"; either

(a) The Son Who *reveals* the Father's Love. (Lightfoot.) Or

(b) The Son Who *is the object* of the Father's Love. (Ellicott.)

There would seem to be in these verses some indirect condemnations of the heresy at Colossae:

(a) We are translated into the Kingdom of His Son, *not of angels or inferior beings.*

(b) Redemption is 'the forgiveness of sins,' *not the initiation into mysteries known only to the few.*

14. **In Whom** = in union with Whom.

redemption. Note R.V. "our redemption." "The metaphor has changed from the victor who rescues the captive by force of arms, to the philanthropist who *releases him by payment of a ransom.*" (Lightfoot.)

through His blood. These words should be omitted here. They have probably crept in from Eph. i. 7, which closely corresponds to the present verse. The idea conveyed by them is insisted upon later in the present chapter. Cf.

i. 20. Having made peace *through the blood of His Cross.*

the forgiveness of sins, R.V. "*our sins.*" Redemption, of course, means more than this, but the first effect upon the penitent sinner is the "forgiveness of his sins." Cf.

Luke i. 77. To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins.

"Redemption, in its fulness, is our being brought into Christ, and being made members of Himself, and in Him we have not only forgiveness, but a new life." (Sadler.) Cf.

15. Who is the image of the invisible
God, the firstborn of *every creature*: all creation

Rom. viii. 23. Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

v. 15-20. St. Paul is now in the heart of his subject. The main feature of the Colossian heresy was its rejection of the mediatorial work of God the Son (see p. 10). We have here, therefore, in a few sublime verses, a description of the Person of the Son of God,

(a) in relation to His Divine Father (v. 15);

(b) in relation to created beings (vv. 15-20).

The Apostle uses language which was constantly on the lips of his opponents. The Jews of Alexandria frequently described "the Word" (or "Logos") as "the image of God." St. Paul adopts the phrase in its true meaning.

He himself used the phrase in an earlier Epistle:

2 Cor. iv. 4. Christ, Who is the image of God.

15. Who is the image of the invisible God, i.e. the perfect, visible representation—the manifestation—of the invisible God—the perfect Divine likeness.

All that we really know of the Father we know *through the Son*.

John i. 18. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.

In Him the Divine nature comes near to us in a form that can be grasped by mind and heart and will, as it once came near to men in a form that could be grasped in part by men's senses. (Maclaren.) Cf.

1 St. John i. 1. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.

This is true of the Son

(a) *in His Divine Nature* (as the Logos, or Word).

The very Name, "Word," implies the power of revelation.

(b) *in His Human Nature* (as the Incarnate Christ). Cf.

John xii. 45. He that seeth Me seeth Him that sent Me.

The Fathers, generally, commented on this verse as applying only to the Divine Logos, but the Son of God both before and after His Incarnation was "God manifest."

image. In the word "image," therefore, we have not merely the idea of

(a) *representation, i.e. the Divine "copy," or "likeness," and*

(b) *manifestation, i.e. the visible representation, but*

(c) *real, essential embodiment.* (Bp. Barry.)

15 (*repeated*). Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of *every creature* : all creation

Christ is not merely *like* God, He is *essentially* God, *i.e.* He is of the *Divine Substance*. This is clearly seen from the context (for the word image will not always bear this meaning in the N.T. Cf. 1 Cor. xi. 7.)

ii. 9. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

That "image" signifies more than mere likeness is clear from

Heb. x. 1. The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not *the very image* of the things, etc.,

where "shadow" and "image" are in strong contrast.

That Christ Himself is "the image of God" in this highest sense of the word is clear from

Heb. i. 3 (R.V.). Who (*i.e.* the Son) being the effulgence of His (the Father's) glory, and the very image (marg. the impress) of His substance, etc.

John x. 30. I and My Father are one.

the invisible God. The Father Himself is invisible. We can only *know* of Him (apart from *conjecture*) through the Son.

1 Tim. vi. 16. Whom no man hath seen, nor can see.

Mat. xi. 27. Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.

The firstborn of every creature, better, as in R.V., "the firstborn of all creation." St. Paul again is using familiar language. The word "firstborn" was used

(a) *by the Jews generally, of the Messiah,* the words of Ps. lxxxix. 27 (Also I will make Him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth) being admitted to be Messianic.

(b) *by Philo and the Alexandrian Jews* of St. Paul's day in reference to "the Logos."

The Arians used this verse in their attempts to establish the heresy that the Son of God was Himself a created being. They argued that if He was "firstborn of creatures," He was *Himself a creature*. This interpretation of the phrase is clearly excluded

(a) *by the context.*

1. *The Son is "first-born," not "first-created."* The use of the former title shows that He is in a different relation to God from the created universe.

2. *He is Himself the agent of the Father in the work of creation.*
v. 16 (R.V.). In Him were all things created.

So also John i. 3.

16. For *by* him were all things created, in
that are in heaven, and that are in earth,
visible and invisible, whether they be
thrones, or dominions, or principalities,
or powers: all things *were created by* | have been created through him,
him, and for him: | and unto him;

3. *He is self-existent.*v. 17. **HE IS** before all things.So also John viii. 58, Before Abraham was, **I AM.**4. *He is the sustaining power of the universe.*

v. 17. In Him all things consist.

5. *In Him is found the totality of Divinity.*

v. 19. It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.

*(b) by other passages in the New Testament.*1. *The use of the title "only-begotten,"* which shows that the relation of the Word to the Father was unique, e.g. John i. 18.2. *The Divinity of the Uncreated Word* is abundantly set forth. See John i.

The phrase might read "First-born *in relation to* all creation"; in other words, "in relation to the created universe, the Eternal Word is 'the First-born.'" Maclaren quotes a similar construction in Milton, where Eve is described as "the fairest of her daughters," *i.e.* in comparison with her daughters. The word First-born would therefore imply

(a) Priority. The Eternal Son of God was "begotten of His Father *before all worlds,*" *i.e.* from all eternity. (Nicene Creed.)*(b) Supremacy.* He is Lord of the universe by virtue of His being the First-begotten.

It should further be noted

1. that the phrase is used of our Lord in His Divine Nature as the Eternal Word, and has no reference to His Incarnation as Son of man ;

2. that the whole verse is an illustration of the phrase "neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the substance" (Athan-Asian Creed), for our Lord is

(a) the image of the invisible God, *i.e.* of the Divine Substance.*(b)* the "First-born," and therefore has a different personality from the Father Who is "neither created, nor begotten."

3. The verse completely meets the Colossian heresy relating to Christ's Personality :

(a) The first phrase shows His relation to God.*(b)* The second phrase shows His relation to the world.

16. for. The work of the Son in creation shows His claim to the title "First-born of all creation."

16 (*repeated*). For *by* him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things *were created by him, and for him* :

in
have been created through him,
and unto him ;

Since He created *all* things

- (a) He Himself is not a creature.
- (b) He is *before* all things.
- (c) He is *above* all things.

by Him, etc. Notice the R.V.,

- (a) "*In Him* were all things created (a definite act).
- (b) All things have been created (continue in creation) *through Him and unto Him.*"

1. The three prepositions should be carefully noted.

- (a) **In Him.** "All the laws and purposes which guide the creation and government of the universe reside in Him, the Eternal Word, as their meeting-point." (Lightfoot.)
- (b) **through Him,** not, however, as the mere passive instrument of the Father, but as Himself a Divine Co-operating Agent. Cf.

Rev. iii. 14. These things saith the Amen, . . . *the beginning* of the creation of God.

- (c) **unto Him.** As He is the "beginning" of the creation of God, so is He the end—all things converge to Him as the final goal. Cf.

Eph. i. 10. He might gather together . . . all things in Christ.

Rev. xxii. 13. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

2. The different tenses of the verb should be noted. (See R.V.)

- (a) In Him *creation took place* as a definite historic act.
- (b) Through Him and unto Him all things *have been created* and continue in their relation of creatures to Creator.

3. The teaching of this and other passages of the New Testament is that in the natural creation *the Father was working "in" the Son*; that while to the Father belongs in the highest sense "origination" (Christ Himself being God of God), it is *in and through Christ* that creation was carried into effect. Cf.

John i. 3. All things were made by (*i.e.* through) Him (*i.e.* the Word).

John i. 4. In Him was life.

Heb. i. 2 (R.V.). Through Whom (*i.e.* the Son) also He (*i.e.* the Father) made the worlds.

1 Cor. viii. 6 (R.V.). One Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things.

16 (*repeated*). For *by* him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things *were created by him, and for him*:

in
have been created through him,
and unto him ;

4. The verse affords a further proof of Christ's Divinity and Co-equality with the Father, for elsewhere the same language is applied to the First Person of the Blessed Trinity. Cf. Rom. xi. 36.

that are in heaven . . . invisible. The Apostle is not content with the inclusive phrase "all things"; he presents all creation in two distinct classifications, each exhaustive:

- (a) things in the heavens, and upon the earth;
 (b) things material and things spiritual.

Christ is Creator and Lord of all—all owe their being and continuance to Him.

whether they be thrones, etc. The Apostle may have mentioned these spiritual orders for one of two reasons:

- (a) Because his idea of the unseen world was that it was peopled by spiritual existences in vast numbers, and of varying degrees of dignity.

In support of this we might mention

1. St. Paul's evident belief in such spiritual existences and powers. Cf. Eph. iii. 10, Eph. vi. 12.
 2. Similar references in other parts of the New Testament. Cf. Heb. xii. 22.
 3. Passages in the Ancient Liturgies, *e.g.* "Thee the innumerable hosts, of angels, archangels, thrones, dominions, etc." (Clementine Liturgy, quoted by Sadler.)
- (b) Because the Apostle has in mind the wild speculations of the false teachers at Colossae, who would interpose between God and man innumerable orders of created beings, doing away with the mediatorial work of the Son.

In support of this view may be mentioned:

1. The parallel passage in Eph. i. 21, where the Apostle seems to be impatient of the very use of such names, *e.g.* "Every name that is named."
2. A similar impatience in Col. ii. 18.

If the first view be accepted, the meaning would be, "The Eternal Word is the Creator of the vast hosts of heaven, this unseen spiritual world."

If the second view, then we must interpret, "Whatever names you may care to give to your spiritual powers, however much or however little truth there may be in your strange speculations, you can mention no spiritual existence which does not owe its origin to Christ."

17. And he is before all things, and
by him all things *consist*.

in

marg. hold together

thrones, dominions, etc. The order is of no significance. It does not agree with that in Eph. i. 21. The list may even be intended to include earthly dignities as well as spiritual powers,—evil spirits as well as good. It may be noted, however, that

- (a) "*thrones* apply invariably to angelic beings of the highest order;
- (b) the words translated *principalities* and *powers* usually go together; and are used
1. of earthly powers as well as spiritual;
 2. of evil spirits as well as good.

by Him and for Him, R.V. "through . . . unto. . ." (See note above on "by Him.")

17. **He is.** Each word is emphatic,

He, *i.e.* the Eternal Word,

is (not *was*), the present tense denoting absolute existence.

Lightfoot prints these words in capitals, "HE IS," giving as an illustrative text, John viii. 58, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (words further illustrated by the Name given to Himself by God at the Burning Bush. Ex. iii. 14, I AM THAT I AM). Cf. also

John i. 15. He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for *He was before me* ('before' is superlative in Gk., meaning 'first of all').

before all things. The reference is not to the superior dignity, but to the *pre-existence* of the Eternal Word. (So in the Athanasian Creed, "None is *afore* or *after* other," *i.e.* the Son and Spirit are co-eternal with God.) The Word, being from all eternity, is 'before' all things which belong to time.

by Him all things consist, *i.e.* 'in Him,' as in R.V.

consist=hold together (R.V., marg.), cohere.

Christ not only created, He maintains, or sustains. By Christ, God 'made the worlds,' and in Christ is that 'continued creation,' which means the preservation of life, and the order and harmony of the universe.

The various forces at work in the universe can be shown to be obedient to certain laws—as yet only partially, but every year more completely understood. Christ is

'Existent behind all laws: He made them, and, lo, they are.' (Browning.) Such laws in their origination and in their successful working are the outcome of His Eternal Mind, for such is the good pleasure of the Father (v. 19). Cf.

Acts xvii. 28. In Him we live, and move, and have our being.

18. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

18. **And He is the head of the body, the Church.** The Apostle has been speaking of the pre-eminence of the Son with regard to the *Natural Creation*; He now proceeds to show His pre-eminence with regard to the new *Spiritual Creation*.

The two descriptions answer clause for clause:

The Eternal Word is

with regard to the Natural Creation

1. its Creator and Sustainer (vv. 16, 17);
2. its Superior with respect to pre-existence and dignity (v. 17, He is before all things);
3. The first-born of all creation (summing all up in one title).

The Incarnate Christ is

with regard to the Spiritual Creation (the Church)

1. its Head (giving life, ruling and sustaining);
2. its beginning (in time and in originating power);
3. the first-born from the dead (in Him we rise, as in Him we were created).

It has been pointed out that the parallelism under (3) above, had already been shown by St. Paul at Antioch in Pisidia, where he declared that Christ's resurrection was foreshadowed in the words "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Acts xiii. 33).

The Head of the body. Christ's relation to the Church is that of the head to the body in that

- (a) He gives it its life,
- (b) He directs and controls,
- (c) He is its superior in dignity,
- (d) its happiness is dependent on living union with Him.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians the same relation of Head to Body is set forth; but while here the attention is mainly directed to the Head, in Ephesians the attention is rather centred on the Body.

The Church. Gk. *ecclesia*, i.e. a body of men "called out" from the world for the service of God. The word sometimes denotes (as here) the whole body of professing Christians, sometimes a particular section of that body, e.g. 'the Church . . . at Corinth' (1 Cor. i. 2).

Who is the beginning, i.e. "of the Church," in a double sense:

- (a) He is before it in point of time (being the first-born from the dead).
- (b) He is the Source of its life and power.

the first-born from the dead. Again in a double sense:

- (a) Christ is the first-fruits.

