

THE
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AND BY THE
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COLOSSIANS.

Exposition and Homiletics

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Homilies by Various Authors.

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THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. COLOSSÆ AND ITS PEOPLE.

COLOSSÆ (or Colassæ) was an inland city of Western Asia Minor. It was situated on the river Lycus (modern *Tchoruk-su*), a southern affluent of the famous Mæander, lying under the frowning heights of Mount Cadmus, which bounded the Lycus valley on the south; and on the high-road from Miletus and Ephesus to the central highlands of the peninsula, at a point distant about a hundred and twenty miles from the coast. Ethnically, it belonged to south-western Phrygia, with the borders of Lydia and Caria closely approaching it on the west and south; but politically, the district was included in the Roman proconsular province of Asia, whose capital was Ephesus.

Under the Persian kings, Colossæ had been "a populous city, prosperous and great" (Xenophon, 'Anabasis,' i. 2. 6; Herodotus, vii. 30); but in later times it was eclipsed by its more fortunate neighbours, Laodicea and Hierapolis, which lay on opposite sides of the Lycus valley, ten or twelve miles below Colossæ, and distant some six miles from each other. Laodicea, whose name commemorated the rule of the Greco-Syrian dynasty in Asia Minor, was the chief city of the immediate district, the Cibyritic *conventus* (διοίκησις, diocese) or "jurisdiction," one of the departments or counties into which the Roman province of Asia was divided for administrative purposes. Hierapolis, on the other hand, was a health-resort, celebrated for the medicinal qualities of its waters, which were extremely abundant; "full of natural baths" (Strabo, xiii. 4. 14). The great prosperity of this region was chiefly due to its wool. The neighbouring uplands afforded excellent pasture for sheep, and the streams of the Lycus valley were peculiarly favourable to the dyer's art. Both these cities were actively engaged in the trade in wool and dyed stuffs, of which Colossæ had formerly been a chief centre, giving its name (*colossinus*) to a valued

purple dye. Colossæ, however, had already dwindled into a third-rate town (Strabo, xii. 8. 13; died A.D. 24), whether from natural causes, or, as M. Renan conjectures, from the conservative and Oriental habits of its people, who were slow to adapt themselves to new conditions. After this time it disappears from history, whilst the other cities held a conspicuous place both in secular and Christian annals. Even its ruins have been discovered but lately, and with difficulty. The Byzantine town of Chonæ (modern *Chonas*), which took its place, is situated three miles to the south of the river, at the mouth of the pass leading through the Cadmus range.

The early decay and subsequent obliteration of Colossæ are probably due to the combined action of the earthquakes with which this valley has been frequently visited, and of the immense calcareous deposits formed by the streams on the northern side of the Lycus—a phenomenon especially marked at Colossæ (Pliny, 'Natural History,' xxxi. 2. 20)—which, in the course of ages, have considerably modified the features of the locality. Colossæ, if situated in the plain, immediately on the river-side, as now appears, would be liable to suffer greater injury from these causes than the sister cities. There was a destructive earthquake in this region about the very time that St. Paul wrote, according to the testimony of Tacitus and Eusebius. Tacitus, indeed, gives its date as A.D. 60 or 61, and mentions only Laodicea as involved in the calamity. But Eusebius, who says that Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossæ were overthrown, fixes the date of the occurrence some four years later; and in this instance he is probably more correct (see Lightfoot, pp. 38—40). Very possibly Colossæ, already decaying and enfeebled, succumbed to this disaster.

The population of this district was of a heterogeneous character. Its substratum was Phrygian, marked by that tendency to mystical illusion and orgiastic excitement which made Phrygia the home of the frantic worship of Dionysus and of Cybele, and which gave birth to the Montanistic heresy with its strange ecstasies and its ascetic rigour. In the cities, as throughout Asia Minor, the Greek language and Greek manners prevailed, and the immigrant Greek population had long ago blended with the native inhabitants and leavened them with their own superior culture. A large body of Jewish settlers had been deported to this region from Mesopotamia by Antiochus the Great, and the Jewish community in Laodicea and the neighbourhood appears to have been both numerous and wealthy. If we may judge from the Talmud, it was not renowned for strict orthodoxy: "The wines and the baths of Phrygia have separated the ten tribes from Israel" (see Lightfoot, p. 22). M. Renan believes that there existed "about the Cadmus (sc. *Eastern*: a Semitic word) an ancient Semitic settlement," and that traces of its influence exist in the remains of Colossæ; and the tutelary Zeus of Laodicea bore the epithet of *Asets*, a name which seems to be of Eastern (probably Syrian) origin (Lightfoot, pp. 8, 9). These are circumstances of some importance in view of the Oriental affinities of the Colossian error.

§ 2. ST. PAUL'S CONNECTION WITH COLOSSÆ.

The Churches of the Lycus were not founded by St. Paul himself. Twice he had traversed Phrygia—in his second missionary tour from the Lycaonian cities through Galatia to Troas (Acts xvi. 4—8), and in his third from Galatia to Ephesus (Acts xviii. 23; xix. 1). But his direct route, on both journeys, would take him through northern Phrygia, to the north-east of the Lycus valley. The language of ch. i. 7 and ii. 1 seems to us positively to exclude the supposition that this district had been evangelized by the apostle in person. But during his long residence at Ephesus (A.D. 54 or 55 to 57, 58) we are told that “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts xix. 10). Epaphras, a Colossian by birth (ch. iv. 12), had been the principal means of spreading the knowledge of Christ in Colossæ and the neighbouring cities, and had superintended the Colossian Church since its foundation (ch. i. 6, 7; iv. 12, 13). He had laboured from the beginning under St. Paul's direction (ch. i. 7, “for us:” see Exposition), and with remarkable zeal and success. The apostle has nothing but praise for his labours; nothing but approval for the doctrine that Epaphras had taught, and the discipline that had been established in the Church at Colossæ (ch. i. 5—7, 23; ii. 5—7; iv. 12, 13). He had evidently been acquainted by report with the Churches of the Lycus for some time (ch. i. 3, 4, 9; ii. 1), and had been previously in communication with Colossæ (ch. iv. 10). Now Epaphras has come to visit the apostle in his captivity, bringing a good report of the general condition of the Colossian Church, of its stability and growth in grace, and assuring the apostle of its loyal affection for him (ch. i. 8); but at the same time filling St. Paul's mind with a deep anxiety (ch. ii. 1—4), which he shared himself (ch. iv. 12), by his tidings of the new and perilous doctrine that was gaining a footing in it.

The apostle's friend Philemon resided at Colossæ (comp. ch. iv. 9 with the Epistle to Philemon), where his house had become an important centre of Christian influence (Philem. 2, 4—7). He was another of St. Paul's “sons in the gospel” (ver. 19), having come under the apostle's influence, we may presume, when on some visit with his family to Ephesus, the metropolitan city of the province. His son Archippus was at present exercising some special “ministry” in the Laodicean Church, as we gather from the connection of vers. 16 and 17 in ch. iv. (comp. Philem. 2). The apostle had, by a singular providence, recently met with Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave, and had been the means of converting him to the faith of Christ (Philem. 10, 11). He has persuaded him to return to his master, and is sending him back, “no longer as a slave, but a brother beloved” (Philem. 16), in company with Tychicus, the bearer of the Colossian and Ephesian letters (ch. iv. 7—9; Eph. vi. 21, 22), with a private note to Philemon, entreating pardon for Onesimus, and announcing his own hope of being free before long to visit Colossæ himself (Philem. 12—17, 22).

§ 3. DATE OF THE EPISTLE.

When he wrote this letter, the apostle was a prisoner (ch. iv. 3, 18: comp. Eph. iii. 1, 13; iv. 1; vi. 19, 20; Phil. i. 12—20; Philem. 9, 10, 13), suffering for the cause of Gentile Christianity (ch. i. 24—27: comp. Eph. iii. 1—6, 13). We cannot doubt, therefore, that it was written during the long imprisonment (A.D. 58 or 59 to 62, 63)—first in Cæsarea, then in Rome—which ensued on the attack made on his life in Jerusalem, due to the animosity of the “Jews from Asia” (Acts xxi. 27), whose hatred was roused by the success of his ministry among the Gentiles.

The Epistle to the Philippians, we know, was written from Rome (Phil. i. 13; iv. 22); and it has been generally assumed, according to the subscription of the Received Text, that the other three letters of this period date likewise from the same city. Meyer, Reuss, and others have, however, contended for Cæsarea as their birthplace, but on insufficient grounds. Rome was the most likely place in the world for the runaway Onesimus to seek to hide in. There, too, St. Paul was allowed, as a prisoner, considerable freedom; and communication with distant Churches was probably easier and less jealously guarded than at Cæsarea (Acts xxviii. 30, 31: comp. xxiv. 23 R.V., 26; and see note on ch. i. 6, “in all the world”). And, what is still more decisive, the apostle’s own thoughts and the guiding hand of Providence had hitherto been pointing continually to *Rome* as the immediate goal of his mission (Acts xix. 21; xxiii. 11; Rom. xv. 23—29). Till he had “seen Rome,” he would scarcely think of returning to Asia (Philem. 22). And while at Cæsarea he had no prospect of release, we know that in Rome he cherished the hope of seeing his Macedonian friends again (Phil. i. 27; ii. 23, 24); and from Macedonia it is but another step to Asia Minor. Luke and Aristarchus, who were with the apostle when he wrote these letters (ch. iv. 10, 14; Philem. 24), were the companions of his voyage to Rome (Acts xxvii. 2). Dating the Epistle from St. Paul’s imprisonment at Rome, during the years 61 to 63 A.D.—and a later rather than an earlier point in this period is more probable—we allow to the Church at Colossæ a growth of five or six years, a time not too long to account for the progress and development of Christian life in its members which the tenor of the letter implies (ch. i. 4—6, 9, 23; ii. 5—7).

It is quite evident that the Epistle to Philemon and that to the Ephesians were written contemporaneously with this. The relation between Ephesians and Colossians is closer than that which exists between any other of St. Paul’s writings. They are *twins*, the offspring of one birth in the writer’s mind. Their connection we shall discuss more fully afterwards. The Epistle to the Philippians stands distinctly apart from these Epistles, both in its contents and style, though, at the same time, it has unmistakable affinities with them. It matters little whether we suppose it to have

preceded or followed them in its composition. Bishop Lightfoot ably contends, on internal grounds, for its precedence; but the language of Phil. ii. 6—11 seems to indicate that the apostle's teaching had already reached the Christological stage of its progress signalized by the Colossian Epistle. Indeed, this passage is the climax of St. Paul's Christology.

§ 4. THE COLOSSIAN HERESY.

There was no intrinsic importance attaching to Colossæ itself or arising out of its relation to the future progress of the gospel, as in the case of Corinth or Rome; nor had the Colossian Church any such peculiar claims on the apostle as he recognizes in writing to the Philippians or the Galatians. It is the more evident that the emergency which called forth this Epistle, and the questions that had arisen at Colossæ, were in his view of the most grave and ominous character. For in this remote country town had appeared the first symptoms of a heretical movement, so well known under its later name of Gnosticism, whose outbreak in this region St. Paul had already predicted (Acts xx. 29, 30), and which was pregnant with deadly mischief to the Church of Christ.

The exact nature and origin of what is called "the Colossian heresy" it is difficult to ascertain; and widely divergent views are still prevalent respecting it. Our subsequent examination of the Epistle will show (1) that this doctrine pretended to a *philosophical character* (ch. ii. 8: comp. vers. 3, 4); (2) that its advocates were, in some sense, *Judaists* (ch. ii. 11, 14, 16, 17); (3) that they practised *the worship of angels*, whose powers they exaggerated (ch. ii. 10, 15, 18, 19; i. 16); (4) that they inculcated *ascetic rules*, going beyond the Mosaic Law, and inspired by antipathy to the bodily life (ch. ii. 20—23); (5) that their whole system tended to *limit the greatness and the authority of Christ and the sufficiency of his redemption* (ch. ii. 8—10, 17, 19; i. 14—20); and (6) that they still assumed the character of *Christian teachers*, and professed to be inviting Christians to a higher and more secure spiritual life (ch. i. 23, 28; ii. 3—10, 16—18, 23; iii. 1, 14, 15). The Colossian errorists, then, were *philosophical, Judaizing, visionary, ascetic Christians*.

Now, it is necessary to ask whether there was anything in the conditions of the time, and in the tendencies of religious thought in the first century, to account for so remarkable a combination as this. The question, as it seems to us, admits of a tolerably sufficient answer. For the last two hundred years Alexandria, the most important city of the Dispersion, had been the centre of an intellectual movement within Judaism itself which, while carefully maintaining the outward framework of the Mosaic economy, had profoundly modified its inner character, under the combined influence of Greek philosophy and of Oriental mysticism. The result of this process is presented to us in the extensive works of Philo, a contemporary of Jesus

and of Paul, whose testimony in regard to the direction of Hellenistic thought at this period is the more valuable as it is evident that he was not

writer of independent or original genius, but rather the eloquent exponent of the long-established and influential school to which he belonged. Among the first principles of his teaching are those which have always been the commonplaces of Eastern theosophy, whether Indian, Persian, or Egyptian—the doctrines of the intrinsic evil of matter and of the absolute separation between the Godhead and the created world. His Judaism supplied the *angels, powers, words* (and especially *the word*), who were the necessary intermediaries between God and the creature; and furnished also, with certain modifications and refinements, the ceremonial and ritual cultus by which, under angelic direction, the spiritual element in man was to raise itself above the gross obstructions of the material, and to regain that rational vision of God from which it had fallen. Greek philosophy supplied the terminology and the method of Philo's system, which resolved religion into a mystical and contemplative knowledge of God belonging to the higher reason, and identified the spiritual man with the philosopher. This teaching took the form, for the most part, of elaborate expositions of the Books of the Law, *allegory* being the all-powerful instrument by which every historical incident and legal injunction was spiritualized and made to prove or to illustrate the tenets of the Alexandrine philosophy. Prevalent and traditional as this system was with the Egyptian Jews in the home of the Septuagint, its principles were widely diffused amongst Hellenistic Jews and Greek proselytes in other quarters. Especially in Western Asia Minor, which was in active intercourse with Alexandria and presented similar mental and social conditions, we may presume that Philonian Gnosticism was a doctrine already current in educated Jewish circles.

The *Essenism* of Palestine, so well known through Josephus ('Jewish War,' ii. 8) and sympathetically described by Philo ('Quod Omnis probus Liber,' §§ 12, 13), is a striking proof of the extent to which foreign theosophic and ascetic elements had penetrated Judaism. In spite of the "hedge set about the Law" by the watchful rabbis, a subtle mysticism had found its way into the heart of Palestine, filtering through either from Alexandria and the West or from Persia and the East. It may be doubted, however, whether the local and isolated Essenic fraternities had any direct connection with the rise of the Colossian heresy. It was the conversion of the Essenes after the fall of Jerusalem that originated in *Ebionism*, a properly Essenic Christianity (A. Ritsehl, 'Die Entstehung d. Altkatholischen Kirche,' ss. 178—248). Although the Essenes, like the Pharisees, are called "philosophers" by Josephus writing for Greek readers, it does not appear that they claimed any such title for themselves, or that their system was of a rationalistic character (see Philo, as referred to above). But St. Paul puts the philosophical pretensions of the Colossian errorist in the forefront of his denunciations (ch. ii. 4, 8). On "the

Essenes," see Lightfoot's *dissertation* ('Commentary,' pp. 349—419; also pp. 82—95).¹

It is important to note that in the Greek world there had been going on for some time an extensive revival of the *Orphic* and *Pythagorean mystic doctrines*, which might be described as a pagan Essenism. The marvellous career of Apollonius of Tyana—philosopher, ascetic, mystic, and miracle-worker—shows how well prepared was the soil of Asia Minor in the first century for the growth of all kinds of magical and Gnosticizing theosophy, no matter how crude in construction or monstrous in pretensions.

The time was ripe, surely, for the birth of Gnosticism such as we find it, in its infant form, in this Epistle. Under all the circumstances, it would have been surprising if a theosophy of this type had not, during the apostle's lifetime, made its appearance within the Christian Church at some point or other in that strange border-land between East and West, where his mission had been attended with such wonderful success.

We have evidence of a connection between Pauline Christianity and Alexandrine Judaism in the person of *Apollos* (Acts xviii. 24—xix. 1). The cultured Greek eloquence which, combined with his scriptural learning, made this teacher so acceptable at Ephesus and Corinth (1 Cor. i. 12; iii. 4—6), he owed, doubtless, to the more liberal and eclectic training of the Jewish schools of Alexandria. And the Epistle to the Hebrews, whoever was its author, shows that there were many points of contact between Christian theology and the religious philosophy of Philo, and that the gospel, as Paul taught it, was quite capable of absorbing and assimilating the best fruits of Alexandrine learning. Now, let us suppose that some philosophic and eloquent Jew, imbued like Apollos with the Alexandrine culture, and a man of an ascetic and ambitious disposition, had come under the influence of Christian teaching in Asia Minor; but that, unlike Apollos, subordinating the gospel to his philosophy, he had conceived the idea of amalgamating the new faith with his Alexandrine intellectual system, modified to some extent under local influences; also that he pretended, as might be expected with such antecedents, in carrying out this plan, to be extending and completing St. Paul's own doctrine, and offering a more advanced wisdom, the true "mystery of God," to the more cultivated and spiritual members of the Church. Attempts of this kind must have taken place again and again in individual instances, in that syncretistic age. The cases of Simon Magus, and of Cerinthus at a later time, are not dissimilar. But this supposition, we submit, is all that is needed to explain the rise of "The Colossian heresy." The problem is scarcely, as Dr. S. Davidson puts it ('Introduction to Study of New Testament,' vol. ii. p. 179), to account for the existence of "a Gnostic sect" in St. Paul's time. The

¹ The existence of the 'Therapeutæ,' as a Jewish monastic sect, is very doubtful. Lucius, in his 'Die Therapeuten u. ihre Stellung in d. Geschichte d. Ascese' (Strassburg, 1879), has again, and more successfully, called in question the authenticity of the treatise 'De Vita Contemplativa,' attributed to Philo

appearance of individual teachers and of sporadic tendencies always precedes the formation of a distinct sect. So far as the indications of the Epistle itself are concerned, the heresy may have been confined to a *single person*, in this decaying and unimportant town of Colossæ. But the heresiarch was evidently a teacher of eloquence and influence (ch. ii. 4, 8, 23); and his doctrine, though it had not become prevalent even at Colossæ (ch. ii. 5), possessed a singular fascination. The apostle had good reason to "doubt whereunto this would grow." Where the material lies ready for a conflagration, the first spark may be fatal. St. Paul had marked with a prescient eye the working of men's minds around him during his long sojourn at Ephesus, and he had warned the Church there of an impending struggle (Acts xx. 29, 30). Through his intimacy with Apollos he had, presumably, become well acquainted, even if he were not so before, with the principles of Alexandrine Judaism. He had had occasion to censure at Corinth the Greek tendency to overvalue eloquence, and to welcome philosophic and rationalizing views of Christian truth (1 Cor. i. 17—ii. 16; xv. 12). In writing to Rome he had also had to deal with a class of "weak brethren," who had adopted mistaken ascetic rules (Rom. xiv.). The apostle cannot, therefore, have been altogether taken by surprise when Epaphras arrived, in perplexity and alarm, to seek his help against the strange form of doctrine that had appeared in Colossæ.

It is only by a forced and fanciful exegesis that Baur and his followers have found traces in the Epistle of a reference to the developed Gnosticism of the second century. Had the Epistle originated then, such traces must have been much more distinct than even these critics pretend. Neither this nor the Ephesian letter knows anything of the *æons*, the personified *Wisdom and Knowledge*, the *Demiurge*, the *syzygies* and *emanations* of the Valentinians and Marcionites. And the ascetic notions of the later Ebionites were common to them with the Essenes and with Philo in the first century. The Colossian heresy represents the earliest and crudest stage of the movement which culminated in the full-blown Gnosticism of the second century, with its endless ramifications and its imposing array of technical terms. The Epistle to the Colossians, the Pastoral Epistles, the Apocalypse, and the Epistles of St. John, indicate in natural order the rise and progress during the apostolic age of the incipient heretical tendencies which are the necessary presupposition of the widely spread and highly organized Gnostic system delineated by the apologists of the following centuries. Pfeiderer defines with delicate precision the nature of the Colossian heresy when he calls it "an advance to a speculative and ascetic refinement of Judaism, which was amalgamated with Christianity, and represented as the complete fulfilment of it." But he asserts too much when he says, "It is certain that a false doctrine of this kind could not have existed in the time of the apostle" ('Paulinism,' English trans., vol. ii. pp. 95, 98).

§ 5. CHARACTER OF THE EPISTLE.

The novel character of the Colossian heresy accounts in great part for the number of new and peculiar words, occurring especially in the polemic part of the Epistle.¹ The obscure and seemingly embarrassed style of some passages in the second chapter, with the absence of Old Testament citations, and the rarity of St. Paul's favourite logical formulæ and conjunctive particles, may be due to the same cause. However thoroughly master of his position, we can hardly expect the apostle to move on this new ground with quite the same ease and freedom with which he combats his Pharisaic opponents in the Galatian and Roman Epistles, with the weapons sharpened in the schools of rabbinical dialectic. He was himself by training a rabbi, and not a philosopher. Moreover, the system he is dealing with was but loosely coherent, being speculative rather than argumentative in method, and not based, like the legalistic Judaism of Galatia, on scriptural authority. And the false teachers (or teacher) of Colossæ did not, we should gather, assail the apostle's personal authority; but may have rather claimed, in competition with Epaphras, to be the true exponents and completers of Pauline doctrine. Hence the apostle asserts and denounces, and no longer argues and appeals as in the Epistle to the Galatians. The Divine glory and sufficiency of Christ he sees to be at stake; and he applies the whole force of his mind and the weight of his recognized apostleship to the vindication of that principle in its commanding grandeur and simplicity and in its instant appeal to the loyalty of the Christian heart. From this lofty height he rejects and casts down, now on this side and now on that, the speculations and pretensions which so insidiously trenched upon the sovereign completeness of Christ, and endangered the citadel of the Church's faith.

The doctrines of salvation retreat comparatively into the background here; but they are by no means absent, and are expressed in a thoroughly Pauline manner, and sometimes in language that puts them in a new and striking light (ch. i. 12—14, 21—23; ii. 11—14; iii. 12—15). But the doctrine of *the person of Christ* is "all and in all" in this Epistle. Every part of the letter directly or indirectly pays its tribute to this theme, and "acknowledges" him "to be the Lord." This sublime and all-pervading thought gives a unity to the Epistle which defies every attempt at disintegration, and suffuses it with a sustained loftiness and devotional

¹ Of the thirty-four Pauline *hapax legomena* of the Epistle, the second chapter contains half, and amongst them such words as "persuasiveness-of-speech," "making-(one)-a-spoil," "philosophy," "Godhead," "bodily," "new-moon," "investigating" (or "intruding-into," ἐμβραβεῖν), "will-worship" (or, "devotion-to-worship"), "unsparingness," "surfeiting," whose use is obviously due to controversial exigency. In other instances, as Alford well remarks (in his 'Introduction' to this Epistle, § iv. 3), "It is the *σμενότης* of controversial tone, even more than the necessity of the subject handled, which causes our Epistle to abound so much with peculiar words and phrases."

intensity of feeling peculiar in its kind to St. Paul. "Non est cujusvis hominis Paulinum pectus effingere" (Erasmus).

But the apostle's Christology here is no more than the complete and deliberate statement of what is virtually contained, by way of implication and incidental reference, in the earlier Epistles. It is the necessary dialectic development of the Christology of Romans and Corinthians brought into conflict with Gnosticizing theosophy. "The most advanced formulæ that we shall find in the Epistle to the Colossians," M. Renan justly says, "exist already in germ in the older Epistles" ('St. Paul,' p. 275); see Rom. i. 4; ix. 5; xiv. 9; 1 Cor. ii. 8; iii. 22, 23; viii. 6; xv. 24—28; 2 Cor. iv. 4—6; v. 15, 19; viii. 9; Gal. iv. 4. That sovereignty of Christ which the apostle had previously asserted as extending over the individual life and the relations of mankind to God, he now victoriously carries forward into the transcendental sphere, into the world of angels and the constitution of the created universe, the ground from which it was being assailed by the new philosophic teachers. He is thus led to give his teaching respecting the person of Christ its ideal completion. He sets forth the unity of the earthly and the heavenly, the moral and the natural, the Church and the universe, in "Jesus Christ and him crucified." "All things," he declares, "consist in Christ: through him were all things reconciled unto him" (compare introductory note to Sect. II. in the Exposition).

From the nature of its subject it arises that, while the Epistle to the Romans, for example, is predominantly psychological and historical in its treatment, this Epistle is metaphysical and transcendental. The logic of the former is mainly inductive, of the latter deductive.

It is due, partly perhaps to the requirements of the more advanced Christian life of the Church, but chiefly to the ascetic and moralizing character of early Gnosticism, that the *moral teaching* of Colossians and Ephesians is more full and systematic than that of St. Paul's earlier Epistles. The sacredness of *family obligations* and their relation to Christian doctrine now come into prominence in the apostle's teaching, in opposition to the universal tendency of mysticism and asceticism to disparage and undermine the natural order of life. In these respects the letters to the Asiatic Churches constitute a middle term between the four great, specifically evangelical Epistles, and the Pastoral Epistles with their concern about "good works." Necessarily, as time went on and the Churches grew out of their infancy, and as new dangers assailed them, St. Paul became more of a "pastor and teacher," and less predominantly an "evangelist."

In this Epistle, as still more markedly in Ephesians, and to a less degree in Philippians, we find a cumulative fulness and roundness of expression, a fondness for compound terms and phrases, and a habit of extending sentences indefinitely by participial and relative clauses, that do not appear, at any rate to the same extent, in the apostle's former writings. And we miss something of the glow and vehemence, "the powerful step and dancing spring" (Ewald) of his earlier style. But we must remember

that the writer is now "such a one as Paul the aged" (Philem. 9), worn and broken by hardship and imprisonment. These letters belong to the mellow afternoon rather than to the heyday of the apostle's vigour. The difference is not greater than often appears in the same writer at different periods and under a change of circumstances. There is nothing stereotyped about St. Paul.

§ 6. COLOSSIANS AND EPHESIANS.

With the doctrine of the person of Christ, that of *the Church* advances to its completion. For it is "his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23). The Church is the recipient of his fulness, its organic expression and embodiment. The more complete and all-embracing that "fulness of God" in Christ is seen to be, the grander becomes our conception of the Church and her destiny, and of the subordination under which, in God's counsels, all other objects and interests are placed to her perfection; the more sacred and essential her unity becomes, in our view, as the counterpart of the oneness in which "all things" are "summed up in Christ" (Eph. i. 10). These thoughts, however, the apostle contents himself with indicating here (ch. i. 18; ii. 19; iii. 11, 15); he reserves their full expansion and application for the Ephesian letter. From this point of view, the general relation of the two Epistles becomes sufficiently clear.

But while these Epistles are so intimately connected in thought and in expression, and in a number of passages are not only parallel but almost identical in content, when more closely examined they betray a striking difference of tone and style. Not a few critics have, on this account, assumed a different authorship. But the difference is, in reality, one of *mood and attitude* in the same mind—a contrast between two opposite states of mind, such as frequently alternate in intense and mobile natures like St. Paul's. Our Epistle is the expression of a mind anxious and perturbed, struggling with great spiritual difficulties of a profound and perplexing character, and in regard to which the writer is at a greater disadvantage, as they have come upon a Church at a distance and comparatively unknown to him (ch. i. 28—ii. 3). The Ephesian letter breathes the spirit of rest that follows conflict; it is the most tranquil and meditative, the most calmly expansive and John-like of St. Paul's Epistles; and only here and there (Eph. iv. 14; vi. 10—20) does it remind us of the struggle in which his mind has been engaged, and which he sees to be awaiting the Church in the future. The first is like the mountain stream cleaving its way with swift passage, by deep ravines and sudden, broken turnings, through some barrier thrown across its path. The second is the calm and far-spreading lake in which its chafed waters find rest, mirroring in their clear depths the eternal heavens above.

§ 7. COLOSSIANS AND OTHER NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS.

This Epistle is closely allied to that to the Hebrews. Both have the Person and offices of Christ, with his relation to the angels, for their leading theme. The latter treatise furnishes, in several passages, the earliest and best commentary on the Christology and angelology of our Epistle (see notes on ch. i. 15, 18; ii. 9, 10, 15). This, however, is the Epistle of the lordship of Christ; that, of his priesthood. This is concerned mainly with the present, with the relations of Christ as Redeemer-King to the existing Church, and to the natural universe; that is a review of the past, and beholds in Christ the fulfilment of the spiritual needs and anticipations of the ancient covenant. In ch. iii. 17, indeed, the apostle gives a passing glance in the direction followed by the other Epistle, and furnishes a pregnant hint of which a great part of its argument may be viewed as the development.

The doctrine of the Person of Christ also brings this (and the Ephesians) letter into closer and more sympathetic connection than any other of St. Paul's Epistles with the writings of St. John. Addressing himself to "the seven Churches which are in Asia" (including Laodicea), St. John cannot forget that they know "Jesus Christ" as "the Firstborn of the dead," who "loosed us from our sins," and as "the Beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. i. 5, R.V.; iii. 14: comp. ch. i. 14—18). "The Word of God" of the Apocalypse, to the majesty of whose Person all nature pays its tribute, who "sits with the Father on his throne," and as "Prince of the kings of the earth," "comes forth conquering and to conquer," is "Christ Jesus the Lord," whom the Asiatic Churches had "received" through St. Paul, is the "Image of God," who intended to be "in all things pre-eminent" (Rev. i. 5, 13—18; iii. 21; vi. 2; xix. 11—16: comp. ch. i. 15—18; ii. 7, 10; iii. 1). No passage of St. Paul's approaches so nearly the teaching of St. John's great Epistle as ch. i. 12, 13, where "the inheritance in the light," "the dominion of the darkness," and the "translation" by "the Father" into "the kingdom of the Son of his love," appear in a combination intrinsically Pauline, and yet that sounds like an utterance of St. John's before the time. Finally, it was reserved for "the beloved disciple" to pronounce that title of Christ which seems trembling on our apostle's lips in ch. i. 15—18; and yet which he forbears to use (Was it because of the abuse of the term *Logos* in the Philonian philosophy, which confounded the *words* with the *angels* of God in a very mystifying fashion?). St. John has brought all the earlier Christological teaching to a focus, and given it a completed form in his doctrine of the *Incarnate Word*, which is the Alpha and Omega of his Gospel, and indeed of the New Testament itself.

The First Epistle of Peter appears to echo, again and again, the language and ideas of this Epistle (comp. e.g. 1 Pet. i. 4 with ch. i. 5; i. 7, 13, 14 with ch. iii. 4—7; i. 20, 21 with ch. i. 26, 27; iii. 15, R.V., with ch. ii. 6 and iv. 6; v. 4 with ch. iii. 4). It contains reminiscences, still more unmistak-

able, of the Ephesian and Roman Epistles, and of St. Paul's earlier writings generally; but not, as we think, of the Pastoral Epistles, nor of Philippians. This dependence of 1 Peter on the Pauline Epistles presents a curious and interesting problem. The key to its solution may probably be found, in part, in the reference of ch. iv. 10 (see note *in loc.*) to Mark, who was present with St. Paul when he wrote to the Asiatic Churches, and was at that time contemplating a journey to the East; and who is found again at Babylon with St. Peter, when, at a date probably but little later, he is inditing his general Epistle addressed to the same quarter.

The links which connect this Epistle with the other letters of St. Paul are too numerous and varied to be here set forth in detail. They pervade the entire texture of the Epistle, and extend not only to the general correspondence of thought and manner, which is apparent on the surface, but also to those finer idiosyncrasies of sentiment and nuances of style which infallibly betray the author, whatever variety of subject-matter, and of logical method and phraseology, his writings may present. This Epistle is linked to the rest by a network of coincidences of this nature, which embraces every one of the canonical Pauline Epistles, saving only that to the Hebrews. It has been one object of this Exposition to exhibit these correspondences as fully as possible. The student who will take any single section of this Epistle, and work out its lines of connection with the other Epistles, will gain an impression of its genuineness, and of the sure and solid way in which it is braced into the fabric of Pauline teaching and theology, such as can scarcely otherwise be obtained.

§ 8. AUTHENTICITY OF THE EPISTLE.

It is the less necessary to defend the authenticity of this Epistle, assailed first by Mayerhoff (1838) and then more dangerously by Baur, since Holtzmann and Pfleiderer, the ablest representatives of the school of Baur who have dealt with the subject, acknowledge that "there is so much that is genuinely Pauline in it, that it is almost impossible to regard the whole of the Epistle as a later production." Its partial authenticity being allowed, the course of the Exposition will show that the Epistle is thoroughly consecutive, and is entirely a unity from beginning to end. Critics so free from orthodox predilections and of such different schools as De Wette, Renan, and Ewald, acknowledge that it bears the stamp of Paul throughout. Holtzmann has attempted, in his '*Kritik der Epheser- u. Kolosserbriefe*' (Leipzig, 1872), to recover the original Pauline nucleus by a learned and ingenious process of critical dissection. His analysis is rejected by Pfleiderer, who holds the interpolation theory, but gives no definite expression or thorough grounding to it ('*Paulinism*,' English trans., vol. ii. pp. 95—119; Pfleiderer's treatment of the subject-matter is, in many respects, remarkably clear and instructive). Klöpffer, in his full and impartial Commentary, has

examined and effectually disposed of Holtzmann's reconstruction (ss. 25—42). The chief objections made against the Pauline authorship on internal grounds have been met by anticipation in the preceding sections.

"The *external* testimony to our Epistle is so ancient and unbroken and general, that from this side no well-founded doubt can be raised" (Meyer). It appears in the Muratorian Canon, the earliest detailed list of the New Testament writings, drawn up about the end of the second century. The Church Fathers of the second and third centuries, Irenæus, Tertullian, the Alexandrian Clement, and Origen, quote it repeatedly and amply, in the form in which we possess it, without hesitation or variation, as a work of the Apostle Paul and an authoritative Church document. From Tertullian and Irenæus we learn that it was acknowledged by Marcion and by the Valentinian school of Gnostics in the first half of the second century. And, before the age when formal quotation of the New Testament Scriptures began, in the Epistles of the earlier Clement, of Barnabas, and of Ignatius, belonging to sub-apostolic times, and in the writings of Justin Martyr and of Theophilus ('*Ad Autolyicum*') amongst their successors, there are expressions which appear to show an acquaintance with the Epistle.

§ 9. RECENT COMMENTARIES.

Amongst available commentaries on this most difficult Epistle, Bishop Lightfoot's masterly work is pre-eminent in all that belongs to its historical and doctrinal elucidation. Every page of the present Exposition testifies to the writer's obligations to this work. Meyer displays here even more than his wonted thoroughness and acumen. It is needless to say that Ellicott and Alford should be diligently consulted. The latter, in his handling of this Epistle, shows remarkable independence and soundness of judgment. Hofmann is always keen and suggestive. Klöpper's latest work ('*Der Brief an d. Colosser, kritisch untersucht u. s. w.*,' Berlin, 1882) is valuable for its ample and luminous discussion of the leading exegetical questions, and of recent critical theories of the Epistle. The writer is glad to find himself supported by Klöpper on several points on which he has been compelled to dissent from other authorities, and regrets that this work was not earlier to hand. Valuable aid will be found in Eadie's and Ll. Davies' expositions, and in the '*Speaker's Commentary*,' and the '*New Testament Commentary for English Readers*.'

§ 10. ANALYSIS OF THE EPISTLE.

The main division of the Epistle evidently falls at the end of the second chapter. Its first half is chiefly doctrinal and polemical; the second, hortatory and practical. It is divided in the following Exposition into ten sections:—

1. The *introduction*, with its *salutation*, *opening thanksgiving*, and *prayer* (ch. i. 1—14).

2. The fundamental doctrinal statement of the Epistle, concerning the *redeeming Son and his kingdom* (ch. i. 15—23).

3 and 4. A parenthesis by way of personal explanation, respecting the *apostle himself and his mission* (ch. i. 24—29), and his present concern for the *Colossians and their neighbours* (ch. ii. 1—7).

5 and 6. The polemic against the false teaching at Colossæ, directed (1) against its general principles, as limiting the sufficiency of Christ and the *Christian's completeness in him* (ch. ii. 8—15); (2) against the particular *claims of the false teacher*, and the Jewish observances, the angel-worship, and the ascetic rules he inculcated (ch. ii. 16—23).

7. The apostle now proceeds from negative warnings and denunciations to positive injunctions, setting forth with considerable fulness the *true Christian life in its practice*, as contrasted with the false asceticism and visionary illusions of theosophy (ch. iii. 1—17).

8. He enforces particularly the *duties of family life*, and, with the case of Onesimus in view, dwells at length on the obligations of servants and masters (ch. iii. 18—iv. 1).

9. Brief exhortations of a general character are added, respecting *prayer and social converse* (ch. iv. 2—6).

10. The Epistle concludes with *personal messages and greetings* (ch. iv. 7—17); and is sealed by the writer's authenticating signature and final benediction (ch. iv. 18).

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I

Vers. 1—14.—SECTION I. INTRODUCTION. The Epistle commences, in St. Paul's manner, with a *salutation* (vers. 1, 2), followed by *thanksgiving* (vers. 3—8) and *prayer* (vers. 9—14). Only in 2 Thessalonians, however, outside of the Epistles of this group, do we find a formal opening prayer. The *salutation* agrees closely with that of Ephesians.

Ver. 1.—Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus through God's will, and Timothy the brother (Eph. i. 1; 2 Cor. i. 1). The apostle designates himself by his *office*, as always, except in the Macedonian Epistles and the letter of private friendship to Philemon. Timothy shares also in the greeting of the Epistle to Philemon, probably a leading member of the Colossian Church (comp. ch. iv. 9, 17 with Philem. 2, 10—12). During St. Paul's long residence at Ephesus Timothy was with him (Acts xix. 22), and there, probably, Philemon had come under his influence (see Introduction, § 2), and made Timothy's acquaintance. There was, therefore, at least one link of acquaintance between "Timothy the brother" and "the saints in Colossæ" (comp. Phil. i. 1; 2 Cor. i. 1; 1 and 2 Thess. i. 1, where his name appears in the same way). The honourable prominence thus given to Timothy marked him out for future leadership in the Church (1 Tim. i. 3, 18; 2 Tim. ii. 2; iv. 2, 5, 6).

Ver. 2.—To those in Colossæ¹ (which are) saints and faithful brethren in Christ (Eph.

i. 1; Phil. i. 1; Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 2; 2 Cor. i. 1). "Saints" in respect of their Divine calling and character (ch. iii. 12; 1 Cor. 1, 2, where this title is formally introduced); "faithful brethren in Christ" (Eph. i. 1) in view of the errors and consequent divisions threatening them as a Church (ver. 23; ch. ii. 5, 18, 19; iii. 15; Eph. iv. 14—16; vi. 10—18; Phil. i. 27; 2 Tim. ii. 19). *Grace to you, and peace*: "as in all his Epistles." This Pauline formula of greeting combines the Greek and Hebrew, Western and Eastern, forms of salutation (comp. "Abba, Father," Rom. viii. 15). *Xáris* is a modification of the everyday *χαίρειν*, *hail!* (Acts xv. 23; Jas. i. 1; 2 John 10); and *εἰρήνη* reproduces the Hebrew *shalóm* (*salám*). *Grace* is the source of all blessing as bestowed by God (ver. 6; Eph. i. 3—6; ii. 5; Rom. v. 2, 17, 21; Titus ii. 11); and *peace*, in the large sense of its Hebrew original, of all blessing as experienced by man (Eph. ii. 16, 17; Luke ii. 14; Acts x. 36; Rom. v. 1; viii. 6; 2 Thess. iii. 16). *From God our Father*. Among the apostle's salutations this alone fails to add "and from our Lord Jesus Christ"—a defect which copyists were tempted to remedy. The omission is well established (see Revised Text, and critical editors generally), and cannot surely be accidental. In this and the twin Ephesian letter, devoted as they are to the glory of Christ, the name of *the Father* stands out with a peculiar prominence and dignity, much as in St. John's Gospel: "honouring the Son," they must needs "honour the Father" also (vers. 12, 13; ch. iii. 17; Eph. i. 17; ii. 18; iii. 14; iv. 6; v. 20).

Vers. 3—8.—The opening *thanksgiving* is full and appropriate. Its content is determined by the state of this Church, and by the apostle's relation to it through Epaphras, and his own present position.

Ver. 3.—We give thanks to God, Father of

¹ The Greek manuscripts vary in their spelling of *Colossæ*. The evidence points to *Colossæ* as the genuine reading here, and *Colassians* in the title. "While *Colossæ* alone occurs during the classical period and in St. Paul's time, it was afterwards supplanted by *Colassæ*" (Lightfoot, p. 16; so Westcott and Hort).

our Lord Jesus Christ. *We; Timothy and I* (comp. 1 Thess. i. 2; 2 Thess. i. 3; 2 Cor. i. 3, 4, etc.). The Revised Text omits "and" between "God" and "Father," following Lachmann, Westcott and Hort, and Lightfoot (who hesitates), on evidence numerically slight, but sufficient; especially as in every other instance of this combination the conjunction is present. "Father" is also without definite article in the better-attested (Revised) reading. The words, "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," bear, therefore, an explanatory, quasi-predicative force. St. Paul wishes his readers to understand that he gives thanks to God on their account distinctly under this aspect, regarded as "Father of Christ." He has just spoken of "our Father," and now adds, "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," suggesting that it is in this relation that we know God as "our Father," the Author of grace and peace, the Object of Christian thanksgiving. So the sovereign and exclusive mediation of Christ, the ruling idea of the whole Epistle, is thrown into bold relief at the outset; and, in this light, the unique omissions of vers. 2 and 3 explain and justify each other. This fatherhood embraces the entire Person and offices of the Son as "our Lord Jesus Christ." Praying always for you (ver. 9; ch. ii. 1—3; Phil. i. 4; Rom. i. 9). The apostle had known from the first of the existence of this Church; and had already been in communication with it (see Introduction, § 2). He had, therefore, a general prayerful interest in the Colossians (2 Cor. xi. 28), that has been quickened to joyful thanksgiving (ch. ii. 5; comp. 1 Thess. iii. 6—10) by the arrival of Epaphras. "Always" and "for you"—either or both of the phrases—may be joined grammatically to "we give thanks" or to "praying;" the latter connection is preferable (see Alford or Ellicott); similarly in Philem. 4; in Eph. i. 16 the turn of expression is different.

Ver. 4.—*Having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have* (ἔχετε, Revised Text) *toward all the saints* (Eph. i. 15, R.V.; Philem. 5, R.V.; 1 Thess. iv. 9, 10; 1 John iii. 23; 2 John 4; 3 John 3, 4). "Having heard"—more immediately from Epaphras (vers. 8, 9). Note the characteristic recurrence of this word: he *had heard* of their faith and love, as they *had heard* before the word of truth (ver. 5); *from the day they had heard* they had borne fruit (ver. 6), and he, in return, *from the day he heard* of it, had not ceased to pray for them (ver. 9); see note on ver. 8; and comp. 1 Thess. i. 5 and ii. 2 with iii. 6 (Greek). "In Christ Jesus" is attached to "faith" (as to "brethren" in ver. 2) so closely as to form with it a single idea; to be "in Christ Jesus" is of the

very essence of this faith and brotherhood. "Faith in Christ," "believe in Christ," in our English Bible, commonly represent a different Greek preposition, *eis* (literally, *into* or *unto* Christ); only in the pastoral Epistles and in Eph. i. 15—not in Gal. iii. 26 (see Lightfoot) or Rom. iii. 25 (see Meyer or Beet)—do we find, as here, *πιστὶς ἐν Χριστῷ*. In Christ faith rests, finding its abiding ground and element of life. In the Epistles of this period the Christian state appears chiefly as "life in Christ," rather than, as in the earlier letters, as "salvation through Christ" (comp. e.g. Rom. v. and Col. ii. 9—15). The "love" of the Colossians evokes thanksgiving, as that which they have "toward all the saints;" for as the Church extended Christian love needed to be more catholic (ver. 6; ch. iii. 11), and Colossian error in particular tended to exclusiveness and caste-feeling (see note on ver. 28). The iteration of "all" in this Epistle is remarkable.

Ver. 5.—(We give thanks) because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens (ch. iii. 4; Eph. i. 12—14; Phil. iii. 20, 21; Rom. viii. 18—25; 1 Cor. xv. 50—58; 2 Cor. v. 1—5; 1 Thess. iv. 13—17; 1 Pet. i. 3—5; Matt. vi. 20; xix. 21; Luke xii. 33; John xiv. 2, 3). "Hope" is objective—*matter of hope*, as in Gal. v. 5; Titus ii. 13; Heb. vi. 18. St. Paul speaks most of *heaven* and *heavenly things* in the letters of this period. Ver. 4 gives the nearest grammatical connection for this clause; and many recent commentators, following Greek interpreters, accordingly find here that which "evokes and conditions" the Colossians' "love" (Meyer, Ellicott) or "faith and love" (De Wette, Lightfoot). But this construction we reject. For it makes the heavenly reward the reason of the Colossians' present (faith and) love, reversing the true and Pauline order of thought (Rom. v. 1—5; viii. 28—39; xv. 13; Eph. i. 13; comp. 1 John iv. 17, 18); while, on the other hand, the heavenly hope is the last and highest ground of the apostle's thanksgivings and encouragements, and the forfeiture or impairing of it the chief matter of his fears and warnings throughout the Epistles of this group (ch. i. 12, 22, 23, 27, 28; ii. 18; iii. 4, 24; Eph. i. 13, 14; ii. 12; iii. 6; iv. 4; Phil. i. 6; ii. 16; iii. 11—21; comp. 1 Pet. i. 3, 4). It is better, therefore, with Bengel, Hofmann, Klöpper, Conybeare, Eadie, and others, from Athanasius downwards, to refer ver. 5 as well as ver. 4 to the principal verb, "we give thanks" (ver. 3). What the apostle hears of "the faith and love" of the Colossian brethren moves him to give thanks for "the hope which is in store for them in heaven." Of that hope this faith and love are to him a pledge and an earnest,

even as the "seal of the Spirit" (Eph. i. 14) and the "peace of Christ in their hearts" (ch. iii. 15; see note) are to themselves. Similarly, in Phil. i. 27, 28 and 2 Thess. i. 4, 5, from the present faith and patience of the saints the certainty of their future blessedness is argued. By singling out this *hope* as chief matter of thanksgiving here, the apostle enhances its certainty and its value in his readers' eyes. (On this verse, see the *Expositor*, first series, vol. x. pp. 74—80.) From the *general occasion and ground* of his thanksgiving in the Christian state and prospects of his readers, St. Paul proceeds to dwell on certain *special circumstances* which enhanced his gratitude to God (vers. 5 b—8). Which (*hope*) ye heard of before, in the word of the truth of the gospel; or, *good tidings* (vers. 7, 23; ch. ii. 7; Eph. i. 13; iv. 15, 21; Gal. i. 6—9; iii. 1—4; iv. 9; v. 7; 1 Thess. i. 5; ii. 13; iv. 1; 2 Thess. ii. 13—15; 1 Pet. v. 12). There is a veiled polemic reference in "the word of the truth of the gospel" (comp. ver. 7 and parallels from Galatians). The word "before" (*afortetime*) "contrasts their earlier with their later lessons, the true gospel of Epaphras with the false gospel of recent teachers" (Lightfoot). Others interpret, less suitably: *heard already* (*before my writing*), or *heard beforehand* (*before the fulfilment of the hope*). It is in St. Paul's manner to refer his readers at the outset to their conversion and first Christian experiences (see parallel passages). Their *hope* was directly at stake in the controversy with Colossian error. Here we meet the first of those cumulative combinations of nouns, so marked a feature of the style of Colossians and Ephesians, which are made a reproach against these Epistles by some critics; but each is appropriate in its place.

Ver. 6.—That is come unto you, even as also (it is) in all the world, bearing fruit and increasing, as in you also (Rom. i. 8; 1 Thess. i. 8; 2 Cor. ii. 14; Acts ii. 47; v. 14; vi. 7; ix. 31; xi. 21; xii. 24; xix. 20). The words, "and increasing," are added to the text on the testimony, all but unanimous, of the older witnesses. Their propriety is manifest; for the success of the gospel at Colossæ was a gratifying evidence, both of its inherent fruitfulness, and of its rapid progress in the Gentile world. Stationary at Rome (see Introduction, § 3), and with his messengers coming and going, and news reaching him from time to time of the advance of the Christian cause, the strong expression, "in all the world," is natural to St. Paul. From Rome "all the world" is surveyed, just as what takes place at Rome seems to resound "in all the world" (Rom. i. 8). *Bearing fruit* (verb in middle voice,

implying inherent energy) precedes *growing*—the first "describing the inner working," the second "the outward extension of the gospel" (Lightfoot). For "bearing fruit," comp. Eph. v. 9; Gal. v. 22; Phil. i. 11; John xv. 8, 16; and for "growing," 2 Thess. iii. 1; Matt. xiii. 31—33; and parallel passages; see also ver. 11. In the last clause the expression "doubles back upon itself" in a fashion characteristic of St. Paul, whose sentences grow and change their form like living things while he indites them (comp. ch. iii. 13; 1 Thess. i. 5—8; iv. 1, R.V.): the coming of the gospel to Colossæ suggests the thought of its advent in the world, and this gives place to the fuller idea of its fruitfulness and expansion, which in turn is evidenced by its effect at Colossæ. Since the day that ye heard (it), and knew well the grace of God in truth (ver. 5; ch. ii. 6, 7; Eph. i. 13; iv. 21; 1 Thess. ii. 1, 2, 13; 1 Cor. ii. 1—5; xv. 1—11; 2 Cor. i. 19; Gal. i. 6, 11; iii. 1—3; 2 Tim. iii. 14). For their progress had been continuous (comp. Phil. i. 5). Meyer and Ellicott, with the A.V., better maintain the connection of thought in understanding "the gospel" as object of "heard." The verb *ἐπέγνωτε*, *knew well*, with *ἐπίγνωσις* (ver. 9, etc.), belongs specially to the vocabulary of this group of Epistles. *Knowledge*, in 1 Corinthians, is denoted by the simple *gnosis*. But this word became at an early time the watchword of the heretical *Gnostics* ("men of knowledge:" comp. 1 Tim. vi. 20); and the false teachers of Colossæ pretended to an intellectual superiority, asserted, we may imagine, in much the same way (comp. ch. ii. 2—4, 8, 23). The apostle now prefers the more precise and distinctive *epignosis* (*ἐπιγνώσκω*), meaning "accurate" or "advanced knowledge" (see Lightfoot here, and on ver. 9). "To hear the gospel" is "to know well the grace of God" (Acts xx. 24; Rom. iii. 21—26; 2 Cor. v. 20—vi. 1; John i. 17); the *full knowledge* of which "in truth" (ver. 5; Eph. iv. 14, 15, 20—24) would preserve the Colossians from knowledge falsely so called.

Ver. 7.—As ye learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow-servant; literally, *bondman* (Eph. iv. 20; 2 Tim. iii. 14). Only in ch. iv. 7 does the epithet "fellow-bondman" appear again in St. Paul (the Revisers in these two places omit their marginal "bond-servant"). The dominant thought of Christ Jesus "the Lord" (ch. ii. 6; iii. 22—iv. 1) possibly dictates this expression. That the Colossians had received the gospel in this way from Epaphras, a disciple of St. Paul, was a striking proof of its fruitfulness, and a further cause for thanksgiving on his own part. Who is a faithful minister of Christ on our (or, *your*) behalf (ch. iv. 12, 13; 2

Cor. viii. 22; Phil. ii. 22). He puts his seal upon the ministry of Epaphras, and vindicates it against all questioning at home. Textual evidence for "on our" or "your behalf" is pretty evenly balanced: most older Greek copies read the first person, while the ancient versions generally adopted the second; and the critical editors are similarly divided. The Revisers, with Tregelles, Alford, Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort, prefer "our," which gives a finer and more fitting sense. It was as St. Paul's representative that Epaphras had ministered in Colossæ, and to him he now reported his success; and this justified the apostle in claiming the Colossians as his own charge, and in writing to them in the terms of this letter (ch. ii. 1, 2, 5—7: comp. Rom. xv. 20; 2 Cor. x. 13—16). "Minister" (*διδάσκων*, *deacon*, in its official sense found in St. Paul first in Phil. i. 1, then in 1 Timothy) is to be distinguished from the "servant" (*δούλος*, *slave*) of the last clause, and from "assistant" (*ἀντιπρόεδρος*: 1 Cor. iv. 1; Acts xiii. 5; xxvi. 16), and "attendant" (*θεράπων*: Heb. iii. 5); see Trench's 'Synonyms of the New Testament.' It is a favourite word of St. Paul's, and points to the service rendered, while other terms indicate the status of the servant.

Ver. 8.—Who also showed us your love in (the) Spirit (2 Cor. vii. 7; viii. 7; 1 Thess. iii. 6; Phil. iv. 10); i.e. *your love to us, Timothy and myself*, especially if we read "in our behalf" in ver. 7: so, many interpreters, from Chrysostom to Klöpper. Epaphras had conveyed the blessings of the gospel from St. Paul to the Colossians, and they now send back the grateful assurance of their love by the same channel (comp. note on "having heard," ver. 4, and parallel passages). This was a choice fruit of the gospel in them (comp. Phil. iv. 10, 15—18), and such a reference to it gives a kindly conclusion to the thanksgiving. Ellicott and others understand here *brotherly love in general*—a somewhat pointless repetition of ver. 4. Meyer, reading "on your behalf" in ver. 7, more suitably suggests the Colossians' love to Epaphras in return for his services to them. The Spirit is the ruling element of the Colossians' love (Gal. v. 22). "Love-in-the-Spirit" forms a single compound phrase, like "faith-in-Christ-Jesus" (ver. 4). The one Spirit dwells alike in all the members of Christ's body, however sundered by place or circumstance (Eph. iv. 1—4), and makes them one in love to each other as to him (John xiii. 34, 35; 1 John iii. 23, 24). "Spirit" occurs besides in this Epistle only in ch. ii. 5 (but see "spiritual," ver. 9), and some find in ch. ii. 1, 5 the explanation of this phrase (sc. "a love formed in absence, without personal inter-

course;" but this is forced, and doubtful in point of grammar).

Vers. 9—14.—The opening prayer rises out of the foregoing thanksgiving, and leads up to the chief doctrinal statement of the Epistle (vers. 15—20: compare, for the connection, Eph. i. 15—23; Rom. i. 8—17). The burden of this prayer, as in other letters of this period, is the Church's need of knowledge (comp. Eph. i. 17, 18; Phil. i. 9, 10). Here this desire has its fullest expression, as the necessity of the Colossians in this respect was the more urgent and their situation, therefore, the more fully representative of the stage in the history of the Pauline Churches now commencing. He asks for his readers (1) a fuller knowledge of the Divine will (ver. 9); to result in (2) greater pleasingness to God (ver. 10 a), due (3) to increased moral fruitfulness and spiritual growth (ver. 10 b), to (4) patience under suffering (ver. 11), and to (5) thankfulness for the blessings of redemption (vers. 12—14).

Ver. 9.—For this cause we also (Eph. i. 15—17; 1 Thess. iii. 6—13). Timothy and I, in return for your love to us (ver. 8) and in response to this good news about you (vers. 4—6). From the day that we heard (it); an echo of "from the day that ye heard it" (ver. 6). Do not cease praying for you, and making request. The former is a general expression (ver. 3), the latter points to some special matter of petition to follow. This second verb St. Paul only uses elsewhere of prayer to God in Eph. iii. 13, 20 (see Trench's 'Synonyms' on *αἰτέω*, *αἰτήμα*). That ye may be filled with (or, *made complete in*) the knowledge of his will (ch. ii. 10; iv. 12; Eph. iii. 18, 19; Rom. xii. 2; Heb. xiii. 21). On "knowledge" (*ἐπίγνωσις*), see note to ver. 6, and Lightfoot's note here. "With the knowledge" represents the Greek accusative of specification (as in Phil. i. 11, where see Ellicott); and the verb *πληρωθῆτε* (comp. note on *pleroma*, ver. 19), as in ch. ii. 10 and i. 25, denotes "fulfilled" or "made complete," rather than "made full"—"made complete as to the full knowledge," etc. "His will" ("God's will," ver. 1; ch. iv. 12) need not be limited to the original purpose of salvation (Eph. i. 9), or to his moral requirements respecting Christian believers (ver. 10; so Meyer), but includes "the whole counsel of God" (Acts xx. 27) made known to us in Christ (vers. 26, 27). In all spiritual wisdom and understanding (ch. ii. 2; Eph. v. 17; Phil. i. 9; 1 Cor. xiv. 20). Wisdom, in its highest sense, is the sum of personal excellence as belonging to the mind; it implies a vital knowledge of Divine truth, forming the sentiments and determining the will as it possesses the reason. Hence the word occurs in a great variety of connections;

"Wisdom and knowledge" (ch. ii. 3), "and prudence" (Eph. i. 8), etc. For this Church the apostle asks specially the gift of *understanding or comprehension* (comp. ch. ii. 2; only in Eph. iii. 4 and 2 Tim. ii. 7 besides, in St. Paul; 1 Cor. i. 19 from LXX), the power of *putting things together* (*σύνεσις*), of discerning the relations of different truths, the logical bearing and consequences of one's principles. For the errors invading Colossæ were of a Gnostic type, mystic at once and rationalistic; against which a clear and well-informed understanding was the best protection (comp. notes on "truth," in vers. 5, 6; also ch. ii. 4, 8, 18, 23; Eph. iv. 13, 14). This "wisdom and understanding" are "spiritual," as inspired by the Divine Spirit (comp. the use of "spirit," "spiritual," in 1 Cor. xii. 1—11; Gal. vi. 1 and v. 16, 25; Eph. i. 17; iii. 16—19), and opposed to all "wisdom of the flesh," the unrenewed nature of man (ch. ii. 18; 1 Cor. ii. 4—6, 13—15; Jas. iii. 15).

Ver. 10.—To walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing (Eph. iv. 1; Phil. i. 27; 1 Thess. ii. 12; iv. 1; 2 Thess. i. 5, 11; 1 John ii. 6; Rev. iii. 4; Heb. xiii. 21); so as to please him in every way. "The end of all knowledge, the apostle would say, is conduct" (Lightfoot). Spiritual enlightenment (ver. 9) enables the Christian to *walk* (a Hebraism adopted also into biblical English) in a way "worthy of the Lord" (Christ, ch. ii. 6; iii. 24; Acts xx. 19, etc.), becoming those who have such a Lord and who profess to be his servants. And to be "worthy of Christ" is to "please God" (Rom. viii. 29; Eph. i. 4, 5, 11; 1 Cor. i. 9). This is the ideal and the aim of the religious life throughout the Bible (comp. 1 Sam. xiii. 14; Micah vi. 6—8; Heb. xi. 5, 6; John viii. 29; Rom. viii. 8). The characteristics of this walk are set forth by three co-ordinate participial phrases (vers. 10 b—12), standing in the half-independent nominative case instead of the more regular accusative (as agreeing with the understood object of the infinitive *περιπατεῖτε*: see Winer's 'N. T. Grammar,' p. 716; compare, for the idiom, ch. iii. 16, also ii. 2). In every good work bearing fruit (Eph. iv. 28; Gal. vi. 9, 10; 1 Thess. v. 15; 2 Thess. ii. 17; 1 Tim. v. 10; Titus iii. 8; Heb. xiii. 16; Acts ix. 36). "Good work" is that which is *beneficial, practically good* (see parallel passages). "In every good work" might grammatically qualify the foregoing "pleasing" (so R.V. margin and many older interpreters), but appears to be parallel in position and sense with "in all power" (ver. 11). On "bearing fruit" (netive in voice where the subject is *personal*: comp. *ἐκτρέφω* in ch. i. 29 and in Phil. ii. 13), see note to ver. 6. While doing good to his fellow-men, the Christian is growing by (or,

in) the knowledge of God (ch. ii. 19; Eph. iv. 13—16; 2 Pet. iii. 18; 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2; xiv. 20; xvi. 13; Heb. v. 12—14). His own nature becomes larger, stronger, more complete. Here it is individual (internal) growth, in ver. 6 collective (external) growth (of the gospel, the Church) that is implied; the two are combined in Eph. iv. 13—16. The dative *τῇ ἐκπαίδεσι* (so best copies and Revised Text: the Received, *unto the knowledge*, is a repetition of ver. 9) is "dative of instrument" (Alford, Lightfoot) rather than "of respect" (*in the knowledge*; so R.V.).

Ver. 11.—In all power being empowered, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness (vers. 24, 29; Eph. i. 19; iii. 16; vi. 10; 1 Cor. xvi. 13; 2 Tim. i. 7, 8; ii. 1, 3, 9, 10; 1 Pet. v. 10). The same word is repeated as noun and verb (*δύναμις, δυναμίζω, power, empower*) with a strong Hebraistic sort of emphasis (otherwise in Eph. iii. 16). In all (every kind of) power gives the mode, according to the might of his glory the measure, and unto all patience, etc., the end of this Divine strengthening. "Might" (*κράτος*), in distinction from "power" (*δύναμις*) and other synonyms (comp. ver. 29; Eph. i. 19; vi. 10), implies "mastery," "sovereign sway," and, except in Heb. ii. 14 ("might of death"), is used in the New Testament only of the power of God. "Glory," as in Phil. iii. 21, bears a substantive meaning of its own, and is not a mere attributive of "might." It is the splendour of God's revelations of himself, in which his *might* is so conspicuous. Gazing on this *glory*, especially as seen in Christ (2 Cor. iv. 6) and the gospel (1 Tim. i. 11, R.V.), the Christian discerns the might of him from whom it streams forth, and understands how that might is engaged in his behalf (Eph. i. 19, 20; comp. Isa. xl. 28, 29; xlii. 5, 6); and this thought fills him with invincible courage and endurance. *Patience* is steadfastness and stout-heartedness under ill fortune (not a mere resigned *patience*); *long-suffering* is gentleness of temper and magnanimity under ill treatment (comp. ch. iii. 12; and see Lightfoot, *in loc.*, and Trench's 'Synonyms'). Christ, in his earthly life, was the supreme example of *patience* (2 Thess. iii. 5, R.V.; 1 Pet. ii. 21—23; Heb. xii. 3, 4), which is "wrought by tribulation" (Rom. v. 4): *long-suffering* finds its pattern in God's dealing with "the unthankful and evil" (Rom. ii. 4; 1 Tim. i. 16; 1 Pet. iii. 20; 2 Pet. iii. 15). "With joyfulness" belongs to this clause (Theodore, Calvin, Bengel, Alford, Lightfoot) rather than the next, and lends a more vivid force to the foregoing words, while comparatively needless if prefixed to those that follow (so, however, Chrysostom,

Erasmus, Meyer, Ellicott—"with joy giving thanks," etc.). This paradox is genuinely Pauline, and arises from personal experience (comp. ver. 24; Phil. i. 29; Rom. v. 3; 1 Thess. i. 6; 2 Cor. i. 4—8; vi. 10; xii. 9, 10).

Ver. 12.—Giving thanks to the Father, who made us (or, you) meet for our (or, your) share in the lot (or, portion) of the saints in the light (vers. 3—5; Acts xx. 32; xxvi. 18; Titus iii. 7; Eph. i. 5, 11—14; Gal. iii. 29; Rom. viii. 15—17). The reading "us" is very doubtful. Westcott and Hort, with Tischendorf, prefer "you," as in the two oldest manuscripts: for the transition from first to second person, comp. ch. ii. 13, 14 (vers. 9—12). In the same strain the apostle gave thanks on their account (ver. 5). "Thanks-giving" is prominent in this letter (ch. ii. 7; iii. 15, 17; iv. 2), as "joy" in Philipians. The title "the Father" frequently stands alone in St. John's Gospel, coming from the lips of the Son, but St. Paul employs it thus only here and in Eph. iii. 14, R.V.; Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 6 (comp. 1 John iii. 1); see note on ver. 2. Those "give thanks to the Father" who gratefully acknowledge him in "the spirit of adoption" as their Father through Christ (Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 1—7; Eph. i. 5). And the Father makes us meet for the inheritance when he enables us to call him "Father"—"If children, then heirs." "To make meet" (*ἁγιάζειν*), the verb found besides only in 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6 in the New Testament, "to make sufficient," R.V.) is "to make competent," "to qualify" for some position or work. This *meetness*, already conferred on the Colossians, consists in their forgiveness (ver. 14) and adoption (Eph. i. 5—7), which qualify and entitle them to receive the blessings of Christ's kingdom (ver. 13; Rom. v. 1, 2; Gal. iii. 26—29; Eph. ii. 5, 6; Titus iii. 7), and which anticipate and form the basis of that worthiness of character and fitness of condition in which they are finally to be presented "perfect in Christ" (vers. 10, 22, 28; 1 Thess. v. 23, 24); "not qui dignos fecit" (Vulgate), but *qui idoneos fecit* (Ellicott). "Called and (made us meet)," is one of the few characteristic readings of the great Vatican Manuscript, which Westcott and Hort reject (see their 'Introduction,' § 320, and Lightfoot's 'Detached Notes,' p. 251). "The lot of the saints" is that entire wealth of blessedness laid out for the people of God (Eph. i. 3; ii. 12; iii. 6; iv. 4—7), in which each has his due share or part (Meyer, Ellicott, Lightfoot, less suitably: "parcel of (consisting in) the lot"); comp. ver. 28; Eph. iv. 7. Κληρος ("lot," Acts viii. 21; xxvi. 18), scarcely distinguishable from the more usual κληρονομία ("inheritance," ch. iii. 24; Eph. i. 14, etc.;

Acts xx. 32; Heb. ix. 15; 1 Pet. i. 4), is used in the Old Testament (LXX) of the sacred land as "divided by lot," and as "the lot" assigned to Israel (Numb. xxxiv. 13; Deut. iv. 21, etc.), also of Jehovah himself as "the lot" of the landless Levites (Deut. x. 9), and of Israel in turn as "the lot" of Jehovah (Deut. iv. 20). It is the divinely allocated possession of the people of God in his kingdom. It belongs to them as "saints" (ver. 2; Eph. ii. 19; Acts xx. 32; xxvi. 18; Ps. xv.; Numb. xxxv. 34; Jer. ii. 7); and it lies "in the light," in "the kingdom of the Son of God's love" (ver. 13) that is filled with the light of the knowledge of God proceeding from Christ (2 Cor. iv. 1—6; John i. 4; viii. 12),—light here manifest "in part" and in conflict with Satanic darkness (ver. 13; Eph. v. 8—14; vi. 11, 12; 1 Thess. v. 4—8; Rom. xiii. 11—13; John i. 5), hereafter the full possession of God's saints (ch. iii. 4; 1 Cor. xiii. 12; Rom. xiii. 12; John xii. 36; Rev. xxi. 23—25; Isa. lx. 19, 20).

Vers. 13 and 14 proceed to show how this qualification has been gained.

Ver. 13.—Who (so, the Father) rescued us from the dominion of the darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love (Eph. v. 8; vi. 12; Rom. vii. 14—viii. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57; 1 Thess. i. 9, 10; 1 Pet. ii. 9; 1 John i. 5—7; ii. 7—11). To "rescue" (*ῥύσασθαι*: 1 Thess. i. 10; Rom. vii. 24; 2 Cor. i. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18,—to be carefully distinguished from other Greek verbs rendered "deliver") implies the evil state of the rescued, the superior power of the rescuer, and a conflict issuing in deliverance. St. Paul repeatedly associates the figure of darkness with the language of warfare (Eph. vi. 12; Rom. xiii. 12; 1 Thess. v. 8; comp. John i. 5, R.V. margin). "Dominion of darkness"—same as "dominion of Satan" (Acts xxvi. 18). *Ἐξουσία*, as distinguished from *δύναμις* ("power," vers. 11, 29), is "right," "authority" (comp. 1 Cor. ix. 4—6; John i. 12; xvii. 2): the power of Satan is not mere external force, but takes the form of established and (as it were) legalized dominion (1 Cor. xv. 56; Luke iv. 6; John xii. 31). "The darkness" is precisely opposed to "the light" (ver. 12), being the region of falsehood and hatred, whether in this world or outside of it, where Satan rules (Eph. vi. 12; v. 8, 11; 2 Cor. iv. 4; 1 John ii. 8—11; Matt. viii. 12; Luke xii. 53; John iii. 19, 20; xii. 85). To "translate" (*μετεστήσει*) is to remove from one place, office, etc., to another; Josephus ('Ant.,' ix. 11, 1) uses it of the deportation of the Israelites by the Assyrian king. The Father, rescuing his captive children, brings them "into the kingdom of the Son of his love." Here we touch the central

and governing idea of this Epistle, that of *the supreme lordship of Christ* (vers. 15—20; ch. ii. 6, 10, 19, etc.); and this passage affords a clue which will, we trust, guide us through some of the greatest difficulties which follow. (On "the kingdom of the Son," comp. Eph. i. 20—23; Phil. ii. 6—11; Rom. xiv. 9; 1 Cor. viii. 6; xv. 24—28; Heb. i. 1—4; ii. 5—10; Rev. i. 5—7, 18; v., etc.; John v. 22—27; xvii. 2; xviii. 36; Matt. xxv. 31—46; xxviii. 18—20.) Only here and in Eph. v. 5; 2 Tim. iv. 1, 18; 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, does the apostle speak of the kingdom as *Christ's*; otherwise as *God's* (and future). The "Son of his love" is not simply the "beloved Son" (Eph. i. 6; Matt. iii. 17, etc.), but the representative and depositary of his love: "Who is his love made manifest" (Augustine, Lightfoot; see ver. 2, note; John iii. 16; xvii. 26; 1 John iv. 8, 9, 14—16; Eph. ii. 4; Titus iii. 4—6; Rom. v. 8), being at once our "Redeemer-King" (ver. 13, 14) and the "Image of the invisible God" (ver. 15).

Ver. 14.—In whom we have (or, *had*) our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins (Eph. i. 7; Gal. iii. 10—13; Rom. iii. 19—26; 2 Cor. v. 18—21; 1 Pet. iii. 18, 19). Eph. i. 7 suggested to some later copyists the interpolation "through his blood," words highly suitable in the Ephesian doxology. This verse is the complement of the last: there salvation appears as a *rescue by sovereign power*, here as a *release by legal ransom* (*ἀπολύτρωσις*). The *ransom-price* Christ had declared beforehand (Matt. xx. 28; xxvi. 28; comp. Rom. iii. 24—26; Gal. ii. 20; 1 Tim. ii. 6; Heb. ix. 12—14; 1 Pet. i. 18; Rev. i. 5, R.V.; v. 9). "We have redemption" ("had it," according to a few ancient witnesses) in present experience in "the forgiveness of our sins" (vers. 21, 22; ch. ii. 13, 14; iii. 13; 2 Cor. v. 21; Rom. iv. 25; v. 1; viii. 1; Titus ii. 14; Heb. ix. 14; x. 1—18; 1 Pet. ii. 24; 1 John i. 7—ii. 2; iv. 10). Rom. iii. 24 gives its objective ground. The "redemption of the body" (also *bought* by the same *price*, 1 Cor. vi. 20) will make the work complete (Eph. i. 13, 14; Rom. viii. 19—23; 1 Cor. i. 30). Lightfoot suggests that the apostle intends to contradict the doctrine of redemption taught by the Gnostics, who made it consist in initiation into their "mysteries" (see note on ver. 27); and supposes that this notion may already

have existed at Colossæ in some incipient form. But such an abuse of the term seems to imply a well-established and familiar Christian use. Philo, who speaks the language of the Jewish philosophic mysticism of the first century, has no such usage.

In firm, clear lines the apostle has retraced, in vers. 12—14 (comp. vers. 20—23; ch. ii. 11—14), the teaching of his earlier Epistles on the doctrines of salvation. Here he assumes, in brief and comprehensive terms, what in writing to the Galatians and Romans he had formerly been at so much pains to prove.

VERS. 15—23.—SECTION II. THE REDEEMING SON AND HIS KINGDOM. We now approach the real subject of the apostle's letter, and that which is its distinction and glory amongst the Epistles, in the great theological deliverance of vers. 15—20 concerning the *Person of Christ*. This passage occupies a place in the Christology of St. Paul corresponding to that which belongs to Rom. iii. 19—26 in regard to his Soteriology. Here he treats directly and expressly of the sovereignty of Christ and the nature of his Person—subjects which elsewhere in his writings are for the most part matter of assumption or mere incidental reference. But the paragraph is no detached or interpolated piece of abstract theology. It depends grammatically and practically on the previous verses (12—14). It sets forth *who he is and what place he fills in the universe*—that Son of God's love in whom we have redemption, and in whose kingdom the Father has placed us; and what cause, therefore, there is for the Colossians to give thanks as having *such a Person* for their redeeming King. The passage falls into two parts, closely corresponding both in form and sense, and governed, like other of the apostle's more fervid and elevated utterances, by a Hebraistic antithetical rhythm of expression, which should aid us in the difficulties of its interpretation. A twofold headship is ascribed to the Lord Christ—*natural* (vers. 15—17) and *redemptional* (vers. 18—20): the first the source and ground of the second; the second the issue and consequence of the first, its reassertion and consummation. This symmetrical structure we may attempt to exhibit in the following way:—

I. Ver. 15. (a) Who is Image of God the invisible, Firstborn of all creation:

Ver. 16. (b) For in Him were created all things,

" (c) In the heavens and on the earth, the things visible and the things invisible—
whether thrones, whether lordships, whether principalities,
whether dominions—

Ver. 17. (d) All things through Him and unto Him have been created;

" (e) And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

II. Ver. 18. (e) And He is the Head of the body, the Church ;

" (a) Who is (the) Beginning, Firstborn out of the dead,
that in all things He might become pre-eminent :

Ver. 19. (b) For in Him he was pleased that all the fulness should dwell ;

Ver. 20. (d) And through Him to reconcile all things unto Him, having made peace
through the blood of his cross,—through Him,

" (e) Whether the things on the earth, or the things in the heavens.

I. (a) In virtue of his relation to God, Christ is at once (b) *ground* of creation, (c) both in heaven and on earth, and at the same time (d) its *means* and its *end* ; he is, therefore, (e) supreme over the universe, preconditioning its existence, constituting its unity. II. In a similar sense he is (e) Head of the Church, (a) in virtue of his new relation to man, which makes him (b) *ground*, (d) *means*, and *end* of reconciliation also, (c) whether on earth or in heaven.

Ver. 15.—Who is Image of God the invisible (ch. ii. 9 ; Phil. ii. 6 ; 2 Cor. iv. 4 ; Heb. i. 1—3 ; xi. 27 ; John i. 1—3, 18 ; v. 37, 38 ; 1 Tim. i. 17 ; Exod. xxxiii. 20 ; Job xxiii. 8, 9). On "image" (*εἰκών*), see Lightfoot's full discussion ; and Trenchard's 'Synonyms.' The word is well defined by Philo ('On Dreams,' i. § 40) : "The image—no imitation, but the very archetypal representation itself (*αὐτὸ τὸ ἀρχέτυπον εἶδος*). This title the apostle had before conferred on Christ in 2 Cor. iv. 4. There it is in the moral and redemptional attributes of the Godhead, manifest in "the illumination of the gospel," that *Jesus Christ* (ver. 6), the incarnate Redeemer, appears as "the Image of God : " here the title is put upon him as representing the invisible God in all that pertains to nature and creation. The Colossian error rested on a philosophical dualism. It assumed an absolute separation between the infinite God and the finite, material world, which was viewed as the work of lower and more or less evil powers. To counteract it, therefore, the apostle's argument must go down to the foundation of things, and seeks for a true conception of the universe on which to ground itself. Accordingly, in this and the following verses, he bases the redeeming work of "the Word made flesh who dwelt among us," set forth in his previous Epistles, upon that of "the Word who was with God in the beginning, who was God, and through whom all things were made." He avoids, however, the term *Logos*, which must have been perfectly familiar to him in this connection—possibly to prevent misunderstanding (see Introduction, §§ 4, 7). Firstborn of all creation (Rom. viii. 29 ; Heb. i. 2, 6 ; John i. 18 ; Ps. lxxxix. 27). (On "firstborn," see again Lightfoot's invaluable note.) *Primogeniture* in early ages carried with it the rights of full heirship, involving representation of the father both in his

religious and civil capacity, and in his sovereignty within the house (Gen. xxv. 31 ; xxvii. 29 ; xlix. 3 ; Deut. xxi. 17 ; 1 Chron. v. 1). But natural precedence, as in the case of Esau and Jacob, may yield to Divine election, which gives a unique sacredness and separateness to the position and title of the firstborn. So Israel is Jehovah's *firstborn* among the nations (Exod. iv. 22, 23 ; Jer. xxxi. 9). What belonged to the chosen people under this title is, in the language of Ps. lxxxix. 27, concentrated on the person of the Messianic King, the elect Son of David ; and *firstborn* became a standing designation of the Messiah. The apostle has already applied it to Christ in his relation to the Church (Rom. viii. 29 ; see below, ver. 18), as being not the *eldest* simply, but one intrinsically superior to and sovereign over those whom he claims for his brethren (comp. Rom. xiv. 9). Here the historical birthright and actual sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ within the Church are affirmed to rest upon an original primacy over the universe itself. He is not the Church's only, but "all creation's Firstborn" (comp. Heb. iii. 3—6, "Son over his own house"—the house of him "who built all things"). The phrase is synonymous with the "Heir of all things" of Heb. i. 2, and the "Only-begotten" of John i. 18. So far were the titles Firstborn and Only-begotten from excluding each other in Jewish thought that Israel is designated "God's firstborn, only-begotten," in the apocryphal Psalms of Solomon (xviii. 4 ; also 4 Esdr. vi. 58) ; and so entirely had the former become a title of sovereignty that God himself is called "Firstborn of the world" (Rabbi Bechai : see Lightfoot). Philo uses the equivalent *πρωτόγονος* of the Divine Word as the seat of the archetypal ideas after which creation was framed. This phrase has been a famous battle-ground of controversy. It was a chief stronghold of the Arians, who read "of (out of) all creation" as partitive genitive. This interpretation, while grammatically allowable, is exegetically and historically impossible. For vers. 16 and 17 expressly and emphatically distinguish between "him" and "the all things" of creation. The idea of the Son of God being part of creation was foreign to St. Paul's mind (ch. ii. 9 ; 1 Cor. viii. 6 ; Phil. ii. 6—8), and to the thought of his day. Had such a misunderstanding occurred to

him as possible, he would, perhaps, have expressed himself differently. Some of the early opponents of Arius gave to *πρωτότοκος*, against all usage, an active sense—"First-begotten of all creation." Athanasius, with other Greek Fathers of the fourth century, in the stress of the same controversy, were led to propose what subsequently became the standard Socinian interpretation, understanding "creation" to mean "the new (moral) creation" (so also Schleiermacher)—against the whole scope of the context, and cutting the very nerve of the apostle's argument. The Jewish theosophy of the day distributed the offices of representing God, and of mediating between him and the creatures, amongst a variable and nebulous crowd of agencies—*angels, words, powers*—neither human nor strictly Divine. The apostle gathers all these mediatorial and administrative functions into one, and places them in the hands of "the Son of his love." Looking up to God, he is his Image: looking down on creation, he is its primal Head and Lord. "Creation," standing collectively without the article in antithesis to "First-born," is used qualitatively, or (as the logicians would say) *intensively* (see Alford; and comp. ver. 23 and Eph. ii. 21, Revised Text). This is better than making *κτίσις* a quasi-proper noun (Winer, Lightfoot), or rendering distributively, "every creature" (Meyer, Ellicott). (On this occasional collective use of *πᾶς* without article, see Krüger's 'Griech. Sprachlehre,' i. 50. 11. 9.)

Ver. 16.—For in him were created all things (ver. 17; John i. 3, 4). 'Ev is "in," never "by," in St. Paul. Τα πάντα (collective plural with singular predicate, literally, *was created*) corresponds nearly to our "the universe." John i. 4 (R.V. margin; preferable, as we think) is the true parallel to this sentence. St. John sees in "the Word" the animating principle of creation; St. Paul in "the Son of God's love" its ground and *raison d'être*. "He is the Source of its life, the Centre of all its developments, the Mainspring of all its motions" (Lightfoot). As the spiritual life of believers was formed "in Christ" (ch. i. 2, 4; ii. 10—15), so, in its measure, the natural life of creation. The added in the heavens and on the earth (ver. 20; Phil. ii. 10; Matt. vi. 10) reduces to the same subordination to the Lord Christ the two worlds so widely separated in common thought and in the religious philosophy of the time. The polemic bearing of this distinction comes out more clearly when to the distinction of *sphæra* is added that of *nature*—the things visible and the things invisible (ch. ii. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 18; Rom. i. 20; Heb. xi. 3); and when amongst the latter are specified those highest orders of invisible beings whose power might be

most readily supposed to come into comparison with that of the Son,—whether thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or dominions (ch. ii. 10, 15, 18, 19; Eph. i. 21; iii. 10; iv. 10; vi. 12; Rom. viii. 38; 1 Cor. xv. 24; Heb. ii. 5; Rev. iv. 4). By their low and vague conceptions of the position of Christ, and by over-exalted notions of that of the angels, the Colossian errorists had all but, if not altogether, identified their powers with his. The apostle, therefore, declares that the invisible beings of the worlds above us, however lofty their names or mighty their powers, are *his creatures* as much as the lowliest objects within our sight (comp. Heb. i., ii., where also false views are corrected of the importance of the angels, exaggerated at the expense of Christ). This list of angelic titles is not intended to be exhaustive, or authoritative. It is rather quoted as current at the time, and in a certain tone of "impatience with this elaborate angelology" (Lightfoot). All things through him and unto him have been created (1 Cor. viii. 6; Heb. i. 2; John i. 3). "In him" (ver. 16a) carries us back to the beginning of creation (with verb *ἐκτίσθη* in aorist, indefinite past); "through him" leads us along its process; and "unto him" points us to its end (verb *ἐκτίσται* in perfect tense, of abiding result). Comp. Philo ('On Monarchy,' ii. § 5): "Now the image of God is the Word, through which the whole world was framed." Already St. Paul had said, "Through Christ are all things" (1 Cor. viii. 6). Hitherto the "unto (for) him" has been reserved for "the Father" (1 Cor. viii. 6; Rom. xi. 36; comp. Heb. ii. 10). Baur finds in this change of expression a radical theological contradiction and a sign of unauthenticity, as also in the contrast of ch. iii. 11 with 1 Cor. xv. 28. But the apostle speaks from a standpoint different from that of the earlier Epistles. In the Roman and Corinthian passages he is concerned with the relations of God to man, and his dealings with mankind through Christ; here, with the relations of Christ himself to his own kingdom. The final "delivering up of the kingdom to the Father" lies outside the scope of this passage, which begins with the delivering up of us by the Father to "the kingdom of the Son" (ver. 13). Till "the end," which is "not yet," Christ must reign (1 Cor. xv. 25), and all things owe allegiance to him; they are created unto this end (Eph. iii. 9, 10), and therefore unto him, to serve his kingdom (Phil. ii. 10). The apostle asserts of creation what he has already said (2 Cor. v. 15; Rom. xiv. 9; Acts xx. 28) and is about to say again (ver. 20) of the redeemed Church. That both exist for Christ (relatively and proximately) is a truth perfectly

consistent with their existing for God (absolutely and ultimately); 1 Cor. iii. 23 gives the unity of the two ideas.

Ver. 17.—And he is before all things (ver. 15: John i. 1; viii. 58; xvii. 5; Rev. iii. 14; Prov. viii. 22—31). This emphatic “he” (*αὐτός*) meets us in every clause and in every possible grammatical form, as though in the very grammar of the sentence Christ must be “all in all.” “He” is kept ringing in the ears of those who were in danger of forgetting him in the charm of other sounds (ch. ii. 4, 19: comp. ch. ii. 9—15; Eph. ii. 14—18, for the same rhetorical feature; also Eph. iv. 11; 1 John ii. 2; Rev. xix. 15, Greek). We now pass from the origination (ver. 16 a), through the continuance (ver. 16 b, present perfect *ἐκτίσται*), to the present constitution (ver. 17 b) of the universe as resting upon this antecedent and perpetual He Is, which affords the underlying basis uniting in one the redemptional and the creative offices of Christ (vers. 17, 18). In the mouth of a Hebraist like St. Paul, the coincidence of the doubly emphatic “He Is” with the etymological sense of Jehovah (*Yahweh*; *יְהוָה*, LXX), as interpreted in Exod. iii. vi., can scarcely be accidental (see Lightfoot). And Greek readers of the LXX might be reminded of such declarations as those of Isa. xli. 4; xlv. 6; xlviii. 12 (comp. John i. 1, 2; viii. 24, 28, 58; xiii. 19; Rev. i. 8, 17; xxi. 6). In St. Paul’s Christ, as in Isaiah’s Jehovah, sovereignty of redeeming, rests upon sovereignty of creative power, and both alike upon that *perpetuity of being* which “the Son of God’s love” shares with the Father. Socinian exegetes give to “before” an ethical sense (“at the head of,” “superior to”), in harmony with their reference of vers. 15—18 to the relation of Christ to the Church. But *πρὸ* never has this sense in St. Paul: comp. also the “Firstborn” of ver. 15, and again “Beginning,” “Firstborn” (ver. 18). If ver. 15 left us in any doubt as to the writer’s intention to assert Christ’s pre-mundane existence, this expression ought to remove it. Language can hardly be more explicit. And all things in him consist (John i. 3, 4, R.V. margin; Heb. i. 3; xi. 3); i.e. have their common standing, are constituted a whole. The apostle speaks here the language of philosophy. In Plato and Aristotle, the term *consist* (*consistence*) is found expressing the essentially philosophical conception of the inherent unity, in virtue of which the universe is such and forms a single, correlated whole. The Alexandrine Judaists had already found this unifying principle in the Logos: “He is the Image of God, to whom alone fullness belongs. For other things of themselves

are loose; and if they happen to be consolidated anywhere, it is the Divine Word by which they are tied fast. For it is the cement and the bond of things, that has filled all things with its essence. And having chained and woven together everything, it is itself absolutely full of itself” (Philo, ‘Who is Heir of Divine Things?’ § 33). St. Paul’s declaration meets the questionings indicated by language of this kind (see the more extended references of Meyer and Lightfoot).

Ver. 18.—The words, *And he is the Head of the body, the Church* (ch. ii. 10, 19; Eph. i. 22, 23; iii. 8—10; iv. 15, 16; Heb. i. 3; John xv. 1—6), identify the mediatorial Lord of creation (vers. 15—17) with the redeeming Head of the Church, and claim the prerogatives belonging to him in the former capacity as the basis of his position and offices in the latter (comp. Eph. i. 22). The Pauline doctrine of the Church as the body of Christ is developed in Colossians and Ephesians, especially in the latter Epistle, where it receives its fruitful application. Here the doctrine of the Person of Christ and the doctrine of the Church find their meeting-point as mutually implying each other, and together opposed to the double effect of early Gnosticism, which tended first to lower the dignity of Christ, and then to impair the unity of his Church (see ch. ii. 19, note). In 1 Cor. xii. 12—27 and Rom. xii. 4, 5 the figure of the *body and members* is merely a passing illustration of the mutual relation of believers in the Church; now the *body of Christ* becomes the formal title of the Church, expressing the fundamental and fixed conception of its nature as related to him, who is the centre of its unity, the source of all vital energy and directing control within it (comp. the *vine and branches*, John xv.). In vers. 16, 17 the writer passed from the thought of the origin to that of the constitution of the cosmos; now he proceeds in the reverse order. (*He is the head*) who is (the) Beginning (Rev. iii. 14; xxi. 6; xxii. 13; Acts iii. 15; v. 31; Heb. ii. 10; xii. 2). *Ἀρχή* is without article, used as a proper noun. It is arbitrary to identify it with *ἀναρχή* (“firstfruits”) of 1 Cor. xv. 20, 23; Rom. xi. 16. As explained by the following words, it denotes, as in philosophical Greek, a *first principle, originating cause, fons et origo* (see Lightfoot’s note and references). To borrow “of the dead” from the following parallel clause weakens the force of both. His body, the Church, begins in him, dating and deriving from him its “all in all” (ch. iii. 11, 4; 1 John v. 12; Rev. xxi. 5; 2 Cor. v. 17). This is quite consistent with the “all things are of God” of 2 Cor. v. 18; for the apostle

is thinking here of the relative, historical beginning of "the kingdom of the Son" (ver. 13), there of the absolute beginning of the Divine work of redemption (comp. 1 Cor. i. 30; iii. 23; and note on "unto him," ver. 16). St. John, writing to the neighbouring Laodicea, echoes, apparently, this language of our apostle (Rev. iii. 14). As *Firstborn out of the dead* (ch. ii. 12, 13; iii. 1; Eph. i. 19, 20; Rom. i. 4; vi. 1—14; 1 Cor. xv. 13—18; 2 Cor. xiii. 4; Acts xiii. 30—39; 1 Pet. i. 3, 21; Rev. i. 5, 18; ii. 8; John xi. 25), this Beginning actually begins; Christ becomes the source of a new humanity, a new creation (2 Cor. iv. 14 and Rom. viii. 21). The apostle derives the whole life and power of Christianity, whether as seen in Christ or proved by his people, from his resurrection (see parallels). The name *Firstborn* brings over with it into this verse the glory which surrounds it in ver. 15. The Divine Firstborn, who is before and over all things, wins his title a second time for his earthly brethren's sake (Heb. ii. 10—15). As he appears "out of the dead," born anew from the dark womb of the grave, the nether abyss (Rom. x. 7; Eph. iv. 9; Phil. ii. 8), the Father declares to him, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Acts xiii. 33; Heb. i. 5); the Church exclaims, "My Lord and my God" (John xx. 28); "all authority in heaven and on earth" becomes his (Matt. xxviii. 18; John xvii. 2); he is made "Firstborn over many brethren," who call him Lord (Rom. viii. 29; xiv. 9; Rev. v. 12); and proceeds to "subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. ii. 9, 10; iii. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Heb. x. 13; Rev. xix. 11—16). "*Firstborn out of the dead*" in the source of his new birthright of lordship in the Church, he is "*Firstborn of the dead*" (Rev. i. 5, R.V.: comp. ver. 15) in his abiding relation to dying humanity. And he won this title so as to carry out an antecedent purpose in his mind (comp. Rom. xiv. 9; "In the mind of the father," say Meyer and others—a thought true in itself, but interpolated here), viz. that he might become in all things pre-eminent (ver. 13; ch. ii. 6; Eph. v. 5; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Luke xix. 12—27; xxii. 29, 30; John xviii. 36; Rev. i. 5; iii. 21; xix. 16; Ps. ii. 7, 8). The purpose of creation as "unto Christ" (ver. 17) had been frustrated, so far as related to man, by the entrance of sin and death, and his rightful pre-eminence denied him (John i. 10). He must, therefore, recover it, must become pre-eminent; and this he does by his death and resurrection (John xii. 31, 32; Heb. ii. 14, 15; xii. 2; Phil. ii. 6—11; Isa. liii. 12). "To this end Jesus died and lived again" (Rom. xiv. 9; comp. 2 Cor. v. 15; Rev. i. 18).

Ver. 19.—For in him he was pleased that all the fulness should dwell (ch. ii. 9; Eph. i. 10; John i. 14, 16; Acts ii. 36; Heb. vii. 25; Matt. xxviii. 18). Vers. 19, 20 stand to ver. 18 as vers. 16, 17 to ver. 15. The creative work of the Son explains and justifies his supremacy over the natural universe, and his reconciling work accounts for his lordship over the Church, as it establishes his "pre-eminence in all things." *In him dwelt the forces and laws of the first creation; in him, likewise, all the fulness engaged in the new creation.* It is hard to say what is the grammatical subject of "was pleased." (1) The great majority of interpreters, both ancient and modern, understand "the Father" as borrowed from vers. 12, 13, and suggested by the apostle's use of this verb elsewhere (see 1 Cor. i. 21; Gal. i. 15; Phil. ii. 13; Eph. i. 5, 9, 11); so, recently, De Wette, Meyer, Lightfoot, Alford, Klöpper, R.V. (2) Ellicott, Ewald, R. Schmidt, Weiss, R.V. margin, adopt the immediately following "all the fulness." (3) Conybeare, Hofmann, with a few others, prefer "the Son," the exclusive and all-absorbing subject of vers. 15—18. The *second* interpretation personifies *Pleroma* in a manner unsupported by Pauline usage, and more suitable to the second century (see note on "fulness," below); but the considerations urged by its supporters against the common view are of great weight. In favour of the *third* interpretation given above, are the following reasons: that it supplies the *nearest* subject, that which the Colossian reader, without the usage of other Epistles in his mind, would naturally assume; that it prepares for the reference of the further predicates, "reconcile," "having made peace," "present you holy," etc. (vers. 20—23), to *Christ*, in agreement with the closely parallel Eph. ii. 14—16; v. 27; further and especially, that this view best harmonizes with the sustained and unique emphasis with which the writer has dwelt on the *sovereignty of Christ* in every clause from ver. 14 onwards; and, lastly, that his point of view is *historical* (note the aorists throughout vers. 18—20), as concerned not with the "eternal purpose" and absolute initiative of the Father, but with the establishment of his own kingdom by the Son (ver. 13; see note on "unto him," ver. 16). There is nothing in the term "well pleased" ("good pleasure") to prevent the apostle applying it to the Son, if he finds occasion to do so. But "this view confuses the theology of the passage hopelessly" (Lightfoot). Just the same is said by Baur and Pfleiderer of the "unto him" of ver. 16, and the "all in all" of ch. iii. 11, as compared with the language of 1 Corinthians

and Romans; and the same answer holds good in each case, viz. that the apostle speaks concerning Christ and the Church, and his thoughts move within the circle of their mutual relations, grounded as these are in the Christian constitution of the universe itself. God's good pleasure (Eph. i. 5, 9) lay within and behind Christ's choice and action (John viii. 29); but it was his own good pleasure too (John x. 30). So in John x. 18 (comp. also Eph. v. 2 and Gal. ii. 20 with Rom. v. 8 and viii. 32) the initiative of Christ in the work of redemption is recognized along with that of the Father. "He emptied himself" (Phil. ii. 7); and again "was pleased" that "all the fulness" should be his: comp. Eph. iv. 8—11 (quite consistent with 1 Cor. xii. 28), Heb. i. 3 b, where Christ appears regally assuming his own glory. "All the fulness" is not precisely "the fulness of the Godhead" of ch. ii. 9. Had the more definite expression preceded, it would have been fair to interpret this more general one by its aid. *Pleroma* is a word so varied and elastic in Pauline usage (see Rom. xi. 12; xiii. 10; Gal. iv. 4; Eph. i. 10, 23; iii. 19; iv. 13) that it can scarcely have hardened suddenly into "a recognized term in theology, denoting the totality of the Divine Person and attributes" (Lightfoot). No earlier example of such a usage is furnished. To import it here is to make the Epistle speak the language of the second century. "All the fulness" ascribed to "the Son of God's love" as "Head over all things to the Church," alike "Beginning of the creation of God" and "Firstborn out of the dead," embraces that entire plenitude of nature and of power residing in him since the time that he ascended to the right hand of power (ch. iii. 1; 1 Pet. i. 21; Heb. i. 3, 4; v. 9; vii. 28), and in virtue of which he "becomes in all things pre-eminent." *Karouías* denotes a "fixed dwelling" (ch. ii. 9; Eph. iii. 17); but is aorist in tense here (present in ch. ii. 9) along with *eúdoxase* ("was pleased")—"should make its dwelling in him" (see Acts vii. 2, 4), pointing to a distinct event, viz. in this case the *Ascension* which consummated the *Resurrection* set forth in the last clause. Eph. i. 20—23 and iv. 8—10 strongly confirm the correctness of this view; there "the fulness" with which Christ is charged, and wherewith he proceeds to "fill all things," dates from his ascension (John xii. 32; Acts ii. 32—34; v. 30, 31; Rom. viii. 34). (On the etymology and history of *Pleroma*, see Lightfoot, pp. 257—273. It is passive in derivation, denoting that wherewith anything is filled or made complete.) "From henceforth" Christ is a complete Christ, and we are "made complete in him" (ch. ii. 9, 10; see

notes). This plenitude qualifies him as plenipotentiary in his work of reconciliation.

Ver. 20.—And (was pleased) through him to reconcile all things unto him (ver. 16; Eph. i. 10; Heb. ix. 26; x. 12, 13; Ps. ii. 7, 8). Not "through Christ—unto the Father," as Meyer, Alford, Ellicott, Lightfoot contend. This involves reading "the Father" as subject of ver. 19 (see note). There is nothing in the grammar of this verse to suggest a reference of the same pronoun to two different persons. And the analogy of ver. 16 appears decisive (see note): "Through him and unto him all things were created and reconciled" (De Wette, Conybeare, Hofmann). So Chrysostom: "Lest thou shouldst think that he undertook the office of a minister only, he saith 'unto himself.' And yet he elsewhere says that he reconciled us 'to God.'" English idiom prefers the reflexive "himself" in such a sentence (so in ver. 19); but it is not necessary in Greek (A. Buttmann, 'N. T. Grammar,' p. 111, English trans.). Elsewhere *καταλλάσσω* ("reconcile") is construed with *πρός* or simple dative; here with *εἰς* in correspondence with ver. 16, and implying, in contrast with *διὰ* ("through"), the end for which rather than the person to whom one is reconciled (ver. 18 b; also Rom. xiv. 9; 2 Cor. v. 15; 1 Cor. iii. 23). Brought back again to peace with God, we are brought into the kingdom of his Son (vera. 13, 14). The rebels are made to "kiss the Son." He wins back his kingdom in them. And so the design of creation as his dominion is answered at last. "Reconcile" ("reconciliation") in New Testament usage implies previous resentment in him to whom the offender is reconciled (see Cremer's 'Lexicon,' and Meyer on Rom. v. 10). For such resentment in Christ, comp. ch. iii. 13; 1 Cor. viii. 12; Luke xix. 27; Acts xxvi. 14; Rev. vi. 16; Ps. ii. 12. *Καταλλάσσω* is "to take into favour or allegiance," and, with *ἀπὸ*, "to take back into favour." This reconciliation to Christ the King concerns the "all things" of ver. 16, restoring the broken unity of creation (see note on "the things in the heavens," below). And there is an actual reconciliation now being carried on by the Son from heaven (Phil. iii. 20, 21; 1 Cor. xv. 25), resting upon the potential reconciliation effected on the cross (compare the same double sense in 2 Cor. v. 18—21). Having made peace through the blood of his cross (ch. ii. 13, 14; Eph. ii. 13—18; 2 Cor. v. 18—vi. 1; Rom. iii. 25; v. 10; Heb. ix. 11—14; Rev. i. 5; v. 9; Matt. xxvi. 28). The apostle "glories" only "in the cross" (Gal. vi. 14), the sole means of salvation, viewed from whatever side (1 Cor. i. 23, 24). Peace is made for those who were

"alienated and enemies in wicked works" (ver. 21), who were under the dominion of the enemy of God and his Christ (vers. 13, 14). It begins as the peace of *forgiveness* (ver. 14; ii. 13; iii. 13; Rom. iii. 24-26; v. 1), and continues as an abiding fellowship with God through the Spirit, in obedience to Christ, the *one Lord* (ver. 13; ch. ii. 6; Rom. v. 1, 2; vii. 5-9, 28; Gal. v. 22; Phil. iv. 7; 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; Acts ii. 32-34). There can be peace only when he is Lord (1 Cor. xv. 25; Heb. x. 13; Rev. xix. 11-16). In this all the present blessings of salvation are comprised (ver. 2). "The blood of the cross" is the one all-sufficient atonement which brings men into peace with God, and so puts them back into the kingdom of Christ, who is "Prince and Saviour," "Priest and King" (Rom. iii. 25, 26; xiv. 9; 2 Cor. v. 15; Titus ii. 14). *Faith*, the subjective condition of *peace*, appears in ver. 23 (Rom. v. 1; xv. 13). "Having made peace," as a single compound verb, occurs only here in the New Testament (comp. Matt. v. 10). The repeated through him is textually doubtful; copyists were more likely to omit than to insert it here. This emphatic repetition suitably introduces the bold and startling words, whether the things on the earth, or the things in the heavens (ver. 16). The things "in the heavens," as in ver. 16, include the whole creation, spiritual or material, other than "the things upon the earth." In Rom. viii. 19-21 we learned that the earthly creation shares man's fall and his redemption. But "sin entered" (Rom. v. 12) here from outside, and how far its influence extends beyond our planet we cannot tell. St. Paul does not positively affirm that the reconciliation of the cross embraces other worlds than ours. He speaks hypothetically. Christ's death is in his eyes an event parallel only to creation in its magnitude, and he can set no limit to its potential efficacy. Its virtue is sufficient to "reconcile all things," wherever such reconciliation is needed and is possible (yet see Heb. ii. 16). The difficulty is not to be evaded by putting a milder sense on "reconcile" as applied to "the things in the heavens" (so Alford and others, referring to Eph. iii. 10); "the blood of the cross" forbids any thought but that of the propitiatory atonement (see Meyer). Nor does the text say anything of a reconciliation between "earth and heaven" (Erasmus), "men and angels" (Chrysostom, Bengel), "Jews and Gentiles," "secular and spiritual affairs," etc.; such glosses are opposed to St. Paul's strict use of the word "reconcile," and to the parallelism of ver. 16.

In vers. 21-23 the apostle descends, with characteristic boldness and suddenness, from

the vast generalizations of vers. 15-20 to the closest personal application of his theme—from "all things in earth and heaven" to "you" (comp. Eph. i. 22—ii. 1, 2). With Lightfoot, we place only a comma, or a colon at most, after ver. 20.

Ver. 21.—And you, at one time being (men) alienated, and enemies in your thought, (engaged) in your wicked works, yet now did he reconcile; or, were ye reconciled [so Meyer, Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort, and R.V. margin, following Codex B] (ch. ii. 11; iii. 7; Eph. ii. 1-3, 11, 12; iv. 18; v. 5-8; 1 Cor. vi. 4; Rom. vi. 21; 1 Pet. i. 11; iv. 3). The combination of *ὄντες* ("being") with perfect passive participle ("having been alienated") implies a fixed condition, that has become as a part of one's nature (so in Eph. iv. 18, Revised Text). As the opposite of "reconciled," "alienated" is strictly passive, and denotes, not a subjective feeling on the part of the sinner, but an objective determination on the part of God, an exclusion from the Divine favour, from "the kingdom of the Son" and "the lot of the saints" (vers. 12, 13; Eph. v. 9; ii. 3, 11-13; iv. 18; Rom. i. 18: comp. usage of LXX in Ps. lxxviii. 9; 1 Esdr. ix. 4; Sir. xi. 34). "Enemies in your thought" sets forth the disposition of the sinner towards God (Rom. viii. 7; Phil. iii. 18: so Alford, Ellicott, Lightfoot). Meyer maintains the passive sense of "enemies," as found in Rom. v. 10; xi. 28; Gal. iv. 16. On the latter view, *τῇ δαίμονι* is instrumental dative, "by," "in virtue of your state of mind;" on the former, it is dative of reference or definition. *Δαίμονι* (here only and Eph. ii. 3 and iv. 18 in St. Paul) has possibly a polemical reference. It denotes in Greek philosophy, the faculty of *thought*, as opposed to the bodily powers. In Philo's teaching it signifies the higher part of human nature, akin to God, and opposed to evil which belongs to the senses: "Thought (*δαίμονι*) is the best thing in us" ('On Fugitives,' § 26); "Every man in regard to his intellect (*δαίμονι*) is united to the Divine Word, being an impression or fragment or ray of that blessed nature; but in respect of his body he belongs to the entire world" ('On the Creation of the World,' § 51). But here sin is associated with the *intellect* in man, and redemption with "the body of Christ's flesh" (ver. 22): comp. notes on "reason," ch. ii. 18, and "body," ch. ii. 23; also Eph. iv. 18, where the *reason* is vain, the *intellect* darkened. "Wicked" [emphasized by its position in the Greek, denoting *active* evil; see Trench's 'Synonyms,' on *πορνός*] works" is a phrase common in St. John, only used here by St. Paul (comp. ch. iii. 7; Eph. ii. 1-3; Rom. vi. 19, 20; Gal. v. 19; Heb. ix. 14). These works are the practices of life in which the sinner is

abidingly excluded from "the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph. v. 5), and manifests the radical antipathy of his mind toward God. "Yet [or, 'but'] now:" comp. ver. 26; ch. iii. 8; Eph. ii. 13; Rom. iii. 21, etc.—a lively form of transition characteristic of St. Paul, primarily temporal, then also logical in sense. "Were ye reconciled" breaks through the grammatical structure of the sentence, as in vers. 26, 27 (see Lightfoot, and Winer's 'N. T. Grammar,' p. 717). If "did he reconcile" (or, "hath he reconciled") be the correct reading, "Christ" is still subject of the verb, as in vers. 19—22, and consistently with Eph. ii. 15, 16. (On "reconcile," see ver. 20.)

Ver. 22.—*In the body of his flesh* (ver. 20; ch. ii. 11; Rom. viii. 3; vii. 4; 1 Tim. iii. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 24; iii. 18; iv. 1; Heb. ii. 14, 15; x. 20; 1 John iv. 2; 2 John 7; Luke xxiv. 39). With a significant emphasis, the material body of Christ is made the instrument of that reconciliation in the carrying out of which "his whole fulness" is engaged (vers. 19, 20); see note on "thought," ver. 21, and on "body," ch. ii. 23. The necessity of the double expression was shown by the fact that the Gnostic Marcion erased "of his flesh" from the text of this Epistle, and interpreted "the body" as "the Church;" Bengel and others suppose "of his flesh" to be added to prevent this mistake (see Tertullian, 'Against Marcion,' v. 19). This phrase was the crux of Docetism, whose principles were indeed implicitly contained in the Alexandrine-Jewish philosophy with its contempt for matter and the physical life, which was now first beginning to leaven the Church. *Body* is antithetical to *soul*; *flesh* to *spirit*. The former is individual and concrete, the actual physical organism; the latter denotes the material of which it consists, the bodily nature in its essence and characteristics (comp. note on ver. 11; and see Cremer's 'Lexicon' on these words). "In the body" is not "by the body," nor "during his earthly life" (as though opposed to "out of the body," 2 Cor. v. 6—8; xii. 3), but "as incarnate." The Epistle to the Hebrews expands the thought of our Epistle in its own way in Heb. ii. 14—18; x. 5—10. That reconciliation is through the (or, *his*) death (Rom. iii. 25; iv. 25; v. 10; 1 Cor. xv. 3; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; Gal. iii. 13; Heb. ii. 9; ix. 15, 16; John xi. 51, 52; x. 11; Rev. i. 18; ii. 8) is the fundamental axiom of the gospel (ver. 5), already implied in vers. 14 and 20. And the atoning death presupposes the Incarnation (Heb. ii. 14). The two foregoing phrases belong grammatically to ver. 21. To present you holy and without blemish and unreprouvable before him (ver. 28; Eph. i. 4; v. 25—27; 1 Thess. ii. 19; v. 23; Rom. ii. 16; 1 Cor. iv. 5; 2

Cor. iv. 14; v. 10; Acts xvii. 31); before "Christ" (ver. 19), who is "Judge" (John v. 22, 23) as well as "King" and "Redeemer" (vers. 13, 14); this also belongs to his fulness. He will "himself present the Church to himself" (Eph. v. 27, Revised Text; also 2 Cor. iv. 14). In this presentation his redeeming work culminates (comp. Phil. i. 6, 10; ii. 16; and, in view of the connection of vers. 22 and 23, 1 Cor. i. 6—9). So, in general, Meyer and Alford, Elliott and Lightfoot refer to God's present approbation, quoting Eph. i. 4, a parallel much less close than ver. 27, and supposing "God" the subject of the verb (see note on ver. 19). "*Holy erga Deum; without blemish respectu vestri; unreprouvable respectu proximi*" (Bengel). (On "holy," see note, ver. 2; also ch. iii. 12.) "*ἄμωμος* is not "without blame," but "without blemish," "immaculate" (Lightfoot, R.V.; Eph. i. 4; v. 27; Phil. ii. 15; comp. Heb. ix. 14; 1 Pet. i. 19). In the LXX it is the equivalent of the Hebrew *tamim* ("integer"), "faultless" in bodily condition or in moral character. "Unreprouvable," as a judicial term ("without charge that can be preferred"), points to the judgment-day, and hence is wanting in Eph. i. 4 (comp. 1 Cor. i. 8; Rom. viii. 33, 34; 1 Tim. iii. 10; Titus i. 6, 7).

Ver. 23.—If at least ye are continuing in the faith, grounded and settled (ver. 4; ch. ii. 6, 7; Eph. iii. 18; vi. 10—17; Phil. i. 27; 1 Thess. iii. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 15; 1 Cor. xv. 2, 58; Gal. i. 6; v. 1). All that Christ has done and will do for the Colossians, yet depends on their continued faith. *Efyē* (only Pauline in New Testament; containing "the volatile particle *ye*") suggests, actually (Gal. iii. 4) or rhetorically (Eph. iii. 2; iv. 21), a conceivable alternative; *if as appears, as one hopes, or fears, or may assume*. "Are continuing in" (*ἐπιμένετε*) is both "abiding by" and "adhering to" (Rom. vi. 1; Phil. i. 24, R.V.; 1 Tim. iv. 16). As present indicative, it implies a (supposed) actual state. "The faith," as regularly in the New Testament, is the act and exercise of faith (subjective), not the content or matter of faith (objective). "Grounded" or "founded," perfect passive, implies a fixed condition (comp. ch. ii. 7; Eph. iii. 18, coupled with "rooted;" 1 Cor. iii. 10—12; Eph. ii. 20; 2 Tim. ii. 19; also Luke vi. 48). "Settled" (*ἐδραίοις*, from *ἔδρα*, a seat) is opposed to "moved away," just as in 1 Cor. xv. 58. The words, and not being moved away (or, *letting yourselves be moved away*), put the same assumption negatively, and more specifically as he adds, from the hope of the gospel; *good tidings* (vers. 5, 27; ch. iii. 15, 24; Eph. ii. 12; 1 Thess. i. 3, 10; 2 Tim. i. 9—11; 1 Cor. xv. 58; 2 Cor. iv. 13—v. 8; Rom. viii. 17—25; Heb. iii. 6, 14; vi. 11, 18, 19;

x. 35, 36)—that which is its peculiar property and glory, the crown of Christ's redeeming work (ver. 22), the end of his servant's labours (ver. 28), for which, by anticipation, he already gives thanks (ver. 5), but which was directly threatened and brought in question by Colossian error (see notes on ch. ii. 18; iii. 15). (*The gospel*) which you heard (vers. 5, 7; notes), which was preached in all creation, that is under the heaven (ver. 6; Rom. xvi. 26; Mark xvi. 15; Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; xxiv. 14). The transition from "you" to "all creation" resembles that of vers. 5, 6 (comp. vers. 20, 21). "Preached" is literally "heralded," "loudly and officially announced;" so, frequently in St. Paul (see 2 Tim. i. 11), also in Mark xvi. 15. Greek usage does not support the interpretation which makes *κτίσις* ("creation") equivalent to "humanity." This sense of the word, which, even in Mark, such interpreters as Bengel, Lange, Alford, reject, is quite Hebraistic and exceptional. The phrase, "all creation," the writer has already used in ver. 15; here, as there (see note), without the article (Revised Text). The universal meaning it carries there is now limited by "under the heaven." The *earthly creation*, subject as it is to Christ, is the sphere of this proclamation, the *preaching-room* which is to resound everywhere with the glad tidings (comp. Ps. l. 1; xcvi. 7; Isa. lii. 7; lv. 12; Rev. x. 2; xiv. 6). And with this range it was proclaimed, for from the first it claimed universal audience. Whereof I became, I Paul, a minister (vers. 24—29; Eph. iii. 1—13; 1 Tim. i. 11—14; ii. 7; 2 Tim. i. 11; Rom. i. 5; xi. 13; xv. 15—19; 1 Cor. iii. 5, 10; ix. 1, 2, 16, 17; 2 Cor. iv. 1—6; vi. 1—10; Gal. i. 1, 15, 16; 1 Thess. ii. 4; Acts ix. 15; xxvi. 16—18). (For "minister," see ver. 7.) The later Epistles betray a markedly heightened sense in the apostle of the unique dignity and importance of his own position, and those who question their authenticity press this fact against them. But the difference of tone is what one would expect in "such a one as Paul the aged, and now a prisoner also of Christ Jesus" (Philem. 9). As the Gentile Churches grew, reverence for his person deepened; and the success of his life-mission became more assured, especially now that the struggle with reactionary Judaism, signalized by the Epistles of the third missionary journey, was to a large extent decided in his favour. The false teachers he is now opposing did not, we should gather, attack the apostle personally; but may rather have claimed to be on his side.

The movement of thought we have followed in vers. 15—23 proceeds from *Christ's redeeming work to the experience of the Colossians in receiving it, and the labours of the apostle in publishing it; and is parallel to that of*

Eph. i. 20—iii. 13. Here, however, the *second* of these topics has been made quite subordinate (vers. 21—23; comp. Eph. ii.). The *third* is the subject of our next section.

Vers. 24—29.—SECTION III. THE APOSTLE AND HIS MISSION. *Analysis:* (1) The apostle's ministry is at present one of suffering (ver. 24). (2) Christ, the Hope of the Gentiles, the Secret of the ages, is its theme (vers. 25—27); (3) and its aim the individual perfection of all to whom it is addressed (ver. 28). (4) In seeking which he is sustained by a supernatural power (ver. 29).

