

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

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INTRODUCTION

The GENUINENESS of this Epistle is attested by JUSTIN MARTYR [*Dialogue with Trypho*, p. 311, B.], who quotes “the first-born of every creature,” in reference to Christ, from ^{<5015>}Colossians 1:15. THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH [*To Autolychus*, 2, p. 100]. IRENAEUS [*Against Heresies*, 3.14.1], quotes expressly from this “Epistle to the Colossians” (^{<5044>}Colossians 4:14). CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA [*Miscellanies*, 1. p. 325], quotes ^{<5028>}Colossians 1:28; also elsewhere he quotes ^{<5009>}Colossians 1:9-11, 28 2:2, etc. ^{<5008>}Colossians 2:8 3:12, 14 4:2, 3, etc. TERTULLIAN [*The Prescription against Heretics*, 7], quotes ^{<5008>}Colossians 2:8; [*On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, 23], and quotes ^{<5022>}Colossians 2:12, 20 3:1, 2. ORIGEN [*Against Celsus*, 5.8], quotes ^{<5028>}Colossians 2:18, 19.

Colosse (or, as it is spelt in the best manuscripts, “Colassae”) was a city of Phrygia, on the river Lycus, a branch of the Meander. The Church there was mainly composed of Gentiles (compare ^{<5022>}Colossians 2:13). ALFORD infers from ^{<5001>}Colossians 2:1 (see on ^{<5001>}Colossians 2:1), that Paul had not seen its members, and therefore could not have been its founder, as THEODORET thought. ^{<5007>}Colossians 1:7, 8 suggests the probability that Epaphras was the first founder of the Church there. The date of its foundation must have been subsequent to Paul’s visitation, “strengthening in order” all the churches of Galatia and Phrygia (^{<4184>}Acts 18:24); for otherwise we must have visited the Colossians, which ^{<5001>}Colossians 2:1 implies he had not. Had Paul been their father in the faith, he would doubtless have alluded to the fact, as in ^{<4186>}1 Corinthians 3:6, 10 4:15 ^{<5005>}1 Thessalonians 1:5 2:1. It is only in the Epistles, Romans and Ephesians, and this Epistle, such allusions are wanting; in that to the Romans,

because, as in this Church of Colosse, he had not been the instrument of their conversion; in that to the Ephesians, owing to the general nature of the Epistle. Probably during the “two years” of Paul’s stay at Ephesus, when “*all which dwelt in Asia* heard the word of the Lord Jesus” (⁴⁸⁰Acts 19:10,26), Epaphras, Philemon, Archippus, Apphia and the other natives of Colosse, becoming converted at Ephesus, were subsequently the first sowers of the Gospel seed in their own city. This will account for their personal acquaintance with, and attachment to, Paul and his fellow ministers, and for his loving language as to them, and their counter salutations to him. So also with respect to “them at Laodicea,” (⁵⁰⁰Colossians 2:1).

The OBJECT of the Epistle is to counteract Jewish false teaching, by setting before the Colossians their true standing in Christ alone (exclusive of all other heavenly beings), the majesty of His person, and the completeness of the redemption wrought by Him; hence they ought to be conformed to their risen Lord, and to exhibit that conformity in all the relations of ordinary life ⁵²⁰Colossians 2:16, “new moon, sabbath days,” shows that the false teaching opposed in this Epistle is that of *Judaizing* Christians. These mixed up with pure Christianity Oriental theosophy and angel-worship, and the asceticism of certain sections of the Jews, especially the Essenes. Compare JOSEPHUS [*Wars of the Jews*, 2.8,13]. These theosophists promised to their followers a deeper insight into the world of spirits, and a nearer approach to heavenly purity and intelligence, than the simple Gospel affords. CONYBEARE and HOWSON think that some Alexandrian Jew had appeared at Colosse, imbued with the Greek philosophy of PHILO’S school, combining with it the Rabbinical theosophy and angelology which afterwards was embodied in the Cabbala. Compare JOSEPHUS [*Antiquities*, 12.3,4], from which we know that Alexander the Great had garrisoned the towns of Lydia and *Phrygia* with two thousand Mesopotamian and Babylonian *Jews* in the time of a threatened revolt. The Phrygians themselves had a mystic tendency in their worship of Cybele, which inclined them to receive the more readily the incipient Gnosticism of Judaizers, which afterward developed itself into the strangest heresies. In the Pastoral Epistles, the evil is spoken of as having reached a more deadly phase (⁵⁰⁰1 Timothy 4:1-3 6:5), whereas he

brings no charge of immorality in this Epistle: a proof of its being much earlier in date.

The PLACE from which it was written seems to have been Rome, during his first imprisonment there (⁴⁸⁷Acts 28:17-31). In my *Introduction* to the Epistle to the Ephesians, it was shown that the three Epistles, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, were sent at the same time, namely, during the freer portion of his imprisonment, before the death of Burrus.

⁵⁰⁴Colossians 4:3,4 ⁴⁰³Ephesians 6:19,20, imply greater freedom than he had while writing to the Philippians, after the promotion of Tigellinus to be Praetorian Prefect. See *Introduction* to Philippians.

This Epistle, though *carried* by the same bearer, Tychicus, who bore that to the *Ephesians*, was *written* previously to that Epistle; for many phrases similar in both appear in the more expanded form in the Epistle to the Ephesians (compare also *Note*, see on ⁴⁰²Ephesians 6:21). The *Epistle to the Laodiceans* (⁵⁰⁶Colossians 4:16) was *written* before that to the Colossians, but probably was *sent* by him to Laodicea at the same time with that to the Church at Colosse.

The STYLE is peculiar: many *Greek* phrases occur here, found nowhere else. Compare ⁵⁰⁸Colossians 2:8, “*spoil* you”; “making a show of them openly” (⁵⁰⁵Colossians 2:15); “beguile of your reward,” and “intruding” (⁵⁰⁹Colossians 2:18); “will-worship”; “satisfying” (⁵⁰²Colossians 2:23); “filthy communication” (⁵⁰⁸Colossians 3:8); “rule” (⁵⁰⁵Colossians 3:15); “comfort” (⁵⁰¹Colossians 4:11). The loftiness and artificial elaboration of style correspond to the majestic nature of his theme, the majesty of Christ’s person and office, in contrast to the beggarly system of the Judaizers, the discussion of which was forced on him by the controversy. Hence arises his use of unusual phraseology. On the other hand, in the Epistle of the Ephesians, subsequently written, in which he was not so hampered by the exigencies of controversy, he dilates on the same glorious truths, so congenial to him, more at large, freely and uncontroversially, in the fuller outpouring of his spirit, with less of the elaborate and antithetical language of system, such as was needed in cautioning the Colossians against the particular errors threatening them. Hence arises the striking similarity of many of the phrases in the two Epistles written about the same time, and generally in the same vein of spiritual thought; while the

peculiar phrases of the Epistle to the Colossians are such as are natural, considering the controversial purpose of that Epistle.

CHAPTER 1

COLOSSIANS 1:1-29.

ADDRESS: INTRODUCTION: CONFIRMING EPAPHRAS' TEACHING: THE GLORIES OF CHRIST: THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER FOR THE COLOSSIANS: HIS OWN MINISTRY OF THE MYSTERY.

1. by the will of God — *Greek*, “through,” etc. (compare *Note*, see on ^{<4001}1 Corinthians 1:1).

Timothy — (Compare *Notes*, see on ^{<4002}2 Corinthians 1:1 and ^{<5000}Philippians 1:1). He was with Paul at the time of writing in Rome. He had been companion of Paul in his first tour through Phrygia, in which Colosse was. Hence the Colossians seem to have associated him with Paul in their affections, and the apostle joins him with himself in the address. Neither, probably, had *seen* the Colossian Church (compare ^{<5001}Colossians 2:1); but had seen, during their tour through Phrygia, individual Colossians, as Epaphras, Philemon, Archippus, and Apphia (^{<5000}Philemon 1:2), who when converted brought the Gospel to their native city.

2. Colosse — written in the oldest manuscripts, “Colasse.” As “saints” implies union with God, so “the faithful brethren” union with Christian men [BENGEL].

and the Lord Jesus Christ — supported by some oldest manuscripts omitted by others of equal antiquity.

3. Thanksgiving for the “faith, hope, and love” of the Colossians. So in the twin Epistle sent at the same time and by the same bearer, Tychicus (^{<4015}Ephesians 1:15,16).

We — I and Timothy.

and the Father — So some of the oldest manuscripts read. But others better omit the “and,” which probably crept in from ^{<4000}Ephesians 1:3.

praying always for you — with thanksgiving (^{504F}Philippians 4:6). See ^{500H}Colossians 1:4.

4. Since we heard — literally, “Having heard.” The language implies that he had only heard of, and not *seen*, them (^{501E}Colossians 2:1). Compare ^{400B}Romans 1:8, where like language is used of a Church which he had not at the time visited.

love ... to all — the absent, as well as those present [BENGEL].

5. For — to be joined with the words immediately preceding: “The love which ye have to all the saints *because of* (literally, ‘*on account of*’) the hope,” etc. The hope of eternal life will never be in us an inactive principle but will always produce “love.” This passage is abused by Romanists, as if the hope of salvation depended upon works. A false argument. It does not follow that our hope is founded on our works because we are strongly stimulated to live well; since nothing is more effectual for this purpose than the sense of God’s free grace [CALVIN].

laid up — a treasure *laid up* so as to be out of danger of being lost (^{500J}2 Timothy 4:8). *Faith, love, and hope* (^{500K}Colossians 1:4,5), comprise the sum of Christianity. Compare ^{502B}Colossians 1:23, “the hope of the Gospel.”

in heaven — *Greek*, “in the heavens.”

whereof ye heard before — namely, at the time when it was preached to you.

in the word, etc. — That “hope” formed part of “the word of the truth of the Gospel” (compare ^{401B}Ephesians 1:13), that is, part of the Gospel truth preached unto you.

6. Which is come unto you — *Greek*, “Which is present among you,” that is, which has come to, and remains with, you. He speaks of the word as a living person *present* among them.

as it is in all the world — *virtually*, as it was by this time preached in the leading parts of the then known world; *potentially*, as Christ’s command was that the Gospel should be preached to all nations, and not be limited, as the law was, to the Jews (^{413B}Matthew 13:38 24:14 28:19). However, the

true reading, and that of the oldest manuscripts, is that which omits the following “and,” thus (the “*it is*” of *English Version* is not in the original *Greek*): “As in all the world it is bringing forth fruit *and growing* (so the oldest manuscripts read; *English Version* omits ‘and growing,’ without good authority), even as it doth in you also.” Then what is asserted is not that the Gospel has been preached in all the world, but that it is *bearing fruits* of righteousness, and (like a tree *growing* at the same time that it is *bearing fruit*) *growing in numbers* of its converts in, or throughout, all the world.

heard of it — rather, “heard *it*.”

and knew — rather, “came to know”; became *fully* experimentally *acquainted* with.

the grace of God in truth — that is, in its truth, and with true knowledge [ALFORD].

7. As ye also learned — “Also” is omitted in the oldest manuscripts. The insertion implied that those inserting it thought that *Paul* had preached the Gospel to the Colossians as well as Epaphras, Whereas the omission in the oldest manuscripts implies that *Epaphras alone* was the founder of the Church at Colosse.

of — “*from* Epaphras.”

dear — *Greek*, “beloved.”

fellow servant — namely, of Christ. In ^{<502>}Philemon 1:23 he calls him “my fellow prisoner.” It is possible that Epaphras may have been apprehended for his zealous labors in Asia Minor; but more probable that Paul gave him the title; as his faithful companion in his imprisonment (compare *Note*, see on ^{<504>}Colossians 4:10, as to MEYER’S conjecture).

who is for you, etc. — Translate, “who is faithful in your behalf as a minister of Christ”; hinting that he is one not to be set aside for the new and erroneous teachers (^{<503>}Colossians 2:1-23). Most of the oldest manuscripts read, “for (or ‘*in behalf of*’) US.” *Vulgate*, however, with one of the oldest manuscripts, supports *English Version*.

8. your love — (^{<500>}Colossians 1:4); “to all the saints.”

in the Spirit — the sphere or element IN which alone true love is found; as distinguished from the state of those “in the flesh” (^{<418B>}Romans 8:9). Yet even they needed to be stirred up to greater love (^{<518D>}Colossians 3:12-14). Love is the first and chief fruit of the Spirit (^{<418D>}Galatians 5:22).

9. we also — on our part.

heard it — (^{<510D>}Colossians 1:4).

pray — Here he states what in *particular* he prays for; as in ^{<510D>}Colossians 1:3 he stated *generally* the fact of his praying for them.

to desire — “to make request.”

might be filled — rather, “*may* be filled”; a verb, often found in this Epistle (^{<510D>}Colossians 4:12,17).

knowledge — *Greek*, “*full and accurate knowledge*.” Akin to the Greek for “knew” (see on ^{<510D>}Colossians 1:6).

of his will — as to how ye ought to walk (^{<415D>}Ephesians 5:17); as well as chiefly that “mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself; that in the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ” (^{<410D>}Ephesians 1:9,10); God’s “will,” whereby He eternally purposed to reconcile to Himself, and save men by Christ, not by angels, as the false teachers in some degree taught (^{<510D>}Colossians 2:18) [ESTIUS]. There seems to have been a want of *knowledge* among the Colossians; notwithstanding their general excellencies; hence he so often dwells on this subject (^{<510D>}Colossians 1:28 ^{<510D>}Colossians 2:2,3 3:10,13 4:5,6). On the contrary he less extols *wisdom* to the Corinthians, who were puffed up with the conceit of knowledge.

wisdom — often mentioned in this Epistle, as opposed to the (false) “philosophy” and “show of wisdom” (^{<510D>}Colossians 2:8,23; compare ^{<410D>}Ephesians 1:8).

understanding — sagacity to discern what on each occasion is suited to the place and the time; its seat is “the understanding” or intellect; wisdom is more general and has its seat in the whole compass of the faculties of the soul [BENGEL]. “Wouldst thou know that the matters in the word of Christ are real things? Then never read them for mere knowledge sake”

[Quoted by GAUSSEN.] Knowledge is desirable only when seasoned by “spiritual understanding.”

10. *Greek*, “So as to walk”; so that ye may walk. True knowledge of God’s will is inseparable from walking conformably to it.

worthy of the Lord — (⁴⁰⁰Ephesians 4:1).

unto — so as in every way to be well-pleasing to God.

pleasing — literally, “*desire of pleasing*.”

being fruitful — *Greek*, “bearing fruit.” This is the first manifestation of their “walking worthy of the Lord.” The second is, “increasing (growing) in the knowledge of God (or as the oldest manuscripts read, ‘growing BY the full knowledge of God’);” thus, as the *Gospel word* (⁵⁰⁰Colossians 1:6) was said to “bring forth fruit,” and to “grow” in all the world, even as it did in the Colossians, ever since the day they *knew* the grace of God, so here it is Paul’s prayer that *they* might continue to “bring forth fruit,” and “grow” more and more *by the full knowledge* of God, the more that “knowledge” (⁵⁰⁰Colossians 1:9) was imparted to them. The full knowledge of God is the real *instrument* of enlargement in soul and life of the believer [ALFORD]. The third manifestation of their walk is (⁵⁰¹Colossians 1:11), “Being strengthened with all might,” etc. The fourth is (⁵⁰²Colossians 1:12), “Giving thanks unto the Father,” etc.

