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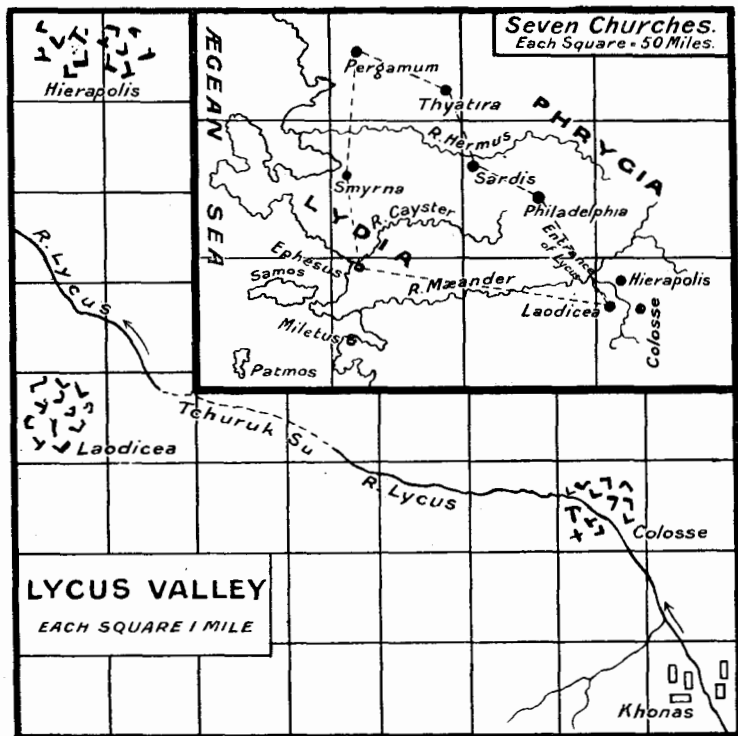
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THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

By Rev. S. R. MACPHAIL, D.D.



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TO THE
COLOSSIANS

BY

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FOREWORD

ON the great subject of the Epistle to the Colossians our English classic is Marshall's *Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*. This work was first published in 1692, and has ever since been regarded as unapproached in describing faith's use of the Christ's fulness for all possible human requirement; "DIRECTIONS" 3, 4, and 12 being peculiarly valuable. We have several other works in English richly suggestive of the topic generally; Bishop Hall's *Christ Mystical* and Mr. Polhil's *Christus in Corde* being prominent. S. Bernard's *Sermons to his Monks on the Canticles* is a Latin fountain of similarly directed mystical thought. For practical exhibition of Paul's teaching on personal daily intimacy between Christ and His people, Rutherford's letters have never been equalled, nor are likely to be on this side our Lord's return. In the following commentary I have endeavoured to reproduce the thought of the letter in the verbal expression employed by the Apostle. Two words determine that thought:—PLERÓMA (*fulness*) and MUSTERION (*secret*). By keeping these prominent, and giving them their Pauline adjustment to each other, the letter has been found much less difficult to follow. It is because I have found this for myself that I have ventured to adopt it in the following pages.

The Greek text followed has been that bound with the R.V. and, lying beside it, the late Dr. Weymouth's *Resultant Greek Testament*, which is arrived at by balancing the results of ten leading editors, giving due weight not only to their scholastic importance, but to the reasons they assign for their varied readings. For English prior to 1611, Wyclif's N.T. (A.D. 1380) has been used, in an edition printed in 1810.

S. R. M.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE COMMENTS

O.T. and N.T.=Old and New Testaments.

LXX.=The Septuagint—Greek Version of O.T., B.C. 280 and later.

A.V.=Authorised Version of 1611.

R.V.=Revised Version of 1885.

R.G.T.=*Resultant Greek Testament*, Dr. Weymouth's, 1905.

i.e. (*id est*)="that is"; *e.g.* (*exempli gratia*)="for example."

Cf. (*confer*)="compare"; qtd.="quoted by."

f.="following" page or verse; ff.=more than one such.

MS.="manuscript"; MSS.=more than one.

INTRODUCTION

WHEN any one proposes to enter on the study of a portion of the New Testament, the first question which arises is, To which division of the New Testament does my present study belong? For there are two leading divisions. The one contains the narrative of our Lord's earthly ministry (the four Gospels), and the other belongs to a subsequent time of special Revelation, when the Holy Spirit interpreted to the Apostles the full meaning of the Lord's earthly mission, and also led them, as He had Himself promised, into much new truth. These two portions combined form the New Testament Revelation, and contain all through which the knowledge of grace and glory by Jesus Christ comes to men in every age. The New Testament is final Revelation, but New Testament theology, *i.e.* man's grasp of the New Testament, is ever purifying, enlarging, and enriching. Similarly, nature is constant and complete, but the reading of nature, which is the work of natural science, is progressive and very varied. Theology is only one of many and varied sciences which unfold the riches of Revelation as contained in Holy Scripture. Hence the value of such a study as that now proposed, for very often to humble and earnest students the Bible unveils new truth from its boundless fulness. The Church of Christ in the world and the Bible, as a whole, are monuments of the latter portion of New Testament truth.

The Letter to Colosse belongs to that period of Paul's ministry when he was an ambassador in bonds, and almost certainly to the Roman portion of that imprisonment. It thus falls near the close of those thirty years in which he was a follower of Jesus Christ. Ten of those years were spent in preparation for his Gentile apostleship;

ten in the activity of that great work ; and ten in prison, or, more probably, partly in prison and partly, for perhaps two years, in active labour in old and new fields. The letters known as "Pastoral Epistles" cannot well be otherwise explained. Seven Churches or groups of Churches had the distinguished honour of receiving letters from the Apostle, which form part of the New Testament. The two earliest of these, sent to Thessalonica, stand last, of Church letters, in our Bibles. Their subject-matter is no doubt the reason for this arrangement. The group which stands first were next written. They are all occupied with the fundamental doctrines of grace. After them comes the prison group, whose leading theme is the great mystery, generally known as "the Christ mystical." They are our chief source of knowledge of this supreme truth of Christianity. The Epistle to Colosse belongs to this group. In the Epistle "to the Ephesians" the truth is stated compactly without any controversial matter, but in the other two letters—to Colosse and Philippi—matters arise which make special emphasis necessary—in the one case to loose views about the Head, and in the other to loose conduct on the part of members of the Body of the Christ mystical. Two of the letters of this group were sent to Roman Asia, which extended about 100 miles from west to east. Ephesus stood at its western extremity and Colosse at its eastern.

Colosse was the smallest of three towns situated, within sight of each other, on the Lycus, a tributary of the Mæander, which runs across Asia towards Ephesus. Though strongly maintained, it is scarcely credible that a circular letter to Asiatic Churches would ignore Colosse and Hierapolis and include Laodicea, which, as in the case of Colosse also, was not planted by Paul (ii. 1). Much more probably the letter of which the Apostle speaks towards the close of this one was written to Laodicea itself, but has not been preserved to us. Thus Tychicus was entrusted with the letter "to the Ephesians," one to Laodicea and one to Colosse. He was joint bearer of the private letter to Philemon at Colosse.

Colosse was not much distinguished in later classic history. In earlier times, as when Xerxes invaded Greece, it is spoken of by Herodotus and Xenophon as a great city, but about B.C. 200 it is

designated "a small city" (*polisma*). Its decay seems to have steadily progressed, for practically no record of the Church survived N.T. times. By a frequent custom in the East, the old site, still possessing many ruins, was subsequently deserted, and a new town arose about two miles distant—the modern Khonas. There are coins extant expressing "Concord" (*homonoia*) between Ephesus and the other Lycus towns, but none apparently with the name of Colosse (Akerman's *Coins of Ephesus*, 30 and 35). Other coins of Colosse, however, remain. Khonas, according to Sir W. Ramsay, "possessed one of the most famous Churches of Asia Minor" (*C.R.E.* p. 468). Coins and views of the three cities may be seen in Lewin's *St. Paul*. One coin of Laodicea is of uncommon interest, from its representing the crowning of a victor in local games, a subject present to Paul's mind more than once in the Colossian letter. It would be rash to form a conclusion against the character of the Church from there being so little after-history. The same is true of the Church in Philippi, and yet to no Church did the Apostle so open his whole heart. Lives of men often correspond closely to this experience; they rise, they make a brilliant display ("of promise," we say), and then suddenly disappear. Yet their influence is often agelong, as in the case of the two Churches referred to.

ERROR IN THE CHURCH AT COLOSSE

This section of the Introduction is written with considerable misgiving. But as it is the result of long study and careful balance of the best available opinion, it is hoped that it may commend itself to students of the Epistle. The points are numbered to indicate the growth of the position taken.

1. There is no evidence that the false teaching in Colosse was the occasion of Epaphras' visit to Paul. Indeed, the whole tone of the letter is entirely otherwise. The information given to Paul by Epaphras pointed to great stability and gracious enlargement on the part of the Church. His prayers also do not indicate any concern regarding heresy; nor do Paul's prayers touch on this. The Galatian and Corinthian letters show how definite and outspoken Paul could be when he believed defection to be present.

2. Though there was certainly false teaching in Colosse there is no evidence that it had taken any hold of the Church. On reflection it seems as though in trying to grasp the nature of the false teaching the study became so absorbing that its relation to the Church has been overlooked. The impression left is "the Colossian heresy"—a misleading, because ambiguous expression. There is nothing beyond the letter to throw light on the attitude of the Church. It may indeed be suggested that at a later period a general Council in Laodicea condemned secret angel worship. But we know from John's Patmos letter to Laodicea that no Church seemed more free from alien doctrine than that of Laodicea. There are no references save to home industries and personal self-satisfactions. Yet this letter was, in part at least, intended for them.

3. The evidence lies the other way. In the whole of Chapter I there is no surface reference to the intruded heresy. In Chapter II it is approached by a renewed expression of deep satisfaction in their orderly attitude and their steadfastness in faith. How unlike verses 6 and 7 are to Paul's tone to the Galatian Churches! The admonitions regarding false views extend from ver. 8 to ver. 23 of that chapter, and are not resumed afterwards. Another theme runs through the entire letter, and it is under one section of that subject that the false teaching is introduced, dealt with, and no more recalled. The analysis of Chapters III and IV to ver. 6 will make this fully manifest. The remainder of the letter is merely a series of salutations. In the letter to Philemon, written at the same time, there is no reference to error of any kind, and yet at least a part of the Church in Colosse is there saluted.

4. Other reasons than Church defection have been suggested for writing this letter, and they seem at least equally convincing. Some are persuaded that thus Paul desired to maintain Epaphras' authority. Others imagine that he was a delegate charged with important Church difficulties, such as in the letter sent from Corinth to which Paul sent answer in 1 Corinthians. Others believe that as in the course of Providence Paul felt bound to restore Onesimus to his master, Philemon, in Colosse, he took advantage of that mission, in which he determined to include the living voice of Tychicus, to write

a letter to the Church there on what was most present to his own heart at the time (see Ep. to Ephesians). Perhaps he was the more inclined to do so since he hoped very soon to visit the Church (see his letter to Philemon). Other reasons have been suggested, but these may suffice.

5. Running through the entire letter and practically absorbing its teaching significance—even inclusive of the errors exposed—is the specific theme of “the Great Mystery,” which was to Paul the most important truth of Christianity, and that for which he was “an ambassador in bonds.” Paul represents this as entirely new Revelation, for which you look in vain before apostolic times. Adumbrations of it can *now* be seen in the past, but “the secret” was God’s secret up to the time of apostolic reception of it. When and how it was revealed we are not told. But Paul regarded it as introducing a great subdivision of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and speaks of it as “God’s Wisdom” pre-eminently. The Epistle to the Ephesians is the same truth taught without controversial digression. By the need arising from error which had appeared in Colosse, we have the advantage of viewing “the mystery” more fully as regards the Head of “the Christ Mystical.” In this aspect it becomes more distinctly “the Pleroma Mystery,” “the secret of the Fulness.”

6. As so often happens in the Church, new truth provoked new error from the enemy of truth. Hence Paul’s great Revelation was, consciously or unconsciously, opposed by one (or perhaps more than one) false teacher in Colosse. We owe the opponent much, for he has yielded rich spoil to the cause of truth. There is no possibility, at least at present, of presenting the teaching which Paul opposes under any technical term. The time was not yet when it could be called Gnosticism, and on the other hand it was more than ascetic Essenism. Manifestly, Paul’s determined opponents everywhere, the Judaists, had insinuated themselves, though perhaps only in the composite creed of the false teacher; anyhow, they were in some way present with their circumcision and ceremonial party-cry. And whenever there was culture in those days, whether among Jews or Gentiles—Hellenists or Academicians—its presence was always discoverable by

philosophy in one or other of its protean forms—the infant of the neo-platonism of later times. Besides, there is always something in the soil and in the people to whom teaching goes. Preoccupation and predisposition count for much in all propagandism. And no soil was more impregnated than that of Phrygia, even from the earliest times, with mystic rites and mystic visions. It seems to have shared with Egypt the possession of the most persistent esoteric beliefs which time has embraced. When we shall know the Hittite story better, we shall doubtless realise what a world of social and religious life belonged to that region. But classic lore has already pictured to us under the Phrygian Cap the religious thought of many ages in its most seductive and weird combinations. Christianity found the Phrygian Mithraic rites and practices in all parts of the Roman Empire, including our own country. Its last great battle was with that form of paganism, and though Christianity claimed to hold the field, the spoils of war were much too equally distributed. All these influences seem to have contributed something to the mind of the false teacher of Colosse. How the Apostle's slight sketch should convey so much varied suggestion is another proof of the greatness of the Divine purpose with His "chosen vessel." The Eastern Rabbi was also the cultured Western savant, and hence he stands through the ages an unequalled foil for aspiring marksmen (see Appendix B).

THE GREEK USED BY PAUL IN THIS LETTER

A line of study has recently been opened up which throws much new light on the N.T. writings. A vast accumulation of papyri, ostraca (potsherds), wooden, metal, and stone writings of various kinds have been unearthed, specially in Egypt, dating back to a few centuries before Christ, and continuing to appear till a few centuries after Christ. These enable us to understand better than before the literary distinction between a *letter* and an *epistle*—the one marking a style used for friendly intercourse, the other a more formal and less colloquial form of expression. The epistle, in language and literary elaboration, was drawn up as "open letters" are among us. The writings of Paul are all letters, not epistles, not even excepting his

Roman letter. They are therefore not to be taken as literary productions. In Divine providence they have become so, no doubt, but they were written for the time, place, and circumstances to which they were forwarded, and are full of references adequately understandable only by those who received them. They were consequently written in that form of Greek which for daily use had everywhere dislodged classic Greek, having become the common language of all who "Hellenised." The papyri, etc., referred to, are all in that common form of Greek now distinguished as *Koiné*—which simply means "*Common*." We have been accustomed to speak of "N.T. Greek" as though it were a law unto itself. The phrase is now supplanted by the expression *Koiné*, and a wide study, covering some centuries, finds its central interest in the N.T. language, grammar, and form generally. Many words previously supposed to be peculiar to the N.T. are found in the *Koiné*, and remarkable light has also fallen on technical terms previously most obscure. Thus a new richness has entered into N.T. study—grammar, lexicon, and antiquities all receiving much impulse; students of the spirit of the N.T. also finding new surprises of wealth and beauty in its boundless variety of treasure.

THE TITLE

The title belongs to a later date than the Epistle itself. When it was prefixed the town was probably known as Kolassæ. Coins still extant have both forms. Many editors place Kolassæ in the title—marking a late date—and Colossæ in the letter itself (*e.g.* R.G.T.).

THE LETTER

Our Bibles contain examples of almost every form of literature known to us. The letter form is a peculiarity of the N.T., and there occupies the chief place. It has been suggested that the N.T. age was that in which the world discovered for the first time the value of the freedom which a letter supplies for dealing with matters of life and heart-culture. The Epistle to the Hebrews is regarded as the highest form of literary epistle which the N.T. contains.

From various places—Acts xv. 23, Paul's, James's, Peter's, and

John's First Epistle—we become aware that our modern adjustments of thought in letter writing and those of the ancients considerably differ. Only in very formal communications do we begin by inscribing our own names, and then only in the third person. The ancients began with their own names, even though, as in Paul's case, they also signed at the end (2 Thess. iii. 17).

The ordinary arrangement of Paul's letters to Churches is—(1) The usual indication of source and destination. (2) Some hearty expression of regard (when this could be given). (3) Sometimes a prayer is introduced at this point. (4) He then takes up some doctrinal theme, either purely didactically or with reference to certain forms of error. (5) Passing from this, ethical teaching—fitted to requirements in each Church—fills a large place. The letters close with (6) Salutations, personal references, occasional résumés of advice ; then taking the pen from the amanuensis he signs his own name, with a benediction-salutation.

EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

CHAPTER I

THIS chapter may be conveniently divided into six paragraphs—

- Verses 1, 2. § 1. **The Salutation.**
" 3-8. § 2. **Thanksgiving for the Colossians.**
" 9-13. § 3. **Prayer for the Colossians, passing into**
" 14-20. § 4. **A Hymn of the Christ.**
" 21-23. § 5. **Return to the Colossians, past and present.**
" 23-29. § 6. **Paul magnifies his office as Christ's minister.**

In all this chapter there is no indication of any false teaching in Colosse; on the contrary, the Apostle expresses entire confidence in their steadfastness in faith.

1 **PAUL**, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of
2 **God**, and Timotheus our brother, To the saints

§ 1. THE SALUTATION (1, 2)

The Apostle modifies the ordinary forms of salutation in the East and the West, combining them, with a new intensity of meaning, into a Christian form. The letter of Claudius Lysias is in the ordinary Western form. For the Eastern cf. Ezra vii. 12. The oldest letters known at present are those of Khummurabi, the Amraphel of Abraham's day (B.C. 1900). At that time, and for long afterwards, the form was—"To A. say, thus saith B.; Sulmu," *i.e.* "peace." The next considerable correspondence which we possess is that found at Tel-el-Amarna, written a century or two before the age of Moses. Such letters were enclosed in a clay envelope, addressed and sealed. Few envelopes have come down to us, because they must have been broken in order to reach the letter enclosed in them (Johns' *Babylon., etc., Letters, etc.*).

Paul. The word signifies "little," but we have no reason to suppose that the Apostle used it with any etymological purpose. Most probably his Gentile apostolate made a Gentile form desirable, and not improbably it was a birth-name of his Roman citizenship.

An Apostle: lit. "one sent." It differs from *angelos* in containing authority *to issue* the business in hand. It is thus = *legatus*. In the

Gospels it is used generally of "the twelve." The same use is continued in Acts. Our Lord used the verbal form of the word when speaking of His own mission as sent by the Father (see Heb. iii. 1). John Baptist is also spoken of as sent by God. In a wider sense Barnabas is called an Apostle, having received a definite Divine call with Paul, who speaks of "apostles of the churches" in 2 Cor. viii. 23. Others also are so pointed out, 2 Cor. xi. 5, xii. 11. Epaphroditus is so entitled, Phil. ii. 25. Marks of apostleship were working Gospel miracles—"signs," "wonders," and "powers." In 1 Cor. the Apostle makes the test of his apostleship the change wrought in Corinth by his preaching. In the *Didaché*, a document of the close of the first century A.D., apostles are recognised as a class of missionaries, and tests are given by which their claims might be tried. Paul is always particularly insistent that his apostleship was *entirely* of Divine appointment. It was of the first importance that this should be fully understood. His special teaching was not yet firmly established in the Church. That teaching is the centre of this Epistle, as will appear afterwards.

We recognise then a twofold use of the word—one limited, the other general. In the limited sense the apostolate ceased with its first possessors, and with the power they had of supernatural, physical, and spiritual manifestations. In the general sense of Divinely called and equipped messengers and teachers of His truth, we still have apostles and prophets in the Church, if we choose to call them so.

Of Jesus Christ: rather "Christ Jesus," R.V. The Apostle uses these two names in either order with about equal frequency. Perhaps there may be a purpose of emphasis in fixing the order—whether it be laid on the personal or the official designation. **The Christ**—*Messiah*. In the Gospels, even when used for our Lord, the word is preceded by the article, thereby indicating the great "Hope" of the Jewish people. In Acts we find the earliest contentings of the Church with the Jews turned on the claim that "Jesus is the Christ." Thus Peter argued at Pentecost, as he had previously to the Lord Himself at Cæsarea Philippi (Mark viii. 29). For some time this line of argument was prominent, but rapidly the word became, in Church circles at least, a part of a combined name—Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus. Even the article becomes disused, till one or other or both names combined becomes the ordinary use. It requires no more than mention that **Jesus** is the name given our Lord at His annunciation, and was no doubt made public at His circumcision, as in the case of His kinsman John Baptist.

By the Will of God. Occasionally the Apostle enlarges on his resolute insistence that he derived his apostleship from God and from Him only. Here he is content with the bare statement.

And Timothy. The first mention of Timothy occurs Acts xvi. 1, 3, in the course of Paul's second missionary journey. Of mixed Jewish and Gentile parentage, he was deprived of synagogal instruction

and recognition. The loss was well made up by the blessing of a godly mother and grandmother (Eunice and Lois). When a youth he was circumcised under Paul's directions, and he thus became serviceable in Jewish society, which would otherwise have been closed against him. He continued the Apostle's most loved and trusted associate through all his after history, participating in both his active labours and his prison oversight of churches. The last letter of the Apostle, on the eve of his martyrdom, is to Timothy, still, as ever, "my dearly beloved son." Some valuable hints regarding Timothy's personal struggles to maintain his personal Christian character and position may be gathered from the letters sent to him. Like the Apostle, he evidently required "to keep under his body," and he bravely set himself to do so. Tradition has it that he perished at Ephesus during a feast to Artemis, an end his much loved father in God narrowly escaped many years previously.

The brother. This manner of speaking of fellow-Christians was early in use in the Church, and "leads straight to the doctrine of regeneration" (Maclaren). It was founded on our Lord's own teaching, and occurs on the lips of Ananias of Damascus in his recognition of Paul immediately after his conversion. It is used collectively of Christians in Joppa, Judea, Lystra, Corinth, etc., and stood for the Christian community even before Pentecost (Acts i. 15, R.V.).

There seems a special note of recognition in applying it here to Timothy—as if to say "a brother indeed."

Ver. 2. To the Saints (*Hagioi*). The words *saint* and *holy* are one in Greek. So are sanctification and holiness, hallow and sanctify. The thought first occurs in Scripture (apart from "hallowing the seventh day") in the narrative of the Burning Bush (Ex. iii. 5). For many centuries it simply meant what was set apart to God, and might be true of persons, places, things, times, etc. It does not give any suggestion of character, simply of Divine property. He may destroy it or use it, as He sees fit. All God's Israel were thus holy, irrespective of character. When thus understood we may with absolute propriety use such expressions as Holy day, holy communion, holy Bible, holy ministry, etc., where the adjective merely indicates that the subject spoken of is distinguished in its present use as belonging to God. In the N.T. the children of even one Christian parent are saints. So in the Epistles are those who have declared themselves followers of Jesus Christ. This use is general in Acts also. The "Saint" of ecclesiastical history has no place in Scripture, indeed, not in *fact*. In the decay of the Church certain individuals were fixed upon to absorb the honours of saintship, while the Church reserved the right to *make saints*. When studied as a N.T. *doctrine* holiness implies a *character*, corresponding to that of God, wrought upon men by the Holy Spirit. As a Christian term holiness implies *all-roundness*, *wholeness*, or completeness of Christ-likeness.

and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colossæ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Faithful brethren. The word here employed means either *faithful* or *believing*. Where it stands either may be equally suitable. There seems no reason for supposing that the Apostle means to distinguish brother from brother. His great soul, like his Master's, lives above unnecessary definitions, and dwells in the liberty of only suspecting when he has become persuaded.

Colossæ. This reading is almost universally adopted (see remarks in the Introduction).

Grace (*charis*). The usual salutation in the Gentile world was *Chairé*, translated "Greeting," "Hail," etc. In the N.T. the word assumes a new importance, and is best known, not as mere favour, its usual classical meaning, but as the entire sum of temporal and spiritual good secured to men by the Lord Jesus. Though little used in the Gospels, and not at all by Matthew and Mark, it is very frequent in the Epistles.

Peace. This was the usual Jewish salutation—having come down from the earliest period of Semitic social life. Our Lord employs it in directing His followers how to salute men when entering their houses, and He personally so saluted His disciples when He entered their fellowship after His resurrection,—“Peace be unto you.” In the Epistles it assumes a meaning no doubt resulting from the Lord's assurance, “in Me ye shall have peace.” In Peter's discourse, recorded in Acts x. 36, the gospel is described as “good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ.” In his letter to the Ephesians Paul speaks of the Lord “*our peace*”; he also says “*He made peace*,” and describes the gospel as “*preaching peace*.” Our opinion is that every faithful and truly justified man may and ought infallibly to believe that his sins are remitted to him as an individual, and that . . . he hath this grace and peace which the Apostle desired for the Colossians” (Davenant, *Col.*). That the early Christians possessed this assurance of peace is beautifully displayed in the Roman Catacombs where the words IN PACE occur with wonderful frequency on the tombs of old and young.

From God our Father. The Christian man's relation to God the Father is specially through the relation of Persons within the Trinity itself. The Christian man is united to the Lord Jesus so as to be one with Him, and in this union is one with Him as He is with the Father—“that they also may be one in us.” This relation is entirely different from any creature Fatherhood of God, and is also essentially different from similar language found in the O.T., *e.g.* “But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father.”

And the Lord Jesus Christ. These words ought to be omitted here, as in R.V. and R.G.T. They occur in the corresponding place in Ephesians, from which they have probably been transferred.

3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord
4 Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard

§ 2. THANKSGIVING FOR THE COLOSSIANS (3-8)

Ver. 3. In this section the Apostle describes the true gospel of Jesus Christ, and indicates what constitutes a worthy reception of it as manifested by the Colossians.

We give thanks. In some of his letters the Apostle uses the form "blessed be God" to introduce his thanksgivings. "Paul makes use of thanksgiving in place of congratulation" (Calvin).

To God and the Father. A better reading is "God the Father." The Christian suggestiveness of this expression is probably traceable to John xx. 17.

Of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the full N.T. designation of the Saviour. The new element now introduced—"OUR LORD"—is of the greatest importance. The Greek word *Kurios* was employed in ordinary fellowship as a note of respect or honour, e.g. "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with." It is also the LXX. rendering of the Hebrew "JEHOVAH" or Yahveh. When so used in our A.V. the letters are always printed in capitals, LORD. We must remember that this LXX. version was in common use in our Lord's day, and is generally employed in quotations from the O.T. by our Lord and His Apostles. The Lord Jesus became thus known from the beginning of the Christian Church. "Our Lord" meant "our Jehovah." Thus Peter argued at Pentecost: "God hath made Him *both Lord* and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." In the Epistle to the Romans the Confession on which Salvation depends is said to be that "JESUS IS LORD." Doubtless, as Lightfoot maintains, this is "the name which is above every name." It was so to the Jew in Covenant, and so also under the New Covenant. To bow at the name of "Jesus," and not of "Lord," is therefore a mistake of misdirected honour, even were there not the grotesqueness of the literalness of the performance. Recent studies of ancient documents have indeed led to the general conclusion that in the time of Paul "Lord" was throughout the Eastern world "a universally acknowledged religious conception" (Deissmann). Our Lord, therefore, signifies not official authority, but the Divine Personality of Him who is, at the same time, the Messiah and the Saviour. "OUR JEHOVAH-JESUS-THE-MESSIAH" is His full N.T. name.

Praying always for you. Elsewhere Paul subdivides prayer into "prayer, supplication, thanksgiving" (Phil. iv. 6; cf. Eph. vi. 18). His experience of Divine impulse in his prayers is discovered in Rom. viii. 26 (cf. 2 Sam. vii. 27, "Thy servant hath found in his heart to pray this prayer"). The experience of promptings to prayer is common among Christians, sometimes with very remarkable attending circumstances. Few things in the inner life require more careful attention than these movings of our spirits.

of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye
5 have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for

Ver. 4. **Since we heard of your faith**: lit. "*having heard.*" The Apostle thus introduces his special object in writing to the Colossians. With his wonted adroit courtesy he puts in front the information regarding them which gladdened his spirit. He discovers in the report he had received evidence that each of the great virtues—faith, hope, love—flourished among them. In some of his letters he mentions only one of these (*e.g.* Rome), elsewhere two (*e.g.* 2 Thess.); but here, as in 1 Thessalonians, etc., the entire trinity.

Faith in Christ Jesus. The reference is not to their conversion, but to the character of their Christian profession ("Christ *dwelling in* their hearts by faith"). To believe, believe in, and believe on, the Lord Jesus, are in Scripture used interchangeably, and very specially in John's writings (*e.g.* John vi. 29, 30, viii. 30, 31). According to the context, any of these expressions may or may not refer to saving faith. The distinction often urged between faith in the O.T. and in the N.T. is to be understood only of the specific testimony requiring faith. The O.T. word of God demanding faith differed from the N.T. word. The one was a word of complex legal enactments, with promises added, the other is a simple command to receive and possess the Person of the living Word, the Lord Christ. The "obedience of faith" in the one case recognised certain performances and conduct; in the other case it simply received a definite relation to the Incarnate Son. In each case "faith in God" is the demand made, but instead of the works of the O.T. the New Covenant says: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John vi. 29). In Rom. x., where both Covenants are briefly stated, Paul replaces the "DO" of Deut. xxx. 12, 14, with "BELIEVE" for the New Covenant. The faith which thus establishes a *oneness* with Jesus Christ continues to supply the entire after-life with new faculties, resources, and experiences.

And of the love . . . Saints. Love (Greek, *agapé*) has received a new richness from Jesus Christ. The Greek word so common in the N.T. was long thought to be "N.T. Greek." Even Trench (*Synon.*) speaks of it as "born within the bosom of revealed religion." It has since his time been discovered (Deissmann, *B. Studies*) in Philo, independently of Scripture. Our *agapé* is specially claimed for God, thus suggesting that love is an exercise of the will and heart together. Its full force may be best measured through Paul's prose poem, 1 Cor. xiii.: "When we are at rest in Him, the work of love is but the glad expression of our rest" (Moule, *Col. St.*).

Ver. 5. **For** (R.V. "because of") the hope. It is much discussed whether "hope" is grammatically to be related to "love" or "thanksgiving." But while in the sentence "We give thanks" does seem somewhat remote from "hope," to found faith and love on hope is much more remote from Christian teaching and experience. The word

you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of
 6 the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it

Hope does not occur in the Gospels. But then they record the presence among men of "the Hope" of Israel. But no sooner does He return to the Father than He becomes again the object of Hope—a hope of His "coming again." In all John's writings he uses "hope" only once, and Peter uses it only three times. Sometimes in the N.T., as with ourselves, hope expresses inward feeling, not objective expectation, but its correct use is always affirmative, not negative or hesitative, prospective not present. The hope is here made definite—"laid up." The idea is a treasure, and was probably derived from our Lord's teaching in Matt. vi. 20. Under the thought of "an inheritance" Peter describes the hope as "kept in Heaven" (1 Pet. i. 4).

In Heaven: lit. "*in the heavens.*" The Hebrews thought of Heaven as sevenfold, and so used a plural form. The ancient Babylonian ziggurat rose by seven stages to meet the God whose chamber was at the top. Paul speaks of "the third Heavens," and we read "above all heavens." The word itself means *Heave* (Scotch, *Lift*). The Greeks expressed the same by *Oouranos*, used only in the singular, though in the N.T. used in plural, even in such a form as "the Kingdom of Heaven," and in the Lord's Prayer. The now common reference of the word to God Himself is said to date from the time of Alexander the Great (Westcott). Of what heaven consists we are graciously ignorant. To see with entirely fresh surprise is immeasurably better than to recognise what we had read in guide-books and seen in postcards.

Whereof ye heard before. "Before" may suggest a contrast between the teaching they first received and something later which might wish to displace it.

In the word of the truth of the Gospel. "Word" here is Greek *Logos*, and expresses God's message either in human language or in the Person of His Son. The Fourth Gospel opens with—"In the beginning was the Word, . . . and the Word was God." In Mark our Lord's teaching is described thus: "He spake the Word to them." Preachers are by Luke (i. 2) described as "Ministers of the Word." Elsewhere in this letter (iv. 3) the Apostle employs the phrase "door of the Word" (utterance, A.V.), by which he means opportunity for preaching Christ's mystery.

The truth of the Gospel. More seems meant than simply "the true Gospel." The Gospel is itself *the great truth*. There were many "Gospels" abroad claiming to be the gospel of Christ. These Paul repudiated with anathema (Gal. i. 9). No matter who might preach them, no matter what origin they might claim. John uses "the truth" to mark the entire revelation of Christ, and states emphatically "the truth became through Jesus Christ." He also records the Saviour's promise that when the Paraclete should come He would lead the Apostles unto "all the truth." On the fulfilment

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

of this Paul took his stand, and in its consciousness repudiated all contrary teaching as opposing Christ.

The Gospel. Our English word "Gospel" is variously traced; by some to *God* and *spell* (as gossips=God-sibs), in which case it means "a narrative of God"; by others to *good* and *spell*, when it means "good news," thus closely approaching the Greek word *Eu-Angelion*—*Evangel*. The N.T. has appropriated the word for its own good tidings. It is, however, never used in the narratives of Luke or John, only twice in the Acts, and only once by Peter. At first the use was "Good news of the Kingdom," "the Gospel of Christ," "the Gospel of our Salvation." Very soon, however, it became technical and stood alone. Our application of the term to denominate the four narratives of our Lord's sojourn on earth has no Scriptural authority. In the Early Church the four narratives were together spoken of as "The Evangel," but by the time of Justin Martyr the present use prevailed (Dods, *Introduc. N.T.*; Westcott, *Intro. Gos.*).

Ver. 6. Which is come unto you: lit. "*is present with you.*" The meaning seems to be "you already possess the ultimate truth," which is also possessed everywhere and has its harvests in every land. They therefore required no new teaching; nor could any new teaching produce such fruit as had resulted from the Gospel, which had already done so much for them. The appeal to experience is always relied on by Paul as an unanswerable argument in his establishment of truth. Even with the Galatians this was his strongest weapon.

As in all the world. The Greek *Cosmos*, used here, is very variously applied; e.g. to indicate the universe, society, the Roman Empire, and also, morally, to distinguish the "world" from the Church. Here it seems introduced in a large general way, as we say, "All the world knows." It may, of course, mean the Roman world, over much of which Paul had himself in ten years made known the good news. His converts were still more widely scattered. The enumeration of the regions from which the 3000 of the day of Pentecost were drawn shows at a single glance how widely the Gospel message spread from the very beginning of the Church. To this we may add the manifest greater propagative power of the Gospel in the first age, though, now and again, we hear of even greater results in equally short time. There are "years of grace" since the Reformation which dwarf the day of Pentecost.