Ver. 24.—Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake (ch. iv. 3; Eph. iii. 1, 13; vi. 19, 20; Phil. i. 12, 16, 29; ii. 17; Philem. 9, 13; 2 Tim. i. 11, 12; Acts ix. 16; xxvi. 29). "Who" is wanting in the older manuscripts. The abruptness of expression indicates a sudden outburst of feeling (comp. 2 Cor. vii. 9; 1 Tim. i. 12). "Now—as these thoughts fill my mind" (Lightfoot); or, better, "In my present position (with the chain round my wrist:" Eadie). St. Paul's sufferings as apostle of the Gentiles and in defence of their rights in the gospel—so "for your sake" (comp. Acts xiii. 44—50; xxii. 21, 22; 1 Thess. ii. 14—16; Rom. xv. 16; Gal. v. 11; 1 Tim. ii. 7)—were matter of joy to him as they were of benefit to them. And am filling up in my turn the things that are lacking of the afflictions of Christ (Mark x. 39; John xv. 20; Rom. viii. 17; 2 Cor. i. 5; 2 Tim. ii. 12; Phil. iii. 10). "Am filling up" (*ἀναπληρῶ*) has the same object (*ὁστέρονμα*) in 1 Cor. xvi. 17; Phil. ii. 30 (comp. 2 Cor. ix. 12; xi. 9; 1 Thess. iii. 10). Here it is further compounded with *ἀντι* ("over against"), which implies some sort of correspondence—between defect and supply, say Meyer, Alford, Ellicott; but this is surely contained in the idea of *filling up*, whereas *ἀντι* bears as a rule, and always in St. Paul, a distinct and pointed reference of its own. "He says not simply *ἀναπληρῶ*, but *ἀνταναπληρῶ*, that is, *Instead of the Lord and Master, I the slave and disciple*" (Photius). Christ, the Head, had borne his part, now the apostle in turn fills up his part, in the great sum of suffering to be undergone on behalf of the body of Christ (see parallels). The verb being so understood, then, with Lightfoot, we infer that "the afflictions of Christ" (a phrase peculiar to this passage) are: (1) *Christ's own ministerial sufferings*, endured at the hands of men. *Affliction* is a common term for all that Christians suffer as being in "this present evil world" (2 Thess. i. 4—6; Rom. v. 3; 2 Cor. iv. 17; comp. John xvi. 33). Such suffering is common to the Master and his servants (John xv. 20), and he leaves behind to each his fitting and correspondent share therein. These afflictions are "the sufferings of the

Christ" in their *ministerial* as distinguished from their *mediatorial* aspect. (2) The latter sense is, however, put on the phrase by Romanist divines, who quote the text in support of the doctrine of the merit of the saints, in contradiction to the uniform teaching of St. Paul and the whole New Testament, that the sacrifice of Christ is the sole meritorious ground of salvation for all men, leaving nothing to *fill up* (vers. 20—22; Eph. ii. 16; Rom. iii. 25, 26; 2 Cor. v. 18, 19; Gal. iii. 13; Heb. ii. 9; ix. 26; x. 14; Acts iv. 12; xiii. 38, 39; John i. 29; 1 John ii. 2; 1 Pet. ii. 24, etc.). It is worthy of note that, unless it be in the Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul never uses the words "suffer," "suffering" (much less "affliction") in connection with the atoning sacrifice. He dwells rather on the objective fact itself—"the death," "the cross," "the blood." (3) The prevailing interpretation (Chrysostom, Augustine, down to Alford, Ellicott) finds here the *afflictions of the Church* (including Paul's) *made Christ's by mystic sympathy* (Eph. v. 23, 29). But this view identifies Paul's sufferings with his Master's, while he expressly distinguishes them; and the idea, however beautiful in itself, is without Pauline analogy. (4) Meyer holds the afflictions to be *Paul's own afflictions which are Christ's by ethical identity*, as belonging to the same class. This approaches (1), but is less simple grammatically, and again confuses the *antithesis* involved in the pointed *anti*. (5) Other modifications of this view—*afflictions coming from Christ, on account of Christ*, etc.—are less plausible. Dr. Gloag, in the *Expositor*, first series, vol. vii. pp. 224—236, fully discusses the passage and ably defends (3). In my flesh (2 Cor. iv. 10, 11; vii. 5; Gal. iv. 13, 14); for St. Paul's physical nature felt keenly the pangs of imprisonment, the chafing of "these bonds." And thus he puts honour on the despised flesh, as capable of such high service (see note, ver. 22). On behalf of his body, which is the Church (ver. 18; ch. ii. 19; Eph. i. 23; iv. 16; v. 23; 2 Tim. ii. 10). The interests of the Church demanded his sufferings. They are "for you" (Colossian Gentiles); but, in his view, the full possession of the gospel by the Gentiles and the existence of the Church itself were vitally bound up together (Eph. ii. 15, 21, 22; iii. 6). If "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for her" (Eph. v. 25), he might well in his turn suffer on the same account. The magnitude of the interests involved are measured by his greatness whose body the Church is (vers. 15—18). (On "body," see note, ver. 18.)

Ver. 25.—Of which "I became a minister" (2 Cor. iv. 5; vi. 3—10; xi. 28, 29; 1 Thess. ii. 1—12; Acts xx. 28; 1 Pet. v. 1—4). His sufferings are, therefore, matter of duty, as

well as of joy. As the Church's *minister*, he is bound to toil and to suffer in whatever way her welfare requires. Elsewhere he styles himself "minister of the gospel" (ver. 23; Eph. iii. 7), "of God," "of Christ," "of a new covenant" (2 Cor. iii. 6). (On "minister," see note, ver. 7. According to the stewardship of God, that was given me to you-ward (Eph. iii. 1—13; 1 Cor. iv. 1—4; ix. 17; 1 Tim. i. 4, R.V.; iii. 15; Luke xii. 42; xvi. 2—4; Heb. iii. 2—6; 1 Pet. iv. 10). *οἰκονομία* ("economy") is first "house-management," then "administration" generally; the *οἰκονομὸς* ("house-steward") was a confidential upper servant, frequently a slave, who controlled the general arrangements of a large establishment, and was responsible immediately to the master. Such an office the apostle holds, along with others (1 Cor. iv. 1), in the Church, "the house of God" (Eph. ii. 19—22; 1 Tim. iii. 15; 2 Tim. ii. 20: this conception, like that of "the body of Christ"—comp. note on ver. 18—is fully developed only in the later Epistles). In this office he "administers the gospel" (1 Cor. ix. 17, 18), "the grace of God" (Eph. iii. 2; 1 Pet. iv. 10), and here more especially "the mystery" of vers. 26, 27 (comp. Eph. iii. 9, R.V.). In Eph. i. 10 and iii. 2, the *οἰκονομία* is referred to God himself, the supreme Dispenser in his own house. This office "was given" him, and specifically as "toward the Gentiles" (for "you" points to the Colossians as Gentiles, vers. 24, 27, notes; Eph. iii. 1, 2; Rom. xi. 13), when he first became a servant of Christ (Acts ix. 15; xxii. 21; xxvi. 16—18; Gal. i. 15, 16; 1 Tim. i. 11—15; Rom. xv. 15, 16). Some interpreters connect "to you-ward" with the word "fulfil," but less suitably (comp. Eph. iii. 2; Rom. xv. 16). To fulfil the word of God (Rom. xv. 16—19; xvi. 25, 26). "To fulfil" (see vers. 9, 24, and "fulness," ver. 19; also ch. ii. 9, 10; iv. 12) is either "to complete," to give full development and extension to the gospel message (vers. 5, 6; 2 Thess. iii. 1; 2 Cor. ii. 14—17; Rom. xv. 19; Acts xx. 20, 21, 27); or "to accomplish" the prophetic word (Rom. ix. 24—26; xv. 8—12; Acts xv. 15—17), as in Acts xiii. 27, and frequently in the Gospels. This verb *πληρῶναι*, however, is not used by St. Paul elsewhere in the latter sense, and the former precisely suits the context (compare parallels from Romans). Other interpretations—"to preach abundantly," "to continue Christ's preaching" (Eph. ii. 17; Heb. ii. 3), "to execute the Divine commission"—miss the sense of the verb. The word which it is the object of the apostle's ministry to fulfil, and in regard to which he had a special stewardship, is none other than—

Ver. 26.—The mystery which hath been hidden away from the ages and from the generations (Eph. ii. 2, 3; iii. 5, 9; Rom. xvi.

25, 26; xl. 25, 26, 33). The word "mystery" plays a large part in Colossians and Ephesians. It occurs in 1 Corinthians, and twice in the Roman Epistle, written from Corinth. Its use in Rom. xvi. 25 is identical with that of the passage before us. The Greek *mysteria* were secret religious doctrines and rites made known only to initiated persons, who formed associations stately assembling at certain sacred spots, of which Eleusis near Athens was the most famous. These systems exercised a vast influence over the Greek mind, and Greek literature is full of allusions to them; but their secret has been well kept, and little is known of their real character. Some of these mystic systems, probably, inculcated doctrines of a purer and more spiritual type than those of the vulgar polytheism. The ascetic and mystical doctrines ascribed to Pythagoras were propagated by secret societies. The language and ideas connected with the mysteries were readily adopted by the Jewish Broad Church of Alexandria, whose endeavour it was to expand Judaism by a symbolical and allegorizing method into a philosophic and universal religious system, and who were compelled to veil their inner doctrine from the eyes of their stricter, unenlightened (or unsophisticated) fellow-believers. *Μυστήριον* appears in the Apocrypha as an epithet of the Divine Wisdom (Wisd. ii. 22; viii. 4; etc.); Ps. xlix. 4; lxxviii. 2 (comp. Matt. xiii. 34, 35) furnished the Old Testament basis of this usage. (See Philo, 'On the Cherubim,' § 12; 'On Fugitives,' § 16; etc., for the place of *mystery* in the Alexandrine theology.) St. Paul, writing to men accustomed, either as Greeks or as Hellenistic Jews, to this phraseology, calls the gospel "a mystery," as that which is "hidden from the natural understanding and from the previous searchings of men" (1 Cor. ii. 6—16). But in the words that follow he repudiates the notion of any secrecy or exclusiveness in its proclamation (comp. 2 Cor. iii. 12—iv. 6); in his language, "mystery is the correlate of revelation." The thrice-repeated *ἀπὸ* ("from" "away"), with the double indication of time, "gives a solemn emphasis" (Meyer) to the statement. *Agēs* are successive epochs of time, with their states and conditions (comp. Gal. i. 4); *generations* are successive races of men, with their traditions and hereditary tendencies. But now it was made manifest to his saints (oh. ii. 2; iv. 3; Eph. i. 9; iii. 5; vi. 19; 1 Tim. iii. 16; 1 Pet. i. 20). The word "reveal" (Eph. iii. 5; 1 Cor. ii. 10) indicates a process, "make manifest" points to the result of this Divine act (Rom. xvi. 25, 26; comp. Rom. i. 17 with iii. 21; see Trench's 'Synonyms'). The transition from the participle in the last clause to the

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strongly assertive finite verb in this almost disappears in English idiom: comp. vers. 5, 6; Eph. i. 20—22 (Greek); and see Winer's 'N. T. Grammar,' p. 717, or A. Buttman, p. 382. There is also a change of tense: the manifestation is a single, sudden event (aorist), breaking through the long and seemingly final concealment of all previous time (present perfect participle); similarly in Rom. xvi. 25, 26 and 1 Pet. i. 20 (comp. ch. ii. 14, note). *To his saints*; i.e. to the Church at large (ver. 2; ch. iii. 12); but this implies a spiritual qualification (1 Cor. ii. 14). "His saints" are the recipients; "his holy apostles and prophets, in the Spirit," the organs (Eph. iii. 5) of this manifestation. The Church had long ago formally accepted this revelation (Acts xi. 18); it was St. Paul's office to make it practically effectual.

Ver. 27.—To whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery amongst the Gentiles (Eph. iii. 5—10; Acts xi. 17, 18; Rom. xi. 11, 12, 25—32; xv. 9—12). "Willed" stands emphatically first in the Greek. The revelation was so momentous in its issue, so signal in its method, and so contrary to human foresight and prejudice, that it proceeded evidently from "the will of God" (vers. 1, 9; ch. iv. 12; comp. Rom. ix. 18): "Who was I," said St. Peter, "that I could withstand God?" The Ephesian letter delights to dwell on *God's will* as the cause of the whole counsel and work of salvation. The Revisers have rendered the verb by "was pleased," the equivalent of *εὐδοκέω* (ver. 19; Eph. i. 5, 9; etc.). There is no need to seek a reference to *free grace* in the verb "willed"; the two ideas are concurrent, but distinct (see, however, Lightfoot). The apostle's mind is filled with amazement as he contemplates the boundless *riches* which the salvation of the Gentiles revealed in God himself (comp. Rom. xi. 33—36; xvi. 25—27; Eph. iii. 8—10). "The glory of this mystery" is the splendour with which it invests the Divine character (on "glory," see note, ver. 11; and for "riches of glory," Eph. i. 18; iii. 16; Phil. iv. 19; Rom. ix. 23). *Amongst the Gentiles*: "semi-local clause, defining the sphere in which the riches of the glory is more specially evinced" (Ellicott). At last this *mystery* is defined: which is Christ in you (oh. ii. 2, 3; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Eph. iii. 17; Gal. ii. 20; iv. 19; Rom. viii. 10). By a bold metonymy, the *mystery* is identified with its subject or content. It is "Christ" himself (see ch. ii. 2, note), the Divine secret of the ages, the burden of all revelation; and "Christ in you" (oh. iii. 11), Christ dwelling in Gentile hearts—this is the wonder of wonders! So the "sinners of the Gentiles" receive "the like [equal] gift" with the heirs of the

promises (Acts xi. 17). By a further and yet bolder apposition, this mystery of Christ in Colossian believers is made one with the hope of glory (vers. 5, 23; ch. iii. 4; Eph. i. 12—14, 18; Phil. iii. 20, 21; Rom. ii. 7; viii. 18—25; 1 Cor. xv. 43; 1 John iii. 2), of which it is a pledge and a foretaste (vers. 4, 5; ch. iii. 15; Eph. i. 13, 14; Rom. viii. 10—17). This glory is that which the Christian will wear in his perfected, heavenly state (ch. iii. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 43; Rom. viii. 18), when he will fully reflect the glory he now beholds in God through Christ ("the glory of this mystery"): compare the double "glory" of 2 Cor. iii. 18. The rights of the Gentile believer in Christ are therefore complete (Eph. iii. 6). Possessing him now in his heart, he anticipates all that he will bestow in heaven (on "hope," see ver. 5).

Ver. 28.—Whom we proclaim, admonishing every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom (ch. iii. 16; 1 Thess. ii. 4—13; 1 Cor. i. 23, 24; iv. 1—5; xv. 11; 2 Cor. iv. 1—6; v. 18—vi. 1; Acts xx. 18—35; xxvi. 22, 23). *We* (emphatic, like the "I" of vers. 23, 25) includes St. Paul's coadjutors, Epaphras in particular (ver. 9; ch. iv. 7, 11, 12; comp. 2 Cor. i. 19). *Καταγγέλλω*, to publish, bears a wider sense than *κηρύσσω*, to herald (ver. 23), St. Paul's favourite word. "Admonishing and teaching" are the two essential parts of the apostle's ministry, related as repentance to faith (Lightfoot, who gives interesting classical parallels). *Νοθεύω* (radically, "to put in mind"), peculiar to St. Paul in New Testament (including Acts xx. 31), may denote reproof for the past, but more especially warning for the future (see 1 Cor. iv. 14; 2 Thess. iii. 15; comp. note on ch. iii. 16). Thrice in this verse "every man" is repeated, and "in all wisdom" follows "teaching" with a marked emphasis. The Colossian errorists, as we should presume from the general tenor and affinities of their system, sought to form an inner mystical school or circle of discipleship within the Church, initiated into a wisdom and holiness supposed to be higher than that attainable by ordinary Christian faith (see note on "mystery," ver. 26; also ch. ii. 2, 3, 8). An intellectual caste-feeling (see note, ch. iii. 11) was springing up in the Church. In 1 Cor. ii. 6—16 the apostle denounces the pride of reason which claims "the things of God" as its own; here he denounces the pride of intellect which refuses the knowledge of them to those who stand on a lower level of mental culture. To every man the Divine wisdom in Christ is accessible (ch. ii. 3, 10; iii. 10, 16; Eph. ii. 17; iii. 18, 19): to none but "the spiritual man" (1 Cor. ii. 6, 12—iii. 1). "Wisdom" here is not subjective,

a quality of the apostle (so Meyer, quoting 1 Cor. iii. 10), but objective, the quality of the truth itself (comp. ch. ii. 2, 23; iii. 16; Eph. i. 18; 1 Cor. i. 22—25; ii. 6, 7). That we may present every man perfect in Christ (ver. 22; Eph. iv. 13; v. 25—27; 2 Cor. xiii. 7—9; 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20; 2 Tim. ii. 10): the aim alike of Christ's redemption (ver. 22) and of the apostle's ministry. "Perfect" (*τέλειος*) is a word associated with the Greek mysteries (comp. 1 Cor. ii. 6, 7; and quotations in Lightfoot), and in common use denoted "full-grown," "grown men," as opposed to "children" (Eph. iv. 13, 14; Phil. iii. 12, 15; Heb. v. 11—vi. 1). The philosophic Judaists affected this term considerably. Philo frequently distinguishes between the "perfect" or "fully initiated" (*τέλειοι*), who are admitted to the sight of God, and the "advancing" (*προκόπτοντες*; comp. Gal. i. 14), who are candidates for admission to the Divine mysteries; and he makes Jacob a type of the latter, Israel of the former (see 'On Drunkenness,' § 20; 'On Change of Names,' § 3; 'On Agriculture,' §§ 36—38). The apostle makes "perfect" designedly parallel to the "holy and without blemish" of ver. 22, holding out a spiritual ideal very different from that of Alexandrine mystics; and declares that it is to be realized "in Christ" (vers. 2, 4), as in ver. 22 it appeared to be wrought "through Christ" and "for Christ" (comp. ver. 16).

Ver. 29.—To which end also I toil hard, striving according to his working (ch. ii. 1; iv. 12, 13; 1 Cor. xv. 10; Gal. iv. 11; Phil. ii. 16; 1 Tim. iv. 10; Acts xx. 35). *Κοπιῶ*, to labour to weariness, often used of manual labour, is a favourite word of St. Paul's (1 Cor. iv. 12; 2 Cor. xi. 27; 1 Thess. ii. 9; comp. Eph. iv. 28; 1 Thess. i. 3; John iv. 38). The figurative use of "striving" ("agonizing," i.e. "contending in the arena") is only Pauline in the New Testament: comp. ch. ii. 1; iv. 12; Phil. i. 30; 1 Cor. ix. 25; 1 Thess. ii. 2; 1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 7; also Luke xxi. 44; in 1 Tim. iv. 10 (B.V.) it is again connected with "toil" (*κοπία*). We need not, with Meyer and Elliott, distinguish inward from outward striving in this word. The apostle's bodily sufferings (ver. 24) and his mental anxiety (ch. ii. 1) alike enter into the mighty struggle which he is maintaining on the Church's behalf, and which strains every fibre of his nature to the utmost (comp. 2 Cor. xi. 28). "Striving" implies opponents against whom he contends (Eph. vi. 12; 2 Thess. iii. 2; 2 Cor. xi. 26); "toiling hard," the painful efforts he has to make. In this toil he is divinely sustained, for he "strives according to his [Christ's]: comp. Phil. iv. 13] working." *Ἐνεργεῖα*

("energy," "operative force," "power in action")—another word of St. Paul's vocabulary (frequent also in Aristotle)—is used by him only of supernatural power, "a working of God," "of Satan" (2 Thess. ii. 9, 11). Which worketh in me with power (ver. 11; Eph. iii. 16; Phil. ii. 13; iv. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10). The "energy of Christ" is such that it "effectually works" in the apostle; the same idea is repeated in noun and verb (ver. 11, note). The verb is middle in voice, as this "working" is that in which

the Divine "energy of Christ" puts itself forth and shows what it can do (comp. 2 Cor. xiii. 3—6); see note on "bearing fruit," ver. 6, and Winer's 'N. T. Grammar,' p. 318 (dynamic middle). So it works unmistakably "in [or, 'with'] power." Never do we find this consciousness of the Divine power dwelling in himself expressed by St. Paul with such joyous confidence as at this period (see Phil. i. 20, 21; iv. 13; Eph. iii. 9, 20; and comp. note on ver. 23 b).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—14.—Sect. 1. *Introduction.* I. THE SALUTATION. 1. *Paul and Timothy.* (1) "Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God"—"not of men, nor by men" (Gal. i. 1; ii. 8; 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10; 1 Tim. ii. 7; Acts ix. 15), as every true minister of Christ is able to say, holding his office, not by his own seeking or scheming, nor by election of the Church alone, though that is needful in its place (Acts xiii. 1—3), but by a distinct Divine appointment (John xxi. 15—17; Acts xx. 28). (2) The apostle delights to honour his associates. With every right to speak simply in his own name, yet he adds that of "Timothy the brother" ("my fellow-worker," Rom. xvi. 21; "my true child in faith," 1 Tim. i. 1). Not as a matter of courtesy and kind feeling only, but in view of the future needs of the Church, its older and more responsible officers should duly recognize young brother Timothy. 2. *Saints and faithful brethren.* (1) All true Christians are *saints* by their very calling, as persons devoted to God and brought near to him (ch. iii. 12; 1 Pet. i. 15, 16; ii. 5, 9; 1 John i. 3; Exod. xix. 3—6) through the blood of atonement (Titus ii. 14; Heb. ix. 14; x. 12, 14; Rev. i. 5, 6), and by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (2 Thess. ii. 13; Titus iii. 5), and the continued influence of the truth (2 Thess. ii. 13; John xv. 3, 4, 7; xvii. 17). A spotless moral life is the outcome of this inward sanctity, which belongs to body as well as soul—"as becometh saints" (Eph. v. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 19—21; 2 Cor. vi. 17; 1 Thess. v. 23). (2) They are *brethren* to each other "in Christ," having access through him "in one Spirit to the Father," and belonging to "the household of God" (Eph. ii. 18—22; iv. 1—4; ch. iii. 11—14; Gal. vi. 10; 1 Thess. iv. 9, 10; John xiii. 14; xv. 12—17; 1 John ii. 7—11; iii. 23); and *faithful* to Christ the Head and to the brotherhood, when their faith is assaulted and their unity endangered (ch. ii. 7, 19; iii. 15; iv. 3, 15—17; Phil. i. 27). 3. *Grace and peace.* (1) All Divine blessing is matter of *grace* to us as dependent creatures, but especially as fallen and sinful. It is "the grace of God that brings salvation" (Titus ii. 11; Eph. ii. 5), which "superabounded where sin abounded" (Rom. v. 20), and is the source of all good in man (1 Cor. xv. 10) and of all we hope for (2 Thess. ii. 16; 2 Tim. i. 9, 10; Acts xv. 11). It is the outflow of God's love, of his "kindness and philanthropy" (Titus iii. 4); and has its supreme expression in "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (Rom. v. 8; Heb. ii. 9; John i. 17; iii. 16; 1 John iv. 10). Our everlasting songs will resound "to the praise of the glory of his grace" (Eph. i. 6; Rev. i. 5, 6; v. 12, 13; vii. 10). (2) *Peace* is the effect of *grace* within the soul—the end of its war with God in forgiveness of sin (vers. 14, 20; Eph. ii. 16; 2 Cor. v. 19; Rom. v. 1), the restoring of inward harmony and health (Rom. viii. 6), freedom from fear and trouble (ch. iii. 15; Phil. iv. 7; John xiv. 27), bearing fruit in mutual concord and amity (Eph. ii. 14—16; Rom. xv. 7; 2 Thess. iii. 16). It is the gift, the legacy of Christ (Eph. i. 2; ii. 14, 17; John xiv. 27; xvi. 33; xx. 19, 26). These all-comprising gifts are primarily "from God our Father." *Grace* is the outgiving of the Father's love toward his rebel children (Acts xvii. 28; Eph. ii. 4, 5; Luke xv. 11—32), and *peace* the reuniting of the child to the Divine family (Eph. ii. 18, 19).

II. THE THANKSGIVING. 1. *The essentials of the Christian life.* (Vers. 3—5.) "Fides, amor, spes: summa Christianismi" (Bengel). Compare the order and relation of the three graces here and in 1 Thess. i. 3; Eph. i. 15—18; with 1 Cor. xiii. 13; also Heb. x. 22—25, Revised Version. (1) "To hear of your faith in Christ Jesus" is good

news indeed. So in the case of a child or friend; how much more in that of a whole community! What boundless and endless possibilities of good are implied in this single fact! It is the birth of true, eternal life (ch. ii. 12, 13; Rom. vi. 1—11; John i. 12; iii. 36; vi. 47, 57; xvii. 3), the entrance into a fellowship with Christ (1 Cor. i. 9) which brings a happiness and power to which there is no measure (1 Pet. i. 8; 1 John i. 3, 4; John vii. 38; xv. 11; xvi. 22; Phil. iv. 13). (2) "Faith worketh by love" (Gal. v. 6); hearing of the first, if it be genuine, one is sure to hear of the second. Love is the first "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. v. 22), the witness of a Divine life in the soul (1 John iii. 14; v. 1). This love is *catholic*—a family affection, going out to all the children of God, *the saints* everywhere and of all times, whenever we see them or hear or read of them; overleaping every national, social, or (alas that we should have to add!) ecclesiastical barrier (ch. iii. 11; Gal. iii. 28). (3) But the present state and character of Christians call for thanksgiving on their account, most of all, "because of the hope in store for them in heaven." Faith and love are unspeakable blessings even now; but what "if in this life only we had hoped in Christ" (1 Cor. xv. 19)? It is the thought of what awaits the Colossian believers in heaven, the conviction that they have "Christ in them, the hope of glory" (ver. 27; ch. iii. 4), that fills the apostle's heart with joy (Phil. i. 6; 2 Thess. i. 3—5; 1 Pet. i. 3—7; John xiv. 2, 3; xvii. 24). So in regard to himself (Phil. i. 21—23; 2 Cor. v. 1—8; 2 Tim. iv. 6—8). *Finis coronat opus*. It is the grand outlook, the glorious prospect beyond death, that gives security and dignity, a serene calmness and a buoyant energy, to the Christian life (Rom. v. 1—5; viii. 18, 35—39; 1 Cor. xv. 58; 2 Cor. iv. 16—18; Phil. i. 20; 2 Tim. i. 12; Heb. xi. 13, 35; Rev. ii. 10). This hope will not deceive; it is founded on "the word of the truth of the gospel" (1 Cor. xv. 15; 2 Pet. i. 16). 2. *The progress of the gospel*. (Vers. 6—8.) (1) It spreads by its *inherent fruitfulness*, by the living energy with which it works in those who receive it, by the silent contagion of conviction and example, acting continuously as leaven on the surrounding mass of the world (Matt. xiii. 33). The fruit it produces in the lives of those who receive it becomes seed in its turn for the soil around. Epaphras has heard the gospel from St. Paul; he carries it home and teaches and practises it there, and the Church of Colossæ springs up (comp. 1 Thess. i. 8—10). (2) At the same time, it has its *special messengers and advocates*—"servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1); "Ye learnt from Epaphras" (ch. iv. 12; Rom. xii. 5—8; 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11, 12). "A faithful minister of Christ:" how honourable the title! how great the reward (1 Pet. v. 1—4)! We note the care of the apostle to commend and support his *fellow-servant*, and the grateful and graceful way with which he refers to the love of the Colossians to himself. The progress of the gospel is not a little helped by mutual recognition and confidence of this kind on the part of Christ's servants towards each other.

III. THE OPENING PRAYER. 1. *Christian knowledge*. (Vers. 9, 10.) (1) We so often find knowledge divorced from action, the head and the heart at variance, that we are apt to exclaim, "Knowledge, alas! 'tis all in vain." But it is, nevertheless, a precondition of all saving faith and all right action. In it lies the beginning of the soul's life (ver. 6 b), the means of its growth and advancement (ver. 10, "by the knowledge of God"), and the end towards which it strives (ch. iii. 10; 1 Cor. xiii. 12; John xvii. 3). True, "we know in part," and are "rather known by God" than know him (Gal. iv. 9); and knowledge, therefore, must go hand-in-hand with the "faith that worketh by love." Otherwise it "puffeth up," and needs to be humbled beneath the supremacy of love (1 Cor. viii. 1—3; xiii. 1; 1 John iv. 7, 8; John xiii. 17; xiv. 15—17; xvi. 13). But it is possible to exalt love in a one-sided, prejudicial way; and then the prayer of Phil. i. 9 should be called to mind. (2) Knowledge in the form of a sound and manly *understanding* (1 Cor. xiv. 20), an instructed and well-ordered *comprehension* of the system of Christian truth, is necessary for the Church, absolutely necessary for her teachers, and especially in times of mental conflict, such as that on which the Asiatic Churches were then entering, and such as that which is now reaching an acute stage in our modern Christendom. In her contention with heresy and scepticism, the Church's strength depends on the amount of "spiritual wisdom and understanding" possessed by her members. And the understanding is a spiritual faculty, that needs to be informed and guided by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. (3) Yet Christian know-

ledge can never be merely abstract, terminating in the intellect; for it is "knowledge of God's will." All its doctrines bear on practice; its principles of truth are laws of life; its teachings, commands. It concentrates reason, feeling, will, in the unity of a spiritual life, where each predominates in turn, and every faculty sustains and quickens every other (comp. Eph. iv. 13—15; John vii. 17; xiv. 15—17). 2. *Christian conduct.* (Vers. 10—12.) (1) Advancing to a completer knowledge of God's will, the Christian man more and more "bears fruit in every good work." For he knows that God's will is the well-being of men, and that he cannot please him better, or co-operate more effectually with his gracious purposes towards mankind, than by "doing good, as he has opportunity, to all men, and especially to those that are of the household of faith" (Gal. vi. 10; 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4; Titus iii. 8; Heb. xiii. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 12—15; Matt. v. 14—16, 44—48; xxii. 36—40). (2) And in him "patience has its perfect work." "In all power he is strengthened, according to the might of God's glory"—to what end? In order to *do* some great thing, one would suppose; but no, it is "unto all patience and long-suffering." Patience is the mark of strength. In suffering human nature is most receptive of the power of God. And on that lonely sick-bed, where some quiet sufferer lies, may oftentimes be witnessed a display of "the might of his glory" which the grandest achievements of the Christian hero will scarcely equal (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10; Rom. v. 3; Heb. ii. 10; v. 7—9; xii. 1—3; Jas. i. 2—4; Rev. vii. 13—15). Perhaps imprisonment had helped to teach the ardent and restless spirit of the apostle this lesson. He endures "with joyfulness," not with a mere passive and dumb submission; for he suffers "by the will of God" (Acts ix. 16; v. 41; Heb. xii. 5—10; 1 Pet. iii. 17). "It was granted" him (Phil. i. 29, *ἐχαίρων*, "made matter of grace and favour") "to suffer for Christ's sake;" and thus, at least, he can glorify him, if in no other way (1 Pet. ii. 19, 20). For whatever gifts or means for doing good may be wanting to us, we have at any rate the capacity of suffering. (3) And whether doing or bearing his Lord's will, the Christian's life will be a constant "thanksgiving to the Father." At the thought of the blessings of redemption (vers. 12—14), as he gains a deeper insight into all "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God," new songs of praise break forth ever and again from his soul. He is a child and heir of God (Rom. viii. 14—17), joint-heir with Christ and with his saints (Eph. iii. 6; Titus iii. 7; Gal. iii. 29), in the realm of light where his soul already dwells, and whose light will shine for him "more and more unto the perfect day." He rejoices "in hope of the glory of God." How shall he not, therefore, give thanks! So God would have it (1 Thess. v. 16—18). (4) And so walking, he walks "worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing" (Eph. v. 10; Rom. xii. 2). God's smile rests upon him from day to day. "The Lord taketh pleasure in his servants." Christ could say, "I do always the things that please him" (John viii. 29), and they who are "as he is in this world" can, in their measure and degree, humbly say the same. They abide in their Saviour's love (John xv. 9, 10). They have "confidence towards God" (1 John iii. 21, 22)—confidence even in the thought of the day of judgment (1 John iv. 17). Pleasing God now, they will be accepted then. 3. *The nature of salvation.* (Vers. 12—14, 21, 22.) For that inheritance for which the Christian praises God he was "made meet," and he is grateful for the means, as well as for the end, of his salvation. He holds the title-deeds of his heritage in certain acts and transactions on the part of God which make him meet for it, and make it meet for the Divine Father to invest him with it. (1) His salvation is an act of *rescue—a redemption by power.* For men were captives, under a dark and cruel tyranny (Eph. ii. 2; vi. 12; 2 Cor. iv. 4; 2 Tim. ii. 26; Acts xvi. 18; Heb. ii. 14; John viii. 34; xii. 31; xiv. 30; xvi. 11; Luke iv. 6, 18). When we consider how inbred and inveterate is the power of evil over mankind, how allied with the disordered course of nature, and how its working in this world is a part of a vast, mysterious confederacy of spiritual forces acting powerfully and insensibly upon and around us, we need not wonder that our salvation is represented as a mighty and glorious achievement of Divine power, one with that exhibited in Christ's victory over death (Eph. i. 19, 20; ch. ii. 12). *Delivered*, we are at the same time *translated*—carried over at once into the opposite camp as subjects and soldiers of Christ Jesus; whose kingdom is that where *love* rules, whose means and ends, counsels and agencies, are all the ministers of love. Light and love are one, as darkness and hate (1 John ii. 9—11; iv. 7—v. 5). (2) It is equally an act of *ransom—redemption by price.* God cannot deny himself

He is "a *just* God and a Saviour." His power works on the lines laid down by his righteousness. He would have destroyed rather than saved us, would have violated the human conscience, had he (conceivably) saved us without forgiveness; or without a forgiveness rationally grounded on some act of propitiation that should make amends for the guilty past. This propitiation, as it frees us from the power of Satan and of death, is our ransom. The Son of God's love, if he would redeem us, *must pay the price*. What that price should be, Divine justice determines, while Divine love provides it. He bought us with "his own blood" (Gal. iii. 13; Acts xx. 28; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19); "gave his life a ransom" (Matt. xx. 28; Titus ii. 14). (3) And we may anticipate what follows in vers. 20, 21, by adding that it is, finally, an act of *reconciliation*. God lays aside his holy resentment against us as sinners, accepting the sacrifice of Christ which he himself has provided, offered on earth and by our Representative, as a just and countervailing satisfaction "for the sins of the whole world" (Rom. iii. 25; John i. 29; 1 John ii. 2); while men thereupon, becoming aware of this (Luke ii. 14; Eph. ii. 17), cease from their enmity and strife against him (2 Cor. v. 19, 20). So "peace is made through the blood of the cross" (Eph. ii. 16; Rom. v. 1, 10, 11). And meeting God in this peace-making, men meet each other; the broken unity of mankind is restored (Eph. ii. 13—16; ch. iii. 11; John xi. 51, 52); and other worlds, it may be, share with our own in the "peace" established "on earth" (ver. 20).

Vers. 15—23.—Sect. 2. *The redeeming Son and his kingdom*. I. CHRIST THE LORD OF UNIVERSAL NATURE. (Vers. 15—17.) Colossian error was undermining the Christian system by introducing into it a false, dualistic theory of nature, then widely prevalent in other quarters. And the leaders of Christian thought can never afford to be indifferent to the current philosophic views of their day. Indeed, in the contact of Christian teaching with philosophy, and in the reflection of thoughtful men at all times, the question was sure to arise and must constantly recur in new forms, "What is the relation of Christ to the universe? At what point does he enter the scheme of things? He who died on Calvary, who claims to save the souls of men, what has he to do with nature and the common world?" If this question could not be answered, or if any inferior and limited position in the world of being must be assigned to him, then, as the Colossian heresy shows, his spiritual authority and the efficacy of his redemption become, in the same degree, limited and uncertain. Hence the teaching of the Epistles of this group (Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians) respecting the Person of Christ is the logical and theological sequel of that of the second (Galatians, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians), respecting our salvation through him. We gather from the apostle's teaching here: 1. *That in Christ God becomes visible, and nature becomes intelligible*. To earnest philosophic thought, as to sound religious instinct, it has always been evident that "what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear" (Heb. xi. 3). An "everlasting power and divinity are clearly seen from the creation of the world"—but as "invisible things" (Rom. i. 20). Our latest Agnosticism is but a despairing echo of the cry of Job: "I go towards the east, but he is not there; and westward, but I cannot perceive him; toward the north, where he is working, but I cannot see him; where he veileth himself in the south, but I cannot find him" (xxiii. 8, 9). God effectually hides himself behind his works. All visible point to invisible causes, all finite things lead up to the Infinite, all phenomena to the noumenal; but whither they point we cannot follow. Some of the most profound and minute of modern scientific inquirers testify most strongly to this (e.g. M. Dumas and M. Pasteur, in their addresses at the French Academy, 1880, 1882). From that invisible, Christ comes forth to testify of him whom "no man hath seen nor can see" (John i. 14, 18; xiv. 9). We know now what the Maker of the universe is like. The world is no longer orphaned. The unknown God proves to be its Father, and his Son its elder Brother. Human thought has a visible centre around which to move, a sun which sheds light and warmth over all its speculations. The incarnation and resurrection of Christ, with the whole course of his miracles (his *signs*), assure us that natural law is, and must prove itself ultimately to be, subservient to spiritual law, the lower to the higher order, the material world to the moral being of man. His miracles and parables and his general teaching furnish many fruitful hints, some that lie on the surface, others that await our deeper searching or future need, respecting the meaning and use of the natural world. He is, after all,

its chief Interpreter, the Master of poets and philosophers of nature who often owe most to him when they are least aware of it, as well as of religious thinkers and social reformers. While we hold fast this faith in the "Image of God the invisible," the "Firstborn of all creation," we may witness science and philosophy pursuing their inquiries without misgiving, and we may follow them, warily indeed, but without mistrust; for they can discover no truth which will not in the end support the "truth as it is in Jesus," and they labour, though they know it not, only to add their own to the "many crowns" that are preparing for the head of our Immanuel. 2. *All the relations which nature holds to God centre in Christ.* (1) If the world rests on God, is grounded in him, refers secretly and everywhere to God as the immanent, perpetual Cause of its being and its energy; if in him "we live and move and are;"—then we are to understand all this of Christ. "In him were created, in him consist all things" (vers. 16, 17). "God was in Christ" creating the heavens and the earth; is "in Christ" sustaining, co-ordinating, directing the march of the circling worlds, the evolution of their teeming, endlessly varied forms of life. The "winds and the sea" that "obeyed him," disease and death and the mighty spirits of darkness that fled at his word, knew something of this secret, if men do not. (2) If *through God* the universe came to be (Rom. xi. 36); if he supplied the agencies of creation, the matter and the force (unless matter is really *force*) out of which it was generated, the laws which shaped its form and governed its development;—then it appears that all this was done *through Christ*. (3) If the world moves *towards God* (Rom. xi. 36), in spite of all divergence and confusion; and if throughout the unmeasured cycles of its duration past and to come it advances towards the fulfilment of its destiny, "that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 28);—then its course is directed also *unto Christ*. The will of God respecting the kingdom of his Son was the secret of creation (Eph. iii. 9, 10). Man's sin did not give birth to that purpose. It called for its vindication in new forms of superabounding grace; but from the beginning it was "the Father's will that all should honour the Son as they honour the Father" (John v. 23). He is "the Heir of all things" (Heb. i. 2), and it is "the glory of God the Father" "that every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. ii. 9—11). So far, therefore, as we can trace any Divine working in the course of nature or history, we may refer it to Christ as truly as the forgiveness of sins or the resurrection of the dead. Nature and grace, body and spirit, history and revelation, the secular and sacred, are essentially one, are parts of the same scheme, each being the complement of the other (instance the inseparable connection of Christ's miracles of healing with his spiritual work), and are working under the same management (Matt. xxviii. 18), towards the same issue, that "purpose of the ages which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, to sum up all things in Christ" (Eph. i. 10; iii. 9—11).

II. CHRIST THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH. (Vers. 18—23.) 1. Into the world created to be "the kingdom of the Son of God's love," "sin entered, and death through sin;" and *death became king, sin in death* (Rom. v. 12, 13, 21), instead of "the Prince of life." Hatred was planted in the human breast, and with it came a darkness that "apprehended not the light of life" (vers. 13, 21; John i. 4, 5; 1 John iii. 8, 11, 12); and men fell under "the dominion of Satan" (Acts xxvi. 18; Eph. ii. 2, 3; Luke iv. 6; 1 John v. 19), the "murderer," the "father of lies;" till it came to pass that, though Christ ever "was in the world, the world knew him not" (John i. 10). Men were everywhere "cut off from Christ," "alienated," "children of wrath" (ver. 21; Eph. ii. 3, 12); how rebellious against *him*, his advent proved. Then, in their "wicked works," they not only denied the Son his pre-eminence, but even said, "Come, let us kill him" (Matt. xxi. 38; Luke xix. 14; Ps. ii.). 2. And he submits to die, that he may "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." *The Firstborn of all creation becomes Firstborn out of the dead.* So high he was in his Divine, eternal birth, so low he stooped—to the Virgin's womb, to "a servant's form," and "unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (vers. 18, 20; Phil. ii. 7, 8; Rom. i. 3; ix. 5; 2 Cor. viii. 9; Gal. iv. 4; Heb. ii. 5—18), to restore his human brethren, to recover his alienated kingdom, "to reconcile all things unto himself" (vers. 18, 20; Rom. xiv. 9; Phil. ii. 10, 11; Rev. i. 5, 6, Revised Text). 3. So dying, he lives again that he may give us life (Rom. vi. 4—11); descending, in turn he ascends and lifts us with him (Eph.

iv. 8—10; ii. 5, 6; John xii. 32); *emptying himself, he gains a new sovereign fulness* (ver. 19; Phil. ii. 8; Eph. iv. 10; i. 20—23) of all that the dark, exiled, broken, miserable world needs to restore it and build it up again (ch. ii. 9, 10; Phil. iv. 19). 4. *Round himself as the living Centre, he gathers a new humanity and forms a new world, which is his body, the Church* (vers. 18, 24; ch. ii. 19; Eph. iv. 16; v. 23; John xv. 1—8)—a body wider, and yet narrower, than the visible (Matt. xiii. 24—30; John x. 16); “a spiritual house,” built of those united as “living stones” to the “living Stone” (1 Pet. ii. 4, 5), which “groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. ii. 21). So he is *the Beginning* (ver. 18) of an age-long, world-wide process of resurrection and reconstruction. The life that is in him is an organic, formative, spiritual energy, with a “mighty working” in it that is “able to subdue all things unto itself” (Phil. iii. 21; Rom. viii. 2—11); a leaven destined to leaven the whole lump (Matt. xiii. 31—33). “The kingdom of this world” must “become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ” (Rev. xi. 15; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Dan. ii. 34, 35; vii. 13, 14); “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” must penetrate, transform, and dominate every sphere of human thought and activity; “the works of the devil” everywhere, and in every form and shape, must be “destroyed” (1 John iii. 8). Then only will he have “reconciled all things on the earth to himself.” 5. For ourselves, as individuals, the design of Christ’s reconciliation is *the perfection of our personal character as approved by himself at the day of judgment* (vers. 22, 28). This is true also of the Church collectively (Eph. v. 27). He is Judge as well as Saviour; and his justice is as inflexible as his mercy is compassionate. “The King,” for as King he will then appear, desires to be able to say to each of us, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you;” “sit with me in my throne” (Matt. xxv. 34; Rev. iii. 21); but he will only say it to those who are worthy (Rev. iii. 4, 5). To this end he redeemed us by his blood, bestowed on us his Spirit, brought us into his kingdom, subjects us to its discipline, employs us in its service, instructs us in its wisdom, enriches us with all its spiritual blessings—“to present us (on that day) holy and without blemish and unreprouvable before him” (Jude 24, 25; 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13; v. 23, 24). 6. How far the influence of *this reconciliation extends beyond the things upon the earth*; and, if it does so extend, in what direction; whether or how it touches “the principalities and powers in heavenly places,”—we cannot tell, and dare not attempt to guess. Origen, on the warrant of this passage (ver. 20), fondly thought that even Satan himself would be ultimately reconciled to God. At any rate, when he “through whom and unto whom all things have been created” is the sacrifice, and when the evil of this world is but a part of the realm of evil above and around us, we may not deny the possibility of others sharing with us, somehow, in the atoning virtue of his death. 7. But all this is so far stated from the Divine side, as matter of *God’s general purpose and plan in Christ* (Eph. i. 10; 1 Tim. ii. 4; 2 Tim. i. 9; Acts iii. 21); and this plan will certainly be carried out; “all things,” as a whole, will certainly be reconciled. But there is nothing here to contradict the possibility of a self-exclusion of individuals, belonging to this world or to other worlds, from the benefits of the Divine amnesty, and of their expulsion from a reconciled universe (2 Thess. i. 9; Matt. xxv. 41; Luke xiii. 25; John xv. 6; Rev. xxii. 15). Ver. 23 intimates as much as this. “All this is yours,” the apostle virtually says, “if ye continue in the faith, not being moved away from the hope of the gospel;” but if not, what then? Contrast 2 Cor. v. 19 and 20; John x. 10 and v. 40. Still the distressing question, “Lord, are there few that be saved?” presses on us, and our Lord’s reply speaks in the same tones of stern and solemn warning (Luke xiii. 23—30). For us to whom the message of reconciliation is now addressed, it is clear that “*now* is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. vi. 2). To be a minister of this reconciliation, and so a minister of the Church, a builder of the house of God, the Body of Christ, how high and responsible the office (vers. 23—26; 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2; 2 Cor. v. 11—vi. 10)!

Vers. 24—29.—Sect. 3. *The apostle and his mission.* I. PAUL A MINISTER OF CHRIST. (Vers. 24, 25, 28, 29.) In this passage the apostle draws a picture of himself which, taken with the delineations furnished by him elsewhere, stands before the Church for all time as the ideal portrait of the “faithful minister” and the “good soldier of Christ Jesus.” The account he gives of himself here concerns *his calling, his aim, his work,*

and *his experience*. 1. The apostle styles himself (1) *minister of the gospel* (ver. 23 b), of the glad tidings of salvation for all men, from all sin, in Jesus Christ (Matt. i. 21; Luke i. 68—79; Acts v. 31; xiii. 38, 39, 47; 1 Tim. ii. 3—7; Titus ii. 11—14), “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts xx. 24). It is this that he has to *serve*—to publish, explain, apply it, to carry it everywhere and to all its practical issues. And in thus serving the gospel, he knows that he is best serving the interests of mankind (Titus iii. 3—8; 2 Cor. iv. 6; Eph. v. 9; Phil. iv. 8, 9). There is no charge so serious and responsible, requiring so high a character (1 Thess. ii. 4) or so much boldness and power of utterance in its minister (Eph. vi. 19, 20). (2) He is also *minister of the Church* (ver. 25), *pastor and teacher as well as evangelist* (Eph. iv. 11). And *minister* means “servant.” The Church does not exist for his sake, but he for the Church’s sake: “We preach ourselves your servants [slaves] for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor. iv. 5; comp. ver. 24; 1 Thess. ii. 6—8; 1 Pet. v. 2, 3; John x. 9—15; Ezek. xxxiv.). He has authority, which he does not hesitate to use when need arises (1 Cor. iv. 19—v. 5; 2 Cor. x. 2—6); but it is that “which the Lord gave for edification” (2 Cor. x. 8; xiii. 10). To the Church he can say, “I seek not yours, but you;” “whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, all are yours;” “I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls” (2 Cor. xii. 14, 15; 1 Cor. iii. 22; Phil. ii. 17; 1 Thess. ii. 8). And well may he do this, for he serves the Church for which the Lord Jesus “gave himself,” which he “loves,” which he “nourishes and cherishes as his own body” (ver. 24; Eph. v. 25, 29). He follows in the steps of “the good Shepherd,” who “giveth his life for the sheep” (John x. 11). (3) His ministry is a *Divine trust, a stewardship of God* (ver. 25; Eph. iii. 2, 9; 1 Cor. iv. 1; ix. 17). He was “separated from his mother’s womb” (Gal. i. 15), was “sent” (Acts xxii. 21), “was put to ministry” (1 Tim. i. 12), “appointed herald and apostle and teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth” (1 Tim. ii. 7). And in accordance with his inward call, he was “separated” for his particular work by “the Holy Ghost,” acting through the officers of the Church at Antioch (Acts xiii. 1—3). He is, therefore, a “minister of Christ,” a “minister of God,” and “steward of the mysteries of God” (2 Cor. xi. 23; vi. 4; 1 Cor. iv. 1). Hence the dignity and authority of his office (Gal. i. 1, 11, 12), and the power with which it invests him (ver. 29; 2 Cor. x. 4, 8; xii. 12; xiii. 3—6), and his responsibility for the final account (1 Cor. iv. 1—5; 2 Cor. v. 11; Phil. ii. 16; 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20; Heb. xiii. 17). His business is to “serve the Church,” but “to please God” (Gal. i. 10). 2. The aim of his ministry is twofold. (1) *To fulfil the word of God* (ver. 25)—to give it the widest possible extension (vers. 6, 23, Rom. xv. 17—21; 2 Thess. iii. 1), to carry it through every “open door” (ch. iv. 3; Eph. iii. 9; 1 Cor. xvi. 9; 2 Cor. ii. 12—14), and “manifest the savour of the knowledge of Christ in every place,” and to carry it on to its full issue in the salvation and sanctification of all who hear it (ver. 28; Acts xx. 27; 1 Thess. ii. 11, 12; 2 Thess. ii. 13—15). And so his aim is (2) *to present every man perfect in Christ*. (Ver. 28.) This is his endeavour and hope regarding *every man* to whom his ministry is addressed, *unto which he toils hard and strives* (ver. 29). His supreme reward “in the day of Christ,” his “joy and crown of glorying” (1 Thess. ii. 16; Phil. ii. 16), will be found in the saved souls, the perfected and ripened Christian characters, whom he will be able then to *present* as the fruit of “the grace of God that was with him” (1 Cor. xv. 10; Eph. iii. 2, 8; Rom. i. 13). 3. His work is (1) *the preaching of Christ* (ver. 29)—“Christ crucified” (1 Cor. i. 23; ii. 2) and “risen again” (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4; Acts xvii. 18), “made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. i. 30); “Christ the Image of God” (ver. 15; 2 Cor. iv. 4), the “Firstborn of all creation” (ver. 15), “Head of the Church” (ver. 18), “Lord of both the dead and the living” (Rom. xiv. 9), “all and in all” (ch. iii. 11). (2) *The admonishing and teaching of every man*. (Ver. 28.) For “all have sinned” and need Christ (Rom. iii. 23—26), and all have a claim on his salvation (1 Tim. iv. 10; ii. 3, 4; Rom. iii. 29, 30; i. 16; Heb. ii. 9; John iii. 16, etc.). He “admonishes every man,” therefore, often “with tears” (Acts xx. 31), of the nature and the penalties of sin, of the day of judgment and “the fear of the Lord” (2 Cor. v. 11), of the danger of falling from grace, of the special faults or errors he may discern in him (Gal. iii. 1—4, etc.; 1 Cor. i. 11, etc.). He *teaches in all wisdom*, supplying instruction apt for the simplest understanding and for the weakest “babe in Christ,” and also speaking “wisdom among the perfect” (1 Cor. ii. 6—iii. 2), seeking to meet every stage and state of the Christian life, and studying

the gentleness and patience (2 Tim. ii. 24—26; 1 Thess. ii. 7), the sympathy and adaptiveness which the teacher's work requires (1 Cor. ix. 20—22), "teaching publicly and from house to house," "keeping back nothing that was profitable," but everything that was unprofitable (1 Tim. iv. 6—8; vi. 3—5; 2 Tim. ii. 14—23; Titus iii. 8, 9), and plying every possible means to promote and to increase in all men "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts xx. 18—21, 27). 4. In this work: (1) *His labour is intense and painful*. (Ver. 29.) *Work* is in his eyes the one thing for which the Christian ministry is to be valued and commended (1 Thess. v. 12, 13). He is himself "in labours more abundant," and in this respect chiefly is "more a minister of Christ" than some others (2 Cor. xi. 23; comp. 1 Cor. xv. 10). No kind of toil comes amiss to him, for Christ's sake. Claiming his "right in the gospel" to "live of the gospel as the Lord ordained," yet on grounds of expediency he cheerfully foregoes it, and "brings himself into bondage to all," "for the gospel's sake" (1 Cor. ix. 1—23). "These hands," as he holds them up hard and black with working at the coarse sail-cloth, show how "in all things he gave us an example" of self-denying toil (Acts xx. 34, 35). (2) *And now his sufferings surpass even his labours, yet they fill him with constant joy*. (Ver. 24.) He is a prisoner, and his flesh rebels against "these bonds" (Acts xxvi. 29). He cannot preach abroad, or visit the Churches (ch. iv. 3; Eph. vi. 19, 20; Phil. i. 25, 26), whose "care" still "presses on him daily" (2 Cor. xi. 28). Many desert him (ch. iv. 11), and some even who "preach Christ" do it to injure and not to help him (Phil. i. 16). Yet even in this he can rejoice (Phil. i. 17, 18). He has learnt the secret of contentment (Phil. iv. 11). He is conscious of being "set for the defence of the gospel" (Phil. i. 16). His sufferings are evidently tending to its furtherance (Phil. i. 12—20). The cause of the Gentile Church is being effectually served by the sacrifice he has made (Eph. iii. 1, 13; Phil. ii. 17, 18). Above all, he feels that he is treading in the steps of Christ, suffering in the same interest, carrying on the same cause; and he takes it as a gift of grace (Phil. i. 29) that he has thus assigned to him his special share in that which Christ has been pleased to leave for his servants to suffer after him. How shall he not rejoice to be "as his Master"! In the two words *κονίω ἀγωνίζομενος* (ver. 29), whose full force is untranslatable, the apostle paints himself to the life, as the spiritual athlete, the great Christian champion, never flagging in his efforts nor shrinking from the heavy blows that fall upon him, till the prize of victory is won (comp. 1 Cor. ix. 24—27; 2 Cor. ii. 14—17; iv. 7—18; xi. 23—33; Acts xx. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8). But while we look at him with admiration, he cries out, "It is not I, but Christ living in me; and in my poor efforts his mighty energy displays itself" (ver. 29; 1 Cor. xv. 10; 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9; Gal. ii. 20).

II. CHRIST THE MYSTERY OF GOD. (Vers. 26, 27.) This is the glorious theme of St. Paul's ministry. 1. *It is the burden of the old revelation, the secret of ancient history*. The great heroes of the Old Testament—patriarchs, lawgivers, prophets, kings—were fragmentary types of him, in their character, achievements, or sufferings (Heb. v. 10; Acts vii. 37, etc.). The highest aspirations and anticipations of "holy men of old, moved by the Holy Ghost," were directed mysteriously all along to him, to his birth, teaching, sufferings, resurrection, to "the glory that should follow," to "the preaching of repentance and remission of sins to all nations in his name" (Luke xxiv. 26, 27, 44—47). The Jewish system of worship and discipline, in its construction and design, prefigured and prepared for his advent, who was himself meanwhile secretly acting in it and speaking through it to his people (John i. 10, 11; 1 Cor. x. 4, 9; Heb. ii. 10—12; xi. 26). The whole history of Israel and the development of the Old Testament system unerringly pointed to this goal, where it met the blindly groping, half-articulate desire of all nations. In Christ the lines of promise and of preparation, converging from the most distant ages and widely separated peoples, meet and are focussed, in this "fulness of the times." 2. *But the goal was hidden from the ages and from the generations*, who stood with straining sight seeking to pierce the darkness of the future (1 Pet. i. 10—12; Matt. xiii. 17). Seeing but a part of the promise, "afar off," and "at sundry times and in divers manners," they could not forecast its issue, nor piece together its scattered intimations. The Gentiles knew that they needed a Divine Saviour, and their need had become consciously extreme and desperate (1 Cor. i. 19—21; Eph. ii. 12; 1 Thess. iv. 13; Acts xvii. 23, 27). The Jews knew that he would come, but little suspected in what guise. They knew not how great and inward

was their own need of him. Least of all did they expect or wish that he should be for "a light of the Gentiles, and for salvation unto the ends of the earth" (Acts xiii. 47). Those who knew most of his coming were least prepared to believe this. It is, alas! still a *mystery* to them (Eph. iii. 4—6; Rom. xi. 1; 2 Cor. iii. 12—16). 3. *This mystery brings to God's saints, not only a Christ revealed to them, the open secret of the Old Testament, but a Christ manifested in them* (ver. 27; Gal. i. 16), *Gentiles and Jews alike* (Acts xi. 17), *which is a deeper secret still*. How "rich" is the Divine "glory" displayed in this! With what "might" do our weak hearts need to be "strengthened that Christ may dwell through faith" therein, that so we may be "filled with all this fulness of God" (Eph. iii. 16—19)! 4. *And therefore this mystery of God is not finished yet*. (Rev. x. 7; xxi. 1—8.) "Christ in you is the hope of glory" (ver. 27). Every saint of God is a new mystery to the world, and even to himself (ch. iii. 3; 1 John iii. 1, 2). "The manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 19) has still to come, when their hidden life will be made visible. The soul united to Christ and like to him will be mated with "a spiritual body" (1 Cor. xv. 44), a "body of glory" (Phil. iii. 21). Then at last the inward and the outward, character and condition, will harmonize and be fitly matched, and "we shall be manifested with him in glory" (ch. iii. 3, 4). This is the Christian *hope*, of which "Christ in you" is the abiding pledge (ch. iii. 15, note; Eph. i. 13, 14; Rom. viii. 11).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 3—8.—*The apostle's thanksgiving for the spiritual progress of the Colossians*. Notwithstanding the dangerous speculations of a Judæo-Gnostic philosophy which had sprung up at Colossæ, threatening the integrity of their faith, the apostle is yet able to express his thankfulness for the faith and love which animated the Christian brotherhood in the valley of Lycus. He is thankful for their continued allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the one satisfaction of all their yearnings, the one solution both of their speculative questionings and of their religious wants.

I. **THANKSGIVING IS A CONSTANT EXERCISE OF THE CHRISTIAN HEART, AS IT IS ALSO A TRUE PART OF PRAYER.** "We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." 1. *It ought to mingle with every prayer*. We never pray but we have cause for thankfulness, and we never give thanks but we have cause to pray. And whatever may be the subject of our rejoicing ought to be matter for thanksgiving. Prayer with thanksgiving was the apostle's constant recommendation (Phil. iv. 6). 2. *It is to be addressed to God the Father in Christ*. (1) Because we are commanded to "enter his gates with thanksgiving," "to be thankful to him and to bless his Name" (Ps. c. 4). (2) Because it is only from him that we have all good (Jas. i. 17). (3) Because it is only by him we are preserved from all sin (Ps. cxxi. 7). (4) Because he only is good in himself (Luke xviii. 19). 3. *Reasons for thanksgiving*. (1) It is the only requital God expects or we can make for his mercies (Ps. l. 10, 14; lxix. 30, 31). (2) We cannot expect a blessing unless we are thankful for it. (3) The more thankful we are for mercies received, the more ground we have for expecting more of them. 4. *We ought to be thankful as well as prayerful for others as well as ourselves*. (Eph. vi. 18; 1 Tim. ii. 1.) What a treasury of prayers belongs to the saints!

II. **THE SUBJECTS OF THE APOSTLE'S THANKSGIVING—THE FAITH AND LOVE OF THE COLOSSIANS.** "Having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love which ye have toward all the saints." It is interesting to remark that the apostle, in the two Epistles written at the same time as this to Colossæ, expresses thankfulness for similar blessings (Eph. i. 15; Philem. 6). 1. *Their faith in Christ Jesus*. (1) It was not merely faith resting upon him and finding its nurture and support in him. (2) But it centred in him as the sphere in which it had its due exercise. In this sense, Christ "dwells in the heart by faith" (Eph. iii. 17), and believers "rejoice in him" (Phil. iii. 3, 7). Such a faith is a merciful preservative against doctrinal errors. 2. *Their love to all the saints*. (1) The nature of this love. It includes: (a) "Doing good to all, especially to those of the household of faith" (Gal. vi. 10), and "distributing to the necessity of saints" (Rom. xii. 13). (b) Loving fellowship (Acts ii. 42). "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. x. 25). (c) Bearing with their infirmities. "Love covereth

the multitude of sins" (1 Pet. iv. 8). We are not to grieve our brother with our meat, else "we walk not charitably" (Rom. xiv. 15). (d) Cherishing a forgiving spirit (Eph. iv. 31). (2) The manner of this love. (a) It is to be brotherly. We are "to love the brotherhood" (1 Pet. ii. 22). (b) It is to be sincere. "Without dissimulation" (Rom. xii. 9); "Not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John iii. 18). (c) It is to be from "a pure heart" (1 Tim. i. 5). (d) It is to be fervent. "Have fervent charity among yourselves" (1 Pet. iv. 8). (e) It is to be full of labours (1 Thess. i. 3). (f) It is above all to be catholic. "All the saints," without distinction. (3) The reasons for this love. (a) Christ's example and command (John xiii. 34). (b) It is a sign of grace. It is a token that "we are translated from death to life" (1 John iii. 14). David's delight was "in the saints" (Ps. xvi. 3). (c) It is the "fulfilling of the Law" (Rom. xiii. 10). (d) There is comfort in it (Phil. ii. 1). (e) It commends the gospel to the world. We ought, therefore, to be "sound in love" (Titus ii. 2), and "to provoke one another to love and good works" (Heb. x. 24). 3. *The relation between faith and love.* They are necessarily joined together; for: (1) Faith "worketh by love" (Gal. v. 6) and ought never to work without it. (2) The grace of God abounds in "faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. i. 14). Faith and love are the two members of the Christian religion. 4. *The graces of the saints are easily known and heard of.* The apostle heard of the faith and love of the Colossians. "Since the day we heard of them." They ought, therefore, to be bright in their heavenly lustre.

III. THE MOTIVE OR IMPULSIVE CAUSE OF THESE GRACES. "Because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens." 1. *The nature of this hope.* (1) The sense of the word oscillates, it has been observed, between the subjective feeling and the objective realization; yet the thing hoped for is rather more prominent in the passage. It centres in the inheritance, in "the recompense of the reward," in "the good foundation against the time to come," in "the eternal life that God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began." (2) It is Divine in its origin, unlike the false hopes of men. We are "begotten to a living hope" (1 Pet. i. 3). (3) Its true fulcrum, or point of support, is in the merits of Christ (1 Tim. i. 2; Heb. vi. 19, 20). 2. *The security of this hope.* "Which is laid up for you in the heavens." It is secure because: (1) It is laid up in the country where our Father dwells. And who can destroy it in such keeping? (2) It is linked to "the two immutable things"—the oath and the promise of God, which are fastened within the veil by our Forerunner, even Jesus (Heb. vi. 19). (3) It is where the devil cannot come. (4) It is in heaven, not on earth, and therefore free from all the corruptions that the moth and rust of the world may inflict. 3. *The quickening power of this hope.* It has great influence upon our faith and love. God makes one grace cause another. "It is hope that plucks up the heart of man to a constant desire of union with God by faith, and of communion with man by love." Moses had respect to the recompense of the reward (Heb. xi. 25, 26). The saints will find that it is not in vain to serve the Almighty. They ought, therefore, to remember (1) that their hope is not in this world; (2) that they should walk as "pilgrims and strangers," using the world as if they used it not; (3) that they should despise the scorn and hate of a world which "will always love his own." 4. *How is this hope to be increased?* Though it cannot be made more secure, it may be more fully realized. To this end, we need (1) true grace, for we can only have "a good hope through grace" (2 Thess. ii. 16); (2) experience (Rom. v. 4); (3) patience and comfort of the Scriptures (Rom. xv. 4); (4) joy and peace in believing (Rom. xv. 13).

IV. THE SOURCE OF OUR DIVINE HOPE. "Whereof ye heard before in the Word of the truth of the gospel, which is come unto you." 1. *It is by the hearing of the Word we learn of our hope.* There is no other way of learning it. The Lord has sent us the news of salvation. Nature tells us nothing of a Divine hope. The importance of this hearing is manifest, because: (1) It is the source of faith. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. x. 14); "Hear, and your soul shall live" (Isa. lv. 4). (2) It opens men's hearts (Acts xvi. 14). (3) It causes the stony heart to melt, and the proud heart to tremble (Isa. lxvi. 2). (4) The afflicted conscience is cured by it (Ps. li. 8). Let us, therefore, thank God for it, love his gospel, receive his commands, and submit to his guidance. 2. *The preciousness of the Word.* It is "the Word of the truth of the gospel." As if to signify the contrast between the simple truth taught them by Epaphras and the errors of the false teachers. Its

preciousness lies in its truth. (1) It reveals to us the true mind of the Lord as to the way of salvation. "It is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptation" (1 Tim. i. 12). (2) It exhibits to us Jesus Christ as the Truth, as "him that is true," as "the faithful and true Witness." (3) It reveals to us the gospel; for "it is the Word of the truth of the gospel." This gospel is (a) the power of God to salvation (Rom. i. 16). (b) It brings life and immortality to light (2 Tim. i. 10). (c) It brings abundance of blessings (Rom. xv. 14). (d) It is a witness to all nations (Matt. xxiv. 14). (4) It works truth in us by working knowledge in us and enabling us to do the truth (John iii. 22; Jas. iii. 17). Therefore believers ought to pray God to give them the Spirit of truth, that "they may come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. ii. 25), and never think of resting in the mere form of truth (Rom. ii. 20; John iii. 22). 3. *The accessibility of the Word.* It is "come unto you." It came without their seeking it or sending for it. The Colossians sat in darkness and the shadow of death, estranged "from the life of God through ignorance," till God caused the light to shine into their hearts. We ought, therefore, (1) to acknowledge the free grace of God in sending us such good tidings; (2) to rejoice in the gospel and walk by the light of it.

V. *THE FRUIT-BEARING POWER AND EXPANSIVENESS OF THE GOSPEL.* "Even as it is also in all the world, bearing fruit and increasing." These words set forth at once the efficacy and the rapid growth of the gospel, its inner working and its outward expansion. 1. *Its fruit-bearing power.* (1) This was according to promise (Isa. lv. 10, 23). (2) It was its design—"to gather fruit which might abide to everlasting life" (John xv. 16). (3) It was to produce fruit "in all the world"—in all climates, among all races, in all ages of the world, as if to mark its universal adaptability to the wants of men. In this respect it differed from the false gospels, which were esoteric or limited in their application. It is the grand verification of the gospel that it continues to bear fruit age after age (Ezek. xlviii. 12). 2. *Its expansiveness.* Its rapid progress in the days of the apostles is one of the wonders of history; for "the Word of God grew and multiplied" in the face of the opposition of magistrates, the persecution of Jewish zealots, the perversions of false teachers, and the inconsistencies of Christian professors themselves. Though the Word was not yet announced to all nations, the whole world was the area of its increasing power.

VI. *THE EFFECTS OF THE GOSPEL, PARTICULARLY AT COLOSSÆ.* "As it doth in you also, since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth." 1. *The hearing is necessary to the knowledge of the grace of God, yet there is a hearing that is resultless of all good.* To hear with profit, we must (1) become fools that we may be wise (1 Cor. iii. 18); (2) come with a purpose to be reformed by it (Ps. xxv. 14); (3) listen with a meek and humble spirit (Jas. i. 22); (4) hear with faith and assurance (Heb. iv. 1; 1 Thess. i. 5). 2. *The true knowledge of the grace of God is fruitful in all the growths of righteousness.* (1) The gospel as taught at Colossæ was an offer of free grace, as opposed to the false gospels, which were codes of rigorous prescription. We must, therefore, be careful (a) not to receive the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. vi. 1); (b) to appreciate "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9); (c) to avoid those who would "make void the grace of God" (Gal. ii. 21); (d) to find our constant standing in this grace (1 Pet. v. 2). (2) The gospel at Colossæ had produced much spiritual fruit to the praise of God's glory. Epaphras makes special mention of their "love in the Spirit." It refers to all the love which is wrought in the heart by the Spirit. (a) This love is a chief gift of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22; Rom. xv. 30). (b) It is of necessity sincere (Rom. xii. 13), the outcome of a pure heart (1 Tim. i. 5), and practical in its scope (1 John iii. 18). (c) It is inconsistent with the idea of working evil to a neighbour (Rom. xiii. 10) or of offending a brother in a thing indifferent (Rom. xiv. 15). 3. *The early and continuous experience of this grace is a good sign of spiritual growth.* "Since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth." This language implies that the work of God wrought speedily upon the Colossians, and that it continued to work. Their goodness was not as the morning dew.

VII. *THE FOUNDER OF COLOSSIAN CHRISTIANITY—EPAPHRAS.* "As ye learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit." 1. *His character and position as a minister.* (1) The apostle gives him the right hand of fellowship, and mentions him

with loving regard, that he may strengthen his influence among the people of Colossæ. He would thus be better beloved and more useful. (2) The commendation presents Epaphras in a twofold relation. (a) To the apostle himself, (a) as "our beloved fellow-servant," working in the service of the same Master and in loving relationship to all his servants; (b) as the representative particularly of the apostle himself, being "a minister of Christ on our behalf," preaching at Colossæ instead of the apostle, and, therefore, not to be displaced by the new school of Judæo-Gnostic sectaries; (γ) perhaps, also, as "a fellow-prisoner," for Epaphras appears in this light in the contemporary Epistle (Philem. 23). (b) To the Colossian Church. "Who is a faithful minister of Christ." (a) He was called a minister of the Colossians; for Christ is our true Master, and Epaphras is his minister. It is by his authority ministers act in the people's service. (β) His faithfulness is to be specially noted. He was faithful to Christ, to the truth, to the souls of men. It is "faithful men" who will be "able to teach others also" (2 Tim. ii. 2). It is necessary for "a steward of the mysteries" to be "found" faithful. 2. *His continued interest in their welfare.* (1) Epaphras tells the apostle something that would tend to bind the flock at Colossæ more closely together. "He declared unto us your love in the Spirit." A faithful minister is always glad to give a good report of his people, and especially of what good things God has wrought by him. He has, no doubt, to make report of corruptions in opinion and worship at Colossæ, but he is careful to make first mention of their spiritual graces. (2) He labours for them in prayer (ch. iv. 12), that "they may stand fast, perfect and complete in the whole will of God."—T. C.

Vers. 9—11.—*The apostle's prayer for the enlargement and completion of their spiritual life.* I. THE URGENT SPIRIT OF THIS PRAYER. "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you." 1. *It is the duty as well as the desire of ministers, not only to teach their flocks, but to pray for them.* They must say, like Samuel, "God forbid that I should . . . cease to pray for you" (2 Sam. xii. 23). The prayer of Moses was more influential against Amalek than all the weapons of Israel. "The prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. v. 16). 2. *They ought to be unceasing in their supplications.* There must be "perseverance in supplication for all saints" (Eph. vi. 18). We must give God no rest; for he often delays the answer to increase our importunity (Luke xviii. 3, 4; 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9). 3. *The reason for constant supplication.* "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray . . . for you." The apostle had heard of their faith and love, and was naturally concerned for their growth in grace, for the free course of the Word among them, and for their freedom from all error. He heard they were good, and he prayed that they might be better.

II. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE APOSTLE'S PRAYER. "That ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." 1. *The Divine will is the supreme subject of knowledge to a believer.* It is not mere speculations about God's nature or his counsels, but his will, that we are to study. This is God's will as it is made known to us either in Scripture or experience. (1) It is his determining will (Eph. i. 5). (2) It is his prescribing will, including Law and gospel, and especially the nature of faith and repentance (Acts xxiii. 9; Eph. i. 9; Rom. xii. 2). (3) It is his will of approval (Gal. i. 4; Matt. xviii. 14). (4) It is his providential will (1 Cor. i. 1; Rom. i. 10). We have much to learn concerning God's will in these four respects. 2. *The knowledge necessary to understand it is instinct with "spiritual wisdom and understanding."* Knowledge is power, but it may work for evil as well as good. It must be regulated by wisdom and understanding. (1) Wisdom; not that which has "a show of wisdom," and springs from vanity nurtured by the fleshly mind (ch. ii. 18, 23); not fleshly wisdom (2 Cor. i. 12); much less that which is "earthly, sensual, devilish" (Jas. iii. 17); but spiritual wisdom—the knowledge of the true end of life, such as God gives to the simple (Ps. xix. 7), enabling them to penetrate the mysteries of Divine truth (1 Cor. ii. 6) and to understand their duty to God and man in all the relations of life. It is "from above" (Jas. iii. 17); it presupposes the existence of faith and love; it is a subject of Christian prayer. (2) Understanding is the faculty of spiritual insight which takes in the bearings of things. It fits us for the service of God on earth and for the glory of God in heaven. As it is spiritual, it is

touched with meekness and humility. 3. *The measures of this knowledge.* "That ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will." There is no limit assigned to it. (1) We cannot rest with mere rudiments; we must be "filled with all knowledge" (Rom. xv. 14). (2) There will always be something wanting in this life. "We know in part" (1 Cor. xiii. 11). (3) Nothing but the knowledge of the will of God will ever satisfy the deep hunger of man's heart. 4. *Motives to this fuller knowledge.* (1) It is the glory of the saints to have it (Jer. ix. 24). (2) It is their special privilege to have it (Mark iv. 11). (3) To want it is a sin and a sorrow (Hosea iv. 6). (4) It is the most excellent of all knowledge; for it is eternal life itself (John xvii. 3). 5. *Design of this knowledge.* "To walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing by the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to the power of his glory, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." The design is twofold as it bears respectively upon action and upon suffering. (1) The knowledge of God's will is to influence conduct. Its true end is practical obedience. We are "to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." (a) Walking worthy of the Lord. This is not (a) with a worthiness of merit, for we are all of us unprofitable servants (Luke xvii. 10); (β) but with a worthiness of meekness such as is becoming when we consider the dignity of our calling, the glory of the kingdom of God, the supplies of grace which the gospel affords, and the blessed hopes laid up for us in heaven. (γ) It is a worthiness "unto all pleasing." We must "so serve God that we may please him" (Heb. xii. 28; 1 Cor. vii. 31). (i.) He that seeks not to please him in all things seeks not to please him in anything. (ii.) If we please him he will make our very "enemies at peace with us" (Prov. xvi. 7). (iii.) "Men-pleasing" is inconsistent with God-pleasing (ch. iii. 22). (iv.) It would be sinful and ungrateful to displease him. (v.) Pleasing God is the work of heaven (Ps. ciii. 20, 21). (b) A twofold aspect of worthy walking. (α) Christian fruitfulness. "Bearing fruit in every good work." (i.) The necessity of it. (a) It is for God's glory (John xv. 18). (b) As a proof of our faith (Jas. ii. 18, 26). (c) The edification of others (Matt. v. 16; Titus iii. 8). (d) The increase of our final reward (2 John 8). (ii.) The means of it. (a) We must abide in the true Vine, Jesus Christ (John xv. 4; Phil. i.). (b) We must dwell beside the rivers of water (Ps. i. 3). (iii.) The extent of it—"in every good work." We must be harmoniously developed in our obedience as in our inward experience (Phil. iv. 8). (β) Increase in moral stature—"increasing by the knowledge of God." We grow in grace just as we grow in knowledge (2 Pet. iii. 18). There is a mutual interaction between knowledge and grace. We are to add to our faith virtue, and to our virtue knowledge (2 Pet. i. 5), just as we are to grow in all spiritual graces by knowledge. Knowledge promotes the sanctification of our callings and our food (1 Tim. iv. 3), enables us to discern things that differ (Phil. i. 10), and keeps down corrupt affections (Isa. xi. 7, 9). (2) The knowledge of God's will tends to strengthen patience in suffering. (a) The need of abounding strength—"strengthened with all might." (α) The afflictions of life tend to weaken us. (β) Our adversaries are many. (γ) Our faith is fitful. (δ) We are often unsettled and tossed about by the wind of contrary doctrine (Eph. iv. 14). (e) We are, perhaps, "babes in Christ," and unskilful in the word of righteousness (Heb. v. 12, 13). (b) The source of our strength—"according to the power of his glory;" his glory being the manifestation of his love to man (Eph. iii. 16). We "can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us" (Phil. iv. 13). He "giveth strength to his people" and "strength is of the Lord" (Ps. lxxii. 11). "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isa. xl. 31). "Glorious power will be victorious power." It is God's revelation of himself to us that gives us our greatest strength. It is his glory that sets his power to work, as it is by promise pledged to his people. Therefore: (α) Let us pray for knowledge and faith to discern God's promise and power (Eph. i. 8). (β) Let us hold fast the truth of the gospel, eschewing "winds of doctrine." Let us "follow the truth in love." (c) The fruit of our strength—"unto patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." (α) Patience or endurance. (i.) It is the grace which does not easily succumb under suffering, and is one of the most blessed fruits of the tree of life. It is the result of the bracing effect of affliction (Jas. v. 11), and is opposed to despondency or cowardice. (ii.) Our patience will grow (a) through the word of patience, for the comforts of the Scriptures beget both patience and hope (Rom. xv. 4). (b) We must cultivate a

humble and constant trust in the Lord (Ps. xxxvii. 3). (c) We must continue instant in prayer (Rom. xii. 12). (d) Long-suffering is a temper of gentleness and self-restraint, closely connected with patience. (i.) It is the Lord's command that we should suffer long (Matt. v. 21, 22). (ii.) There are injuries that befall us in Divine providence (2 Sam. xvi. 10). (iii.) A revengeful spirit is a hindrance to prayer (1 Tim. ii. 8) and to the due power of the Word (Jas. i. 21), and it lets the devil into the heart (Eph. iv. 21). Therefore, let us practise this grace of long-suffering. (γ) Joyfulness. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." It is possible to be "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. vi. 10). (i.) Our patience and long-suffering must be balanced with joy so as to sustain their true temper. (ii.) It is possible to be joyful in tribulations (Jas. i. 2). (iii.) It is commanded by Christ (Matt. v. 12) and enforced by his own example on the cross (Heb. xii. 2). (iv.) Its ground is our fellowship with Christ in his sufferings (1 Pet. iv. 13), and the expectation of a heavenly inheritance (Heb. x. 14). (v.) It is one of the fruits of God's Spirit (Gal. v. 22).—T. C.

Ver. 12.—*Divine meetness of the saints for their inheritance.* "Giving thanks to the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

I. THE NATURE AND GLORY OF THE INHERITANCE. Whether we understand by it heaven or the blessings of the kingdom is immaterial, but the original suggests the idea of a joint inheritance, of which each individual enjoys a part. 1. *It is an ancient inheritance.* For "it is a kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34). Its "Builder and Maker" is God himself (2 Cor. v. 1). 2. *It is bound up with the coheirship of Christ.* (Rom. viii. 17, 18; Ps. ii.) God makes us "heirs and rich in faith" (Jas. ii. 5). By virtue of the coheirship, it is a free, sure, satisfying, durable inheritance. 3. *It is a holy inheritance.* It is "with the saints." Only saints enjoy it with one another. "The pure in heart shall see God" (Matt. v. 8). No unclean thing shall enter into God's kingdom (Acts xx. 32; xxvi. 18; 1 Thess. i. 10). 4. *It is an inheritance "in light."* (1) The Lamb is the Light of heaven (Rev. xxi. 23). (2) There will be clear vision in heaven's light. Whatever "makes manifest is light." "In thy light we shall see light." We shall "know even as we are known." We shall "see face to face." We shall dwell for ever "in the light of God's countenance." There will be no darkness there.

II. THE MEETNESS FOR THE INHERITANCE. 1. *It is implied that we have no natural meetness for it.* We could not merit it by our righteousness, and our spirits are out of harmony with its joys. There is nothing in us but "enmity against God" (Rom. viii. 7). The spirit which is in moral darkness cares not for the light. 2. *The meetness is given to us.* (1) We are made meet by our calling, by our justification, by our adoption. (2) We are made meet for it by our sanctification. The Father gives us, along with the kingdom, the disposition, inclination, behaviour of heirs, sons, kings, and priests.

III. THE AUTHOR OF THIS MEETNESS. "The Father." 1. *It is he who hath begotten us to the inheritance.* (1 Pet. i. 3.) 2. *It is he only who can pardon us and accept us.* 3. *It is he who is the Fountain of all holiness.* 4. *It is he who is stronger than all to preserve us to the end and crown us with final glory.* (Jude 24; Eph. i. 17.)

IV. THE DUTY OF THANKSGIVING. "Giving thanks to the Father." 1. *A sanctified heart is ready to acknowledge the instrument by which good is received, yet more the Author of blessing.* 2. *It honours God to thank him.* "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me" (Ps. l. 23). 3. *A thankful heart is sure of a gracious hearing.* The more thankful we are for mercies received the more ground have we to expect more mercies.—T. C.

Ver. 13.—*Translation into Christ's kingdom.* The apostle now proceeds to show how the Father makes us meet for the inheritance of saints. "Who delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love."

I. THE ORIGINAL CONDITION OF ALL MEN. They are under "the power of darkness." 1. *Consider the meaning of this darkness.* There is a darkness that is seasonable; which, in the economy of nature, brings rest and recovery to man. This darkness is far different. (1) It is the darkness of ignorance apart from "the light of life" (John viii. 12; Eph. v. 13). (2) It is the darkness of sin (Rom. xiii. 12; 2 Cor. iii. 14), blinding men against the truth. (3) It is the darkness of misery (Isa. viii. 22). (4)

It is the darkness of death (Ps. lxxviii. 12). (5) It is the darkness of hell—"utter darkness." 2. *It is darkness organized for the ruin of men.* It is "the power of darkness"—an arbitrary, usurped power, and not "a true kingdom." The prince of darkness is at the head of this dreary realm and strives to keep all his slaves in darkness, lest "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus should shine into them" (2 Cor. iv. 4).

II. THE RESCUE FROM THIS POWER OF DARKNESS. "Who delivered us." None but God can do this work. The strong man will keep his own till the stronger come (Luke xi. 22). He delivers us in our effectual calling. 1. *He enlightens our minds in the knowledge of Christ, who is "the true Light."* (John viii. 12.) 2. *He persuades and enables us to embrace Christ as offered in the gospel.* (John vi. 44; Phil. ii. 13.) 3. *He renews our wills and causes us to "walk in the light as he is in the light."* (1 John i. 7.) 4. *He clothes us "with the armour of light."* (Rom. xiii. 12.)

III. THE NEW KINGDOM OF THE RESCUED CAPTIVES AND ITS NEW RELATIONS. "And translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love." The word usually suggests the transplanting of races and the settlement of them in a new territory. 1. *The significance of the translation.* (1) It implies separation (a) from the world, (b) from sin, (c) from the devil. "Go out from among them, and be ye separate" (2 Cor. vi. 17). (2) It implies the assumption of entirely new relations. The believer is a member of a new society—"the kingdom of grace;" is "a fellow-citizen with the saints;" is heir of the kingdom of glory. He has a new name, new hopes, new friends, and works for a new heaven. 2. *The new kingdom of the saints.* "The kingdom of the Son of his love." (1) It is not the kingdom of inferior angels, as errorists might fancy (ch. ii. 8), but that of God's own Son. (2) It is a kingdom already in existence. (3) It is a kingdom that cannot be shaken like the kingdoms of earth (Heb. xii. 28). (4) It is a kingdom that will endure to the end (Luke i. 33). (5) It is a kingdom in which the number of the possessors will not diminish the blessings enjoyed by each. (6) It is a kingdom in which Christ now reigns by his Word and Spirit; the saints rejoicing to have him reigning over them. (7) All the subjects of this kingdom are kings (Rev. i. 6).—T. C.

Ver. 14.—*Redemption through the blood of Christ.* "In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." (See homiletical hints on Eph. i. 7).—T. C.

Vers. 15—17.—*Christ's headship over nature.* The Gnostic errorists at Colossæ taught that the gulf between the infinite God and finite man was bridged across by subordinate angelic agencies. The apostle teaches that the gulf is bridged by Jesus Christ, who, being both God and Man, touches both and is the Reconciler of God and man. He shows that Christ has a double sovereignty, a twofold mediatorial function—in relation to the universe and in relation to the Church. Thus we have a most pregnant statement concerning the doctrine of the person of Christ with the view of showing that there is a real mediation between God and creation.

I. HIS RELATION TO THE INVISIBLE FATHER. "Who is the Image of the invisible God." Christ is likewise called "the Brightness of the Father's glory, the express Image of his person" (Heb. i. 3). 1. *The meaning of this image.* (1) Christ is not a mere likeness of the Father, like the head of a sovereign stamped on a coin, or as a son bears the features of his father. (2) But he is an essential manifestation and embodiment of the Father. Thus the invisible God becomes visible to man, according to our Lord's own words, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him" (John i. 18). "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). (3) It implies his perfect equality with the Father in respect to substance, nature, and eternity. The Son is the Father's Image except in respect that he is not the Father. 2. *Lessons to be drawn from this representation of Christ's glory.* (1) If we would know the Father, we must get into Christ by faith (2 Cor. iv. 4). (2) As it is Christ's glory to be God's Image, be it our honour to be Christ's image, in knowledge (ch. iii. 10), in holiness, in righteousness (Eph. iv. 21). We are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. viii. 29). (3) How great a sin it is to turn the glory of the incorruptible God into the image of corruptible creatures" (Rom. i. 23)!

II. CHRIST'S RELATION TO THE UNIVERSE. He is "the Firstborn of all creation." As his being God's Image implies his eternal unity with God, so his being the only begotten Son of God implies the distinctness of his Person. The apostle thus guards the truth on one side against Arianism, on the other side against Sabellianism. There are two ideas involved in this statement. 1. *Christ has a priority to all creation.* Arians refer to the passage as implying that he is only one, though the very first, of created beings. But (1) he is said here to be begotten, not created. (2) He is declared in the context to be "before all things," and therefore he is no part of them. (3) "All things" are declared to be "made by him," but he is himself necessarily excepted from the number of the things he created. (4) The Scriptures elsewhere declare his eternal pre-existence and Godhead. 2. *Christ is sovereign Lord of creation by right of primogeniture.* The word "Firstborn" is used of the Messiah almost as his technical designation (Ps. ii. 7), as we see by Heb. i. 6, "When he bringeth the First-begotten into the world." As such he is "Heir of all things" (Heb. i. 2; Rom. iv. 14). There is thus implied a mediatorial function in the world as well as in the Church. 3. *Christ is the actual Creator of all things.* "For in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." These words justify the title of "Firstborn of all creation." They were all created "in him," not merely "by him"—as if the germ of all creative power and wisdom lay in his infinite mind, as the sphere of their operation. The words impliedly exclude the Gnostic idea that Christ was an inferior agent of the infinite God. He was the creative centre of the universe. Mark: (1) The extent of creation—"things in the heavens and things upon the earth." This includes all creation as described by locality. (2) The variety of the creation—"whether things visible or invisible." This division would include the sun, moon, stars, the earth with all its visible glories, in one class; the angels and the souls of men in the other class. (3) The orders of creation, "whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." As Gnosticism placed Christ among the higher intelligences, the apostle places him far above all angelic intelligences of every order. It is not possible to say whether these names represent various grades of a celestial hierarchy, but it is probable that they do; "thrones and dominions" belonging to the first order, "principalities and powers" standing next, as including spirits both good and evil. Christ made the angels. 4. *Christ is himself the End or final Cause of creation.* "All things have been created through him and for him." All things were created by him as well as for him—for the manifestation of his glory. "He that was the first Cause must be the last End." The final destination of the universe is referred to the Son, just as it is elsewhere ascribed to the Father (Rom. xi. 36). The Son is the Centre of the world's final unity. 5. *Christ is the Sustainer of the universe.* "And by him all things consist." The continued existence, as well as the creation, of all things, depends upon him. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John v. 17). He "upholds all things by the word of his power" (Heb. i. 3). The sustaining unity of the creation is in him (1) because he maintains its order, appointing all things to their respective ends; (2) because he sustains the operation of all things, correlating means with ends; (3) because he secures the co-operation of all things, so that all things work together for his glory; (4) because he maintains the perpetuity of all things. Thus Christ maintains the cohesion of the universe.

III. LESSONS TO BE DRAWN FROM CHRIST'S RELATION TO HIS FATHER AND TO THE UNIVERSE. 1. *We delight in the doctrine of Christ's divinity, which is the doctrine of Christendom.* 2. *If he made angels and men, they may well worship him.* 3. *His relation to creation encourages us to hope that he will overrule all the power of nature for the growth of his Church.* Even wicked men will have no power to destroy his Church. The creation proves his power, and his love proves his good will. 4. *The knowledge of his glory ought to deter from all creature-worship.* 5. *We should ever pray that he would direct the work of our hands continually.* (Ps. xc. 7.) 6. *We ought not to fret at Divine providence.* (Ps. xxxvii. 2, 3.) The creative and administrative work of Christ, in the natural order of things, is the comfort of all believers.—T. C.

Ver. 18.—*Christ's headship of the Church.* He is the head of the new creation as well as of the natural creation. "And he is the Head of the body, the Church: who

is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."

I. CONSIDER WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THIS HEADSHIP OF THE CHURCH. There is a real essential union of the Head and the members. 1. *Christ is the Centre of the Church's life.* He is its Life. "Because I live ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). The union is strictly vital. "The second Adam is a quickening spirit" (1 Cor. xv. 45). 2. *He is the Centre of its unity.* Believers are all one in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. xii. 12). We are baptized by the Spirit into one body (1 Cor. xii. 13). 3. *He is the Source of all its blessings and comforts.* (1) He loves it (Eph. v. 27). (2) He sympathizes with its distresses (Matt. xviii. 5). (3) He supplies it with abundant grace. "Of his fulness have we all received, even grace for grace" (John i. 16). 3. *He is the Mainspring of all its holy activity.* "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13); "Without me ye can do nothing" (John xv. 5).

II. CONSIDER WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE SUBJECTION OF THE BODY TO THE HEAD. 1. *The Church must own no other Head than Christ.* There are under-currents of priestly domination in our day subversive of this headship. The Pope is *not* and cannot be the head of the Church in any sense. We can be in subjection to no other than Christ. 2. *We must do nothing to dishonour our Head either in flesh or spirit.* (2 Cor. vi. 15—18.) 3. *We must use all means to grow up into our Head in all things,* that "there may be increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (Eph. iv. 16). 4. *We must dwell with our fellow-members in love and humility.* "Keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv. 3). The members must sympathize with one another (1 Cor. x. 24).

III. THE ORIGIN OF THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST. "Who is the Beginning, the First-born from the dead." 1. *Christ is the Beginning of the new creation.* Two ideas are implied in the expression. (1) Priority in time. He is "the Firstfruits of them that have fallen asleep" (1 Cor. xv. 20). (2) The origination of spiritual life. As he is "the Beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. iii. 14), he is the Beginning of the new creation. He is the "Prince of life" (Acts iii. 14), the "Author of salvation" (Heb. ii. 10). 2. *Christ is Head through his resurrection.* He is "the First-begotten from the dead." Consider: (1) That he was among the dead. Thus he made expiation for our sins. (2) That he was begotten from among the dead, because he was raised from death to life "for our justification" (Rom. iv. 23, 24). (3) That he was the first so begotten. (a) Others were translated or died again. (b) He rose to die no more (Rom. vi. 9). (c) His resurrection involves the resurrection of all his saints. (4) His resurrection is his title to headship (Eph. i. 20—23). (5) Let us realize "the power of his resurrection" (Phil. iii. 10) in a holy life.

IV. THE DESIGN OF THE FATHER WAS THAT ALIKE IN THE SPIRITUAL AND THE NATURAL ORDER CHRIST MIGHT HAVE THE PRE-EMINENCE. "That in all things he might have the pre-eminence." Both in nature and in the Church he is pre-eminent; and the Father's design will be yet more fully accomplished when all things are put under his feet and "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ" (Rev. xi. 15). Thus our Divine Redeemer is "Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last" (Rev. i. 8, 11, 17, 18).—T. C.

Ver. 19.—*The fulness of the Godhead in Jesus Christ.* "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." The apostle thus explains the headship alike of the Church and of the universe, for he says the indwelling of Deity was the ground of both.

I. THE NATURE OF THIS FULNESS. 1. *It is not the mere manifestation of Godhead.* 2. *It is Godhead itself in the totality of its powers and attributes.* It is "the complete fulness and exhaustless perfection of the Divine essence." It is elsewhere described: "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (ch. ii. 9). Christ is indeed "God manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. iii. 16). The Judæo-Gnostics taught that the fulness of the Godhead was distributed or dispensed among several spiritual agencies—"thrones, dominations, principdoms, virtues, powers"—so as to introduce grades of angelic mediators between God and man. The apostle declares that the fulness of the Godhead rests, not in them, but in Christ as the Word of God. Thus he is no mere emanation from the Divine Being.

II. THERE IS A PERMANENTLY INDWELLING FULNESS IN HIM. "That in him all the fulness should have its permanent abode." This is the force of the original word, which is very suggestive in the light of later Gnostic heresies. The false teachers held that the fulness of the Godhead as dispersed among spiritual agencies was partial like a blurred image, and also temporary. The apostle teaches: 1. *That the totality of Divine powers abides in Christ.* 2. *That it abides in him permanently and remains for ever, not coming and going like a transient phenomenon.* Therefore we have an inexhaustible supply for all the needs of the Church.

III. THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THIS INDWELLING FULNESS TO US. 1. *It was of the Father's "good pleasure" that it should abide in his incarnate Son for the welfare of the Church.* 2. *We are to receive "of his fulness and grace for grace."* (John i. 16.) We are to grow "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13). The standard is nothing short of the fulness of Christ. 3. *The Church is his very fulness*—"the fulness of him who filleth all in all," because his fulness is communicated to her (Eph. i. 23).

IV. LESSONS TO BE DRAWN FROM THIS TRUTH. 1. *Great is the mystery of godliness.* (1 Tim. iii. 16.) 2. *Great is the comfort of the believer in virtue of this infinite fulness.* There is fulness of wisdom to keep us from error, fulness of grace to subdue our sin, fulness of joy to keep us from despair, fulness of mercy and pity to succour us in our distresses. "Therefore let no man take thy crown" (Rev. iii. 11); "Cast not away your confidence" (Heb. x. 35). 3. *Great is the security of the believer.* It is a permanent fulness.—T. C.

Ver. 20.—*The reconciliation effected by Christ.* "And, having made peace through the blood of the cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself."

I. THE NATURE OF THIS RECONCILIATION. 1. *It implies a prior estrangement.* Man "departed from the living God" (Heb. iii. 12). He is "alienated" from God (ver. 21). "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. viii. 7). Even God himself was angry with man (Ps. vii. 11). But this prior estrangement implies an antecedent friendship. 2. *Though man was first in the breach of this friendship, God was first in the reconciliation.* This blessed restoration of broken relations is traced to "the good pleasure" of the Father. It is a mistake to say that Christ is the cause of his Father making to us the offer of reconciliation. The atonement is not the cause, but the effect, of God's love. 3. *There was reconciliation on God's side as well as man's.* There is a change in the Divine relation or mood of mind toward us; for he himself "made peace by the blood of the cross," and his reconciliation of all things to himself is represented as based upon the peace thus made. The death of Christ was a true satisfaction to Divine justice for sin, so that God could be "just and the Justifier of the ungodly."

II. THE MEANS OF THIS RECONCILIATION. "Having made peace through the blood of the cross." The reconciliation was not absolute or without mediation. It was "through the blood of the cross"—the first term suggesting a comparison between Christ's death and the Old Testament sacrifices; the second, the penal nature of the Redeemer's death as that of a curse-bearing Substitute. The apostle emphasizes this aspect of truth, because the errorists of his time denied alike a real incarnation and a real atonement.

III. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THIS RECONCILIATION. "By him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. 1. *"Things in earth" may include more than man.* (1) It may include the whole visible creation, which is "groaning and travailing together in pain until now," and "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 19-21). The curse passed to the ground through man's sin; through man will the blessing reach it again. It is a significant fact that Christianity in its purest form brings a happy change over those portions of the earth where it prevails. (2) But, definitely and primarily, "things in earth" refer to man. Man's reconciliation to God is based upon God's reconciliation to man. It was in virtue of Christ's death that the Holy Spirit came to change the hearts of men and bring them into harmony with God. 2. *"Things in heaven."* Not angels, as some suppose, for they were never estranged from God and Christ, and the Head of angels as well as men is never represented as the Mediator of angels.

A mere increase of knowledge or blessedness on their part, or the confirmation of them in their heavenly obedience, can hardly be covered by the term "reconciliation." The word must be used in its ordinary sense. The apostle has described Christ's mediatorial function as twofold: as exercised in the natural creation and in the spiritual creation—in the universe and in the Church. His object is not to show the extent either of the creation or of the reconciliation, but the person of the Creator and the Reconciler, and the Church marks the glorious sphere of the reconciliation as it is seen in its two great divisions of living and dead saints. The "things in heaven" seem, therefore, to apply to the saints in glory.—T. C.

Vers. 21—23.—*Application of the reconciliation to the special case of the Colossians.* I. THE NATURAL STATE OF THE COLOSSIANS. "And you, being in time past estranged and enemies in your mind in evil works, . . . hath he reconciled." 1. *They were estranged from God.* The original term denotes that they had fallen from a prior relationship of amity. It points suggestively to the original innocence of man in Eden, and to the deplorable effects of the Fall, as separating between God and man (Isa. lix. 2). They had become strangers to God, (1) because strangers to the life of God (Eph. iv. 17); (2) because they followed strange gods (Deut. xxxii. 16; Rom. i. 25); (3) because they were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel" (Eph. ii. 12). 2. *They were hostile to God both in thought and deed.* A strange thought that man should cherish a living enmity in a dead heart! It is enmity to God as Lawgiver and Punisher of sin. (1) Mark the reality of this enmity. (a) The threatening of the second command asserts it: "Them that hate me" (Exod. xx. 5). (b) The friendship of the world involves it: "Whosoever will be a friend of the world will be an enemy of God" (Jas. iv. 4). (c) The carnal mind is full of it (Rom. viii. 7). (d) All scoffs and blasphemies manifest it (Ps. lxxiv. 18). (2) The seat of this enmity. "In your mind." It is an essentially carnal mind. The enmity lies deep down in the heart, which is a "chamber of imagery," full of all shapes of hatred to God and man. Strange that there should be hatred to him who is Author of our being and Fountain of our happiness! We need, indeed, in regeneration to be "renewed in our mind" (Eph. iv. 23), that we may exchange our hatred for love. (3) The practical sphere of this enmity. "In evil works." The enmity is not caused by evil works, but is manifested through them (Matt. xv. 19). They whose "mind and conscience are defiled" are "unto all good works reprobate" (Titus i. 16).

II. THE RECONCILIATION OF THE COLOSSIANS. "Yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death." The reconciliation has been already explained. The means of it are here expressively set forth by the apostle. The passage suggests: 1. *That the atonement was a great historic fact*; so that no person might conclude that the reconciliation was effected apart from the person of the incarnate Son or after his return to glory. 2. *That he was a real man in a human body*, as if to refute Gnostic theories as to a phantom body or as to the body being essentially evil. It was a heresy to say that "Jesus Christ had not come in the flesh" (1 John iv. 2, 3). 3. *That he carried about with him on earth a sin-bearing humanity.* It was, therefore, a "weak, abased, and suffering humanity" (Rom. viii. 3). 4. *That his life was consumed by death*, as the completion of his atoning sacrifice for sin.

III. THE FRUIT OR EFFECT OF THE RECONCILIATION. "To present you holy and without blemish and unreprouvable before him." 1. *We see that sanctification follows reconciliation and does not precede it.* It confounds the relations of things and perverts Christian doctrine to reverse the order. 2. *The atonement provides for our sanctification.* It purchased for us all the communications of Divine life. Christ is made to us at once "Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). 3. *The nature of this sanctification.* "Holy and without blemish and unreprouvable." The words point, not to the relative standing before God, but to the externally observable advances in spiritual life. These are represented, first, positively—"holy;" and then negatively—"without blemish and unreprouvable." 4. *The end of this sanctification.* "To present you holy and without blemish and unreprouvable before him." Not, as some allege, at the day of judgment, but for his personal approbation, implying (1) that all we do is in God's presence (Luke ii. 18; xii. 26; Acts x. 33); (2) that God is the Witness of all our acts (Luke viii. 47; 2 Cor. vii. 12; Gal. i. 20); (3) that

God not only accepts what is in any measure good (Luke i. 75), but highly esteems what is good in the saints (Luke i. 25; 2 Tim. ii. 2, 3; v. 4).

IV. AN EXHORTATION TO PERSEVERANCE IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROVISION FOR THEIR RECONCILIATION. "If at least ye continue in the faith grounded and steadfast, and are not constantly shifting from the hope of the gospel, which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven." 1. *There is nothing strictly hypothetical in this passage*, as the tense clearly indicates; yet warning is needed as the divinely ordered means of averting failure. There were risks to faith in the presence of Judeo-Gnostic teachers. We need to be reminded that "he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matt. xxiv. 13); but God himself provides for us the grace of continuance. 2. *The mode of this continuance.* "Grounded and steadfast." (1) Marking its positive side. (a) We must be built on the true Foundation (Eph. ii. 20). We must be grounded in the doctrines of grace as well as "built as living stones" on "the precious Corner-stone" laid in Zion (1 Pet. ii. 6). Otherwise we shall be swept away in the rising floods of judgment (Luke vi. 48, 49). (b) We must be steadfast as the result of this grounding. An ungrounded Christian cannot be a growing Christian. It is well to be settled in the faith if we would make progress in Christian life. Suffering has its influence in increasing our stability. Therefore our apostle prays that the God of grace, "after that ye have suffered a while," may "make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Pet. v. 10). (2) Marking its negative side. "And are not constantly shifting from the hope of the gospel, which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven." (a) The apostle points to the danger of drifting. When the anchors are lifted, it is impossible to know where the ship may go on a dangerous shore. The false teachers were subtle and plausible and speculative. It may have been hard to resist their logic. But the end of their speculations was death—the sacrifice of the hope of the gospel. (b) He points to a sure anchorage—"the hope of the gospel, which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven." (a) This hope may have been that of the resurrection, of which the false teachers said it "was past already" (2 Tim. ii. 18), and thus cut up by the roots the true expectations of the Christian. (b) It was more probably the "hope of the gospel" generally, which is described in Eph. i. 18 as "the hope of our calling," including all the blessings of redemption with resurrection itself. (c) It was a hope (i.) made known by the gospel; (ii.) imparted to them by Epaphras, the delegate of the apostle—"which ye heard;" (iii.) and proclaimed as the universal hope of man to all creation. It was not, therefore, reserved for a select coterie of men. "Its universal tendency was already realized," and its wide publicity was not to be called in question. (3) Consider the importance of religious steadfastness. "We must hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope unto the end" (Heb. iii. 6). Let us, therefore, bless God that "he has begotten us to a lively hope" (1 Pet. i. 3). (4) Seek wisdom from on high "to know what is the hope of our calling" (Eph. i. 18). (5) Let us read the Scriptures prayerfully, that "through patience and comfort of the Scriptures we may have hope" (Rom. xv. 4). (6) Let us acknowledge that "truth that is according to godliness" (Titus i. 1, 2).—T. C.

Vers. 24—27.—*The mission, sufferings, gospel, and preaching of the apostle.* He introduces here a somewhat abrupt reference to himself, not to vindicate his authority as an apostle, which was not challenged at Colossæ, but to emphasize his mission as the apostle of the Gentiles, and to draw the Colossians into closer relations of sympathy with himself.

I. THE APOSTLE'S SUFFERINGS FOR THE CHURCH. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the Church." 1. *The nature of his sufferings.* These are to be understood by his frequent reference to the afflictions of Christ. (1) The afflictions of Christ are not (a) afflictions borne on account of Christ; (b) nor afflictions imposed by Christ; (c) nor afflictions which resemble those of Christ; (d) nor the afflictions which the apostle endures instead of Christ, as supplementing his afflictions; but the afflictions which Christ endures in his suffering Church. The Messiah was "to be afflicted in all their afflictions" (Isa. liiii. 9). (2) How the apostle filled up that which was lacking of Christ's afflictions. Not as if Christ did not suffer all that

was necessary to the salvation of men, but left something to be suffered by members like the apostle as a means contributory to their own salvation. Roman Catholics base upon this passage their doctrine of supererogatory merit and indulgences. Some Protestant divines think this position is to be met by distinguishing part of Christ's sufferings as vicariously satisfactory and part as merely edifying by way of example, and represent the apostle as supplementing, not the first, but the last kind of suffering. This view is subject to the grave objection that there were no sufferings of Christ that were not vicariously satisfactory, as there were none that were not likewise designed for edification, comfort, and example. The Roman Catholic view is unsound, (a) because it contradicts the whole tenor of Scripture (John xix. 30; Heb. x. 1—15); (b) because it is absurd, for if the apostle supplied in his suffering what Christ failed to supply, nothing remains for other saints to supply by their sufferings. (3) The apostle shows in the context that his work was not to redeem, but to edify the Church. What, then, is the meaning of the apostle's statement? That the sufferings of the members of Christ are the sufferings of Christ; for the Church is his body, in which he exists, lives, and therefore suffers. All the tribulations of the body are Christ's tribulations. 2. *The design or intent of the apostle's sufferings.* "For his body's sake, which is the Church." It was for the extension and edification of the Church. He suffers in his natural body—"in my flesh"—for the mystical body. He teaches us: (1) *That we are to seek the advancement of the cause of Christ above our own personal comfort.* (2) *That we ought to endure sufferings because they concern the good of others more than ourselves.* (3) *That we are not to take care for the flesh or serve the flesh.* (Rom. xiii. 14; Gal. vi. 8.) 3. *The spirit in which the apostle bore his varied sufferings.* "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you." (1) Because they were the means of unspeakable blessing to the Gentiles; (2) because they would confirm the faith of the Colossians and encourage them to bear suffering with like patience; (3) because they would contribute to the apostle's own ultimate blessedness (Heb. x. 34; 1 Pet. i. 6, 7).

II. THE SPECIAL DISPENSATION ASSIGNED TO THE APOSTLE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE GENTILES. "Whereof I was made a minister according to the dispensation of God which was given me to you-ward, to fulfil the Word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from all ages and generations, but now hath it been manifested to his saints, to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the Hope of glory." 1. *The apostle's peculiar mission to the Gentiles.* He calls himself here "a minister of the Church," as he has just called himself "a minister of Christ." His commission is from God himself. "A dispensation of God is given to me." God is the Dispenser of all good things to his Church. Hence we infer (a) that the efficacy of the Word depends much upon God's appointment of his servants; (b) that his servants ought to be regarded with confidence and love, because they are God's ambassadors and make the Word of God their supreme rule in dispensing the things of God; (c) that the commission ought to be executed with all faithfulness and diligence (2 Tim. iv. 1, 2; 2 Cor. ii. 17; iv. 2). 2. *The design of the dispensation given to the apostle.* "To fulfil the Word of God." That is, to give its complete development to the Word of God—"to give its fullest amplitude to, to fill up the measures of, its foreordained universality." Every minister is bound "to fulfil the Word of God" in his ministry, (1) by preaching the whole counsel of God (Acts xx. 27); (2) by rightly dividing the Word of truth according to the wants of the hearers; (3) by the application of the promises of the Word (Luke iv. 21); (4) by bringing men to fulfil it in a gospel obedience (Rom. xv. 18). 3. *The long-hid but now revealed mystery of the gospel.* (1) It is "Christ in you, the Hope of glory." Here is the true mystery of godliness. It is not Christ, but Christ freely given to the Gentiles. (a) Christianity is Christ in the heart. "He dwells in our hearts by faith" (Eph. iii. 18). He lives in us (Gal. ii. 20). He is in us (2 Cor. xiii. 5) if we are not reprobates. If he is in us, then (a) we must continue to live by faith (Gal. ii. 20); (b) we may expect to receive "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" that are "hid in him" (ch. ii. 3); (c) we may look for larger measures of his love (Eph. iii. 18); (d) we must keep holy hearts, for he will not dwell in an "evil heart of unbelief"—"The heart is Christ's chamber of presence: shall we not, therefore, keep it with all diligence?" (e) the grace of Christ will be efficacious against all temptations (2 Cor. xii. 9). (b) Christ in the heart is the Hope of glory. (a) He is

expressly called "our Hope" (1 Tim. i. 2; ch. i. 4, 23). (β) He is the Hope of glory because he has, as our Forerunner, carried the anchor of our hope within the veil, and fastened it to the two immutable things—the oath and the promise of God—in which it was impossible that he should lie. (γ) The resurrection of Christ establishes this hope (1 Cor. xv. 19). We should be of "all men most miserable" without it. (δ) We should read the Word, that "through patience and comfort of the Scriptures we may have hope" (Rom. xv. 4), seeing Christ therein as the ground of our hope for eternity. (ε) There is no hope for man apart from Christ. (2) The mystery was long hid from the world. "Hid from ages and from generations." (a) This does not mean that the future salvation of the Gentiles was unknown in ancient times; for the prophets are full of it (Isa. lx. 3; lxii. 2; liv. 1—3). (b) But the mystery was that the Gentiles should be admitted to the blessings of salvation on equal terms with the Jews. (3) The mystery was at last made known to the saints (a) by revelation to the apostle (Eph. iii. 5); (b) by preaching (ch. iv. 4; Titus i. 3); (c) by prophetic exposition (Rom. xvi. 26); and (d) by the actual conversion of the Gentiles themselves without their conformity to Jewish usages.—T. C.

Vers. 28, 29.—*The manner in which the apostle discharged his divinely given trust.* "Whom we proclaim, admonishing every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ: whereunto I labour also, striving according to his working who worketh in me mightily."

I. THE DUTY OF MINISTERS. It is to preach Christ. 1. *It is not to preach morality.* Though it is right and necessary to exhibit moral duties in the light of the cross. 2. *It is not to preach a philosophy or a thaumaturgy.* (1 Cor. i. 22—24.) 3. *It is to preach Christ crucified.* (1 Cor. ii. 3.) Some preach Christ's incarnation as the grand hope of man, but this is to present a broken hope, if it is not supplemented by the death of Christ. 4. *It is to preach Christ as the only Saviour.* "Neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts iv. 12). There is no salvation in ordinances, in saints, in angels, in images, in pictures, in works of righteousness. 5. *It is to preach Christ as a sufficient Saviour.* He is mighty to save, and "able to save to the uttermost."

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH CHRIST IS TO BE PREACHED. 1. "*Admonition.*" "Admonishing every man." This implies: (1) The duty of rebuke in the case of those who repair to other saviours than Christ. Preachers must, likewise, rebuke sin (Isa. lviii. 1; 2 Tim. iii. 17; Heb. ix. 10). (2) Preaching is to set forth examples of admonition (1 Cor. x. 11). (3) Great is the profit of admonition to those who receive it aright (Prov. xxviii. 13). (4) It implies that all men need admonition, for all are apt to err or sin. 2. *Teaching.* Christianity is not a thaumaturgy, not a spectacular religion; it is the exhibition of Christ through the gospel of truth. The understanding must be informed. (1) There is the promise of the Spirit to lead us into all truth (John xiv. 26). (2) There is the Word of truth, which preachers are rightly to divide (2 Tim. ii. 15). (3) We need to be instructed, for we are ignorant and prejudiced. (4) There is immense variety in truth. "In all wisdom." Preachers must preach wisely—not in the "wisdom of words" (1 Cor. i. 17), but in the truly Divine wisdom which enables us "to understand our own way" (Prov. xiv. 8), which teaches us humility—"becoming fools that we may be wise" (1 Cor. iii. 18); "to walk not as fools, but as wise" (Eph. v. 15); and "to consider our latter end, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Ps. xc. 12).

III. THE DESIGN OF THIS PREACHING OF CHRIST. "That we may present every man perfect in Christ." 1. *Perfection is the aim.* It will be attained in glory. It implies perfection in knowledge as well as holiness. We are to seek perfection (1) in doctrine (Heb. vi. 1); (2) in faith (Jas. ii. 22); (3) in hope (1 Pet. i. 13); (4) in love (1 John iv. 18); (5) in understanding (1 Cor. xiv. 20). 2. *Perfection is only to be realized in Christ.* (1) Its ultimate realization comes through him (Phil. i. 6). (2) This thought ought to make saints seek a closer intercourse with Christ. 3. *It is a perfection designed for all saints.* "Every man." It is not for an inner circle of disciples, an initiated few, but for "every man." This universality of blessing marks the distinction between the gospel of Christ and the schools of Judæo-Gnostic speculation.

IV. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH MINISTERS OUGHT TO LABOUR IN THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. 1. *They must labour and strive.* The ministry is a severe labour to body, mind, and

spirit. The apostle "laboured more abundantly than they all." The Lord's work cannot be done negligently (2 Tim. iv. 1—3; 1 Thess. v. 12). 2. *Ministers must labour, not in their own strength, but in the Lord's strength.* "Striving according to his working, who worketh in me mightily." It is the Lord who works in his ministers for the salvation of souls. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but "it is God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor. iii. 6).—T. C.

Vers. 1—8.—*The hope laid up in heaven.* This Epistle, written from Rome to meet and overmaster the "Colossian heresy," begins with a salutation somewhat similar to those at the beginning of other Epistles. There is the assertion of Paul's apostleship as direct from Christ; there is the statement of the brotherhood of Timothy, and the desire that grace and peace may be the constant portion of the saints and faithful brethren at Colossæ. But, having thus started, Paul immediately passes to an account of their character as he had got it from Epaphras, and how this character had been produced. He is thankful for it, and he wishes them to remember how it had been formed within them. And here we have to notice that—

I. JESUS CHRIST IS THE OBJECT OF THE COLOSSIANS' FAITH. (Ver. 4.) They had happily been led to this—to trust in the personal Saviour. It is not the promises, but the Promiser; not the proposition, but the Person pledging himself to the fulfilment of the proposition, in whom we believe. Now, the heresy, which will appear more clearly afterwards, made a good deal of angelic and intermediate personages; there was, in fact, a tendency to a mystic peopling of the unseen with needless forms, explanatory, as the Colossians supposed, of the mysteries of creation. It was important in these circumstances to state with precision that Jesus Christ is the great Object of faith. Faith in such a Being becomes a glorious simplicity. It is a simple extension of that trust to him which we extend to our fellow-men. But his glorious personality, embracing a Divine as well as human nature, makes all the difference between faith in men and faith in him. The latter is true saving faith.

II. THE SAINTS WERE THE SPECIAL OBJECTS OF THE COLOSSIANS' LOVE. (Ver. 4.) While faith goes out to a personal Saviour, it worketh by love towards all the saints. For it cannot but be that, in trusting and loving the perfect Saviour, we learn almost instinctively to love those in his image. The saints, *all* the saints, are seen to have their claim upon the believer's love. The love of good men is the note of a true Christian.

III. HEAVEN WAS INDISPENSABLE TO THE CONSUMMATION OF THEIR HOPE. (Ver. 5.) It is the characteristic of the Christian system to relegate a goodly portion of its promise to the world to come. It has certainly a promise for the life that now is, but chiefly has it a promise for that which is to come. In heaven the hope is laid up. And into this hope the Colossians heartily entered. They looked for more to follow—for a purity, for a power, for a perfection impossible in the present life. There is thus a faith, a love, and a hope characteristic of the saints at Colossæ as well as elsewhere.

IV. THIS HOPE HAD BEEN COMMUNICATED THROUGH THE PREACHED GOSPEL. (Vers. 5—8.) Had the Colossians not had the gospel preached to them, they would never have entered into such glorious, heavenly hopes. The word of the gospel is fruit-bearing. It kindles the hopes of men. Everywhere it has the same blessed effects in lifting men's hearts to heaven. It would seem that Epaphras had been the instrument in the Lord's hand in evangelizing the Colossians. He had, as a faithful minister of Christ, preached the Word to them, and they had received it and become the loving disciples he represented them to be in his report to Paul. "Love in the Spirit" was the leading idea in their lives. All this was matter for profound gratitude to God, and so the apostle pours out his thanksgiving to God the Father (ver. 3) because of it. In such circumstances it surely becomes us to see that we rise on the wings of hope to heaven and appreciate the glorious consummation which there awaits us. We need such a hope to complete the demands of our immortal being. We cannot be satisfied with the seen, with the present life, with the present world; we must have more. And this the gospel gives us in that hope which is laid up for us in heaven.—R. M. E.

Vers. 9—14.—*The kingdom of God's dear Son.* From the thanksgiving presented because of the faith, hope, and love of the Colossians, Paul next proceeds to inter-

cession for their spiritual progress. There is considerable similarity between the intercession he makes for the Ephesians (Eph. iii. 14—21) and the intercession he here makes for the Colossians. In both he appeals to the Father that the most intimate and loving relations may be established between the persons prayed for and "his dear Son." He gives, however, in the case before us a magnificence to his conception of Christ which is not found in the longer Epistle. In this way he could best meet and overcome the Gnostic tendency at Colossæ. Let us consider the truth embodied in the intercession in the following order:—

I. WE SHALL CONSIDER THE KING HERE REFERRED TO. (Ver. 13.) Paul has already presented Jesus Christ as the Object of the Colossians' faith. But in the present section he presents him as "God's dear Son," or "the Son of his love" (*υιὸς τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ*), in possession of a kingdom. This kingdom is the antithesis of "the power of darkness;" it is, in fact, a kingdom of light. The sphere of the inheritance of the saintly subjects is said to be light (ver. 12). Hence Jesus is brought before us in this prayer much as he is brought before us in the Apocalypse, as the light-giving Lamb (Rev. xxi. 23). "I am the Light of the world," he said; and as the greater light rules the day, so does Jesus rule in his kingdom (John viii. 12; Gen. i. 16). The sun is now known to be the source of all the light and heat enjoyed on the earth; to his genial beams we owe spring and summer and autumn, and all the precious fruits of the earth; so is it to Jesus Christ we owe all the procession of seasonable blessing which his kingdom affords. He is King, then, over such a realm as Pilate could not appreciate—over a kingdom of truth, whose rights interfered not with the rights of Cæsar (John xviii. 33—38; Matt. xxii. 21). The light in which our spirits are bathed is truth—the truth as it is in Jesus. From his glorious Person there radiates the benign and healing beams which enable the recipients to grow even as the calves of the stall (Mal. iv. 2).