11. *Greek*, “Being made mighty with (literally, ‘in’) all might.”

according to his glorious power — rather, “according to the power (the characteristic of ‘His glory,’ here appropriate to Paul’s argument, ⁴⁰³Ephesians 1:19 6:10; as its exuberant ‘riches,’ in ⁴⁰⁴Ephesians 3:16) of His glory.” His power is inseparable from His glory (⁴⁰⁵Romans 6:4).

unto all patience — so as to attain to all *patient endurance*; persevering, enduring continuance in the faith, in spite of trials of persecutors, and seductions of false teachers.

long-suffering — towards those whom one could repel. “Patience,” or “endurance,” is exercised in respect to those whom one cannot repel [CHRYSOSTOM].

with joyfulness — joyful endurance (⁴⁴⁶⁵Acts 16:25 ⁴⁸⁷⁸Romans 5:3,11).

12. You “giving thanks unto the Father.” See on ⁵⁰⁰⁰Colossians 1:10; this clause is connected with “that ye may be filled” (⁵⁰⁰⁰Colossians 1:9), and “that ye may walk” (⁵⁰⁰⁰Colossians 1:10). The connection is not, “We do not cease to pray for you” (⁵⁰⁰⁰Colossians 1:9) giving thanks.”

unto the Father — of Jesus Christ, and so *our* Father by adoption (⁴⁸⁸⁸Galatians 3:26 4:4-6).

which hath made us meet — *Greek*, “who *made* us meet.” Not “*is making* us meet” by progressive growth in holiness; but *once for all made* us meet. It is not *primarily* the *Spirit’s* work that is meant here, as the text is often used; but the *Father’s* work in putting us by adoption, once for all, in a new standing, namely, *that of children*. The believers meant here were in different stages of progressive sanctification; but in respect to the meetness specified here, they all alike had it from the Father, in Christ His Son, being “complete in Him” (⁵⁰²⁰Colossians 2:10). Compare ⁴⁸⁷⁷John 17:17 ⁴⁸⁰⁰Jude 1:1, “sanctified by God *the Father*”; ⁴⁸⁰⁰1 Corinthians 1:30. Still, *secondarily*, this once-for-all meetness contains in it the germ of sanctification, afterwards developed progressively in the life by the Father’s Spirit in the believer. The Christian life of heavenliness is the first stage of heaven itself. There must, and will be, a *personal* meetness for heaven, where there is a *judicial* meetness.

to be partakers, etc. — *Greek*, “for the (or ‘*our*’) portion of the inheritance” (⁴⁸⁸⁸Acts 20:32 26:18 ⁴⁰¹¹Ephesians 1:11) of the saints in light.” “Light” begins in the believer here, descending from “the Father of lights” by Jesus, “the true light,” and is perfected in the kingdom of light, which includes knowledge, purity, love, and joy. It is contrasted here with the “darkness” of the unconverted state (⁵⁰¹³Colossians 1:13; compare ⁴⁸⁸⁹1 Peter 2:9).

13. from — *Greek*, “*out of* the power,” out of the sphere in which his power is exercised.

darkness — blindness, hatred, misery [BENGEL].

translated — Those thus translated as to state, are also transformed as to character. Satan has an organized dominion with various orders of powers

of evil (^{<400>}Ephesians 2:2 6:12). But the term “kingdom” is rarely applied to his usurped rule (^{<402>}Matthew 12:26); it is generally restricted to the kingdom of God.

his dear Son — rather as *Greek*, “the Son of His love”: the Son on whom His love rests (^{<472>}John 17:26 ^{<400>}Ephesians 1:6): contrasted with the “darkness” where all is hatred and hateful.

14. (^{<400>}Ephesians 1:7.)

redemption — rather as *Greek*, “*our* redemption.”

through his blood — omitted in the oldest manuscripts; probably inserted from ^{<400>}Ephesians 1:7.

sins — Translate as *Greek*, “*our* sins.” The more general term: for which ^{<400>}Ephesians 1:7, *Greek*, has, “*our transgressions*,” the more special term.

15. They who have experienced in themselves “redemption” (^{<5014>}Colossians 1:14), know Christ in the glorious character here described, as above the highest angels to whom the false teachers (^{<508>}Colossians 2:18) taught worship was to be paid. Paul describes Him:

(1) in relation to God and creation (^{<5015>}Colossians 1:15-17);

(2) in relation to the Church (^{<5016>}Colossians 1:18-20). As the former regards Him as the Creator (^{<5015>}Colossians 1:15,16) and the Sustainer (^{<5017>}Colossians 1:17) of the natural world; so the latter, as the source and stay of the new moral creation.

image — exact likeness and perfect Representative. Adam was made “in the image of God” (^{<0027>}Genesis 1:27). But Christ, the second Adam, perfectly reflected visibly “the invisible God” (^{<50171>}1 Timothy 1:17), whose glories the first Adam only in part represented. “Image” (*eicon*) involves “likeness” (*homoiosis*); but “likeness” does not involve “image.” “Image” always supposes a prototype, which it not merely resembles, but from which it is drawn: the exact counterpart, as the reflection of the sun in the water: the child the living image of the parent. “Likeness” implies mere *resemblance*, not the exact *counterpart* and *derivation* as “image” expresses; hence it is nowhere applied to the Son, while “image” is here, compare ^{<4107>}1 Corinthians 11:7 [TRENCH]. (^{<4018>}John 1:18 14:9 ^{<4002>}

Corinthians 4:4 ^(S186) 1 Timothy 3:16 ^(S103) Hebrews 1:3). Even before His incarnation He was the image of the invisible God, as the Word (^(S101) John 1:1-3) by whom God created the worlds, and by whom God appeared to the patriarchs. Thus His *essential* character as *always* “the image of God,”

(1) before the incarnation,

(2) in the days of His flesh, and

(3) now in His glorified state, is, I think, contemplated here by the verb “is.”

first-born of every creature — (^(S100) Hebrews 1:6), “the first-begotten”: “begotten of His Father before all worlds” [*Nicene Creed*]. Priority and superlative dignity is implied (^(S102) Psalm 89:27). *English Version* might seem to favor Arianism, as if Christ were a creature. Translate, “Begotten (literally, ‘born’) *before* every creature,” as the context shows, which gives the reason why He is so designated. “For,” etc. (^(S119) Colossians 1:16,17) [TRENCH]. This expression is understood by ORIGEN (so far is the *Greek* from favoring Socinian or Arian views) as declaring *the Godhead* of Christ, and is used by Him as a phrase to mark that *Godhead*, in contrast with His *manhood* [Book 2, sec. *Against Celsus*]. The *Greek* does not strictly admit ALFORD’S translation, “the first-born of all creation.”

16. For — *Greek*, “Because.” This gives the proof that He is not included in the things created, but is the “first-begotten” before “every creature” (^(S115) Colossians 1:15), begotten as “the Son of God’s love” (^(S113) Colossians 1:13), antecedently to all other emanations: “for” all these other emanations came from Him, and whatever was created, *was created by Him*.

by him — rather as *Greek*, “in Him”: as the conditional element, pre-existent and all-including: the creation of all things BY *Him* is expressed afterwards, and is a different fact from the present one, though implied in it [ALFORD]. God revealed Himself in the Son, the Word of the Father, *before all created existence* (^(S115) Colossians 1:15). That Divine Word carries IN *Himself the archetypes of all existences*, so that “IN *Him* all things that are in heaven and earth have been created.” The “in Him” indicates that the Word is the ideal ground of all existence; the “by Him,” below, that He is

the *instrument* of actually realizing the divine idea [NEANDER]. His essential nature as the Word of the Father is not a mere appendage of His incarnation, but is the ground of it. The original relation of the Eternal Word to men “made in His image” (^{<0027>}Genesis 1:27), is the source of the new relation to them by redemption, formed in His incarnation, whereby He restores them to His lost image. “*In Him*” implies something prior to “by” and “for Him” presently after: the three prepositions mark in succession the beginning, the progress, and the end [BENGEL].

all things — *Greek*, “the universe of things.” That the *new creation* is not meant in this verse (as Socinians interpret), is plain; for *angels*, who are included in the catalogue, were not *new created* by Christ; and he does not speak of the new creation till ^{<018>}Colossians 1:18. The creation “of the things that are in the *heavens*” (so *Greek*) includes the creation of the *heavens themselves*: the former are rather named, since the inhabitants are more noble than their dwellings. Heaven and earth and all that is in them (^{<011>}1 Chronicles 29:11 ^{<006>}Nehemiah 9:6 ^{<010>}Revelation 10:6).

invisible — the world of spirits.

thrones, or dominions — *lordships*: the thrones are the greater of the two.

principalities, or powers — rather, “*rules, or authorities*”: the former are stronger than the latter (compare *Note*, see on ^{<021>}Ephesians 1:21). The latter pair refer to offices *in respect to God’s creatures*: “thrones and dominions” express exalted *relation to God*, they being the *chariots* on which He rides displaying His glory (^{<017>}Psalm 68:17). The existence of various orders of angels is established by this passage.

all things — *Greek*, “the whole universe of things.”

were — rather, to distinguish the *Greek aorist*, which precedes from the perfect tense here, “*have been created*.” In the former case the creation was viewed as *a past act at a point of time*, or as done once for all; here it is viewed, not merely as one historic act of creation in the past, but as the *permanent result now and eternally continuing*.

by him — as the instrumental Agent (^{<003>}John 1:3).

for him — as the grand *End* of creation; containing in Himself the reason why creation is at all, and why it is as it is [ALFORD]. He is the *final* cause as well as the *efficient* cause. LACHMANN’S punctuation of ^{<5015>}Colossians 1:15-18 is best, whereby “the first-born of every creature” (^{<5015>}Colossians 1:15) answers to “the first-born from the dead” (^{<5018>}Colossians 1:18), the whole forming one sentence with the words (“All things were created by Him and for Him, and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist, and He is the Head of the body, the Church”) intervening as a parenthesis. Thus Paul puts first, *the origination by Him of the natural creation*; secondly, *of the new creation*. The parenthesis falls into four clauses, two and two: the former two support the first assertion, “the first-born of every creature”; the latter two prepare us for “the first-born from the dead”; the former two correspond to the latter two in their form — “All things by Him ... and He is,” and “By Him all things ... and He is.”

17. (^{<4858>}John 8:58.) Translate as *Greek*, “And *He Himself* (the great HE) is (implying *divine essential being*) before all things,” in *time*, as well as in dignity. Since He is before all things, He is *before even time*, that is, *from eternity*. Compare “the first-born of every creature” (^{<5015>}Colossians 1:15).

by him — *Greek*, “IN Him” (as the conditional element of existence, ^{<5016>}Colossians 1:16) [ALFORD].

consist — “subsist.” Not only are called into being from nothing, but *are maintained in their present state*. The Son of God is the *Conservator*, as well as the *Creator* of all things [PEARSON]. BENDEL less probably explains, “All things in Him come together into one *system*: the universe found its completion in Him” (^{<5014>}Isaiah 41:4 ^{<6213>}Revelation 22:13). Compare as to GOD, ^{<5113>}Romans 11:36: similar language; therefore *Christ* must be God.

18. Revelation of Christ to the Church and the new creation, as the Originator of both.

he — emphatical. Not angels in opposition to the false teachers’ doctrine concerning angel-worship, and the power of Oeons or (imaginary) spirit emanations from God (^{<5120>}Colossians 2:10,18).

head of the body, the church — The Church is His body by virtue of His entering into communion corporeally with human nature [NEANDER],

(⁴⁰¹²Ephesians 1:22). The same One who is the Head of all things and beings by creation, is also, by virtue of being “the first-born from the dead,” and so “the first-fruits” of the new creation among men, the Head of the Church.

who is — that is, in that He is the Beginning [ALFORD]. Rather, this is *the beginning of a new paragraph*. As the former paragraph, which related to His originating the *physical* creation, began with “Who is” (⁵⁰¹⁵Colossians 1:15); so this, which treats of His originating the new creation, begins with “who is”; a parenthesis preceding, which closes the former paragraph, that parenthesis (see on ⁵⁰¹⁶Colossians 1:16), including from “all things were created by Him,” to “Head of the body, the Church.” The *head* of kings and high priests was anointed, as the seat of the faculties, the fountain of dignity, and *original* of all the members (according to *Hebrew* etymology). So Jesus by His unction was designated as the *Head* of the body, the Church.

the beginning — namely, of the new creation, as of the old (²⁰⁸⁰Proverbs 8:2 ⁶⁰⁰²John 1:1; compare ⁶⁰⁰⁸Revelation 1:8): the beginning of the Church of the first-born (³⁰²²Hebrews 12:23), as being Himself the “first-born from the dead” (⁴⁰³³Acts 26:23 ⁴⁰⁵¹1 Corinthians 15:20,23). Christ’s primogeniture is threefold:

- (1) From eternity the “first-begotten” of the Father (⁵⁰¹⁵Colossians 1:15);
- (2) As the first-born of His mother (⁴⁰²⁵Matthew 1:25);
- (3) As the Head of the Church, mystically begotten of the Father, as it were to a new life, on the day of His resurrection, which is His “regeneration,” even as His people’s coming resurrection will be their “regeneration” (that is, the resurrection which was begun in the soul, extended to the body and to the whole creation, ⁶⁰²⁰Romans 8:21,22) (⁴⁰³⁸Matthew 19:28 ⁴⁰³³Acts 13:33 ⁶⁰⁰⁵Revelation 1:5). Sonship and resurrection are similarly connected (⁴⁰²⁶Luke 20:36 ⁶⁰⁰⁴Romans 1:4 8:23 ⁴⁰³²1 John 3:2). Christ by rising from the dead is the efficient cause (⁴⁰⁵²1 Corinthians 15:22), as having obtained the power, and the exemplary cause, as being the pattern (³⁰²³Micah 2:13 ⁶⁰⁰⁵Romans 6:5

^{<1182>}Philippians 3:21), of our resurrection: the resurrection of “the Head” involves consequentially that of the members.

that in all things — He resumes the “all things” (^{<5011>}Colossians 1:20).

he might have the pre-eminence — *Greek*, “He HIMSELF *may* (thus) become the One holding the first place,” or, “take the precedency.” Both ideas are included, priority in *time* and priority in *dignity*: now in the regenerated world, as before in the world of creation (^{<5015>}Colossians 1:15). “Begotten before every creature, or “first-born of every creature” (^{<5427>}Psalms 89:27 ^{<4183>}John 3:13).

19. *Greek*, “(God) was *well pleased*,” etc.

in him — that is, in the Son (^{<4087>}Matthew 3:17).

all fullness — rather as *Greek*, “all *the* fullness,” namely, *of God*, whatever divine excellence is in God the Father (^{<5019>}Colossians 2:9 ^{<4189>}Ephesians 3:19; compare ^{<4116>}John 1:16 3:34). The Gnostics used the term “fullness,” for the assemblage of emanations, or angelic powers, coming from God. The Spirit presciently by Paul warns the Church, that the true “fullness” dwells in Christ alone. This assigns the reason why Christ takes precedence of every creature (^{<5015>}Colossians 1:15). For two reasons Christ is Lord of the Church:

- (1) Because the fullness of the divine attributes (^{<5019>}Colossians 1:19) dwells in Him, and so He has the *power* to govern the universe;
- (2) Because (^{<5021>}Colossians 1:20) what He has done for the Church gives Him the *right* to preside over it.

should ... dwell — as in a temple (^{<4121>}John 2:21). *This indwelling of the Godhead in Christ* is the foundation of *the reconciliation* by Him [BENGE]. Hence the “and” (^{<5021>}Colossians 1:20) connects as cause and effect the two things, *the Godhead in Christ, and the reconciliation by Christ*.