1 Cor. xv. 20. Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

19. For *it pleased* the Father that in
him should all *fulness* dwell;

marg. for the whole fulness of
God was pleased to dwell in
him
the fulness

(b) It is in Christ that we too shall rise.

1 Cor. xv. 22. In Christ shall all be made alive.

John xiv. 19. Because I live, ye shall live also.

There is an analogy here between the teaching of St. Paul and St. John. Cf. Rev. i. 5, "Jesus Christ . . . the first-begotten of the dead."

in all things. 'All' is emphatic, *i.e.* not only in the Natural Creation, but in the Spiritual Creation also, pre-eminence belongs to the Son.

He might have the pre-eminence. "His resurrection from the dead is His title to the headship of the Church." (Lightfoot.)

By His resurrection we are assured

(a) that ours is a *living* Christ;

(b) that He is really the Son of God.

Rom. i. 4. Declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead.

(c) That He is able to give life to us.

With regard to these verses it has been said, "No passage in the N.T. more fully, perhaps none so fully, witnesses to the Divine Nature, Power, and Eternity of the Saviour of mankind." (Moule.)

19. **It pleased the Father.** The words '*the Father*' are not in the original. It is a little doubtful, therefore, as to what is the subject of the verb '*was pleased*.' There are three suggestions:

(a) *The Father.* (So A.V. and R.V.) It was the good pleasure of the Father that the 'pleroma' should abide in the Incarnate Son.

Most commentators accept this insertion. Moreover, it agrees best with the sense of the following verse.

(b) *The Son Himself.* The Eternal Son determined of His good pleasure that the 'pleroma' should permanently abide with His Human Nature after the Incarnation—two natures in the one Person.

An easier reading, but unlikely, since the Incarnation is invariably referred to the good pleasure of the Father. (See p. 83.)

(c) *The fulness* (personified). So R.V. marg. The whole fulness of God was pleased to dwell in Him.

Grammatically simple; the personification of the 'pleroma' belongs, however, to a later time, and is closely bound up with Gnostic speculations.

19 (*repeated*). For *it pleased* the Father
that in him should all *fulness* dwell;

marg. for the whole fulness of
God was pleased to dwell in
him
the fulness

It pleased the Father that in Him, etc. The word pleased denotes that :

(a) *The Father determined it.*

John iii. 16. God so loved the world, that *He gave His only begotten Son.*

(b) *The Father delighted in it.*

Matt. iii. 17. This is My beloved Son, *in Whom I am well pleased.*

Our Lord invariably refers the manifestations of His Divine Power to the good pleasure of the Father. Cf.

Luke x. 22. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father.

John xi. 41. Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me, **in Him**, *i.e.* in the Incarnate Christ.

all fulness, R.V. 'all the fulness.' The 'fulness' (*pleroma*), or 'plenitude,' was a recognized theological term, denoting the totality of the Divine powers and attributes. (Lightfoot.)

In the one Person of the Incarnate Son of God were to be found both Human Nature and Divine, each in perfection. Cf. "So that two *whole and perfect natures* . . . were joined together in one Person." (Art. ii.)

The false teachers asserted that "from the 'pleroma' issued all the various agencies through which God at any time exerted His power in creation, or manifested His will through revelation. The mediatorial beings would retain more or less of its influence, according as they claimed direct parentage from it or traced their descent through successive evolutions. St. Paul states that the *pleroma* abides absolutely and wholly in Christ as the Word of God."¹

As illustrating this verse, cf.

John xvi. 15. All things that the Father hath are Mine.

Cf. also John iii. 34, where, however, the meaning is somewhat doubtful.

dwell, abide permanently. The Incarnation did not involve a merely temporary union of the Human with the Divine; the *pleroma* had its *permanent abode* in Christ. Cf. 'The Godhead and the Manhood (were) joined together in one Person, *never to be divided.*' (Art. ii.)

In times past God revealed Himself partially and in many ways; in the fulness of time came Christ, the perfect Revealer, *the Word of God*, in Whom was to be found the 'plenitude' of Divine attribute and power.

¹ Lightfoot, p. 100.

20. *And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven,*

and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him,

20. The pronouns make the verse a little obscure. The corresponding nouns are as follows (R.V.): Through Him (*i.e.* Christ) to reconcile all things unto Himself (*i.e.* the Father), having made peace (*i.e.* the Father having made peace) through the blood of His (*i.e.* Christ's) Cross.

The verse is really a continuation of v. 19, and the subject of the statement is the same, viz. 'the Father.' It may be paraphrased thus: It was the Father's good pleasure to bring, through Christ, all things in earth and heaven into harmony with Himself, having willed that this peace should be secured through the blood of Christ's Cross.

having made peace, *i.e.* the Father having willed that Christ's blood should be the bringer of peace between God and His Creation. Cf.

Rom. v. 1. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

through the blood of His Cross, *i.e.* through Christ's death on the Cross. It was the death of Christ which was "the propitiation for our sins."

by Him=through Him, *i.e.* through His Son.

to reconcile all things unto Himself. Note that the sinner is reconciled to God, not God to the sinner. "It is the mind of man, not the mind of God, which must undergo a change, that a reunion may be effected." Cf. v. 21, "Enemies *in your mind*." Originally, all creation was at peace with God. Then came man's fall, and the earth was 'cursed' for his sake. It was man's fall that made 'reconciliation' necessary. God's love remained constant even when man fell.

to reconcile. This implies restoration to a state from which they had fallen, or to which they were destined (Lightfoot), viz. a state of peace and harmony with God.

all things. The neuter form in the original and the relation to the context make it doubtful whether this phrase means

- (a) all intelligent beings (angels and men);
- (b) the whole universe.

In different senses our Lord's death effects the reconciliation of all, *e.g.*

- (a) it reconciles *man*—since Christ was "the propitiation" for man's sin;
- (b) it reconciles *angels*—inasmuch as it means for them fuller revelation, and, therefore, nearer approach to God;
- (c) it reconciles *the universe*—for since the universe fell into "the bondage of corruption" when man fell—it rises with his reconciliation to God. Cf.

Rom. viii. 22. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together *until now*.

21. And you, *that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works*, yet now hath he reconciled

being in time past
in your evil works

22. In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and *unblameable and unproveable* in his sight:

without blemish

In any case St. Paul wishes to emphasize the *universality* of Christ's work of Redemption.

Chrysostom says of this verse (quoted in Speaker), "It is great 'to reconcile'; greater 'through Himself'; greater again 'through His blood'; greatest of all 'through His Cross.'"

21. **you**, *i.e.* you Gentile Colossians. The blood of the Cross reconciles you also to God—it is the one and only propitiation, and you shared in its blessings when you received Christ.

sometime, R.V. "in time past."

alienated, 'estranged,' *i.e.* from God. By their sins they had "removed themselves" from God. Cf. Eph. ii. 12 (R.V.), "separate from Christ." Eph. ii. 13 (R.V.), Ye that once were "far off" are made nigh, etc.

enemies, *i.e.* to God. Cf. Rom. viii. 7. The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Sinfulness is hostility to God, being a state of antagonism

(a) to His Nature;

(b) to His Laws.

by wicked works, R.V. 'in your evil works.' They were 'hostile' because 'alienated'; they were hostile as shown by their wicked deeds.

now, *i.e.* in this New Dispensation. The 'reconciliation' is offered 'now' to the Gentiles, especially through the preaching of St. Paul.

hath He reconciled, *i.e.* hath 'the Father' reconciled "in the body of Christ's flesh," etc.

22. **in the body of His flesh**. There seems to be a double reason for the special stress laid by St. Paul on 'body' and 'flesh.'

(a) *It thus distinguishes the natural body from the spiritual body of verse 18.*

(b) *It combats existing heresy.*

1. The general Gnostic heresy looked upon the flesh as evil.

2. The special Docetic error (elaborated later) declared that our Lord existed on earth only as a phantom.

through death, etc. These verses are second to none in putting forth the nature and office of the Incarnate Christ. They tell us:

(a) *Christ's Body was a real, human body—not a phantom.*

(b) *That His Divine Nature was not put aside—"in Him should all the fulness dwell."*

(c) *That Christ's Human Body was subject to death.*

(d) *That this Death reconciled man to God.*

23. If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven ; whereof I Paul am made a minister ;

stedfast

heard

in all creation

was made

to present, as a sacrifice is presented. Cf. Rom. xii. 1, "I beseech you . . . that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."

unblameable, R.V. without blemish.

unreproveable, *i.e.* against whom no accusation is laid.

in His sight, *i.e.* in the sight of the Father.

23. **If**. The indicative mood follows. Hence, 'If ye continue, *as I trust ye will*.'

the faith. Either

(a) *your faith*, *i.e.* belief. Cf. Rom. xi. 23, "If they abide not still in unbelief."

(b) (more probably) *the faith*, *i.e.* 'the Christian faith.'

Cf. Eph. iv. 5. One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

Cf. also Eph. iv. 14. "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," etc.

Again the Apostle is alluding to the danger threatened by the presence of heretical teachers.

grounded= 'built on a foundation.' Cf. Eph. iii. 17, "Rooted and grounded in love."

settled, because 'grounded.' Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 58, "Therefore be ye steadfast, unmoveable," etc.

not moved away=not constantly shifting (Lightfoot).

not in a chronic state of rebellion and revolution. (Speaker.)

the hope of the Gospel=the hope revealed by the Gospel, *i.e.* the hope of a Second Advent of Christ, and a Resurrection of the Body. This hope was destroyed by heresies which appeared very early in the neighbourhood of Colossae. Cf. 2 Tim. ii. 18, "Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already."

Every creature, R.V. 'in all creation.' St. Paul uses this hyperbole to emphasize

(a) *the universality of the Gospel*.

It is one constant message.

It is for every place and time.

(b) *the publicity of the Gospel*, as opposed to the secret mysteries of Gnosticism.

He may also have had in his mind the command of Christ to preach the Gospel to 'every creature' (Mk. xvi. 15).

24. *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 :

Now I
on my part that which is lacking

whereof I Paul am made a minister, R.V. "was made," viz. at his conversion, when a special commission was given him to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. (See Acts xxvi. 17.)

The thought of the universal proclamation of the one true Gospel causes the Apostle to dwell for a moment on the share he himself has had in such a glorious work.

24. **Who now rejoice**, R.V. "Now I rejoice." 'Now' is emphatic. St. Paul's outburst of rejoicing is caused by the thought of the glory of the Gospel.

rejoice in my sufferings for you. It is noticeable that 'joy in suffering' is a frequent theme of the Epistles of the Captivity. Cf.

Eph. iii. 13. I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Phil. ii. 17. If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.

fill up = fill up on my part (R.V.),

that which is behind = that which is lacking (R.V.),

the afflictions of Christ = the afflictions endured by Christ.

"The point of the Apostle's boast is that Christ, the sinless Master, should have left something for Paul, the unworthy servant, to suffer." (Lightfoot.)

Now the afflictions of Christ may be viewed in two lights:

(a) as an atoning sacrifice;

(b) as building up the Church.

As an *atoning sacrifice*, the sufferings of Christ were "a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." In this St. Paul's sufferings could have no share.

As an element, however, in the *building up of the Church*, the afflictions of Christ are supplemented by every saint and martyr, and it is from this point of view Paul's sufferings "filled up that which was lacking." Cf. 2 Cor. i. 7, "Ye are partakers of the sufferings."

In other words, Christ's afflictions

(a) left nothing lacking in their *atoning merit*;

(b) were like all other Christian afflictions in their *spiritual influence on the Church*.

Lightfoot points out that the idea of expiation or satisfaction is wholly absent from the passage. The misunderstanding of the passage has led to two opposite errors:

(a) That of many Protestant commentators who would deprive

25. Whereof I *am made* a minister, according to the *dispensation* of God which *is given* to me for you, to fulfil the word of God ;

was made
 marg. stewardship
was given

26. Even the mystery which hath been hid from *ages* and from generations, but now *is made manifest* to his saints :

all ages
hath it been manifested

27. To whom God *would* make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles ; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory :

was pleased to

“fill up” and “that which is lacking” of their proper force and meaning.

- (b) That of Romanists who, upon this passage, founded their doctrine of the merits of the saints, and its consequence, the doctrine of indulgences.

in my flesh for His body's sake. There is an intentional antithesis. The Apostle suffers in his natural body on behalf of Christ's spiritual body—the Church.

Cf. 2 Tim. ii. 10. I endure all things for the elect's sakes.

25. a **minister.** This helps to explain the previous verse. It shows that the Apostle is speaking of *edification* of the church, not *satisfaction* for sin. He is a *minister*, not a *Mediator*. (Speaker.)

the dispensation of God. Dispensation=stewardship. St. Paul was a 'minister and steward of God's mysteries'; it was his office to provide the household of God with the Word of Truth.

to fulfil the word of God, *i.e.* to proclaim the Gospel of God in all its fulness, as explained in the following verse. The whole passage should be compared carefully with the parallel passage (Eph. iii. 1-10).

26. **mystery.** The word 'mystery' in the New Testament has always the meaning given in this verse, *viz.* "a truth, long hidden, now made manifest," a truth, that is, only discoverable by revelation. The mystery itself is stated in v. 27. St. Paul borrows the term from heathen worship, but while the *heathen* 'mystery' was a secret revealed only to the select few, the *Christian* 'mystery' is freely made known to all.

hid from ages and from generations, R.V. 'all ages.'

The 'age' embraces the longer period; many 'generations' make up an 'age.' This mystery was hidden not merely from men in the remote ages, but even from the recent generations of men. Cf. Eph. iii. 9, The mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been *hid in God*.

27. God would **make known,** R.V. "God was pleased to make known."

this mystery. The mystery which is now made manifest relates to

- (a) *The admission of the Gentiles into covenant with God.*

"Christ in you," *i.e.* you Gentiles.

Cf. Eph. iii. 6, "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel."

- (b) *The nature of the blessing and privilege.*

"Christ in you," *i.e.* within you (not among you).