II. LET US CONSIDER THE SUBJECTS SECURED FOR THIS KING. (Vers. 13, 14.) Now, Paul in this prayer speaks of the Father providing subjects for his dear Son. And, strange to say, he finds them in the kingdom of darkness, and by translation he populates the kingdom of his Son. He finds the raw material in sinners who need redemption and pardon, and they become Christ's subjects through receiving at his hands these indispensable blessings. Truly it is a strange arrangement that the King, God's dear Son, should, before entering upon his reign, first die and provide through the shedding of his blood the redemption and forgiveness the subjects need. Yet so it is. The Father sent his Son to be the Sacrifice to take away sin, and from the altar he passes to the throne. We here can see how endeared the King must be to his subjects. Having lived and died to redeem us, we feel it to be only just that we should live, and, if need be, die for him. Hence the consecration of the blood of the Son of God is upon all the subjects. It is a kingdom of redeemed and pardoned and blood-bought souls over whom Jesus reigns.

III. CONSIDER NEXT THE OCCUPATIONS OF THIS KINGDOM. (Vers. 9—11.) We can now see clearly that the duty of the blood-bought subjects of King Jesus is, in one word, to *do his will*. But, before we can do his will, we must *know* it. Hence Paul prays that these Colossians may be "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." The cry of the blood-bought soul is "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" We place ourselves at the disposal of our King and ask him to show us his will. As a rule, we shall not be left long in doubt regarding it. In the darkest hour the light ariseth for the upright (Ps. cxii. 4). If we straightforwardly want to know what Christ's will is, we shall soon find it. But this knowledge of Christ's will is that the Colossians may "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Jesus indicates his will that his blood-bought people may walk worthily. High moral principle is to characterize them constantly. And every good work will find in them willing hands. The servants of Christ have been always in the van of philanthropic effort. And this morality and zeal will not be allowed to hinder progress in the knowledge of God. Education is not withheld from any of Christ's subjects by reason of the multiplicity of other claims. The real education, which is in the knowledge of God—for the world and all that it contains constitute in the last analysis simply a revelation of his power and Godhead (Rom. i. 20)—goes hand-in-hand with moral earnestness and effort. But yet again, the subjects of Christ's kingdom find the need

of patience and long-suffering; they cannot get along without bearing a good deal from worldly people—sneers, insolence, persecution, and in extreme cases death. Yet the King strengthens his people with might according to his glorious power, so that they are able “joyfully” to bear and suffer what is sent. It is here that the occupations of the kingdom constitute a power. The world wonders at the saints who can be so joyful in their King, in spite of the drawbacks and difficulties to which they are exposed.

IV. CONSIDER AGAIN THE COMPENSATIONS OF THE KINGDOM. (Ver. 12.) What is “the inheritance of the saints in light”? Does it mean a heavenly world where light such as only shines on tropical lands shall bathe emancipated men, and they shall be enabled to lie like lotus-eaters amid the glory, and never further roam? It is to be feared that the current notions of heaven partake of the dreamy “sofa-religion,” which to earnest worldly natures is so repulsive. Let us, on the contrary, remember that the doing of our Lord’s will is its own reward. Heaven will afford no higher enjoyment than this. Our souls are not rightly balanced when they look for something else or more. “We are saved,” says Archer Butler, “that we may for eternity serve God; salvation itself would be misery if unaccompanied by a love for that service.” In the pleasing of our King, therefore, all the compensations of the kingdom lie. The outward conditions and circumstances would be changed in vain if we were not animated by this loyal and loving spirit. May such meekness for the inheritance be our present experience, as it was that of the Colossians.—R. M. E.

Vers. 15—20.—*The glories of King Jesus.* The apostle, having in his prayer pleaded for the Colossians that they may be worthy members of the kingdom of Christ, proceeds to speak of the glories which belong to their King. His purpose, like that of every true preacher, is to make Christ pre-eminent. The central thought of the passage is that God is invisible, but Christ is the visible Manifestation of the Father’s perfections. In him as the perfect “Image” we may “see God.”

I. JESUS AS THE GLORIOUS CREATOR REVEALED THE MIND OF GOD. (Vers. 15, 16.) We are apt to think of Christ’s revelation of the Godhead solely in his incarnation. Doubtless it was the climax of the “exegesis” of the invisible God (cf. John i. 18, *ἐκφράσις*). But there were previous revelations, and this is Paul’s idea here that creation is a revelation of God through the power of Christ. Now, one thing is certain about the creation, that it addresses itself to *mind*. If men imagined it was *thoughtless*, they would not spend two minutes more in its investigation. All *science* proceeds on the postulate of creation being thinkable, intelligible, an appeal to mind. If creation, then, embodies thought, we have further to notice that it is thought of the same order as *human* thought. After all the weary investigation, therefore, which tries to blink the fact of creation being a revelation of God, we are reduced in the last analysis exactly to this idea. Of course, we have not succeeded in interpreting the revelation in nature with either accuracy or fulness; but every year’s honest work carries us on towards the fuller understanding of the Divine Thinker who speaks to his creatures in all the work of his hands. The fascination of science lies in the fact that a deeper Thinker than any of the investigators is behind the work, and is calling for interpreters. The wonderful creation is from end to end, in heaven above and in earth beneath, Christ’s exposition of the mind of God.

II. HISTORY IS ALSO AN EXPOSITION BY CHRIST OF THE DIVINE MIND. (Ver. 17.) For not only did Christ as Creator give the system a start, but as the Upholder of the system he makes it a continuous revelation. The philosophy of history lies in the assurance of the great procession of facts being under the constant control and direction of Divinity. Of course, as in the former case of the interpretation of nature, we may be and are very far from a full grasp of the significance of history. Yet undoubtedly a reverential study of the course of events brings us daily nearer the understanding of the whole. It adds to our interest to take with us this assurance—that Jesus Christ is at the back of all being, upholding it, sustaining the system, and reducing it to an orderly exposition of the Divine thought. Amid the apparently chaotic course of events, in consequence of the freedom and frailty of the creature, there is the really orderly procession of the whole towards that “one Divine event to which the whole creation moves.”

III. CHRIST’S ECCLESIASTICAL HEADSHIP IS A FURTHER REVELATION OF GOD. (Ver.

18.) For not only has Christ been Creator, not only has he been and is the Preserver of the system, but he has also been constituted Head of a special class of beings, united in what is called "the Church." Many of his creatures do not recognize either him or his relations to the universe. They act as if he were not, and his control of them is without their leave and in spite oftentimes of their opposition. But others happily have come to recognize him as Lord of all, and consequently of themselves as well. Believers in him, adorers of him, they have learned to look on life as simply a longer or shorter opportunity of doing his will or of suffering "his good pleasure." And as Christ comes into tenderer and closer relations to the believers of the world than he can come into towards the unbelievers, he is as closely bound to his believing people as the ruling and sovereign "head" is to the subject and obedient "members" of the one body. And this headship of Christ is a revelation unto men of the mind of God. Of course, in this case, as in the previous cases, there is only an approximation to the understanding of God's mind and will as thus revealed. But we are progressing steadily towards the ideal of perfect light and perfect submission. The Churches may but imperfectly grasp what God in Christ means; they may be very wayward and arbitrary in many of their interpretations; but the desire to know and obey Christ brings them along the line of privilege and duty with increasing appreciation and success.

IV. IN CHRIST'S RECONCILIATION OF ALL THINGS UNTO GOD HE FURTHER REVEALS TO THE UNIVERSE THE MIND OF GOD. (Vers. 18—20.) Now, just as philosophy is the reduction of the multiform in fact to the uniform in idea, so is there in the system administered by Christ provision made for the reconciliation of all things to the Supreme, that the unity of all things may be the last thought of God. This is the meaning of the cross and the blood shed upon it, and all the redemptive system which centres around it. This is the purpose of Christ's resurrection to immortal life the first, that, as the pre-eminent One, he might gather in his embrace a reconciled universe and lay it at the Father's feet. Of course, the prerogative of creaturely freedom is such as to refuse the reconciliation and to crystallize into hostility in some sad cases. It would be contrary to the Divine plan to *force* the will and ride rough-shod over the determinations of the creature. Some consequently, it would seem, are to be allowed to take their own course and remain incorrigible; yet in the unifying idea of God their discord, as in the music of the great masters, will be made to contribute to and to emphasize the general harmony. Meanwhile, how grand the idea is of the unity of all things! Surely we should not allow ourselves to conflict consciously with it in our dealings with men. We should back it up as the goal and far-off Divine event to which all things are made to move. The blood of the cross cries really for the reconciliation of the universe to God.—R. M. E.

Vers. 21—29.—*The indwelling Christ the believer's Hope of glory.* The apostle now passes from the general idea of the reconciliation in Christ of all things, to its particular application to the Colossians. We may allow the idea, by its very vastness and grandeur, to become indefinite. We need, therefore, to see its application to the individual soul. Paul consequently brings the reconciliation home to every heart. And here we notice—

I. THE COLOSSIANS' NATURAL STATE. (Ver. 21.) They were "alienated," and the alienation passed into downright enmity, which manifested itself in "wicked works." Not only were they alienated from God, but from one another and even from themselves. For sin is such a separating power that it not only cuts us off from God and from our fellow-men, but also from ourselves, so that we are divided and dissipated in the faculties and energies of our souls. Hence we find ourselves incurring, not only the Divine anger and the anger of our fellows, but we become angry with ourselves. It will be seen, therefore, that the reconciliation needed is a very wide one.

II. THEIR GRACIOUS RECONCILIATION. (Vers. 22—27.) The reconciliation has been brought about at no less a cost than the death of the Son of God. It must be precious. And now we are to notice how real it is. For just as the alienation and enmity have been towards God and men and self, so the reconciliation brings us into unity with God, unity with men, and unity with self. We are reconciled to God; we are reconciled to our fellow-men; we are reconciled to ourselves. This is secured by Christ's indwelling, so that he becomes our Hope of glory (ver. 27) and the Source of that holiness and blamelessness which are the characteristics of redeemed men. Let us look at this

reconciliation through atonement and indwelling. 1. We are reconciled to *God* by it. The Divine hatred to sin found fitting outlet in the cross of Jesus, and in consequence Christ's Spirit comes and dwells in the believer as the Source and Fountain of a holy character. The inspired, Christ-inhabited soul becomes the object of restored fellowship and complacency; God looks down in love, and he and man are one. 2. We are reconciled to our *fellow-men* by it. The indwelling Christ leads us to peace-making, and we refuse to continue at war with those around us. We rather rejoice in the assurance that the atonement and inspiration of Christ are intended to bring about peace and concord among men. 3. We are reconciled to *ourselves* by it. For in sin, as we have seen, we are divided and dissipated; but grace comes and we are united to fear God's Name. We doubtless battle with our sins, but we realize that this is the way to regain our true selves and put internal discord away.

III. THEIR EXPECTED PERSEVERANCE AND PERFECTION. (Vers. 23—28.) This faith in Christ, this body of truth through which we have been brought into such intimate relations to Christ, is that in which we are grounded and settled. We expect to continue therein, and this is the meaning of our perseverance. Now, if Christ dwells within us by his Spirit, our progress is assured through his inspiration, and perfection in him is the goal we are to reach at last. This perfection which Paul aims at for the Colossians is not the imputed perfection which "completeness in him" implies, but the perfection of sanctification which his inspiration secures in due season. Only thus are we brought into complete harmony with the universe of God.

IV. THE APOSTLE'S PAINFUL MINISTRY IN SECURING THIS. (Vers. 24—29.) As the minister or servant of the Colossian Church, he had taken "pains" to instruct them properly. In this respect every good and noble work is painful; unless we take pains we cannot do it well. But over and above this, Paul was called upon to suffer special trials. He was a prisoner at this time at Rome. He was a suffering member in Christ's mystical body. Now, one member often suffers in the interests of other members. The atonement of Christ was the suffering of the Head in the interests of all the members. In this none of the members can have any share. But Christ's afflictions had a wider meaning than simply atonement. He was perfected in experience by them, so as to be sympathetic in a degree impossible otherwise. In this department Paul could have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings (Phil. iii. 10). Now, the Colossians profited by Paul's sufferings for them at Rome. All his pain, all his agonizings for them, all the devotedness of spirit he had manifested for them during many years, went to make up the needful basis for their spiritual progress. If he had not suffered as he did, he could not have composed these Epistles of the captivity. To this painful ministry all earnest souls are called. It is part of our heritage, and the experiences found within it are altogether glorious.—R. M. E.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Address and salutation.* It is common to compare the Epistle to the Colossians with the Epistle to the Ephesians. Written about the same time (both conveyed by Tychicus), there are many coincidences in thought. But there is this difference—that the thought in this Epistle does not centre round the Church of Christ (the word occurs only twice, as compared with nine times in the Epistle to the Ephesians), but round the *Person of Christ*. There is also this difference—that this Epistle has not the catholic form of the Epistle to the Ephesians, but has a certain controversial form, with reference to the peculiar state of the Colossian Church. In order to understand the Colossian heresy, it is necessary to bear in mind that the type of religion to which the Eastern mind was inclined was mysticism. One feature was the belief in a good and a bad principle (Isaiah refers to them as light and darkness), the latter having its abode in matter. Another feature is the postulation of emanations, or intermediate agencies between heaven and earth. This mysticism seems to have had congenial soil in Phrygia, to which Colossæ belonged. It had an ascetic side (communication with matter being to be eschewed), and, readily combining with Judaism, it formed *Essenism*. In the Galatian Churches it was Judaism that was struggling to modify Christianity. In the Colossian Church it was rather this Essenism that was the modifying element. The modification of Christianity by Eastern philosophy (its finding a place for redemption and the Person of Christ) was afterward known as Gnosticism.

I. ADDRESS. 1. *The writers.* "Paul." He is the principal writer. The thought

has a distinctively Pauline character. We cannot mistake its coming from the writer of the Epistle to the Ephesians. He has a relation to two personalities, who are yet one (Jesus being the Christ of God). (1) *His relation to Christ.* "An apostle of Christ Jesus." That gave him unquestionable authority in all matters which he discussed. He gave the mind of Christ. He was under the infallible direction of the Spirit. And his statements were to be accepted in the face of all statements to the contrary. (2) *His relation to God.* "Through the will of God." It was not that he had light in himself more than any ordinary writer. It was simply that God graciously willed that he should communicate the mind of Christ to them and to others. And that was his support in every word he dictated. "And Timothy." He is subordinated to Paul in the writing of the Epistle; and his personality is, after a few introductory verses, lost sight of. He is brought into relation, not directly to Christ or God, but to the brethren. "Our brother." A member of the Christian brotherhood Timothy was. And that really contained more in it (title to everlasting life) than "apostle" by itself. "Apostle" would cease, but "brother" would remain. Apostle though Paul was, in a brotherly way he consulted with Timothy regarding the Church of Colossæ. The ground of his consulting with him would naturally be his acquaintance with that Church. That active brother, it may be presumed, had ministered to them and had won their affection. And so Paul associates him with himself in writing to Colossæ, that, beyond the "apostolic," there might be the "personal," in which personal Timothy was partly his representative. He might expect to have influence with Colossæ, when there was both apostolic authority and personal affection combined. 2. *The persons addressed.* (1) *Generic designation.* "To the saints." The *holy people* had formerly been those connected with the *holy land*; but here were they, many of them Gentiles, receiving the ancient title of honour. (2) *Specific designation.* "And faithful brethren in Christ." The corresponding designation in Ephesians is "And the faithful in Christ Jesus." The apostle goes a point here beyond their believing, viz. to their being, in virtue of their believing, a brotherhood, and a brotherhood subsisting in (as created by) Christ, therefore distinctively the *Christian brotherhood*. Locality. "Which are at Colossæ." This town was situated in Phrygia, in the interior of Asia Minor. There were three towns connected with the valley of the Lycus (a tributary of the Mæander). Overhanging the valley on opposite sides, and facing each other, with the mountains rising behind and the Lycus flowing between, about six miles apart, were Laodicea and Hierapolis, the two towns which are referred to at the close of this Epistle. Further up the river, and intersected by it, distant about twelve miles both from Laodicea and Hierapolis, was the third town of Colossæ. With a certain historical character, it was the least important place to which any Epistle of Paul's was sent. The attention of the apostle was drawn to it at the time by the presence at Rome of two Colossians—Epaphras, who is referred to in the seventh and eighth verses, and Onesimus, the runaway slave about whom Paul writes in his Epistle to Philemon.

II. THE SALUTATION. 1. *The two words of salutation.* (1) *Grace.* "Grace to you." This is the universal word of salutation in the Epistles which bear Paul's name (it is wanting in the Epistle to the Hebrews). It points to this—that we must not look to our friends being blessed on the ground of their deservings. If they are to be blessed, as we would wish them, then there must be the outflowing of Divine favour toward them. (2) *Peace.* "And peace." This also is the universal word in salutation with Paul. If we were dealt with according to our deservings, there would be constant cause for dispeace. But being dealt with according to infinite grace (upon which we can ever fall back under a sense of our ill deservings), there should then be a calming of the mind and an ultimate complete deliverance from all disturbing influences. 2. *Source to which we look in salutation.* "From God our Father." In the Revised translation the usual addition is omitted, "and the Lord Jesus Christ." It does not enter into the plan of the apostle to connect his thought with the Father and the Spirit in this Epistle, as in the Epistle to the Ephesians (they are named twenty-four times in Ephesians, and only six times in Colossians). But here in the forefront prominence is given to the Father (all the more because of the unusual omission) as the original Source whence all blessings flow. The Divine fatherhood (not apart from Christ) is the natural guarantee for provision being made for ourselves and for our friends, for individuals and for Churches.—R. F.

Vers. 3—8.—*Pauline Sorites.* I. **THANKSGIVING.** This forms a suitable introduction (in Ephesians the apostle starts with a sublime but less personal doxology). 1. *The facts of thanksgiving.* There may be said to be two facts, but the other is subordinated to this (which accordingly is assigned the first place), "We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." In this exercise Timothy was conjoined with Paul. Being a thing about which they were agreed, they could thank God, not only separately, but unitedly. This is a holy partnership on which God looks down with special pleasure. Where did they go to with their thanksgivings? It was to the First Source, through the Second Source. *Our Lord* as the Saviour anointed (*Jesus Christ*) dispenses blessings; but he has got them from the Father ("He has received gifts for men"), and therefore we trace them up, in others as well as in ourselves, through Christ to his Father. "Praying always for you." This is stated to show the abundance of his opportunity for thanksgiving. He was always praying for the Colossian Church as for other Churches. This was one form which his care for all the Churches (a daily care) took. And Timothy, it seems, was not behindhand, but was copying the comprehensiveness of his instructor. And as, in their like-mindedness, they had daily prayers together, when they came to thanksgiving Colossæ was never forgotten. 2. *On what their thanksgiving was founded.* "Having heard." He (Paul) was not (never had been) an eye-witness of the Church at Colossæ, but his ear was open to all information from that quarter, by Colossian visitors, or by special deputy (from himself), or through less direct channels. Timothy (with his many movements and, we may suppose, missions of inquiry) had probably been at Colossæ, but his knowledge, too, had been added to by hearing. And, as the two talked over matters, they found subject for thanksgiving. It is one reason for our extending our knowledge of missionary operations (not confining them to one society or field) that, by doing so, we get a multiplicity of subjects for thanksgiving. 3. *For what specially they thanked God.* (1) *Faith.* "Of your faith in Christ Jesus." It was faith (subjectively) that made them a Church. When Paul and Timothy thanked God for the faith of the Colossians, they had in view the activity of their faith. It was not only there (that is supposed in their being addressed as "faithful brethren"), but it was strongly operating. The clement in which it operated, and in which it admitted of endless expansion, was Christ Jesus (a saving element being in him that was inexhaustible). (2) *Love.* "And of the love which ye have toward all the saints." Their love to be thus signalized must have been more than ordinarily active. There is a vague kind of love which does not amount to much. If it is really the Christian principle of love (of the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians) and if it is sufficiently active, it will show itself, not only in the absence of jealousy, but in the presence of positive interest. These Colossians did not confine their affections within their own circle, but let them go out toward all the saints. They acquainted themselves with the condition of other Churches, and in many ways were helpful to them. Faith and love are here referred to generally, but when Paul and Timothy gave thanks, they would be able to fix upon this and upon that as evidencing the reality and vitality of their faith and love.

II. **THE LOVE (WHICH FORMED MATTER OF THANKSGIVING) WAS CAUSED BY HOPE.** "Because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens." This hope had a certain objective character. It was something outside of them which was safely laid past for their future enjoyment. At the same time, it had a certain subjective character. It was something operating within their own breasts. They were kind to the saints of their day (without exception). Why? Because they looked beyond the present. The time would come when (removed from under earthly conditions) they would meet them in the heavens. They might get no reward here (their catholicity might bring them persecution), but it would be reward enough to see there those whom they had done their duty by, and to receive from Christ words of approval. It was because of this hope, then (so sure), that their love flourished.

III. **THE HOPE WAS COMMUNICATED IN THE GOSPEL.** "Whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel." We owe it to God that he has given us "the truth" (and the gifts of God are without repentance). We may well prize this gift of God when we think of the erroneous ideas which men (unaided by revelation) have entertained. This is the Promethean fire, not stolen, but, in infinite love, sent down from heaven. God has placed us under additional obligation by giving us the truth in

the form of "the Word." Considering the conditions of language and our earthly necessities, this form is perfect. "The Law of the Lord is perfect." It is an abiding form. There may be movements of thought away from "the Law and the testimony," but here always is the truth in the form in which God wishes us to have it, if only we can bring our minds up to it. The whole Word of truth is precious; but there is that which is to be regarded as singularly precious (being singled out here), viz. the gospel, or the good message, God's special message (of a glad nature), to sinners in need of salvation. It was this gospel that the Colossians at a former period had heard. By this the burden of their sin had been removed, and the hope of immortality enkindled within them.

IV. HOW THE GOSPEL (THROUGH WHICH THE HOPE WAS COMMUNICATED) WAS PRESENTED. 1. *There was a general gospel movement.* "Which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing." The parting command of the Master was, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation [every creature]." And the command had been carried out (as time allowed) in its wideness. The gospel-trumpet had been heard, not merely in Palestine, but had sounded out to all lands. And everywhere an efficacy had attended the preaching of the gospel. False forms of religion are limited by certain climatic conditions, by certain temperaments. What would do in Phrygia might not do in Rome. But the gospel (unmodified) had been proved to be world-wide in its adaptation, adapted for Jew and Gentile, for Eastern and Western alike. As the apostle represents it here, in all the world the gospel-tree had been bearing fruit and increasing. In a healthy fruit tree there is a double effort going on. There is an effort after fruit-producing, which is crowned when in autumn there are seen the ripe apples or rich clusters of grapes. But at the same time, there is an effort after the producing of more wood, which has a view to future fruit-producing. And so with regard to the gospel in the Church; if it is vital, then there will be produced the fruits of righteousness, the fruit of the Spirit (a rich cluster) which is described in Galatians. And not only so, but there will at the same time be produced an increased sphere of fruit-producing. And the two processes can go on without their interfering with each other. The gospel in the Church may be producing its rich clusters, and at the same time enlarging the sphere where such clusters may grow. 2. *The movement in Colossæ partook of the characteristics of the general movement.* "As it doth in you also." The gospel was as a tree (on a small scale) in Colossæ. And there, as in all the world, it was bearing fruit and increasing. Three fruits have already been mentioned, these the three Christian graces—faith, hope, and charity. And we may gather from the second word that the numbers of Christian converts were increasing at Colossæ. And also Christians may have gone forth from Colossæ to spread the gospel in other places. 3. *This was to be accounted for by two circumstances.* (1) *The gospel had been rightly presented to them.* "Since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth." The movement is traced back to its very commencement. He (the writer, Timothy assenting) calls to mind the very day when the gospel was first preached to them. It was a red-letter day in the history of Colossæ (though viewed differently by some there), more famous than the day when Xerxes halted there on his march against Greece, or the day when Cyrus with his Greeks passed through it on his march against his brother at Babylon. It was really Christ entering the town, to take possession of those for whom he had died. And no spurious gospel had been preached to them. There were spurious gospels, which consisted in cold moralities and rigorous prohibitions. But the gospel (the true gospel) which had been preached to them was *the grace of God*. It told of salvation wrought out, not in answer to man's call, but to satisfy the yearnings of Divine love. It was salvation offered, not to human merit, but freely, on the ground of the infinite merits of the Saviour. And this gospel (as evidence that it had been rightly presented) they knew, from their own consciousness of salvation, to be the truth of God. (2) *The gospel had been rightly presented to them by Epaphras.* "Even as ye learned of Epaphras." *His character more generally.* "Our beloved fellow-servant." He was a servant of Christ (ready to go anywhere at the Master's bidding). That was his general fitness for service. That was what Paul and Timothy were as well as he. For he is called their "fellow-servant." And he was a fellow-servant whom they had learned to regard with the warmest affection. *His character with special reference to the Church at Colossæ.*

"Who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf." He represented Christ in ministering the gospel at Colossæ; and testimony is borne to his having faithfully represented him. He had not shrunk from declaring unto them the whole counsel of God. He had preached unto them grace which, while free, bore good fruit. We may, therefore, regard him (and not Paul directly) as the founder of the Colossian Church. At the same time, he represented Paul (and his coadjutors). He was acting on their behalf. There were friendly relations between Colossæ and Ephesus. In connection with the sojourn of the apostle for three years at that Asian centre, it is said that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." Among those who had occasion to visit Ephesus during that period, and were led to hear the Word, was probably Epaphras. Converted by the apostle, we can understand him charged by him to preach the gospel at his native Colossæ. And thus, though Paul had never visited Colossæ, yet he claimed an interest in the Church as having led to its formation, in having given them Epaphras.

V. EPIAPHRAS CONVEYED TO ROME THE TIDINGS OF THEIR LOVE (FOR WHICH GOD WAS THANKED). "Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit." He not only had conveyed the gospel from them to the Colossians, but had also conveyed to them now at Rome the tidings of their love. It was the love for which God was thanked, and it is here characterized as "in the Spirit" (one of the two references to the Spirit in an Epistle which is largely taken up with the Person of Christ). It was a love within that sphere in which the Spirit works (and wide as it), and sustained by the Spirit. Epaphras had acted a kindly part toward them. In giving an account of matters relating to the Colossian Church, he had not concealed what was to their credit. The whole of the allusion to Epaphras (so honourable to him) was fitted and intended to establish his influence at Colossæ, which may have been shaken by false teachers. This paragraph, so remarkable, bears a resemblance in form to the Sorites in logic. It is a series of propositions, in which the predicate of one becomes the subject of the next, and in which in the last there is a reference back to the first. The propositions are these: 1. We thank God especially for your love. 2. Your love, for which we thank God, was caused by hope. 3. The hope, which caused your love, was communicated in the gospel. 4. The gospel, which communicated the hope, was rightly presented by Epaphras. 5. Epaphras, who rightly presented the gospel, gave us tidings of your love (for which we thank God). These propositions (if with some loss of clearness, yet with gain of force) are (with considerable detail) all compacted by the apostle into one unbroken paragraph.—R. F.

Vers. 9—23.—*Prayer leading up to the Person of Christ.* I. MAKING REQUEST. 1. *Impulse under which request was made for the Colossians.* "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you." It was formerly praying and giving thanks; it is now praying and making request. (1) *It was an impulse with a sufficient cause, viz. the same which led to the thanksgiving.* It was an impulse, not founded on fiction, but on matter of fact, on well-accredited testimony. Information received regarding the faith and love of the Colossians had led to praying and thanking God on their behalf. This information also (such is the force of "also," it is wrong to connect it with "we") led to praying and making request on their behalf. (2) *It was a united impulse.* We; i.e. Paul and Timothy. So that here it is literally the carrying out of the Lord's words, "If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." (3) *It was a well-sustained impulse.* It did not spend itself in a day (as is sometimes the case); but, commencing with the day when the first hearing had taken place, it had continued without interruption and was still operative. How much, then, did all this represent of *availing prayer*, of influence going forth on behalf of the Colossian Church! Blessed is the Church that has two such men from day to day mingling their prayers together in its interest. 2. *For what request was made.* (1) *For knowledge.* There is the same notable petition in the Epistle to the Ephesians and in the Epistle to the Philippians. There can be no doubt that the apostle was the friend of enlightenment. If ignorance is the mother of superstition, then knowledge is the mother of true religion. (a) *It is a request for progressive knowledge.* "That ye may be filled with the knowledge." We are not born with our minds full of knowledge.

Rather are our minds like empty vessels that need to be filled. There is our capacity of knowing, over against the vastness of the knowable. This filling process begins soon, and the prayer is that it may go on toward fullness. (b) *It is a request for the progressive knowledge of God's will.* "Of his will." This is very wide as it stands. It is by his will that things have been made as they are made. And, therefore, this may be taken as a prayer for the advance of science. It is not by his will that he is, or that he is love, or that there is a distinction between right and wrong. But it is his will that we should justly conceive of him, and that we should act in a manner consistent with his holy character. It is by his will that Christ became our Substitute and died for our salvation. And it is his will that we should believe on Christ, and, as we shall presently see, take after him in our characters. (c) *It is a request for the progressive knowledge of God's will within the spiritual sphere.* "In all spiritual wisdom and understanding." In Ephesians "wisdom" is conjoined with "prudence;" here it is conjoined with "understanding." We are happily in the position of having exact definitions of these three words. Aristotle, in his 'Nicomachean Ethics,' treats of them at length. All are characterized as *intellectual virtues*. "Wisdom" is conversant with universals, or things eternal and immutable. "Prudence" and "understanding" are conversant with particulars, or details, or applications of principles or things about which deliberation is needed. Prudence is *practical* (has to do with lines of action, what is to be done or not to be done). Understanding is *critical* (has to do with processes of thought, how things are to be viewed or not to be viewed). This account of the three words is quite in accordance with Pauline usage. "Wisdom" has evidently with Paul to do with the everlasting verities—the character of God, the principles of his government, the mystery of redemption. And "understanding" has to do with subjects of thought which admit of doubt and which have to be presented in their relations to the great entities. And his wisdom and understanding are of the spiritual kind, such as unspiritual men are strangers to. There must be a penetrating with the Spirit if we would rightly apprehend eternal principles and understand their application to subjects that come up for consideration. And it is this that is asked for the Colossians as necessary for the filling with the knowledge (the clear, certain, experimental knowledge) of God's will. (2) *For the Christian form of character.* This is emphatically here the will of God, the knowledge of which is asked. (a) *Generally. It is a request for a worthy Christian walk.* "To walk worthily of the Lord." Christ is Lord; we are his servants. And we are like those servants whose ears were bored, as bound to serve this Master for ever. He is no common Master; for (in connection with his doing of God's will) it is said that his ears were bored. *Conduct worthy of him*, then, how shall we get the conception of it, and, when we have got the conception, put it into execution? "Unto all pleasing." It is implied in this language that he is uninterruptedly observant of our conduct, and that he forms an estimate of it as we proceed—an estimate which must be according to truth. It is implied also that, if we would bring our conduct up to what is worthy of Christ, we must seek his universal approval, we must seek to please him in every moment that we live, in every step that we take. (b) *Under a special aspect. (a) It is a request for progressive fruitfulness following upon progressive knowledge.* "Bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." It is better to read, "by the knowledge of God." The advantage of this translation (which is grammatically correct) is that "knowledge" is used as before, viz. as that which leads to good conduct as its fruit. There is a taking up here of language which has already been employed. It was said that the gospel-tree was bearing fruit and increasing in Colossæ as in all the world. Now, Christians are trees, whose fruit is *every good work*. A work is good which has Christian principle in it. If for the sake of Christ we are industrious, eager to learn, contented, slow to anger, humble, ready to give up what is hurtful,—then we are fruitful in good works. Especially are we fruitful in good works if, after the example and for the sake of Christ, we live for the good of others, try to make all around us happy, are kind to the poor, pity the sinful. If a tree is in a healthy state, it not only bears fruit, but increases (in wood) so that it bears more fruit another year. So, if we are in a healthy spiritual state, we shall not only bear fruit, but as we go on in life we shall increase (in quality of being, in aptitude) so that we ever bring forth more fruit. This progressive fruitfulness is brought about by the knowledge of God, which has already

been characterized as progressive. The more we get into our minds of Divine truth, the fuller our knowledge of God, the richer will be the fruit which we produce. (B) *It is a request for increased strength.* "Strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and long-suffering with joy." If a tree is to bear fruit, it must be supplied with nourishment. So, if we are to produce every good work, we must be strengthened by God. The measure according to which strength can be supplied is infinite. It is "according to the might of his glory." "Might" is an attribute of the glorious majesty of God. "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God." Power can be communicated from this source to us. We have already been strengthened with some power, but we need to ask for ourselves, and others need to ask for us, that we may be strengthened with more power. We need to be strengthened in prosperity to make a right use of our powers; but especially do we need to be strengthened in times of trial *unto all patience and long-suffering.* "Patience," in so far as it is to be distinguished from "long-suffering," has reference to trials as laid upon us by God. "Long-suffering," in so far as it is to be distinguished from "patience," has reference to trials caused, and as caused by others. We never need to bear with God, we have to bear up under what he (directly or indirectly) lays upon us; but we have to bear with others who are unreasonable or do us injury. And the power communicated from the Divine glory is efficient to make us endure with joy. This is the Christian, as distinguished from the mere Stocial, relation to sufferings. We can rise in triumph over our sufferings. "Let us also," says the apostle, "rejoice in our tribulations." "In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (γ) *It is a request for thankfulness.* Alike in prosperity and in adversity, we have *three causes* for joy, for which we pour out our souls in gratitude. (i.) *Thankfulness for the loving purpose of God.* "Giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." This is not a meetening for heaven in the way of holy habits. The words cannot bear that interpretation which is commonly put upon them. The historical parallel is to be kept in view. The Jews had their allotment (it is literally here "the portion of the lot," i.e. the portion which fell to them by lot) in the land of Canaan. God counted it a meet thing (so we would translate) that they should have this allotment. This was, in point of time, antecedent to the deliverance from Egypt, which is referred to in the next verse. It was true that in Abraham God counted it a meet thing that they, his descendants, should possess the land of Canaan. So for us saints, i.e. the successors of the holy people (not merely Jewish Christians, but Gentile Christians, who are referred to at the close of this paragraph), there is in store an allotted inheritance. This is to be in the world of light (when the shadows have fled away, when the light of God is all-penetrative), and with this in prospect there would need to be a meetening, in the expelling of all impurity, of all darkness, from our natures. But still it is true that this was the loving purpose of God from all eternity. The Father (it was his love that was at the root of it) counted it a meet thing in Christ that we should be partakers of the inheritance in light. And thus what is expanded and made prominent in Ephesians regarding the purpose of God, we have here in brief and incidentally. (ii.) *Thankfulness for the deliverance effected in Christ.* "Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love." The historical parallel is still kept up. Egypt was, to the Israelites, a house of bondage. They were under power, not power in its purity, power in the service of light, but power in the service of darkness—harsh, oppressive power. But out of that they were brought with a strong arm, and were translated into a new orderly state of things, which is expressed by the word "kingdom" (the theocracy). So there is an Egypt behind us all. Sin was the tyranny of darkness. But the Father effected for us a deliverance. How it was effected is not stated here. But, to carry out the historical parallel, it was by the sacrifice of the Son of his love. The power of darkness came upon him in all its horrors. He was the Firstborn, slain in the land of Egypt, that Israel might escape. And this deliverance involved a complete changing of our state. It was a bringing us in Christ into a true kingdom, a kingdom presided over by Christ, a kingdom whose law is love. (iii.) *Thankfulness for the enjoyment of redemption.* "In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." We are yet in our wilderness state; we have not come to our full redemption, to our possession of the

but. But we have the feeling of emancipation. We have the first and characteristic blessing of redemption, viz. the forgiveness of our sins. We feel happy in the enjoyment of the Divine favour. And that is only part of the redemption we have here. For, as is brought out in Ephesians, we have the Spirit as the Earnest of the inheritance. We have thus, under all circumstances, causes for thankfulness to God; and therefore prayer may always go up for this.

II. THE PERSON OF CHRIST. 1. *In relation to the universe.* His having the pre-eminence. (1) *As arising out of his relation to the Father.* "Who [i.e. the Son of his love] is the Image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation." *First part of the designation.* Image is to be distinguished from mere likeness. There is a likeness between members of the same family, but the parental features are *imaged* in the child. In "image" there is the idea of *derivation from an original*. So it is not mere likeness that is predicated of the First and Second Persons of the Godhead; but God is represented (imperfectly, we may believe) as the original, and Christ as the copy. In 1 Cor. xi. 7 man is said to be the image of God, so that this way of designating the Second Person does not necessarily imply his divinity. At the same time, it may be employed in consistency with his divinity, if (admitting the mystery of the relationship, viz. that one should be original or prototype, and another copy or impress) we think of him as the *perfect* Image of God. The designation "invisible" is here applied to God, and when Christ is said to be the Image of the invisible God, the apparent meaning is that the essential idea of his existence is that he is *God manifest*, and that antecedent to his being *God manifest in the flesh*. From all eternity he manifests, is in visible form, that God whom no man hath seen nor can see. And this, as we shall presently see, accounts for his connection with the work of creation. *Second part of the designation.* He is "the Firstborn of all creation." As we must first think of original and then of copy, so we must first think of Father and then of Son. The Father is imaged in the Son. In relation to the Father, the Second Person is strictly the *Only-begotten*. The firstborn has always reference to some coming after. Christ is the "Firstborn" among many brethren, i.e. Brother leading others after him. He is styled in this passage "the Firstborn from the dead," i.e. the first to rise from the dead himself, and bringing others after him. If the expression had been "the first-created of creation," the Arian interpretation (Christ's creatureliness) might have been pressed. But there is an expression used which seems to make Christ stand out from all creation, as not created himself, but born. If it had been Christ's relation to the Father that had been solely in question, the expression would probably have been not "born," but "begotten" (only begotten). But it is rather Christ's relation to all that might be thought of as in the family. And therefore the ordinary word in such a relation is used, "firstborn" (as distinguished from after-born by same mother). And it is intended to bring out emphatically the thought that he has the rights of the firstborn. Philo had applied the name "First-begotten" (relative to Father) to the Logos. But the Messianic name was "Firstborn" (relative to other members of a family). "I will make him my Firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth" (Ps. lxxxix. 27). Kings of the earth, by virtue of primogeniture, are placed over their portions of the earth. As God's Firstborn, Christ is higher, as *absolutely placed over all creation*. (2) *As arising out of his causal relation to the universe.* (a) *Conditional cause.* "For in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." We are taught here, in opposition to the Arian idea, that Christ stood out from all things created as their Cause. He is thus placed in a different category from creation. As Cause, he was very closely connected with creation. There seems to be a catching up of the thought that he is essentially the *Manifester* of God. In him, as such, creation had its origin. God is manifested (comes out of invisibility) in creation. "For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity." If, then, it was to be made to appear (outside of Godhead) what God was in his wisdom, power, goodness, to whom did this belong but to the Second Person? It was in him as Manifester that it necessarily inhered. There was an *emphatic universality* connected with his work of creating. In him were *all things* (equivalent to the universe) created. But, as if that were not enough, a comprehensive division is added: "in the heavens and upon the

earth." As if this, again, were not enough, a different division (for stars are in the heavens and visible, the human spirit is upon the earth and invisible), but an equally comprehensive division, is added: "things visible and things invisible." As if these two divisions in *locality* were not enough, *essences* are next brought in, but not all essences, only the highest—angelic beings, that might be thought of as in rivalry with the Son: "whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." Great prominence was given in Jewish speculations to the not very profitable subject of the grades of the celestial hierarchy. These speculations were mixed up with the non-scriptural doctrine of seven heavens. And Judaizing Christians speculated in the same line. These angels became the intermediate beings of Eastern theosophy. The idea was that, matter being the evil principle, God could not create it immediately. But there was a descending scale from God to matter. God created a being at a certain remove from himself. This first-created being created another, still further removed; and so it went on, till one was created far enough down to create matter. It is quite likely, from the reference afterward to the worshipping of angels, that in Colossæ there was danger of the idea gaining ground that the angels in their several grades were to be regarded, in the light of Eastern theosophy, as beings having to do with creation, and on that ground to be worshipped. The apostle certainly clears the whole ground here for the Colossians. He does not profess to know what the several grades are. He gives the common (not the inspired) names with a certain impatience (as associated with much that was rash). But this he asserts that, whatever they are, they have nothing to do with creating. In him all of them, from the highest to the lowest, were created. No part of creation was the work of an inferior angel, but every part of it was immediately in him. (b) *Instrumental cause*. "All things have been created through him." Creation can be ascribed to God, as it is in Rom. xi. 36. But it is true that God never acts immediately; he always acts through the agency of the Son. New Testament language is very explicit on this subject. "All things were made by him [the Word], and without him was not anything made that was made." "Through whom [his Son] also he made the worlds." So here the present (no longer the past) fact of creation is attributed to the instrumentality of the Son. And this is not the passive instrumentality the Alexandrian Jew thought of in attributing creation to the Logos. Neither is the agent in creation the dark, hard, limited demiurge of the Gnostics; but he is distinctly a Divine Person, One who with an intelligence, with an interest, with a plastic power, that are all infinite, has done his work. (c) *Final cause*. "And unto him." One Agent and one End; so the Christian doctrine of creation proceeds. And how grandly does it rise above all mere human speculations about creation! Why has this *totality* been brought into existence? There are subordinate ends which are served by the various parts. A plant has an end in its own development and fruit-bearing. It has an end beyond that, in its service to man and to beast. Man—the microcosm, as he has been called—has an end in his own development. He has an end beyond himself, in the mastering of the world. And each member of the race has an end in helping the development of his neighbour. But when we think of the presence of so much evil, we still ask—Why have we and all things been made? It is a satisfaction to have, as the answer, that the one reason which determined the existence of the whole, as the one Bringer into existence, is Christ as the Manifestation of God. It was no cold necessity, it was the Son, who is here the subject, freely, filially, and in view of all that now exists to mar creation, bringing out what was in the heart of the Divine Father. And in that answer, here given, faith can rest. (d) *Pre-existent cause*. "And he is before all things." It was very necessary clearly to think of Christ as pre-existent to his incarnation. Christ himself said in memorable words, "Before Abraham was, I am." His pre-existence is here carried forward to a much earlier point. There is that totality now which is called the universe. The time was when there was *nothing* outside of God. There were no materials lying from all eternity (as some have vainly imagined) out of which a universe could be constructed. There were no germs out of which a universe could be developed. There was simply the creative energy of the Word, who had himself to create all the materials and germs of things. We have, then, to go back to him as the pre-existent Creator. And not only *was* he before all things; but, as it is here put, he *is* (absolutely exists) before all things. For time itself is his creation; and before it, and outside of it, he in himself exists. (e) *Permanent cause*.

"And in him all things consist." But for him, all things would fall asunder and go back into nothingness. There are laws, indeed, which regulate and give stability to things; but these laws subsist in Christ, are non-existent out of him. His continued existence is really the guarantee for the sun rising every morning. It will rise so long as he, who made it, has an end in its rising. And all things have consistence and persistence only in his existence and in his ends. There is no other basis on which things can proceed toward the consummation. 2. *In relation to the Church.* (1) *His headship over the Church.* "And he [who has the pre-eminence in the universe] is the Head of the body, the Church." As Christ, as God's Firstborn, has rights over all creation, so has he the headship over the Church. In Eph. i. 22, 23 the thought turns more on the Church as the body of Christ; here it turns more on Christ as the Head. Through the brain, in its connection with the nerves, the mind can be present in all the body; so Christ is present in all the members of the Church. From the brain as a centre the movements of the body can be originated, guided, combined, controlled; so from Christ as a Centre the movements of the Church are originated, guided, combined, controlled. This domination of the brain, being so complete, is well fitted to set forth the *supremacy* of Christ over the Church. (2) *As arising out of his relation to the Church.* (a) *Originating cause.* "Who is [seeing he is] the Beginning." He gives origin to the Church. It belonged to Christ, as the Manifestor of God, to bring the universe into existence; so it belongs to Christ, as the Manifestor of God, to bring the Church into existence. The connection is very close. It is as though we created and then guided and controlled the movements of our body. A king rules over those with whose existence he has had very little connection. Christ in the Church rules and by strongest right over those whom he has created and again created. (b) *Inaugurating cause.* "The Firstborn from the dead." It is difficult to get a word to express the whole meaning. There is this idea—that he exists in that in which he operates. He is the great Energizer incarnate. And as incarnate (in the carrying out of his work) he was numbered among the dead. But he rose from the dead, the possessor of a new life. He is not only the possessor of a new life himself, but he is regenerative cause to those that come after him. As regenerative cause to those that come after, he has the right of the Firstborn over them. Thus is his authority established in the Church as in the universe. 3. *Combination.* (1) *His being Mediator in both spheres.* "That in all things he might have the pre-eminence." There was dualism (a good and a bad principle) at the root of the doctrine of intermediate beings or angelic mediators. The apostle teaches the existence of one Mediator presiding over the two spheres—the universe and the Church. This is a cardinal point in the Christology of the New Testament. There are some who have mistakenly or confusedly the idea that it is God in nature and Christ in the Church. It is really Christ in both, as the Mediator of God. He mediated in creation before he mediated in redemption. It belongs to the very idea of his being to be Mediator. This absolute pre-eminence of Christ implies a unity of meaning, a harmony of working, between the two spheres. It is comforting so far as the *universe is concerned*. For it implies that we are as in a Christian temple. It is our Saviour who is working around us. We can feel that there is behind all works of creation, not iron law, but infinite love—the love that bled on Calvary. It is comforting so far as the *Church is concerned*. For it implies, as is taught in Ephesians, that all things can be placed at the service of the Church. All the forms of things (even the evil forms) are for the education of the Church. All the products of the earth are for the support of the Church. The worldly powers are controlled for the Church. The very stars in their courses fight for the Church. (2) *His qualifications as Mediator.* "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell." In the fact of Christ being Mediator there is implied a certain *subordination*, his being Second in relation to the First. There is the same subordination implied in his being represented as the copy of the great Original, and also in his being represented as Son which cannot be thought without first thinking "Father." With the First, here as elsewhere, there is associated the idea of good pleasure. It is as fitting for the Father to have his good pleasure as for Christ to carry it out. The remarkable thing here is that this good pleasure is represented as extending to the qualifications which Christ possessed as Mediator. "It was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell." To the word

pleroma, translated "the fulness," may be attached the idea of "filled-up receptacle." The word "plenitudo" seems nearer the meaning. It is applied to the full complement for manning a ship. As applied to Christ, it means the totality of the Divine perfections. There were some who had the idea that the agent employed in creating had only a portion of the *pleroma*, as much as was needed for his work. It is asserted of Christ as Mediator that he exhausted in himself the Divine perfections. There were some who had the idea that there was a separation from (in human semblance), and afterward a return to, the *pleroma*. It is asserted of Christ that the Divine plenitude did not sojourn, but necessarily dwelt, in him. Thus were the Colossian believers guarded against all actual or possible philosophizings that would have dimmed the glory of the great Mediator. (3) *The issue of his work as Mediator*. "And through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens." This relates to the doctrine of *the last things*. The word "reconcile" is stronger than "adjust," or "rectify." It is applied to the reconciliation of enemies. It is applied to our reconciliation, as sinners, to God. It is not so strong as the expression, "summing up in Christ," which is used in Ephesians. But it is stronger than the word translated "reconcile" in the fifth chapter of 2 Corinthians. It is intensive here, and means reconciliation (after a breaking of the harmony) *back* to the pristine or intended condition of things. This reconciliation is to extend to *all things*, viz. all things to which the Mediator gave being. This universal reconciliation is to be not merely between the different parts, but unto the Father. It is to be effected through the Son. More specifically it is stated that it is to be on the ground of God having made peace through the blood of Christ's cross. The blood shed on the cross, the blood of atonement for sin, was the procuring cause of reconciliation. There the reconciling efficacy all centred. And it is to go out to the widest circumference, for it is added, "Through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens." What are the contents of the universal reconciliation which is here taught? We must guard, on the one hand, against a dilution of the language of Scripture. We must guard, on the other hand, against a dogmatic fixing of the form which this universal reconciliation is to take. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children." It belongs to us to take advantage of the revealed way of reconciliation, viz. faith in Christ.

III. APPLICATION TO THE COLOSSIANS. 1. *Gentilism*. "And you, being in time past." The Colossians are reminded of what they were in time past, to emphasize their present participation in reconciliation. (1) *Gentile in position*. "Alienated." In their heathen state they were among the "things" needing to be reconciled to God. They were *away* from him, as the Greek word indicates. They were in the position of *aliens*. They were without external privileges such as the covenant people had. And they were without the inward helps that were necessary for their living the life of God. (2) *Gentile in their thoughts*. "And enemies in your mind." The mind is the seat of the thoughts. It is where we reflect, come to our conclusions, form our resolutions. It was in this sphere that the Colossians manifested *hostility to God*. If a right conception of God had been presented to them, it would not only have been uncongenial to them, but it would have called forth active, virulent hostility. As it was (with God very much as a lost thought), their hostility showed itself rather in their pleasing themselves in their thoughts, in their forsaking the rays of light that still lingered in their reason and conscience. (3) *Gentile in their works*. "In your evil works." This was the outcome of their God-hating thoughts. Hating good (if not so directly God) in their mind, they did not, and indeed could not, keep their hatred there. Their actions took a complexion from their thoughts. Those who love God have more or less of the Divine form in their actions. But the actions of these Colossians in heathenism were evil. They were not done out of love to God. That alone was sufficient to give them a character of evil. Of positive forms of evil, from what is warned against in this Epistle, we may particularize sensuality, covetousness, deceitfulness, revengefulness. 2. *The historical element in reconciliation*. "Yet now hath he [God] reconciled in the body of his [Christ's] flesh through death." (1) *God in bodily form*. It is true that we must separate from God his having a body. He is a Spirit; "he consists not of various parts extended one without and beyond another." The ground on

which the Jews were forbidden to represent God under any bodily form was that he had no bodily form. He was in the fifteenth verse declared to be the *invisible* God. "Now, if he had a body and hid it from our eyes, he might be said not to be seen, but could not be said to be invisible" (Charnock). And yet he whose divinity (from language in preceding verses) is indubitable has here ascribed to him a body. He appeared in Old Testament times in what was the semblance of a body; but it is a real body that is here ascribed to him. That is to say, we have what we cannot understand—the Divine spirituality, and yet a body. (2) *God in the form of flesh*. The Second Person did not receive a body *unique* in kind. He did not receive our body in its paradisaical or ideal state; but as it was actually, inheriting the effects of the Fall. He received it from Mary. If there was a purifying (from the Holy Ghost), what he received was none the less flesh. He appeared in flesh in the midst of human history. That is to say, he whose existence formed the ground upon which history went forward, became himself part of history, became himself an historical Personage. (3) *God in the experience of death*. Flesh is a weak thing. It cannot well stand the shocks of time. Its transitoriness is being ever evidenced. "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." "And the Word became flesh," it is said, and that carried with it a weak, transitory existence. In flesh he had to pass through the experience of death. That is to say, we have this as the climax of the mystery—that he, who is the absolutely Living One, in experience went round to the opposite pole of death. In accordance with this, we can pray in such words as these: "Good Lord, deliver us: by the mystery of thy holy incarnation; by thy holy nativity and circumcision; by thy baptism, fasting, and temptation; by thine agony and bloody sweat; by thy cross and passion, Good Lord, deliver us." This is said by unitarians to be a *materializing* of God. *God came into time, assumed humanity nineteen hundred years ago*. That is what Christianity says, what stamps it as an *historical* religion. It is only to be scouted as a *lowering* of God on the supposition that it is impossible for God to descend. But if it is possible for God, impelled by love, to descend (and the possibilities of love are matter of revelation), then we have a grand *historical commencement* in God descending through the infinite interval into time and into humanity. He descended, according to the teaching here, in the Father's Name *to make reconciliation*. The foundation of this reconciliation was laid principally in the great historical fact of his death. It was death in perfect submission to the will of God. It was death as the desert of sin. It was death deriving infinite value from the fact that the Person dying was the Son of God. To this Reconciler in humanity all can cling. His reconciliation would seem to have a universality extending beyond humanity. Within humanity Gentiles as well as Jews were included. "I am a man, and there is nothing human foreign to me." All alike can cling to God appearing in humanity and can participate in the benefits of his work performed in humanity. 3. *The ultimate of reconciliation*. "To present you holy and without blemish and unrepvable before him." "Before him" is to be understood as before God, and points to a time when we shall be in the presence of God in a sense in which we are not now in the presence of God. It is God also who presents here; but, as God reconciles through Christ, so also he presents through Christ (in accordance with Eph. v. 27). (1) *Positively. Holy*. This is to be taken in its full contents. We are now consecrated to God (as ancient Israel). At our presentation we shall have all the inward dispositions that correspond to our outward consecration. Our spiritual susceptibilities, affinities, aspirations, will correspond to the presence of God into which we come. (2) *Negatively. Without blemish*. This is the constant sacrificial expression. Whatever was offered to God was to be *without blemish*. It would belong to the officiating priest to pronounce upon the fitness of an animal for sacrifice. There is a Greek word which means "blemish-examiner." Such Christ is to those who are to be presented to God. In his inspection of the seven Churches he discovered blemishes in them. We shall not be in a fit state for presentation to God until all blemishes have been removed from us. *Unrepvable*. This is a following up of the previous expression. Pronounced upon by Christ, our position before God is for ever secured, our character is unimpeachable. No one can come in after him to reverse his decision. There cannot be ground for any subsequent charge being brought against us. 4. *Gentle exhortation to steadfastness*. (1) *In faith*. "If so be that ye continue in the faith." To have so much done for us as is implied in our

fitness for presentation to God, we must persevere, and persevere in the right way. Our position is to be faith toward Christ. Within ourselves we have not the elements of strength. We are powerless to form character. We are not only to come into the position of faith, but we are to *rest* in it. However our outward position may be altered, our inward position is to remain unaltered. *Result.* "Grounded." "My soul hath found the steadfast ground." We try other foundations, only to find them insufficient. When we have got past our own doings and the services of the Church down to Christ, then we feel that we have found the immovable Foundation, the steadfast ground for our being. "And steadfast." A building even by its own weight gets steadied when it is upon a secure foundation. So by faith are we to get steadied upon the Foundation. We are to become like the Foundation. The immovableness that is in Christ is to come up into us. (2) *In hope.* "And not moved away from the hope of the gospel." Believing in Christ we have hope toward God—we have hope in view of the future. We have hope of being presented holy and without blemish and unprovable before God. This is the hope communicated in, evoked by, the gospel. From this hope we are not to be moved away (which is the negative corresponding to the positive connected with faith). We are not to be of two moods, hoping and desponding, but we are to keep to the one mood, hoping. Circumstances may arise in which we are tempted to despond or despair; but our hope is to partake of the immovableness of its object. *The inexcusableness of being moved away from the hope of the gospel.* (a) *From their having heard the gospel.* "Which ye heard." Left to themselves, they would have been in heathenism and its hopelessness: "Having no hope, and without God in the world," as is said in Ephesians. Such had been their melancholy state, but by the grace of God the gospel had been preached to them in Colossæ. It became them, then, to present a contrast to the hopelessness of heathenism, to be inspired with the hope of future presentation and everlasting continuance before God. (b) *From the universality which characterized the gospel.* "Which was preached in all creation under heaven." The form of the command was: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation." The apostle, writing not many years after the giving forth of the command, regards its universal character as already established. It had already obtained this seal of its Divine authorship. It was not a partial provincial thing, but, preached in all creation under heaven, it had been proved to be adapted to the wants of men. They were not, then, to abandon its peculiar hope. (c) *From Paul's personal relation to the gospel.* "Whereof I Paul was made a minister." Of this gospel, the universal hope-bringer, he had the high privilege of being a minister. He had no claim to the position. He was only Paul, one who had been a persecutor and had obtained mercy. But the gospel was dear to him, and, in writing to them and in introducing his personal relation to them, he puts that forward as a reason for their not being moved away from their hope.—R. F.

Vers. 24—29.—*Paul's sufferings.* "Now." This is the connecting word, and serves to bring down the time from the past (when he was made a minister) to the present when he contemplates his sufferings.

I. HE REJOICES IN HIS SUFFERINGS, BECAUSE THEY WERE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COLOSSIANS. "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake." He adopts a triumphant key with regard to his sufferings. He is not merely reconciled to them, but he finds them a sphere in which he has occasion for rejoicing. He does not rejoice in them as sufferings, for they were no more pleasant to him than to others. Nor does he rejoice in them here because they were helpful to self-discipline. But he rejoices in them because they were beneficial to the Colossians. He was suffering as a witness to the gospel. 1. *His sufferings may have been as prayers.* The Lord looking down on them, in response to them, may have showered blessings on the Colossians. 2. *His sufferings may have been as the sending of the gospel to them.* Because he stood in the breach, others may have been left free to give them the gospel. 3. *His sufferings may have been as a stimulus to them.* Because he was courageous in enduring sufferings, their courage may have been strengthened.

II. HE REJOICES IN HIS SUFFERINGS BECAUSE THEY WERE CONNECTED WITH THE AFFLICTIONS OF CHRIST. "And fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake." The language employed is very remark-

able. "That which is lacking" is properly "deficiencies." The word is distributive—one deficiency after another. The verb which governs "deficiencies" is a double compound. The simple verb would give this meaning, "I fill the deficiencies of the afflictions of Christ." The single compound would give this meaning, "I fill up the deficiencies of the afflictions of Christ" (stress being laid on the fact that what the apostle supplied in suffering after suffering met deficiency after deficiency in the afflictions of Christ). The double compound gives this meaning, "I on my part with suffering after suffering meet deficiency after deficiency on the part of Christ in his afflictions" (stress being laid on the opposition of *persons*). Protestant commentators (with the exception of Dr. Lightfoot) seem to have settled down into regarding the *afflictions of Christ* as those endured by Christ in the sufferings of his people. It is quite scriptural to identify Christ with the sufferings of his people (Matt. xxv. 31-46); but the bringing in of this identification (with nothing in the language to point to it) has the effect of obscuring the antithesis between the two persons to which the language gives prominence. It is more natural, then, with Dr. Lightfoot, to adopt the Roman Catholic exegesis, and to regard the afflictions of Christ, not as those which he endures mystically in the Church, but as those which he endured personally in his day. He did not complete these so as to preclude his people suffering after him; but Paul and others, with suffering after suffering, were meeting deficiency after deficiency in them. The Roman Catholic conclusion from this is that saints, by the merits of their sufferings, supplement the merits of the Saviour. But that is an utterly un-Pauline idea (coming in after Christ and making up the deficiencies of his merits), and certainly it is not borne out by the language which is employed here. 1. The sufferings of the apostle can be classed with the sufferings of Christ as *afflictive* (not meritorious). In 2 Cor. i. 5 it is said that the sufferings of Christ abounded to the Corinthians (or overflowed on them). If our sufferings are the overflows (or surplus) of the Master's sufferings, then they are in the same class, only, however, under the aspect in which they are presented in that passage as sufferings for which consolation is provided. The exclusion of meritoriousness is secured here by the use of the word "afflictions" (not "cross," or "death," or "suffering of death"). It is true that in all his afflictions (and not merely in his death) he was accumulating merits for his people. But it is quite consistent with that to regard them separately (compared with ours) as providentially appointed. 2. The sufferings of the apostle can be classed with the sufferings of Christ as *edifying* (not meritorious). There is a generalization of the previous thought. The sufferings of the apostle were edifying, not merely to the Colossians, but to the body of Christ, which is the Church. They were as prayers, as the sending of the gospel, as stimulus for the whole body of the faithful. Even we at this day are sharing in the benefit. And, though Christ by the meritoriousness of his sufferings actually gave rise to the Church, yet we can separate (for the sake of comparison) the edifying aspects of them.

III. HE REJOICES IN HIS SUFFERINGS BECAUSE THEY WERE CONNECTED WITH HIS OFFICE. 1. *He was a minister of the Church.* "Whereof I was made a minister." It is consonant to a Christian to suffer loss that others may be advantaged. It is certainly consonant to a minister of the Church to be afflicted (in soul and in body) that others may rejoice. He is not so much the holder of a benefice as one who wears himself out for souls. It is said of the greatest Minister of the Church that he came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. And Paul, in the spirit of service, was closely assimilated to Christ. He was sowing that others might reap, labouring that others might enter on his labours. 2. *He was charged with the mystery relating to the Gentiles.* "According to the dispensation of God which was given me to you-ward, to fulfil the Word of God, even the mystery which hath been hid from all ages and generations: but now hath it been manifested to his saints." As a minister of the Church, he held an office of trust. He was a steward in the house of God. His office was of Divine appointment. It had reference to the Colossians, but not to them exclusively, only to them as representatives of the Gentile world. In this office he was charged to fulfil (to complete the round of) a Divine declaration. This was the mystery hid from the ages and from the generations (making up the ages), but manifested (brought into the clear light) to the saints of that day. 3. *This mystery was a glorious manifestation.* "To whom God was pleased to make

known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the Hope of glory." There is glory in nature; the sun is a glorious object. There was glory in the Mosaic economy (with all its limitations). But in this mystery God was pleased, and had it in view, to make known the riches (the highest form, the greatest affluence) of glory. This was a display such as was not given elsewhere. The sphere of this display was among the Gentiles. The darkness of the background, therefore, added to the glory; but it was a glorious thing in itself. It is here described as "Christ in you, the Hope of glory." Stress is not to be laid on "in you." The first meaning is "among you," and "in you" only comes in under that. The stress of the thought is to be laid on this—that to them, in the hopelessness of heathenism, Christ came as the great Hope-bringer. In Christ (not in his doctrine here, but in his Person) they had the forgiveness of sins, they had the beginning of redemption. But what they had of Christ was only the earnest of what they would yet have. What they looked forward to in the future with hope was glory (differing from the glory previously mentioned only in that it respects persons and not things). This glory is to be thought of as the highest efflorescence of our being, from the Christ within, which is synonymous with full redemption. 4. *The breadth of his duties as charged with the mystery.* "Whom we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ." There was the broadest of all subjects, viz. Christ, who has already been presented as the First, the Midst, the Last, in the universe and in the Church. This Christ they spoke of, not in a whisper (or only to the initiated), but proclaimed that men widely might hear. This bold presentation of Christ was not one-sided. There was the preparing the way for Christ in *admonishing* (showing the need for repentance and urging to repentance), and then, as complementary to that, there was the building up in Christ in *teaching* (presenting Christ for faith in his qualifications and in his work). And in this they observed a universality; for it is said, with the emphasis of repetition, "admonishing every man and teaching every man." And having emphasized "every man," it is added (still having respect to universality), "*with all wisdom.*" It was a point with the Gnostics that wisdom was to be kept back from the many. According to the apostle's teaching, there was no oligarchy of intellect (the few who had perception). There were no exclusive possessors of the Divine wisdom. There was universality in the Divine offer and intention. Another point with the Gnostics (as with others) was that only the few, the select spirits, could come to perfection; the many must be content with a lower attainment, a lower heaven. But the apostle did not go upon such principles. He saw perfection (the highest form of human existence) opened up for every man in Christ (the ideal Man), and therefore he sought to present (under God, to whom pre-eminently it belongs to present) every man perfect in Christ. 5. *The spirit in which he discharged his duties.* "Whereunto I labour also, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." There is a recurrence from "we" to "I" (with individualizing effect). The apostle introduces a favourite metaphor of his. He painfully exercised himself in training for the conflict, and then he went down to the arena and engaged in the conflict. Thus he comes back to the sufferings with which he started. The proclamation of the gospel (so broad) was a proceeding with painful accompaniments. But, in the midst of all, he rejoiced because he was not left to his own strength, but was supernaturally supported. There was an unseen Master beside him, nerving him as he laboured (in training) and strove (in the lists); and so he laboured and strove, not according to his own poor working, but according to his (Christ's) working that worked in him mightily.—R. F.

Introduction. Throughout this Epistle St. Paul is dealing with the twofold evil that had arisen in the Colossian Church—an error half Judaic, half Gnostic; an error that was theological and practical. It arose from the wrong conception of matter as inherently evil, and as consequently demanding intervening mediators between the material system of things and God, and as making abstinence from contact with material things, as far as might be possible, very incumbent on the godly. This error has its modern analogies in sacerdotalism and in pietism. To combat the error then and now the *plenitude of Christ* must be preached—Christ the Fulness; therefore the all-sufficient Mediator; therefore, too, the all-sufficient Consecrator of the material system.

The errors of the ritualist and of the recluse are both met by this great fact of the plenitude of Christ.—U. R. T.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The apostolic salutation.* Pondering this salutation, we ask about it three questions.

I. WHAT IT REVEALS ABOUT THE APOSTLE. It indicates: 1. *His dignity.* "An apostle . . . by the will of God." This was a title (1) *divinely* derived; (2) *directly* derived from God; (3) abundantly *justified*, (a) by supernatural visions and experiences, (b) by seals of success. This title was used here, though not in his salutation to all the Churches, because here (1) he was dealing with error and erroneous teachers, and so needed a claim of authority; (2) he was personally an entire stranger to the Colossians; (3) he writes from prison, and it was well he should remind himself and them of his true dignity. He was a prisoner, yet none the less an apostle. 2. *His condescension.* "Timotheus our brother." He was no fellow-apostle, yet his brother; he was his boyish, not to say childish, convert, yet his brother. Great souls never patronize; they elevate true men, of whatever station or age, into brotherhood with them. The Greatest said, "I have called you not servants, but friends." "He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

II. WHAT IT IMPLIES ABOUT THE CHURCH. It recalls to us: 1. *Its locality and its associations.* One of the historic Churches in the valley of the Lycus; the town, too, had been famous, though its glory was waning. Xerxes and Cyrus had made it famous, but Paul's letter has made its name known where Xerxes and Cyrus have never been heard of. 2. *Its character.* This indeed ought to be the character of every Church. For its members were: (1) "*Saints.*" The Old Testament description of Israel thus applied to Christians to indicate their union with God. (2) "*Faithful brethren.*" Indicating their union with each other. All free-masonries, guilds, etc., are but hints of what the Church is meant to be in this aspect of it.

III. WHAT IT SUGGESTS ABOUT TRUE BLESSEDNESS. "Grace and peace" is Paul's customary greeting; it is a blended Greek and Hebrew salutation. It expresses the Apostle's best wish for a Church. What is it? 1. "*Grace.*" It is a Greek thought Christianized. It takes the conception of grace of form, of gesture, of tone, into the spiritual realm. It has on Paul's pen and lips two meanings. (1) It is to be *enjoyed* as the attitude of God in Christ towards men. It is thus the Divine pity, gentleness, favour, the bearing of a forgiving, condescending, loving God. That is infinite grace. (2) It is to be *possessed* as the spirit of a Christian. It is thus "the grace of life"—moral beauty, spiritual loveliness. It is the indwelling in human character of more than all that the Greeks conceived in their "three Graces." 2. "*Peace.*" It may include: (1) *Freedom from persecution*, then a great desideratum. (2) *Absence of internal dissension.* This was the one main purpose of his letter. (3) *Inward calm of heart and quiet confidence in God.* This is ideal peace. Christ's peace and the wish of Paul is the gift of Jesus; for he said, "My peace give I unto you."—U. R. T.

Vers. 3—8.—*The apostolic thanksgiving.* We notice here—

I. THE SPIRIT OF THIS THANKSGIVING. Whatever is in it is so beautiful that we may well imitate it. Observe: 1. It is *unselfish*. We hear the prisoner praise, the chained captive exult, for the joys of others. Arthur Helps says, "That man is very strong and powerful, who has no more hopes for himself, who looks not to be loved any more, to be admired any more, to have any more honour and dignity, but whose sole thought is for others, and who only lives for them." That is what you have before you here. 2. It is *ungrudging*. Paul is about to deal with their errors, but nevertheless how willing and, indeed, eager he is first to recognize what is good and laudable in this Colossian Church! There are two sets of men with regard to art, scenery, and society: those who first see the blemish, then the beauty; and those who first of all rejoice in the admirable, if afterwards they have to criticise any drawback. To the second of these Paul belonged. 3. It is *constant*. Like a perennial fountain, his praise and prayer for them shall be poured forth.

II. THE SUBJECT OF THIS THANKSGIVING. He thanks God: 1. *For the spiritual possessions of the Church.* Here is the familiar triad of his thought and description—faith, love, hope. Sometimes he views faith and love as leading up to hope; here he

deplets hope as kindling faith and love. (1) *The faith is Christ-centred.* "In Christ Jesus." (2) *The love is practical.* It distributes "to the necessities of saints." (3) *The hope is secure.* It is stored up—"laid up in heaven." So it is above fire and flood and all destructive forces. 2. *For the means by which these possessions had been obtained.* For: (1) *The gospel*; "Word of truth," etc. He rejoices in its reality—"Word of truth"; universality—"whole world;" and in its fertility. He shows not only its vitality, but its inherent reproductiveness. It "multiplies itself again." (2) *The preacher.* He thanks God, not only for their possessions, and the means by which they had been acquired; but: 3. *For the source and sphere of their possession.* "Love is its spirit." Love is the life of the saints.—U. R. T.

Vers. 9—14.—*The apostolic prayer.* The maxims of the Church as well as those of the world often throw a glamour round much that is worthless—a glamour that stirs our desire of possession. But neither the world nor a worldly Church can teach us what is really worth aiming at, struggling after, praying for. A man like Paul can. What he asks for it must be good to have. His prayer may well guide us. We ought to *wish* for what he sought for Christians; and, more than that, we are encouraged to *hope* for it. He prays—

I. THAT THEIR KNOWLEDGE MAY INCREASE. Partly because of the error by which many of the Colossian Church were being misled, but also because increase of knowledge is good for any Church, Paul here says he prays for it, and even at times afterwards urges it on them. No Greek had more veneration for the blue-eyed Athena, no Roman for wondrously equipped Minerva, than Paul had for knowledge. There are three expressions here to describe this knowledge, expressions that are very often used in combination both in the Old and New Testaments. They describe, generally, the science, the philosophy, and the art of religion. 1. *Knowledge*, which in the Greek is not the simple word for knowledge, but intensified, large, and thorough knowledge. In this case full acquaintance with the Law of God, the precepts of Christ, the doctrine of the apostles, which is essential as a beginning, a basis of Christian culture, but is only a beginning and a basis. 2. *Wisdom*, which is higher than knowledge and includes both knowledge and understanding. It is not mere additional information, the acquaintance with more facts, or even more laws, or even more principles. Wisdom is digested knowledge, knowledge wrought into a system; or, as Cardinal Newman well puts it, "reason exercised upon knowledge." In this case it is the calm comprehensive view of the information attained—information about God's Law, Christ's precepts, the apostle's doctrine. 3. *Spiritual understanding*, using a word that denotes the application of knowledge to detail, following its processes as applied to daily life and separate actions. It means a keen, quick understanding of the bearing of God's will on *all* their conduct, *all* their conversation, *all* their life. Such a knowledge, with wisdom and understanding, would not only save the Colossians, but save us. It is, thank God, a wisdom recorded for us in Scripture, incarnate in Jesus, interpreted by the Holy Spirit. But we must acquire it. Is half an hour a day too much to give? Is earnest study too much? Is persistent prayer too much? "Wisdom is the principal thing; . . . with all thy getting get understanding."

II. That, as the result of their knowledge, THEIR CHARACTER MAY RIPEN. This we should expect from prayer for knowledge of the *will* of God; not His essence, nature, attributes, but *will*. Religion is not a system for speculation, but for the regulation of life. What the apostle here taught, viz. that the end of all knowledge is conduct, Jesus Christ made gloriously clear in his words, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." No more than you would be satisfied if your vines year after year only "made wood," or your apple trees simply grew in height and in far-reaching branches, would St. Paul or Christ, the great Husbandman himself, have been satisfied if there had been only mental growth, intellectual growth—"culture," as the modern phrase is—in this or any Church. Hence his prayer seeks blessing for character; he looks, as you on the vine, for clusters of the grape—for fruit. In the description of character the apostle prays for, we notice: 1. *A walking worthily of the Lord.* A walk, a progress, an activity, worthy of the follower of him who "has left us an example that we should follow in his steps." 2. *An increasing knowledge of God.* So knowledge recurs, and this time it is more than a knowledge of God's will; it is a knowledge of God himself.

This is a result of such walking, such conduct. Obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge. We are divinely assured that they who "do the will shall know of the doctrine." 3. *The being strengthened with all might* according to the power of his glory. Inner strength, producing not only endurance, but gentle patience in sorrow. 4. *Giving thanks to the Father.* Thus life shall have a glow on it, a music in it. Praying that their life may have this glow, this music, "with joyfulness," the apostle is led to recall the reasons for their profound joy. (1) Meekness for blessedness: "Mado us ineb to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (2) Deliverance from tryanny: "Delivered us from the power of darkness." (3) Settlement in liberty and honour: "Translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." And all this is through Christ, our Ransom, our Rescuer; but now not a victor rescuing by force of arm, but a philanthropist by payment of ransom. Thus Paul strikes the key-note of his message to Colossæ—Jesus Christ the King of the kingdom in which Christians already are; the Source of their deliverance from the guilt and from the power of sin; Jesus Christ the Fulness, the Plenitude of God's presence and grace.—U. R. T.

Vers. 15—29.—*Christ all in all.* The truth taught in our text is that Christ is all and in all, the one absolute Mediator between God and man, the only Reconciler of heaven and earth. We notice—

I. *THE DIVINE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST.* This includes: 1. *His supremacy in relation to God.* He is his Image, Likeness, Representation. Heathen idolatries utter the longing of the soul for him. To the prayer, "Show us the Father," Christ answers, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." 2. *His supremacy in relation to nature.* He is "the Firstborn." To all creation he stands as Heir. We notice: (1) His creative agency. Christ is the Wisdom of God; Christ is the Word of God; Christ is the Arm of God. (2) His sustaining energy. He binds all things together. (3) His consummating glory. He is the End of creation, the Alpha and the Omega. As the bow of Ulysses could only be bent by its master, so creation only fully responds to the touch of Christ. 3. *His supremacy in relation to the Church.* He is the Head. This implies sovereignty and sympathy—vital union. We say that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." In an infinitely higher sense the blood of Christ is the seed of the Church. 4. *His supremacy in relation to the Resurrection.* He is "the Firstborn from the dead." The risen Christ is the life of the Church.

II. *THE EXPLANATION OF THIS DIVINE PRE-EMINENCE IS THE DIVINE PLENITUDE.* Christ is as supreme as the apostle has been describing because he is so full of God. He is the *Pleroma*. This, as Archdeacon Farrar shows, is the key-note of the Epistle. When we say this, we mean that in Jesus is found "the totality of Divine attributes and powers." For in him there is: 1. *Fulness of might.* He is manifested in his miracles and in his own resurrection as the Lord of nature. Its forces are subject to him. 2. *Fulness of wisdom.* He claims, and as far as can be these claims are verified, to reveal God and to know what is in man. He did not misinterpret the Divine nor misunderstand the human. 3. *Fulness of love.* God is love. But could there be an amplitude of love beyond that which is manifested in Jesus Christ? Where is the love of God and where the God of love, if not in Jesus?

III. *THE WORK OF CHRIST IN HIS PRE-EMINENCE AND PLENITUDE IS THE WORK OF RECONCILIATION.* Our Lord is thus set forth as in his supremacy and fulness the great Reconciler. This is God's purpose; nay, God's passion. But all words are faint in describing any emotion in the infinite heart. The clear teaching here is, not that God loves because Christ died, but that Christ died because God loves. Reconciliation is the Father's desire, the Father's work. Much is left in necessary mystery, but Paul's words here answer for us two great questions. 1. *What is God reconciling to himself through Christ?* We must not be afraid of the assertion—"all things." By that I read all things (1) in this world's activities and institutions; (2) in human hearts and minds. The whole universe of being is to find its lapsed harmony in Jesus Christ; to be set again in its right relation to the righteous Father. 2. *How is God reconciling all things to himself through Jesus Christ?* Such a work involves even Divine effort; such a work is worth accomplishing at a tremendous cost. Hence "the blood of the cross," i.e. life poured out in a sacrifice of utmost pain and darkest shame. The highest can only serve through suffering; the mightiest can only save by sacrifice. Three

practical questions. (1) *Has Christ pre-eminence in all things with us?* Do all our sheaves make obeisance to his in the great field of life and love? (2) *Is Christ the Plenitude of all things to us?* Kepler felt, in studying the laws of nature, that he was thinking over again the thoughts of God. Is it so with us in duty, thought, and love? Is Christ all in all? (3) *Has Christ reconciled us to God?* Are we (a) forgiven; (b) resigned; and (c), most difficult of all, ceaselessly obedient to God?—U. R. T.

Vers. 23—29.—The ministry of the mystery. In these words the apostle dwells on his own part in carrying out Christ's work of reconciling men to God. That he does this in no boastful spirit goes without saying; but that he does so without any affectation of reserve or of modesty is equally plain. Indeed, he sets forth with unusual emphasis the glory of the Word the apostle has to proclaim, and the greatness of the work that proclamation involves: that Word, he shows, is a sublime mystery; that work a manifold ministry.

I. THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY IS THE PROCLAIMING OF A BLESSED MYSTERY. The term "mystery," as Paul here twice uses it, and often in this Epistle, does not describe what is essentially incomprehensible, but rather what was hidden but is now revealed. The gospel is a mystery, but a mystery that is to be preached fully, as Bishop Lightfoot renders the word "fulfil;" a mystery that is made manifest, a mystery into which (as the word borrowed from the ancient mysteries, in ver. 28, suggests) every man may be initiated. 1. *The gospel a mystery.* All religion deals with mystery. Genuine mystery is the stamp of a religious divinity; false mystery is the counterfeit superstition stamps. In its aspect towards the vast, the infinite, the Divine, religion must always have some mystery to man. 2. *The gospel a mystery that was long secret from man.* "Hidden things belong to God." There are hidden facts and laws in nature that science has only gradually discovered or is now only gradually discovering; hidden moral meanings in nature and history that poet's sight only can descry and poet's song only describe. There were hidden things in religion that only holy men of old moved by the Holy Ghost could reveal. 3. *The gospel is a mystery that is now fully revealed.* Whatever may have been the guesses of nobler pagans, or the anticipations of patriarchs, or the predictions of prophets, all was only the pale light of very early dawn upon the hills of ancient time. It was noon when Christ lived, taught, died. The seal was broken, the secret was revealed. What secret? 4. *The gospel is the revealed secret of God's universal redeeming love.* Christ is fully proclaimed. And Christ is the Mystery. In him are all the treasures, all the wealth, of God stored away. (1) *All the mystery is revealed in Christ.* As the rainbow has all possible colours in its wondrous arc, as the fabled music of the spheres has all possible tones in its chord, so in Christ is *all* the wisdom, *all* the righteousness, *all* the love, of God. (2) *All men may receive the blessings of this mystery.* Christ, and Christ freely given to the Gentiles, and Christ freely given to be an indwelling Power in them, is the great Mystery, which, as Paul dwelt on it, made him proclaim it with newer and deepening joy. "Now," when I see the full extent of God's mercy—"now," when I ponder his mighty, all-sufficient, all-embracing love, I rejoice, not only to proclaim, but to suffer untold sacrifices in proclaiming it to men. Anything, Paul felt and said, was worth doing, anything was worth suffering, if he might but preach the whole gospel without reserve, to all men without restriction. This leads us to notice—

II. THIS WORK INVOLVES COMPLETE CONSECRATION ON THE PART OF ITS MINISTERS. This consecration may, indeed often does, involve: 1. *Intensity of suffering.* Very bold does the assertion of the apostle seem about "filling up what is behind of the sufferings of Christ." Were his sufferings incomplete, then? No and yes. Yes; for he left work to be done that involves suffering. There must be suffering sympathy, suffering self-denial, sometimes suffering death, in carrying on the work of bringing men to God. This consecration will involve: 2. *Manifoldness of labour.* There is the three-fold function of the Christian worker denoted here. This consecration is the result of: 3. *The highest constraint.*—U. R. T.

Vers. 1, 2.—The salutation. We propose to offer brief hints towards a consecutive exposition of this invaluable Epistle, taking the Revised Version as our text. In this

opening sentence we learn four things respecting the writer and his fellow-Christians to whom reference is made.

I. PAUL'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF AUTHORITY AS AN APOSTLE. Observe how quietly Paul takes for granted his apostolical authority. Where it was assailed, as at Corinth or in Galatia, he was prepared to defend it. His credentials were every whit as valuable as those of the eleven. Were they witnesses of the risen Christ (Acts i. 21, 22)? So was he (1 Cor. ix. 1). Were they selected and called by Christ himself (Mark iii. 14; Luke vi. 13)? So was he (Acts ix. 15; xxvi. 16—18). Were they inspired by his Spirit (John xvi. 13; xx. 21, 22)? So was he (Gal. i. 11—16; 1 Cor. vii. 40; xiv. 37). Had they power to proclaim the gospel with authority, to bind and loose, to perform "the signs of an apostle" (Matt. xxviii. 18—20; John xiv. 12; xx. 23)? So had he (1 Cor. v. 3—5; ix. 16, 17; 2 Cor. ii. 10; xii. 12). We can hardly overrate the importance, in the present day, of maintaining the authority of all the apostles as inspired by the Spirit of Christ to teach the doctrines of Christ, and of the authority of St. Paul among the rest. Such a consciousness of a Divine mission and authority on the part of any Christian "sent" "by the will of God" may be: 1. *Admonitory*. "What manner of persons ought we to be?" "It is scandalous to be compelled to say of ministers what Tacitus writes of Licinius, 'Such a torpor had invaded his mind that, unless others had reminded him that he was a prince, he would have forgotten it.'" Dr. Payson tells us that as he went about his work he could sometimes hardly restrain himself from shouting aloud from very joy, "I'm a minister of Christ; I'm a minister of Christ." 2. *Encouraging*. For if we are sent "by the will of God" to preach or teach that gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," we may go and proclaim it, expecting it will be made a blessing, and making the watchword of the Crusaders our own, "God wills it." And we may emulate Paul's enthusiasm in preaching "the Word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. v. 13—21).

II. PAUL'S FELLOWSHIP WITH TIMOTHY. The relations of Timothy to Paul are described by various suggestive terms. 1. He was the apostle's spiritual child, his "own son in the faith" (1 Tim. i. 2; 2 Tim. i. 2). But here and in the inscriptions of other Epistles he recognizes him as: 2. A brother in the same "household of faith," the family of God, in which the Colossians too had their place, in which "one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." Elsewhere he recognizes him as: 3. A fellow—"steward of the mysteries of God." Well instructed from a child in the Scriptures, he preached the gospel at Corinth in company with Paul (2 Cor. i. 19), and could be trusted to preach the same truth in his absence (1 Cor. iv. 17; 1 Thess. iii. 2). And he highly commends him as: 4. A devoted and most unselfish fellow-worker in the Church of Christ (1 Cor. xvi. 10, 11; Phil. ii. 19—22). Further illustrations may be found in the Epistles to Timothy. Such notices as these show the humility of the apostle. There is no pomp of office or pride of power. He acts in the spirit of his own precept (Phil. ii. 3). He delights to honour a brother, though confessedly his inferior, by associating his name with his own, thus vouching for his faith and commending him to the confidence of brethren who did not know him.

III. PAUL'S ESTIMATE OF THE COLOSSIANS. Here, as elsewhere, the apostle assumes that the Christian community he addresses is, in the main, worthy of the titles "saints and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus." These words imply that all who are members of a Church should be expected to be "saints," i.e. persons consecrated to the service of Christ; to be "brethren," adopted into the family of God and therefore "members one of another," and as brethren to be "faithful," to "show all good fidelity in all things," to "hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end." But such a character can only be maintained "in Christ Jesus," by union with him. One of the Fathers tells us that a saint, *sanctus*, is so called from two words *sanguine tinctus*, i.e. as it were tinged with blood, "because anciently they who wished to be purified were sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice." The lesson suggested is valuable, though the etymology may not be correct (Heb. ix. 14; x. 22). Augustine, commenting on Ps. lxxxvi. 2, says, "If thou shalt say that thou art holy of thyself, thou art proud; but being a believer in Christ and a member of Christ, if thou shalt not acknowledge thyself to be holy, thou art ungrateful. Say unto God, 'I am holy; for thou hast sanctified me.'" Our names are a perpetual appeal to us to consecration, purity, and fidelity,

or they are witness against us. It is not enough to be called "faithful;" "it is required in stewards that a man *be found faithful*" (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24).

IV. PAUL'S AFFECTIONATE GREETING TO THEM. "Grace" is the initial good and "peace" the final good. Grace is "the well-spring of all mercies, peace the crown of all blessings." The old Hebrew salutation, "peace," expands under the light and love of Christ to "grace and peace" in many of Paul's Epistles, and to "grace, mercy, and peace" in some of the later ones (1 Tim. i. 2; 2 Tim. i. 2; Titus i. 4). These blessings come from God our Father the Fountain (Ps. xxxvi. 9; Jas. i. 17); they are treasured up in Christ the Reservoir, ever full of "*living water*" (ver. 19; John iv. 10, 14), and conveyed to us by the Holy Spirit as a channel; one yet manifold ("the seven Spirits," Rev. i. 4), because distributing to the necessities of each individual believer. We can wish for one another no better blessings than God's grace and God's peace; for "in his favour is life;" "the peace of God passeth all understanding."—E. S. P.

Vers. 3—8.—*The thanksgiving.* Good news from Colossæ had been brought to Paul at Rome by Epaphras. This devoted servant of Christ (ch. iv. 12) had probably been the first evangelist sent by Paul to Colossæ, and the founder of the Church there (ver. 7, Revised Version). He brought also news which caused the apostle much anxiety (ch. ii. 1, 2, 8, etc.). But before he utters cautions he pours forth thanksgivings. We are thus reminded of two things. 1. Paul's largeness of heart. Love "rejoiceth in the truth" and "envieth not" those who have either more spiritual gifts or more temporal blessings (Rom. xii. 15). The fruit of Epaphras' ministry was a source of joy to him. He felt grateful for the gifts in money from the Philippians brought by Epaphroditus (Phil. iv. 17, 18), but more for "the love in the Spirit" of the Colossians reported by Epaphras. 2. Paul's sympathy with the mind of his Master. Christ also dictated Epistles. Wherever there is anything to commend in the Churches of Asia, the Lord mentions this before he utters a word of censure. The apostle, writing earlier, but taught by the same Spirit of Christ, pursues a similar course in nearly all his Epistles (Rom. i. 8; 1 Cor. i. 4; Eph. i. 16; Phil. i. 3; 1 Thess. i. 2; 2 Thess. i. 3). "The meekness and gentleness of Christ" enable him to praise and congratulate even the disorderly Church at Corinth. The apostle blends thanksgivings with his prayers, especially on account of that *triad* of graces, faith, love, hope, which elsewhere he rejoices in (1 Cor. xiii. 13; 1 Thess. i. 3). Their faith worked by love and was sustained by hope. Their permanent fruitfulness proved the reality of their spiritual life. We must, however, observe that the term "hope" is used here in a sense somewhat different to that in the other passages quoted above. It is the object of hope (as in Gal. v. 5; Titus ii. 13; Heb. vi. 18), implying subjective hope. That "hope set before us" "we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast, and entering into that which is within the veil." Following the suggestions of this figure, we may notice some of the links of the chain of spiritual blessings by which the souls of converts are connected with that anchor, and on account of which ministers may give thanks on behalf of Christians who in these respects resemble the Colossians.

I. WE HAVE HEARD "THE WORD OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL." No gospel, no hope (Eph. ii. 12). We did not come to the gospel; it "is come unto" us. The Physician sought the patient, the Saviour the sinner (Isa. lxx. 1; Luke xix. 10). The gospel in its triumphant progress throughout all the world reached Great Britain, an *Ultima Thule*, brought by unknown missionaries who "for his Name's sake went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles." We ourselves have heard "the joyful sound," the genuine gospel, "the grace of God in truth" (Gal. ii. 5; 1 Pet. v. 12), the gospel of Christ which alone is "the power of God unto salvation."

II. WE HAVE TRUSTED OURSELVES TO CHRIST. "Your faith in Christ Jesus." We have not only heard, but we *know*, "the grace of God in truth." We know it because we have had a Divine Teacher. "In cœlo cathedram habet qui corda docet" (Augustine). Our faith is the gift of God; it rests not "in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God." Thus we "*know* whom we have believed," etc. (2 Tim. i. 12; 1 John v. 13, 19, 20). Belief conducts to knowledge (John vi. 69).

III. WE ARE BRINGING FORTH FRUIT. Wherever the gospel comes, *i.e.* comes home to men's consciences and hearts, it must be a fructifying power. "Even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit," etc. Ours is not a faith which "is dead in itself because it

has not works." "Can that faith save" us (Jas. ii. 17, 14)? Ours is a "faith working through love." The quickening Spirit within us will bring forth "fruit after his kind" (Gal. v. 22, 23). One of the most characteristic fruits is love. "The love which ye have toward all the saints." We cherish love toward them because, in spite of all their failings, they are beloved children of our Father God (1 John iv. 7; v. 1).

IV. OUR FRUITS ARE VISIBLE AND PERMANENT. They are such as an Epaphras could discern and report. Our lights shine; our good works are seen (cf. 1 Thess. i. 7-9; 3 John 6). This fruit-bearing is prompt. "Since the day," etc. The fruit itself multiplies; the gospel is "bearing fruit and increasing." Side by side with the outward growth of the gospel (which may be illustrated by the notices of the increase of the Church in Judæa from the "about a hundred and twenty" to the "many myriads" of Acts xxi. 20; and from progress in our own days), there is the ripening of Christian character (2 Thess. i. 3; Heb. vi. 10) and the leavening influence of the gospel on modern society. For all these things we thank God, but especially if our fruit is permanent. The gospel still is bearing fruit in us (Ps. i. 3). Our hearts are not the stony or thorny ground. Christ's object is being fulfilled (John xv. 16). We have not forgotten our first love; our last works are more than our first. "The past things perish if those things which were begun cease to go on to perfection" (Cyprian). Growth and persistence are causes for sincerest thanks.

V. "THE HOPE WHICH IS LAID UP IN THE HEAVENS" SUSTAINS OUR FAITH AND LOVE. "Faith . . . and love . . . because of the hope." This hope laid up is itself one of the things "hoped for." It is a reserved blessing, part of that great goodness of God "laid up for them that fear thee" (Ps. xxxi. 19; 1 Pet. i. 4, 5). But the links in the chain of spiritual blessings we have examined unite our souls here to the inheritance yonder (Rom. viii. 24, 25). Such hope maketh not ashamed (Rom. v. 5; Jude 20, 21). If our souls are not firmly moored to that object of hope "laid up for us in the heavens," let us ask—Which is the missing link?—E. S. P.

Vers. 9-12.—*The intercession.* The news brought by Epaphras had a further effect on the apostle. It prompted him, not only to thanksgivings, but to intercessions. In the Christian life some prayers receive definite answers and need not be repeated. But new subjects are perpetually coming before us. Thus there is a call on us to "pray (*προσεύχουαι*) without ceasing" and to "make request (*αἰτέουαι*)" with perseverance for definite blessings till they are granted, and petitions are changed into thanksgivings or are clearly refused. Note how Paul, while "in labours more abundant," found time for prayers "without ceasing" also (Rom. i. 9; Phil. i. 4; 2 Tim. i. 3). As a specimen of his intercessions take this prayer. The requests end with the words, "Giving thanks unto the Father," though the prayer may be said to include the statements of sublime truth which follow (vers. 12-14), which suggest motives for seeking the blessings asked on their behalf. And the prayer itself comes to no definite end, but may be said to lose itself in adoration as the apostle unveils the mystery of the person and glory of Christ. The key to the somewhat involved clauses of the sentence is in ver. 10, "to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing." And the objects of the prayer are—

L FULLER KNOWLEDGE WITH A VIEW TO A MORE CONSISTENT CHARACTER. Paul prays that the Colossians may receive what they already possess (vers. 6, 9; cf. Ps. cxvi. 2; Matt. xiii. 12). The more God gives, the more we should ask of him. God's "will" includes doctrines to be believed and duties to be discharged (cf. John vi. 40; 1 Thess. iv. 3). The two questions put by Paul on the day of his conversion, "Who art thou, Lord?" and "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" are the two great questions of the Christian life. An uneducated conscience is a more serious obstacle to growth in grace than an unenlightened intellect. Our "wisdom and understanding" need to be "spiritual" (Ps. xxv. 9, 14; 1 Cor. ii. 9-12) as contrasted with "philosophy and vain deceit" and mere worldly policy (ch. ii. 8, 18, 23). The Holy Spirit can make us discriminating as well as sensitive. The wisdom needed may be had for the asking (Jas. i. 5). For all the knowledge gained is in order to enable us "to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing." The end of all knowledge is conduct (John xiii. 17).

II. A CONSISTENT CHARACTER IN ALL ITS VARIOUS ASPECTS. Three signs of a full-

orbed, consistent Christian character are mentioned in three clauses (see Greek, vers. 10—12). They are comprehensive enough to describe a completely sanctified life.

1. *Fruitfulness.* This is the natural, as it is also the appointed, end of spiritual life (John. xv. 16); "fruit after its kind." But whereas a fruit tree can bring forth only one variety of fruit, we are to be "bearing fruit in every good work"—all manner of fruit, like the tree of life in the Paradise of God. "Twelve manner of fruits" are said to be borne by that celestial tree. And no less than nine varieties of "the fruit of the Spirit" (note "fruit," not "fruits," unity in diversity) are enumerated in a single passage (Gal. v. 22, 23). Any manifestation of Christian consistency may be fruitful, though here the reference is chiefly to the active Christian life. While bearing fruit, we ourselves shall be "growing" and "increasing." A fruitful life is a healthy life. The "spiritual wisdom and understanding" already asked for will be means of grace and of growth, like rain and dew to the plant (Deut. xxxii. 2; Hos. xiv. 5). We shall increase "by the knowledge of God" (Revised Version, margin). Such spiritual fruitfulness and growth will be most "pleasing" to God (John xv. 8). 2. *Patience.* (Ver. 11.) The reference here is to the passive virtues. "Patience and long-suffering" remind us of the heroic endurance and the superhuman self-restraint by which suffering Christians may glorify God. To enable us to suffer patiently and to suffer long, the omnipotence of God is put forth. His almighty and everlasting arms are placed beneath us to prop up our poor feeble patience. So great are "the riches of his glory" and "the might of his glory," that he can enable us to endure, not only with patience, but even "with joy" (Rom. v. 3; 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10). Suffering may be as high a vocation as preaching. Notice how our Lord, passing over all the active labours of Peter with a word ("Feed my sheep"), fixes attention on his last sufferings and death as the special means by which (in St. John's words) "he should glorify God" (John xxi. 18, 19). 3. *Thankfulness.* (Ver. 12.) Some of the causes for thankfulness are brought before our thoughts in the clauses that follow. But we need go no further than that name "the Father," for hallelujahs to rise to our lips. (Illustrate this from some of the Father's names, "Father of mercies," "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," etc., and some of the statements respecting him—"The Father himself loveth you;" "Your Father knoweth," etc.) Such thankfulness strengthens patience. (Illustrations: German Reformers, in times of special trouble, cheering one another by singing the forty-sixth psalm. Some Malagasy Christians, during the persecution, when meeting with the late Rev. W. Ellis and enjoying secret Christian fellowship, on one occasion said, "We are so happy *we must sing.*" Warned of the danger of being heard, they restrained themselves for a time, but soon said again, "*We must sing;*" and they sang in a whisper.

If this prayer is answered in our experience, we enjoy the three elements of a consistent and robust Christian life described by our Lord in John xiii. 17, viz. knowing, doing, feeling: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."—E. S. P.

Vers. 12—14.—*The love of the Father.* We have seen that the apostle's prayer loses itself in utterances of adoring gratitude to the Fountain of all good. In the work of our salvation we have proofs of the love of the Father (John iii. 16; Rom. viii. 32), the love of the Son (Gal. ii. 20; Eph. v. 2), and the love of the Spirit (Rom. xv. 30; Eph. iv. 30), of the one "God of our salvation." In vers. 12—14 Paul reminds the Colossians of the love of the Father, and that the blessings which this love secures to us are powerful motives for gratitude and for seeking to attain to that character for which he has been praying. The blessings which the Father's love procures for us includes four changes—a change of *place*, of *character*, of *kingdom*, and of *state*.

I. A CHANGE OF PLACE. There is an "inheritance" which has been "prepared" and is "reserved" for us (Matt. xxv. 34; 1 Pet. i. 5). It is not here, but "in heaven;" not here, amid darkness and ignorance, "the shadow of death," and, what is worse, the stern realities of sin and of death itself; but "in light"—note various uses of this figure (Isa. lx. 19, 20; Eph. v. 8, 9; 1 John i. 5; ii. 8—10; Rev. xxi. 23; xxii. 5, etc.). That inheritance is possessed only by God's "saints," whether angelic or human. The sanctity needed for this inheritance is something more than that "consecration" of heart to God which even we sinful children of God may enjoy as we

render service in the lower sanctuary of "this present evil world." The "saints in light" are "without blemish," "faultless." God, who is himself "light," is our pledge, that in that inheritance there shall be "no darkness at all," nothing "that defileth," etc. (Rev. xxi. 27).

II. A CHANGE OF CHARACTER. "Who made us meet," etc. The reference is not here to that growth in the elements of spiritual-mindedness by which we become increasingly fitted for the employments and enjoyments of the heavenly inheritance. Paul has been praying for these (vers. 9—11); but here he recognizes that the new nature which God has bestowed on us has already qualified us "to be partakers," etc. A king's child is already, by his birth, capable of taking some part in the life and the engagements of the palace. The penitent robber could take a place in Paradise on the day of his conversion. If we are partakers of the Divine nature we are meet for the Divine inheritance. Already we are "children of the light." Our darkness is past, never to return; the light shineth, and when we change our place it must needs be to an inheritance suited to our new natures and present characters (John xvii. 24). Without the new birth we shall be as unfit for our inheritance above as a boorish peasant, who had suddenly come to a peerage, for his new position, and as incapable of enjoying and really "inheriting" it as one who had no taste for art or sacred music would be if admitted to a picture-gallery or an oratorio; he could not "see the kingdom of God." What a glorious gift our new nature is! It is only by means of it we are made capable of receiving the blessings offered to us; as though a monarch could not only give us a high place in his service, but at the same time could endow us with power to discharge its duties, without which the mere position would be a burden rather than a blessing. Thus God deals with us (2 Cor. v. 5; Eph. ii. 10).

III. A CHANGE OF KINGDOMS. (Ver. 13.) The change of nature is accompanied by a twofold deliverance—we are rescued from a lawless tyranny (ver. 13) and delivered from a lawful condemnation (ver. 14). We speak of a change of kingdoms, for elsewhere we read of the "kingdom" of Satan who is "the prince of this world." But here the term suggests mere power ("the power of darkness," spoken of by Christ, Luke xxii. 53). The agents of Satan are described as "the powers, the world-rulers of this darkness" (Eph. vi. 12). We were under their power and under the tyranny of "the prince of the power of the air," who is at their head (Luke xi. 21; Eph. ii. 2). The mental anarchy of demoniacal possession is a fit symbol of the lawless tyranny of the kingdom of Satan. From that tyranny the Father, with a strong hand, rescued us, emancipated us, and transferred us into a Divine kingdom, of which "the Son of his love" is the Head. Love is as much the essence of the only begotten Son as it is of the Father (1 John iv. 8—10). So that his kingdom is a kingdom where love is the ruling power, and where promises, privileges, and benedictions are the main motives for wearing his easy yoke. We are made free citizens of that kingdom and shall share in its triumphs here and in its final glory.

IV. A CHANGE OF STATE. (Ver. 14.) The kingdom which Christ established in our hearts is based on his work as a Redeemer (Rom. xiv. 9; Phil. ii. 7—11). The pardon of sins and the translation into the kingdom are inseparable. Each blessing would be incomplete and insufficient without the other. Pardoned sinners left under the power of Satan can no more be thought of than subjects of Christ's kingdom still under wrath. We were under a lawful condemnation as well as a lawless tyranny. From that merited curse we have been ransomed by the Father's love through the redeeming work of Christ (Eph. i. 7; Titus iii. 5—7). The fundamental facts and doctrines of the gospel are all implied here (Rom. iv. 25; v. 1—11; 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4; Gal. iii. 10—13, etc.). We thus enjoy a change of state, being justified and no longer condemned. Note the words, "in whom," etc. Luther remarks that there is a good deal of divinity in the pronouns; so is there also in the prepositions. Christians not only receive blessings *through* Christ, but *in* Christ (ver. 19; 1 Cor. i. 30; 1 John v. 20, etc.); from whose fulness we receive (like the air, in which we live and move and draw our breath without limitation or restraint; not like water, supplied to us from time to time in a limited cistern). Notice too the necessity of all these four blessings to us, and how absolutely dependent we are for them upon the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Our enfranchisement in the kingdom of Christ includes free forgiveness, secures for us, by the work of the Spirit, "the sanctification, without which

no man can see the Lord," and ensures our admission to the heavenly inheritance. "Blessed are they that wash their robes," etc. (Rev. xxii. 14; see also Acts xx. 32; xxvi. 17, 18; Rom. viii. 29, 30; Phil. iii. 20). What motives for "giving thanks unto the Father" arise from the reception of such glorious gifts!—E. S. P.

VERS. 15—17.—*The glory of the Son.* The blessings which flow to us from the love of the Father (vers. 12—14) are only enjoyed by union with "the Son of his love," "in whom" we are (1 Cor. i. 30), and "in whom we have our redemption" and all its allied blessings. Who is this Son of God? In answering this question the apostle unfolds the true doctrine of the Christ, and meets one of the errors that was seeking a home in the Colossian Church. The error of the heretical teachers was twofold—"They had a false conception in theology and a false basis of morals. These two were closely connected together and had their root in the same fundamental error—the idea of matter as the abode of evil and thus antagonistic to God. As the two elements of the heretical doctrine were derived from the same source, so the reply to both was sought by the apostle in the same idea—the conception of the person of Christ as the one absolute Mediator between God and man, the true and only Reconciler of heaven and earth." The practical error is dealt with in the second chapter; the doctrinal heresy is refuted here. The false teachers seem to have believed in a variety of angelic or superhuman mediators who had some place in the works of creation and redemption. Paul teaches that both in the universe and in the Church, in creation and redemption, Christ is the one and all-sufficient Mediator. He alone could fill the void between God and man; he alone could be the great Reconciler; and to him alone was due the homage which these false teachers were diverting to angels or other beings standing in the place which God claims for "the Son of his love." The apostle's teaching is "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence"—in relation to God; to the universe, the natural creation; and to the Church, the moral creation (vers. 15—18).

I. THE GLORY OF THE SON IN RELATION TO GOD. "Who is the Image of the invisible God." The two chief ideas seem to be *representation* and *revelation*. Elsewhere the Son is called "the Effulgence of his glory [revelation], and the very Image of his substance [representation]" (Heb. i. 3). We may find an important application of this truth in the life and character of the Incarnate Word. Christ's words, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," seem to require this. The Father's perfections were represented and reflected in the sinless character of the Man Christ Jesus, as the brightness of the midday sun, on which we cannot gaze, may be reflected in a lake or mirror, and under certain limitations its rays may be examined and analyzed. Through the words and conduct of Jesus we may learn much concerning the truthfulness, the unselfishness, the indignation, and the love of God. But while this truth may have been a thought in Paul's mind, the truth he teaches here is part of the revelation which Scripture gives respecting the nature of the Triune Jehovah. That the term "Image" refers to the pre-incarnate Christ, we infer from (1) the creation being ascribed to him; and (2) the term "Firstborn," etc., being coupled with it—a term which includes both priority and supremacy. Notice: 1. *There is that in the Divine nature which is both invisible and incomprehensible.* (Exod. xxxiii. 20; John i. 18; 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.) As we cannot see "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" with mortal eyes, neither can we fully comprehend a Divine Being who is absolute, infinite, without beginning and without end. 2. *Yet God hath been seen by mortal eyes.* (Gen. xlviii. 22—33; xxxii. 28—30; Exod. xxiv. 10, 11; xxxiii. 23; Josh. v. 13—15; vi. 2, etc.) And men have learned to see God by the eye of faith, to know him as their own God. The doctrine of the Word of God, who is "the Image of God" (2 Cor. iv. 4), "the Life" and "the Light of men" (John i. 4; 1 John i. 2), is the reconciling truth. There is a glory in God which no creature can behold; but the Divine Word is a ray of that glory. There is a Divine personality which is invisible; but the Word is the express image of that Person. There is a Divine silence respecting mysteries we cannot comprehend; but there is also a Divine "Word" which breaks the silence and reveals to us something of the infinite and incomprehensible (John i. 1, 14, 18). Every manifestation in time has been through him who is "the Image of the invisible God." But "who by searching can find out God" etc. (Job xi. 7—9)?

"Thought, express thy weak endeavour!
 Here must reason prostrate fall;
 Oh, the ineffable for ever,
 And the eternal all in all!"

II. THE GLORY OF THE SON IN RELATION TO THE CREATION. This is unfolded by four truths respecting him. 1. *He is "the Firstborn of all creation."* In the New Testament the term "Firstborn" is applied five times to Christ (vers. 15 and 18; Rom. viii. 29; Heb. i. 6; Rev. i. 5). Its use here figuratively reminds us of the place which the firstborn occupied in a Hebrew family. Having priority, he had also a certain supremacy over the other members and a double portion of the inheritance. Our Lord Christ has *priority*; "before Abraham," before all creation (John i. 1, 2); absolute pre-existence, "before all things" (ver. 17). He has *supremacy*. If Paul here alludes to Ps. lxxxix. 27, we are reminded that the Messiah is "higher than the kings of the earth," "King of kings," "Lord of all," etc. And he enjoys more than the firstborn's *double portion* (John iii. 34, 35; v. 22, 23, 26, 27). 2. *He is the means of all creation.* The sixteenth verse confutes the notion of the Son of God being himself a creature, though the highest. He is the Creator, not of "the rest" of the universe, but of "all things." Who can adequately interpret that mysterious term "in him," etc.? We can only venture to suggest such truths as these: Apart from Christ there would have been no creation at all. He was the reason for it. He was the First Cause and the Final Cause, the Alpha and the Omega of creation. The term "in him" includes both the following truths "by him" and "for him," "through him and unto him." The same preposition (*ἐν*), which the apostle so often uses to describe the relations between the Saviour and his people, he here employs to teach us the relations between Christ the Creator and the universe. But these are but guesses towards an interpretation (Luke x. 21). We are at any rate expressly taught that all things were created "through him" or "by him" (John i. 3); "in the heavens" (revelations of the telescope, Isa. xl. 26) "and upon the earth" (revelations of the microscope, making "things invisible" become visible),—all were created by Christ. From the world of matter we turn to the world of spirits, to things strictly "invisible." The false teachers may have indulged speculations as to the ranks and power and authority of angels. Without discussing the subject, Paul teaches that, whoever they may be and whatsoever their authority, they are all created by and subordinated to Christ, the "Firstborn of all creation." 3. *He is the object of all creation.* We need not dissociate the human nature of our Lord in his present glory from the Divine nature when we reflect on the truth that all things were created "for him," "unto him." It is a sublime thought that everything in creation and in history was planned for the glory of our blessed Redeemer. This world with its mountains and lakes and cataracts, its flowers and fruits and birds, was made so beautiful because it was Christ's world. Other worlds, peopled by the heavenly hosts, were created that his glory might be revealed to them and through them. Man was created and the ages of history were all arranged for him. Sin was permitted for him (like a dark cloud showing more clearly the glory of the rainbow). The eternal purposes of redemption and their fulfilment in time were all for him. What a proof of the Deity of Christ is supplied by comparing ver. 16 with Rom. xi. 36! 4. *He is the upholder of all creation.* (Ver. 17.) Being "before all things" from the moment of creation down to the present time, he had upheld all things by the word of his power, and "in him all things consist," i.e. hold together. He is the Corner-stone of the universe no less than of the Church. Behind the laws of nature we see the mind of Christ. If he were to cease to uphold things they could not "hold together;" their harmony, nay more, their very existence, would cease; for in him all things live and move and have their being. But "My Father worketh even until now, and I work" (John v. 17, 19; x. 30).

All these truths respecting the glory of Christ remind us of the supreme claims over each one of us of that Divine Son who created us for his own glory and redeemed us by his own precious blood, that he might reign over us for our salvation (Acts v. 31; Rom. xiv. 7—9).—E. S. P.

Vers. 18—20.—*The supremacy of Christ in the moral universe.* So supreme is the glory of Christ, that he occupies a similar position in the moral as he does in the

material universe. We may linger on the exhaustless theme of the glory of Christ as we see further illustrations of it—

I. IN HIS RELATION TO THE CHURCH. 1. "*He is the Head of the body, the Church.*" For he is its Founder; the Church is his creation (Matt. xvi. 18; xviii. 17—20). Having "all power in heaven and earth," his glory and grace are so great that he can sustain the whole Church in life, and rule and guide each member of it. Our life is bound up with his life; our interests are made his own by the sympathy of our living Head. (Illustrate from Acts vii. 56; ix. 4; xviii. 9, 10; xxiii. 11; xxvii. 23, 24; 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18.) 2. "*Who is the Beginning*"—the first in time and the first in power in relation to the Church. Because he is "the First and the Last," "the Beginning of the creation of God," he is also the Fountain, "the Prince [or, 'Author'] of life" (Acts iii. 14) to his Church. Every act of pardon granted, every shower of reviving grace bestowed, every interposition of Providence, is from him. (Illustrate from Jesus Christ's use of "I" and "me" in John xiv.—xvi.) 3. "*The Firstborn from the dead.*" He is the supreme Lord from among all who have entered the grave, by virtue of his being the first to rise to the new life from the dead. Note the contrast between the resurrection of Christ and of others. Dying voluntarily, though sinless (John x. 17, 18), he rose by his own power (John ii. 20), not to die again (Rom. vi. 9), in an immortal body (Rev. i. 18). Thus he is the Cause, the Pledge, and the Pattern of our resurrection, and has supremacy over his Church in both worlds (Rom. xiv. 9). Already we have seen that he is "Firstborn," and Lord of the material creation; and he has the same position in the spiritual creation, "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." He is the Image and Manifestation of God, the First Cause and the Final Cause, the Creator and Preserver of the universe, the Head and Lord of the Church, the Author and Pattern of our glorious resurrection. Yes; and in all things he shall have the pre-eminence (Ps. lxxii. 17; 1 Cor. xv. 25). The day will come when commerce, science, art, literature, shall all be consecrated to him; when the minority shall become a majority, and an innumerable multitude shall "honour the Son even as they honour the Father" (John v. 23; Rev. vii. 9—17).

II. IN HIS WORK AS THE UNIVERSAL RECONCILER. Whichever of the alternative renderings of ver. 19 in the Revised Version we adopt, the precious practical truth is the same. The pre-eminence of Christ is assured by "the fulness" that abides in him. All the Divine perfections are his (ch. ii. 9). We may take the term in its widest signification—a fulness of life and power and glory, of goodness and grace, without limit and without end. Thus the Man Christ Jesus, full of a Divine life (John iii. 34; v. 26), was qualified to be the Agent by which the great reconciliation in the universe should be accomplished (ver. 20). "The well is deep;" the place is "holy ground." The reconciliation of "things upon the earth" is a mystery; how much more of "things in the heavens"! Notice: 1. Sin introduced discord into the universe, which spread to this earth. It not only separates men from God, but brings thereby calamities to "the whole creation." Sin left to itself works universal ruin; "when it is full grown it bringeth forth death." God must stand in a different relation to sinners and to the unfallen. If the guilty are to be saved, a new relation must be established between them and God. This is "the reconciliation" (Rom. v. 11). The change in man's heart is a result, but the sequel of the change of relations established by "the reconciliation" (2 Cor. v. 18, 19). 2. To effect this reconciliation a propitiatory sacrifice was needed. To show righteous grace to the guilty both the holiness and the love of God called for a Divine sacrifice. No theory can fully clear up this mystery of Divine mercy; but faith accepts it and Christian experience attests it (Luke vii. 35). No sacrifice less than "the death," "the blood of the cross," could effect this reconciliation (Rom. v. 6—10; 2 Cor. v. 21). O paradox of mercy! The shedding of human blood stirs up strife; Christ's blood brings down peace. Innocent blood cries for vengeance; the blood of the cross pleads for pardon (Heb. xii. 24). 3. But what is meant by the reconciliation of the things in the heavens? It is not universal restoration of the devils and the damned; for Paul is speaking of what God has already done by the blood of the cross, and in ver. 23 he speaks of the final salvation of believers as conditional. The passage which best illustrates ours is Eph. i. 10. We can only throw out hints as to the meaning. We know that angels are intensely interested in the work of redemption (Eph. iii. 10;

1 Pet. i. 12). The entrance of sin and its spread among the human race may have produced, though not distrust, yet something like dismay. But the death of Christ revealed the majesty and mercy of God as they had never been combined before. The very fact that the lost sons of men could be "made nigh" by the death of Christ brought these celestial sons of God still nearer. The bonds which unite these unfallen yet finite creatures to God become firmer than ever, and thus the harmony of the universe becomes more complete. Such are some of the jewels in the crown of our Divine Mediator and Redeemer.

Learn: 1. The glory of the cross. Though "all the fulness" dwelt in Christ, even he could not effect a reconciliation except by death (Gal. vi. 14). 2. The efficacy of the cross. Though erected on this tiny globe, its power extends throughout the universe. 3. The motives from the cross (2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 20).—E. S. P.

Vers. 21—23.—*The apostle's comprehensive view of salvation.* The work of Christ, though comprehensive enough to affect the whole universe, is so penetrative and personal that not a single human soul is overlooked in it. Note how Paul narrows his range of view from the universe to the individual: "To reconcile *all things* . . . *you* hath he reconciled . . . *I* was made a minister." But in his view of what the salvation of each individual was, there was no narrowness. In vers. 21—23 he gives us a comprehensive view of salvation. He speaks of the past, the present, and the future.

I. WHAT WE WERE. "Alienated." True in an especial sense of the heathen Colossians (Eph. ii. 11, 12; iv. 17—19), we yet must not shrink from recognizing this as a description of the natural state of all sinful men who have not yet accepted the offer of reconciliation. It thus agrees with our Lord's verdict on humanity (John iii. 3). If we do not relish communion with God or conversation about him, and have no eager desire to do his will and enjoy his favour, these are clear signs of alienation, that there is a gulf between us and our Father. Such alienation does not end in mere indifference; it leads to positive enmity (Rom. viii. 7). This "hard saying" of Scripture can easily be justified in the court of conscience, and needs to be impressed on the hearts of the unconverted. They may feel a complacent regard towards a God of their own imagining, but a positive aversion to the living and true God, who hates iniquity and "is angry with the wicked every day." Are they subject to the Law of God?—that is the test. They are not. Both hearts and acts are in antagonism to him; "enemies in your mind in your evil works." Not to speak of those sins of the flesh from which they may have been restrained, selfishness and all its kindred sins of the Spirit are sufficient proofs of the alienation and enmity of mind in its relations to God. The lamentable indifference of men to Christ and his salvation is the crowning proof of the enmity of the heart towards God (John iii. 18, 19).