20. The *Greek* order is, “And through Him (Christ) to reconcile again completely (see on ^{<4126>}Ephesians 2:16) all things (*Greek*, ‘the whole universe of things’) unto Himself (unto God the Father, ^{<4189>}2 Corinthians 5:19), having made peace (God the Father having made peace) through the

blood of His (Christ's) cross," that is, shed by Christ *on* the cross: the price and pledge of our reconciliation with God. The Scripture phrase, "God reconciles man to Himself," implies that He takes away by the blood of Jesus the barrier which God's justice interposes against man's being in union with God (compare *Note*, see on ^{<615B>}Romans 5:10; ^{<615B>}2 Corinthians 5:18). So the *Septuagint*, ^{<620A>}1 Samuel 29:4, "Wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master," that is, *reconcile his master* unto him by appeasing his wrath. So ^{<615B>}Matthew 5:23,24.

by him — "through Him" (the instrumental agent in the new creation, as in the original creation): emphatically repeated, to bring the person of Christ, as the Head of both creations alike, into prominence.

things in earth ... in heaven — Good angels, in one sense, do not need reconciliation to God; fallen angels are excluded from it (^{<610A>}Jude 1:6). But probably redemption has effects on the world of spirits unknown to us. Of course, His reconciling *us*, and His reconciling *them*, must be by a different process, as He took not on Him the nature of angels, so as to offer a *propitiation* for them. But the effect of redemption on them, as He is *their* Head as well as *ours*, is that they are thereby *brought nearer God*, and so gain an increase of blessedness [ALFORD], and *larger views of the love and wisdom of God* (^{<615B>}Ephesians 3:10). All creation subsists in Christ, all creation is therefore affected by His propitiation: sinful creation is strictly "reconciled" from its enmity; sinless creation, comparatively distant from His unapproachable purity (^{<615B>}Job 4:18 15:15 25:5), is lifted into nearer participation of Him, and in this wider sense is reconciled. Doubtless, too, man's fall, following on Satan's fall, is a segment of a larger circle of evil, so that the remedy of the former affects the standing of angels, from among whom Satan and his host fell. Angels thereby having seen the magnitude of sin, and the infinite cost of redemption, and the exclusion of the fallen angels from it, and the inability of any creature to stand morally in his own strength, are *now* put beyond the reach of falling. Thus BACON'S definition of Christ's Headship holds good: "The Head of *redemption* to man; the Head of *preservation* to angels." Some conjecture that Satan, when unfallen, ruled this earth and the pre-Adamic animal kingdom: hence his malice against man who succeeded to the lordship of this earth and its animals, and hence, too, his assumption of the form of a serpent, the subtlest of the animal tribes. ^{<615B>}Luke 19:38 states expressly

“peace in heaven” as the result of finished redemption, as “peace on earth” was the result of its beginning at Jesus’ birth (⁴¹¹⁴Luke 2:14). BENGEL explains the reconciliation to be that of not only God, but also *angels, estranged from men* because of man’s enmity against God. ⁴¹¹⁰Ephesians 1:10 accords with this: This is true, but only part of the truth: so ALFORD’S view also is but part of the truth. An actual *reconciliation or restoration of peace in heaven*, as well as on earth, is expressed by Paul. As long as that blood of reconciliation was not actually shed, which is opposed (³⁸⁸⁷Zechariah 3:8,9) to the accusations of Satan, but was only in promise, Satan could plead his right against men before God day and night (³⁹⁰⁶Job 1:6 ⁴²⁰Revelation 12:10); hence he was in heaven till the ban on man was broken (compare ⁴⁰⁸Luke 10:18). So here; the world of earth and heaven owe to Christ alone *the restoration of harmony after the conflict and the subjugation of all things under one Head* (compare ⁴⁸¹³Hebrews 11:23). Sin introduced discord not only on earth, but also in heaven, by the fall of demons; it brought into the abodes of holy angels, though not positive, yet privative loss, a retardation of their highest and most perfect development, harmonious gradation, and perfect consummation. Angels were no more able than men by themselves to overcome the peace disturbers, and cast out the devils; it is only “by,” or “through HIM,” and “the blood of HIS cross,” that *peace was restored even in heaven*; it is only after Christ has obtained the victory fully and legally, that Michael (⁴¹¹⁷Revelation 12:7-10) and his angels can cast out of heaven Satan and his demons (compare ⁵²¹⁵Colossians 2:15). Thus the point of Paul’s argument against angel-worship is, that angels themselves, like men, wholly depend on Christ, the sole and true object of worship [AUBERLEN].

21. The Colossians are included in this general reconciliation (compare ⁴¹¹⁰Ephesians 2:1,12).

sometime — “once.”

alienated — from God and salvation: objectively *banished from God*, through the barrier which God’s justice interposed against your sin: subjectively *estranged* through the alienation of your own wills from God. The former is the prominent thought (compare ⁴⁸¹⁰Romans 5:10), as the second follows, “enemies in your mind.” “Actual *alienation* makes habitual ‘enemies’” [BENGEL].

in your mind — *Greek*, “in your understanding” or “thought” (^{<4118>}Ephesians 2:3 4:18).

by wicked works — rather as *Greek*, “in your wicked works” (wicked works were the element *in* which your *enmity* subsisted).

yet now — *Notwithstanding* the former alienation, *now* that Christ has come, *God* hath *completely reconciled*, or restored to His friendship *again* (so the *Greek*, compare *Note*, see on ^{<5021>}Colossians 1:20).

22. In the body of his flesh — the element in which His reconciling sufferings had place. Compare ^{<5024>}Colossians 1:24, “afflictions of Christ *in my flesh*” (^{<4124>}1 Peter 2:24). Angels who have not a “body of flesh” are not in any way our reconciling mediators, as your false teachers assert, but He, the Lord of angels, who has taken our *flesh*, that *in* it He might atone for our fallen manhood.

through death — rather as *Greek*, “through *His* death” (which could only take place in a body like ours, of flesh, ^{<5024>}Hebrews 2:14). This implies He took on Him our true and entire manhood. *Flesh* is the sphere in which His human sufferings could have place (compare ^{<5024>}Colossians 1:24 ^{<4125>}Ephesians 2:15).

to present you — (^{<4127>}Ephesians 5:27). The end of His reconciling atonement by death.

holy — positively; and in relation to God.

unblamable ... unprovable — negatively. “Without blemish” (as the *former Greek* word is translated as to Jesus, our Head, ^{<4119>}1 Peter 1:19) *in one’s self*. *Irreproachable* (the *Greek* for the *second* word, *one who gives no occasion for his being brought to a law court*) *is in relation to the world without*. *Sanctification*, as the fruit, is here treated of; *justification*, by Christ’s reconciliation, as the tree, having preceded (^{<4100>}Ephesians 1:4 5:26,27 ^{<5024>}Titus 2:14). At the same time, our sanctification is regarded here as *perfect* in Christ, into whom we are grafted at regeneration or conversion, and who is “made of God unto us (perfect) sanctification” (^{<4123>}1 Corinthians 1:30 ^{<4102>}1 Peter 1:2 ^{<5001>}Jude 1:1); not merely *progressive* sanctification, which is the *gradual development* of the sanctification which Christ is made to the believer from the first.

in his sight — in God’s sight, at Christ’s appearing.

23. If — “Assuming that,” etc.: not otherwise shall ye be so presented at His appearing (^{<502>}Colossians 1:22).

grounded — *Greek*, “founded,” “fixed on the *foundation*” (compare *Note*, see on ^{<487>}Ephesians 3:17; ^{<468>}Luke 6:48,49).

settled — “steadfast.” “Grounded” respects the *foundation* on which believers rest; “settled,” *their own steadfastness* (^{<460>}1 Peter 5:10). ^{<468>}1 Corinthians 15:58 has the same *Greek*.

not moved away — by the false teachers.

the hope of the gospel — (^{<418>}Ephesians 1:18).

which ye have heard ... which was preached to every creature ...

whereof I ... am ... a minister — Three arguments against their being “moved away from the Gospel”:

(1) Their having heard it;

(2) The universality of the preaching of it;

(3) Paul’s ministry in it. For “to (*Greek*, ‘in’) every creature,” the oldest manuscripts read, “in *all creation*.” Compare “in all the world,” ^{<500>}Colossians 1:6; “all things ... in earth,” ^{<500>}Colossians 1:20 (^{<465>}Mark 16:15): thus he implies that the Gospel from which he urges them *not to be moved*, has this mark of truth, namely, the universality of its announcement, which accords with the command and prophecy of Christ Himself (^{<424>}Matthew 24:14). By “*was preached*,” he means not merely “*is being preached*,” but *has been actually, as an accomplished fact, preached*. PLINY, not many years subsequently, in his famous letter to the Emperor Trajan [*Epistles*, Book X., Epistle 97], writes, “Many of every age, rank, and sex, are being brought to trial. For the contagion of that superstition [Christianity] has spread over not only cities, but villages and the country.”

whereof I Paul am — rather as *Greek*, “*was made a minister*.” Respect for me, the minister of this world-wide Gospel, should lead you not to be moved from it. Moreover (he implies), the Gospel which ye heard from

Epaphras, your “minister” (⁵⁰⁰⁷Colossians 1:7), is the same of which “I was made a minister” (⁵⁰²⁵Colossians 1:25 ⁴⁹³⁷Ephesians 3:7): if you be moved from it, ye will desert the teaching of the recognized ministers of the Gospel for unauthorized false teachers.

24. Who — The oldest manuscripts omit “who”; then translate, “Now I rejoice.” Some very old manuscripts, and the best of the *Latin versions*, and *Vulgate*, read as *English Version*. To enhance the glory of Christ as paramount to all, he mentions his own sufferings for the Church of Christ. “Now” stands in contrast to “I was made,” in the past time (⁵⁰²³Colossians 1:23).

for you — “on your behalf,” that ye may be confirmed in resting solely on Christ (to the exclusion of angel-worship) by the glorification of Christ in my sufferings (⁴⁹⁰¹Ephesians 3:1).

fill up that which is behind — literally, “the deficiencies” — all that are lacking of the afflictions of Christ (compare *Note*, see on ⁴⁰⁰⁵2 Corinthians 1:5). Christ is “afflicted in all His people’s afflictions” (²³³⁰Isaiah 63:9). “The Church is His body in which He is, dwells, lives, and therefore also suffers” [VITRINGA]. Christ was destined to endure certain afflictions in this figurative body, as well as in His literal; these were “that which is behind of the afflictions of *Christ*,” which Paul “filled up.” His own meritorious sufferings in expiation for sin were once for all completely filled up on the Cross. But His Church (His second Self) has her whole measure of afflictions fixed. The more Paul, a member, endured, the less remain for the rest of the Church to endure; the communion of saints thus giving them an interest in his sufferings. It is in reference to the Church’s afflictions, which are “Christ’s afflictions, that Paul here saith, “I fill up the deficiencies,” or “what remain behind of the afflictions of Christ.” She is afflicted to promote her growth in holiness, and her completeness in Christ. Not one suffering is lost (⁴⁵⁰⁸Psalms 56:8). All her members have thus a mutual interest in one another’s sufferings (⁴³²⁶1 Corinthians 12:26). But Rome’s inference hence, is utterly false that the Church has a stock treasury of the merits and satisfactions of Christ and His apostles, out of which she may dispense indulgences; the context has no reference to sufferings in *expiation of sin* and productive of *merit*. Believers should

regard their sufferings less in relation to themselves as individuals, and more as parts of a grand whole, carrying out God's perfect plan.

25. am — *Greek*, “I was made a minister”: resuming ^{<502>}Colossians 1:23, “whereof I Paul was made a minister.”

dispensation — the *stewardship* committed to me to dispense in the house of God, the Church, to the whole family of believers, the goods of my Master (^{<222>}Luke 12:42 ^{<401>}1 Corinthians 4:1,2 9:17 ^{<402>}Ephesians 3:2).

which is given — *Greek*, “which was given.”

for you — with a view to you, Gentiles (^{<502>}Colossians 1:27 ^{<656>}Romans 15:16).

to fulfill — to bring it fully to all: the end of his stewardship: “fully preached” (^{<659>}Romans 15:19). “The *fullness* of Christ (^{<5019>}Colossians 1:19), and of the times (^{<411>}Ephesians 1:10) required him so to do” [BENGEL].

26. the mystery — (See on ^{<410>}Ephesians 1:9,10; ^{<405>}Ephesians 3:5-9). The *mystery*, once hidden, now revealed, is redemption for the whole Gentile world, as well as for the Jews, “Christ in *you* (Gentiles) the hope of glory” (^{<502>}Colossians 1:27).

from ages — “from,” according to ALFORD, refers to time, not “hidden from”: from the time of the ages; still what is meant is that the mystery was hidden from *the beings living in those “ages.”* The “ages” are the vast successive periods marked by successive orders of beings and stages of creation. *Greek*, “aeons,” a word used by the Gnostics for angelic beings emanating from God. The Spirit by Paul presciently, in opposition to Gnostic error already beginning (^{<5028>}Colossians 2:18), teaches, that the mystery of redemption was hidden in God's purposes in Christ, alike from the *angelic beings* (compare ^{<402>}Ephesians 3:10) of the pre-Adamic “ages,” and from the subsequent *human* “generations.” Translate as *Greek*, “*the ages ... the generations.*”

made manifest to his saints — to His apostles and prophets primarily (^{<405>}Ephesians 3:5), and through them to *all His saints*.

27. would — rather as *Greek*, “willed,” or “was pleased to make known.” He resolves all into God’s *good pleasure* and *will*, that man should not glory save in God’s grace.

what — How full and inexhaustible!

the riches of the glory of this mystery — He accumulates phrase on phrase to enhance the greatness of the blessing in Christ bestowed by God on the Gentiles. Compare ^{<STR>}Colossians 2:3, “all the *treasures*” of *wisdom*; ^{<HR>}Ephesians 3:8, “the unsearchable *riches* of *Christ*”; ^{<HR>}Ephesians 1:7, “*riches* of His *grace*.” “*The glory* of this mystery” must be the glory which this once hidden, and now revealed, truth makes you Gentiles partakers of, partly now, but mainly when Christ shall come (^{<STR>}Colossians 3:4 ^{<STR>}Romans 5:2 8:17,18 ^{<HR>}Ephesians 1:18). This sense is proved by the following: “Christ in you the hope of *the* (so *Greek*) *glory*.” The lower was the degradation of you Gentiles, the higher is the richness of the glory to which the mystery revealed now raises you. You were “without *Christ*, and having *no hope*” (^{<HR>}Ephesians 2:12). Now you have “*Christ* in you the *hope* of *the* glory” just mentioned. ALFORD translates, “Christ among you,” to answer to “this mystery *among* the Gentiles.” But the whole clause, “Christ IN you (^{<HR>}Ephesians 3:17) the hope of glory,” answers to “this mystery,” and not to the whole sentence, “this mystery *among* the Gentiles.” What is *made known* “among you Gentiles” is, “Christ *in* you (now by faith as your *hidden* life, ^{<STR>}Colossians 3:3 ^{<HR>}Galatians 2:20) the hope of glory” (your manifested life). The contrast (antithesis) between “CHRIST IN YOU” now as your *hidden* life, and “the hope of glory” hereafter to be *manifested*, requires this translation.