28. Whom we *preach, warning* every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom ; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus :
proclaim, admonishing

29. Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Cf. Eph. iii. 17. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."

the hope of glory. The hope of the Glory hereafter. This hope can only come when Christ dwells in the heart.

Cf. 1 Tim. i. 1. Our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, *Which is our hope.* It is because we "have Christ" that we also "have hope."

28. warning . . . teaching. The two great duties of the preacher are

(a) *To warn, i.e.* to convince of error, to reprove.

(b) *To teach,* or instruct in the faith.

every man . . . in all wisdom. By the repetition of the words "every" and "all" (four times used in this one verse) St. Paul emphasizes

(a) *The universality of the Gospel.* The Gnostic's creed meant a blind faith for the many, and special initiation for the few. The Gospel knows

1. no exception of persons—it is for every man ;

2. no curtailing of its message—it offers all its wisdom.

(b) *Its message for the individual hearer.* It is for *every man*—individually, not merely for the community as a whole.

Cf. Acts xx. 20, 31. I have taught you publicly, and from house to house, . . . warning every one night and day with tears.

that we may present, etc. This is the *aim* of St. Paul's warning and teaching—to present his converts "perfect in Christ."

perfect. This is possibly a term borrowed from the ancient mysteries. The man was 'perfect,' who was initiated into the mysteries, as contrasted with the mass of uninstructed converts without. In such cases only the few were 'perfect'; St. Paul's aim in connection with the Gospel was to present *every man* perfect.

29. labour . . . striving. Two words borrowed from the games,

(a) *labour* being applied to the toilsome training and preparation,

(b) *striving* (agonizing) to the actual contest in the lists.

according to his working. God's work is essential, but man must work too. The Apostle labours, and because he labours God works in him.

which worketh in me. Christ in Paul is not merely the hope of glory, but also the source of strength.

CHAPTER II.

1. For I would that ye knew *what* how greatly I strive
great conflict I have for you, and for them
 at Laodicea, and for as many as have
 not seen my face in the flesh :

2. That their hearts might be com-
 forted, *being* knit together in love, and they being
 unto all riches of the full assurance of
understanding, to the acknowledgment of understanding, that they may
the mystery of God, and of the Father, know the mystery of God,
and of Christ ; even Christ,

CHAPTER II.

1. **For** connects this verse with the statement of i. 29.

what great conflict I have, R.V. "how greatly I strive," viz.

in prayer to God (i. 3, 9),

in vehement desire (i. 9),

in his earnest warnings (i. 28),

in his teaching (i. 28),

even to bonds and suffering (i. 24).

Laodicea. See p. 30. Laodicea is twice mentioned with Colossae,— here, and in iv. 13. It is again mentioned in Rev. iii. 14 in connection with the messages to the seven churches of Asia. Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis were near one another in the valley of the Lycus in pro-consular Asia.

As many as have not seen, etc., *i.e.* "all who, *like yourselves*, have not seen," etc. (Lightfoot.) The Colossians and Laodiceans are obviously included in the phrase "as many as." Grammatically it would be possible to exclude them, and read "what conflict I have *not only* for you and for them at Laodicea, but *even* for those who have not seen," etc. The context, however, is against such a reading, and makes it almost certain that the Colossians had never seen Paul's "face in the flesh."

2. **that their hearts**, etc. The words in the A.V. rendering of this verse are not in all cases happily chosen. The Apostle's yearning has a fourfold object. He strives

(a) that their hearts may be strengthened;

(b) that they themselves (not 'their hearts') may be bound together in love;

(c) that they may enjoy the wealth of an intelligent assurance and conviction;

(d) that they may have perfect knowledge of the mystery of God (*viz. Christ*).

comforted=strengthened and confirmed, as well as encouraged.

being knit, *i.e. they themselves* being knit together.

acknowledgment, rather, as in R.V. "full knowledge."

of God and of the Father and of Christ. The MSS. differ here very much. Most commentators accept R.V., and read "the mystery of God, even Christ."

3. In whom are *hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* | all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden.

4. And this I say, lest any man should *beguile you with enticing words.* | delude you with persuasiveness of speech.

5. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

3. **in Whom are hid.** The great 'mystery of God' involves a seeming paradox. The mystery itself is "*Christ in Whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden.*" The Apostle has chosen the technical vocabulary of his adversaries. *Treasures, wisdom, knowledge, hidden*, all "have a strong Gnostic tinge." (Speaker.) The treasures of wisdom and knowledge were hidden from the outside world according to the Gnostic teaching—hidden with the initiated few. The Apostle says: "Nay, all these treasures are hidden in Christ, and because hidden in Him they cease to be hidden, since He is willing to reveal them to every earnest seeker after God."

Notice in the Epistle the various statements in which *Christ's Divinity* is implied:

- i. 14. In Whom we have redemption.
 - i. 15. Who is the Image of the invisible God.
 - i. 16. By Him were all things created . . . by Him all things consist.
 - i. 19. } In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead.
 - ii. 9. }
 - ii. 3. In Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
 - iii. 1. Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
 - iii. 4. Christ Who is our life.
- Etc.

4. **beguile you with enticing words.** Notice R.V. "persuasiveness of speech," *i.e.* specious, plausible reasoning.

The Apostle is anxious lest the Colossians should be led astray by the enticing and plausible sophistries which were already existent, and which later on, in fully-developed Gnosticism, became a fine art.

He gives the same warning more than once. Cf.

- ii. 8. Beware lest any man spoil you with philosophy and vain deceit.
- ii. 18. Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, etc.
- ii. 23. Which things have indeed a *show of wisdom*, etc.

5. **yet am I with you in the spirit.** Two interpretations have been suggested of the last three words:

- (a) *in the Apostle's own spirit or mind.* Absent in flesh, he still has them ever present in his thoughts. Cf. 1 Cor. v. 3.
- (b) *in the power of the Holy Spirit.* God gives him a spiritual knowledge of them, even while himself so far away. Cf. 2 Kings v. 26.

The former is much the more probable.

6. As ye *have therefore received* Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him : therefore received -

7. Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in *the faith*, as ye *have been taught*, abounding *therein* with thanksgiving. your faith, were taught, omit

joying and beholding. Joy causes him to dwell in contemplation.

your order and the stedfastness of your faith. St. Paul uses two military terms ;

order = military order, organization,

stedfastness = solid strength, the solidity of the phalanx.

He rejoices to find this little spiritual army in Colossae so well *organized*, and with such *solid strength*.

The use of technical terms may well have been suggested by the conditions of the Apostle's imprisonment. He was under military guard in imperial Rome. In the companion Epistle to the Ephesians, the Christian soldier's equipment is compared in detail with the Roman soldier's armour.

6. **As ye have therefore received,** R.V. "as therefore ye received," *i.e.* at your conversion.

Christ Jesus. The Apostle says "Christ" rather than "the Gospel," because the central point in the Colossian heresy was the subversion of the true idea of the Christ. (Lightfoot.)

The Colossians received

not merely (a) The doctrine of Christ,

but (b) Christ Himself.

so walk . . . rooted . . . built up. St. Paul uses three figures with regard to the Christian, viz. the path, the tree or plant, and the building.

(a) He is to *walk* in Christ—since Christ is the Way.

(b) He is to be *rooted* or grafted in Christ—as a branch has living union with the vine, or perhaps as a tree is firmly rooted in the earth.

(c) He is to be continually *buildded up* in Christ—since Christ is the living Corner Stone.

7. **rooted . . . built up . . . strengthened.** The tenses are different: 'rooted' is a perfect participle, 'built up' and 'strengthened' are present.

They are to be rooted *once for all*, but there is to be a *continual process* of building up and strengthening.

built up in Him. Christ is here represented not as the foundation, but as the 'binding element,' the Corner Stone holding the building firmly together. Cf.

Col. i. 17 (R.V.). In Him all things consist. (Marg. 'hold together.')

Eph. ii. 20. Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone,

8. Beware lest any man *spoil you* maketh spoil of you through
through philosophy and vain deceit, after his philosophy
the tradition of men, after the *rudiments* *margin.* elements
of the world, and not after Christ.

as ye have been taught. Probably by Epaphras. See p. 25.

abounding = overflowing.

with thanksgiving. The Apostle urges very strongly throughout the Epistle the duty of giving thanks to God. Cf.

- i. 12. Giving thanks unto the Father.
- ii. 7. Abounding therein with thanksgiving.
- iii. 15. Be ye thankful.
- iii. 17. Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.
- iv. 2. Watch in the same with thanksgiving.

Lightfoot notices that in several cases the exhortation assumes special prominence by being made a sort of refrain.

8. spoil you. Not (a) despoil you,
but (b) carry you off as spoil; make you his prey.

In other words, you belong to the kingdom of Christ which is a kingdom of liberty; beware lest you are carried away by these false teachers into a slavery even worse than that from which you were formerly rescued.

philosophy, R.V. "his philosophy." The "philosophy" of the Greeks was the search for knowledge (*philosophia* = a love of wisdom), at first noble in its aims, in later times mere profitless speculation.

St. Paul does not condemn *all* philosophy, but he says Christianity is not primarily a philosophy. Even the highest triumphs of the human intellect are valueless as compared with "the wisdom of God."

These heretics, he would add, seek by *their specious arguments and theories* to carry you away as spoil.

and vain deceit, rather, "which is a vain deceit." The Apostle condemns the philosophy which threatens Colossae on many grounds:

- (a) It is a *vain deceit*—empty, misleading.
- (b) It is *traditional*—and therefore unsatisfactory.
- (c) It is *of men*—the Gospel is of God.
- (d) It is *rudimentary*—the Christian aims at perfect manhood.
- (e) It is *of the world*—the Gospel is spiritual. Finally,
- (f) It is *not of Christ*—The Gospel's message is "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

the tradition of men. The 'tradition' was the teaching handed on from man to man, in contrast to the written doctrine contained in the Revealed Word of God. The word is used

- (a) of the Pharisaic additions to the Law (Mk. vii. 3);
- (b) of true Gospel teaching communicated and preserved orally (1 Cor. xi. 2, R.V.).

9. For in him dwelleth all the fulness
of the Godhead bodily.

St. Paul does not condemn *all* traditional teaching, but merely such as was of purely human origin. The Christian revelation was not *merely* traditional in any case, but the traditions of these false teachers, whether Judaic or Gnostic, was entirely of man's inventing, and therefore stood self-condemned.

the rudiments = the elements. (Cf. Gal. iv. 9, "beggarly elements.") Elementary discipline is fit for children; as children advance to manhood, the rudiments may be set aside. So in the history of the world. Before Christ came there were elementary ordinances, such as circumcision, sacrifice, suited to the age. Now, however, the time for these had passed. The Colossians must beware lest, having attained to manhood in Christ, they should go back to the elements of a spiritual childhood.

9. **For in Him.** St. Paul proceeds to show the two great characteristics of the teaching which *is* "after Christ."

(a) Its source is Divine (vv. 9-10).

(b) It is a Gospel of liberty and holiness (vv. 11 onwards).

in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (See note on i. 19.) This is one of the most striking verses in the New Testament, condensing into a few words the whole doctrine of the Incarnation. Every word tells.

<i>In Him</i>	= In Christ, not in a series of angelic beings,
<i>dwelleth</i>	= has its permanent abode,
<i>all</i>	= for it is not given "by measure" to Him,
<i>the fulness of</i>	} = { this <i>pleroma</i> which your seducers affirm to be
<i>the Godhead</i>	
<i>bodily</i>	= bodily wise, <i>i.e.</i> incarnate, Christ having taken man's nature upon Him.

The verse at once declares Christ's perfect Godhead and His perfect Manhood.

As corroborative proof of His *perfect Godhead*, cf.

John x. 30. I and My Father are one.

Col. i. 15. Who is the image of the invisible God. Cf. also Nicene Creed. Of one Substance with the Father.

As corroborative proof of His *perfect Manhood*, cf.

John i. 14. The Word was made flesh.

Col. i. 22. In the body of His flesh through death. Cf. also Nicene Creed. And was made man.

The later Gnostics, and probably these earlier ones also, assumed human flesh to be essentially evil, and to them, therefore, the thought of

10. And *ye are complete in him*, which in him ye are made full
is the head of all principality and power :

11. In whom also *ye are* circumcised were
with the circumcision made without
hands, in putting off the body *of the sins* of the flesh, in
of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ :

our Lord having a real human body was repellent. The Apostle shows that our Lord had a real body, but *in it abode the fulness of the Godhead.*

10. **ye are complete in Him.** Notice R.V. "in Him ye are made full," which brings out the idea of the passage much more strongly.

Cf. John i. 16. Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

All can be filled from His fulness, which, being infinite in supply, can know no diminution. To be "in Him" is to be a partaker of His fulness.

ye are complete, i.e. all you Colossian Christians. It is not an initiated few who are to enjoy the blessings which spring from the Divine fulness (pleroma)—such blessings are offered to all.

which is, i.e. Who is, referring to Christ.

the head, and therefore

(a) superior to all,

(b) Lord of all.

all principality and power. All these intermediate agencies which false teachers would place between God and man, are, if they exist at all, inferior to Christ. See note on i. 16.

11. **In Whom also ye are circumcised,** R.V. "were circumcised," *i.e.* (as the next verse shows) at Holy Baptism.

The mention of circumcision shows that the Colossian heresy was a mixture of what was Judaic with what was an early form of Gnosticism.

It should be noticed, however, that in the other Epistles of the captivity, similar distinction is drawn between the old legal circumcision and the spiritual circumcision of the New Covenant. Cf. Eph. ii. 11, Phil. iii. 3.

made without hands. This phrase in the N.T. is equivalent to heavenly, real, and spiritual, as opposed to what is earthly, symbolical, and carnal.

body of the sins of the flesh, rather "body of the flesh," as in all the best MSS.

What is here called the "body of the flesh" is elsewhere called:

the old man (Col. iii. 9);

the body of sin (Rom. vi. 6);

the body of death (Rom. vii. 24).—(Barry.)

It is "the body with its sinful affections and lusts." The body in itself is not vile; indeed it was assumed for a permanent abode by Christ Himself (v. 9). But it is our sinful fleshly nature that needs to be "put off," *i.e.* the flesh in so far as it rebels against the spirit.