And bringeth forth fruit. It is of the essence of Christianity to reproduce itself. Hence the truth of what is often stated—"the true Church must be a missionary Church." Fruit as we handle it and eat it is no more than the covering of the propagative life of the plant—one of nature's manifold devices to disperse seeds for future

harvests. This is equally true whether the fruit be in personal character or in Christian effort.

And increaseth. This clause, though not in A.V., ought from weight of evidence to be supplied. It adds to the figure what is a characteristic of healthy Christian life. Some lives are so bent on fruit through constant activity that they quite neglect "to grow by grace and knowledge." In nature fruit is found on *new wood*, even in the case of the oldest trees as well as of yearly crops and annuals. Gospel truth is peculiarly adapted to supply *increase*. Alford misses the truth here by distinguishing between a tree and corn. Church and mission must grow together, and where either becomes straitened, one important cause will certainly be found in the other.

As it doth also in you. This is unnecessary after what precedes, but the big-souled Apostle is more careful of his courtesy than of his literature. Sometimes the heart is too full for words: at other times it cannot find words enough to convey its exuberance.

Since the day ye heard . . . grace of God. The Apostle thus exhibits another synonym for "the gospel." "How shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard?" The knowledge here mentioned is intensive, and conveys the idea of *insight* (see ver. 9). We are not to distinguish between the grace of God and the grace of Christ Jesus. Yet we may remember that grace belongs to the Father as something He is pleased to bestow freely, and "grace became through Jesus Christ" as the result of His Atonement and Righteousness. His grace is the income of His work.

Since the day. Note the immediateness of gospel power of Colosse. In the records of modern missions many years frequently pass ere any visible fruit is gathered. In the Apostle's experience, *e.g.* in Thessalonica, not only was fruit frequently immediate, but consolidation scarcely less so. It seems to have been less immediate in Corinth and Philippi. The preacher's concern must be to be sure he preaches a gospel capable of bearing immediate fruit, whether it be followed by this result at once or only after long patience. Such a gospel can be learned from Scripture, and from a thousand testimonies of immediate results in *all* ages of the Church. A Scotch Marrow-man would say of his preaching, "I laid him in Christ's way" (Low's *Boston*).

In truth. This clause may, constructively, belong to either "received" or "grace." From Paul's immediate purpose it seems better to relate it to the gospel. Bengel has the fine remark: "The acknowledgment of the truth responds to the truth of the preaching, neither admits of faking" (*mangonium*). Calvin says, "Truly and without pretence."

The description of a genuine gospel message found above may be summarised thus: (1) It is of *world-wide* suitability; (2) it is a gospel which *produces*, and keeps producing, *fruit*; (3) it is a gospel which commands *growth*, alongside its fruitfulness; (4) it is a gospel

7 grace of God in truth: As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister

which is capable of securing *immediate* fruit; and (5) it is a gospel which makes its burden and its message to be *the grace of God*.

Ver. 7. As ye also learned of Epaphras. We should omit "also" with the best MSS. (R.G.T., etc.). Its insertion would suggest that Epaphras was not their first gospel teacher. Epaphras. The name is a contracted form of Epaphroditus, but he is not to be confounded with the Philippian envoy of that name, who was a European, not an Asiatic. He apparently came to the knowledge of Christ through Paul's ministry, perhaps in Ephesus. From the common instinct of grace, he was led to communicate the good news in Colosse and its neighbourhood. Some of the best aggressive work on the foreign field is done in this way. Paul, in his letter to Thessalonica, describes this dispersive power of grace by calling the Christians there *echoes*, whereby words first heard in one place were echoed far and wide. The man of Gadara acted in this way. Both here and in the letter to Philemon, Epaphras is described as "dear fellow-slave in Christ Jesus." How much more famous this one humble earnest soul has become than the vast proportion of the world's greatest conquerors and statesmen!

Our dear fellow-servant, *i.e.* "fellow-slave." Paul, James, Peter, Jude are all proud to call themselves slaves of Jesus Christ. In addition to Epaphras only Tychicus is so designated by Paul. The slave, while the entire property of his master, was more highly esteemed than the hired servant. Hence the abasement of the prodigal when willing to occupy such a position. The absoluteness of parental authority was almost identical with that of master and slave. Each equally required *manumission* in order to personal freedom. The hold thus possessed is well illustrated, even in later ages, by the relations of Michael Angelo and his father (see Appendix C).

Who is for you a faithful minister of Christ. The R.V. reads "on our behalf," as though Epaphras occupied Paul's place in relation to the Colossians. Barnes, reading with A.V. says, "For you, when with you and in managing your interests here."

Minister. The Greek is *diaconos*, our *deacon*. Two derivations of the word are suggested, the one=*in the dust*, the other=*one who hastens*. In the N.T. it is used generally of any sphere of service, and particularly of an office in the Christian Church. This latter use seems confined to the later writings of the Apostle, though it has sometimes been traced to his letter to Rome. Of course there is no indication of either time or place of the office from this circumstance. Arguments on omissions are singularly unreliable, and are ever becoming intensely ridiculous. Its relation to other words denoting service comes out in our Lord's teaching, that those who wished to become great in His Kingdom must become *diaconos* among His followers; and he who aimed at a first place must become a (*doulos*)

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

slave—not to Him, but to all men. It is attached to Phebe's name perhaps officially, and certainly officially to certain officers in the Church at Philippi. The character suitable for those who could occupy this office is detailed in Paul's first letter to Timothy. In the modern Christian Church the name *deacon* is used very variously. The Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Nonconformist deacon have very little in common, and probably the Apostle would ask regarding each, "Where got you this official?" A very careful study and statement of the subject may be found in Hort's *Ecclesia*. There is certainly every reason to agree with Bishop Lightfoot that the Episcopal deacon had no corresponding official in the synagogue. It is equally true that he is not in Scripture.

Ver. 8. Who also declared . . . Spirit. Declared is "made manifest." From Epaphras' representations Paul had become convinced that the Colossians cherished affection toward him. He delights to recognise the satisfaction this gave him, and that it added a new bond which deepened his eagerness on their behalf. Nothing is gained, and much is lost by secret love. As an inset of fruitful faith, Peter makes it the leading element in the spectrum of spiritual productiveness.

In the Spirit. The word *pneuma* (the source of our *pneumatics*) occurs in the N.T. three hundred and seventy-nine times. As the most ancient MSS. are all in capitals (*uncials, inch-long letters*), there is no distinction of great S and small s. Afterwards, cursive writing came into use, in which almost the entire MS. was written without capitals. Thus we get no MS. help in determining when the Holy Spirit and the human or other spirit may be intended. Our A.V. has differed greatly in its printed copies from time to time. Also the present A.V. and the R.V. constantly disagree in respect to printing this word spirit. In the place now before us the A.V., in the Oxford Press Edition of 1896, has spirit, the R.V. Spirit. Besides all this, the word is employed in the N.T. with reference to twelve distinct subjects (see Bullinger, *Given and His Gifts*).

If we are, with the R.V., to understand the Holy Spirit in this place, it is the only mention of Him in the letter. Probably even this is not so, but only a reference to His work upon the human spirit of the Colossians. This omission of reference to the Spirit is remarkable. A corresponding want of reference to the O.T. has been noted. They afford instructive material against conclusions from omission, and also show a freedom in presenting truth which among ourselves would often provoke suspicion.

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

§ 3. PRAYER FOR THE COLOSSIANS (9-13)

Ver. 9. For this cause we also. Nothing makes prayer rise in a Christian heart so readily and so strongly as good news of the workings of grace. When the grace is in some way linked to the person who prays, we may expect a greater outpouring of the heart. Persons whom nothing could persuade to recognise mission claims have become deeply interested when some loved one has become a missionary.

From the day we heard it. Paul puts his readiness to pray for them alongside their readiness to receive the gospel. Each was moved from the very first. This was a new bond between them.

Do not cease to pray for you, and to desire. Is this hyperbole (Ellicott)? If prayer could only be by "entering the closet and shutting the door," it no doubt is. But unbrokenness of desire, which also is prayer, we know even in matters of less importance. The ever-presence of God may be cultivated by active desire as well as by any other form of heart-occupation. There are wonders in *telepathy* among men, but greater in *sympathy* with our God for men. Note here that there is no satisfying with grace. The more received, the more the hunger. True, at some moments and under some particular forms of grace, men have cried, "Lord, stay Thy hand, Thy silly vessel can hold no more." Soon, however, the common cry returns, "Lord increase Thy grace." Bengel distinguishes prayer and desire as *genus* and *species*.

That ye might be filled. "Filled" is a thought ever present with the Apostle, because of his intense sense that the gospel is boundlessly rich in bestowment. This letter is perhaps more occupied with this thought than any other part of Scripture. "My God shall supply all your need," *i.e.* "fill up." In Eph. i. 23, he seems to reach his climax, "He filleth all in all." We shall find the same in this Epistle again and again. He thus introduces us to his teaching on the PLEROMA (*i.e. fulness*) MYSTERY which is central in the Epistle.

With the knowledge of His will. The Apostle uses three words, more specially, for knowledge: one of which is generally (not Eph. iii. 4) translated *understanding*. The other two are *gnosis* and *epignosis*. Almost all commentators and scholars distinguish these as less and more intense knowledge; the latter, expressing "*insight*," is that here employed. Similarly, Trench in his *Synonyms*, who also quotes Grotius, etc. Dean Robinson (also Olshausen) in his *Ephesians* labours to prove that *epignosis* refers to some particular knowledge. On I Cor. xiii. 12 Bengel remarks, "The compound signifies much more than the simple." Surely this passage alone refutes the Dean's position: "Now I know (verbal form of *gnosis*) in part; then shall I know (the verb of *epignosis*) even as also I am

filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and 10 spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy known" (verb of *epignosis*), where the coming knowledge is evidently more *wide* and intense. Beet (Phil. i. 9) makes the word here—"Scientific knowledge." In Col. ii. 2, the A.V. translates it "acknowledgment." Apart from the use of the verb (eleven times), the Apostle employs the term fifteen times, and most frequently in this letter.

Will. "Good, perfect, and acceptable will of God" is Paul's description of God's will (Rom. xii. 2). However technical the term Righteousness may sometimes seem, our Lord used it to express simply *the will of God*. All righteousness between man and man is also that which is according to God's will. Whatever may be imagined by the wish, "Oh, to be nothing, nothing," the mystics who invented the expression, and specially St. John of the Cross, intended it to signify a desire to have no will but God's, to be able truly to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done." Paul's first use of his new life was to exchange his previous "I verily thought I ought" into "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The more we put on Christ the more we shall instinctively say, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." What we too often regard as medicine, was by our Lord called daily bread—"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me."

In all wisdom. "*All*" here, as in many places, denotes "every kind of—." Nothing seems more characteristic of Paul's style than his play with this word. He piles thought on thought, each burdened with this "all," as though he were concerned to adduce at once every possible element in the domain of grace. The following places will explain this characteristic: Rom. iii. 19-23, six times; Rom. x. 11-18, six times; Rom. x. 1-4, five times; Rom. xv. 22-28, twelve times; Phil. i. 1-9, eight times. In this Epistle alone the word occurs forty times.

Spiritual belongs to both wisdom and understanding.

Wisdom (Greek, *sophia*) is frequent in this letter, but much more so in I Corinthians. Bengel says: "Wisdom lies in the entire grasp of the soul's faculties; understanding belongs to the intellect." We read of wisdom which is a gift of the Spirit. It is distinguished from merely human (I Cor. ii. 5), fleshly (2 Cor. i. 12), worldly, or age wisdom (I Cor. ii. 6). "This petition may almost be called the keynote of this group of Epistles" (Beet).

Ver. 10. That ye might walk. This is a Scripture form of expression for the entire life. We read of this walk from earliest ages; e.g. "Enoch walked with God." It is described as walking *with, after, before, and in the way of God*. This is said to be done "by faith," "in the Spirit," "in Christ," "in wisdom," etc. This practical view of true living is expressed in our Lord's "follow Me" and in "imitation" of Him, which is the form of following indicated in the

of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Epistles. Thus "followers of God 'are' imitators of God." Dean Robinson says that the moral purpose of the word here used is confined to the writings of Paul and John. In Ephesians alone it occurs seven times, and in John's Epistles ten times. "It is in harmony with the fact that from the first Christianity was proclaimed as '*A Way*' (Acts ix. 2, xviii. 25, etc.)."

Worthy. R.V. "worthily." The adverbial use of the adjective in older English (cf. Eph. iv. 1; 1 Thess. ii. 12) has created much perplexity in many consciences. None walk more successfully than "*worthily*," i.e. becomingly, and that is Paul's prayer here. It expects habitual conduct, not full attainment. Perhaps the distinction is best recognised in reference to the Lord's Supper, where none are worthy and yet all are required to behave worthily. The Baptist, the Prodigal, the Centurion all felt unworthy, yet all drew near for welcome and received it.

The Lord (see ver. 3). The Saviour is habitually thus designated. The phrase is varied to "worthy of God" (1 Thess. ii. 12), and "of your calling" (Eph. iv. 1).

Unto all pleasing. This is the first part of the walk worthily of the Lord. The substantive "pleasing" is used only here in the N.T., but the verb is frequent in Paul's letters. Scholars tell us that in classic Greek the word had a suggestion of cringing (Ellicott, Lightfoot, Abbott, etc.), but in Philo, of Paul's age, it frequently occurs in a high sense, as here (see Deissmann, *Studies*).

All, is here distributive—"every kind of—"

Bearing fruit. The result of pleasing God is fruitfulness (see ver. 6), and that not in one form of activity alone, but, again distributively—**every good work.** This is no doubt an echo of our Lord's words, John xv. 16. The same vitality of gospel influence which had produced fruit in their conversion they must now display in a dynamic issuing from their lives towards others. The Greek word "good," as in "good Shepherd," etc., is emphatically=winsome, though the ordinary application is also frequent in Scripture. "Created in Jesus Christ unto good works" is the birth-calling of every child of God (Eph. ii. 10).

And increasing in the knowledge of God. Here again the Apostle reduplicates and combines fruit and increase (see ver. 6). The direction of gospel energy resulting in fruit is to be found in "knowledge of God." There are three readings here, one "by the knowledge," and the others "in" and "into" the knowledge. The Colossians' first increase (ver. 6) was founded on knowledge, and so we may best understand this clause also. About the same time at which he wrote this letter he sent another to Philippi in which (iii. 8) he deliberately renounces all his gains for "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." Through that knowledge he expected to win

11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made

the prize of his Divine calling. Knowledge is again *epignosis*: "not a knowledge (*gnosis*) which puffs up, but a knowledge (*epignosis*) which increases" (Alford; 1 Cor. viii. 1).

Ver. 11. Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power: lit. "in every kind of power empowered according to the might of His glory." The dynamic (*dynamis*) of the Christian life has its supply in the dynamic which resides in the glory of the ascended Lord. The word itself is that employed by our Lord when the woman touched Him to whom He said "virtue," i.e. "dynamic power has gone out of Me." It is also one of the words descriptive of His miracles, "mighty works." He is Himself spoken of as "the Son of God, with power." The dynamic is found in this larger sense in the entire new life in Christ Jesus, whose existence and supply belong to vital union with Him in glory, which is the sphere of His distribution of His fulness. "The glory which Thou gavest me I have given them." The Apostle Paul divides his grasp of gospel truth into two parts—the gospel of the *grace* of God, and the gospel of the *glory* of God. The latter occupies the greater part of the prison letters, specially Ephesians and Colossians; the former division occupies the second group. The "riches of the glory" which he elaborates in Ephesians, belong to the present possession of glory in this world, and is central in the great mystery which he unfolds in these prison letters (see more fully, iii. 4).

Might of His glory. We may here understand "might" as we do "riches" in Eph. iii. 4, Phil. iii. 19 ("Riches of glory").

Unto all patience and long-suffering. All is again=every kind of—"Patience and long-suffering," the one word stands for "bearing up," the other for "bearing through." The one suggests soul-quiet when trial comes from *things*, the other quiet when it comes from *persons* (Trench, *Syn.* vol. ii. p. 10ff.). In this way God is long-suffering, but is never patient in our sense. He is the "God of patience" because He makes men patient (Trench).

With joyfulness. This is the exuberance which distinguishes every virtue and grace when it becomes Christian. The Christian note, in every noble characteristic, is gladness—"as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing," so (1 Thess. i. 6) "having received the word in much affliction, with joy in the Holy Ghost," "took joyfully the spoiling of your goods" (Heb. x. 34). Some (with Chrysostom, Ellicott, etc.) connect "joy" with the following clause, but not so Lightfoot, Alford, R.G.T., etc.

Ver. 12. Giving thanks unto the Father. The "thanks" apparently belongs to the prayer, and is an element in the grace desired for the Colossians. Again he returns to ver. 3, and from it carries thanks-

us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints
13 in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of
giving which he now desires them to cherish, as he had cherished it
for them. As for himself, so for them, he would have the thanksgiving
directed to the Father (see ii. 7).

Who hath made us (or, you) meet to be partakers. Here we find
the specific matter of thankfulness with which he desires to occupy
the saints in Colosse. **Made us (you) meet, i.e. "sufficient"** or "com-
petent" (Lightfoot); "qualified" (Moule). The entire clause is one
word in Greek, and may be rendered, consistently with the figure
used, "*enfranchised us.*" The Greek word is only once again found
in the N.T., 2 Cor. iii. 6, where the A.V. reads: "Made us able
(ministers)." The adjective form is frequent in the Epistles.

Of the inheritance of the Saints: lit. "*into the portion of the lot of
the saints.*" The idea in the Apostle's mind seems to be drawn from
the planting of a Roman colony, which, wherever established, con-
tinued in vital connection with Rome itself. Here the colonists are
not Romans, but subjects of the Kingdom of Christ. They are
represented as drawn from a conquered region, and have been trans-
ferred to territory of the kingdom of which they have now become a
part. There they are established as a colony, possessed of every
privilege belonging to citizens in the imperial city itself. The first
step in this elevation is *enfranchisement* or receiving citizen rights.
With this was presented a definite *allotment* or "parcel of lot," of
land in the territory to be colonised. It is this point which is now
before us. The Colossians are reminded that they have been
manumitted and have received the *municipium* or civic rights in
Christ's Kingdom, and with these a specific allotment with the saints
generally. The region to be occupied is that of grace, and there they
meantime enjoy their new citizenship. Their rights are equal
to those now in *glory*. But whether it is as grace now or glory
afterwards, the kingdom is one and its name is LIGHT, which at once
suggests the name of the country they previously inhabited, which
is DARKNESS. The thought can be followed in the subdivision of
Canaan under Joshua, where "the line" indicates the boundary of
each allotment. "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasantness."
"The lot of our inheritance, choose out for us shall He." "To
every man according to his several ability," is the principle on which
the lots are assigned.

Ver. 13. **Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.** Here
is a definite statement historically presented of how the rescue was
accomplished and where the conflict took place. The Colossians
were found under the power or rule of "the Darkness" kingdom, of
which they formed a part: "once ye were darkness, but now are ye
light in the Lord." The Divine power effected a rescue: "by grace are
ye saved," and for them "the darkness was past and the true light
now shineth." Barnes refers, under this clause, to the Persian

darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of
14 his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through
belief in two kingdoms in the universe, that of Darkness and that
of Light.

And hath translated us. Had the rescue been made by another than God, it might have resulted in captivity or death, after a triumphal exhibition of their miserable impotence. But this is not God's way. He manumits all His captives, and settles them in His own dominions, here described the Kingdom of the Son of His love. This kingdom is partly in this world and partly beyond it. It is a kingdom which has already come, but which also is "reserved in Heaven" as yet. Though pre-eminently a spiritual kingdom, it never loses the characteristics of locality and extension. But whether present or future "the Son of His love" rules over it in His own Person, and the heralds of His dominion announce both grace and glory, now and for ever, to all who are enrolled as His subjects.

Olshausen quotes from Augustine: "The Son of His love is no other than He who is begotten of His substance."

§ 4. A HYMN OF THE CHRIST (14-20)

Ver. 14. In whom we have redemption. Thus the Apostle begins a relation of the far-reaching privileges of every colonist settled in his lot in this kingdom of the Christ beloved. The privileges are: (1) redemption. The word means the receipt given for a ransom paid. He is Himself this receipt, and so long as He continues faithful and King, so long every "rescued" and "translated" colonist must possess security for his lot in the inheritance. His title to all is in the Christ's own Person. The second privilege is (2) the forgiveness of sins. A colony of once-rebels might well often tremble lest their past doings might sometime or somehow be remembered again. The forgiveness here mentioned is "putting away" or "*re-mission*" of sins. It implies that an absolute end has been made in Him and by Him of all the sins. He has taken them unto Himself; so they can never be found elsewhere. The absolute security, therefore, of every colonist is entirely wrapped up in Him, who is the King over all, by appointment of the Father, whose love is centred in Him.

Through His blood. This clause does not belong to the true text, but has been imported from Eph. i. 7.

At this point the Apostle glides, almost imperceptibly, from prayer to song. In A. S. Way's remarkable translation of Paul's Epistles many passages are selected and arranged as Hymns. The following passage is one of these, and is entitled "Hymn of Messiah Supreme." The hymn is an outburst of Paul's spirit, fired by his contemplation of the glorious grace of the Lord Christ. He often breaks off in similar flights under the same impulse. This, however, is more lofty and sustained than usual. In the translation by Mr.

15 his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every

Way the hymn begins at ver. 13 and closes at ver. 20. The coherence of the passage seems to demand vers. 13 and 14 for the preceding prayer, or rather the prayer-argument.

Ver. 15. **Who is the image of the invisible God.** In Eph. i. 20-23; Phil. ii. 6-11, and in this hymn the Person of the Christ is described more fully than elsewhere. Three relations are dwelt on: (1) the Son's relation to the Father, ver. 15; (2) His relation to Creation, vers. 16, 17; (3) His relation to the Church, ver. 18. Thereafter follows a grand summary, descriptive of the effect of His atonement on the universe.

Image. The word itself stands for three things: (1) *likeness*, (2) derivation, (3) common nature (Davenant); or "likeness, representation, manifestation" (Lightfoot). In respect of our Lord, all three are present, and thus nothing is wanting in Him to complete the image of the Father. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." This truth is not confined to His incarnate state, but is Eternal truth regarding Him. His likeness to the Father is Eternal, and so is His derivation from the Father as His only begotten Son. Thus we reach the Nicene Creed, "very God of very God"; or as in the Westminster Catechisms, "the same in substance, equal in power and glory." Calvin remarks on the early Councils missing the true point of "the image" in their eagerness to establish identity of essence—*homoousios*, and goes on to show that He is "the image" in reference to us, that we may behold the Father, the Godhead in Him. Our Lord is therefore "God manifest in the flesh." The Person is the Eternal Son, manifested in human nature, which He assumed. Bengel (2 Cor. iv. 4) remarks: "He who sees the Son sees the Father *in the face* of Christ." Another truth presents itself under this word "image." "Put ye on the new . . . after the image of Him," etc. "We all with open face . . . are changed into the same image." "Whom He did foreknow He also . . . to the image of the Son." The God-image is the Son's likeness from all eternity; and His image is ours (in Him) unto all eternity. The word *character*, "express image," of Heb. i. 6, closely answers to "image" here.

The invisible God. "No man hath seen God at any time." But in Christ Jesus the invisible is now seen. When, in Matt. xi. 27, our Lord speaks of His revealing the Father, He does not mean that He makes Him visible to any one, but that He makes men know the Father, *i.e.* know Him, as alone He can possibly be known, in the Christ. "He that *hath* seen Me *hath seen* the Father," is the Christ's answer to every request, "Show us the Father."

The "INVISIBLE GOD" is therefore His inherent description, not an incident of time or place. Neither by angel nor archangel, neither in time nor in eternity, can this impassable barrier be crossed, which is described positively as "dwelling in light which is unapproachable"

16 creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible,

(1 Tim. vi. 16). With several similar descriptions, the climax seems reached in Heb. xi. 27, "endured as *seeing* Him Who is *invisible*."

The first-born of every creature. R.V., "all creation." The Greek word is *PROTO-TOKOS*. Bengel thus disposes of what is to some minds a suggestion in this word that the Christ is Himself a part of creation, though the first part, "the *pro* which is contained in *proto-tokos*, governs the genitive 'of creation.'" *Time is an accident belonging to Creation*. Here, as in every word-study, we must leave mere etymology and even general use, and fall back on the analogy of truth discovered to us where the meaning is unmistakable. The clause has two hands, grasping God with the one and creation with the other. "The first-born"; the Son is so named again, ver. 18 and Rev. i. 5, with the added reference "of the dead"; also Rom. viii. 29, "of the brethren," and in Heb. i. 6, simply "the first-born." The second element in the word cannot possibly be related to creation which is not *born*, but *made*. It belongs of necessity to His eternal Sonship as "the only begotten." The word in all its references to our Lord evidently points to a headship relation, and yet a distinct priority. It has been surmised that as Paul uses the word *image* (*eikon*), which belongs also to the Alexandrian philosophy of his day, he here uses another Alexandrian expression of the *Logos* (Word). But much more probably he was influenced by Ps. lxxxix. 28, which led, through the LXX., to the adoption of "first-born" for the Messiah (see Alford's full note here).

Of all creation. The Greek may stand for either creation, creature, or the fiat of creation. Till the Arian controversy of the fourth century this passage was always referred to the eternal sonship. It was then used by the Arians to support their heresy of a creation of the Son to become Head of creaturehood. The word, did it stand alone, might no doubt suggest some such thought, but the corresponding word, "only begotten Son," His own claims, and their experimental realisation by His saints, close the door against everything that would detract from His eternal oneness and equality with the Father. His relation to *all creation* is equally clearly determined in the following clauses and by N.T. teaching generally. The Nicene Creed (A.D. 325) is most distinct—"By whom (*i.e.* Christ) all things were made."

Ver. 16. For by Him were all things created. Rather read "*in Him*," with R.V. The Christ is thus the archetypal original of the universe, in whom it first arises and from whom it all proceeds. "The world was made through Him," "Through whom also He made the ages." This view of the meaning is entirely consistent with Scripture, which, throughout, affirms that the Father is the Fountainhead of all, the Son the working accomplisher of all, and the Spirit the administrator of all the Son's accomplishments.

whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for

All things—the *universe, the all things*. We are not here occupied with this earth alone, but with all which constitutes, in modern expression, "*matter, ether, force*." All these have their origin in Him. Thus Bible science outruns natural science, which necessarily holds itself limited to "phenomena." Each science, however, may and should contribute its gains to other sciences, and it is from failure in this respect of good fellowship in truth that there is so much confusion of opinions among specialists. No more important contribution could be made to general science (encyclopædia) than what is now before us—that ere the beginning in phenomena all the universe in all its parts was created in the eternal Son.

Were created. The tense of the verb marks a definite accomplished act. The evolution of creation, described on the pages of nature and of history, may be satisfactorily indicated by the same word, but strictly the works were *finished* from the foundation of the world. We get a glimpse of this truth in one of its aspects in Eph. i. 4, "Chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world."

That are in Heaven and that are in Earth. Heaven is here in the plural (see ver. 5). *Earth* is a word which represents the solid ground—*gē*, as in "*geography*." Creation is thus made emphatic as embracing this earth and all outside it—all space.

Visible and invisible. If we follow Plato, this refers to the material and the immaterial. But there seems no good reason for so understanding the Apostle. "Invisible" may well be found in expanded form in what immediately follows.

Whether they be thrones . . . powers. The opinion seems well founded that the Apostle here enumerates four orders of beings in the unseen world. They are repeated in Eph. i. 21 in a slightly varied form and order. That there are in the antagonistic invisible kingdom similar ruling powers, we gather from Eph. vi. It has been denied that the Apostle approves the angelology here indicated and in Eph. vi. This is, as regards the latter place, an utterly impossible position to assume.

All things were created by Him and for Him. This is a recapitulation, but it also contains an amplification—"by Him": lit. "**through Him.**" This appears to mark the second stage of creation, that of phenomena, but not on earth alone, or only within the range of our physical senses. It is the first step of the evolution of God's eternal purpose on the page of universal history. It is "the beginning of the creation of God." The Word now utters what the Father planted in Him, and the utterance is found in the universe—"the all things." "The ages were framed (*i.e.* fitted up, perfected) by the Word of God." The same mystery of evolution from the Son extends to the specific history of His saints. It is interesting to notice on a coin of ancient Ephesus that Androclus, the founder

17 him : And he is before all things, and by him all 18 things consist. And he is the head of the body, the of the city, is denoted "creator of the Ephesians," the word used for creator being *Ktistes*, that used in Colossians for our Lord. Another coin of the same city designates Augustus *Ktistes*, not as founder, but recreator (Akerman).

And for Him. This marks the destination of the universe. He is its ω as He has also been its α . The mysteries of "matter, ether, and force" are ever becoming greater as His thoughts and works are understood. But while men speculate variously on the drift of all things, we know that the haven where they shall anchor eternally is within the veil now concealing the glory of the Christ. When He says "all power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth," He states not merely a dispensational but an eternal truth which extends much beyond power. "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory."

Were created : lit. "have been created." Creation was stated at the beginning of the verse to be an accomplished fact, here it is restated as an abiding reality.

Ver. 17. **And He is before all things.** Cf. John viii. 58, "Before Abraham was, I am." The present tense (*is*) puts the Christ outside the beginning, thereby throwing light on "the First-born" of ver. 16.

By Him all things consist, i.e. "stand together," our word system ("our little systems have their day"). This is *cohesion* in its fullest aspect. The nature of the Divine presence in the universe is thus indicated as an ever-determining force. It is the energy of *immanence*, as the previous clause marked the energy of *transcendence*. Thus the true "laws of nature" are simply records of His habitual activities, and their existence constantly depends on His independent determining good pleasure, who is God over all, before all, and in all. In this ascription we see Him at once the fashioner and the bond of creation. "In Him we (the all things) live and move and have our being." Science, as commonly spoken of by us, is consequently only at best "provisional statement."

Ver. 18. **And He is the Head of the Body.** The Son's relation to the Father and to the universe having been stated, vers. 15-17, we pass to consider His relation to the Church.

The Church—the Ecclesia. At the time of the Reformation the word, as used in the N.T., was uniformly translated "congregation." *Ecclesia* is first classical, standing for an assembly of the people brought together (*i.e.* called out) by a public crier. It is used in the LXX. for two Hebrew words, rendered in R.V. "congregation" and "assembly." But both these words are most frequently expressed by "synagogue" (*i.e.* "a bringing together"). Though etymologically *Ecclesia* means "called out," in use the term seems to have entirely lost that idea. In the Gospels it occurs only twice (Matt. xvi. 18, xviii. 17), and in both places refers to the fellowship of believers under Christ.

church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-

In the Book of Acts the word is fully established in Christian use; and in Paul's earliest epistles, written within twenty-five years of the Ascension, it ranks with our present uses of the word. When the assembly of Christians became Gentile as well as Jewish, the congregations in each separate place were termed *Ecclesia*. Paul's favourite phrase is "church," or "churches in Christ." This passes into the universal and Catholic *Ecclesia*, whose oneness is not secured by a union of churches, but of individuals. Following this is the final stage, where the Church consists of the entire fellowship of those who are personally "in Christ Jesus," whether in heaven or on earth, and who are therefore members of His Body mystical. This is the only true N.T. "communion of saints." Our word "church" is entirely unrelated to *Ecclesia*, being a corruption of the Greek word *Kurtaké*—"belonging to the Lord" or "Dominical." The Scotch *Kirk* is a nearer approach to the original form. These words, borrowed from Greek, were originally used to describe the *house*, not the *assembly*. We still say "the house of God," and use "church" to express it; but this use is not in the N.T. *Ecclesia*, where the place of meeting is always distinguished from the assembly (e.g. "the church in their house") (see Hort, *Ecclesia*).

He is the Head. If we think of the expression apart from "the body," this name for our Lord may mean supremacy, as well as the place in an organised body denominated the head. When men regard sections of professing Christians as "bodies" there may, without error, be a head, a chief, a Lord, a pope for each body as they incline. But if we refer to "the body of Christ," the fellowship of the faithful, there cannot possibly be any head save Christ Himself. It is utterly unscriptural to use the term "body" to indicate any select number of persons within Christ's Church, or in any other sense but that of the One Body, embracing all Christians of all times and places of whom He alone is or can be the Head. It is equally unscriptural to do so when the lines of demarcation are national or credal. Our Lord is said to be head *over* all things *for* His Church, where the idea is supremacy over the universe. But He is Head *of* the Church, as being in vital corporate oneness with it, and as the supply and energy of all its vital forces and accomplishments.

His Body. This language is more than figurative. All language must in a sense be figurative, expressing the less known in terms of the better known; but the purpose is to express, in a form limited by human speech and use, and actual spiritual oneness, best understood by us in the intimacy and interrelation of a Body—with its Head. There are various other relations used in Scripture to the same purpose, but under the great Pleroma-mystery this one is kept for its details. In Hall's *Christ Mystical* the other relations are fully considered. Even the figure-language of Body and Head

is found inadequate to express all the intimacy and energy of "the Christ mystical." To see this we have to remember only two points. One is that this Head creates new members—of which there are indeed adumbrations even among lower creatures. The other is that while this Head is of common nature with His members, He also transcends them in eternity and in essence as the eternal only begotten Son of the Father. No doubt, in a lower sense, His members are also "partakers of the Divine nature," but there is an incommunicable godhead in Him into which His members cannot possibly enter. Eternity and creaturehood exclude the thought, and experience establishes the consciousness that it is and must be so. While in the prison letters the Apostle dwells on the fact in most emphatic utterances that the Pleroma-mystery was a recent revelation, it almost seems as though from the first he was specially prepared to receive it. When apprehended by the Lord on the way to Damascus the language of the Divine challenge was—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Thus the *identity* of Christ and His people was pressed upon him with the first breath of his new life, and never left him in all the thirty years which followed. It is remarkable that not even in his own day did this truth take much hold; and in the after-history of the Church it is even less apparent. The truth itself was materialised into a great world power centred not in members, but in a self-chosen autocracy—termed a priesthood, recognising a Head, like themselves, and chosen by them to be their Head. Thus into the greatest of all Revelations the enemy intruded and set up a rival Body and Head. Even the Reformation failed to dislodge this monster-travesty of God's greatest enrichment of our race. Hort in his *Ecclesia* states the truth very distinctly: "The work which Christ came to do on earth was not completed when He passed from the sight of men. He, the Head, needed a body of members for its full working out through the ages; part by part He was, as St. Paul says, to be fulfilled in the community of His disciples, whose office in the world was the outflow of His own. And on the other hand His disciples had no intelligible unity apart from their ascended Head."