28. preach — rather as *Greek*, “announce” or “proclaim.”

warning ... teaching — “Warning” is connected with *repentance*, refers to one’s *conduct*, and is addressed primarily to the *heart*. “Teaching” is connected with *faith*, refers to *doctrines*, and is addressed primarily to the *intellect*. These are the two heads of evangelical teaching.

every ... every man — without distinction of Jew or Gentile, great or small (^{<STR>}Romans 10:12,13).

in all wisdom — with all the wisdom *in our method of teaching* that we possess: so ALFORD. But ^{<S100>}Colossians 1:9 ^{<S106>}Colossians 3:16, favor ESTIUS' view, which refers it to the *wisdom communicated to those being taught*: keeping back nothing, but instructing all in the perfect knowledge of the mysteries of faith which is the true *wisdom* (compare ^{<A006>}1 Corinthians 2:6,7 12:8 ^{<B017>}Ephesians 1:17).

present — (See on ^{<S102>}Colossians 1:22); at Christ's coming.

every man — Paul is zealous lest the false teachers should seduce *one single* soul of Christ's people at Colosse. So each individual among them should be zealous for himself and his neighbor. Even one soul is of incalculable value.

perfect in Christ — who is the *element in living union with whom alone* each believer can find *perfection: perfectly instructed* (^{<A013>}Ephesians 4:13) in doctrine, and *full grown or matured* in faith and practice. "Jesus" is omitted in all the oldest manuscripts.

29. Whereunto — namely, "to present every man perfect in Christ."

I also labor — rather, "I labor also." I not only "proclaim" (*English Version*, "preach") Christ, but I *labor* also.

striving — in "conflict" (^{<S101>}Colossians 2:1) of spirit (compare ^{<B103>}Romans 8:26). The same *Greek* word is used of Epaphras (^{<S102>}Colossians 4:12), "*laboring fervently* for you in prayers": literally, "agonizing," "striving as in the agony of a contest." So Jesus in Gethsemane when praying (^{<D224>}Luke 22:44): so "strive" (the same *Greek* word, "agonize"), ^{<D231>}Luke 13:24. So Jacob "*wrestled*" in prayer (^{<D221>}Genesis 32:24-29). Compare "contention," *Greek*, "agony," or "striving earnestness," ^{<S101>}1 Thessalonians 2:2.

according to his working — Paul avows that he has power to "strive" in spirit for his converts, so far only as *Christ* works in him and by him (^{<A003>}Ephesians 3:20 ^{<S104>}Philippians 4:13).

mightily — literally, "in power."

CHAPTER 2

COLOSSIANS 2:1-23.

HIS STRIVINGS IN PRAYER FOR THEIR STEADFASTNESS IN CHRIST; FROM WHOM HE WARNS THEM NOT TO BE LED AWAY BY FALSE WISDOM.

1. For — He explains in what respect he “labored *striving*” (⁵⁰²Colossians 1:29). Translate as *Greek*, “I wish you to know how great a conflict (the same *Greek* word as in ⁵⁰³Colossians 1:29, “*agony* of a conflict” of fervent, anxious prayer; not conflict with the false teachers, which would have been impossible for him now in prison) I have for you.”

them at Laodicea — exposed to the same danger from false teachers as the Colossians (compare ⁵⁰⁶Colossians 4:16). This danger was probably the cause of his writing to Laodicea, as well as to Colosse.

not seen my face in the flesh — including those in Hierapolis (⁵⁰⁹Colossians 4:13). Paul considered himself a “debtor” to all the Gentiles (⁵¹⁴Romans 1:14). “His face” and presence would have been a “comfort” (⁵⁰⁰Colossians 2:2 ⁴⁰⁸Acts 20:38). Compare ⁵⁰⁰Colossians 1:4,7,8, in proof that he had not *seen*, but only *heard of* the Colossians. Hence he strives by earnest *conflict* with God in anxious prayer for them, to make up for the loss of his bodily presence among them. Though “absent in the *flesh*, I am with you in the *Spirit*” (⁵⁰⁵Colossians 2:5).

2. Translate, “That their hearts *may* be comforted.” The “their,” compared with “you” (⁵⁰⁴Colossians 2:4), proves that in ⁵⁰¹Colossians 2:1 the words, “have not seen my face in the flesh,” is a *general* designation of those for whom Paul declares he has “conflict,” including the particular species, “you (Colossians) and them at Laodicea.” For it is plain, the prayer “that *their* hearts may be comforted,” must include in it the Colossians for whom he expressly says, “I have conflict.” Thus it is an abbreviated mode of expression for, “That *your and their* hearts may be comforted.” ALFORD translates, “confirmed,” or allows “comforted” in its original radical sense

strengthened. But the *Greek* supports *English Version*: the sense, too, is clear: *comforted* with the consolation of those whom Paul had not seen, and for whom, in consequence, he strove in prayerful conflict the more fervently; inasmuch as we are more anxious in behalf of absent, than present, friends [DAVENANT]. Their hearts would be comforted by “knowing what conflict he had for” them, and how much he is interested for their welfare; and also by being released from doubts on learning from the apostle, that the doctrine which they had heard from Epaphras was true and certain. In writing to churches which he had instructed face to face, he enters into particular details concerning them, as a father directing his children. But to those among whom he had not been in person, he treats of the more general truths of salvation.

being — Translate as *Greek* in oldest manuscripts, “They being knit together.”

in love — the bond and element of perfect *knitting together*; the antidote to the dividing schismatical effect of false doctrine. Love to God and to one another in Christ.

unto — the object and end of their being “knit together.”

all riches — *Greek*, “all the riches of the full assurance (⁵⁰⁶¹ Thessalonians 1:5 ⁵⁰⁶¹ Hebrews 6:11 10:22) of the (Christian) understanding.” The accumulation of phrases, not only “understanding,” but “the full assurance of understanding”; not only this, but “the *riches* of,” etc.; not only this, but “*all* the riches of,” etc. implies how he desires to impress them with the momentous importance of the subject in hand.

to — Translate “unto.”

acknowledgment — The *Greek* implies, “full and accurate knowledge.” It is a distinct *Greek* word from “knowledge,” ⁵⁰⁶¹ Colossians 2:3. ALFORD translates, “thorough ... knowledge.” *Acknowledgment* hardly is strong enough; they did in a measure *acknowledge* the truth; what they wanted was the *full and accurate knowledge* of it (compare *Notes*, see on ⁵⁰⁶¹ Colossians 1:9,10; ⁵⁰⁶¹ Philippians 1:9).

of God, and of the Father and of Christ — The oldest manuscripts omit “and of the Father, and of”; then translate, “Of God (namely), Christ.”

Two very old manuscripts and *Vulgate* read, “Of God the Father of Christ.”

3. Translate in the *Greek* order, “In whom (not as ALFORD, ‘in which’) *mystery*; Christ is Himself the ‘mystery’ (^{<SIMP>}Colossians 2:2 ^{<SIBIG>}1 Timothy 3:16), and to Christ the relative refers) are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden.” The “all” here, answers to “all” in ^{<SIMP>}Colossians 2:2; as “treasures” answer to the “riches”; it is from the *treasures* that *the riches* (^{<SIMP>}Colossians 2:2) are derived. “Are” is the predicate of the sentence; all the treasures ARE in Him; *hidden* is predicated of the state or manner in which they are in Him. Like a mine of unknown and inexhaustible wealth, the *treasures* of wisdom are all in Him *hidden*, but not in order to remain so; they only need to be explored for you to attain “unto the riches” in them (^{<SIMP>}Colossians 2:2); but until you, Colossians, press after attaining *the full knowledge* (see on ^{<SIMP>}Colossians 2:2) of them, they remain “hidden.” Compare the parable, ^{<SIBIG>}Matthew 13:44, “treasure hid.” This sense suits the scope of the apostle, and sets aside ALFORD’S objection that “the treasures are not hidden, but revealed.” “Hidden” plainly answers to “mystery” (^{<SIMP>}Colossians 2:2), which is designed by God, if we be faithful to our privileges, not to remain *hidden*, but to be revealed (compare ^{<SIMP>}1 Corinthians 2:7,8). Still as the mine is unfathomable, there will, through eternity, be always fresh treasures in Him to be drawn forth from their hidden state.

wisdom — general, and as to *experimental* and *practical* truth; whence comes “understanding” (^{<SIMP>}Colossians 2:2).

knowledge — *special* and *intellectual*, in regard to *doctrinal* truth; whence comes “the full knowledge” (^{<SIMP>}Colossians 2:2).

4. **And** — “Now.” Compare with “lest any man,” etc. ^{<SIMP>}Colossians 2:8,16,18. He refers to the blending of Judaism with Oriental philosophy, and the combination of this mixture with Christianity.

enticing words — plausible as wearing the guise of *wisdom* and *humility* (^{<SIMP>}Colossians 2:18,23).

5. **For** — argument against their suffering themselves to be *beguiled*, drawn from a regard to his personal authority as though he were present.

joying and beholding — beholding with joy.

order — your *good order*; answering to “knit together” (^{<SIMP>}Colossians 2:2) as a well-organized body; the same *Greek* as that for *knit together*, is used of the body” of the Church *compacted*,” in ^{<A006>}Ephesians 4:16. Compare ^{<A443>}1 Corinthians 14:33,40.

steadfastness — *Greek*, “*the firm (or ‘solid’) foundation.*” As “order” expresses the outward aspect of the Church; so “steadfastness” expresses the inner basis on which their Church rested. The *Greek* literally implies not an abstract quality, but the *thing* in the concrete; thus their “faith” here is *the solid thing* which constituted the *basis* of their Church.

6. “As therefore ye received (once for all; the aorist tense; from Epaphras) Jesus *the Christ as your Lord* (compare ^{<A413>}1 Corinthians 12:3 ^{<A005>}2 Corinthians 4:5 ^{<S003>}Philippians 3:8), so walk in Him.” He says not merely, “Ye received” the doctrine of Christ, but “Jesus” Himself; this is the essence of faith (^{<A421>}John 14:21,23 ^{<A016>}Galatians 1:16). Ye have received once for all the Spirit of *life* in Christ; carry into practice that life in your *walk* (^{<A025>}Galatians 5:25). This is the main scope of the Epistle.

7. **Rooted** — (^{<A017>}Ephesians 3:17).

built up — *Greek*, “*being builded up.*” As “rooted” implies their *vitality*; so “builded up,” massive *solidity*. As in the Song of Solomon, when one image is not sufficient to express the varied aspects of divine truth, another is employed to supply the idea required. Thus “walking,” a third image (^{<S003>}Colossians 2:6), expresses the thought which “rooted” and “built,” though each suggesting a thought peculiar to itself, could not express, namely, onward *motion*. “Rooted” is in the *past* tense, implying their first *conversion* and vital grafting “in Him.” “Built up” is *present* (in the *Greek*), implying their progressive *increase* in religion by union with Him. ^{<A020>}Ephesians 2:20 refers to the *Church*; but the passage here to their *individual* progress in edification (^{<A012>}Acts 20:32).

stablished — confirmed.

as — “even as.”

abounding therein with thanksgiving — advancing to fuller maturity (compare ^{<SIMP}Colossians 2:2) in the faith, “with thanksgiving” to God as the gracious Author of this whole blessing.

8. Translate, “Beware (literally, ‘Look’ well) lest there *shall be* (as I fear there is: the *Greek* indicative expresses this) any man (pointing to some known emissary of evil, ^{<RUP}Galatians 1:7) *leading you away as his spoil* (not merely gaining spoil out of you, but making *yourselves* his spoil) through (by means of) his philosophy,” etc. The apostle does not condemn *all* philosophy, but “*the* philosophy” (so *Greek*) of the Judaic-oriental heretics at Colosse, which afterwards was developed into Gnosticism. You, who may have “the *riches* of *full* assurance” and “the *treasures* of wisdom,” should not suffer yourselves to be led away as a *spoil* by *empty*, deceitful philosophy: “riches” are contrasted with spoil; “full” with “vain,” or *empty* (^{<SIMP}Colossians 2:2,3,9).

after — “according to.”

tradition of men — opposed to, “the fullness of *the Godhead*.” Applied to *Rabbinical traditions*, ^{<RUP}Mark 7:8. When men could not make revelation even *seem* to tell about deep mysteries which they were curious to pry into, they brought in human philosophy and pretended traditions to help it, as if one should bring a lamp to the sundial to find the hour [*Cautions for Times*, p. 85]. The false teachers boasted of a higher wisdom in theory, transmitted by tradition among the initiated; in practice they enjoined asceticism, as though matter and the body were the sources of evil. Phrygia (in which was Colosse) had a propensity for the mystical and magical, which appeared in their worship of Cybele and subsequent Montanism [NEANDER].

rudiments of the world — (See on ^{<RUP}Galatians 4:3). “The rudiments” or elementary lessons “of the (outward) world,” such as legal ordinances; our Judaic childhood’s lessons (^{<SIMP}Colossians 2:11,16,20 ^{<RUP}Galatians 4:1-3). But NEANDER, “the *elements* of the world,” in the sense, *what is earthly, carnal and outward*, not “the rudiments of religion,” in Judaism and heathenism.

not after Christ — “Their” boasted higher “philosophy” is but human tradition, and a cleaving to the carnal and worldly, and not to Christ.

Though acknowledging Christ nominally, in spirit they by their doctrine deny Him.

9. For — “Because.” *Their* “philosophy” (^{<5118>}Colossians 2:8) is not “after Christ,” as all true philosophy is, everything which comes not from, and tends not to, Him, being a delusion; “For in Him (alone) dwelleth” *as in a temple*, etc.

the fullness — (^{<5119>}Colossians 1:19 ^{<640>}John 14:10).

of the Godhead — The *Greek* (*theotes*) means the ESSENCE and NATURE *of the Godhead*, not merely the *divine perfections* and attributes of Divinity (*Greek*, “*theiotes*”). He, as man, was not merely God-like, but in the fullest sense, God.

bodily — not merely as before His incarnation, but now “bodily in Him” as the incarnate word (^{<614>}John 1:14,18). Believers, by union with Him, partake of His fullness of the divine nature (^{<616>}John 1:16 ^{<600>}2 Peter 1:4; see on ^{<639>}Ephesians 3:19).

10. And — And *therefore*; and so. Translate in the *Greek* order, “Ye are in Him (by virtue of union with Him) *filled full*” of all that you need (^{<616>}John 1:16). Believers receive of the divine unction which flows down from their Divine Head and High Priest (^{<532>}Psalms 133:2). He is *full of* the “fullness” itself; we, *filled* from Him. Paul implies, Therefore ye Colossians need no supplementary sources of grace, such as the false teachers dream of. Christ is “the Head of all *rule and authority*” (so the *Greek*), ^{<610>}Ephesians 1:10; He, therefore, alone, not these subject “authorities” also, is to be adored (^{<5128>}Colossians 2:18).