12. *Buried* with him in baptism,
wherein also ye *are risen* with him
through *the faith of the operation of God,*
who hath raised him from the dead.

having been buried
were raised
faith in the working of God,
who raised

the body of the flesh. The old legal rite of Circumcision meant the cutting off a part of one member of the body. Spiritual Circumcision requires the putting off of the whole carnal nature, even as the whole body is submerged in Baptism.

the circumcision of Christ, i.e.

not (a) the circumcision Christ underwent in infancy,

but (b) the circumcision which is in its nature "of Christ."

In this verse the Apostle shows the superiority of this later circumcision over the earlier legal rite in three respects:

(a) *It is spiritual*—made without hands.

(b) *It puts off the whole carnal nature*—not a part only of the outward body.

(c) *It is of Christ*—not of Abraham or of Moses.

"Man's nature, however, craves for an external and visible symbol." This we have in Holy Baptism (see v. 12), which is a *sacrament, i.e.* 'an outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace.' Both Circumcision and Baptism admitted to covenant with God, but whereas

Circumcision was a covenant of the letter,

Baptism is a covenant of the spirit.

12. **Buried with Him.** In consequence of our union with Christ, "what is done or suffered by Him *historically*, is done in us *analogously* and *mystically* now, and will be completed *historically* and *actually* hereafter." (Speaker.) So we are crucified, buried, dead, risen, ascended with Christ. Cf. iii. 1, iii. 4.

Buried with Him in baptism, etc. For a valuable comment on this verse, see Romans vi.

Baptism (the Spiritual Circumcision of the New Dispensation) is fitly represented under the figure of Christ's Death and Resurrection.

(a) *In its outward sign.* The submerging of the body in the Baptismal waters is a figure of death and burial; the re-appearance represents a rising again to newness of life.

(b) *In its inward, spiritual grace.* Being united to Christ in His Death, we obtain the blessing which Christ died to bring, viz. "forgiveness of sins"; being united to Him in His Resurrection, we commence a "new spiritual life."

Hence the inward grace of Baptism is "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness."

through the faith of the operation of God, etc., R.V. "through faith in the working of God." Faith in the Resurrection of Christ secures the blessings that Resurrection was intended to convey. Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 17. Notice that "Faith" is required of persons to be baptized.

13. And you, being dead *in your sins* through your trespasses
 and the uncircumcision of your flesh, *hath he quickened* together with him, did he quicken
 having forgiven *you* all trespasses; us

14. *Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances* that was against us, which having blotted out the bond
 was contrary to us, and took it out of written in ordinances (*marg.*
 the way, nailing it to his cross; the bond that was against us
 by its ordinances)

13. **You being dead in your sins.** The Apostle proceeds to explain more fully the Sacramental Grace of Baptism, more especially as it applied to the Gentiles.

Their former condition was that of

(a) Death unto sin.

(b) Alienation from God. (Uncircumcision.)

The change for them meant

(a) A quickening into life (v. 13).

(b) The forgiveness of sins (v. 13).

(c) The cancelling of their debt to God (v. 14).

(d) Nay, more, the total destruction of the bond which was against them (v. 14).

you being dead, *i.e.* you Gentiles being dead.

in your sins, *i.e.* by reason of your sins. Notice R.V.

the uncircumcision of your flesh, *i.e.* your carnal nature which prompts to sin—"the external fact being symbolical of the unregenerate, carnal mind."

Cf. Eph. ii. 11. **Ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh**, who are called **Uncircumcision** by that which is called the **Circumcision in the flesh made by hands**, etc.

hath He quickened together with Him = hath *God* quickened together with *Christ*.

quicken = to give life to.

forgiving you, rather, "forgiving us." The Apostle claims his share.

all trespasses. Notice the universality of the forgiveness.

14. **blotting out**, etc. In this grand verse a new and striking figure is introduced. The sinner in his unregenerate state is represented as having signed his name to a bill or bond which he cannot discharge. This bond is the obligation to fulfil the requirements of the Law; such fulfilment is, however, impossible, for "all have sinned," and "the soul that sinneth shall die." Christ, however, has, once for all, cancelled the bond. He first erased our name so that we no longer stood under its obligation. He then destroyed the bond wholly by nailing it to the Cross whereon He suffered.

Several words and phrases need comment:

blotting out = erasing, as writing was erased from the wax tablet.

the handwriting = our signature, probably denoting the consent of our conscience that such an obligation was ours.

15. And *having spoiled principalities* and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

having put off from himself the principalities (*marg.* having put off from himself his body, he made a show of the principalities)

of ordinances, R.V. "written in ordinances," viz.:

- (a) the old Mosaic law of ordinances,
- (b) all precepts commanding right conduct.

Another interpretation was suggested by the Greek commentators, who referred the word to "Gospel" precepts, and paraphrased "blotting out the handwriting which was against us by His ordinances."

against us . . . contrary to us. That is, not only was it

- (a) a bond, legally valid against us; but also
- (b) actively hostile to us.

took it out of the way = destroyed it, removed it altogether.

nailing it, etc. It has been suggested that an old custom may be alluded to here, viz. that of cancelling a bond by driving a nail through it and posting it in a public place. This is doubtful. Our Lord, however, discharged our debt by His death on the Cross. He "redeemed us from the curse of the Law."

15. **having spoiled, etc.** This is one of the most difficult verses in the Epistle. The general tone is clear enough; it is a glorious rejoicing over Christ's triumph against the powers of darkness. There is no corresponding passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians. The chief difficulty is in the opening participle, rendered "having spoiled." This is certainly not its meaning. It occurs again in iii. 9, where it is rendered "put off," and that is in all probability its meaning here. Two interpretations are suggested:

- (a) *Having put off His body*, He made a show of principalities and powers.
- (b) *Having put off from Himself principalities and powers*, He made a show of them, etc.

The latter is much more likely. The powers of evil are represented as assailing our Lord, or as encumbering Him like poisonous garments, and they were finally *put off* in the great victory of the Cross.

He made a show of them openly. "He *displayed* them as a victor displays his captives or trophies in triumphal procession." (Lightfoot.)

openly, rather, "boldly," "confidently."

triumphing over them in it, leading them in triumph. "The defeated powers of evil are led in public, chained to the triumphal car of Christ." (Lightfoot.)

in it = "in the Cross." So the symbol of shame becomes Christ's and the Christian's greatest glory. The hour of death becomes the hour of greatest triumph.

16. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of *an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days*:

a feast-day or a new moon or a sabbath day:

17. Which are a shadow of *things* to come; but the body is of *Christ*.

the things
Christ's.

18. Let no man *beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility* and worshipping of angels, *intruding into those things which he hath not seen*, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility (*marg. of his own mere will, by humility*) dwelling in the things which he hath seen (*marg. many authorities insert not*)

v. 16-17. The Apostle warns them against two grave practical errors :

(a) *Rigid asceticism.*

(b) *Undue attention to ritual observances.*

Each of these is Judaic in character. Later on, in verse 18, he warns them against an error which is Gnostic in character.

judge you = take you to task, call you to account.

in meat, or in drink, *i.e.* with regard to what you eat and drink, —how far you fail to practise the abstinence they deem essential.

Lightfoot draws attention to the fact that the Jewish prohibitions were mainly with respect to *eating*; that the prohibitions with regard to *drinking* were few in number, the Nazarite vow being one of them. He suggests that these Colossian heretics had probably gone much further, forbidding wine and animal food altogether.

Abstinence may often be of great value to an individual Christian, but to look upon it as having a universal saving efficacy is to put one's self into bondage, whereas the Gospel is a gospel of liberty.

an holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days, the various Jewish festivals.

Holy-day } = one of the *annual* feasts, as the Passover.
(R.V. feast day)

new moon = one of the *monthly* festivals.

Sabbath = the *weekly* holy-day.

17. which are a shadow. These various appointed days served a distinct purpose in the old legal Dispensation. Under that Dispensation everything was a shadow of what was to come in the fulness of time.

It was a shadow in a double sense :

(a) *It foreshadowed*, coming before and typifying the substance.

(b) *It was itself unreal, shadowy, unsubstantial*, as contrasted with the real body which was of Christ.

This double meaning is brought out in Heb. x. i. "The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things," etc.

Under the New Dispensation this purpose has vanished. Holy-days may be a very valuable aid to worship and devotion, but care must be taken not to assign to them an importance which was theirs only under the old condition of things. Cf. Our Lord's words (Mk. ii. 27), "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

18. Let no man beguile you of your reward, R.V. "Let no man rob you of your prize." The figure is that of the stadium, the phrase being used of an attempt to rob the athlete of his merited prize. The Colossians had begun well—they were in a fair way of winning an eternal reward—

19. And not *holding* the Head, from which all the body *by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together*, increaseth with the increase of God.

holding fast
being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands,

let them beware lest in listening to these false teachers they suffered the prize to slip from their grasp.

in a voluntary humility, lit. "willing in humility," *i.e.* "taking delight in humility."

Humility is a pagan vice, but a Christian virtue. In this passage only (including verse 23) in the N.T. is it spoken of disparagingly. And here it is not a *real* humility which is condemned, it is the *affected, paraded* humility which was connected with the false theology of the heretical teachers at Colossae.

Another translation is given in the R.V. margin, *viz.* "of his own mere will, by humility," but the A.V. and R.V. rendering is preferable.

worshipping of angels. This false humility was shown in their wild theories with regard to angelic orders.

"Man," they said, "was too vile to have any direct contact with God. Hence the need for successive orders of beings intermediate between God and man."

If the Colossian yielded to this he was robbed of his prize, since the great mystery of the Gospel was "Christ in you the hope of glory,"—Christ—the one Mediator, Himself both God and man.

intruding into, R.V. "dwelling in." Marg. "taking his stand upon." Lightfoot, "invading."

those things which he hath not seen. The reading is somewhat doubtful; the oldest MSS. have not the negative. We have therefore:

(a) *R.V., the things which he hath seen*, the explanation of the whole phrase then being, "parading or poring over his visions."

(b) *A.V. and R.V. marg., the things which he hath not seen.* This makes good sense, but does not agree with the best manuscripts.

vainly puffed up. His "humility," therefore, is an affected humility; it is pride aping humility.

in his fleshly mind, R.V. "by." His mind is carnal, and "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh" (Rom. viii. 5).

19. **not holding the Head**, etc. Notice carefully the R.V. alteration. The Apostle is now stating the Gnostical position negatively. Their teaching is fatal not only in what they accept, but in what they reject. They worship inferior agencies—they reject the Head. The figure used is that of the human body, receiving, through its various channels of communication, life and energy from the Head. The following table may make it clear:

19 (<i>Repeated</i>). And not <i>holding</i> the Head, from which all the body <i>by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together</i> , increaseth with the increase of God.	holding fast being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands,
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In the human body,	In the Church,
(a) The head is the source of energy;	(a) Christ is the source of life and power;
(b) The joints (articulations) and bands (ligaments)	(b) The mutual relationship of the members to one another and their relation to Christ
are the means of securing for the body	are the means of securing for the Church
1. nourishment,	1. Spiritual nourishment —the supply of life and energy from the Spiritual Head,
2. unity and compactness;	2. unity and order as a Church;
(c) The final result being growth.	(c) The result being that it increaseth with the increase of God.

We may notice further :

- (a) *Connection with v. 18.* Since the union of Christ and the Church is so close and real that the Church's very life depends on that union, there is no place for angels in between. And since Christ is God, they cannot come between Christ and God. Hence as mediatorial agents they have no place, and the whole Gnostical position breaks down. Angels have, of course, a real existence (Mat. xviii. 10), and a real and valuable office (Heb. i. 14), but Christ is the one Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. ii. 5).
- (b) *Contrast with corresponding passage in Ephesians.* In Eph. iv. 15, 16, "The Head, even Christ: from Whom the whole body," etc., attention is chiefly directed to "unity of the various members of the Church." In Colossians the chief point is "the life-giving union with the Head."

A few verbal notes on the verse may be added.

Holding, R.V. "holding fast."

the Head, from Which, lit. "the Head from Whom." The Gk. word for 'head' is feminine, the pronoun is masculine. It is clear, therefore, that 'the Head' is the title of a person, *i.e.* of Christ.

joints and bands, "the junctures and ligaments," (Lightfoot.) The elements of union are twofold :

- (a) the relation of contiguous surfaces,
 (b) the attachment of the several parts.

20. Wherefore if ye *be dead* with Christ from the *rudiments* of the world, why, as though living in the world, *are ye subject* to ordinances,

died
margin. elements
do ye subject yourselves

having nourishment ministered, and knit together, the two conditions necessary for the body's life and growth, viz. :

- (a) nutrition,
- (b) organic unity.

These two are supplied by the joints and bands.

increase of God, *i.e.* the increase

- (a) which God gives,
- (b) which brings into closer union with God.

Lightfoot draws attention to the interesting fact that, when St. Paul wrote this verse, which, although nearly two thousand years old, stands the test of modern physiological discoveries, he had for his companion "Luke, the beloved physician" (Col. iv. 14).

20. If ye be dead, R.V. "If ye died," *i.e.* at Baptism. This is another instance in which the sense has been lost by the incorrect insertion in the A.V. of a perfect tense. Amongst other similar inaccuracies may be mentioned :

- i. 12. The Father Which hath made us meet . . . Who hath delivered us . . . and hath translated us, etc.
R.V. Who made us, delivered us, translated us, etc.
- ii. 6. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus. . . .
R.V. As therefore ye received, etc.
- iii. 1. If ye then be risen with Christ.
R.V. If ye were raised, etc.
- iii. 3. For ye are dead and your life is hid, etc.
R.V. For ye died, etc.

In all cases referring to a definite past act. (See note on i. 12, "hath made.")

dead. The Apostle enters upon a new section, and begins to treat of great principles of action. They spiritually 'died' and 'rose again' with Christ at Baptism (v. 12). Let them learn what that 'death' and 'resurrection' should mean.