Who is the beginning. The Apostle's mind is occupied with our Lord and His Church. We may therefore fittingly assign the beginning here intended to His relation to His Body. He is its beginning—*arché*. In Heb. ii. He is called "Captain" of Salvation, and in Heb. xii. "Author" of our faith. Also in Acts iii. 15, "Prince" of life. One word, *archégos*, is used in each case. *Arché* in the plural is frequently used, once and again in this Epistle, to indicate "principalities." We may therefore understand the clause now before us as marking His priority, His superiority, and His operation in fashioning His Church.

The first-born from the dead. First-born has been considered under ver. 15, where it is introduced quite otherwise than here.

The dead, i.e. "those who have died." The reference is plainly

19 eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him
20 should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace
to His resurrection from among those who were dead. He thus
becomes head of a new order of existence—a race possessed of
resurrection-life derived from Him. Even now all His people have
in Him this resurrection-life as regards spiritual powers, but they
wait for His return to attain the full “adoption,” “when they shall
receive a body like unto the body of His glory.” “It is sown in
dishonour, it is raised in glory.” “We shall be like Him.”

That in all things He might have the pre-eminence: lit. “*that in all things He Himself might become first.*” The word employed by the
Apostle for pre-eminence is nowhere else found in the N.T., but
as used elsewhere it marks emphatically the Divine purpose that the
Son should be universally first, in creation and redemption equally
pre-eminent and causative. Olshausen quotes Chrysostom: “He is
first every way; first above, first in the Church, first in the Resur-
rection.” Barnes enumerates: “First over the universe, first from
among the dead, first as Head of the Church, and first in the affection
of His people.”

Ver. 19. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness
dwell: lit. “*because in Him it seemed right that the entire fulness
should have its home.*” This verse is an explanation and also an
advance. As explanation it determines that “first” in the previous
verse is intensive as well as distinguishing. He is first, and also filling
all. As additional truth it is the crowning Revelation regarding the
Christ in relation to all existence. We have seen Him as from
eternity (1) the only ever-possible expression of Godhead, as (2) the
archetypal original of all creation, as (3) the originating head of a
new body, possessed throughout by His resurrection-life. Now the
climax is reached—the entire *fulness* of God and His universe, in
all its parts, has in Him its permanent residence. A department
of this fulness will come up subsequently, chapter ii. 9.

It pleased the Father is probably good exposition, but it is not
translation. Way renders it: “In Him it was God’s pleasure that all
His plenitude should dwell.” Wyclif translates: “For in Him it
pleside al plentee to inhabite.” Even the Schoolmen took a firm
grasp of this great revelation: “If God should put forth His absolute
power to the utmost, He could not possibly pour into the Soul of
Christ one drop of grace more than it hath already” (qtd. Polhil).

All fulness: in Greek, all THE PLEROMA, a technical word since
Paul’s time. It may be studied in many writers. The following
remarks are derived chiefly from Lightfoot and Dean Robinson.
The form of the word has afforded scope for much scholarship, but
does not concern us here. It is used of a ship’s crew, and also of
its cargo; sometimes, as the reference to a ship suggests, a comple-
ment of any kind, and then any “full accomplishment.” It is
introduced in the Gospels for completeness (e.g. Mark ii. 21) or

full measure (Mark viii. 20). In Paul's letters it is employed quite untechnically in the sense of "the fulness" or the plenitude (Romans, Galatians, Corinthians, etc.). But there remains a technical use in Ephesians and Colossians (also John i. 14, 16). In Colossians the plenitude is in Christ. In Ephesians the Church is His Pleroma, because one with Him, and so partaking of a pleroma which, through Him, possesses all the universe ("He filleth all *with all*"). After Paul's time, possibly before it, the Gnostics adopted the word to express their ABRAXAS (blessing) or Divine completeness, expressed by varied symbolism. In the Gnostic pleroma were included 365 æons or emanations. Thus Pleroma was "*the all-embracing One*" or Pantheus (see King's *Gnostics*). Figures of Abraxas and details of his composition will be found in the same volume. When we reach the polemical portion of this letter the practical use of this note will be more apparent. But it should be observed that much of this form of thinking is traced to the second century to Basilides, who incorporates in his system many Buddhistic interpretations. The name Abraxas is really an epithet of the supreme Pantheus, whose name is very frequent on Gnostic gems as IAO, which is understood to be a form of Jehovah. The Fathers were much occupied with these interminable speculations. Though at present somewhat remote from our regions of thought, there are indications that ere long we may be again plunged into a sea of similar intellectual and speculative conceits.

Dwell, *i.e.* have its fixed residence. Whether this is intended to mark eternal- or time-residence has been argued. Since it forms a portion of the grand sweep of the Apostle's review, it seems preferable to take it in its widest possible range, and so understand an eternal residence of the pleroma in the Son. It seems also more consistent with ver. 16 to take it so. But however it may be as regards the past, for the future the Son is certainly in possession of the Pleroma to all eternity. "All things that the Father hath *are Mine*." "To Him be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion for ever and ever" (Rev. v. 13). Bengel's note here is valuable: "This indwelling is the foundation of the reconciliation."

Ver. 20. **And having made peace . . . cross**. In the R.V. this clause, following the Greek, changes places with the next.

Made peace. This refers evidently to the Father's part in the perfected work of the Son. In Eph. ii. the reference of Peace is to the Son Himself. He "made peace," preached peace, and is our Peace. All three are necessary to complete the view.

"Making peace" is in Eph. ii. twofold. It is making peace with God, and also making peace by removing the barriers between Jew and Gentile, which lies at the heart of Paul's special testimony. In Colossians, however, the idea is the universal sweep of reconciliation secured by our Lord's redemption, so that henceforth no man makes peace with God, but finds it already made in the great Reconciliation accomplished by the Cross. Because God is now fully reconciled He

through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they

sends forth His ambassadors to make known that He is "the God of peace," who, through them, beseeches men to become reconciled to Him (2 Cor. v. 20).

By the blood of His Cross. Blood here stands for life surrendered. It is not blood, but *blood-shedding*, which avails, *i.e.* life surrendered in place of another, life which is thus secured from death. The entire typical ceremonial of Israel stands on this great teaching, but its universal presence among the nations relates it to the earliest ages of the world, being co-extensive with human disquiet and soul-longing after the Unseen and the Eternal. Even if men could show that Christ's blood involved no more than a martyr-death, the human spirit would still demand some life to be substituted if men are ever to stand right with Him whose government all men of conscience know they have tried hard to withstand.

His Cross. This part of the clause requires to be as carefully guarded as the former. The part taken by the Jews and by the Romans in the crucifixion of our Lord was simply the most diabolic act in the world's history. Nothing but execration belongs to that and its motives. But there was also a Divine working in that Cross. "He made Him to be sin for us." "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." That is the Divine working in the Cross of Christ. But He was no more compelled to become sin for us, than to be crucified by Pilate's sentence. "His own self bare our sins, in His own body on the tree." "No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." Many men are more concerned to blaspheme beside the Cross than to wonder at the Jewish preference for Barabbas. Verily, they have their reward.

The introduction of the Cross into Christianity as a material symbol of its presence has worked much mischief. Even Constantine's Labarum (A.D. 312) did not bear the Cross, but merely the monogram of our Lord's name. And it is pleasing to think that up to the time when the Romans left our shores (A.D. 410) not a single Christian monument carried that emblem. We might well have left the charm with the Egyptians for their kings and gods, or with the old Assyrian monarchs who wore it as a charm round their necks. But Christianity was as much pagan as Christian in its symbols, rites, and ceremonies before the fourth century, and much of Christendom remains so still. The introduction of the figure of the Cross is among the last heathen importations into our religion, and we know how persistent it is.

By Him to reconcile all things unto Himself. The reconciliation is here fully expressed. The previous clause explains the means by which God reached His wonderful aim—"the blood of the Cross." It also shows the nature of the reconciliation as the establishment of peace.

21 be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your

To Himself, defines where the reconciliation has its seat. *He* is reconciled; and **all things** is the concrete statement of the extent of the reconciliation. This concrete is expanded in the following clause.

To reconcile. The word the Apostle employs is a compound form implying a *return*. Our term *atonement* is the ordinary one for this wonderful Divine work. But it is ambiguous. Its old English meaning was certainly *at-one-ment*, *i.e.* reconciliation—bringing persons together who were estranged (Trench, *Syn.* vol. ii.). Its present meaning is *vicarious sacrifice*.

In our A.V. "to make atonement" is to produce a reconciliation through something done, the something being, generally, stated. So it is used in connection with sacrifice. What, in Heb. ii. 17, our Lord did was done "to make *propitiation* for the sins of the people" (R.V.). The word there used is not the same as here in Colossians. The reconciliation is the result of the blood of the Cross or of redemption, and its form is "peace with God," peace made by God Himself through Jesus Christ. The atonement (at-one-ment), therefore, is the direct result of the Cross of Christ, and this is that Divine reconciliation, that acceptance, that "gracing," in the beloved of which Paul was the ambassador. He accordingly exhorts men "to be reconciled to God" by receiving Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation (A.V. "atonement").

Whether they be things on Earth or things in Heaven. Here the preceding "all things" are unfolded. The two categories have created considerable discussion. But instead of limiting the "things in heaven" to angels, as Bengel and others do, we may surely find here, as throughout the Hymn, the grand swell of Paul's unbounded boast in the outworking of the Cross of his Lord and Saviour. He would guard against the Colossians thinking that his "all things" was simply a large statement of possibly narrow inclusiveness. Nay—it sweeps into itself all that this earth contains, and all which the Heavens contain—visible and invisible, physical and spiritual alike. It is the reconciliation of the entire universe, which is meantime groaning, as human spirits also groan, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. viii.). Then the treasures of the great Redemption will be thrown open, and all creation will enter on its Redemption fulness of possession and glorification.

At this point the Great Hymn of the Christ closes; surely the grandest song ever sung in human language.

§ 5. RETURN TO THE COLOSSIANS, PAST AND PRESENT (21-23)

Ver. 21. "And you that were sometimes alienated." We may compare this with Eph. ii. 1, where the heathen state is very fully detailed. Thus we regard the Colossians as not "banished" but "estranged."

mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled
22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you

Sometimes: as frequently in our A.V.=once, at a past time. There is no suggestion of continuance or repetition.

Alienated. Aliens were not merely foreigners, but often persons deprived of citizen rights (Beet). This seems to be the idea here, thus preparing the way for the "*re-conciliation*"; very probably, recurring again to their enfranchisement into the kingdom (ver. 12), he reminds them of the time when they had no citizen rights.

And enemies in your mind by wicked works. This is strongly suggestive of his words to the Ephesians—"dead in (*by*) trespasses and sins wherein ye walked."

The Colossians were enemies when grace came upon them and delivered them (ver. 13). But he defines more closely—in **your mind**; probably "*by* your mind" or "*intention*." This was the seat of the hostility, and this mental state resulted in wicked works. "God gave them up because they desired not to retain Him" (Rom. i.). But grace now reverses all this. God's grace toward them resulting in grace in them toward Him.

Yet now hath He reconciled. The past has issued into a very different present. The reconciliation proclaimed by the ambassador has proved effectual. But it required the same Divine power which made the reconciliation to render it effectual. The result of the preaching was as Divine as the truth which the preaching conveyed. "The truth which shines most conspicuously in the experience of all the saved, is that they were saved by God, not by themselves" (Dods, *Footsteps*).

Ver. 22. **In the body of His flesh through death.** Again he restates the power procuring the reconciliation. We may wonder at the repetition, but the Apostle knew, as those who have tried to reproduce the truth he taught equally know, how hard it is by words to persuade men that there is no possible ground of reconciliation outside God Himself.

The body of His flesh. The expression comes in the midst of a teaching where "His Body" is used to point to His members as the Christ mystical. Hence it is desirable to indicate that the reference here is to His physical body, that in which He suffered for us.

Through death ("the blood of His Cross," ver. 20). It is noteworthy that the power of the Cross is that which effects the reconciliation on both sides: on God's side to us, and on our side to God. This latter is the point in ver. 21, as in ver. 20 the other side was before us.

To present you holy, etc. This announces the *third* sufficiency of the work wrought by the Cross. In it there is more than reconciliation procured and applied. There is also a continuous work reaching a definite consummation, which is divided into three parts. Of these the first is (i.) "to present you holy." God is here represented as concerned that when the Christ returns He may find His

holy, and unblameable, and unproveable in his sight,
23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and
be not moved away from the hope of the gospel,

Colossian members *Holy*. In Eph. v. the same thought occurs, but there it is wrought out as the presentation of the bride to the bridegroom *by Himself*—she being a captive-bride. “Forget also thine own people and thy father’s house” (Ps. xlv.). Holy must here mean more than “belonging to God.” It must mean the holiness of being “conformed,” of having put on the Lord Jesus.

Without blemish. The thought is derived from the character of sacrificial animals, etc., under the Law. It is really the other side of “holy,” *i.e.* God would not accept as holy, anything that was “blemished.” Even the sons of Aaron, if they had a blemish in their bodies, might not wait at God’s altar (Lev. xxi. 21).

Unproveable, *i.e.* unaccusable. Hence the challenge of Rom. viii. 38 f. “It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth”? So 1 Cor. i. 8, where again God makes the saints “unproveable” (same word as in Colossians) “in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The part of the Father in the establishment of the kingdom of His Son is much more clear and emphatic in this epistle than in our ordinary theology. Conformity also by co-operation on our part is as much Paul’s teaching as conformity by the power of regeneration. The following verse makes this clear.

Ver. 23. **If ye continue in the faith.** There seems no good reason to read into this any special suggestion of unsettlement on the part of the Colossians. It is as true to readers now as it was then, and is not less required by us. The perseverance of the saints is evermore His perseverance with sinners.

In the faith. This does not refer to any specific creed drawn up by man, nor to any mere attachment to a form of words, even if prepared under Divine guidance. The reference is to the hold of the soul on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the activity of the spiritual nature in contact with the living Christ. One wonders exceedingly at the disingenuousness of those who teach youth that “the Apostles’ Creed” emanated from the apostles.

Grounded, *i.e.* placed on a foundation. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” “Built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets.” They only are on the bed-rock of stability whose actions correspond to the truth they have heard (Matt. vii. 24).

Settled. This word is twice used by Paul in writing to Corinth, and each time is translated “stedfast” (1 Cor. vii. 37, xv. 58). In the one case the reference is to their place of confidence, in the other to their continuance there.

In the following clause the Apostle indicates the nature of the trial to which their faith might be exposed:—

Be not moved away . . . ye heard. The centre of their stability

which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.

24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill

is clearly "the hope of the gospel." Of this he wrote, ver. 5: "The hope laid up for you in Heaven," namely, all that pertains to the glory of the ascended Lord, and to the coming glory of His saints. On this their faith has been made secure. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

Moved away. The Greek word here does not recur in N.T., but is elsewhere used exactly as in A.V. They were to see to it that they stuck to their foundation, where they were already established.

Which ye heard. He thus expresses his confidence in what they had learned from Epaphras concerning truth "as it is in Jesus."

Which was preached to every creature which is under Heaven. Every creature: much rather, as R.V., "in all creation under heaven." Again, as in ver. 6, he asserts that what they had been taught was the true Catholic gospel of God's grace. As a purely historical statement, the Apostle surely uses a bold hyperbole, but as a statement of the sufficiency of the gospel for all races of men his description is now almost definitely established. As Paul personally selected for his preaching the chief cities of the Roman Empire, and found, whatever their peculiarity, that the gospel was there the power of God unto Salvation, he was confident that his message would prove equally powerful wherever man might be found and by whomsoever it might be preached.

Whereof I Paul am made a minister: "of which I have become—even I Paul—a minister." "I magnify mine office." A minister—a *diaconos*, our *Deacon*. But it surely indicates neither one superior in function, calling himself "a minister," nor one inferior in office, calling himself "a deacon," but is a description of service in Christ's Church in which all may be equally approved according to the grace given (see ver. 7). Paul and Epaphras are equally ministers, servants, of Jesus Christ, though the one was also an Apostle, the other not.

§ 6. PAUL MAGNIFIES HIS OFFICE (23-29)

Ver. 24. This section begins with the last clause of ver. 23 and tinues to the end of the chapter. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you." Paul's sufferings he very frequently attributes to his determined stand on behalf of Gentile Christians, though not for that alone, but as a part of a vast truth of Christian privilege. But the nature of that stand is generally overlooked or even misstated. In dealing with "THE MYSTERY," this will clearly appear. But the sufferings he endured for the gospel in its fulness were never to him

up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

a source of perplexity or of sadness. You may occasionally hear the clang of the Roman chain, but you never hear a groan from the brave prisoner. On the contrary, he says: "We glory in tribulation," "I take pleasure in reproaches," "Most gladly therefore will I rather suffer." And here in Colossians: "I rejoice in my sufferings." A similar note is that of Peter (1 Pet. iv. 13),—"Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers in Christ's sufferings."

For you, is "on your behalf." This he explains in what follows. It is a much richer explanation than reminding them of his championship of the Gentile cause. Indeed, it is richer than our Christianity ventures to grasp, though it is as true now as in Paul's day, as true for us as it was for him.

And fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ. The idea seems to be that in the Divine purpose, for the full attainment of the Christ Mystical, a certain amount of suffering is necessary. This may be distributed among the members of the Body and the Head. Paul tells the Colossians that he was privileged to absorb much of the sufferings of the Body and so of "the Christ," thereby reducing the amount still to be endured. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor. xii. 24), is the same truth in less startling form. We can see this in much vicarious suffering and in much comfort transmitted by men called to suffer in order to secure it, as Paul elsewhere teaches. The truth as Paul here puts it is, however, only touched by these considerations. It must be placed among the rich treasures of faith.

Of Christ. This must be understood of "the Christ Mystical." It has no reference to our Lord's sufferings which He endured to perfect man's redemption. That He did alone. That was fully complete when He cried, "It is finished." Augustine says: "Though we brethren die for brethren, yet there is no blood of any martyr that is poured out for the remission of sins. This Christ did for us" (qtd. Calvin). In His new incarnate life, as the Head of a redeemed Body, sufferings remain to be endured. Paul knew it well,—*"Why persecutest thou Me?"* Once, through Paul's persecutions, the Body of Christ had suffered, so he now rejoices to assume as much as he can secure of the sufferings which belong to that Body. "I endure all things for the Elect's sakes." As he was once the instrument of their sufferings, so he now rejoices in turning away suffering from them upon himself. We still to this day reap in our deliverances the benefits of what Paul suffered.

For His Body's sake—the Church (see ver. 18). In writing to the Corinthians he dwells on the true relation of the members of Christ's Body one to another. In Philippians the same aspect prevails. Here and in Ephesians the emphasis is laid on the Head of the Body.

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil
 26 the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been

Ver. 25. **Whereof I was made a minister.**

Whereof is the Church, as the Greek makes certain. In ver. 23 he writes of himself in the same terms, but there as "minister of the Gospel." This double ministry is highly instructive. The one stands for his work, as preaching the *grace* of God, and the other for his preaching of the *glory* of God, of which the Church is the ultimate expression. Of this latter ministry the remainder of the chapter is a very rich summary. As the matter is of such momentous importance he is careful to tell how he came to be its exponent.

According to the dispensation of God. He here asserts of his ministry, as in ver. 1 of his apostleship, that it is derived directly from God. As the one depended on "the Will of God," so this depends on a dispensation, *i.e.* a *stewardship* of God—(our "*Economy*"). Economy in the N.T. indicates either the method of administration or the stewardship itself. We generally employ it to mark a specific quality of administration, though also technically (*e.g.* domestic, political, animal economy). In religious language the rendering "dispensation" alternates with the other, and distinguishes forms and characteristics of periods of Divine procedure. Thus we speak of patriarchal, mosaic, regal dispensations, as expressing periods over which God manifested His will, as among the patriarchs under Moses' legislation, under a government by kings. Paul speaks (Eph. i. 10) of the "dispensation of the fulness of times" to express that point in history when our Lord became incarnate and accomplished our redemption.

Which was given to me for you. This must refer to the Gentiles generally, of whom the Colossians were a part.

To fulfil the Word of God. This puts the stewardship in concrete form. It was a distinct message from God with which he was specially entrusted. But the marginal reading throws light upon the clause where the rendering is "fully preach," as though, till this Revelation came, preaching wanted its fulness.

Ver. 26. **Even the mystery which hath been hid.** Wyclif, "the pryuyte." Except in a few cases "Mystery" in the N.T. stands for a *secret* of any kind. This is also a late classical use. Its chief application in the old world was to THE MYSTERIES, such as those of Eleusis, of Mithras, etc., in which, after mystic rites, the deepest readings of nature and of the unseen world were in some scenic form revealed to the initiated. Some of the technical terms connected with these mysteries are employed in the N.T., and much more fully in early Christian writings.

There are several N.T. mysteries or secrets. Even our Lord uses the word in referring to the great truths of His Kingdom,— "the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven." In this sense we may

hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make understand the Apostle when he writes (1 Cor. iv. 1) of himself, and others as "stewards of the mysteries of God." Elsewhere he enumerates specific mysteries. They are such as these: "The mystery of iniquity," "the mystery of the duration of Israel's blindness," the mystery of the transformation depending on our Lord's return. There is, however, one which is "THE GREAT MYSTERY," which is most prominent in the prison Epistles and also in Rom. xvi. 25, 26, which many believe to have been added, subsequently to the letter, by his own hand (see Bullinger, *Ch. Ep.* v.). In Corinth Paul says he had been unable to preach his mystery because of their divided state. To define the mystery as the introduction of Gentiles into the Christian Church is to miss the fact that since the days of Abraham the promise of Gentile partnership in the Messianic kingdom was prominent, that the prophets were steeped in that expectation, and that the grandest Psalms of Israel had that as their keynote. The Jews, even as Christians, at first winced under the realisation of that great feature of Israel's Hope. Even the apostles were slow to act upon the promise when the time came, except through the long-open door of Proselytism. But THE MYSTERY was the undistinguishable oneness, in Christ Jesus, of both Jew and Gentile, and, even more wonderful, the absolute oneness of both with Him, and with Him as containing all the fulness of God. This the Apostle repeatedly declares was an entirely new revelation, made first to him, but made to others also, and to be found in prophetic writings (*i.e.* N.T. prophetic writings). The Apostle Peter tells us distinctly that the O.T. prophets were utterly unable to reconcile in their own utterances Messianic intimations of sufferings and of glory. It was a puzzle even in the ranks of angels. But now it was the common intelligence of the Church, and with it came the entirely fresh revelation of the mystery.

Hath been hid from ages and from generations. We learn from this that the mystery was not merely not understood, it had not been revealed in any previous age. *Æons* (ages) here Wyclif translates "Worldis." May the meaning not be so? The mystery extends itself to the entire universe.

But now is made manifest to His Saints. Evidently the revelation is a special property of the Church, whom it chiefly concerns, though the Church has never given it a welcome. In Corinth they *could* not, though spiritually highly gifted.

Ver. 27. To whom God would make known. It is better with R.V. to read "was pleased" or "wished."

To make known. This is the general translation of the Apostle's word in this verse, and it occurs five times in the same connection in the Ephesian letter.

What is the riches of the glory of this mystery. It is not merely

known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope
28 of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and as a wonderful revelation affecting the universe that the "mystery" has been given. There is something better. There are riches of glory for the Church wrapped up in it. Paul's mind was revelling in the same contemplation when he wrote to Philippi: "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory *in* Christ Jesus." These same riches he elaborates in his prayer in Eph. iii, where he confines himself, as in Philippians, to those riches of glory which belong to earth's experiences. The riches are that which makes the glory so unsearchable, "the *untrackable* riches of Jesus Christ."

The riches. In Ephesians Paul writes of riches of mercy, riches of grace, riches of glory, and the riches of this glory, even His inheritance in His saints. These together left Paul lost in a labyrinth of Divine wonderment—it was untrackable by human penetration. He was content to be again a lost man!

Among the Gentiles. In them the wonder reached its climax—the Gentile "dog" on equal terms of privilege and intimacy with the purest "Hebrew of the Hebrews," in the inmost heart of Jehovah God Himself; and both lifted into a "nighness" and a filial intimacy which made them one with the Son of His eternal love. That there should be such an answer to the Greek request, "Sir, we would see Jesus," is surely taking a place far nearer the throne than even had they stood on the topmost stage of Jacob's ladder of vision and of fellowship.

Which is Christ in you, the Hope of glory. How simply the whole mystery is here expressed! The eternal secret, containing the full glory of revelation in its fullest measure, is—"Christ"—yes, "Christ, as formed in you and formed by you—and this the one grand fullness of all Hope—even the Hope of glory." We may read it so. "Christ—Christ in you—Christ the Hope of glory." The eternities are thus spanned and the Divine glory is concentrated, with the result that the eternal Son—containing all the Divine fullness—makes His Mansion for ever in a poor sinner's heart, saying, "Fear not, I am the First and the Last": glory, see i. 11 and iii. 4.

Ver. 28. Whom we preach, i.e. Christ. Thus the gospel, of grace and glory both, is Christ, the personal Lord in whom all contradictions are reconciled and all impossibilities have become realisations. **Preach** or "proclaim," R.V. Various words are rendered preach in our A.V. Preaching is sometimes "*evangelising*" (Matt. xi. 5; Luke iv. 18); very frequently in Acts. It is also "*heralding*" (the word in Col. i. 23), even more frequently than evangelising. It is that used, 1 Cor. i. 23, where we have "We preach Christ crucified." "*Reasoning*" or "*disputing*" is also translated preaching, as at Troas, Acts xx. 7, 9. Another form of expression also rendered preaching is simply "*conversing*" or "*talking*," e.g. Acts viii. 25, xi. 19, xiii. 42.

teaching every man in all wisdom ; that we may present
29 every man perfect in Christ Jesus : Whereunto I also

Warning every man and teaching every man. Warning: R.V. "admonishing," as in iii. 16. It is used by Paul alone in the N.T., but by him eight times.

Teaching. The Apostle makes teaching a part of true preaching of Christ. In apostolic work there is ever room for inducing mental reflection and mental enlargement. Is this not still needful for conscience and intellect? Bengel restricts the warning to those already Christians, and the teaching to those still ignorant. The other way seems to be at least equally desirable in our time.

Every man. Effective preaching always makes men hear as individuals, and its abiding results are ever found in individuals. But Paul's method was not simply public preaching, but (possibly "from house to house, etc.") as at Ephesus, Acts xx. 31, "one by one."

In all wisdom, i.e. "Every kind of wisdom" (see ver. 10). The Apostle ransacked the entire sphere of wisdom to which he had access, and brought out of its treasures whatever he could use to make his preaching more effective. The man with a concentrated purpose is most likely to harness all sources of supply to his great aim. Life is one, but it is fed from innumerable outside contributors. To educate the conscience and intellect of our fellows we cannot equip ourselves too much or too variously.

That we may present every man perfect. Here is the apostolic aim in his preaching. As in conflict so in preaching, he could say, "So preach I not as one that beateth the air." It is still "personal" preaching,—"Every man." It is ambitious preaching. It aims at perfection in the hearers.

Perfect. This is a much vexing term in our N.T., but specially in our A.V. The Greek word in the Apostle's text is well known in connection with the ancient mysteries. It there represents "the initiated." In this sense of "perfect" the Gnostics, soon after Paul's time, expressed an idea nearly allied to the classic use—"proficients" in knowledge. Within the Church of the second century "the perfect" were those who had been admitted into the *Sacramental mysteries*—the baptized ; and later, as now in the Church of Rome, etc., the perfect are those who display a certain variety of gifts and graces under some *Rule* (regula) or Order.

A larger view, however, is that of Fénelon (*Letters*, cxxix.), who says : "Perfection requires us to belong to God with our whole heart ; when once that is the case, whatever we do for Him becomes easy."

But perfect seems in the place before us to be employed in a wide sense not uncommon in the N.T., e.g. "Every perfect gift is from above" ; "Let patience have her perfect work." In his notes on *Hebrews*, Westcott says, "a man is said to be *teleios*" (*perfect*).

labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

“who has reached the full maturity of his powers, the full possession of his rights, his *telos*, his end.”

Another Greek word so translated means *to mend* (as nets), *to restore*. “Thou hast perfected praise” (Matt. xxi. 16); “Be perfect, be of good comfort” (2 Cor. xiii. 11); “Make you perfect” (Heb. xiii. 21). Several such passages occur where the idea expressed is “fit up”—the root of our “*artist*.” “Perfect” is also the translation of a word meaning *readiness*. It occurs only once, and indicates attainment secured by Scripture knowledge (2 Tim. iii. 17). In Rev. iii. 2, “perfect” means “filled up.” To this we may add the recollection that Noah, Job, David, Zecharias, etc., are all in a Bible-sense called “perfect,” though in our ordinary sense of the word they were not so. “We are to know that though the Law requireth of us the utmost perfection of holiness, yet the gospel maketh allowance for our weakness” (Marshall, *Sanctification*).

In Christ Jesus. Omit “Jesus” with R.V., R.G.T., etc. This expression, sometimes slightly varied, occurs one hundred and ninety-six times in the N.T., and of these one hundred and sixty-four times in Paul’s writings. It is his favourite manner of stating the present position of every believer, and is closely related to his “great mystery.” In the prison Epistles it occurs seventy-four times, yet not once in the three Synoptic Gospels. A faint suggestion of its import is conveyed by such expressions as “in cotton,” “in shipping,” “in law,” “in medicine,” etc., which express the surrender of the life and its powers to follow, and attain in these pursuits (see Deissmann, *In Christo Jesu*).

Present, frequently—“commit,” “set before.” The Apostle seems ever to keep in view not only his own meeting with Christ at His appearing, but his expectation of having with him those who have become united to Christ through his ministry. In ver. 22 the Father is seen presenting such to His Son; in Ephesians the Son presents them to Himself, and Paul also expects to have some share in the presentations of that great day.

Ver. 29. Whereunto I also labour.

Whereunto, i.e. in order to secure that result; also belongs to the labour—“I labour also,” R.V.; **labour**, the word is strong and frequent. It is used of our Lord at Jacob’s Well, “being wearied,” and of those whom our Lord called, Matt. xi. 28, “who labour.”

Striving according to His working. The Greek for “striving” is “agonising,” putting forth the utmost effort, as for a prize.

His working. The Greek is “inworking,” “energy.” He thus defines the source of all he accomplishes. “It is no more I, but Christ.” It is not humility or self-denial to boast in Christ Jesus. His signet on my finger makes all I impress with it royal and commanding.

Which worketh in me mightily: lit. "*which inworketh me in power.*" The Apostle is conscious of sufficiency, but not through his own resources, but in Him who answered his cry of distress—"My grace is sufficient for thee." In this he found the calm and strength which led him to say, "I am good for anything through Christ becoming my dynamic." This last claim seems almost an anachronism. Paul was meantime a prisoner in bonds, yet he claims to be powerfully at work and Divinely sustained in it. How this could be, the letters themselves make sufficiently manifest. Rutherford's greatest work was done in exile in Aberdeen, and Bunyan's in Bedford's prison. Nothing is more true in history and in experience than "the Lord despiseth not His prisoners."

Thus far the Apostle has engaged the Colossians with varied gospel truth on the Person of the Christ, and the kingdom's planting and settlement. He has also in much detail reviewed the Colossian Church and its excellent character, yet not one word has he spoken of any error or defection among them. There may be unconscious bias in his selection or manner of presenting truth, but certainly there is nothing to suggest that he has any correction for them any more than for those to whom he sent the "Ephesian" letter.

CHAPTER II

THE movement of thought in this chapter is much more varied than in the former. It gives the impression of a strong ground-swell issuing in fitful rushes to and fro. The movements are round the Colossians, the Person of the Lord as seen in THE GREAT MYSTERY, and a form of error which, pressing hard on the Church, the Apostle vigorously and passionately refutes—using against it partly experience already possessed by the Colossians, but especially the absolute comprehension of all that men can ever require in the Lord Jesus.

The following summary may assist in following the verses and their purpose :—

- Verses 1, 2. § 1. Paul's solicitude for the Colossians and others.
- " 3. § 2. The mystery stated.
- " 4, 5. § 3. His concern for them, and his satisfaction in them.
- " 6, 7. § 4. Renewed exhortation to steadfastness.
- " 8. § 5. Warning against specific error.
- " 9, 10. § 6. The truth opposed to the error.
- " 11-13. § 7. The Colossian experience of the Christ.
- " 14, 15. § 8. More detail of the Christ's working.
- " 16-18. § 9. Particular errors to be resisted.
- " 19-23. § 10. The folly and uselessness of the false teaching.

1 FOR I would that ye knew what great conflict I have
for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as
2 have not seen my face in the flesh; That their hearts
might be comforted, being knit together in love, and

§ I. PAUL'S SOLICITUDE FOR THE COLOSSIANS AND OTHERS (1, 2)

For I would that ye knew . . . for you. He here comes to closer range with what was a burden on his spirit, and throws himself more fully upon their sympathy and confidence.

For: this links Chapter I. with what he is now to state in more impressive form.

I would that ye knew—"I desire you to know." So he repeats in still stronger language his previous expressions of deep interest in the Colossians.

What great conflict I have. He closed the former chapter by telling them he had an "agony" for them, in which he was upheld by the dynamic of the Christ. He now characterises his "agony" as "great" in the sense of drawn-out. At a later part of the letter he represents Epaphras as similarly occupied. It is a prayer-agony which so occupies him. Prayer is now his chief weapon, a weapon he seems never to lay aside. No wonder; for the chief service of the kingdom has in all ages been wrought by it. No doubt there was found a place in his conflict for his messengers and for his letters, but he is ever making and asking for prayer in all directions.

For you, for them at Laodicea . . . the flesh. The threefold extension of his prayer, as here indicated, is for a special class—those whom he had never personally met. His letter to Rome is a striking proof of the interest he here asserts.

Laodicea. What we can gather regarding this Church will be found under iv. 13 ff.

As many, etc. So far as the words go this might mean an additional class. But evidently such is not his intention by them, but an extension of localities coming under the same class—those Churches which he had never visited.

Ver. 2. That their hearts might be comforted. The heart in Scripture, when used figuratively, is much more inclusive than with us. It stands for the entire inner man. "With the heart man believeth," is a claim on the whole propulsive nature of the man. So "My Son, give me thine heart," demands the will and all of the man the will can carry with it. The "new heart" of Divine promise closely corresponds to *regeneration*—a refashioning of the entire man.

Might be comforted. The word is the same as that used when speaking of the Holy Spirit as the "Comforter," the *Paraclete*. The root idea of Paraclete is calling to one's side, hence "ad-vocate" (1 John ii. 1). The Latin word, which is our "comfort," emphasises the thought of courage secured through fellowship. "Speaking to

unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ: In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. "The heart" is another Scripture thought, while *sighing* with one is most frequent in the O.T. and is much used of Divine comfort. Perhaps the simplest form of comfort is that used by the Jews who went "to speak kindly" to Martha and Mary concerning their brother.