11. Implying that they did not need, as the Judaizers taught, the outward rite of circumcision, since they had already the inward spiritual reality of it.

are — rather, as the *Greek*, “Ye *were* (once for all) circumcised (spiritually, at your conversion and baptism, ^{<628>}Romans 2:28,29 ^{<518>}Philippians 3:3) with a (so the *Greek*) circumcision made without hands”; opposed to “the circumcision in the flesh *made by hands*” (^{<621>}Ephesians 2:11). Christ’s own body, by which the believer is

sanctified, is said to be “not made with hands” (^{<4185>}Mark 14:58 ^{<3891>}Hebrews 9:11; compare ^{<2125>}Daniel 2:45).

in putting off — rather as *Greek*, “in your putting off”; as an old garment (^{<402>}Ephesians 4:22); alluding to the putting off the foreskin in circumcision.

the body of the sins of the flesh — The oldest manuscripts read, “the body of the flesh,” omitting “of the sins,” that is, “the body,” of which the prominent feature is *fleshiness* (compare ^{<4835>}Romans 8:13, where “flesh” and “the body” mutually correspond). This fleshly body, in its sinful aspect, is put off in baptism (where baptism answers its ideal) as the seal of regeneration where received in repentance and faith. In circumcision the *foreskin* only was put off; in Christian regeneration “the *body* of the flesh” is spiritually put off, at least it is so in its ideal conception, however imperfectly believers *realize* that ideal.

by — *Greek*, “*in*.” This spiritual circumcision is realized in, or by, union with Christ, whose “circumcision,” whereby He became responsible for us to keep the whole law, is imputed to believers for justification; and union with whom, in all His vicarious obedience, including HIS CIRCUMCISION, is the source of our sanctification. ALFORD makes it explanatory of the previous, “a circumcision made without hands,” namely, “the circumcision brought about by your union with Christ.” The former view seems to me better to accord with ^{<3122>}Colossians 2:12 3:1,3,4, which similarly makes the believer, by spiritual union with Christ, to have personal fellowship in the several states of Christ, namely, His death, resurrection, and appearing in glory. Nothing was done or suffered by our Mediator as such, but may be acted in our souls and represented in our spirits. PEARSON’S view, however, is that of ALFORD. JOSHUA, the type (not Moses in the wilderness), circumcised the Israelites in Canaan (^{<4612>}Joshua 5:2-9) the second time: the people that came out of Egypt having been circumcised, and afterwards having died in the wilderness; but those born after the Exodus not having been so. Jesus, the Antitype, is the author of the true circumcision, which is therefore called “the circumcision of Christ” (^{<4223>}Romans 2:29). As Joshua was “Moses’ minister,” so Jesus, “minister of the circumcision for the truth of God” unto the Gentiles (^{<4512>}Romans 15:8).

12. Translate, “*Having been buried with Him in your baptism.*” The past participle is here coincident in time with the preceding verb, “ye were (*Greek*) circumcised.” Baptism is regarded as the burial of the old carnal life, to which the act of immersion symbolically corresponds; and in warm climates where *immersion* is safe, it is the mode most accordant with the significance of the ordinance; but the spirit of the ordinance is kept by affusion, where immersion would be inconvenient or dangerous; to insist on literal immersion in all cases would be mere legal ceremonialism (⁴⁰⁸Romans 6:3,4).

are risen — rather as *Greek*, “*were raised with Him.*”

through the faith, etc. — *by means of your faith in the operation of God*; so “faith of,” for “faith in” (⁴⁰⁸Ephesians 3:12 ^{410B}Philippians 3:9). Faith in God’s mighty operation in raising again Jesus, is saving faith (⁴⁰⁸Romans 4:24 10:9); and it is wrought in the soul by His same “mighty working” whereby He “raised Jesus from the dead” (⁴⁰⁸Ephesians 1:19,20). BENGEL seems to me (not as ALFORD understands him) to express the latter sense, namely, “Through the faith which is *a work of the operation of God who,*” etc. ⁴⁰⁸Ephesians 1:19,20 accords with this; the same mighty power of God is exercised in raising one spiritually dead to the life of faith, as was “wrought in Christ when God raised Him literally from the dead.” However, “faith of” *usually* is “faith in” (⁴⁰⁸Romans 3:22); but there is no grammatical impropriety in understanding it “the faith which is the effect of the operation of God” (⁴⁰⁸Ephesians 2:8 ^{410B}1 Thessalonians 2:13). As His literal resurrection is the ground of the power put forth in our spiritual resurrection now, so it is a pledge of our literal resurrection hereafter (⁴⁰⁸Romans 8:11).

13. you, being dead — formerly (⁴⁰⁸Ephesians 2:1,2); even as Christ was among the dead, before that God raised Him “from the dead” (^{410B}Colossians 2:12).

sins — rather as *Greek* is translated at end of this verse, “trespasses,” literally, “failings aside” from God’s ways; actual transgressions, as that of Adam.

uncircumcision of your flesh — your not having put off the old fleshly nature, the carnal foreskin, or *original sin*, which now by spiritual circumcision, that is, conversion and baptism, you have put off.

he quickened — GOD “quickened together with Him (CHRIST).” Just as Christ’s resurrection proved that He was delivered from the sin laid on Him, so our spiritual quickening proves that we have been forgiven our sins (^{<A1E2>}1 Peter 3:22 4:1,2).

forgiven you — So *Vulgate* and HILARY. But the oldest manuscripts read, “us,” passing from the particular persons, the Colossians, to the general Church (^{<S11H>}Colossians 1:14 ^{<A10E>}Ephesians 1:7).

all trespasses — *Greek*, “all *our* trespasses.”

14. Blotting out — *Greek*, “Having wiped out”; coincident in time with “having forgiven you” (^{<S11P>}Colossians 2:13); hereby having *cancelled* the law’s indictment against you. The law (including especially the *moral* law, wherein lay the chief difficulty in obeying) is abrogated to the believer, as far as it was a compulsory, accusing code, and as far as “righteousness” (justification) and “life” were sought for by it. It can only produce outward works, not inward obedience of the will, which in the believer flows from the Holy Spirit in Him (^{<A1E2>}Romans 3:21 7:2,4 ^{<A1E2>}Galatians 2:19).

the handwriting of ordinances — rather, “IN ordinances” (see on ^{<A1E2>}Ephesians 2:15); “the law of commandments contained in ordinances.” “The handwriting” (alluding to the Decalogue, the representative of the law, *written by the hand* of God) is *the whole law*, the obligatory bond, under which all lay; the Jews primarily were under the bond, but they in this respect were the representative people of the world (^{<A1E2>}Romans 3:19); and in their inability to keep the law was involved the inability of the Gentiles also, in whose hearts “the work of the law was written” (^{<A1E2>}Romans 2:15); and as they did not keep this, they were condemned by it.

that was against us ... contrary to us — *Greek* “*adversary* to us”; so it is translated, ^{<S127>}Hebrews 10:27. “Not only was the law *against us* by its demands, but also *an adversary* to us by its accusations” [BENGE].

TITTMANN explains the *Greek*, “having a *latent* contrariety to us”; not *open designed* hostility, but virtual unintentional opposition through our frailty; not through any opposition in *the law itself* to our good (^{<800>}Romans 7:7-12,14 ^{<855>}1 Corinthians 15:56 ^{<802>}Galatians 3:21 ^{<800>}Hebrews 10:3). The “WRITING” is part of “that which was contrary to us”; for “the *letter killeth*” (see on ^{<800>}2 Corinthians 3:6).

and took it — *Greek*, and hath taken it out of the way” (so as to be no longer a hindrance to us), by “nailing it to *the cross*.” Christ, by bearing the curse of the broken law, has redeemed us from its curse (^{<803>}Galatians 3:13). In His person nailed to the cross, the law itself was nailed to it. One ancient mode of cancelling bonds was by striking a nail through the writing: this seems at that time to have existed in Asia [GROTIUS]. The bond cancelled in the present case was the obligation lying against the Jews as representatives of the world, and attested by their *amen*, to keep the whole law under penalty of the curse (^{<802>}Deuteronomy 27:26 ^{<800>}Nehemiah 10:29).

15. ALFORD, ELLICOTT, and others translate the *Greek* to accord with the translation of the same *Greek*, ^{<800>}Colossians 3:9, “Stripping off from Himself the principalities and the powers: “GOD put off from Himself *the angels*, that is, their ministry, not employing them to be promulgators of the Gospel in the way that He had given the law by their “disposition” or ministry (^{<405>}Acts 7:53 ^{<800>}Galatians 3:19 ^{<800>}Hebrews 2:2,5): God manifested Himself without a veil in Jesus. “THE principalities and THE powers” refers back to ^{<800>}Colossians 2:10, Jesus, “the Head of all principality and power,” and ^{<800>}Colossians 1:16. In the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, God subjected all the principalities, etc., to Jesus, declaring them to be powerless as to His work and His people (^{<800>}Ephesians 1:21). Thus Paul’s argument against those grafting on Christianity Jewish observances, along with angel-worship, is, whatever part angels may be supposed to have had under the law, now at an end, God having put the legal dispensation itself away. But the objection is, that the context *seems* to refer to a triumph over *bad angels*: in ^{<804>}2 Corinthians 2:14, however, Christ’s *triumph* over those subjected to Him, is not a triumph for destruction, but for their salvation, so that good angels *may* be referred to (^{<800>}Colossians 1:20). But the *Greek* middle is susceptible of *English Version*, “having spoiled,” or, literally [TITTMANN], “having *completely*

stripped,” or “despoiled” *for Himself* (compare ^{<B888>}Romans 8:38 ^{<B524>}1 Corinthians 15:24 ^{<B1017>}Ephesians 6:2). *English Version* accords with ^{<B129>}Matthew 12:29 ^{<B112>}Luke 11:22 ^{<B14>}Hebrews 2:14. Translate as the *Greek*, “The rules and authorities.”

made a show of them — at His ascension (see on ^{<B1018>}Ephesians 4:8; confirming *English Version* of this verse).

openly — ^{<B104>}John 7:4 11:54, support *English Version* against ALFORD’S translation, “in openness of speech.”

in it — namely, His cross, or crucifixion: so the Greek fathers translate. Many of the Latins, “In *Himself*” or “in Him.” ^{<B1017>}Ephesians 2:16 favors *English Version*, “reconcile ... by *the cross*, having slain the enmity thereby.” If “in Him,” that is, Christ, be read, still the Cross will be the place and means of God’s triumph in Christ over the principalities (^{<B1017>}Ephesians 1:20 2:5). Demons, like other angels, were in heaven up to Christ’s ascension, and influenced earth from their heavenly abodes. As heaven was not yet opened to man before Christ (^{<B1013>}John 3:13), so it was not yet shut against demons (^{<B1016>}Job 1:6 2:1). But at the ascension Satan and his demons were “judged” and “cast out” by Christ’s obedience unto death (^{<B123>}John 12:31 16:11 ^{<B14>}Hebrews 2:14 ^{<B115>}Revelation 12:5-10), and the Son of man was raised to the throne of God; thus His resurrection and ascension are a public solemn triumph over the principalities and powers of death. It is striking that the heathen oracles were silenced soon after Christ’s ascension.

16. therefore — because ye are complete in Christ, and God in Him has dispensed with all subordinate means as *essential* to acceptance with Him.

meat ... drink — *Greek*, “eating ... drinking” (^{<B141>}Romans 14:1-17). Pay no regard to any one who sits in judgment on you as to legal observances in respect to foods.

holyday — *a feast* yearly. Compare the three, ^{<B131>}1 Chronicles 23:31.

new moon — monthly.

the sabbath — Omit “THE,” which is not in the *Greek* (compare *Note*, see on ^{<B101>}Galatians 4:10). “SABBATHS” (not “the sabbaths”) of the day of

atonement and feast of tabernacles have come to an end with the Jewish services to which they belonged (^{<0233>}Leviticus 23:32,37-39). The weekly sabbath rests on a more permanent foundation, having been instituted in Paradise to commemorate the completion of creation in six days.

^{<0238>}Leviticus 23:38 expressly distinguished “the sabbath of the Lord” from the other sabbaths. A *positive* precept is *right because it is commanded*, and ceases to be obligatory when abrogated; a moral precept is *commanded* eternally, *because it is eternally right*. If we could keep a perpetual sabbath, as we shall hereafter, the positive precept of the sabbath, one in each week, would not be needed. ^{<3010>}Hebrews 4:9, “rests,” *Greek*, “keeping of sabbath” (^{<2103>}Isaiah 66:23). But we cannot, since even Adam, in innocence, needed one amidst his earthly employments; therefore the sabbath is still needed and is therefore still linked with the other nine commandments, as obligatory in the spirit, though the letter of the law has been superseded by that higher spirit of love which is the essence of law and Gospel alike (^{<5130>}Romans 13:8-10).

17. things to come — the blessings of the Christian covenant, the substance of which Jewish ordinances were but the type. Compare “ages to come,” that is, the Gospel dispensation (^{<4017>}Ephesians 2:7). ^{<3016>}Hebrews 2:5, “the world to come.”

the body is of Christ — The *real substance* (of the blessings typified by the law) belongs to Christ (^{<3018>}Hebrews 8:5 10:1).