And first, *death*, which for them should have had a double signification :

- (a) *Inwardly*, "a death unto sin."
- (b) *Outwardly*, "a death to the old state of things," to the whole Mosaic system, and indeed to any other worldly system under which they had lived.

If, therefore, they are still the slaves of ordinances, they need never have died to the world. They are still *of* the world, even though they are not professedly *in* it.

What these ordinances were is shown to some extent in vv. 21-23.

21. (*Touch not; taste not; handle not;* Handle not, nor taste, nor touch

22. *Which* all are to perish with the using;) after the *commandments* and doctrines of men? which things precepts

In so far as they were *Mosaic*, they were *obsolete*, and had been superseded.

In so far as they belonged to the "*philosophy*" of v. 8, they were *vexatious inventions* of men.

rudiments, elements (Gal. iv. 9, 'beggarly elements'). See note on v. 8. So far as these ordinances had once been enjoined, they belonged to the elementary discipline of the world. So far as they were entirely unwarrantable, they were also unfit for those aiming at Christian manhood.

as though living in the world, *i.e.* as though you had never died to outward things in your baptism.

subject to ordinances, R.V. "Why . . . do ye subject yourselves to ordinances?"

Lightfoot. Why are ye overridden with precepts, ordinances?

21. Touch not; taste not; handle not, R.V. "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch." This agrees better with the slight difference of meaning between the first and third Greek verbs.

It shows, moreover, that the prohibitions are in an ascending scale as regards strictness. "The rule becomes minuter as the superstition becomes intenser." (Speaker.)

The words, of course, are the words of *the false teachers* (whether Judaistic or Gnostical or both), and are *quoted by St. Paul* merely for the purpose of condemning them.

The idea underlying the prohibitions was that of the defilement which arose from contact with impure things. (Cf. Mk. vii. 4, "When they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not" for fear, that is, lest they should have touched something unclean.)

22. Which all are to perish with the using. Notice the altered brackets in the R.V. It is a little doubtful whether these words are

(a) *a continuation of the quotation of v. 21.* In this case the phrase would be better rendered "which all tend to spiritual corruption by their abuse";

or (b) *St. Paul's parenthetical comment on the quotation.* This is much more probable. "All these rigid prohibitions," he would say, "to which you attach a saving efficacy, simply concerns *perishable* things, which disappear as soon as you have used them." The same idea is contained in

1 Cor. vi. 13. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them.

23. Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and *neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.*

severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.

Mk. vii. 15, 19. "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him, . . . because it . . . goeth out into the draught," etc. (*i.e.* perisheth).

after the commandments and doctrines of men. Whether these precepts were issued by Judaizing or Gnostical teachers, they were "of men," for

- (a) if *Gnostical*, they were mere human inventions;
- (b) if *Jewish*, they were also "of men," for though ordained in the first instance by God, man was now free from this elementary discipline.

The Apostle clearly has in mind our Lord's quotation (Mk. vii. 7) of Isaiah xxix. 13, since he makes the same use of the passage as Christ did, arguing against these vexatious prohibitions on the ground

- (a) that meats are *perishable*;
- (b) that these things are *indifferent in themselves*.

23. For explanation of this difficult passage, see Analysis, p. 41. Notice also carefully the R.V. The *main idea* (omitting the three special characteristics of this show of wisdom) may be thus paraphrased:

Precepts such as these may carry with them the appearance of wisdom, but they are not of any real value in checking indulgence of the flesh.

Which things, *i.e.* precepts such as these.

have a show of wisdom = pass as wisdom, have a reputation for wisdom (lit. having a word or talk of wisdom). There is much that is plausible in this false teaching, but it all lacks reality.

- (a) *There is an officious parade of devotion—will worship, . . . but it ends in parade.*
- (b) *There is an affectation of humility . . . but it is not genuine.*
- (c) *There is great severity practised on the body, . . . but more than this is wanted if we would overcome the evil tendencies of our fleshly nature.*

will worship, R.V. "will-worship" with hyphen, a compound noun denoting "self-imposed service."

humility. See note on v. 18. In this verse the context gives the word a bad meaning, "paraded, unreal humility."

neglecting of the body, lit. "unsparing of the body." Hence, R.V. "severity to the body."

not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. The R.V. and A.V. differ entirely here, and represent two great classes of interpretation of an extremely difficult passage;

- (a) **A.V.** (as above) = "not holding the body in any honour to

CHAPTER III.

1. If ye then *be risen* with Christ, seek those things which are above, *where Christ sitteth* on the right hand of God. were raised together where Christ is, seated

satisfy its reasonable wants," *i.e.* carrying their severe treatment of the body so far as to fail to consider worthy of attention even its reasonable natural cravings.

- (*b*) R.V. "not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh," *i.e.* the 'show of wisdom' is merely 'show'; practices such as these have no real value in checking fleshly indulgence, or remedying fleshly weakness.

CHAPTER III.

1-4. The Apostle now looks upon the matter from the other point of view. The sealing of their faith in Holy Baptism meant not only the sharing of Christ's death, but the partaking of His resurrection—**They rose with Christ**. Let them live as men can only live who have risen with Christ. No need for a thousand and one ascetic restrictions, or rules for guidance. Let them remember the one great fact of their lives that *they rose with Christ*, and this will decide their every action.

Notice the number of times the Apostle appeals to the fact of this rising again, and the several associated lessons:

- (*a*) *It was symbolized and sealed in Baptism* (ii. 12).
 (*b*) *It was the work of God the Father, Who raised Christ* (ii. 13).
 (*c*) *It was meaningless unless it had been followed by a new life* (iii. 1).
 (*d*) *It would be followed by a more glorious resurrection hereafter* (iii. 4).

1. **If ye then be risen with**, R.V. "were raised together with," alluding to their acceptance of Christ in Holy Baptism.

St. Paul takes it for granted all were raised then. He advises them to continue in "the state of salvation" to which they were called in Baptism. The A.V. is a little misleading. It would imply that they were *still* in a risen state. This does not necessarily follow.

Seek those things . . . Set your affection. "You must not only seek heaven, you must *think* heaven." (Lightfoot.) Aim at celestial things, be heavenly-minded.

Cf. the language of our Ascension Day Collect—" . . . we may also in heart and mind thither ascend," etc.

where Christ sitteth. Notice how frequently the name of Christ is used, as though once the Apostle had established the claim of Christ to individual worship as our great Mediator, he gloried in the using of His Holy Name.

2. Set your *affection* on things above, mind
not on things on the earth.

3. For ye *are dead*, and your life is died
hid with Christ in God.

4. When Christ, who is our life, shall
appear, then shall ye also *appear* with be manifested
him in glory.

sitteth, etc. The original is here more forcible (see R. V.), viz. "Where Christ *is*, seated on the right hand of God." Three ideas are involved in this Article of our Creed:

- (a) That of an accomplished work (Heb. x. 12).
- (b) That of Divine Sovereignty (1 Peter iii. 22).
- (c) That of intercession for us (Rom. viii. 34).

2. **Set your affection**—not your "affections," but your "mind," or "thoughts." Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. "Catch the spirit of the things above, being heavenly-minded." (Barry.)

not on things on the earth. A Christian has, of course, earthly duties, and he has a right to enjoy innocent earthly pleasures. But while he does duty faithfully, and finds delight in what God gives to make life happy, his aims and thoughts centre in heaven.

"To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven."

3. **ye are dead**, lit., as in R. V., "ye died," *i.e.* at Baptism.

your life is hid, "in the double sense of *safety* and *concealment*" (Cambridge Bible), here more especially the latter.

Lightfoot beautifully paraphrases: "When you sank under the baptismal water, you disappeared for ever to the world. You rose again, it is true, but you rose only to God. The world henceforth knows nothing of your new life, and (as a consequence) your new life must know nothing of the world."

with Christ. This has been shown in ii. 19. Just as the body by means of "joints and bands" shares the life of the head, so the Church, and each living member of the Church, is in vital union with Christ, its Divine Head.

in God, Who is the source of Life.

4. **Christ Who is our Life.** The Apostle goes a step further. Not only is our life hid *with Christ*, **Christ is Himself our Life.**

Cf. Phil. i. 21. To me to live is Christ.

John xi. 25. I am the Resurrection and the Life.

Notice the teaching of the Bible with regard to the Blessed Trinity:

- (a) **The Father** is the ultimate Source of Life. Cf. John v. 26, As the Father hath life in Himself; so *hath He given to the Son* to have life in Himself.
- (b) **The Son** is the Life. John i. 4, In Him was life. (See also above: "I am . . . the Life.")
- (c) **The Holy Spirit** is the Person Who brings this Life to man. He is "the Giver of Life." (Nicene Creed.)

5. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, *inordinate affection, evil concupiscence*, and covetousness, which is idolatry : passion, evil desire

shall appear, *i.e.* at His Second Coming.

then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. The highest hope as it is the chief reward of the Christian, is to see Christ face to face, and to reign with Him in glory. Cf.

1 John iii. 2, 3. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him *purifieth himself, even as He is pure.*"

Notice that the Johannine and Pauline lesson is the same.—If Christ is really in you, the hope of glory, then "purify yourselves, even as He is pure."

5. The practical warnings which begin here still keep up the idea of death and new life with Christ. "Death" is made use of here, "Life" in verse 12.

Mortify, *i.e.* kill. This is the only passage where we are told to "kill" what is within us.

therefore, *i.e.* because you have died to the world. If you really died to the world when you put on Christ, then all that is in you which belongs to the world must be pitilessly slain—you must "die daily."

your members, *i.e.* in so far as they are the servants or the instigators of sin. There are two principal suggested interpretations:

- (a) *The members are identified with the sins they serve.* The members in themselves are not condemned—they may serve good or bad ends. Cf. Matt. v. 29, *If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, etc.*
- (b) *Sin is represented as a body, of which the various sinful acts and habits are members.*

The general meaning, however, is perfectly clear,—“Kill whatever within you is base and vile.” Cf.

Gal. v. 24. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

which are upon the earth, which keep one chained down to the earth. Your affection should be "on things above."

fornication, etc. In every case where St. Paul enumerates the sins which specially incur the wrath of God, he commences with sins of impurity, probably because

- (a) they were the most frequent vices of the age,
- (b) they are the most insidious in every age,
- (c) they are the most deadly in their effect on the whole spiritual life.

So our Litany speaks of "fornication and all other *deadly sin.*"

6. For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh *on the children of disobedience* ; *marg. omit*

7. In the which ye also walked *some-time*, when ye lived in *them*. *aforetime these things*

8. But now ye also put off all these ; anger, wrath, malice, *blasphemy, filthy communication* out of your mouth. *railing, shameful speaking*

fornication—uncleanness. The second is the more general; it includes every action which violates the law of purity.

inordinate affection . . . evil concupiscence. Notice R.V. The first term is *passive*, it is the response to impressions from without. The second is *active*, it is the desire arising from our own evil nature. The same distinction is shown in the phrase "affections and lusts" (Gal. v. 24).

Covetousness which is idolatry. Covetousness (in its ordinary sense) is idolatry, since "the covetous man sets up another object of worship besides God." (Lightfoot.) Cf. our Saviour's words, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

The same idea is present in the Epistle to the Ephesians (v. 5), "nor covetous man, who is an idolater."

6. **the wrath of God, God's anger against sin.**

cometh = 'is coming,' *i.e.*

(a) now, in this present time;

(b) at the great Day of Judgment.

on the children of disobedience, *i.e.* on those who sin wilfully.

Some ancient manuscripts omit this phrase, which was possibly introduced from the parallel passage in Ephesians (Eph. v. 6).

7. **in the which.** Either

(a) *in the which things,* *i.e.* the state of things which incurred the wrath of God;

or (b) *amongst whom* (R.V. marg.), *i.e.* amongst the children of disobedience.

walked . . . when ye lived in them. The two verbs denote

(a) their actual behaviour and practice—"walked."

(b) the conditions of their life and surroundings—"lived."

sometime, R.V. "aforetime" = in times past.

8. **But now,** *i.e.* now that ye have put on Christ. All these vices belong to the unregenerate life.

ye also put off, R.V. "Put ye also away." The verb is imperative.

all these, not merely the vices enumerated in v. 5, but all the things "for whose sake the wrath of God comes," etc.

anger, wrath, etc. See Analysis, p. 42.

Anger is the chronic settled feeling of hatred,

wrath is the sudden outburst of passion,

malice is the evil nature which finds pleasure in doing harm to others—malignity. (Lightfoot.)

9. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds ;

10. And have put on the new man, which is *renewed in knowledge* after the image of him that created him :

being renewed unto knowledge

blasphemy, R.V. "railing." In Eph. iv. 31 the same Greek word is rendered "evil-speaking."

The word blasphemy is used in two senses:

- (a) (as here) railing, evil-speaking generally,
- (b) (a later use) evil-speaking against God.

filthy-communication. Lightfoot would translate "*foul-mouthed abuse*," since the word is used in two senses, both of which suit the passage, viz.

- (a) *Filthy-talking*;
- (b) *Abusive language*.

The R.V. renders "shameful speaking."

9. **Lie not one to another.** "Lying is directly forbidden in the Apostolic Epp. only here and in the parallel passage (Eph. iv. 25). The very infrequency of absolute prohibition shows that truth was an instinct of the new spiritual life." (Speaker.)

ye have put off the old man. The "old man" is the "old unregenerate nature" which was sacramentally "put off" at Baptism. Cf.

- (a) "First that I should renounce the devil and all his works," etc. (Catechism.)
- (b) "Grant that the Old Adam in these children may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in them." (Bapt. Serv.)

10. **put on the new man.** Either

- (a) (most probably) *the new regenerate nature* formed after Christ;
- or (b) *Christ Himself*—the Second Adam. See Gal. iii. 27, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

The new man, which is being renewed. The young life, which commenced when the old man was put off, is perpetually being renewed; there must be no stagnation, but perpetual approach to the image of God. The word "new" in Eph. iv. 24 ("the new man") is a different Greek word.