Being knit together in love. The Greek word recurs in ver. 19 and is found in Eph. iv. 16, where it is rendered "compacted." Elsewhere the idea of *instruction* is most prominent, also in the LXX. (Moule). The literal rendering is "lifted-up-together" or "made-go-together."

In love. How richly significant this whole expression is will appear as the Apostle advances with his wonderful theme, in which love is the fountainhead and the controlling power at every step. Indeed, he teaches plainly that without love it would be quite in vain that the mystery should be expounded to them. Where that love was wanting his great truth could not possibly come.

And unto all riches . . . understanding. All riches, *i.e.* every kind of riches, which is Paul's expressive word (i. 27) for the measure of whatever entered his grand optimism centred in the Christ.

Of the full assurance. This word stands out in the N.T. for the sweep of gracious conviction in various directions. Here it is *understanding*, elsewhere *hope*, again *faith*, and in I Thess. i. 5, it is in reference to the *word* preached. Calvin here strongly repudiates the substitution by the Schoolmen of "moral conjecture" for the assurance of God's Spirit. The meaning of the word is *under full sail*, "borne fully along."

Of understanding (see i. 9).

To the acknowledgment. This is the intensive word for knowledge so frequently used by the Apostle, as in i. 11, where it="insight." Way renders it "comprehension."

Of the mystery, etc. We find much difference of readings at this point. The R.V. reads "of God, even Christ." The R.G.T. has "of God, Christ." Lightfoot carefully elaborates this reading. The translation may be either "the mystery of God (which is) the Christ," or "the mystery of our God (who is) the Christ." The latter is good theology, but not Pauline language. The former seems much more likely, namely, that the Christ is "THE MYSTERY," "the secret of God." This is certainly the burden of the letter and of Paul's mind while in his Roman imprisonment. The old reading complicates the thought (to us at least) with "the mystery of the Trinity."

§ 2. THE MYSTERY STATED (in part) (3)

Ver. 3. **In whom are hid . . . knowledge.** The Greek order makes *hid* emphatic and places it last in the clause, "In whom are all treasures . . . hid."

4 treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say,
lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.
5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you

Treasures is the ordinary word for the idea conveyed by A.V.

Wisdom is as in i. 9.

Knowledge is here *gnosis*, the less intensive, all-embracing word. He is not only the centre of spiritual insight, but the reservoir of all supplies of knowledge. These two, "wisdom and knowledge," stand thus together in Rom. xi. 33, where the Apostle utters a burst of wondering admiration, beholding the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. What he there admires in the Divine government he here finds treasured in Christ Jesus.

Hid. He employs the ordinary N.T. word for hiding, *e.g.* "the hid talent," "the hid treasure." It is undesirable, however, to take "hid" in this place as corresponding to the hiding of the mystery in 1 Cor. i. 7 (Lightfoot), since that hiding is the keeping back of the secret; this hiding is depositing it in a secure place, as a treasure-house. The application of the term to "Apocryphal" writings does not call for more than a mere recognition that the word has been thus extended in use.

§ 3. HIS CONCERN AND SATISFACTION IN THEM (4, 5)

Ver. 4. And this I say . . . words. His renewed introduction of the Mystery is in order to safeguard their souls. **Lest any man beguile you.** These words might well be written in any circumstances, but have probably an undernote of reference to the Colossians in their actual position of trial.

Beguile you. The Apostle's word is only twice found in the N.T. (see Jas. i. 22, "deceiving"). It means "to talk one aside," and is frequent in the LXX., *e.g.* Ex. viii. 29; 1 Sam. xix. 17. Way renders it "victimise you."

With enticing words. R.V., "persuasiveness of speech." We do not find the word again in the N.T., and it is not found in the LXX. Bengel renders it "plausible talk," and the Vulgate "*in sublimitate sermonum.*" Calvin remarks: "There can be no persuasiveness of speech that can turn aside so much as the breadth of a finger the minds of those who have devoted their understanding to Christianity."

Ver. 5. For though I be absent . . . spirit. This phrase is common among ourselves in sending greetings to functions, etc.—"I shall be with you in spirit." The meaning, "I know all the danger you are in, though not with you to witness it," is surely forced, and not consistent with the introducing word "for." Is it not rather a reason for his solicitude on their behalf, arising from the gracious character of their state?

in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

In spirit. This is the second and only additional use of the word spirit in this epistle, and certainly means Paul's human spirit, his mind and desire. See a brief statement of the N.T. use of the word at i. 8. A difficulty sometimes occurs when "flesh and spirit" are thus brought together. They are used to express the presence of two natures in the child of God, which evermore "lust" against each other, and the struggle is lifelong (Gal. v. 17). The teaching on this subject is most distinct in John's first epistle, though much obscured by the manner of printing "spirit" in A.V. and R.V. A section of Chapter III. of this epistle is devoted to the same subject. There is no good end served by trying to force upon the words here employed some reference to a spiritual revelation he had received.

Joying and beholding . . . Christ. The accounts of the Colossians which reached the Apostle caused him joy, and stirred his imagination so as to produce a vivid picture of their Church life. We have here therefore not an inverted statement, but a natural sequence—"hearing, rejoicing, beholding."

Order. The word is military—"array" or "marshalling," "standing shoulder to shoulder." Thus he frequently enriches his vocabulary from his experience, even as a prisoner. If Paul had not much eye for nature—poor eyesight is much circumscribed in this very respect—he was lynx-eyed among the affairs of men in all departments of life. In Rome, as in his wanderings, he was ever in close touch with Roman soldiery. From them he learned many things which he transferred into the language of Christian life and experience. Ephesians vi. contains his richest use of this knowledge in describing the Divine panoply provided for the Christian warrior against the hosts of darkness.

The steadfastness. Again the word is military, and marks their *solid front*. It is the word we employ in "*stereo-type*," to indicate the distinction between movable type and type in solid block. The military *phalanx* and the "*firmament*," or vault of heaven, contribute to the uses of the word. To be thoroughly drilled is one thing, and may be perfected in barracks, but steadfastness is tried under fire or in severe campaigning. The "good soldier of Jesus Christ" must receive not merely knightly training, but must carry personal achievements on his shield.

Your faith in Christ. This tells us where Paul saw the Colossians well marshalled and standing their ground. In view of such confidence in them we cannot conceive that the errors with which they were plied had gained much hold, as is almost always asserted. Men, however, in our day also often live an entirely double life, scuttling the ship at the one end and keeping all the pumps going at the other. Perhaps it was so at Colosse, though the evidence is wanting. The flesh (nature) and the Spirit (grace) lusting in the

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord,
7 so walk ye in him; Rooted and built up in him, and
same man, find wonderfully varied expression, intellectually, morally,
spiritually. For faith, see i. 4. Beet strongly maintains from this
verse the undoubted continued stability of the Colossian Church.

§ 4. RENEWED EXHORTATION TO STEADFASTNESS (6, 7)

Ver. 6. As ye have therefore received . . . Him.

Received. The Apostle looks back to the beginning of their faith and speaks of it as *receiving* a person, the Christ. "Having the Son" is John's expressive use for the same truth. "He that hath the Son hath life." So our Lord said: "He that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me." "Christ in you," Paul makes the summary form of "the great mystery." The spiritual significance of receiving Christ comes out in John's statement (John i. 11) that when "He came unto His own, His own received Him not." To receive Him, therefore, is to be made partaker of all the fulness which resides in Him, and perhaps specially, "all the truth as it is in Jesus." The old expression, "appropriating faith," cannot be improved.

Christ Jesus the Lord—the full name and title of the Saviour (see i. 2, 3).

So walk ye in Him. Walk is the same word as in i. 10.

In Him. To walk *in* a Person is an unusual thought, but since the sphere of the walk is among the "untrackable riches of Jesus Christ," all of which are laid up in Him, the idea is simply to keep within the Christ for all supply which life may require. "Do not travel beyond Christ in your life's whole progress and satisfying." "Ye are complete (filled up) in Christ Jesus." The Christian man begins with possession of that completeness, and works it into his life as need arises. "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory *in* Christ Jesus." The danger he is about to unfold largely consisted in looking away *from* the Christ. He forestalls the reference by exhorting, as in Heb. xii. 1, 2, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking away *unto* Jesus." The power of His eye *is* the needed energy for the race.

Ver. 7. **Rooted . . . in Him.** Leaving the idea of walking he finds other figures which graphically expose the inner side of the walk. Mixed crystals (even of metaphors) often make wholesome medicines. He combines two ideas: *rooted*, of a tree; *built up*, of a house.

In i. 10, *rooted* has already been found. The root out of sight is not less essential than what shoots up into full view, whether trunk, branches or fruit. And the root growth must increase as much as what is above ground, often demanding far more of the resourcefulness of life than is distinguishable above ground. Whatever the soil contains which can advantage the plant is cheerfully surrendered to its use. "So also is the Christ." We call the root-supply *crude sap*,

established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

but it is absolutely essential as a leading portion of *true* sap, which is the vital force.

Built up. This idea is very common in Scripture. Paul uses it perhaps to most purpose in Eph. ii. of the great spiritual temple—collective and individual. In i. 23, we have already met the idea in connection with the foundation, as in 1 Cor. iii. 11. From this form of expression we have our word *edify* (house-making), which comes to us through Latin.

In Him. The expression is technical (see i. 28) of the Christian's relation to his Lord. It is specially so in Paul's writings. "Abiding in Christ" a man has root soil and fruit supply—with all the added benefits of sun, living water, and atmosphere—"Complete in Christ Jesus."

Stablished . . . thanksgiving. Stablished is frequent in the N.T., e.g. 2 Cor. i. 21, where it is introduced in connection with the same thought: "Stablisheth us with you in Christ." It is also translated "confirm"—of word or promise.

In the faith: much rather "by your faith," R.V. margin. Faith is the outgoing of quickened energy, so as to draw into itself whatever promotes its growth; or it is the binding power which fastens into the oneness each portion added to the building. Any one who has explored a vitrified fort knows how mightily such a force secures stability.

As ye have been taught. They should not suppose that such results must flow from richer or wider teaching than they had received. Nay, what they had heard was sufficient to produce all they could require.

Abounding. They must, however, see to it that they put forth their own efforts, else the teaching could not of itself lead to such high issues. They must *abound*, i.e. *overflow*. It is the same which describes God's grace as abounding (Eph. i. 8; 2 Cor. ix. 8, etc.). We always expect strong forms of expression from Paul, who "abounded" in all he said or did, or was.

Therein. This should probably be omitted, with R.V.; R.G.T. puts it in brackets.

With thanksgiving: read lit. and R.V. "in thanksgiving." "In every thing give thanks," is one of the Apostolic high claims. "In every thing by prayer . . . with thanksgiving let your requests be made known." We have found this grace already (i. 12), and shall meet it again (iii. 15, 17, iv. 2). Forty times the same word occurs in some of its forms in Paul's writings, and only fourteen times elsewhere in the N.T. As a matter of experience, nothing so benumbs or even extinguishes faith as want of thanksgiving, and nothing more speedily rouses and enlarges it than a thankful spirit freely uttering itself. The soul of music is the spirit of thanksgiving, and under it

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and men can face death and demand victory. "Thankfulness is like genial sunshine; all flowers breathe perfume, and fruits ripen under its influence" (Maclaren).

§ 5. WARNING AGAINST SPECIFIC ERROR (8)

Ver. 8. Beware lest . . . Christ.

Beware is lit. "see (to it)," our colloquial "look out." The expression is Pauline, *e.g.* iv. 17; I Cor. viii. 9, xvi. 10; Gal. v. 15; Eph. v. 15; Phil. iii. 2.

Here for the first time in the letter a practical danger is indicated. While doubtless there was from the first some burden of concern regarding Colosse, the tone is entirely one of approval and confidence, as much so as in the Ephesian or Philippian letter. We also should approach the error in the same spirit as the Apostle himself. It has been of immense consequence to the Church in all subsequent ages that there was this attempt to force error upon the Church in Colosse, for great as is the value of the letter to the Ephesians, it lacks entirely the notes of danger which are sounded in this letter and which help so much to enrich our knowledge of THE GREAT MYSTERY, intrinsically and over against serious heresies which have often visited and overcome the Church. In particular, the unique Headship of Christ over His own Body has here its most signal elaboration and most glorious unveiling.

Lest any man. The indefinite seems to be studiously employed. "I name no names but—" "Take heed, perhaps there will be someone who—" (Moulton, *Proleg.*).

Spoil you. R.V., "maketh spoil of you"; "make you his prey" (Lightfoot). The Colossians had already been conquered by the Prince of Light and had been manumitted into heavenly citizenship. They must beware of becoming spoil to another conqueror and so losing all they had obtained. Paul more than once refers to Roman triumphs. Perhaps he had this thought in his mind here. It was certainly present to him almost immediately afterwards (see ver. 15). That the other sense of spoil (damage) is not intended the Greek word renders certain.

Through his philosophy. Some early Christian apologists who were deeply imbued with Greek philosophy found considerable difficulty in adjusting themselves to the tone of the Apostle in this verse. The slight distinction many of them saw between leading heathen philosophies and the Christ would certainly have been repudiated by Paul; *e.g.* Justin Martyr says in his *Apology*: "They who live according to reason are Christians, even though they are regarded as godless: such, for example, were Socrates and Heraclitus among the Greeks." Like very many other words, "philosophy" deteriorated in the course of use. Its beginning was noble, as its

vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him etymology also shows—"the love of wisdom." The philosopher originally admitted that he was only a seeker (Plato, *a hunter*), not one who had attained to wisdom—a sophist. Paul proclaimed one who *is* the wisdom of God, and in whom all its treasures are laid up. Thus his message is the answer to the genuine philosopher. It is well to remember that, according to Dio. Lærtius, Pythagoras first assumed the name philosopher—"wisdom lover"—"because none is wise except God." The word had, however, come to mean one who had absorbed wisdom and was its expounder. This Paul repudiated, because he was certain that wisdom was all treasured in his Lord and Saviour. All who went aside from the Christ in their pursuit of wisdom were held to be on the wrong scent, following *vain* deceit, or lit. "an empty-out-of-the-way." Is this a recollection of Plato's hunting figure? (cf. Geddes, *Phædo*).

After the tradition of men, *i.e.* "in obedience to the tradition." Two characteristics of the misleading philosopher are given, after which we have the true wisdom presented.

(i.) The misleading philosopher *is a traditionalist*. The word *tradition* has had very varied experience in relation to truth. In the Gospels it is used to contrast the O.T. Scriptures and the traditions of the Rabbis, etc. In the Early Church it stood for instruction generally, and specifically for Scripture, *e.g.* apostolic tradition represented what was taught in the Epistles. Subsequently it became the technical word for what the Church taught which was *not* in Scripture, but was regarded as of equal authority. Irenæus and Tertullian expressly repudiate any tradition in the Church, other than such memories of apostolic oral teaching as could be substantiated by what Scripture contains. Clement of Alexandria, however, asserts an apostolic tradition containing truth additional to that in Scripture, which he undertook to communicate. To-day the Church of Rome teaches, "Holy Scripture and tradition are both the Word of God." The sufficiency of Scripture alone is denied, that of tradition alone is asserted.

The word *parádosis* was used in speaking of the great mysteries among the Greeks. They were entirely esoteric, and to put them in writing or sculpture was fatally criminal. The Jews also had esoteric teachings (*e.g.* among the Essenes). To all this Christianity was essentially opposed, in spirit as well as in fact. Even the GREAT MYSTERY of the Apostle was secret only to those who were spiritually unfit to grasp it. So far as words are concerned, it is equally open to all, and requires no key save that which is supplied by spiritual adjustment to revealed truth. The merely psychic man makes nothing of even common gospel truth, and the "carnal" Christian (as were those in Corinth) is incapable of grasping "the wisdom" of the mystery.

(ii.) The rudiments of the world. The word *stoicheia* occurs seven

10 dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And

times in the N.T., four times from Paul's pen. It originally stands for the letters of the alphabet, and naturally became an expression for elementary education. We, too, speak of "the ABC" of any department of knowledge. The translations of the word by our A.V., "elements" and "rudiments," are entirely satisfactory. The Apostle recognises in the philosophy which had lost the true scent no more than mere ABC plausible talk (ver. 4), and that in an inferior region. He subsequently indicates certain details of this elementary aberration. Early Christian writers generally referred "elements" to the physical elements—particularly those related to astrology, which regulated ceremonies of all kinds. This meaning may be suggested collaterally to some extent, since ceremonial observances occupied a leading place in the false teaching in Colosse.

Of the world; the *cosmos*. Paul's teaching starts before time began, and his sphere is the uncreated Creator of us and of all things. The teaching he exposes knows no more than the ABC of created existence. "World" often in the N.T. stands for age (*æon*), but here it is the entire region of the external and the material. The word itself originated with Pythagoras, the inventor of the word "philosopher." Way renders the clause "the puerilities of externalism."

And not after Christ. This is Paul's great counter-vail to the false philosophy. He finds all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in the Christ. Thus he opposes his Lord to all which can be brought to men with a claim of wisdom, however proudly clothed in a revered antiquity; or of knowledge, however grandly decked in the rhetoric of schools which pry into elemental values and invisible entities. The details of this misconception of wisdom and knowledge follow at ver. 16.

The present drift of knowledge towards primary elements is most striking. Atoms are now left far behind in the pursuit of primary elements, and the most primary are now believed to move in a sphere which is known only to the scientific imagination, and even there can be better expressed by symbols + and —, than by material substance of any conceivable definition. One step more and we reach——?

"Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell."

§ 6. THE TRUTH OPPOSED TO THE ERROR (9, 10)

Ver. 9. **For in Him . . . bodily.** This verse closely approaches i. 19, but introduces two limitations of the previous description. Nothing is retracted or qualified, but out of the entire truth a portion is taken to suit an immediate purpose.

All the fulness—*pleroma*—of the godhead. Previously the Christ

ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality was described as the dwelling-place of *all* fulness, uncreated and created. Now only the uncreated fulness is mentioned. The word introduced for *godhead* occurs nowhere else in the N.T. It indicates *deity* as distinguished from *divinity*; *personality*, not *quality*. The Vulgate, however, reads "*plenitudo divinitatis*."

Bodily, *i.e.* "in bodily form," as now incarnate in His Church. This seems the more probable meaning, rather than "really," "essentially," or even "in His physical body." Paul's usage certainly points to the Church when speaking of our Lord's body, except when some qualification determines a physical reference (see iv. 15 ff.). Thus very vividly extremes are seen meeting—Divine all-fulness and our humanity, with the former resident in the latter. This is the surpassing marvel of the Person of the incarnate and glorified Son. **Dwelleth** is probably chosen to meet certain Gnostic views already abroad, that the full Christ was only present from His baptism till His death.

Ver. 10. **And ye are complete in Him.** R.V., "in Him ye are made full," *i.e.* "*pleroma-ed*."

In Him is the fulness of godhead.

In Him ye too are made full. Here is the mystery in its almost richest form. "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's." And to the same purpose are these words to His Father: "I in them and Thou in Me." "I in them," so that they are full with Me; "Thou in Me," so that I am full with Thee. May we not venture one step more on this most holy ground? Is not the Apostle also responsible for teaching that we too are that by which He is made full—complete? "His body, the fulness, the pleroma, of Him that filleth all with all" (Eph. i. 23). Thus we dare think that He would still be incomplete, though possessing the pleroma of godhead, were He to want even one member of His body.

Who is the head of all principality and power.

Who is the Head. The Headship here is not that which binds Him to His Church. It corresponds to "Head *over* all things to His Church" (Eph. i. 23). *For* His Church—His body—He holds all else in subjection. Elsewhere Paul becomes very exultant and asks, "Know you not that we shall judge the angels?" Similarly, though not so definitely, he singles out **principality and power**. These two are frequently joined together. Sometimes they are *human* (Tit. iii. 1); sometimes *spiritual*—good (Eph. iii. 10) or evil (ii. 15). They form the latter pair of those portions of the invisible world created in the Son, mentioned in i. 16. The pseudo-Dionysius' elaboration of the orders of the unseen world ("*Celestial hierarchies*") and the fatal prominence given to angel worship, not only by the Colossian false teacher or teachers, but not less in the Christian Church of the middle and more recent ages, have caused a disgust

II pality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting with the entire subject, which is unworthy of the place it occupies in Scripture. Of "the innumerable hosts of angels" (Heb. xii. 22) in heaven, some are "leaders" and some "authorities," though how to be distinguished from each and from others called "thrones" and "dominions," we cannot meantime know or even conjecture with any show of reason. Enough to know that they are all subject to the Son, as here stated, and also in Heb. i. 6, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Wise though they may be, they are sent to school to the saints, that they may learn to know the Christ (Goodwin).

§ 7. THE COLOSSIAN EXPERIENCE OF THE CHRIST (11-13)

Ver. 11. In whom also ye are circumcised. For the third time the Colossians' experience of the Christ is brought into prominence. It is now more profoundly dealt with, doubtless determined as regards its form by the error abroad in their midst. The present view refers to dangers partly *Judaistic* (circumcision and ordinances) and partly *spiritualistic* (powers of the unseen world).

Circumcised. The rite of circumcision dates back as a Divine ordinance to Abraham, and was a figurative expression of separation from the world and its fleshy defilements, and an entrance into covenant with God and consequent newness of life. All male children, if of Abraham's seed, must be circumcised. If any desired to enter into the covenant with Abraham, circumcision was the first step—putting off the old world-life, and putting on the new. Slaves required to be circumcised before they could form part of an Abrahamic household. That from the first it was understood to have a moral and spiritual purpose is abundantly plain, notwithstanding the scanty references in the O.T. to the rite. In Deut. xxx. 6, we read: "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." In Deut. x. 16, the command is given: "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." The "proselytes of righteousness" of a later date (the "stranger within thy gates" of an earlier time) were those who surrendered themselves to be separated unto Jehovah, Israel's God. Without this none might take part in the feast of Israel's oneness with Jehovah and with each other. As the formal rite was of the nature of a surgical operation, it is called "*circumcision made with hands.*" In later ages Jews sometimes became uncircumcised in mature years to avoid recognition as Jews, to which 1 Cor. vii. 18 refers. Cf. Jahn's *Bib. Antiq.* § 163; Celsus, *Lib. vii. c. 25*; 1 Mac. i. 15.

Though there is no historical evidence before the time of Christianity, there seems reason to believe that a *baptism* followed

off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision
12 of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also

circumcision in the case of adults. This may account for John Baptist's adoption, *without question*, of a baptismal rite. There was a similar baptism by our Lord's followers, though not by Himself, (John iv. 1, 2). Though we are here also without chronological data as to its priority to Christianity, the Mithraic ritual of the second century certainly included a form of baptism as well as a religious supper. Unfortunately the practice of the Christian Church of the second century affords no help in discovering apostolic observances, because its ritual had ceased to be anything other than an elaborate form of pagan mysteries—even to the sacrifice of a lamb (Hatch, *Hib. Lect.*). See also Appendix B.

Putting off the body of the sins of the flesh. This is a further reference to the significance of circumcision. The language means an utter break with the past. "Forget also thine own people and thy father's house."

Of the sins.—These words are to be omitted with R.V., R.G.T., etc.

Body of the flesh. In circumcision, as physically observed, only a small part was removed, but in the heart circumcision the entire old man—"body of the flesh"—must be renounced. This explains the unusual phrase. "Circumcision was given to the fathers that it might be a figure of a thing that is absent, hence it puts away the presence of the reality" (Calvin). The new circumcision is **made without hands**, *i.e.* it is not ritual or mechanical, but results from faith's entrance into Christ, whereby "old things pass away and all things become new." Thus it becomes also "*a new creation*"—a renewal—a death followed by a resurrection. The old body is no more of me as once it was; it is a body of death. Even the life I now live in the flesh, is a faith-life upon the Son of God. In brief, "it is no more I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

By the circumcision of Christ. This has sometimes been taken to mean, "My Lord was circumcised, and I am now part of His body, so that I need no circumcision other than what I have in Him." But surely that is entirely out of sympathy with the Apostle's tone here and in the greater part of his ministry. If any thing was unmistakable about him, it was his antagonism to pressing the rite on the Gentiles, not as something they did not require because He had suffered it, but because it was *done away* in Christ. Surely the expression means the blessed transference of the man who by faith leaves his old life behind and enters by Christ into entire newness of life and character. This is the circumcision of Christ, wrought by the Holy Spirit (Rom. ii. 29): "Circumcision is that of the heart in the Spirit," *i.e.* in the HOLY SPIRIT in the definite sense, and as distinguished from the spiritual conditions and tendencies which He produces" (Meyer).

Ver. 12. **Buried with Him in baptism.** It is not improbable that the

full ceremony of introducing a proselyte into covenant standing, may have suggested this clause. There is no doubt that soon after apostolic times the Jews did use baptism as well as circumcision in their proselyte initiation. With Him. The verb is compound "buried together," making clear that when He is buried, the Colossians were also buried, in Him. This is Pauline teaching all along the line of the believer's partnership with the Christ. "Let His baptism be the foundation of yours, rest your baptism upon His, graft your baptism into His; . . . be baptized in living concert with Him" (Martin).

We now meet one of the most trying problems of ecclesiastical logomachy—the meaning of *Baptism*. It cannot be adequately discussed in a mere note, neither may it be passed over. The following points seem, so far as study has brought conviction, to indicate leading facts:—

1. The classic use of *Baptize* (which is simply the transliteration of the N.T. Greek word) affords no help, for its use by Greek writers cannot be its N.T. use. Most cases of its occurrence in the classics indicate nothing more than *contact* by wetting, or, quite as frequently, to *drown*. It also sometimes means to *stupefy* by drugs, etc. Evidently there is no help from these occurrences, which embrace at least a hundred passages.

2. We have not been able to ascertain the significance of the word in the *Koiné* of N.T. times.

3. In the N.T. the contact suggested by "baptizing" is variously stated. John Baptist says: "I baptize with water, but the Christ shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Pentecost, with the *descent* of the Holy Ghost, must be understood as the fulfilment of this, for our Lord before His ascension said, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The manner of the Spirit's coming at Pentecost is "filling them" (Acts ii. 4). When Peter explained the miracle of the descent, he said it was a fulfilment of Joel's word, "I will *pour out* of my spirit upon all flesh" (Acts ii. 17); and again (ver. 33), "He hath *poured out* this which ye see and hear." In 1 Cor. x. 2, the Apostle speaks of Israel as "having been *baptized unto Moses*." There are two ideas present. Baptized unto Moses means, "put under Moses leadership." In this connection he asks: "Were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" Thus he disallows any party object in their baptism. But there is another idea. The word baptize shows the symbolic import of the circumstances in which the separation to Moses took place. The one symbol of baptism was *the cloud* which rested over them or went before them; and the other, the enclosing walls of the *divided sea*. They were neither wet, drowned, nor stupefied, but enclosed with Moses beneath the cloud and between the walls of water. Again, in Mark vii. 2-4, "baptize" is used of ceremonial washings of all kinds—hands, cups, and couches being included. Evidently any form of "washing" suggesting the idea of cleansing might be employed from entire

ye are risen with him through the faith of the operating, if desired, to the barest sprinkling, as in the case of couches (beds?). Even in the case of the hands to be washed, they are not *defiled*, only "common." This ceremonial use and method are suggested over thirty times in the N.T. So there seems entire freedom as to the precise measure and manner of contact which are necessary to secure ceremonial effectiveness by baptism. Baptisms in private houses to which references occur in the N.T. indicate simply a domestic supply of water.

4. Much has been "proved" regarding the manner of baptism from the prepositions used and the inflections depending on them. Some find one method in these as the inevitable result of attention to their significance, and others are prepared to prove the exact opposite to be true. Space forbids stating both sides. By the end of the first century there is no doubt (see the *Didache*) that both methods, which to-day divide so many Christians, were followed, what we know as the Baptist method being preferably followed, outdoor rather than indoor baptisms being observed. The later practices of "signing," anointing, and threefold application of water belong to the rapid declension of the Church. In reference to the last of these, it is noteworthy that in the N.T. there is no mention of baptism other than unto the name of the Lord Jesus. What this remarkable fact may mean lies beyond the purpose of this handbook.

Buried with Him. In any form of Christian baptism it is most difficult to see any likeness to an Eastern rock burial with a stone placed before the door. But what the symbol would never suggest is doubtless contained in the rite of baptism. It is equally difficult to find anything in the baptism symbol to suggest the manner of our Lord's resurrection. But that the rite contains within it this reference is undoubted. Yet while His death and resurrection are certainly both pointed to in our baptism into His name, death and resurrection are not pointed to in baptism itself, as the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, which is N.T. baptism, unmistakably demonstrates. So "baptized unto Moses" simply means united to Moses, made into a national oneness with Him. It is only baptism to Christ which points to a union with Him—"putting on the Lord Jesus"—which is procured by His death and resurrection. The great truths, therefore, of death and resurrection are not visible in the ceremony of baptism, but are the essence of that to which the baptism points away.

Also risen with Him. This follows death with Him of necessity—else had we all perished. For if no resurrection had followed, "then Christ had died in vain." Thus baptism teaches the same truth as circumcision, the putting off the old life and putting on the new; not mere *Covenant* life, however, but a life of *oneness* with the Lord of life Himself. "We are not only ingrafted into Christ's death, but we also rise to newness of life." "He adds *by faith*, for unquestion-

tion of God, who hath raised him from the dead.
 13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with
 ably it is by it that we receive what is presented to us in baptism. But by what faith?" (Calvin).

Through the faith of the operation of God, *i.e.* "through faith in the energy of God." This describes the true place of faith in reference to Christian circumcision and Christian baptism. It is faith, not in ordinances, but in Divine energy: and this not through God making the ordinances sufficient. Such a faith in dead force called *opus operatum* (or *brutum fulmen*) is utterly alien to Christian truth. Its adoption in Christendom, and its continuance in full power up to the Reformation, was very much the cause of the obscuring of our Lord's person and work. Where it still prevails as sacramentarianism it renders our Lord a merely secondary influence in determining the eternal destinies of men. As "baptismal regeneration" it "makes the recipient a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven" ("*Catholic religion*"—Anglican). This is at our own end of history. At the other end the belief was no less fatal. To avoid misunderstanding the following utterance of Cyprian (A.D. 250) may suffice: "The water must be cleansed and sanctified by the priest, that, by its washing, it may wash away the sins of the man that is baptized." Better known are the following words still in use: "Sanctify *this water* by the mystical washing away of sin." Says Cunningham, quoted by Whyte (*S. Catechism*): "The doctrine of baptismal regeneration has been perhaps as powerful and extensive a cause of deadly error as any doctrine that Satan ever invented."

Who raised Him from the dead. The resurrection of our Lord is generally ascribed to the Father. We should not forget, however, that our Lord said, "I have power to lay it (My life) down, and I have power to take it up again." The executive of the resurrection was God the Spirit (Rom. i. 4, viii. 11, etc.). The resurrection of our Lord is a cardinal fact in Christianity, but equally so in the world's history. The evidence for the fact permeates the entire progress of Christianity, in addition to the attestations within the N.T. "I believe the resurrection of Christ is established by stronger evidence than exists for any other historical fact" (M. Dods, *Footsteps*).

Ver. 13. **And you being dead.** This closely corresponds with Eph. ii. 1: "Dead as regards (not *in*, A.V.) your transgressions." Trespass offerings were for actual wrong-doings; sin offerings were for sinful condition. Trespass implies some external law which is broken, consciously or unconsciously. Sometimes the word for sin points to missing a mark—the idea of *failure*. It is otherwise here (cf. i. 14).

And the uncircumcision of your flesh. As uncircumcised persons their life was death as regards God, but we may understand the reference to be to the estranged state of the Colossians while without

14 him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way,

Christ. **Hath He quickened**, *i.e.* made to live with Christ in His resurrection life. Many leading authorities, R.G.T. and R.V., add "(even) you" after quickened. This is the power of the "endless life" which is in Christ Jesus. This our Lord expressed as the object of His mission,—“I am come that they might have life.” “Your life is hid with Christ.” We may suppose that the Apostle intends their historical newness of life in Him, rather than their virtual union with Him.

Having forgiven you all trespasses. The expression “forgiven” you, differs from that used in i. 14, where the idea is “putting away.” Here it is “*being gracious.*” The trespasses which had slain them He deals with in His grace. His grace in dying lays hold on them in their death; His grace in His resurrection life raises them also to life with Him. **You**: a better reading is “*us,*” thus signifying that he too was a partaker of this wonderful grace. **All**: may be understood both intensively and extensively. In the Jewish code there were trespasses against both God and man, known and unknown, but all requiring sacrifice. All this misery was their condition when a shout of triumph was heard by the prisoners, condemned already, dead, even now, in the eyes of the law. What means that shout? Is it death or life for them? The prison doors are burst open and a voice of grace rings out, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” It tells them that all that was against them no more exists. The Apostle proceeds to narrate how all this was accomplished.

§8. MORE DETAIL OF THE CHRIST'S WORKING (14, 15)

Ver. 14. Blotting out . . . Cross. This is another form of the grace of ver. 13. The figure of a bond suggests *cancelling* (Lightfoot) or “abrogating.” The same word occurs twice in Rev.—“wipe away” (of tears), and a third time in a promise not to “blot out” a name from “the book of life.” Barnes refers to bankers marking paid cheques by driving a hole through them. **The handwriting**, *i.e.* “note of hand.” Perhaps the legal use of *mandate* comes nearest to the Greek. It is not found again in the N.T. **Of ordinances.** “The bond written in ordinances,” R.V. The Greek is *dogmas* or *decrees* (Acts xvi. 4, xvii. 7), not rites, but *enactments*. But as those decrees, which were Mosaic and ceremonial, did not extend to the Gentiles, we must take the “dogmas” widely and apply the reference to all human sense of responsibility before God. Had the Apostle been writing to Jews he would probably have used language connected with covenants. Several *Epigraphoi* (handwritings) have been recovered of the apostolic age, and among them are some cancelled, by scoring

15 nailing it to his cross ; And, having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

out (Deissmann, *Bib. St.*). We seem to be introduced into a court where two opposing parties are engaged in debate. A bond lies on a table and is under discussion. A third party comes into court, goes up to the table, seizes the bond, and hurries from the court. This is our Lord, who in this way mediates between God and man. We are led to follow Him. He goes with the bond directly to the Cross and nails it there.

Nailing it to His Cross : lit. "the Cross" ; Wyclif, "pitchynge it on the Cross." The idea seems to be drawn from what Pilate did when our Lord was crucified. He nailed over the Cross the "*crime*" for which He was executed,—"**JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.**" It was common usage to send a man to execution, his crime posted with him. The Chinese always do so with their criminals. The technical word for such a writing was *titlos* ; *titulus* in Latin. This is the very word John uses (xix. 19) to describe Pilate's writing on the Cross. The Apostle sees the Lord nailing the bond to the Cross above His own head, where Pilate had put *his* death warrant. "He loved me and gave Himself for me," is Paul's deep thought ; and as he gazes on that scene he sees clearly, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." The bond is thus cancelled, the law is abrogated, for He made an end of sin by satisfying the law for ever, through becoming sin for us. Thus "I, by the law, am dead to the law."