18. beguile — Translate, “Defraud you of your prize,” literally, “to adjudge a prize out of hostility away from him who deserves it” [TRENCH]. “To be umpire in a contest to the detriment of one.” This *defrauding of their prize* the Colossians would suffer, by letting any self-constituted *arbitrator* or *judge* (that is, false teacher) draw them away from Christ, “the righteous Judge” and Awarder of the prize (^{<5019>}2 Timothy 4:8 ^{<3012>}James 1:12 ^{<0104>}1 Peter 5:4), to angel-worship.

in a voluntary humility — So “will-worship” (^{<5023>}Colossians 2:23). Literally, “Delighting ([WAHL] in humility”); *loving* (so the *Greek* is translated, ^{<4128>}Mark 12:38, “*love to go in long clothing*”) to indulge himself *in a humility* of his own imposing: *a volunteer in humility* [DALLAEUS]. Not as ALFORD, “Let no one *of purpose* defraud you,” etc. Not as GROTIUS, “If he ever so much wish” (to defraud you). For the participle

“wishing” or “delighting,” is one of the series, and stands in the same category as “intruding,” “puffed up,” “not holding”; and the *self-pleasing* implied in it stands in happy contrast to the (mock) *humility* with which it seems to me, therefore, to be connected. His “humility,” so called, is a *pleasing of self*: thus it stands in parallelism to “his fleshly mind” (its real name, though *he* styles it “humility”), as “wishing” or “delighting” does to “puffed up.” The *Greek* for “humility” is literally, “lowliness of *mind*,” which forms a clearer parallel to “puffed up by his fleshly *mind*.” Under pretext of humility, as if they durst not come directly to God and Christ (like the modern Church of Rome), they invoked angels: as Judaizers, they justified this on the ground that the law was given by angels. This error continued long in Phrygia (where Colosse and Laodicea were), so that the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 360) expressly framed its thirty-fifth canon against the “*Angelici*” (as AUGUSTINE [*Heresies*, 39], calls them) or “invokers of angels.” Even as late as THEODORET’S time, there were oratories to Michael the archangel. The modern Greeks have a legend that Michael opened a chasm to draw off an inundation threatening the Colossian Christians. Once men admit the inferior powers to share invocation with the Supreme, the former gradually engrosses all our serious worship, almost to the exclusion of the latter; thus the heathen, beginning with adding the worship of other deities to that of the Supreme, ended with ceasing to worship Him at all. Nor does it signify much, whether we regard such as directly controlling us (the pagan view), or as only *influencing* the Supreme in our behalf (the Church of Rome’s view); because he from whom I expect happiness or misery, becomes the uppermost object in my mind, whether he *give*, or only *procure* it [*Cautions for Times*]. Scripture opposes the idea of “patrons” or “intercessors” (⁵⁰⁷⁶1 Timothy 2:5,6). True Christian humility joins consciousness of utter personal demerit, with a sense of participation in the divine life through Christ, and in the dignity of our adoption by God. Without the latter being realized, a false self-humiliation results, which displays itself in ceremonies and ascetic self-abasement (⁵⁰⁷⁸Colossians 2:23), which after all is but spiritual pride under the mock guise of humility. Contrast “glorying in the Lord” (⁴⁰³¹1 Corinthians 1:31).

intruding into ... things which he hath not seen — So very old manuscripts and *Vulgate* and ORIGEN read. But the oldest manuscripts and

LUCIFER omit “not”; then translate, “haughtily treading on (‘Standing on’ [ALFORD]) the things which he hath seen.” TREGELLES refers this to *fancied* visions of angels. But if Paul had meant a *fancied seeing*, he would have used some qualifying word, as, “which he *seemed* to see,” not “which he *hath* seen.” Plainly the things were *actually* seen by him, whether of demoniacal origination (^{<GEN1>}1 Samuel 28:11-20), or phenomena resulting from natural causation, mistaken by him as if supernatural. Paul, not stopping to discuss the nature of the things so seen, fixes on the radical error, the tendency of such a one in all this to walk by SENSE (namely, what he *haughtily prides himself on having SEEN*), rather than by FAITH in the UNSEEN “Head” (^{<SOP1>}Colossians 2:19; compare ^{<SOP2>}John 20:29 ^{<SOP3>}2 Corinthians 5:7 ^{<SOP4>}Hebrews 11:1). Thus is the parallelism, “vainly puffed up” answers to “haughtily treading on,” or “setting his foot on”; “his fleshly mind” answers to the things which he hath seen,” since his fleshliness betrays itself in priding himself on *what he hath seen*, rather than on the *unseen* objects of *faith*. That the things seen may have been of demoniacal origination, appears from ^{<SOP5>}1 Timothy 4:1, “Some shall depart from the *faith*, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils” (*Greek*, “demons”). A warning to modern spiritualists.

puffed up — implying that the previous so called “humility” (*Greek*, “lowliness of mind”) was really a “puffing up.”

fleshly mind — *Greek*, “By the mind of his own flesh.” The flesh, or sensuous principle, is the fountain head whence his mind draws its craving after religious objects of *sight*, instead of, in true *humility* as a member, “holding fast the (unseen) Head.”

19. Translate, “Not holding *fast* the Head.” He who does not hold Christ solely and supremely above all others, does not hold Him at all [BENGEL]. The want of firm holding of Christ has set him loose to (pry into, and so) “tread haughtily on (pride himself on) things which he hath seen.” Each must hold fast the Head for himself, not merely be attached to the other members, however high in the body [ALFORD].

from which — rather, “from whom.”

the body — that is, all the members of the body (^{<SOP6>}Ephesians 4:16).

joints — the points of union where the supply of nourishment passes to the different members, furnishing the body with the materials of growth.

bands — the sinews and nerves which bind together limb and limb. Faith, love, and peace, are the spiritual bands. Compare “knit together in love” (^{<SIMP>}Colossians 2:2 ^{<SIB4>}Colossians 3:14 ^{<BIB1>}Ephesians 4:3).

having nourishment ministered — that is, supplied to it continually. “Receiving ministrations.”

knit together — The *Greek* is translated, “compacted,” ^{<BIB1>}Ephesians 4:16: implying firm consolidation.

with the increase of God — (^{<BIB1>}Ephesians 4:16); that is, wrought by God, the Author and Sustainer of the believer’s spiritual life, in union with Christ, the Head (^{<BIB1>}1 Corinthians 3:6); and tending to the honor of God, being worthy of Him, its Author.

20. Wherefore — The oldest manuscripts omit “Wherefore.”

if ye be dead — *Greek*, “if ye died (so as to be freed) from,” etc. (compare ^{<BIB1>}Romans 6:2 7:2,3 ^{<BIB1>}Galatians 2:19).

rudiments of the world — (^{<SIB1>}Colossians 2:8). Carnal, outward, worldly, legal ordinances.

as though living — as though you were not dead to the world like your crucified Lord, into whose death ye were buried (^{<BIB1>}Galatians 6:14 ^{<BIB1>}1 Peter 4:1,2).

are ye subject to ordinances — By do ye submit to be made subject to ordinances? Referring to ^{<SIB1>}Colossians 2:14: you are again being made subject to “ordinances,” the “handwriting” of which had been “blotted out” (^{<SIB1>}Colossians 2:14).

21. Compare ^{<SIB1>}Colossians 2:16, “meat ... drink.” He gives instances of the “ordinances” (^{<SIB1>}Colossians 2:20) in the words of their imposers. There is an ascending climax of superstitious prohibitions. The first *Greek* word (*hapse*) is distinguished from the third (*thiges*), in that the former means *close contact* and *retention*: the latter, *momentary contact* (compare ^{<BIB1>}1 Corinthians 7:1 ^{<BIB1>}John 20:17, *Greek*, “Hold me not”; cling not to me”).

Translate, “*Handle not, neither taste, nor even touch.*” The three refer to meats. “*Handle not*” (a stronger term than “nor even *touch*”), “nor taste” with the *tongue*, “nor even touch,” however slight the contact.

22. Which — things, namely, the three things handled, touched, and tasted.

are to perish — literally, “are constituted (by their very nature) for perishing (or ‘*destruction by corruption*’) in (or ‘*with*’) their using up (consumption).” Therefore they cannot really and lastingly defile a man (⁴¹⁸⁷Matthew 15:17 ⁴¹⁸³1 Corinthians 6:13).

after — according to. Referring to ⁵⁰²¹Colossians 2:20,21. All these “ordinances” are according to human, not divine, injunction.

doctrines — *Greek*, teachings.” ALFORD translates, “(doctrinal) systems.”

23. have — *Greek*, “are having”; implying the *permanent* characteristic which these ordinances are supposed to have.

show of wisdom — rather, “a *reputation of wisdom*” [ALFORD].

will-worship — arbitrarily invented worship: *would-be worship*, devised by *man’s own will*, not God’s. So jealous is God of human will-worship, that He struck Nadab and Abihu dead for burning strange incense (⁴⁸⁰¹Leviticus 10:1-3). So Uzziah was stricken with leprosy for usurping the office of priest (⁴⁸⁰⁶2 Chronicles 26:16-21). Compare the will-worship of Saul (⁴⁹³⁸1 Samuel 13:8-14) for which he was doomed to lose his throne. This “voluntary worship” is the counterpart to their “voluntary humility” (⁵⁰²⁸Colossians 2:18): both specious in appearance, the former seeming in religion to do even *more* than God requires (as in the dogmas of the Roman and Greek churches); but really setting aside God’s will for man’s own; the latter seemingly self-abasing, but really proud of man’s self-willed “humility” (*Greek*, “lowliness of mind”), while virtually rejecting the dignity of direct communion with Christ, the Head; by worshipping of angels.

neglecting of the body — *Greek*, “not sparing of the body.” This asceticism seems to have rested on the Oriental theory that matter is the source of evil. This also looked plausible (compare ⁴¹⁰²1 Corinthians 9:27).

not in any honor — of the body. As “neglecting of the body” describes asceticism *positively*; so this clause, *negatively*. Not paying any of that “honor” which is due to the body as redeemed by such a price as the blood of Christ. We should not degrade, but have a just estimation of ourselves, not in ourselves, but in Christ (Acts 13:46 1 Corinthians 3:21 6:15 7:23 12:23,24 1 Thessalonians 4:4). True self-denial regards the spirit, and not the forms of ascetical self-mortification in “meats which profit not those occupied therein” (Hebrews 13:9), and is consistent with Christian self-respect, the “honor” which belongs to the believer as dedicated to the Lord. Compare “vainly,” Colossians 2:18.

to the satisfying of the flesh — This expresses the *real* tendency of their human ordinances of bodily asceticism, voluntary humility, and will-worship of angels. While seeming to *deny* self and the body, they really are *pampering* the flesh. Thus “satisfying of the *flesh*” answers to “puffed up by his *fleshly* mind” (Colossians 2:18), so that “flesh” is used in its ethical sense, “the carnal nature” as opposed to the “spiritual”; not in the sense, “body.” The *Greek* for “satisfying” implies *satiating to repletion, or to excess*. “A surfeit of the carnal sense is human tradition” [HILARY THE DEACON, in BENGEL]. Tradition puffs up; it clogs the heavenly perceptions. They put away true “honor” that they may “*sate to the full* THE FLESH.” Self-imposed ordinances gratify the flesh (namely, self-righteousness), though seeming to mortify it.

CHAPTER 3

COLOSSIANS 3:1-25.

EXHORTATIONS TO HEAVENLY AIMS, AS OPPOSED TO EARTHLY, ON THE GROUND OF UNION TO THE RISEN SAVIOUR; TO MORTIFY AND PUT OFF THE OLD MAN, AND TO PUT ON THE NEW; IN CHARITY, HUMILITY, WORDS OF EDIFICATION, THANKFULNESS; RELATIVE DUTIES.

1. If ... then — The connection with ^{<5128>}Colossians 2:18,23, is, he had condemned the “fleshly mind” and the “satiating to the full the flesh”; in contrast to this he now says, “If then ye have been once for all raised up (*Greek*, aorist tense) together with Christ” (namely, at your conversion and baptism, ^{<5129>}Romans 6:4).

seek those things ... above — (^{<4123>}Matthew 6:33 ^{<5129>}Philippians 3:20).

sitteth — rather, as *Greek*, “Where Christ is, sitting on the right of God” (^{<4124>}Ephesians 1:20). The Head being quickened, the members are also quickened with Him. Where the Head is, there the members must be. The contrast is between the believer’s former state, alive to the world but dead to God, and his present state, dead to the world but alive to God; and between the earthly abode of the unbeliever and the heavenly abode of the believer (^{<4125>}1 Corinthians 15:47,48). We are already seated there *in* Him as our Head; and hereafter shall be seated *by* Him, as the Bestower of our bliss. As Elisha (^{<1222>}2 Kings 2:2) said to Elijah when about to ascend, “As the Lord liveth ... I will not leave thee”; so we must follow the ascended Savior with the wings of our meditations and the chariots of our affections. We should trample upon and subdue our lusts that our conversation may correspond to our Savior’s condition; that where the eyes of apostles were forced to leave Him, thither our thoughts may follow Him (^{<4122>}Matthew 6:21 ^{<5122>}John 12:32) [PEARSON]. Of ourselves we can no more ascend than a bar of iron lift itself up’ from the earth. But the love of Christ is a powerful magnet to draw us up (^{<4125>}Ephesians 2:5,6). The design of the

Gospel is not merely to give rules, but mainly to supply *motives* to holiness.

2. Translate, “Set your *mind* on the things above, not on the things,” etc. (^{<5102>}Colossians 2:20). Contrast “who *mind* earthly things” (^{<5108>}Philippians 3:19). Whatever we make an idol of, will either be a cross to us if we be believers, or a curse to us if unbelievers.

3. The *Greek* aorist tense implies, “For ye have died once for all” (^{<5102>}Colossians 2:12 ^{<5104>}Romans 6:4-7). It is not said, Ye must die practically to the world in order to become dead with Christ; but the latter is assumed as *once for all* having taken place. in the regeneration; what believers are told is, Develop this spiritual life in practice. “No one longs for eternal, incorruptible, and immortal life, unless he be wearied of this temporal, corruptible, and mortal life” [AUGUSTINE].

and your life ... hid — (^{<5108>}Psalm 83:3); like a seed buried in the earth; compare “planted,” ^{<5105>}Romans 6:5. Compare ^{<5131>}Matthew 13:31,33, “like ... leaven ... *hid*.” As the glory of Christ now is hid from the world, so also the glory of believers’ inner life, proceeding from communion with Him, is still hidden with Christ in God; but (^{<5104>}Colossians 3:4) when Christ, the Source of this life, shall manifest Himself in glory, then shall their hidden glory be manifest, and correspond in appearance to its original [NEANDER]. The Christian’s secret communion with God will now at times make itself seen without his intending it (^{<5154>}Matthew 5:14,16); but his full manifestation is at Christ’s manifestation (^{<5131>}Matthew 13:43 ^{<5132>}Romans 8:19-23). “It doth not yet appear (*Greek*, ‘is not yet *manifested*’) what we shall be” (^{<5102>}1 John 3:2 ^{<5101>}1 Peter 1:7). As yet Christians do not always recognize the “life” of one another, so *hidden* is it, and even at times doubt as to their own life, so weak is it, and so harassed with temptations (^{<5101>}Psalm 51:1-19 ^{<5101>}Romans 7:1-25).

in God — to whom Christ has ascended. Our “life” is “laid up for” us *in God* (^{<5105>}Colossians 1:5), and is secured by the decree of Him who is invisible to the world (^{<5108>}2 Timothy 4:8).

4. Translate, “When Christ shall *be manifested* who is our life (^{<5125>}John 11:25 14:6,19), then shall ye also with Him *be manifested* in glory” (^{<5103>}1

Peter 4:13). The *spiritual* life our souls have now in Him shall be extended to our *bodies* (^{<RFB>}Romans 8:11).

then — and not till then. Those err who think to find a perfect Church before then. The true Church is now militant. Rome errs in trying to set up a Church now regnant and triumphant. The true Church shall be visible as a perfect and reigning Church, when Christ shall be visibly manifested as her reigning Head. Rome having ceased to look for Him in patient faith, has set up a visible mockhead, a false anticipation of the millennial kingdom. The Papacy took to itself by robbery that glory which is an object of hope, and can only be reached by bearing the cross now. When the Church became a harlot, she ceased to be a bride who goes to meet her Bridegroom. Hence the millennial kingdom ceased to be looked for [AUBERLEN].

5. Mortify — *Greek*, “make a corpse of”; “make dead”; “put to death.”

therefore — (See on ^{<SRB>}Colossians 3:3). Follow out to its necessary consequence the fact of your *having once for all* died with Christ spiritually at your regeneration, by daily “deadening your members,” of which united “the body of the sins of the flesh” consists (compare ^{<SRB>}Colossians 2:11). “The members” to be mortified are the fleshly instruments of lust, in so far as the members of the body are abused to such purposes. Habitually repress and do violence to corrupt desires of which the members are the instruments (compare ^{<RFB>}Romans 6:19 8:13 ^{<RFB>}Galatians 5:24,25).

upon the earth — where they find their support [BENGEL] (Compare ^{<SRB>}Colossians 3:2, “things on earth”). See ^{<HRB>}Ephesians 5:3,4.

inordinate affection — “lustful passion.”

evil concupiscence — more general than the last [ALFORD], the disorder of the *external* senses; “lustful passion,” *lust within* [BENGEL].

covetousness — marked off by the *Greek* article as forming a whole genus by itself, distinct from the genus containing the various species just enumerated. It implies a self-idolizing, grasping spirit; far worse than another *Greek* term translated “the love of money” (^{<SRB>}1 Timothy 6:10).

which is — that is, inasmuch as it is “idolatry.” Compare *Note*, see on ^{<404>}Ephesians 4:19, on its connection with sins of impurity. *Self* and *mammon* are deified in the heart instead of God (^{<404>}Matthew 6:24; see on ^{<405>}Ephesians 5:5).