- 'New' in Col. iii. 10=new, in the sense of *young*;
- 'new' in Eph. iv. 24=new, in the sense of *fresh*.

Both ideas are present in the verse before us, since the second is the force in the derived verb "renewed."

unto knowledge = "perfect knowledge" in Christ, not the so-called "gnosis" of false teachers.

after the image of Him that created him. In the original creation of the world man was formed after the image of God. Even so, in the regenerate life, there must be a constant refashioning after the image of the Creator.

11. Where there *is neither Greek nor Jew*, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free : but Christ is all, and in all. cannot be Greek and Jew

the image of Him, *i.e.* of God the Father. The parallel is here drawn with Gen. i. 27, "God created man in His own image."

where, *i.e.* either in the regenerate life or in Christ.

II. Where there is neither, etc. All distinctions of race, of ceremonial, of intellect, of caste break down before Christ and Christianity. There is no "privileged few," as the Gnostic might have said; there is no "specially favoured race" as in the old Mosaic dispensation; whatever a man's condition may be of birth, of environment, of personal gifts, of social standing, it makes no difference in regard to his position before God. The Gospel recognizes none of these accidental or artificial distinctions; Christ has destroyed them all—in Him all are brothers.

Greek nor Jew. To the Jew this was an exhaustive analysis of humanity. Every one who was not a Jew was a Greek (*i.e.* a Gentile). Similarly, to the Greek or Roman, mankind was summed up under the terms "Greek and barbarian."

circumcision nor uncircumcision. In reality the same analysis as the preceding (the terms of course being reversed), this special classification being repeated since the argument has already turned on the fact that 'spiritual circumcision' belongs not merely to the Jew (ii. 11).

Barbarian, Scythian. The word "barbarian" denotes literally one who speaks an unintelligible language. Cf.

1 Cor. xiv. 11. "If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian," etc.

The Scythian was looked upon as the lowest type of barbarian. His savageness was proverbial. *But*, says the Apostle, *even the Scythian has the Gospel offered to him*—Christianity knows no distinction such as the world would draw.

bond nor free. The slave has no rights in society or the state, but in the Christian kingdom and in the Christian brotherhood bond and free are alike.

It has been pointed out that these several classifications were suggested by the circumstances of the case.

- (a) *The Judaizing element in the Colossian heresy* suggested Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision.
- (b) *The Gnostical element* suggested Barbarian, Scythian.
- (c) *The sending back of Onesimus* (see pp. 2, 27) suggested the words "bond nor free."

Cf. Gal. iii. 28, where the text is different.

Christ is all. "Christ substitutes Himself" for all these worldly privileges. He is everything to the Christian.

12. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, *bowels of mercies*, kindness, *humbleness of mind*, meekness, long-suffering ;

a heart of compassion
humility

13. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a *quarrel* against any : even as *Christ* forgave you, so also do ye.

complaint the Lord

14. And above all these things put on *charity*, which is the bond of perfectness.

love

and in all, either (*a*) in all believers,
or (*b*) in all the developments of the Christian's life.

12. **Put on.** The complementary exhortation to "Put off" in verse 8.
the elect of God, i.e. "the chosen of God."

Not (*a*) chosen to final salvation,
but (*b*) chosen to Church membership and Christian privilege.

In the *Gospels* the word has the former meaning, the more comprehensive word being "called." Cf. "Many are *called* but few *chosen*." In St. Paul's Epistles there is no such distinction. Cf. 2 Tim. ii. 10, "I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may . . . obtain salvation." The last phrase shows clearly that "elect" has not the more restricted meaning. So, too, St. Peter addresses a whole Church as elect (1 Peter i. 2), and in another Epistle bids his readers endeavour "to make their calling and election sure."

holy and beloved, holy=consecrated to God's service; beloved=beloved of God.

bowels of mercies, R.V. "a heart of compassion." For analytical list of the Christian graces to be "put on," see p. 43.

meekness, long-suffering. "Best distinguished by their opposites:
meekness, opposed to rudeness, harshness.
long-suffering is opposed to revenge, wrath." (Lightfoot.)

13. **if any man have a quarrel against any**, quarrel=complaint. The modern meaning of quarrel, viz. "wrangling," is absent. If any man has a *cause of complaint*, let there be *no quarrel*, let him forgive.

as Christ forgave you. A further proof of the Divinity of Christ. The Father is the Ultimate Source of forgiveness; Christ by His one great act of redeeming love was the Father's channel of forgiveness.

For the spirit of the passage, cf.

Matt. xviii. 32, 33. I forgave thee all that debt, . . . shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?

Cf. also the language of the Lord's Prayer.

14. **above all, i.e. over all.** Love is the outer garment (Lightfoot), or, perhaps, the band or girdle, which keeps the other garments in their places.

charity, i.e. "love."

the bond of perfectness. Love binds together all the graces and virtues which make a perfect character.

15. And let the peace of *God rule* in your hearts, to the which also ye *are* called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Christ *marg. arbitrate*
were

16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts *to the Lord.*

unto God

Virtuous actions may proceed from a variety of motives: hypocrisy, love of applause, etc.—they make up perfection only when they are bound together by love. Cf.

1 Cor. xiii. 2. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,
. . . and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

The Gnostic taught that "perfectness" was to be obtained through *knowledge*; the Christian teaching is that it is to be obtained through *love*. "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth" (1 Cor. viii. 1, R.V.).

15. **The peace of God**, R.V. "The peace of Christ" (agreeing with most of the oldest MSS.). It is the peace of *Christ* for a double reason:

- (a) He *gave* it. John xiv. 27, My peace I give unto you.
- (b) He *Himself is* it. Eph. ii. 14, He is our Peace.

It is the harmony which ought to exist amongst faithful Christians.

rule, R.V. marg. "arbitrate." The Greek verb meant

- (a) To act as umpire in the games.
- (b) To arbitrate generally.
- (c) To rule.

It is probable that St. Paul intended it to have the second meaning here. "Whenever there is a conflict of motives in the heart, let the peace of Christ step in and decide."

The third meaning "to rule" is, however, equally significant in this passage.

to the which, *i.e.* to the which *peace*.

ye are called, R.V. "ye *were* called."

in one body, *i.e.* into one body—the body of the Church (i. 18).

be ye thankful. Cf. ii. 7, iii. 17.

16. **The Word of Christ**. Either

- (a) Let *Christ Himself* dwell in the heart, instructing and guiding;
- or (b) Let the *sayings of Christ* be treasured in the heart, and have effect on life and conduct.

The 'sayings of Christ' would be known, possibly, from the earliest Gospels, which may have already appeared; more probably from oral teaching.

Teaching and admonishing one another. The Apostle notes four results which will follow if there is the indwelling "Word of Christ":

- (a) Mutual instruction and admonition.
- (b) Singing in the grace of God.
- (c) Hearty service in Christ's name.
- (d) Thanksgiving to the Father.

17. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks *to God and the Father by him.* to God the Father through him.

18. Wives, *submit yourselves* unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. be in subjection

We notice in this first phrase the true function of sacred song, viz.:

- (a) Instruction.
- (b) Warning.

As an example of "instruction" in a Psalm, we might take the third, fourth, and fifth verses of the Venite; whereas the eighth verse is an example of "admonition."

in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Chrysostom comments on the phrase as though no distinction were to be drawn between the three terms. It seems clear, however, that

- (a) *Psalms*=the poetic compositions in the Hebrew Psalter.
- (b) *Hymns*=those written by the Christians themselves.
- (c) *Spiritual songs*=a comprehensive term including all sacred songs.

Traces of Christian hymns are to be found in the later Epistles of St. Paul. Cf. 1 Tim. iii. 16.

We have, moreover, several instances recorded of the singing of psalms or hymns. Cf. Acts xvi. 25 (Paul and Silas).

singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Bishop Alexander paraphrases, "Gracefully singing with heartfelt devotion to the Lord," and shows that this rendering brings out the three conditions of sacred song, *i.e.*:

- (a) Sweetness of vocal expression—'gracefully.'
- (b) Fulness of inward devotion—'heartfelt.'
- (c) Direction to a divine object—'to the Lord.'

Lightfoot translates "in grace" by "in *God's* grace," and paraphrases thus: "Let your singing be pervaded with grace from heaven."

17. in the name of the Lord Jesus. That is,

- (a) doing all as in His sight;
- (b) relying upon His promised help;
- (c) ever trying to be conformed to His image.

"This is the great practical lesson which flows from the theological teaching of the Epistle."

giving thanks to God and the Father by Him, R.V. "to God the Father through Him."

Thanksgiving, like Prayer, is to be offered to the Father "through Jesus Christ our Lord."

18. Wives, submit yourselves. St. Paul has said, "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." He now shows them how to carry out this principle in the various relations of family life, viz. those of

- (a) wife and husband,
- (b) child and parent,
- (c) slave and lord.

19. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

The passage should be carefully compared with the corresponding part of Ephesians (v. 22—vi. 9), which offers a very instructive parallel. There is a marked difference, however, in regard to the amount of space devoted to the various classes in the two Epistles. In our own Epistle,

- (a) The duties of wife and husband are *much more briefly* set forth, and the duties of child and parent *somewhat more briefly* than in Ephesians.

If the latter Epistle were the Epistle to the Laodiceans (Col. iv. 16), the Colossians would be able to supplement the advice given in their own Epistle.

- (b) The duties of the slave are *very fully given*. This may be due to the fact that the case of Onesimus was just then powerfully before the mind of the Apostle. Onesimus was going with Tychicus, the bearer of the letter. (See also on v. 22.)

submit yourselves, R.V. "be in subjection to."

as it is fit in the Lord. The duties of wife and husband are set forth in three places in the N.T.; once by St. Peter (1 St. Peter iii. 1-6), who was himself a married man; and twice by St. Paul (here and in Eph. v. 22-33), who was not married (1 Cor. vii. 7, 8).

In all three the duty of the wife is *subjection*, but the reason assigned varies, and the variation is instructive.

- (a) In **Ephesians** the wife is bidden to be in subjection to her husband, *as the Church is subject to Christ*.
- (b) In **1 Peter iii.** subjection is enjoined, that even *unbelieving husbands may be won by the loyal submission of their wives*.
- (c) In **Colossians** (the Epistle which tells us Christ is all and in all) the order is given because "*it is fit in the Lord*."

St. Paul elsewhere gives a reason why man has authority over woman, viz. because of his priority in creation—1 Tim. ii. 13, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve." In other words, man's 'priority in creation' suggests his 'precedence.'

19. Husbands, love your wives. In St. Peter the duty of the husband is *honour*, in Ephesians and Colossians it is *love*.

- (a) In **Ephesians** it is love, because
- (a) Christ loved the Church, His Bride;
- (b) man and wife are one flesh.

- (b) In **Colossians** it is love, but no reason is assigned except what may be assumed from the preceding verse, "*it is fit in the Lord*."

be not bitter against them, i.e. "behave not harshly."

Cf. 1 Peter iii. 7. . . . giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel.

20. Children, obey your parents in all things : for this is well-pleasing *unto* the Lord.

21. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

omit

22. *Servants*, obey in all things *your masters according to the flesh* ; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers ; but in singleness of heart, fearing *God* :

margin. bond-servants
them that are your masters
(*margin.* lords) according to the
flesh
the Lord

20. **Children, obey your parents.** Compare Eph. vi. 1-3.

(a) In **Ephesians** the child's duty is

1. *to obey*, because obedience is right ;

2. *to honour*, and so secure the blessing promised in the Fifth Commandment.

(b) In **Colossians** the duty is *to obey*, since obedience is commendable in those who are members of Christ.

well-pleasing = commendable.

unto the Lord, rather "in the Lord," *i.e.* according to the standard of those who are "in the Lord"—members of His body, the Church.

21. **provoke not your children to wrath**, *i.e.* do not irritate them by needless chiding, or unnecessary restriction.

lest they be discouraged. That is, either

(a) grow sullen, lose heart (Lightfoot),

or (b) be discouraged in their Christian course (Sadler),

probably the former. The child of a parent who is constantly fault-finding loses heart, and becomes spiritless.

In **Ephesians** the positive duty of "nurturing the child in the admonition of the Lord" is added.

22. **Servants**, *i.e.* bond-servants, slaves.

The duties of the slave are more fully set forth than those of the parent and child, possibly because

(a) the case of Onesimus was in the Apostle's mind,

(b) the ranks of the Christian Church were largely recruited from slaves,

(c) the Church would have been seriously threatened if converted slaves had misunderstood the freedom Christianity gave.

obey in all things. Cf. with Eph. vi. 5-8. There is little difference, beyond the emphasis laid in the present passage upon "the reward of the inheritance."

masters, or lords.

according to the flesh. The master has power only over the slave's body. His spirit is rightly in subjection to another Lord.

with eyeservice, *i.e.* working only when under the master's inspection.

The word occurs only here and in Eph. vi. 5. Lightfoot suggests that it may have been coined by St. Paul.

in singleness of heart, *i.e.* "with undivided service,"

23. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men ;

24. Knowing that *of* the Lord ye shall receive the *reward* of the inheritance: *for* ye serve the Lord Christ.

from
recompense
omit

25. But he that doeth wrong shall *re-ceive* for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

receive again

fearing God, rather, fearing *the Lord*. Throughout, there is the contrast between the earthly master (or lord) and the heavenly Lord. The slave is to obey his earthly lord as one must obey who fears his heavenly Lord—the Lord Christ.

24. **from the Lord**, rather, from *a* Lord or Master. However your earthly master treats you, you have *a* Master who will recompense you. (Lightfoot.)

the reward of the inheritance. The slave is Christ's free man, and therefore the inheritance is for him.

Cf. Gal. iii. 29. If ye be Christ's, then are ye . . . heirs according to the promise.

Cf. Col. iii. 11. Where there is neither . . . bond nor free.

ye serve the Lord Christ. The greatest honour is theirs in spite of the hardness of their earthly lot.

25. **He that doeth wrong.** This is at once a warning and an encouragement, since it may apply either to slave or to master.

(a) Let the slave who does wrong beware—that Master in heaven is all-seeing, and has power to punish.