Ver. 15. Having spoiled principalities and powers. The scene is continued at the Cross. Speaking to the Jews immediately before His death, He said : "This is your hour and of the power of darkness." So we see Him here surrounded by principalities and powers resisting His gracious intervention. The Psalmist grasped the situation messianically (Ps. cxviii. 11), "They compassed me about like bees, . . . but in the name of the Lord I will cut them off." Even more suggestive of the scene is Ps. xxii. 11-16 : But He *throws them* all off ("having put off from Himself." R.V.). So far they fail to prevail against Him. Nor is this all. To Paul's mystic gaze the scene changes into a great triumph, in which the Lord comes forth more than Conqueror. "**He makes a show of them openly.**" The place of His crucifixion has become the place of the eternal defeat of all that sought to destroy Him. He is now a conqueror, and they are objects for the world's scorn and contempt. He exposes them to the universe boldly (not openly). The very word used means "to point the finger in scorn." Should the question arise how He came thus to expose them, the answer is, He celebrated a triumph over them. No man could do this without the mandate of his country's supreme authority, and it was reserved for the *completion* of a successful war of great importance. The most striking part of a

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

triumph was the march past of the conquered foes, for nothing so drew out popular feeling and admiration of the Conqueror as the tokens of greatness and of power in those who had been overthrown. Paul evidently regarded a Roman triumph, which was the greatest of all scenic displays in the old world, as suggestive of the excelling grandeur of the finished work of his Lord (2 Cor. ii. 14). We may follow the great triumphal procession up the Mount toward the dwelling-place of the Most High. As He rides thus gloriously the gates of the Heavenly Temple open, while a song of victory greets the Conqueror: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

§ 9. PARTICULAR ERRORS TO BE RESISTED (16-18)

Ver. 16. **Let no man therefore judge you.** There is strong emphasis on "therefore." It supports the following counsel by the all-sufficiency of the Cross and of the glorious triumph of the Christ. Thus Paul makes our completeness in Christ the sufficient reply to all false and futile aberrations, seducing men away from Him, either wholly or in part. **Judge you, i.e.** "take you to task" (Lightfoot, Abbott, etc.); in—"in the matter of"—**eating and drinking.** Rom. xiv. 17 presents the same thought: "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink." What precise name should be attached to the false teaching in Colosse cannot be determined. The Essenes certainly were well known for abstinence from wine and animal food. The attitude of the Apostle is not prohibitive of such abstinences on sufficient grounds. In writing to Corinth he declares himself prepared wholly to abstain from animal food for the sake of others, if he can so help them. But he must retain his liberty to judge on each occasion whether to abstain or not. He advises Timothy to use wine for bodily infirmity. What he here disallows is the right of any one to sit as judge over his liberty which he has in Christ Jesus. If a man vow (Nazarite) vow of abstinence, good and well. But no one is to impose such a vow on another conscience.

Or in respect of a holy-day: lit. "in the part of." This is not suggestive of giving God "a part of a day," as some fondly imagine, but is good Greek for what the A.V. expresses. From material things he passes to seasons—abstinences of time. In this enumeration the ordinary requirements of Judaism are manifestly implied. **Holy-day, i.e.** day set apart to God from common use. But here the reference is really to a *feast-day*. Ceremonially, however, the idea of a "Sacred Season" covers the expression, *e.g.* Passover, Pentecost, etc. The Christ has fulfilled all their intention Godward, and therefore they have ceased to have intrinsic value (cf. 1 Chron. xxiii. 31). **Or of the new moon.** Wyclif, "Neomonye." This refers to the

17 the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to
18 come; but the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile

monthly holy-day, when special sacrifices were offered and ordinary work set aside. The seventh new moon of each year was peculiarly sacred. **Or of the Sabbath-day.** This is the most frequent of sacred days, occurring weekly. The Apostle thus includes annual, monthly, and weekly sacred seasons. A similar reckoning is made, Gal. iv. 10, where a yet wider view is taken of obsolete seasons. The Sabbatic and Jubilee years are added to the list. The inclusion of the Sabbath is to our minds most unexpected, and especially as it was pre-Mosaic, and had more special Divine promise attached to its observance than to any other day or season. But the Sabbath rest is also "fulfilled" in Christ. "We which have believed are entering into rest." As a pre-Mosaic institution a rest day with God belongs to man's constitution morally, mentally, and physically, as is well understood. And though under Christian liberty the ceremonial Sabbath is done away in Christ, the rest day is continued in the Lord's day observance of the completion of the New Creation in His Resurrection life. "The Sabbath was made for man," is our Lord's own testimony; and when man became conscious of a greater Creation rest than was secured at first, he instinctively sought its enjoyment in that day, which reminded him of his new blessedness. Though in early Christian writings the term "Lord's day" was used for our Sunday, it is not found in the N.T., nor before Ignatius' letter to the Magnesians. The seeming use of the term in Rev. i. 10 is, even by Lightfoot, referred to our Lord's return as Judge, and not to the Christian Sunday (Lightfoot, *Apos. Fath.* vol. ii.).

Sabbath days. We should read "Sabbath day," since under a plural form a singular is undoubtedly intended (cf. Matt. xii. 1; Luke iv. 16).

Ver. 17. **Which are a shadow of things to come:** lit. "of the comings." The "Shadow" figure as applied to Mosaism extends back to its beginnings. "See that thou make all things according to the *pattern* showed to thee on the Mount." The pattern (type) was doubtless the Archetypal Christ (Heb. viii. 5). The "Shadow" is expressly used of the entire ritual (Heb. viii. 5, x. 1). While thus historically the shadow was revealed to men generally before the substance, it is not always so, for our sacraments, which are also shadows, instrumentally convey solid present realities, not mere shadows of realities. "He contrasts shadows with revelation, and absence with manifestation" (Calvin). The body is of Christ: *i.e. the reality, the substance of these shadows is the Christ.* "In His temple doth every whit speak of His glory." This may easily be traced in the rest of His love, the joy of His presence, the deliverance He accomplished for me, the covenant of His death, the fellowship of His abiding, etc. To some one objecting that our sacraments are also shadows, Calvin replies, "They are not bare shadows, but, on the contrary, symbols of Christ's presence,

you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which for they contain that *yea* and *amen* of all *the promises of God* which has been once manifested to us in Christ."

Ver. 18. **Let no man beguile you.** It seems as though the Apostle were now thinking of another false teacher. At all events, he makes a fresh start and unfolds a new danger.

Beguile you: "rob you of your prize," R.V. The word comes from Greek *Brabeion*, and Latin *Bravium* (Phil. iii. 14), indicating the prize awarded to victors at the public games. Our "*Bravo*" is thence derived and expressed—"the prize (to him)"! In the Philippian passage the Apostle is more explicit—"the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus." In writing to the Galatians the same danger is pointed at very emphatically, "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing"; "Ye are fallen from grace."

In a voluntary humility. The terseness of the language has created much perplexity in assigning a satisfactory explanation. Our best authorities differ. We may render it—"wishing (to beggar you) in humility," thus carrying over the robbing of the previous clause.

Humility had become, under Christianity, a virtue instead of a vice as formerly. This gave it a special attractiveness in any teaching which dwelt upon it. We learn much regarding its high place in Acts xx. 19; Eph. iv. 2; Phil. ii. 3; 1 Pet. v. 5, and it recurs in this Epistle at ver. 23, where its misuse is pointed out; and again iii. 12, where its noble character reappears.

And worshipping of angels. This appears to be the practical direction of the feigned humility required by the false teaching in Colosse. **Worshipping** is *threskeia*, perhaps worship in a minor sense, "*a religion of angels.*" (So the Vulgate.) This leaves room for a very wide cult, though probably not so wide as that subsequently adopted and continued even to the present time by the Church of Rome and others. The "*Shepherd of Hermas,*" one of the writings known as of "*The Apostolic Fathers,*" elaborates a system of angelology with most minute details. There was certainly a great craving in the Early Church, as Ignatius confesses for himself, to know more regarding angels than Scripture reveals. The doctrine of "*guardian angels*" was specially attractive, and "*the Shepherd*" supplied food for this craving with astounding definiteness and blasphemy. "*The Platonists infected the Christian Church also with this error*" (Calvin). It is suggestive that a council in the neighbouring town of Laodicea, held about A.D. 364, condemned this very practice of what it called "*secret idolatry.*" "*Angels will always win the day over Jesus Christ . . . if the choice of a mediator between us and God is left to the vanity of the human mind*" (Quesnel, qtd. Moule).

Intruding into those things which he hath not seen. The R.V. reads, "*Dwelling in the things which he hath seen.*" R.G.T. and Lightfoot also omit not; Ellicott and Moule insert it with A.V.

he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,
 19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body
 by joints and bands having nourishment ministered,

Intruding—only once in the N.T. does the Greek word here used occur, but other usage suggests the R.V. rendering. With the one rendering we regard the angel teacher making his discourse on matters of which he had no experience ; in the other case he appears pretending to have had some vision of angelic dignity. This same pretence of spirit fellowship abounds in our day, and has captured many eminent as well as many shallow persons. Generally, those who value their moral fibre do not continue long in the fellowship of the cult. **Vainly puffed up.** Vainly means, as in Matt. v. 22, "without a cause," or as in Gal. iii. 4, "in vain." **Puffed up** occurs six times in I Corinthians, and, in addition, only here in the N.T. It is contrasted with "edify" in the reference, "knowledge puffeth up, love edifies." "He was dropsical from conceit of mind" (Maclaren). **By his fleshly mind,** i.e. "mind of his flesh," "the *nous* of his flesh." Thus doubtless the Apostle refers to the lowest sphere of mental occupation, mind hampered by the entanglement of a diseased spiritual condition. This mental poverty induced a notion of superiority which resulted in a venture into the invisible world and a claim for angel worship. Cf. R. Harris' *Side-Lights of N.T.*, 198 ff.

§ 10. THE FOLLY AND USELESSNESS OF THE FALSE TEACHING (19-23)

Ver. 19. **And not holding the Head.** This is the central motive of the letter. The danger in Philippi was loose relations among the members of the Body. Here it is loose relations to Christ, the Head. **Holding** is "holding fast," R.V. The errorists no doubt found a place for the Christ in their teaching, else it would have had no attraction for the Colossians. But it took a loose grasp of the Christ, and so became a serious evil, as all ages of the Church have proved. Loosely-knit members produce a spiritual neurasthenia very difficult to treat and impossible to argue with. **The Head.** There can be no question that the Lord Himself is meant.

From which all the Body: read "*whom*" for "which," R.V.

By joints and bands having nourishment ministered. R.V. reads more simply: "Being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands." The function of the Head is described as twofold: (i.) supply ; (ii.) uniting power among the members. **Having nourishment ministered.** The Greek is one word, and is derived from an Attic institution. A *chorégos* was a person who defrayed the expense of providing a *chorus* for the Athenian stage. The expense included the entire "property" necessary. This was so costly that only men of wealth could undertake it. But there was much possible honour connected with it. The successful *choregus* was awarded a sacred

and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

20 Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudi- tripod of brass, which was generally erected over a temple of Bacchus in "the street of tripods" near the Acropolis. The "choragic pillar of Lysicrates" (B.C. 335) alone remains, and is well known even in our country, where copies of it may be seen over Christian churches—a strange excerpt of devotion to Bacchus, for a Church of Christ! The prefix to the verb denoting "supply" increases its force. Hence we may read "richly provided for." "Nourishment," as food, is not suggested. **And knit together.** In a corresponding passage in Ephesians the translation is "compacted" (see Col. ii. 2). "The Body is one, though the garments differ; yea, rather, for the most of these the garment is one, but differs in the dressing; handsomely and comely set out by one, disguised by another. Neither is it, nor ever shall be, in the power of all the fiends of hell . . . to make God's Church other than one" (Hall, *Christ Mys.*). **By joints and bands.** These words were probably technical in the physiology of Paul's day. They suggest to lay readers of Greek not "joints" as known to us, but merely "contacts" of any kind; cf. Eph. iv. 16, where the rendering is "every kind of contact of supply." So far as Lightfoot and Abbott can trace ancient scientific usage, this sense prevails. Dean Robinson (*Eph.*) adduces also the meaning—"fastening," with ancient medical authority. **Bands**—fastenings, or rather "ligaments." The word occurs, Eph. iv. 3 and Col. iii. 14, as "bond." The sense of the clause seems to be "contacts and fastenings" or "ligaments."

A *third* function of the Head is now enumerated—(iii.) *increase or growth.* This is evidently the ultimate purpose of the other functions. **Increaseth.** The increase may be *in members*—a peculiarity of this Head—or *development* of members already in the Body. We should probably take hold of both views. The other side of increase, arising from vital energy within the members, the Apostle indicates, Eph. iv. 16. The remarkable attestation to the position here taken, derived from recent science in connection with the brain, claims notice (see Lightfoot). It is a fond fancy, worth harbouring, that the "beloved physician" was at Paul's elbow when he dictated this verse! **With the increase of God.** It sounds somewhat harsh to read "increaseth the increase," yet it is correct construction to express most strongly his definition of the increase. So we may read "increaseth—the increase is God's." The clause is a climax. Grace is ever Divine fulness entering human emptiness, Divine fulness vitalising human deadness, Divine fulness pouring its own energy of life into human inertness and producing increase, an increase corresponding to itself, till it reach Divine completeness in form and character—"the stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus."

Ver. 20. **If ye be dead . . . world.** The Apostle returns to his hortative solicitude for the Colossians. **If** is his emphatic way of stating

ments of the world, why, as though living in the world,
 21 are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not, taste not,
 22 handle not; Which all are to perish with the using,)
 after the commandments and doctrines of men?

what is unquestionable (cf. iii. 1; Phil. ii. 1, etc.). **Be dead**, rather "have died." It marks a certain definite point—when Christ died. **With Christ**: see ver. 12, where burial, following death, is the point of the believer's oneness made prominent. The entire gamut of this oneness is given variously in Eph. and Col., but each simply amplifies the other.

From the rudiments of the world. For this expression see ver. 8, where the special aspect of "the rudiments" is in relation to philosophy, as here to matters of observance.

Why, as though living in the world, i.e. "as though your true life were merely a physical existence." This it is not, but, as in ver. 19, a life "hid with Christ" (iii. 3), begun, sustained, and perfected in Him. We should not confound this with what we often call "a worldly life," meaning "unspiritual." It is even more rudimentary in its outlook. **Are ye subject to ordinances?** R.V. reads: "Do ye subject yourselves to ordinances," all one Greek word, which we have already encountered, ver. 14, as *dogmata*. May we render it here—why are ye fad-bound?

Ver. 21. He now proceeds to give specimens of the prevailing fads "Don't eat, don't taste, don't (even) touch." The enumeration is in a descending order, thereby increasing the piquancy of the exposure. **Touch not, taste not, handle not**, is not quite so happy a rendering. We need not press for details regarding the proscribed materials. The objectionable point is reducing Christian life to maggoty details of prohibition, with no moral centre in them.

Ver. 22. **Which all . . . using.** This is a parenthesis, but does not include ver. 21 as in A.V. It is added to intensify the Apostle's aversion to the objects of his repudiation. These things about which your new teacher, or teachers, makes so much stir are all things which come to their end even in their use, leaving no moral influence behind them, so that for life's great ends use or non-use is practically the same. The teaching is the same as 1 Cor. viii. 8, "Neither, if we eat not, are we the worse; neither, if we eat, are we the better." There are other explanations of the clause, but the above seems most natural. The literal form would be—"which are all for destruction" or "corruption."

In the using. The word frequently means "*misuse*," and might be so interpreted here, as though the Apostle meant—"these things indeed lead to fatal issues, but only through misuse, not by mere eating, tasting, or touching. This is more simple in itself, if more difficult to find in the Apostle's Greek.

After the commandments . . . men. Connect here with ver. 21. **After**="according to." **Commandments**: R.V., "precepts"; used

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.

only here and twice in the Gospels (Matt. xv. 9; Mark vii. 7). The verbal form is used of God's law, the substantive of human law. **And doctrines:** lit. "teachings," as of master and scholar. The phrase seems to be derived from Is. xxix. 13 (as in LXX.), and is used also Matt. xv. 9; Mark vii. 7. The quotation itself manifests Paul's attitude to the Colossian teachers.

Ver. 23. **Which things have . . . worship.** These and all such impositions are now analysed and exposed. They indeed possess "a language, a repute of wisdom." To the eye they masquerade as wisdom—the cant word of the age. In character, however, they are mere **will-worship**, spurious **humility**, affected **neglecting of the body**. The Vulgate makes it all "superstition."

Will-worship, *i.e.* self-selected-service—a compound word, used in ver. 18 in connection with angel worship. So this expression may refer back to that idolatry.

Humility. He has already referred, ver. 18, to the seductive power of this word on Christian sentiment. It was a word of special interest, and so could be made a special snare when adroitly exploited to base ends. This was attempted by the well-known channel of "the pride that apes humility," as though the Christ were not so accessible to us as to angels. Hence the fatal curse of Mariolatry—even worse than the deception of Colosse, as the history of its development abundantly demonstrates. A third element was **neglecting of the body**. R.V., "severity to the body"; "unsparing (treatment) of the body" (Moule). The entire ascetic system of corrupt Christianity is here expressed. The most popular delineation of this conceit when elaborated into a system of brutal tyranny is found in Kingsley's *Saint's Tragedy*. But without an infamous director many have sought rest in personal self-chosen tortures. False religion and false philosophy have alike regarded the body with aversion. Paul here clears himself of any sympathy with such, though well knowing that his flesh required watchfulness and restrictions.

Not in any . . . flesh. The R.V. reads: "Not of any value against—" (so Moule, Lightfoot, and others). The result of these bodily austerities the Apostle says did not contribute to the end professed. They were a failure. Ellicott reads: "Serving (only) *to* the satisfying," etc.

Honour is certainly the ordinary purpose of the word here employed. But in this place it conveys no distinct idea under this rendering. On the other hand, "value," "real value," is at least uncommon (see Abbott). We leave it as a perplexing problem, meantime assuming the R.V. rendering. **Satisfying of the flesh.** R.V., "Against the indulgence," etc. If this rendering be adopted

we reach the thought that the prescribed austerities served no end, since fleshly indulgences still held sway, and what professed to check them proved useless. This interpretation has this at least in its favour, that it expresses a great truth for every age. Satan can as easily find his place at a man's elbow in the desert as at his dessert.

CHAPTER III. TO IV. 6

THE Apostle having finished his teaching regarding the foundation principles of the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus and of His people's oneness with Him therein, proceeds to unfold the contents of that new life. In expounding the foundation he was led to deal with currents of thought and practice which had presented themselves in Colosse, which he regarded as subversive of truth "as it is in Jesus." These currents were opposed to the great characteristics of gospel truth which he laid down in five particulars. They were also antagonistic to the great work accomplished by the Christ when He found a "bond of decrees" from which man could of himself find no possible escape. But there was even more than that in the false teaching which had entered the Colossian Church. There was in it an attempt to make Christianity a merely rudimentary and superficial appeal to man's nature and requirements. By a strange infatuation the proposed substitute was almost entirely materialistic and mechanical, though draped in language which claimed to be philosophic. It was, however, a mere "*will-o'-the-wisp*" philosophy, and in place of a world-wide power and productiveness, resulting from having its inherent seat in the heart of God, it was a religion suited only to faddist coteries. Probably there is no town of any size in Christendom at the present moment which does not possess in some prominent form within its "Church life" every phase of opinion found in Colosse, and not as a mere attempt within its bounds to plant such doctrine, as seems to be all that can be said regarding Colosse, but as a prominent and distinguishing feature of what it represents in the community. It shows itself in protean forms from extreme sacramentarianism to the most peurile faddism—with all the erudition of feast days, angel, saint, and Mary-worshipping in between. The great object of the letter is, however, to instruct the Colossians more fully regarding the great mystery of the fulness of the Christ, as the Christ-mystical—so that His members may never travel beyond Him for any requirement which may ever arise, but find their "*completeness*"—filled-up-ness—in Him for all things. Probably nowhere in Scripture is there such a wonderful summary of this great truth as in the portion of the letter on which we now enter. It is a panoramic view of the life hid with Christ in God, exhibiting its inner and outer resources alike. In seven sections the life as it should be lived is passed before us:—

PANORAMA OF THE PLEROMA-MYSTERY LIFE

- Verses 1-4. § 1. The Christian's life viewed as resurrection-life.
 „ 5-9. § 2. Counsels regarding the remaining flesh element.
 „ 9-11. § 3. Graphic statement of the mystery-life on the Christ-side.
 „ 12-14. § 4. A description of the fitting clothing for the new life.
 „ 15-17. § 5. Directions regarding occupation with Christ in the new life.
 „ 18-iv.1. § 6. The family life of a member of Christ's body.
 „ 2-6. § 7. Three regions of life-culture to be maintained.
 There remains only "TO APPEAR WITH HIM IN GLORY."

I IF ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things

§ 1. THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE AS A RESURRECTION-LIFE (1-4)

Ver. 1. If ye then be risen with Christ. His former teaching reached, beyond death and burial, to resurrection with Christ. He now proceeds to treat of the next stage of oneness with Him, namely, in His ascension and session. In all this there is no attempt of the false teachers to follow the Christ life. The only region into which they could at all affect to follow was in respect of prayer, for whose access they proposed angels—ostensibly, no doubt, as making their mediation more likely to reach the Divine arm than our own prayers—the same blasphemy that still obtains in the invocation of saints, Madonna, and angels. Paul's mystery doctrine annihilates all this, its object being to show that the Christian has not merely full access but actual oneness even now with Him who sitteth upon the throne. Mediators, therefore, are not only unnecessary but *impossible*. They are shut out by the absolute inclusion together of Christ and His people. Baptism had been to them the symbol of this oneness created between them and Christ, through their having been *grafted in* (*sumphutoi*, Rom. vi. 5) with Him, and so evermore in vital contact with all His life, power, and fulness. This life—His resurrection-life—occupies all the remaining teaching of the letter.

"If ye then did rise with Christ." The language is assertive, not interrogative or uncertain (see ii. 20). Resurrection-life is life eternal, which men receive from Christ as soon as they receive Him. "I am come that they might have life." "This life is in His Son." "He that hath the Son hath life." The resurrection-life of our Lord has an availing sufficiency which His life before the Cross did not contain. But His new life is not only without the possibility of death, *indissoluble* (Heb. vii. 16), but has in it a *comprehensiveness* equal to the fulness of God, and an *effectiveness* sufficient for life to an entire universe. It is of this life the Christian man becomes partaker at his regeneration. Having, then, secured this life in Him (i.) Seek those things which are above. It would be utterly incongruous

which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and to be in the enjoyment of a life whose home-sphere and full enjoyment are "above," and yet be content to live with no interest in that home and its concerns. **Above**: there is always a real local suggestion in this term when it stands for heaven. Looking up is the instinct of desire and of expectation, as looking down is of indifference or despair. Men may cavil at the direction chosen, but in saner moods they follow suit and "look up." "We seek those things which are above when in heart and spirit we are truly sojourners in this world and are not bound to it" (Calvin). "Heaven is not given to the indolent" (Davenant). **Where Christ sitteth**. He is Himself the Christian's Heaven—so far as we can meantime know. Often a place on earth owes all its conscious reality to the presence of a loved one there. How soon a sailor's wife picks up the geography of remotest parts when *his* ship calls there. *His Session* followed His Ascension—though once since then, in Stephen's experience, He has been seen standing. **At the right hand of God**. The expression has become technical, expressing the throned dignity of His place in Heaven beside the Father. It may here perhaps have a suggestive reference to His nearness to the source of all supply, so that other mediators are out of the question. As regards the Colossians themselves, His place should fill them with "wonder, love, and praise," since His place is, in Him, their place also. Augustine says: "To sit is to possess judicial power; but to be at the right hand of God is to be in the greatest blessedness."

Ver. 2. (ii.) He finds in the imagination a fresh power of the new life. **Set your affection on things above**: lit. "*think* things above." R.V., "Set your mind." This is distinct occupation with Christ and His interests. Heaven may well be a place for Christian *imagination*, if regulated by judgment and Revelation. There is no place for which so little "guide-book" information has been provided. It is a land of surprises as well as of far-reaches. The King in His beauty and His Land may well possess our thinking flights, as we dream of our rooms in the many mansions. **Not on things of the earth**. We cannot suppose that *all* play of the imagination on things of earth is forbidden. Much of God's best gifts would thus be lost, and very many of His choice talents, such as artists, poets, scientists, and philosophers possess in high degree. True, all art began in religion, but there is much art, outside religion, in which we may find God, as we do in nature.

Ver. 3. **For ye are dead**, *i.e.* "have died." This is a reminder from ii. 20: Christ's death removed both Him and you from having your true sphere in this world. Olshausen calls telling attention to their being dead and yet called "to mortify"; shortly afterwards (cf. Phil. iii. 12 ff.) he adds: "At first Paul views the believer quite *objectively*, in the

4 your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with

manner in which God looks on him in Christ, and afterwards he views him in his *subjective* position." **Your life is hid with Christ.** The tense of the verb indicates continuance—"a life of being hid." But the new life is not a mere bodily existence. Indeed, it is not an independent life at all, but is in Christ a portion of His life. In Galatians the Apostle winds in and out, with a play of seeming contradictions, on this theme: "I am crucified—I live—not I—Christ lives in me," etc. We cannot imagine, with some, that the Apostle harks back to Baptism. It is the heart of the Pleroma-mystery which he cannot forget even for a moment. **In God.** The idea is a recall of John xvii., "I in them, and Thou in Me." "In order that our waiting may not be painful let us observe those expressions 'with Christ' and 'in God,' which intimate that our life is out of reach of danger though it does not so appear" (Calvin).

Ver. 4. (iii.) Their Hope is the third incitement within the new life; **When Christ who is our life**: lit. "When Christ our life." This is practically a title of our Lord. Its reality runs through the entire teaching of the letter, forms a large section of John's Gospel and pervades his first Epistle. He says *our*, because he cannot even in writing afford to lose even in expression any part of his Lord's fulness.

Shall appear. R.V., "Shall be manifested." This is undoubtedly a reference to His second advent, which, except in the very latest, is less frequently mentioned in the later than in the earlier letters. This is the only mention of it in this letter, and in Ephesians there is none, unless perhaps iv. 30. Four outstanding words in the N.T. intimate this "Blessed Hope":—

1. That here, in Colossians, which=*make manifest*, as in 1 Pet. v. 4; 1 John ii. 28, iii. 2.
2. The word which we apply to the last book of the N.T., the *Apocalypse*=a "*revealing*," 1 Cor. i. 7; 2 Thess. i. 7; 1 Pet. iv. 13.
3. The same word as our *Epiphany*=a *making manifest*, 2 Thess. ii. 8; 1 Tim. vi. 14; 2 Tim. i. 10.
4. A word which=*arrival* or "being present," which is now almost English, the *Parousia*. It is found in papyri of the Koiné period, to express a royal visit. See, e.g., Matt. xxiv. 27 ff.; 1 Cor. xv. 23; 1 Thess. ii. 19; 2 Thess. ii. 1, 8, 9, etc.

Though little expressed in the letters of the pleroma-mystery, it is yet contained in that great teaching which reaches its climax or manifestation only "at His appearing," as the next clause asserts. "This, then, is that festal day of which the Apostle subjoins a clear and most delightful promise in these words following" (Davenant). **Shall ye also appear**, i.e. "be manifested." The manifestation of His

5 him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which

people is described as "being like Him," "having a body like unto the body of His glory," and in some wonderful way assuming an attractiveness such that "*He* will be glorified in His saints, and be admired *in* all them that believe." In **glory** : Greek, *doxa*—a rainbow-coloured word in its shades of meaning. By derivation it may mean no more than "seeming." It passes on to indicate *reputation*, and its N.T. uses are chiefly :—

1. "*Recognition*," "honour," e.g. Rom. iii. 23 ; John xii. 43.
2. "*Splendour*," Rom. i. 23. It is thus frequent in the LXX.
3. Very specially of *God's glory* in redemption. Corresponding to this was the *Shekinah* glory over the mercy seat in the O.T.
4. By *this glory* God works in redemption. Christ "was raised by the glory of the Father," i.e. "By the forth putting of His power."

5. In connection with our Lord Himself—

- (i.) He had glory with the Father from eternity.
- (ii.) He manifested His glory at Cana and the Transfiguration Mount, and in His daily "dwelling" with His disciples, who saw in Him the glory of an only begotten of the Father. We must assuredly firmly hold that our Lord for His Incarnation "emptied Himself" (*Kenosis*) on our behalf (cf. iii. 9). But we dare not allow any theory regarding this Divine mystery to approach any such position as would exclude His Divine glory from His Incarnate Person. As the preceding texts assert, those who saw Him aright in His humiliation saw *in* Him, and sometimes saw emanating from Him, a glory as of an Eternal only Begotten (cf. Phil. ii. 5-9 ; 2 Cor. viii. 9, etc.).

(iii.) He received glory when His earth mission was perfected, and in that glory He now lives and works.

6. This glory He shares with His people now, and will continue to do so eternally, but most fully after "His appearing."

The Gospel of Jesus Christ thus subdivides itself into "the Gospel of the GRACE of God," and "the Gospel of the GLORY of God" (cf. i. 11, 27). "The Lord will give grace and glory."

§ 2. COUNSELS REGARDING THE REMAINING FLESH ELEMENT (5-9)

Ver. 5. **Mortify therefore your members.** R.V. margin, "make dead" ; Way, "crush the life out of—." This cannot mean physical members, else were suicide enjoined. The members must be the energies and activities of the flesh-man, morally considered. In verses 9 and 10 the same is expressed by the *old man*. Similarly, we read of the "first Adam," "the outward man," "the carnal mind," etc. These energies of the sinful nature are the members which are to be made dead. "Let nothing live inimical to such a state, kill at once (aorist) the organs and media of a mere earthly life" (Ellicott).

The fullest and briefest discussion of the subject of "the flesh and

are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which

the spirit" known to the writer is in a tract of W. Perkins of Cambridge, dated 1595, on Gal. v. 17. His definition is: "The spirit signifies a created quality of holiness which by the Holy Ghost is wrought in the mind, will, and affections of man and the flesh, the natural corruption or inclination of the mind, will, and affections to that which is against the law." His summary is, after his wont, in diagrammatic form:—

THE VOICE OF A MAN.	1. Carnal of	Evil. I do what is evil and I will do it.
		Good. I do not what is good and I will not do it.
	2. Regenerate of	Evil. I do the evil which I would not.
		Good. I do not do the good which I would.
	3. Glorified of	Evil. I do not what is evil and I will not do it.
		Good. I do that which is good and I will do it.

Davenant quotes a saying of Origen: "The mortification of sin is not effected in a moment, but is the work of an increasing struggle. Sin languishes from the commencement of our mortification; it wastes away in the progress; at last it shall be abolished."

Upon the earth. This is generally understood to mean the contrast of the scene of occupation between the old man and the new. The *earth* is the sphere of the one, "the above" of the other. Thus they are known and distinguished. Also, the new life is hid in God; the other is of the earth earthy. An enumeration now follows of some of the "earth members," by which the whole may be easily recognised, as they have a common character.

Fornication. This flesh member occupies a prominent place in history and in Scripture, where it is applied to both physical and spiritual defilement. The body social is sadly deformed by this desolating member.

Uncleanness. Even more searching is this member than the other, and penetrates regions, such as thoughts, words, looks, gestures, where the former dare not venture. Death, not argument, is the only safe treatment.

Inordinate affection; really "passion," R.V. The word is strong, and refers to *rust* in its most masterful corrosive exhibitions. Not mastery over it, but death to it, is the Apostle's direction. **Evil concupiscence;** R.V., "evil desire." Passion stirs of itself, but evil desire is led out to action. It can be cultivated even in prayer, by dallying with it under pretence of praying against it. **And covetous-**

6 is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God
 7 cometh on the children of disobedience. In the which
 ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.
 8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath,

ness, *i.e.* must-have-more-ness. "Had covetousness no power over you, you could have no other *selfish* tempers to struggle against. They are all dead as soon as covetousness has done working in you" (W. Law, *Spirit of Love*). Which is idolatry; R.V., "the which is idolatry"; "seeing that it is" (Moule). Idolatry is itself "the service of an idol." The measure of that service may greatly vary. Regard for the idol itself is the sinfulness. Now an *idol*, morally considered, is any object of preference which makes God follow *behind* it. So a good thing as well as a bad may be an idol. The good which is better to me than God is my idol. If my idol be evil, or foolish in itself, so much the more grotesque is my preference for it. That must-have-more-ness which ignores the will of God is self-evidently an idol. That "more" which I insist on takes God's place, and I am an idolater. Thus many men make idols of their own prayers, putting them in God's place.

Ver. 6. The Apostle now estimates all these "members" by a Divine standard. For which . . . disobedience. There is a close parallel here with Eph. v. 6, and from that epistle the clause "on the children of disobedience" has probably been imported. The wrath of God. This is a necessity of moral Divine government. A holy God could only regard such violations of wholesome living with the strongest revolt of His Being, *i.e.* with wrath, as we must say in trying to express Divine emotions in terms of our own. Anyhow, that is the word the N.T. employs to determine for us the Divine attitude to all that counterworks His desire that His universe should in all its parts be a reflection of His own holiness.

Cometh; rather, "is coming." "The present hints at the enduring principles of the moral government of God" (Ellicott).

Ver. 7. In the which ye also walked. The reference is to the flesh members. Should the omitted clause be retained it might be taken—"Among whom." Walked, cf. Eph. ii. 3. For walk, see i. 10. Sometime (see i. 21); R.V., "aforetime."

When ye lived in them. The R.V. adopts the reading "in these things." There was a time when ye too spent your life in that very atmosphere, and so were exposed to Divine wrath. This *living* points to habitual condition, not possible entanglement for a brief season. The "flesh" remains within the man who possesses the pleroma-life, and so it may surprise him at times into sin, but continued mastery becomes evermore impossible, else were there no new Christ-life in the man. He must have the mastery where He resides.

Ver. 8. But now . . . all these, *i.e.* under the power of the new life ye put off. This is the second direction in regard to the flesh;

malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have

(i.) *put to death*, (ii.) *put off*. We cannot kill the things now to be enumerated, but at the same time they are not to be tolerated. The language is directive, not descriptive, as the Greek makes clear.

You also. You and all other saints must do the same.

All these things—"the all things," *i.e.* of this class. Again no provision for the flesh can be tolerated.