II. WHAT WE ARE. "Reconciled." The work of reconciliation is twofold. There was a reconciliation effected on the cross (ver. 23; 2 Cor. v. 19). There is a reconciliation still to be accomplished in the heart of every impenitent sinner (2 Cor. v. 20). For there are two obstacles in the way of complete reconciliation—the one is in the character of God; the other, in the character of man. The first arises from God's holiness; the second, from man's wilfulness. The first was removed by the work of Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice—"that he might himself be just, and the Justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus;" the second is taken away, immediately by the work of the Holy Spirit on man's heart, but mediately through the death and resurrection of Christ and all the spiritual powers that flow therefrom (John xvi. 7—11; Rom. v. 10). What a manifestation of "the riches of his grace which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence," thus to open a pathway by which a holy God might righteously make the first overtures of mercy to a reluctant rebel race! And was it not equally glorious to be able, without destroying man's freedom or doing any violence to his nature, to overcome his own unwillingness, and open a pathway into his sinful heart for "the peace of God which passeth all understanding"? But at what a cost this has been done! Paul never shrinks from "the offence of the cross." In the face of false teachers at Colossæ and amongst ourselves, he affirms the reality of the sacrificial death of the Divine Son in whom "all the fulness" dwelt. None but incarnate God could effect this reconciliation, and even he only "in the body of his flesh through death" (Heb. x. 5—10).

III. WHAT WE SHALL BE. "Presented faultless." That the apostle is looking forward to the future we infer from ver. 23. He holds out before us the prospect of attaining that perfection of character which we are striving to attain to, but which, as an ideal, is perpetually rising and receding as we reach after it (Phil. iii. 12-14). We shall gain that holiness which we now "follow" (Heb. xii. 14; 1 Pet. i. 13-16). We shall be "unblamable," or "without blemish" (a sacrificial term). The precept in Rom. xii. 1 will be perfectly fulfilled then. The confession in 1 Cor. iv. 3 will be needless then. We shall be "unreprovable." Now Christ must at least say, "I have a few things against thee," and we confess Job ix. 20, etc. But then neither the accuser of the brethren, nor our own enlightened consciences, nor God himself, will reprove us (Rom. viii. 33, 34). And all this "before him." We shall be pure enough to bear the scrutiny and to be happy in the presence of that God whose holiness is a consuming fire and whose presence would therefore be intolerable to a sinful soul (1 John iii. 1, 2; Jude 24, 25). But there is a condition attached. Paul describes it in terms of generous confidence: "If, as I would take for granted," etc. (cf. Phil. i. 6). There is a truth to be believed ("the gospel"), a confidence to be maintained (your "faith," 2 Cor. i. 24), and an expectation to be cherished ("hope;" cf. Heb. iii. 14; vi. 11; 1 Pet. i. 3-5; Jude 20, 21). Learn: 1. Our steadfastness in Christ is the best evidence of our reconciliation by Christ, and our earnest of a presentation in glory. The loss of faith is the knell of hope. 2. Our assurance of reconciliation and our hope of final perfection are both bound up with the glorious gospel, and may be the privilege of all; for that gospel is a message of salvation for every creature under heaven.—E. S. P.

Ver. 24.—*The privilege of suffering.* Following the Revised Version, and omitting "who," we notice that there is an abruptness in the way in which the apostle breaks forth into thanksgiving at the thought of his sufferings. "Now I rejoice," etc. The underlying thought seems to be this: "If ever I have been disposed to repine at my lot, if ever I have felt my cross almost too heavy to bear, yet now, now when I contemplate the lavish wealth of God's mercy, now when I see all the glory of bearing a part in this magnificent work, my sorrow is turned into joy" (Lightfoot). In a measure every Christian labourer may enter into Paul's joy because he may share his motives also. We note two reasons for regarding suffering as a privilege.

I. WE MAY THUS KNOW THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS. "I fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh." The oneness of Christ and his people is the key to these mysterious words. In 1 Cor. xii. 12 even the name "Christ" is given to the body as well as the Head. The sufferings which Christians endure are endured by Christ their Head in them; e.g. Matt. xxv. 35, etc.; Acts ix. 4; 2 Cor. i. 5; Heb. xiii. 13. Jesus Christ during his earthly life endured sufferings which were peculiar to himself. They were vicarious, propitiatory, and meritorious. They are "finished" (Rom. vi. 9, 10). But the time of suffering is not yet past (Rom. viii. 23). Till the period of education and probation is past, there are afflictions of Christ yet to be filled up (cf. Rev. xxi. 4, 5). They are needful for the accomplishment, *not* of the atoning, but of the saving work of Christ. And if he selects us to be members in whom he is pleased to fill up some of *his* sufferings, we may regard it as a privilege rather than as an infliction. The term for "fill up" is very emphatic. It suggests the thought of completing, in response to or in exchange for something else; as though Paul meant "He suffered for my redemption; shall I not in my turn suffer for his glory and the good of his Church?" All sufferings which we endure as Christians may be privileges because promoting the work of full salvation in our own souls (John xv. 2; 1 Pet. v. 10, etc.). But when the apostle expresses his ardent desire to "know the fellowship of his sufferings" (Phil. iii. 8-10), we think he desired to share sufferings like those of Christ so far as a saved sinner can enter into fellowship with the sinless Saviour. This may be the case: 1. When our sufferings arise from the same cause, viz. *sin*, whether in ourselves (2 Cor. vii. 9) or in others. Our Lord's three recorded weepings were occasioned directly or indirectly by sin (Luke xix. 41; John xi. 33-35; Heb. v. 7-9). Paul wept in sympathy with his Master (Acts xx. 19, 31; 2 Cor. ii. 4; Phil. iii. 18). 2. When they are endured for the same end (1 John iii. 8). In seeking to rescue souls from sin we must needs undergo self-denial and suffering. But thus in an especial manner shall we be "fill-

ing up," etc., so that Christ may the sooner "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied."

II. WE MAY THUS RENDER VALUABLE SERVICE TO OUR FELLOW-CHRISTIANS. Paul's present sufferings as an apostle and as an ambassador in bonds at Rome were especially "for you" Gentiles. And already they were the means of conferring great benefits on his fellow-Christians (Phil. i. 12—14). This was a motive with the apostle at other times (2 Cor. i. 5; iv. 8—15; 2 Tim. ii. 10). It may be enjoyed by others—by the persecuted (Acts v. 41; Phil. i. 27—29), by the self-denying missionary whose heroism kindles the flame of zeal in other hearts, by earnest workers (1 Thess. i. 6—8) and self-denying givers (2 Cor. viii. 1, 2), by the invalid who can say 2 Cor. i. 3, 4; xii. 9, 10; Phil. iv. 11—13. Some of the best blessings have come to Christ's "body, the Church," through those members of it who are selected for especial suffering. So long as Christ's purposes are fulfilled in us we may well leave the method of our ministry calmly in his hands. Suffering may be, not a release from service or a substitute for it, but the highest form of it. We may enjoy the sacred indifference of the apostle (Phil. i. 20), and look forward to an ample "recompense of reward" (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18; 2 Tim. ii. 12; 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13).—E. S. P.

Vers. 24—29.—*St. Paul's view of his ministry.* In these verses we have a comprehensive view of the ministry of the apostle, which suggests truths respecting the *nature, subject, and object* of every ministry that claims to be apostolic in its spirit. He teaches us the following truths:—

I. THAT HIS MINISTRY WAS A STEWARDSHIP OF THE WORD OF GOD. Twice we find the personal claim, "I;" "I Paul was made a minister." But far from the spirit of egotism, we hear in these words the echo of such expressions of grateful humility as we find in 1 Cor. xv. 8—10; Eph. iii. 7, 8; 1 Tim. i. 12—14. For his ministry was a "stewardship." He was entirely dependent for it on another. He went forth, not to publish the thoughts excogitated in his own mind, but to "deliver" testimonies and doctrines which he had received (1 Cor. xv. 1—4). The "mysteries" he had to deal with were not sacraments, but truths; and he was not a priest, but a preacher "of the gospel . . . whereof I Paul was made a minister" (ver. 23). The stewardship was entrusted to him at his conversion (Acts xvi. 17, 18). From it he could not escape (1 Cor. ix. 17). But he gloried in it (1 Cor. iv. 1, 2; Eph. iii. 8). Being a minister of Christ, he was a minister for the whole Church; "whereof," *i.e.* of which Church, "I was made a minister." And as such he willingly recognized himself even as a bond-servant of the Church as well as of Christ (*δοῦλος*) "for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. iv. 5; see also 1 Cor. ix. 19—23). His one aim was to be faithful, "to fulfil the Word of God" (Rom. xv. 19; 2 Tim. iv. 17).

II. THAT THE WORD ENTRUSTED TO HIM WAS A MYSTERY. A mystery, according to St. Paul, is a truth which was once hidden but is now revealed. It is not discovered by men, but revealed to men. This applies: 1. To the whole gospel (Eph. vi. 20). Who could have discovered or even conceived God's "way of salvation"? It was a mystery of mercy. But it is now an open secret, revealed by Christ's own lips and through his apostles and committed to our trust (1 Tim. i. 11; Jude 3). 2. To the precious truth that was especially entrusted to St. Paul as the apostle of the Gentiles (Eph. iii. 1—7). The admission of us Gentiles to all the blessings of the gospel on terms of perfect equality with the Jews was a truth which, in spite of such predictions as Gen. xxii. 18; Isa. lvi. 1, etc., was "hid from all ages and generations," even from the apostles of Christ during his earthly life (Matt. x. 5; xv. 24). Before his conversion Paul would have been shocked at it as a blasphemous heresy. But God had revealed his Son *in him* (Gal. i. 15, 16).

III. THAT THIS MYSTERY FOUND ITS SOLUTION IN CHRIST. 1. When in the fulness of time God, transcending the hopes of the most sanguine anticipants of a glorious future, "sent forth his Son," "his unspeakable gift," it would have been unlike God to confine so great a blessing to such a fraction of humanity as the Jews. 2. The appearing of Christ was the greatest vindication of God's dealings with the heathen nations which in time past were suffered "to walk in their own ways" (Acts xiv. 16). 3. The atonement of Christ explained the forgiveness of sins among Gentiles as well as Jews in all ages (Rom. iii. 25, 26). 4. The resurrection of Christ brought life and

immortality to light in a world which sorrowed over its dead as having "no hope." 5. The ideal humanity of Christ ("the Son of man") pointed him out as "the Way to the Father" for all men apart from the hedges and barriers of the Jewish fold (John x. 16). 6. The reception of Christ in any soul brings a new life and love and a new "hope of glory." No wonder, then, that here and elsewhere the apostle adds term to term ("riches of his glory," "exceeding riches of his grace," etc.) to describe God's mystery of mercy for us Gentiles, "which is Christ in you the Hope of glory."

IV. **THAT THE PREACHING OF CHRIST AIMS AT THE PERFECTION OF MEN.** (Vers. 28, 29.) We set before ourselves the highest standards. We aim to present men "perfect," in the manifold senses in which that word is used in the New Testament—perfect in condition (Heb. v. 9), in knowledge (1 Cor. xiii. 12), in character (Jude 24), because perfect "in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. i. 30). But for this end: 1. We must preach "Christ" in all his fulness, as our Immanuel, our atoning Priest, our Divine Head, our perfect Pattern, our final Judge, as "the Way and the Truth and the Life," as "all and in all." 2. We must be discriminative in our preaching—"warning," "teaching," "every man" "in all wisdom." 3. We must be earnest and "labour," "striving," etc. 4. We must be dependent, trusting to Christ's "working which worketh in me mightily."—E. S. P.

Ver. 6.—*The fruitfulness of the gospel.* I. **THE GOSPEL IS FRUITFUL.** It is not a barren doctrine. It is a living truth that produces effects in the hearts of men which are made manifest through the influence of them on external conduct. It is fruitful in two ways. 1. *In increase.* The truth spreads like leaven; the mustard seed grows into a great tree; the two or three in an upper room multiply into the thousands of Pentecost and into the millions, the Churches of modern Christendom. 2. *In good influences.* The tree not only puts forth new shoots and so grows in size, it blossoms and bears fruit. The fruits of the gospel are the same graces as are elsewhere called "the fruits of the Spirit" (Gal. v. 22, 23). Christianity makes happier and better men of us. These fruits are as visible as the fact of the numerical increase of the Church. All modern history bears witness to them, especially in the elevation of woman, the abolition of slavery, the recognition of national justice, the spread of a spirit of humanity, the creation of institutions of charity, and, better still, the doing of innumerable nameless deeds of kindness.

II. **THE FIELD OF THE GOSPEL'S FRUITFULNESS IS THE WORLD.** It was not preached in the whole world in St. Paul's day, nor is it even yet. But the process of bearing fruit throughout the world then began and still continues. 1. *The fruit is seen in this world.* The ripest fruit may not be perfected here, but if there is no fruit on earth there will be none in heaven. The gospel is first of all good news of peace on earth—it promises blessings for the present life (1 Tim. iv. 8). 2. *The gospel brings blessings to the whole earth.* It is suited to all kinds of men, of all nations and in all ages, because it speaks to the common heart of mankind, offering the supply of universal wants and conferring graces that are universally good. 3. *The gospel bears fruit throughout the world by first of all bearing fruit in the Church.* "As it doth in you also." We can only enjoy the fruits of the gospel by entering the kingdom of Christ. The fruitfulness of the Church is the direct cause of the spread of Christianity throughout the world. Thus God is glorified in our fruitfulness (John xv. 8).

III. **THE SECRET OF THE GOSPEL'S FRUITFULNESS IS THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GRACE OF GOD OF WHICH IT IS THE DECLARATION.** 1. *The energy of fruit-bearing resides in the grace of God.* When men feel that grace they become new creatures. The constraining love of Christ works the miracle. 2. *The receipt of this energy depends on the knowledge of Divine grace.* It does not work by magic, but through an understanding of its truths. Therefore it is vain to pray for the increased fruitfulness of the gospel without also preaching the gospel. 3. *A true understanding of the grace of God is necessary for its fruitfulness.* It must be known "in truth." Perversions of the gospel hinder the fruitfulness of Christianity. The gospel tells of facts. Let us see those facts clearly separated from the errors and imaginations of human theology. —W. F. A.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The knowledge of God's will.* I. **THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL IS**

THE KNOWLEDGE WHICH IS MOST SUPREMEY IMPORTANT. 1. The *knowledge of God* is the most important knowledge attainable. Many are eager in pursuing the investigation of curious questions of human affairs who are quite indifferent to the truth about the Being who fills heaven and earth. Others are busily searching into the mysteries of the works of God, while quite forgetful of the Maker of them. But to know God is to know the Highest and Best. 2. The *knowledge of the will of God* is the most important knowledge of God. (1) It is the highest knowledge of God; for the disposition of the will is the chief characteristic of a spiritual being. (2) It is the knowledge of God with which we have most concern; for, though there must be glories and wonders in all the great thoughts of God, for us it is most needful that we should understand what he is purposing to do and what he wishes us to do. (3) It is the most attainable knowledge of God. The abstract ideas of the mind of God are far above our reach. The practical thoughts and laws and commandment of his will are what he has most clearly revealed.

II. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL MAY BE ACQUIRED THROUGH SPIRITUAL WISDOM. 1. It may be acquired. This branch of theology is within our reach. In our darkest moments, when we cannot understand the thoughts and plans of God, we may discover what God wills us to do. 2. It is to be got at through *spiritual wisdom*. We have it not by nature. We cannot reach it by efforts of bare human intelligence. Philosophy will not reveal it. A higher wisdom than the earthly, a purer wisdom than the carnal, heavenly and spiritual wisdom is necessary for this knowledge. 3. This spiritual wisdom is a *Divine inspiration*. St. Paul prays for it. It is not a product of experience like our knowledge of the world. The man of the world learns much about evil by his experience, but little about goodness. Goodness and the will of God with which it is identical are only seen by a spiritual light which little children may have more clearly than learned men and experienced observers. It is an inward light, a spiritual inspiration.

III. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL IS FRUITFUL IN GREAT PRACTICAL RESULTS. This is not a barren knowledge acquired only for the satisfaction of idle curiosity, nor even merely a worthy object of contemplation. 1. We must know the will of God in order that our life may be *worthy of Christ*. This is an important point not sufficiently considered by those people who slight the contemplative side of Christianity. The practical side will be a blundering failure without the due cultivation of the contemplative. A lame man with good eyes can walk more straightly than a man with sound limbs who is blind. To please God we must first of all know his will. 2. This knowledge helps us to be fruitful in *good works to men*. We can never benefit men so much as by doing God's will. Our duty to God and our duty to men are mutually inclusive. We must study the will of God more carefully in order that our work amongst men may be more wise and successful. We often fail in our conscientious efforts to benefit men because we do not work according to the method of God's will.—W. F. A.

Ver. 12.—*The inheritance of the saints*. I. CHRISTIANS ARE HEIRS OF A RICH INHERITANCE. 1. The gospel offers *Divine wealth*. Its blessings are not confined to bare deliverance from ruin. They include hidden treasures, pearls of great price, princely feasts, a whole kingdom of glory. 2. This wealth is, for the most part, *prospective*. It is an inheritance not yet possessed. The heir may be in severe straits before he comes into his property. We have foretastes of the future blessedness, but the chief part of this blessedness is yet to come. 3. The possession is to be had *without any action of ours* in acquiring it. The heir does not seize his estate and hold it by right of conquest; he does not purchase it; he does nothing to earn the worth of it; he simply receives it by bequest from another. We do nothing to win or earn our Christian heritage. Christ obtains it and bequeaths it, and as his heirs we simply enter into possession as the son of a great warrior peaceably takes possession of the kingdom won by the sword of his father. 4. Still, the inheritance is *received by right*. The heir has a right to his estate. Laws and documents secure it to him. The Divine covenant of grace is the Christian's title-deed, giving him no precarious hope, but a certain promise and right to his future blessedness.

II. CHRISTIANS ARE BEING TRAINED FOR THEIR GREAT INHERITANCE. The heir of a nobleman must be educated so as to be fitted for his position in society. The heir of a

throne needs a special training in order that he may enter upon the duties as well as the privileges of royalty. It would be useless to bequeath a library to a man who had no interest in literature, or to leave an art collection to a man of boorish tastes. The heir must be suited to the inheritance. We hear much of the acquisition of our inheritance, and some seem to think that their great task is thus to secure it for themselves. But we should remember that this thing is done, the kingdom won by the victory of Christ, the riches bought by his sacrifice of himself. Now, the sole requisite is that we should be ready to enter into possession. And this is a great and essential requisite. An impure soul could not be admitted into heaven; but, if admitted, such a soul would find no joy there. Note: 1. *God is making us meet* for the great inheritance by the present discipline of life. 2. There are those who may be said to *have been made thus ready*, because, although not yet perfect, they are new creatures and have characters and sympathies fitted for the enjoyments of the pure delights of heaven. 3. It may be remarked by the way that St. Paul knew of *no purgatorial fires* which were to keep Christians out of the joys of heaven for some intermediate period.

III. THE REQUISITE FITNESS FOR THE CHRISTIAN INHERITANCE DEPENDS ON THE CHARACTER OF THAT INHERITANCE. 1. The inheritance is *in light*. It lies in the clearer realm of eternal truth; it is characterized by the purity that excludes all dark blots and stains of sin; it is radiant with the summer sunshine of heavenly joy. 2. Such an inheritance requires *saintliness* as a suitable condition of enjoying it. It is an inheritance of saints. Only those who are forgiven, cleansed, and purified can stand in the searching light of eternal truth; and they only can enjoy the blessings of a kingdom of holiness and find therein true gladness. Nevertheless, this is no reason for discouragement. St. Paul thanks God for accomplishing the necessary preparation. It is his work, and he will perfect it with all who trust to his grace and the power of his Spirit.—W. F. A.

Ver. 14.—*Redemption*. (See on Eph. i. 7).—W. F. A.

Ver. 15.—*Christ in his relations to God and to the world*. This Epistle to the Colossians is conspicuous among the writings of St. Paul for its enthusiastic assertion of the supreme glory and divinity of Jesus Christ. In opposition to an incipient Gnosticism which would lose the solitary rank of the Son of God in a crowded hierarchy of angels, it exalts that rank with an elevation and a distinctness not to be met with in any previously written portion of the New Testament. It is impossible to read the words of the apostle impartially without seeing that he taught the full divinity and pre-existence of Jesus Christ. The old unitarianism that appealed to scriptural authority for confirmation was simply blind with prejudice. Modern unitarianism is more consistent when it rejects the inspiration of the book which plainly contains the doctrine it repudiates. It is true that the ideas of St. Paul are expressed in accordance with the notions of his times, especially in relation to the "Logos" doctrine of Alexandrian philosophy, and therefore that if we interpret them into the language that fits our modern conception of things, they may appear to change their form. But however expressed, the truths taught by the great apostle concerning the Divine, pre-existent, and supreme Christ are essential to the gospel of the New Testament.

I. CHRIST IN HIS RELATION TO GOD. He "is the Image of the invisible God." This implies two facts. 1. *Resemblance*. The likeness is not external and accidental, "as one egg is like another"—the "homoiousion" of the semi-Arians. The image is produced by the prototype as the seal by the die; it is "the impress of his substance," as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes it (Heb. i. 3). The language of the apostle refers to the Divine nature of Christ. But it remains true after the Word has been made flesh. Thus we may see that, as at the creation man was made in the image of God, so in the Incarnation the perfection of humanity is identical with the exact likeness of God. Christ became no less human because he was the Image of God, but, on the contrary, just perfectly human. Our highest conception of divinity is our ideal of manhood. 2. *Expression*. Christ is the Image of the invisible God. "No man hath seen God at any time," etc. (John i. 18). God is invisible because he is pure spirit. No change of place and no change of state will ever enable us to see God with our physical eyes. The light which suffuses the air is invisible except where it shines

on some object and is reflected to us. God's universally diffused presence requires such reflection for us to see it. We have this in some degree in the works of nature—star, sea, and flower reflecting God's glory. But it is only in Christ the perfect Image that we can have the perfect manifestation of God. He only can say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9).

II. CHRIST IN HIS RELATION TO THE WORLD. He is "the Firstborn of all creation." That this expression refers, not to the Incarnation, but to the Divine pre-existence of Christ, is plain if only from the language of the following verse (ver. 16). It expresses two facts. 1. *Pre-existence*. We have no reason for thinking that the human soul of Christ existed before the Incarnation. But it is plainly taught by St. Paul that that which is Divine in him did so exist. Our Lord said the same of himself (John viii. 58). Without attempting to understand the mystery of the nature of God, we may gather this important lesson—that all those Divine characteristics which are so beautifully revealed in Jesus of Nazareth were not produced for the first time in the New Testament days. Though less known, they were as really existing in the age of Moses and even at the first creation of the world. Therefore the very scheme of nature and the whole government of the world must be in accordance with what we know of Christ. As Christ will finally judge the world, and all that we know of his Spirit will lead us to be thankful that such a one is the Judge, so we may rejoice that the same Spirit of love and gentleness has been from the first eternally pervading all things. 2. *Pre-eminence*. The firstborn has the chief honour. Christ's rank is not only above that of the highest archangels; it is distinctive in kind. He is not the first creature of many creatures, but the first *born* of all creation, in the deepest sense the only begotten Son of the Father. (1) Thus he who is most pure and good is most noble. (2) He who humbled himself and sacrificed himself the most was the most highly exalted. (3) All who trust in Christ may have the assurance that they could have no greater security for their confidence. (4) Christ is worthy of worship.—W. F. A.

Ver. 18.—"*The Firstborn from the dead.*" I. RESURRECTION IS BIRTH. Christ rising the first from the dead is called the first *born*. Death looks ugly to us because we only see the earthly side. The experience of Christ should help us to look on to the other side and the issue of death in birth in the heavenly sphere. Thus the sunset of the east is the sunrise of the west. The Christian future is not merely rest; it is life. It is not a repetition of the old weary life of earth; it begins afresh in birth.

II. CHRIST INSTITUTES A NEW ORDER OF LIFE. He is the new Adam. Mankind began its old life in the garden of Eden; it begins its new life in Joseph of Arimathea's garden. The sins, sorrows, and failures of the past are crucified with Christ, dead and buried. To the old weary earth Christ brings a new spring-time, and with it the birth of new hopes and energies. But the perfect development of this new order of things is only possible after death. Christ has begun it, and as one by one his people follow him they too enter into its growing glories.

III. CHRIST IS SUPREME IN THE NEW LIFE. On earth he was lowly, despised, rejected, and slain. Proud enemies seemed to triumph over him. A Tiberius sat on the throne of the world and the Son of God was nailed to the cross. But in the new order he who was the Firstborn of all creation (ver. 15) resumes his rightful rank and becomes the Firstborn from the dead. Therefore "he is the Head of the body, the Church." From this fact we may derive some important inferences; e.g.: 1. Christ being supreme in the heavenly world, his Spirit of purity and love will pervade and rule all its life. 2. They who follow Christ most closely in obedience to his will and in imitation of his character will enjoy the highest places in heaven. 3. Christ is worthy of the highest adoration now and through all eternity.

IV. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS THE EARNEST OF THE FUTURE LIFE OF HIS PEOPLE. He is the *Firstborn*, not the *Only begotten* from the dead; and he is "the Firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29). 1. The historical fact of the resurrection of Christ demonstrates by one instance the fact that death does not necessarily end all and indicates the possibility of a similar birth for us into a future life. 2. The character, teaching, mission, and work of Christ all teach us that he is not content to enjoy the resurrection-life by himself, but will bring many sons to glory. 3. The risen life of Christ is the type and pattern of the future life of his people.—W. F. A.

Ver. 19.—(See on ch. ii. 9.)—W. F. A.

Ver. 20.—*The great reconciliation.* The world wants not only education, improvement, and development; it has a sorer need—the necessity of forgiveness, reconciliation to God, renewal, and restoration. It is the glory of the gospel that it recognizes this deep fact, too often ignored by philosophic schemes of life, and that it provides for it by offering the satisfaction of the world's great need in reconciliation through Christ and his atonement.

I. IT IS GOD WHO BRINGS ABOUT THE GREAT RECONCILIATION. Two errors in regard to this glorious truth are very prevalent. 1. *The error of attempting to effect the reconciliation for ourselves.* Costly sacrifices, hard penance, prayers, and almsgiving have been resorted to, but in vain. The work is God's, not man's. The first mistake is closely associated with another, viz.: 2. *The error of supposing that God needs to be reconciled to us.* It is commonly thought that the great work is to move God into a favourable consideration for us. But the first step in the reconciliation began with God. He desired it and prepared the way for it before men took any steps towards realizing it. For this reason he first of all sent his Son into the world (John iii. 16), and is now sending ambassadors and beseeching us by them to be reconciled. We began the separation, for ours was the offence, but God begins the reconciliation. He does not need to be reconciled to us. He waits to be gracious. The necessary reconciliation is on our side. We need to be reconciled to God.

II. ALL THINGS IN EARTH AND HEAVEN ARE THE SUBJECTS OF THE GREAT RECONCILIATION. 1. The reconciliation is to be *universal*. It is God's good pleasure to reconcile all things. Nothing short of that complete restoration would satisfy him. If ninety and nine sheep are safe, the shepherd will not rest until he has found the hundredth. Nevertheless, though this universal restitution is God's desire, there is a dark and difficult question as to how far the imperious will of man may stand out against it. 2. *The reconciliation begins with things on earth.* Here is the great wrong. In this life we become reconciled to God. 'The full success of Christ will involve the creation of a new earth. Though the laws of nature may not be altered, yet to us the wilderness will become a garden when we become reconciled to the God of nature. 3. The reconciliation *reaches up to things in heaven.* It unites earth to heaven. Through union with God all beings and all things become united among themselves. Thus peace is established on earth, heavenly mindedness becomes a sympathetic link between the toilers and sufferers in this world and the angels and spirits of the just in the higher world.

III. CHRIST AND HIS ATONEMENT ARE THE MEANS THROUGH WHICH THIS RECONCILIATION IS EFFECTED. 1. Christ is the *Mediator* in the quarrel between us and God, the Peacemaker (Eph. ii. 14), the "Daysman" who lays his hand on God and on us. The angel-mediators of Colossian Gnosticism could not do this, being neither Divine nor human. Because all fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, he brings God to us in merciful loving-kindness; and because he is also "very Man," he, as our Representative, brings us back to God. 2. The *sacrifice* made by Christ in his death is the atonement which accomplishes our reconciliation. "The blood of his cross" signifies, not merely the fact that Christ died on the cross, but also the peculiar value of his death in the shedding of his precious blood, i.e. in the giving up of his life for us with all its wealth of purity and love.—W. F. A.

Vers. 21–23.—*Our reconciliation.* St. Paul had just been describing the great universal reconciliation. He now directs attention to the enjoyment of a share in it by himself and his readers. It is useless to think of a grand and glorious restoration if we lie outside its blessings, dead and lost. Yet there is a constant danger lest we should be merely interested in the contemplation of the riches of redemption from the outside. Especially when we are considering very large, sublime truths, we are tempted to ignore our own experience. It is instructive to observe that St. Paul always connects his most abstract speculations with practical results, and descends from soaring visions of truth to personal experience.

I. A PAST ALIENATION. This was the early condition of the Colossians; it is the condition of all of us before we are renewed in Christ. 1. The alienation arises out of

wicked works. We cannot keep our sins to ourselves. They affect our relations with God; they separate us from him. This is the worst result of them. 2. The alienation consists in the *state of our minds*. The deeds of the hand react on the thoughts of the heart. He who begins by breaking God's Law ends by separating his whole inner life from God. 3. The alienation results in *enmity to God*. It cannot remain in passive neglect of the will of God. He who is not with Christ is against him. He who does wicked works may think that his deeds have no relation to God; but, in truth, he is fighting against God.

II. A PRESENT RECONCILIATION. 1. It is accomplished at a *great cost*. Nothing less than death—the death of the Son of God—could bring it about. How stubborn must have been our enmity! How great must the love of God be! How highly should we value the reconciliation which God has provided at such a fearful price! 2. It is enjoyed *through our union with Christ*. The reconciliation is “in the body of his flesh.” As we eat his flesh, spiritually, by faith and communion, we receive the blessing of reconciliation. 3. It is a *present condition*. “Yet now hath he reconciled.” Reconciliation is accomplished at once, fully, perfectly, and ungrudgingly, with no hints or reminders of the old sins ever again brought up. In the strength of the reconciliation we go on to the working out of the salvation that is only perfected when all sin is conquered.

III. A FUTURE PERFECTION. Though reconciled, we are not yet presented to God. A process of preparation is necessary for this. 1. The reconciled must be made *holy*. Forgiveness is the first step; but it is not the last. Without holiness no man can see God. The whole of life should be a cleansing and purifying and preparing for the unblemished condition in which only Christ can present us to God. But the reconciliation is a necessary preliminary, an important beginning, and a constraining motive for the perfect purification. 2. We must do *our part* to realize the future perfection. It depends on our continuing in the faith.—W. F. A.

Ver. 27.—*Christ, the Hope of glory*. I. CHRISTIANITY BRINGS A HOPE OF GLORY. 1. It brings a *hope*. All men who live at all live in the future. The past is irretrievable. The present is but a passing moment. Life reaches out to what lies before it. For this we need to be buoyed up by some hope—

“Ever by a mighty hope
Pressing on and bearing up.”

The man without a hope is as good as dead. Who will care to walk on over the weary path of his pilgrimage if no light cheers him in the distance, if only deepening gloom besets his uncertain footsteps? It is the glory of the gospel that it speaks of a hope of glory. 2. The object of the Christian hope is *glory*. It is more than bare escape from ruin; more than mere gladness. There is something ennobling and elevating in the best sense of the word “glory.” It not only includes the greatest blessings; it calls us off from low, selfish, epicurean conceptions of future happiness, and points to a pure and lofty aim for our aspirations.

II. THIS CHRISTIAN HOPE IS FOR ALL. The emphasis of the phrase lies on the word “you.” “Christ in you,” etc. 1. *All nations* are included. The narrower Jew kept the glory of redemption to himself, though he would allow some of its minor blessings, overflowing from his own full cup, to spread among the Gentiles. Christ brings the richest blessings to all peoples without distinction. 2. *All characters* are included. St. Paul has just been describing the early conditions of the Colossians. They had been alienated and enemies to God in their mind (ver. 21). Yet these men have the hope of glory. Thus there is a wonderful revelation of the love of God in the thought—even to you, Colossians, once great enemies to God, Christ is the Hope of glory. And so always the worst sinners, when redeemed by Christ, may anticipate, not only pardon, but the highest glory.

III. CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHRISTIAN HOPE OF GLORY. 1. It is first of all based on the *atonement of Christ*. By his shame comes our glory. He first reconciles us to God and then leads us on to glorification. 2. The hope of glory for Christians is *dependent on the glory of Christ*. He wins glory through his triumph over sin and death. But he does not keep the glory to himself; he freely shares it

with his people. Then the Christian glory is just a share of this glory of Christ's. It is no selfish thing, much less is it an earthly, corrupt thing like much that degrades the name of glory among men. 3. *Christ himself* is the Centre of this glory. Christ is the Hope of glory, not merely the teachings of Christ, the work of Christ, the sacrifice of Christ. In him is glory—the glory of the Only begotten from the Father (John i. 14). He is the glory of his Church.

IV. WE ENJOY THE HOPE OF GLORY BY RECEIVING CHRIST SPIRITUALLY. Christ in you is the hope of glory. So long as we are separated from Christ we dwell in darkness and no ray of his glory is ours. No external relations with Christ will make the hope ours. We must enter into personal relations with Christ; we must receive him into our hearts. When he dwells in our hearts by faith he brings to us his own life, and with this the glory that belongs to it.—W. F. A.

Vers. 28, 29.—*The mission of Christian preaching.* In describing his own practice St. Paul describes the model mission of the Christian preacher. Nothing less than this great ideal should satisfy a Christian minister. But nothing outside it should be assumed by or expected of him. The apostle is but a preacher and teacher, not a priestly authority.

I. THE SUBJECT OF CHRISTIAN PREACHING IS CHRIST. It does not consist in vague speculations on religion. It is clear, positive, definite, and concrete. The preacher is to uphold Christ. He is to tell the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ; to draw the portrait of Christ (Gal. iii. 1); to proclaim the grace of Christ; to set forth the claims of Christ; and to show the relation of Christ to everything in life. 1. There is a *unity* in this preaching. It all centres in Christ. 2. There is a *breadth* in it. Christ has grace and authority in regard to all aspects of life. 3. There is *power* in it. The charm and spell of the gospel dwell in Christ himself. In proportion as he is lifted up does he draw all men to himself, and in proportion as the preacher wanders into side issues does he lose the secret of his influence.

II. THE FIELD OF CHRISTIAN PREACHING IS ALL MANKIND. Three times does the apostle express the universality of this truth as against the Jew who would limit the best treasures to his nation, and the Gnostic who would keep the higher truths for the more instructed. "Admonishing *every man* and teaching *every man* in all wisdom." 1. Christ is for all; for (1) none are so good, or wise, or safe, or happy as to afford to do without him; and (2) none are so ignorant, or foolish, or guilty as to be beyond the reach of his blessings. 2. In Christ all wisdom is for all men. There is no reserve, at least of the highest wisdom, since the Christ who is preached to all men freely is the Word and the Wisdom of God.

III. THE METHOD OF CHRISTIAN PREACHING IS PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION. 1. *Proclaiming* Christ. The first requisite is information on the main points of the gospel. The Christian preacher is a herald and a witness (Acts ii. 32; iii. 15). 2. *Admonishing*. Men must be charged with the guilt of their sins, as well as encouraged by the offers of the gospel. An earnest, faithful dealing with individuals according to their personal condition is a necessary though painful part of a minister's work. 3. *Teaching*. Thorough instruction must follow the general proclaiming of the gospel. Growth in grace depends largely on growth in knowledge. Neglect of this laborious, unexciting part of the preacher's mission, careful teaching, is sure to be avenged by ultimate weakness, if not by disastrous lapses into practical errors.

IV. THE END OF CHRISTIAN PREACHING IS TO PRESENT MEN PERFECT IN CHRIST. We are not to be satisfied with such abstract teaching as simply informs the minds of people. The great work is most practical. It is to mould lives, to develop characters, to perfect souls. 1. *It is to bring men into living union with Christ.* We preach Christ in order that men may live Christ. The great result is the effecting of a vital union with Christ. 2. *It is also to lead men on to perfection in Christ.* The preacher will be expected, at the return of his Master, to present, as the fruit of his life's work, not a crowd of raw converts, but a body of ripe Christians. The work is not finished in conversion. It only begins with that. Line upon line, and precept upon precept, often with sad iteration as old lessons unlearned need to be repeated, characterizes the necessary task of the Christian preacher. And it is not done till perfection is reached.

V. SUCCESS IN THIS MISSION DEPENDS UPON WORKING HARD IN THE POWER OF CHRIST.
COLOSSIANS. G

1. It requires *hard work*. St. Paul "labours," "striving." The words in the Greek suggest the athlete who trains himself into great vigour for some severe enterprise. Men are not to be won for Christ and perfected in Christ by indolent, self-indulgent preachers. No work is harder than that of the Christian preacher when it is faithfully discharged. 2. Success is also only attainable through the *power of Christ*. He works mightily in the preacher as well as in the hearer. With this secret of strength the feeblest preacher may succeed where a Demosthenes would fail.—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

Vers. 1—7.—SECTION IV. THE APOSTLE'S CONCERN FOR THE COLOSSIAN CHURCH. So far the contents of the letter have been of a general and preparatory character. Now the writer begins to indicate the special purpose he has in view by declaring, in connection with his concern for the welfare of the Gentile Churches at large (ch. i. 24—29), *the deep anxiety which he at present feels respecting the Colossian and neighbouring Churches*.

Ver. 1.—For I would have you know how great a strife I have on behalf of you and those in Laodicea (ch. iv. 12, 13; 2 Cor. xi. 28, 29; Rom. i. 9—13; Phil. i. 8, 25—30; 1 Thess. ii. 17, 18; Gal. iv. 20). The apostle has dwelt at such length and so earnestly upon his own position and responsibilities (ch. i. 24—29), that the Colossians may feel how real and strong is his interest in their welfare, though personally strangers to him (see next clause). His solicitude for them is in keeping with the toil and strife of his whole ministry. "I would have you know;" a familiar Pauline phrase (1 Cor. xi. 3; Phil. i. 12; Rom. i. 13, etc.). *ἵνα* ("how great") has, perhaps, a slightly exclamatory force, as in Jas. iii. 5 (only other instance of the word in the New Testament), and in classical Greek. For "strife," see note on "striving" (ch. i. 29): the energy and abruptness of language characterizing this second chapter bear witness to the inward wrestling which the Colossian difficulty occasioned in the apostle's mind. (On the close connection of Colossæ with Laodicea, comp. ch. iv. 13—17, notes; also Introduction, § 1.) The danger which had come to a head in Colossæ was doubtless threatening its neighbour. The words, and as many as have not seen my face in (the) flesh (ver. 5; ch. i. 8; Rom. i. 11; Gal. i. 22; Acts xx. 25), raise the question whether St. Paul had ever visited Colossæ. The language of ch. i. 7 (see note) raises a strong presumption against his being the founder of this Church, and the narrative of the Acts scarcely admits of any visit to this region in former missionary journeys. Theodoret amongst the Greeks, followed by our

own Lardner and a few recent critics, contended that the apostle distinguishes here between Colossians and Laodiceans (or at least the former), and *those who had not seen his face*. But the disjunction is grammatically harsh and improbable (see Ellicott). (On the general question, see Introduction, § 2.) The apostle is the more anxious for this endangered Church, as the gifts that his presence might have conveyed (Rom. i. 11) were wanting to them. He says, "in flesh," for "in spirit" he is closely united with them (ver. 5; ch. i. 8: comp. 1 Cor. v. 3, 4). The object of his *strife* on their behalf is—

Ver. 2.—That their hearts may be encouraged (ch. iv. 8; Eph. vi. 22; 1 Thess. iii. 2; iv. 18; 2 Thess. ii. 17; 2 Cor. xiii. 11). For the mischief at work at Colossæ was at once *unsettling* (vers. 6, 7; ch. i. 23) and *discouraging* (ch. i. 23; ii. 18; iii. 15) in its effects. Παρακαλῶ, a favourite word of St. Paul's, means "to address," "exhort," then more specially "to encourage," "comfort," (2 Cor. i. 4), "to beseech" (Eph. iv. 1; 2 Cor. vi. 1), or "to instruct" (Titus i. 9). The heart, in Biblical language, is not the seat of feeling only, but stands for the whole inner man, as the "vital centre" of his personality (see Beck's 'Biblical Psychology': comp. Mark vii. 19, 21; 1 Pet. iii. 4; Rom. vii. 22; Eph. iii. 16, 17). While they are (literally, *they having been*) drawn together in love, and into all (the) riches of the full assurance of the understanding, unto (or, into) (full) knowledge of the mystery of God, (even) Christ (ver. 19; ch. i. 9; iii. 10, 14; iv. 12; Eph. i. 17, 18; iii. 17—19; iv. 2, 3, 15, 16; Phil. i. 9; ii. 2; 1 Cor. i. 10; 2 Cor. xiii. 11). In the best Greek copies "drawn together" is nominative masculine, agreeing with "they," the logical subject implied in "their hearts" (feminine). Συμβιβάζω has the same sense in ver. 19 and Eph. iv. 16; in 1 Cor. ii. 16 it is quoted from the LXX in another sense; and it has a variety of meanings in the Acts. "Drawn together" expresses the double sense which accrues to the verb in combination with the two prepositions "in" and "into": "united in love," Christians are prepared to be "led into all the wealth of Divine knowledge."

This combination of "love and knowledge" appears in all St. Paul's letters of this period (comp. Eph. iv. 12—16; Phil. i. 9; and contrast 1 Cor. viii. 1—3; xiii. 1, 2, 8—13). "The riches of the full assurance," etc., and "the knowledge of the mystery" are the counterpart of "the riches of the glory of the mystery," of ch. i. 27; the fulness of conviction and completeness of knowledge attainable by the Christian correspond to the full and satisfying character of the revelation he receives in Christ (comp. Eph. i. 17—19). (On "understanding," see note, ch. i. 9.) "Full assurance," or "conviction" (ἐπιγνωσις), is a word belonging to St. Luke and St. Paul (with the Epistle to the Hebrews) in the New Testament (not found in classical Greek), and denotes radically "a bringing to full measure or maturity." Combined with "understanding," it denotes the ripe, intelligent persuasion of one who enters into the whole wealth of the "truth as it is in Jesus" (comp. ch. iv. 12, R.V.; also Rom. iv. 21 and xiv. 5, for corresponding verb). In this inward "assurance," as in a fortress, the Colossians were to entrench themselves against the attacks of error (ch. i. 9; iii. 15, and notes). *Eis ἐπιγνωσιν* is either in explanatory apposition to the previous clause, or rather denotes the *further purpose* for which this wealth of conviction is to be sought: "knowledge of the Divine mystery, knowledge of Christ"—this is the supreme end, ever leading on and upward, for the pursuit of which all strengthening of heart and understanding are given (ch. iii. 10; Eph. iii. 16—19; Phil. iii. 10). The Revisers have corrected the erroneous "acknowledgment" by their paraphrastic rendering, "that they may know." (On *ἐπιγνωσις* (comp. *γνώσις*, ver. 3), see note, ch. i. 6.) The object of this knowledge is the great *manifested mystery* of God, namely *Christ* (ch. i. 27). We confidently accept here the Revised reading, that of nearly all recent textual critics, which omits the words found in the Received Text between "God" and "Christ." There are extant eleven distinct variations of this reading, and that of the Textus Receptus is, to all appearance, the latest and worst; "the passage is altogether an instructive lesson on textual criticism" (Lightfoot, pp. 252, 253; also Westcott and Hort, 'Introduction: Notes on Selected Readings,' pp. 125, 126). The words thus read have been interpreted "mystery of the God Christ" (the Latin Hilary, and a few moderns); "of the God of Christ" (Meyer, quoting Eph. i. 17; John xx. 17; Matt. xxvii. 46);—both interpretations grammatically correct, but unsuitable here, even if in harmony with Pauline usage elsewhere. Alford omits "of Christ" altogether, distrusting the textual

evidence. Meyer objects to the rendering we have followed (that of Ellicott, Lightfoot, Revisers), that the apostle, if this be his meaning, has expressed himself ambiguously; but comp. ch. i. 27 (see note); also 1 Tim. iii. 16, "The mystery, *who* was manifested in flesh."

Ver. 3.—In whom (or, *which*) are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden (ly) (Eph. i. 8, 9; iii. 8; Rom. xi. 33; 1 Cor. i. 5, 6, 30; ii. 7; 2 Cor. iv. 3). Bengel, Meyer, Alford, and others make the relative pronoun neuter, referring to "mystery;" but "Christ," the nearer antecedent, is preferable (vers. 9, 10; ch. i. 16, 17, 19). In him the apostle finds what false teachers sought elsewhere, a satisfaction for the intellect as well as for the heart—*treasures of wisdom and knowledge* to enrich the understanding, and unsearchable mysteries to exercise the speculative reason. "Hidden" is, therefore, a secondary predicate: "in whom are these treasures,—as hidden treasures" (Ellicott, Lightfoot). (For a similar emphasis of position, compare "made complete," ver. 10, and "seated," ch. iii. 1.) Meyer and Alford, with the Vulgate, make "hidden" an attributive: "in whom are hidden treasures." Chrysostom and leading versions make it primary predicate: "in whom are hidden," etc., against the order of the words. This word also belongs to the dialect of the mystic theosophists (see note, ch. i. 27: comp. 1 Cor. ii. 6—16; Isa. xlv. 3; Prov. ii. 1—11). (On "wisdom," see note, ch. i. 9.) *Knowledge* (γνῶσις, not ἐπιγνωσις, ver. 2; ch. i. 9; iii. 10; for this phrase is more comprehensive) is the more objective and purely intellectual side of wisdom (comp. Rom. xi. 33).

Ver. 4.—In this verse the apostle first definitely indicates the cause of his anxiety, and the Epistle begins to assume a polemic tone. This verse is, therefore, the prelude of the impending attack on the false teachers (vers. 8—23). This I say, that no one may be deluding you in persuasive speech (vers. 8, 18, 23; Eph. iv. 14; 1 Cor. ii. 1, 4, 13; 1 Tim. vi. 20; Ps. lv. 21). This was the danger which made a more adequate comprehension of Christianity so necessary to the Colossians (vers. 2, 3). Πιθανολογία, one of the numerous *hapax legomena* of this Epistle (words only used here in the New Testament), compounds into one word the *πειθοί λόγοι* ("persuasive words") of 1 Cor. ii. 4 (compare "word of wisdom," ver. 23). In classical writers it denotes plausible, *ad captandum* reasoning. Παραλογίζομαι (only here and Jas. i. 22 in the New Testament) is "to use bad logic," "to play off fallacies (paralogisms)." The new teachers were fluent, specious reasoners, and had a store of sophistical arguments at

command. The tense of the verb indicates an apprehension as to what may be *now going on* (vers. 8, 16, 18, 20; ch. i. 23). We shall see afterwards (vers. 8-23) what was the doctrine underlying this "persuasive speech."

Ver. 5.—For if indeed I am absent in the flesh, yet in the spirit I am with you (1 Thess. ii. 17; 1 Cor. v. 3, 4). The connection of this verse with the last is not obvious. Ellicott, following Chrysostom, makes St. Paul's spiritual presence the reason for his being able to give the Colossians this warning; Meyer, his bodily absence the reason for their needing it. It is better, with Lightfoot, to see here a general explanatory reference to the previous context, a renewed declaration (ver. 1) of watchful interest in these distant brethren and a hearty acknowledgment of their Christian loyalty. The tone of authoritative warning just assumed (ver. 4) is thus justified, and yet softened (compare the apologetic tone of Rom. xv. 14, 15). The phrase, "if I am absent," does not imply a previous presence (see note, ver. 1). Rejoicing and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ (Phil. i. 4-8, 27; 1 Cor. i. 5-8; 1 Thess. ii. 13; 2 Thess. i. 4). St. Paul does not say, "rejoicing in beholding." The consciousness of union with brethren far away, whom he has never seen (ver. 1), is itself a joy; and this joy is heightened by what he sees through the eyes of Epaphras (ch. i. 4, 6-8; comp. 2 Cor. vii. 7) of the condition of this Church. *Táxis* and *στερέωσα* are military terms, denoting the "ordered array" and "solid front" of an army prepared for battle (Lightfoot, Hofmann): comp. Eph. vi. 11, etc.; Phil. i. 27. Others find the figure of a *building* underlying the second word—Vulgate, *firmamentum* ("solid basis")—and this is its more usual meaning, and agrees with ver. 7 and ch. i. 23 (comp. 2 Tim. ii. 19; 1 Pet. v. 9; Acts xvi. 5; also Ps. xviii. 2, LXX, for the noun, not found, elsewhere in the New Testament). The precise expression, "faith in Christ" (literally, *into*—*eis*, not *en*, as in ch. i. 4, see note) occurs only here in the New Testament; in Acts xxiv. 24 read "in Christ Jesus." In such passages as Rom. iii. 22, 26 (where *πίστις* is followed by the genitive), Christ appears as *object* of faith; in such as ch. i. 4 and ii. 5 he is its *ground* or *substratum*, that in which it rests and dwells, *into* which it roots itself.

Ver. 6.—As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him (Phil. i. 27; ii. 9-11; 1 Thess. iv. 1; 2 Thess. ii. 13-15; 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2; Gal. iii. 2-4; v. 1; Heb. iii. 6; iv. 14; x. 23; John vii. 17; xv. 5-10; Rev. iii. 11). Such a *walk* will be consistent with their previous steadfastness, and

will lead them to larger spiritual attainments (ch. i. 10; see note). "Ye received" (*παράλαβετε*, not *δέχεται*, as in ch. iv. 10; comp. 1 Thess. ii. 13) reminds the Colossians of what they had received (compare "ye were taught," ver. 7 and ch. i. 7) rather than of the way of their receiving it. "Christ Jesus the Lord," is literally, *the Christ Jesus, the Lord*—an expression found besides only in Eph. iii. 11 (Revised Text). The prefixed article points out *Christ Jesus* in his full style and title as the Person whom the Colossians had received, and received as *the Lord*. "The Lord" has a predicative force, as in 1 Cor. xii. 3 (R.V.); 2 Cor. iv. 5; Phil. ii. 11. "Jesus is Lord" was the testing watchword applied in the discerning of spirits; "Jesus Christ is Lord" is to be the final confession of a reconciled universe; and "Christ Jesus is Lord" is the rule of faith that guides all conduct and tests all doctrine within the Church (comp. ver. 19; Rom. xvi. 18). It is "a summary of the whole Christian confession" (Meyer). To vindicate this lordship, on which the Colossian error trenchoned so seriously, is the main object of the Epistle (ch. i. 13-20). We must not, therefore, with Alford, Lightfoot, Hofmann, analyze "the Christ Jesus:" "Ye received the Christ, (namely) Jesus, who is the Lord." The writer has already used "Christ Jesus" as a single proper name at the outset (ch. i. 1, 4); and it was the *lordship of Christ Jesus, not the Messiahship of Jesus*, that was now in question. In Acts xviii. 5, 28 the situation is entirely different. In the following clause, "in him" is emphatic, as in ver. 7 (compare the predominant *αὐτός* of ch. i. 16-22; ii. 9-15). Hence the contradiction of figure, "walk, rooted, and builded up," does not obtrude itself. (On "walk," see note, ch. i. 10; and on "in Christ" in this connection, see notes, ch. i. 4; ii. 10; and comp. Rom. vi. 3-11; viii. 1; 2 Cor. v. 17; John xv. 1-7.)

Ver. 7.—Rooted and builded up in him (ch. i. 23; ii. 5; Eph. ii. 20, 21; iii. 18; iv. 16; 1 Cor. iii. 9-12; Jude 20; Luke vi. 47, 48). "Rooted" is perfect participle, implying an abiding fact ("fast-rooted"); while "builded up" (literally, *upon* or *unto*) is in the present tense of a continued process, the prefix *en* also implying growth and gain (ch. i. 6, 10; ii. 19). Meyer and Ellicott view *en αὐτῷ* as a mere complement of the latter participle: "being builded in him." This weakens the force of both prepositions (*en* and *en*), and the emphasis of the repeated "in him." The ideas of *planting* and *building* are similarly combined in 1 Cor. iii. 9; Eph. iii. 18; and *rooted* is a figure applied to buildings in other Greek writers (Lightfoot). "Christ is the ground for the roots below, and the foundation for

the building above" (Meyer). And established in (or, by) your faith, according as ye were taught (ch. i. 5—7, 23; 1 Cor. i. 6—8; 1 Thess. iii. 2; iv. 1; 2 Thess. ii. 18—15; 1 Pet. v. 9, 10). 'Ev before *πίστει* ("faith") is struck out in the Revised Text, and is probably a correct gloss. The instrumental dative, preferred by Meyer and Lightfoot, does not accord so well with ver. 5 and ch. i. 23 (comp. Phil. i. 27; 1 Cor. xvi. 13; 1 Tim. v. 8; 2 Tim. iv. 7; 1 Pet. v. 9). "Stablished" (*βεβαιούμενοι*, being kept firm) is present in tense, like "built up" (ver. 6, see note): comp. Rom. iv. 16; Phil. i. 7; Heb. iii. 6; vi. 19; xiii. 9; and distinguish from *συντίσω*, to make stable, fix firmly. In "as ye were taught" the apostle reminds his readers again of their first lessons in the gospel (ch. i. 5—7, see notes; 2 Thess. ii. 15). Abounding in it, with thanksgiving; or, abounding in thanksgiving (ch. i. 3, 12; iii. 15, 17; iv. 2; Eph. v. 4, 20; 1 Thess. v. 18; Heb. xiii. 15). The Revisers relegate "in it (your faith)" to the margin, following the judgment of Tischendorf and Tregelles; while Westcott and Hort, Alford, Ellicott, Lightfoot, retain the words in the text. The reading "in him," found in the Vulgate and leading Western documents, throws doubt on these words; but it is difficult to see why they should have been inserted if not authentic, and they might easily be confused by a copyist with the foregoing "in him." The second *ἐν*, if *ἐν αὐτῇ* be retained, becomes *ἐν* of accompaniment, and may be rendered "with," as in ch. i. 29; Eph. vi. 2. (On "thanksgiving," see note, ch. i. 12.)

Vers. 8—15.—SECTION V. THE CHRISTIAN'S COMPLETENESS IN CHRIST. The apostle has first defined his own doctrinal position in the theological deliverance of ch. i. 15—20, and has then skilfully brought himself into suitable personal relations with his readers by the statements and appeals of ch. i. 23—ii. 7. And now, after a general indication in ver. 4 of the direction in which he is about to strike, he unmasks the battery he has been all the while preparing, and delivers his attack on the Colossian error, occupying the rest of this second chapter. He denounces (1) *its false philosophy of religion* (vers. 8—15); (2) *its arbitrary and obsolete ceremonialism* (vers. 16, 17); (3) *its visionary angel-worship* (vers. 18, 19); (4) *its ascetic rules* (vers. 20—22; ver. 23 reviewing the whole system in a brief characterization of its most prominent and dangerous features. It will be convenient to treat separately the first of these topics, under the heading already given, which indicates the positive truth developed by St. Paul in antagonism to the error against which he contends—a

truth which is the practical application of the theological teaching of the first chapter.

Ver. 8.—Beware lest there shall be some one who maketh you his spoil through his philosophy and empty deceit (vers. 4, 18, 23; Eph. iv. 14; 1 Tim. vi. 20; 1 Cor. ii. 1, 4; Gal. i. 7; Acts xx. 30). "Beware;" literally, *see (to it)*, a common form of warning (ch. iv. 17). The future indicative "shall be," used instead of the more regular subjunctive "should be," implies that what is feared is too likely to prove the case (comp. Heb. iii. 12 and (with another tense) Gal. iv. 11). "Some one who maketh (you) his spoil (*ὁ συλαγωγῶν*)" is an expression so distinct and individualizing that it appears to single out a definite, well-known person. The denunciations of this Epistle are throughout in the singular number (vers. 4, 16, 18), in marked contrast with the plural of Gal. i. 17, and that prevails in the apostle's earlier polemical references. It is in harmony with the philosophical, Gnosticizing character of the Colossian heresy that it should rest on the authority of some single teacher, rather than on Scripture or tradition, as did the conservative legalistic Judaism. *Συλαγωγῶν*, a very rare word, *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament, bears its meaning on its face. It indicates the selfish, partisan spirit, and the overbearing conduct of the false teacher. Against such men St. Paul had forewarned the Ephesian elders (Acts xx. 29, 30). "And empty deceit" stands in a qualifying apposition to "philosophy:" "His philosophy, indeed! 'It is no better than a vain deceit.'" This kind of irony we shall find the writer using with still greater effect in ver. 18. *Deceit is empty* (*κενός*: comp. Eph. v. 6; 1 Thess. ii. 1; 1 Cor. xv. 14; distinguish from *μῆτρας*, fruitless, vain), which deceives by being a show of what it is not, a hollow pretence. From the prominence given to this aspect of the new teaching, we infer that it claimed to be a *philosophy*, and made this its special distinction and ground of superiority. And this consideration points (comp. Introduction, § 4), to some connection between the system of the Colossian errorists and the Alexandrine Judaism, of which Philo, an elder contemporary of St. Paul, is our chief exponent. The aim of this school, which had now existed for two centuries at least, and had diffused its ideas far and wide, was to transform and sublimize Judaism by interpreting it under philosophical principles. Its teachers endeavoured, in fact, to put the "new wine" of Plato into the "old bottles" of Moses, persuading themselves that it was originally there (comp. note on "mystery," ch. i. 27). In Philo, *philosophy* is the name for true religion,

whose essence consists in the pursuit and contemplation of pure spiritual truth. Moses and the patriarchs are, with him, all "philosophers," the writers of the Old Testament "philosophize;" it is "the philosophical man" who holds converse with God. This is the only place where *philosophy* is expressly mentioned in the New Testament; in 1 Cor. i. 21 and context it is, however, only verbally wanting. According to the tradition of men, according to the rudiments of the world, and not according to Christ (vers. 17, 20, 22; Gal. i. 11, 12; iv. 3, 9; 1 Cor. i. 20, 21; iii. 19-21; Matt. xv. 2; Mark vii. 8; 1 John iv. 5; 1 Pet. i. 18). This clause qualifies "making spoil" (Meyer, Ellicott) rather than "deceit;" human authority and natural reason furnish the principles and the method according to which the false teacher proceeds. "Tradition" does not necessarily imply antiquity (comp. 1 Cor. xi. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 15; iii. 6); "of men" is the emphatic part of the phrase. These words are characteristic of St. Paul, who was so profoundly conscious of the supernatural origin of his own doctrine (see Gal. i. 11-17; 1 Cor. xi. 23; 1 Thess. iv. 15; comp. John iii. 31-35; viii. 23; 1 John iv. 5). Similarly, "the rudiments of the world" are the crude beginnings of truth, the childish faulty and imperfect religious conceptions and usages to which the world had attained apart from the revelation of Christ (comp. Gal. iv. 3, 9; also Heb. v. 12, for this use of *στοιχεῖα*). It is not either Jewish or non-Jewish elements specifically that are intended. Jew and Greek are one in so far as their religious ideas are "not according to Christ." Greek thought had also contributed its rudiments to the world's education for Christ: hence, comprehensively, "the rudiments of the world" (comp. 1 Cor. i. 21). The blending of Greek and Jewish elements in the Colossian theosophy would of itself suggest this generalization, already shadowed forth in Gal. iv. 3. Nander, Hofmann, and Klöpper (the latest German commentator), have returned to the view that prevailed amongst the Fathers, from Origen downwards, reading this phrase, both here and in Galatians, in a physical sense, as in 2 Pet. iii. 10, 12; the *elementa mundi*, "the powers of nature," "heavenly bodies," etc., worshipped by the Gentiles as gods, and which the Jews identified with the angels (ver. 18; Heb. i. 7) as God's agents in the direction of the world. This interpretation has much to recommend it, but it scarcely harmonizes with the parallel "tradition of men," still less with the context of ver. 20, and is absolutely at variance, as it seems to us, with the argument involved in Gal. iv. 3. Not the

doctrine of Christ, but *Christ himself* is the substitute for these discarded rudiments (vers. 17, 20). His Person is the norm and test of truth (1 Cor. xii. 3; 1 John iv. 1-3). The views combated were "not according to Christ," for they made him something less and lower than that which he is.

Ver. 9.—Because in him dwelleth all the fulness (or, completeness) of the Godhead bodily (ch. i. 19; Phil. ii. 6-8; Rom. i. 3, 4; ix. 5; John i. 1, 14). In ch. i. 18-20 we viewed a series of events; here we have an abiding fact. The whole plenitude of our Lord's Divine-human person and powers, as the complete Christ, was definitively constituted when, in the exercise of his kingly prerogative, "he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." "From henceforth" that fulness evermore resides in him (comp. note, ch. i. 19). The undivided *pleroma* of ch. i. 19 now reveals its twofold nature: it is "the fulness of the Godhead," and yet "dwells corporeally in him." "Godhead" (*θεότης*) is the abstract of "God" (*θεός*), not of the adjective "Divine" (*θεῖος*; the Vulgate therefore, wrongly, *divinitatis*: comp. Rom. i. 20; Acts xvii. 29; Wisd. xviii. 9), and denotes, "not Divine excellences, but the Divine nature" (Bengel); see Trench's 'Synonyms.' Schenkel and others, guided by a conjecture of Theodoret, have found here the *Church*, supporting their view by a very doubtful interpretation of Eph. i. 23. Still more groundless is the identification of this *pleroma* with the created world. The apostle unmistakably affirms that the Divine nature, in its entirety, belongs to the Church's Christ. The literal sense of "bodily" (maintained by Meyer, Alford, Ellicott, Lightfoot, Hofmann, after Chrysostom and Athanasius) has been avoided by those who render it "wholly" (Jerome); "essentially, substantially" (Cyril, Theophylact, Calvin, Klöpper), as opposed to "relatively" or "partially;" "truly" (Augustine, Erasmus, Bengel, Bleek), as opposed to "figuratively" (ver. 17). The adverb *σωματικῶς* (always literal in classical usage, along with its adjective) occurs only here in the New Testament; the adjective "bodily" in 1 Tim. iv. 8; Luke iii. 22. "The body of his flesh" in ch. i. 22 affords a truer parallel than the language of ver. 17, where *σῶμα* bears an exceptional sense (see note). Elsewhere St. Paul balances in similar fashion expressions relating to the twofold nature of Christ (see parallels). The assertion that "all the fulness of Deity" dwells in Christ negatives the Alexandrine "philosophy," with its cloud of mediating angel-powers and spiritual emanations; the assertion that it dwells in him *bodily* equally condemns that contempt for the body and

the material world which was the chief practical tenet of the same school (comp. notes on ch. i. 22 and ii. 23).

Ver. 10.—And (because) **ye are in him made complete**; or, *fulfilled* (Eph. i. 3, 7—11, 23; iii. 18, 19; iv. 13; Phil. iv. 19; Gal. iii. 14, 24; v. 1, 4; 1 Cor. i. 30; ii. 2). A complete Christ makes his people complete; his *pleroma* is our *plerosis*. Finding the whole fulness of God brought within our reach and engaged in our behalf (Phil. ii. 7; Matt. xx. 28) in him, we need not resort elsewhere to supply our spiritual needs (Phil. iv. 19). "In him" is the primary predicate (see Alford, Ellicott, against Meyer: comp. ver. 3): "Ye are in him" is the assumption (Rom. viii. 1; xvi. 7); "(ye are) made complete" is the inference. (On the verb *πληρώω* (the basis of *pleroma*), used in perfect participle of abiding result, see notes, ch. i. 9, 19.) This *completeness* includes the furnishing of men with all that is required for their present and final salvation as individuals (vers. 11—15; ch. i. 21, 22, 28), and for their collective perfection as forming the Church, the body of Christ (vers. 2, 19; ch. i. 19; Eph. i. 23; v. 26, 27); for this twofold *completeness*, comp. Eph. iv. 12—16. Who is the Head of all principality and dominion (vers. 15, 18; ch. i. 16; Eph. i. 21; Phil. ii. 10, 11; 1 Cor. xv. 24; Heb. i. 6, 14; 1 Pet. iii. 22). (On "principality," etc., see note, ch. i. 16.) The Colossians were being taught to replace or supplement Christ's offices by those of angel-powers (see notes, vers. 15, 18). Philo ('Concerning Dreams,' i. §§ 22, 23) writes thus of the angels: "Free from all bodily encumbrance, endowed with larger and diviner intellect, they are lieutenants of the All-ruler, eyes and ears of the great King. Philosophers in general call them *demons* (*δαίμονες*); the sacred Scripture *angels*, for they report (*διαγγέλλουσι*) the injunctions of the Father to his children, and the wants of the children to their Father. . . . Angels, the Divine words, walk about [comp. 2 Cor. vi. 16] in the souls of those who have not yet completely washed off the (old) life, foul and stained through their cumbersome bodies, making them bright to the eyes of virtue." In such a strain the Colossian "philosopher" may have been talking. But if Christ is the Maker and Lord of these invisible powers (ch. i. 15, 16), and we are *in him*, then we must no longer look to them as our saviours.

Ver. 11.—In whom also ye were circumcised, with a circumcision not wrought by hands (Eph. ii. 11; Phil. iii. 3; Gal. v. 2—6; vi. 12—15; Rom. ii. 25—29; iv. 9—12; 1 Cor. vii. 18; Acts xv. 1, 5; Deut. xxx. 6). Circumcision was insisted on by the new 'philosophical' teacher as necessary to

spiritual *completeness*; but from a different standpoint, and in a manner different from that of the Pharisaic Judaizers of Galatia and of Acts xv. 1. By the latter it was preached as *matter of Law and external requirement*, and so became the critical point in the decision between the opposing principles of "faith" and "works." By the philosophical school it was enjoined as *matter of symbolic moral efficiency*. So Philo speaks of circumcision ('On the Migration of Abraham,' § 16) as "setting forth the excision of all the pleasures and passions, and the destruction of impious vain opinion" (see also his treatise 'On Circumcision'). From this point of view, *baptism* is the Christian circumcision, the new symbolic expression of the moral change which St. Paul and his opponents alike deemed necessary, though they understood it in a different sense from him (see vers. 20—23). In this respect the Christian is already *complete*, for his circumcision took place in the stripping off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ (ch. iii. 5, 8, 9; Eph. iv. 22—25; Rom. vi. 6; vii. 18—25; xiii. 12; 1 Pet. ii. 1; iv. 1, 2). The inserted "of the sins" is an ancient gloss. *Ἀπ' ἐκ-δυσίς*, a double compound, found only in this Epistle (see corresponding verb in ver. 15; ch. iii. 9), denotes both "stripping off" and "putting away." "The stripping off of the body" was the ideal of the philosophical ascetics (see note on "body," ver. 23, and quotations from Philo). The apostle adds "of the flesh;" i.e. *of the body in so far as it was the body of the flesh* (vers. 13, 18, 23; ch. iii. 5). "The flesh" (in ch. i. 22 that which Christ had put on; here that which the Christian puts off; comp. Rom. viii. 3) is "the flesh of sin," of Rom. viii. 3; Gal. v. 19; Eph. ii. 3, etc. "The body," while identified with this "flesh," is "the body of sin" and "of death" (Rom. vi. 6; vii. 24; see Meyer, Godet, or Beet); sin inhabits it, clothes itself with it, and presents itself to us in its form; and this being the normal condition of unregenerate human nature, the sinful principle is naturally called *the flesh*. So "the (bodily) members" become "the members that are upon the earth," employed in the pursuit of lust and greed, till they become practically one with these vices (ch. iii. 5, see note; also Rom. vii. 5, 23). Yet "the body" and "the (sinful) flesh," while in the natural man one in practice, are in principle distinguishable (ver. 23; comp. ch. i. 22), and separable (Rom. vi. 12). The deliverance from the physical acts and habits of the old sinful life, experienced by him who is "in Christ" (ver. 10; Rom. viii. 1—4; 2 Cor. v. 17), is "the circumcision according to the Christ," or here more pointedly "of Christ"—a real and complete, instead of a partial

and symbolic, putting away of the organic life and domination of sin which made the body its seat and its instrument. The genitive "of Christ" is neither objective ("undergone by Christ"), nor subjective ("wrought by Christ"), but stands in a more general relation—"belonging to Christ," "the Christian circumcision." The occasion of this new birth in the Colossians was their baptism—

Ver. 12.—When ye were (literally, *having been*) buried with him in your baptism (ver. 20; ch. iii. 3; Rom. vi. 1—11; Gal. iii. 26, 27; Eph. iv. 5; v. 26; Titus iii. 5; 1 Pet. iii. 21). *Βάπτισμός*, the rarer form of the word, is preferred by Tregelles, Alford, Lightfoot (see his note), being found in Codex B, with other good authorities; it indicates the process ("in your baptizing"). *Βάπτισμα*, the usual form of the word, is retained by Revisers, after Tischendorf, Ellicott, Westcott and Hort. *Baptism* stands for the entire change of the man which it symbolizes and seals (Rom. vi. 3—5; Gal. iii. 27). The double aspect of this change was indicated by the twofold movement taking place in immersion, the usual form of primitive baptism—first the *κατάβυσις*, the descent of the baptized person beneath the symbolic waters, figuring his death with Christ as a separation from sin and the evil past (ver. 20),—there for a moment he is *buried*, and burial is death made complete and final (Rom. vi. 2—4); then the *ἀνάβυσις*, the emerging from the baptismal wave, which gave baptism the positive side of its significance. In which (or, *whom*) also ye were raised with (him), through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead (ch. iii. 1; i. 18; Eph. ii. 6, 8; Rom. vi. 4; iv. 24, 25; 1 Pet. i. 21). We refer the relative pronoun to the immediately antecedent "baptism," although the previous *ἐν ᾧ* refers to "Christ" (ver. 11; comp. Eph. ii. 6) and some good interpreters follow the rendering "in whom." For the Christian's *being raised with Christ* is not contrasted with his *circumcision* (ver. 11)—that figure has been dismissed—but with his *burial in baptism* (ver. 12 a); so Alford, Ellicott, Lightfoot, Revisers. "Having been buried" is replaced in the antithesis by the more assertive "ye were raised" (comp. vers. 13, 14; ch. i. 22, 26). "With" points to the "him" (Christ) of the previous clause (comp. Eph. ii. 6; Rom. vi. 6). *Faith* is the instrumental cause of that which baptism sets forth (comp. Gal. iii. 26, 27), and has for its object (not its *cause*; so Bengel) "the working" (*ἐνεργεῖα*; see note, ch. i. 29; also Eph. i. 20; iii. 20) "of God." And the special Divine work on which it rests is "the resurrection of Christ" (Rom. iv. 24, 25; x. 9; 1 Cor. xv. 13—17); comp. note on "Firstborn out of

the dead," ch. i. 19. Rising from the baptismal waters, the Christian convert declares the faith of his heart in that supreme act of God, which attests and makes sure all that he has bestowed upon us in his Son (ch. i. 12—14; comp. Rom. i. 4; also 1 Pet. i. 21; Acts ii. 36; xiii. 33, 38, etc.). Baptism symbolizes all that circumcision did, and more. It expresses more fully than the older sacrament our parting with the life of sin; and also that of which circumcision knew nothing—the union of the man with the dying and risen Christ, which makes him "dead unto sin, and alive unto God." How needless, then, even if it were legitimate, for a Christian to return to this superseded rite! To heighten his readers' sense of the reality and completeness of the change which as baptized (*i.e.* believing) Christians they had undergone, he describes it now more directly as matter of personal experience.

Ver. 13.—And you, being dead by reason of (or, *in*) your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses (Eph. ii. 1—5; i. 7; Rom. v. 12—21; vi. 23; vii. 9—13, 24; viii. 1, 2, 6, 10; 1 Cor. xv. 56; John v. 24; vi. 51; 1 John iii. 14; Gen. ii. 17). (For the transition from "having raised" (ver. 12) to this verse, comp. Eph. i. 20—ii. 1; also ch. i. 20, 21.) Again the participle gives place to the finite verb: a colon is a sufficient stop at the end of ver. 12. *Death*, in St. Paul's theology, is "a collective expression for the entire judicial consequences of sin" (see Cremer's 'Lexicon,' on *θάνατος* and *νεκρός*), of which the primary spiritual element is the sundering of the soul's fellowship with God, from which flow all other evils contained in it. *Life*, therefore, begins with *justification* (Rom. v. 18). "Trespasses" are particular acts of sin (Eph. i. 7; ii. 1, 5; Rom. v. 15—20; xi. 11); "uncircumcision of the flesh" is general sinful impurity of nature. The false teachers probably stigmatized the uncircumcised state as unholy. The apostle adopts the expression, but refers it to the pre-Christian life of his readers (see vers. 11, 12), when their Gentile uncircumcision was a true type of their moral condition (Rom. ii. 25; Eph. ii. 11). These sinful acts and this sinful condition were the cause of their former state of *death* (Rom. v. 12). The Revisers rightly restore the second emphatic "*you*"—"you, uncircumcised Gentiles" (comp. ch. i. 21, 22, 27; Eph. i. 13; ii. 11—18; Rom. xv. 9). It is *God* who "made you alive" as he "raised him (Christ)," (ver. 12); the second act being the consequence and counterpart of the first, and *faith* the subjective link between them. *Χαρίζουαι*, to show grace, used of Divine for-

givenness only in this and the Ephesian Epistle (ch. iii. 13; Eph. iv. 32: comp. Luke vii. 42, 48; 2 Cor. ii. 7, 10; xii. 13), points to the cause or principle of forgiveness in the Divine grace (Eph. ii. 4, 5; Rom. iii. 26; v. 17). In "having forgiven us" the writer significantly passes from the second to the first person: so in Eph. ii. 1—5 (comp. Rom. iii. 9, 30; 1 Tim. i. 15). The thought of the new life bestowed on the Colossians with himself in their individual forgiveness calls to his mind the great act of Divine mercy from which it sprang (the connection corresponds, in reverse order, to that of ch. i. 20, 21; 2 Cor. v. 19, 20), and he continues—

Ver. 14.—Having blotted out the bond (that was) against us with (or, *written in*) decrees, which was opposed to us (Eph. ii. 14—16; Rom. iii. 9—26; vii. 7—14; 2 Cor. v. 19; Gal. iii. 10—22; 1 Cor. xv. 56; Acts xiii. 38, 39). The ancients commonly used wax tablets in writing, and the flat end of the pointed stylus drawn over the writing *smear*ed it out (expunged) and so cancelled it (comp. Acts iii. 19; Ps. ii. 9; Isa. xliii. 25, LXX). "God," not "Christ," is the subject of this verb, which stands in immediate sequence to those of vers. 12, 13 (comp. 2 Cor. v. 19). It is the *receiver* rather than the *offerer* of satisfaction who cancels the debt: in Eph. ii. 15 (comp. ch. i. 22) a different verb is used. *Χειρόγραφον* ("hand-written;" a word of later Greek, only here in the New Testament) is used specially of an *account of debt, a bond signed by the debtor's hand* (see Meyer and Lightfoot). This *bond* (with its *decrees*) can be nothing other than "the law" (Eph. ii. 14—16; Acts xiii. 38, 39; Rom. iii. 20; vii. 25; Gal. iii. 21, 22, etc.); not, however, the *ritual law*, nor even the *Mosaic Law* as such (as Meyer contends), but *law as law*, the Divine rule of human life impressed even on Gentile hearts (Rom. ii. 14, 15), to which man's conscience gives its consent (Rom. vii. 16, 22), and yet which becomes by his disobedience just a list of charges against him (so Neander and Lightfoot; see the latter on Gal. ii. 19). Exod. xxiv. 3 and Deut. xxvii. 14—26, indeed, illustrate this wider relation of Divine law to the human conscience generally. *Τοῖς δόγμασιν* is dative of reference either to *καθ' ἡμῶν* ("against us:" qualifying or explanatory—in respect of its decrees) or to the verbal idea contained in *χειρόγραφον* ("written in," or "with decrees"). The former explanation (that of Winer and Ellicott) is preferable. The Greek Fathers made it instrumental dative to *ἐξαλείψας*, understanding by these *δόγματα* the doctrines (*dogmas*) of the gospel by which the charges of the Law against us are expunged. But this puts on *δόγμα* a later theological sense foreign to St. Paul, and universally rejected

by modern interpreters. In the New Testament (comp. Luke ii. 1; Acts xvi. 4; Heb. xi. 23), as in classical Greek, *δόγμα* is a *decree*, setting forth the will of some public authority (comp. note on *δογματίζω*, ver. 20). The added clause, "which was opposed to us," affirms the active opposition, as "against us" the essential hostility of the decrees of God's law to our sinful nature (Rom. iv. 15; Gal. iii. 10: comp. Rom. vii. 13, 14). The emphasis with which St. Paul dwells on this point is characteristic of the author of Romans and Galatians. *Ἐναντίας* occurs besides only in Heb. x. 27; the prefix *ἐν* implies close and persistent opposition (Lightfoot). And he hath taken it out of the midst, having nailed it to the cross (ch. i. 20—22; Eph. ii. 18; 2 Cor. v. 19; Rom. iii. 24—26; v. 1, 2; Gal. iii. 13; Heb. i. 3; John i. 29; 1 John iv. 10). A third time in these three verses (12—14) we note the transition from participle to co-ordinate finite verb; and here, in addition, the aorist tense passes into the perfect ("hath taken"), marking the finality of the removal of the Law's condemning power (Rom. viii. 1; Acts xiii. 39): comp. the opposite transition in ch. i. 26, 27. The *moral deliverance* of ver. 11 is traced up to this *legal release*, both contained in our completeness in Christ (ver. 10). The subject is still "God." *Cancelling the bond* which he held against us in his Law, God has for ever removed the barrier which stood between mankind and himself (2 Cor. v. 19). Christ's place in this work, already shown in ch. i. 18—23 (in its relation to himself), is vividly recalled by the mention of the cross. And the abolition of the Law's condemnation is finally set forth by a yet bolder metaphor—"having nailed it to the cross." The nails of the cross in piercing Christ pierced the legal instrument which held us debtors, and nullified it; see Gal. iii. 13 (comp. Gal. ii. 19, 20); Rom. vii. 4—6. *Προσηλώσας* may suggest the further idea of *nailing up* the cancelled document, by way of publication. At the cross all may read, "There is now no condemnation" (compare the "making a show" of ver. 15; also Rom. iii. 25; Gal. iii. 1). (For vers. 11—14, compare concluding remark on ch. i. 14.)

Ver. 15.—Having stripped off the principalities and the dominions (ch. i. 16; ii. 10; Acts vii. 38, 53; Gal. iii. 19; Heb. i. 5, 7, 14; ii. 2, 5; Deut. xxxiii. 2; Ps. lxxviii. 17). *Ἀπεκδυσάμενος* has been rendered, from the time of the Latin Vulgate, "having spoiled" (*exspoliatus*), a rendering which is "not less a violation of St. Paul's usage (ch. iii. 9) than of grammatical rule" (Lightfoot; so Alford, Ellicott, Wordsworth, Hofmann, Revisers). It is precisely the same participle that we find in ch. iii. 9, and the writer has

just used the noun *ἀνέκδυσις* (ver. 11) in a corresponding sense (see note *in loc.* on the force of the double compound). He employs compounds of *δύω* in the middle voice seventeen times elsewhere, and always in the sense of "putting off [or, 'on'] from one's self;" and there is no sure instance in Greek of the middle verb bearing any other meaning. Yet such critics as Meyer, Eadie, Klöpper, cling to the rendering of the Vulgate and our Authorized Version; and not without reason, as we shall see. The Revised margin follows the earlier Latin Fathers and some ancient versions, supplying "his body" as object of the participle, understanding "Christ" as subject. But the context does not, as in 2 Cor. v. 3, suggest this ellipsis, and it is arbitrary to make the participle itself mean "having disembodied himself." Nor has the writer introduced any new subject since ver. 12, where "God" appears as agent of each of the acts of salvation set forth in vers. 12—15. Moreover, "the principalities and the dominions" of this verse must surely be those of ver. 10 and of ch. i. 16 (compare the "angels" of ver. 18). We understand St. Paul, therefore, to say "that God [revealing himself in Christ; 'in him,' 15 b] put off and put away those angelic powers through whom he had previously shown himself to men." The Old Testament associates the angels with the creation of the world and the action of the powers of nature (Job xxxviii. 7; Ps. civ. 4), and with its great theophanies generally (Ps. lxxviii. 7; Dent. xxxiii. 2; 2 Kings vi. 17, etc.); and its hints in this direction were emphasized and extended by the Greek translators of the LXX. Acts vii. 38, 53 (St. Stephen); Gal. iii. 19; Heb. ii. 2, ascribe to them a special agency in the giving of the Law. Heb. i. and ii. show how large a place the doctrine of the mediation of angels filled in Jewish thought at this time, and how it tended to limit the mediatorship of Christ. The mystic developments of Judaism among the Essenes and the Ebionites (Christian Essenes), and in the Cabala, are full of this belief. And it is a corner-stone of the philosophic mysticism of Alexandria. In Philo the angels are the "Divine powers," "words," "images of God," forming the court and *entourage* of the invisible King, by whose means he created and maintains the material world, and holds converse with the souls of men (see quotation, ver. 10). This doctrine, we may suppose, was a chief article of the Colossian heresy. Theodoret's note on ver. 18 is apposite here: "They who defended the Law taught men to worship angels, saying that the Law was given by them. This mischief continued long in Phrygia and Pisidia." The apostle

returns to the point from which he started in ver. 10. He has just declared that God has cancelled and removed the Law as an instrument of condemnation; and now adds that he has at the same time thrown off and laid aside the veil of angelic mediation under which, in the administration of that Law, he had withdrawn himself. Both these acts take place "in Christ." Both are necessary to that "access to the Father" which, in the apostle's view, is the special prerogative of Christian faith (Eph. i. 18; iii. 12; Rom. v. 2), and which the Colossian error doubly barred, by its ascetic ceremonialism and by its angelic mediation. (See, on this passage, Alford; also Peirce's 'Paraphrase and Notes,' 2nd edit., 1729; Robertson Smith, on 'Christ and the Angels,' *Expositor*, second series, vol. i. 138, etc.; A. Sabatier's 'L'Apôtre Paul,' p. 220, 2nd edit., 1881.) We are compelled, with all deference to its high authority, to reject the view of the Greek Fathers, to which Ellicott, Lightfoot, and Wordsworth have returned, according to which "Christ in his atoning death [in it; 'the cross,' ver. 15 b] stripped off from himself the Satanic powers." For it requires us to bring in, without grammatical warrant, "somewhere" (Lightfoot), "Christ" as subject; it puts upon "the principalities and the dominions" a sense foreign to the context, and that cannot be justified by Eph. vi. 12, where the connection is wholly different and the hostile sense of the terms is most explicitly defined; and it presents an idea harsh and unfitting in itself, the incongruity of which such illustrations as those of the *Nessus robe* and *Joseph's garment* only make more apparent. It is one thing to say that the powers of evil surrounded Christ, and quite another thing to say that he wore them as we have worn "the body of the flesh" (ver. 11; ch. iii. 9). He made a show (of them) openly, having led them in triumph in him; or, *it* (Eph. i. 21, 22; Phil. ii. 10; 1 Pet. iii. 22; Heb. i. 5, 6; John i. 52; Matt. xxv. 31; xxvi. 53; Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 9). In this, as in the last verse, we have a finite verb between two participles, one introductory ("having stripped off"), the other explanatory. *Δεῖγματι* (*to make a show or example*), occurs in the New Testament besides only in Matt. i. 17, where it is compounded with *παπα* (Revised Text), giving it a sinister meaning, not belonging to the simple verb. With the angelic "principalities," etc., for object, the verb denotes, not a shameful exposure, but "an exhibition of them in their true character and position," such as forbids them to be regarded superstitiously (ver. 18). God exhibited the angels as the subordinates and servants of his Son (ver. 10; comp. Luke i. 26; ii. 10, 13; Mark i. 13; Luke

xxii. 43; Matt. xxviii. 2, etc.). "Openly" (*ἐν παρρησίᾳ*: literally, *in freedom of speech*, a favourite word of St. Paul's) implies the absence of reserve or restraint, rather than mere publicity (comp. Eph. vi. 19; Phil. i. 20). *ἔσπευτο* (*"having triumphed;"* 2 Cor. ii. 14 only other instance of the verb in the New Testament: its use in classical Greek confined to Latinist writers, referring, historically, to the Roman *triumph*) presents a formidable difficulty in the way of the interpretation of the verse followed so far. For the common acceptance of the word "triumph" compels us to think of the "principalities," etc., as *hostile (Satanic)*; and this, again, as Meyer strongly contends, dictates the rendering "having spoiled" for *ἀνεκδιδόμενος*. So we are brought into collision with two fixed points of our former exegesis. If we are bound lexically to abide by the reference to the Roman military triumph, then the angelic principalities must be supposed to have stood in a quasi-hostile position to "the kingdom of God and of Christ," *in so far as men had exaggerated their powers and exalted them at Christ's expense*, and to have been now robbed of this false pre-eminence. The writer however, ventures to question whether, on philological grounds, a better, native Greek sense cannot be found for this verb. The noun *thriambos* ("triumph"), on which it is based, is used, indeed, in the Latin sense as early as Polybius, a writer on Roman history (160 B.C.). But it is extant in a much earlier classical fragment as synonymous with *dithyrambos*, denoting "a festal song;" and again in Plutarch, contemporary with St. Paul, it is a name of the Greek god Dionysus, in whose honour such songs were sung, and whose worship was of a choral, processional character. This kind of *triumph* was, one may imagine, familiar to the eyes of St. Paul and of his readers, while the spectacle of the Roman triumph was distant and foreign (at least when he wrote 2 Corinthians). We suggest that the apostle's image is taken, both here and in 2 Cor. ii. 14, from the *festal procession* of the Greek divinity, who leads his worshippers along as witnesses of his power and co-operators of his glory. Such a figure fittingly describes the relation and the attitude of the angels to the Divine presence in Christ. Let this suggestion, however, be regarded as precarious or fanciful, the general exposition of the verse is not thereby invalidated. (For further elucidation, see the *Expositor*, first series, vol. x. pp. 403—421; xi. p. 78. On "triumph," in 2 Corinthians, see Mr. Waite's *Additional note* in 'Speaker's Commentary.') The Revisers omit the marginal "in himself" of the Authorized Version, which correctly, as we think, refers

the final *ἐν αὐτῷ* to Christ (ver. 10), though incorrectly implying "Christ" as subject of the verse. It was not only "in the cross" that God unveiled himself, dispensing with angelic theophanies, but in the entire person and work of his Son (ch. i. 15; 2 Cor. iv. 4; John i. 14, 18; xiv. 9). "Which veil" (for here we may apply the words of 2 Cor. iii. 14) "is done away in Christ." So the whole passage (vers. 10—15) ends, as it begins, "in him:" "We are complete in him"—in our conversion from sin to holiness set forth in baptism, and our resurrection from death to life experienced in forgiveness (vers. 11—13); and in the removal at once of the legal bar which forbade our access to God (ver. 14), and of the veil of inferior and partial mediation which obscured his manifestation to us (ver. 15).

VERS. 16—23.—SECTION VI. THE CLAIMS OF THE FALSE TEACHER.

Ver. 16.—Do not let any one, therefore, be judging you in eating or in drinking (vers. 21—23; 1 Tim. iv. 1—5; Rom. xiv. 17; Heb. ix. 10; xiii. 9; Mark vii. 14—19). The new teachers dictated to the Colossians in these matters from the philosophical, ascetic point of view (see notes on "philosophy," "circumcision," vers. 8, 11), condemning their previous liberty. (For the adverse sense of "judge," comp. Rom. xiv. 4, 10, 13.) The scruples of the "weak brethren" at Rome (Rom. xiv.) were partly of an ascetic character, but are not ascribed to any philosophic views. In 1 Cor. viii. 8 and x. the question stands on a different footing, being connected with that of the recognition of idolatry (comp. Acts xv. 29). In Heb. ix. 10 it is purely a point of Jewish law. In one form or other it was sure to be raised wherever Jewish and Gentile Christians were in social intercourse. Ver. 17 shows that such restrictions are "not according to Christ" (ver. 8), belonging to the system which he has superseded. "Therefore" bases this warning upon the reasoning of the previous context. Tertullian ('Against Marcion,' v. 19) supplies the link connecting this verse with vers. 10, 15, 18, when he says, "The apostle blames those who alleged visions of angels as their authority for saying that men must abstain from meats." The abolishing of angel mediation (ver. 15) robs these restrictions of their supposed authority. The Essenes found in the Nazarite life and the rules for the ministering Jewish priest (Numb. vi. 3; Lev. x. 8—11; Ezek. xlv. 21) their ideal of holiness. Philo also attached a high moral value to abstinence from flesh and wine, and regarded the Levitical distinctions of meats as profoundly symbolic. Or in respect of feast, or new moon, or sabbath

(Rom. xiv. 5, 6; Gal. iv. 9, 10). The yearly *feast*, the monthly *new moon*, and the weekly *sabbath* (1 Chron. xxiii. 31; Isa. i. 13, 14) cover the whole round of Jewish sacred seasons. These the Colossian Gentile Christians, disciples of St. Paul through Epaphras, had not hitherto observed (Gal. iv. 9, 10). Philosophic Judaists insisted on these institutions, giving them a symbolical and ethical interpretation (see Philo, 'On the Number Seven;' also, 'On the Migration of Abraham,' § 16, where he warns his readers lest, "because the feast is a symbol of the joy of the soul and of thanksgiving towards God," they should imagine they could dispense with it, or "break through any established customs which divine men have instituted").

Ver. 17.—Which are a shadow of the things to come, but the body is of Christ (Gal. iii. 23—28; iv. 4; 2 Cor. iii. 11, 13; Heb. vii. 18, 19; ix. 11—14; x. 1—4). The apostle's opponents, we imagine, taught in Platonic fashion that these things were shadows of *ideal truth* and of the *invisible world* (comp. Heb. viii. 5), forms necessary to our apprehension of spiritual things. With St. Paul, they shadow forth prophetically the *concrete facts* of the *Christian revelation*, and therefore are displaced by its advent. The singular verb (literally, *is*) quite grammatically combines the particulars of ver. 16 under their common idea of a foreshadowing of the things of Christ; and the present tense affirms here a general truth, not a mere historical fact. How this was true of the "sabbath," e.g., appears in Heb. i. 1—11; comp. 1 Cor. v. 6—8; John xix. 36, for the Christian import of the Passover-fest. The figurative antithesis of "shadow" and "body" is sufficiently obvious; it occurs in Philo and in Josephus: to refer to ver. 19 and ch. i. 18 for the sense of *body*, is misleading. For "the things to come" (the things of Christ and of the new, Christian era, now commencing), comp. Rom. iv. 24; v. 14; Gal. iii. 23; Heb. ii. 5; x. 1. This substance of the new, abiding revelation (2 Cor. iii. 11) is "Christ's," inasmuch as it centres in and is pervaded and governed by Christ (ch. i. 18; iii. 11; Rom. x. 4; 2 Cor. iii. 14). Nothing is said here to discountenance positive Christian institutions, or the observance of the Lord's day in particular, unless enforced in a Judaistic spirit. The apostle is protecting Gentile Christians from the re-imposition of Jewish institutions as such, as impairing their faith in Christ (comp. Gal. v. 2—9), and as, in the case of the Colossians, involving a deference to the authority of angels which limited his sovereignty and sufficiency (vers. 8—10, 18, 19). This verse contains in germ much of the thought of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Ver. 18.—Let no one defraud you of your prize (ch. i. 5, 23; iii. 15; Phil. iii. 14; Gal. v. 7; 1 Cor. ix. 24—27; 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8; Jas. i. 12; 1 Pet. v. 4; Rev. ii. 10; iii. 11). These eight words represent but three in the Greek. (On *καταβασθεύω*, see Meyer's elaborate note.) *Βραβεῖον* is used again in ch. iii. 15 (see note), meaning primarily "to act as *βραβεύς*," arbiter of the prize in the public games; *βραβεῖον*, the prize, is also figuratively used in Phil. iii. 14, and literally in 1 Cor. ix. 24, and is synonymous with the "crown" of other passages. *Κατὰ* gives the verb a hostile sense; and the present tense, as in vers. 4, 8, 16, 20, implies a continued attempt. *Let no one be acting the umpire against you*, is the literal sense. The errorist condemns the Colossian Christian for his neglect of Jewish observances (ver. 16), and warns him that in his present state he will miss the heavenly prize, "the hope" he had supposed to be "in store for him in heaven" (ver. 5; comp. notes on ch. i. 5 and iii. 15; also Eph. i. 13, 14). Delighting in lowliness of mind and worship of the angels (ver. 23; Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 8, 9; Judg. xiii. 17, 18). By these means the false teacher impressed his disciples. His angel-worship commended itself as the mark of a devout and humble mind, reverent towards the unseen powers above us, and made purely Christian worship seem insufficient. "Delighting in" is the rendering of *θέλων ἐν* given by Bengel, Hofmann, Lightfoot, Klöpper, and is preferable to that of Meyer and Ellicott, who, with several Greek interpreters, supply the sense of the previous verb "desiring (to do so) in lowliness," etc.; and to that followed in the Revisers' margin, which puts a sort of adverbial sense on *θέλων*—"of his mere will, by humility," etc. This latter rendering underlies the paraphrastic "voluntary humility" of the A.V., and agrees with the common interpretation of *ἐθελουθῆσκα* in ver. 23 (see note). *Θέλων ἐν* is, no doubt, a marked Hebraism, and St. Paul's language is "singularly free from Hebraisms" (compare, however, the use of *εἰδέναι*, to know, in 1 Thess. v. 12; the similar *εὐδοκέω ἐν* is well established, 1 Cor. x. 5; 2 Cor. xii. 10; 2 Thess. ii. 12). This very idiom is frequently used in the LXX, and occurs in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, a Christian writing of the second century. The apostle may surely be allowed occasionally to have used a Hebraistic phrase, especially when so convenient and expressive as this. Westcott and Hort, with scrupulous purism, mark the reading on this account as doubtful. *Ταπεινοφροσύνη* ("lowliness of mind"), a word, perhaps, compounded by St. Paul himself (see Trench's 'Synonyms'), is almost confined to the Epistles of this group (comp. ver. 23; ch. iii. 12; Eph. iv.

2; Phil. ii. 9; also Acts xx. 19; 1 Pet. v. 5). This quality is ascribed *ironically* to the false teacher (compare the "puffed up" of the next clause, and for similar irony see 1 Cor. viii. 1, 2; Gal. iv. 17). ὀρησκέλα is "outward worship" or "devotion;" comp. note on ver. 23; elsewhere in New Testament only in Acts xxvi. 5 and Jas. i. 26, 27 (see Trench's 'Synonyms'). "Worship of the angels" is that *paid to the angels*; not "offered by them," as Luther and Hofmann interpret, supposing that the errorists pretended to imitate the worship of heaven. 'Investigating (or, *dwelling on*) the things which he hath seen' vainly—being puffed up by 'the reason' of his flesh (2 Cor. xii. 1, 7; 1 Cor. viii. 1; 1 Tim. vi. 3-5; 2 Pet. ii. 18; Jude 16). For ἐμβάτεον, we adopt the sense which it bears in 2 Macc. ii. 30; in Philo, 'On the Planting of Noah,' § 19. and in patristic and later Greek generally, viz. "to search into," "examine," "discuss" (see Suicer's 'Thesaurus'). The rendering "proceeding" or "dwelling on," though near the radical sense of the word ("to step on" or "in"), wants lexical support. The same may be said of the rendering "intruding into," which suits the Received reading, "which he hath not seen." The "not" of the relative clause is wanting in nearly all our oldest and best witnesses, and is cancelled by the Revisers, with Tregelles, Tischendorf, Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort, etc. Its appearance in two different forms (ὅν and μὴ) in the documents that present it, makes it still more certain that it is a copyist's insertion. The common reading gives, after all, an unsatisfactory sense; it is not likely the apostle would blame the errorist simply for entering into things beyond his sight (comp. 2 Cor. iv. 18; v. 7). Meyer, after Steiger and Huther, gives the best explanation of "which he hath seen," supposing the writer to allude ironically to *pretended visions* of angels or of the spiritual world, by which the false teacher sought to impose on the Colossians. This view is suggested by Tertullian in the passage cited under ver. 16. Such visions would be suitable for the purpose of the errorist, and congenial to the Phrygian temperament, with its tendency to mysticism and ecstasy (see Theodoret, quoted under ver. 15, who also says that *angel-worship* was specially forbidden by the Council of Laodicea, A.D. 364). If the false teacher were accustomed to say with an imposing air, "I have seen, ah! I have seen!" in referring to his revelations, the apostle's allusion would be obvious and telling. The language of 2 Cor. xii. 1 (R.V.) suggests a similar reliance on supernatural visions on the part of the apostle's earlier opponents. This pretentious visionary is, however, a "philosopher" and a "rea-

soner" first of all (vers. 4, 8). Accordingly he *investigates what he has seen*; inquires into the import of his visions, rationally develops their principles, and deduces their consequences. So far, the apostle continues in the ironical vein in which the first words of the verse are written, setting forth the pretensions of his opponent in his own terms, his irony "restraining itself till, after the word ἐμβάτεον, the indignation of truth breaks forth from it" (Steiger) in the caustic and decisive "vainly." Εἰκὴ qualifies the foregoing participle (so Origen, apparently, in Cramer's 'Catena,' vol. iv. p. 69; Steiger, De Wette, Hofmann, Conybeare) more suitably than the following. Thus it signifies "idly," "to no purpose," as everywhere also in St. Paul (Rom. xiii. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 2; Gal. iii. 4; iv. 11); not "without cause," as joined to φουρτούμενος ("puffed up"), whose force it could only weaken. "Vainly" stigmatizes the futility, "puffed up" the conceit, and "by the reason of his flesh" the low and sensuous origin of these vaunted revelations and of the high-flown theosophy which they were used to support. (For the sarcastic force of "puffed up," comp. 1 Cor. iv. 6, 19; v. 2; vii. 1; xiii. 4). The "reason" (νοῦς) is, in Greek philosophy, the philosophical faculty, the power of supersensible intuition; and in Plato and Philo, the organ of the higher, mystical knowledge of Divine things (see Philo, 'Who is Heir of Divine Things?' §§ 13, 20, and *passim*). The Colossian "philosopher" (ver. 8) would, we may imagine, speak of himself as "borne aloft" in his visions "by heavenly reason," "lifted high in angelical communion," or the like. Hence the apostle's sarcasm, "*Exalted* are they? say rather, *inflated: lifted high by Divine reason? nay, but swollen high by the reason of their flesh.*" Some such allusion to the language of the errorists best accounts for the paradoxical νοῦς τῆς σαρκός (see Lightfoot); contrast with Rom. vii. 25, and compare the disparaging reference to δαιμόνι, ch. i. 21 (note). Difficult as this passage is, we hesitate to follow Lightfoot, and Westcott and Hort, who have given their weighty sanction to the perilous remedy of *conjectural emendation*; the latter editors for the second time in this verse, and again in ver. 23. The line of interpretation here adopted is advocated in the *Expositor*, first series, vol. xi. pp. 385-398.

Ver. 19.—**And not holding fast the Head** (vers. 6, 8; ch. i. 15-20; Eph. i. 20-23; Phil. ii. 9-11; Rom. ix. 5; xiv. 9; 1 Cor. viii. 6; Rev. xix. 16). In the last verse the errorist was judged "out of his own mouth," and the intrinsic hollowness of his pretensions was exposed. Now "he appears before the judgment-seat of Christ," charged with high treason against him, the Lord alike of

the kingdoms of nature and of grace. So the apostle falls back once more (comp. ver. 10) on the foundation laid down in ch. i. 15-20, on which his whole polemic rests. Both in creation and redemption, the philosophic Judaists assigned to the angels a rôle inconsistent with the sovereign mediatorship of Christ (see notes on vers. 10 and 15). From whom all the body, through its joinings and bands being supplied and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God (ch. i. 18; Eph. i. 22, 23; iv. 15, 16; John xv. 1-6; 1 Cor. iii. 6). Disloyalty to "the head" works destruction to "the body," which in this case "proceeds from" ("grows out of," *ἐξ . . . αὐτοῦ*) its Head, while it depends upon him. Gnosticism from the beginning tended to disintegrate the Church, by the caste-feeling (ch. i. 28, note; iii. 11) and the sectarian spirit to which it gave birth (ver. 8; Acts xx. 30). Its vague and subjective doctrines were ready to assume a different form with each new exponent. Here lies the connection between this and the Ephesian letter, the doctrine of the Church following upon and growing out of that of the person of Christ, each being threatened—the latter immediately, the former more remotely—by the rise of the new Judæo-Christian mystic rationalism. Colossians asserts the "thou in me" of John xvii. 23; Ephesians the corresponding "I in them;" and both the consequent "they made perfect in one" (comp., especially, Eph. iii. 14-21 and iv. 7-16 with ch. i. 15-20 and ii. 9-15). (On "body," see note, ch. i. 18.) *Ἄφ' αὐτοῦ* signifies, not "joints" as parts of the bony skeleton, but includes all points of contact and connection in the body; Latin *nexus, junctura* (see Lightfoot). Bengel and Meyer, following Chrysostom, interpret it as "senses," or "nerves;" but this does not commend itself either lexically or contextually. The *συνδεσμοί* (comp. ch. iii. 14) are the "ligaments," the stronger and more distinct connections that give the bodily framework unity and solidity. So, by the organic co-operation of the whole structure, the body of Christ is furnished with its supplies, enabled to receive and dispense to each member the needed sustenance; and "knit together" (ver. 2), drawn into a close and firm unity. "Supplied" (comp. 2 Cor. ix. 10; Gal. iii. 5) indicates a sustenance both required and due. In ch. i. 6 we read of the increase of the gospel, in ch. i. 10 of the individual believer, and now of the Church as a body (Eph. ii. 21; iv. 16). "The increase of God" is that which God bestows (1 Cor. iii. 6), as it proceeds "from Christ" (*ἐξ αὐτοῦ*; ver. 10; ch. iii. 11; John i. 16), in whom is "the fulness of the God-head" (ver. 9; comp. Eph. i. 23 and iii. 17-19). In Eph. iv. 16 the same idea is expressed in almost the same terms. There,

however, the growth appears as proper to the body, resulting from its very constitution; here, as a bestowment of God, dependent, therefore, upon Christ, and ceasing if the Church ceases to hold fast to him.

Vers. 20-23.—The apostle's fourth and last warning is directed against *ascetic rules of life*.

Ver. 20.—If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world (vers. 8, 10-13; ch. iii. 3; Rom. vi. 1-11; vii. 1-6; 2 Cor. v. 14-17). "Therefore" is struck out by the Revisers on the best authority. It would imply a logical dependence of this verse upon the last, which does not exist. This warning, like those of vers. 16, 18, looks back to the previous section, and especially to vers. 8, 10, 12. It is a new application of St. Paul's fundamental principle of the union of the Christian with Christ in his death and resurrection (see notes, vers. 11, 12). Accepting the death of Christ as supplying the means of his redemption (ch. i. 14, 22), and the law of his future life (Phil. iii. 10; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; Gal. ii. 20), the Christian breaks with and becomes dead (to and) from all other, former religious principles; which appear to him now but childish, tentative gropings after and preparations for what is given him in Christ (comp. Gal. ii. 19; iii. 24; iv. 2, 3; Rom. vii. 6). On "rudiments," see note, ver. 8. There these "rudiments of the world" appear as general ("philosophical") principles of religion, intrinsically false and empty; here they are moral rules of life, mean and worthless substitutes for "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." (For the Pauline idiom, "died from" (so as to be separate, or free from)," comp. Rom. vii. 2, 6; Acts xiii. 39.) Why, as (men) living in (the) world, are you made subject to decrees (Gal. iv. 9; v. 1; vi. 14; 2 Cor. v. 17). To adopt the rules of the new teachers is to return to the worldly, pre-Christian type of religion which the Christian had once for all abandoned (Gal. iv. 9). "World" bears the emphasis rather than "living" ("having one's principle of life;" comp. 1 Tim. v. 6; Luke xii. 15). Standing without the article, it signifies "the world as such," in its natural character and attainments, without Christ (ver. 8; Eph. ii. 12; 1 Cor. i. 21). *ἀρρατιζέσθε* (the verb only here in the New Testament) is passive rather than middle in voice (Winer, p. 326; see Meyer *in loc.*); literally, *why are you being dogmatized, overridden with decrees?* Compare "spoil" (ver. 8), "judge" (ver. 16), for the domineering spirit of the false teacher. The "dogmas" or "decrees" of ver. 14 (see note) are those of the Divine Law; these are of human imposition (vers. 8, 22), which their authors, however, seem

to put upon a level with the former. In each case the *decrees* is an external enforcement, not an inner principle of life.

Ver. 21 gives examples of the *decrees* which the Colossians are blamed for regarding—and in this respect more than in any other they seem to have yielded to the demands of the false teacher. 'Do not handle, nor taste, nor touch' (vers. 16, 23; 1 Cor. vi. 12, 13; viii. 8; x. 25-27, 30; Rom. xiv. 14-17; 1 Tim. iv. 3-5; Titus i. 15). Those rules form part of a prohibitory regimen by which sinful tendencies to bodily pleasure were to be repressed (ver. 23), and spiritual truths symbolically enforced (ver. 17; see note on "circumcision," ver. 11): comp. Philo, 'On Conspicuousness,' also 'On Victims,' § 3. ὅλως the last of the three verbs, appears to be the strongest, forbidding the slightest contact. ἄψη is better rendered "handle" (comp. John xx. 17); by itself it will scarcely bear the meaning it has in 1 Cor. vii. 1. The next verse seems to imply that all three verbs relate to matters of diet. Ambrose and other Latin Fathers of ascetic tendencies put these prohibitions into the mouth of St. Paul himself, reversing his meaning.

Ver. 22 *a* is the apostle's comment on these rules, in the form of a continuation of their terms. *Do not touch*—things which are all intended to perish (literally, for corruption) in their consumption (Matt. xv. 17; Mark vii. 19; 1 Cor. vi. 13; viii. 8; 1 Tim. iv. 3-5), which, being destroyed as they are used, therefore do not enter into the soul's life, and are of themselves morally indifferent; so the Greek Fathers, and most modern interpreters. This is the position which Christ himself takes in regard to Jewish distinctions of meats (Mark vii. 14-23, R.V.). We note the same style of sarcastic comment on the language of the false teachers as that exhibited in ver. 18. Augustine, Calvin, and some others render, "which (decrees) tend to (spiritual) destruction in their use;" but ἀποχρηστis never means simply "use," and the antecedent "decrees" is awkwardly supplied. More plausibly, De Wette and some moderns interpret, "things which tend to (spiritual) destruction in their abuse," putting the words in the mouth of the false teacher, as though he said, "Abstain from everything the use of which may be fatal to the soul." But this ascribes to the errorist an argument which falls short of his principles (see note on "hard treatment of the body," ver. 23); and to which, specious as it is, and in harmony with the apostle's own teaching (1 Cor. vi. 12; ix. 26, 27), he makes no reply. According to the commandments and teachings of men (Isa. xxix. 13, LXX;

Matt. xv. 9; Mark vii. 7; ver. 8; 1 Cor. i. 20; ii. 5, 13); the only passage in this Epistle which distinctly alludes to the language of the Old Testament. But the words are, we may suppose, primarily a reminiscence of the language of Christ, who uses them in connection with his announcement of the abolition of the sacred distinctions of meats (comp. Mark vii. 1-23). This clause points out the method after which, and direction in which, the new teachers were leading their disciples, on the line of a man-made instead of a God-given religion. "Commandments" (or, "injunctions") include the prescriptions of ver. 21 and all others like them; "teachings" embrace the general principles and doctrines on which these rules were based. So this expression, following "rudiments of the world" (ver. 20), leads us back by a rapid generalization from the particulars specified in ver. 21 to the general starting-point given in ver. 8 (see note), and prepares us for the brief and energetic summary of the whole Colossian error which we find in—

Ver. 23.—Such as have (literally, are (things) having) word indeed of wisdom (vers. 4, 8; 1 Cor. ii. 1, 4, 13; xii. 8). The antecedent of "such as" is "commandments and teachings" (Meyer, Alford, Ellicott), not "decrees" (ver. 21). For ver. 22 supplies the immediate antecedent, and the wider sense thus given is necessary to support the comprehensive and summary import of ver. 23. The Greek "are having" brings into view the nature and qualities of the subject, in accordance with ἄνωγα, such as, the qualitative relative (comp. ἦτις, ch. iii. 5; see Moulton's Winer, pp. 209, 210; also Meyer and Ellicott, on the grammatical point). A certain "word of wisdom" was ascribed to the false teachers in ver. 4 (note the play upon λόγος in St. Paul's Greek). They were plausible dealers in words, and had the jargon of philosophy at their tongue's end (ver. 8; compare note on ἐμπατεῖων, ver. 18). On this the apostle had first remarked in his criticism of their teaching, and to this he first adverts in his final resumé. "Word of wisdom" is one of the "gifts of the Spirit" in 1 Cor. xii. 8; but the disparaging μὲν, indeed, with the emphatic position of λόγον throwing σόφας into the shade, in view also of the censures already passed in vers. 4, 8, puts a condemnatory sense upon the phrase: "having word indeed of wisdom"—"that and nothing more, no inner truth, no pith and substance of wisdom" (so Chrysostom and Beza). "Word and deed," "word and truth," form a standing antithesis (ch. iii. 17; Rom. xv. 18; 1 Cor. iv. 19, 20; 1 John iii. 18, etc.), the second member of which supplies itself to the mind; and

the solitary *μὴν* in such a connection is a well-established classical idiom (see Winer's or A. Buttmann's 'Grammar'; also Meyer). It is superfluous, therefore, as well as confusing to the order of thought, to seek in the sequel for the missing half of the antithesis. Other renderings of *λόγον*—"show" (English A.V., Bengel, De Wette), "ground" or "reason" (Vulgate, Klöpper), "reputation" (Meyer, Alford, Ellicott, Lightfoot)—are partly doubtful or exceptional in point of usage, and partly overlook the pointed reference of vers. 22, 23 to the language of vers. 4 and 8. And the combination of *λόγον* *ἔχοντα* into a single phrase is scarcely justified here in face of the established Pauline association of "word" and "wisdom" (comp. 1 Cor. i. 17—ii. 16, as well as xii. 8). Both in this Epistle and in 1 Corinthians the writer is contending against forms of error which found their account in the Greek love of eloquence and of dexterous word-play. While the first part of the predicate, therefore, explains the intellectual attractiveness of the Colossian error, the clause next following accounts for its religious fascination; and the third part of the verse strikes at the root of its ethical and practical applications. (Shown) in (or, with) devotion to (or, delight in) worship (or, voluntary worship) and lowliness of mind (ver. 18). The preposition "in" brings us into the moral and religious sphere of life in which this would-be wisdom of doctrine had its range and found its application. The prefix *ἐθελο-* of *ἐθελοθρησκεία* ordinarily connotes "willingness" rather than "wiffulness;" and the "delighting in worship" of ver. 18 (see note) points strongly in this direction. As against Ellicott and Lightfoot on the etymological point, see Hofmann, pp. 102, 103. Only so far as the *worship* in question (see note, ver. 18, on "worship") is evil, can the *having a will to worship* be evil. The other characteristics of the error marked in this verse seem to be recommendations, and "devotion to worship" is in keeping with them. This disposition, moreover, has an air of "humility," which does not belong to a *self-imposed, arbitrary worship*. There is a love of worship for mere worship's sake which is a perversion of the religious instinct, and tends to multiply both the forms and objects of devotion. This spurious religionism took the form, in the Colossian errorists, of *worship paid to the angels*. On this particular worship the apostle passed his judgment in ver. 18, and now points out the tendency from which it springs. In ver. 18 "humility" precedes; here it follows "worship," by way of transition from the religious to the moral aspect of the new teaching. And (or, with) un-

sparing treatment of (the) body—not in any honour (as) against surfeiting of the flesh (vers. 16, 21, 22; Phil. iii. 19—21; 1 Tim. iv. 3; 1 Cor. vi. 13—20; xii. 23—25; 1 Thess. iv. 4). The "and" linking this clause to the last under the government of "in," is textually doubtful; Lightfoot cancels it; Westcott and Hort give the omission as a secondary reading. Mr. Hort regards the passage, like ver. 18, as hopelessly corrupt—a verdict which we would fain believe is too despairing. If *καὶ* be struck out, then *ἀφειδία* must be attached, somewhat loosely, to the principal predicate ("are having") as an instrumental dative. On either construction, the sense appears to be that it was its combination of ascetic rigour with religious devotion that gave to the system in question its undoubted charm, and furnished an adequate field for the eloquence and philosophical skill of its advocate. *Ἀφειδία*, *unsparingness*, and *πλησμορτία*, *surfeiting*—both found only here in the New Testament—and along with them "body" and "flesh," stand opposed to each other. This clause, therefore, contains a complete sense, and we must not look outside it for an explanation of the included words, "not in any honour." As we have seen, the first clause of the predicate ("having word indeed," etc.) needs no such complement. The clause "not . . . flesh" is a comment on the words, "unsparing treatment of the body." On this topic the apostle had not yet expressed his mind sufficiently. He has in vers. 16, 20—22 denounced certain ascetic rules as obsolete, or as trifling and needless; but he has yet to expose the principle and tendency from which they sprang. He is the more bound to be explicit on this subject inasmuch as there were ascetic leanings in his own teaching, and passages in his earlier Epistles such as Rom. viii. 13; xiii. 14; 1 Cor. vii. 1; ix. 27, which the "philosophical" party might not unnaturally wrest to their own purposes. He could not condemn severity to the body absolutely, and in every sense. The Colossian rigorism he does condemn—(1) as not *in keeping with bodily self-respect*, which is the safeguard of Christian purity; and (2) as not in reality directed against *sensual indulgence*, the prevention of which is the proper end of rules of abstinence. These two objections are thrown into a single terse, energetic negative clause, obscure, like so much in this chapter, from its brevity and want of connecting particles. In 1 Thess. iv. 4 the phrase, "in honour," occurs in a similar connection: "That each one of you know how to gain possession of his own vessel" (i.e. "to become master of his body;" see Wordsworth and Alford on the passage; also Meyer's reference on

Rom. i. 24) "in sanctification and honour" (comp. 1 Cor. vi. 13-20 for the apostle's teaching respecting the dignity of the human body; also Phil. iii. 19-21). The contempt of Alexandrine theosophists for physical nature was fatal to morality, undermining the basis on which rests the government of the body as the "vessel" and vesture of the spiritual life. Their principles took effect, first, in a morbid and unnatural asceticism; then, by a sure reaction, and with equal consistency, in unrestrained and shocking licence. See, for the latter result, the Epistles to the seven Churches of Asia (Rev. ii. and iii.); in the Pastoral Epistles, the two opposite effects are both signalized. The rendering "value" given by Lightfoot and the Revisers seems to us misleading; *τιμή* means "value" only in the sense of "price," as in 1 Cor. vi. 20, and this surely is not their meaning. *Πλησμονή* has been taken in a milder sense by the Greek commentators, Luther, and others: "satisfaction" or "(legitimate) gratification." So the apostle is made to charge the false teachers with "not honouring the body, so as to grant the flesh its due gratification." But this rendering confounds the "body" and the "flesh," here contrasted, and gives *πλησμονή* a meaning without lexical warrant (see Meyer and Lightfoot). And the sentiment it expresses errs on the anti-ascetic side, and comes into collision with Rom. xiii. 14 and Gal. v. 16. *Πλησμονή*, in the LXX and in Philo, as in earlier Greek, denotes "physical repletion," and is associated with drunkenness and sensual excess generally. Hence we cannot admit the interpretation of Meyer, Alford, Ellicott, who make the "flesh" here the *sinful principle* generally, and understand "surfeiting" figuratively, supposing the apostle to mean that the ascetic rules in question, "while they dishonour the body, tend to gratify the carnal mind." This gives an idea true in itself, and agreeing with the sense of "flesh" in vers. 11, 18, but out of place here, while it strains the meaning of *πλησμονή* (see Lightfoot's exhaustive argument). The preposition *πρὸς* does not help us, meaning "for" or "against," according to its connection. We combine Lightfoot's interpretation of *πρὸς πλησμονὴν τῆς σαρκὸς* with Wordsworth's and Alford's of *οὐκ ἐν τιμῇ τινί*. The saying of Phil. iii. 19

("whose god is their belly, and their glory in their shame") contains the same opposition of "honour" to "fleshly indulgence" as that supposed here, possibly suggested by the phrase, "surfeiting of dishonour" (*πλησμονὴ ἀτιμίας*), of the LXX in Hab. ii. 16. Here, then, the apostle lays hold of the root-principle of the false teachers' whole scheme of morality, its *hostility to the body as a material organism*. Such a treatment, he declares, dishonours the body, while it fails, and for this very reason, to prevent that *feeding of the flesh*, the fostering of sensual appetency and habit, in which lies our real peril and dishonour in regard to this vessel of our earthly life.