6. (See on ^{<405>}Ephesians 5:6.)

7. **sometime** — “once.”

walked ... when ye lived in them — These sins were the very element in which ye “*lived*” (before ye became once for all dead with Christ to them); no wonder, then, that ye “*walked*” in them. Compare on the opposite side, “*living* in the Spirit,” having as its legitimate consequence, “*walking* in the Spirit” (^{<405>}Galatians 5:25). The “*living*” comes first in both cases, the *walking* follows.

8. **But now** — that ye are no longer *living* in them.

ye also — like other believers; answering to “ye also” (^{<507>}Colossians 3:7) like other unbelievers formerly.

put off — “Do ye also put away all these,” namely, those just enumerated, and those which follow [ALFORD].

anger, wrath — (See on ^{<406>}Ephesians 4:31).

blasphemy — rather, “reviling,” “evil-speaking,” as it is translated in ^{<406>}Ephesians 4:31.

filthy communication — The context favors the translation, “*abusive language*,” rather than impure conversation. “Foul language” best retains the ambiguity of the original.

9. (^{<405>}Ephesians 4:25.)

put off — *Greek*, “*wholly* put off”; utterly renounced [TITTMANN]. (^{<402>}Ephesians 4:22).

the old man — the unregenerate nature which ye had before conversion.

his deeds — habits of acting.

10. the new man — (See on ^{<400>}Ephesians 4:23). Here (*neon*) the *Greek*, means “the *recently*-put-on nature”; that lately received at regeneration (see on ^{<400>}Ephesians 4:23,24).

which is renewed — *Greek*, “which is being renewed” (*anakainottmenou*); namely, its development into a perfectly renewed nature is continually progressing to completion.

in knowledge — rather as the *Greek*, “unto perfect knowledge” (see on ^{<500>}Colossians 1:6; ^{<500>}Colossians 1:9,10). Perfect knowledge of God excludes all sin (^{<870>}John 17:3).

after the image of him that created him — namely, of God that created the *new man* (^{<400>}Ephesians 2:10 4:24). The new creation is analogous to the first creation (^{<400>}2 Corinthians 4:6). As man was then made in the image of God naturally, so now spiritually. But the image of God formed in us by the Spirit of God, is as much more glorious than that borne by Adam, as the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, is more glorious than the first man. ^{<000>}Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man in our *image*, after our *likeness*.” The “image” is claimed for man, ^{<400>}1 Corinthians 11:7; the “likeness,” ^{<500>}James 3:9. ORIGEN [*On First Principles*, 3:6] taught, the *image* was something in which all were created, and which continued to man after the fall (^{<000>}Genesis 9:6). The *likeness* was something *towards* which man was created, that he might strive after it and attain it. TRENCH thinks God in the double statement (^{<000>}Genesis 1:26), contemplates both man’s first creation and his being “*renewed* in knowledge after the image of Him that created Him.”

11. Where — Translate, “Wherein,” namely, in the sphere of the renewed man.

neither ... nor ... nor ... nor — Translate as *Greek*, “There is *no such thing* as *Greek and Jew* (the difference of privilege between those born of the natural seed of Abraham and those not, is abolished), circumcision *and* uncircumcision (the difference of legal standing between the circumcised and uncircumcised is done away, ^{<400>}Galatians 6:15) — bondman, freeman.” The present Church is one *called out of the flesh*, and the present *world-course* (^{<400>}Ephesians 2:2), wherein such distinctions exist, to life in the Spirit, and to the future first resurrection: and this because Satan has such

power now over the flesh and the world. At Christ's coming when Satan shall no longer rule the flesh and the world, the nations in the flesh, and the word in millennial felicity, shall be the willing subjects of Christ and His glorified saints (^{<2074>}Daniel 7:14,22,27 ^{<2077>}Luke 19:17,19 ^{<6111>}Revelation 20:1-6 3:21). Israel in Canaan was a type of that future state when the Jews, so miraculously preserved distinct now in their dispersion, shall be the central Church of the Christianized world. As expressly as Scripture abolishes the distinction of Jew and Greek now as to religious privileges, so does it expressly foretell that in the coming new order of things, Israel shall be first of the Christian nations, not for her own selfish aggrandizement, but for their good, as the medium of blessing to them. Finally, after the millennium, the life that is in Christ becomes the power which transfigures *nature*, in the time of the new heaven and the new earth; as, before, it first transfigured the spiritual, then the political and social world.

Scythian — heretofore regarded as more barbarian than the barbarians. Though the relation of bond and free actually existed, yet in relation to Christ, all alike were free in one aspect, and servants of Christ in another (^{<4172>}1 Corinthians 7:22 ^{<4188>}Galatians 3:28).

Christ is all — Christ absorbs in Himself all distinctions, being to all alike, everything that they need for justification, sanctification, and glorification (^{<4131>}1 Corinthians 1:30 3:21-23 ^{<4121>}Galatians 2:20).

in all — who believe and are renewed, without distinction of person; the sole distinction now is, how much each draws from Christ. The unity of the divine life shared in by all believers, counterbalances all differences, even as great as that between the polished "*Greek*" and the rude "Scythian." Christianity imparts to the most uncivilized the only spring of sound, social and moral culture.

12. the elect of God — There is no "the" in the *Greek*, "God's elect" (compare ^{<4088>}Romans 8:3 ^{<5104>}1 Thessalonians 1:4). The order of the words "elect, holy, beloved," answers to the order of the things. *Election* from eternity precedes *sanctification* in time; the *sanctified*, feeling God's *love*, imitate it [BENGEL].

bowels of mercies — Some of the oldest manuscripts read singular, "mercy." *Bowels* express the yearning compassion, which has its seat in

the heart, and which we feel to act on our inward parts (^{<483>}Genesis 43:30
^{<2810>}Jeremiah 31:20 ^{<4178>}Luke 1:78, *Margin*).

humbleness of mind — True “lowliness of mind”; not the mock
“humility” of the false teachers (^{<5123>}Colossians 2:23 ^{<4000>}Ephesians 4:2,32).

13. Forbearing — as to present offenses.

forgiving — as to past offenses.

quarrel — rather as *Greek*, “cause of blame,” “cause of complaint.”

Christ — who had so infinitely greater cause of complaint against us. The
oldest manuscripts and *Vulgate* read “the Lord.” *English Version* is
supported by one very old manuscript and old versions. It seems to have
crept in from ^{<4082>}Ephesians 4:32.

14. above — rather “over,” as in ^{<4016>}Ephesians 6:16. Charity, which is the
crowning grace, covering the multitude of others’ sins (^{<4048>}1 Peter 4:8),
must *overlie* all the other graces enumerated.

which is — that is, “*for it is*”; literally, “*which thing is*.”

bond of perfectness — an upper garment which *completes* and keeps
together the rest, which, without it, would be loose and disconnected.
Seeming graces, where love is wanting, are mere hypocrisy. Justification
by faith is assumed as already having taken place in those whom Paul
addresses, ^{<5182>}Colossians 3:12, “elect of God, holy ... beloved,” and
^{<5122>}Colossians 2:12; so that there is no plea here for Rome’s view of
justification by works. Love and its works “*perfect*,” that is, manifest the
full maturity of faith developed (^{<4054>}Matthew 5:44,48). Love ... be ye
perfect, etc. (^{<5121>}James 2:21,22 ^{<4185>}1 John 2:5). “If we love one another,
God’s love is *perfected* in us” (^{<5138>}Romans 13:8 ^{<4631>}1 Corinthians 13:1-13
^{<5105>}1 Timothy 1:5 ^{<4112>}1 John 4:12). As to “bond,” compare ^{<5182>}Colossians
2:2, “*knit together* in love” (^{<4000>}Ephesians 4:3), “keep the unity of the Spirit
in the bond of peace.”

15. peace of God — The oldest manuscripts and versions read, “The
peace of CHRIST” (compare ^{<5100>}Philippians 4:7). “The peace of GOD.”
Therefore Christ is God. Peace was His legacy to His disciples before He

left them (^{<6427}John 14:27), “MY peace I give unto you.” Peace is peculiarly His to give. Peace follows *love* (^{<5084}Colossians 3:14 ^{<4902}Ephesians 4:2,3).

rule — literally, “sit as umpire”; the same *Greek* verb simple, as appears compounded (^{<5128}Colossians 2:18). The false teacher, as a self-constituted *umpire*, defrauds you of your prize; but if the peace of Christ be your umpire ruling in your hearts, your reward is sure. “Let the peace of Christ act as umpire when anger, envy, and such passions arise; and restrain them.” Let not those passions give the award, so that you should be swayed by them, but let Christ’s peace be the decider of everything.

in your hearts — Many wear a peaceful countenance and speak peace with the mouth, while war is *in their hearts* (^{<4888}Psalm 28:3 ^{<5521}).

to the which — that is, with a view to which state of Christian peace (^{<2308}Isaiah 26:3); ^{<4075}1 Corinthians 7:15, “God hath called us to peace.”

ye are called — *Greek*, “ye were also called.” The “also” implies that besides Paul’s exhortation, they have *also* as a motive to “peace,” their having been once for all called.

in one body — (^{<4904}Ephesians 4:4). The unity of the body is a strong argument for “peace” among the members.

be ye thankful — for your “calling.” Not to have “peace ruling in your hearts” would be inconsistent with the “calling in one body,” and would be practical unthankfulness to God who called us (^{<4904}Ephesians 5:4,19,20).

16. The form which “thankfulness” (^{<5085}Colossians 3:15) ought to take.

Let the word of Christ — the Gospel *word* by which ye have been called.

richly — (^{<5022}Colossians 2:2 ^{<6514}Romans 15:14).

in all wisdom — ALFORD joins this clause with “teaching,” etc. not with “dwell in you,” as *English Version*, for so we find in ^{<5028}Colossians 1:28, “teaching in all wisdom,” and the two clauses will thus correspond, “In all wisdom teaching,” and “in grace singing in your hearts” (so the *Greek* order).

and ... and — The oldest manuscripts read “psalms, hymns, spiritual songs” (see on ^{<4859}Ephesians 5:19). At the *Agapae* or love-feasts, and in

their family circles, they were to be so full of the Word of Christ *in the heart* that the mouth should give it utterance in hymns of instruction, admonition, and praise (compare ^{<4000>}Deuteronomy 6:7). TERTULLIAN [*Apology*, 39], records that at the love-feasts, after the water had been furnished for the hands and the lights had been literally, according as any had the power, whether by his remembrance of Scripture, or by his powers of composition, he used to be invited to sing praises to God for the common good. Paul contrasts (as in ^{<4000>}Ephesians 5:18,19) the songs of Christians at their social meetings, with the bacchanalian and licentious songs of heathen feasts. Singing usually formed part of the entertainment at Greek banquets (compare ^{<4000>}James 5:13).

with grace — *Greek*, “IN grace,” the element in which your singing is to be: “the grace” of the indwelling Holy Spirit. This clause expresses the seat and source of true psalmody, whether in private or public, namely, the *heart* as well as the voice; singing (compare ^{<4000>}Colossians 3:15, “peace ... rule *in your hearts*”), the psalm of love and praise being in the heart before it finds vent by the lips, and even when it is not actually expressed by the voice, as in closet-worship. The *Greek* order forbids *English Version*, “with grace in your hearts”; rather, “singing in your hearts.”

to the Lord — The oldest manuscripts read, “to God.”

17. Literally, “And everything whatsoever ye do ... do all,” etc.; this includes *words* as well as *deeds*.

in the name of the Lord Jesus — *as disciples called by His name as His*, seeking His guidance and help, and desiring to act so as to gain His approval (^{<4000>}Romans 14:8 ^{<4000>}1 Corinthians 10:31 ^{<4000>}2 Corinthians 5:15 ^{<4000>}1 Peter 4:11). Compare “in the Lord,” ^{<4000>}Colossians 3:18, and “Christ is *all*,” ^{<4000>}Colossians 3:11.

God and the Father — The oldest manuscripts omit “and,” which seems to have crept in from ^{<4000>}Ephesians 5:20.

by him — *Greek*, “through Him” as the channel of His grace to us, and of our thanksgiving to Him (^{<4000>}John 14:6, end).

18. **unto your own husbands** — The oldest manuscripts omit “own,” which crept in from ^{<4000>}Ephesians 5:22.

as it is fit in the Lord — *Greek*, “*was fit*,” implying that there was at Colosse some degree of failure in fulfilling this duty, “as it was your duty to have done as disciples of the Lord.”

19. (⁴⁰⁵²Ephesians 5:22-33.)

be not bitter — ill-tempered and provoking. Many who are polite abroad, are rude and bitter at home because they are not afraid to be so there.

20. (⁴⁰⁶¹Ephesians 6:1.)

unto the Lord — The oldest manuscripts read, “*IN* the Lord,” that is, this is acceptable to God when it is done *in the Lord*, namely, from the principle of faith, and as disciples in union with the Lord.

21. (⁴⁰⁶⁴Ephesians 6:4.) It is a different *Greek* verb, therefore translate here, “*irritate not*.” By perpetual fault-finding “children” are “discouraged” or “disheartened.” A broken-down spirit is fatal to youth [BENGEL].

22. (⁴⁰⁶⁵Ephesians 6:5,6.) This is to fear God, when, though none sees us, we do no *evil*: but if we do evil, it is not God, but men, whom we fear.

singleness — “*simplicity of heart*.”

fearing God — The oldest manuscripts read, “the Lord.”

23. **And** — omitted in the oldest manuscripts (compare ⁴⁰⁶⁷Ephesians 6:7,8). Compare the same principle in the case of all men, Hezekiah (⁴⁸²2 Chronicles 31:21 ⁴⁸²¹Romans 12:11).

do, do it — two distinct *Greek* verbs, “*Whatsoever ye do, work at it*” (or “*labor at*” it).

heartily — not from servile constraint, but with hearty good will.

24. **the reward of the inheritance** — “Knowing that it is from the Lord (the ultimate source of reward), ye shall receive the compensation (or recompense, which will make ample amends for your having no earthly possession as slaves now) consisting of the inheritance” (a term excluding the notion of meriting it by *works*: it is all of grace, ⁴⁸⁰⁴Romans 4:14 ⁴⁸⁸⁸Galatians 3:18).

for ye serve — The oldest manuscripts omit “for,” then translate as *Vulgate*, “Serve ye the Lord Christ;” compare ^{<5182>}Colossians 3:23, “To the Lord and not unto men” (^{<4122>}1 Corinthians 7:22,23).

25. But — The oldest manuscripts read, “for,” which accords with “serve ye,” etc. (^{<5182>}Colossians 3:24), the oldest reading: the *for* here gives a motive for obeying the precept. He addresses the slaves: Serve ye the Lord Christ, and leave your wrongs in His hands to put to rights: (translate), “For he that doeth wrong shall receive *back the wrong* which he hath done (by just retribution in kind), and there is no respect of persons” with the Great Judge in the day of the Lord. He favors the master no more than the slave (^{<6185>}Revelation 6:15).