Anger, wrath. These are several times joined together both in N.T. and the LXX. Though often used synonymously, yet wrath is the more turbulent stirring, anger the more settled feeling, as though brooding revenge. Jeremy Taylor makes wrath great but transient anger. Trench (*Syn.* vol. i.): "*Ira furor brevis est.*" **Malice**: lit. "evil." The word is very wide in application, *e.g.* Matt. vi. 34; Acts viii. 22; but perhaps the A.V. rendering is here best. Cf. Eph. iv. 31; 1 Pet. ii. 1. In James i. 21 it is rendered *naughtiness*.

He now passes to errors of *the lips*, which are a *third* form of flesh evil. The construction places them partly under things to be put away and partly things which are not to be. These lip-evils are (i.) **blasphemy**; *i.e.* evil-speaking (Eph. iv. 31), not necessarily against God. R.V. reads "railing." The Apostle elsewhere speaks of himself as having been "a blasphemer," not in our modern sense of daring, bad language, or of impiety, but as one who spoke strongly against Jesus as the Christ. It is used in the N.T. of speaking against God, as we imply by blasphemy, in Matt. ix. 3, xxvi. 65; John x. 36, etc. It is rendered "railing," Luke xxiii. 39, and generally "speaking evil," Tit. iii. 2; 1 Pet. iv. 4, etc. "The heart has no kind of vengeance so ready as this of evil-speaking" (Davenant).

(ii.) **Filthy communication**, etc. R.V., "Shameful speaking," *i.e.* base talk, whether abusive or filthy. We say "foul-mouthed" for both. Wyclif renders it "foul word."

Ver. 9. (iii.) **Lie not one to another.** Though the requirement here bears on their intercourse with fellow-Christians, it is not, as in Jesuitical morals, to be restricted to them. Yet private and public lies are often deemed morally distinct, and social and commercial falsehood are distinguished. We seem to assent to the claims of parliamentary language much more thoroughly than to the restrictions of truth as between man and man, or as between parents and children, or lies told for "peace sake." The reasons which the Apostle proceeds to assign are to be referred to all the regions in which the flesh members strive to assert themselves.

Seeing ye have put off. The word here employed is only once again used in the N.T., namely, Col. ii. 15. There the Lord put off, for us, the enclosing throng of principalities and powers. Here the believer is reminded that he has stript himself clear of the old nature. It is true that the old man is not dead, else were the previous injunctions unnecessary. But his *dominion* is over. He now

10 put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the
 11 image of him that created him: Where there is neither occupies the place of a conquered enemy, a dethroned ruler, to be watched and restrained, as a foe and rebel in Mansoul. **The old man.** In Scripture language this marks "the flesh" (see ver. 5). Way translates it "outworn human nature." **With his deeds.** Manifestly the old man is not dead in the child of God, but must be dealt with as a power still active, arrogant, and assertive.

Ver. 10. **And have put on the new man.** Nature and grace alike abhor a vacuum. It is the expulsive force of a new affection which accomplishes all the attainments of Christian living (2 Cor. iii. 18). Only grace within will ever keep nature repressed, and grace is not a mere principle or power, but the energy of the Christ imparting His own life to the soul.

The new man. This is the product of regeneration. Various other names are employed for this new creation; e.g. spirit, Divine nature, that which is born of God, inward man, the mind, etc. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." **Have put on.** So Rom. xiii. 14, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus." So we may assume that the life of Christ received in regeneration is the assumption of Christ. The Pleroma-mystery life is that life of Christ which the N.T. saint enjoys. Its "new-man" is the regenerate part of the saint which stands absolutely apart from sin and sinning—"Cannot sin because it is born of God." As the flesh-man, the old man, can only sin and cannot leave off, so the new man can never sin (1 John throughout; cf. Eph. iv. 24). **Which is renewed:** R.V., "is being renewed." The word occurs only here and in 2 Cor. iv. 16 in the N.T. Its use in Corinthians is the same as here, where the "outward" and "inward" man are contrasted, and the inner man is said to be "renewed day by day." This assuredly points to the growth of the new life toward the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. **In knowledge:** R.V., "unto knowledge." Knowledge (see i. 9) is again intensive=insight. The life is always determined by knowledge. We live by knowing Him. "This is life eternal to know Thee . . . and Jesus Christ." Contact with the word, as containing all our materials of knowledge, is ever necessary. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." If we surrender the unique inspiration of the Word, we become entirely unprotected from all forms and degrees of disbelief. Any study of God's Word which is merely intellectual, as of a classical writer, uniformly endangers the Word's vital power, as a living seed, and continued handling of it thus becomes very often fatal to the individual. **After the image of Him that created him.** "After the image"=corresponding to the likeness. "Whether God be defined as the creator in reference to the *first* or to the *second* Creation does not alter the doctrinal truth involved in the words" (Ellicott). The new man is the second Adam in Christ

Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Jesus. The first was created in the image of God, and the second in that same image by re-creation. Though the image is not perfected in the new man, it is constantly assuming nearer approaches to that blessedness. The pre-destination of every member of the Body is conformity to the image of the Son. Practically, "we grow up into Him in all things." So John addresses "little children, young men and fathers," according to their several attainments in grace (1 John ii. 12 ff.). The thought seems to move in and out between the new man complete—the Christ mystical, and the new man—the spirit life of each regenerate member of the Body. The larger thought, however, predominates throughout the epistle. But while our thoughts revel in our conformity to the image of God, through being in Christ's likeness, we should also remember, with Augustine, "As the image of an emperor upon a coin differs from that in his son: so does the image of God in us differ from that in Christ." Thus, though briefly, Paul represents the conflict between the spirit or new man and the flesh, the old man, as an ever-present occupation of the child of God. Though the issue is assured, the struggle is most constant and severe. Only such strong measures as slaying, stripping off, and incessant self-restraint can secure victory. But this victory is essential. There must be palms of victory as well as blood-washed robes from the tribulations of the flesh. "Therefore are they before the throne of God."

§ 3. GRAPHIC STATEMENT OF THE MYSTERY LIFE ON THE CHRIST-SIDE (11)

The flesh section is an essential parenthesis, since it is present in the practical life of the regenerate man. Before proceeding with his description the Apostle throws out, by way of bracing the memory, a wonderful flashlight upon the life in Christ Jesus.

Ver. 11. **Where there is neither Greek nor Jew.** *Where, i.e.* in the new Christ, the Christ mystical, and so surely in all true grasp of that life by us. **There is neither.** The Greek text is emphatically exclusive (Abbott denies this); Lightfoot says "the possibility is negated"; so Moule, etc. The juxtaposition of what in Paul's day seemed moral, social, religious, and racial antagonisms and unsurmountable alienations, becomes a telling exposition of the great reconciliation wrought in and by Christ Jesus. In Eph. ii. the removal of the "middle wall of partition" erected in the Jewish temple illumines the same great truth. That wall separated the Jews from all other people in approach to Jehovah (cf. Josephus, *B.J.* v. 5. 2; *Antiq.* xv. 11. 5). One of the *notices* declaring a death-penalty for crossing that dividing wall has come down to us. It is in Greek form, for those to whom that language at the time of Herod spoke most distinctly. It may be seen figured in the present writer's *Hist. Geog. of the Holy Land*. In Christ no such separations exist. **Greek nor Jew:** lit. "a Hellen

Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

and a Jew." Evidently the Apostle means to express what we imply by "Jew and Gentile." To the Greek all but his own people were "barbarians." To the Jew all others were Gentiles—"Sinners of the Gentiles"—heathen, *i.e.* *Ethnics*—"of the nations." In John vii. 35, the A.V. reads "Gentiles" where "Greek" stands in the N.T. text. Hellenists in the N.T., as elsewhere, is entirely different, and is a distinction of culture within the Jewish community itself (Acts vi. 1, etc.).

Circumcision nor uncircumcision. This pair stands out in the Jewish mind as inveterately opposed, at least as much so as the former pair. Contempt found its climax in asserting "uncircumcised" (Eph. ii. 11.) Religiously, too, it involved exclusion from all Jehovah's blessings. It stood for sacramentarianism in Christian ages. Perhaps the greatest of all Paul's life trials was his conflict with this Judaistic antagonism to spiritual renewal. It was all the more severe that for circumcision it could be claimed that it was once a part of Divine obedience. Its righteousness had, however, departed from it, and now the Apostle asserts emphatically, "If ye be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing" (see ii. 11). **Barbarian, Scythian.** The dictionaries inform us that from the Augustan age the term *Barbarian* ceased to have its widest use, and became applicable only to those who did not possess classic culture. The Romans were thus placed on a par with the Greeks! No doubt many Jews (Hellenists) were also included as *new Greeks*.

Scythian. The opposing "nor" (Greek, *kai*) of the previous pairs is here wanting, and perhaps because antagonisms may not be implied. Lightfoot seems to have proved that to the Jewish mind Scythian meant non-such savagery (*barbaris barbariores*, Bengel). As a people the Scythians lived near the Black and Caspian seas, and were the original Tartars (Turks). Having once passed through Palestine, in the days of Josiah, they left the memory their name ever recalled. "It came to be used as we use Goth" (Abbott).

Bond nor free: lit. "slave, freeman." In civic and political spheres this is as startling a statement as any of the others—perhaps more intolerable generally. Even twenty centuries of Christianity have not established Paul's contention in the private and social mind of Christendom. Elsewhere, Gal. iii. 28, the antithesis is extended to "male and female."

In the following clause he throws out his marvellous Revelation of how the Christ thus obliterates distinctions of all kinds which separate men from one another.

Christ is all and in all: lit. "Christ the all and in all." There are thus two sides to the process of elimination of distinctions. (1) "Christ is the all—in the mystical union. Perhaps we may most nearly see it in chemical affinities. Bodies brought together become

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and absorbed into a new compound. In nature every element is absorbed into a new compound and becomes changed in character. But this illustration does not go far in grace, for, in Christ, while united to Him, all elements except Himself are changed, and all are conformed to Him. The precipitate, not absorbable, is removed from the new substance. (2) The second part of the great truth is that the Christ-qualities are infused into every portion of the new life in Christ, so that while He receives in them that which fills Him up—completes Him—they are all permeated by His fulness. "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." "There is no act of life in the body which is not in the head: there is no act of grace in the whole Church to which the grace of Christ extendeth not itself." "That beautiful thing, grace, in Him appears not in beams and drops, but as in a sun, an ocean. Happy are those who are in union with Him, they live in the spring and universal principle of grace" (Polhil, *Christus in Corde*).

§ 4. A WARDROBE FOR THE NEW LIFE (12-14)

Ver. 12. The Apostle resumes his exhibition of the practical conduct befitting the new life. The Body requires a covering. The Head clothes Himself with the Word. The Body should be clothed as here directed.

Put on therefore. Having put off the old man and his provisions, assume a new uniform to mark your new entrance upon Christ-life. Such seems to be the force of **therefore**. **As the elect of God.** This is a new feature of the place occupied by the Colossians. They were in Christ because "elect in Christ Jesus." In Eph. i. 4, he throws more light on this aspect of grace. "He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world." The choice was made in Christ Jesus. So our Lord said to the Father: "Of those whom Thou gavest me I have lost none." "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." So the entire working of the Father in redemption is "in Christ Jesus." There alone can contact with God's heart be encountered. The eternity of the choice is equally asserted, "before the foundation of the world." It is therefore a timeless election. But election contains all its consequents, as in Rom. viii. 30, "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called; . . . also glorified." Thus the election spans both eternities, and includes all time-influences and responsibilities, among which we *know* our own attitude to grace to be deliberate and as self-chosen as any action or purpose of our life. The election is therefore by the Father, in the Son, and is operated by the Holy Spirit. **Holy and beloved.** **Holy** is the common heritage of all who belong to God, and is, like "elect," titular as well as descriptive. **Beloved** here has its place in God's heart, not the Apostle's. It belongs to their new position in Christ—"The Father's elect, very own, beloved." How richly

beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of
 13 mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another,
 and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel
 against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

precious it is! But historically it is equally rich and varied. "All things work together for good . . . to them who are the called according to His purpose." Every name and every event in the music of the spheres and in the trend of earth's empires circle round my "acceptance in the Beloved."

Bowels of mercies. This seems, in the order of clothing, to be the under garment; R.V., "A heart of compassion." The word employed is uniformly translated "mercies." Its verb is in Rom. ix. 15, twice rendered "compassion." Mercy is love going out to misery, grace is love to no-desert, while glory is the majesty of love enfolding with itself. "The good are tear-abounding men." **Kindness:** Wyclif, "benignity." "Benignity" or "sweetness" (Jerome, qtd. Trench, *Syn.*). The name Christ, Trench tells us, was sometimes represented as *Chrest* (the root here), and was not always displeasing, since it described His loving sweetness.

Humbleness of mind: one word in Greek, cf. ii. 18.

Meekness. Only Paul, among N.T. writers, uses this word. It is uniformly translated as here. The idea is *mildness*. Its adjective is used in our Lord's word, "I am meek," Matt. xi. 29.

Long-suffering (see ii. 11). These are the under garments of the new man in Christ. Then follow (ii.) the *outer attire*.

Ver. 13. **Forbearing one another.** In Eph. iv. 2, which is parallel, there is added "in love." This is a more difficult part of the dress to assume than what succeeds it, but it is also more Divine. It is the same word which our Lord used in His saying, "how long shall I *suffer* you?" It is literally "up-bear." **Forgiving one another.** The same word was used of Divine forgiveness in ii. 13—the meaning being "graced." It beautifully expresses the character of genuine Christ-like forgiveness—a gracious act graciously performed. Peace-keeping and peace-making are the two graces here enjoined.

One another. The Greek is really "yourselves," "all *one* in Christ Jesus." "These your other selves" (Way). **If any man have a quarrel against any:** R.V., "a complaint." The word does not recur in N.T. or in the LXX. "Quarrel" meant "complaint" when the A.V. was made, and is used by Wyclif also. **Even as Christ forgave you:** R.V., "the Lord," etc. The principle of forgiveness here enunciated is that of our Lord's teaching and of the prayer He taught His disciples. The matter corresponds to Peter's proposed "how often shall my brother offend and I forgive him?" The other is supposed to be in the wrong, but I must grace him as Christ has graced me. Forgiveness must thus cover us front and back. If I want forgiveness, I must first forgive, and if I have received forgiveness, I must therefore

14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the 15 bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in forgive others. I must thus be clothed with forgiveness, "even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven me."

Ver. 14. The under and outer garments still require for completeness an *overall* dress of distinction. Thus we come upon the (iii.) third part of the Christian wardrobe.

Above all these. Evidently the order of use is thus indicated. In the Christian panoply, in Eph. vi., the "above all" is reserved for faith's *shield*. Here it is *civic* attire, and the *toga prætecta* of the Christian *man* is assumed as his distinctive dress. Put on charity. In the text there is no repetition of the verb, simply "love" (R.V.). Love as here introduced is not to God or Christ, but to our fellows. "It is a virtue divinely infused by which God is sincerely loved for His own sake, and one's neighbour for God's sake" (Davenant). Tertullian tells in his *Apology* that the pagans used to say of Christians, "see how they love one another" (*vide ut invicem se diligant*). Which is the bond of perfectness. Bond is simply a "fastening," that which holds together and *so completes*. The same word occurred as "bands" in ii. 19. Love is thus the completion of a citizen's attire, but it is also a citizen's badge. When Christians became imbued with false notions of humility they gave over wearing the citizen *toga* and assumed the much simpler *pallium* of the Greeks. This poor asceticism spread till it became common to speak of a man becoming a Christian as "going from the *toga* to the *pallium*." Perfectness. This may be taken of the dress itself, marking its completion, or of its distinction as proclaiming birthright or attainment of the first order. The "perfectness" may, however, suggest *initiation* into definite privileges such as men attained in the mysteries. This becomes more strikingly significant when we remember that in Paul's day it was reckoned that there was no future salvation for any man who was not initiated into the mysteries, *i.e.* who was not in the mystery sense "perfect." The word here employed is only once again in the N.T., Heb. vi. 1; but it occurs in the LXX., and was the proper rendering for the THUMMIM or "*Perfections*," though "truth" prevails in the LXX. Perhaps the Apostle had in mind the crowning part of the High Priest's robes of "glory and beauty," where the Thummim or "perfections" were placed, whereby the mind of Jehovah was ascertained.

§ 5. DIRECTIONS REGARDING OCCUPATION WITH CHRIST (15-17)

Ver. 15. (i.) **And let the peace of God rule in your hearts.** The R.V. instead of "God" reads "Christ," with strong evidence (R.G.T., etc.). **The peace of Christ**—"the holy satisfaction of mind wrought by Christ" (Meyer). "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you"; and, after His resurrection, "Peace be unto you."

We here tread the inner retirement of the life hid with Christ,

your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one 16 body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ and so do not think much of "peace *with* God." "In the secret place of the most High" we revel in "the peace of God," which floods our spirits and regulates all our heart intercourse with Him in the secret of His Presence. **Rule in your hearts.** Remembering that hearts in Scripture include will and desire (see ii. 2), we must secure that peace sways the entire inner region of our life's energy. **Rule** is a word taken from the national games. We have already considered it, ii. 18, in a compound form—"beguile you of your reward," *i.e.* *outprize* you. The substantive indicates the prize itself, as in I Cor. ix. 24 and Phil. iii. 14. We translate here "*be umpire in your hearts.*" The umpire (*brabeutés*) not only presided over the contest, but every question arising was determined by his judgment. His place was to answer every challenge—*How's that?* and his decision was final. This is the place assigned to the peace fellowship between my Lord and me in all matters that concern my occupation and conduct. Experience shows that it is a peace which is in touch with Christ which alone is trustworthy. There is a peace, even in some Christian lives, which is not so reliable a judge as the opinion of the world itself. **To which also ye were called.** "Our high calling of God in Christ Jesus" is what is indicated. No doubt here, as always in the Epistles, "calling" determines action, not merely provokes it. In the Gospels a call might be no more than a summons, but in the Epistles it contains all that the Westminster Catechisms imply by "effectual calling." "Whom He called, them He also justified." Thus "calling" stands for "occupation with," as we speak of our respective "worldly callings." The peace is therefore part of our occupation with Christ as we have already determined. **In one body.** Hort (*Ecclesia*) says: "Better 'in a body,' *i.e.* to be a member of a body." The close intimacy of all parts of the Body with the Head is again brought into prominence. There is but one life, and it permeates every part, so there should be "no schism in the Body," but peace throughout, within and without, "a peace the world can neither give nor take away." **And be ye thankful:** lit. "be ye *eucharistic.*" In this form the word is unique. We have already seen, ii. 7, how large a place thanksgiving occupies among Christian graces and Christian duties. Some (Calvin, etc.) render the expression "be friendly" or "amiable"; but this is below the high tidal flow of the context. Even Cicero felt with the Apostle in reference to this grace, "not only the greatest of all the virtues, but the mother of them."

This closes the *first* occupation with the Lord. The *second* now follows:—

Ver. 16. (ii.) **Let the word of Christ dwell in you.** Though our leading expositors differ we may safely hold that the word here intended is whatever word of Christ is most provocative of the spirit which

dwell in you richly in all wisdom ; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and

bursts out into the expression here indicated. Whatever provokes unrestrained and varied praise we may be certain is the word which the Apostle has in his mind. Now, as determined by experience, the simplest preaching of the Gospel of the Grace of God, most frequently and among the largest number, has this effect. This is true equally among the ripest saints and with newly converted sinners. But, also, the unfolding of the heart of the Christ, as now glorified, and looking forward to His return, has often so overcome Christian men that they have been compelled to pass from wondering praise to such a sense of His ineffable love and loveliness as to cry out, "Lord, stay Thy hand, Thy silly vessel can hold no more." A lifetime of praise has sometimes followed from the memory of such an hour. **Richly.** Mere haphazard contact or occasional lodging of Christ's word will serve very little purpose for Christian life. "Let there be no part of you in which the Word of God does not dwell" (Davenant). The Word must dwell, settle down at home with him, and that in *large measure*, as a wealthy permanent guest, able and willing to unfold and share great riches of mercy, grace, and glory. All these are in the "untrackable" riches of His Word. Calvin quotes a saying of Juvenal : "Virtue is praised and left to starve." So God's Word is left to starve by many who praise it. It is not yet a hundred years since the Pope wrote regarding Bible Societies that they are "a most crafty device, by which the very foundations of religion are undermined." It is true of the Pope's religion, no doubt. **In all wisdom :** *i.e.* "Every kind of wisdom." All that can possibly be stored of wisdom's varied treasure can be made to contribute to insight into the Word of Christ. He is Himself the treasure-house of wisdom and knowledge, and the more "like meets like" the greater will be the enrichment and enjoyment of the fellowship. **Teaching and admonishing one another.** Grammatical coherence is here suspended. But sympathy with the rush of thought secures all we require in order to grasp the full meaning. There is a similar direction in Eph. v. 19, but there he simply says, "speaking to yourselves." **Teaching and admonishing.** The didactic and practical influences of praise are here distinctly intended. Perhaps Augustine's experience both in Milan and afterwards may be quoted to purpose in this place : "When I remember the tears which I poured forth at the chants of Thy Church, in the beginnings of my recovery of the Faith, and how even now I am moved, not with the singing, but with the things sung, when they are sung with a clear voice and well suited melody, I realise again the great advantage of this institution" (*Conf.* x. c. 33). The mass of hymnody in the Church handed down from all ages, and the recollection that all periods of specially revived life have ever produced their own fresh outburst of song, make the Apostle's words here peculiarly instructive and illuminative. In

spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. The same praise forms are mentioned in Eph. v. 19. How to distinguish them historically and constructively is far from clear. It is worth noticing that in the LXX. superscriptions of the Psalter there are "Psalms" found with each of these marks of character. This, of course, merely shows that the Apostle *may* have meant no other forms of praise than the Psalter contains. If we might accept the various "songs" found by Way in the Epistles, the difficulty would be reduced to a minimum. But few probably will be prepared to find so many hymns in the Epistles as he does, and for which he argues with much persuasiveness and force. In his Corinthian letter Paul seems to indicate that personally prepared or selected hymns might be brought to the Christian assemblies by individuals. Such attempts at general worship do not succeed well among us, unless when "printed slips" are distributed. Perhaps they may have been used for solo singing with accompaniment. There is, however, nothing to suggest this. When we look for preserved hymns of the Early Church, outside Scripture, we are much struck with the extreme meagreness of what has survived. There is one Greek hymn of Clemens Alexandrinus (A.D. 204), two of the third century, and about twelve of Gregory Nazianzen at the close of the fourth century.

Trench in his *Sacred Latin Poetry* introduces the Latin poets of the Church with his usual felicity. But he presents no hymns before the closing years of the fourth century. To Ambrose, from whom Augustine learned to appreciate the praise of God's house, he, with considerable hesitation, assigns twelve hymns. To him and Augustine together, we are said to owe the "*Te Deum*," though it is not mentioned by any writer before the eleventh century (Daniel, *Theol.* vol. ii.). **Psalms** we may probably understand as those of the Psalter—the praise book of the O.T. Church. The word Psalm began by meaning a *touch*; then a thing touched—an instrument; and finally the music and words rendered together. The Hebrew name for the Psalter was "the Book of Praises," which, according to Augustine, meant "praise, God's praise and song." **Hymns.** This word does not yield itself to definition. It is certainly used in the N.T. for the *Hallel* sung at the Passover, which is a portion of the Psalter. That non-Biblical hymns were in use in the fourth century is certain, since their use was denounced by the Council of Laodicea, A.D. 360. Tertullian also tells us (A.D. 200) that in Christian worship "every one sung an Hymn out of the Bible or of his own composing" (*de proprio ingenio*). For the three words for praise here used, see Trench, *Syn.* vol. ii. **Singing with grace in your hearts:** lit. "in grace singing." No doubt he means to indicate the necessity of praising, so as to avoid, what Augustine feared for himself, viz. mere emotional abandon to music. Some (Abbott, Bleek, etc.) interpret "with thankfulness." If this is preferable, why

17 the Lord. 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.

18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands,

not? In your hearts. Ellicott thinks this *another kind* of singing—that of the inward heart to God, the former being among themselves. To the Lord, as the object of the praise. It is not to be addressed to an audience, but to Him. Pliny (A.D. 112), writing to his emperor regarding the Christians of his province, said: "They meet together before day to sing a hymn to Christ as God." Thus the return flow of the indwelling word of Christ is found in hymning His praise. Bernard speaks well on this point: "You sing that you may please the people more than God. You tune the voice; tune the will. You keep the harmony of sounds, keep also the concord of manners."

We now reach the third occupation with Christ which the Apostle enforces.

Ver. 17. (iii.) **And whatsoever ye do.** He now claims all the activities of life of every possible kind for the Lord. *Doing* is divided into "word and deed"—speech and behaviour. **All in the name of the Lord Jesus.** This is not the same as "for the sake of." When we say "use my name," we mean that whatever my name avails with the person referred to I desire that the person who uses it may receive that consideration. When I sign a document with my name, its value depends on how far my name is sufficient for what the document indicates. Hence when Christ gives us His name to use, He gives us the right to expect whatever His name avails with the Father to secure, and to the extent of what claim He has a right to make on the Father. We go in before God just as He Himself might go, and ask even as He would ask. **Giving thanks to God the Father.** Thanks again comes to the surface. But no wonder; has He not said, "In everything give thanks." Like the Lacedæmonians, who always crowned themselves when they went out to battle, the Christian sings his thanksgiving before he leaves his knees. It is there, like Paul, he fights his "Agony" and rises praising. **Through Him.** It is confidence in His name, not in my praying, nor in myself who pray, nor in anything about me, which makes me thank God for the answer before it comes. When of old Jehoshaphat went to meet his enemies, the singers went praising before the army. So still if we pray as we ought.

§ 6. THE FAMILY LIFE OF A MEMBER OF THE BODY (18-iv. 1)

This section, like those preceding, is in three divisions. Family life is discussed (i.) with the heads of the house; (ii.) with the children; and (iii.) with the slaves of the household.

(i.) WITH THE HEADS OF THE HOUSE

Ver. 18. **Wives, submit yourselves.** R.V., "be in subjection." The idea of orderly adjustment is most prominent. In Eph. v. 21 the sub-

19 as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, 20 and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your

jection is made equally imperative on all members of the Christ to one another. There, without repeating the verb, the claim is addressed, as here, to wives. It is the word used of our Lord when He returned to Nazareth and "was subject" to Mary and Joseph. (**Your own husbands.** (We should omit "own.") The relationship is placed as high, in Ephesians, as thought can imagine it, and is made as deep as self-interest can be expressed. The achievement of Christianity for this relationship, both in the East and in the West, is one of its most striking and ennobling procurements. There is nothing comparable to Christian matrimony in any previous age. No doubt classic story has some few beautiful fore-shadowings of it, *e.g.* Panthea, wife of Abradates. Said she: "If ever there was a woman regarded her husband more than her own soul, I am that woman" (Xenophon). A like devotion was that of Phocion's wife, that most noble and brave Athenian lady. To make such women possess all ranks of society has been the grand mission of Christianity into the family. **As it is fit in the Lord**: lit. "was fit." There is an individuality of relationship as well as of personality. The Apostle finds the maintenance of wifely "submission" essential to the Christ being all in all His members. Moule, while pressing the headship of the husband, believes (*Col. Stud.*) that the rendering "be loyal to your husbands" fully meets the Apostolic position.

Ver. 19. Husbands, love your wives. In Eph. v. the thought can be grasped through the mystery parallel of the love of Christ, which stands for much more than submission can ever suggest. That love is utter surrender, entire self-sacrifice, even unto death. "He loved me and gave Himself for me," not merely "to me," which would be submission. But the love that wins has its much richer display in its communication of all it has and is to the object of its choice. Henceforth there is but one possession and one interest by both, and by both co-operating as members one of the other. **Be not bitter against them.** There are few domestic risks more common than an outbreak of "bitterness." Words, tones, looks, actions, silences, and no-actions are all at the command of an attack of bitterness. The sweetness of Jesus Christ could scarcely be more effectively inculcated than by this precept. Even "roots of bitterness" are causes of defilement in home life, how much more the scattering of the seed (Heb. xii. 51 has the same word as is used here). Let us leave picric acid in its native home—coal tar.

Though Paul passes on to the next portion of the family he cannot lose sight of the influence of the heads of a house on all its members.

(ii.) THE CHILDREN OF THE FAMILY

Ver. 20. Children, obey your parents. This precept is more extended in Eph. vi. **Children.** He uses a word which reminds them of

parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the
21 Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger,
birth-relation, not of how old they are. This relation cannot be
outgrown or outworn. *Obey*. The idea is primarily related to hearing,
but covers the entire range of obedience. The primary sense comes
out very distinctly in the Book of Proverbs, which used to be a chief
text-book in training the young. "Now therefore hearken unto Me,
O ye children," etc. *In all things*. Partial and selected obedience
is the curse of much family life. Nothing so surely prepares harvests
of shame and misery. Affection with disobedience is mere animalism,
and even that in an untrained form. Under strict Jewish law the
disobedient child was reported and publicly stoned. Roman law
made obedience on the part of children as necessary as on the part
of slaves. Even Michael Angelo was not emancipated by his father
till well on in years. Christianity certainly gives a sweeter adjust-
ment, but it does not reverse the relations, nor relax the moral
necessity for obedience on the part of youth, as a part of parental
responsibility to the Creator, for whom the parents act and whom
they represent. Of course obedience is not required when conscience,
i.e. a pure child conscience, refuses acquiescence. Such cases
almost always embrace their own enlightenment, or it is supplied by
immediate Divine succour. In Ephesians the Apostle is more definite
and supplies "in the Lord." But as the entire section is on family
life *in* the Body of Christ, it is not necessary to repeat it. *This is
well pleasing unto the Lord*. R.V., "*in* the Lord." The thought
is not exactly that in Ephesians just quoted. Here it is obedience
that is in view, there it is rather motive. "To obey is better than
sacrifice," even when it requires much sacrifice. Sacrifice may be very
unproductive, obedience is ever rich in reward. It undergoes a
metamorphosis in its very performance, and from a cross becomes
a crown.

It should be observed that in the entire N.T. children are
addressed as those who already love the Lord. There are many
Bible children conspicuously of God's family, but there are no
turnings to God reported among children. Both our Lord and His
Apostles always dealt with them as "Christians," and the passage
here is no exception. They bear the Master's attestation, "Of such
is the Kingdom of Heaven." And yet we know many of whom this
is not true, and no profane Sacramentarianism can make it so.

Ver. 21. *Fathers, provoke not your children*. No doubt both parents
are meant, though probably fathers are more likely to err in this
respect. Scripture certainly does not make light of the mother's
influence. How often we read, when describing a man's character—
"And his mother's name was —." Onward to the Cross, and
even when there, our Lord's devotion to His mother stands out
with sublime expressiveness. *Provoke not*, *i.e.* "don't irritate."
In 2 Cor. ix. 2 the word is used in a good sense, and it does not

22 lest they be discouraged. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, again occur in the N.T. It is Homeric, and was then used for "a challenge to battle" (Moule). Let such an attitude be kept out of family life or it will perish. **Lest they be discouraged, i.e.** "lose spirit." A spiritless child, especially when made so by harsh, unsympathetic, and suspicious handling or judging or dispraising, is about the poorest product of any home, less hopeful than even a more erring character. Far better endure much and over-estimate than drive outside for recognition. Our God, as the Bible shows, makes more of any good in us than any one else in the universe. "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light," said the Master, and it is wonderful how much more light we see in the world when we are ourselves living in sunshine.

(iii.) THE SLAVES OF THE HOUSE

Ver. 22. **Servants, obey in all things your masters.** The word for servants is "slaves." The hired servant (Luke xv.) occupied a much lower position in household economy in ancient times than a slave frequently filled. The hired servant was the "*orra-man*" of the establishment. Here, as elsewhere, Christianity casts seed into the ground, and only finds it, in social life generally, after many days. In Brace's *Gesta Christi* there is a remarkable statement regarding ancient slavery and the tardy way in which Christianity was able, or, practically, endeavoured, to deal with it. He states the steps by which Christian principles were successfully applied up to the present time. It only died by a process of being choked by the seed here sown. The letter to Philemon makes this whole subject appear in its true light as confronted by the mind of Christ. It is often asked with much querulousness why our Lord and His Apostles did not openly antagonise the entire system. We might as well ask why they did not attack the Emperor of Rome. Indeed that attack would have been much the easier of the two. The conquest of the world by Christ must dispel the distinction of bond and free, as the Apostle urges most distinctly, and in that oneness there must be the recognition of being members one of another. Caste is quite as contrary to the spirit of this Epistle as slavery itself, whether Indian caste or British classes and masses. The nearest approach on earth to the realisation of Paul's teaching is in the observance of the Lord's Supper by those who may be found together there. The obedience of the slave is the same as that of the child, "**in all things.**" **According to the flesh.** The word "*lord*" is that by which he expresses **Master**. There is another Lord, who is over both. Hence the distinction here made. **Not with eye-service** (see also Eph. vi. 6, where alone the word is again found). The expression,

23 fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as
 24 to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the
 Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance:

perhaps a coinage of the Apostle, is so happy that it has entered common speech. It means literally "eye-slavery." There is no virtue in being doubly slaves. **As men-pleasers.** The same remarks as regards use and form applies here as to the previous term. To please men in our work may be a worthy ambition, even as to please God is so. But to have no higher aim is unworthy of a Christian. **But in singleness of heart:** *i.e.* "simplicity." "This one thing I." So the Psalmist, "Unite my heart." We talk of mixed motives, and probably there always is a mixture behind actions. But there should always be some conscious regulating motive constituting our leading impulse. This motive Paul determines for all whether bond or free. **Fearing God.** R.V., "fearing the Lord." The relation of the slave to THE LORD, his Lord and Saviour, determines the character of the fear required. "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord." Such is the eye-service of the Christian who is a slave. In his own adroit fashion the Apostle carries the slave away and above the earth-service even in its performance, and so continues—

Ver. 23. **Whatsoever ye do, do heartily:** lit. "work from your soul." There is no off-time in Christ's service. He claims even the dinner hour ("whether ye eat or drink . . . do all to the glory of God"). But that is not all; in eating, drinking, and all else I should put my soul into it. I must bring my best to it. John's commendation in his Third Epistle is "thou doest a faithful thing whatever you work at." Evidently scamp-work with hand or brain is intolerable in a Christian. We want to recognise this trade-union in our individual lives, else we drop our Christianity at the door of our workshop. If this was wholesome teaching for those who were compelled to work, it is surely not less incumbent on those of us who pledge our powers by individual contract. **As to the Lord.** So the slave can rise above his master and his service. Thus we "make drudgery divine." **And not unto men.** Of course it is my earthly master's work, assigned to me by him, through purchase, if I am a slave through contract, if I have engaged myself to him, and as such I do it, but far more it is my Saviour's work for me, and in doing it for Him I look on to His "well done." No angel in heaven has higher work than mine. He does God's will for him, and I do His will for me. Were we to change places by mutual consent neither of us could get a "well done."