Here we have a suitable starting-point for the exhortations of the next chapter, where the apostle, in vers. 1-4, shows the true path of deliverance from sensual sin, and in vers. 5-7 sets forth the Christian asceticism—"unsparing treatment" of the *flesh* indeed! The line of teaching adopted by the errorists may be illustrated by Philo's doctrine in his third book of the 'Allegories of the Sacred Law,' § 22: "God saw that Er was wicked;" for he knows that this *leathern burden* of ours, the body—for *Er*, being interpreted, is *leathern*—is evil and always plotting against the soul; and it is ever under the power of death, indeed actually dead [comp. Rom. viii. 10]. Yet this all do not see, but only God, and those he loves. For when the mind [*νοῦς*: comp. note, ver. 18] becomes engaged in sublime contemplations and is initiated into the mysteries of the Lord [note, ch. i. 26], it judges the body to be evil and hostile;" again ('On the Change of Names,' § 4): "Pale and wasted, and reduced to skeletons as it were, are the men devoted to instruction, having transferred to the powers of the soul their bodily vigour also, so that they have become, as we might say, dissolved into a single form of being, that of pure soul made bodiless by force of thought [*διανοία*: see ch. i. 21, note]. In them the earthly is destroyed and overwhelmed, when reason [*νοῦς*: ver. 18], pervading them wholly, has set its choice on being well-pleasing to God." The writer has attempted an elucidation of this verse in the *Expositor*, first series, vol. xii. pp. 280-303.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-7.—Sect. 4. *The apostle's concern for the Colossian Church.* Already the apostle has breathed out his "heart's desire and prayer to God" for these Colossians (ch. i. 9-12), "unknown by face" to him (vers. 1, 5), and yet so dear because of their faith and love (ch. i. 4, 8; ii. 6, 11-13; iii. 1-3, 9, 10, 15), and the loyalty they have hitherto maintained (ver. 5), and the objects of so much anxiety on account of

the insidious and deadly nature of the assault being made upon their faith, of whose real character they seem to have been little aware. We expect, therefore, in this passage a recurrence of the strain of thought pursued in the prayer of the first chapter. We find a like prominence given to *knowledge*, the chief desideratum of this Church, and to the need of a Christianly instructed *understanding* as a safeguard against the subtleties and plausibilities of error. At the same time, the view now presented of this object has gained greatly in fulness and depth by the development of the apostle's argument in the intervening paragraphs of his letter. The teaching of this section we may summarize in the words of 2 Pet. iii. 18, as setting forth the nature and the elements of—

I. GROWTH IN THE GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. (Vers. 2, 3, 6, 7.) 1. St. Paul has spoken of the Church as "the body of Christ" (ch. i. 18, 24), and so he must needs desire that its members may be *knit together in love* (ver. 19; Eph. iv. 16; 1 Cor. i. 10). Without such union the Church is no longer a *body*, and its members, broken and scattered, become an easy prey to error. The salvation of individual souls is but half the work of Christ. "He loved the Church, and gave himself for her" (Eph. v. 25; Acts xx. 28). He seeks to build the redeemed, regenerated units of mankind as "living stones" into "a holy temple" (Eph. ii. 20—22; 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17); to integrate them into the "one body" of which he is the Head and his Spirit is the Soul (Eph. iv. 3—6; comp. sect. 2, II. 4 (homiletics)). Of this union, *love* is the bond (ch. iii. 14; Eph. iv. 2; John xiii. 34, 35). In all true and lasting union amongst men some sympathetic affection must exist, either as a basis for the fellowship or as generated by it. Mere identity of beliefs or of interests will never hold men for long together. The heart must love or hate, must be attracted or repelled, in some degree, by every personality around it. And the union of souls in Christ, being the most deep and spiritual of any, must be thoroughly pervaded and determined by love. Moreover, the growth of Christian knowledge and the perfecting of personal character depend much more largely than we are apt to suppose, in this age of exaggerated individualism and selfish culture-seeking, on the soundness and completeness of our Church life, of our Christian social life. To St. Paul's mind the "perfect man" and the perfect Church—the perfection of the part and of the whole—are reciprocally dependent, and all but identical (Eph. iv. 11—16). 2. But *love without knowledge*, heat without light, will not suffice. As "faith, being alone, is dead" (Jas. ii. 17), so love in like condition is blind and easily falls into error. "I pray that your love may abound yet more and more *in knowledge and all discernment*" (Phil. i. 9). The apostle declared that "God willed to make known to his saints the riches of the glory of his mystery" (ch. i. 27); accordingly he desires for them "all riches of the full assurance of the understanding," "unto the knowledge of the mystery" (ver. 2). (1) The former is the subjective counterpart of the latter. The understanding that is enlightened and informed in the truth belonging to the revelation of God in Christ, that ranges freely, yet reverently, through "the breadth, and length, and height, and depth" of this mystery, and learns to *comprehend* it (Eph. iii. 18), is itself enriched, assured, and satisfied thereby. (2) The object which the mind contemplates, into which it seeks to penetrate ever more deeply, is *Christ, the mystery of God*. "To know him" is its supreme aspiration (Phil. iii. 10), in which intellectual inquiry is guided by spiritual sympathy and inspired by love (Phil. iii. 7; John xiv. 21). To know him as an historical Person is something; this knowledge supplies the material and the basis for all other knowledge of Christ (Acts x. 36—43). To know him as a living, present Saviour is the essential knowledge, the one thing needful (Phil. iii. 8—11); it is to "gain Christ, and be found in him." But it is yet more than this *to know him as the mystery of God*—to discover his secret indwelling in nature and in history; to understand how "to him give all the prophets witness;" to hear the footfall of "the coming One" echoing along the silent chambers and winding corridors of the ages past (ch. i. 21); to find in him the centre of all life and law, uniting God and the world, eternity and time (ch. i. 15—17); to behold in "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," at the same time "the outbeaming of the Father's glory, the very Image of his substance, through whom also he made the worlds, and who upholds all things by the word of his power" (Heb. i. 2, 3), the "Firstborn of all creation," the "Heir of all things." Here is knowledge indeed, and for him who is grounded in it, speculative theories of nature and of God and the mystic dreams of theosophy will have but little charm. This

mystery of God surpasses and includes all others; for *Christ*, in nature and in grace, in history and personal experience, "is all and in all." In view of this Mystery, no wonder that the apostle says that we are "being renewed unto *knowledge*" (ch. iii. 10). We can conceive no object worthier of the pursuit of the loftiest and greatest minds than "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord" (Phil. iii. 8; Eph. iii. 9—11; 1 Pet. i. 12). By it "the heart," the whole "inward man" (Eph. iii. 16), is "established" (ver. 7) and "encouraged" (ver. 2) by the "comfort of love" (Phil. ii. 1) and "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (ver. 3) that are "in Christ." 3. *Love and knowledge must bear fruit in practical obedience.* Christ Jesus was received by the Colossians as "the Lord" (ver. 6; ch. iii. 24; iv. 1). He is a Master to be obeyed (Rom. xiv. 9; John xiii. 13; xiv. 15), as well as a Mystery to be known and a Saviour to be loved. *In him we must walk.* The whole conduct of life must be governed by his Spirit (Rom. viii. 14; Gal. v. 25) and directed toward his ends (Phil. i. 20, 21; 2 Cor. v. 15). He "in all things" claims to be "pre-eminent" (ch. i. 18; 1 Cor. xv. 25; 2 Cor. x. 5). Every desire, affection, pursuit, of the Christian must "acknowledge him to be the Lord." By such true obedience the soul grows in strength and security, and is ever being more completely "built up in him" (ver. 7: comp. ch. i. 10). 4. *And the root of this life of advancing knowledge and obedient love is faith.* By this the soul is first "rooted in him" (vers. 5, 12; ch. i. 3, 23; Phil. iii. 9; Eph. ii. 8; Rom. v. 1, 2, etc.). From this root springs love (Gal. v. 6), obedience (Rom. vi.; viii. 3, 4), satisfying knowledge (Eph. iii. 17—19), every good word and work (1 Thess. i. 3; 2 Thess. i. 11; ii. 16, 17). If this fails, everything fails (Gal. iii. 1—5). Whatever strengthens, comforts, and upbuilds the Christian, does so by ministering to his faith. A growing knowledge, a quickened love, a more steadfast obedience, enable his faith to strike deeper root—*establish him in his faith* (ver. 7). In this world he never ceases to "walk by faith" (2 Cor. iv. 18; v. 7); and *his abounding in it* is the greatest gain which the furthest advancement in the life of God can bring him. Yet faith, again, has its outward instrument and condition. It "comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. x. 17). The Colossians are to be "established in their faith," "even as they were taught" (ver. 7: comp. ch. i. 5, 7). To that instruction they owe all they possess in Christ, even their own selves (Philem. 19). 5. *And he who abounds in faith will abound in thanksgiving also.* The more strongly the Christian believes in the Son of God and enters into the mysteries of his kingdom, the more joyfully and constantly will he offer his tribute of praise. This, too, is a fruit of faith—"the fruit of the lips" (Heb. xiii. 15; Hos. xiv. 2), the only fruit of all his mercies which we can directly render to the great Giver. Of such thanksgiving, called forth by the contemplation of the "mystery of God" in Christ, St. Paul's own act of praise in Eph. i. 3—14 is a noble example (comp. Rom. xi. 33—36; xvi. 25—27; 1 Tim. i. 12—17; 1 Pet. i. 3—5; Rev. i. 5—7; Matt. xi. 25—28. See sect. 1, III. 2, homiletics).

II. A DANGER AND A SAFEGUARD. (Vers. 4, 5.) 1. There was one thing that specially endangered Christian life and the well-being of the Church at Colossæ. It was the *charm of perverted eloquence* (ver. 4). A clever tongue and a popular style are gifts by no means incompatible with the faithful and spiritual preaching of Christ; but they have their peculiar dangers for their possessor, and for the Church in which they are exercised. St. Paul appears to have admired gifts of this kind in Apollos, but he felt that a plainer and severer method became himself, in which the sheer might and majesty of the truth should stand forth without adornment of rhetoric or drapery of graceful diction that might distract attention from the all-important theme of his address (1 Cor. ii. 1—5). The possession of such powers made the men whom he is denouncing at Colossæ so formidable. Perhaps their very gifts had proved a snare to them; and there are indications in St. Paul's description of them (vers. 8, 16, 18, 23: comp. Acts xx. 29, 30) of the arrogance and self-seeking spirit, and the intellectual dishonesty, into which men of popular powers are liable to fall. 2. On the other hand, there was one specially hopeful feature in the state of this Church—the *good order* which it had maintained (ver. 5); contrast with 1 Cor. i. 11, 12; xi. 2—18; xiv. 40. So far, these "deceitful workers" had not succeeded in disturbing the Church's unity or stirring up insubordination against its officers. In every organized body it is a first condition of strength and safety that its members should "obey them that have the rule" (Heb. xiii. 17), should "all of them be subject one to another" (Eph. v. 21;

1 Pet. v. 5), each in his place and rank keeping step and time with the movement of the whole.

Vers. 8—15.—Sect. 5. *The Christian's completeness in Christ.* I. A FALSE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION. (Vers. 4, 8, 11, 16—23.) "Not according to Christ" (ver. 8) is the fatal sentence which the apostle pronounces upon the system of doctrine that was finding entrance at Colossæ. However plausible in argument (ver. 4) or lofty in its intellectual pretensions (vers. 8, 23), however skilfully it may avail itself of the venerable rites of ancient faith or of the popular predilections and tendencies of the day (vers. 11, 16, 18), and whatever the apparent sanctity and austerity of its professors (vers. 18, 20—23), the religious system which sets *him* aside and professes to lead men into communion with God and to the moral perfection of their nature otherwise than "in him," must after all be, at the heart of it, "a vain deceit." For he is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," the Lord and Life of nature and the Light of men (ch. i. 15—17; John i. 3, 4), the "Beginning" of the "new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness;" he is simply "all things and in all" to the Church of God. All true philosophy, though standing on natural grounds and drawing its premisses from natural experience and intuition, yet, rightly understood, must needs harmonize with the Christian faith, and will be "according to Christ." For no two truths, however differently grounded or expressed, can really be contradictory. And the facts on which philosophy rests, the mental and material constitution of things concerning which it theorizes, "were created" and "consist in him" (ch. i. 16, 17). "In Christ" must lie, therefore, the ultimate *rationale* of the finite universe. The Colossian error presented itself as *philosophy*, advanced on rational grounds, and claiming the attention of men of thought and culture within the Church. It inculcated the religious traditions of the Jew under the forms and methods of the Greek intellect, seeking to reanimate both by the aid of the new spiritual fervour and lofty moral aspirations of the Christian faith. There was nothing in itself blameworthy in such an attempt. Endeavours must be continually made, though they can never be final, to harmonize the current philosophy of the age with the Divine revelation as received in the Church. St. Paul himself makes large contributions in this direction. But those who take this work in hand should understand both sides of the question. This the Colossian errorists failed to do. They tried to fit Christ into some place in their preconceived philosophy, instead of allowing themselves to be led, as St. Paul would have taught them (ch. i. 15—20), through Christ to a deeper and more sound philosophy. Hence their teaching, put forward as Christian truth and claiming to be the Christian theory of life, is condemned as "philosophy and empty deceit." 1. It was *according to the tradition of men*. It could claim only human authority for its principles. They were not found in Christ's doctrine, and had received no authentication from his lips (Gal. i. 11, 12), no Divine attestation or proof of their being "from heaven" (Matt. xxi. 25, 26; Heb. i. 4). And any scheme of religion, whether calling itself "philosophy" or not, that is in this position, stands self-condemned. "The world by wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. i. 21). What he is, how he is disposed towards the children of men, it is for *him* to say. They know full well that they have lost his favour and defaced his image in their souls; but how their recovery is possible is to them "past finding out." And therefore, to fix and measure the nature of God and the relations he may assume to us, "according to the tradition of men," is the height of ignorance and presumption. But Christ is "the faithful Witness," "the Word who was in the beginning with God" (Rev. i. 5; John i. 2); and an authentic voice from heaven declares, "This is my Son, my chosen: *hear ye him*" (Luke ix. 35; John i. 18). 2. And such systems, leaving the clear and firm ground of obedience to the supremacy of Christ, are compelled to fall back, in some form or other, on the *rudiments of the world*. Their advocates discover that the influence of human names and the force of general reasoning do not command the deference of the conscience or stir the spiritual emotions, are indeed without that "power of God" (1 Cor. i. 24, 25; 1 Thess. i. 5) which attends the word of Christ. They return, therefore, to the dead forms of old religions, putting, as they suppose, a new meaning into them. They are at once "advanced," and reactionary. They dress up the newest rationalism in the cast-off garments of faith's childhood. They combine a puerile ritualism, borrowing its forms and practices from the mere *rudiments* of an

age of sensuous "feeling after God," with the most bare and abstract, the most arid and joyless, conceptions of his nature, or of a *nature* that is their substitute for him. The combination of "philosophy" and "circumcision" (vers. 8, 11), of eloquent and subtle reasonings with minute and arbitrary rules as to "eating and drinking," and the physical culture of the soul (vers. 4, 16, 20—23), is after all not unnatural; and is apt to repeat itself, to a greater or less extent, in every attempt at religion that is not essentially spiritual, and that departs from the "one foundation, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. iii. 11). 3. We must also mark the *arrogant and overbearing temper* of the new teachers at Colossæ, their exclusiveness and their endeavour to form a personal party within the Church. They are "men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples *after them*" (Acts xx. 30). They would make simple Christians *their booty* (ver. 8). They set up to *judge* their brethren in matters of diet and outward observance (ver. 16). They assume, in this character of judges in the Church, to *deny* to Christian men, walking in faith and love (ch. i. 4) and having Christ's peace within their hearts (ch. iii. 15), "the prize of their calling" (ver. 18), because they will not accept their notions and practices. They issue their *decrees*, "Touch not, taste not," etc., as if they were the very law of God (vers. 22, 14). They are "humble" before the powers of the invisible world, and zealous to offer them a worship which they repudiate and abhor (ver. 15; Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 9); but rob Christ of his honour (vers. 18, 19, 23), and are proud and self-willed towards their brethren "whom they have seen." They heap upon the body invented and misdirected severities (ver. 23), while they are governed by "the mind of the flesh" (ver. 18). They aggrandize themselves, while they destroy the Church of God (ver. 19).

II. THE COMPLETE CHRIST OUR COMPLETENESS. (Vers. 9—13.) *For the Christian everything depends on what he thinks of Christ and makes him to be.* Christ's glory is his security. His greatness and the greatness of our interest in him are commensurate. For "he gave *himself* for us" (Gal. ii. 20). Our salvation is not merely *a work of Christ*, a something wrought out for us, and (externally) conferred upon us; it is "Christ in us" (ch. i. 2; Eph. iii. 17; Gal. i. 16; John xiv. 20; xvii. 26). And St. Paul virtually says, "In robbing Christ of his glory, your new teachers are robbing you of your salvation. By so much as his position is lowered, his fulness diminished, by so much is your spiritual life imperilled and impaired. Whatever is taken away from the completeness of his Person and the sufficiency of his mediation, is taken away at the same time from your assurance of pardon (ver. 13; ch. i. 14) and your motives for holiness (ch. iii. 1, 2), from the ground of your faith (vers. 6, 7), and the certainty of your heavenly prize (ver. 18; ch. i. 23; iii. 15). Whatever touches *his person* touches the centre and vital spring of your life in God, the anchor of your immortal hopes, and the foundation on which rests the whole fabric of the Church" (ver. 19; Eph. ii. 20—22; Matt. xvi. 15—18). 1. (1) *In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead.* Then he is not a partial, or an approximate, or temporary manifestation of God—like previous theophanies—a mere phase of the Infinite. He does not rank and share with *angels* and the various orders of created being in mirroring by scattered, broken rays the glory of God. As *the Son*, he stands at an infinite distance from, and holds an absolute supremacy over, *all creation* (ch. i. 15; Heb. i. 2—4; iii. 6). God is what he shows himself to be in Christ, and no other. There, if we could but behold and receive it, is "all the fulness of the Divine nature." In him we *know the only true, the real, veritable God* (John xvii. 3). At last we grasp the *substance* of truth and no longer chase its *shadows* (ver. 17). Here is nothing transient, to be displaced by further evolution: this *fulness dwells in him*; we reach finality, truth absolute, determinate; and he who knows and has Christ may say, "This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John v. 20). (2) And this fulness *dwells in him bodily*. For the Divine Word "became flesh," and in a human body "made his tabernacle amongst us" (John i. 14). He was "born of a woman, born under the law" (Gal. iv. 4), suffered our bodily ills and temptations, wrought with human hands, looked through human eyes, and spoke in the language of men; sat as a friendly guest at our tables, and stood as a mourner by our gravesides; died a human death, "in the body of his flesh" (ch. i. 22), by the hands of men, and was laid in an earthly grave; he rose, "the same Jesus," in that same body, and ascended into heaven (ch. i. 18, 19; iii. 1—4), "far above all principality and power" (ver. 10; Eph. i. 20—23), where he sits a radiant *body*, "appearing in the presence of

God for us" (Heb. ix. 24), and whom one day we shall see (ch. iii. 1-4; Phil. iii. 20, 21; 1 Pet. i. 8, 9; 1 John iii. 2; Acts i. 11)—"the Man Christ Jesus," "who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. ix. 5). This was the vision that dying Stephen beheld in the presence of Saul of Tarsus (Acts vii. 55-60), which ere long appeared to himself (Acts ix. 3-6) and was henceforth evermore before his eyes. And since he has assumed it, Christ's humanity is also permanent. The fullness of the Godhead *still dwells in him bodily*. He will not cease to be man any more than he can cease to be God. His relationship to his human brethren, and the remembrance of his earthly sorrows, of "the wounds that he received in the house of his friends," are too precious to him for that. He is still "the Lamb, in the midst of the throne," who is "the Shepherd" of his heavenly flock (Rev. vii. 17), the "Firstborn out of the dead" among the "many brethren" that have eternal life in him (ch. i. 18; Rom. viii. 29). And heaven for us is "to be where he is," "to see him as he is" (ch. iii. 4; Phil. i. 23; 2 Cor. v. 8; John xii. 26; xvii. 24; 1 John iii. 2)—"the Man Christ Jesus," "the Lord of glory"! "All the fullness of the Godhead, in bodily form!"—a mystery compared with which the contradictions that so often baffle and vex us are trifles indeed; and yet an indubitable fact, that astonishes heaven (Eph. iii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 12) and glorifies the earth, and that fills struggling, sinful mortals with a sense of Divine sympathy, an assurance of forgiveness and help that make all things possible. 2. But Christ's fullness does not simply "dwell in him," terminating in himself; it is *an active, outflowing fullness, that seeks to make us in turn complete in him* (ver. 10; Eph. i. 23; iii. 19; iv. 8-13; John i. 14, 16; xvii. 22, 23, 26). The Judaizers of Colossæ, as we understand their position, were urging on their Gentile disciples that they should complete their imperfect Christian state by circumcision and the adoption of various ritual observances (including worship of the angels along with Christ) and bodily austerities (vers. 16-23). These requirements they enforced by philosophical reasoning, under considerations of the symbolic meaning of ancient rites and the beneficial effect upon the soul of the regimen prescribed as cleansing and elevating to its proper level man's spiritual nature. St. Paul acknowledges by implication that, to a certain extent (but see ver. 23 b), the aim of this teaching is right; but the means it inculcates he utterly disallows, being "not according to Christ." The whole tendency of the system was to draw away attention and trust from Christ. Other objections, such as might easily present themselves, he does not care to argue. (1) *In him ye were circumcised*. "The inward reality of which this rite was the imperfect and prophetic symbol, the consecration of the present life to God, the *putting off of the old sinful nature, the body of the flesh*, has already taken place in you. This is the *circumcision of Christ*, the change from sin to holiness, from moral filthiness to purity; and you know that you have passed through it, if you are *in him* (1 Cor. vi. 11; Gal. iii. 27; v. 24; Rom. xiii. 14). Do not grasp at the shadow when you have the substance. Be content to believe that in this, the 'one thing needful,' you are *complete in him*." (2) From this point the apostle goes a step further back, exactly on the line of his previous teaching in Rom. vi., respecting the connection of sanctification with justification, when he adds, "having been buried with him in your baptism, wherein also ye were raised with him." For a state of sinfulness is a state of death. The sinner lies immediately under the wrath of God (ch. i. 21; iii. 6; Eph. ii. 3; Rom. v. 10); and that anger, with the sense of alienation it brings and the shadow of condemnation it casts upon the conscience, is virtually death, is the death of death (comp. Rom. vii. 24, 25 and viii. 1, 2). There is no cleansing of the soul of a dead sinner till this sentence is repealed, and "the love of God" is again "shed abroad in his heart" (Rom. v. 5). *Christ gives life that he may give purity* (ch. i. 21, 22; Rom. vi. 13; Titus ii. 14; 1 Pet. ii. 24)—*purity with life*. And life comes through his resurrection; by the same law, the same power, which "raised Jesus our Lord from the dead," are our souls also raised from their death of sin. The operation in both cases is equally supernatural and Divine. The first event is the warrant and the pledge of the second. The return of our Surety and Champion from the grave assures us that his sacrifice is accepted and his victory complete (ch. i. 18; Rom. iv. 25; Acts ii. 32-36; xiii. 34-39; John xx. 19, 20). On this fact our faith in him as Lord and Saviour rests (Rom. iv. 24; vi. 7-11; x. 9; 2 Cor. iv. 14); it is a "faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead." Through this faith we are justified—*forgiveness* becomes ours (ver. 13; ch. i. 14; Rom. v. 1); and in this consciousness of pardon sinful man first

comes to know the life of God (Eph. ii. 1—5; Rom. vi. 7—11); he is *reconciled*, and a new existence of peace and purity is born within him (2 Cor. v. 17—21), to culminate in his final presentation *perfect in Christ* (ch. i. 21, 22, 28). (3) Of this passing from death to life, not circumcision, but *baptism, is the appointed and proper Christian symbol*. Therein the believer is "buried with Christ" in his grave (ver. 12; Rom. vi. 3, 5); his old self, his former condemned existence, is put off and washed away for ever. He emerges from the cleansing stream, "a new creature in Christ Jesus." All this baptism sets forth and sets forward, so far as the picturing and outward acting of the matter may. And being the authoritative public sign of the grace of a new life, it seals that life on the consciousness and memory of the believing and understanding recipient, and binds its obligations upon him before God and man; so that henceforth he can only "reckon himself to be dead unto sin, but living unto God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. vi. 11).

III. THE BAR REMOVED: THE VEIL LIFTED. (Vers. 14, 15.) What the individual Christian now realizes for himself in Christ—his new life in God and the cleansing and sanctifying of his nature—is but the personal appropriation of that which was revealed to the whole world and addresses itself to the wants of human nature everywhere. It meets the conditions brought about by God's previous dealings with mankind (ch. i. 23, 26—28; Rom. i. 2—5; xvi. 25—27; Acts xiv. 15—17; xvii. 26—31; Heb. i. 1, 2). In two respects the apostle signalizes the earlier relations of men to God as imperfect: two hindrances there were to that "access to the Father" now secured (Eph. ii. 18; Rom. v. 2; Heb. vii. 19; x. 19—22)—hindrances congruous in nature and effect, felt in the quick and instructed religious consciousness of Judaism more keenly than elsewhere—that are "taken out of the way" in Christ. There was *the law* with its condemning voice for the conscience, and *the angelic mediation* with its terrors and its mysteries for the heart and understanding. The first guilty pair "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden" (Gen. iii. 8); and a sinful, weak-hearted people, chosen to be brought near unto him, said, "Let not God speak with us lest we die" (Exod. xx. 19). And God in mercy and in justice heard their prayer. He veiled himself behind his laws and his providence, behind the forms of nature, and the oracles of prophecy, and the progress of history, and the flashing forth of his glory in the angels of his presence, until Law, the *παύλας*, "ordained through angels," should have done its work, "and the fulness of the times should be come" (Gal. iii. 19—24; Rom. v. 20). 1. Till then it was increasingly felt that *the law with its decrees was against us*. It "wrought wrath" (Rom. iv. 15). It brought us "under a curse" (Gal. iii. 10). It stirred up and brought to its crisis in an agony of self-despair the conflict between the better nature and the worse in man (Rom. vii. 7—25). It invoked death with its anticipatory terrors as the seal to its authority and the witness to our guilt (Rom. v. 12—14, 21; vii. 24; 1 Cor. xv. 56). The list of its commandments is but a catalogue of our offences, a tale of debts, not one of which we are prepared to meet, and yet which must be discharged "to the uttermost farthing." In Christ's cross, God has, at a stroke, *wiped out the whole bill of our offences*. He has removed it from between us and himself, and nailed it, with Christ's body, to the cross, where he bids us read, "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1; iii. 26). This the apostle had taught already, and it is the glory of his earlier Epistles, addressed to Churches infested with Pharisaic Judaism and its teaching of salvation by works of law, to have established this truth in the understanding and the faith of the Church for all time. 2. But the philosophic Judaism with which he has now to deal requires him to insist more strongly on *the immediate revelation of God himself to the world that is made in Christ*. Now that One has been "manifested at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. ix. 26; Isa. lix. 2), it is possible to behold God by a nearer vision. With the revelation of his pardoning mercy and sin-avenging justice in Christ, "the Son of his love" (Eph. ii. 4; Rom. iii. 26), he makes known his inmost name and nature. To Israel, in comparison with other nations, "God was nigh" (Deut. iv. 7; Lev. xx. 26); and yet even Israel complains, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself" (Isa. xlv. 15). He "came with ten thousand of his holy ones, and from his right hand went a fiery law for them" (Dent. xxxiii. 2); and "the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God" (Ps. lxxviii. 8). "He made the clouds his chariot;" his "way was in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps were not known" (Ps. lxxvii. 19, 20). The mystic

veil that screened his presence was as splendid as the law by which he ruled the consciences of men was stern and terrible. But in Christ, he "laid his glory by." God appeared in the Babe of Bethlehem, in the Man of sorrows, in Christ crucified, as *the Father* of the children of men. He bids all his angels worship and wait upon the lowly form of the Son of man, and the elements of nature (more closely linked with the angelic powers, perhaps, than we can imagine) are made to do his bidding, "that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John v. 23). "They shall call his name Immanuel, *God with us*" (Matt. i. 23). None had "seen God at any time;" the angels that had been his ministers, the glories of the created world in which he robed himself (Ps. cii. 26; civ. 2), these could not utter his Name: "the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, the Word made flesh, *he declared him*" (John i. 14, 18). "The veil is done away in Christ." But "the same veil," which in St. Paul's day hung between the Jewish mind and the true knowledge of God, "remaineth unlifted" for those who will not behold "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iii. 14; iv. 3-6). God at once "reconciled the world unto himself" and unveiled himself to the world *in him*. This is the sum of these two verses.

Vers. 16-23.—Sect. 6. *The claims of the false teacher.* The Colossian error is the earliest Christian *heresy*, understanding the word in its stricter sense as denoting a movement in the direction of error, originating within the Church itself. It first answers to the terms of St. Paul's prediction in Acts xx. 29-31. The powerful Judaizing reaction with which St. Paul and the Gentile Church had previously to struggle, and which drew from him the Galatian and Roman Epistles, was negative and retrograde in its character, originating from without rather than from within the Church, and stimulated by the increasing violence and desperation of Jewish national feeling. But here we discern the rise of a *heterodox school of thought within Christianity itself*. At this point, first of all, were those elements of error introduced, those seeds of division sown, which ripened into the wild and disastrous Gnostic apostasy of the second century; and that may be said to have persisted to the present day. For our inveterate and multiplied ecclesiastical divisions and our deeply rooted doctrinal differences, with the animosities and prejudices that attend them, show too plainly that the rents which then began to open in the Church's unity are far from being closed. Accordingly, the Colossian error presents heresy in its germinal form. It contains and combines in itself the root-principles and incipient forms of those errors which have most widely prevailed in after ages. It unites evil tendencies which afterwards parted asunder and became opposed to each other, which seem indeed to be radically inconsistent. But this was an age of eclecticism and amalgamation. Moreover, there is a latent contradiction inherent in falsehood and error. It must needs be inconsistent and witnesses against itself. Its principles, when carried forward and pushed to their issues in logic and practice, become mutually destructive; and the system built upon them and the party which has espoused them of themselves break up into contending fragments. Hence the shifting phases and combinations of religious error—Protean, many-headed—under which the same elements constantly reappear, identical in essence, incessantly varying in form. "The truth as it is in Jesus" is alone self-consistent, harmonious, and enduring. But who will assure himself that he has in all things, so far as he might, truly ascertained and followed it?

THE FIRST HERESY. We have distinguished in the Colossian heresy four elements of error, which may be roughly designated under the names of *rationalism*, *ceremonialism*, *mysticism*, and *asceticism*. They are the heresies, respectively, of the intellect, of the religious instinct, of the spiritual consciousness, and of the moral will,—aberrations, each of them, of functions belonging to the highest and divinest part of man's nature. 1. The false teachers are evidently *rationalists*. It is this characteristic which the apostle first expressly specifies (vers. 8, 23), and to which the whole tenor of the Epistle bears witness (see, especially, ch. i. 9, 28; ii. 2-4; iii. 10, 16; and compare the introductory remarks in our homiletics, sect. 2, I. and sect. 5, I.). They construed Christianity in terms of their preconceived philosophic theory. They were philosophers first, and Christians afterwards, or only Christians so far as their philosophy permitted. Christ was not the centre of their thoughts, the Master of their intellect and heart (ch. ii. 19; iii. 11); but they made an idol of their *intellectual system*, and he must

perforce be made to pay homage to it and fit himself into some limited and vacant space where it might be able to make room for him! Not in Christ, it appears, but in themselves and in "the tradition of men," were "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," out of which the Christian teaching, in its uncultured crudeness and poverty of thought, must have its errors corrected and its deficiencies supplied! But the philosophy of these Colossian *illuminati* was clearly wrong in its views both of the world and of human nature; and no one would be found now to advocate it. Their attempts to recast and rationalize Christianity proved an utter failure, and bore fruit in the next age only in immorality and schism. Their wisdom was but a "wisdom of words" (vers. 2, 3); they were "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. iii. 7). Every system of philosophy, every scheme of human life, which attempts to patronize and to pervert to its own purposes the Christian teaching, has, we may be sure, a like doom awaiting it. St. Paul does not seek to check the rationalistic movement at Colossæ by mere repression, by discouraging intellectual inquiry. On the contrary, he impresses on his readers again and again the necessity of a better understanding, a deeper knowledge of "the mystery of God" (ch. i. 6, 9, 10, 25—28; ii. 1—4; iii. 10, 16). It was their slight and imperfect Christian education which laid them open to the attacks of sophistry and a shallow philosophy. The letter is one that appeals to and stimulates Christian thought in an extraordinary degree, and is itself a theological discipline. The spurious and plausible *gnosis*, "the knowledge falsely so called" (1 Tim. vi. 20), which was fascinating the Colossians, could be cast out only by the *epignosis*, the advanced and perfect knowledge (compare homiletics, sects. 1, III. and 4, I., II.). What Lord Bacon said of atheism may apply with equal truth to heresy: "A little philosophy inclineth men's mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion." 2. With their philosophical, *à priori* interpretation of Christianity, the false teachers of Colossæ combined a love of ceremonialism and a devotion to the externals of worship. Here we note the Jewish element in their training, while their Greek sympathies and habits of thought betray themselves in their fundamental philosophic bias. The motive of their religiousness was, however, radically different from that of the traditional Jewish legalism, and St. Paul deals with it in quite another method from that which he follows in Galatians. The "philosophers" of Colossæ valued Jewish ritual for its expressiveness and symbolic truth, and practised it as a means of spiritual self-culture rather than in mere obedience to law. Hence they insisted much on the sacred seasons and feasts, on the distinctions of meats (vers. 16, 17), on circumcision (ver. 11), and studied greatly the art of worship (vers. 18, 23); while, like the Essenes, they attached little importance to the sacrificial system of Judaism. So, at least, we should infer from the apostle's silence on these latter topics, as contrasted with the leading part they play in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Their system was Jewish in its materials, but wholly different from the Jewish in spirit and tendency. But their piety was wanting in spiritual depth and reality, or they could scarcely have failed to recognize in Christ "the Image of God" (ch. i. 15), and the "new and living way" to the Father. God was to them so far off that they would not seek to approach him directly in the Person of his Son, but supposed a whole hierarchy of mediators necessary, to make worship possible. He was, in their view, a great abstract Infinity, no "living Father," no listening, answering Presence. Their religion was an elaborate artifice, beneficial chiefly in its reaction on themselves; and their God was shrouded, like an Oriental monarch, behind a multitude of vague and fugitive mediators, whom practically they worshipped instead of him. A like result ensues wherever the idea of a personal God is obscured and weakened in the minds of men, whether by philosophical reflection making him a formula, or by superstitious ignorance treating him as a fetish. For true worship is the converse—"in spirit and in truth" (John iv. 23, 24), of the human children with their living Father in heaven. And this cannot well be maintained where an ornate ceremonialism overpowers the senses and fills the imagination with its external pomp; or where the living God "in whom we live," and Christ the "one Mediator" (1 Tim. ii. 5), are so distant from the realizations of faith, that angels, or departed saints, or the blessed virgin-mother, or earthly priests and confessors, are thrust in to fill the void, and are made in reality to intercept the soul's reverence and devotion. There may be a sincere "zeal for worship" in the anxious study of ecclesiastical dress and

decoration, and under the sensuous impressiveness of a splendid and elaborate ritualism. But this is not what "the Father seeketh" (John iv. 23, 24), and such aids to devotion often hinder his children from seeking him. Our worship must, indeed, have its forms; and order and propriety (1 Cor. xiv. 40) must be studied in their regulation, and in all the appointments of the house of God. And men of varying temperament and mental habit are aided by a greater or less degree, and by different kinds, of outward expression in their worship. But when the form is cultivated for its own sake, and the sensuous and the artistic predominate over and displace the spiritual, the end of worship itself is frustrated, and the service that professes to be rendered to the Most High becomes a mockery to him, and a blind to his worshippers that effectually hides him from them. Yet this tendency has often a strong attraction for devout and humble spirits, "delighting in humility" (vers. 18, 23); who love to worship, and readily bow before any superior influence, but are not so anxious to "worship what they know" (John iv. 22). A multiplying of the objects of worship (ver. 18) very commonly attends the excessive elaboration of its forms; for both are due to the same cause, and are the manifestations of a religion weak in spiritual faith in God. The dissatisfaction and emptiness of soul which ensue on seeking God thus, lead to our making still more cumbrous and exacting the forms of devotion, and to our resorting to new mediators and new methods of approach to him, till Christian worship sinks into a round of ritual performance and semi-idolatry, and becomes an imposture in itself and an aversion to thoughtful, truth-seeking men.

3. There was, in the third place, a strong vein of false mysticism in the Colossian heresy. This element, in the nature of the case, is more difficult to distinguish and to delimitate than those already set forth. The mysticism of Greece was chiefly derived and fed from Oriental sources. Pythagoras, in the latter half of the sixth century B.C., founded a school of mystical and ascetic philosophy, whose principles were largely adopted in the comprehensive system of Plato. The Pythagorean and Platonic mysticism was at this time greatly in vogue, especially in Asia Minor and in Egypt, where it found a congenial soil. The Alexandrine school of Philo imported its principles into Judaism. The Neo-Platonism, in which, in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., pagan philosophy made a last splendid struggle for existence, and which has left deep marks of its influence on the development of Christian thought, was a revival of Greek mysticism in a more intense and religious form. The Montanism of the second century, a product of the same Phrygian soil on which the Colossian heresy sprang up, attested the persistence of the mystic tendency within the Church. Its later manifestations, as allied now with pantheistic rationalism, now with devout ceremonialism, now with rigid asceticism, we cannot endeavour here to follow. There has always been in the Church a mystical school, side by side with the rationalistic, and the ritualistic or sacerdotal. And, within certain limits, the mystic principle has its rights, and must be recognized as essential to spiritual religion. To mysticism, the spiritual consciousness of the individual is the source and the test of truth. God is to be reached by intuition. Meditative contemplation, aided by suitable initiatory and disciplinary symbolic rites, is the way of salvation, whose goal is absorption in the Divine nature. Such was the teaching of ancient mystics generally; and the esoteric doctrines introduced at Colossæ were, doubtless, of the same stamp. That God, indeed, reveals himself by his Spirit to the individual consciousness, is the teaching of St. Paul, and, as we believe, of the whole Bible (Rom. viii. 16; Gal. i. 16; Ps. cxxxix., etc.). But when the inner consciousness, the spiritual reason, is regarded as in itself the primary source of revelation, then error begins and hallucination supervenes. The mind turns itself in upon its own self-generated phantasies, instead of fixing its gaze on the historical revelation of God and seeking to comprehend and mirror its glory (2 Cor. iii. 18; iv. 6; Rom. i. 20; Ps. xix., etc.). The Colossian errorist, walking in the light of his self-confident, self-contemplating reason, saw visions of angels as he imagined, and heard messages and teachings that were but the echo of his own speculations. With these deceived and deceiving subjective imaginings the apostle confronts the actual historic Person and work of Christ, as the supreme Object of contemplation and of trust (ch. i. 13—15, 21, 22, 27—29; ii. 6, 7; iii. 11, 15—17). Only through "belief of the truth" come the testifying and sanctifying visitations of "the Spirit of the truth" (2 Thess. ii. 9—14; Eph. i. 13, 14; Acts ii. 38; xix. 1—7). The objective revelation of God to the soul and the subjective attestation and experience of its power

are reciprocally linked together, and advance *pari passu*. Compare the teaching of Christ in promising the Holy Spirit to his disciples (John xiv. 15—24). The doctrine of the Holy Spirit was indirectly but vitally affected by the Colossian error; and this topic, though not brought forward in this Epistle, is prominent in the Ephesian letter, which is in many respects a complement to this and, in our belief, is “the letter” to be sent “from Laodicea” for the perusal of the Colossian Church (ch. iv. 16). “Christ the Mystery of God,” “Christ in you the hope of glory,”—this is the apostle’s mysticism, the true mystery that is to expel the false, unhallowed mysteries, that seek by self-directed intuitions and self-invented lustrations and incantations to penetrate the secrets of the spiritual world and to enter into union with the Infinite. 4. *In the sphere of morals and practical life, the Colossian errorists inculcated a strict asceticism.* This part of their system is consistent with each of the other three, though it proceeded rather from its philosophical and mystical than from its Judaistic and ceremonial constituent factor. In the early Christian ages, asceticism was frequently associated with theoretic rationalism; in later times, it has been more frequently the ally of a sacerdotal type of Christianity. Asceticism was a thing foreign to Judaism. It was a religion too healthy and practical for that. Ps. cxxviii. expresses what has always been the true religious feeling of Israel in regard to the blessings of this life. The Pharisaic yoke was indeed “grievous to be borne,” and pressed on the externals of life with the weight of a slavery; but, after all, it concerned matters which habit makes comparatively easy, and its spirit was that of a formal legalism, aiming at precision in the performance of all external acts, and by no means valuing *hard treatment of the body* in itself. But the latter was the distinguishing feature of the new Colossian ethics, as of the ethics of Eastern mysticism and of Christian monachism, and, in some sort, of Puritanism too. (1) Asceticism is the perversion of a true and noble impulse. In it the maxim, *Corruptio optimi pessima*, has its saddest illustration. How natural it is for an earnest soul, striving after purity and fellowship with God, to fall into a hatred of the body and the material world! How all but irresistible must this tendency have been in the midst of the reeking impurities and the social dissolution of the pagan and barbarian worlds! (2) Moreover, the very nature of religious language, with its necessities of figurative expression, lends itself to misconstruction of scriptural truth in this direction. Witness the interpretations still prevalent of St. Paul’s own terminology. It is difficult, both in thought and in practice, to distinguish always between *the body*, which Christ raised, which becomes the temple of his Spirit, whose members are to be instruments of righteousness, which is the symbol of the Church the bride of Christ, which nature itself teaches every man to nourish and to cherish (1 Cor. vi. 12—20; Rom. vi. 12—14; viii. 11; Eph. v. 22—30), and *the flesh*, which has to be stripped off, to be put to death, to be crucified with its affections and lusts, by all who are “of Christ Jesus” (ch. ii. 11; iii. 5; Gal. v. 24). (3) With the Colossian errorist, as in the Alexandrine theosophy, the body was the source of sin, the prison in which the soul is shut up and severed from God. To break the chains of sense, to cast off the burden of the flesh and become pure spirit, and thus to rise towards God,—this was the aspiration of the ancient mystics. Matter and spirit were the two opposite poles of being; and the distinction between moral good and evil, for them, merged itself in this. They declared indiscriminate war against the physical life and natural enjoyment as itself sinful or tending to sin. Their conception of holiness it was, of course, impossible absolutely to realize; but he would approximate to it the most nearly who maintained himself in as feeble and impoverished a bodily condition as was consistent with active thought. (4) Such doctrine was, we may be sure, more often preached than practised. But it took effect, within a little time, in the *denunciation of marriage* (1 Tim. iv. 3; Heb. xiii. 4), as among the Jewish Essenes, with the dishonouring of the family life and the weakening of social bonds which necessarily ensue. To this source we trace that false ideal of Christian purity which, before many centuries, became prevalent in the Church Catholic, and the rise of the gigantic and baleful institution of monasticism and the celibate priesthood, which, by withdrawing from the world the most powerful elements of Christian character and influence, and by the immorality and social disorganization which it engendered, has blighted the Church’s history and delayed indefinitely the conversion of mankind to the faith of Christ. (5) Let us listen to our heavenly Intercessor, who asks the Father, “Not that thou shouldest

take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from its evil!" who bids his disciples be "the salt of the earth," "the light of the world" (John xvii. 15; Matt. v. 13, 14). Let us have faith in the power of his Spirit, who can so sanctify our *mortal body* that "sin shall not reign in it" (Rom. vi. 12; 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20); and can so bellow the temperate and grateful use of the natural blessings God bestows upon us (1 Tim. iv. 3—5; ch. iii. 21, 22) that, "whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do," we shall "do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31; ch. iii. 17). Let us hear St. Paul, while he teaches us to "make not provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts" (Rom. xiii. 14), yet to "abide with God," each in that secular state "wherein he was called" (1 Cor. vii. 24). (6) God's Law regulates, does not suppress, the natural life. The home, the field, the mart, the senate, all that belongs to the natural fabric and constitution of human life, is his creation, the arena for the exercise of his superintending providence, and the field of probation in which he trains his children for their spiritual manhood. He sent his Son to be the Saviour of *the world*, not of the individual soul alone, but of human society in its widest sense, including business and politics, art and science, all the public interests and constituent elements of collective human life, which are to find their sanctification, that is, their perfection and their unity, as they are penetrated and ruled by "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." So "the kingdom of the world" shall "become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" (Rev. xi. 15). (7) The Gospel puts high honour on the human body. The fact that Christ was "born of a woman" redeems its birth from dishonour and contempt. The Incarnation is fatal to all theosophy based on the hostility of the material to the spiritual, and to the false spiritualism which would seek God by fleeing from the body. Christ has incorporated our flesh with his own Divinity, and *in the body of his flesh* (ch. i. 22) he redeemed us, and reconciled the world to God. To the meanest human person there belongs an unspeakable dignity and sacredness as partaking of that "blood and flesh" in which he shared (Heb. ii. 14), and through which he "poured out his soul unto death" (Isa. liii. 12). Christ's work will be completed and "the travail of his soul satisfied" only by "the redemption of our body," which will consummate our "adoption" and will bring with it the deliverance of "the creation itself" from "the bondage of corruption" (Rom. viii. 18—25). For this end, we still "wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," descending from heaven (Phil. iii. 20, 21). So waiting, we shall keep pure and clean this "earthly house of our tabernacle" (2 Cor. v. 1; 1 John iii. 3). Nothing that belongs to it can we "call common or unclean" (Acts x. 15), "body of humiliation" though it is (Phil. iii. 21). We occupy it for Christ our Master. It is the "temple of the Holy Spirit"—the Spirit of delicate purity, the Spirit of order and of beauty, the Spirit of health and unity, whose "communion" is the Church's breath of life, and the secret, pervasive atmosphere and inspiration that brings all that is pure and healthful into the society of men.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Nature and objects of the apostle's struggle on behalf of the saints.* "For I would have you know how great a struggle I have for you and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." His object is to justify his urgency in writing to a people whom he had not known personally.

I. THE APOSTLE'S CONFLICT. It marks: 1. *His intense anxiety on their account.* "Fears within as well as fightings without." 2. *His anxious labours in defending the simplicity of the gospel against the corrupting devices of false teachers.* 3. *His striving in prayer for the saints.* (Ch. iv. 12.) Ministers who "please not men, but God," have often a great "fight of affliction" on behalf of their flocks, especially when they have to encounter men who "resist the truth" and "withstand the words" of faithful men and "do much evil" (2 Tim. iii. 8; iv. 14, 15). The Judæo-Gnostics had inspired him with a deep concern for the religious integrity of the Colossians, the Laodiceans, and, perhaps, the Christians of Hierapolis, who all dwelt in the valley of the Lycus. What a blessing to them that they had the prayers and the labours of an apostle who had never seen one of them in the flesh!

II. THE OBJECT OF THE APOSTLE'S CONFLICT. "That their hearts may be comforted,

they being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the Mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden." He thus indicates how the threatened danger was to be averted. Their hearts were to be comforted and strengthened so that they might stand fast in the faith. 1. *The manner in which the comfort was to reach them.* "They being knit together in love." (1) Love is itself "the bond of perfectness" (ch. iii. 14). The want of love often breaks unity. It is by love "we keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv. 3). (2) It seeks a fuller fellowship with the saints in the gospel (Phil. i. 5; ii. 1). (3) It leads to a union of judgment to the exclusion of everything like "contention and vain-glory" (Phil. ii. 2, 4). Love is "to abound in knowledge and all judgment," and is thus able to "discern things that are more excellent" (Phil. i. 9, 10). It is thus a protection against error and seduction. This love always springs out of "a pure heart" (1 Tim. i. 5). 2. *The end of the consolation and the object of the union in love.* "And unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the Mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (1) Love gives insight to the understanding. Therefore the apostle prays that the Philippian's "love may abound in knowledge and all judgment" (Phil. i. 9), and that the Ephesians may be "rooted and grounded in love," so that they may know that love "which passeth knowledge" (Eph. iii. 17—19). As we grow in grace we grow in knowledge. The two growths go on together helping and developing each other. There is a necessity that the saints should seek, not merely knowledge, but "a full assurance of intelligence" respecting, not alone the doctrines of the gospel, but the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The knowledge of a personal Saviour is Christianity in its essence. (2) The mystery for the Christian understanding that solves the problem of humanity is "Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden." It is not Christ, but Christ containing these treasures. Above, it was "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (ch. i. 27); here it is Christ with these precious treasures. (a) *The knowledge of Christ is the first and the last thing in religion.* The apostle counted all things but loss for "the excellency" of this knowledge (Phil. iii. 8). Eternal life is involved in it (John xvii. 3; Isa. liii. 11). It is the knowledge of him which leads to great boldness and sincerity. "Nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim. i. 12). (b) *Access to Christ gives access to all his treasures.* The treasures of the Gnostics were hid from all but the initiated; the treasures hid in Christ are made accessible to all, so that we can know "the heavenly things" which he alone knows "who is in heaven" (John iii. 12, 13). It is thus he reveals to us the Father, brings life and immortality to light, and enriches the Church with "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Rev. i. 1). The treasures are twofold. (a) *Wisdom.* There is "a word of wisdom" as well as "a word of knowledge" given by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 8). Wisdom reasons about the relations of things, and applies to actions as well as doctrines. Christ is made to us "Wisdom" (1 Cor. i. 30). The wisdom that is "from above" has many noble qualities (Jas. iii. 17), essentially moral in their nature. What but ignorance of Christ leads men to listen to deceivers? (b) *Knowledge.* This is more restricted than wisdom applying to the apprehension of truths. "Though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge" (1 Cor. xiii. 2). This was the very word that the Gnostics took as their watch-word, but the apostle here significantly makes it secondary to wisdom. It is a right thing for believers to sound forth the praises of Christ's wisdom and knowledge.—T. C.

Vers. 4, 5.—*A warning against deceivers.* "This I say, that no one may delude you with persuasiveness of speech." It is necessary to say this which he has just said concerning the great "mystery of God," because there is danger of deception.

I. THE METHODS OF DECEPTION. 1. *One method is to reason men into error, as the word here signifies.* Gnosticism was essentially rationalistic in its method, gossamer-like in its webs of speculation, and full of intellectual pride. The subtle seducer is often more dangerous than the persecutor. 2. *Another is to use persuasiveness of speech in the application of this reasoning.* They use "fair speeches and flattering words to deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. xvi. 18). The arguments were false and sophistical, but they were made to appear true through arts of rhetoric.

II. HOW TO MEET SUCH ARTS OF DECEPTION. 1. *It is the duty of ministers to warn*

their people against them. How often did the apostle say, "Be not deceived;" "Be not carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. iv. 14)! Ministers are thus to "take heed to the flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them bishops" (Acts xx. 28). 2. We must "try the spirits" ourselves (1 John iv. 1), and try them, above all things, by the standard of God's Word (Isa. viii. 20). 3. We must retain the knowledge and faith of Jesus Christ as the treasure-house of all wisdom and knowledge. The knowledge of his excellency is a preservative against seducing spirits. 4. We must live under the constant power of the Word, which is "able to build us up." (Acts xx. 32.) 5. We must walk purely in the fear of God. For "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John vii. 17).

III. THE REASON FOR THIS WARNING AGAINST DECEPTION. "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." He was anxious lest such a solid fruit of orthodoxy should be broken down by the arts of plausible teachers. 1. *True love rejoices in the work of grace wherever it is discerned.* The apostle heard from Epaphras good tidings of Colossian faithfulness and firmness, and was glad, as Barnabas was glad at Antioch when he saw "the grace of God" (Acts xi. 23). The Apostle John likewise says, "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth" (2 John 4). "A holy mind can rejoice in the good things of those he warneth and reproveth." 2. *Order and steadfastness are signs of soundness in the faith.* These words have military associations which may have been suggested by the presence of the Prætorian soldiers with the apostle (Phil. i. 13). (1) Order marks the outward relation of Church fellowship. The Colossians did not break rank or "walk disorderly." We are to "walk by rule" (Gal. vi. 16); "to guide our feet into the ways of peace" (Luke i. 79); and generally to "order our affairs with discretion" (Ps. cxii. 5). As God is "a God of order," we are to do all things "discreetly and in order" (1 Cor. xiv. 40). (2) Steadfastness of faith marked their state as inwardly considered. (a) This must always be our principle of resistance to the devil; "Whom resist, steadfast in the faith" (1 Pet. v. 9). (b) It is necessary to our success in prayer, for we are to pray "in faith, without wavering" (Jas. i. 6). (c) It is the means of our greater victory over the world (1 John v. 4). (d) It is, above all, our surer protection against errorists (Judo 3). (e) It causes good men to rejoice. "Now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord" (1 Thess. ii. 8).—T. C.

Vers. 6, 7.—*The principle of a consistent Christian walk.* "As ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."

I. THE RECEPTION OF CHRIST IS THE SUBSTANCE OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. *This includes the reception of him doctrinally, as the historical Person Jesus, and the acceptance of him as Lord.* The false teachers misrepresented his true character in these respects. 2. *But it expressly points to a believing reception of himself as at once the sum and substance of all teaching and the foundation of all hope for man.* Those who thus receive him (1) become sons of God (John i. 11, 12); (2) receive the promise of an eternal inheritance (Heb. ix. 15), are co-heirs with himself (Rom. viii. 17); (3) receive the very Spirit of Christ (Rom. viii. 9); (4) receive rest for the soul (Matt. xi. 28); (5) possess security that he will save to the uttermost (Heb. vii. 25).

II. THE WALK MUST CORRESPOND TO THE SPIRITUAL RECEPTION. "So walk ye in him." This implies: 1. *That we are carefully to guard the true doctrine of Christ's person.* One apostle rejoiced to hear that his children "walked in truth" (2 John 4). There were men who "walked not after the traditions which they received of the apostle" (2 Thess. iii. 6). Let us give earnest heed to what has been "received of the Lord" and is delivered "to his apostles" (1 Cor. xi. 23). Let us not "lose what we have wrought" (2 John 9). 2. *That we are to walk in all holy obedience to Christ's commands.* "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John xv. 14). 3. *But the passage essentially means that we are to walk in Christ as the sphere or element in which our life is to find development.* We are to walk in him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and our life is to be the life of faith in the Son of God (Gal. ii. 20). All our strength, guidance, motives, are to be found in him. "His grace will be sufficient for us," as he "dwells in our hearts by faith."

III. THE CONDITIONS OF A HOLY WALK IN CHRIST. "Having been rooted and being built up in him, and being established in your faith, even as ye were taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." There is here an expressive variety of metaphor. 1. *The believer must be firmly rooted in Christ.* This is done once for all in regeneration. It is a past act. The tree may shake in its topmost branches, but its roots are firm because they grasp the solid earth. So the firmness of believers is due to Christ (John x. 28, 29), and his sap makes them fruitful (John xv. 5). The believer is to "cast forth his roots as Lebanon," and thus he will "grow up unto him in all things." 2. *He must be built upon Christ as the Foundation.* (1) There is no other foundation (1 Cor. iii. 11). As the foundation upholds the house, so is the believer upheld by Christ (Matt. xvi. 18). (2) The building is progressive—"being built up in him" (1 Cor. iii. 9—15). The believer is to receive "the strengthening of his faith" in Christ. Thus the body of Christ "maketh increase of itself in love." 3. *He must be established in faith.* "Established in your faith, even as ye were taught." (1) Faith is the great means of giving stability to life. "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace" (Heb. xiii. 9). (2) Faith itself needs stability. The Gnostics exalted knowledge above faith, but faith holds the key of the soul's position. "Therefore be not faithless, but believing;" "Lord, increase our faith." The strong faith of Abraham gave him the stability that marked his singularly consistent and holy career. (3) Faith must have constant reference to its grounds in the Word—"even as ye were taught." The Colossians were not to follow the false teachers, but Epaphras, their teacher. 4. *There must be an abounding faith mingled with thanksgiving.* "Abounding therein with thanksgiving." (1) We cannot trust God too much. We ought, therefore, to pray continually, "Lord, increase our faith." We ought also to add to our faith every other Christian grace (2 Pet. i. 5). (2) Our faith must overflow with thanksgiving. We must be sensible of our mercies and privileges, and thus we shall get the comfort and benefit of them by "giving of thanks."—T. C.

Ver. 8.—*A warning against speculative deceivers.* "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Mark—

I. THE NATURE OF THE PHILOSOPHY HERE CONDEMNED. It is philosophy inseparably connected with "vain deceit." There is a philosophy which is highly serviceable to religion, as it is the noblest exercise of our rational faculties; but there is a philosophy prejudicial to religion, because it sets up the wisdom of man in opposition to the wisdom of God. 1. *The apostle refers to the Judæo-Gnostics who regarded Christianity mainly as a philosophy*—that is, as a search after speculative truth, and not as a revelation of Christ and a life of faith and love in him. The apostle claims for the gospel that it is thus "the wisdom of God." 2. *He refers to the speculative result of such a philosophy.* It tends to "vain deceit;" it is hollow, sophistical, disappointing, misleading. It is the "science falsely so called" which "puffs up" and cannot edify. It always tends to undermine man's faith in the Word of God.

II. THE ORIGIN OF THIS PHILOSOPHY. "After the tradition of men." It had its source in mere human speculation, and could not appeal to inspired books. Our Lord condemned the Pharisaic attachment to traditions (Matt. xv. 2, 3, 6; Mark vii. 8, 9). This later mystical tendency was strong in its traditions, which it reserved for the exclusive use of the initiated.

III. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THIS PHILOSOPHY. "After the rudiments of the world." This seems to point to ritualistic observances worthy only of children, but not adapted to grown men. They belonged "to the world"—to the sphere of external and visible things. These rudiments were "beggary elements," done away in Christ.

IV. ITS NEGATIVE WORTHLESSNESS. "And not after Christ." 1. *It had not Christ for its Author*; for it followed "the tradition of men." 2. *It had not Christ for its Subject*; for it displaced him to make way for ritualistic ordinances and angelic mediators. No philosophy is worthy of the name that cannot find a place for him who is the highest Wisdom (1 Cor. i. 30).

V. THE DANGERS OF THIS PHILOSOPHY. "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you." It would have an enslaving effect, partly by its ritualistic drudgeries and partly by its false teaching. There are worse losses than the loss of

property or even children. This false philosophy would involve: 1. *The loss of Christian liberty.* (Gal. v. 1.) 2. *The loss of much of the good seed sown in Christian hearts.* (Matt. xiii. 19.) 3. *The loss of what Christians had wrought.* (2 John 10.) 4. *The loss of first love.* (Rev. ii. 1.) 5. *The loss of the joys of salvation.* (Ps. li. 12.) —T. C.

Vers. 9, 10.—*Christ the Fulness of the Godhead, and our relationship to him.* "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and in him ye are made full, who is the Head of all principality and power." The apostle is here condemning one of the false principles that underlay the teaching of the Gnostics—the substitution of angelic mediators for Christ.

I. CHRIST'S TRUE DEITY AND TRUE HUMANITY. 1. *He is no mere emanation from the supreme God, but "all the fulness of the Godhead."* All the infinite perfections of the essential being of God are in him. The Gnostics taught that the fulness of the Godhead was distributed among many spiritual agencies. The apostle teaches that it is in Christ as the eternal Word. "The Word was with God, and was God." 2. *This fulness "dwells" in him now and for ever.* It is a blessedly abiding fact. It is a permanent indwelling. 3. *It dwells "bodily;"* that is, with a bodily manifestation. The false teachers, imagining that matter was essentially evil, could not brook the thought of the Divine Redeemer linking himself for ever with a human body, and they, after Docetic theory, either denied the reality of his body or its inseparable connection with him for ever. But "the Word was made flesh" (John i. 14), and "The spirit which confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, . . . is the spirit of antichrist" (1 John iv. 3).

II. OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE FULNESS OF CHRIST. "And in him ye are made full, who is the Head of all principality and power." 1. *Christian life is union with Christ.* (1) We can obtain nothing from Christ till we are in Christ (1 John v. 20). "In him we have life" (1 John v. 11), as in him we are chosen (Eph. i. 4). (2) We cannot, therefore, look for life from subordinate mediators. 2. *Christian life is the enjoyment of his fulness.* (1) Therefore nothing is to be looked for from angelic mediators. "Out of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace" (John i. 16). His fulness is not finite, but infinite. There can never, therefore, be lack of supply. (2) It ought to be our prayer to receive more largely of this fulness. The apostle prayed for the Ephesians that they might be "filled up to all the fulness of God," and "grow unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iii. 19; iv. 13). (3) To share in this fulness is no privilege of an esoteric few, but is that of all who are united to Christ by faith.

III. THE EXPLANATION OF THIS RELATIONSHIP OF CHRIST'S FULNESS TO OUR FULNESS. "Who is the Head of all principality and power." He is more than Sovereign over the powers. He is the Source of their life and activity. This headship over angels is asserted elsewhere (Heb. i. 1—14). Angels are not, therefore, mediators for man, displacing "the one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. ii. 5). They are but fellow-servants under the same Head (Rev. xxii. 8, 9). Therefore we do not seek our fulness in them, but in our Head.—T. C.

Ver. 11.—*The true circumcision.* The Colossians did not need the rite of circumcision to make them complete, for they had received the spiritual circumcision, of which the rite was only a type. "In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ." The apostle censures the ritualistic ideas of the false teachers by showing what is the nature and effect of the true circumcision.

I. ITS NATURE. It is not external, but internal, wrought by the Spirit and not by the hands of men. It is "of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter" (Rom. ii. 29). It is "the circumcision of the heart," so often spoken of even in Old Testament times (Deut. x. 16; xxx. 6; Ezek. xlv. 7; Acts vii. 51), which ought to have accompanied the external rite. The Colossians, as Gentiles, were circumcised in this spiritual sense on the day of their conversion.

II. ITS EXTENT. "In the putting off the body of the flesh;" not in the mere cutting off of a part of the body, as in the external rite of Judaism. This language marks the

completeness of the spiritual change and its effects upon both body and soul. 1. *The body of flesh is more than the mere body*, which is not "put off," for it is not evil, but becomes "the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19). It is the body in its fleshliness, regarded as the seat of the lusts which war against the soul and bring forth fruit unto death. The expression is similar to "the old man which is corrupt" (Eph. iv. 22), "the body of sin" (Rom. vi. 6), and "sinful flesh," or, literally, "the flesh of sin" (Rom. viii. 3). The spiritual circumcision implies, not the mere putting off of one form of sin, but the putting off the whole of the power of the flesh. 2. *The putting off of the body of flesh implies deliverance from the dominion of sin*—dying to sin as a controlling and regulating power, so that the body, hitherto "the instrument of unrighteousness," becomes "an instrument of righteousness unto God" (Rom. vi. 13).

III. ITS AUTHOR. "In the circumcision of Christ;" that is, the circumcision wrought by Christ through his Spirit. Its Author is not Moses or Abraham, but Christ himself, by virtue of our union with him. The formation of Christ in the soul as the Author of a new spiritual life is "the circumcision of Christ;" it is the new birth, which, under the power of the Holy Spirit, casts off the power of corruption. It is wrought by the Lord the Spirit (2 Cor. iii. 18), and is the result of Christ dwelling in us by faith (Gal. ii. 20; Eph. ii. 5—8). This is the true circumcision, "whose praise is not of man, but of God."—T. C.

Ver. 12.—*The import of Christian baptism.* Circumcision has passed away, something has come in its place in Christian times. The two ordinances of circumcision and baptism have a correlative significance. "Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead."

I. THE IMPORT AND DESIGN OF BAPTISM. It solemnly attests that fellowship with Christ in his death and resurrection on which all personal interest in the blessings of his salvation depends. "Baptism is the grave of the old man and the birth of the new." The whole process of spiritual renovation—the death of the corruption of nature and the rise to newness of life—is practically represented and sealed in baptism. We are identified with Christ: 1. *In his death.* "Buried with him in baptism" unto death. Our baptism unites us to him, so that we died with him. We are "planted in the likeness of death;" but here the apostle asserts a participation in his death. 2. *In his burial.* After "he died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3), "he descended into the lower parts of the earth" (Eph. iv. 9). So "we are buried with him," shut off from the kingdom of Satan, as the dead in their graves are shut off from the living world; and thus we have with him severed our connection with the old world of sin. 3. *In his resurrection.* For "we rose with him," that we might henceforth "walk in newness of life." We must share in his death, that we may share in his life. Justification is in order to sanctification. Union with Christ in the one carries with it participation in the other.

II. THE INSTRUMENT THROUGH WHICH WE ENJOY THE BLESSINGS SIGNIFIED IN BAPTISM. "Through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." This shows how the outward is based on the inward, and how it derives from it whatever vitality it possesses. Faith appropriates the act of God's mighty power in Christ when he raised him from the dead, as an act that imparts its virtue to all who in faith realize it. The physical power in raising Christ is the guarantee and assurance of the spiritual power which is exerted in us in regeneration. Faith is necessary to the effect of baptism as it is to salvation. "If thou believest in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 9). It is by faith we obtain the benefits of the spiritual resurrection and come to "know the power of his resurrection." The grace is received through faith. In New Testament times faith preceded baptism—a proof that baptism is not regeneration. The earliest cases were naturally those of adult baptism, in which there was a profession of faith in Christ.

III. THE PLEDGE OF THE SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION. "The working of God, who raised him from the dead." This power to us is made possible and actual by his resurrection; for "in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." His resurrection involves both our bodily and our spiritual resurrection.—T. C.

Vers. 13—15.—*The atonement and its blessed results.* “And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he quicken together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.” These words add no new thoughts to the passage, but are a more detailed explanation of the matters involved in the work of Christ in the soul.

I. CONSIDER THE PERSONAL QUICKENING OUT OF A STATE OF DEATH AND DEFILEMENT.

1. *The condition of all men by nature—spiritual death.* This death is viewed in two aspects. (1) In relation to definite acts of transgression, as showing the power of sin and the fruit of an evil nature. (2) In relation to the root of the evil—“the uncircumcision of your flesh;” your unsanctified, fleshly nature marked by alienation from God (see homiletical hints on Eph. ii. 1). 2. *The quickening energy of God.* “You did he quicken together with him.” Spiritual death is put away by the quickening energy of God, which flowed into your hearts out of the risen life of Christ. You are brought up with him objectively in his resurrection, subjectively in his application of the power of his resurrection (see homiletical hints on Eph. ii. 1).

II. CONSIDER THE GROUND AND CONDITION OF THIS QUICKENING. The pardon of sin. “Having forgiven us all our trespasses.” Thus spiritual life is connected with pardon, and presupposes pardon. The sins of men must be pardoned before life could properly enter. Our Lord could not have been quickened till we, for whom he died, were potentially discharged (Rom. iv. 25). So, indeed, the quickening presupposes at once pardon, the blotting out of the handwriting, and the victory over Satan.

III. CONSIDER THE INDISPENSABLE ACCOMPANIMENT OF THIS PARDON. The removal of the condemning power of the Law. “Having blotted out the handwriting in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.” 1. *The nature and effects of this handwriting in ordinances.* (1) It is not the mere ceremonial law, though its ritual observances were symbols of deserved punishment or an acknowledgment of guilt. We cannot limit it to this law, though the outward observances of ver. 20 were specially in view; for the apostle is not here distinguishing between Jews and Gentiles. (2) It is the whole Law, moral and ceremonial—“the Law of commandments contained in ordinances”—which fastens upon us the charge of guilt, and is the great barrier against forgiveness. It was immediately against the Jews, mediately against the Gentiles. It is the Law, in the full compass of its requirements. (3) The hostility of this Law to us. It was “against us; it was contrary to us.” (a) Not that the Law was in itself offensive, for it was “holy and just and good” (Rom. vii. 12); but (b) because our inability to fulfil it or satisfy its righteous demands exposed us to the penalty attached to an undischarged obligation. It was, in a word, a bill of indictment against us. 2. *The blotting out of the handwriting.* It was blotted out, so far as it was an accusing witness against us, by Christ wiping it out, taking it “out of the way, and nailing it to his cross.” It was not done by an arbitrary abolition of the Law; moral obligations cannot be removed in this manner; but by the just satisfaction which Christ rendered by his “obedience unto death.” It was nailed to his cross, and thus its condemnatory power was brought to an end. Strictly speaking, there was nothing but Christ’s body nailed to the cross; but, as he was made sin, taking the very place of sin, “bearing our sins in his own body on the tree,” the handwriting, with the curse involved in it, was identified with him, and thus God condemned sin in Christ’s flesh (Rom. viii. 3). Christ exchanged places with us, and thus was cancelled the bill of indictment which involved us in guilt and condemnation.

IV. CONSIDER THE RELATION OF THE ATONEMENT TO THE VICTORY OVER SATAN. “Having put off from himself the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” It was the cross that gave the victory over the principalities and powers of darkness, because sin was the ground of their dominion over man and the secret of their strength. But no sooner had Christ died and extinguished the guilt lying on us, than the ground of their successful agency was undermined, and, instead of being at liberty to ravage and destroy, their weapons of warfare perished. Christ on the cross, as the word signifies, reft from him and from his people those powers of darkness who could afflict humanity by pressing home the consequences of their sin. He cast them off like baffled foes (John xii. 31), made such a show of them openly as angels, if not men, could probably apprehend.

He made the cross a scene of triumph to the irretrievable ruin of Satan's kingdom.
—T. C.

Vers. 16, 17.—*Condemnation of ritualistic observances and ascetic severities.* The apostle draws a practical inference from the view he had just given of the work of Christ. "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day, or of a new moon, or of a sabbath day: which things are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's."

I. THE PROHIBITION. It is twofold, respecting first the distinction of meats and drinks, and then the observance of times. 1. *The distinction of meats and drinks.* (1) *This distinction was made in the Mosaic Law as to things clean and unclean.* There was no prohibition as to drinks, except in regard to Nazarites and priests during their ministration (Lev. x. 9; Numb. vi. 3). It is probable that the Colossian errorists, like the Essenes, forbade wine and animal food altogether; for they imposed a rigorous asceticism upon their disciples. (2) *The distinction is abolished by the gospel.* (a) Our Lord hinted at the approaching abolition (Mark vii. 14, 19). (b) There was a formal annulment of the distinction in Peter's vision (Acts x. 11, etc.), where the distinction between those within and those without the covenant was being done away. (c) The abolition is implied in Heb. ix. 10, where the rule as "to meats and drinks" is said to have been "imposed until the time of reformation." (d) It is also implied in the action of the Council of Jerusalem, and in the language of Peter respecting "the yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear" (Acts xv. 10). (3) *The attitude of Christians towards this distinction.* "Let no man . . . judge you in respect of" them. (a) Christians are not justified now in making such a distinction or in imposing it upon others. Thus the Roman Catholics are condemned for their distinction of meats: "Commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim. iv. 3). It is not "that which goeth into the mouth that defileth the man" (Matt. xv. 2, 11). (b) Christians in apostolic times had a liberty in these matters which they were to exercise for edification. (a) It was allowable for a believer neither "to eat flesh" nor to drink wine "so long as the world standeth" (1 Cor. viii. 13). (b) It was allowable in the transition state of the Church, while it consisted of two diverse elements—Jews and Gentiles—for liberty to be exercised in these matters, with a due regard to the rights of conscience (Rom. xiv. 2). (c) But we in our different circumstances must resist any attempt to impose upon us a distinction of meats. "Let no man . . . judge you in meat, or in drink." It is not in man's power to make that a sin which God has not forbidden. "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment" (1 Cor. iv. 3). "Why dost thou judge thy brother?" (Rom. xiv. 3, 10). Besides, we must remember the spiritual nature of Christianity: "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17). We must "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made his people free" (Gal. v. 1). 2. *The observance of times and seasons.* "Or in respect of a feast day, or of a new moon, or of a sabbath day." The apostle said to the Galatians, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years" (Gal. iv. 10). (1) There was a provisional and temporary discretion allowed likewise in the matter of days. "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. xiv. 5, 6). The apostle leaves the matter of days an open question. (2) Yet no man was to be taken to task for refusing to observe them. The times were entirely Jewish. (a) The "feast day" referred to the annual festivals, like Pentecost and Passover. (b) The "new moon" referred to the monthly festival. (c) The "sabbath day" referred to the Jewish sabbath, which was always observed on the Saturday. "But does the apostle not seem to strike at the obligation of maintaining the observance of one day in seven for the worship of God, and sunder the connection that exists between the Jewish sabbath and the Christian Sunday?" We answer that: (a) The observance of the Lord's day never came into question in apostolic times. It was universally observed from the beginning both by Jews and Gentiles. It cannot, therefore, be affected by anything said as to "days" in Rom. xiv. 1—6 or in this passage. (b) The devotion of a seventh part of our time to God rests on considerations as old as creation, for the sabbath was made for man even before sin entered the world. (c) The sabbath of the

Jews was typical, and therefore was abolished in Christ, and therefore, as well as for other reasons, the Lord's day, which took its place from the beginning of the gospel dispensation, was changed from the last to the first day of the week. The sabbath day was so long and so deeply associated with the stated feasts, the sabbatical year, and the jubilee year of Judaism, that it partook of their typical character, and thus passed away with the other institutions of Judaism. But this was not the original aspect of the sabbath, which had nothing in it typical of redemption, for it began while there was no sin and no need of salvation. Thus, just as baptism is the Lord's circumcision according to ver. 11, the Lord's day is the sabbath of Christian times.

II. THE REASON FOR THE PROHIBITION. "Which things are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's." They were useful as shadows before the Substance came, but after it they were useless. 1. *The shadow.* The word implies: (1) The dimness, the unsubstantiality of these Jewish ordinances or institutions. The light they projected forward into Christian times was obscure. (2) Their temporary nature. The shadow disappears when the substance is come. 2. *The substance.* "The body is Christ's;" that is, belongs to Christ. The reality is verified in Christ and the benefits of the new dispensation. The blessings they prefigured are to be realized by union with Christ.—T. C.

Vers. 18, 19.—*A warning against angel-worship.* The apostle now notices the theological error of the false teachers, which was the interposition of angelic mediators between God and man. "Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, dwelling in the things he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind."

I. ANGEL-WORSHIP IS CLEARLY CONDEMNED. 1. *The angel whom John would have worshipped*, said, "See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant . . . worship God" (Rev. xxii. 9). 2. *God will not share his rights with another.* "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." The first commandment forbids all other worship. 3. *There is but one mediator between God and men*, the Man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. ii. 5, 6). Papists say that the apostle merely condemns such worship of angels as excludes Christ, but the condemnation is most absolute and simple. Besides, Christ is declared to be the one single and only way to the Father, to the exclusion of all angelic mediators. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me;" "If ye shall ask anything in my Name, I will do it" (John xiv. 6, 14). "We offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. ii. 5). 4. *The worship of angels implies an omniscience on their part which belongs only to God.* God only knows the hearts of men (2 Chron. vi. 30). 5. *Our Lord's superiority to all angels, as asserted in Heb. i. and ii., implies the same condemnation;* for they are merely "ministering spirits, sent to minister to the heirs of salvation."

II. THE MOTIVE OF THIS ANGEL-WORSHIP. "A voluntary humility." The idea of the false teachers, like that of modern Papists, was that God was so high and inaccessible that he could only be approached through the mediation of inferior beings. It was remembered that the Law was given "by the ministration of angels" (Acts vii. 53), and that angels exercised a certain tutelary guardianship (Dan. x. 10—21). But it was, after all, a mere parade of humility to approach God through the mediation of such inferior creatures. It implied, besides, a serious misrepresentation of the fitness of the one Mediator, of whom it was said, "It behoved him to be made like to his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God" (Heb. ii. 17). He surely can sympathize with us even more closely than angels, for he shared our human nature. It was, therefore, a false and perverted humility that sought the intercession of angels.

III. THE SPIRIT THAT SHAPED THIS DOCTRINE OF ANGEL-WORSHIP. "Dwelling in the things he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." 1. *The false teachers claimed to have visions of the heavenly world and a knowledge of angels which they could not possibly possess.* They claimed to know the secrets of a region which they had never seen. 2. *They were filled with great self-conceit, notwithstanding their parade of excessive humility.* "Vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." The Gnostic tendency was always associated with an assumption of superior knowledge, but it was an utterly groundless assumption. It was "in vain." It was without reason or

ground. God would resist it (Jas. iv. 7); men would not regard it (Prov. xi. 2); and they themselves would inherit nothing by it but folly (Prov. xiv. 8; 1 Tim. vi. 4). Even where real visions are vouchsafed, there is a temptation to self-elation, as in the case of the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. xii. 7). But, in the case of false visions, the tendency would be still more manifest. The mind would be "the mind of the flesh," as it is literally; not "the mind of the Spirit." It was "the carnal mind that is enmity with God." Let us rather seek to become "fools that we may be wise" (1 Cor. iii. 18), and not be "puffed up one against another." It is knowledge that puffeth up (1 Cor. viii. 1); it is only love that edifieth.

IV. THE NEGATIVE SOURCE OF THE HERESY OF ANGEL-WORSHIP. "Not holding the Head from whom the whole body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God." The Colossian errorists invented angel-worship because they did not see in Christ the true and only Mediator who was to bridge the chasm between God and men. They put inferior beings in the place of him who is the only Source of spiritual life. They did not "hold the headship" doctrinally; they had no individual or vital adherence to the Head as the Source of life to them. 1. *Jesus Christ, as the Head, is the true Source of spiritual life and energy.* He who is "at once the lowest and the highest," who is "the Word made flesh," "raises up man to God, and brings God down to man." The fulness of the Godhead resides in him bodily, and out of that fulness he communicates freely to us. 2. *The relation of the body to the Head.* "From whom the whole body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands." (1) The care of Christ extends to every member of the body. We must likewise learn to extend our love to all the saints. (2) There is a double effect produced by the relation of Head and members. (a) The supply of nutriment. Christ is the sole Source of supply to our souls—"through the joints." God calls us "to this fellowship with his Son" (1 John i. 7). (α) We can have no spiritual nutriment from Christ till we have believed in him. (β) The joints through which our supply of grace comes cannot be broken. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. viii. 39). (γ) It is through these joints we receive Christ's "unsearchable riches" (Eph. iii. 9); "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places" (Eph. i. 3); so that we come behind in no spiritual gift. (b) The compacting of the frame into a perfect unity—"knit together by bands." Christ is the Source of the Church's unity. "He hath made both one" (Eph. ii. 14). There is a unity of faith, a unity of spiritual life, a unity of ordinance, a unity of love, a unity of final destiny, in the Church, by virtue of her connection with her Head. 3. *The end of this relation.* "Increaseth with the increase of God;" that is, with the increase which he supplies. (1) The body grows extensively, by the addition of new members; it grows intensively in grace, knowledge, and the practice of all holy duties. (2) The First Cause of all this growth is God. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but "it is God who gave the increase" (1 Cor. iii. 6). Thus through Christ, God and man are linked together; the finite and the Infinite are reconciled; the great problem of speculation has been at last practically solved.

V. THE DANGER OF ANGEL-WORSHIP. "Let no man rob you of your prize." The apostle implies that the prize of eternal life—"the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"—would be lost by turning aside from the Head to angelic mediators. We must not "lose what we have wrought" in this way (2 John 10). "Let no man take thy crown" (Rev. iii. 11). Let us, therefore, avoid "profane babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Tim. vi. 20), and hold fast "the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 4).—T. G.

Vers. 20-23.—*A warning against asceticism.* The apostle now proceeds to deduce the practical consequences of our fellowship in the death of Christ. "If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using) after the precepts and doctrines of men?"

I. MARK THE PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES OF OUR SHARING IN THE DEATH OF CHRIST. 1. *Fellowship in Christ's death.* "We are buried with him by baptism unto death" (Rom. vi. 3-9). We are united with Christ in his death. Community in death involves community in life, and thus our death with Christ involves not only (1)

death to sin (Rom. vi. 2), (2) death to self (2 Cor. v. 14, 15); but (3) death to the Law (Rom. vii. 6; Gal. ii. 14), (4) death to the world (Gal. vi. 14), and (5) death "from the rudiments of the world" (ch. ii. 20). 2. *The inconsistency of this fellowship with a mere ritualistic religion.* (1) Such a religion is rudimentary, disciplinary, designed for the infancy of the Church, not for its period of adult experience and privilege. Christ by his death wiped out these rudiments which have their sphere in the visible life of the world. They are but "weak and beggarly elements," from which we are for ever separated by the death of Christ. In him all things have become new. Christians cannot, therefore, live in that which Christ died to take away. Besides, Christians are living no longer in the world. "They are not of the world;" yet, if they submitted to its ordinances, they were "as though living in the world." They had been called out of the world to be of another body, of which Christ is the Head. Therefore they were not to be conformed to the fashion of the world (Rom. xii. 2). (2) A ritualistic religion is usually negative rather than positive in its character, being strong in the element of prohibition: "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch." The apostle repeats the prohibitions of the false teachers in their own words. They, believing that matter was essentially evil, resolved upon reducing our contact with it in its most familiar forms to a minimum. The prohibitions here referred to go far beyond the Levitical enactments, which had no ascetic tendency. The Essenes, who were forerunners of the Colossian errorists, shunned oil, wine, flesh, meat, and contact with a stranger. Mark how rigorous and precise these errorists were in their outward observances. They were like the Pharisees of old, who cared not for the weightier matters of the Law, but tithed mint and anise and cummin. They attributed an intrinsic value to things that were fleeting: "All which things perish in the using;" leaving no spiritual result: "For meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse" (1 Cor. viii. 8). Our Lord himself said it was not that which "entereth the mouth which defileth a man" (Matt. xv. 16, 17). (3) A ritualistic religion is always marked by "the precepts and doctrines of men." Many of the Jewish ordinances were handed down by tradition and had no warrant in the written Word of God. Therefore our Lord said, "They teach for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. xv. 9).

II. THE PRETENTIOUS WORTHLESSNESS OF THIS ASCETIC RITUALISM. "Which things, indeed, have a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body, but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh." 1. *Its reputation for wisdom.* It had a show of wisdom without the reality, for it affected an air of extreme piety, of profound regard for God, and of deep knowledge in Divine things. All its ritualistic observances would be recommended by the plea that they tended to promote piety. The repute of wisdom was manifested in three things. (1) Will-worship, or service beyond what God requires—in a word, superstition. This is the origin of penances and pilgrimages and festivals in Romanism. They are supposed to promote piety, but they have "a mere show of wisdom." They charge God with folly, as if He did not know what was most conducive to piety, and they involve a tacit claim to amend God's ordinances. But God loves obedience better than sacrifice (1 Sam. xv. 22), and may well ask such ritualists, "Who hath required this at your hands?" (Isa. i. 12). Will-worship has been the great corrupter of pure religion. (2) Humility. It is a studied and affected humility, not resting on a basis of faith and love, but consciously cultivated, and therefore not inconsistent with spiritual pride. "Pride may be pampered while the flesh grows lean." (3) Severity to the body. (a) There seems a show of wisdom in this habit, because an apostle found it wise "to keep his body under" (1 Cor. ix. 27), and the Colossian ascetics might have pleaded that they could thus enhance their spiritual insight. (b) But such severity to the body is expressly condemned. (a) Religion belongs to the body as well as the soul. The body, "so fearfully and wonderfully made," becomes "a temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. vi. 19). Its members are to be "yielded as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom. vi. 13). We are to offer our bodies as "living sacrifices," not dead or mutilated or maimed sacrifices. There is, therefore, nothing religious in whipping the body, like the Flagellants, or in denying it necessary food, or in arraying it in dirty or ragged clothing. "The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit," not a macerated body. We must keep up our bodily vigour for the discharge of the duties of life, so that the body may

serve the Spirit. (8) There may be a corrupt heart under an ascetic habit of body. Spiritual pride may dwell there in power. 2. *Its failure to accomplish its chief end.* "But are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh." (1) This ascetic rigour in designed as a check upon sensual indulgence. There seems "a show of wisdom" in such a method. (2) But it is no check to such self-indulgence, as the history of asceticism proves. The monastic life, while it seemed hostile to self-indulgence, made way, as by a sort of back door, to all sorts of sensual extravagance.—T. C.

Vers. 1-7.—*The Trinity as the source of Christian love and consolation.* It would appear that Paul had not only the interests of the Colossians and Laodiceans at heart, but also as many as had not seen his face in the flesh. He did not act on the worldly principle, "Out of sight, out of mind;" but on the gospel principle, "Though out of sight, though never yet seen, yet kept in mind." We are thus brought at once to—

I. PAUL'S COSMOPOLITAN SPIRIT. (Ver. 1.) The selfish soul leaves out of consideration *all* but his own little circle; the Christian leaves out of consideration *none* but his own little circle. The gospel made a cosmopolitan of Paul the Pharisee. He who had been of the strictest sect becomes the man of broadest spirit. Besides, the problem of the world produced a "conflict" within him. He was in an agony of earnestness for unseen, uncounted millions. His great soul throbbed at Rome in sympathy for all who were under Caesar's sceptre. As the "apostle of the Gentiles" he magnified his office by making all mankind his spiritual care.

II. HIS DESIRE WAS THAT THROUGH CHRIST THEY MIGHT ALL UNDERSTAND THE MYSTERY OF THE TRIUNE GOD. (Ver. 2.) For the gospel does not commit the care of the universe to a "lonely God," but to a Triune Jehovah, who, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has the elements of social happiness within himself. A social Trinity presides over the universe. Now, so practical a truth is this of the Trinity that, as Paul here puts it, the consolation of the heart and Christian unity depend upon it. It is sometimes insinuated that the doctrine of the Trinity is a profitless and unpractical speculation. Any one who thinks so would do well to read such an essay as Mr. Hutton's on 'The Incarnation and Principles of Evidence.' It will be seen from such a line of thought that there are deep longings of our nature which only an incarnation, and by consequence only a Trinity, can supply. But even apart from such subtle disquisition we may see in the sociality of the Trinity as distinguished from the awful loneliness of the Socinian hypothesis an element of consolation and of union. If God be a lonely being, and Martineau is driven to the term "lonely God;" if he is satisfied in his loneliness,—then there gathers round him that repellent element which we associate with the unsocial among men. I am not encouraged to come to this lonely and infinite One. He can do without me, and it repels me to think he can. But when I learn that God is not a lonely One, but has been, so to speak, a "family Being" from all eternity, rejoicing as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the satisfaction of his social qualities, then I am encouraged to come to him and to satisfy in him the longings of my heart. It will be found, then, that *consolation* is promoted by the realized truth of the Trinity in a way that cannot be secured by rival hypotheses. No unitarian abstraction can do for men what the social Trinity can. It will be found also that unity among Christians is promoted by this mighty truth. God as our Father gathers around him through the mediation of his Son Christ Jesus, and through the gift of his Spirit, the scattered members of the human family, and they feel united in a sense of sonship and sociality. A social Trinity secures a united society. Hence we find such a great thinker as John Howe preaching from ver. 2, a fine discourse for "union among Protestants." Now, it is when Christ is preached in all his fulness that "the treasury of wisdom and knowledge" to be found in him is opened up and the mystery of the Triune God becomes plain. It is in this full preaching of Christ that the present and eternal interests of the human race lie.

III. HE SEES THAT THIS PREACHING WILL ALSO SECURE A PROPER CHRISTIAN WALK. (Vers. 4-7.) He tells the Colossians that he is with them in spirit, taking notice of their order and conversation. He calls upon them, therefore, to walk in Christ Jesus the Lord as they have received him. This brings before us the fact that Jesus Christ, when received by faith, becomes the tenant of the human heart. He becomes the recognized Lord of the conscience, and to his sovereignty all things are submitted. The morality

secured by the gospel is therefore the simple morality of pleasing the indwelling Christ. We may here follow the sainted Henry Martyn, who thus describes what the Christian walk is. It is (1) to continue to apply his blood for the cleansing of our consciences from guilt; (2) to live in dependence on his grace; (3) to follow his example; and (4) to walk in fellowship with him. And this morality will be pervaded constantly by the grateful spirit. In truth, gratitude is the spirit and morality is the form assumed by the gospel as it lays hold of the minds of men. God having in his gospel done so much for us, we feel that we ought to do all we can for him. We consequently walk before him in love and strive gratefully to do the things which please him.—R. M. E.

Vers. 8—15.—Christ our All. Having laid down the truth about the Trinity as the great want of the race, Paul proceeds to warn the Colossians against the so-called philosophers. "There are certain men," it has been well observed, "who, because they possess somewhat more learning than others, think, when they become converts to the gospel, that they are great acquisitions to the cause; they officiously extend the shield of their learning over their more unlearned brethren, and try to *prove* where others *believe*; but, while they think they promote the cause, they generally spoil what they touch." Against such philosophers God's people in all ages require to be warned.

I. THE PHILOSOPHY IS TO BE SUSPECTED WHICH LEADS MEN AWAY FROM CHRIST. (Ver. 8.) Paul warns the Colossians against a philosophy which led men back to rudimentary forms and ceremonies instead of forward to Christ. Now, every argument which leads to a ceremony for hope instead of to Christ has some flaw in it. It may be a subtle flaw, not easily detected, but we may be quite sure it is there. There is no better rule, then, than this. Christ is the embodied truth, and we have missed the road if we are not led to him (John xiv. 6).

II. AS THE EMBODIMENT OF THE DIVINE FULLNESS, HE IS THE FOUNTAIN-HEAD OF ALL TRUTH AND PERFECTION. (Ver. 9.) In Jesus Christ Divinity has expressed itself in human form. We can see, hear, and handle the Divine Being in the person of Christ. The Incarnation gives to men the true philosophy they long after. Christ is all and in all. Hence we are resistlessly drawn to him for the solution of our doubts and difficulties as well as for the salvation of our souls. No wonder that an acute writer entitled one of his volumes 'The Knowledge of Jesus the Most Excellent of the Sciences.'

III. CHRIST AFFORDS US ALL PROVISION FOR OUR ACCEPTANCE. (Ver. 10.) The great question which man must ask is, "How can sinful man be accepted with God?" Philosophy replies, "By certain solemn ceremonies, by sacrifices, by circumcision, by baptism," etc. The gospel replies, "Acceptance is secured in Christ; we are complete in him," or, as the Revised Version has it, "In him are ye made full." Now, it has been insinuated that merit cannot in the nature of things pass from one person to another. The fact is, however, that we are constantly being kindly treated *for the sake of others*. Children, for example, receive consideration for the sake of respected parents; individuals receive consideration for the sake of respected friends; and the whole array of letters of introduction, vicarious influence, and the like, is based upon the recognition of the fact that the merit of others can overshadow and benefit those in whom they are interested. The acceptance which we receive from the Father for the sake of Jesus is on the line, therefore, of natural law. It is the application of a principle upon which men are acting every day.

IV. FROM CHRIST WE RECEIVE THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION. (Ver. 11.) Circumcision was among the false teachers the initial ceremony which secured a Jewish standing for the Gentile proselyte. Their insinuation was that Gentiles who remained uncircumcised could not possibly be saved. It was this which Paul combatted constantly. Hence he shows, in this eleventh verse, that the real circumcision is secured in Christ for all who trust in him. It is a circumcision not made with hands, a circumcision of the heart, a circumcision which secured "the putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh." If the Gentile converts realized this, then they need not concern themselves about the outward circumcision. It surely teaches us that, not by mechanical, but by spiritual means we may vanquish the power of sin within us. It is said that circum-

cision circumscribes lustful tendencies and keeps them within mechanical bounds. Whatever truth may be in this, it is certain that Jesus can so restrain us by his indwelling and grace as to deliver us from the whole body of the sins of the flesh.

V. CHRIST HAS ALSO CANCELLED THE CEREMONIES UPON THE CROSS, SO THAT WHEN WE RISE WITH HIM INTO NEWNESS OF LIFE WE ARE FREED FROM THEIR OBLIGATION. (Vers. 12—15.) The ritual of Judaism typified in its various aspects the atoning work of Jesus Christ. The sacrifices pointed to the one great sacrifice on Calvary. The long list of ordinances, therefore, conducted the intelligent mind to Christ's cross and received their fulfilment there. Hence it was that those who by faith passed through resurrection with Christ became as free from the obligation of these ceremonies as the risen Jesus was himself. Could any one have gone to Jesus after his resurrection and asked from him, with any show of reason, a fulfilment of the ceremonial Law? Is it not felt by every intelligent thinker that Jesus had so fulfilled the ceremonies in the actualities of atonement that more ceremony from him would be unmeaning? A similar emancipation, Paul here insists, from the obligation of ceremonies is the property of Christ's believing people. A careful study of the cross is the great protection, therefore, against improper emphasis being laid on ceremonials.—R. M. E.

Vers. 16—23.—*Legalism exposed.* The apostle, having shown in the last section how much Christ is to the believer, proceeds in the verses now before us to expose the false use of ceremonies, or, in modern phraseology, *ritualism*. The false teachers were anxious to entangle the Gentile converts in a tedious round of ceremonies—to make them, in fact, Old Testament ritualists. They could even adduce what seemed to them philosophic reasons for such practice. But Paul scatters their false philosophy to the winds by the magic power of his Redeemer's cross.

I. LEGALISM ANCIENT OR MODERN IS THE PRACTICE OF CEREMONIES WITHOUT THEIR TRUE MEANING BEING APPRECIATED. (Ver. 16.) The Judaizers insisted on the Gentiles entering into the scrupulosity of the Jews about meat and drink, about holy days and new moons, and about the seventh-day sabbath, for the word is *singular* as the Revised Version has it, and not plural as in the Authorized Version. Now, it was quite possible for Jews and Gentiles to enter upon the keeping of these ceremonies without ever considering their signification. A ceremony may be kept just to be able to congratulate ourselves upon the keeping of it; that is to say, a ceremony may be kept in a self-righteous spirit instead of intelligently. When ceremonies minister to self-righteousness, when they lead to pride, when they are entertained in order to furnish a fancied claim, they are mere superstitions. It is to be feared that no other *rationale* can be given of a large proportion of modern ceremonial. It is a mere blind and leads souls away from Christ to self-righteousness. It may, indeed, have the appearance of great humility. There may be apparent awe and regard for the angels, and the visible may seem to so impress the soul as to secure deepest humiliation; but when the issue of the ritual is self-congratulation and a fancied independence of Christ's merits for acceptance, the whole process is simply a deceptive superstition. It matters not how æsthetic the ritual may seem: the Jew of the apostolic age could have pleaded æstheticism like his modern counterpart; but the true analysis of the whole process is that it is self-righteousness cultivating superstition.

II. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST MUST TEST THE MEANING OF ALL CEREMONIES, AS THE SUBSTANCE DETERMINES THE SHADOW. (Ver. 17.) If ceremonies cease to lead souls to Jesus, then they are meaningless and condemned. The ceremonial laws of Moses were so constructed as to lead the thoughtful worshipper on to the promised Messiah. Meat must be bloodless, because blood was to be the atonement for sin, when Messiah came. The blood was forbidden, because the blood of Jesus Christ was to be shed in due season. The regulations about drink and holy days and new moons pointed, as may easily be shown, in some way or other to Christ. The seventh-day sabbath was the type of the spiritual rest to which Jesus conducts us (Heb. iv. 9—12). Christ is the Substance, and these ceremonies simply shadowed forth some aspect of his mission. But when men kept the ceremonies without ever thinking of their relation to Christ, when they kept them and made saviours of them instead of seeing in Jesus their only Saviour, they became not only meaningless but prejudicial to the interests of souls. Let Christ, then, be our test for every ceremony to which men summon us. If it is a

substitute for Christ, or if it has no relation to Christ, then we are bound to dismiss it from our thoughts as simple superstition.

III. FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST IN CRUCIFIXION MAKES MEN FREE FROM THE OBLIGATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CEREMONIES. (Vers. 20—23.) When Jesus died upon the cross every ceremony was fulfilled. The ceremonial Law had no further claim upon him. In the same way, when the Gentile converts so appreciated the Crucifixion that they were able to say they were "crucified with Christ" and so "dead with Christ," then the ceremonies of circumcision and the like were no longer obligatory upon them. They had fulfilled them in their Substitute and so were free from them. It was this liberty for which Paul so earnestly contended.

IV. ARE BELIEVERS IN CONSEQUENCE TO RENOUNCE ALL CEREMONY AND TURN CHRISTIANITY INTO QUAKERISM? Certainly not. The Gentile converts were not encouraged by the apostles to set *all* ceremony at defiance. Though taught that the ceremonies of Judaism were fulfilled in Christ, they were directed not to eat blood, not to eat things strangled; they were directed to celebrate baptism and the Lord's Supper, and to keep the Lord's day. But what kept them right in these ceremonies was what will keep us right in ceremonies—the simple determination whether or no they foster reverence for and deepen our interest in the atoning work of our blessed Lord. What really conducts the soul to Jesus is safe; but what only nominally does so and really ministers to self-righteousness is dangerous and deadly error. Let Jesus be our test continually, and we shall be kept safe.—R. M. E.

Vers. 1—7.—*Introduction to the polemical part of the Epistle.* I. PERSONAL CONCERN. 1. *Paul's striving.* "For I would have you know how greatly I strive for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." There is an advantage in the Revised translation, in carrying forward the word "strive" from the preceding verse. Having declared his striving in general, the apostle now shows ("for") how his striving was specially directed. (1) *His striving was remarkable as directed toward those who had not seen his face in the flesh.* Among these are plainly included the Colossians. With them are associated their neighbours the Laodiceans. The Hierapolitans (to whom there is reference at the close of the Epistle) are not mentioned. But it is added generally, "as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." Spiritually present he had been (as he tells us in the fifth verse), and he must have had indirect modes of intercourse with them, yet they wanted the impression of his presence in the flesh—they wanted the impression of his personal ministry among them. It can be made out that in none of his journeys before this time did his route naturally lie by the valley of the Lycus. It is difficult to have an interest in those, whose faces we have not seen. There is something in the expression of the countenance, as also in the touch of the hand, the sound of the voice. We like these, not as substitutes for the spirit, but rather as helps to our getting at and fixing our impressions of the spirit. Paul, in the quickness of his sympathy, got over this difficulty. He had associations in many cases with countenance, with hand, with voice. But he reserved a portion of his sympathy for those, like the Colossians, with whom he had no such associations. His concern was simply founded on the fact that they had been rescued from heathenism, that they were exposed to perils, and on the information which he received from time to time regarding their condition. (2) *His difficulty in the circumstances in giving them any right impression of the greatness of his striving.* "How greatly I strive." There was no ordinary conflict in his mind. There was the vehemence belonging to an intensely earnest nature. But how could he convey the impression of what his striving was (the moral fulcrum on which he depended for moving them) to persons in the position of the Colossians? If they had had an impression of his personal ministry, then he might have revived that wherewith to oppose the heretical teachers; but he had never been at Colossæ. If he had been able then to go to the rescue, he might have given them an impression of his intensity in the way in which (like a good athlete) he grappled with those teachers. But he was in an imprisoned condition in Rome; and his conflict would be none the less because he was imprisoned and far away from them. Was he, then, like a bird beating its wearied breast against the wires of its cage? No; there was outlet for the struggle within. He could relieve himself at the throne of grace, and there, by his earnest pleading, move

the hand that could move them. But that was not enough; he wished to have influence with them in impressing on them what his striving was, and so he writes; and, as he writes, feeling the difficulty that arose from their not having seen him in the flesh, he exclaims, "I would that ye knew how greatly I strive for you." 2. *The end of his striving.* "That their hearts may be comforted." There are positions in which Churches and individuals stand in need of heart-comfort. Our English word "comforted" is etymologically "being made strong." "Fortified" belongs to the same root. And the one meaning passes into the other. If our hearts are sad, we feel unnerved for work. But if, amid our trials, we have comfort, we feel strong for work. (1) *Comforted in the way of having unity of feeling.* "They being knit together in love." It is no ordinary union of Christians that is pointed to here. It is such a welding of them together as is not easily torn asunder. What an uncomfortable thing is division! How much to be desired in the way of comfort when, however assailed, Christians can present a united front! And the union which is not easily broken up can only subsist in love. And the love must not be a mere negative, or pretence; but must be a deep, pervading feeling. It is only when love avails to break down selfishness, to excite mutual interest between the members of a Christian society, that there is knitting together or the strong bond that is referred to in the third chapter. (2) *Comforted in the way of having unity of sentiment.* "And unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding." Unity of feeling he desired for them; but as the cause (not the consequence) of unity of sentiment. When there is unity of feeling in a high degree, these questions can be calmly, patiently looked at without risk of a rupture. We have to aim at a right state of the understanding. "Give me understanding" is the repeated prayer of the psalmist. Our understanding is given us to examine into facts, to plan aright for our conduct, to avoid mistakes, to detect errors. And we are constituted so that we can not only judge, but have the assurance that we are judging correctly. There is an assurance which is begotten of ignorance, of self-conceit. That is very different from the assurance which is the result of patient investigation, of steady contemplation. There is a self-evidencing power of the truth. The words of God, when we closely examine them, shine in their own light. There is a peculiar satisfaction in our being sure of our seeing the truth. When our eyes have been enlightened by the Spirit, we can say with confidence, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." It is this certainty extending over a wide range that is here represented as being the wealth of the understanding. This is of far more value than material riches which men heap up and know not who shall gather them. What a man gains in the way of clear convincing perception of things he can never lose. He who engages in the pursuit of these riches shall gather them in his own everlasting being. And, having begun to have an assuring view of truth, he shall go on to all riches of the full assurance of understanding. "That they may know [unto the thorough knowledge of] the Mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden." This is parallel to the foregoing, and points to the Christian state of the understanding. All things are dark to us at first; we have, by reflection, to clear away the darkness. There is one thing which is pre-eminently dark, which we could never have found out for ourselves; it is here called "the mystery," and is explained to be Christ. He is the Mystery of God in this sense—that in him lay hidden all the thought and purpose of God. The theosophists spoke of hidden things, and made much of wisdom in general and also of a special insight. The apostle declares that all the treasures that they pretended by their *sophia* and *gnosis* to discover are hidden in Christ, and that it is by coming to the thorough knowledge of him that we get possession of the hidden treasures. The object, then, of the apostle's striving for the Colossians, as for others, was (in view of what follows) this, that, unitedly, in the use of their understanding, they might come to such an appreciation of Christ as would lay open to them all the hidden treasures. If they had that, then they would be carried away by no false *sophia* and *gnosis*.

II. RELATION TO THE SITUATION. 1. *Exposure of the Colossians.* "This I say, that no one may delude you with persuasiveness of speech." He directs himself specially to the Colossians. He has been telling them about his great striving for them, and about the key to the hidden treasures, in order to put them on their guard. They were in the presence of danger. There were teachers (of whom we shall hear more) that had designs on them. They used a persuasive form of speech (in a bad sense). They had

not the persuasiveness that comes from the truth. They were conscious of no basis of reality for their speech. They taught a system for which there were not proofs. They pretended by their *sophia* and *gnosis* to open up hidden things; but it was only pretence. Their fine phrases, their plausible representations, their large promises, were delusive, leading away from reality, leading away from Christ in whom alone are the hidden treasures. 2. *Spiritual presence with them.* "For though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." The spirit is freer than the body. The apostle was present in the spirit, where he was absent in the flesh. This spoke to a certain cognizance of them, from all that he had heard of them, and especially from the intensity of his sympathy with them. Transferred, as it were, to Colossæ, his feelings (and to this prominence is given) were those of joy. He was not repelled (as from what was disagreeable), but was rather enchaind. It especially gave him joy to observe two points which were important in reference to his purpose. (1) *Their order.* They were (to take one of the associations of the word) like a well-appointed regiment. They were well organized as a community. They were organized for the advancement of the cause of Christ among themselves and beyond themselves. Hitherto they had been free from divisions. There was no disorderliness, such as there was in the Church of Corinth. (2) *The steadfastness of their faith in Christ.* Their outward state (which was one of order) was conditioned inwardly by faith. They had an immovable object for their faith. "If we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself." Their faith in some degree corresponded. It had such a hold on Christ that it was, as the word is, something firm, like a piece of solid masonry (in a fortification) not easily battered down. It would stand, he hoped, the assaults made on it by the false teachers.

III. EXHORTATION TO REMAIN TRUE TO THEIR STARTING-POINT. He does not bestow praise without giving exhortation (in view of the danger). The spirit of the exhortation is given in the words of the Lord to the Church of Smyrna (where danger, however, had not been well met), "Remember therefore how thou hast received, and didst hear." In the force of the apostle's thought there is a certain disregard of metaphor (*walk, tree, building*). It is, therefore, necessary to present the thought (in our division) without keeping to metaphor. 1. *We are to think and act from day to day in accordance with our first reception of Christ.* "As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him." There is an emphatic specification of the object. They received Christ (the person of Christ being in dispute). Whom did they receive as Christ? The historical Jesus (partaker of humanity). This Jesus they received and worshipped as the Lord (with supreme power over the universe and the Church). And the apostle holds rightly that they were bound by their past action. Having thus received Christ, they were not to cast him off. They were not to think and act according to their pleasure or according to the suggestion of heretical teachers. But their thoughts and actions (specially the former in the present instance) were to be controlled by Christ and his laws. 2. *What is added in our development is to be in accordance with its beginnings.* "Rooted and builded up in him." The change of tense is not brought out in the translation. It is literally, "Having been rooted and being builded up in him." They got a *rooting* in Christ at the beginning, viz. under Epaphras, who presented Christ plainly to them, giving them line upon line and precept upon precept, until they came to a clear conception of the truth. This rooting was effectual in the subsequent development. To change the figure with the apostle, they got a grounding in Christ (as we get a grounding in a language or science). Every successive layer was to be in accordance with their grounding. The building was to rise up in, and to take form from, that Christ in whom they had been so well grounded. 3. *Our faith is to be established in accordance with our early teaching.* "And established in your faith, even as ye were taught." All early teaching is not good, and the development is often hindered by imperfect or faulty grounding. The early teaching enjoyed by the Colossians was proved to be good by the subsequent development. There is a missing of the thought by Meyer and Ellicott, who interpret, "Taught to become established in [or, 'by'] the faith." The idea rather is that, under the teaching of Epaphras, they got a right hold of Christ. From him thus laid hold of by them they were not to be moved away. The whole carrying forward of their faith in the way of stability was to be

toward no false Christ, but toward Christ Jesus the Lord. *Subjoined exhortation to thanksgiving.* "Abounding in thanksgiving." This comes in with a certain abruptness. But the duty of thanksgiving is so frequently (five times) introduced as to form a subordinate feature of the Epistle. An overflowing of thanksgiving to God for the faith by which they came in their early teaching, and for all the blessing opened up to them by faith (the hidden treasures in Christ), would be helpful to their faith being established in view of present danger.—R. F.

Vers. 8-15.—*Philosophy.* I. FALSE PHILOSOPHY. "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit." It was a real danger (as the expression bears) against which the apostle warns the Colossians. He refers indefinitely to the teachers (any one), but he strikingly describes what their work would be. The work of the Christian teachers on them in their heathen state, as described in ch. i. 13, 14, had been a *deliverance, a redemption*; the work of those teachers on them in their Christian state would be a leading them into captivity, a making a booty of them. He does not define what this teaching was, but he characterizes the substance of it (as distinguished from the form, which is characterized in the fourth verse) as a philosophy which was a vain deceit. This is not a characterization of all philosophy, but only of the philosophy with which these teachers would have made spoil of the Colossians. A philosopher is literally a lover of wisdom, and in that sense a Christian is a philosopher. The origin of the name, as given by Cicero, is as follows: Pythagoras once upon a time, having come to Phlius, a city of Peloponnesus, displayed in a conversation which he had with Leon, who then governed that city, a range of knowledge so extensive that the prince, admiring his eloquence and ability, inquired to what art he had principally devoted himself. Pythagoras answered that he professed no art and was simply a *philosopher*. Leon, struck by the novelty of the name, again inquired who were the philosophers, and in what they differed from other men. Pythagoras replied that human life seemed to resemble the great fair held on occasion of those solemn games which all Greece met to celebrate. For some, exercised in athletic contests, resorted thither in quest of glory and the crown of victory; while a greater number flocked to them in order to buy and sell, attracted by the love of gain. There were a few, however—and they were those distinguished by their liberality and intelligence—who came from no motive of glory or of gain, but simply to look about them, and to take note of what was done and in what manner. "So, likewise," continued Pythagoras, "we men all make our entrance into this life on our departure from another. Some are here occupied in the pursuit of honours, others in the search of riches; a few there are who, indifferent to all else, devote themselves to an inquiry into the nature of things. These, then, are they whom I call students of wisdom, for such is meant by philosopher." The philosophy in question in Colossæ was no humble endeavour to ascertain the nature of things, but a pretentious system without any basis in observed facts, or in reason applied to them (certainly without any basis in revelation), and therefore only *vain*. *It had two marks of a false system.* 1. *It was purely traditional.* "After the tradition of men." Our sacred books have been handed down to us, but we do not rest their authority on mere tradition. There is evidence (to which we make our appeal) that they do not owe their origin to men, that they are a Divine revelation, that they have been first handed to men by God. Tradition has been a frequent device in connection with systems that have imposed on the human mind. The answer to questionings has been that it was so handed down from remote antiquity (occultly, for the traditional and occult generally go together). A remarkable instance was a later development named *cabbala*, or tradition. The mystic elements in this were not essentially different from those which were operating around the Colossian Church. The primary substance, the Cabbalists said, is an ocean of light. There was a primitive emanation, named Adam tadmon, from which proceed decreasing stages of emanations, named Sephiroth. Matter is nothing but the obscuration of the Divine rays when arrived at the last stage of emanation. This (and much besides) was to be received on the ground that it had been secretly handed down from Moses. But it is no sufficient evidence of a system being true that it has been handed down; we must submit it to further examination, and such examination the philosophy at Colossæ could not stand. 2. *It was purely*

mundane. "After the rudiments of the world." What was handed down had no high genesis. Very crude were the first attempts to solve the riddle of the universe. Empedocles taught that all things were formed out of the four elements, fire, air, earth, and water, by a process of mingling and of separation, set in motion by the two principles of love and hate. The postulation of intermediate agents in a descending series down to one who could create matter was very rudimentary. The apostle was sorry that such meagre and earth-born philosophizings should be palmed upon men as all that was needed to make them perfect. *The standard of condemnation.* "And not after Christ." What is tradition when we have Christ to give form to our thoughts? What are the rudiments of the world (all that earth can produce of a philosophy) when we have the perfect revelation from heaven?

II. THE TRUE PHILOSOPHY. *There are two cardinal points.* (1) *The fulness of God in Christ.* "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." By the *pleroma* of the Godhead we are to understand the totality of the Divine attributes, the sum of the Divine perfections. We are to think of the *pleroma* as residing first in God and then in Christ (just as we think first of Father and then of Son, first of original and then of copy). The *pleroma* resides in the Second Person necessarily and eternally, but nineteen hundred years ago (such is our creed) it began to reside in him *bodily wise*, that is to say, a connection was mysteriously formed between the *pleroma* in him and (what was far removed) a human body. In the body he took to himself he tabernacled on earth, and not only so, but in it now glorified he permanently resides (such is the force of the Greek word), that is to say, the time will never come when there will be a separation of the *pleroma* in him from our humanity. Such is the apostolic teaching, but on it reverence forbids that we should dwell. (2) *The fulness of Christ in us.* "And in him ye are made full." It is an advantage in the Revised translation that "full" is carried forward from the preceding thought (not "fulness" and then "complete," when the word is the same). The *pleroma* in Christ is communicated to us. Out of his *pleroma* have all we received. Christians collectively are called the *pleroma* of Christ. This is no mere refinement of thought. The comfort of it is that Christ in his redemptive work, in the fulness of his atoning merits, has made it possible for us to have more than mere beginnings or husks. There must be allowance for difference of essence, but, allowance being made for that, then all that is in Christ can be communicated to us. We can think out the Divine thought. We can be under the impulse of the Divine love. We can have strength to perform the Divine purpose. We can come out into the Divine liberty. It is only Christ actually working in us that can remove all moral impediments, and educe to the full the God-given tendencies of our being. And, therefore, the truest philosophy is to preserve a state of openness towards him. *This philosophy is all-sufficient.* 1. *It enables us to dispense with what intermediate agents may be supposed to do for us.* "Who is the Head of all principality and power." Christ is not only placed over all that can be called principality and power, but he is the Source of all the vital force that belongs to them. What of the *pleroma* may be dispersed, fragmentary in them, is undispersed, unbroken in him. There is no need, therefore, of supplementing what he can supply. 2. *It enables us to dispense with circumcision.* It would seem that in the false philosophy with which the Church at Colossæ was threatened, there was a Judaistic as well as a mystic element. The combination of the two was called Essenism. (1) *Circumcised with Christ in his circumcision.* "In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ." They had no need of the circumcision made with hands (the material circumcision); they had been circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands (a spiritual circumcision). They had got the inward reality corresponding to the outward rite. This is presented here as the putting off of the body of the flesh. There was the putting off as of a garment. The word in the original, being intensive, points to a complete putting off. The putting off applied to the body as a whole. The body of the flesh points to our old impure condition (in which the flesh is the dominating principle). It could only be ideally that we were thus circumcised, for there is still actual impurity in our condition that needs to be put off. When in the past are we to understand this circumcision as timed? The general opinion is that we are to take the time from the baptism referred to in the next verse.