(b) Let the master who ill-treats his slave beware—a day will assuredly come when such wrongs will be righted.

The time has not come to preach emancipation for the slave. The Apostle, however, most powerfully advocates

kindness on the part of the master,

loyalty on the part of the slave;

while he proclaims the common Christian brotherhood which, in the course of the ages, would cause slavery to cease altogether.

no respect of persons. This, like the first part of the verse, tells both ways. The slave is encouraged, but he must not presume. With God he is not esteemed lower than his master, but neither is he higher than his master. There is no respect of persons with God.

This doctrine must have sounded strangely novel in the ears of those who lived under a law (the Roman law) which declared that a slave was 'a chattel,' and therefore had no rights.

CHAPTER IV.

1. Masters, give unto your servants
 that which is just and *equal*; knowing
 that ye also have a Master in heaven.

marg. equality

2. *Continue* in prayer, and watch in
 the same with thanksgiving;

continue stedfastly

3. Withal praying also for us, that God
 would open unto us a door of *utterance*,
 to *speak* the mystery of Christ, for which
 I am also in bonds:

for the word

CHAPTER IV.

1. **give unto your servants**, etc., *i.e.* do ye on your parts show towards your servants justice and equality.

equal, *i.e.* deal *equitably* and *impartially* with your servants.

There is no emphasis here laid upon the *equality* which a common Christian brotherhood brings, although the *idea* of that equality in the sight of God runs through the whole passage.

ye also have a Master. The Apostle does not except himself. Cf.

Titus i. 1. Paul, *a servant* of God.

Acts xxvii. 23. Whose I am, and Whom I serve.

2-6. The Apostle gives concluding exhortations as to

(a) *Their inner life*—it is to be one of persevering, watchful, thankful prayer, especially for the Apostle and his companions, and their work in the Gospel.

(b) *Their outer life*—it is to be one of wisdom and prudence in act and conversation.

2. **continue in prayer**, *i.e.* persevere in prayer.

watch. Prayer is not a mere sentiment; it is the highest of Christian acts, and demands all the Christian's energies. Hence the need for watchfulness. Cf. Mk. xiv. 38, "Watch ye and pray."

This earnestness and intensity of prayer was shown in the case of our Lord (St. Luke xxii. 44), of Paul and Silas (Acts xvi. 25), of David, Daniel, Hezekiah, and many others.

with thanksgiving. See note on ii. 7.

3. **for us**, *i.e.* for the Apostle and his companions, viz. Timothy (i. 1), Epaphras (iv. 12), Aristarchus (iv. 10), etc.

Lightfoot thinks that St. Paul never uses the 'epistolary' plural, referring to himself alone.

a door of utterance, R.V. "a door for the word." Either

(a) an opportunity for proclaiming the Gospel,

or (b) ability (in himself) to proclaim the Gospel.

The former is the more probable (cf. 1 Cor. xvi. 9), although the latter seems to be the meaning suggested by the parallel passage in Eph. vi. 19.

the mystery of Christ, the great message of St. Paul that the Gospel is for the Gentile as well as the Jew.

4. That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

5. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, *redeeming the time.*

marg. buying up the opportunity

6. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer *every man.*

each one

7. All my *state* shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is a* beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord :

affairs
the

for which also I am in bonds. So long as Saul of Tarsus preached Judaism, he was the favourite of priests and people (Acts ix. 14); immediately he began to proclaim the Gospel, the Jews sought to kill him (Acts ix. 23). Ultimately it was his "proclaiming the mystery of Christ" which led to his imprisonment (Acts xxiv. 5).

5. walk, conduct yourselves, behave.

them that are without, *i.e.* those outside the Church. Our Lord in sending out His twelve disciples two by two had warned them to be "wise as serpents" (St. Matt. x. 16).

redeeming the time, R.V. marg. "buying up the opportunity," *i.e.* seizing eagerly every opportunity that offers for furthering the cause of the Gospel. The metaphor is taken from commercial life. In Eph. v. 16 a reason is given for the command, viz. "because the days are evil."

6. with grace, *i.e.* either

(a) with pleasantness and affability,

or (b) with the grace of God.

seasoned with salt. Our Lord Himself used a similar metaphor. Cf. St. Matt. v. 13, "If the salt have lost his savour," etc.

Salt acts in two ways:

(a) it preserves pure,

(b) it gives flavour.

It is quite possible that both meanings are present here. Let their speech be in the first place sanctified and pure, and in the next place let it have the pleasant flavour which would make it acceptable to others.

how ye ought to answer every man. In the world, outside the Church's pale, were men with very varying dispositions and powers and needs. Let the Christian endeavour to accommodate himself to these various cases; by so doing he would not merely defend the Church from attack, but even secure fresh converts. Cf.

1 Cor. ix. 20-22. Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, . . . to them that are without law, as without law. To the weak became I as weak, . . . I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

7. my state, R.V. "my affairs."

Tychicus. For biographical notices of persons named in the Epistle, see pp. 23-29. Tychicus was a native of the province of Asia (Acts xx. 4), and was, with Onesimus, the bearer of this Epistle to the Colossians. He was also entrusted with the circular letter known as the Epistle to the Ephesians. (See p. 3.)

8. Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, *that he might know your estate*, and comfort your hearts; that ye may know our estate

9. With Onesimus, *a faithful and beloved brother*, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here. the

faithful minister. 'Minister' in Greek is *diakonos*, whence is derived our word "deacon." It does not appear that the word is here used in its technical sense. Lightfoot, however, draws attention to the interesting fact that the term "fellow-servant," which follows, seems to have been generally used in the early Church by a bishop when speaking of a deacon. He suggests that the origin of the custom is to be traced to St. Paul twice coupling the words "deacon" and "fellow-servant" (*viz.* here, and in i. 7, where he is speaking of Epaphras).

fellow-servant, a term used by St. Paul twice only, *viz.*

1. of Epaphras, in i. 7;

2. of Tychicus, in the present passage.

8. **Whom I have sent**, *i.e.* "Whom I am now sending with this letter." "Under the Roman empire there were no postal establishments for carrying private letters with regularity. Everything of the kind was done as an occasional opportunity presented itself, or by express. St. Paul was thus obliged, in his superintendence of the churches, to bring with him persons who discharged the duties of couriers. Similarly the Jews had special officials whose duty it was to superintend the correspondence between the synagogues." (Speaker's Commentary.)

that he might know your estate. Notice R.V. "that ye may know our estate," this evidently being the object of the mission of Tychicus. (See v. 7 and v. 9.)

comfort your hearts, rather, "encourage you to persevere." (Light-foot.)

9. **Onesimus.** See pp. 2, 27. The sending back of Onesimus to his master Philemon was probably the indirect cause of the sending of the present Epistle. St. Paul took occasion from the returning of the runaway slave to send a letter to the whole church of the city to which the slave belonged.

In connection with the present passage should be noted

- (a) The tenderness with which St. Paul commends one formerly unprofitable as now
 a brother,
 faithful,
 beloved.
- (b) The evident assumption that Onesimus will be forgiven by his master.
- (c) The comment afforded to the Apostle's own injunctions with regard to master and slave.

10. Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and *Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas*, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

Mark, the cousin of Barnabas

11. And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, *which have been* a comfort unto me.

men that have been

10. **Aristarchus.** See p. 24. Aristarchus was a Macedonian of Thessalonica who had started with the Apostle on his voyage to Rome.

my fellow-prisoner, rather, "my fellow-prisoner-of-war." St. Paul was not, however, a prisoner of war. The title (given elsewhere to Epaphras and others) may imply either

(a) that Aristarchus had at one time or another been imprisoned with St. Paul in the course of *his missionary warfare* (Cambridge Bible);

or (b) that he was now in close attendance on the Apostle and so practically a prisoner.

Marcus, i.e. Mark. See p. 26. This is the first notice of 'John Mark' since his departure from Paul and Barnabas at Perga, and the resulting dissension between the two Apostles. Later still, in St. Paul's second imprisonment, we find the presence of the younger disciple earnestly desired by the Apostle he had formerly deserted (2 Tim. iv. 11).

sister's son, rather, as in R. v. 'cousin.' This relationship to Barnabas explains the more lenient view taken by Barnabas than by Paul of Mark's departure at Perga.

touching whom ye received commandments. This implies some previous communication having passed from St. Paul to the Colossian Church.

if he come. St. Mark evidently went to 'Asia' as suggested here, for in 2 Tim. iv. 11 it seems that he was in that district shortly before St. Paul's death.

receive him. It would appear that there was a lingering prejudice against Mark (probably the result of his former weakness), and this the Apostle is anxious to remove.

11. **Jesus which is called Justus.** Jesus is a very common Hebrew name, Justus a common Latin surname meaning just or righteous. There is no other notice of this disciple in the N. T. In the Epistle to Philemon the concluding salutations include greetings from all those mentioned in the present passage *with the exception of Jesus called Justus.*

who are of the circumcision, i.e. who are converts from Judaism. They were either Jews by birth, or proselytes.

The "who" includes Aristarchus, Marcus, and Jesus Justus, although it might have seemed unlikely in the case of the first, who is styled in Acts "a Macedonian of Thessalonica."

12. Epaphras, who is one of you, a *servant* of Christ, saluteth you, always *labouring fervently* for you in *prayers*, that ye may stand perfect and *complete* in all the will of God.

marg. bond-servant
striving his prayers
fully assured

13. For I bear him *record*, that he hath *a great zeal* for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.

witness
much labour

14. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

These only are my fellow-workers, etc., i.e. "These only of the *circumcision*." It seems from Acts xxviii. 24-29 that the Jews in Rome were not favourably disposed towards the Apostle's teaching. From Phil. i. 15, 16 we learn that even amongst those professing Christianity there were many who taught a very different gospel from his own, and who were certainly not a "comfort" to him.

The words, however, must not be taken too literally. He is probably referring not to the general body of converts, but to the leading spirits in the Roman Church, and of these very few were converts from Judaism.

12. **Epaphras** (see p. 25) is a shortened form of Epaphroditus. The Epaphras of Colossians and the Epaphroditus of Phil. ii. 25 are probably not the same, for

(a) The one was apparently a native of Colossae, the other of Philippi.

(b) The one is always called by the shorter, the other by the longer name.

one of you, i.e. a Colossian, either by birth or residence.

labouring fervently, R.V. "striving"; Gk. "agonizing."

perfect. St. Paul is again using a term which had been abused by the Gnostic teachers in Colossae.

complete. The R.V. takes the more probable reading, "fully assured."

13. **Laodicea . . . Hierapolis.** For geographical notices, see p. 30. It would seem, from the great striving of Epaphras for Laodicea and Hierapolis as well as Colossae, that all three cities owed their evangelization to him. They were near enough to each other to make this quite possible.

14. **Luke . . . Demas.** See pp. 25, 26. Luke, *i.e.* Lucas, is probably a shortened form of Lucanus, Demas of Demetrius. It is noticeable that, while an affectionate addition is made to the mention of Luke, Demas is dismissed with the mere mention of his name. Lightfoot suggests that we have here the foreshadowing of the desertion of the Apostle by Demas, of which we read in 2 Tim. iv. 10.

the beloved physician, lit. "the physician, the beloved." This is the only passage in the N.T. where Luke is styled "the physician." Several passages in his Gospel and in the Acts seem to give evidence of medical knowledge; and it is interesting to note that St. Luke's first association with St. Paul is almost identical in time with an attack of the Apostle's malady. (Cf. Gal. iv. 13 with Acts xvi. 10, where the word "we" indicates that St. Luke had joined St. Paul.)

15. Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and *Nymphas*, and the church which is in *his* house.

marg. Nympha
their (*marg.* her)

16. And when this epistle *is* read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

hath been

17. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

It is interesting also to notice that both here and in *Philemon* the two Evangelists Mark and Luke are mentioned as being together. They probably met again later on. Cf. 2 Tim. iv. 11.

15. **The brethren which are in Laodicea.** Possibly "the church of the Laodiceans" of verse 16. Some have suggested a more restricted meaning, e.g. a *Colossian settlement* in Laodicea.

Nymphas. It is a little doubtful whether the name should be *Nymphas* (masculine) or *Nympha* (feminine). If masculine, it is probably a shortened form of Nymphodorus. Nymphas was evidently one of the leading Christians in Laodicea.

the church which is in his house. A similar expression is used in the N.T. of Priscilla and Aquila (Rom. xvi. 5 and 1 Cor. xvi. 19), and of Philemon (Philem. 2). The "Church" in the house of Nymphas would, of course, be a section of the Church of the Laodiceans (v. 16).

"There is no clear example of a separate building set apart for Christian worship within the limits of the Roman empire before the third century, though apartments in private houses might be specially devoted to this purpose." (Lightfoot.)

his house. The pronoun is doubtful. It may be

(a) *his* house. So A.V., referring to Nymphas.

(b) *their* house. So R.V. (with best MSS.), referring to Nymphas and his family or friends.

(c) *her* house. So R.V. marg., referring to Nympha.

16. **cause that it be read,** etc., in spite of the serious warnings which it contains, and which may be distasteful to many amongst you. Cf. 1 Thess. v. 27.

It is clear, from this verse, that St. Paul's Epistles, while suggested by some temporary need, and addressed to a particular section of the Christian Church, contained matter which the Apostle considered of much more widely-reaching importance. There was to be inter-communication between Church and Church; the Epistle sent in the first instance to one was to be read by the other.

The Epistle from Laodicea (see p. 30), *i.e.* the Epistle which the Laodiceans have received from me, and which you will receive from them. This was, in all probability, the letter we know as 'the Epistle to the Ephesians,' a circular letter intended for a number of the churches of Asia, of which Ephesus and Laodicea were two, and Colossae evidently a third.

17. **Say to Archippus.** The message is to be given to Archippus by the Church.