CHAPTER 4

COLOSSIANS 4:1-18.

EXHORTATIONS CONTINUED. TO PRAYER: WISDOM IN RELATION TO THE UNCONVERTED: AS TO THE BEARERS OF THE EPISTLE, TYCHICUS AND ONESIMUS: CLOSING SALUTATIONS.

1. give — *Greek* “render”: literally, “afford.”

equal — that is, as the slaves owe their duties to you, so you *equally* owe to them your duties as masters. Compare “ye masters do the *same* things” (see on ⁴⁰⁸Ephesians 6:9). ALFORD translates, “fairness,” “equity,” which gives a large and liberal interpretation of justice in common matters (^{501F}Philemon 1:16).

knowing — (^{502A}Colossians 3:24).

ye also — as well as they.

2. Continue — *Greek*, “Continue perseveringly,” “persevere” (⁴⁰⁸Ephesians 6:18), “watching *thereunto*”; here, “watch *in the same*,” or “*in it*,” that is, in prayer: watching against the indolence as to prayer, and in prayer, of our corrupt wills.

with thanksgiving — for everything, whether joyful, or sorrowful, mercies temporal and spiritual, national, family, and individual (⁴³⁴⁷1 Corinthians 14:17 ⁵⁰⁰Philippians 4:6 ⁵¹⁶⁸1 Thessalonians 5:18).

3. for us — myself and Timothy (⁵⁰⁰Colossians 1:1).

a door of utterance — Translate, “a door for the word.” Not as in ⁴⁰⁸Ephesians 6:19, where power of “utterance” is his petition. Here it is an opportunity for *preaching the word*, which would be best afforded by his release from prison (⁴⁶³1 Corinthians 16:9 ⁴¹²²2 Corinthians 2:12 ⁵⁰²Philemon 1:22 ⁶⁰⁸Revelation 3:8).

to speak — so that we may speak.

the mystery of Christ — (⁵⁰⁷Colossians 1:27).

for which ... also — *on account of which I am* (not only “an ambassador,” ⁴⁰²Ephesians 6:20, but) ALSO in *bonds*.

4. ALFORD thinks that Paul asks their prayers for his release as if it were the “only” way by which he could “make it (the Gospel) manifest” as he ought. But while this is *included* in their subject of prayer, ⁵⁰²Philippians 1:12,13, written somewhat later in his imprisonment, clearly shows that “a door for the word” could be opened, and was opened, for its *manifestation*, even while he remained imprisoned (compare ⁵⁰²2 Timothy 2:9).

5. (See on ⁴⁸⁵Ephesians 5:15,16.)

in wisdom — practical Christian prudence.

them ... without — Those not in the Christian brotherhood (⁴⁸²1 Corinthians 5:12 ⁵⁰²1 Thessalonians 4:12). The brethren, through love, will make allowances for an indiscreet act or word of a brother; the world will make none. Therefore be the more on your guard in your intercourse with the latter, lest you be a stumbling-block to their conversion.

redeeming the time — The *Greek* expresses, buying up for yourselves, and *buying off* from worldly vanities the *opportunity*, whenever it is afforded you, of good to yourselves and others. “*Forestall the opportunity*, that is, to buy up an article out of the market, so as to make the largest profit from it” [CONYBEARE and HOWSON].

6. **with grace** — *Greek*, “IN grace” as its element (⁵⁰⁶Colossians 3:16 ⁴⁰²Ephesians 4:29). Contrast the case of those “of the world” who “therefore *speak of the world*” (⁵⁰⁵1 John 4:5). Even the smallest leaf of the believer should be full of the sap of the Holy Spirit (⁴¹⁷Jeremiah 17:7,8). His conversation should be cheerful without levity, serious without gloom. Compare ⁴⁰²Luke 4:22 ⁴¹⁶John 7:46, as to Jesus’ speech.

seasoned with salt — that is, the *savor* of fresh and lively spiritual wisdom and earnestness, excluding all “corrupt communication,” and also tasteless *insipidity* (⁴¹⁵Matthew 5:13 ⁴⁰⁸Mark 9:50 ⁴⁰²Ephesians 4:29). Compare all the sacrifices *seasoned with salt* (⁴⁰³Leviticus 2:13). Not far

from Colosse, in Phrygia, there was a salt lake, which gives to the image here the more appropriateness.

how ye ought to answer every man — (⁴¹⁸⁵1 Peter 3:15).

7. Tychicus — (See on ⁴¹⁰⁰Ephesians 6:2).

who is a beloved brother — rather, “the beloved brother”; the article “the” marks him as *well known to them*.

8. for the same purpose — *Greek*, “for this very purpose.”

that he might know your estate — Translate, “that he may know your state”: answering to ⁵⁰⁰⁷Colossians 4:7. So one very old manuscript and *Vulgate* read. But the oldest manuscripts and the *old Latin versions*, “that YE may know OUR state.” However, the latter reading seems likely to have crept in from ⁴¹⁶²Ephesians 6:22. Paul was the more anxious to know the state of the Colossians, on account of the seductions to which they were exposed from false teachers; owing to which he had “great conflict for” them (⁵¹¹¹Colossians 2:1).

comfort your hearts — distressed as ye are by my imprisonment, as well as by your own trials.

9. Onesimus — the slave mentioned in the Epistle to Philemon (⁵⁰¹¹Philemon 1:10,16), “a brother beloved.”

a faithful ... brother — rather, “the faithful brother,” he being known to the Colossians as the slave of Philemon, their fellow townsman and fellow Christian.

one of you — belonging to your city.

They shall make known unto you all things — *Greek*, “all the things here.” This substantial repetition of “all my state shall Tychicus declare unto you,” strongly favors the reading of *English Version* in ⁵⁰⁰⁸Colossians 4:8, “that *he* might (may) know your state,” as it is unlikely the same thing should be stated *thrice*.

10. Aristarchus — a Macedonian of Thessalonica (⁴⁴⁷⁰Acts 27:2), who was dragged into the theater at Ephesus, during the tumult with Gaius, they being “Paul’s companions in travel.” He accompanied Paul to Asia

(^{<400k}Acts 20:4), and subsequently (^{<407k}Acts 27:2) to Rome. He was now at Rome with Paul (compare ^{<502k}Philemon 1:23,24). As he is here spoken of as Paul's "fellow prisoner," but in ^{<502k}Philemon 1:24 as Paul's "fellow laborer"; and vice versa, Epaphras in ^{<502k}Philemon 1:23, as his "fellow prisoner," but here (^{<500k}Colossians 1:7) "fellow servant," MEYER in ALFORD, conjectures that Paul's friends voluntarily shared his imprisonment by turns, Aristarchus being his fellow prisoner when he wrote to the Colossians, Epaphras when he wrote to Philemon. The *Greek* for "fellow prisoner" is literally, *fellow captive*, an image from prisoners taken in warfare, Christians being "fellow soldiers" (^{<312k}Philippians 2:25 ^{<500k}Philemon 1:2), whose warfare is "the good fight of faith."

Mark — John Mark (^{<412k}Acts 12:12,25); the Evangelist according to tradition.

sister's son — rather, "cousin," or "kinsman to Barnabas"; the latter being the better known is introduced to designate Mark. The relationship naturally accounts for Barnabas' selection of Mark as his companion when otherwise qualified; and also for Mark's mother's house at Jerusalem being the place of resort of Christians there (^{<412k}Acts 12:12). The family belonged to *Cyprus* (^{<406k}Acts 4:36); this accounts for Barnabas' choice of Cyprus as the first station on their journey (^{<413k}Acts 13:4), and for Mark's accompanying them readily so far, it being the country of his family; and for Paul's rejecting him at the second journey for not having gone further than Perga, in Pamphylia, but having gone thence home to his mother at Jerusalem (^{<408k}Matthew 10:37) on the first journey (^{<413k}Acts 13:13).

touching whom — namely, Mark.

ye received commandments — possibly *before* the writing of this Epistle; or the "commandments" were *verbal* by Tychicus, and *accompanying this letter*, since the *past* tense was used by the ancients (where we use the present) in relation to the time which it would be when the letter was read by the Colossians. Thus (^{<501k}Philemon 1:19), "I have written," for "I write." The substance of them was, "If he come unto you, receive him." Paul's rejection of him on his second missionary journey, because he had turned back at Perga on the first journey (^{<413k}Acts 13:13 15:37-39), had caused an alienation between himself and Barnabas. Christian love soon healed the breach; for here he implies his restored

confidence in Mark, makes honorable allusion to Barnabas, and desires that those at Colosse who had regarded Mark in consequence of that past error with suspicion, should now “receive” him with kindness. Colosse is only about one hundred ten miles from Perga, and less than twenty from the confines of Pisidia, through which province Paul and Barnabas preached on their return during the same journey. Hence, though Paul had not personally visited the Colossian Church, they knew of the past unfaithfulness of Mark; and needed this recommendation of him, after the temporary cloud on him, so as to receive him, now that he was about to visit them as an evangelist. Again, in Paul’s last imprisonment, he, for the last time, speaks of Mark (^{<50412>}2 Timothy 4:11).

11. Justus — that is, *righteous*; a common name among the Jews; Hebrew, “*tzadik*” (^{<4023>}Acts 1:23).

of the circumcision — This implies that Epaphras, Luke, and Demas (^{<50412>}Colossians 4:12,14) were *not* of the circumcision. This agrees with Luke’s Gentile name (the same as Lucanus), and the Gentile aspect of his Gospel.

These only, etc. — namely, of the Jews. For the Jewish teachers were generally opposed to the apostle of the Gentiles (^{<5015>}Philippians 1:15). Epaphras, etc., were also fellow laborers, but Gentiles.

unto — that is, in promoting the Gospel kingdom.

which have been — *Greek*, “which have been *made*,” or “have become,” that is, *inasmuch as* they have become a comfort to me. The *Greek* implies *comfort* in forensic dangers; a different *Greek* word expresses comfort in domestic affliction [BENGEL].

12. Christ — The oldest manuscripts add “Jesus.”

laboring fervently — As the *Greek*, is the same, translate, “striving earnestly” (see on ^{<5019>}Colossians 1:29 and ^{<5011>}Colossians 2:1), literally, “*striving as in the agony of a contest*.”

in prayers — Translate as *Greek*, “in *his* prayers.”

complete — The oldest manuscripts read, “fully assured.” It is translated, “fully persuaded,” ^{<5021>}Romans 4:21 14:5. In the expression “perfect,” he

refers to what he has already said, <sup>^{SIC12}Colossians 1:28 2:2 3:14. “Perfect” implies the attainment of the *full maturity* of a Christian. BENGEL joins “in all the will of God” with “stand.”

13. a great zeal — The oldest manuscripts and *Vulgate* have “much labor.”

for you — lest you should be seduced (<sup>^{SIC12}Colossians 2:4); a motive why you should be anxious for yourselves.

them that are in Laodicea ... Hierapolis — churches probably founded by Epaphras, as the Church in Colosse was. Laodicea, called from Laodice, queen of Antiochus II, on the river Lycus, was, according to the subscription to First Timothy, “the chiefest city of Phrygia Pacatiana” (<sup>^{SIC11}1 Timothy 6:21). All the three cities were destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 62 [TACITUS, *Annals*, 14.27]. Hierapolis was six Roman miles north of Laodicea.

14. It is conjectured that Luke “the beloved physician” (the same as the Evangelist), may have first become connected with Paul in professionally attending on him in the sickness under which he labored in Phrygia and Galatia (in which latter place he was detained by sickness), in the early part of that journey wherein Luke first is found in his company (<sup>⁴⁴³⁰Acts 16:10; compare *Note*, see on <sup>^{SIC12}Galatians 4:13). Thus the allusion to his medical profession is appropriate in writing to men of Phrygia. Luke ministered to Paul in his last imprisonment (<sup>^{SIC11}2 Timothy 4:11).

Demas — included among his “fellow laborers” (<sup>^{SIC12}Philemon 1:24), but afterwards a deserter from him through love of this world (<sup>^{SIC12}2 Timothy 4:10). He alone has here no honorable or descriptive epithet attached to his name. Perhaps, already, his real character was betraying itself.

15. Nymphas — of Laodicea.

church ... in his house — So old manuscripts and *Vulgate* read. The oldest read, “THEIR house”; and one manuscript, “HER house,” which makes Nymphas a woman.

16. the epistle from Laodicea — namely, the Epistle which I wrote to the Laodiceans, and which you will get *from* them on applying to them.

Not the Epistle to the Ephesians. See *Introduction* to Ephesians and *Introduction* to Colossians. The Epistles from the apostles were publicly read in the church assemblies. IGNATIUS [*Epistle to the Ephesians*, 12], POLYCARP [*Epistle to the Philippians*, 3.11,12], CLEMENT [*Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1. 47], ^{<512>}1 Thessalonians 5:27 ^{<612>}Revelation 1:3, “Blessed is he that *readeth*, and they that *hear*.” Thus, they and the Gospels were put on a level with the Old Testament, which was similarly read (^{<511>}Deuteronomy 31:11). The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write, besides those extant, other Epistles which He saw necessary for *that* day, and for particular churches; and which were not so for the Church of all ages and places. It is possible that as the Epistle to the Colossians was to be read for the edification of other churches besides that of Colosse; so the Epistle to the Ephesians was to be read in various churches besides Ephesus, and that Laodicea was the last of such churches before Colosse, whence he might designate the Epistle to the Ephesians here as “the Epistle *from* Laodicea.” But it is equally possible that the Epistle meant was one to the Laodiceans themselves.

17. say to Archippus — *The Colossians* (not merely the clergy, but the laymen) are directed, “Speak ye to Archippus.” This proves that Scripture belongs to the laity as well as the clergy; and that laymen may profitably admonish the clergy in particular cases when they do so in meekness. BENJEL suggests that Archippus was perhaps prevented from going to the Church assembly by weak health or age. The word, “fulfill,” accords with his ministry being near its close (^{<512>}Colossians 1:25; compare ^{<510>}Philemon 1:2). However, “fulfill” may mean, as in ^{<512>}2 Timothy 4:5, “*make full proof of thy ministry*.” “Give all diligence to follow it out fully”; a monition perhaps needed by Archippus.

in the Lord — The element in which every work of the Christian, and especially the Christian minister, is to be done (^{<517>}Colossians 4:7 ^{<617>}1 Corinthians 7:39 ^{<514>}Philippians 4:2).

18. Paul’s autograph salutation (so ^{<612>}1 Corinthians 16:21 ^{<517>}2 Thessalonians 3:17), attesting that the preceding letter, though written by an amanuensis, is from himself.

Remember my bonds — Already in this chapter he had mentioned his “bonds” (^{<514>}Colossians 4:3), and again ^{<514>}Colossians 4:10, an incentive

why they should love and pray (^{<S04B>}Colossians 4:3) for him; and still more, that they should, in reverential obedience to his monitions in this Epistle, shrink from the false teaching herein stigmatized, remembering what a conflict (^{<S001>}Colossians 2:1) he had in their behalf amidst his *bonds*. “When we read of his chains, we should not forget that they moved over the paper as he wrote; his [right] hand was chained to the [left hand of the] soldier who kept him” [ALFORD].

Grace be with you — *Greek*, “THE grace” which every Christian enjoys in some degree, and which flows from God in Christ by the Holy Ghost (^{<S08E>}Titus 3:15 ^{<S0E25>}Hebrews 13:25)