It seems more natural to interpret the circumcision of Christ as the circumcision undergone by Christ, and to take the time from that event. It is not unnatural to pass from the spiritual circumcision described to the circumcision of Christ so understood, unless its spiritual significance is left out. That event was more than a mere honouring of the Mosaic rite, it pointed to (though it did not actually effect) its fulfilment. Did it not point to Christ putting off in his death the body with which our sin was associated? It could be said then that when Christ was circumcised we were spiritually circumcised in his circumcision. *A cognate thought is added for the purpose of further elucidation.* (2) *Baptized with Christ in his baptism.* As we interpret the circumcision of Christ of the circumcision undergone by Christ, so we interpret baptism here of the baptism undergone by Christ (not their baptism). It could be said that when he was baptized we were baptized in his baptism. *There are two sides of baptism.* (a) *A going down into the water.* "Having been buried with him in baptism." There is similar language employed in Rom. vi. 4. We were buried with him through baptism into death. The language is evidently taken from *immersion*. It is said of Jesus that he came up out of the water, so we are to understand that he went down into the water. There was, as it were, a burial under the waves. And as the coming up out of the water is connected in what follows with the resurrection of Christ, so we are to understand that the burial in baptism is connected with the burial of Christ. In baptism we are represented as burying what Christ may be said to have put away in his grave—the old state of sin. The language employed here tells in favour of immersion as a *scriptural mode*. There is every reason to believe that it was the mode followed in Palestine in our Lord's day. It has an advantage over sprinkling in pointing so strikingly to the burial of the old nature as in the grave of Christ. The only reason that can be urged against it is that it is not suitable in a cold climate. The use of water being all that is essential, the mode may be accommodated to altered conditions. On the other hand, there is an identification of baptism with circumcision. What is the putting off and laying aside of the body of the flesh in the one, is the burial in the other. And thus the language of the apostle seems to tell in favour of infant baptism. (b) *A coming up out of the water.* "Wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." The language is taken from the coming up out of the water which is associated with our Lord's baptism, but none the less truly does it point to the fact of Christ's resurrection, which is clearly referred to. Christ went down into the grave, but came up again. So the believer disappears under the waters of baptism, but comes up to sight again. This is a side that is not presented in circumcision. In baptism there is an impressive exhibition of the fact that we are regenerated. This new life we get in union with Christ. The working of God was signally displayed in raising Christ from the dead. But that was more than a display of omnipotence. It is to be taken in connection with the removal of the cause that operated in Christ's death and burial, viz. sin. Christ rose from the dead the possessor of a new and endless life. And if we take as the object of our faith the working which raised Christ from the dead, we shall become sharers with him in the same new and endless life. 3. *Paranthetical application of the being raised with Christ to the Colossians and to the Gentiles generally.* "And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he quicken together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses." There is a difficulty started here regarding the subject of the remainder of the paragraph. Meyer, Alford, and Eadie make God the subject; Ellicott makes it Christ. Lightfoot makes it a case of a sudden change of subject. It can be said in favour of Christ being "subject," that he has been prominent in the apostle's thought in the context as in the Epistle as a whole. It can also be said that the putting off from himself the principalities and powers is language which can only be applied to Christ. On the other hand, it is unnatural, with Ellicott, to pass from the thought of Christ being raised by God to the thought of Christ quickening himself. Nor is it satisfactory simply to say that there is a sudden change of subject. The most natural solution of the difficulty seems to be to regard this verse as paranthetical. The apostle applies the thought of being raised with Christ, and, having done so, he proceeds with Christ as the subject as though the application had not been interjected. The Colossians had been in a state of deadness. Their deadness was caused by their trespasses. There is nothing of the pantheistic

element here that was so prevalent in the East. They had committed personal trespass against a personal Lawgiver, and thus were thrown into a state of deadness. Their deadness through trespasses is associated with the uncircumcision of their flesh. They had not the sign of circumcision on them. And so they had that deadness which in circumcision is represented as being put away. Being dead, God quickened them together with Christ, gave them the reality of circumcision or the reality corresponding to the coming up out of the waters of baptism. This presupposed the exercise of forgiveness toward them. They (and not only they) had been forgiven their trespasses. And thus, the cause of deadness being removed, they could be quickened. (1) *How circumcision can be dispensed with.* "Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." Our obligation to keep the Law of God (so we are constituted) is compared to a bond. It is as though we had subscribed it with our own hand. The word is handwriting. In the case of the Jews it was in the form of well-known ordinances (of which circumcision was one). In the case of the Gentiles the public sense of right also found expression in ordinances. The bond was against us in this sense, that it contained obligation which had to be met by us. It was not only against us in that sense (which it was from its very nature), but in its actual incidence on us in our fallen condition it was contrary to us. It could, as it were, be brought into a court of law to effect our conviction. There it was with our autograph. We had not met our obligation and had no manner of meeting it. What Christ did with the bond was to cancel it. His pen, as it were, was drawn through it. Or the writing was erased that it could never again be brought as evidence against us. To make it more emphatic, it is added that he took it out of the way (so that it could never again be found). "He took it out of the midst," it is literally, so that it could never be produced between us and God. And to make it still more emphatic, it is added that he nailed it to his cross. It was so affixed to the cross that when he was crucified it was treated similarly and completely made an end of. His crucifixion was a meeting the bond, discharging all our obligations to the broken Law. There is thus, therefore, no bond that can be produced for our conviction, but there is a discharged bond which can be produced for our justification. (2) *How the help of intermediate agents can be dispensed with.* "Having put off from himself the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." The principalities and powers were those that sought to thwart Christ in his great undertaking, to prevent the salvation of men. They began to gather around him at his temptation. Especially at the close did they obtain power. These evil principalities and powers clung to him like a garment. It was only by his thus allowing them to come into close contact with him that they could for ever be put off from men. It is said, regarding Hercules, the most celebrated of all heroes of mythology, that he came by his end by putting on a robe that had been steeped in the blood of Nessus, whom he himself had shot with a poisoned arrow. When it became warm round him the poison penetrated into his system. He attempted to wrench it off, but it tore away his flesh. And he hastened his end by placing himself on a burning pile. It was sin that made the principalities and the powers like a poisoned clinging robe. But he put them off from himself. So complete was his victory that he held them up publicly to view as spoils. This triumph he obtained on the cross. It was there that the principalities and the powers had him at a terrible disadvantage. They had, as it were, power given them against him. But he, trusting in God, threw them off. And thus the symbol of weakness became the symbol of triumph.—R. F.

Vers. 16—23.—*Three errors.* I. LEGALISM. "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's." There is a detailed reference here to *Jewish institutions*. Eating (rather than meat) was encompassed with regulations. There was a distinction drawn between clean and unclean animals. Certain parts of animals (the fat, the blood) were not to be eaten. God's rights (firstborn, portions of the priests) were not to be infringed in eating. There was not so much binding down in regard to drinking. Priests were forbidden the use of wine before ministering in the tabernacle; and the Nazarite vow included entire absti-

nonce from the use of wine. The sacred times are classed according to their frequency. There were the three great *annual* feasts (extending each over a week) of the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Every *month* commenced with a celebration. And the *weekly* sabbath (older than Jewish institutions) had its special services. The false teachers who sought to impose these institutions on the Colossian Christians were *Essenes*. These went far beyond the Pharisees. They ate no animal food, drank no wine. They would not light a fire, move a vessel, perform the most ordinary functions of life on the sabbath. Everything material was inherently evil and was not to be touched more than was absolutely necessary. The apostle claims, against these teachers, on behalf of the Colossians, that they were not to be judged in respect of their non-observance of Jewish institutions. And the ground on which he does so is this. These institutions (in their purity, and not as exaggerated in Essenism) were only shadows of the things to come. They were connected with what was substantial (and therefore were channels of blessing so long as they lasted), but Christians, having got the substantial in Christ, are necessarily freed from the shadowy in the Law. No conclusion is to be drawn from this adverse to gospel institutions. "We may observe," says Alford, commenting on this passage, "that, if the ordinance of the sabbath had been in *any form* of lasting obligation on the Christian Church, it would have been quite impossible for the apostle to have used this language." This carried out would take the ground from under all gospel institutions. There would be no *sign* whatever now, connected with our religion, the reality having come. Liberation from all *form* is not certainly the New Testament idea. An argument may be drawn from the context. Circumcision was a shadow of the coming reality, viz. the putting off of the body of the flesh (death to the old). This reality we have now in Christ, but it does not therefore follow that it is disconnected from all positive institution. On the other hand, it is the teaching of the apostle that the same reality has been put into the gospel institution of baptism. Another argument may be drawn from the text itself. One of the feasts referred to is the Passover. The Paschal lamb was a shadow of the coming reality, viz. the sacrifice of Christ. But that great gospel reality has not been disenshrined. On the contrary, it has been put into an institution, which is to last till the close of the earthly order of things. So with the sabbath. It foreshadowed the reality of rest in Christ. We have now got *the substance*, but still the substance has been put into the institution of the Lord's day, in which it will remain till all earthly institutions are done away. Only there is this to be remembered, in connection with *our use of gospel institutions*. We are not to be *legalistic* in the use of them. We are not to feel as though baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or the Lord's day had any magical power in them. They simply serve to hold up gospel realities for our faith to grasp. And there is a freedom (as of sons) which belongs to us in the use of them, such as there was not connected with the Law.

II. ANGEL-WORSHIP. "Let no man rob you of your prize." The Colossian Christians are here compared to the contenders in the Grecian games. The prize for which they were contending, and which they were in the way of obtaining, was eternal life. The word translated "rob" might seem to point to the false teachers as showing hostility in the character of judges. But that is not in accordance with the Pauline conception, in which Christ is Judge. Rather are we to think of them as showing their hostility in interfering with them in one form or another, so as to bring it about that they, the Colossians, did not receive the prize from the judge. And this is required by the connection. For the false teachers are represented as putting an obstacle in the way of the Colossians to trip them up so that they lose the prize. The obstacle is *angel-worship*.

1. *Its spurious humility*. "By a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." We have already described the Eastern doctrine of *successive emanations*. These the Essenes (with their Jewish tendencies) identified with the *successive orders of angels*. These orders at intervals filled up the distance between God and men. They were so familiarly known as to be *named*. There was an *appearance of humility* in that. For it went on the supposition of the *unapproachableness of God*. We are such insignificant beings that it is not for us to worship so great a being as God. It only becomes us to worship the beings that lie nearer to us (the angels), and who have had more immediately to do with our creation. Regarding this humility the apostle asserts that it had *its ground*

in their own will, not in reality. The way in which he makes it out is this: The angel-worshipper "dwells in the things which he hath seen." This must be held to be a great blot on the Revised translation. The meaning suggested is that the angel-worshipper is an inhabitant of the world of sense. This is nothing less than grotesque. For the angel-worshipper shows the spuriousness of his humility by confidently going across the boundary line of sense. "Dwelling in" is a most objectionable translation. The word is literally to step on, *to step off one place on to another.* The exact sense depends on the retention or non-retention of "not" in the text. The former makes the better sense, well brought out in the old translation, "intruding into those things which he hath not seen." The latter has a slight preponderance of authority in its favour, and may be understood as giving the sense—stepping on to the domain of the *visionary*. The general meaning is undoubtedly this—that, while professing (in his humility) that he is only fit to worship angels, he penetrates illegitimately into the invisible world, *i.e.* not in the way of faith and revelation. He makes the large assertion that the Divine Being does not care for our worship. And he names (as though he had actually seen) the different orders of angels. And so the apostle makes it out to be not humility at all. It is (when unbarred) *inflation*. It is inflation with what is *baseless, unreal*. It is inflation from a bad principle—the mind of the flesh (as distinguished from the mind of the Spirit). That is to say, there is in it fleshly discontent with the simple contents of revelation regarding the angel-world. And there is the fleshly desire to appear to know more than is to be known. The lesson to be learned from this is that we are not to *undervalue our humanity*. We are all the greater beings that our Father in heaven is so great.

"We look up in our littleness
To thy majestic state;
Our comfort is thou art so good,
And that thou art so great."

As the angel-worshipper said that it was not for us to worship God, so the agnostic says nowadays that it is not for us to know God. If there is a God, he is not to be known, and we are not at liberty to go beyond the known. There is an appearance of humility in that, but if there is abundant evidence against holding the existence of God in suspense, then it is not really an indication of humility, but rather of proud dislike of God. 2. *Its renunciation of the Head.* "And not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God." The apostle puts his objection to angel-worship on a strong basis of truth. The parts of the body are jointed and banded. The joints and bands serve for the body being nourished and compacted. This takes place in connection with a common centre of vital energy. The result is the increase appointed for the body by God. So Christians in their relations to one another are as joints and bands. They form lines along which communications can be sent from Christ, by which the Church is nourished and compacted and has its appointed increase. But this is on condition of holding fast the Head. The angel-worship, by which the false teachers would have tripped up the Colossians on their way to the goal, would have been a losing hold of Christ. It would have been a substituting for the mediation of Christ the mediation of inferior beings. It would have been fatal severance from him who does the whole work of mediation for men. And the same strong objection is to be taken to the regard paid to angels, to saints, especially to the Virgin Mary, in the Church of Rome. Whatever distinctions may be drawn by Roman Catholic theologians, whatever safeguards may be adopted, the practical result is what the apostle notes here, the letting go of the all-sufficiency of the mediation of Christ and the paralyzing of the Church's energies.

III. *ASCETICISM.* The teaching of the apostle is that *Christians are freed from mundane ordinances.* "If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances?" One part of the truth of baptism is that we are sharers with Christ in his death. We not only die with Christ; but there is *something to or from which we die.* This is thought of sometimes as sin, sometimes as self, sometimes as the Law. It is here thought of as *the world* in its *rudiments*, that is to say, its teachings and rules (the latter prominent

here), which are all rudimentary compared with the perfect form of Christianity. We have *died to the world* (God-forsaking) and its ordinances, why then, as though *living in the world* (as though we had not died, as though our former relations to the world were still maintained), should we subject ourselves to its ordinances? 1. *These ordinances are prohibitory.* "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch." Some, by a strange blunder, have supposed this to be an inculcation of abstinence *by the apostle*. He is, on the contrary, disparagingly giving the spirit of asceticism. It saith, "Abstain, abstain, abstain." He gives the very words of asceticism, "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch." The words are given in the correct order in the Revised translation. With a descent of language, there is an ascent of superstition. The things referred to we are not to handle, nor are we to taste them, nor have the slightest contact with them. The error of asceticism is that it makes prohibition (negation) the essence of religion. The counteractive thought is that it is not by heaping up prohibitions that man's spiritual need can be met. 2. *These ordinances relate to the outward.* "All which things are to perish with the using." The things are the *foods and drinks* which were prohibited. The apostle seems to direct a double argument against asceticism. The meats and drinks had a good property; they had also a defect. (1) *They were for use.* "With the using" is his language. That is to say, they had no inherent evil (according to the ascetic idea). They were made to be handled, to be tasted, to be touched. They were made for consumption. They were made (with a certain heartiness in the expression used) to be used *up*. (2) *They were in the use of them to go to corruption.* They could not be used over again. Decomposition set in which became complete (destruction). As they could not thus be the be-all for man (not being eternal), so neither, on the other hand, was religion to be placed in mere abstinence from them. 3. *These ordinances are humanly imposed.* "After the precepts and doctrines of men." There were *numerous ordinances of God* before the perfect religion came. These had close connection with religion as Divine helps. They were laid down authoritatively by God, and by them God taught important lessons. But the ascetics were out of date with their ordinances (partly Jewish they were in Essenism). They were only (even the Jewish parts of them) the precepts and doctrines of men. There was no authority for imposing them on the consciences of men. 4. *These ordinances are not in their contents entitled to be called wisdom.* "Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh." Ascetic observances were thought to be *wisdom*. They were intimately associated with *worship*. They were supposed to be based on the two great virtues of *humility and self-denial*. The ascetics had the reputation of carrying these virtues even to excess. We have already referred to the practices of the Essenes. As an illustration of what the apostle means by humility and severity to the body, we may take the modern instance of Lacordaire. "Immediately after Mass, and while his face was yet lighted up with ineffable joy, he would seek the cell of one of his brethren, kneel humbly down, and beg for the full severities of discipline. Rising from it, all bleeding, he would press his lips on the feet of him who had chastised him, and overwhelm him with expressions of gratitude. Sometimes he would place himself under the monk's feet, and remain there a quarter of an hour in silence; sometimes he would not be content without the bestowal of still ruder chastisement—he must be boxed on the ears, be spit upon, be ordered about like a slave, 'Go, wretch, brush my shoes, bring me this thing or that;' he must even be spurned like a dog. Once in the convent at Orlais, after having delivered an affecting sermon on humility, he felt irresistibly impelled to follow up precept by example. He came down from the pulpit, begged the assembled brethren to treat him with the severity he deserved, and, uncovering his shoulders, received from each of them twenty-five strokes. The community was a large one, and the ordeal lasted a long time. Brethren, novices, and fathers stood by in deep emotion until all was over, and Lacordaire rose up pale and exhausted. One Good Friday he made himself a cross, raised it in a subterranean chapel, and, bound to it by cords, remained on it three hours." *The apostle teaches that ascetic observances have only a show of wisdom.* (1) *They are voluntary.* He points to this element in the worship with which they were associated. We are to have soul-humiliation before God. We are to have humiliation for sin. But there is no call for our demeaning ourselves or our demeaning the humanity which God has given us. And such demeaning is not

to be taken as an indication of soul-humiliation. In the same way, we have to deny ourselves. The apostle even notes severe treatment of his body, "I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage." But we are not wantonly to buffet the body, as though God had given it to be a plague to the spirit, or as though it were meritorious in itself to do so. Such severity is not to be taken as a true laying of self on the altar. (2) *They are ineffective.* He finds no fault with the end. They are intended to check the indulgence of the flesh. But he denies them value as *means* toward that end. They have only a charm for the few; the many must be repelled. And even with the few they are no proper safeguards. There are often witnessed outbreaks of the flesh, and even, where there are not such outbreaks, there is not the proper condition of the spirit. The only proper safeguard is the positive of the risen life with Christ, and especially of attraction toward him, to the consideration of which the apostle proceeds.—R. F.

Vers. 1-3.—*Three wonderful things.* We have here—

I. A NOBLE ANXIETY. In the words he here uses Paul pictures his eagerness as the eagerness of the racer and the wrestler in the then familiar national games. So far there is nothing very rare, for the spectacle of anxious men struggling with keenest eagerness to gain some purpose of their own is common. Life is an arena crowded with such. But the elements of nobleness in Paul as here discovered are: 1. His anxiety *for others.* He says to the men of Colossæ—My "conflict is for you." It is no self-centred life that Paul lives when he spends himself lavishly for these early Churches. 2. His anxiety *for the absent.* There is a counterfeit coin in current speech: "Out of sight, out of mind." It is a proverb coined in the mint of a very shallow and selfish life. It is only true of the worst men. Such a spirit (1) *limits power*; (2) *narrows character.* Whilst real care for the absent: (1) *Increases the power of the mind.* It gets strong enough to wing its pinions over oceans and even to pierce other worlds. (2) *Cultivates a spiritual habit.* It delivers man from being the creature of sense. 3. His anxiety *for those with whom he had no direct connection.* He is caring for the group of Churches on the Lycus that he had not planted or even visited. It was pure, disinterested love. Such is Paul's noble anxiety. Wherein does the modern gospel of altruism excel this gospel Paul believed and practised? And where has altruism the motives with which Christianity pulsates or the examples that Christianity can cite?

II. A BLESSED EXPERIENCE. Analyzing these verses, we find signs: 1. *Of personal comfort.* The word "comfort" here, as in the word "Comforter," points to more than solace; it tells of encouragement, strengthening. What better experience could he desire for the members of this young Church than that their hearts should be comforted? But to that is added the blessing: 2. *Of social security.* Few expressions can better describe a completer unity than this, "knit together." It means an interweaving of sympathies, an interlinking of destinies. And this interweaving and interlinking is attained by the highest and surest method, "in love." 3. *Of firm conviction.* "Full assurance." There is much more here than mere opinion; there is conviction. A conviction, too, of man's noblest faculty, the understanding, which is more than the reason alone. And this complete conviction is, as to the truth, of the supremest importance, namely, the acknowledgment of the open secret about God.

III. AN OPEN SECRET. As we have seen, Paul did not mean by "mystery" an unknowable, mystical something, but rather a truth once hidden but no longer concealed, a truth fully, freely revealed. Christianity is the open secret. The self-revelation of Christ is the revelation of man, of duty, of God, of Heaven. In him were stored away all the riches of truth and love for which men cried. He is the exhaustless Storehouse of God's supplies for man's higher nature. He is the still small voice, and God is in the voice, and only the listening will hear. Or he is a vast mine of thought, of sympathy, of grace, and only the industrious, who sink the shaft of inquiry, of fellowship, of faith, will know what the mine contains. Paul knew.—U. R. T.

Vers. 4-7.—*Blessed Christian possibilities.* These words of apostolic desire open to us three blessed Christian possibilities—a possibility to the Church, a possibility to the individual, and a possibility to the inner life of each.

I. THE FORMIDABLE STRENGTH POSSIBLE TO A CHRISTIAN CHURCH. The apostle declares that it gave him joy to behold the condition of the Colossian Church; indeed, the words

he uses describe his looking again and again because of the joy it gave him. What gave him such joy? 1. Their *orderly array*. 2. Their *solid front*, as the word "stead, fastness" here depicts. In the centre of the military world, and made a soldier's guard, no wonder Paul lays his hands on metaphors so vividly suggesting precision, compactness, obedience. He sees how a Church can be perfectly marshalled for its mission—the mission of a holy war against ignorance, pride, selfishness, sin. Well for a Church to have its every member a "defender of the faith."

II. THE CONSTANT GROWTH POSSIBLE TO THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. The growth implies life. 1. *The origin of the life is here described*. It is "having received Christ." As Simeon took the holy infant into his arms, the true Christian receives Christ into his trust, thoughts, affections. 2. *The progress of life is here described*. The three metaphors used, of a path, a tree, a structure, teach the same lesson of intimate and advancing union with Christ. Whether walking, or being rooted, or being built, it is all "in Christ."

III. THE PERPETUAL THANKSGIVING POSSIBLE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. This summons to thanksgiving is a sort of refrain throughout the Epistle (ch. i. 10; iii. 15, 17; iv. 2). Faber inquires whether there can be true worship without joy. Because he asserts, "Worship is not fear of God or love of God, but delight in God." This is Paul's exposition and doctrine, for there must be joy in thanksgiving. And perpetual thanksgiving is the true spirit of those who are (1) *objects of perpetual providence*; (2) *subjects of perpetual grace*. Therefore abound with thanksgiving.—U. R. T.

Vers. 8-15.—*The complete man*. The one thought around which we may let the many, varied, and some of them strange ideas of this paragraph gather, is the conception of the *complete man*. The words teach us—

I. THAT THE COMPLETE MAN IS NOT LED AWAY BY ERROR IN THOUGHT OR BY EVIL IN LIFE. Any one who is so led is incomplete. And the apostle is here warning his readers to be on their guard, lest, having once been emancipated from such captivity, they should be insidiously captured again and taken away as prey into such slavery. His words here show: 1. *How error in thought and evil in life are closely connected*, (Vers. 8, 18.) 2. *The two common causes of such error and evil*. "Traditions of men," mere superstitions, are the "rudiments of the world"—mere beginnings of knowledge. All such are to be condemned when they are not "after Christ;" that is, when they are not (1) doctrines of which he is the Teacher, or (2) doctrines of which he is the ultimate Theme.

II. THE COMPLETE MAN DERIVES HIS COMPLETENESS FROM CHRIST. "Ye are complete in him," or we might paraphrase it, "Ye are filled up from him." This paragraph shows what Christ has done for such a man. 1. By Christ he is *separated from evil*. (Vers. 11, 12.) Circumcision was the great symbol of the separation of the Jews; baptism of the separation of the Christians. The complete man is as one "circumcised without hands" by Christ, baptized as in a burial by Christ. 2. By Christ he is *made alive to goodness and to God*. (Vers. 12, 13.) Such a man is "risen with Christ." He is a man marked by pre-eminent livingness. (1) *The type of his livingness is here*: the risen Christ; he who was gloriously alive. (2) *The means of his livingness are here*: through faith in the mighty power of God, which was triumphantly manifested in the raising of Jesus. 3. By Christ he is *emancipated from guilt*. (Vers. 14, 15.) Most vivid and full are the metaphors describing emancipation from the guilt and from the power of sin. "Blotting out handwriting," etc. And all this work of Christ was consummated on Calvary. He like a conqueror nailed to his cross "the writings" that were against us; on his cross he openly triumphed over evil.

III. CHRIST THUS MAKES MEN COMPLETE BECAUSE OF WHAT HE IS IN HIMSELF. The life of God must be wafted in upon man; borne in upon him. Whence? From Christ, "in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." There are three thoughts here about Christ. 1. *All the fulness of God is in him*; he is not a mere emanation of God; not a mere flash of the light, but its Brightness; not a mere tone of the truth, but the Word. 2. *All the fulness of God is permanent in Christ*. In him "*dwelleth*." He is a reservoir whose waters never fail; he does not say he has bread or he has water to bestow, but he is the Bread of life, he is the Water of life; the Holy Ghost abode on him. 3. *All the fulness of God was incarnate in his humanity*. It dwelt in him

"bodily." The purity, righteousness, wisdom, compassion, love, of God was gathered up in that human life. He was Immanuel, and from his fulness, thus complete, lasting, human, we are fed.—U. R. T.

Vers. 16—19.—*Christian independence.* Remembering the evils in the Church at Colossæ, namely, the ceremonialism, the asceticism, the appeal to angelic mediators, and at the same time recalling the theme of the paragraph preceding the verses now before us, the complete sufficiency of Christ as man's Mediator, nature's Lord and Consecrator, and the soul's Deliverer from bondage to ceremonies, we are prepared to notice the result of Christ's work for man and over man, as here suggested, and to consider the great theme of *Christian independence*.

I. THAT CHRISTIAN INDEPENDENCE IS A FREEDOM FROM THE BONDAGE OF CEREMONY AND OF SUPERSTITION. The sixteenth verse suggests what ceremony may bind men; the eighteenth what superstition may enslave them. We notice the Christian's independence: 1. *From the bondage of ceremonialism.* The form of this bondage varies, but its spirit continues. The form of bondage in those days was (1) bondage as to food. There were restrictions as to meat and drink, which were rigid as any moral code. They were mostly Jewish, and had wrongly been inserted in the Christian system. (2) Bondage as to days. These were also mostly Jewish anniversaries, or monthly or weekly celebrations. The claim of their observance was so punctilious as to be a sore bondage. From both of these the Spirit of Christ frees men. As to meats, "nothing was common or unclean;" as to days, the shadow thrown in advance had given way to the substance. 2. *From the bondage of superstition.* A heathen superstition had intruded in the form of the worship of angels, which led to "a voluntary humility," that is, to an artificial, self-conscious affectation of humility, leading to the prostration of men before imaginary superior beings. From this parade of humility and morbidly fostered prostration Christ delivers by bringing each soul into conscious relationship with the Highest. That lofty relationship enjoyed, there will be no cringing before any who are inferior to him.

II. THAT FALSE TEACHERS SEEK TO DEPRIVE MEN OF THIS INDEPENDENCE. So they did in Paul's day, and so they do now. They "beguile" men, trip them up in the race, and hinder their attaining the prize. Two sets of false teachers so beguile men. 1. *The sentimentalist*—those who foster among their adherents a pietism under the name of unworldliness. 2. *The sacerdotalist*—those who exercise over their followers a priestism that makes the man a slave of the institution, instead of the institution being a servant of the man.

III. THAT CHRISTIAN INDEPENDENCE IS DERIVED FROM AND NOURISHED BY UNION WITH CHRIST. 1. The right relationship with Christ gives independence because of the strength flowing from union with the Head, the Source of all power and control. 2. This right union with Christ gives independence because it involves healthy relationship to the body, i.e. all fellow-Christians. There is none of the ruptured relationship with Christ or the Church that some count liberty, but which is really only licence. There is rather the being healthily and perfectly united to Christ and to the Church by the ligaments of loving relationship—ligaments these that hold all together and hold all to Christ, and give him the complete control of all. Each soul has liberty, just as the limbs of a healthy man have free play. Moreover, such a soul grows with the growth of God.—U. R. T.

Vers. 20—23.—*The Christian's exemption from bondage to outwardness.* "The rudiments of the world," of which our text speaks, are, according to Bishop Lightfoot, "the rudimentary, elementary, ordinances and discipline of the mundane sphere;" or, according to Conybeare, "the childish lessons of outward things." Taking the two renderings together, does it not seem that Paul is rather speaking of the spirit of outward things, and not of outward things themselves—the spirit of outwardness as opposed to that of inwardness? And if so, is it not suggested here—

I. THAT THE CHRISTIAN IS EXEMPT FROM BONDAGE TO OUTWARDNESS? He is not ordinance-ridden. What ordinances does Paul primarily speak of? Mingled and inter-fused Judaic, Gnostic, Essenic, and Pharisaic. Paul quotes the words of some of their prescriptive limitations about wine, oil, meat, etc. And also he shows what embargo

that spirit of outwardness placed on intercourse with persons who were (1) ceremonially unclean, (2) religiously inferior, (3) nationally alien. He adduces three reasons against being bound in the bondage of ordinances and regulations concerning such outward things. 1. *That such things themselves are transient and fleeting.* "The fashion of the world passeth away," he says in another place; and here, "which all are to perish with the using." They who guide their course by such things are as mariners who would direct their voyage rather by the clouds than by the stars. 2. *That the virtues that are cultivated in care for such are artificial virtues.* They engender (1) *vanity*, (2) *arbitrariness*, (3) *false humility*, because voluntary and affected. 3. *That such bondage fails in its object.* "Not in any honour."

II. THAT IN CHRIST'S DEATH IS THE POWER AND PATTERN OF EXEMPTION FROM SUCH OUTWARDNESS? Paul is accustomed to dwell on the Christian's complete identification with Christ: "crucified," "buried," "risen," with him. Here it is identification with Jesus in his death. "Make thou, O Christ, a dying of my life." This first and mainly describes a dying to sin, here a dying to the dominion of outwardness. It is the paradox of Christian experience, "I am truly alive because I am dead." About this insensibility to the dominion of the external, this "death to outwardness," Paul here teaches: 1. *Christ's death is the power by which man dies to merely outward rule and regulation.* Through meditation, sympathy, fellowship, faith in the death of Christ, not only is the soul fired with hatred to sin which slew him, and with the love of God who could love thus, but of the hollowness of all formality and the coldness of all legality in the presence of such motives. 2. *Christ's death is the pattern of such exemption from bondage to the outward.* The unresponsiveness of his dead body on the cross is an image of the soul that through faith in him is dead to the world. That independence to the external is (1) *complete*, and (2) *gradually obtained*.

"Let no man think that sudden, in a minute,

All is accomplished and the work is done;

Though with thine earliest dawn thou shouldst begin it,

Scarce were it ended with thy setting sun."

U. R. T.

Vers. 1—3.—*St. Paul's anxieties for the Colossians, and how they were allayed.*

I. ST. PAUL'S ANXIETIES FOR BRETHREN HE HAD NEVER SEEN. We infer from this passage, as well as from other considerations, that the apostle had not visited Colossæ and was not acquainted with the Church. Yet he felt much interest in them and had many anxious thoughts about them. Our sympathies are not to be confined to the narrow circle of our acquaintance. If a heathen could say, "Homo sum," etc., much more should a disciple of "the Son of man" respond, "I am a Christian, and consider nothing that concerns Christians a matter of indifference to me;" "For we are members one of another," and the heresies that may distract our brethren in France or the persecutions that befall the converts in China should call forth our anxieties and our prayers. The apostle has to utter solemn warnings. Most skilfully does he attract and conciliate these unknown Christians by telling them of his cares and his prayers on their behalf. There was an *ἀγῶν* in his public ministry (ch. i. 29) and in his quiet hours (ver. 1; ch. iv. 12). It was caused by the care of souls (2 Cor. xi. 28). Absence intensified it. (Illustrations: Caged bird hearing the cries of its young. A mother hearing of the sickness or spiritual peril of a child far from home. Cf. 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3; Gal. iv. 19.) "The pastor," says Cyprian, "is wounded by the hurt of his flock." Paul's anxiety was for the spiritual comfort and concord of the Colossians. "Comfort" in its older sense includes the ideas of help and strength as well as of soothing and consolation. Error weakens as well as disturbs. The attitude of perpetual doubt and criticism is most unfavourable to growth and harmony. We notice three things that he was very anxious for the Colossians to enjoy as means of preserving them from the errors that encompassed and assailed them. 1. *Ardent love.* It is by love that we gain spiritual discernment, and are thus enabled to explore the hidden treasures of grace. The intellect is affected by the heart (Ps. xiv. 1). Love to a godly father may be our safeguard against scepticism; how much more may love to Christ be! Like a rocking stone, our soul may be somewhat swayed, but not "greatly moved" (Ps. lxxii. 2). Like a magnet, our hearts may be liable to partial deflections, but still point towards

the pole. Moreover, love will unlock many a truth. Pascal has said, "In order to love human things, it is necessary to know them; in order to know things that are Divine, it is necessary to love them." If we trust and love Christ we shall *know him* ("We have believed, *and we know*," etc., John vi. 68, 69; observe the order of the words), and then all the controversies of Christendom need not shake us (2 Tim. i. 12). 2. *Intelligent faith*. "The full assurance of understanding," etc. Love as a mere sentiment may degenerate into a weak toleration of any error that disguises itself in the garb of love. Or, under the plea of jealousy for truth and love for souls, it may be depraved into an intolerant bigotry. Love must be a means to an end (John viii. 31, 32). There are hidden treasures of truth in Christ "the Truth," which need manly intelligence inspired by childlike love and trust (Ps. xxv. 9; Matt. xi. 25). 3. *Steadfast consistency*. (Vers. 6, 7; see next sketch.) We are thus reminded of three chief preservatives against error—a warm heart, a clear judgment, a clean conscience (Eph. iv. 14, 15).

II. HOW ST. PAUL SOUGHT TO ALLAY HIS ANXIETIES. 1. *He strives for the Colossians in prayer*. Like his ancestors Abraham, Jacob, and Moses, and his brother Epaphras (ch. iv. 12), he knew what it was to strive, to wrestle in prayer. No doubt, like his Master, he was sometimes "in an agony of prayer." Gather up Paul's references to his intercessions, and illustrate from the lives of others who have been mighty in prayer; e.g. John Welsh, the minister of Ayr, and son-in-law of John Knox, of whom it is said that he used always to sleep with a plaid upon his bed, that he might wrap it round him if he rose in the night to pray. Sometimes his weeping would awaken his wife, and when she asked the reason, he would reply, "O woman, I have the souls of three thousand to answer for, and I know not how it is with many of them." 2. *He points them to Christ*. (Ver. 3.) With an allusion to the false teachers who boasted access to some secret knowledge and wisdom into which they could initiate their disciples, Paul assures them that all the richest treasures of a wisdom they had not yet attained to were concealed and could be discovered in Christ himself (like pearls at the bottom of the ocean). The truth is even wider than the application the apostle gives of it. As all things were made "by him and for him" and "consist in him," so all branches of knowledge have a relation to him and find their truest meaning in him. (1) He is the Key to history. Its treasures are not unlocked until God's education of the world in its history is connected with the advent of Christ (John i. 3, 4, 9, 10; Gal. iv. 4). (2) He is the Interpreter of science, which may reveal many of its secrets to a godless investigator, but reserves its choicest treasures for those who can see in them his handy-work. (3) The philosophy of mind and of morals is best understood if Christ be known. We see in him ideal human nature and the power which can recover men from that injury to human nature which philosophy no less than theology must recognize. We learn the supremacy of conscience, the dignity and value of the soul, and the fact of a life beyond death. (4) Christ is the Essence of true theology. A knowledge of Divine things apart from Jesus Christ is, at the best, most imperfect and unsatisfactory (1 Cor. i. 20, 21). But Christ is Light, Truth, Revelation, God (Luke x. 22; John i. 18; xiv. 9). 5. Christ is the Wisdom of God and the Power of God unto salvation. In him we are made "wise unto salvation," and this pearl of great price is the most precious of all the treasures which can be found in him (1 Cor. i. 30, 31). He alone can satisfy the hunger of the soul, and thus fortify it against the errors of those who would beguile with "enticing words" which are "not after Christ."—E. S. P.

Vers. 4—7.—*Congratulations and counsels*. We have seen that the heresy that was threatening the Colossian Church was twofold in its character. Its propagators "had a false conception in theology and they had a false basis of morals." These two errors were closely connected together, and seem to have sprung from the prevalent idea that matter was the abode of evil and therefore opposed to God. It was the plausibility of these false doctrines that made the apostle so anxious. But he had the firmest conviction that the Christ he proclaimed could satisfy every reasonable want and aspiration of the inquiring spirit. The words, "This I say," etc. (ver. 4) look back over vers. 1—3, and remind them both of his anxieties and his convictions. But at present the heaven had not spread in the Church, so that the apostle can address to them—

I. CONGRATULATIONS ON THEIR STEADFASTNESS. (Ver. 5.) St. Paul thus most wisely

prepares the way for warnings. He shows them how deep is his interest and sympathy. He says all he can in their favour, as our Lord does to the Churches in Asia. The recognition of what is good in others is one of the best means of helping them to see and to strive against error. All right-minded Christians at Colossæ would be encouraged by the declaration that so eminent an apostle as Paul could rejoice in them while he saw them holding their present faith. (For other illustrations of commendation, see Phil. i. 3—5; ii. 22; 2 Thess. i. 3, 4; 3 John 3, etc.) Men can more easily be encouraged in the truth than scolded into it. The terms "order" and "steadfastness" may both have been used as military figures, suggested by the apostle's familiarity with military matters in the Prætorian camp at Rome (cf. Eph. vi. 13, etc.). He saw their "orderly array and solid front." They were still loyal to the truth and steadfast in the faith. Their ranks were not yet thinned by deserters, in spite of all the seductive appeals of the emissaries of error around them. But cautions were not needless in the midst of congratulations. When an epidemic is in the country precautions are needed, though it may not yet have entered our house or even our town. A fearless, cheerful mind may in itself be one precaution, just as the encouragement in our faith which we receive from the sympathetic words of experienced Christians may be one safeguard against the epidemic of unbelief. But with these congratulations on their steadfastness, St. Paul thinks it needful to blend—

II. CAUTIONS RESPECTING THEIR DANGERS. (Ver. 4.) Note: 1. *Paul does not make light of erroneous teaching.* He warns against "enticing words," "persuasiveness of speech." The tendency of many now is to make light of doctrinal, definite teaching altogether, using the Greek term for "doctrine" (*dogma*) as a term of reproach—a course as childish as it is dangerous. Paul knew that doctrine had a moulding power on the characters of those who came under its influence (Rom. vi. 17). He was not indifferent even to the form of sound words (2 Tim. i. 13). The variety of meaning in good honest words may nevertheless make them instruments of error, not to say deception. (Illustrate from such words as "inspiration," "atonement," etc.) Solemn cautions are suggested to teachers and disputants by Prov. xviii. 21; Matt. xii. 36, 37. 2. *Paul nowhere charges these false teachers with immorality or any gross sin.* Elsewhere he does bring such charges against other heretics (1 Tim. vi. 5; Titus i. 10—16). Here the strongest is in ver. 18. This is instructive for two reasons. (1) The errors at Colossæ were as yet in the bud, and had not brought forth the bitter fruit that was natural to them. Dr. Lightfoot has shown that it is probable that the more perilous heresy of Cerinthus was the outgrowth of these errors at Colossæ (Comm., pp. 106—113). The gradual corruption of the truth respecting the ministry as a teaching and pastoral office, apparently harmless enough at first, led on to full-blown sacerdotalism, Romanism, Vaticanism. (2) We are reminded of the special danger of errors when held and taught by holy men. A Tetzels and a Tom Paines are harmless compared with advocates of substantially the same doctrines whose lives are blameless. We must seek to combine charity to men with unflinching opposition to their erroneous teaching when it touches the "faith in Christ." "Obsta principis" (Jude 3). 3. *Paul counsels them to hold fast to the gospel of Christ.* (Vers. 6, 7.) Till you can find something better, "hold that fast which thou hast," etc. (Rev. iii. 11). They had received a definite gospel from Epaphras; Paul certifies it as his own. They had received "Jesus" (a living example, a dying Saviour) as "the Christ" (God's own Son, the anointed Priest and King of men) their "Lord" (Rom. xiv. 9). The reception of this gospel had brought "great joy in that city," and they could still "abound in thanksgiving" (ver. 7; Rom. v. 11). They had begun well; now, says St. Paul, go on well; "Walk in him." Abide in Christ and proceed by Christ, for as he is "the Truth" wherein we are to abide, he is also "the Way" wherein we are to walk. But he takes for granted that holding the truth of Christ is essential to walking in the ways of Christ. Notice the connection of Phil. iii. 8—11 and 12—14. This is still further seen by the other figures which he employs. The first is that of a tree. Notice the tenses employed in the participial clauses. We are once for all to be firmly rooted in Christ. As "God's husbandry," "planted in the house of the Lord," the roots of our life are "hidden with Christ in God." To him we must cling; around him every fibre of the soul must twine. Thus "rooted and grounded in love" because in Christ himself, we shall be safe against the gales of false doctrine (Eph. iv. 14), which would uproot our

souls. The second figure is that of a house, "God's building," a more frequent figure (Eph. ii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 5). Edification is a gradual work, and in proportion to it shall we be "established in our faith." In the West Indies we have seen trees that seemed to combine the two figures of this verse. In the magnificent silk-cotton trees (*Eriodendrum*) we see enormous trunks sometimes rising eighty or a hundred feet before they send forth any of their huge branches. The widespreading roots secure the safety of the vast superstructure from the wildest hurricane. But around the base of the trunk there rise above the roots massive buttresses whereby the tree is "built up" to still greater stability. Thus "rooted and built up" in Christ, the Christian may defy storms, may "wax stronger and stronger," may bring forth "much fruit," "abounding therein in thanksgiving."—E. S. P.

Vers. 8-10.—*Christ's fulness the Christian's safeguard.* While thus abiding and walking in Christ (vers. 6, 7), the Colossians still needed the warning, "Be on your guard;" "Take heed," etc. In the words that follow we find—

I. A SUGGESTIVE SKETCH OF THE FALSE TEACHING THAT ASSAILED THE COLOSSIANS.

1. *It came in the garb of philosophy.* Real philosophy is nowhere condemned by the apostle. The term itself warns against its abuse. It is attributed to Pythagoras, who taught that no man was truly wise but God only, but he claimed to be a lover of wisdom. The false teaching at Colossæ was rather a theosophy than a philosophy. As such it was "vain deceit" (Job xi. 7-9; 1 Cor. i. 19-21; iii. 18-20). It was part of that "knowledge which is falsely so called" (1 Tim. vi. 20). 2. *It claimed respect because of human authority and antiquity.* It was "after the tradition of men." So far as the error was of Jewish origin, we can imagine something of its nature from the references to it in the Gospels (Matt. xv. 2-9; Mark vii. 3-5). These traditions had an attraction for many religious minds (Gal. i. 14). Grafted upon the genuine commandments of God, they had a semblance of authority, and some of them an undefined antiquity. The false teaching that was of Gentile origin could bring forward in its support names eminent in the philosophical world. But the authority was merely of men and could not appeal to "Scripture inspired of God." 3. *It prescribed services and ceremonies pleasing to the unspiritual mind.* The rite of circumcision (ver. 11), the strict observance of feasts or fasts, and the distinction of meats (ver. 16), might form important parts of a religion which would be easy to a mind religious but not truly spiritual (Rom. xiv. 17, 18). 4. *It was probably recommended by the personal influence of one or more popular teachers in their midst.* This is an inference from the words, "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy," etc. (Revised Version). A devout and pure heresiarch is a source of peculiar peril. Hence the vehement warning in Gal. i. 8, 9. 5. *But it was alien from the doctrine and Spirit of Christ.* "Not after Christ." Paul had absolute confidence that the good news he proclaimed was Christ's own gospel, by which he was prepared to test any teaching, and if needs be to condemn it as "a different gospel which is not another gospel" (Gal. i. 6). There are points of resemblance between the heresy at Colossæ and the most prominent errors of the present day that are suggestive. Rationalism, in its various degrees of anti-supernaturalism, bases itself on philosophy and science (so-called); it speaks in tones of authority, and teaches as truths the thoughts and traditions and alleged discoveries of men quite irrespective of whether we have a revelation of the thoughts of God. It is recommended by the personal influence of exemplary men. "Science and Christ have nothing to do with one another except in as far as the habit of scientific investigation makes a man cautious about accepting any proofs" (from a letter by the late Charles Darwin to a student at Jena, June 5, 1879). But it is "not after Christ," the Christ of history and of apostolic doctrine. Sacerdotalism boasts of antiquity, bases itself on the tradition of the early Fathers and the "development" of apostolic doctrine rather than on "the Scriptures of truth." Its ritual, though helpful to some devout minds, involves the danger of spiritual truths being hidden behind sacramental symbols and religious ceremonies. It makes religion easy to an unspiritual man. And sacerdotal errors are commended to us by the influence of men illustrious both in talent and character. Nevertheless, the most attractive sacerdotalism is "not after Christ."

II. AN ASSURANCE THAT THE FULNESS OF CHRIST CAN SUPPLY ALL THAT WE NEED.

(Vers. 9, 10.) 1. *The fulness of the Godhead dwelt in the eternal Word from the beginning.* This is one of the superhuman truths revealed by God's Spirit and which stands or falls with Christianity (John i. 1; 1 John i. 2). 2. *That fulness now dwells in "the Man Christ Jesus," "the Word made flesh," "bodily."* The Incarnation is the grandest supernatural fact in the world. It is a "present truth," for Jesus Christ still lives, and the "fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in him" still. No wonder that mysteries and miracles should gather around our incarnate God. The transfiguration and the resurrection are natural to him. His dying rather than his rising is miraculous. 3. *His sufficiency as Mediator renders us independent of all other mediation.* His one sacrifice as an atonement takes the place of all the elementary lessons of Jewish symbolism, and makes the sacrifices of a so-called Christian priesthood a practical denial of his work on the cross (Heb. ix. and x.). Since he is "the Head of all principality and power," we need neither saints nor angels as intercessors (1 Tim. ii. 5; Heb. vii. 25), nor can we degrade ourselves to receive God's absolution from an intrusive priest. 4. *The fulness of blessing that flows direct from Christ can satisfy all the necessities of the human heart.* Let us not make light of churches, ministries, sacraments, or other means of grace. But let us hold fast to the truth that Christ himself can immediately supply all our needs, so that we may be "*in him* made full." We are thus reminded of man's emptiness and need (John xv. 5; Rev. iii. 17); of his capacity for receiving blessings indefinitely great ("filled with all the fulness of God"); of "the exceeding abundant grace of our Lord" (John i. 16; 1 Cor. i. 30; Eph. iii. 17—21; Phil. iv. 13); and of the need of union with Christ by faith ("in him") as the necessary condition of spiritual life.—E. S. P.

Vers. 11—15.—*Purity, pardon, and victory through Christ.* Errors in religion, when taught sincerely, are intended to secure spiritual blessings (e.g. purity by austerities; peace of conscience and assurance of pardon by confession and priestly absolution). But the truth of our completeness in Christ strikes at the root of all such errors, for it assures us that all the blessings we can need may be gained direct from him. In ver. 10 we learn that the headship of Christ is our guarantee that we are not dependent upon any intermediate superhuman power. In vers. 11—15 we are reminded that the personal blessings which external rites were designed to secure are ours if we are Christ's.

I. **PURITY.** Judaizing teachers taught the necessity of circumcision even by Gentile converts as a means of purification and salvation. St. Paul teaches the Colossians that they have no need of this, because, by union with Christ, they receive that inward purity of which circumcision was a type (ver. 11; Rom. ii. 28, 29). Moses and the prophets had seen through the type (Deut. x. 16; xxx. 6; Jer. iv. 4). The believer's circumcision is distinguished from that which was typical of it in these particulars: 1. In its character; spiritual, not external, wrought not by hands but by the Spirit himself. 2. In its extent; it puts off, not a mere morsel of the flesh, but "the body of the flesh," the whole body of carnal affections. 3. Its Author; it is the circumcision, not of Moses (John vii. 22) for a nation, but of Christ for all believers (Phil. iii. 3). And as Paul speaks here of spiritual circumcision, so does he also of spiritual baptism. His argument is not, "You need not be circumcised because you have been baptized." Here he speaks highly of some baptism "wherein ye were also raised," etc. Elsewhere he clearly denies the doctrine of regeneration by baptism (cf. 1 Cor. i. 13—17 with 1 Cor. iv. 15). It would be strange if here he spoke disparagingly of "hand-wrought" circumcision, and then passed on immediately to speak of the spiritual efficacy of "hand-wrought" baptism. This would be to introduce the very element of ceremonialism and ritualism which he is here denouncing. Many, never baptized with water, are now "in Christ," in glory. It is the spiritual baptism alone in which we are buried and raised with Christ (Rom. vi. 3—5). The one great baptism of the New Testament is that of the Holy Spirit (Mark i. 8; Acts i. 5). Of that, baptism by water is a beautiful emblem. But in Paul's Epistles he generally speaks of that "one baptism" rather than of baptism with water. Here he speaks of a spiritual circumcision, a spiritual death and burial and resurrection, and a spiritual baptism. The baptism by the Holy Spirit is that purification of the soul from the love and dominion of sin by which we are set apart, consecrated to a course like Christ's, to a spiritual history of which our Lord's

earthly history was typical as well as causal. By union with him we are "crucified with Christ," "dead to the Law," "dead with Christ," "buried with him," "risen with him," "sitting with him in the heavenly places." If the apostle here makes an allusion to water baptism, which was symbolic of the higher baptism, his argument does not rest on, but is opposed to, the supposition that "it is in that font, and when we are in it, that the first breath of [the new] life is drawn." Nor can we see that the lowering of a body into a bath and the lifting it up again is a significant and striking symbol of the burial and resurrection of Christ, especially when we remember how different the customs of burial among Jews and Romans were from our own. However, the main truth of these verses is clearly that in Christ we have purity. "He is made unto us of God sanctification." Every pure motive, every good resolution, every holy impulse is from him. Our entire renunciation of sin ("the putting off of the body of the flesh") is through the power of his purifying Spirit (Gal. ii. 19, 20; vi. 14, 15). By faith in God, who by his Divine power raised the dead body of our Saviour from the tomb (Eph. i. 19, 20), we too are "raised with him," etc. (ver. 12). Whatever he who has raised us prescribes as means of attaining greater purity, we will revere and observe; but we reject new-fangled methods of holiness "after the tradition of men" (Ps. cxix. 128).

II. "JUSTIFICATION OF LIFE." This Pauline phrase (Rom. v. 18) sums up the blessings described in vers. 13, 14. We regard Christ as the Subject of the whole sentence. He is one with his Father in the work of quickening (John v. 21; Eph. ii. 1—5), and of pardoning (ch. iii. 13; Eph. iv. 32). But in order to accomplish this Divine work of giving life, there needed the no less Divine work of providing justification. For there was what Paul describes as a document in existence, which was a barrier to our pardon. It was God's Law, not merely for the Jews (Rom. iii. 19), but for the Gentiles (Rom. ii. 14, 15), which "worketh wrath" (Rom. iv. 15). But Jesus Christ, in whom "dwelleth," etc. (ver. 9), has removed the barrier. He had power to forgive sins "on earth" (Mark ii. 10), and has it still (Acts v. 31). The value of Christ's obedience unto death as an atonement for sin is constantly taken for granted by the apostle. He was not sent to prove it, but to "deliver" it and testify to it (1 Cor. xv. 3; 1 Tim. ii. 6). By Christ's vicarious sacrifice the ransom is given, the bond is cancelled, the document is annulled, and our sins may be blotted out (Isa. xliii. 25; Matt. xviii. 21—35; xx. 28). We are redeemed from the curse of the Law. As the instrument of our condemnation, it is taken out of the way; it is crucified with Christ, nailed to his cross. According to Paul's allegory in Rom. ii. 1—4, the Law, a holy but inexorable husband, is dead, and we are joined to a no less holy but a loving Lord and Saviour. The conditions of acceptance with God and final salvation are no longer "The man that doeth these things shall live by them," but "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Heb. iii. 14; 1 Pet. i. 9). What need have we of other means of forgiveness? of angelic intercessors or absolving priests or eucharistic sacrifices? "In him ye are made full."

III. DELIVERANCE FROM OUR INTERNAL FOES. Christ in his fleshly nature was exposed to the assaults of sin and of the evil one throughout his life (Matt. iv. 1—11; Luke iv. 13) till the last day of it (Luke xxii. 53; John xiv. 30). But on the cross his life of humiliation and strife came to an end (Rom. vi. 10). His cry, "It is finished!" declared that his work of conflict, as well as his work of atonement, was ended. He put off from himself once for all and for ever the hostile principalities and powers (cf. John xii. 31; Heb. ii. 14; 1 John iii. 8). The entrance of Christ into Jerusalem, commonly called his triumphal entry, is nowhere called his triumph in the New Testament. His triumph was on the cross. The powers of darkness plotted his death, and by his death they received their deadly blow. The malefactor's cross became the victor's car (Rom. xiv. 9; Phil. ii. 7—11; Rev. i. 18). This victory is for us who are "in Christ." Satan and all his allies (Eph. vi. 11, 12) who work through the world and the flesh are conquered foes; they know it, and we do too (Rom. vi. 14; viii. 37—39; xvi. 20; 1 Cor. xv. 55—57; Gal. vi. 14). We need no other allies in this conflict, no mystic methods of exploring the secrets or annulling the power of our spiritual foes (Phil. iv. 13).—E. S. P.

Vers. 16—19.—*Two dangers to be avoided.* We find here two notes of warning—"Let no man judge you;" "Let no man rob you." Two dangers need to be guarded against.

I. THE INFLUENCE OF UNJUST JUDGMENTS. The apostle has here in view the practical error of Judaizing ritualists. They had received from Moses regulations respecting meats and drinks and feasts, which they endeavoured to enforce on Gentile converts as necessary to salvation (Acts xv. 1). If they did not always proceed to this extreme, they treated others as negligent of most important means of grace. They thus brought a strong pressure to bear on the consciences of new converts who had received no such instructions from apostles or other Christian teachers who had "begotten them through the gospel." It was no easy thing to resist such pressure exerted by men with all the sacred traditions of Judaism behind them; just as it must have been hard work for the early Reformers to resist the influence of the hostile opinions of all the leaders and Fathers of the Christian world. (Illustrate from the case of Cranmer.) Thus the Colossian converts were in danger of yielding to the censorious judgments of these teachers and conforming to their requirements. In so doing they might grasp at shadows which belonged to Moses and lose the substance which was Christ's. Neither the twelve apostles nor Paul made light of Mosaic ordinances (Acts xvi. 3; xviii. 18; xxi. 26) or sacred seasons (Acts xvi. 13; xviii. 21; xx. 16; xxiv. 11). But St. Paul earnestly protests against the yoke of bondage being imposed on Gentile converts. We too must beware of yielding to similar pressure from ritualizing Christians. So long as we endeavour to observe all things which Christ has commanded, we must be prepared to brave the judgments of those who would impose on our consciences observances and expedients which are not of Divine authority; e.g. the enforcing on the conscience of the observance of Good Friday, or of early communion, evening communion being denounced; the forbidding of marriage during Lent or Advent. There is peril in regarding any human appointments as taking rank with Divine ordinances: "I am afraid of you" (Gal. iv. 10, 11). There is positive sin in enforcing them on the consciences of others (Rom. xiv. 1—6, 13).

II. THE LOSS OF OUR EXPECTED PRIZE. (Vers. 18, 19.) This danger arose from the theological errors of the advocates of a rudimentary Gnosticism. This heresy was more serious than the other, as we infer from the fact that to lose our expected prize is a far greater calamity than to endure the condemnation of narrow-minded brethren. By yielding to the temptation, even through the influence of false opinions, of robbing Christ of his glory as sole Mediator, we may ourselves be robbed of our prize, our "crown." False doctrines may be fatal when they have their roots in moral causes and bring forth "wild grapes." The element of error here chiefly condemned is the worship of angelic mediators. It had four sources. (1) A spurious humility, as though we could not venture to have access to God except through the mediation of inferior beings. (2) A vain pretence to know more than is revealed respecting the world of spirits ("Dwelling in the things which he hath seen," i.e. his assumed visions). (3) Spiritual pride (which is a frequent source of heresy even in Christian men; 1 Cor. viii. 1). (4) An imperfect knowledge of or trust to Christ ("not holding the Head," etc.) This analysis of error applies, to a large extent, to the modern errors of the intercession and worship of angels, saints, and the Virgin Mary. They arise from: (1) Spurious humility; as though a child should appeal to his father through a domestic servant, when his elder brother was appointed as his tutor and counsellor (1 Tim. ii. 5; Heb. i. 14). (2) Pretended knowledge; for whatever speculations we may indulge as to the employments of "the dead in Christ," *we know nothing* to authorize us to appeal to them as intercessors. (3) Spiritual pride, which shows itself in declining to be satisfied or even in setting aside "the things which are revealed" respecting worship and mediation (1 John ii. 2; Rev. xix. 10, etc.), and exalting our own imaginations or the unsupported assertions of fellow-sinners to the level of the true sayings of God (Rev. ii. 14, 15, 20). In some respects Romanists and spiritualists are victims of similar delusions. (4) A failure in "holding fast the Head," etc. Unhappy men! "If thou knewest the gift of God!" God is better to you than your servile fears or false humility would suggest. We have an Advocate, even Christ (John xiv. 6; Eph. ii. 18). We need no advocate with him. "I can speak more safely and cheerfully to my Jesus than to any of the holy spirits of God" (Augustine). The angels have not my nature, and I need no redeemed sinners as intercessors, since I have the Sinless One (Heb. vii. 25, 26). To admit any one to share with Jesus Christ the glory of the work of mediation is (to say the least) to "hold the Head," not "fast," but in a manner that is both

lax and perilous. If we are "holding fast the Head," we must acknowledge him as the Image of God, in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," as the Author and the End of all creation, as the Lord of the world and the supreme Ruler of his Church, as the great Reconciler between God and man by the blood of his cross, and as the believer's only Hope of glory. It is from him alone that his members receive spiritual supplies, are knit together and grow. False teachers, who would divert our faith or affections from him, may rob us of our reward. (Illustration: Racers diverted from the straight course toward the umpire at the goal, or persuaded to neglect one of the laws of the game (Gal. v. 7; Phil. iii. 12—14; 2 Tim. ii. 5; Heb. xii. 1, 2).) To us the exhortations come home (Eph. iv. 14—16; Heb. iii. 12—14; Rev. iii. 11).—E. S. P.

Vers. 20—23.—*The worthlessness of unauthorized ceremonialism.* The apostle here reverts to the ethical errors of the false teachers. Combining his teaching here and elsewhere respecting what he calls "the rudiments of the world," we learn the following truths:—

I. "THE RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD" WERE USEFUL IN THEIR OWN TIME AND PLACE. The difficult expression, "rudiments of the world," seems to mean elementary teaching on the religious life which was no part of the teaching of Jesus Christ. It was not necessarily opposed to Christianity; for it included much of the Mosaic legislation under which the Jews were treated as children and pupils (Gal. iv. 3). These rudimentary lessons were both disciplinary and typical. Paul respected the prejudices of Jews and of Jewish converts in their favour (Acts xvi. 3; xxi. 23—26). He allowed tender consciences to be bound by such rudiments as were not either of Jewish or Christian obligation (Rom. xiv. 2, 3, 14). So in the present day, among heathens just emerging from darkness but not yet "risen with Christ," certain elementary precepts and restrictions may be valuable as temporary educational expedients. And more stringent rules of Church discipline than the New Testament enforces may be expedient for a time in the training of converts from heathenism who have just come out from a worse than Egyptian bondage. (Illustrate from Exod. xxiii. 13, and similar requirements in Polynesia or other mission fields.)

II. THE CHRISTIAN IS EMANCIPATED FROM BONDAGE TO THESE RUDIMENTS. "If ye died with Christ," etc. "This death has many aspects in St. Paul's teaching. It is not only a dying with Christ (2 Tim. ii. 11), but it is also a dying to or from something. This is sometimes represented as *sin* (Rom. vi. 2); sometimes as *self*; sometimes as the *Law* (Rom. vii. 6; Gal. ii. 19); sometimes still more widely as the *world*," as here and in ch. iii. 3. Our Lord, by his teaching and example, set his disciples free from the traditions of men (Matt. xii. 1—13; xv. 1—9) and from some of the ceremonial laws of Moses (Mark vii. 14—19, "*This he said* making all meats clean;" cf. Acts x. 15). By his death as the Sacrifice he fulfilled all that was typical in the ceremonial Law, so that by union with him "we have been discharged from the Law" (Rom. vii. 6). By his power as the risen Saviour, the supreme Head and Lawgiver of his Church, he replaces the precepts of Moses by his "I say unto you." He thus introduces all believers into a new sphere of life and liberty (Heb. xii. 18—25). We experience what Christ can do for us apart from "the rudiments of the world," and therefore need not go back to them. Having pardon, peace, purity, through the death and resurrection of Christ, it would be as unreasonable to seek those blessings in rudiments, as it would be for a cultured literary man to be constantly practising in elementary reading and spelling books. To "subject ourselves" to such restrictions would be as though a slave on the free soil of Britain should still crouch before his old master (Gal. v. 1).

III. THESE RUDIMENTS HAVE NO POWER TO PROMOTE THE OBJECT FOR WHICH THEY ARE RECOMMENDED. (Vcr. 23.) So far as they were Mosaic they had no longer the value which belongs to even the most "positive" precepts as a test of obedience. In the Christian Church even the laws of Moses are merely "the precepts of men;" Jesus only is Lord. The rudiments respecting fasting, etc., which originated in asceticism, never had any spiritual value, but were for the most part the result of fundamental error (1 Tim. iv. 1—5). Self-denial for our own good or that of others is commended by Paul (1 Cor. viii. 13; ix. 27); but the asceticism of Colossæ which was enforced on Christian converts is condemned as fostering pride and powerless to suppress sin.

"Pride may be pampered while the flesh grows lean" (Wordsworth). Thus the axe is laid at the root of those unscriptural austerities which are glorified in the Church of Rome; e.g. even the saintly Pascal "wore beneath his clothes a girdle of iron with sharp points affixed to it, and when he found his mind disposed to wander from religious subjects or take delight in things around him, he struck the girdle with his elbow and forced the points into his side." Men notorious for filth have been canonized (for an illustration, see *Endie on Colossians*, p. 211). How absurd to think that hair shirts and "thongs and whip-cord are means of grace"! But as Dr. South has said, "The truth is, if men's religion lies no deeper than their skin, it is possible they may scourge themselves into very great improvements." Occasional fasts may be of value, but a religion of asceticism is "a libel upon Providence, a surly and superstitious refusal of Divine benignity." The safeguard against such errors is a clear view of our salvation by Christ, our union with him, our submission to him, and our fulness in him.—E. S. P.

Ver. 3.—Christ the Treasury of wisdom. I. WISDOM IS A TREASURE FOR THE GREATEST TREASURY. St. Paul agrees with Solomon. Both exalt wisdom. It is a mistake to suppose that the gospel discourages knowledge and sets a premium on folly. It disregards worldly wisdom just because it brings a higher wisdom. It uses what the world calls the foolishness of preaching in order that it may confound the worldly wise and enlighten the ignorant with the true wisdom of God. 1. The treasury of wisdom is a *jewel-chamber*. Knowledge is good in itself. It is a treasure worth possessing for its own sake. The truly wise man would rather lose his money than his knowledge. Knowledge has these advantages over other possessions: (1) it cannot be stolen; (2) it is not lessened by being shared by many; (3) it does not suffer corruption; (4) it is a pure, calm, and elevating source of delight. 2. This treasury is a *granary*. Knowledge is good for the soul. The mind lives and grows upon ideas. The soul is nourished by the Word of God, which is the revelation of his wisdom. To know God is eternal life. 3. This treasury is a *bank*. True knowledge is like money. It is the means for procuring many other good things. It has a far larger purchasing power than gold and silver. Knowledge is power, just because it shows us how to use many things which are useless to ignorance. The knowledge of Divine truth helps us to the use of Divine grace and the performance of Divine Law.

II. CHRIST IS THE TREASURY OF WISDOM. The Gnostics looked elsewhere. St. Paul says that, not only some wisdom, but all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, are in Christ. They are part of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Nature is a mine in which science discovers numberless treasures of knowledge, but it is knowledge about Nature herself, not about the supernatural, the Divine, and the spiritual. Speculation soars in search of knowledge. But what it flatters itself to have discovered as mountain heights of knowledge often turns out to be but the shadows of cloudland. All the highest and best knowledge is in Christ. 1. The knowledge is *in Christ himself*. It is not simply in his teaching, much less is it in doctrines about him. To know him in his life and character and nature is to have the treasure of the best wisdom. 2. The knowledge covers *the most important subjects of inquiry*. We may include these in three questions. (1) Theological: What is God? Christ says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." To know Christ is to know God. (2) Anthropological: What are man and his destiny? In his earthly life Christ revealed the true nature and glory of humanity, and in his resurrection its great destiny. (3) What is duty? The example of Christ is the answer to this question. Our duty is to follow him.

III. LOVE IS THE KEY TO THIS TREASURY OF WISDOM. 1. The treasure is *hidden*. A superficial glance at Christ will not reveal it. The merchantman seeks for goodly pearls; the purchaser of the field digs for the hidden treasure. 2. *Nothing but love* will open up the treasury. Gnostics thought intellectual enlightenment would do this; theologians in all ages have tried various keys—the rusty key of old-world learning, the ponderous key of argumentation with its intricate wards; too often they have forgotten the golden key of love. 3. *Love* opens up the treasury of wisdom in Christ. St. Paul desires the Colossians to be "knit together in love" (ver. 2) in order that they may "know the Mystery of God, even Christ," etc. (1) This love must be love to Christ, that we may be in sympathy with man and so know him; and (2) love to one another, that we may be in sympathy with Christ's way of regarding God and man.—W. F. A.

Vers. 6, 7.—*Growth in Christ.* St. Paul is anxious lest the invasion of a new philosophy should lead the Colossians away from their earlier life in Christ. Recognizing how rightly they had at first received the gospel, he desires them to continue in the faith as they had been taught. But while he is most earnest in deprecating any departure from the primitive foundation, he is equally earnest in wishing for progress in a continued building on that foundation. The true Christian life is neither a so-called progress that carries us away from Christ to newer masters, nor a dogged and stupid obstinacy that will not budge from the past and stagnates in its immobility, but a growth in Christ.

I. GROWTH IN CHRIST IMPLIES CONTINUANCE IN CHRIST. Any other change, even though it may seem to involve an advance, is a retrogression from Christ. The Colossians are exhorted to walk in Christ as they had received him. They had received him as Christ Jesus the Lord. 1. *As Jesus.* They had begun by recognizing the true human nature of Christ. The Gnostics were persuading them to give this faith up for the idea of a phantom Christ. We are not troubled with these Docetic notions. But practically we are tempted to lose our hold upon the human brotherliness of Christ in our doctrinal systems of divinity and our elaborate solemnities of devotion. 2. *As the Lord.* He was not only a Teacher, a mystic Mediator such as the Gnostics regarded him, but a Master. To regard Christ as Lord is not merely to have an abstract conviction of his divinity, not simply to offer him worship; it is to submit to his kingly rule. To grow in Christ, then, we must, first of all, continue in brotherly sympathy with him, and also in dutiful submission to him.

II. GROWTH IN CHRIST CONSISTS IN A CONTINUOUS ADVANCE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. 1. We must be *rooted*. As the root derives nourishment from the soil for the increase of the tree, so are we to send out the deepest efforts of our soul to Christ and to draw from him ever more and more of spiritual vigour. 2. We must be *built up*. This is a gradual progress. It does not abolish the past in making the future, but, on the contrary, it erects the latter on the former. It produces a compact and harmonious structure. So the temple of the Christian life should be rising in solid strength and grace and beauty, based on Christ as the Foundation, to be finished with Christ as the chief Corner-stone, and consecrated for the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ.

III. GROWTH IN CHRIST RESULTS IN ENLARGED FAITH AND GRATITUDE. 1. *Enlarged faith.* "Stablished in your faith." Faith, which is the means of growing in the Christian life, is itself enlarged and strengthened by the process. 2. *Great gratitude.* "Abounding in thanksgiving." An advanced Christian will always be a thankful one, for he will know more of the goodness of God in Christ, and his own heart will be more full of love. Therefore also the joy of Christianity will increase with the growth of the Christian life.—W. F. A.

Ver. 9.—*The full divinity of Christ.* The Gnostic error which St. Paul seems to be opposing was twofold. It denied that all the fulness of the Godhead resided in Christ, teaching that, while the highest effluence of that fulness was in him, other effluences which completed it were distributed through the angels, in descending gradations of being. At the same time, in its abhorrence of matter, it refused to believe that so much divinity as it allowed to Christ could dwell in a human earthly body, and, accordingly, it favoured the absurd idea that what men saw of Christ was a phantom appearance, not a real man. In reply to this twofold error, St. Paul teaches that all the fulness of the Godhead is in Christ, and that this dwells in him bodily.

I. CHRIST IS FULLY DIVINE. The fulness of the Godhead is in Christ. Wherein this fulness consists is an infinite mystery. We must be omniscient to measure and sound its contents. But we see glimpses of parts of it, rays of divinity breaking out here and there. And all that we see is in Christ. There is no known characteristic of divinity which is not ascribed to Christ in the New Testament, from creation (ch. i. 16) to judgment (Acts x. 42) and the final restitution of all things (Eph. i. 10). 1. In this fact is the essential difference between the divinity of Christ and God's dwelling in the temple of the heart of good men. In men he dwells partially. They can hold but a small part of God's nature, and they do not give up the whole of their hearts for that. Christ is wholly filled with the whole of God. 2. This fact helps us to escape from the idea of two or three separate gods. It is the one infinite God who works in

creation, and rules in heaven, and pleads with our spirits, and dwells fully in Christ. Christ is perfectly Divine, because the one God dwells perfectly in him. Thus when we worship God and Christ we are not worshipping two beings, but the one God in Christ. Therefore, also, all that we see and know of Christ is so much revelation of God. To be in sympathy with Christ is to be reconciled to God.

II. GOD IS INCARNATE IN CHRIST. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ in a bodily way. "The Word was made flesh." Some have thought to make this fact seem impossible by absurd representations, which go on the assumption that an infinite God cannot enter a finite being without ceasing to be infinite. How he can do so we cannot understand. This is not a subject that admits of being rationalized. But dogmatic objectors may be reminded that it is their teaching which sets a limit to the infinite by proclaiming its inability to enter fully a finite being. Does not the infinity of God involve, not the distribution of innumerable parts through all space, but presence of him wholly in every region of the universe? Why, then, cannot he manifest his presence in a peculiar way in one being? Moreover, if God, who is always infinite, can dwell in man at all, that fact is a mystery which seems to foreshadow the greater mystery of his full dwelling in Christ. The humanity of Christ is real and pure and perfect humanity, and God who dwells in him is still perfect God. This is very different from the metamorphosis of a God into a man that is described in heathen mythologies. It is to be practically learnt from this Christian mystery (1) that God is now very near to us in a brother man; (2) that we can be raised to God and become one with Christ and God through Christ's oneness with us and God (John xvii. 23).—W. F. A.

Ver. 10.—*The fulness of humanity.* I. WHEREIN THE FULNESS OF HUMANITY CONSISTS. St. Paul has been writing of the fulness of the Godhead. He now turns his thoughts to our poor, naked, hungry humanity, and he shows how there is a completion and a satisfaction that may be called our fulness, in some way corresponding to the fulness of God. 1. *The full satisfaction of our wants.* We are empty, hungry, and needy. We require pardon for sin; strength for trouble, temptation, and toil; light in darkness; innumerable graces for innumerable distresses. Our fulness must be the quenching of the soul's thirst, the satisfaction of the aching void within. 2. *The full attainment of the perfection of humanity.* We may have every known desire satisfied and may be full up to the measure of our present capacity, and yet not have attained to the fulness of humanity. Our capacity may be enlarged, new aspirations may be inspired in us. To attain to the stature of the perfect man, to be quite like Christ, is to reach our spirit's prime and to have our human fulness. This will be a fulness of knowledge, of goodness, of power for spiritual service.

II. FROM WHAT THE FULNESS OF HUMANITY IS DERIVED. By the word "fulness" St. Paul means that which fills as well as that which is perfected in itself. Christ alone can fill and perfect us. 1. *We must find the fulness in Christ.* Because he is filled with the fulness of God he is himself a perfected Man and the Source of the same grace for us. We have to learn, then, that to reach our fulness we must have what is in Christ. Perfect humanity is not possible without God. When we become possessed by the Spirit of God we become true men. This true religious life does not make us less human; it perfects our humanity. Not by science, nor by learning, nor by energy in affairs of the world, nor by any purely human effort, though all these things have their missions, but through Christ, we may attain the true ideal of humanity. 2. *We can attain to this fulness by personal union with Christ.* We must not simply learn the method from Christ, nor seek the blessing as a gift of his, but derive it from close, living fellowship with him. The secret is to be "in Christ," "rooted" as the tree by being rooted in the soil derives nourishment therefrom, and "built up in him" as the temple stands firm when erected on a solid foundation.—W. F. A.

Ver. 16.—*The rights of liberty.* At first sight the advice of St. Paul to the Colossians, not to let any one interfere with their private judgment in regard to meats, days, etc., may seem to conflict with the principle of generosity laid down in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: "If meat maketh my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I make not my brother to stumble." But a closer examination of the two cases will show that they differ essentially.

I. CONSIDERATION FOR THE SCRUPLES OF THE WEAK MUST BE DISTINGUISHED FROM YIELDING TO THE TYRANNY OF THE BIGOTED. 1. It is *weak* brethren whom St. Paul spares in his Epistle to the Corinthians. But, when writing to the Colossians, he has no such people in view, but a very different class—censorious, bigoted enemies of Christian liberty. Such men should be firmly opposed. 2. In the former case St. Paul was considering the condition of the weak brethren whom he wished to *save from stumbling*. In the present instance no such consideration is called for. It is not their imperfections that the Colossians are to deal gently with, but the interference of troublesome people who will not stumble the less because they have their own way in unlawful tyranny. 3. In the former case the concession was *voluntary*. St. Paul spoke of his own action, freely adopted. Here, however, it is not a case of generous concession on the part of the more liberal, but one of tyrannical assumption on that of the more bigoted. This case may be illustrated by St. Paul's vigorous resistance to the attempts that were made by certain professed Christians at Jerusalem to compel the circumcision of Titus (Gal. ii. 3—5).

II. IT IS OUR POSITIVE DUTY TO MAINTAIN THE RIGHTS OF LIBERTY. We may be tempted to yield out of love of peace, or from an unselfish feeling of generosity. But this is more than a mistake; it is a fault. Several reasons concur to forbid us to yield to the judgment of the more bigoted in these matters. 1. *The claims of truth*. If we believe that our position is the right one, to renounce it will be to sacrifice truth. In maintaining our own rights in this instance we are upholding great principles. 2. *The honour of Christ*. If we renounce the freer, larger gospel for a cramped and mutilated one, we dishonour the Name of Christ. For his sake the broad generosity and liberal spirituality of Christianity must be maintained. 3. *The performance of our own duty*. We cannot serve God so well when our liberty is fettered by the interference of the narrower-minded as when we follow our own conscience without such restraints. 4. *The good of our fellow-men*. By permitting encroachments on the liberty of the gospel, we narrow the privileges which we should be offering to our fellow-men. We are put in trust of the gospel. Let us beware of traitorous efforts to rob it of its richest treasures (Gal. ii. 5).

Nevertheless, let us take home to ourselves a further lesson, and beware of judging our brother Christians in regard to sabbath observance and other external habits *either way*—on the one hand, for too strict formalism in our eyes; or, on the other hand, for too free behaviour. “To his own Lord he standeth or falleth” (Rom. xiv. 4).—W. F. A.

Ver. 23.—*The failure of asceticism*. I. ASCETICISM IS FASCINATING. It is remarkable to observe how readily the severest devotees of asceticism have found followers when the performance of the simpler duties of Christian charity has been left neglected. A St. Simeon, scorched by the blazing sun of noonday and chilled by the cruel frosts of night on his pillar in the desert, finds enthusiastic imitators who would be slow in following Christ's lowly work of going about to do good to his brethren. 1. Asceticism follows the notion that *since indulgence of the lower nature is sinful, that nature itself must be evil*. In this notion is the explanation of the inclination of many of the best men to asceticism. 2. Asceticism appears to be the *readiest way of preventing sins of the flesh*. It seems as though the flesh could not be tamed; therefore it is caged, chained, crushed, slain. 3. Asceticism aspires to the *rare holiness of excessive purity*. Thus, while professing humility, it is often guilty of great pride. 4. Asceticism is *within our own power* and is dependent on our own will. It is will-worship. It is not the submission of our will to the will of God, but the assertion of our will though in self-restraint. This is much easier and requires less humility and faith than spiritual obedience. 5. Asceticism is *effective as a display of holiness*. It would be unjust to accuse all ascetics of playing for the admiration of the world. But it is impossible to doubt that the Church has had her hypocrites, who “disfigure their faces, that they may be seen of men to fast.”

II. ASCETICISM FAILS IN ITS PROFESSED OBJECT. Not only can it be accused of setting up a false ideal; it does not even realize that ideal. Even from its own point of view it must be regarded as a monstrous failure. It is “not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.” History gives horrible proofs of this fearful fact. The

monasteries of the Middle Ages were hotbeds of vice. No more immoral men could be found among the libertines of gay society than the celibate priests, bishops, and popes of the great age of professed asceticism. Literature confirms the testimony of history. The writings of ascetics are too commonly tainted with an unwholesome flavour. Subjects which to ordinary men would call up no impure associations are suggestive of corrupt ideas to these saints. The most sacred relations of life are degraded by the ascetic handling of them. Marriage is regarded only in its lowest character, and is lowered by being so treated. The finger of the monk leaves an unclean mark on the purest page of domestic life. This is what might be expected. 1. Asceticism is *unnatural*. Outraged nature avenges herself on the insult that is put upon her in the distortion of her life. 2. Asceticism is *opposed to the sympathies of Christ*. He sanctioned the ties of domestic life and sanctioned its joys. 3. Asceticism *does not touch the seat of sin*. This is not in the body. It is in the soul. So long as the heart is corrupt, no bodily restraints will make the life holy. The ascetic, like the Pharisee, cleanses only the outside of the cup. The stream must be cleansed at the fountain. The heart must be renewed. Then it will be found that "to the pure all things are pure."—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

VERS. 1—17.—SECTION VII. THE TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE. The apostle, having delivered his attack on the system of error inculcated at Colossæ, now passes from the controversial to the more practical purport of his letter. There is no break, however, in the current of his thought; for throughout this chapter he urges the pursuit of a practical Christian life in a sense and in a manner silently opposed to the tendencies of Gnosticizing error. How much more congenial was the task to which he now addresses himself we may judge, perhaps, from the ease and simplicity which mark the language of this chapter, as compared with the abrupt and seemingly embarrassed style of the last section. We may analyze the hortatory section of the Epistle (ch. iii. 1—iv. 6) as follows: (a) ch. iii. 1—4, urging the Colossians to maintain a *lofty spiritual life*; (b) vers. 5—8, to *put off* their old vices, *impurity, malice, falsehood*; (c) vers. 9—14, to *put on* the new Christian virtues, especially *gentleness, forgivingness, love*; (d) vers. 15—17, to let the *sovereign influences of Christ* sway their whole life—inward, social, secular; (e) ver. 18—ch. iv. 1, enjoining the Christian discharge of their relative duties, as *wives and husbands, children and fathers, servants and masters*, under the sense of their allegiance to the *Lord Christ*; (f) ch. iv. 2—4, exhorting to *constant prayer*, and especially for the apostle himself at the present juncture; and (g) vers. 5, 6, to wise conduct and edifying speech *toward them that are without*. It will be seen how much more comprehensive and systematic is the view thus presented of Christian duty than that furnished by earlier Epistles; and how the ideas of the

supremacy of Christ, the unity of the Christian brotherhood, and the sacredness of the natural constitution of human life, which were threatened by the rise of Gnosticism in Colossæ, underlie the apostle's exposition of Christian ethics. Paragraphs (a) to (d) in the above analysis we have grouped together under the title given to this section; (e) demands a separate treatment; and (f) and (g) will finally be bracketed together.

VERS. 1, 2.—If, therefore, ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at God's right hand; mind the things above, not the things upon the earth (ch. ii. 11—13, 20; Rom. vi. 1—11; Eph. i. 20—22; Phil. iii. 20; Matt. vi. 19, 20; Luke xii. 13—40). The apostle has already shown that when his readers, entering the gate of baptism, became Christians through faith in Christ, they *died with him* (ch. ii. 20), *were buried*, then *raised and made alive together with him* (ch. ii. 11—13): comp. Rom. vi. 1—11. So they were restored to peace and favour with God (ch. i. 21—23; ii. 13, 14), severed from their old life of sin (ch. ii. 11), and set in the path of holiness (ch. i. 22). At the same time, they left behind all childish, tentative forms and notions ("rudiments") of religion, whether Jewish or non-Jewish (ch. ii. 8, 11, 18, 20—23). They became dead both from sin and from human modes of salvation. Both are included in "the things upon the earth," to which belong at once the grosser sensual forms of sin (ver. 5) with its "surfeiting of the flesh" (ch. ii. 23), and that vaunted *philosophy*, which is after all earth-born and earthward tending (ch. ii. 8, 20), bringing the soul again into bondage to material things. The apostle lifts his readers into a new, heavenly sphere. He bids them make "the things above," i.e. "the things of

Christ," the one object of their thought and endeavour. So they will master the flesh by rising above it, instead of fighting it on its own ground by ceremonial rite and ascetic regimen. "The things above" are no abstract, transcendental conception, as in the theology of St. Paul's opponents, for they are "where Christ is." The things "in the heavens" as well as those "upon the earth" were created "in him, through him, unto him" (ch. i. 16); there he is Lord, even as *here* (ch. i. 17; i. 10; Matt. xxviii. 18). His presence gives distinctness and positiveness to the Christian's view of heaven, and concentrates his interests and affections there (comp. Phil. i. 23; iii. 20; 1 Thess. i. 10; Eph. i. 3; ii. 6; Matt. vi. 19, 20; John xii. 26; xiv. 3; Acts i. 11; vii. 56). "Seated" is placed with emphasis at the end of its clause, indicating the completeness of the Saviour's work and the dignity of his position (comp. Eph. i. 20—22; Heb. i. 3; x. 12, 13; Rev. iii. 21; and see Pearson on the Creed, art. vi.). (For "the things above," see vers. 3, 4; also ch. i. 5 and ii. 18 compared with Phil. iii. 11—14, 20, 21; Rom. ii. 7; viii. 17—23; 1 Cor. xv. 42—49; 2 Cor. iv. 16—v. 8; John xvii. 24.) To "seek" these things is to strive that they may be ours in the future; to "mind" them is to occupy our thoughts with them in the present. (For the word "mind" (*φρονέω*), comp. Phil. iii. 19 and Rom. viii. 5—7 (*φρόνημα*, *mind*ing); in Rom. xiv. 6 it is rendered by "regard.")

Ver. 3.—For ye died, and your life is hid, with Christ, in God (ch. ii. 11—13, 20; Eph. iv. 22; Phil. iii. 20; Rom. vi. 1—14; vii. 1—6; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; Gal. ii. 20; 1 Cor. iii. 23; John xv. 5; xii. 26; Rev. iii. 21). In this *hidden life* of the Christian lies the ground and the spring of the more outward life of thought and endeavour of vers. 1, 2. And this *life* comes through *death*, from that "dying with Christ" out of which we "rose with him" (ver. 1; ch. ii. 11—13, 20; Rom. vi. 3, 4, 8). "The aorist ἀπεθάνετε ('ye died') denotes the past act; the perfect κεκρυπται ('hath been and is hid') the permanent effects" (Lightfoot). (On the nature of this *death*, see notes to ch. ii. 11—13.) "Died—and your life!" this paradox is explained in Rom. vi. 10, 11, and repeated in Gal. ii. 20; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. The Christian's *life* is lodged in the sphere of "the unseen and eternal." It centres in *Christ*, and as he is *hidden*—withdrawn from the world of sense, yet with us always in his Spirit (John xiv. 16—20; xvi. 16—22)—so our *life* with him. And if "with Christ," then "in God;" for "Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 23); "lives to God" (Rom. vi. 10), and "is at God's right hand" (ver. 1), being "the Son of his love" (ch. i. 13; John i. 18).

The apostle says, "in God" ("in heaven," Phil. iii. 19), to emphasize the fact of the union of Christ with God, or perhaps to deepen the reader's sense of the sacredness of this life in Christ (comp. 1 Tim. vi. 14—16). "Is hid" (ch. i. 26, 27; ii. 2, 3), another allusion to the fondness of the Colossian errorists for *mysteries*. In ch. i. 26 St. Paul spoke of the ancient mystery of a Christ for all the world; then of the new, perpetual mystery of a Christ dwelling within believing hearts. But this second mystery is equally that of *our life in Christ* as of *Christ's life in us*, lifting us to heaven while it brings him down to earth. This mutual indwelling of the Head in heaven and the members upon earth is the most intimate and inscrutable of all secrets (John xiv. 20; xv. 1—7; xvii. 22, 23, 26). "The world knows neither Christ nor Christians, and Christians do not even know themselves" (Bengel). But as the old historic secret had its manifestation at last (ch. i. 26), so will the new secret that lies enfolded within every Christian life—

Ver. 4.—When Christ shall be manifested, our (or, your) life, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory (Rom. viii. 18—23; Phil. iii. 21; 1 Cor. i. 7; iv. 5; 1 Thess. i. 10; 1 Tim. vi. 15; 2 Tim. ii. 10—12; iv. 8; Titus ii. 13; 1 John iii. 2; ii. 28). Our future destiny, with our present redemption (ch. i. 14), is wrapped up in Christ. Our *life* is not only "with him" (ver. 3); it is "himself" (Phil. i. 21; John i. 4; vi. 50—57; xiv. 6; 1 John v. 12); he is its source and ground, way and rule, means and end—its *all* (ver. 11; comp. ch. i. 20; ii. 6—10; Eph. i. 3, 23; iii. 17—19; iv. 13; Phil. iii. 10; iv. 19, etc.). From the hour of his ascension he has been *hidden* (Acts i. 9; iii. 21; 1 Pet. i. 8); and his *manifestation* is as much a part of the Christian creed as his death and resurrection (Acts xvii. 31; 1 Thess. i. 10; iv. 16; 2 Thess. i. 10; ii. 8; 1 Cor. xv. 23; Phil. iii. 20; 2 Tim. iv. 1; John xv. 3; 1 John iii. 2, 3; Rev. xxii. 12, 20). Then the Christian will have his *manifestation* also with him, in the "revelation of the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 19); who will receive their second "adoption, to wit, the redemption of their body" (Rom. viii. 23). "Seeing him as he is" in his glory, "we shall be like him" (1 John iii. 2) in glory. At last the spiritual life of the soul will have its due organic expression, in a body perfect and heavenly as itself (1 Cor. xv. 35—49; 2 Cor. v. 1—5). This is already the case with our human nature in Christ (Phil. iii. 21); and the change will proceed from the Head to the members (1 Cor. xv. 23), who will be conformed to his "body of glory," as now they are being conformed to his spiritual image

(Rom. viii. 9-11, 29, 30; xii. 2; 2 Cor. iii. 18; John xvii. 22-26; 1 John iv. 17). The textual change from "your" to "our" is doubtful (see note on ch. ii. 13). Observe that "Christ" is repeated four times in the last four verses.

Ver. 5.—*Make dead, therefore, the (or, your) members that are upon the earth* (ch. ii. 11; iii. 9; Eph. iv. 21, 22; Phil. iii. 19; Rom. vi. 6; viii. 13; xiii. 14). "Your" is omitted by most textual critics, but English idiom requires it in translation. In its absence a stronger emphasis falls on the defining clause, "that are upon the earth." As these things may no longer be pursued or studied (vers. 1, 2), the organs devoted to them must be put to death. These *members* are indeed those of the actual body (Rom. vi. 13, 19; vii. 5, 23; viii. 13); but these *in so far as ruled hitherto by sinful impulse and habit*, constituting the body of "the old man" (ver. 9; Eph. iv. 22; Rom. vi. 6), "of the flesh" (ch. ii. 11), "of sin," and "of death" (Rom. vi. 6; vii. 24), with "sinful passions working in its members, bearing fruit unto death" (Rom. vii. 5): comp. note, ch. ii. 11. *That body is "made dead" by destruction of the evil passions that animated it.* The body of "the new man" is physically identical with it, but different in moral habit and diathesis—a difference that manifests itself even in bodily expression and manner (2 Cor. v. 17). *Νεκρώω* occurs besides in the New Testament only in Rom. iv. 19 and Heb. xi. 12 (in Rom. viii. 13, a still stronger word is used of "the practices" of the body): as the aged Abraham had been *made dead* in respect of the natural possibility of fatherhood, so the body of the Christian is to be dead for purposes of sin. If there were any doubt as to the writer's meaning, the next clause removes it. His language has approached that of the philosophical ascetics (see ch. ii. 23, note and quotations); hence the abrupt explanatory apposition that follows: *fornication, uncleanness, (sensual) passion, evil desire, and covetousness, the which is idolatry* (Eph. v. 3-5; Phil. iii. 19; 1 Cor. vi. 9-11; v. 11; Rom. i. 29; 1 Tim. vi. 17; Matt. vi. 24, 31, 32; Luke xii. 21; Ps. xlix. 6; lii. 7). To these vices the Colossian Gentiles (some of them at least) had been to such a degree devoted that their *members* had become virtually identified therewith. The first two sins are related as particular and general. The second pair, *πάθος* and *ἐπιθυμία*, are combined in 1 Thess. iv. 4 in contrast to "(bodily) sanctification and honour" (comp. ch. ii. 23, and "passions of dishonour," Rom. i. 26). The former denotes a morbid, inflamed condition of the sensual appetite; the latter, craving for some particular gratification of it (see Trench's

'Synonyms'). Neither of these words is etymologically, or invariably, evil in sense. The degradation of such terms in all languages is a sad evidence of the corruption of our nature. *Πλεονεξία* is both wider and more intense in meaning than our "covetousness." It denotes radically the disposition to "have more," "grasping greed," "selfishness grown to a passion." Hence it applies to sins of impurity, greediness for sensual pleasure (1 Thess. iv. 6; Eph. iv. 19); but by the emphatic use of the article ("the covetousness"), and by the words that follow, it is marked out as a distinct type of sin; so in Eph. v. 3, 5, where "uncleanness" and "greed" are stigmatized as *vile* forms of sin. This word, often used by St. Paul, is peculiar to him in the New Testament. "The which" (*ἥτις*: comp. *ἅτινα*, ch. ii. 23) gives a reason while it states a fact ("inasmuch as it is idolatry"). For the thought, comp. Eph. v. 5 and 1 Tim. vi. 17, also Matt. vi. 24; it is a commonplace of religion, and appears in Philo and Jewish rabbis (see Lightfoot). Lightfoot places a colon after "upon the earth," and supposes "fornication," etc., to be "proleptic accusatives," looking forward to some verb unexpressed, such as "put off" (ver. 8). But this is needless (see Winer, p. 666), and the command, "make dead your members," requires this qualifying explanation. The grammatical awkwardness of the apposition is not without rhetorical effect.

Ver. 6.—*Because of which (things) the anger of God cometh [upon the sons of disobedience]* (Eph. ii. 2, 3; v. 6; Gal. v. 21; Rom. i. 18; ii. 5-9; v. 9; 1 Thess. i. 10; ii. 16; 2 Thess. i. 5-10; John iii. 36; Rev. vi. 17; Mal. iii. 2). The latter phrase is cancelled by Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alford, Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort; but retained by Ellicott and, preferentially, by the Revisers. The witnesses against it, though numerically few, are varied and select, and the parallel (Eph. v. 6) would suggest insertion of the words if originally absent. "The anger of God is coming" is a sentence complete in itself (comp. Rom. i. 18). God's "anger" (*ὀργή*) is his settled punitive indignation against sin, of which his "wrath" (*θυμός*) is the terrible outflaming (Rev. xvi. 1; xiv. 10); see Trench's 'Synonyms.' "Cometh" implies a continuing fact or fixed principle (see Winer, p. 332); or rather, perhaps, signifies that this "anger" is in course of manifestation, is "on the way:" comp. 1 Thess. i. 10, "the anger that is coming," not "to come," also the use of *ἐρχομαι* in John xiv. 3, 18; Hob. x. 37. The objects of this anger ("children of wrath," Eph. ii. 2, 3) are "the sons of disobedience." The expressive Hebraism by which a man is said to be a *child* or *son* of the dominant quality

or influence of his life is frequent in the New Testament.

Ver. 7.—*In which also ye walked once, when you were living in these (things)* (Eph. ii. 3; v. 8; Rom. vi. 19—21; 1 Cor. vi. 11; xii. 2; Titus iii. 3; 1 Pet. iv. 3). Even retaining “sons of disobedience” in ver. 6, it seems better, with Alford, Lightfoot, and the English Version, to read *ois* as *neuter*, “in which,” referring to the same antecedent (ver. 5) as “because of which” in ver. 6; not “amongst whom” (Ellicott, Meyer). The latter interpretation is against the general usage of “walk in” with St. Paul (ch. iv. 5; Eph. ii. 2, 10; iv. 17; v. 2; Rom. vi. 4; 2 Cor. iv. 2), and seems to condemn the mere fact of living “amongst the sons of disobedience” (see, on the other hand, 1 Cor. v. 9, 10; Phil. ii. 15; John xvii. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 12). The parallel “because of which” (ver. 6) gives *also* its force: these sins are visited with the Divine anger, and *moreover* are the very sins in which the Colossians aforesaid had lived; observe the same connection in Eph. v. 6—8; 1 Cor. vi. 10, 11. “Wereliving” stands opposed to “make dead” of ver. 5, and to “ye died” (ver. 3: comp. ch. ii. 20; Gal. ii. 20); it marks the time when “the old man” (ver. 9), with his “earthly members” (ver. 5) was alive and active (comp. Rom. vii. 5, 9, “sin came to life”). “In these things” (*τούτοις*, not *αὐτοῖς*: Revised Text) points to the things enumerated in ver. 6, with a mental gesture of contempt.

Ver. 8.—*But now do ye put away indeed all these (things)* (ver. 9; ch. ii. 11; Eph. iv. 22, 25; Rom. xiii. 12; 1 Pet. ii. 1). The thought of the *death of the old life* gives place to that of the *divesting of the old habit*; the new life wears a new dress. Mark the triumphant emphasis in “but now!” (opposed to the “once” of ver. 8), characteristic of the writer (comp. ch. i. 21, 26; Rom. iii. 21; vi. 22, etc.). *Tὰ πάντα* (“all these things,” “the whole” of them) summarizes the vices specified in ver. 5, and forms the starting-point of another series, in which *malice* predominates, as *impurity* in the previous list; *anger, wrath, malice, evil-speaking, foul speech from your mouth* (Eph. iv. 26—31; v. 4; Rom. i. 29—31; 1 Cor. vi. 10; Gal. v. 20, 21; Titus iii. 3). There is a similar order and division between these two chief classes of sin in the parallel passages. In Eph. iv. 31, 32 and v. 3—5 the order is reversed. “Anger” (*ὀργή*) is ascribed to God in ver. 6 (comp. Eph. iv. 26; Heb. x. 30). (On “anger” and “wrath” (or “rage”), see ver. 6.) The latter is once ascribed to God by St. Paul (Rom. ii. 8), more frequently in the Apocalypse. In man it is universally condemned. (For *κακία, malignity, badness of disposition*, comp. Rom. i. 29; 1 Cor. xiv. 20; Titus iii. 3; see Trench’s ‘Synonyms.’) *βλασφημία*,

in its original sense, includes injurious speech of any kind, either against man or God (see Rom. iii. 8; xiv. 16; 1 Cor. x. 30; Titus iii. 2). *Αἰσχρολογία* (*aischrologia*) (only here in the New Testament) denotes, like the English “foul,” either “scurrilous” or “filthy.” The former kind of speech is suggested by the foregoing *blasphemia*; but especially in such an atmosphere as that of Greek city-life, scurrility commonly runs into filthiness. In Eph. v. 4, where a slightly different word occurs, the latter idea is prominent. The two last vices, being sins of *speech*, must be put away “out of your mouth.” “Your” bears the emphasis in the Greek; such utterance is quite unfit for a *Christian mouth* (comp. Eph. iv. 29; v. 3, 4; Jas. iii. 10; and the prohibition of *lying* in the next verse).

Ver. 9.—*Lie not one to another, having stripped off the old man with his deeds* (Eph. iv. 14, 15; 20—25; 1 Tim. i. 6; Rev. xxi. 8; ch. ii. 11; Rom. vi. 6; viii. 12, 13; Gal. v. 16, 24). The imperatives of vers. 5 and 8 were aorists, enjoining a single, decisive act; this is present, as in vers. 1, 2, 15, 18, etc., giving a rule of life. Only in Colossians and Ephesians do we find the apostle give a general warning against *lying*. What reason there was for this we cannot tell; unless it lay in the *deceit* of the heretical teachers (ch. ii. 8: comp. Eph. iv. 14, 15; Acts xx. 30; 2 Cor. xi. 13; 1 Tim. iv. 2; 2 Pet. ii. 1; 1 John iv. 1; Rev. ii. 2; iii. 9). The *lying* in question is uttered within the Church (“to one another”), and is fatal to its unity (ver. 11; Eph. iv. 25; Acts xx. 28—30). The following aorist participles, “having stripped off” and “having put on” (ver. 10), may, grammatically, be part of the command—“strip off,” etc., and “lie not”—as *e.g.* in 1 Thess. v. 8; Heb. xii. 1; or may state the *fact* on which that command is based. The latter view is preferable (Meyer, Alford, Ellicott, English Version; but see Lightfoot); for the participles describe a change already realized—a change of *principle*, which has, however, still to be more fully carried out in *practice* (ch. ii. 11—13, 20; iii. 1, 3, 7, 11; Eph. iv. 20—24; Gal. iii. 27, 28); in ver. 12 the imperative mood is resumed with an emphatic “therefore,” implying a previous reference to fact. (On the double compound *ἀν-εκ-δυστάμενοι*, “having stripped off (and put) away,” see notes, ch. ii. 11, 15.) The “old man” is the former self, the “I no longer living” (Gal. ii. 20) of the Colossian believer, to whom “the members that are upon the earth” (ver. 5) belonged—the entire sinful personality of “him who is in the flesh” (Rom. viii. 8). His “deeds” (“practices,” “habits of doing,” Rom. viii. 13; see Trench’s ‘Synonyms’ on *πράσσω*) are the pursuits of which vers. 5, 8, 9 supply examples.

Ver. 10.—And having put on the new (man), which is being renewed unto (full) knowledge, after (the) image of him that created him (Eph. iv. 23, 24; ii. 15; Rom. vi. 4; vii. 6; viii. 1-4; xiii. 12-14; 2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15; ch. i. 9; ii. 2, 3; Gen. i. 26-28; Matt. v. 48; Heb. xii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 16; Rom. viii. 29). New (*νέος*) is "young," "of recent date" (compare the "once," "but now" of vers. 7, 8; also ch. i. 5-8; 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2), whose birth was well remembered, and which presented so vivid a contrast to the "old man with his deeds." "Being renewed" (*ἀνακαινούμενον*, derived from the adjective *καίνος*) sets forth the other side of this newness, its novelty of quality and condition (compare "newness of life," Rom. vi. 4). And this participle is in the present tense (continuous), while the former is in the aorist (historical). So the notions are combined of a new birth taking place once for all, and a new character in course of formation. In Eph. iv. 23, 24 these ideas are in the same order (see Treuch's 'Synonyms'). "Full knowledge" was one purpose of this renewal, the purpose most necessary to be set before the Colossians. The nature and objects of this knowledge have been already specified (ch. i. 6, 9, 27, 28; ii. 2, 3, 9, 10; comp. Eph. i. 18, 19; iii. 18, 19; Phil. iii. 8-14; 1 Cor. i. 18-31; and on *ἐπίγνωσις*, see note, ch. i. 6). "After (the) image" is clearly an allusion to Gen. i. 26-28; so in Eph. iv. 24 ("after God"). It is adverbial to "renewed," not to "knowledge." Man's renewal in Christ makes him what the Creator at first designed him to be, namely, his own image (compare note on "reconcile," ch. i. 20). Chrysostom and others take "Christ" as "him that created," in view of ch. i. 15, 16; but then it is said that all things "were created *ἐν* . . . *through* . . . *for* Christ," not absolutely that Christ created them. But "the image of God after which" man was created and is now re-created, is seen in Christ (Rom. viii. 29; 2 Cor. iii. 18; iv. 4; John i. 18).

Ver. 11.—Where there is (or, can be) no Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman (Gal. iii. 28; vi. 15; Eph. ii. 14-18; iv. 25; 1 Cor. xii. 13; Rom. xv. 5-12; Philem. 15, 16; John xvii. 20-23; Luke xxii. 24-27; John xiii. 12-17). That *ἐν* means "can be," "negating, not merely the fact, but the possibility," is doubtful in view of 1 Cor. vi. 5 (Revised Text). "In Christ" these distinctions are non-existent. There is no place for them. These and the following words indicate the sphere, as "unto knowledge" the end, and "after the image" the ideal or norm, of the progressive renewal to be effected in the Colossian believer. It can be carried on only where

and so far as these distinctions are set aside. The "new man" knows nothing of them. The enmity between Greek and Jew being removed, the malice and falsehood that grew out of it will disappear (vers. 8, 9; comp. Rom. xv. 7; Eph. iv. 25). In Gal. iii. 28 "Jew" stands first, and the distinction of sex is added. The distinctions here enumerated appear as looked at from the Greek side. Only here in the New Testament does "Greek" precede "Jew" (comp. Rom. i. 16; 1 Cor. xii. 13, etc.). "Barbarian" (Rom. i. 14) and "Scythian" (only here in the New Testament) are together opposed to "Greek," and imply want of culture rather than alien nationality, the Scythian being the rudest of barbarians (see Lightfoot's full note). Such terms of contempt would, in Asia Minor, be commonly applied by Greeks to the native population. The party who affected philosophic culture (ch. ii. 8, 23) may, perhaps, have applied them to simple uneducated Christians (see note on ch. i. 28). (On "circumcision," see ch. ii. 11; and for the connection with ver. 9, comp. Gal. vi. 15.) For "bond" and "free," a division then pervading society universally, comp. Galatian list. Onesimus and Philemon are doubtless in the apostle's mind. On this relationship he enlarges in the next section (ch. iii. 22-iv. 1). The four pairs of opposed terms represent distinctions (1) of race, (2) of religious privilege, (3) of culture, (4) of social rank. But Christ is all things, and in all (ch. i. 15-20; ii. 9, 10; iii. 4, 17; Eph. i. 3, 10, 22, 23; ii. 13-22; iii. 8, 19; Phil. i. 21; iii. 7-14; iv. 19; Gal. ii. 20; v. 2, 4; Rom. v. 10; viii. 32, 39). "Christ" stands at the end of the sentence, with accumulated emphasis. The Church regards and values each man in his relation to Christ, and bids every other consideration bow to this. He is "all things"—our common centre, our standard of reference, and fount of honour, the sum of all we acknowledge and desire; and he is "in all"—the common life and soul of his people, the substance of all we experience and possess as Christians. The second "all" is masculine (so most commentators, from Chrysostom downwards), referring more specially to the classes just enumerated. Similarly, in Eph. iv. 6; comp. ch. i. 27; Eph. iii. 17; Gal. i. 15; ii. 20; iv. 19. (While he is "in all," it is equally true that all are "in him;" comp. John xv. 4; xvii. 23, 26.) Just as in the spiritual sphere, and in the relations between God and man, Christ is shown to be all, so that "principalities and powers" are comparatively insignificant (ch. i. 16; ii. 9, 10, 15); so in the moral sphere, and in the relations between man and man. All human distinctions, like all angelic offices, must pay homage to his supremacy,

and submit to the reconciling unity of his kingdom (Eph. i. 10).

Ver. 12.—Put on, therefore, as elect of God, holy, [and] beloved (vers. 9, 14; Eph. iv. 24; i. 3-5; Gal. iii. 27; Rom. xiii. 14; 1 Thess. v. 8; i. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 13; Titus i. 1; Rom. viii. 28-39; 1 Pet. i. 1, 2; 1 John iii. 1). The terms "elect," "holy" (same as "saints," ch. i. 2; see note), "beloved," apply alike and separately to those addressed. Bengel, Meyer, Alford, Ellicott prefer to read "holy and beloved elect (ones);" but "holy" and "beloved" are used frequently by St. Paul as distinct substantive expressions, and indicate conditions ensuing on, rather than determining, election. Colossian believers are "elect" in virtue of an antecedent choice of them to salvation on the part of God, as those who would believe on his Son (1 Thess. i. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 13; Eph. i. 4, 5; ii. 8; Rom. viii. 28-30; 1 Pet. i. 1, 2). Their whole Christian standing springs from and witnesses to God's eternal (Eph. i. 4) election of them—an election which, however, presumes faith on their part from beginning to end (ch. i. 22, 23; Rom. ix. 30-33; xi. 5-10, 17-24). "Elect" and "called," with St. Paul, are coextensive terms: comp. Rom. i. 7 (R.V.) with this passage, also 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. To address the Colossian Christians as *elect* is to remind them of all that they owe to God's grace. "Elect" as chosen by God, they are "holy" as devoted to God. By the latter title they were first addressed (ch. i. 2); holiness is the essence of Christian character. That they should gain this character and appear in it at the last judgment was the purpose of Christ's atoning death (ch. i. 21, 22), as it was the purpose of God's eternal election of believers (Eph. i. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Pet. ii. 9). "And" is marked as doubtful by Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort; "it is impossible not to feel how much the sentence gains in form by its omission" (Lightfoot). "Beloved" (*ἀγαπημένοι*) is the perfect participle passive; it describes the position of those who, carrying out by their present holiness the purpose of their past election, are the objects of God's abiding love (1 Thess. i. 4). This love dictated their election and set at work the means by which it should be secured (Eph. i. 3-14; ii. 4; Rom. viii. 28-30, 39; 1 John iii. 1; iv. 9, 10). As its purposes are increasingly fulfilled in them, it rests on them with an abiding complacency and satisfaction (Eph. v. 1; John xiv. 21-23). Christ is "the Beloved One" (Eph. i. 6; Matt. iii. 17, etc.), and those who are "in him" in their measure share the same title (John xvii. 23-26). But their choice by God and devotion to God, who is all love to them (Rom. viii. 39; 1 John iv. 16), must in turn beget a loving heart in them (1 John

iv. 11). A heart of pity, kindness, lowliness of mind, meekness, long-suffering (Eph. iv. 1, 2, 32-v. 2; Phil. ii. 1-4; Gal. v. 22; 1 Cor. xiii. 4; Titus iii. 2; 1 Pet. iii. 8, 9; Matt. v. 5, 7; xi. 29; Luke vi. 35, 36). "The *σπλάγχνα* are properly the nobler viscera" rather than the bowels. The use of this figure, found three times in Philemon, is Hebraistic (comp. Luke i. 78; 2 Cor. vi. 12; Philem. 7, 12, 20; Jas. v. 11; 1 John iii. 17), though similar expressions occur in Greek poets. "Pity" (or, "compassion") is an attribute of God in Rom. xii. 1; 2 Cor. i. 3: comp. Luke vi. 36 ("pitiful"). (On "kindness," or "kindliness," see Gal. v. 22; 1 Cor. xiii. 4; 2 Cor. vi. 6—in each case following "long-suffering;" Rom. xi. 22, where it is opposed to "severity" in God (comp. Rom. ii. 4); Eph. ii. 7; Titus iii. 4, where it is ascribed to God in his dealing with men in Christ; also Matt. xi. 30.) It is synonymous with "goodness" (Gal. v. 22; Eph. v. 9; Matt. vii. 11; xii. 35, etc.); but "goodness" looks chiefly to benefit intended or conferred, "kindness" to the spirit and manner of bestowal (see Trench's 'Synonyms'). The objects of "pity" are the suffering and miserable; of "kindness," the needy and dependent. The "lowliness of mind" of ch. ii. 18, 23 was something specious and to be guarded against; here it is the central and essential element of the true Christian temper (Acts xx. 19; Phil. ii. 3; 1 Pet. v. 5; Luke xiv. 11; xviii. 14), its self-regarding element (Rom. xii. 3). It is linked with "meekness," as in Eph. iv. 2 and Matt. xi. 29. "Pity" and "kindness," preceding "humility," relate to the claims of others upon us; "meekness" and "long-suffering," to our bearing towards them. "Meekness," the opposite of rudeness and self-assertion (1 Cor. xiii. 5), is a delicate consideration for the rights and feelings of others, especially necessary in administering rebuke or discipline (Gal. vi. 1; 2 Tim. ii. 25; 1 Cor. iv. 21; Titus iii. 2), and conspicuous in Christ (Matt. xi. 29; xxi. 5; 2 Cor. x. 1). St. Peter marks it as a womanly virtue (1 Pet. iii. 4). "Long-suffering" is called forth by the conduct of "the evil and unthankful" (see ch. i. 11, and note). St. Paul claims this quality for himself (2 Cor. vi. 6; 2 Tim. iii. 10). Throughout Scripture it is ascribed to God (Exod. xxxiv. 6; Rom. ii. 4; ix. 22; 1 Tim. i. 16; 2 Pet. iii. 9, 15, etc.).

Ver. 13.—Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other (literally, *yourselves*), if any one have a complaint against any (Eph. iv. 1, 2, 32; v. 1; 1 Thess. v. 14; 1 Cor. vi. 7, 8; 2 Cor. ii. 10; Matt. vi. 14, 15; xviii. 21-35; Mark xi. 25; Luke xvii. 3, 4). (On "bearing with" or "forbearing," see 1 Cor. iv. 12; 2 Cor. xi. 19, 20; Matt. xvii. 17.) It is ascribed to God, with "long-suffering,"

especially as shown in his dealing with the sins of men before the coming of Christ (Rom. ii. 4; iii. 26: comp. Acts xvii. 30). *Long-suffering* may be shown towards all who do us injury; *forbearance* especially towards those from whom regard or obedience is due. It falls short of *forgiveness*, which can only ensue on repentance (Luke xvii. 3, 4: comp. Rom. iii. 25, 26; Acts xvii. 30). The change of pronoun in the two participial clauses appears also in Eph. iv. 2 and 32: the first is reciprocal, but the second is reflexive, implying the *oneness* of the forgiving and the forgiven party. Forgiving a Christian brother, it is as though a man were forgiving himself (comp. vers. 14, 15; Gal. vi. 1; Rom. xii. 5; xv. 5—7; and the same variation in 1 Pet. iv. 8—10). "Forgive" is literally "to grant grace," used of Divine forgiveness in ch. ii. 13 (see note). The words, "if any have any complaint," etc., would certainly apply to Philemon as against Onesimus (Philem. 18, 19: comp. 2 Cor. ii. 5—11; Mark xi. 25). Even as the Lord (or, *Christ*) forgave you, so also ye (ch. ii. 13; Eph. iv. 32; i. 7; Rom. iii. 24—26; 2 Cor. v. 19; Acts xiii. 38; v. 31; 1 John i. 9; Matt. ix. 1—8; xviii. 27; Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7; Ps. ciii. 3). This argument is latent in the appeal to the "elect" and "beloved" of ver. 12. The evidence for the alternative readings, "Lord" and "Christ," is nearly equal in weight. In any case, the "Lord" is "Christ" in this passage (ch. ii. 6; iii. 17, 24); and that *he* forgave (comp. ch. i. 20, note) is quite consistent with the assertion that *God* forgave (ch. ii. 13), for God forgave "in Christ" (Eph. iv. 32). So "God in Christ reconciled" (2 Cor. v. 19); and yet "Christ reconciled us" (ch. i. 20, 21; Eph. ii. 16). "Forgiving," supplied in thought from previous context, completes the sense of "so also ye" (Meyer, Alford, Ellicott). To suppose an ellipsis of the imperative, with Lightfoot and the English Version ("do ye"), is needlessly to break the structure of the sentence. Ver. 14 shows that the leading imperative, "put on," of ver. 12 is still in the writer's mind. For the reciprocal double καί ("even . . . also"), comp. ch. i. 6 or Rom. i. 13; it is characteristic of the writer.

Ver. 14.—And over all these things (put on) love, which (thing) is the bond of perfectness (ch. ii. 2; Eph. iv. 2, 3; v. 1; Phil. ii. 2; 1 Cor. xiii.; Gal. v. 13—15, 22; Rom. xiii. 8—10; 2 Pet. i. 7; 1 John iv. 7—21; John xiii. 34, 35). In 1 Cor. xiii. "love" is the substance or substratum of the Christian virtues; in Gal. v. 22 it is their head and beginning; here it is that which embraces and completes them. They imply love, but it is more than them all together. They lie within its circumference; wanting it, they fall to pieces and are nothing. (For συνδεσμός ("bond" or "band"), comp. ch. ii. 19.)

In Eph. iv. 3 we have the "bond of peace" (see next verse). Love is *the bond* in the active sense, as that *wherewith* the constituents of a Christian character or the members of a Church are bound together: peace, in a passive sense, as that *wherein* the union consists (comp. 1 Cor. i. 10; 2 Cor. xiii. 11). "Love" (compare "covetousness," ver. 5) is made conspicuous by the Greek definite article—being that *eminent, essential* grace of Christian love (ch. i. 4, 8; ii. 2; 1 Cor. xiii.; 1 John iv. 16, etc.). "Perfectness" is genitive of object, not of quality: love unifies the elements of Christian goodness and gives them in itself their "perfectness" (Rom. xiii. 10). (For "perfectness," see note on "perfect," ch. i. 28; and comp. iv. 12.) Against Galatian teachers of circumcision, and Corinthian exalters of knowledge, the apostle had magnified the supremacy of love (Gal. v. 6; 1 Cor. viii. 1—3); and so against the Colossian mysticism and asceticism he sets it forth as the crown of spiritual perfection, the goal of human excellence (comp. Eph. iv. 15, 16).