Ver. 24. **Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive.** This knowledge lies in the fact that I am now, in all I do, already one with Him. **The reward.** R.V., "the recompense." The hand that is to be stretched out when He says "well done" will be His own. To my earthly master—whether I am bond or free—I may seem an unprofitable servant, but my Lord and Saviour will fill His hand with recompense.

25 for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

I **MASTERS**, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

But it will be a wonderful balance of merit and recompense in which He will weigh out my portion. **Of the inheritance.** This is the recompense—God's own *inheritance*! The slave has received a possession, which he may legally enter upon; the bond-man has become joint-heir with the Son of the Highest; the mere chattel of an earthly house has become a Son of the Eternal God—a King seated on a throne in the kingdom of our God, for ever and ever. **For ye serve the Lord Christ.** The change just indicated might well raise doubt in any mind—perhaps most of all in a slave's mind. "Ah," says the Apostle, "all this is yours just because you are slaves, otherwise it could not be yours." But the slavery is under Christ, and because you have done His Will. "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's"—not merely to belong to Him, but to slave for Him.

Ver. 25. **But he that doeth wrong** (lit. "for the wrong-doer") shall receive for the wrong which he hath done. This receiving is doubtless from the same hand as conveys the recompense to the other slave. There is no respect of persons. In Eph. vi. 9 the thought is extended by adding "with Him." **Respect of persons** is very nearly our "face value," which is quite distinct from intrinsic value. The face value of a slave and his owner may be very different. God values by another standard. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart," *i.e.* on the intrinsic make-up of the man.

CHAPTER IV

VER. I. Masters, give unto your servants, *i.e.* "lords, give to your slaves." Give is "assign," or, better, "provide." **Just and equal.** "Equality" is good translation here, but seems out of place. Read as A.V. and R.V. Calvin translates "mutual equality," and contends for "distribute right." **Knowing that ye also have a Master in Heaven.** Again we read "Lord" here. "He is Lord of all," and in Him there is no more bond and free. The Gospel does not level down, but always levels up. Its message to all ranks and conditions is a right and a power to be raised. The Most High is the goal of the creature, and there alone the creature can rest. The social aspiration of Christianity is to manifest on the earth what is already true in the ideal Heaven in which we are throned, that we are members one of another, serving together under our glorious Head, in whom we no

2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with
3 thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God
more exalt ourselves one above the other, but receiving all to do and
to enjoy from His hand we each seek the other's good, and count it
our honour to serve one another as He serves us.

§ 7. THREE MORE REGIONS OF LIFE-CULTURE TO BE
OBSERVED (2-6)

Before closing his panorama of the Pleroma-Mystery life the
Apostle adds three practical directions which greatly conduce to
successful Christian living. They are (i.) **prayer**, (ii.) **public walk**,
(iii.) **speech**.

Ver. 2. (i.) **Continue in prayer**. R.V., "continue steadfastly," *i.e.*
"persevere in prayer." For brevity and comprehensiveness one seeks
in vain for an improvement on Madame Guyon's definition: "Prayer
is nothing else but the application of the heart to God and the
interior exercise of love." For Paul's "perseverance" we have our
Lord's "watch and pray" and His parables on "shamelessness" and
annoying (*lit.* face-blackening) importunity. There is a kind of perse-
verance in prayer which is most offensive. It may be known from this
definition by Fénelon, "To pray is to desire, but to desire what God
would have us to desire." Even the Holy Spirit restricts His prayers:
"He maketh intercession for the saints *according to God*." **Watching
therein**. This seems different from our Lord's "watch and pray."
The Apostle sets us to watch the prayer itself. "Never let Christ's
name pass in prayer with a 'bare mention,' but seize on some aspect
of His Person or work suitable to the matter on hand" (Whyte,
S. Catm.). We have to watch to keep praying; to watch what we
ask, else we may become parrots of prayer language; to watch the
cross and undercurrents of our minds; to watch the motives of our
utterances; to watch the submission of our wills; to watch the
name's sake through which we expect; and, probably, as much as
any of these, we must watch our bodily postures when at prayer, else
prayer may become a soporific. These are but specimens of the
varied need of watching in prayer. **With thanksgiving**. "In every-
thing give thanks, even when importunity and need may most
press. On the sun's side of the cloud there is always a silver lining.
Let us imagine it when we cannot see it. The sun never 'refuses to
shine,' but always does shine, though not always for us to see.
Prayer and thanks are like the double motion of the lungs, the air
that is sucked in by prayer is breathed out again by thanks" (qtd.
Whyte, *S. Catm.*).

Ver. 3. **Withal praying for us also**. Paul and his associates depended
much on the prayers of others. They believed that prayer prevailed
for them. Access for others has ever been as open as for ourselves.
He loves to hear of our interest in His affairs. We only catch
sparks of His own heart when by prayer we incarnate His promises.

would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the
 4 mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: That I
 5 may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Walk in wis-
 dom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

That God would open unto us a door of utterance. R.V., "a door for the Word." Doubtless that is the meaning. "An open door" is a well-known term for access. Sometimes it is for himself he craves an open door. But in either case the great soul has only one aim—that His mystery message should be spread abroad. **To speak the mystery of Christ.** Thus we see without question the particular part of the Word which was burning in his soul and which he deemed most important. It seems strange to read all this eagerness on Paul's part about a portion of truth which is scarcely recognised to-day. **For which, i.e.** "on account of which"; **I am in bonds, i.e.** I have been bound. It is now manifest that his persecution and imprisonment were not because of his eagerness for Gentile equality in the Church, or because of his breaking down the authority of Jewish rites and ceremonies, but for his doctrine of the Christ, His Divine all-fulness and His oneness, a oneness which obliterated all human distinctions, with all those who believed on Him. So that in Him they had all things even now, and thus all life was lived from Him and His supplies, and not toward Him as an ultimate attainment.

Ver. 4. **That I may make it manifest.** He is concerned, even he, Paul, that he should be able to present this new revelation in a worthy manner. Perhaps he sometimes felt when the glorious vision of the Christ mystical rose up before him that human language, as he possessed it, was incapable of expressing all he desired to utter. In a like passage in Ephesians he adds the desire for *boldness*, which, we learn from the Acts, was a distinctly Pentecostal gift. **As I ought to speak.** Writing to Corinth on the same subject he calls it "God's wisdom." There he had not taught it because the Corinthians were unable to grasp it through party differences. He confined his teaching among them, he says, "to Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Ver. 5. (ii.) **Walk in wisdom.** Here is the practical sagacity of Apostolic Christianity. Its highest teachings are never separated or separable from the details of everyday life. They must go together or both will miscarry. **Toward them that are without.** The expression was used by the Jews for the Gentile world and also for those "cast out." Paul uses it of those outside the Christian Church (cf. 1 Cor. v. 12). Wyclif translates here "them that ben without forth." The Christian dare not neglect the judgment of the world; it is to be taken into account even in choosing office-bearers in the Church (1 Tim. iii. 7). Though the world cannot understand Christian motives, it can most truly measure Christian conduct, and knows most accurately what it ought to be. **Redeeming the time.** R.V. margin, "buying up the opportunity"—"buying out" (Moule). Cf. Eph. v. 16, "Instant in

6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

season and out of season." Wyclif here reads, "Aghenbiyng tyme" (again-buying). Tact and grace should always live on good terms together. Thoughtful love will keep them right. Calvin selects three reasons for acting as here enjoined. They may be thus presented—

1. Lest any stumbling-block be put in the way of the blind.
2. Lest the name of Christ be exposed to derision.
3. Mingling with others we, little by little, become profane.

Ver. 6. (iii.) The third practical counsel is : **Let your speech be always with grace.** It would be hard to overstate the importance of this in Christian living. The Epistle of James is the classic *locus* for this wide theme. The fruit of the lips is not always praise. Speech here is *logos*—discourse generally. Moule's idea that here it refers to the Gospel surely misses the Apostle's mind at this part of his letter. Our lips require the same care as our walk before the world.

With grace. Though Lightfoot and Moule differ as to whether secular or spiritual grace be intended, we prefer to think that both are enjoined. Grace in conduct, educated by grace in the heart, is the true relation of things. Ellicott suggests "grace was to be the element *in* which, or perhaps the garb with which," etc. Social amenities are best learned from spiritual culture. Some one has said "grace should help a man to handle his knife and fork." Hannah knew the secret. "*He* raiseth up the poor out of the dust . . . to set them among princes and to make them inherit the throne of glory" (cf. Ps. cxiii. 7). **Seasoned with salt.** "Attic salt" was a recognised term for ebullitions of wit—sometimes "poisoned salt," as Seneca remarks. The seasoning of speech with a preserving substance is very variously attained, and varies greatly from age to age. Style, language, knowledge, thought, illustration, etc., have much to do with permanence of utterance. Some men consciously write for immortality and secure it. Paul is himself a prominent case of a man writing homely letters in the language of the common people and attaining the richest immortality of unfading study above all men who ever lived. Here he gives advice regarding brilliant, wholesome, graceful speech on the part of Christian men in their daily life. Similar were our Lord's words, "Have salt in yourselves." **That ye may know :** lit. "to know." The Church was not long in discovering that it was required to answer the world's satire and misrepresentation. The "Apologists," who followed in the century after Paul, often applied the very character of speech here enjoined to Christian defence. His own oration at Mars Hill is a very classic illustration of his skill and courtesy, using Attic salt of quotation as well as Christian eagerness for his Master's name and triumph. Since those early days we often find the Church's greatest polemics foremost among its most sweetly attractive members. Who could outstrip Samuel Rutherford in bold onset or in the witchery of

7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow-intimacy with his Lord? Under his "fiercely nodding plumes" he wears the heart of fondest lover. **How to answer every man.** "To be able to give a reason for the hope that is in us" is a Christian duty, and should certainly enter into every Christian man's education in some definite way, and not by the haphazard of "picking up" opinions. The ministry of catechism is almost dead, and the Church to whose ministry it belongs (Gal. vi. 6) dwindles because of the neglect, or too often because of the pitiful substitutes it employs to maintain its external appearance (see Dupanloup's *Ministry of Catechising*).

This verse closes Paul's panorama of life in Christ Jesus according to the PLEROMA-MYSTERY. By grasping this as the central thought the interpretation has been much simplified and often made much more secure. It will have been observed that Paul's subdivisions of each of the seven sections into three portions has given more clearness to his outline. In Appendix A this will be seen in a diagrammatic form. What remains of the letter is more familiar and personal.

CHAPTER IV. (*from ver. 7*)

The remaining verses may be thus classified :—

Verses	7-9.	§ 1.	Two men commissioned to go to Colosse.
"	10, 11.	§ 2.	Greetings from three Jewish converts.
"	12-14.	§ 3.	Greetings from three Gentile converts.
Verse	15.	§ 4.	Greetings to Laodicea.
"	16.	§ 5.	Uses to be made of the letter.
"	17.	§ 6.	A personal message.
"	18.	§ 7.	The benediction-autograph.

§ 1. TWO MEN COMMISSIONED TO GO TO COLOSSE (7-9)

Ver. 7. **All my affairs shall Tychicus.** This is a much-honoured name among the Apostle's most trusted friends. He was, perhaps, a trophy of grace in Ephesus (Acts xx. 4), where his name first appears. He is there called an Asiatic. In addition to the commission now under consideration he was twice sent to Ephesus (Eph. vi. 22 ; 2 Tim. iv. 12), and was at least designed for a relief visit to Crete (Tit. iii. 12). We find him with Paul in Rome when this letter was written and also that "to Ephesus." In what is called Paul's second imprisonment he was also with him, but left for Ephesus just before the end came (2 Tim. iv. 12). **All my affairs—***i.e.* "all things concerning me"—"my circumstances generally" (Moule), cf. Phil. i. 12. **A beloved brother:** better, "*the* beloved

8 servant in the Lord: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know your estate, and 9 comfort your hearts; With Onesimus, a faithful and

brother." Paul had a wonderful gift of insinuating recognitions, as well as of heart-clinging. "My beloved brother" on such an occasion as this may heal a broken spirit. **Faithful minister.** It is well to keep friendships in repair, but better still to strengthen men in serving the Lord. Wreaths on coffins are attractive, but they often represent appreciation carefully concealed for years, and for want of which the coffin became necessary. **And fellow-servant in the Lord, i.e. "fellow-slave."** Some might see patronage in what went before. This excludes it—"we are one to serve Him." When rank entered the Church, even this became a titular condescension on the part of a bishop (Lightfoot in *Apos. Fa.*). In the Lord. Let this cover all the terms of loving recognition which he has used. It matters little what we are if we are *that* in Him and for Him. Therein lies the rank (cf. Appendix C.).

Ver. 8. **Whom I have sent unto you.** The Greek idiom and ours differ in tense uses. Paul conceives of the letter as having just been delivered. **For the same purpose;** lit. "for this very thing." This is one purpose, but a second follows immediately. **That he might know your estate.** The R.V. adopts another reading, "that ye may know our estate"—a repetition of ver. 7, and therefore less likely. MS. authority is well divided. It was some time since Epaphras had left Colosse, and so fresh information would be acceptable, perhaps also desirable. But there was a yet more pressing cause. **And comfort your hearts.** It is the same word as in ii. 2. Much of life's comfort is in a visit itself apart from any additional interchange of word or deed. A child's surest comfort is often in a mother's mere presence.

Ver. 9. **With Onesimus.** The construction is: "I have sent Tychicus with Onesimus." The name affords Paul an opportunity for introducing his habit of playing on words, and so, in writing to Philemon about Onesimus, he (ver. 11) sports with its meaning—"profitable." The name is said to be a common slave-name (Lightfoot). He appears as a runaway slave, who also carried away with him other property of his master. Having found his way to Rome, he fell in with the Apostle, came under the power of the Gospel, which "raised the beggar from the dung-hill and gave him a place among the princes of His people." But the Gospel creates as well as stimulates conscience. Onesimus knew he was not his own but Philemon's. Paul hears all the story, and much as he clung to Onesimus, who had become his devoted friend, he felt that Philemon's claim was paramount. He undertakes responsibility for the material loss sustained, and sends back his chattel to his master with a letter in his hand. The letter indicates that Philemon would receive his own property and also a Christian brother, dearly beloved by Paul. Farrar's *Darkness and Dawn* weaves a fair story round the few N.T. references. Tradition has nothing additional

beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here.

10 Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and

worth remembering. **A faithful and beloved brother.** How strangely these words must have sounded when read aloud in the Church Assembly in the hearing of Philemon. They seemed so strange, even to Barnes, that he could not tolerate the idea that Onesimus was only a common slave! Had he lived till now, probably his spirit would have found rest even in that! **Who is one of you.** There is no suggestion in writing to the Church that Onesimus is a slave, only **One of you.** Oh, that unfailing gracious courtesy of the noble Paul. What more could one man do for another? The Christ's "*Me*" gathers up and enfolds all such with Himself. Why should not ours do so also? **They shall make known . . . here.** The clause seems most unnecessary, but it puts Onesimus on a footing of equality with Tychicus as a delegate to the Church, and that was much. Would it be far wrong to think that the letter itself found a chief motive in this very fact? An Apostolic introduction!

§ 2. GREETINGS FROM THREE JEWISH CONVERTS (10, 11)

Ver. 10. (i.) **Aristarchus** was a Thessalonian and a body-friend of Paul. We find them together in Ephesus, where he was made a prisoner; again when Paul sailed from Greece to Asia; and later still they went to Rome together (Acts xxvii. 2). He is still with Paul when this letter was written, and tradition, with its wonderful creative knowledge, has found a bishopric for him near Colosse. **My fellow-prisoner.** Whether Aristarchus was ideally a prisoner through close attachment to Paul, or whether he was actually detained with him, having arrived in Rome together, or is so named as having once been a prisoner in Ephesus, we cannot now tell. The word used means "a prisoner of war." **Saluteth you.** Wyclif, "greeteth you well." (ii.) **And Marcus, sister's son.** R.V., "the cousin of," of whom Peter writes "my son," as Paul does of Timothy. He is generally known as John Mark, whose mother had a house in Jerusalem well known to Peter. It was evidently a Christian centre in early Apostolic days. For some reason not given, Mark had left Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, and Paul refused to accept his fellowship again in similar work. Barnabas took another view of the separation, and insisted on his partnership again. So Paul and Barnabas separated in Gospel fellowship of service. Evidently they subsequently cemented that difference, and here, and still more in 2 Tim., Paul goes out of his way to show his appreciation of Mark and of his Gospel labours. We, too, often think better of men than once we did, but without going out of our way to express our new appreciation either to them or to others.

Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas; (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort

Sister's son. Except in much later use, the word=*cousin*.

Touching whom, etc. Evidently some instructions had been sent to Colosse regarding Mark. Bengel supposes they were verbal messages sent along with this letter. The tense chosen does not forbid this, but it seems an unnecessary narrowing of means and occasions of intercourse between churches and apostles, etc. It was evidently some matter of importance, for the word used is "commandments." **If he come unto you receive him.** A like "commandment" he gives to the Corinthian Church regarding Timothy (1 Cor. xvi. 10). It is just possible that Mark's known connection with Peter, "the apostle of the circumcision," may have created some prejudice against him in Gentile communities. Anyhow Paul places all his authority at the command of Mark to secure for him a worthy and cordial welcome in Colosse.

Ver. 11. (iii.) **And Jesus (i.e. Joshua), which is called Justus.**

Jesus is the LXX name for Joshua—even for the Book—and is retained in Heb. iv. 8, etc. **Justus** was a common Jewish surname. His name is all we know of him. **Who are of the circumcision.** At first one wonders why Paul should make this note of distinction in a letter which so strongly obliterates such differences. But the next clause gives us a glimpse of his heart-pain. **These only are my fellow-workers.** He cannot mean all others had forsaken him; the following names exclude that possibility. But of his own brethren, the Jews, he was almost utterly forsaken. Even in Rome, where Jews were most abounding, he has only three names of fast friends for God's work. **Unto the Kingdom of God.** This was the Jewish view-point of the Messiah's work, and is the expression used by Luke to define a portion of Paul's preaching while in Rome (Acts xxviii.). We are here strongly reminded of Paul's solemn parting from his Jewish countrymen in Rome, when he made a public transfer of salvation to the Gentiles. He did not, however, cease from his previous preaching to those who would hear. But evidently the attitude of the gospel and of the Jews to each other was henceforth widely different from what it was when he wrote his letter to Rome. **Which were a comfort unto me.** It is a sad exposure of Jewish desertion, and must have been unspeakably trying to one who loved his race and gloried in their history as he did. If, like Moses, he preferred his nation to himself, even in his deepest needs, he must have suffered exceedingly, and would find comfort exceedingly difficult.

12 unto me. 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 com-
 13 plete in all the will of God. For I bear him record,
 that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in

§ 3. GREETINGS FROM THREE GENTILE CONVERTS (12-14)

Ver. 12. (i.) **Epaphras, who is one of you.** For this name see i. 7.

Who is one of you. The same form of introduction as he made his climax when introducing Onesimus! **A servant of Christ.** He returns to his favourite conception of his relation to Jesus Christ. He laid his Roman freedom with Himself at Christ's feet for ever. There too he best loved to find his fellow-labourers. **Always labouring fervently for you.** This is Paul's answer to what might be an inquiry in Colosse—"What is Epaphras doing so long in Rome?"

Labouring fervently. "Agonising," R.V., "striving"—the same word by which he described his own prayer (ii. 1).

That ye may stand perfect. The idea is no doubt "initiated," having "full knowledge" or "full appreciation." **And complete, i.e. "filled up."** This seems to mean *practical* realisation of what is known or valued. It corresponds to "winning Christ" in Philip-pians. It is "filled with the knowledge of His Will."

In all the will of God; or, "in every will of God." The prayer is just Paul's own as described in chap. i., where, however, the form is "perfect in Christ Jesus." The two ideas meet in our Lord's words—"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." We attain to Christ by reaching the will of God; we reach Heaven by stepping out on earth's highways.

Ver. 13. **For I bear him record.** "Take my word for it he," hath a great zeal for you. R.V., "much labour"—a different Greek reading. Wyclif has "travail." The word suggests severe and continued work. **For you.** They were a church probably planted by his labours (see i. 7).

For them in Laodicea. This town was of much more importance than Colosse. Though there were six cities of the same name in Asia, there is no doubt that the town on the Lycus, beside Colosse, was intended (see the map). It was called Diospolis previous to 250 B.C. After Christian times it continued to prosper, at least as a Christian centre, notwithstanding its critical condition when John wrote to it from Patmos in the Lord's name. Much valuable and fresh information regarding the Lycus towns will be found in Ramsay's *Seven Churches*. To-day nothing remains of Laodicea but vast ruins scattered over six or seven hills. It was the seat of a Council, *cir.* A.D. 364, which determined the Canon of Scripture, and also condemned forms and practices of angel-worship (see Westcott's *Canon of N.T.*; Trench, *Seven Churches*; Ramsay, *C.R.E.*).

14 Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved

And for them in Hierapolis. This town lay six miles north of Laodicea (see map). Its theatre and gymnasium still remain, while its famous calcareous springs give a most weird appearance to the neighbourhood. This remarkable feature may be seen figured in Curton and Jones' *N.T.*, which also contains a panoramic view of the Lycus valley. A ride round the three churches in one day could easily be accomplished by Epaphras, and may have occupied him many a Sunday.

Ver. 14. (ii.) **Luke, the beloved physician.** Luke is Lucanus shortened. Though we have two N.T. books from his pen, he never mentions himself by name, which occurs only three times in the N.T.—here, in Philemon's letter, and 2 Tim. iv. 11. These references show him with Paul when writing his prison letters, and also just before his martyrdom. Early tradition makes him an Antiochian (Syrian). A well-known reading of Acts xi. 28 suggests that he and Paul first met in Antioch. His presence with the Apostle is first assured at Troas (Acts xvi. 10). They crossed together to Macedonia. At Philippi they seem to have parted company, Luke remaining behind, perhaps in charge of the infant Church. They did not meet again for seven years, when Paul returned to Philippi. They then evidently agreed to part no more. The use of "we" in the travel record is the guide-post by which we infer these facts. There are many legends regarding Luke. The only one worth remembering is that he died in Greece. His *art* work is evidently a blundering myth, but his professional medical work is vouched for by Paul, and escapes into his narratives in both his works. That he had some considerable nautical knowledge seems certain from his admirable success in describing shipboard matters in sailor language. Sir Wm. Ramsay has made Luke his life study, he has rescued his work from endless crude suspicions, has vindicated his almost unique accuracy in detail, and in his *Coming of Luke* has provided a rich historical feast for the imagination (St. Paul *Tr. and R.C.*).

The beloved physician. It is a heart rest to think that one who "bore in his body so many marks of the Lord Jesus" had so skilful a friend beside him to minister to his stigmata.

(iii.) **Demas.** This man's name suggests to us the young ruler whom Jesus loved, but who made the "great renunciation." They both seem to have done so under similar temptation. Leaving Paul to go to Thessalonica was perhaps, as tradition says, only going home. There was a model church there, so it was not all world. Perhaps Demas also considered that! Then there was Aristarchus, his fellow-townsmen, a good and true Christian. Is there a shadow of a coming event in the fact that Paul merely names him? Did he hear the others send their salutation and, for shame, say—"Me too"? Anyhow, a few years later, Paul writes: "Demas hath forsaken me." Many have lived long enough not to be bitter towards Demas.

15 physician, and Demas, greet you. Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church

They have known and loved too many who have left their first love and are now with the world. Their heart says—with many another name passing before the mind—"perhaps he came back again." We trust so. Ah, "all Asia" had done the same as Demas. Perhaps "all Asia's" desertion was not so hard to bear as Demas' alone. We wonder why? It was *the age* Demas loved—his age. We love ours, and the snare of *up-to-dateness* creates more forsakings of early promise and zeal than all other influences of our time.

§ 4. GREETINGS TO LAODICEA (15)

Ver. 15. Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea. Evidently there was close intimacy between the two churches. Only a twelve miles' ride lay between them, and we imagine their spiritual mould was similar. Paul attached much importance to the doctrinal mould of Christians, so much of after life depends upon its beginnings. We believe the same, but in practice think that if a man is truly converted all that is important is secured. A weak and elementary tone and temper are the result. Heat and light are alike necessary for fruit worth securing. We must learn to enlarge our views of the Kingdom and of the Church if we wish to keep in true touch with our Lord and Master. And Nymphas, or Nympha. Unaccented, as in Uncial MSS., the Greek may mean either. *His* or *Her* in the next clause divides the MSS. with "*their*." The Church in their (his or her) house has puzzled all commentators, apparently because the copyists were puzzled, and variously expressed their ideas.

There were churches in private houses in those days, and for long afterwards. They seem to have been known technically as *Kat'oikon* assemblies. They were known locally by the name of the person to whom the house belonged. There was such an assembly in the house of Philemon at Colosse. Perhaps Nymphas' house was the recognised place in Laodicea for the local *Kat'oikon*. Or Nymphas may have been in charge in Laodicea as an "*Archisynagogus*" (*Rosh-hak-Keneseth*). Hort (*Ecclesia*) calls such gatherings as are here mentioned "*domestic ecclesiæ*," and indicates that their position requires elucidation. Gall, in his *Synagogue*, etc., has worked out the subject of these churches. He recalls similar assemblies in Aquila's house in Ephesus, and again in Rome. There were several of them apparently in Rome when Paul sent his letter there. The same phrase occurs early in the Acts, where Saul the persecutor entered the *Kat'oikon* assemblies seeking his victims. They were the "*Conventicles*" of Jerusalem and elsewhere in those days of persecution. In his later history he went from *Kat'oikon* to *Kat'oikon* as Christ's ambassador. The conclusion is that those were small assemblies of Christian people meeting in private houses,

16 which is in his house. 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 17 from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, Take heed to

and were recognised as a part of church life. John Knox had such assemblies for Bible study, and introduced them into England. They became distasteful to Queen Elizabeth, and were put down, but survived in Scotland till recent years. The Methodist class-meeting is a near approach to them. In classic use the *Katoikoi* were colonists planted in cities: the "settlement" itself, frequently of Jews, was named *Katoikia*. An inscription, found in Hierapolis, bears this name for a Jewish settlement in that city (Ramsay, *Seven Churches*). Lightfoot reminds us that not till the third century were any separate buildings erected for Christian worship within the Roman Empire.

§ 5. THE USE TO BE MADE OF THE LETTER (16)

Ver. 16. **And when this epistle is (has been) read amongst you.** Again the tense is determined by the point of view—the reception of the letter. The Apostle seems to have found it necessary to avoid private letters on public questions. He also appears to have found it necessary to indicate that he personally signed all his letters. His Church letters were to be read in public assembly. This was far more effective than passing round letters, or even distributing copies. **Cause it to be read also,** etc. We should say, "Endeavour to have it read also." Why not also in Hierapolis? Perhaps there may have been no fully formed Church there; or were their circumstances quite different? **And that ye likewise read (i.e. "endeavour to get a church reading of") the epistle from Laodicea.** We should naturally imagine this to be a letter sent by the Church of Laodicea addressed to that in Colosse. But the tense use already indicated determines the preposition here—"Endeavour to secure from the Laodiceans a letter which they will have received from me." What letter was this? Moule, in his *Colossian Studies*, has no doubt it was that known to us as "To the Ephesians"—a circular letter to the churches of Asia. But more recently Harris and Ramsay seem to have almost disproved this, and we must be content to think that the letter to Laodicea has been lost to us, with many more. In his *Philippians*, Lightfoot has a valuable note on "Lost Epistles of St. Paul," p. 136 ff.

§ 6. A PERSONAL MESSAGE (17)

Ver. 17. **Say to Archippus.** This name occurs again in the letter to Philemon, and so closely to that of this prominent Christian and his wife as to have suggested that he was their son. We may suppose, with others, that he had secured some post of responsibility in the

the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

18 The salutation by the hand of me, Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

Church there. But we cannot imagine that there is a note of rebuke conveyed by the Apostle, through a letter to be publicly read in the assembled Church. Far rather it is a word of hearty encouragement, backed by the consciousness that all the Church knew that Paul was deeply interested in his work and its success. **Take heed to the ministry.** It is mere trifling to try to attach a Church order which did not exist in Paul's day to this servant of Christ, whatever his post may have been. Evidently his call to office was by Paul regarded as a Divine call, whatever providences may have converged to make the call appear. **That thou fulfil it.** It would brace any worthy servant of Christ to get an apostle's message of cheer and solicitude for his welfare. Bengel, with his genius for insight, says that so far from the people being shut out from Scripture and being made hear only what the minister might think fit, the Apostle sends his letter to the people and makes them his mouthpiece to the minister! **In the Lord.** If of Divine calling, then it would require Divine sufficiency for its performance. We are reminded of Augustine's apt response to Divine claims, "Lord, give what Thou askest, then ask what Thou wilt."

§ 7. THE BENEDICTION-AUTOGRAPH (18)

Ver. 18. The Apostle has ceased dictating. He puts out his hand for the stylus, which he grasps and writes—**The salutation, by the hand of me, Paul, i.e.** "the salutation by this hand of mine—by me—Paul." In his second earliest extant letter he tells his correspondents that he made a rule of personally signing all his letters. The "great characters" he writes of to the Galatians would be quite distinct from those of his amanuensis, though he perhaps wrote that letter throughout. **Remember my bonds.** He has already asked for their prayers, for his work's sake. Now it is personal. He had forgotten himself in them, but raising his hand to write made him conscious of the galling chain. One hears a sigh, but it glides into a confidence of loving sympathy. For that and for all else he pours all his great heart's longing into one short "**Grace be with you,**" "God bless you," and something more.

We can see him drop the stylus, close his eyes, and become very grave and solemn while in silence he entreats his Lord to make the letter effectual for the strengthening of His cause, and for much enlarging of those to whom it was sent. No doubt the Master said "Amen," and that amen has come down the ages, even unto us who have now read it together.

APPENDIX A

OUTLINE OF THE LETTER

CHAPTER I

- § 1. Salutation.
- § 2. Thanksgiving.
- § 3. Prayer.
- § 4. Hymn of the Christ.
- § 5. The Colossians, past and present.
- § 6. Paul magnifies his office.

CHAPTER II

- § 1. Paul's solicitude for the Colossians and others.
- § 2. THE MYSTERY stated.
- § 3. His concern for, and satisfaction in, the Colossians.
- § 4. Renewed exhortation to steadfastness.
- § 5. Warning against specific error.
- § 6. The truth opposed to the error.
- § 7. Colossian experience of Christ.
- § 8. More detail of Christ's working.
- § 9. Particular errors to be resisted.
- § 10. The folly and uselessness of false teaching.

CHAPTER III.-IV. 6

PANORAMA OF THE PLEROMA-MYSTERY LIFE.

- § 1. The Christian life as resurrection life { seek.
imagine.
hope.
- § 2. Counsels regarding the flesh { slay.
put off.
don't.
- § 3. Mystery-life on Christ's side { no race distinction.
no religious ,,
no condition ,,
- § 4. The wardrobe of the new man { inner garments.
outer ,,
rank attire.
- § 5. The new man's occupation with Christ { Christ's peace.
,, word.
,, name.

- § 6. The family life of a member of Christ { heads of houses.
children of „
slaves in „
- § 7. Three special regions of life-culture { prayer.
walk.
talk.

CHAPTER IV. 7 to end

- § 1. Two commissions to go to Colosse.
2. Three greetings from Jewish converts.
3. Three greetings from Gentile converts.
4. Greetings to Laodicea.
5. Use to be made of his letters.
6. A personal message.
7. Paul's benediction-autograph.

APPENDIX B

MITHRAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

A SLIGHT reference has been made in the Introduction to the relation between Christianity and Mithraism in the early centuries of our era. This may perhaps with some advantage be presented at more length, and as the subject is one in which recent archæology has reaped some of its richest harvests, the details may be found fresh and suggestive. Early Church history is quite unaccountable apart from some knowledge of the influences which determined its rapid decline from primitive simplicity. Some years ago this was chiefly accounted for by the insinuating attractions of what may be termed the classic mysteries. The terminology of these may indeed be traced in the N.T. itself. But at present we are receiving wonderful accessions of knowledge regarding a power which reached the Roman world about the same time as Christianity, and though not recognisable in the N.T. became the most serious and close antagonist with which our faith has ever been engaged. The struggle lasted for over three centuries, and when it ceased the Christianity which held the ground was in outward appearance little removed from that of the conquered power. It was the similarity of the two which gave most vehemence to the struggle, and this likeness increased as the centuries moved forward.

Much more strikingly than in the best classic literature were men's highest aspirations met by the Mithraic Cult. To its priests more than to the finest of the Epic or Lyric poets, or even the dramatists and satirists, are the words applicable,—

“Each legend of the shadowy strand
Now wakes a vision blest ;
As little children lisp and tell of Heaven,
So thoughts beyond their thought
To those high bards were given.”

Mithraism is dated back to Elam, which was a settled and powerful state centuries before the patriarchal age. We know it best, with its extended frontiers, as Persia, whose religious aspirations are generally associated with the name of Zoroaster ; though the historic (?) Zoroaster may perhaps be sought for more probably a thousand years later, when the world received its second great historic religious upheaval under Buddha, Confucius, Pythagoras, and others. Mithras, the Indian Mitra, occupied a place between Ahriman, the God of evil, and Ormuzd, the supreme and good God. His functions were accordingly those of *Mediator*, and consequently of *Saviour*, for there was no question that good would ultimately triumph over evil. In this position Mithras closely corresponded to the Babylonian Marduk, who, as Son of the Chief God, became the world's Saviour by overthrowing the monstrous and savage Tiamat, the impersonation of confusion or chaos. Perhaps Varuna, who is always closely allied to Mitra, occupied a similar position in Indian theology.

We are hitherto unable to trace the earliest forms of Mithraic devotion. It

crossed to Babylon not improbably with the Persian ascendancy, and there gathered up a large element of astrology, which haunted its entire after-history and perhaps gave it a more pronounced solar character than belonged to it originally. From Babylon it passed to Phrygia, where it received fresh elements, more mystical and inward than it previously possessed. The Phrygian influence is strongly marked, even to the eye, by the presence of the Phrygian cap on Mithras' head in all his subsequent delineations. We learn, on the authority of Plutarch, that the Cult crossed over into Europe about 70 B.C., after Pompey's defeat of Phrygian pirates. Its place was obscure at first, and secured only the attachment of the lower orders, but eventually it became the favourite devotion of the senatorial families of Rome and of the entire Empire.

The Art delineation of the Cult was fixed under strong Grecian influence, and, though there is no certainty, we may with great probability assign this feature of its influence to the time of Alexander the Great, 333 B.C. Its impressiveness seems to have owed much to the admirable art expression of its most striking features, found in wonderful uniformity over the Roman world, and specially in Europe. But whatever Greek art may have done for its glyptic presentation, its Persian and Phrygian characteristics were never laid aside. Lucian's witticism against Mithraism in his "council of the Gods," is simply that Mithras could not speak Greek.