18. The salutation *by the hand* of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. *Amen.*

with mine own hand

omit

¶ *Written from Rome to the Colossians by Tychicus and Onesimus.*

omit

Archippus (see p. 24) was probably the son of Philemon (Philem. 2), and held an important office in the Church either at Colossae or Laodicea, it is not quite clear which. If at Laodicea, the suggestion, that the verse affords, of a need for stimulating the chief (?) officer of the Church finds support in the lukewarmness of the Church itself later on. (Rev. iii. 16.)

ministry, lit. "diaconate," but in all probability not, here, the actual office of the deacon. Everything points to a position in the Church of greater prominence and importance.

Take heed to the ministry. A warning which suggests either

(a) that Archippus was *new* to his work,—he may possibly have been the substitute for the absent Epaphras,

or (b) that Archippus had *grown lukewarm* in his work.

18. **The salutation by the hand of me Paul.** The Apostle wrote his Epistles through an amanuensis. To give a guarantee of their genuineness, he signed them at the end. Cf.

2 Thess. iii. 17. The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every Epistle: so I write.

Sometimes he added much more than the mere signature. He appears to have written the whole of *Philemon* (Philem. 19) and a considerable section at the close of *Galatians*.

His writing would appear to have been large and laboured. Cf.

Gal. vi. 11 (R.V.). See *with how large letters* I have written unto you with mine own hand.

In one Epistle the name of the amanuensis, Tertius, is mentioned (Rom. xvi. 22).

Remember my bonds. Remember, and be willing to suffer yourselves for the truth of the Gospel I preach.

Grace be with you. A shortened form of the usual closing benediction of St. Paul. The longer form of 2 Cor. xiii. 14 has become the concluding benediction of the Church in her daily services.

Amen, omitted in R.V.

Written from Rome, etc. The subscription here is obviously true, but was probably not inserted till the fifth century. In the case of some of the Epistles the subscription is obviously incorrect (*e.g.* 1 Cor.) or extremely doubtful.

PASSAGES DESERVING SPECIAL ATTENTION.

- I. 2. *saints*=those set apart to God, not necessarily those of holy life.
Colosse, Colossae or Colassae.
- I. 7. *who is for you a faithful minister*, R.V. on *our* behalf.
- I. 9. *filled with the knowledge of His will*, which is denied to the outer world by your false teachers.
- I. 12. *partakers of the inheritance*. Possible allusion to the division of Canaan.
the saints in light, *i.e.* in the kingdom of light.
- I. 13. *the power of darkness*, the tyranny of the powers of evil.
hath translated us. Allusion to the practice of transporting whole peoples to different lands by conquerors.
His dear Son, R.V. the Son of His love.
- I. 14. *redemption*=release by payment of ransom.
- I. 15. *the image of the invisible God*=the perfect, divine likeness and manifestation. Christ is not merely *like* God, He is *essentially* God.
the first-born of every creature. Christ was not a creature Himself.
(See note.)
- I. 16. *By Him were all things created*. Notice prepositions in R.V.:
in Him, through Him, unto Him.
thrones, dominions, etc. Allusion to the angelic "orders" of the heretical teachers.
- I. 17. *He is before all things*. HE IS before all things.
by Him all things consist=in Him all things hold together.
- I. 18. *the head of the body*. Christ is the head of the spiritual creation,
as He is the head of the natural creation.
Who is the beginning, *i.e.* in time and as a source of life.
the first-born from the dead. Notice the double sense.
- I. 19. *It pleased the Father*. Subject of sentence doubtful.
all fulness=pleroma=totality of Divine powers and attributes.
- I. 21. *alienated*=estranged, *i.e.* from God by their wicked works.

- I. 22. *the body of His flesh.* And yet the Gnostics said that flesh was evil.
- I. 23. *grounded and settled*=built on a sure foundation and immovable. *preached to every creature.* Condemns Gnostic exclusiveness.
- I. 24. *fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.* Christ's afflictions perfect as an atoning sacrifice; but as an element in building up the Church, they may be supplemented.
- I. 25. *the dispensation of God,* dispensation=stewardship.
- I. 26. *mystery.* This verse defines the N.T. word "mystery."
- I. 28. *present every man perfect.* Term borrowed by St. Paul. (See note.)
- II. 1. *as many as have not seen my face.* Had St. Paul visited Colosse?
- II. 2. *full assurance of understanding,* firm conviction arising from understanding.
acknowledgment of the mystery, full knowledge of the mystery.
- II. 3. *in Whom are hid all the treasures,* etc. Gnostic terms used.
Read note carefully.
- II. 4. *enticing words*=plausible reasoning.
- II. 5. *your order and the steadfastness of your faith.* Military terms.
What led to their use?
- II. 6. *as ye have therefore received Christ Jesus.* Cf. "Christ in you."
- II. 7. *so walk . . . rooted . . . built up.* Three figures: the path, the plant, the building. Notice tenses: having been rooted, ever being builded.
- II. 8. *beware lest any man spoil you, i.e. carry you off as spoil.*
philosophy and vain deceit, i.e. his philosophy, which is a vain deceit.
rudiments=elements.
- II. 9. *bodily*=having assumed a bodily form. This verse completely states the doctrine of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.
- II. 10. *Ye are complete in Him*=in Him ye are made full.
- II. 11. *made without hands, i.e. spiritual, heavenly.*
the body of the sins of the flesh (omit "of the sins"), not a part of the flesh only.
the circumcision of Christ, i.e. which is in its nature "of Christ."
- II. 12. *buried with Him in baptism.* Notice carefully the Apostle's figure and teaching.
- II. 13. *hath He quickened together with Him*=hath the Father given life to, together with Christ.

- II. 14. *Blotting out the handwriting.* Notice carefully the whole verse. Christ has not only cancelled the bond that was against us (having erased our signature), but has destroyed it altogether by nailing it to His Cross.
- II. 15. *having spoiled principalities,* a very difficult verse, which needs careful reading.
- II. 16. *judge you*=take you to task.
- II. 17. *a shadow of things to come.* Notice the function of the Mosaic Law.
- II. 18. *Let no man beguile you of your reward, i.e. rob you of your prize.*
a voluntary humility=an affected, paraded humility.
intruding into those things which he hath not seen. Notice R.V. and explanation.
- II. 19. *not holding the head.* The whole verse requires careful study.
joints and bands=junctures and ligaments.
- II. 20. *if ye be dead with Christ,* rather, "if ye died," i.e. at Baptism. Notice similar inaccuracies of tense, e.g. III. 1.
- II. 22. *Which all are to perish with the using, i.e. the ordinances relate only to perishable things.*
- II. 23. *a show of wisdom* = a reputation for wisdom.
will worship = the officious parade of devotion.
humility = affectation of humility.
neglecting of the body = severity to the body.
not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. Notice most carefully the difference in R.V. and A.V. and the explanation.
- III. 2. *set your affection, i.e. your mind or thought.*
- III. 3. *your life is hid,* hence safety and concealment.
- III. 5. *mortify therefore your members.* The members are identified with the sins they serve. "Kill whatever within you is vile." *Covetousness which is idolatry.* Why is covetousness "idolatry"?
- III. 6. *the children of disobedience* = those who sin wilfully.
- III. 8. *blasphemy* = railing.
- III. 9. *the old man* = the old unregenerate nature.
- III. 10. *the new man* = (probably) the new regenerate nature.
which is renewed in knowledge, i.e. which is ever being renewed unto perfect knowledge in Christ.
- III. 11. *neither Greek nor Jew,* etc. Explain the verse. Which expression is peculiar to this verse?

- III. 12. *bowels of mercies*, R.V. heart of compassion.
- III. 13. *if any man have a quarrel*; quarrel = complaint or cause of complaint.
- III. 14. *above all these things put on charity*. Love is either the girdle or the outer garment which binds or holds together.
- III. 15. *Let the peace of God rule*, i.e. arbitrate as umpire.
to the which ye are called, i.e. to the which *peace* ye were called.
- III. 16. *psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*. Is there any distinction?
- III. 17. *in the name of the Lord Jesus*. Explain.
giving thanks. Notice importance attached to thanksgiving in the Epistle.
- III. 22. *servants* = bond-servants, slaves.
singleness of heart, i.e. with undivided service.
- III. 24. *the reward of the inheritance*, which is for bond as well as for free.
- III. 25. *he that doeth wrong*, i.e. whether master or slave.
- IV. 1. *just and equal* = just and equitable.
- IV. 3. *a door of utterance*, R.V. a door for the word. Either *opportunity* or *ability*.
- IV. 5. *them that are without*, i.e. outside the Church's pale.
redeeming the time, R.V. marg. buying up the opportunity.
- IV. 6. *seasoned with salt*, i.e. pure and flavoured.
- IV. 7. *all my state* = all my affairs.
- IV. 8. *that he might know your estate*, R.V. that ye may know our estate.
- IV. 10. *Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas*, R.V. Mark the cousin of Barnabas. Notice in this verse the previous communication concerning Mark.
- IV. 11. *Who are of the circumcision*, i.e. Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus Justus.
These only . . . have been a comfort, i.e. these only, of the *circumcision*, have been a comfort.
- IV. 12. *perfect and complete* = perfectly instructed and fully assured.
- IV. 14. *Luke, the beloved physician*. Why was he with St. Paul?
- IV. 15. *Nymphas and the church which is in his house*. Notice R.V. and R.V. margin, and explain the last phrase.
- IV. 16. *the epistle from Laodicea*. What was this epistle?
- IV. 17. *Take heed to the ministry*. Give probable explanation.
- IV. 18. *The salutation by the hand of me Paul*. What was the usual practice of St. Paul with regard to the *writing* of the Epistles?

QUESTIONS.

THE following questions have been already set in the Religious Knowledge Examination in Training Colleges. One question only was to be answered in each section.

1894.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS AND TO PHILEMON.

SECTION I.

1. What may we learn from the Epistle to the Colossians concerning the teachers of the Colossian Church and the messengers sent to it?
2. What may be gathered from the Epistle to the Colossians as to the errors which beset the Colossian Church?

SECTION II.

1. Explain carefully the following passages :
 - (a) "The image of the invisible God."
 - (b) "Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body ; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh."
2. Explain carefully the following passages :
 - (a) "The first-born of every creature."
 - (b) "And, having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself ; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

SECTION III.

1. What exhortations are given in the Epistle to the Colossians (1) to slaves, (2) to their masters? How are these exhortations illustrated by the Epistle to Philemon?

2. Comment on the following :

(a) "The Epistle from Laodicea."

(b) "The salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand."

(c) "Whom I have begotten in my bonds."

SECTION IV.

1. Show what may be gathered from these Epistles as to (a) the place at which Philemon lived, (b) his family, (c) his conversion, (d) his Christian zeal and love.

2. Explain the expressions :

"The church which is in his house" (Col. iv. 15).

"The church in thy house" (Phil. 2).

Whose houses are here referred to, and where were they situated? What is the rendering of the first of the above expressions in the Revised Version, and how do you explain it?

SUPPLEMENTARY PAPER FOR THIRD YEAR STUDENTS.

All the questions on this Paper may be answered.

1. State what you know of the history of the Churches of Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis.

2. "The mystery of Christ for which I am in bonds." Examine carefully the meaning of "the mystery of Christ," and show from the Acts that it was the direct cause of his imprisonment.

3. Explain :

(a) "Who now . . . fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh . . . the church."

(b) "Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship . . . to the satisfying of the flesh."

(c) "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints."

4. Give some account of the condition of slaves in the heathen world. Contrast the attitude of the law and the Gospel on the subject of slavery.

The following questions have been set at the Higher Local Examinations of Cambridge University. The syllabus, however, included the Epistles to the Thessalonians as well as the Epistle to the Colossians.

HIGHER LOCAL EXAMINATIONS.

THE EPISTLES TO THE COLOSSIANS AND THESSALONIANS.

June, 1884.

1. Describe, as fully as you can, with quotations, the errors which St. Paul combats in his Epistle to the Colossians, distinguishing between those which can and those which cannot be attributed to a Jewish source.
2. What do we gather from the Epistles to the Thessalonians as to their attitude towards (*a*) St. Paul's person, (*b*) the Christian faith as taught by him?
3. Explain the following passages of the Authorised Version, in their connection with the context, and, where necessary, emend them, referring, if you can, to the Original and to the Revised Version:
 - (*a*) Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.
 - (*b*) That, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.
 - (*c*) With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.
4. What is said in these Epistles on the subjects of (*a*) baptism, (*b*) resurrection, (*c*) industry, (*d*) submission to authority?

June, 1885.

1. What may we infer from these Epistles as to the types of character belonging to (*a*) the Colossians, (*b*) the Thessalonians?
2. Give, as nearly as you can in St. Paul's words in the Epistle to the Colossians, his precepts on the subject of the social relations.
3. What is the teaching of the Epistle to the Colossians as to the position which our Lord occupies in relation to (*a*) the Father, (*b*) Creation, (*c*) the Church?

4. Compare St. Paul's teaching in the Epistles to the Thessalonians as to the Coming of Christ, with the teaching of our Lord on the same subject.
5. Explain the following passages of the Authorised Version. Show their connection with the context, and, where necessary, emend them, referring, if you can, to the Original, or the Revised Version :
- (a) Touch not ; taste not ; handle not ; which all are to perish with the using.
- (b) Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone.
- (c) Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

June, 1890.

1. Compare :
- (1) The circumstances of St. Paul at the time when he wrote (a) the Epistle to the Thessalonians and (b) the Epistle to the Colossians.
- (2) The false doctrine which he specially attacks in his Epistles to those two Churches.
2. (a) What is St. Paul's teaching in the Epistle to the Colossians concerning the office of Christ in the Universe?
- (b) What references does St. Paul make to his work and teaching at Thessalonica in the Epistles to the Thessalonians?

June, 1891.

1. What is St. Paul's teaching in the Epistle to the Colossians on the practical consequences to mankind of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?
2. What is St. Paul's teaching in the Epistles to the Thessalonians concerning (a) the time of the Coming of the Lord, (b) the attitude of Christians with regard to it?

3. Write notes on the following passages (A.V.), giving the R.V. where necessary :
- (a) Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.
 - (b) This man is the great power of God.
 - (c) Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body ; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.
 - (d) The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every Epistle : so I write.

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