Ver. 15.—And let the peace of Christ be umpire in your hearts (ch. i. 14, 20—22; ii. 18; Eph. ii. 13—18; Rom. v. 1, 10; 2 Cor. v. 18—21; Acts x. 36; Heb. xiii. 20; Phil. iii. 14). "Of God," the reading of the Received Text, is borrowed from Phil. iv. 7, where, however, "in Christ Jesus" follows (comp. ver. 13 b, and Eph. iv. 32). "The peace of Christ" is that which he effects in reconciling men to God, and to himself as their Lord (ver. 13 b; ch. i. 20, see note; Rom. v. 1). Here is the source of inner tranquillity and health of soul (see note on "peace," ch. i. 2; Rom. viii. 6—9; John xvi. 33); and of the outward union and harmony of the Church, the body of Christ (Eph. ii. 16; iv. 2, 3; Rom. xiv. 15—19; xv. 7). In John xiv. 27, on the other hand, *Christ's peace*, his "legacy," is that which he possessed and exemplified—an idea foreign to this context. This "peace" is to "act as umpire" in the Christian's heart. The compound *κατα-σπα-σέω* ("act as umpire against you") has already been used in ch. ii. 18 (see note); also Phil. iii. 14, cognate *σπασέω* of the false teacher who, in condemning the faith of the Colossian Christians as insufficient for the attaining of "perfectness" (ver. 14) without angel-worship, etc., virtually *took away their prize* and judged them "unworthy of eternal life." The Greek commentators seem, therefore, to be right, as against most moderns (but see Klöpper on the other side), in retaining the primary sense of the verb instead of generalizing it into "rule" or the like. It stands in precise antithesis, both of sense and sound, to ch. ii. 18: "Let not the deceivers decide against you, but let the peace of Christ decide in your hearts" (Cramer's

'Catena'). "The peace of Christ" dwelling within the heart is to be the security of the Colossian believer against the throats of false teachers: "They seek to rob you of your prize; let this assure you of it." Present, conscious peace with God is a warrant of the Christian's hope of everlasting life (Rom. v. 1—11; viii. 31—39; xv. 13; Eph. i. 13, 14; 1 Thess. v. 23; Titus iii. 7). This assurance is identical with "the witness of the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 15, 16; Gal. iv. 6, 7; Eph. i. 13, 14). The apostle argued in ch. i. 4, 5 from the present faith and love of his readers to "the hope laid up for them in heaven;" here he bids them find in the peace which Christ has brought to their souls the earnest of their future bliss. It is but a generalizing of the same idea when he speaks in Phil. iv. 7 of "the peace of God" as "garrisoning the heart and thoughts" against fear and doubt. **Unto which also ye were called, in one body** (ch. i. 12, 18; ii. 2; Eph. iv. 14—18, 1—6; Phil. i. 27, 28; 1 Cor. x. 17; xii. 12, 13; Rom. xii. 5). So this "peace" is to be at once their inward safeguard, and the ground of their outward union. They are to stand together in its defence (Phil. i. 27, 28). Error, which blights the Church's *hope*, destroys her unity. So the maintenance of that "one hope of our calling," assured by a Divine peace within the soul, unites all Christian hearts in a common cause (compare the connection of vers. 18 and 19 in ch. ii.). With St. Paul, the peace of God's children with him and with each other is so essentially one that he speaks almost indistinguishably of both (Eph. ii. 15, 16; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; 2 Thess. iii. 16). He adds, and **be ye thankful** (ch. i. 3—5, 12; ii. 7; iii. 17; iv. 2; Eph. v. 20); viz. "for this assurance of your future blessedness afforded by the peace of Christ within your hearts, with its outward evidence in your Christian unity." The apostle gave thanks for them on like grounds (ch. i. 3—5: comp. i. 12—14). The command to *give thanks* prevails in this Epistle, as that to *rejoice* in Philipians. "Be" is the Greek *γίνομαι* ("become"); so in Eph. iv. 32; v. 1, 17. It implies "striving after an aim as not yet realized" (Meyer: comp. John xv. 8)—rather, therefore, "to be in act," "to prove" or "show one's self thankful" (see Grimm's 'Lexicon;,' and comp. Rom. iii. 4; Luke x. 36).

Ver. 16.—**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom** (ch. i. 5, 9, 27, 28; ii. 2, 3; iv. 5, 6; Eph. i. 17, 18; iii. 8, 9; 1 Cor. i. 5, 6; 2 Tim. iii. 15). The "word of Christ" is the Christian doctrine, *the gospel* in the widest sense of the term (ch. i. 5), as proceeding from Christ (Gal. i. 11, 12; Heb. ii. 3; Matt. xxviii. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 3). This precise phrase occurs only here, where the

name of *Christ* is emphasized in so many ways (comp. 1 Thess. i. 8; 2 Thess. iii. 1). The apostle, it may be, alludes primarily to the personal teaching of Christ himself (comp. Acts xx. 35; 1 Cor. vii. 10). "You" is understood collectively by Meyer and others ("amongst you"); but the verb "dwell-in" (Rom. viii. 11; 2 Tim. i. 5, 14) requires the stronger sense, suggested also by the "in your hearts" of ver. 15 (comp. note on "in you," ch. i. 27). As "the word" is rich in the Divine wealth stored in it (ch. i. 27; Eph. i. 7, 18; ii. 4, 7; iii. 8; Titus iii. 6), so it is to dwell "richly" in those who possess it. "In all wisdom" God's grace abounded (Eph. i. 8), and St. Paul himself taught (ch. i. 28); so with the *richly indwelling word* in the minds of the Colossians, especially as they were beset by intellectual forms of error (ch. i. 9; ii. 2—4, 8, 23: comp. ch. iv. 5; Eph. v. 15). In this connection of thought, the phrase appears to belong to the previous sentence; so English Version and Lightfoot. Bengel, Meyer, Alford, and Ellicott, however, attach it to the words which follow. **Teaching and admonishing each other** [or, *yourselves*: comp. ver. 13, note] (ch. i. 28; Rom. xv. 14; Heb. v. 12; x. 24, 25; Eph. iv. 15, 16). (For this absolute participial nominative, so marked a feature of St. Paul's style, comp. ch. i. 10; ii. 2; Eph. i. 18; iv. 2; Phil. i. 30; iii. 10; 2 Cor. vii. 5; Winer, p. 716.) What he is doing in his own ministry and by writing this letter, he bids the Colossians do for each other. "Teaching" precedes, being suggested by "wisdom." With psalms, hymns, spiritual songs (Eph. v. 19; 1 Cor. xiv. 26). These are to be a chief means of mutual edification. The repeated "and," also the singular "heart," and "Lord" in place of "God" in the sequel of the verse, are borrowed by the Received Text from Eph. v. 19. The Greeks, the Asiatic Greeks in particular, were devoted to the arts of music. Song and jest, stimulated by the wine-cup, were the entertainment of their social hours (Eph. v. 4, 18, 19). Their Christian intercourse is still to be enlivened by the varied use of song, and by the play of wholesome wit (ch. iv. 6; Eph. iv. 29); but both song and speech are to be "in grace," stamped with a spiritual character and governed by a serious Christian purpose. A "psalm" (from *ψάλλω*, to play an instrument) is "a song set to music;" but this name was already in the LXX appropriated to its present use. Whether its application here is restricted to the psalms of the Old Testament is doubtful (comp. 1 Cor. xiv. 15, 26). "Hymn" (*ᾠμός*) denotes a solemn, religious composition, or song of Divine praise. The word "song" (*οἶδος*, *ψῆς*) is wider in sense; hence is qualified by "spiritual," equivalent to "with [or, 'in']

the Spirit" (Eph. v. 18)—"songs of a spiritual nature, inspired by the Holy Ghost" (comp. "spiritual wisdom," ch. i. 9). Such songs would echo the varied sentiments and experiences of the Christian life. In Eph. v. 14 and 2 Tim. ii. 11—13, very possibly, we have fragments of early Christian song. St. Paul's own language, in more exalted moods, tends to assume a rhythmic and lyrical strain (see introductory note on ch. i. 15—20). In *grace singing, in your hearts, to God* (ch. iv. 5; Eph. v. 19; 1 Cor. xiv. 2, 15, 28; Rom. viii. 27; 1 John iii. 19; Rev. ii. 23; 1 Sam. xvi. 7; 1 Chron. xxviii. 9). "The correct reading is *ἐν τῇ χάριτι* (in the grace);" so Lightfoot, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort in *margin*, rejected by the Revisers. The tendency to omit the article in prepositional phrases should be taken into account in its favour here. And the article helps the sense by giving "grace" a definite Christian meaning (so "the love," ver. 14). Otherwise, *ἐν χάριτι* may mean no more than "gracefully," "pleasantly;" comp. ch. iv. 6. "The (Divine) grace" is the pervasive element and subject-matter of Christian song. Its constant refrain will be, "to the praise of the glory of his grace!" (Eph. i. 6, 12, 14: comp. Rev. i. 5, 6). "In your hearts" (ver. 15)—the inner region of the soul—there is the counterpart, audible "to God," of the song that vibrates on the lips. In Eph. v. 19 we read, "with your hearts"—the instrument (here the region) of the song. (For the connection of "in your hearts" and "to God," comp. vers. 22, 23; Luke xvi. 15; Acts i. 24; xv. 8; Rom. viii. 27; 1 Thess. ii. 4; 1 John iii. 19.)

Ver. 17.—**And everything, whatever ye be doing in word or deed, (do) all in the name of (the) Lord Jesus** (1 Cor. x. 31; v. 4; Eph. v. 20; 2 Thess. ii. 17). Ver. 16 speaks of "word" only; to it is added the "deed," which stands for all the practical activities of life. Both meet in the following "all." "The name of the Lord Jesus" is the expression of his authority as "Lord" (ch. i. 13, 15, 18; ii. 6; Phil. ii. 9—11; Eph. i. 21—23; 1 Cor. xii. 3; Rom. xiv. 9; Acts x. 36), and of his personal character and relation to us as "Jesus" (Matt. i. 21; Acts iv. 12; xvi. 31, Revised Text). (On the prominence of the title "Lord" in this Epistle, see note on ch. ii. 6.) (For the emphatic, absolute nominative *πάν* at the head of the sentence, comp. John vi. 39; xv. 2; xvii. 2; Matt. x. 32; Luke xii. 10.) **Giving thanks to God (the) Father through him** (ver. 15; ch. i. 12—14; ii. 7; iv. 2). Again *thanksgiving* is urged on the Colossians. It is to be the accompaniment of daily talk and work—to be offered to God in his character as "Father" (see notes on ch. 1, 2, 3, 12), and "through the Lord

Jesus" (Rom. i. 8; vii. 25), by whom we have access to the Father (Eph. ii. 18; iii. 12; Rom. v. 1, 2; Heb. x. 19—22) and receive from him all the benefits of redemption (ch. i. 14; Eph. ii. 5—10; Rom. iii. 24—26; Titus iii. 4—7).

Ver. 18—ch. iv. 1.—SECTION VIII. THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF FAMILY DUTIES. We note that in each of the three family relations here dealt with, the subordinate party is first addressed, and the duty of submission is primarily insisted upon (vers. 18, 20, 22: comp. 1 Pet. ii. 13, 18; iii. 1—6). So in Eph. v. 21—24; vi. 1—3, 5—8. There may have been some special reason for this in the state of the Asiatic Churches or of Greek society in that region. But other indications show (1 Cor. vii. 24; xi. 3—16; xiv. 34, 35; Gal. v. 13; 1 Thess. iv. 11; 2 Thess. iii. 11, 12; 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12; vi. 1, 2; Titus ii. 5, 9; 10; iii. 1) that the apostle perceived and sought to check the danger of unsettlement in the natural order of family and social life which often attends great spiritual revolutions, especially when they are in the direction of religious liberty. As in the case of Luther, the apostle's later teaching is largely directed against the antinomianism which resulted, by way of perversion and abuse, from the preaching of salvation by grace and of the sanctity of the individual believer (comp. introductory note to this chapter). Observe how *the Lord* and his authority are made to furnish a higher sanction for each of these natural duties.

Ver. 18.—**Ye wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fit in the Lord** (Eph. v. 22—24; 1 Tim. ii. 11—15; Titus ii. 5; 1 Cor. xi. 3; xiv. 34, 35; 1 Pet. iii. 1—6; Gen. iii. 16). On this duty the apostle dilates in the Ephesian letter, in illustration of its teaching respecting "Christ and the Church" (comp. the very different treatment of it in 1 Pet. iii. 1—7). The use of the *article* (*αἱ γυναῖκες*) in the nominative of address is frequent in New Testament, though not in classical Greek. Lightfoot thinks it Hebraistic. *Ἀρκεν* stands in the imperfect tense (literally, *it was fit*), denoting a normal propriety (comp. Eph. v. 4, Westcott and Hort; and for the general expression, 1 Cor. xi. 13, 14; Philem. 8; Eph. v. 3; 1 Tim. ii. 10; Phil. iv. 8; Rom. i. 29). Like all men of a sound moral nature, St. Paul has a strong sense of natural propriety. The adjunct "in the Lord" belongs to "was fit," not "be subject" (comp. ver. 20). The constitution of nature, as we have learnt in ch. i. 15—18, is grounded "in the Lord." In Eph. v. 22—33 St. Paul shows that this inherent propriety has a deep spiritual significance; and he makes the subjection of the Church to her heavenly Lord a new reason for wifely submission.

Ver. 19.—Ye husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them (Eph. v. 25—31; 1 Pet. iii. 7). “Love” is ἀγαπᾶω, the word which expresses the highest spiritual affection—“even as Christ loved the Church” (Eph. v. 25). Here, first and most of all, the “new commandment” of John xiii. 34 applies. St. Paul only uses the verb πικραίνω (“to make bitter”) here, but he has the noun πικρία (“bitterness”) in a wider application in Eph. iv. 31. It denotes “exasperation,” prompting to hasty severity. Bengel defines it as “odium amoris mixtum”—hatred infused into love.

Ver. 20.—Ye children, be obedient to your parents in all things; for this is well-pleasing in the Lord (Eph. vi. 1, 2; Exod. xx. 12; Deut. v. 16; Lev. xix. 3; Prov. xiii. 22; Luke ii. 51, 52). In Eph. vi. 1, 2 “in all things” (κατὰ πάντα, “in regard to all things”) is wanting; and not the extent, but the intrinsic rightness of the command as it is found in the Decalogue is insisted on. But here, where “Christ is all and in all” (ver. 11), it is “in the Lord” (Revised Text) that the child’s obedience is declared to be “well-pleasing.” There is something especially pleasing in the behaviour of a lovingly obedient child, that wins “favour” both “with God and man” (Luke ii. 52). The law of filial obedience has its creative ground “in him” (ch. i. 16), and is an essential part of the Christian order of life, which is the natural order restored and perfected. “Well-pleasing” is a favourite word of St. Paul’s (comp. ch. i. 10; Eph. v. 10; Phil. iv. 8; Rom. xiv. 18; Titus ii. 9, etc.; used also in Hebrews).

Ver. 21.—Ye fathers, do not irritate your children, lest they be disheartened (Eph. vi. 4). Ἐπειθίζω (“irritate” or “provoke”) St. Paul uses once besides (2 Cor. ix. 2), in a good sense. It implies a use of parental authority which, by continual exactions and complaints, teaches the child to look on the father as his enemy rather than his friend. The synonymous παροργίζω of Eph. vi. 4, found here in many copies, is, more definitely “to rouse to anger.” Ἀθυμῶ (only here in the New Testament) means “to lose heart,” to have the confidence and high spirit of youth broken; “fractus animus pestis juventutis” (Bengel). In place of this treatment, “the discipline and admonition of the Lord” are recommended in Eph. vi. 4.

Ver. 22.—Ye servants (literally, *bondmen*), be obedient in all things to your lords according to the flesh (Eph. vi. 5—9; 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2; Titus ii. 9, 10; 1 Cor. vii. 21—24; Rom. xiii. 1, 5; 1 Pet. ii. 18—25). The duties of *servants* and *masters* are prominent here (ver. 22—ch. iv. 1), in view of the emphasis thrown upon the lordship of Christ; and partly, no doubt, with reference to the

case of the runaway slave Onesimus (ch. iv. 9; Epistle to Philemon). “Servant” is δούλος, *bondman*, as in ch. i. 1 and commonly in St. Paul. In 1 Pet. ii. 18 we have the milder οἰκερής, *domestic*. The vast majority of servants of all kinds at this time in the Greek and Roman world were *slaves*. In most districts the slaves were much more numerous than the free population. And they were undoubtedly numerous in the early Church. The gospel has always been welcome to the poor and oppressed. The attitude of St. Paul and of Christianity towards slavery claims consideration under the Epistle to Philemon; on this point see Lightfoot’s ‘Introduction.’ Here and in Eph. vi. 5 (comp. vers. 7, 8) the apostle calls the master κύριος (“lord”) in reference to “the Lord Christ” (vers. 22 b, 24); elsewhere in the New Testament, as in common Greek, the opposite of δούλος is δεσποτής (1 Tim. vi. 1, 2; 2 Tim. ii. 21, etc.). “According to flesh,” that is, “in outward, earthly relationship” (comp. Rom. iv. 1); Christ is the Lord in the absolute and abiding sense of the word (similarly, “in the flesh” and “in the Lord,” Philom. 16). Not with acts of eye-service (literally, *not in eye-services*), as man-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord (Eph. vi. 6; v. 21; 1 Thess. ii. 4; Gal. i. 10; Matt. vi. 22; Luke xi. 34; Jas. i. 5—8; Ps. cxxiii. 2; Isa. viii. 13; Rev. ii. 23). “Eye-service” is plural here, according to Revised Text; singular in Eph. vi. 6. Here the word ὀφθαλμοδουλεία first occurs in Greek, like ἐθελοθρησκεία (ch. ii. 23). It strikes at the besetting sin of servants of all kinds. Ἀνθρωπάρεσκος (“man-pleaser”) occurs in the LXX, Ps. lii. 6 (comp. 1 Thess. ii. 6; Gal. i. 10). The servant whose aim it is to please his earthly master in what will catch his eye, plays a *double* part, acting in one way when observed, in another when left to himself; with this duplicity is contrasted “singleness of heart” (comp. Rom. xii. 8; 2 Cor. xi. 3; ἀπάτης in 2 Cor. viii. 2 and ix. 11, 13 has a different application). “Fearing the Lord” more than the eye of his earthly lord, the Christian servant will always act in “singleness of heart;” for “the eyes of the Lord are in every place.” In the same manner the apostle (“bondman of Christ Jesus,” ch. i. 1) speaks of his own relations to men and to the Lord Christ respectively (1 Cor. iv. 3—5; 2 Cor. v. 11; Gal. i. 10; 1 Thess. ii. 4—6, etc.; comp. John v. 37—41). The reading “God” of Received Text is a copyist’s emendation, a sample of a large class of corruptions of the text, where a word more familiar in any given connection is, more or less unconsciously, substituted for the original word.

Ver. 23.—Whatever ye be doing, work (theroin) from (the) soul, as to the Lord, and not to men (ver. 17; Eph. vi. 6, 7; 1 Cor. vii. 21—23). (On the first clause, see ver. 17.) In the Revised Text, however, the turn of expression differs from that of ver. 17, *πᾶν* being cancelled. The writer is thinking, not so much of the variety of service possible, as of the spirit which should pervade it. "Do" is replaced in the second clause by the more energetic "work," opposed to indolent or useless doing (comp. Eph. iv. 28; 2 Thess. iii. 10; John v. 17; ix. 4). "From [*ἐκ*, out of] the soul" indicates the spring of their exertions—*inward principle*, not *outward compulsion*; the servant must put his soul into his work. "Soul" implies, even more than "heart," the engagement of the man's best individual powers (comp. Phil. i. 27, as well as Eph. vi. 6). The slaves' daily taskwork is to be done, not only in sight and in fear of the Lord (ver. 22 b; Eph. v. 21), but as actually "to the Lord." Him they are serving (ver. 24 b), who alone is "the Lord" (ch. ii. 6); every mean and hard task is dignified and sweetened by the thought of being done *for him*, and the commonest work must be done with the zeal and thoroughness that his service demands (comp. Eph. vi. 7, "with good will doing bond-service"). The word "not" (*οὐ* instead of *μή*) implies that their service is actually rendered to One other and higher than "men" (1 Cor. vii. 22; Gal. i. 10).

Ver. 24.—Knowing that from (the) Lord you will receive the just recompense of the inheritance (Eph. vi. 8; Rom. ii. 6—11; 2 Cor. v. 10; Rev. xxii. 12; Ps. lxxii. 12). "Knowing" (*εἰδότες*)—that of which one is aware, not merely learning or "getting to know" (*γινώσκω*): see both words in Eph. v. 5 and John xiv. 7, Revised Text; also Rom. vi. 6 and 9; 1 John v. 20. "The absence of the definite article" before *Κυρίου* "is the more remarkable, because it is studiously inserted in the context" (Lightfoot). St. Paul virtually says, "There is a Master who will recompense you, if your earthly masters never do" (comp. ch. iv. 1). "Just" renders the *ἀντὶ* in *ἀνταπόδοσιν* (a word common in LXX), implying "equivalence" or "correspondence" (comp. *ἀντανανίστα* in ch. i. 24; also Rom. xi. 35; xii. 19; 1 Thess. iii. 9; 2 Thess. i. 6; Luke vi. 38; xiv. 12, 14)—a reward in the case of each individual, and in each particular, answering to the service rendered to "the Lord" (comp. Matt. xxv. 14—30). The opposite truth is asserted in ver. 25; Eph. vi. 8 combines them both. The recompense of the faithful Christian slave is nothing less than "the inheritance" of God's children (ch. i. 12; Eph. i. 5, 11, 14;

iii. 6; v. 5; Rom. viii. 17; Gal. iii. 29; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; xv. 50; Titus iii. 7; 1 Pet. i. 4), which the apostle has so often under other terms assured to his readers (ch. i. 5, 23, 27; ii. 18; iii. 4, 15). For a slave to be heir was "a paradox" (Lightfoot): see Gal. iv. 1, 7; Rom. vii. 15—17. No form of promise could be more cheering and ennobling to the despised slave than this. "In Christ," Onesimus is "no longer as a slave, but a brother beloved" (Philem. 16), and if a brother, then a joint-heir with his master Philemon in the heavenly inheritance (ch. iii. 11). Ye serve the Lord Christ (vers. 22, 25; ch. ii. 6; Eph. vi. 6; Rom. xiv. 8, 9; 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; vii. 22, 23; John xiii. 13); that is, Christ is the Lord whose bondmen ye are. "For" is probably a correct gloss, though a corrupt reading. Its insertion indicates that the sentence was read indicatively (Lightfoot, and R.V.); not imperatively ("serve the Lord Christ"), as Meyer, Alford, Ellicott, with the Vulgate, construe it. The verse amounts to this: "Work as for the Lord: he will repay you; you are his servants."

Ver. 25.—For he that doeth wrong shall receive again that he did wrong; and there is no respect of persons (Eph. vi. 8, 9; Phil. i. 28; 2 Thess. i. 5—7; 1 Pet. i. 17; Rom. ii. 11; Gal. ii. 6). "For" is replaced by "but" in the same inferior copies which insert it in the last sentence. Here we have the other side of the recompense promised in ver. 24 a, to which the explanatory "for" points back. The impartial justice which avenges every wrong guarantees the reward of the faithful servant of Christ. So the Old Testament saints rightly argued (Ps. xxxvii. 9—11; lvi. 10, 11; lxiv. 7—10) that the punishment of the evil-doer affords hope to the righteous man. This warning is quite general in its terms, and applies alike to the unfaithful servant and to the unjust master (comp. Eph. vi. 8). At the judgment-seat of Christ there will be no favouritism: all ranks and orders of men will stand on precisely the same footing (ch. iii. 11). The word *ἀδικέω*, twice employed here, denotes a legal wrong or injury (1 Cor. vi. 7, 8); e.g. the conduct of Onesimus towards Philemon (ver. 18). The verb "receive" (*κομισομαι*, carry off, gain; Eph. vi. 8; 2 Cor. v. 10; 1 Pet. v. 4; Matt. xxv. 27) looks more to the receiver, whereas *ἀπολαμβάνεσθε* *ἀπὸ* (ver. 24) points to the giver. *Προσωποληψία* (literally, accepting of the face) is a pure Hobnism, found in St. James twice, and four times in St. Paul.

The apostle turns from the slave to address his master.

Ch. iv. 1.—Ye lords, show just dealing and fairness to your servants [bondmen] (Eph. vi. 8, 9; Matt. xviii. 23—35; Luke vi. 31)

The verb "show" (παρέσθε, *afford, render*) is middle in voice, and, as in Luke vii. 4 and Titus ii. 7, implies spontaneity—"show on your part," "of yourselves." Τὸ δίκαιον ("the just"), a concrete expression, denotes the justice of the master's *dealing* (comp. τὸ χρηστόν in Rom. ii. 4, "the kind dealing of God"). Τὴν ἰσότητά gives the principle by which he is to be guided, that of *equity*, *fairness* (so Alford, Ellicott, Lightfoot). "Equity is the mother of Justice" (Philo, 'On the Creation of Magistrates,' § 14; see other illustrations in Lightfoot). Meyer contends for the stricter sense, "equality" (2 Cor. viii. 13, 14)—i.e. of Church status and brotherhood (Philem. 16; ch. iii. 11). But the context suggests no such special reference; it deals with the family and social relationship of master and servant. "Equity" is a well-established sense of the Greek word. The law of equity bearing on all human relations Christ has laid down in Luke vi. 31. Here is the germinal principle of the abolition of slavery. Moral

equity, as realized by the Christian consciousness, was sure in course of time to bring about legal equality. Knowing that ye also have a Lord in heaven (ch. ii. 6; Eph. vi. 9; 1 Cor. vii. 22; Phil. ii. 11; Rom. xiv. 9; Rev. xvii. 14; xix. 16). (On "knowing," see ver. 24 a.) "Ye also," for Christ is "both their Lord and yours" (Eph. vi. 9, Revised Text). The lordship of Christ dominates the whole Epistle (ch. i. 15, 18; ii. 6, 10, 19, etc.). The assertion that the proud master who deemed his fellow-man his chattel is himself a mere slave of Christ, sets Christ's authority in a vivid and striking light. This consideration makes the Christian master apprehensive as to his treatment of his dependents. He is "in heaven" (ch. iii. 1; Eph. i. 21; vi. 9; iv. 10; Phil. iii. 20; 1 Thess. i. 10; 2 Thess. i. 7; Acts iii. 21; John iii. 13; viii. 23; Heb. ix. 24), the seat of Divine authority and glory, whence he shall soon return to judgment (comp. Ps. lxxvi. 8; Rom. i. 18).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1-17.—Sect. 7. *The true Christian life.* From above only can we be raised. There is no salvation in mere antipathy. Disgust at the vanities of life, repulsion from earthly things, will of itself never lift us beyond them; it needs the superior influence of heavenly things to do that. This the Colossian errorists did not rightly understand; or they could not have made ceremonial purifications and bodily austerities the way of holiness, the means of reaching spiritual perfection. "Touch not, taste not" (ch. ii. 20, 21),—these were their chief commandments. The physical life was their great aversion, and to reduce and harass it was the leading object of their moral endeavours. In the last two sections of his letter (ch. ii. 8-23) the apostle has denounced their system as false and mischievous, to be rejected by Christian believers, since it is *not according to Christ*, but is, in spite of its high pretensions, essentially base and earthly. He now proceeds, by way of command and appeal, to delineate the true Christian character, the working of Christian principles of life, as contrasted with the mystico-ceremonial and ascetic ideal of the Gnosticizing teachers. The Christian he describes is one whose "life is Christ"—a life derived from, and animated and governed by, "the Lord from heaven," and not by "the tradition of men and the rudiments of the world"—"the things upon the earth" (comp. John vi. 31-33, 41, 42, 47-59).

I. THE HIDDEN LIFE. (Vers. 1-4.) 1. *The vital spring of a practical Christian life is personal union with Christ.* "Ye were raised with Christ; your life is hid with Christ; ye shall be manifested with him; Christ is your life" (vers. 1-4). (1) Not only must the principle of a perfect and all-sufficing life for men be heavenly; it must be *personal*. "We live by admiration, hope, and love." All really commanding and sovereign influences acting on human nature contain a personal element. We cannot sustain ourselves on abstract laws, or great universal ideas, or "streams of tendency;" on a "something not ourselves that makes for" this or that; on formulas or generalizations of any kind, however grand and comprehensive, however true and useful in their place. In spite of all plausible argument and elegant ratiocination, and underneath the changing modes and fashions of polite or scientific thought, it yet remains a constitutional and fixed necessity of the human soul to find in that which is higher than itself *Some One* to reverence and to obey. Against this necessity, Alexandrine theosophy and modern scepticism equally contend in vain. Men want a *living God*, One who *knows*, who *loves* and *hates*, who *will* and *acts*—a just God and a Saviour; and they will not have these terms explained away. We are not to be frightened or discomposed by being

told that our God is "a magnified, non-natural Man," and that our notions are grossly "anthropomorphic." We cannot believe that the Power which is infinitely greater than ourselves is *less than a Person*. "That which may be known of God is" so far "manifest in ourselves" (Rom. i. 19), that what we find there of highest and most distinctive—in thought, in will, in affection, in moral self-consciousness—must needs be an index, the surest and directest that reason furnishes (for it is given by the very being of reason itself), to the nature of that Power which made and governs us. To this first principle we are compelled to hold, notwithstanding the metaphysical difficulties old as human thought, which surround those indications—difficulties which meet every interpretation of them alike. The Incarnation has confirmed, while it has corrected, this universal assumption. In the *mind of Christ, in the love of Christ*, in the holy will that says, "Father, I will . . . nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt" (John xvii. 24; Mark xiv. 36), we behold in its purest and most satisfying form *that which may be known of God*, and the relations in which as men we stand thereto. How much God is beyond and behind all that, we cannot guess; but he is *all that*, he is nothing less than, nothing different from, that which we see "in the face of Jesus Christ" (ch. i. 15; 2 Cor. iv. 4; John i. 18). (2) The man whose "life is hid with Christ" is "joined in one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17)—in a sympathy of love and fellowship of thought and aim the most complete of which the human soul is capable—with a living Person in heaven. He is "joined to the Lord," who has "all authority in heaven and in earth" (ch. i. 13, 15, 18; Rom. xiv. 9; John xvii. 2; Matt. xxviii. 18; Rev. i. 5), with the wisdom that touches on the one side the resources of omniscience and on the other the everyday experience of human infirmity and suffering (ch. ii. 3; 1 Cor. i. 24; John ii. 25; xvi. 30; Matt. xi. 27; Heb. ii. 17, 18; iv. 15; Rev. ii. 23), and the claims on our devotion of One who "loved us and gave himself for us" (ch. i. 14, 20—22; Eph. ii. 13, 14; Gal. ii. 20; 2 Cor. viii. 9; John x. 15; xv. 13; Rev. i. 5; v. 12). In him we recognize personal being, personal worth, and personal rights in relation to ourselves, the highest conceivable both in kind and degree. To have a *life hid with Christ* is to dwell in an inward communion of heart with One whom we can perfectly trust, perfectly love, and absolutely obey. (3) This is *life* indeed (John vi. 53; 1 John v. 12). This fellowship supplies, as nothing else can do in the nature of things, the means of moral culture, the influences by which men may be "redeemed from all iniquity" (Titus ii. 14; Gal. i. 4; John xv. 3), by which a Divine character is formed in the soul (Gal. iv. 19) and it is trained for the life of heaven (ch. i. 27; Phil. i. 6). The Christian life is nothing less than a *Divine friendship* (John xv. 12—15; Isa. xli. 8; Exod. xxxiii. 11; Gen. v. 24; xviii. 17). To gain this life one may gladly consent to *die* to all that is alien from the life of Christ (ver. 3; ch. ii. 11, 20; Phil. iii. 7—12; Rom. vi. 2, 11; vii. 4—6). 2. *A true union with Christ lifts our aims above this world*. "Ye were raised with Christ, seek, mind, the things above, where Christ is, for (from the things on the earth) ye died" (vers. 1—3). Christ has gone to heaven, and he is our Life. Thither he has carried with him our desires and hopes (Phil. i. 23; 2 Cor. v. 6—8). To be where he is, is the deepest longing of the Christian heart; and its attainment is the supreme reward of faithful service (John xii. 26; xiv. 1—6; Rev. iii. 21; xiv. 4). Heaven is the Christian's home, because *he* is there. And he has gone thither, not simply as to "the place where he was before" (John vi. 62), and to which he properly belongs (John iii. 13), but as our "Forerunner" (Heb. vi. 20), the "Firstborn among many brethren" (ch. i. 18; Rom. viii. 29). Heaven is the goal which he has marked out for his followers, the "Father's house," the native city of all the members of his body, the Church (Eph. i. 18—23; Phil. iii. 20; John xiv. 2; Heb. xi. 10, 13—16). "The prize of our high calling" (*τῆς ἡμετέρας κλήσεως*, "that calls us above") is bestowed at "the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. iii. 9—21). (1) As workmen, as tradesmen, as citizens, our aims terminate with *the things upon the earth*; as Christians, we seek the *things that are above*. The present in our view is the seed-time, the training school for the immortal future; and its value lies in what it leads to rather than in what it is. Our present spiritual life, the knowledge of Christ and communion with him we now enjoy, is but "the earnest of our inheritance," "the firstfruits of the Spirit" (Eph. i. 14; Rom. viii. 23; Phil. iii. 12—14). "By" this "hope we are saved" (Rom. viii. 17—25); for this, most of all, do we give thanks (ch. i. 3—5, 23; Phil. i. 6; 1 Cor. i. 7, 8; 1 Pet. i. 3—7 comp. homiletics, sect. 1,

II. 1 (3). (2) Yet this *mind*ing of the things above involves no disparagement of the interests and claims of secular life. For this present is the pathway to that future. How seriously important, how carefully to be studied and appraised, how diligently to be improved, are the "few things" of our earthly stewardship, if by a right management of them we may become "lords" of the "many things" of the everlasting habitations (Matt. xxv. 14—30; Luke xvi. 9—12; 1 Cor. vii. 31)! But we must keep our thoughts and aims above the world, taking care not to be *overcharged* with "cares and pleasures of this life" (Luke viii. 14; xxi. 34), "declaring plainly that we seek a country" (Heb. xi. 14), turning earth at every step into "a scale to heaven," making Christ *all in all* in family and social life, in business and in politics. 3. *The Christian life is, therefore, in its essence a mystery.* "Your life is *hid*" (ver. 3). (1) "The world knoweth us not" (1 John iii. 1). As to the life of the children of this world, and of the Christian man so far as he is a man of the world, everything is plain. The principles and motives of the man of business, the politician, or the scientist are easily stated and generally intelligible. And the influences which govern the depraved, ungodly man are all too plain; "the works of the flesh are manifest" (Gal. v. 19). But the man whose "citizenship is in heaven," who "walks by faith, not by sight," who is "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God," whose *life* it is to love and serve a Master who was crucified eighteen hundred years ago, and whom he expects to see only after he himself is dead,—such a person is an enigma to natural men born only of this world; he is "judged of no man" (1 Cor. ii. 14, 15). Political economy, experimental psychology with its "analysis of the human mind," fail to account for him; and the philosopher haply will pass him by as a pretence or an abnormality. He is like a planet deflected from its course by some unknown body out of telescopic reach, whose magnitude and position it is impossible scientifically to determine. (2) *Our life is hidden, because he who is our Life is hidden.* "Ye see me no more," said Jesus; and again, "The world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also" (John xvi. 10; xiv. 19). "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (1 John iii. 1). Our *life* is wrapped up in One "whom we have not seen" (1 Pet. i. 8, 9), with whom we can have no kind of sensible communication; in a Christ who indeed was "manifested in the flesh," but was scornfully disbelieved and put to death, "justified" only "in the Spirit," *seen* only "of angels" (1 Tim. iii. 16). A mystery to the world, the Christian life is a mystery also to its possessor as respects the methods by which it is bestowed and sustained on God's part. "The things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God," and though we receive this Spirit, "we know" but "in part" his operations (1 Cor. ii. 11; xiii. 12). "Thou hearest the voice thereof"—that is all (John iii. 8). There is a supernatural something that defies analysis and measurement in the experience of every Christian—a Divine *life* as distinct from the natural soul-life, as that is from mere animal vitality; and this is just the sovereign creative factor of his religion, the principle of his new birth and new manhood: his life is "hid in God." But while this life itself is hidden, its *fruits* are not (ver. 5—ch. iv. 6; Eph. v. 8—14; Phil. ii. 15, 16; Titus ii. 11, 12; Matt. v. 14—16; John xiii. 35; 1 Pet. ii. 9, 12, 15; iii. 1, 2, 15, 16). 4. *But the mystery of the Christian life is to have its revelation.* "When Christ shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with him, in glory" (ver. 4). This riddle of life must be solved (1 Cor. xiii. 12, R.V. margin); "the things shaken" must be removed, "that the things unshaken may remain" (Heb. xii. 27); appearance must give place to reality; "mortality" must be "swallowed up of life;" God has "wrought us for this very thing" (2 Cor. v. 4, 5). Faith is the virtue of education, and must have its reward in sight; if there is nothing to be *seen*, then those are not "blessed" but only mistaken, "who have not seen and yet have believed" (John xx. 29). Hope must be crowned with fruition, or it will "put us to shame" (Rom. v. 5). And love, content now to "see him not" (1 Pet. i. 8), is only so content on the assurance that "we shall see him even as he is" (1 John iii. 3; Acts i. 11; John xiv. 3). (1) *Christ shall be manifested.* He has pledged himself, both to his friends and to his foes, to return (John xiv. 3; Matt. xxvi. 63, 64). That pledge he gave in the most public and solemn manner possible, in assertion of his Divine sonship and Messiahship. His *second coming* is the goal of New Testament prophecy, and of the Church's hope and longing through the ages (Matt. xxv. 19, 31; Acts iii. 21; xvii. 31; 1 Thess. iv. 14—18; Phil. iii. 20; Titus ii. 13; Heb.

ix. 28; 1 Pet. i. 7; 1 John ii. 28; Rev. i. 7; xxii. 20, etc.). It is the consummation of human history, the *dénouement* of the great time-drama, "the one far-off Divine event, to which the whole creation moves." But he waits till "the gospel of the kingdom is preached to all the nations," "till his enemies be made his footstool," till "the harvest of the earth is ripe," till the hour has struck appointed in the Father's eternal counsels (Matt. xiii. 10, 32; Heb. x. 12, 13; Rev. xiv. 15, 18). Then he will appear in that *glory* (Matt. xxv. 31; xxvi. 64; Titus ii. 13), something of which the three saw "in the holy mount" (2 Pet. i. 16—18), which dying Stephen beheld as he fell asleep, and Saul of Tarsus as he journeyed to Damascus, and John in Patmos (Acts vii. 56; ix. 3—6; Rev. i. 13—18); of which in entering upon his earthly estate he had "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil. ii. 6, 7). "We shall see him even as he is—the *Lord of glory*" (1 John iii. 3; Jas. ii. 1). (2) Christ's glory his saints will share. *They, too, will be manifested.* There will be an "unveiling of the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 18—25). "In this tabernacle we do groan, being burdened" (2 Cor. v. 4). Our life is "cribbed, cabined, and confined." The body, virtually "dead because of sin," oppresses and conceals, while it contains, the immortal "spirit, which is life because of righteousness" (Rom. viii. 10, 11). "Now we see through a glass, darkly" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). We move about as if under a heavy, muffling cloak. "We are spirits in prison, able only to make signals to each other." But we shall then enjoy "the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. viii. 21). This "natural body" will become a "spiritual body," in which the spirit will be perfectly expressed and for ever at home. (3) Then *Christ's glory will be manifest in us.* He will be "glorified in his saints," and they glorified in him (2 Thess. i. 10; Ps. xc. 16, 17). Like some sculptor's work, prepared in concealment and with long labour, carved out of the rough, unshapely block by many a painful stroke of hammer and of chisel, till the artist's glorious ideal is wrought out, and on some public day the finished master-piece is at last unveiled; so *the man, perfect in Christ*, will be "presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (ch. i. 22, 28; Jude 24).

II. THE DEATH OF THE OLD SELF. (Vers. 5—9.) *Impurity, greed, malice, falsehood*,—these are the leading features of the former life of sin which the apostle represents his readers as having followed before they became Christians. He does not, of course, charge all of them equally and alike with these offences. But then, as now, these four types of vice were prevalent amongst the great mass of ungodly men (ver. 7; 1 Cor. vi. 9—11). Such statements, when applied to men living under the influences of Christian society, must be applied with discrimination, and in the light of our Lord's teaching addressed to the moral Jews in Matt. v. 17—48, etc. These vices are native to the soil of the human heart (Mark vii. 20—23). By habitual practice they take possession of the man, so that his "members" are made "slaves to uncleanness and iniquity" (Rom. vi. 19; John viii. 34), and his body becomes a "body of sin" and "of death" (Rom. vi. 6; vii. 23—25; ch. ii. 11). They become virtually his "members that are upon the earth" (ver. 5). Under the sway of sensual appetite and worldly desire, ungoverned by any influence from "the things above," his person becomes more and more completely *an incarnation of sin* (Rom. vii. 5, 20, 23). These "members," then, individually and collectively, must be "put to death;" this "body of the flesh," as a "body of sin," must be "stripped off" and "done away" (ch. ii. 11; Rom. vi. 6). Christ cannot dwell in the soul while "sin reigns in the mortal body" (Rom. vi. 12). He has no "concord with Belial," or with Mammon (2 Cor. vi. 15; Matt. vi. 24). "The old man" must be "so buried, that the new man may be raised up" in us (comp. Eph. iv. 17—24). 1. *Unchastity* was the most conspicuous sin of the Gentile world in which St. Paul moved. There it prevailed in the grossest and most shameless forms; and its prevalence is a fearful warning, as he points out (Rom. i. 18—27), of the outcome of a godless civilization. The society of the populous Greek cities of that day was one in which "fornication, uncleanness, lustful passion, evil desire" (ver. 5), had free course, and its moral condition was only less abandoned than the "reeking rottenness" of Sodom and Gomorrah. Adultery, indeed, was condemned as a civil crime by pagan moralists; but fornication they held, as a rule, to be an innocent and almost a necessary thing. It was in writing to Corinth, perhaps the most licentious city in that licentious age, that the apostle launched his sternest and most vehement interdict against this crime, which is a moral leprosy and pesti-

lence. There he marks it out as peculiar from all other sins in being *a sin against a man's own body*, and an especial insult and outrage to the Holy Spirit who claims the human body for his temple (1 Cor. vi. 13—20: comp. 1 Thess. iv. 2—8). There are too many evidences in the state of modern society, both in high quarters and in low, that as Christian sentiment grows weak and religious faith dies down, in the same proportion the perversion of the sexual passions follows, with its invariable result in the relaxation of moral fibre, the destruction of social confidence, and the physical decay of the corrupted race. Man begins by denying his Maker, and ends by degrading himself. There are times and places where plain speaking on this subject is needful, and no prudery or sentimental delicacy should prevent it. The tempted must be warned; the guilty rebuked; bodily self-respect must be taught in good time. The pure will know how to do this, like the apostle himself and like his Master, "in all purity." When once inward chastity has been lost and uncleanness spots the soul, the stain is not easily effaced. Evils of this kind flourish in the dark and love to be ignored. 2. *Covetousness is idolatry*. (Ver. 5.) It is, obviously and directly, "worshipping and serving the creature" (Rom. i. 25). While it appears to be self-love, it is really the sacrifice of self to the world, offered at the shrine of wealth, or fame, or pleasure. The man seeks to gain power over other men or things; but if this becomes his supreme desire, or if he seeks to attain it by evil means, then from that moment the object of his guilty pursuit *gains power over him*, and begins to entangle and enslave him (John viii. 34; Rom. vii. 23). His passion becomes his tyrant, his ambition an insanity, his pursuit of pleasure an infatuation. Even the thirst for knowledge, the noblest of natural desires, may grow into a selfish greed, jealous and grasping, eating out the best affections, and producing an accomplished scholar, a master of science, void of all goodness of heart and human worth. All creaturely things, regarded out of God, are but "passing *shows*" (*εἰδωλα*, *idols*) of the absolute and enduring goodness that belongs to him (Matt. xix. 17). The homage rendered to them—whether by the savage to his *fetish*, by the civilized worldling to his *wealth or rank*, or by the scientist to his *laws and forces of nature*—is idolatry, the worshipping of shams and shows, in so far as it is *a departing from the living God* (Hob. iii. 12; Exod. xx. 3; Isa. xliii. 10; 1 Cor. viii. 4—6). And with life thus perverted at its fountain-head, it becomes a mere vanity and vexation of spirit. 3. *Malice* is universally denounced. Moralists of all schools and all ages agree in proscribing this vice, though in little else. The malicious man is instinctively dreaded; he is a peril to every one. Sins of malice and of falsehood strike directly at the existence of society, while the two former classes of offence threaten it more gradually and indirectly. (1) Yet it can scarcely be denied that *anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking*, are, to a large extent, congenital to human nature. It is true that there is an instinctive benevolence, a fellow-feeling for one's kind, only exceptionally wanting; but at the same time there exists a proclivity, that is often terribly strong even in its earliest manifestations, in the opposite direction. "Cain was of that wicked one, and slew his brother; . . . because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John iii. 12). It is a weak and fatal delusion to rely on natural benevolence as an effective and commanding moral force, a stable foundation for a system of practical ethics. Nor is it possible in the nature of things that enlightened self-interest or any combination of prudential or utilitarian considerations should ever teach men to love their neighbours as themselves, or should succeed in suppressing rage and jealousy and the murderous passions slumbering in the blood of the race. We must be "taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. iv. 9; see 1 John ii. 7—11; iii. 13—24; iv. 7—21). (2) *The love of Christ* will at last subdue the fratricidal passions of mankind, will "make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth;" and one day will bring men of the most distant climes and hostile interests to clasp each other's hands and look into each other's eyes and say, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another!" Here lies the only hope of the fraternization of mankind. 4. If impurity dishonours the body, *falsehood* dishonours the mind. This sin at once degrades the man, wrongs by deceiving his fellow, and insults his God, the ever-present Witness and Guardian of truth (Acts v. 4; Rom. ix. 1; 1 Thess. ii. 5; Ps. cxxxix. 4; Jer. v. 3). Here the apostle points out (1) its inconsistency with the Christian character of the man (vers. 9, 10); and (2) its contradiction to the Christian view of society (ver. 11). Similarly in Eph. iv. 25: "For we are members one of

another." For a man to deceive his neighbour by word or deed, is as if the eyes should conspire to trick the ear or misguide the hand. The ancients condemned falsehood between men of the same community, but generally regarded it as a lawful weapon to use against enemies or strangers; although the Stoics, with their wider views of humanity, taught on this point, as on others, a higher morality. The "Greek" might deceive the "barbarian," the "bondman" might lie to his master, and have no sense of moral wrong. And so it has been too commonly in the dealing of servants or schoolboys with their masters, of civilized men with savages, of libertines in their conduct towards the other sex. Witness the immoral maxim, "All's fair in love and war." One chief cause of deceit would be removed if men would understand that the instinct of *honour* which bids them be truthful to their equals and comrades, requires the same honesty in dealing with every man as man. The Christian acts on this principle; he will not in any sense "hold the faith of our Lord Jesus with respect of persons" (Jas. ii. 1). (a) Many men who would resist the temptation to utter a lie in so many words, will silently act it; especially in a continued course of action, where the deception lies not in any single definite act, but in the general construction which they lead others to put on their proceedings. Such deception is no less culpable in itself, and as a rule still more disastrous in its effects, than a palpable lie. (b) And again, men find it easy to lie *collectively* who would not do so singly. Though men of probity in their private affairs, they will put their hands to documents, they will consent with others to acts, which they know to be misleading, or, at least, which they do not know to be true. And now that business is becoming more and more a matter of "limited liability," the perils of divided responsibility in this direction should be well understood. 5. "Because of all these things God's anger is coming on the sons of disobedience" (ver. 6). Every act or thought of any of these kinds is a *disobedience*, a breach of "the holy and just and good Law" under which man was first created in his Maker's image (ver. 10). This "Law worketh out wrath" inexorably and perpetually, against "every soul of man that doeth evil" (Rom. ii. 9; iv. 15). And that *anger of God is coming* (Isa. xxx. 27, 28). There is a day appointed for its "revelation" (Rom. ii. 5, 16; Mal. iv. 1), even as for "the manifestation of the sons of God" (ver. 4; Rom. viii. 19). It is already "revealed from heaven" (Rom. i. 18), and gives forewarning of its advent in many a personal and public calamity (Isa. xxvi. 9; Mal. iii. 5; Matt. xxiv. 3—42; 1 Cor. v. 3—5; xi. 30—32). On every account, the Christian must have done with the old life of sin. He sees it to be incompatible with fellowship with Christ, to be hateful to God, to be ruinous to himself and to his fellow-men. No return to it, no renewal of it, no dallying or temporizing with it in any kind or degree, can be tolerated. *It must die if he is to live.*

III. THE UNITY OF MANKIND IN CHRIST. (Vers. 10, 11.) This truth belonged, at least in St. Paul's time, to the more advanced Christian knowledge, "unto which" the believer was "being renewed" (ver. 10); and the Church still comes far short of its full apprehension. 1. *The gospel of Christ reveals the spiritual unity of mankind.* To make this known was a part of the apostle's mission, and of the special "mystery God" entrusted to him (ch. i. 25—28; Eph. iii. 1—6; Rom. iii. 9—30; xv. 5—12). Its manifestation, and the consequent "breaking down of the middle wall of partition" (Eph. ii. 14), were necessary to a complete Christian virtue, the proper virtue of man as man, carried out in all his relations to God and to his fellows; and for the regeneration of human society, the salvation of the world. There was a preparation for this belief in the breaking down of the old nations into the unity of the Roman empire, in the decay of local and ancestral religions, and in the advance of philosophy from the narrower and more political ethics of Plato and Aristotle to the moral system of the Stoics, which was at once more inward and more humane. But there was wanting that conception of a *living, Divine centre of the human race*, given in Christ, which alone could make the sentiment of universal humanity a creative, organic force. 2. *This unity has been realized in the Christian Church.* It appears in the beautiful simplicity of its childlike beginning, in the communism of the infant Church of Jerusalem (Acts ii. 44—47). It was set forth in a larger and fuller way by the Apostle Paul in addressing the mixed Churches of the great cities where he laboured; and was actually put into practice there in a good degree. Jew and Greek (Gal. ii. 12), rich and poor (1 Cor. xi. 20—22; *the exception proves the rule*: comp. Jas. ii. 1—4),

master and slave (Philem. 16, 17), met at the same table of the Lord, mingled as equals in the same Christian society, distinguished only by the measure of "grace" and "spiritual gifts" bestowed on each (Rom. xii. 6; 1 Cor. xii. 7—11). And the records of the first three Christian centuries show how faithfully, on the whole, this principle was maintained, and how nobly the Church held herself superior to temporal distinctions of wealth and rank. Far indeed has she subsequently departed from this rule; and lost how much thereby in spiritual dignity and power! We admire it now as a proof of special humility if the titled or cultured man forgets amongst Christian brethren his worldly eminence; if the employer of labour is glad to sit at the feet of his workman, when that workman, as may often be the case, is his spiritual superior; if the wealthy contributor to a Church fund does not expect, on that account, to dictate in its management. 3. *The Church is destined to gather mankind into a spiritual commonwealth.* In it there is to be no "strife as to who shall be greatest;" but in humility and self-forgetfulness "the greater shall be as the younger, and the chief as he that doth serve" (Luke xxii. 24—26). There "all are brethren, with one Master even Christ" (Matt. xxiii. 8—12). All authority and office are derived from him, and attested by his Spirit in his people (1 Cor. xii. 1—11; Acts i. 24; xiii. 1—4; Gal. i. 1; John xx. 21). The Church is *his body, complete in him*—a unity in itself and in its action, because in every limb it draws its life and gets its direction from *the Head*. And as the Church becomes a greater and more pervasive power in the world, the spiritual brotherhood it creates will work appeasingly on the "wars and fightings," on the aristocratic exclusiveness and haughtiness, the democratic bitterness and jealousy, the invincible prejudices, the clashing interests, by which society is distracted and its bonds are strained almost to rending, and the nations are kept in arms and hurled repeatedly against each other in deadly conflict. When mankind recovers its unity in him in whom it was created and redeemed, when it is reconciled to God and bows its every knee "at the name of Jesus,"—then at last there will be "peace on earth." Where "Christ is all and in all" antipathy must cease.

IV. *THE NEW CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.* (Vers. 12—17.) We have traced the principle of the Christian life in its inner ground and aim, as "hid with Christ" and seeking its home in heaven (vers. 1—4); in its uncompromising and mortal warfare with the old life of sin (vers. 5—9); in its purpose to form a new humanity in the individual soul, and in the world at large (vers. 10, 11). We are now to follow its practical working, to see how the "new man" is to show himself in a new habit and style of living, how the "hidden life" is to blossom out into its fragrance and beauty, and its "celestial fruit" to "grow on earthly ground." We note that the Christian character is one *derived from God* and that *refers to God* in everything. It is as "God's elect, his holy and beloved ones" (ver. 12), that we are called to assume the new habits of Christian grace and goodness. Knowing what the Divine Father is, and what he has done for us (ch. i. 12—14), and what he intends us to be (Eph. i. 4—6), sensible of our filial relation to him (Rom. viii. 15—17; Gal. iv. 1—7; 1 John iii. 1, 2), loyally embracing his will (Rom. vi. 22) and seeking to be conformed to his nature as that is translated for us into "the image of his Son" (Rom. viii. 29; 2 Pet. i. 4; 1 John iv. 17), we shall be "holy in all manner of conversation." But God is known to us through Christ. And, therefore, in the formation of the Christian character "Christ is all and in all" (ver. 13; 1 Cor. xi. 1; Rom. xv. 3; Phil. ii. 5; 1 Pet. ii. 22; 1 John ii. 6; John xiii. 15). It is nothing else than *Christ formed in us* (Gal. iv. 19). In the perfect Christian character, then: 1. *Christ's love rules.* (Vers. 13, 14; 2 Cor. v. 14; 1 John iii. 23; John xiii. 34.) The tender heart of compassion, the gentle, sympathetic kindness, the lowliness of mind, the uncomplaining meekness, the patient long-suffering, the forbearance and forgivingness (vers. 12, 13) of the Christian nature,—these centre in the all-perfect and all-perfecting grace of Christ-like love (1 Cor. xiii. 1; 1 John iv. 7—21; Rom. xiii. 9, 10). He in whose heart dwells the love of Christ cannot "shut up his compassion" from any within reach of help who need it (1 John iii. 17); cannot be rude and ungracious, or hard and unforgiving (Eph. iv. 31, 32; 2 Cor. ii. 5—11); cannot be self-asserting, clamorous, overbearing (2 Cor. x. 1; Phil. ii. 6, R.V. margin; Matt. xii. 19); cannot be passionate and resentful, irritable and fault-finding, obstinate in prejudice, intolerant of opposition. The love of Christ will assimilate his whole disposition and make it sweet, gracious, unselfish, loving, and lovable as that of an

innocent child (Matt. xviii. 1—4). And the Christian man who in the spirit of this love can "possess his soul in patience" through all the strenuous endeavours and painful collisions and vexing wrongs of life, wears "the girdle of perfectness," and has attained the perfect Christian temper. 2. *Christ's peace guards.* (Ver. 15.) The Christian's faith and hope are assailed by a thousand enemies. Sometimes amid the common incidents of life, sometimes in "the heavenly places" of his richest experience and most exalted communion with spiritual things (Eph. vi. 12)—sometimes brought about by open and palpable causes, sometimes by strange influences shadowing the inner life and coming we know not whence or how—sometimes through the ruggedness and gloom of his providential path, sometimes through mental perplexities and the chilling and confused intellectual atmosphere around him,—in any or in all of these ways "the trial of his faith" comes—comes, in one shape or other, to every man who has a faith worth trial. And then, whatever be the form which the assault takes or the quarter from which it is directed, he may find in "the peace of Christ" his strong tower of defence and harbour of refuge. His difficulties may not disappear under this influence; his doubts may not be at once dispelled; the conflict may still rage furiously around and within him; but he will be *kept*, the fortress of his heart will not be surrendered (1 Pet. i. 5; Phil. iv. 7). So long as "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," and "his love is shed abroad in our hearts" (Rom. v. 1—5), nothing can shake our essential faith or rob us of our immortal hope (Ps. xxvii.; xlv. i.; Luke xii. 32; Rev. i. 17). Neither sophistry (ch. ii. 4) nor threatening (ch. ii. 18) will take from us "the prize of our high calling." "One thing," at any rate, "we know" (John ix. 25); and to it "we have the witness in ourselves" (1 John v. 10), in "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," "to which we were called," in the "new heart and right spirit" he has "put within" us, in the moral victory attained over self and the world (1 John v. 4, 5): "we know that we have passed from death unto life" (1 John iii. 14). And we safely infer that he "who has begun a good work in us" will carry it through (Phil. i. 6); that he will keep that which we commit to him, and "none shall pluck us out of his hand" (2 Tim. i. 12; John x. 27—29; Rom. viii. 31—39). So, unitedly and thankfully, we "hold fast the beginning of our confidence, and the glorying of our hope, firm unto the end" (Heb. iii. 6, 14). 3. *Christ's word inspires.* (Ver. 16.) It is to "dwell in the heart richly"—to be the welcome visitant and constant inhabitant of the mind; to be listened to and diligently learned; to be cherished and pondered in inward meditation, not as an object of theoretic study only, but as the power which is to shape the character and guide the life of the Christian (Deut. vi. 6—9; Ps. cxix. 105; John xvii. 17), as the soul's daily nutriment—the bread of God, "which strengtheneth man's heart," "the word of eternal life" (Deut. viii. 3; Jer. xv. 16; Matt. iv. 4; John vi. 63, 68). (1) This word gives *all wisdom*—best of God's gifts to man, which instructs the mind and prompts the tongue and guides the action of its possessor (ch. ii. 2, 3; iv. 5, 6). So furnished, every Christian (ch. i. 28) is able to minister something to his fellows of that which God has taught him by his own study of the Word and its practice in his experience of life (Matt. xiii. 52; Rom. xv. 14; 1 Cor. xiv. 31). Thus the members of the Church are able, "in the meekness of wisdom," to "teach and admonish one another," "being knit together in love, and led into all the riches of the full assurance of the understanding, into the knowledge of the mystery of God" (ch. ii. 2). (2) And it stirs in the heart an ardour of holy feeling that finds expression in *Christian song*. "The word of Christ," cherished in thought, kindles the emotions and wakens all the music of the soul. The early Christians were a singing people, for they were a cheerful and thankful people. And subsequent revivals of religious life, as a rule, have been attended with fresh outbursts of sacred song (Ps. xl. 3). The singing of a people—its heartiness, and simplicity, and the care and pains taken in its cultivation, are a good test of their spiritual state. "Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs"—hymns old and new, narrative, didactic, lyrical; in every measure and every tone of expression—songs of praise, of confession, of wailing sorrow, of ecstatic joy; for the congregation, the household, or the private chamber;—all find a place in the diapason of the Church's music. 4. *Christ's name hallows everything.* (Ver. 17.) Our eating and drinking—acts which seem the most ordinary and purely physical, and quite remote from the interests and sentiments of the spiritual life—these are to be "sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. iv. 5), by the mention of Christ's name in thanksgiving to the Father, who through him sends

us all life's blessings. And if our mere animal necessities of life are capable of being thus hallowed, there is nothing in family relations, or secular employments, or social or civil duties, which may not receive and does not demand the same consecration. We may associate Christ with everything we do, doing all as his servants and under his eye, and in such a way that, by every part of our work, he may be glorified in us. And this will be a safeguard to the Christian man. If he is to do everything in *Christ's* name, he must do nothing unworthy of that name, nothing with which he cannot associate it. Nowhere, in any company or on any business, must he forget, "either in word or deed," that this "worthy name" is the name which he bears, and whose honour is in his keeping. This is the seal that marks the true Church of Christ, which every Christian wears upon his heart: "Let every one that *nameth the name of the Lord* depart from unrighteousness" (2 Tim. ii. 19).

Ver. 18—ch. iv. 1—Sect. 8. *The Christian view of family duties.* Certain general considerations bearing on the family and social constitution of life may be drawn from the teaching of this section. 1. We note that the apostle brings each of the three primary relationships of which he speaks into connection with "the Lord." *The natural order of human life is grounded in Christ.* If "all things were created and do consist in him" (ch. i. 16, 17), then, amongst the rest, this also and in chief. For man in his relation to the world around him is "the image of God," even as Christ is to the whole universe (1 Cor. xi. 7; Jas. iii. 9; Gen. i. 26; Ps. viii.). And man is not a solitary individual; he is a social being, a race-unity. And those relations which are essential and fundamental to human society—marriage, sonship, service—have, most of all, their spiritual type and creative ground in Christ. This is obvious in the case of the two latter relations; as to the first, see Eph. v. 22—32. 2. *The intrinsic fitness of a right discharge of natural duties is affirmed in the first case (ver. 18), and implied in the other two.* The apostle recognizes and appeals more than once to the sense of ethical propriety, that which "nature itself teaches" (1 Cor. xi. 14), which belongs to the universal conscience surviving in our nature though fallen and debased. All true sentiments of natural morality the Christian revelation reaffirms and supports with its effectual sanctions, "as is fit in the Lord" (comp. Phil. iv. 8). Their consciousness of the right as the beautiful (*τὸ καλόν*) was a sound and valuable element in the teaching of the best Greek moralists. They regarded conduct as a work of art, in which grace and fitness were to be studied, and the perfection of an ideal beauty to be the aim of life. While men may have, as a rule, a stronger sense of the right, women better understand the fitting; and it is in regard to the place and duties of woman that St. Paul appeals to convictions of moral fitness and decorum (comp. 1 Cor. xi. 13; 1 Tim. ii. 10). 3. We are taught, indirectly, to cherish *a pleasant and cheerful temper* in domestic life. Bitterness (ver. 19) and harshness, with the distrust and timidity which they engender (ver. 21), and a sullen or constrained obedience (ver. 23), are forbidden; and these are the common elements of domestic unhappiness. Where the husband is gentle, and the father tender though strict, and the master considerate, and the servants willing and honestly anxious to please, there all goes well. Whatever storms may beat upon that house from without, there is peace and sunshine within. And this is "well-pleasing in the Lord." 4. *The principle of authority is steadfastly maintained throughout.* (Vers. 18, 20, 22.) In every house that is not to be "divided against itself," there must be a single head, a ruling will, a definite centre of power and direction. And that power God has placed, as a solemn trust, in the hands of the husband, father, master, who is in his prerogative within his own house an image of Christ in the Church (Eph. v. 23; ch. iv. 1), of God himself, the Father of men (Heb. xii. 9). This principle is the corner-stone of order in human society. Here is "pure religion breathing household laws" (Wordsworth).

I. HUSBAND AND WIFE. (Vers. 18, 19.) The marriage relation stands first, being the basis of the family, which again is the basis of society and of the community of mankind. "He which made them from the beginning, made them male and female" (Matt. xix. 4—6). Marriage is to be "had in honour among all" (Heb. xiii. 4; 1 Tim. iv. 1—3); and not merely the criminal act, but any impure word, thought, or look which offends against its sanctity, "defiles the man" from whom it proceeds, offends in an especial way the Holy Spirit of God, and brings down his wrath upon the offender

(Matt. v. 27, 28; Mark vii. 20—23; 1 Thess. iv. 3—8; 1 Cor. vi. 13—20). The degree of honour and reverence in which it is held in any society largely determines the degree of soundness in its moral condition. Where the opposite vices prevail, whether secretly or openly practised, general moral corruption and decay set in (see homiletics, sect. 7, II. 1). 1. On the one side, there is to be *submission*. The apostle says, “Children, . . . servants, obey” (vers. 20, 22); but not “*Wives, obey your husbands*.” “Be in subjection” (ver. 18) is a gentler and fitter term to use. *Obedience* implies a certain distance and inferiority that has no place here. There is something wrong on one side, or on both, when the husband gives formal orders to his wife. There should be such an intimacy of mutual understanding and sympathy between them, that they seem to have but one mind and will in all common matters. And while to that single mind the wife contributes the qucenly influence of her insight and persuasion, she will feel and show that *resolve* and *direction* belong to him and not to her. The final responsibility for the business of the house devolves on the husband, by the ordinance of God and by the nature of things, which are but two expressions of the same fact (1 Cor. xi. 3—15). It is his part to “rule well his own house” (1 Tim. iii. 4). 2. It was not so needful to say, “*Wives, love your husbands*,” though the apostle once enjoins this, in speaking of “the younger women” in Titus ii. 4. For failure on the wife’s side in this respect is comparatively rare. But the man, full of business, often absent, and with his more exacting nature, is more liable to fall into some disloyalty. He allows other company to become more agreeable to him; seeks amusements and pursuits in which his wife cannot join; no longer makes her his *confidante* and the sharer of his inner life; and allows home to become little more to him than a selfish convenience. And with this selfishness and the uneasiness of conscience that attends it, there supervenes often an irritableness of temper that chafes over every domestic care or trouble, and makes no allowance for infirmities in others; that magnifies every trifling mistake or mishap into an injury, and ignores the wife’s patient affection and eagerness to please. How different is all this from the exalted ideal that St. Paul holds up to the Christian husband!—“Love your wife even as Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for her” (Eph. v. 25). Bengel’s shrewd and caustic remark on this passage is too often verified: “There are many, who out of doors are civil and kind to all; when at home, towards their wives and children whom they have no need to fear, they freely practise secret bitterness.”

II. FATHER AND CHILD. (Vers. 20, 21.) 1. From children, *obedience* to their parents *in all things* is required, and therefore in many things contrary to their inclination and opinions. Childhood means dependence and ignorance. It is only under the shelter of parental oversight that the incipient faculties and plastic nature of the child can be formed to the strength of judgment and firmness of character which will enable him to meet the tasks and the perils of adult life. And for this discipline to be effective, the submission of the child must be absolute. Only when a parental command plainly contradicts the Law of God and violates the child’s conscience, can any kind of disobedience be justified. In that case, obedience cannot be “well-pleasing in the Lord.” But even the worst of parents will rarely be found to have so little respect for the conscience of childhood as to enforce such an injunction. The requirement addressed to the child presumes that the parent *exacts* obedience. This is his inalienable prerogative. Instant, un murmuring obedience should be made the habit of the child’s life, and as a law of nature to it. To have this understood from the first is the simplest and easiest course. If the child be allowed, through passion or persistence, once successfully to rebel, a mischief is done not easily to be repaired. His own self-mastery, and the sense of law and of duty which are to attend him through the whole of life, largely rest on this basis of ingrained obedience. For this purpose, children should be in their earliest years as much as possible under the direct influence of their parents’ presence and authority. The parental office cannot be discharged by proxy. And there must be unity of parental administration, as well as harmony between precept and practice, if a true and reverent obedience is to be possible. In no State was the authority of the father (*patria potestas*) so strict and absolute as in ancient Rome. And there can be little doubt that this stern maintenance of family discipline largely helped to form the Roman character with its extraordinary vigour and tenacity, and to preserve that rigid, firmly knit order and devoted loyalty which were the secret of

Rome's invincible strength. 2. On the other hand, the father *must beware lest his authority should wear a needless aspect of severity*. His righteous desire to "command his children and his household after him" (Gen. xviii. 19), and his anxious sense of responsibility, may occasion this, if not relieved by more genial influences. The innocent liveliness and the many unintended offences of childhood must not provoke him to ill temper. He must learn by patience and tenderness to win the child's affection and open-hearted trust, without impairing its submissive reverence. A mechanical, unsympathetic strictness, or an angry and unequal discipline, will fatally alienate the sensitive heart of the child, which in that case either sinks down into a dull, spiritless apathy, or prepares for a passionate revolt when the hour of its strength shall come. Too often those most anxious to commend religion to their children have made it odious by presenting it in forms unintelligible to the young mind, and associating it with tasks unsuited to its powers, and burdens that it found "grievous to be borne." As the child should find in the child Jesus its pattern, and model (Luke ii. 40-52), so the parent should seek to be to his children an image of "our Father in heaven."

III. MASTER AND SERVANT. (Ver. 22—ch. iv. 1.) This third relationship is one which we may be sure will continue to exist, however varied the forms it may take, so long as the world stands. And what the apostle says here is of universal application, though slavery has happily given place to free service. Even when our lower classes shall have become so far raised in intelligence and independence that co-operation in industrial labour will become the rule instead of the exception, still there must be some to command, others to obey: Indeed, the more extended and complicated the operations of trade and manufacture become, the more thoroughly labour needs to be organized and authority graduated, and the more entirely success depends on management and discipline and on a right adjustment of the relations of master and servant. 1. From servants Christianity demands, what conscience demands, *an honest obedience*, that serves as well behind the master's back as to his face (ver. 22). As a mere matter of commercial advantage, the uniform presence of this quality would be an incalculable economy and enrichment of the community. And religion secures this, directly and of necessity. The man who does his work in God's sight—"as ever in his great Taskmaster's eye"—and as for the judgment-day, cannot *scamp* any part of it. He is serving, not a man like himself, but a heavenly Lord, whose searching eye is always upon him, who understands and can judge every man's work (ver. 24; 1 Pet. i. 17), and who has promised infinite rewards for faithfulness in the "few things" of our earthly probation (Matt. xxv. 21, 23). These convictions form the best guarantee, with the mass of men the only sufficient and effectual guarantee, for good work and thorough workmanship in every department of life.

"A servant with this clause,
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine."

(George Herbert.)

2. And the Christian master, whether at the head of a farm or a factory, of a commercial house or a private family, will remember that he *has his duties along with his rights as a master*. He is dealing with human beings, not with machines. The laws of political economy are not to be his only guide. "The nexus of cash-payments" can never be the sole link that associates any two men together. Woe be to him if he says, with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. iv. 9). "Just dealing and fairness" (ch. iv. 1) must rule in the relations of master and man, if they are to be on a moral and righteous footing. He will not take a hard advantage of his servant's necessity; or allow, if he can help it, his dealings with him to degenerate into a mere struggle between capital and labour for every inch of vantage. The cruel greed that grasps at immediate gain at whatever cost of toil and poverty to others, and that "grinds the faces of the poor" (Isa. iii. 15), may enrich the individual, but in the long run is fatal to the class or the trade which practises it. And the rich oppressor will have to appear at a tribunal where "there is no respect of persons" (ver. 25). Political economy itself teaches that ill-paid labour is the most expensive and wasteful. The man who has want and fear gnawing at his heart cannot be a good workman, even if, in spite of extreme temptation, he be an honest one. Injustice and over-reaching on the part of

the rich and governing classes, political and social institutions that favour "the fat and the strong" at the expense of the weak and poor (Ezek. xxxiv. 16—27), are sure of God's heavy judgment. They generate in the hatred excited in those subject to them an explosive force which, with a suitable train of circumstances, will burst forth, as in the French Revolution, in some volcanic upheaval that the strongest social fabric will be unable to resist. Christ's golden rule of equity (Luke vi. 31) is the only safe, as it is the only righteous, basis for the dealings of man with man, of class with class, or of nation with nation in the world's great polity.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*The obligations of the risen life.* We have here a transition to the practical part of this Epistle. "If ye then were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God."

I. OUR RESURRECTION WITH CHRIST. We are not only "dead with Christ," but "risen with him;" "not only planted in the likeness of his death, but planted together in the likeness of his resurrection;"—"that we may walk in newness of life" (Rom vi. 2—4). This translation has altered our standpoint. We are "quickened together with Christ, and raised together with him" (Eph. ii. 5, 6). We have now an entirely new sphere of intellectual conception and moral aspiration. "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. v. 17).

II. THE PRACTICAL DUTY INVOLVED IN THIS RESURRECTION. "Seek those things which are above." 1. *"The things above" are all things pertaining to our true home*—"the new Jerusalem" and "the heavenly citizenship," in contrast to "the things upon the earth." They include (1) the vision of Christ (John xvii. 24); (2) the enjoyment of God, which is promoted (a) by our fuller knowledge of him (John xvii. 3), (b) by our growing love to him (1 John iv. 16), and (c) by the manifold expressions of his love to us (Zeph. iii. 17); (3) the society of angels and saints. 2. *The excellence of "the things above."* They are (1) satisfying, as things on earth are unsatisfying; (2) certain, as things on earth are uncertain; (3) perpetual and everlasting, as things on earth are transient and decaying; (4) suitable, as things on earth are unsuitable to an immortal spirit. 3. *They are to be sought,* implying (1) our knowledge of them; (2) our longing for them; (3) our anxious effort to realize them (Matt. vi. 33).

III. AN ARGUMENT TO INCITE AND ENCOURAGE US TO THIS DUTY. "Where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God." There are two facts here stated. 1. *Christ our Head is in heaven.* Therefore heaven must be the objective point of our thoughts as well as our hopes. We look up because he, who is our Hope, is there—"within the veil." The thought of Christ's presence gives definiteness to our ideas of heaven. "Where our treasure is, there will be our heart also." 2. *Christ is sitting at the right hand of God.* This implies: (1) His intercessory work; for he has entered into "heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. ix. 24; 1 John ii. 1). (2) His mediatorial dominion and power (Phil. ii. 10). (3) Our sitting with him—"he raised us up and made us to sit in heavenly places in Jesus Christ." These places are those he promised to prepare for his people (John xiv. 2). "He that overcometh, to him will I give to sit with me in my throne" (Rev. iii. 21).—T. C.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Heavenly things the true object of Christian contemplation.* "Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth; for ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." We must not only seek things above, but think them.

I. THE OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATION. 1. *Not things upon the earth,* because (1) they are below us (Phil. iii. 8, 19); (2) unsatisfying (Luke viii. 18; Prov. xxiii. 5; Hos. xiii. 13; Ps. lxxviii. 39); (3) full of anxieties (Matt. xiii. 22; Job xxxviii. 22); (4) unnecessary to our happiness (Job xxviii. 14); (5) transient and uncertain (Prov. xxiii. 5; Luke xii. 19, 20). 2. *"Things there are above."* (See hints on previous verse.) We ought to set our mind upon them, because (1) they are satisfying; (2) suitable; (3) because our treasure is there—of riches (Matt. vi. 19—21), of honours (1 Sam. ii. 30), of pleasures (Ps. xvi. 11).

II. THE DUTY OF SETTING THE MIND UPON RIGHT OBJECTS OF THOUGHT AND AFFECTION. This is the secret of heavenly mindedness. "Tell me what a man thinks, and I will tell you what he is." 1. *It is our duty not to set our mind on things on the earth*, because (1) God may give them to you as your entire portion (Ps. xvii. 14); (2) you may provoke him to take them away (Ps. lxxviii. 5—7); (3) they will turn away your thoughts from heaven (Ps. x. 3, 4); (4) they will distract you in duty (Ezek. xxxiii. 31); (5) they involve the guilt of idolatry (ver. 5). 2. *It is our duty to set our mind on things above*, because (1) there is nothing else worth our serious thought (1 John ii. 15); (2) they will keep you from over-anxiety about the affairs of this life (Phil. iv. 11, 12); (3) the thought of them will increase your fitness for duty (Acts xx. 24); (4) they will make the thought of death more pleasant in anticipation (Phil. i. 23).

III. THE REASON FOR OUR SELECTING SUCH OBJECTS OF BELIEVING CONTEMPLATION. "For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." The thought is twofold—it refers to a past act and to a continuous state. 1. *Our death in Christ*. This involves (1) our death to sin (Rom. vi. 2) and (2) our death to the world (Gal. vi. 14). We are, therefore, cut loose from "things on the earth." 2. *Our hidden life in God*. "Your life is hid with Christ in God." (1) Christian life is a hidden life, (a) in its origin (John iii. 8); (b) it is hid, as an experience, from the world; (c) it is hid from the believer himself in times of spiritual desertion; (d) the full glory of this life is hidden even from the believer (1 John iii. 1). (2) Christian life has its hidden source and abiding strength "with Christ in God." Christ is now hid in heaven and our life is hid with him. (a) It is hid with him as our Representative; this marks its security; this is the sheet-anchor of our spiritual existence. (b) It is hid with him as its constant source; "For he is our Life," in whom we realize a growth in all the graces of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22); "Because I live, ye shall live also;" "I am come that ye may have life . . . more abundantly." (3) God is himself the "sphere or element in which our life is hid. It is 'with Christ in God.'" The Son is "in the bosom of the Father," and thus we have fellowship with both the Father and the Son (1 John i. 3). Thus the believer is doubly secure. He is not only hidden in God's home; he is hidden in God's heart. Therefore we can understand the import of the phrase, "And ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 23).—T. C.

Ver. 4.—*The believer's final manifestation with Christ*. "When Christ, who is our Life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." The believer's life will not be always hidden, any more than the believer's Lord. There will be a period of manifestation for both. This marks the last stage of spiritual life.

I. CHRIST IS THE ESSENCE OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE. This is more than saying that our life is hid with him or that he is the Author of it. "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John v. 12; Gal. ii. 20; Phil. i. 21). We possess this life in virtue of our union with him and his resurrection (John xiv. 19).

II. WE SHALL SHARE WITH HIM IN HIS FINAL MANIFESTATION. 1. *The manifestation of Christ is the "blessed hope" of the saints*. (Titus ii. 13; 1 Tim. vi. 14; 2 Tim. i. 10; iv. 1—8.) He will then be seen as he is (1 John iii. 2), though mockers may ask, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Pet. iii. 4). He will then appear glorious in his person, glorious in his retinue of angels, glorious in his authority. 2. *We shall share in that manifestation*. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John iii. 1, 2); "We wait for the Saviour" (Phil. iii. 21); "The glory thou hast given me I have given them" (John xvii. 22); "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. viii. 17). We shall be manifested with Christ in the glory of our complete manhood, when the conjunction of soul and body shall be perfect and indissoluble. We may well set our mind on things above in view of such a glorious prospect.—T. C.

Vers. 5—7.—*The duty of mortifying the old man*. The apostle proceeds to deduce the practical consequences of our "death in Christ" in the mortifying of tendencies to impurity, covetousness, malice, and falsehood. "Mortify therefore your members

which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, lustfulness, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

I. THE NATURE AND DUTY OF MORTIFICATION. 1. *Its nature.* It is to resist the solicitations of sin, to suppress its first motions, to weaken its power. (1) It is a gradual process—it is "to crucify the flesh," implying a lingering process; it is a destruction that goes on daily, for the remains of the old life still abide, though not in power, in the believer. (2) The word "mortify" implies that sin is not to be allowed to die out of itself; we must kill it. (3) It is a painful process. 2. *The duty of mortification.* (1) It is commanded. We are to show no more mercy to the "old man" than to the "right eye" or the "right hand" that offends us (Matt. v. 29). (2) It is done in the power of the Spirit. "For if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. viii. 13). Therefore it becomes not only possible, but actual. Thus "our instruments of unrighteousness" are turned into "instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom. vi. 13). (3) It is the true consequence of our "death in Christ;" for the apostle says, "Mortify therefore your members," in allusion to this death (ch. ii. 20; iii. 3). We must carry out this principle of death to sin, to the flesh, to the world.

II. THE SPHERE OF THIS MORTIFICATION. "Your members which are upon the earth." He refers: 1. *To the instruments of sinfulness.* They are called members in allusion to the apostle's figure of sin, as a body of sin (ch. ii. 11), and in allusion to the necessity of the bodily organization to their action. They are "upon the earth," because they belong to our body or our earthly condition, or tend to mere earthly gratification. But they are to be turned into "instruments of righteousness unto God." 2. *To the various manifestations of this sinfulness.* (1) Sins affecting our personal life. (a) Sins of impurity. (α) Fornication. (i.) It is God's will we should abstain from it (1 Thess. iv. 3, 4). (ii.) It is one of the works of the flesh (Gal. v. 19). (iii.) It ought not once to be named among Christians (Eph. v. 12). (iv.) It takes away the heart (Hos. iv. 11). (v.) It brings dishonour and shipwreck of character (Prov. vi. 27—29; xxiii. 28). (vi.) The body was made, not for a harlot, but for the Lord (1 Cor. vi. 15, 16). It is a sin against our own bodies. (vii.) The promises of the gospel ought to engage us to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1). (β) Uncleanness. This is a generic product, as fornication is a specific product, of "the earthly members." The observations in the one apply to the other. Those who commit such sins are "alienated from the life of God through their ignorance and hardness of heart" (Eph. iv. 17), and are "delivered up to a reprobate mind" (Rom. i. 24, 26). (γ) Lustfulness and evil desire. These point to "the lust of concupiscence" (1 Thess. iv. 5), which is of the devil (John viii. 44), which wars against the soul (1 Pet. ii. 11), which drowns men in destruction and perdition (1 Tim. vi. 9), and keeps men from "coming to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. iii. 7). These various sins of impurity are to be mortified: how? (α) We can only cleanse our hearts by taking heed to the Word (Ps. cxix. 9). (β) By prayer, as the apostle did with the thorn in his flesh (2 Cor. xii. 9). (γ) By watchfulness (Prov. xxiii. 26, 27). We ought to guard against idleness (Ezek. xlv. 49), fulness of bread, evil company (Prov. i. 20). (δ) We must not "fulfil the lusts of the flesh," but "put on Christ" (Rom. xiii. 14). (b) The sin of covetousness. The apostle here introduces a new type of sin by the use of the definite article, as if he thus exhausted the full catalogue of sin in the world. It is curious to find it linked with sins of impurity. Yet it is so elsewhere (1 Cor. v. 11; Eph. v. 3; 2 Pet. ii. 14). There is a likeness between these two classes of sins. They both imply an unlawful direction of desires not in themselves unlawful, and they both grow by indulgence. Covetousness: (α) Issues, as a defiling thing, "out of the heart of man" (Mark vii. 22). (β) It implies a greedy and distracting care (Luke xii. 15). (γ) It exposes to many a piercing sorrow (1 Tim. vi. 10). (δ) It is a trouble to a man's own house (Prov. xv. 27). (ε) It argues little dependence or faith in the Lord (Luke xii. 30). Therefore "let us have our conversation without covetousness and be content with such things as we have" (Heb. xiii. 6). (ζ) Its heinousness—"seeing it is idolatry." It sets up another object of worship besides God. We cannot "serve both God and mammon" (Matt. vi. 24). Covetousness is base, because it sets up self in the heart. It is odious to God (Ps. x. 3), turns our hearts away from him (1 John ii. 15), and grudges the time spent in God's worship (Amos

viii. 5). Sins of impurity are the sins of youth as the sin of covetousness is the sin of old age.

III. ARGUMENTS TO ENCOURAGE US TO THIS DUTY OF MORTIFICATION. "For which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience: in the which ye also walked aforetime, when ye lived in these things." 1. *The consideration of the wrath of God.* (1) There is wrath in God against all sin. It is the displeasure of a personal God, the moral Governor, against sin, and the moving cause of the punishment he inflicts. It is not identical with the punishment, which is only the effect of it. It is a first principle in natural theology (Rom. i. 32); it has its root in the moral excellence of God; and is inseparable from the attitude of God toward moral evil (Heb. iii. 11; Rom. ix. 22). (2) It is an enduring fact of God's moral government—"the wrath of God doth come." Nothing has occurred to break the connection between sin and God's anger, except in the case of those whom Christ has "delivered from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i. 10). (3) It is directed against the sons of disobedience, who disregard alike the principles of Law and gospel. 2. *A consideration of the former state of the Colossians.* "In the which ye also walked aforetime, when ye lived in these things." It is good to be reminded of our past sin, (1) because it recalls the misery and guilt of our former state and makes us shrink from the thought of a return to it; (2) because it humbles us under a sense of our personal unworthiness; (3) because it quickens our sense of God's mercy that drew us out of it.—T. C.

Vers. 8, 9.—*A warning against social sins.* The sins already noticed are personal; the sins now to be specified arise in connection with man's social relationships. "But now put ye also away all these: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth. Lie not one to another." These sins, again, divide themselves into two classes—three of each: (1) sins of inward feeling; (2) sins of outward expression.

I. SINS OF INWARD FEELING. "Anger, wrath, malice." 1. *Anger and wrath.* There is an anger that is righteous. "Be angry and sin not" (Eph. iv. 26). Even our Lord was angry as he looked upon the Pharisees (Mark iii. 5). But the anger here condemned is sinful. It is a settled feeling of hatred as distinguished from wrath, which is more passionate and transient. (1) We are warned against both. "Cease from anger, leave off wrath, fret not thyself to do evil" (Ps. xxxvii. 8). We are not to give place to them (Rom. xii. 19). "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry" (Eccles. vii. 11). We ought to be "slow to wrath" (Jas. i. 19). We ought not "to let the sun go down upon it." (2) They lay the heart open to the devil (Eph. iv. 17). (3) They grieve the Spirit of God (Eph. iv. 30, 31). (4) They intercept prayer (1 Tim. ii. 8). 2. *Malice.* This is the vicious habit of mind that delights in injury to others. (1) It is the sign of an unregenerate nature (Titus iii. 3; 1 John ii. 9). (2) It springs from pride and envy (Prov. xiii. 10). (3) It is entirely opposed to that love that "worketh no ill to his neighbour" (Rom. xiii. 10). (4) It grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph. iv. 30, 31).

II. SINS OF OUTWARD EXPRESSION. "Railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth. Lie not one to another." 1. *Railing.* This is "the strife of words." (1) It is speaking evil of men, and springs from envy or malice. The tongue of the railer is compared to the sting of adders, to a sharp sword, to arrows. (2) It leads to reprisals; for "if ye bite and devour one another, take heed lest ye be consumed one of another" (Gal. v. 15). (3) The Judge will condemn the railer (Jas. v. 9). (4) It hinders the success of the Word (1 Pet. ii. 1, 2). We ought, therefore, to "put far from us a froward mouth and perverse lips" (Prov. iv. 24). 2. *Shameful speaking.* This applies to foul abuse, not to obscene language. While railing is the expression of angry and malicious feeling, this is the expression of coarse contempt and insolence. 3. *Falsehood.* This habit is to be put off; for: (1) It is that of the devil, who is the father of lies (John viii. 44). (2) God hates it (Prov. xii. 22). (3) It is a breach of the social contract (Eph. iv. 25). (4) It shuts out from heaven (Rev. xxii. 15). Let us pray God to remove far from us vanity and lies (Prov. iii. 8).—T. C.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The ground of these practical precepts.* "Seeing that you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him who created him." We have here

the negative and the positive aspects of the great spiritual change effected in conversion.

I. THE NEGATIVE ASPECT OF CONVERSION. "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds." 1. *The old man is the old unconverted self, strong in his deeds of sin.* His deeds are catalogued among the "works of the flesh" (Gal. v. 22, 23), as well as in the context. He is to be discerned, indeed, by his works like a tree by its fruits. 2. *The putting off of the old man is twofold, namely, at conversion and in the gradual process of sanctification.* Some teach that the old man is an unchanged and unchangeable being, and that, as he has been crucified in Christ (Rom. vi. 6), we have nothing more to do with him. In that case, if we have put on the new man, we are perfectly sinless. (1) There is a putting off of the old man at our justification. (2) There is a gradual putting off likewise—a "mortifying your members which are upon the earth," which is to continue till we get rid of all his deeds. The counsel, therefore, to put off the old man and put on the new man is like the similar counsel, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. xiii. 14), addressed to those who had already "put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27).

II. THE POSITIVE ASPECT OF CONVERSION. "And have put on the new man." This is the regenerate man. He is a "new creation" (2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15). 1. *The nature of this newness.* (1) He has a new nature—"born from above" (John iii. 3). He has "a new heart." (2) He has a new obedience, both as to its spirit, its matter, and its end (Rom. xii. 1). (3) He has a new citizenship (Phil. iii. 20). (4) He has new desires (Ps. li. 2; Matt. v. 6; 1 Tim. iv. 8). 2. *It is a nature constantly renewed unto full knowledge.* "Which is being renewed unto knowledge." It is not at once complete, but in a state of constant development by the Holy Spirit. Knowledge is a principal part of the new grace of the believer. (1) It is the beginning of eternal life (John xvii. 3). (2) It has transforming power (2 Cor. vii. 18). (3) It is necessary to our understanding the wiles of the devil and resisting the temptations of the world (1 Pet. v. 9). 3. *Its renewal is after a Divine pattern.* "After the image of him who created him." The allusion is to Gen. i. 26. The image of Christ in the believer is analogous to that of the image of God in the original man, but will be far more glorious, as the second Man is more glorious than the first man. Thus we see the process of putting on the new man in its beginning (Gal. iii. 27), in its continuance (Rom. xiii. 14), and in its completeness (1 Cor. xv. 53, 54).—T. C.

Ver. 11.—*All distinctions obliterated in Christ.* "Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman: but Christ is all, and in all." The old distinctions which separated man from man can have no existence in the new spiritual life.

I. NATIONAL DISTINCTIONS ARE ABOLISHED IN CHRIST. "Greek and Jew." The peculiar privilege of Abraham's natural seed is gone. Mercy is shown on exactly similar terms to Jew and to Gentile. Thus is manifest that catholicity of the gospel which the Gnostics repudiated.

II. RITUALISTIC DISTINCTIONS ARE ABOLISHED. "Circumcision and uncircumcision." The errorists in Galatia would have imposed circumcision on the Gentile Christians, but neither circumcision nor the want of it availed anything in Christ's kingdom, but "a new creation" (Gal. vi. 15). Thus, while it was an advantage to be born a Jew rather than a Gentile, it was none to become as a Jew by conforming to its ritual (1 Cor. vii. 19).

III. NO DISTINCTION IS RECOGNIZED AS TO CIVILIZATION OR REFINEMENT. "Barbarian, Scythian." The barbarian was the foreigner, the Scythian the savage. The gospel turns the barbarian into a brother, and lifts even the Scythians—the lowest type of barbarians—into the dignity of Christian fellowship.

IV. SOCIAL DISTINCTIONS ARE ABOLISHED. "Bondman, freeman." The gospel has placed them on one level of religious privilege.

V. CHRIST HAS OBLITERATED ALL THESE DISTINCTIONS. "But Christ is all, and in all." He has absorbed them all into himself, filling the whole sphere of human life in its widest varieties of development. He dwells in all, their true Centre; for the life of all believers is "hid with Christ in God." This fact places the saints under immense obligations. They must consecrate all to Christ and resign all to his wise and loving will.—T. C.

Vers. 12—14.—*The duty of putting on all the characteristic qualities of the new man.* We must not only “cease to do evil” in putting off the old man, we “must learn to do well.” “Put on therefore, as God’s elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering.”

I. THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN POSITION. “As God’s elect, holy and beloved.” They are chosen unto holiness that they should be without blame before him in love” (Eph. i. 4). The saints are: 1. *The elect ones of God.* They are chosen to final salvation (Matt. xxiv. 22, 24, 31; Rev. xvii. 14; Titus i. 1; Rom. viii. 33). 2. *The elect are* (1) *holy*—(a) consecrated to God, (b) subjectively holy (2 Cor. vii. 1); (2) *beloved*—(a) the election is connected with God’s love (Rom. xi. 28); (b) it is a free love (Hos. xiv. 5), a tender love (Joel ii. 13), an everlasting love (Zeph. iii. 17).

II. THE DISCHARGE OF THESE CHRISTIAN OBLIGATIONS. We are to put on: 1. *A heart of compassion*; not a head of high knowledge, after Gnostic perception. The apostle begins with the natural and universal instinct of pity, which is here more an act of grace than of nature, for it springs from love to God. We ought to cultivate it, (1) because the Father of mercies is merciful (Luke vi. 33); (2) because those who need it are our own flesh (Isa. lviii. 7); (3) because it will attest the reality and worth of our religion (Jas. i. 27); (4) because we shall reap after the measure of mercies both here and hereafter (Hos. x. 12). 2. *Kindness.* This is the temper of mind which produces a sweet and happy intercourse with others. Our English word is derived from “kin,” and thus a *kind* man is a *kindred* man; we ought to regard the saints as kinsfolk, for they are children of God and brethren in Christ. 3. *Humility.* This is the temper of mind which affects our estimate of ourselves. It is closely allied to kindness, for it takes an unselfish view of personal interests. We ought to “seek lowliness” (Zeph. ii. 3), because: (1) It is one of Christ’s own graces (Matt. xi. 29). (2) God regards it as a grace eminently worthy of our vocation (Eph. iv. 1, 2). (3) He loves to dwell in a lowly soul (Isa. lvii. 15). He giveth grace to the lowly (1 Pet. v. 5, 6). (4) He does not despise their prayers (Ps. cii. 7). 4. *Meekness, long-suffering.* They affect our outward bearing towards others, especially in the case of injury or insult. They are linked together as companion graces in Gal. v. 22. They are eminently illustrated in the life of Christ, and are both fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22). God will guide the meek in judgment and teach them his way (Ps. xxv. 9). It is the praise of Christian love that it suffers long (1 Cor. xiii. 4). 5. *Forbearance and mutual forgiveness.* “Forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any.” This temper is eminently conducive to peaceful relations and diminishes the natural friction of life. It implies (1) a bearing with the infirmities of others (Gal. vi. 2); (2) a disposition to take wrong rather than stand upon the last jot of our rights (1 Cor. vi. 7); (3) a pleasing of our neighbour for his good to edification (Rom. xv. 1, 2); (4) a frank forgiveness of our neighbour in case of a fault,—jars and discords may arise even among saints. (5) It is a temper which is illustrated and enforced by the example of Christ: “Even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye.” His example is decisive both as to the act and the manner of it. He forgave his enemies; he forgave freely; he forgave finally, for salvation. 6. *Love.* “And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.” This love to the brethren is to be put on as the cincture to bind the other graces together. (1) The necessity of this love. (a) It is the proof of faith (Gal. v. 6). (b) It tends to the increase of the mystical body (Eph. iv. 17). (c) It makes us like God himself (1 John iv. 16). (d) It is a demonstration of the reality of religion to a godless world (John xv. 8; Matt. v. 16). (2) The dignity of this love; it is “the bond of perfectness.” It holds together all the graces which make up perfection. The Judæo-Gnostics found their perfection in knowledge; the apostle finds it in love. “Knowledge puffeth up, charity edifieth” (1 Cor. viii. 1). Love binds believers together, and looks to their final perfection in God.—T. C.

Ver. 15.—*Peace and thanksgiving.* “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful.”

I. CHRISTIAN PEACE. 1. *Its Author.* (1) Christ is our Peace (Eph. ii. 14), and “the Lord of peace” (2 Thess. iii. 16), and “the Prince of peace” (Isa. ix. 6). (2) It

is his legacy to the Church (John xiv. 27). It is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22). (3) He proclaims it—"that publisheth peace" (Isa. lii. 7). 2. *The sphere or element of its exercise.* "To the which also ye were called in one body." As "God hath called us in peace" (1 Cor. vii. 15), we are to realize our unity by it as members of the body. Unity is out of the question without peace. Let us show the fruit of our calling by being lovers of peace. The kingdom of God is "righteousness and peace." 3. *Its enthronement as umpire in the heart.* "Let it be umpire in your hearts." (1) It is to act with decisive force in the conflict of impulses or feelings that may arise in a Christian life. (2) Yet we must retain truth along with peace (Heb. xii. 14; Mark ix. 50). The true wisdom is to be "first pure, then peaceable" (Jas. iii. 17).

II. **THANKSGIVING.** "And be ye thankful." It is our duty to be always thankful to God. It held a constant place in the apostle's thoughts. The word, in its substantive and verbal forms, occurs thirty-seven times in his Epistles. We must be in a constant mood of thanksgiving for his mercies, for his grace, for his comforts, and for his ordinances.—T. C.

Ver. 16.—*The use of the Word for spiritual edification.* The apostle, in view of the right exercise of the foregoing graces, counsels the Colossians to make the Word of Christ the subject of experimental study. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom."

I. **THE EFFICACY OF CHRIST'S WORD.** 1. *The Scriptures are Christ's Word.* They have Christ for their Author, for their Subject, for their End. This is the Word that is "sounded forth" everywhere (1 Thess. i. 8), that "runs" everywhere, to be glorified in its success. It is Christ, too, who gives power to this Word. 2. *This Word ought to dwell in us.* Not come and go, but tarry as in a fixed abode. It ought to be an abiding power within us. "The Word of God abideth in you" (1 John ii. 14). 3. *The place of its indwelling is the heart;* not the memory or the head, but the heart. "Thy Word have I hid in my heart" (Ps. cxix. 11). 4. *The manner of its indwelling.* "Richly in all wisdom." (1) Not "with a scanty foothold, but with a large and liberal occupancy." (2) It implies (a) receiving the Word with all meekness and humility (Jas. i. 21); (b) dividing it aright (2 Tim. ii. 15); (c) trying all things so as to keep that which is good (1 Thess. v. 21).

II. **THE USE OR END OF CHRIST'S WORD.** "Teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." There is a double function here assigned to the Word: one making its influence felt upon the mind—"teaching;" the other upon the heart—"singing" with thanksgiving. 1. *The Word is useful for teaching and for warning.* These represent the positive and the negative sides of instruction. (1) Teaching. (a) This implies that the Word is to be used by every Christian for the purposes of instruction (Exod. xxiv. 12). When we have received the "ingrafted Word" into our hearts, we must spread it abroad. (b) It deepens our sense of the value of the Word to impart it to others. (c) It is a test of the sincerity of our attachment to make it known. (d) It is by the efforts of all Christians in this way that the Word will eventually reach the ends of the earth. (2) Admonition. (a) It must be grounded on the Word (Titus i. 6). (b) It must be done in love and meekness (2 Thess. iii. 1; Gal. vi. 1). (c) With a reasonable secrecy (Matt. xviii. 15). (d) With compassion and tenderness (2 Cor. ii. 4). (e) With perseverance (Prov. xiii. 19). 2. *The Word is useful for the purpose of sacred song.* As those who make the songs of a nation can shape its political and moral life, so the hymn-writers have in a large degree shaped the theology of the Church. (1) Singing is a necessary part of Divine worship (Eph. vi. 19; Jas. v. 13; Ps. lxxvi. 1, 2). It is good for spiritual recreation (Jas. v. 13). We should sing in our houses as well as in our churches (Ps. ci. 1, 2; 1 Cor. xiv. 26). (2) The matter of singing—"psalms, hymns, spiritual songs." These are supposed to represent three varieties of the psalms of Scripture. There is evidence, however, that Christians themselves composed hymns for public worship (1 Cor. xiv. 26). (3) The manner of singing—"singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (a) It was to be with the accompaniment of Divine grace, that is, with a holy joy (Ps. ix. 2), with a humble trust in the Lord's mercies (Ps. xlii. 5), with a lively recollection of his benefits (Ps. xlvii. 7). (b) It was to be the outcome of the heart's feeling as well as the expression of the life. This implies singing

with understanding (1 Cor. xiv. 14). Therefore we are to prepare our hearts before we sing (Ps. lvii. 7). (c) It was to be addressed to the Lord, not to man.—T. C.

Ver. 17.—*The principle of a godly life.* This is the practical lesson that flows from the theology of the Epistle. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

I. THE WHOLE EXTENT OF CHRISTIAN LIFE IS CONSECRATED TO THE LORD. Everything falls under the two heads of words and deeds. 1. *Words.* (1) We must avoid words that would dishonour Christ—vain words (Eph. v. 6), bitter words (Job vi. 3), deceitful words (Ps. xxxvi. 3), idle words (Matt. xii. 36). James tells us the sins of the tongue (Jas. iii. 2). (2) We must use words of wisdom (Book of Proverbs), words of truth and soberness (Acts xxiii. 25), words of righteousness (Job vi. 25), wholesome words (2 Tim. i. 13), words of eternal life (John vi. 68). 2. *Deeds.* These must be done (1) in faith, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" (2) in prayer (Ps. ix. 1); (3) with warrant from God's Word (Isa. viii. 20); (4) with perseverance (Gal. vi. 9). 3. *All, both words and deeds, must be done in the Name of the Lord.* They must have supreme reference to him (1 Cor. x. 31); they must be done under his warrant or authority, in the strength of his grace, after his own glorious example, and with ultimate regard to his glory. 4. *Christian obedience must all the while be mingled with thanksgiving to God the Father.* We thank him (1) for the ability to do all our works in the Lord's Name; (2) for our liberty in Christ; (3) for our victory over sin; (4) for our manifold blessings in Christ.

II. REASONS FOR THE CONSECRATION OF OUR WHOLE LIFE TO THE LORD. We ought to be more circumspect than others in our words and deeds: 1. *Because "we live and die to the Lord."* (Rom. xiv. 8.) We are "the Lord's." 2. *Because we are entrusted with such blessings.* "Because God hath bestowed upon them more blessings, and therefore as he gives more wages, requires more work." 3. *Because we are more observed than others.* Therefore we must "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise" (Eph. v. 15). 4. *Because we have the prospect of an abundant reward according to our works.*—T. C.

Ver. 18.—*The duties of wives.* The apostle next proceeds to enjoin family duties, not in the spirit of those errorists, who imagined that such duties were vulgar and inconsistent with the contemplative aspect of the Christian life. His first practical exhortation is to wives, and is summed up in the single duty—"submit yourselves."

I. THE DUTY OF SUBMISSION. "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands." This duty includes: 1. *Honour.* They must honour their husbands as their head (1 Cor. xi. 3; 1 Pet. iii. 6). 2. *Truthfulness.* (Prov. ii. 17.) 3. *Obedience.* (Eph. v. 23; 1 Cor. vii. 34.) 4. *Co-operation with their husbands in all family affairs.* They must "guide the house with discretion" (Titus ii. 5). 5. They must not assume authority over their husbands, either in ecclesiastical or in domestic affairs (1 Tim. ii. 14).

II. REASONS FOR THIS DUTY. "As it is fit in the Lord." In Oriental countries, woman was the slave rather than the companion of man, but in the Grecized communities of Asia Minor, woman held a higher position, and her new position under the gospel may have led her to carry her freedom to the point of licence. It was, therefore, necessary to define her position accurately. Her subjection to man is "fit in the Lord" on several grounds. 1. *From man's priority of creation.* (1 Tim. ii. 13.) 2. *The woman was made for man, not the man for the woman.* (1 Cor. ii. 9.) 3. *The woman's priority in the original transgression.* (1 Tim. ii. 14.) 4. *The man's headship over the woman.* (1 Cor. xi. 3.) 5. *Her weakness.* She is "the weaker vessel" (1 Pet. iii. 7), and therefore stands in need of his greater strength and protection. 6. *The subjection to man is placed on the same basis as the subjection of the Church to Christ.* (Eph. v. 22-24.) 7. But the apostle's language in the text implies a limitation upon her submission; for she is to be subject to him "in the Lord." Both husband and wife must have a due consideration for each other's position, because they are "heirs of the grace of life," and they must see that "their prayers are not hindered" (1 Pet. iii. 7).—T. C.

Ver. 19.—*The duties of husbands.* "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."

I. THE DUTY OF LOVE. This love, which is consistent with his headship over her, implies: 1. *That he is to delight in her* (Prov. v. 18, 19), and *please her* (1 Cor. vii. 33). 2. *That he is to cherish her as Christ the Church* (Eph. v. 29), providing for her support and comfort (1 Tim. v. 3). 3. *That he is to protect her as the weaker vessel.* 4. *That he is not to be bitter against her*, using bitter words or sour looks, acting rigorously or imperiously, as if she were a slave and not a companion. 5. *That he is to seek her spiritual good, for she is to be an heir with him of the grace of life.* (1 Pet. iii. 7.)

II. THE REASONS OF THIS DUTY. 1. *The intimacy of the relationship between them.* He leaves father and mother to cleave to his wife. She is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (Eph. v. 28, 29, 33). 2. *She was originally provided as a help-meet for him.* (Gen. ii. 18.) "Yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant" (Mal. ii. 14). 3. *She is the glory of the man.* (1 Cor. xi. 7.) 4. *The strongest argument is the analogous love of Christ to his Church.* (Eph. v. 25—28.)—T. C.

Ver. 20.—The duties of children. "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing to the Lord."

I. THE DUTY OF CHILDREN IS OBEDIENCE. This includes: 1. *Reverence.* (Lev. xix. 3; Eph. vi. 1, 2.) 2. *Readiness to receive instruction from parents.* (Prov. i. 8.) 3. *Submission to their rebukes.* (Prov. xiii. 1.) 4. *Gratitude.* (1 Tim. v. 4.) 5. *Submission to their just commands.* They are to obey "in all things," that is, in all lawful things, for it must be done "in the Lord" (Eph. vi. 1).

II. THE GROUNDS OF THIS DUTY. "For this is well-pleasing to the Lord." This is, in itself, a sufficient reason for filial obedience. But it is well-pleasing to the Lord for several reasons. It is not enough to serve God, but we must serve him so as to please him (Heb. xii. 28). 1. *It is agreeable to his Law.* (Exod. xx. 12.) 2. *It is right in itself.* (Eph. vi. 1.) 3. *Christ was obedient to his parents.* (Luke ii. 51.) 4. *It is necessary to the good order of family life.* 5. *The welfare of the child depends upon its obedience, especially at a time when it cannot reason upon what is right.*—T. C.

Ver. 21.—The duties of fathers. "Fathers, provoke not your children, lest they be discouraged."

I. THE DUTY OF PARENTS. It is here exhibited on its negative side. They are not to abuse their authority over their children by too great severity either in words or deeds. Some parents spoil their children by indulgence; others, by unwise severities. Bitter words are used, unreasonable commands are given, immoderate correction is administered. Parents are to behave lovingly to their children, even while maintaining their just authority over them.

II. THE DANGER OF NEEDLESS HARSHNESS. "Lest they be discouraged." They may lose heart; their spirit may be broken; they may become morose, sullen, and reckless. Thus they may be turned aside from the service of God, lose the capacity to do great things, become pusillanimous, and eventually become a sad disappointment to their parents.—T. C.

Vers. 22—25.—The duties of servants. The apostle enters into fuller detail in his injunctions to servants, because his intercourse with Onesimus, a Colossian slave now returning to his master Philemon in a new character, had turned his thoughts to the condition and difficulties of the whole class of dependants. His injunctions to them imply that they had a right to be instructed out of the Word, and that if men have less consideration for their interests, the Lord redoubles his concern for them. There was a danger that slaves in the Roman empire might repudiate their relation to their masters, and accordingly the apostle enjoins the duty of obedience to masters, while he announces principles destined ultimately to destroy the unnatural relation.

I. THE FAULTS OF SERVANTS. He specifies five of them. 1. *Eye-service.* There was a temptation to this fault where the master's authority was regarded as unjust and cruel. 2. *Hypocritical service,* arising out of a divided interest and the absence of singleness of heart. 3. *Half-service.* Servants might not please their masters "in all things," but in such things as pleased themselves. 4. *Godlessness.* They chose to please men rather than the Divine Master. 5. *A base and discouraged spirit,* which was to be banished by prospects of heavenly reward.

II. THE DUTIES OF SERVANTS. These are all summed up in the one word "obedience." But this obedience must be becomingly rendered in several important respects. 1. "*Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God.*" (1) Eye-service is designed to please man. Work will be done only so long as the master's eye is on the servant. There is no thought of pleasing aught but man. (2) There must be singleness of heart, that is, simplicity and sincerity of spirit, that will lead to an undivided devotion to work, arising from "the fear of God," because they realize that the eye of the Divine Master is ever upon them. Dissimulation, duplicity, pretence, deceit, must be far from Christian servants. 2. *It must be hearty service.* "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men." Servants, in obeying their masters, serve the Lord. They do the will of God from the heart, not grudgingly or murmuringly, but with a truly hearty obedience. 3. *It must be obedience "in all things;"* that is, in all things lawful. But servants must consider the master's commands as well as his interests, and seek to obey them in everything, however irksome or humiliating.

III. THE ENCOURAGEMENTS OF SERVANTS. "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." 1. *It is an encouragement for them to know that masters are only "according to the flesh."* This limits human slavery. The master cannot touch the soul, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. iii. 16), for the slave is "Christ's freeman" (1 Cor. vii. 22). 2. *There is a reward for true obedience as well as a compensation for wrongs endured.* (1) Servants ought to know of their blessed prospects. (2) Their works will be surely rewarded, reckoned, no doubt, of grace, not of debt. They shall receive "the reward of the inheritance," the heavenly glory, by the Father's bequest. God will be their Paymaster if they are wronged or defrauded by man. Therefore they have strong encouragement to give just obedience to man. 3. *There is a retribution on unjust or tyrannical masters for the wrongs they have done to their servants.* "But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons." Some think this refers to dishonest servants, or to both servants and masters who may have failed in their duty to each other. It is more natural to regard it as referring to the case of masters, for the passage is designed to encourage servants suffering injustice with the prospect of a day of judgment for those who wronged them. God is "no respecter of persons." Man may make a difference. God finds the claim of the slave as valid as the claim of the master.—T. C.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The heavenly life.* Paul has been warning his Colossian converts against the superstitious interest in ceremonies which the false teachers tried to foster; and now he passes to the higher things and thoughts which should occupy the soul. He speaks of their resurrection with Christ if they are real converts, and of the consequent duty of living a heavenly life, which consists in setting one's heart upon heavenly things in contrast to the things which are upon the earth. He further shows that this heavenly life is to end in a glorious manifestation at the second advent of Christ. The line of thought here is consequently of the highest character.

I. THE DEATH TO EARTHLY THINGS. (Ver. 3.) The apostle here affirms that the Colossian Christians "died" (Revised Version). Now, this represents a distinct element in Christian experience; it means that the soul passes through a death to earthly things—to sin and the allurements of the flesh, just as our Lord died upon the tree. The Crucifixion must have its counterpart within us. We die to the attractions of the world. "The dead," says Augustus Hare, in a sermon on this passage, "know not nor care for anything in this world. Their love and hatred and envy are clean wiped out. A dead man is as cold and motionless as a stone, to all that the living make the greatest stir about. How perfectly, then, how entirely, ought we to be free from sin, in order to be *dead* to it! It is not enough to keep from outward acts of sin, if the heart cherishes any secret liking for it. This is not dying to it. Before we can attain to that perfect sinlessness, our hearts must be as completely closed against the tempter as if we were nailed down in our coffins; our ears must be deaf to his voice; our eyes must be blind to his charms. We must not only give up every evil practice; we must also stifle every evil desire. Nothing less can deserve the name of being dead to sin. This, then, is the perfection of innocence which we are to strive after." Now, every true Christian has experienced in larger or smaller measure this

deadening to things earthly which has its perfect ideal in absolute death. The world has not the attractions for our deadened hearts that it once had.

II. THE RESURRECTION TO NEWNESS OF LIFE. (Ver. 1.) Simultaneously with the death to things earthly comes the resurrection to newness of life. We are regarded as rising along with Christ out of our grave in trespasses and in sins (Eph. ii. 2—5) and entering into a new life unto God. Our Lord's life after his resurrection is thus the type of our new life. As our Lord entered by resurrection into an *immortal* life such as he had not before he suffered, according to his words, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore;" so believers enter by resurrection into a new life essentially different from the old. We have passed by faith "from death unto life." "A resurrection," says Liddon, "is a transfer from one state to another. It is a passage from the darkness of the tomb to the sunshine of the upper air. It is an exchange of the coldness, stillness, corruption of death, for the warmth and movement and undecayed energies of life." We have in resurrection attained to "life eternal."

III. THE ASCENSION INTO HEAVENLY RELATIONS. (Vers. 1, 2.) Not only does Paul regard believers as "raised together with Christ," but also as bound to ascend in spirit into heavenly relations. "The things which are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God," are to concern us. Our mind is to be set upon these things instead of upon the things that are upon the earth. Having so risen with Christ, we are bound to show the reality of our resurrection by leading a new life and seeking the things that are above. "As Christ did not break loose from the grave," says Hare, "to tarry on earth, but, having risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, so, instead of lingering among the things of earth, we too should ascend into heaven in heart and mind, and dwell there with him continually." Now, suppose we ascended into heaven and sat down with Christ upon his throne (Eph. ii. 6), what should we realize about our relations to heavenly things? 1. We should realize that *Christ is our Life*. The heavenly world depends consciously upon Jesus for its glorious existence. He is the Life of each and of all. As the source of life, he is there beyond the reach of change, an exhaustless Fountain. 2. We should realize that *Christ is the Object of supreme affection*. The celestial world not only traces all its life to Jesus, but centres all its love in him. To love him with all the soul, heart, mind, and strength is deemed, not the duty merely, but the constant privilege of all. He is the Beloved One who is loved beyond all conception. 3. We should realize that *Christ's kingdom and reign are the supreme concern of the whole heavenly world*. Angels and redeemed ones alike bend in rapturous interest over the progress of Christ's kingdom and inquire doubtless in what ways they can promote it. The heavenly life is thus a life of hope for the triumph of that sacred cause which centres in the Son of God. 4. We should realize that *Christ's second advent in glory is to be the date of our glorification with him*. The heavenly world not only awaits Christ's triumph, but also his manifestation as the glorified Saviour. And in that manifestation of the Son the other sons of God are to share. So that the second advent of Christ into this world is a distinct matter of hope to the celestial inhabitants. Now, in all these ways we can in this life realize heavenly relations. We can regard Christ as our Life, hidden, doubtless, from the eye of sense, but palpable to faith, and rejoice in him as our Divine and exhaustless Source of life. We can set our heart's supreme affections on him, loving him and all he loves for his own dear sake. We can make his kingdom and reign our supreme concern, every other thought being subsidiary and tributary to this. We can, lastly, hope for and love his appearing as the time for the manifestation of the sons of God. Thus shall we live the heavenly life on earth. Thus shall we show that we are more citizens of the other world than of this, and that we are contemplating the time of our emigration with satisfaction. We have acquainted ourselves with the nature of the country we are going to; we have studied the guide-book and consulted the faithful and true Witness about heavenly things; the soil and climate of the better land are not altogether unknown. Its holy and fragrant air, its religious and happy spirit, its bountiful conditions, we have tried to realize, and when we are transferred to it we feel persuaded we shall be at home.—R. M. E.

Vers. 5—11.—*Mortification after death*. Paul, having spoken of our death to

earthly things and of our heavenly life, speaks next of mortification as succeeding death. It seems at first sight strange, yet, when analyzed, it is seen to convey most important truth. To quote from Gode's 'Etudes Bibliques': "When this apostle [Paul] wishes to teach us how one may attempt to die to sin and to live to God, see how he expresses himself: 'Reckon that you *are dead* to sin and *living* unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom. vi. 11). This language is but little conformed to that of reason. Human wisdom says, 'Disengage yourself little by little from the bonds of sin; learn gradually to love God and live for him.' But in such a way we should never break radically with sin and we should never give ourselves completely unto God. We dwell in the dark and troubled atmosphere of our own nature and we cannot contemplate the full blaze of the Divine holiness. Faith, on the contrary, raises us, in some sort by a bond, to the royal position which Jesus Christ now occupies and which in him is already ours. From that position we see sin under our feet; there we relish (*savourons*) the life of God as our true essence in Jesus Christ. Reason says, '*Become holy by being so.*' Faith says, '*Thou art so; become it, then.* Thou art so in Christ; become it in thine own person.' Or, as St. Paul says to the Colossians (iii. 3, 5), '*Ye are dead; mortify, then, your terrestrial members.*'" Accordingly we have here—

I. THE IDEAL DEATH TO SIN. The only one in this world who was really dead to sin was our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. His real experience is only our ideal. Of course, we get the benefit of his deadness to sin. It encircles as with a halo all believers. But for this very reason we make it the ideal of our heart and aim after it. To be as dead to the allurements of earth as Jesus was upon the cross, as the body of Jesus was when in Joseph's tomb,—this is the goal of our spiritual ambition. Faith bounds across the chasm which separates the real and ideal, and reckons it as already ours. Faith is thus victorious anticipation that the ideal shall be real one day.

II. THE REALITY OF MORTIFYING OUR MEMBERS. (Vers. 5-9.) The Colossians seem to have been chained by habits of gross sin. It was no simple matter to break the chain and assert their spiritual freedom. Before death sets in, when mortification of the physical kind is approaching, the suffering is intense. But once the part is deadened, pain has ceased. This has its spiritual counterpart. The process of mortification is painful in the extreme. The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the mind and heart, cannot be mortified by magic. It is a slow undermining of the sinful nature, like the crucifixion of the body. But we must be prepared for it, and manfully must we sit, like executioners, beside our darling sins and nail them to Christ's cross.

III. THE DIVINE WRATH AGAINST SIN HELPS US IN OUR MORTIFICATION. (Ver. 6.) When we realize God's attitude towards our darling sins, that they are abominable in his sight, and that towards those who cherish them his wrath must be manifested, then we are determined to prosecute our mortification work with the utmost zeal. Those who throw doubts upon the Divine anger have failed to appreciate what a mighty moral strength lies within it.

IV. THE GLORIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS ALSO COMES THAT CHRIST IS ALL AND IN ALL. (Ver. 11.) The old man, or old nature, being mortified, the new man, or new nature, which is in the Divine image, takes its place. But in addition Christ is realized as dwelling within and reinforcing our "better self." By his indwelling all the old distinctions of Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, are felt to be of no account; for, if Christ dwells within each, he secures the unity of all. It is this glorious consummation which the apostle contemplated. He rejoiced in the thought of unification through the indwelling Christ. "Our mind," it has been said, "must become Christ's, as Christ is God's. Our very self-consciousness, crucified with him, must cease to be our own. Only then can our work, as being of God that worketh in us, work out the true salvation, the deliverance from self-seeking self." We may also refer to a sermon of Tholuck, in which from this eleventh verse he treats of "Christ before us as our *Pattern*; Christ in us as our *Life*; and Christ for us as our *Righteousness*."—R. M. E.