There are not at present any means of detecting the rise or the occasion of the many points of contact between Christianity and Mithraism. This close contact has been the occasion of much perplexity in both ancient and modern times. The early apologists were deeply conscious of the fact and of its powerful influence. According to their attitude to the culture of their times they represented it in a good light, or as one of the devil's masterpieces. But whatever may have been the reason of correspondence there is no doubt that the Christianity of the second and two succeeding centuries did very much to intensify the points of likeness. Had our religion continued as it was in Apostolic times the closeness of external likeness would have been comparatively slight. But even in the second century Christianity had removed so far from its first form and practice that it became itself the chief cause of the formidable competition with Mithraism. The entire conception of the Christian Church had become revolutionised, and presented much more nearly the rites and terminology of the Eleusinean and other heathen mysteries, with revived Judaistic ceremonials, than what the apostles of our Lord had established with the Holy Spirit's inspiration. It is also quite uncertain how far Mithraism may have adapted itself, after it reached Europe, to its own surrounding influences, among which Christianity must have been a considerable and vital force, at least in the second century. The apologists certainly write as if they believed that imitation had entered into the Mithraic methods of propagation. This remark is most significant as regards the sacraments. But, as we shall presently see, just there above all other regions of Christian observance had pagan elements already invaded and deformed Christianity. It is but right to acknowledge that during the entire history of Mithraism as at present known it was the most pure, elevated, and spiritual of all forms of paganism, and though never monotheistic it maintained itself as worthily as the greater part of our own Christianity. Nothing so degrading has ever been written of Mithraism as Isaac Taylor has gathered into his *Ancient Christianity* from Christian records of the same ages.

Augustine, writing early in the fifth century, informs us that the poison of paganism was so well mixed with the honey of Christianity as to have become a most powerful seduction. "I remember," he writes (*John c. 1, Trac. vii. 6*), "how a priest of the fellow in the Cap (*illius Pilleati*) used to say, 'Even the Capped one is himself a Christian,' and this," he adds, "because otherwise the Christians cannot be seduced." Even Pliny is credited with thinking Mithraism the only rational religion.

But if we would grasp the facts which explain three centuries of world-wide

conflict, we must approach both sides more closely. We shall take no account of how Mithraism made itself strong against all other forms of pagan worship. That subject, though it lies outside the purpose of this Appendix, is well worthy of devoted attention. If, then, we would understand the force of the attack on Christianity delivered by Mithraism, we must acquaint ourselves more closely with Church forms of our religion in the second and two subsequent centuries. We soon discover that N.T. simplicity of language and worship are entirely wanting in what was then recognised as "Catholic" Christianity. If we would press for some actual practice of what we learn from the N.T. to be Apostolic, we shall find it indeed, but in what the neo-Church Catholic called heretical sects. As the Sacraments have always been throughout the centuries the chief debating field, we may try to see how far, even when it was engaged with Mithraism, recognised Catholicity had removed from Apostolic teachings. A summary gathered from Hatch's *Hibbert Lectures* may be considered a sufficiently reliable statement. It should be observed that Mithraism is not present to the author of those lectures, unless on a merely passing mention.

I. BAPTISM.—"In the earlier times (1) baptism followed at once upon conversion; (2) the ritual was of the simplest kind, nor does it appear that it needed any special minister." "When it emerges, after a period of obscurity" (1) "the first point of change is the change of name," (a) ENLIGHTENMENT, "which comes straight from the Greek mysteries;" (b) "the name SEAL, which also came both from the mysteries and from some forms of foreign cult;" (c) "the term MYSTERIUM is applied to Baptism, and with it comes a whole series of technical terms unknown to the Apostolic Church, but well known to the mysteries." (2) "The second point is the change of time, which involves a change of conception"—(a) "It came in all cases to be postponed for a long period of preparation;" (b) "the Christians were separated into two classes, those who had, and those who had not, been baptized;" (c) "baptized persons were distinguished from unbaptized by the very term which was in use for the similar distinction in regard to the mysteries." Still following, though not quoting, the same lectures, we learn that Catechumens had a pass-word, a secret—a *Symbol* entrusted to them immediately before their baptism. This was the first part of the "Disciplina Arcani" or "Secret instruction," which in imitation of the mysteries introduced *esoteric* teachings into the Church. The entire surroundings of the baptismal rite were made an absolute copy of the great mysteries, and were so elaborate and expensive that they could only be exhibited in great churches, and even there generally only once a year, at Easter or at Pentecost.

II. THE LORD'S SUPPER.—None but the initiated were allowed to be present at this observance, which was conducted in a manner utterly different from Apostolic teaching. The supper table very early became an altar, the elements became "mysteries," and the officiating minister a sacrificing priest. When we reach the time of the Pseudo-Dionysius, it is difficult to distinguish a narrative of Christian observance from that of a Greek mystery. And yet such men as Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Augustine felt at home in such performances, and seem to have had no feeling that it was other than Apostolic Christianity. But there is no possible doubt that the whole conception of visible Christianity had been revolutionised from what it was in the first century of its history. It was with this deformed Catholic Church that Mithraism contended, not by way of restoring it to its earlier form, but in competition with it in the variety and impressiveness of spectacular performances more or less intended to represent intellectual and spiritual aspirations.

Mithraism itself stood for the purest form of Nature worship. Mithras was the mythical representative of a power mediating between light and darkness, good and evil, life and death. The Cult was conducted in caves, symbolic of the earth's darkness under the evil influence of Ahriman, whose symbol, the serpent, is ever present in the cave. The work of Mithras is to dispel the darkness, to overcome the evil, and to deliver from death. The very rock within the Cave on

which Mithras stands is often wreathed with snakes. The entrance to the Cave is guarded by impersonations of light and darkness, either standing erect or in chariots. A torch, borne erect or turned downwards, is very frequent. Mithras, the light-bringer, the mediator, is generally represented plunging his dagger into a bull, which connotes the forces of nature. He sometimes appears hunting this bull. As the blood flows out *under the Sun's strength*, the animal's tail is seen already bearing ears of corn. In some cases, as in a figure in the British Museum, these ears spring up around the dagger where the wound has been made. Occasionally trees are seen instead of ears of corn. The blood is caught by a dog. Other emblems, chiefly astrological, haunt the sculptures in greater or less prodigality.

As Phrygia was the chief seat of Earth worship, even to the time of Julian, much of this symbolism may have been acquired there.

Now initiation into this Cult was always by *Baptism*, for which long and careful preparation was necessary. To those thus prepared, certain secrets were entrusted. It was not till about A.D. 170 that Christian Baptism was burdened with a secret symbol. There was also in Mithraism a "signation," an anointing and an exorcising of the person being baptized, all of which made their appearance in Christianity late in the second century.

To reach the higher initiation, that of the *mystic feast*, the approach was made extremely difficult. Twelve struggles, "tortures," were prescribed, in an ascending scale of severity, and only after these were passed could the mystic table be seen. The feast consisted of *Bread*, baked into round cakes—called MIZD or, in Latin form, *Missæ*. They were representative of the Sun's disc, at least in their form, and gave the idea of the *Mass*, from which all save the approved were excluded by the formula—"Ite, missæ est"—"Go, it is the mizd." No doubt other words surrounded "mizd" in the Mithraic rite. To the Bread, *Water* was added. These were partaken of after a priest—*Petor*, a rock-man—had pronounced a certain ritual formula.

Tertullian, writing about Mithraism in A.D. 200, gives several details of the Cult, and adds: "The Devil, whose business it is to prevent the truth, mimicks the exact circumstances of the Divine Sacraments in the mysteries of idols." To this may be added another sentence from the same writer: "If my memory still serves me, Mithra sets his marks on the foreheads of his soldiers, celebrates also the oblation of Bread." With us the question is with whom did all this first appear; or, perhaps more pertinently, which Cult first adapted these symbolisms and practices from the ancient mysteries?

To reach the highest initiation of all a yet more arduous course must be pursued. Lajard, in his celebrated *Le Culte de Mithra* (folio of plates), has reproduced in exquisite refinement a vast collection of "diplomas," as he regards them, of those who passed the various steps upward to the Mithraic Heaven of attainment. "*The Lion*" seems to be the highest stage, for in the only record of the degrees which we possess, from the pen of Jerome, *the Lion* is placed next to Mithras himself (King's *Gnostics*, p. 126). Attached to the highest attainment was another sacrament, the TAUROBOLIUM or *Baptism of Blood*. The aspirant who had satisfied the conditions imposed was placed in a pit which was covered with pierced boards. A bull was led to this platform and there killed, the blood being allowed to fall down upon the candidate for baptism. He was thus made immortal, and was immediately resurrected—"IN ÆTERNUM RENATUS"—"born again for evermore." This, as an inscription, may be seen on the side of the accompanying Mithraic monument, taken from Lajard's volume. The word *Taurobolium* is also there inscribed. This doctrine of new birth and resurrection is believed to have been one of the greatest fascinations in Mithraism, carrying to men's spirits what Christianity offers through the "precious blood of Christ," which has brought life and immortality to light in its message.

For only one other detail of Mithraism can room be found. It leaves no doubt that however much Mithraism may have borrowed from Christianity, it also gave

Christianity somewhat of its own proper possession. A great annual feast in honour of Mithras, as the Sun God, was celebrated yearly on the 25th of December. It was the occasion of the greatest rejoicings and of public games. The date was chosen as that on which the sun again began to assume new strength. Up to the early times of Chrysostom there was no day set apart to make remembrance of our Lord's incarnation. But, though directly in defiance of all historical possibility, the 25th December was chosen by the Church to celebrate the Incarnation, and that "Sunday" has been observed ever since by Christians and pagans alike.

When it first reached Rome, Mithraism was left almost entirely to the humble classes. Its strong manly requirements, and use of the word soldier for its initiates, soon made it popular with the military, so that wherever Roman legions were stationed over the Empire, Mithraic monuments were erected, and may still be seen in very many places. After three hundred years of ever-deepening hold on the highest and best of Roman pagans, it was destroyed by the Christian Roman Emperors, though not without a strong resistance. It was certainly not by visible superiority in worship or in religious practice that Christianity ultimately prevailed, neither could imperial authority alone have been sufficient to root it out. That authority did little good to our religion as a living force. What was invisible in Christianity alone made it triumphant. Divine power, the spiritual renewal of the whole man, its adaptation to the weak as well as the strong; and perhaps more than anything else, the fact that while Mithraism stood only on a mythical name for a nature power, Christianity stood on the fact of a personal history, well established and well canvassed in that age. The hills and valleys, the seas and streams of both East and West, still possessed the echoes of that alone perfect life and of their voices, who both saw and handled Him, and were the interpreters to their fellows of the grace and glory which came to all men and for all ages through Him. Natural selection and self-adaptation may well explain Mithraism with all other merely natural phenomena. But Christianity can never be so explained. Rather, these seem to be its worst enemies. It is the Divine indwelling and directing, it is the living Word of the eternal, it is the purpose and plan of God over all which keeps it amid all human aberrations and oppositions. Let all powers conspire as they may, He that sitteth in Heaven works His will and accomplishes His purpose. Thus we have in sure possession an Everlasting Gospel.



APPENDIX C

MANUMISSION

Free and yet slaves of Jesus Christ (COL. i. 7, iv. 7)

READERS of the N. T., specially of Paul's Epistles, sometimes find difficulty in defining the twofold relation of freedom and slavery in which the Apostle boasts himself. He is Christ's freeman, and at the same time His slave (*doulos*). Had Paul addressed his letters chiefly to Jewish Christians the difficulty might be less felt. For under Mosaism a slave might, when the year of his release came round, refuse to go free. In that case he was brought before the public judge and required to make a declaration that he loved his master and his service, and desired to remain in his house for ever (Ex. xxi. 5, 6; Deut. xv. 16). He was then led to the doorpost of his master's house and an awl was run through his ear, fastening it to the door. Such was the symbolic act whereby a man became and remained a voluntary slave. In a Messianic Psalm even our Lord is represented as thus bound; "Mine ear hast Thou opened," i. e. "bored" or "dugged," as the word elsewhere means (Ps. xl. 6).

But the reference would not generally be understood in the Gentile world, though it was an observed practice outside Mosaism. It is also without any price paid, which is a striking feature of the freedom mentioned in the N. T. Also, it was a purely civic and domestic transaction, without any religious significance.

Manumission, emancipation, and redemption stand for the same thing. The Greek word used in the N. T. for Redemption (*apolutrosis*) contains the fact of a price paid (*lutron*), which in our A. V. is represented by *ransom*, e. g. "Gave His life a ransom for many." Another word found in the N. T. for price is *timé*, generally translated *honour*, e. g. Tim. i. 17, vi. 16; Heb. iii. 3; Rev. vii. 12, etc.

The ordinary Greek word for freedom is also of frequent occurrence in the N. T. and appears twice in Gal. v. i., where we read, R. V., "With freedom did Christ set us free." *Manumission* is sending away by a stroke of the hand; *emancipation* is taking away from under the hand. The transaction was accomplished very variously. The master might smite his slave with his hand and say "Go." Or, as Trench reminds us in his remarks on our Lord's Parable of the Talents, he might invite him to sit at table with himself, which only a freeman could do. Under Roman law there were three forms of manumission: *Manumissio vindicata*, in which a slave was brought before a magistrate and declared by his master to be free. The master held him meantime by the hand. Immediately the declaration was made a lictor struck the slave on the head with his rod (*vindicta*), and the master let go his hand. In "Catholic" *absolution* the old Roman symbolism is retained. Another legal form was known as "*M. censu*," and was accomplished by the master enrolling his slave on the *Census* roll of the city; while a third method was called "*M. testamento*," freedom being declared in the owner's will. To these Constantine added "*M. in Ecclesia*," a public announcement of freedom being made *in the church*. This last became very common in

our own country throughout the Middle Ages. Among other practices prevalent in Great Britain was that of leading a slave to the junction of several roads and telling him to go which way he liked. Often the services of a priest were employed to draw up a document expressing the bestowment of freedom, and a record of this might be made on the margin of the "Gospel-book." Occasionally a master handed to his slave a lance and sword, which none but a freeman could carry (Brace, *Gesta Christi*). In addition to the emancipation of children, referred to in the commentary and illustrated by the case of Michael Angelo, there was also Academic manumission. In a history of Edinburgh University the following is a record for the year 1607: "The twentieth class were *manumitted with magisterial dignity*." Three years previously the ceremony is thus described: "The Primar, calling the candidates before him, performeth the ceremony by imposition of a bonnet (the badge of manumission) upon the head of every one of the candidates." Such was the "capping" of three centuries ago and its significance.

But long before, as well as during N.T. times, there was in force over all Greece a practice of manumission which related it very closely to religion, and gave the transaction a security and prominence not otherwise attainable. Under Grecian ownership a slave might make some money for himself. With this he might determine to buy his liberty. Instead of entrusting it to ordinary securities, or keeping it in his own hands, he might put it in charge of his god, depositing it in the temple treasury. When he had thus laid past enough for his emancipation he appeared with his master before the god, who technically purchased the slave, so as to become the property of the god. He was henceforth the slave of that god, and was under his protection, so that any attempt to take possession of him became an act of sacrilege. A formal document was made out and engraved on the temple wall; at least in very many cases. Of such manumissions many hundreds still remain among the ruined temples of Greece. The old Wall and Temple of the Delphian Apollo is peculiarly rich in this respect.

Though in different cases and places the exact form of purchase varies, the following is perhaps the most expressive:—

"THE PYTHIAN APOLLO HAS FOR THE PRICE (TIMÉ) OF
(naming it)
PURCHASED A MALE SLAVE NAMED
FROM
(the names are always inserted)
FOR FREEDOM."

Then follow any particulars relating to the case, concluding with the names of the witnesses.

The transaction, however, was not complete without a sacrifice in the temple, thus establishing the Covenant by sacrifice. Such was manumission in Paul's day in Athens, Corinth, and wherever Greek influence extended. It was not understood that the slave must attend at the temple for any service, but he secured a better position at once than other freemen (*liberti*) or their children (*libertini*). "If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

This manner of manumission corresponds to a remarkable degree with that which Christians enjoy through their Lord and Master. It clears up our freedom and also our bondage. "He redeems us to Himself, a peculiar people." Hence men who most boast of their liberty no less boast "whose I am and whom I serve." We are redeemed "for freedom"—as in the old bonds on the Delphic walls. The Christian is redeemed by a price paid into the Divine hand, and in that lies the security of the liberated slave. He puts God between him and all his previous thralldom. "With Him is a plenteous redemption price"; and, since it is so, the slave feels certain that he will be redeemed (Ps. cxxx.). But the Redemption is inseparably bound up with sacrifice. Without that the freedom cannot be established. The sacrificial action is as necessary as the price paid in.

In fact, they both form parts of *one whole*. The price linked the man to freedom, the sacrifice linked his freedom to his God.

At this point, however, the parallel breaks down, as figures and illustrations always do in the presence of Divine grace. The slave pays in the money which buys his freedom, and the god only superintends and issues the freedom. But the *entire* price of our redemption is paid by our God Himself in the Person of His Son, who "gave Himself for us that He might redeem us" unto Himself.

The purpose of this Appendix is almost complete. But it may be proper to mention some of the masters from which we are manumitted by our Lord and Saviour. A slave, like the Pythoness at Philippi, might be the joint possession of several owners, and to the Apostolic mind we are enslaved by more than one mastery. Most outstanding are: 1. *The Law*, not merely as we know it under Mosaism, but far more widely. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law." "To redeem them that were under the Law." 2. There was also a bondage to "a *Law of sin and death*." This was not a Divine Law, but one imposed by the tyranny of the God of this world. Under it we are led into all manner of follies and excesses tending to death—physical, moral, and spiritual. Our manumission supplies at the same time an overcoming power, whereby we are enabled to become "more than conquerors over all." So men find themselves sufficient for all things through the supplied dynamic of Jesus Christ. 3. *Ceremonial bondage* was very grievous under the claims of paganism as well as of Mosaism. But though these have passed away there is almost as great a thralldom as ever, both in the Church and in private life. Much of our comfort and discomfort depends on a certain routine of performances either set to us or invented by ourselves. Men lose much more comfort by omissions of small imaginary claims of conscience than by want of personal contact and intercourse with our Lord and Saviour. "Touch not, taste not, handle not" still hold sway in Christian society and practice, and take the place of the Lord Jesus and His daily response to our appeal—"Lord what wilt Thou have me to do?" The Apostle, referring to our self-made austerities, did not hesitate to say, "Ye are fallen from grace." We have indeed constant need to remember that "by grace ye stand." Our most "*broken earthenware*" can be restored, but only by the power of a present and all-sufficient Lord, who makes *whole* on the spot. 4. But the freedom which comes by our Divine manumission is not mere restoration to freedom. It is a transference also "into the glorious liberty of the children of God." It is thus an *adoption*. In our study of the Epistle we found the captive slave becoming a colonist, with possessions under the government of the Son. But there is a higher place than that—"heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." The slave enters the family of his new Master, "no more a servant but a son, and so an heir"—"All things are yours for ye are Christ's."

Note.—The preceding facts regarding Greek manumission have been taken from Deissmann's *New Light from the Ancient East*, where the literature of this part of the subject is fully indicated.

APPENDIX D

COLOSSIANS AND EPHESIANS

SIMILARITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE LETTERS

IN this series of handbooks belief in an inspiration of Scripture, not unworthy of the Divine character, is presupposed. Consequently very much that has been written on the subject of this Appendix does not call for discussion. We should find within the letters themselves all that requires our present study. Close similarity of matter is readily discoverable in other portions of the N.T., as between Romans and Galatians, the, so-called, Pastoral Letters, and, in a most instructive and often very striking degree, between Paul's letters, previous to his first captivity, and the Book of Acts. The work done by Paley in elucidating these correspondences has not been surpassed, and his "undesigned coincidences" are as worthy of study now as at any previous time. The coincidences between the two letters with which we are here occupied are specially well-defined in the *Horæ Paulinæ*. We observe on the face of the two letters that the *time* of writing was the same, the *place* and *circumstances* of each writing were the same, the supreme dogmatic subject was the same, and was present to the mind of the writer in almost the same form and measure. There are indeed several passages almost or identically the same. The Apostle's trusted friend, Tychicus, is indicated as the bearer of both letters. When all these particulars are collected they indicate a closer bond between these two letters than that which connects Romans and Galatians, two Epistles which suffer no critical dislike on account of their likeness to each other.

Particular attention may be called to the fact that the great dogmatic teaching of these two Epistles is almost entirely confined to themselves. There are, indeed, as we have seen in previous pages, more or less distinct references to the same subject elsewhere, but all students of the Great Mystery know that in these two latest Church letters this truth must be chiefly sought. To this may be added the circumstance that each Epistle makes a specific contribution beyond the other to the richness of the Revelation. The emphasis which the Apostle had been led to place on this truth became the direct occasion of his special sufferings for Christ, for not in his time, nor indeed in any subsequent age of the Church, did it receive general recognition. This isolation of a supreme truth is one of the strongest evidences for the certainty of the authorship of both Epistles, especially as each contains specific fresh material regarding it.

When the Church of Christ awakes to the importance of the mystery which so engrossed the Apostle, we shall no doubt see in it much that meantime produces no impression, but which must have been felt regarding it in his day, else had it not been the great cause of his rejection by his own nation—Christian and un-Christian alike, and also by at least some large sections of the Gentile Church. This latter fact we cannot ignore in view of what he wrote a few years later than this letter. His second letter to Timothy contains this appalling statement :

"This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 Tim. i. 15). Yet to the work in "Asia" he had given uninterruptedly three of the ten years of his active ministry. Apart from antagonism to his "Mystery" truth, we cannot imagine any reason for such defection and neglect. But he seems to leave no doubt that his solitariness and his sufferings were the result of his determined insistence on this one element of Revelation, which he elsewhere calls his "*deposit*," and which he was most eager that Timothy also should be sufficiently brave to declare. And if, among the many thousands of Jews in Rome, only *three* persons stood by him in his imprisonment (Col. iv. 11), even in its less severe period there must have been more significance than appears on the surface of his address to the Jews in Rome (Acts xxviii.) when he formally transferred "the Salvation of God" from the Jews to the Gentiles.

Among the points of close resemblance between the two letters, the description of domestic relations and duties is particularly prominent. And yet there are rich touches of distinction between them, such as a fertile mind writing upon any truth, even at the same time, would be sure to produce. Any day's experience of letter-writing on a congenial subject will establish this. The individuality of the correspondent will also, very frequently, unconsciously call out new phases of expression and even new points of view. A critic without mental perspective would of course ignore such considerations, and deal merely with the text under his eye.

It may be desirable to recur to a point dealt with already in some measure, that the Letter to the Ephesians is entirely didactic, while that to the Colossians contains controversial matter. Such phrases as "the Colossian heresy," so common in our text-books and expositions, certainly suggest more than the Epistle warrants. There are, in fact, only nine verses out of ninety-five which can be counted more controversial than corresponding verses in Ephesians. And these are not directed to the Colossians themselves, as though they had been influenced by false teaching, but to some unnamed presence among them. As regards the two Churches, they are equally esteemed so far as the letters determine. If either is preferred it is the Church in Colosse. Of course the Apostle throughout the Epistle to Ephesus lets himself flow out into unexampled spiritual flights in both prayer and description. But that is not the point now before us. Without going into more close detail over points of similarity, a general statement may suffice. In any study of the subject Colossians should be made the basis of comparison, because it is so much shorter than Ephesians. While Ephesians contains one hundred and fifty-five verses, Colossians has only ninety-five, and a closer scrutiny is said to work out, approximately, that seventy-eight verses in Colossians are similar to one-half of the verses in Ephesians. There are thus left seventy-eight verses peculiar to Ephesians, and seventeen peculiar to Colossians.

Dealing briefly with the peculiarities of Colossians, we encounter first its controversial material. Now this really comes up in direct connection with the central truth of the letter. To reverse the relation of the two as they are found in the letter seems quite unwarranted. The next independent feature is the presence of *salutations* to individuals, while there are none in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. It is observable that in his letter to Rome, whose Church, as in the case of Colosse, he had neither founded nor visited, there are many salutations. Various arguments have been founded and pressed in connection with Pauline salutations. The facts seem to require some examination. The Apostle's two earliest letters, those to the Church in *Thessalonica*, which he singles out as a model Church, contain no salutations. Yet he had founded it, and quite recently, circumstances which might suggest the probability of salutations. To the members of the Church in *Corinth*, where he worked longer than anywhere with the exception of Ephesus, he sent no personal salutations in either of his letters. To the Churches in *Galatia* he sent no salutations. Yet if we accept the larger view of the extent of Galatia, which is now probably certain, there were in

Galatia several Churches in which he had deep personal interest. To *Philippi*, with a Church pre-eminently dear to him, he sent no personal salutations, though in the body of his letter he has occasion to name two or three Church members. It would thus appear that personal greetings to Church members are confined to persons in Rome and Colosse—which he had never even visited. Of course there are salutations *from* friends with the Apostle. But we know that such salutations are accidental, depending entirely on local circumstances at the time of writing. If the above examination is correct, one of the chief arguments for the circular character of “the Ephesians” evaporates, because there is no Apostolic practice to sustain it. But our examination of this point is not yet complete. Turning to Colossians, we observe that there are just two salutations, one to a Christian in the neighbouring Church of Laodicea, and one, which is a message and not really a salutation, to a leader in Colosse. We are thus left with one salutation to a Christian in Laodicea—and strangely enough there was a separate letter to that Church itself, written about the same time, whether that “to Ephesians” or not, we cannot meantime determine—and a large cluster of salutations to the Church in Rome. Turning to the Epistle to Rome, we find these salutations are distinctly a *postscript*, the usual formal closing of the letter preceding. It begins with chapter xvi. and is followed by a second postscript, on the theme which belongs chiefly to his later letters. This begins xvi. 25. Not much is left after this examination, beyond the fact that the Apostle’s almost invariable practice was to send no personal salutations in his Church letters. Another independent feature of our Epistle is the presence of Epaphras, whom we encounter at both its beginning and its close, the information which he gave the Apostle of the planting and progress of the Church being also clearly indicated.

The Apostle’s prayers in Ephesians are regarded as a special feature of the N.T. as a whole. A prayer for Colosse occurs, at least in outline, in chapter i. 9-13. Its burden is for insight into the will of God, in order to the enlargement of their Christian life, whose attainments climax in thankfulness—a grace which rules throughout the letter. In this connection we are introduced to the idea of a colony, which nowhere else appears. Perhaps there are condensed terms in the Colossian prayer which may be explained by the Ephesian prayers, but certainly without the Ephesian prayer they would never burst before our gaze into such surpassing enrichment. The second Ephesian prayer is really unique in Scripture, describing the riches of the glory provided for us in Christ—not after our entrance into His presence in the hereafter, but here and now, in the mystic blessedness of our oneness with Him.

The introduction of *circumcision* with *baptism* forms another point of individuality in the Colossian Letter. The teaching on Christian baptism is specially distinctive, making its essence to consist in our union with the Christ in His death and resurrection. Unfortunately this great truth has tended to become obscured from a foolish attempt to confine the symbolism of the rite to these great realities, while, certainly, simply union or engrafting in any form was intended under all religions using the rite—as in the Jewish baptism of Proselytes, the baptism of John, the Mithraic baptism (see Appendix B), and, in Christianity itself, the baptism of the Holy Ghost. In Ephesians baptism comes in merely as one of the seven unities of the Christian vocation. It would serve no good purpose to confuse issues by discussing Eph. v. 26.; but cf. John xiii. 10 and xv. 3. Other peculiarities of the Epistle may be gathered from the commentary, where they come under specific review.

It may probably appear uncalled for to point out the peculiarities of Ephesians. But as the letters are sometimes spoken of as mere copies the one of the other, and as the experts who are persuaded of this are mutually antagonistic regarding the original, some attention to the longer letter may not be out of place.

Recalling the fact that the Ephesian letter is two-fifths longer than the Colossian, we may observe that the style of Ephesians is much more discursive and detailed than that of the other, which is severely and often perplexingly

condensed. The difference of length is accordingly not so much the result of fresh matter in the one as of restrained statement in the shorter letter. For example, in discussing domestic relations in Christian homes, a topical aside is introduced into Ephesians on the intimate oneness of Christ and His people, as seen under a marriage bond. This aside is itself a most remarkably rich Revelation. Similarly, in the prayer of chapter iii, the details of "the riches of our Lord's glory" as communicated to His people even in this world, are described as nowhere else. In the equipment of the life of the member of the mystical body we found directions for wearing becoming attire. In Ephesians there is to correspond a fully detailed statement of the *Panoply* provided for the Christian soldier. Only it is to be observed that the panoply is not provided for the "flesh and spirit" conflict within the renewed man, as in Colossians, but for a conflict of the entire man with the invisible powers of spiritual hierarchies.

In the second chapter there is a description of the Christian's position in language distinct from that of the Pleroma-Mystery. This is, however, so adjusted as to make room for a wonderful background sketch of the ethnic world, lying far off and goddess. A wonderful transformation scene bursts upon the eye under the power of the Christ, where *peace*, in wonderful kaleidoscopic displays, engages the attention, and instead of a glorious world-famed temple of Artemis, a new temple fills the eye, built on a Divine foundation, where the Ephesians themselves are seen to be living stones of the building, and the indwelling Presence is not some rude block of mere nature form and substance, but the one only Eternal God Himself. In Ephesus they made their proudest civic boast that they were *temple-keepers* (NEÓKΟΡΟΙ) of Artemis' great House, but, in Christ, they are parts of an infinitely greater house of God (Acts xix. 35, R.V.).

As has been frequently observed, the great central theme of both letters is that which connects them and separates them from all other writings. The Apostle is possessed by that one theme. It is the *lapis aureus* of his entire mental vision, from which, as from the Roman Forum, all roads through the universe diverge and receive their reckoning. He could not possibly present it fully in any one writing, and he did not suppose he did so even when he wrote these two surpassingly great letters. He even asks for prayer in both of them (Col. iv. 4; Eph. vi. 19, 20), that he might have fresh and enlarged ability to expound his great theme. What still lies hidden in these Epistles for some happier age to discover we cannot guess. But if all else became dwarfed to his master-mind and Christ-wrapped soul before his great mystery, we may well pray, "Lord open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wonderful things out of Thy Law."

Note.—Readers who may desire to make a closer study of the corresponding verses in the two Epistles will find tables prepared for this purpose in De Wette, qtd. Abbott, *Intro. Eph.* xxiii.; Barnes, *Intro. Col.*; a topical view of the chief points in Moule, *Intro. Col.*, etc.

APPENDIX E

WORDS, ETC., SPECIALLY EXAMINED

- All, i. 10.
 Angels, ii. 17.
 Apostle, i. 1.
 Appear (Christ), iii. 4.
 Archippus, iv. 17.
 Aristarchus, iv. 10.
 Atonement, i. 20.

 Baptism, Baptize, ii. 12.
 Body—the Church, i. 18.
 Bond (handwriting), ii. 14.
 Brother, i. 1.

 Children, iii. 20.
Choregus, ii. 19.
 CHRIST, i. 1.
 Church, i. 18, iv. 15.
 Circumcision, ii. 11.
 Colony, Roman, i. 12.
 Colosse, *Introd.*
 Colossian and Ephesian letters, *Appen.*
D.
 Comfort, ii. 2.
 Creation, i. 15.
 Cross, The, i. 20.

 Deacon, i. 7.
 Decrees, ii. 14.
 Demas, iv. 14.
 Dispensation, i. 25.
 Dogma, ii. 14.

 ECCLESIA, i. 18.
 Economy, i. 25.
 Epaphras, i. 7, iv. 12.
 Ephesian and Colossian letters, *Appen.*
D.
 Epistle and letter, *Introd.*

 Faith, i. 4.
 Fathers, iii, 21.
 Feasts (Jewish), ii. 16.

 Filled, i. 9.
 FIRST-BORN, i. 15.
 Flesh, iii. 5.
 FULNESS, The, i. 19.

 Glory, iii. 4.
 Gnosticism, *Introd.*
 Gospel, i. 5.
 Grace, i. 2.
 Greek, N.T., *Introd.*

 Handwriting, ii. 14.
 Head of body, i. 18, ii. 10, ii. 19.
 Heaven, i. 5.
 Heresy in Colosse, *Introd.*, *Appen. D.*
 Holy-day, ii. 16.
 Hope (Blessed), iii. 4.
 Hope (Christian), i. 5.
 Humility, ii. 17.
 Husbands, iii. 19.
 Hymns, i. 14, iii. 16.

 IMAGE, i. 15.
 "In Christ Jesus," i. 28.
 Invisible God, i. 15.

 Jesus (Joshua), iv. 11.

 Kat'oikon Churches, iv. 15.
 Khonas, *Introd.*
 Know, Knowledge, i. 9.
Koiné, *Introd.*
Ktistes, i. 16.

 Laodicea, *Introd.*, iv. 13.
 Letters, collections of, i. 1.
 LORD, i. 3.
 Love, i. 3.
 Luke, iv. 14.

 MANUMISSION, *Appen. C.*
 Mark, John, iv. 10.

- Masters, iv. 1.
 Minister, i. 7.
 MITHRAISM, *Introd., Appen. B.*
 MYSTERY, *Introd., i. 25, ii. 3, Appen. B.*

 New man, iii. 10.
 Nymphas, iv. 15.

 Old man, iii. 9.
 Onesimus, iv. 9.

 Paraclete, ii. 2.
Parousia, iii. 4.
 Peace, i. 2, i. 20, iii. 15.
 Perfect, i. 28, iii. 14.
 Philosophy, ii. 8.
 Phrygian, *Introd., Appen. B.*
 PLEROMA, *Introd., i. 19.*
 PNEUMA, i. 8.
 Power (*dunamis*), i. 11.
 Prayer, iv. 2.
 Preaching, i. 28.
 Pre-eminence, i. 18.
 Proselytes, ii. 11.
 Psalms, iii. 16.

 Reconcile, i. 20.
 Resurrection, iii. 1, *Appen. B.*
- Rudiments, ii. 8.
 Rule, iii. 15.

 Sabbath, ii. 16.
 Saints, i. 2.
 Salt, iv. 6.
 Servant (slave), i. 7, iii. 22, *Appen. C.*
 Shadow (Mosaism), ii. 17.
 Speech, iv. 6.
 Spirit, i. 8.
 Spoil, ii. 8, ii. 15.
 Songs, iii. 16.
Stoicheia, ii. 8.
 Sufferings, i. 24.

 Thanksgiving, ii. 6.
 Timothy, i. 1.
Titulus, ii. 14.
Toga, iii. 14.
 Tradition, ii. 8.
 Triumph, ii. 16.
 Tychicus, iv. 7.

 Umpire, iii. 15.
 Universe, i. 15.

 Walk, Christian, i. 10.
 Way, A. S., i. 14, iii. 16.
 Wife, iii. 18.

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