Vers. 12-17 —*The new life of love.* We have turned over a new leaf, so to speak, in these verses. The old life we have to mortify gives place to a new life of love which we have to develop. Now, the moment we speak of *love*, we are brought into relations with others. It is the social Christian life, therefore, of which Paul here

speaks. As already seen, he is aiming at the *unity* of the Church. Here we have the means by which it is secured. Let us briefly analyze this life of love.

I. IT HAS A HEART OF COMPASSION. (Ver. 12, Revised Version.) All the emotion which misfortune evokes in the heart of God is to have its counterpart in the heart of his people. "Kindness, humility, meekness, and long-suffering" are to be in exercise within us continually. The apparent drawbacks in others are thus transfigured by our kindly spirit into helps to unity.

II. IT HAS A FORGIVINGNESS LIKE THAT OF GOD. (Ver. 13.) Church members and those outside the Church will, from time to time, be guilty of injustice towards us; we may have just ground of complaint. But how our brother's offences dwindle into utter insignificance when compared with the offences we have ourselves committed against God! It will not do to be severe on our debtors after God has been so forgiving towards ourselves (Matt. xviii. 21—35). If we cultivate a God-like forgivingness, then we shall be promoting constantly the unity of the Church.

III. LOVE IS ITS BOND OF PERFECTNESS. (Ver. 14.) We need only study 1 Cor. xiii. to see how love is the all-important matter. It is what brings the whole life into harmony. For love expresses the willingness of the person to give himself to the good of others. It is the principle of the new life, without which it cannot exist.

IV. GOD'S PEACE RULES AND EVOKE MAN'S GRATITUDE. (Ver. 15.) For when we are God-like in our compassion, forgiveness, and love, we find a peaceful temper laying hold of us. We cannot war with others, but must follow the things that make for peace. To the unity of peace we feel that God has called us. He has been our Peacemaker and the Peacemaker of many more, and so we dwell in the unity of the one mystical body. And surely such a state of mind and heart is something to be thankful for. A grateful spirit for our personal peace and for the peace which permeates through the Church of God.

V. GOD'S WORD IS TRANSLATED INTO HEARTFELT PRAISE. (Ver. 16.) For we can only sustain the new life by the reception of God's quickening Word. It must dwell within us richly. And if it do, it will evoke praise from our grateful hearts. We will sing in our social gatherings one to another, and be mutually helpful. The meetings of the saints shall be of a most joyful character. And what a unifying element is always found in social praise! How it blends our hearts into unity as we praise the one Lord. The very harmony of the music catches our souls and blends them into something like the harmony of heaven.

VI. ALL LIFE BECOMES SACRAMENTAL. (Ver. 17.) There can be no idle words nor random deeds in the new life. All is consecrated to the Lord. His Name is our banner, and under it all is done. God has thus come and made "the common" *clean*, and the life on earth is like the great sheet of the Apostle Peter, in which the four-footed beasts and creeping things were pure. Into every nook and cranny of the new life the consecrated spirit is carried: The meanest matters are thus lifted into heavenly light, and God reigns over all. Thus it is that the sacramental element is carried into all things, and we feel that "the communion of the Lord's Supper is meant to be a sample of, and not an exception to, our common days; and in the rite there lies a mighty power to make the whole of the rest of life like itself." Arnold has a curious sermon on this text, in which he advocates the consecration in the making of "wills." But this is only an illustration of a universal principle which God requires in the Christian life. There is to be *no* exception to consecration. In a grateful spirit we are to do all in Christ's Name. May it be our single ambition!—R. M. E.

Ver. 18—ch. iv. 1.—*Christianity remodelling the ancient household.* The unity of the Church, which Paul has in view, is to have its counterpart and model in the unity of the Christian household. The Church is only an enlarged family. Hence Church officers are to serve their apprenticeship in the matter of rule in the family. If they are not able to rule their own families well, they have no business to take office in the Church of God (1 Tim. iii. 2, 12). Of necessity, therefore, Christianity takes up the household and sanctifies it. The relation of Christianity to family life is most important. In the present section Paul takes up three relations and shows how love is to regulate them all.

I. THE RELATIONS OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES. (Vers. 18, 19.) Now, it is well known

that women did not get justice under the ancient *regime*, and yet the apostle exhorts the wives to be in subjection to their husbands, as is fitting in the Lord (Revised Version). Christianity has emphasized the passive virtues; it glorifies woman, therefore, by showing to the world how glorious a thing it is to be subject and even to suffer *for love*. Apparently this is to neglect "women's rights," but really it has secured them. It is in woman lovingly filling her station that she secures, not only her rights, but absolutely her reign. Husbands, again, are exhorted to give up all bitterness against their wives and to love them. Elsewhere he shows that the measure of the husband's love is to be the love of Christ for his Church; that is, a love which can be self-sacrificing if need be, and which will be considerate at all times (Eph. v. 22—33). In such a case, how harmonious family life proves! The stronger and the weaker natures are blended by love into one. Each has its sphere, and there need be no collision amid the responsibilities of love.

II. THE RELATIONS OF PARENTS TO CHILDREN. Here, again, the apostle appeals first to the weaker side. He wishes children to think how pleasing to the Father in heaven obedience is, and, as he has put their parents over them to be obeyed, the children should obey them in all things. There is to be strict obedience in all things to the natural authority. On the other hand, the fathers are exhorted not to provoke the children by their tyranny, lest the little ones be discouraged. Paul saw no such danger from the *mother's* rule. A mother comes with a tenderness and sympathy such as the harder nature of the father cannot always command. This exhortation to *fathers* is surely a great triumph for the mother.

III. THE RELATIONS OF MASTERS TO SLAVES. And here, again, Paul appeals first to the slaves. He does not encourage revolt, but the conquest which comes through loving obedience. Let the slave simply obey in the fear and love of God; let him do his work, not in a spirit of eye-service as a pleaser of men, but in a spirit of conscientiousness as a slave of Christ, and he may rest assured of compensation from his Master in due season. This is liberty—the liberty of love, even though he is still nominally a slave. It is this Christian spirit which has made its mark and won the sympathy of the world, and issued in the emancipation of the slaves. Although Christianity apparently neglected the slaves, it has really been their deliverer. For what has it insisted on among the masters? On justice. Above them it has pointed out a heavenly Master, with whom there is no respect of persons, and who will do right by slave as well as by freeman, and give all their due. The gospel has contended for justice as between man and man, and the world is gradually coming to it. This freedom from respect of persons which characterizes God is a terror at once to the evil-doing slave and to the evil-doing master. If we could bring the world to this, men's wrongs would soon be righted. We are coming to it, blessed be God, steadily. The Christianized household is thus seen to be a unity. Husbands and wives are united in love's best bonds. Parents and children are united in beautiful authorities and subordinations. And masters and servants are united as subjects and servants of the one Master in heaven. It is the one God of love, who, as he overshadows all, unifies them in a life of love, which is the greatest witness he can have on earth. Let us see to it that the Christian spirit in all its beautiful and unifying power reigns in our households and fulfils within them the work of God.—R. M. E.

Vers. 1—4.—*Our risen life*. "If then ye were raised together with Christ." At this point the apostle leaves the polemical and begins the practical. Doctrine again forms the foundation for exhortation. As in combating asceticism he proceeded upon the fact that we were sharers with Christ in his death, so in presenting a substitute for asceticism, he proceeds upon the fact that we were sharers with him in his resurrection. Our being baptized with him extended, not only to our dying with him, but also to our rising with him.

I. ITS HEAVENWARD DIRECTION. 1. *In its connection with Christ*. "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God." It was when we were raised with Christ that we were introduced to the things that are above. There, henceforth, we found our proper sphere. Our being must now ever, and increasingly, tend thitherward. The things that are above we are to *seek* supremely. They are the only things which are worthy of being sought in the fullest sense. Of

the heavenly sphere Christ is the blessed and glorious Centre. He is, in a word, the things that are above. He is here mentioned with a local reference. The time was when he was on earth and mingled with men. He was seen by the eleven disciples going up into heaven. He was seen by the dying Stephen standing on the right hand of God. And we are to think of him as still stationed ("seated," it is here, and according to the usual conception) on the right hand of God. To him, then, must our being now and ever tend. He has gone into heaven to draw our desires and affections after him and up toward him. We are to turn to him with our whole *desire*. We are to turn to him for all that we need. Our spiritual life cannot be maintained without the things that are above in the shape of heavenly blessings descending on us, and we must turn to him for their bestowal (in regal manner, seeing that he occupies the seat of rule). We must turn to him with the whole *affection* of our being. For he is a Person (the Manifestor of God, and Author of our salvation), and is pronounced "the altogether lovely." And to be powerfully drawn toward him is the only way to be delivered from that in regard to which asceticism is pronounced ineffective, viz. the temptations of the flesh. Drawn toward him, we are drawn away from all that should be below us, and we are drawn up to the things which are high. We have thus, though on earth, a great elevation for our being. And, in accordance with it, we should *look high*, even up to him who is seated on the right hand of God. 2. *In its contrast with an earthward direction.* "Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth." There is a word employed here with a slightly different meaning from "seek." The idea is that we are to be so drawn to the things that are above as that they are to occupy our thoughts. There is not only the sphere of the things that are above, but there is the sphere of the things that are upon the earth, to which also we are related. We are not to think of the latter with a sinful association. The things upon the earth have been made by God, and are, therefore, good in themselves. But they are evidently placed in a certain subordination. They are things upon the earth, in contrast with the things that are above. It is implied that they are not to be sought supremely, but (if they would be sought truly according to their nature and purpose) with a due subordination and subservience to the things that are above. We are not to allow them to occupy our thoughts. And the reason is obvious. They cannot so fill up our being as to bring about our perfection and happiness. De Quincey thus concludes his apostrophe to opium: "Thou only givest these gifts to men; and thou hast the keys of Paradise, O just, subtle, and mighty opium!" But the opium-eater's Paradise easily changes into its opposite. There is a fluctuation connected with all things that are upon the earth. And we know that soon our whole earthly prospect will dissolve. That is intended to teach us this lesson, that we are not to set our mind on earthly things. We are not to feel toward them as though they were essential to our being. But, feeling them to be limited in quality and duration, we are to set our mind on that which is unlimited in quality and duration.

II. ITS HIDDEN NATURE. 1. *We are dead to the outwardness of the worldly life.* "For ye died." There is a hiddenness connected with the worldly life which is not to be spoken of. "My soul, come not thou into their secret." But the worldly life is characteristically a life in the outward. It is a life within the sphere of the five senses. It is a life of communion and commerce with earthly things. It is a life which has its roots in the world. It is a life the highest ambition of which is to appear well to the world, and to continue to appear well. Now, as Christians, we are dead, so far as going after the outward is concerned. We occupy a different standpoint altogether. We are dead where men of the world are alive. And the course we have to take, in obedience to Christ, may even bring us into collision with the world. 2. *It is a life hidden with Christ in God.* "And your life is hid with Christ in God." (1) *It is hidden from the world.* We are in a position to comprehend the worldly life from our experience of what sin is. But the Christian life is beyond the comprehension of men of the world, for they have had no experience of it. They have no affinities to it, and, therefore, it is an enigma to them, as nature and art are to those who have no appreciation of the beautiful. They see the manifestations of the Christian life, but they cannot appreciate the motives by which we are actuated, the principles by which we are guided. (2) *It is partly hidden from ourselves.* There is a mystery

in all life. We enter into a plant to find what life is, but it eludes the finest perception. Christians, then, cannot be expected to understand the mystery of the life of God in the soul. And, apart from that, we can only imperfectly understand our experiences. Our life goes forward according to the thought and working of One unseen. (3) *It is a life of hidden fellowship with Christ.* It commenced in that region of the soul which is penetrated only by our own eye and by the eye of God. There with Christ we dedicated ourselves to him. There we have fellowship with Christ, in our joys, even in our earthly joys. There we have fellowship with Christ in our sorrows, even our sorrows of repentance and painful struggles after virtue. And there he is with us to encourage us in all the efforts we put forth for the advancement of his cause. (4) *It is hidden in God.* The worldly life has its roots in the world. The life which consists in fellowship with Christ is hidden because it is lived in God. He is essentially hidden—the invisible God; he is called in this Epistle, elsewhere, a God that hideth himself. Our life, then, has its roots hidden in him, in his eternal purpose and inexhaustible goodness.

III. ITS FUTURE MANIFESTATION. "When Christ, who is our Life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." The Christian life is to be manifested to men. We are to make our light so shine before men that others, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven. But the manifestation referred to here is that to which we are to look forward as the crown of our being. 1. *It results from our relation to Christ.* Our life is not only with him, but he is *our Life*. He is the life of our life. The essential thing in the relation here is that, thus living within us, he gives type and form to our life. 2. *It results from his manifestation.* There is a manifestation yet before him. "When Christ . . . shall be manifested." It is implied that at present he is in a condition of concealment. He is concealed from the world. Many think that he and his cause are under a cloud. He is, to a certain extent, manifested in heaven; but he is not manifested in the full meaning of his work, in his full glory as Saviour. His manifestation will be our manifestation. We shall be completely vindicated before men. It will be made completely manifest that we are sons of God and friends of Christ. Christ within us will work out till we are made glorious in body and in soul with his glory.—R. F.

Vers. 5—11.—*Dying before rising.* There is an alternating between *dying* and *rising*. Having carried out the idea of rising, the apostle goes back to the idea of dying; and, before this paragraph is concluded, he goes back to the idea of rising.

I. MORTIFYING OF OUR MEMBERS WITH REFERENCE TO TWO SINS. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." It is not a ground of condemnation that our members are upon the earth. The idea is simply the members through which we hold correspondence with earth. Of these members, collectively, the apostle says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice." Our members may be instruments of righteousness or instruments of unrighteousness. We are to mortify them by refusing to use them as instruments of unrighteousness. 1. *Sensuality.* "Fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire." There are four words used to describe this sin. The first describes a special form of uncleanness. The second is wider, and includes all forms of uncleanness. The third is wider still, and describes such heated desire as may lead to uncleanness. The fourth is widest of all, and includes all such desire as implies want of purity of feeling. 2. *Covetousness.* "And covetousness, the which is idolatry." The article being used with "covetousness" (not with the other four words) indicates the introduction of a new class. These four form one class; and this fifth is a class by itself. The fact that it is associated (as in Ephesians) with forms of sensuality marks the sense which the apostle had of its evil character. There is not here the thought that it is to be among the things which are not to be named. But there is the thought, which follows in Ephesians, that *covetousness is idolatry*; that is to say, idolatry by pre-eminence. Sensuality is also idolatry. It is making an idol of self in the form of lower and momentary enjoyment. Covetousness has a certain aspect of unselfishness. It is a giving up of present enjoyment; it is a giving up even of future enjoyment. But when unveiled it is really a more systematic form of selfishness. It is making an idol of self, not in the form of future enjoyment, but (which is no better) in the form of the *means* of

future enjoyment. And experience shows that the one idol is less readily dethroned than the other. *The next thought* (which also follows in Ephesians) is *that for these sins God deals with men*. "For which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." They disobey, for the first commandment is "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." They transgress the laws of the body; they transgress also the laws of the spiritual nature. They not only disobey, but they persist in courses of disobedience. They are the *sons of disobedience*. They are as though they had disobedience as their father; so vile is their parentage. They refuse the gospel, by which they could be delivered from their evil courses. And therefore it is that the *wrath of God* cometh upon them. It cometh upon them *incipiently* now. It cometh upon them in the shape of a *materializing* of the spirit. It cometh upon them in the shape of *inward displeasure*. It cometh upon them in the shape of *disturbance from without* (bodily malady, loss of estate, loss of respect, complications). God has many ways of showing his displeasure against men for these sins even now, and his displeasure will yet be more decidedly manifested. *The next thought* (which also follows, though not under the same figure, in Ephesians) is *that they were to remember their former participation in these sins*. "In the which ye also walked aforetime, when ye lived in these things." In heathenism they lived in an atmosphere which was pollution. And then they participated in these sins. If in this fact there was danger of their being decoyed back to their former ways under false representations, on the other hand there was strength to be got from realizing how much they had benefited by the change from heathenism to Christianity. In their present joys and habits (for which they were indebted to Christ) they had wherewith to oppose temptations from their past.

II. THESE AND OTHER SINS TO BE PUT AWAY. "But now put ye also [as well as others rescued from heathenism] away all these." There seems to be a retrospective as well as a prospective reference in the injunction. The other sins are in two classes. 1. *Sins of temper*. "Anger, wrath, malice." The first describes a more *settled*, the second a more *eruptive*, state of our feeling against others. They are to be condemned (1) when they are accompanied with want of self-possession; (2) when they are accompanied with want of reasonable ground; (3) when they are accompanied with malice or anything like delight in the evil condition of others. When these elements are wanting, they are not to be condemned, but need to be carefully watched. 2. *Sins of speech*. "Railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth." Railing is speaking abusively (it may not be clamorously) against others. This is to be condemned when it is accompanied with foulness of speech (shameful speaking). The mouth should not be prostituted to such uses. "Lie not one to another." We are not even to *lie to ourselves*. We are not to make ourselves believe that we are other (even worse) than we really are. We are not to see things other than they really are. We are not to *lie to others*. We are not to make it appear to them that we are other than we really are. We are not to make them out to be other (even better) than they really are. We are not to state things to be other than they really are. We are to put away all falsehood from our intercourse with others. *Reason given for putting away the last and all the sins that have been named*. "Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings." Our old condition is personified as "the old man." *His doings* have been pointed to. In baptism we put off the old man with his doings. We must not be as though unregenerate. We must have nothing to do with practices the time of which is past.

III. THE PUTTING ON IN THE NEW LIFE. "And have put on the new man." Our recent condition is personified as "the new man." *There is a prefacing with two important statements*. 1. *There is a distinctly defined renewal constantly going on*. "Which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him." It may be said that Christ perfected the new condition for us. As appropriated by us, it is in the way of a constant renewal of our life. As in a tree, so with us, with repeated endeavours there ever results fresh accession of life. The end of the renewal is here said to be *knowledge*. The false teachers claimed wisdom, claimed by their philosophy to give the power to know. The apostle shows how knowledge was to be come to. He thinks of it as the terminus of a long process of renewal. It is the word which means *thorough* knowledge, i.e. of God and redemption. There is thus accordance

with the great statement, "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." There is nothing foreign to our nature in this renewal. God made us in his own image. He designed a renewal to go forward in us according to a God-like type. He designed in our renewal that we should come to the thorough knowledge of himself. And this is what redemption effects for us. 2. *In respect of this renewal earthly distinctions are of no importance.* "Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman: but Christ is all, and in all." There is a parallel passage in Gal. iii. 28. The first distinction there ("neither Jew nor Greek") may be said to cover the first three distinctions here. Distinction is denied as to nationality ("Greek and Jew"). Distinction is denied as to religious position ("circumcision and uncircumcision"). Distinction is denied as to culture; and here the apostle does not take the extremes of culture; but more strikingly takes those who to the cultured Greeks were *barbarians*, and to them opposes the Scythians who were *barbarians to the barbarians*. Distinction is denied as to social status ("bondman, freeman"), which distinction had significance in the early Christian Churches, from the number of slaves connected with them, and had special significance in the Colossian Church, from the conversion of a Colossian slave still with the apostle at Rome. There is not, and cannot be, any of these distinctions. In Galatians the apostle teaches that there are no distinctions on the ground of *our sonship in Christ*. Here he teaches that there are no distinctions (in keeping with the thought of the pre-eminence of Christ) on the ground of Christ being *all* and *in all* in the great renewal. (1) *Christ is all in the renewed.* The great need of our nature is to be renewed, and Christ fully meets that need. He gives the whole *contents* and *form* to our renewal. United to Christ by faith, we become *receptacles* of Christ. The *pleroma* dwells in him, and that *pleroma* floods our being with light, with strength, with purity, with all things. Renewed only from Christ, our life manifests itself only in Christian forms. (2) *Christ is all in all the renewed.* Men were broken up into classes, castes. The Jew drew back from the *uncircumcised*; the Greek despised the barbarian; the barbarian despised the Scythian; the freeman despised the bondman. The apostle points to the fact that the great renewal takes place in all alike. Alike in being created in the image of God, they are also alike in the renewal that takes place on that ground and according to that fact. The poor Scythian can be filled full and beautified in the possession of Christ as well as the Greek, the bondman as well as the freeman. In view of this essential identity, all these earthly distinctions become of no account.—R. F.

Vers. 12—17.—*What particularly we are to put on. How we are addressed.* "Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved." The Colossian Christians had been elected by God out of a state of heathenism. By arrangements over which they had exercised no control, the gospel had been brought to them and had been the means of their conversion. As elected by God, they were consecrated to God and were in the enjoyment of the Divine love. The Colossian Christians were not exceptional. We have been elected by God out of the ungodly state of our own hearts and out of the ungodly influences that more or less prevail in a semi-Christian state of society. Thus brought into a true Christian state, and in that state devoted to God, and the recipients of many tokens of the Divine favour, it becomes us to feel the force of it in reference to our duty.

I. THE CHRISTIAN FORMS OF LOVE. The concluding representation is that all are bound together by love. 1. "*A heart of compassion.*" In the original there is indicated the supposed seat of the sympathetic feelings. In heathenism it was rather a heart of cruelty that was worn. The weak were down-trodden and neglected. The softening influence of Christianity appears in our hospitals and asylums, in our abhorrence of oppression, in the missionary enterprise. There is a fine sensibility to the miseries of others in those who have felt the Divine compassions toward them. Especially are we to feel the sorrows of our fellow-Christians. 2. "*Kindness.*" We may show kindness where there is nothing to draw forth compassion. Under all circumstances are we to be kind. There is nothing which we can wear outwardly to be compared with kindness. "Kind hearts are more than coronets." Kindness is the disposition to think about others. It adds greatly to the joy of their existence to let

them see (even in little ways) that we are not forgetting them, but are giving them a place in our thoughts. As God's holy and beloved, we are to be the vehicles of the Divine thoughtfulness. 3. "*Humility.*" As a Christian grace, humility is founded upon the fact of our having humbled ourselves before God as sinners. As a form of love, it is the disposition which forbids us to exalt ourselves over others. It is a form of selfishness simply to wish to give others a sense of our importance and of their unimportance. Rather does love impel us to sink our own importance and to prefer them. 4. "*Meekness.*" This is founded on the fact of God being the First Cause of the provocation received from others. As a form of love, it is the disposition which prompts us to endure rather than retaliate on those who have wronged us. 5. "*Long-suffering.*" This is founded on the fact of God having suffered long and much with us. As a form of love, it is the disposition which forbids us to weary of the good of others. It is enduring in hope. 6. "*Forbearing one another.*" Forbearance seems to be the practical exhibition of the last disposition. It is implied that we all need to have forbearance exercised toward us, as well as to exercise forbearance ourselves. 7. "*And forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any.*" It is here "each other," with a look forward to the thought of our being all first forgiven by Christ. Just cause of complaint has already been supposed. How are we, as just complainants against a brother, to act? We are not merely to endure and to endure for his good, but we are to advance to positive forgiveness. That is to say, in love we are to remove the complaint, so that it is as though it had never been. *The highest example of forgiveness.* "Even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye." The Lord had just complaint against us; who shall estimate what it was? But he carried out a work for us the purport of which was the removal of the complaint. That we have appropriated, and now we are in the position of those from whom complaint has been removed. Forgiveness is usually associated with God, but in this Epistle, in which prominence is given to the Person of Christ, it is associated with him. The fact of Christ being called here "the Lord" points to the fact that, as his servants, we are bound by his example. If the Lord has so acted, servants must not nurse their wrath. *The seven graces bound together by love.* "And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness." There is the perfect number, and they are bound in the bond of perfectness. Love is thought of as the girdle which binds the garments which have been put on. We have seen its presence in all the seven. They are simply love in seven different relations. There is thus no looseness about them, but they constitute a perfect whole.

II. THE CHRISTIAN FORM OF CONCORD. "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body." The peace which is the principle of concord is distinctively the peace of Christ. That is to say, it is the peace which Christ possessed and which he left as a legacy to his disciples. He possessed a holy feeling of tranquillity in view of death and under the wrongs which were heaped upon him, in the enjoyment of his Father's love and in the conscious and complete carrying out of his Father's purposes of love toward men. And this holy feeling of tranquillity it is intended that we too should have, in all circumstances (in our case based on the atonement), in the enjoyment of our Father's love and in the conscious endeavour to carry out his purposes of love. The peace of Christ is to rule in our hearts. In the margin it is "arbitrate." And some have thought the meaning to be that, between contending feelings, the peace of Christ is to act as umpire. But the meaning seems simply to be that it is to rule so as to put down all disquieting feeling, and so that we have it toward God and toward all around us. *The one body* is here thought of as a society in which all are called to a holy feeling of satisfaction. It is, therefore, a society in which concord (out of a Christian ground) reigns. "And be ye thankful." This is the recurrence of what has been noticed as a subordinate feature in the Epistle. What we are to be thankful for is the tranquillity which makes concord.

III. THE CHRISTIAN FORMS OF RELIGIOUS EXERCISE. 1. *The reception of the Word.* "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." The Word also is distinctively the Word of Christ. That is to say, it is the Word which Christ spake and which he caused to be proclaimed. It may be taken as including inspired additions. There is a great richness in the Word of Christ. It contains all the thoughts that are needed to give us peace, guidance, strengthening, heartening, under earthly conditions. We are to receive it to be our *permanent possession*. We are to receive it, not scantily,

but in all its richness. We are to receive it in all wisdom, that is, in all wise apprehension of its meaning, and not in the way of false interpretation. 2. *Christian song.* In Ephesians this is introduced as a counteractive of false excitement, as one of the manifestations of a true excitement of the Spirit. Here it is introduced as the result of the indwelling of the Word of Christ. It was out of no cold heart, but out of a heart of summer gladness, that the Word of Christ came, and, received into us, it wells up in all joyful feelings which find expression in song. (1) *Responsive song.* "Teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." The historic psalms and other compositions used in the service of praise which are called hymns, fall under the head of "spiritual songs." In Ephesians the idea of responsiveness was brought out in the words "speaking one to another." Here it is said more definitely "teaching and admonishing one another." The principal purpose of song is to *enliven*. But the apostle here teaches, that it is not aside from its principal purpose to teach and admonish. And this subsidiary didactic, monitory purpose it is fitted to serve from its being the outcome of the Word of Christ. (2) *Silent song.* "Singing with grace in your hearts unto God." This singing is only in the ear of God. Our other exercises are heard by God too. For it is said, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it." But this is for self-edification, with God as the only listener. It is singing with grace, not with gracefulness, but with the grace that preserves from vanity, from extravagance, and enriches with all Christian elements.

IV. THE CHRISTIAN FORM OF SPEAKING AND ACTING. "And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus." This, like the others, is associated with Christ. His being called "Jesus" points to his having been a speaker and doer in human nature himself. The meaning is, not that we are formally to invoke the Name of Christ in connection with our speaking and doing. But they are to be according to the rules laid down by Christ and as unto Christ. They will thus be redeemed from all mere naturalness and all sinful elements that mix with them, and will have a richness as from the Word of Christ. "Giving thanks to God the Father through him." This is again the refrain of the Epistle, with a certain prominence. Our thanksgivings are to be unto the Father. We are to give thanks through Christ as Mediator. It is only through him that we have leave to thank God. It is only through him that we have anything to thank God for. It is through him that all the blessings of salvation come to us; and so it is through him that we are to thank God for them.—B. F.

Ver. 18—ch. iv. 1.—*Relative duties.* The two considerations on which the apostle's treatment of the relative duties here seems to be based are these: 1. *The position of authority is also relatively, by Divine constitution, the stronger position.* 2. *Christ is to be regarded as represented in the position of authority.* Throughout the paragraph he is designated in respect of his authority. That there may be no doubt about the reference, it is expressly stated, in the twenty-fourth verse, that Christ is Lord.

I. WIVES AND HUSBANDS. 1. *Wives.* "Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." The wife has the weaker position. "The weaker vessel" is the language used by Peter. She is more delicately constituted, and is not so fitted to fight her way in the world. She is made to lean upon her husband, and therefore it is fitting that in her duty she should fall into a certain subordination to him. This is not only fitting in itself, but it is fitting in the Lord. That is to say, it is Christ who is over her in her husband. If, then, she is a Christian wife, she has more than her husband to regard in the relation. She will be willing to be directed by Christ in her husband. 2. *Husbands.* "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." The husband ("band of the house") has the stronger position. He is more robustly constituted. He has a bolder judgment. And so the controlling power has been placed in him. But that does not point to his using it for selfish ends. Christ, as the Head of the Church, as is brought out in Ephesians, used his position only to love the Church and to give himself up for its deliverance. So it is the duty of the husband, as the representative of Christ in the relation, to love his wife and to protect her weakness with his strength. He is not to be a despot, putting bitterness into his strength against his wife;—that would be utterly inconsistent with acting in the Name of Christ.

II. CHILDREN AND PARENTS. 1. *Children*. "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord." Children are at first utterly helpless. And for a long time they are dependent on their parents. Especially, in their inexperience, are they dependent on the experience of their parents. That points to their being obedient to their parents. The principle is, as stated here, obedience *in all things*, there being no *exception* to it in the mere pleasure of the child. In Ephesians the rule is grounded on its being *right*. The rule for the wife, we have seen, is grounded on its being *fitting*. The rule for children here is grounded on its being *well-pleasing*. That is to say, it is a beautiful thing to see children subjecting their impulses, their wishes, their plans, to the better judgment, riper experience, of their parents. It is a beautiful thing to see them rendering prompt and universal obedience. This is not only beautiful in itself, but it is beautiful *in the Lord*. That supposes that they have given themselves to the Lord. In that case they will regard their parents as *given them by the Lord*. And not only so, but they will regard them as *in the place of the Lord to them*. It is pre-eminently a beautiful thing when children learn to reverence and obey their parents, not simply as their parents, but as placed over them by Christ. 2. *Parents*. "Fathers, provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged." Parents (for we are to think of the whole ruling power relative to the children) have the stronger position. There is great disparity at first for purposes of rule. But they are not to use their position *to provoke their children*. That is the *coarse* way of ruling. The rod, though necessary at times, is not to be the substitute for reason. It is also generally the *selfish* way. Parents cannot take pains with their children. They cannot bear with their dulness. They have not the patience to deal with their self-will so as to have it overcome. They cannot bear to have their liberty curtailed, their comfort disturbed, by their children. And so they passionately, tyrannically, carry out their pleasure on their children. That is not only to be condemned in itself, but it is especially to be condemned in those who should regard themselves as the representatives of Christ to their children. Christ does not act harshly to men. He does not act harshly to *them*. And therefore *they* should not act harshly to their children. The effects are, as might be expected, bad. The children are *discouraged*. Youth is the time of hopefulness. With the wakening of the powers hopes spring forth. And parents have carefully to watch over the calling forth of the powers of their children. It is all-important that these be directed in a Christian way. But children are easily discouraged. They lose heart before the difficulties connected with following out useful and Christian aims. And they need to have many words of encouragement spoken to them. They need to be shown what they can do. But to give them no encouragement, to treat them as though they were incapable of anything great, to heap reproaches on them, to punish them harshly, is to crush the life out of them. The breaking of the spirit is said to be the bane of youth.

III. SERVANTS AND MASTERS. 1. *Servants*. (1) *Rule*. "Servants, obey in all things them that are your masters according to the flesh." The slave was entirely at the mercy of his master. God never intended any one to be in that position. The servant with whom we have now to do occupies a very different position—still, however, the weaker position in the relation. And as for children, so for servants, the rule is obedience in all things. That is to say, within the proper sphere of work there is no exception founded on the mere pleasure of the servant. When it is said that obedience is to be rendered to them that are masters according to the flesh, there is a suggestion, though yet only a suggestion, of a relation to a higher Master. (2) *Principle*. "Not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord." The principle is *not* men-pleasing, or regard simply for the human master. That is not fitted to be a principle, for it proceeds on a variable element. It requires no more than eye-service, or as it is here (as distinguished from Ephesians), *acts of eye-service*. The eye of the master cannot always be on the servant. If, then, the servant is regulated by the eye of the master, his work must vary accordingly, being sometimes well done, sometimes ill done, and sometimes not done at all. The principle is fearing the Lord, or regard for the Divine Master. We are not to understand regard for the authority of Christ in general, but regard for the authority of Christ as represented in the master, even in the slave-master. This is fitted to be law universal. For the eye of Christ, being all-seeing, is always on the servant. There is thus excluded duplicity; there is

required singleness of service, or the eye always on Christ in the work done. (3) *Quality*. "Whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men." If the slave looked away to the Lord beyond his master, then, whatsoever he did, whether it was work great or small, oppressive or not oppressive, he could do it, not only with a sense of freedom, but cordially. Christ regarding his work and entering thoroughly into it, he could do it from his inmost being. And so when a Christian servant falls in with a bad master, he is not at liberty, as taught here, to do his work grudgingly. He has this reason in any case for heartiness in the work, that he is rendering it to One who is worthy. (4) *Encouragement*. "Knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance: ye serve the Lord Christ." This was a new order of things, a new field of thought, for the slave. A servant rightly considers himself entitled to payment for his labour. The slave was entitled too; but he was not accustomed to look for payment. Certainly he never thought of being recompensed with an inheritance. In the eye of the law he could not hold an inheritance. He was only property himself. And yet here, as a freeman in Christ Jesus, it is promised that he would have an inheritance. This was nothing less than the inheritance promised down the ages to the people of God—the inheritance without any subtraction from it. This he would receive at the hands of the Rewarder of his servants. He was defrauded all his days of the just reward of his labour; but the Lord would see to his being recompensed, and in better kind. The Lord whom he served was no tyrant, but the Christ who had died for bondman as well as for freeman. And so the Christian servant can make sure of being recompensed. It should be a pleasure to serve the Lord Christ now. It should be a pleasure to serve him even without thought of reward. But the Lord Christ is of liberal mind, and will see to all hearty work being rewarded. And if the heartiness has been overlooked on earth, the reward will only be the greater in heaven. (5) *Warning*. "For he that doeth wrong shall receive again for the wrong that he hath done: and there is no respect of persons." If a servant gives eye-service to his master, or in any form wrongs him, it is not to be supposed that the Lord Christ will overlook the wrong. There will be a receiving again for the wrong that he hath done. It will be so much taken from the final reward. Christ is partial neither to servant nor to master, and, in the final righting that is to take place between the two, it will be seen that his face is set only against wrong-doing. 2. *Masters*. "Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." The master has the stronger position; but that is only that he may use his position for the sake of the weaker. He is to render to his servant that which is *just*, that which does not depend on his pleasure, but is grounded on the eternal order of things. And beyond the just he is to render to him that which is equal. In Ephesians it is said that he is to do the same things. The meaning seems to be that, as the servant is required to give him hearty work, so he is required, on his part, to give considerate treatment. Such equality is becoming in a Christian master. For he also has a Master in heaven. The servant is to give hearty work out of regard to that Master. Out of regard to the same Master he is to give considerate treatment. That Master is considerate toward him; he is to be considerate toward him who has been placed by Christ under him as a servant.—R. F.

Vers. 1—4.—*The Christian's higher life*. Our text gives us a magnificent picture of the higher life of man, indicating the means of its beginning, the signs of its progress, and the hope of its perpetuity.

I. THE EXPERIENCES OF THE BEGINNING OF THE HIGHER LIFE. These initial experiences are spoken of under the three allied figures of death, the hiding as of burial, and resurrection. There is an experience: 1. *As of death*. "Ye have died." The soul as it becomes Christian passes through a death with Christ—(1) a death to sin, (2) a death to the bondage of outwardness. Dead, yet alive!—the paradox that finds its counterpart in the gardener's insertion of the vine shoot, that was cut off and so dead to its old stock, under the bark of the living vine. 2. *As of hiding away* in burial. "Hid." That may mean (1) what is concealed now will be revealed by-and-by; or (2) it may denote a life of much blessed solitude, and of sacred seclusion; or (3) it may mean a life of fellowship with the hidden Christ; or (4) it may tell of a life whose purposes and inspirations are hid in God. 3. *As of resurrection*. "Risen."

That must indicate (1) a living life, such a life as Ezekiel portrays, "I will open your graves, and give you a new heart, a heart of flesh;" and (2) an elevated life. No more of the earth—earthly, no more grave-clothes, sepulchre, and earth-worms, but such beauty and activity and blessedness as belong to the scenes of Christ's forty days' risen life.

II. THE DUTY OF THE HIGHER LIFE. The duty is twofold, and the way of obeying is twofold also. 1. The *twofold duty* of the higher life. (1) The withdrawal of chief concern from inferior things. "Set not your affections," etc. Does not this mean, cease to entwine your affections round the things of time, cease to concentrate your energies on the things of this world? So far we have only the negative aspect of duty; but there is: (2) The fixing of chief interest on superior things. They are twice spoken of here as "things above;" and may they not denote what is above socially, intellectually, spiritually? 2. The *twofold method* of attaining the performance of this duty. (1) "Seek the things that are above." Let the higher things be the object of pursuit. What higher things? Plato would have said, "The true, the beautiful, the good." Most modern Christians, meaning the same, would have said, "Heaven." And Paul, meaning the same, would have said, "Christ." For surely Christ is heaven and heaven is Christ. Well, therefore, does Bishop Pearson urge, "Rise to Christ with the wings of your meditation and in the chariot of your affections." (2) "Set your affections on things that are above." Not only seek heaven, but think heaven; not only think heaven, but love heaven. Our life cannot rise into a higher realm of itself any more than a bar of iron can lift itself. Both have capacity of response. Christ is the magnet to uplift our natures. Love him, and the love of him lifts up.

III. THE DESTINY OF THE HIGHER LIFE. In the fourth verse we have the onward aspect of the higher life. 1. *There is to be a complete manifestation of this higher life.* Paul has said now it is "hid," then it will be unveiled; now it is buried, then it will be "risen." Because of misunderstandings, and misconceptions, and harsh judgments of others, the "higher life" is now often hid; then all will be explained, interpreted, rectified. Because now that life is so often in itself distorted, confused, it is partially "hid;" then in ease and naturalness and grace it will gloriously "appear." 2. *The perfect revelation of this life will be in perfect union with Christ.* (1) How? Because he is the Origin and Sustenance, the Life of man's own inner higher life. (2) When? No calendar can fix the date. It will be the time of his appearing; and that will be to the ages as his incarnation was—"the fulness of the times." (3) What? The glory we shall have will be his glory. That is the glory of purity, simplicity, victory, sacrifice, love. The paragraph we have thus considered names Christ four times. Our model is Christ's death; our strength is Christ's risen life; our heaven is Christ's glory; our hope is Christ's coming.

"Yea, thro' life, death, thro' sorrow and thro' sinning
He shall suffice me, for he hath sufficed.
Christ is the End, for Christ was the Beginning;
Christ the Beginning, for the End is Christ."

U. R. T.

Vers. 5—11.—*Death to evil.* The central thought around which the strange and striking ideas of these sentences gather is "Death to evil." St. Paul exhorts us to put evil to death, to make a corpse of it. Here we have truly "*Mors janua vitæ.*" We inquire—

I. IN WHAT THIS DEATH CONSISTS. "Put to death your members which are upon the earth." The meaning seems to be the same as Christ's command, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out," etc. Neither Christ's nor Paul's injunction can mean hack, hew, maim, the limbs and organs of the body. For that is contradicted by such other teaching as "Yield your members as the instruments of righteousness;" and such disabling of limbs and organs would be useless, for the dumb can be profane, and the blind lustful, and the crippled dishonest. "Out of the heart proceeds evil." The figure in the injunction of our text may be that which the whole context suggests, namely, put these members to death, so far as evil practices are concerned; be as dead to them. Or the figure may have reference to that which describes the entire sinful character as "the old man"—an old man having limbs, organs, etc., here called members.

So these physical members are but symbols of the moral. Anyhow, there is clearly enjoined here: 1. *Death to corrupt living.* This corrupt living is divided here into two classes—impurity and covetousness. These divided between them include the whole domain of sin and selfishness. Covetousness, which is cherished by many who have the repute of respectability and even of Christianity, is so base, so loathsome, so irreligious, that it is here linked with hideous uncleanness, and is distinctly declared to be idolatrous. Avarice becomes the worldling's religion; greed of gain the miser's worship. Evils such as these, and on which the apostle says God's wrath rests, must be slain. 2. *Death to wrong conversation.* Paul deals with the sins of speech which seemed, like echoes of the past, to linger on the lips of the Colossians. They are to put off (1) "anger," i.e. settled hatred; (2) "wrath," i.e. tumultuous outburst of passion; (3) "malice," i.e. malignity, spitefulness; (4) "blasphemy," i.e. slandering; (5) "foul-mouthed abuse," i.e. all such rough speech as now is known as the Billingsgate of social, political, or theological controversy; (6) "falsehood," a word, alas! that needs no description. All these six evils of speech are to be slain. 3. *Death to conventional distinctions.* The special errors that we have seen were prevalent at Colossæ were those that primarily led Paul to deal with this evil. Four conventional distinctions that, wherever they separate men's interests or destroy their mutual sympathies, must be slain, are here described. (1) National distinctions: "Greek and Jew." (2) Ceremonial: "circumcision or uncircumcision." (3) Distinctions of culture: "barbarian, Scythian." Max Müller finely shows how, until Christianity inserted the word "brother" instead of "barbarian," as descriptive of humanity, there was no science of language. (4) Social: "bond and free." There seems to be special reference here to the runaway slave who was going to carry to his master the apostle's letter, and who was to be received as a brother both of Philemon and Paul.

II. *HOW THIS DEATH IS TO BE EFFECTED.* Evil does not die of itself, but must be slain. Nor does it die easily; it must be struggled with. It is to be put to death: 1. *By human endeavour.* "Put to death." You are *wrestler* in some tragic game, *soldier* in the momentous battle, *executioner* in the solemn judgment; therefore you must throw your opponent, stay your enemy, hang or gibbet the culprit. Here is abundant and righteous scope for all our fighting instincts. 2. *By Divine renewal.* "Which is renewed." The death of the old is ensured by the life of the new; just as old leaves are pushed off the boughs and branches by the young vegetation of spring, so the old character is displaced by the new. This power is (1) Divine; (2) constantly put forth; (3) according to Divine ideal—"after the image of him that created him." Christ the Ideal is Christ the Source of all. He is in the renewed man as the germ of life, whose outbursting, as by one blow, kills evil, and whose constant development insures all good.—U. R. T.

Vers. 12-17.—*The marks, method, and motive of the Christian life.* This paragraph is part of the practical application of the great principle St. Paul has been expounding in this chapter, viz. the Christian's death to evil through the death of Christ, and life to holiness through his life. We have here—

I. *THE MARKS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.* When the Christian life is illustrated, as here, by a garment, the analogy must not be pressed too far. For instance, unlike a garment, the Christian character is not (1) merely outside a man, nor (2) separable from a man. But that character is like a garment: 1. Because by it a man is *known and recognizable*. 2. Because by it a man is *adorned*. There are in Paul's description eight characteristics by which, as by a beautiful garment, the Christian man is recognizable and is adorned. (1) "Bowels of mercies," which we may paraphrase as "a heart of compassion." Anthropologists largely judge what physical race a man belongs to by his skull; the Christian must judge what race a man belongs to by his heart. Tender-heartedness is a sign of the Christian as certainly as truthfulness, or temperance, or honesty. (2) "Kindness:" this is the constant, steady, often noiseless, but always beneficent, stream flowing from such a heart. (3) "Meekness;" for whilst the apostle sternly condemns mock humility, which the pietistic among the Colossians had affected, he rigorously insists on that self-humiliation without which no man can be reckoned a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus. (4) "Long-suffering:" this is a temper of life described in the beautiful word "patience," and it indicates freedom from the

intellectual impatience which makes men proud and restive, and from the emotional impatience which makes men fretful and irritable. (5) "Forbearance and forgivingness," which need no description. (6) "Charity;" the love that girdles and holds together all the graces. (7) "Peace of Christ;" which is the peace Christ gives, and is like the peace he possesses. (8) "Thankfulness;" gratitude to God and to one another, which implies a whole catalogue of virtues.

II. THE METHOD OF ATTAINING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. The method here described is threefold. 1. *Christ's dealing with us.* "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." "The Word of Christ." By this we understand: (1) The Word that came from Christ to us. That Word is not to pass away, but to "dwell" in us. (2) The Word that spoke of him. Whether it were in Scripture prophecy, parable, or statement, it unveiled Christ to us. That vision is not to pass away, but to "dwell" in us. (3) The Word that Christ himself speaks. He communes with us in the secret chambers of our soul, and what his still, small voice says to us there about pardon, duty, God, must not pass away; it must dwell there. (4) The Word is indeed Christ himself. He is the uttered thought, the expressed love from God to our soul. He must dwell in us. 2. *Our words to one another.* We only gain ourselves as we help others. We must communicate what we have received if we are to become strong. (1) We are to teach. (2) We are to admonish. Of this there are many ways. One is here described by "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." 3. *Our word to God.* "Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." There must be the outpouring of the heart to God.

III. THE MOTIVE INSPIRING CHRISTIAN LIFE. 1. *Here is the widest description of the Christian life.* It covers "word and deed." 2. *Here is the deepest motive of the Christian life.* "The Name of the Lord Jesus." It is the Name of him who brings God near, who is the Reconciliation of all things to God. So that what is truly done in the Name of Christ brings the world near God, lifts up human nature into fellowship with God. No wonder that Paul adds, for all this let there be "giving of thanks." The Christian life ought to be a eucharist.—U. R. T.

Vers. 18—21.—*The Christian view of family life.* The spirit which was abroad in the early Colossian Church was at once so ascetic and so pietistic that it undervalued home, depreciated family ties, despised human relationships. We have heard Paul boldly meet this spirit with the great doctrine that Christ is the Fulness of all things, Sustainer of all, Mediator of all, King of all, End of all. Here, and in preceding paragraphs, he is meeting detailed developments of that evil spirit by detailed precepts flowing out of that great doctrine of Christ the Fulness. In our text the apostle teaches what we may group around three points.

I. THE DUTIES OF FAMILY LIFE ARE RECIPROCAL. He addresses first one and then another of the group in a home. He does not speak of them or describe them to one another, but sharply, smartly, directly, he turns to each with the summons, "Ye." And thus he summons each to the task of his own duty, the fulfilment of his own obligation. As in some noble antiphon the singers take up their alternative parts, so in the music of home life the members of the family respond with their alternative duties. Between husband and wife, parent and child, the only truly Christian relationship is that of inter-dependence and of reciprocity.

II. THE PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE FAMILY LIFE ARE SIMPLE AND YET SUFFICIENT. The statement of the principles here does not seem intended to be exhaustive. Some parallel passages to the Ephesians are much more complete. But the principles here noted are specimens. They are moral samples of what must actuate family life. And they are simple enough. Nothing grand, romantic, or impossible. "Wives, submit." This cannot mean where conscience protests. It must rather indicate where taste or opinion differ. Defer rather than strive. "Husbands, love." This great king-word "love" (which Paul explains in 1 Cor. xiii.) claims from the husband what Christ gives to the Church—his all. And one injunction of that love will be "Be not bitter," i.e. rough, rude. Many a courtier in society is uncouth as a bear at home. Then he is not a Christian husband after this model. "Children, obey." Cultivate the spirit in which the child Jesus went down to Nazareth, and was subject to his parents. Such a going down prepares for the true exaltation; such subjection qualifies for subsequent sovereignty. "Fathers, provoke not." Avoid the harshness, and even the thoughtless exactions from

your children by which their spirits will become sullen, hopeless, moody. They will want spirits that parents have helped to make buoyant, not that parents have broken.

III. THE MOTIVE FOR FULFILLING THE DUTIES OF FAMILY LIFE IS DIVINE. Whilst secondary motives are thus given to fathers, etc., we find in the passage the highest motive is again and again pressed. "In the Lord," "Well-pleasing to the Lord," "As unto the Lord," etc. Such a life as Paul described can only be achieved by the force of sufficient motive. And such motive he supplies. Here is argument enough for such a course of conduct, inspiration enough for such a spirit of family life. "In the Lord." There is a wonderful fulness of meaning in that phrase, as the Greek language employed it. But not a profounder fulness than the Christian experience interprets when it shows Jesus to be the Source of motive, the Standard of duty, the very Sphere of being to the Christ-loving man.—U. R. T.

Vers. 22—25.—*Religious regulations for master and servant.* The length of the paragraph on this topic is probably partly the result of Paul's having then and there so much to do with Onesimus, the runaway slave whom he was sending back to his master. "Bought and adopted and in Christ a brother; claimed and completed, and in Christ a man." But besides this personal reason, Paul must have felt that there was, in the state of the Colossian society of the time, an urgent need for this lengthy and detailed description of duty. And is there not now? Are not masters and servants in England failing in their reciprocal duties very largely because they are expecting, as Dr. Chalmers said, "universal selfishness to do the work of universal love"? Therefore we may well notice—

I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE SERVANT'S SERVICE. It is marked by: 1. *Obedience.* Engaged for given duties, do them. Refusal to do them, neglect in doing them, is immoral, irreligious. You cannot be a good Christian and a bad servant. 2. *Thoroughness.* Not "eye-service." This happy expression is probably the apostle's coinage. It describes obedience that is superficial, inconstant, hollow. 3. *Simplicity of motive.* "Singleness of heart." Not having two purposes nor secondary aims. 4. *Earnestness.* "Do it heartily." Whatsoever ye do, work at it. The lazy and lethargic are repulsive, the enthusiastic are noble.

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE MASTER'S MASTERSHIP. The duties of a master are as clearly enforced as those of the servant. "The same light attempters various colours; so the same principle regulates various duties." There is claimed from the master: 1. *Justice.* That is, what the law demands, what is legally right and square. There is, however, much more. 2. *Equity.* "What is equal." Equity is more than law, more than legal claim. It is a liberal interpretation of justice in common matters; a response to the intuition of what is right, even though no law defined it or enforced it. It was this teaching about equity that was really the insertion of the leaven that has destroyed slavery in Christendom. What is the touchstone of this equity? Surely this golden rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even the same to them likewise."

III. THE MOTIVES BOTH OF TRUE SERVICE AND OF TRUE MASTERSHIP. The motives put before both masters and servants are two. 1. *They both sustain a common relationship to Christ.* (1) All are his servants. Servants, "Ye serve the Lord Christ;" masters, "Ye also have a Master in heaven." (2) All work is done in his sight. Therefore do it "fearing God." (3) All may be done for his glory. "There is no respect of persons." 2. *Christ will rightly deal out retribution and reward.* With Christ is "the reward of the inheritance." From Christ men shall receive for "the wrong which they have done."

Our conclusion is: 1. Cherish a Christian ambition to serve well. 2. Cherish a Christian ambition to rule well.—U. R. T.

Vers. 1—4.—*Present privileges: future glory.* The apostle now proceeds to the application of the grand truths he has been expounding. Note in what a lofty strain he begins. As in the previous section he refutes practical errors by reminding of the sublimest doctrines, so here, before giving exhortations on special sins and duties, he seeks to lift the Colossians to the heights of that new spiritual, heavenly life it is their privilege to live. (Like a commander encouraging his troops in the field to maintain

the strictest discipline by motives suggested by the purest patriotism and the dignity of their trust.)

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S PRESENT PRIVILEGES. 1. "*Ye died.*" This figurative expression describes the complete change which takes place in those who are truly regenerated. It is most strikingly illustrated in the conversion of an idolatrous or a profligate man. But every true convert dies to his former self, *i.e.* is separated from it as by a death and burial. (Illustrate from Eccles. ix. 5, 6, 10.) As a Christian martyr, worn down by the sickness and pain of a long persecution, obtains a blessed release and separation from this present evil world by death, so is the Christian, by union with Christ, set free, as by a death and burial, from two of his most formidable foes—the Law and sin. (1) We died to the Law (Rom. vii. 4, 6; Gal. ii. 19). We renounced all dependence on works of Law and trusted for justification alone to the work of Christ. (2) We died to sin. We were set free from the love of sin and are being set free from its power. Crucifixion, though fatal, was not immediately so. So our "old man was crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be done away (*καταργηθῇ*), that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin" (Rom. vi. 6, 14).

"It was the sight of thy dear cross
First weaned my soul from earthly things," etc.

2. "*Ye were raised together with Christ.*" (Eph. ii. 4—6; Gal. i. 4.) In the world, not of it. "*We dwell in the flesh, but do not live in the flesh*" (Luther). The true sphere of our life is "*heavenly places.*" Does this seem mystical when spoken of tradesmen, engine-drivers, or kitchen-maids? But if they are Christ's they have a life which is "*hid with Christ in God.*" It is a still and secret life, hidden from the world. The Christian has a different spirit (John xiv. 17) and aim (1 Cor. x. 31) and strength (Phil. iv. 13). He is like a palm tree in the desert, verdant and fruitful, because far beneath the sand the fibres of its roots are enjoying a hidden life of moisture which keeps the tree alive in spite of arid sand and cloudless sky. 3. *Ye may "seek" and "set your mind on the things that are above."* Is not this a privilege as well as a duty? Reflect on the honour of being allowed to fix our best thoughts and our purest affections on persons and objects not at all affected by the change and disappointment and transitoriness of this world. (Like a sailor amid the hardships of a long winter voyage, whose thoughts and emotions are constantly turning to wife and children in his distant home. He does not need to be told, "You ought to think of them; you *must* love them.") What are "the things that are upon the earth"? Find the answer in 1 John ii. 16, 17. They belong to a state from which we profess to have been conclusively delivered. Shall Lazarus take pleasure in his grave-clothes or the healed demoniac in his fetters? Shall those who profess to be living a resurrection-life with Christ "mind earthly things"? Riches? (Ps. lxxii. 10; Prov. xxiii. 5; 1 Tim. vi. 7). Worldly power or fame? (Ps. lxxiii. 18—20; Isa. xl. 6—8; Jas. i. 10, 11). Shall we cling to a sinking vessel when our home is in sight? If we find it hard to enjoy our privileges, let us take the following hints. (1) Give more thought to "the things that are above"—to the great themes of God, Christ, heaven, eternity; and in the light of these, look down on the transitory trifles of this world. (2) Do more for Christ, who, "seated on the right hand of God," is doing so much for us (Matt. vi. 33). (Illustrate Christ's manifold activities for his people in that heavenly world.) Recognize that you have a citizenship in the heavenly places, and therefore civic duties among them. (3) Make sacrifices for Christ and eternity. Treasure there as large a proportion as your conscience will justify of money, time, and every talent you possess (Matt. vi. 19—21).

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S FUTURE GLORY. (Ver. 4.) This follows from ver. 3. Concealment with Christ ensures safety. Our future is wrapped up with his (John xiv. 19). Our life is, as it were, deposited with Christ's life in the very sanctuary of the Godhead. God will not forget that trust (2 Tim. i. 12). Christ himself liveth in us and is our life. What is awaiting Christ? A glorious manifestation (Titus ii. 13; cf. Acts iii. 21 and 1 Thess. i. 10). That manifestation will, by reason of the identity of Christ and his servants, be the manifestation in glory of Christians also, "the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 19). (Illustrate from contrasts suggested by Isa. lx. 14; Matt. xiii. 43; John xvii. 24.) Christ is now concealed, and it is our winter; his revelation

will bring summer to our souls (2 Thess. i. 10). The glory in which we shall be revealed was said by the schoolmen to consist of the robe of the soul and the robe of the body. 1. There will be glory for the soul. No more sin (1 John iii. 2), or sorrow (Rev. vii. 17), or divided affections, or darkness (1 Cor. xiii. 12; cf. Rev. xxii. 3, 4; perfect service, perfect satisfaction, perfect security). 2. In that glory the body shall share (1 Cor. xv. 42—44, 53; Phil. iii. 21). "The resurrection of the dead is the confidence of Christians" (Tertullian; 1 Pet. i. 13). That "grace to be brought unto us" will brighten into glory. It will be *his* glory; that is enough for us.—E. S. P.

Vers. 5—7.—*Sins of the flesh and the sin of covetousness.* Paul, an example to faithful preachers, is not satisfied with general exhortations; he is pointed and personal in his allusion to special sins. The great motive power is in the preceding truths (vers. 1—4, "Mortify therefore," etc.). What neither Jewish ceremonialism nor Gnostic teaching could secure (ch. ii. 23), Christ "our Life," our "Hope of glory," could effect. Note the use of similar lofty motives in Rom. vi. 1, 2; xii. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 15, 19, 20. The term "members" is used, not physically but figuratively, as is "old man" in ver. 9, including those bodily and mental faculties which may be the occasion of sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit. We find first a list of various—

I. SINS OF THE FLESH. (Ver. 5.) Contrast freedom of the apostolic speech on such subjects and the reserve of the present day, which may be excessive, seeing that sins of intemperance and unchastity are the most frequent causes of Church discipline. The conscience must be instructed as well as aroused. Hints as to safeguards to be thrown around the young by Christians; their duties to their own sons and daughters, their apprentices, and domestic servants; social customs, such as "statute-fairs" for hiring servants, "treating," crowded homes, etc.; bad laws (young girls insufficiently protected; state recognition of vice; licensing laws, etc.). The censure and treatment of offenders of both sexes should be far more impartial, and profligate men be branded by the indignation of Christians as one faint image of "the wrath of God" (ver. 6). While seeking to put away these sins from our midst, we must also put to death the very roots of these prolific evils in our own hearts (Matt. v. 27, 28). Govern the thoughts. (Distinguish between a thought *injected* into the mind as a temptation, and *indulged* as a sin, Heb. iv. 15.) Guard all the avenues of temptation (cf. Job xxxi. 1; Ps. xvii. 3; Eph. v. 4): bad books; dangerous company; amusements that excite the passions; intoxicants (Matt. v. 29, 30; Rom. viii. 12, 13; Gal. v. 24). Let the body and the brain and the mind be kept in healthy exercise; this will aid us to "keep under the body" (1 Cor. ix. 27). God "knoweth our frame;" Christ "our Life" has passed through our temptations. Elevation of spirit (vers. 1 and 2), unlike pride (Prov. xvi. 18), may guard us from debasing ourselves: "Ye were raised with Christ;" "mortify therefore," etc.

II. THE SIN OF COVETOUSNESS. Covetousness (*πλεονεξία*) has been described as "the fierce and ever-fiercer longing of the creature which has turned from God to fill itself with the inferior objects of sense." It is a wider term than "the love of money," though that "root of all evil" is the most glaring form of it and the one we take as our illustration. It is significant that here and in Eph. v. 5 St. Paul couples covetousness with the most loathsome sins. A covetous man is an idolater because he loves, trusts, and serves money more than God. This sin is: 1. *Multiform.* It is Proteus-like in its shapes: the avarice of the miser, the ostentation of the *nouveau riche*, or "that loudest laugh of hell, the pride of dying rich." One of its most common and yet scandalous forms is withholding "more than is meet," robbing God of "the first-fruits of all our increase," which God claims under the gospel, though not in the form of Jewish tithe (cf. Prov. iii. 9, 10; xi. 24; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2; 2 Cor. viii. 12; ix. 6, 7). This form of covetousness among Christians may need to be mortified by repeated acts of giving, though painful at first, till duty becomes privilege and the lesson is learned, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." 2. It is *specious*. It is a subtle spirit, needing great discernment for its detection and great grace for its expulsion. It transforms itself into an angel of light, and calls itself "prudence" and other deceptive names. It is said that St. Francis de Sales received at the confessional a greater number of persons than were ever known to visit one confessor besides, but that he did not remember a single instance in which covetousness had been confessed. No

wonder, then, that Church censure for covetousness is exceedingly rare (1 Cor. v. 9). 3. It is *odious to God*. (Ver. 6.) 4. It is *ruinous to the soul*. (Gal. vi. 7, 8; Eph. v. 5, 6; 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.) 5. It *needs ceaseless vigilance* and all the powers of the heavenly life to mortify this "member," which is so peculiarly tenacious of life. Christ's love and power alone can avail (Titus ii. 14).—E. S. P.

Vers. 8—11.—*The new life in Christ the death-warrant to old sins.* The apostle still employs the most powerful motives possible in his exhortations to personal holiness. His figures and illustrations vary ("Ye died; ye were raised with Christ; therefore *put your sins to death*." "Ye put off your old nature and put on a new nature; therefore *put away your old sins*").

I. OLD SINS TO BE PUT AWAY. From the sins of the flesh Paul passes on to sins of the spirit and the tongue. There are two groups. 1. "*Anger, wrath, malice*." Discriminate between these. *ὀργή* may be a right state of mind (Mark iii. 5; Eph. iv. 26), but is easily depraved into a criminal anger, or into *θυμὸς* (wrath, passion), or *κακία* (malice which wishes or seeks to do injury). In fact, all our evil principles may be said to be good principles fallen and debased. Selfishness is fallen self-love; envy is depraved emulation; revenge is fallen resentment; sinful anger is righteous indignation degraded and debased. The lawfulness of anger must be determined by its direction, its degree, and its motive. In the daily struggle against various forms of sinful anger, we may give the following hints. (1) When passion rises in the soul, let it not overflow through the lips. Suppress the mutiny within the citadel (Ps. xvii. 3; xxxix. 1; Jas. i. 19). (2) Let the battle be fought in sight of the cross and in memory of the provocations we have given to God (Eph. iv. 31, 32). (3) Rely on Christ's power to save *now* (Titus ii. 14). 2. "*Railing, shameful speaking, lying*." Among the commonest forms of these fruits of an evil heart (Matt. xii. 34) we note: "Back-biting," reckless detraction, *i.e.* seeking to draw a person down from the reputation he enjoys. (It is not necessary or lawful to speak all we know against a person, though many act as though they were at perfect liberty to utter it, if only it is true.) Attributing wrong motives—a very common form of "shameful speaking," a gross breach of "charity" (1 Cor. xiii. 7), and an arrogant claim to a "discerning of spirits." Exaggerations; false advertisements; conventional falsehoods in business (Matt. v. 37; 2 Cor. i. 12, 17, 18; Eph. iv. 25).

II. THE DEATH-WARRANT OF THESE OLD SINS. Covet not, rail not, lie not, etc., "seeing ye have put off," etc. Two truths are taught. 1. *We profess to be enjoying a new life.* So complete is the change it is described as a change of nature ("old man . . . new man"), a new creation (2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15), a new birth, a new resurrection. Of this new life we learn: (1) It is Divine in its origin ("*him* that created him"). (2) Progressive in its nature ("being renewed unto knowledge"), like a statue becoming more and more like the ideal of the sculptor; or a youth maturing into manhood; or a pupil growing into intimate acquaintance with his master's deepest thoughts (John xvii. 3; Rom. xii. 2; 2 Cor. iv. 16; Eph. iii. 16—19; Phil. iii. 9—14). (3) God-like in its character ("after the image," etc., Eph. iv. 24). A renewed saint is more God-like than an unfallen Adam (Rom. v. 21). The issue of this progressive growth "unto knowledge" and mature Christian character is seen in Eph. iv. 13—16. Everything connected with that new life is in deadly antagonism to every kind of sin, which must be "put away," like slothful habits by the scholar, or "weight" by the runner. Sin is like poison to the new life we profess to enjoy, depressing vitality if it does not extinguish life altogether. 2. *In this life Christ claims supremacy.* (Ver. 11.) Dr. Lightfoot suggests that the distinctions here said to be abolished were selected with special reference to the circumstances of the Colossian Church: to the Judaizing of some, to the Gnostic pride of others who despised the unlettered; and that his relation at the time he wrote to the slave Onesimus led him to add "bondman, freeman." The unity of the race and the brotherhood of men are distinctly Christian doctrines. "The head of every man is Christ" (1 Cor. xi. 3). Our union and subordination to him constitute our equality with one another in the world of grace (Matt. xxiii. 8—10). For all earthly distinctions sink into insignificance compared with his supremacy and his presence in us all. (1) "Christ is all:" he is "all" to God (ch. i. 19; cf. Isa. xlii. 1; Matt. iii. 17), as the only begotten Son, the one atoning Sacrifice ("the Lamb of

God"), the only Mediator, the appointed Judge (John v. 22, 23; Acts xvii. 31). Contrast the limitations attached to Abraham, the friend of God (Gen. xviii. 18—33), and Moses, who was "faithful as a servant," but could not redeem his brethren (Exod. xxxii. 32, 33), and "the fulness" of Christ (Heb. ix. 26; x. 10—14). Being "all" to God, he is all to us; the Centre and Circumference of truth; the Alpha and Omega of our life; "the Author and Finisher of our faith." He is a Saviour in whom "dwelleth all the fulness," etc. (ch. ii. 9), "in whom are hid," etc. (ch. ii. 3), who is "full of grace and truth," whose love "passeth knowledge," whose blood "cleanseth from all sin," and "who of God is made unto us," etc. (1 Cor. i. 30). (2) Christ is "in all"—in all of us; for he comes to save, to conquer, to reign, to share his very life with us (Gal. ii. 20). Where he comes, sin must go; he can brook no rival; for "in all things he must have the pre-eminence." And he is in all things: "He fills all things" (Eph. i. 23; iv. 10). A sense of the all-pervading presence and power of Christ should (a) abase the Christian tempted to be proud of birth, purse, or brain; (b) give dignity to the lowliest disciple in whom the Son of God dwells; (c) pledge us to ceaseless strife against every form of sin.—E. S. P.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The Christian's wardrobe.* The apostle, having bidden the Colossian converts strip off the filthy rags of their old life, takes them into the Christian's wardrobe and shows them some of the robes of righteousness, the beauties of holiness, the jewels of grace, with which they may decorate themselves. These are the only priestly vestments in which God's "royal priesthood" may appear "glorious in the eyes of the Lord." Nor should we ever dare present ourselves before the Lord unless we are attempting to "put on" all these. (Illustrate from "court dress," or Matt. xxii. 11—13.) This spiritual investiture is urged on the Colossians by two considerations.

I. THEIR RELATIONS TO GOD. "Elect, holy, beloved." 1. *Elect.* Our outward religious privileges (1 Cor. iv. 7) and our inward spiritual state (1 Cor. xv. 10) are the result of a Divine choice. Christian experience, no less than God's Word, attributes the beginning of the new life within us to a work of God, and therefore to a purpose and choice of God (2 Tim. i. 9). But for what end has he thus chosen us? We find answers in such words as "fruit" (John xv. 16), "holy" (Eph. i. 3, 4), "sanctification" (2 Thess. ii. 13), "obedience" (1 Pet. i. 2). 2. *Holy.* Here is the true idea of the only Christian priesthood, viz. consecration, being set apart for service and spiritual sacrifices to God. The self-denial of the one High Priest is our pattern and our inspiration (John xvii. 19; Heb. iii. 1). There are not, in the New Testament, two groups of virtues, one for the clergy, the other for the laity, as (Mr. Ruskin tells us) are represented by some of the mediæval poets and painters. All Christ's disciples are called, as priests, to be equally "saints," "holy" (1 Pet. i. 14, 15). 3. *"Beloved;"* enjoying that special love of complacency and delight of which Christ speaks (John xiv. 21; xvi. 27). "The order of the words admirably corresponds to the order of the things: eternal election precedes sanctification in time; the sanctified feel God's love and forthwith imitate it" (Bengel).

II. THE EXCELLENCE OF THESE CHRISTIAN GRACES. 1. *"A heart of compassion"* towards those who are in a worse condition than ourselves, whether caused by sin or calamity. A compassionate nature brings pain with it, yet it is "twice blessed." Silver is no substitute for sympathy. Money sent by a rich Christian who will not take the trouble to "visit the fatherless and widows" is worth less than the sympathetic words and deeds of a poor compassionate neighbour. Refer to Christ being often "moved with compassion" and putting forth a healing touch. So now Heb. iv. 15; 1 John iii. 17, 18. 2. *"Kindness"* to all, perhaps especially to those who are our equals and need no special compassion (cf. Gal. vi. 10; Phil. iv. 8; 1 Pet. iii. 8). A kind heart is a cheerful heart, and provides "a continual feast" (Acts xx. 35). 3. *"Humility."* "There are many," says Augustine, "who would more readily give all they have to feed the poor than become beggars themselves before God." So humility needs to go hand-in-hand with compassion and kindness. It is fostered by a true view both of our own sinfulness and the dignity bestowed upon us. We need it in prosperity lest we become insolent to our neighbours (Esth. iii. 5; Luke xviii. 11), or even towards God (2 Chron. xxvi. 16; Hos. xiii. 6); and in adversity, lest we "faint," etc. (Heb. xii. 5—9). 4. *"Meekness;"* that quiet, gentle spirit which will

calmly endure disappointments or slights. It is a source of power (Eccles. vii. 8). It is not constantly vindicating itself and disputing with assailants (Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6, 11). When we see the power which meek spirits gain over others stronger and rougher than themselves, we see the words fulfilled, "A little child shall lead them." 5. *Long-suffering*. In regard to Divine afflictions, see on ch. i. 11. It is more difficult to exercise it towards men than towards God. In relation to our fellow-sinners we may learn from God's long-suffering towards them. (See the legend of Abraham and the fire-worshipper in Stanley's 'Jewish Church,' i. 21.) And if we are long-suffering towards those that sin against God, how much more towards those that offend us! Let us learn of God (Matt. v. 45; Rom. ii. 4) and of his beloved Son (1 Pet. ii. 23). 6. *Forbearance and forgiveness*. "Forbearing one another." This is often the first step towards frank forgiveness. It may avert a quarrel, for which two are needed. "To conquer one's self is the greatest of conquests," says Plato (cf. Prov. xvi. 32). This victory over self aids us in the victory over the transgressor (Rom. xii. 21; e.g. David, 1 Sam. xxiv.). "Forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any." Our Lord has laid down the law of offences among disciples (Matt. xviii. 15—17; Luke xvii. 3, 4). A Christian spirit will hail the signs of incipient repentance, and will exact no unreasonable humiliation. And even towards the most impenitent offender we may exercise the most forgiving spirit, like God, "ready to forgive" (Matt. v. 44, 45). Observe the pathetic plea urged: "Even as the Lord forgave you," etc. Our Master Christ still has this power (Matt. ix. 6; Acts v. 31). He has used it on our behalf, first when we applied to him with the burden of all the guilty past, and since then day by day (John xiii. 10). Shall he be so prompt and free, and we be hesitating and reluctant (1 John ii. 12)? And this motive is as stringent as it is pathetic. Note the prayer taught (Luke xi. 4), the command given (Mark xi. 25, 26), the warning uttered (Matt. xviii. 35). Imagine an unforgiving man offering the prayer (Matt. vi. 12), "As we forgive," etc., and interpret it into plain language. If we do not forgive, do not let us dare to pray (1 Tim. ii. 8).—E. S. P.

Vers. 14, 15.—*A threefold cord of grace*. We have here an attractive picture of a loving, peaceful, thankful Christian.

I. *LOVE*. It is compared to the girdle, put on over the other articles of attire, and helping to bind all in their place. Christian love is no mere natural emotion or self-interested affection. It is the fruit of the Spirit, whereby God is sincerely loved for his own sake, and one's neighbour for God's sake. To love even our fellow-Christians because they are God's children is not always easy, on account of their inconsistencies. But it is eminently a Christian grace (John xiii. 35; 1 John v. 1). It is called "the bond of perfectness," because: 1. *It is the element of all other graces, the sphere in which they are exercised*. It is like the golden light in which some summer evening landscape is bathed, or the green grass on which the multicoloured flowers are blooming. Without love, "knowledge puffeth up," gifts are "sounding brass," faith is idle (Gal. v. 6), zeal may be wildfire, mercy weakness, humility pride, and charity ostentation. With love, each of these may be the Spirit's fruit. It is thus the bond of perfectness, the distinctive feature of a complete Christian character (Rom. xiii. 8; 1 Cor. xiii. 8, 13; Gal. v. 14). 2. *Love is the pledge of all other graces*. For if we dwell in love and in God (1 John iv. 16) we enjoy increasingly the perfections of God. The outer dress is generally the most valuable part, and a sign that other parts are present and in keeping with it. So the precious girdle of love, visible to all, is a sign that other graces are present and kept in their place by this "bond of perfectness." Cultivate it by charitable judgments, by much forbearance, by seeking to win and refine the less attractive, and to walk in the path marked out for us by Christ (John xv. 12; Eph. v. 2).

II. *PEACE*. This peace is described by a most attractive name, "the peace of Christ" (John xiv. 27), the tranquillity of a trustful child. The term "rule" may be understood in two senses. 1. *Exerts its power to protect*. (See Phil. iv. 7, where God's peace is likened to a garrison; Ps. cxii. 7; Isa. xxi. 3.) Peace gives strength, and strength peace (Ps. xxix. 11). 2. *Sit as umpire*. When in doubt in regard to business speculations, worldly amusements, etc., we may ask, "Which course will the peace of Christ ruling in my heart approve?" To such peace we are called, but to enjoy it we must

allow this peace to rule. We shall then be kept from falling (Ps. cxix. 165), have peace in conflict (John xvi. 33) and in inaction (Ps. iv. 8), through life and in death (Ps. xxxvii. 37). Peace is the faithful handmaid of love, which attends it even in the stormier days of life (Rom. xv. 13).

III. THANKFULNESS. If God's love is shed abroad and Christ's peace rules in our hearts, grateful feelings will well up like sparkling streams. And gratitude to God will deepen love and preserve in peace, fostering forbearance, pity, unselfishness, and patience under those trials which a loving Father appoints for our education.—E. S. P.

Vers. 16, 17.—*The power of the Word and the Name of Christ.* "Having exhorted them to be thankful, he also shows them the way" (Chrysostom). But the connection is wider than this. In ver. 16 the apostle shows how a right use of Christ's gospel may promote the graces to which he has been exhorting; and in ver. 17 how the right recognition of the Name of Christ will be a comprehensive rule to aid us in every duty of life.

I. THE POWER OF THE WORD OF CHRIST. 1. "*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.*" If "every word of God is pure," and therefore both powerful and precious, this is pre-eminently so with "the word of the truth of the gospel." To exert its power it must not be a transient visitor (cf. Jer. xiv. 8), but a resident in the soul, and that "richly." We must welcome it *impartially*—its doctrines (Rom. i. 16, 17, etc.), precepts (Ps. cxix. 128), and promises (Rom. iv. 20, 21). We must receive it with *joy* as a treasure we prize (Ps. cxix. 72; Jer. xv. 16), like sweet poetry that lingers in the memory, or a friend enshrined in the heart (Prov. iv. 21, 22). We may expect it to be a power to ourselves; it will promote in us every kind of wisdom, making us "wise unto salvation," and enlightening the intelligence as well as the heart (Ps. xix. 7, 8; cxix. 130). One chief motive for seeking this blessed occupancy of the soul is that we may be useful to others. 2. "*Teaching and admonishing one another,*" etc. The picture presented is one of unconstrained, cheerful, social religion, as in Acts ii. 42—47; mutual counsel, encouragement, reproof, and interchange of experience (Ps. cxli. 5; Mal. iii. 16; 1 Thess. v. 14; Heb. iii. 13; x. 24, 25, etc.). For this end "the sacrifice of praise" has an especial value. (Power of poetry and song: e.g. Acts xvi. 25; Jas. v. 13. Pliny's testimony; the psalmody of the Reformation; recent developments of sacred song, and conversions therefrom.) Let us seek to sing "with grace in our hearts," so that every hymn may be a means of grace to ourselves and to others (Ps. l. 23).

II. THE POWER OF THE NAME OF CHRIST. We may be said to do or suffer anything in the Name of Christ when we do it or endure it in recognition of the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and in subordination to him. As all thoughtful men have some ruling passion in life—wealth, fame, patriotism, etc.—the Christian's will be the will and honour of his Divine Lord. This is: 1. *A comprehensive rule.* It applies to words and deeds (1 Cor. x. 31; 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11). "It is one thing to be reproached, another to be saved, another to be baptized, another to command, another to pray, another to give thanks in the Name of the Lord;" but all may be done by his authority and for his honour. 2. *A valuable test;* as was "the peace of Christ." (Ver. 15.) Can I do this "in the Name of Christ," "giving thanks to God"? Illustrate this in relation to business (e.g. a godly grocer thinking about going into the liquor traffic), amusements, politics, etc. We are not at liberty to take any part of our life from under this rule. The doctrine that religion and business are disconnected is a "damnable heresy." 3. *A powerful encouragement.* It dignifies drudgery, sanctifies commerce, hallows recreation. Having traded in the Name of Christ, we may pray in that Name and be assured of an answer (John xiv. 14). We may thank God for our subjection to the power of that Name, which ennobles every service and lightens every trial (Eph. v. 20; 1 Thess. v. 18). But the first thing to be done in the Name of Christ is to trust in him for salvation (John iii. 18; Acts iv. 12). Unless that is done, nothing can be truly done "in the Name of the Lord Jesus" (John vi. 29; 1 John iii. 23).—E. S. P.

Vers. 18, 19.—*Husbands and wives.* Notice the honour given to marriage by Moses (Gen. ii. 23, 24), and still more by Christ (Matt. v. 31, 32; xix. 3—9) and his apostles (Eph. v. 22—33; 1 Tim. iv. 3; v. 14; Heb. xiii. 4, etc.). Christianity a gospel of

great joy to the world's suffering women. But blessings rest upon law. The nearer marriage is brought to God the more sacred its duties become. In vers. 18, 19 we have in a condensed form rules more fully set forth elsewhere (1 Cor. vii.; Eph. v.; Titus ii.; 1 Pet. iii.). We see exhortations—

I. To WIVES. Gathering together some of the precepts scattered through the Epistles, we find a fuller summary of the Christian wife's duties at home in Titus ii. 4, 5 (make home the happiest place in the world for both husband and children). In 1 Pet. iii. 1—6 a contrast is drawn between bodily and spiritual attire, between that which may please the eye of frivolous men and women and that which "in the sight of God is of great price;" *not* the latest Paris fashions, but "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit" (a lesson especially to Christian matrons to set a safe example to their juniors). The "manner of life" prescribed in both these passages may be attained by a conscientious observance of the exhortation, "be in subjection." Every family must have one head. Though "love is the fulfilling of the Law," if the words "authority" and "subjection" are never to be heard in the home, it must be through a conscientious regard to mutual duties. This subjection is "fitting." "Doth not even nature itself teach?" The satire poured on an imperious wife, and the sympathy felt for a widow deprived of her stay, supply answers. Scripture teaches the pre-eminence of the husband as illustrated by various relations between the sexes: *e.g.* the order of creation (1 Tim. ii. 13), the derivation of woman (1 Cor. xi. 8), her destiny (Gen. ii. 20; 1 Cor. xi. 7, 9), her share in the first transgression (1 Tim. ii. 14) and penalty (Gen. iii. 16), and their relative position in the kingdom of grace (1 Cor. xi. 3). Thus submission is "fitting *in the Lord*." And the same words remind us of the only limit to it (Acts iv. 19; v. 29). Two motives are suggested. 1. An ungodly husband may thus be won for Christ (1 Pet. iii. 1; 1 Cor. vii. 16). 2. An obedient wife is a living type of Christ's obedient Church, and is thus a witness to the reality of Christ's authority in both the family and the Church.

II. To HUSBANDS. "In exhortations the scales should be equally poised" (Chrysostom) as they are here. For what St. Paul has said to wives already suggests to husbands: If our wives are to be such to us, "what manner of persons," etc.? (2 Pet. iii. 11). Turning to 1 Pet. iii. 7, we see some of the husband's duties. "Dwell with them" (making home magnetic) "according to knowledge" (the highest wisdom you can gain for governing and guiding), "giving honour," etc. (the honour of esteem, of attention to the latest day of life, of confidence, etc.). These duties are summed up here in "love" (Rom. xiii. 10). St. Paul does not say, as the complement of ver. 18, "Govern them," but "Love them." The loving husband will secure the dutiful wife. Motives are suggested both by reason and revelation. 1. A wife is, by God's appointment, part of our very selves (Eph. v. 31 and 28). Marriage is a union of souls. "Bitter against them?"—against those we have taken into the very shrine of our lives? Plutarch tells us, "They who did sacrifice at the rites of Juno took out the gall of the victim and threw it away, signifying by the ceremony that it was not fit that bile and bitterness should enter into the married state." W. Jay quotes Eph. v. 29 thus: "'No man ever yet hated his own flesh,' but many a monster has done so." 2. A wife is the weaker vessel physically, not spiritually. Further motives, addressed to the godly, are: 3. You are "heirs together of the grace of life." Disunion will hinder prayers (Matt. xviii. 19) and progress in your pilgrimage. 4. A husband's love is to be a copy of Christ's love (Eph. v. 25—27), self-sacrificing, purifying, winning the allegiance of the whole nature.

Learn: 1. The grave responsibility of entering the marriage relation. Take no one as a wife for whom you cannot cherish the love of esteem; or as a husband whom you cannot reverence as worthy of being a guide and a stay. 2. The duty of Christians to marry "only in the Lord" (ver. 17; 1 Cor. vii. 39). 3. The preciousness of a spiritual bond which shall survive the dissolution of the marriage tie by death (Luke xx. 35, 36).—E. S. P.

Vers. 20, 21.—*Children and parents.* The family and the Church, the natural and spiritual home, are the two most sacred associations on earth, having as their Head "the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph. iii. 15). The strength of the nation and the welfare of the world are inseparably bound up with

families. Madame de Staël, asked by Bonaparte what was the greatest want of France, replied, "Mothers." The gospel brings to families the blessing of Abraham (Gen. xvii. 7) and of Jesus Christ (Matt. xix. 13—16; Acts ii. 39). It has messages to children and to parents.

I. THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL TO CHILDREN. Children have a place in the kingdom of heaven (Mark x. 16), recognized by baptism into the Name of Christ, the Lord of all (Matt. xxviii. 18—20). Hence they are addressed as called to be young disciples. The obedience of childhood to both parents (Prov. i. 8) prepares for dutiful love in more advanced years (Prov. xxiii. 22), and teaches lessons of submission to the will of the Divine Father. Three motives are suggested in these messages. 1. "*For this is right.*" (Eph. vi. 1.) There is a fine ring as of genuine metal in this motive—the supremacy of duty irrespective of reward. Obedience is but payment in part of a debt due to parents. 2. "*This is well-pleasing in the Lord.*" Remembering the one qualification suggested by "in the Lord," children may enjoy Enoch's testimony (Heb. xi. 5). 3. *It has a special promise* (Eph. vi. 2, 3), which was given to Gentiles. Illustrate from the national persistence of the Chinese; from the continuance of the Rechabites (Jer. xxxv. 18, 19; and see Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' ii. 1008); and from the tendency of obedience and purity in youth to promote health and long life in maturity. But the complexity of natural laws forbids us to consider this an absolute promise to each individual. The most dutiful Child among men (Luke ii. 51; John xix. 25—27) died young under the law of obedience and sacrifice for others (John xii. 24—26).

II. THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL TO PARENTS. Combining ver. 21 and Eph. vi. 4, we are reminded of the following truths. 1. *The grave responsibility of parents towards their children*: who bear on them the image of God, though marred by evil; who belong to Christ and have a place in the kingdom of God, and yet are in a world of sin; who have to be steered through the perils of youth to a Christian manhood and womanhood, which we desire to be something better than our own. 2. *The privilege of recognizing their relationship to Christ*. They belong to him. They need not to be brought into, but to be brought up in, the nurture of the Lord. Christ (John i. 9) is nearer to them and speaks to them earlier than we can. If we are giving to them wise Christian nurture we should expect that they will grow up within the shelter of the fold, following the Shepherd's steps. 3. *There is a treatment which discourages early piety*. Anything calculated to provoke to anger tends to discourage children from believing they can be young disciples and seeking to live as such. Hence this caution to fathers (as heads of the house and as more likely to abuse their authority). From which caution and the precept in Eph. vi. 4, we may gather such hints on parental duty as the following. Make the character and temperament of each child a special study, employing moral principles impartially, but adapting treatment to individual cases. Rule by love and not by fear, avoiding the perils of over-indulgence (1 Sam. iii. 13; 1 Kings i. 6) and over-commandment, never making false threats, nor hesitating to revoke a hasty command which reflection will not justify; nor punishing under the influence of passion. Seek to win the confidence of the children in regard to their spiritual history. Do not propose to them tests of Christian character unsuitable to their age, or visit childish faults as though they were grave moral delinquencies. In choosing for them companions, schools, occupations, "seek first the kingdom of God," etc. (As warning illustrations, cf. Gen. xiii. 10—13; xix. 14, 31, etc.; 2 Chron. xviii. 1; xxi. 6.) In every department of life seek to combine the needed discipline (*παιδεία*) and instruction (*πρόσθετα*) with that personal influence and example which alone can make them "the chastening and admonition of the Lord." 4. *Children are a most powerful and touching motive to parental piety*. (Cf. John xvii. 19.)—E. S. P.

Ver. 22—ch. iv. 1.—*Servants and their masters*. Many of the "servants" of the New Testament were slaves. Their general condition was lamentable. Illustrate this from the penal code, etc. (Smith's 'Dictionary of Antiquities,' art. "Servus"), and from the incident that had recently occurred at Rome (Tacitus, 'Ann.,' xiv. 42—45, or Conybeare and Howson's 'St. Paul,' ii. 468, n.). Paul's connection with Onesimus also brought the subject prominently before his mind. Christianity, by the very divinity of its truths, tended to unsettle the mind of a converted slave if his master were a Christian, and still more if he were a reckless heathen. It came like a torch of truth into an atmosphere

laden with the explosive materials of falsehood and fraud. It might easily have lit up the flames of a new servile war. But Jesus Christ came to effect the grandest revolution, noiselessly, by the spread of Divine principles fatal to every wrong (Isa. xlii. 2—4, 6, 7). The precept, Matt. vii. 12, laid the axe to the root of slavery, as it also undermined the ramparts of every other ancient wrong. Christianity must crush slavery, or it will be corrupted and vitiated by it. Meanwhile it bettered the position of converted slaves. It made them masters of their own consciences. It taught them so to prize their spiritual privileges as not to be over-anxious about their earthly lot (1 Cor. vii. 21—24). The same principles are applicable to the present conditions of Christian servants and their masters.

I. THE DUTY AND DIGNITY OF CHRISTIAN SERVANTS. It is significant that some of the most impressive statements of Christian doctrine and duty are found in sections of the Epistles addressed to servants (vers. 22—25; Titus ii. 9—14; 1 Pet. ii. 18—25). In this passage we see: 1. *The servant's duty.* (Ver. 22.) We are reminded here, as in the previous exhortations, of the qualification implied in the term, "according to the flesh;" e.g. Obadiah (1 Kings xviii. 3, 4). Masters cannot command the consciences even of young apprentices (cf. Matt. xxii. 21; Rom. xiv. 12). God only can adjust the shares of responsibility for a double sin (Job. xii. 16). Servants are especially warned against a common form of unconscientiousness—"eye-service;" e.g. wasting a master's time, or hiding up slovenly work done in his absence. The fidelity of Joseph (Gen. xxxix. 3, 6, 22, 23) may be taken as a pattern, and Nehemiah's maxim (v. 15) as a motto. 2. *The servant's privilege.* (Ver. 23.) Being bound to do everything in the fear of God, he may do everything in the love of God. The great regulating principle of the Christian life may be a motive and an under-current of thought in every detail of duty (as the love of wife and children is to a father busied in commerce). As Jesus was "about his Father's business" when at the carpenter's bench, and as Paul was "serving the Lord Christ" when plying the needle or shuttle, so may Christ be served in the kitchen. (Illustrate from George Herbert's 'The Elixir.') Such service being "from the soul" will be such as can be presented to the eye of the Divine Master, who is always watching us, with that "singleness of heart" which is the strength and stay of every true disciple's character (2 Cor. i. 12). 3. *The servant's recompense.* (Vers. 24, 25.) The twenty-fifth verse reminds even down-trodden slaves that the wrongs they endure will be no excuse for the wrongs they do. The law of Lev. xix. 15 is the rule of the Divine Judge. But the encouragement precedes the warning. The reward will be proportionate (Eph. vi. 8; cf. 1 Cor. iii. 8). It will consist of an inheritance (Matt. xxv. 34; 1 Pet. i. 4), the chief glory of which will be its sinless service of a Master who, by giving us the honour of thus serving him (Rev. xxii. 3, 4), will be serving us (Luke xii. 37).

II. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CHRISTIAN MASTERS. (Ch. iv. 1.) Two things are demanded even for a slave. 1. *Justice.* This could easily be refused; and human tribunals, if they could be appealed to, might entangle the weak, but be powerless to restrain the strong. Plato ('De Leg.,' c. 6) tells us that the noblest specimen of justice is when a man abstains from injuring those he may easily wrong. Christianity demands even more than this. Hence such cautions as some of the rules of feudalism suggest: "Between the servant and the lord there is no judge save God;" "The lord who exacts what is unjust from his servant exacts it at the peril of his soul." 2. *"That which is equal."* (Cf. Eph. vi. 9.) This extends to slaves the protection of our Lord's "golden rule," and places masters under this royal law. This points towards emancipation, and in most cases enforces it on the enlightened conscience. In our present circumstances the rendering of that which is equal will restrain masters from giving the lowest market price for labour such as bare justice might demand when that price involves grinding poverty; and leaving old servants to "the law of demand and supply." But servants must live under the same law, not forgetting the responsibilities and risks of capital, or nurturing an unreasonable selfishness. Some noble illustrations of how Christianity leavens commerce in this aspect have been seen in England during the "cotton famine" of 1862, and in more recent years, when, for the sake of the work-people, mills have been kept running and collieries working at a very serious loss. Observe the motive: "Ye have a Master in heaven," "higher than the highest," before whom earthly distinctions are but trifles; who delights to observe every generous act;

who at any time may call master or servant to give an account of his stewardship; from whom we shall need to receive, not rigid justice, but unmerited mercy, through his own generous gift of grace in Christ Jesus (Matt. v. 7; vii. 2).—E. S. P.

Ver. 1.—Christian aspiration. If we would understand St. Paul we must often remind ourselves of his view of the Christian life as a union and identification with the life of Christ in its several stages. The apostle teaches that the Christian has to live spiritually the same life that Christ lived both spiritually and visibly. He must humble himself like Christ, his old self must be crucified, he must be buried to the world and then rise again in a new life. Now, we are to see how the Ascension follows the Resurrection; how, as it was in the human experience of Christ, so spiritually to us there must be a rising to the things above after we have come from the death of sin to the new Christian life.

I. CHRISTIAN ASPIRATION SPRINGS FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF A NEW SPIRITUAL LIFE. The resurrection must precede the ascension. Christ rose from the dead before he was received up into heaven. We have our resurrection. Without it we vainly strive to aspire to higher things. So long as the soul is dead in trespasses and sins it can have no power to rise to the heights of celestial experience. But this resurrection has taken place in every true Christian. Christianity does not satisfy itself with the death of the old life of sin. It is itself a new resurrection-life. The destruction of old habits, evil pleasures, a wicked will, etc., are but the first process. The very purpose of this killing of the old is to make way for the awakening of the new life. Christ could not have risen if he had not died. He died that he might rise again. We die to sin that we may thereby rise into newness of life. The Christian lives with the energies, faculties, hopes, and aims of a new life. All is not done in the act of the new birth. This, like natural birth, is the beginning of greater things. The aspect of the new life must be onward and upward.

II. CHRISTIAN ASPIRATION AIMS AT THE THINGS THAT ARE ABOVE. It must soar above the sinful pleasures and habits of the past. It would be undoing all the work of redemption if the freed soul were to let itself be again taken captive by sin. The death-agonies of repentance and the birth-throes of the new life would be endured in vain if, like a sow returning to its wallowing in the mire, the soul went back again to grovel in the low and evil things of its old life. What is the use of the beautiful wings of the moth if it continues to crawl over the garbage on which the caterpillar fed? Moreover, the Christian aspiration must carry him away from the old narrow restraints and formal methods and laws of the old life. It is not for him to go back to "ordinances" (ch. ii. 20). Observe, however, that the aspiration is to be to that which is above, not merely to that which is future. The mere longing for heaven as a home of the future may degenerate into an idle sentiment. The true Christian aspiration looks upward rather than forward. It seeks the heavenly things that may be had already in some degree. Its aims are for those things which are spiritually higher and better than the things at present experienced. The Christian should prefer heavenly treasure to earthly riches; the smile of God to the favour of man; truth, purity, and love to any things that are seen and temporal.

III. CHRISTIAN ASPIRATION IS SUPPORTED BY FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST. Nothing is more difficult than active aspiration. The aspiration of sentiment that looks up may be easy. But the aspiration of life that seeks the things that are above is beyond our common endeavours. The wings of the soul are feeble. We lose ourselves in the clouds of our lower atmosphere before we have a glimpse of the stars above. Storms beat us back again to earth, weak and weary and sad. We can only safely aspire in Christ. As we die with him and rise from the grave of our old selves with him, so we ascend by continued fellowship with him. We may hold it true

"That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things."

But we find in experience that the process is slow and toilsome. We want a hand above to draw us up. Now, as Christ is already in glory, when we seek to be near to Christ we approach his high estate. Two important lessons flow from this truth. 1. We cannot remain in fellowship with Christ if we grovel among the things of earth.

Christ ascending to heavenly places will leave us behind and beneath his companionship unless we ascend to heavenly mindedness. The worldly minded Christian is the Christless Christian. 2. But close fellowship with Christ is the one way by means of which we may ascend to the things which are above.—W. F. A.

Ver. 3.—The hidden life. After Christ died he was seen no more by the world. It is true that for forty days he appeared repeatedly on earth, but only to his own disciples. The world never saw him after the stone was rolled against the entrance of the sepulchre in Joseph's garden on the night of the Crucifixion. And soon he ascended to heaven to be with God, and was no longer visible even to his own followers. But he will come again, when "every eye shall behold him." Now, a similar experience is that of the true life of the Christian. He has died to the old life in the world which the world fully understood. He has risen to a new life which the world does not understand—a secret, internal, spiritual life united to the life of Christ and hidden in God. But this life will be revealed when Christ appears again.

I. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS HIDDEN. 1. *Its source of supply is hidden.* Its origin is mysterious; for "the wind bloweth where it listeth," etc. And its continued sustenance is mysterious. The same Spirit which feeds it gives its birth. The world sees the fire in the front, and they wonder that the waters of adversity do not quench it; but not behind, where One is constantly pouring on the oil of spiritual grace. 2. *Its true nature is hidden.* The fruits are manifest. The hidden nature of the spiritual life is no excuse for fruitlessness in the outer life. But the life itself is not the less secret. The stream flows underground, though it proves its presence by the fresh verdure above. It is known only to the soul and to God; known perfectly only to God, for we are mysteries to ourselves. 3. *Its destiny is hidden.* We may hear the deep murmur of the water of life. But we cannot trace the course of the river, nor see where it flows into the ocean of God's being. The world does not understand the aims and aspirations of the Christian. Thus he may be much maligned. Let him mercifully refrain from judging those who in their opposition know not what they do.

II. THIS LIFE IS WITH CHRIST IN GOD. 1. *It is with Christ.* That is the essential characteristic of it. Union with Christ is the cause of all the glorious and mysterious results of Christian experience. Christ is now hidden in God. Therefore his people are spiritually hidden with him. Better be hidden with Christ than famous without him. There are secrets that are delicious in their very secrecy. What can be more happy than the secret relation of Christ to the soul? 2. *It is in God.* This fact accounts for the secret character of the life. God is unseen, and all relations with him are invisible. To be deep and spiritual our life must go out into the darkness that it may find its home in God. If there is no mystery in our Christian experience, this must be shallow and altogether earthly. It can have no living relation to God.

III. THE HIDDEN LIFE WILL BE MANIFESTED IN THE FUTURE. We talk too exclusively of the revelation of evil experiences in the great future. But many good and glorious secrets will also be declared. The despised faithful servant of Christ will be honoured, the misjudged character will be cleared, the hidden life will reveal itself in glory. The idea of a "spiritual body" seems to imply the visible appearance of the spiritual life. The manifestation of Christ will bring with it this manifestation of his people (1 John iii. 2). Note, the doctrine of the hidden Christian life is placed between two practical exhortations: (1) that we should set our mind on the things that are above (ver. 2); and (2) that we should mortify what remains of the evil life (ver. 5). —W. F. A.

Ver. 11 (last clause).—Christ all, and in all. **I. THE FACT.** 1. *Christ is everything to the Christian.* All other interests sink into insignificance before him, as the stars fade at the rising of the sun. (1) Christ is the whole price of redemption. We need no additional grace to that of his gospel. We have not to supplement that gospel by the Law, or to eke out the store of grace with our good works, or to add the intercession of saints to that of Christ, or to offer any fresh sacrifices to complete the atonement. Christ cried on the cross, "It is finished." He, and he alone, is sufficient to bring full salvation. (2) Christ is the one Lord of our lives. He will accept no divided devotion. He, and he alone, has a claim to rule over our hearts. There is but one King of

the kingdom of heaven that is set up in our midst. Any priestly pretension, any dogmatic teaching, or any political coercion that interferes with the authority of Christ, is treason against Heaven. (3) In Christ are all our requirements. To be in him now is the deepest peace; to be with him hereafter is the joy of heaven. All sympathy for all kinds of men, in all possible conditions of sorrow or of joy, may be found in him. All truth of the highest Divine things may be seen in him, the "Word" of God. 2. *Christ fills everything for the Christian.* He is in all. (1) Christ is in the whole heart. All the true Christian's thought and affection are filled with Christ. It is true that Christ does not exclude natural human affections. It was the fantastic mistake of the Church that a St. Catherine, in order to be the bride of Christ, must be excluded from human love. On the contrary, Christ enters our human affections and pervades them. In regard to social intercourse we may say—

"Let not my heart within me burn
Except in all I thee discern."

(2) Christ is in the whole of life. He does not belong to a small consecrated section of it, a temple of holiness, shut off from the busy haunts of commerce and pleasure. He comes into our business, our pleasure, our mundane affairs generally. He is as much in the office and the workshop as in the Church. He claims the six days as much as the Sunday. (3) Christ is in each and all of his people. He is not only in apostolic leaders and pattern saints; he is in little children, the ignorant, the insignificant, the imperfect, the latest converts of a mission to degraded heathen.

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS FACT. 1. It is a *motive for holiness*. If we are new men in Christ, all life belongs to him. There is no room for the indulgence of sin. Any unclean spot is a desecration of his temple. 2. This fact *breaks down the separating barrier between man and man*. Political distinctions ("Greek and Jew"), religious distinctions apart from Christ ("circumcision and uncircumcision"), distinctions of civilization ("barbarian, Scythian"), social distinctions ("bondman, freeman"), all melt before the unifying influence of the common presence of Christ. 3. This fact is a motive for *Christian charity*. (Vers. 12, 13.) It should lead to wider sympathy and warmer compassion; to greater gentleness, forbearance, and meekness; to a more forgiving spirit among Christians. Remember that as you treat your fellow-Christian so you are treating Christ (Matt. xxv. 45). If it is difficult to love him for his own sake, love him for the sake of Christ. If there is little of beauty in his soul and much to repel and annoy us, still consider that, though the temple is not attractive, there dwells within it One who is altogether lovely. Love the Christ who may be found even in the uncouth Christian.—W. F. A.

Ver. 14.—*The bond of perfectness.* I. NO CHRISTIAN CHARACTER IS PERFECT WITHOUT LOVE. There may be wide knowledge, stainless purity, and fiery zeal. But the character will be broken and unfinished if the golden grace is missing. This has been singularly forgotten by the Church. Anything but Christian charity has been sought after. In the very zeal for other excellences this one has been trampled underfoot.

II. LOVE IS THE CROWNING CHRISTIAN GRACE. "*Above all these things put on love.*" 1. Love is the *highest pinnacle of the Christian temple*. Too often the supremacy has been given to orthodoxy, to negative purity, or to rigorous devotion. It has to be learnt that it is better to be heterodox and to love our brethren, than to be sound in doctrine and selfish in heart. It needs also to be more understood that he who denies himself most for his brother stands higher than he who is simply irreproachable in behaviour. 2. Love is thus supreme (1) because it is of the *essential nature of God*, who is love; (2) because it is the *source of all other graces*; (3) because in itself it is *better than anything else*.

III. LOVE BINDS TOGETHER ALL OTHER CHRISTIAN GRACES. Without it the character is not only imperfect, it lacks unity and cohesion. Love is like the keystone of the arch, which both completes the structure and holds all the other stones together. 1. Love should *surround every other grace* as the bond surrounds the bundle. Purity, truth, justice, courage, temperance, etc., should all be exercised in love. 2. Love should *bring all other graces nearer together*. Through love we should realize the relation between generosity and justice, purity and liberty, meekness and courage. 3.

Love should make a *harmonious whole of the character*. The separate sticks become one bundle when tied up together. Love should give unity of spirit and purpose to the whole life. 4. Love should *perfect the strength* of the Christian character. When all the graces are bound by the bond of love they mutually strengthen one another. Selfishness distracts, divides, and weakens life. The soul that is possessed by love is strong.—W. F. A.

Ver. 15.—*Peace the umpire*. St. Paul is not exactly desiring that the peace of Christ may have a large place in the hearts of his readers, that it may be unfettered and dominant, that it may govern all the affections and passions of the soul, as the translation in our Authorized Version would lead us to read his words, and as they are commonly quoted. Instead of the word "rule" we should read "arbitrate." The apostle would have this peace arbitrating among the conflicting claims of various interests and the mutually opposing forces of various thoughts and feelings. In fact, it is to be an umpire.

I. WE NEED AN UMPIRE IN OUR HEARTS. The conditions of our troublesome inner life prove this necessity. 1. *The war of passions*. Earthly desire fights against heavenly aspiration, bodily appetite against spiritual hunger, selfish greed against generous love, wild passion against pure emotion. 2. *The conflict of claims*. Public claims conflict with private claims. Future interests do not agree with temporary advantages. We are drawn hither and thither by cross attractions, confused by a babel of contradictory voices, urged by the force of a tempest of impulses. 3. *The distraction of doubts*. Our thoughts will not harmonize. One idea clashes with another. We hear no music of the spheres in the circling doubts of our troubled minds. We need an umpire to help us to discover what are true among so many prophet-voices.

II. PEACE IS THE UMPIRE NEEDED BY OUR HEARTS. When we possess our souls in quietness we are able to see the right and the truly desirable as we never can while we are distracted by exciting influences. 1. Peace arbitrates between the *passions*. Like a runaway horse who has taken the bit in his teeth and rushes on blindly to destruction, passion sees nothing, and the soul possessed by passion wrecks its highest interests. We must be calm to know what feelings may be indulged and what must be curbed. 2. Peace arbitrates between *conflicting claims*. When all claimants shout together it is impossible to discover the rights of any. There must be quiet in the court of justice. There must be quiet in the soul, that a calm consideration of apparently opposed duties and interests may be made. 3. Peace arbitrates between *distracting thoughts*. While the storm rages the sea is turbid. The waters must be calm if we are to look down to the pearls that may lie in their depths. We must think quietly if we would think truly.

III. IN CHRIST WE FIND THE PEACE WHICH WILL BE THE UMPIRE NEEDED BY OUR SOULS. It is vain simply to exhort the heart to beat more calmly. The very effort to do so only increases the perturbation. It would be cruel mockery for a man to say to one in distress and tumult, "Let peace arbitrate in your heart." You may as well command the wild waves of the sea to hush themselves to rest. 1. Christ *gives peace*. He who said, "Peace, be still" to the waters and there was a great calm, speaks peace to the troubled soul: "Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest." 2. Christ gives his *own peace*. The peace of Christ is that which dwells in him. As he desired that his joy might be in his disciples, so he also blessed them by leaving his own peace as a legacy when he departed. "My peace I give unto you" (John xiv. 27). Nothing is more wonderful, nothing is more beautiful, than the calmness of Jesus among the storms of human foes and diabolical temptations that beat upon him. Like the steady beams of the lighthouse shining calmly over a wild waste of howling waters, Christ, the Light of the world, shone in quietness of soul over all storms and tumults. Now he gives this his peace to his people.—W. F. A.

Ver. 16.—*Psalmody*. Psalmody held a very prominent position in Jewish worship, and there are evidences from the apostolic writings that it was not less honoured in the Christian Church. Certainly a dispensation which was ushered in by angel-anthems, and which surpassed all that went before it in gladness, should not be wanting in scope for praise and adoration. The Church that neglects psalmody neglects a most impor-

tant element of its life and work, and will assuredly suffer in consequence. Let us especially beware of the absurd notion that good music is essentially allied to any particular kind of teaching, and the most foolish, suicidal policy of degrading the service of song because we may not agree with the doctrines of those people who develop it most richly. This is to leave to them a monopoly of a pleasing attraction and of a function of the Christian life which all Christians have a right and a duty to employ. If it was wise not to "let the devil have all the best tunes," it must be unwise to permit those people whose religious teaching we think erroneous to have all the good music. Consider some of the leading characteristics of good psalmody.

I. IT SHOULD BE BEAUTIFUL. This is but an external condition, and worthless without higher qualifications. But it is not unimportant. 1. *We should offer our best to God.* It is unworthy to cultivate good music in our homes and to seek the best music for our entertainments, and to yet offer our praises to God in slovenly, unmusical tones. 2. *We should help the expression of our own devotion by all means in our power.* Good psalmody will not create devotion in an undevout heart, but it will assist it in one that is devout, while wearisome dulness and jarring discords will greatly hinder it. 3. *We should attract others to our religion.* It is not only lawful, it is our duty, to use all means that we may win some. No means are more effective than good psalmody. Now, this beauty of psalmody is evidently contemplated by St. Paul. "Psalms" represent what is sung to musical accompaniments; "songs," what is rendered in poetry. Poetry and music constitute the external beauty of psalmody.

II. IT SHOULD BE HEARTFELT. "Singing with grace in your hearts." 1. The first condition is the enjoyment of Divine grace. Psalmody should be the expression of adoration and praise in response to the grace of God. If we have not the grace we cannot truly take our part in the Church's song of praise. But let us not distress ourselves with the narrow notion that none who are not clearly spiritual Christians can take part in Christian psalmody. For the grace of God is so wide and various that every man has tasted some, and they who have not the highest grace have still enough for devout thankfulness. 2. The praise must come from the heart. Whether we have received much or little grace we must be consciously thankful, and must sing God's praises in our souls if we are really to praise him at all. After all, the music of the heart, even if it be sounded forth by a very harsh voice, is what God most values.

III. IT SHOULD BE OFFERED TO GOD, THOUGH ALSO AIMED AT OUR OWN MUTUAL INSTRUCTION. 1. The first great object of psalmody is "singing . . . unto God." This gives to it its peculiar solemn interest. Worship is expressed by it, and worship is the noblest act of the soul. 2. Nevertheless, indirectly we *teach and admonish one another* by these songs. Strictly didactic poetry is not, perhaps, either very interesting or very instructive. But the experience of one soul when breathed forth in song may be helpful to another soul. Hence the supreme value of the Hebrew psalms, those inimitable expressions of universal religious experience. We may receive in song what we would not heed or feel when offered in formal instruction.—W. F. A.

Vers. 18, 19.—*Husbands and wives.* (See on Eph. v. 22, 23.)—W. F. A.

Vers. 20, 21.—*Children and parents.* (See on Eph. vi. 1—4.)—W. F. A.

Ver. 22—ch. iv. 1.—*Servants and masters.* (See on Eph. vi. 5—9.)—W. F. A.

Ver. 24 (last clause).—*The service of Christ.* St. Paul is giving directions to bond-servants. But if they serve the Lord Christ, so also must all other Christians (ch. iv. 1). The principles of conduct recommended to the slaves may be taken home to ourselves by all of us.

I. CHRISTIANITY IS THE SERVICE OF THE LORD CHRIST. St. Paul, the greatest of the apostles, called himself the "bond-servant of Jesus Christ." Christ spoke of his disciples as "servants" (Matt. x. 24), though he generously raised them above the common limitations of service by admitting them into the confidences of friendship (John xv. 15). The gospel first offers free gifts—grace, love, forgiveness, etc. But while accepting these gifts, and neither needing nor able to make any adequate return, we are not to be nothing but recipients. The blessings are given to fit us for service.

The Church is not an almshouse for the indolent; it is a hive of industry. Christ is Master as well as Saviour. The first act of faith is to receive the grace of Christ in order that the second may be to obey his commandments (John xiv. 15).

II. THE SERVICE OF CHRIST EXTENDS TO THE WHOLE OF LIFE. It is not simply a matter of what we call religious affairs, the devotions of the sanctuary, etc. It is not merely the doing of work that is called spiritual, such as preaching, teaching, etc. The bond-servants are bidden to serve Christ in their daily work. They are exhorted to work heartily as unto the Lord, in whatsoever they do (ver. 23). We must serve Christ in our daily business.

III. THE SERVICE OF CHRIST MUST BE SINCERE. 1. It must not degenerate into *eye-service*. Our work is not to please men, but to serve Christ. His eye is ever on us. It matters little whether men admire or neglect our work. 2. It must be done *in singleness of heart*. Christ will take no divided devotion. We must not be covertly seeking our own interests as distinct from the interests of Christ, so as to have a double, distracting, and often conflicting series of ends to be pursued. We shall gain our own blessedness in the single-eyed service of Christ, and not as a side issue. 3. It must be done *from the heart*. It must be no mechanical work. We must think about it and put our heart and soul into it. There is a world of difference between the obedience that simply follows the word of command as the signal rises or falls when the lever is moved, and the obedience that considers, feels, and adopts the wishes of the master, and carries them out intelligently and voluntarily, as the signalman interprets and follows the code of directions.

IV. SUCH SERVICE OF CHRIST ENNOBLES ALL WORK. Work is noble or mean, not so much because of the kind of things done, as on account of the motives that inspire it. A surgeon has to do things which would be disgusting in themselves, but which are refined by the humane motives that prompt them. No task undertaken for a pure purpose can be degrading. The most menial work done for Christ's sake is elevated to the level of the devotion of the angels.

V. CHRIST WILL RECOMPENSE HIS SERVANTS ACCORDING TO THEIR SERVICE. "We shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." This is the judgment of Christians. We are inclined to forget this while warning publicans and sinners of their coming judgment. Christians will have to give an account of the use of their talent. 1. *Then deceitful eye-service will be exposed and punished.* 2. *Then faithful, obscure devotion will be revealed and rewarded.*—W. F. A.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1.—(See p. 157.)

Vers. 2—6.—SECTION IX. PRAYER AND SOCIAL CONVERSE. There are added some brief exhortations of a more general tenor, the contents of which are summed up in the heading given to this section.

Ver. 2.—Continue steadfast in prayer, being watchful (or, *wakeful*) therein, with thanksgiving (Eph. vi. 18; Rom. xii. 12; Phil. iv. 6; 1 Thess. v. 17, 18; 1 Tim. ii. 1; Luke xi. 5—10; xviii. 1—8; xxi. 36; Acts i. 14; xx. 31; 1 Cor. xvi. 13; 1 Pet. v. 8; Matt. xxvi. 41; Mark xiv. 38). "Steadfast continuance" in prayer is specially illustrated in our Lord's sayings on the subject in St. Luke (comp. Acts i. 14, where the same peculiar verb is used). In Phil. iv. 6; 1 Thess. v. 17, 18; 1 Tim. ii. 1, again "thanksgiving" is associated with "prayer." *Wakefulness* in prayer is enjoined by Christ in Matt. xxvi. 41 and

Mark xiv. 38: compare the synonymous *ἀγρυπνέω*, to be sleepless, used in Eph. vi. 18; Mark xiii. 33; Luke xxi. 36; Heb. xiii. 17. "To be awake" is to be alive in the fullest sense, to have all the powers of perception and action in readiness. The activity of the soul in prayer is to be both energetic and incessant. "With [literally *in, ἐν*, not *μετά*, as in Eph. vi. 18] thanksgiving" gives the pervading element or influence, in or under which the prayers of the Colossians were to be offered (comp. ch. i. 12; ii. 7; iii. 15, 17).

Ver. 3.—Praying at the same time also for us (Eph. vi. 19; Rom. xv. 30—32; 1 Thess. v. 25; 2 Thess. iii. 1, 2; Heb. xiii. 18). In Ephesians and Romans the apostle implores prayer for *himself* alone, and dwells on his personal circumstances. Here and in the Thessalonian letters he unites his fellow-labourers with him in the request. That God may open to us a door for the word (1 Cor. xvi. 9; 2 Cor. ii. 12; 1 Thess. i. 9; ii. 1). "The word" is the Word of

God which the apostle preaches (ch. i. 5, 25; 1 Thess. i. 6; Gal. vi. 6; 2 Tim. iv. 2; Acts xvi. 6); and "a door" is wanted, in his present difficulties, through which that Word may freely pass, such as he speaks of in 1 Cor. xvi. 9; 2 Cor. ii. 12 (comp. Acts xiv. 27; Rev. iii. 8). It is fanciful to give "door" here the sense of "mouth." The "opening of my mouth," in Eph. vi. 19, expresses the subjective freedom (corresponding to "as I ought to speak," ver. 4); "the door for the word," the objective liberty desired by St. Paul in his imprisonment. To speak the mystery of Christ, because of which also I am bound (ch. i. 23—29; Eph. vi. 19; iii. 1—13; iv. 1; Phil. i. 12—14; Philem. 9; 2 Tim. ii. 8—10; Acts xx. 22—24). Were his prison door once opened, the apostle would be able freely to preach the gospel to the Gentiles—for this "the mystery of Christ" chiefly signifies (ch. i. 25—29; Eph. iii. 1—8; 1 Tim. ii. 3—7). (On "mystery," see note, ch. i. 26.) It is this very mission which makes him long for freedom, that keeps him a prisoner (ch. i. 23; Eph. iii. 13). He is in the strange position of an "ambassador in chains" (Eph. vi. 19; Philem. 9, 10; comp. 2 Tim. ii. 9). This "I am bound" (singular) shows that the "for us" of the former clause designedly includes others with himself.

Ver. 4.—That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak (Eph. vi. 20; 2 Cor. ii. 17; iv. 1—6; v. 11, 20—vi. 10; Rom. xii. 6; 2 Tim. ii. 24—26; iii. 10; Acts xx. 18—21, 27, 33—35). This clause qualifies the last; the "open door" is to be asked for the apostle, that he may make effective use of it. *The mystery* has been made manifest by God in the mission of Christ (ch. i. 27; ii. 15, note; 2 Cor. v. 19, etc.); but that manifestation has to be made known to the Gentile world (Eph. iii. 9; 2 Cor. ii. 14; Rom. x. 14). To this end he had received a special manifestation of "the mystery of Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6; v. 19; Gal. i. 15, 16; Acts ix. 15, 16; xxii. 14, 15, 21; xxvi. 16—18). *How* the apostle conceives that he "ought to speak" appears from the parallel passages (see especially 2 Cor. v.; vi.; and Acts xx.).

Ver. 5.—Walk in wisdom towards those without (Eph. v. 15—17; 1 Thess. iv. 12; v. 15; 1 Cor. x. 32; 2 Cor. iv. 2; Titus ii. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 12, 15; iii. 16; Matt. x. 16). (On "wisdom," see ch. i. 9, note; i. 28; ii. 3; iii. 16; this was a chief need of the Colossian Church.) "Those without," as opposed to Christians—"those within the pale," a Jewish mode of expression (Lightfoot): comp. 1 Thess. iv. 12; 1 Cor. v. 12, 13; 1 Tim. iii. 7. From a different point of view, they are designated "the rest" in Eph. ii. 3; 1 Thess. iv. 13; v. 6. This injunction ap-

pears in a different form and position in Ephesians. Standing at the close of the writer's exhortations, and followed up by the direction of the next verse, it is more pointed and emphatic here. *Buying up each* (literally, *the opportunity*) (Eph. v. 16; 1 Cor. vii. 29; Gal. vi. 10; John xi. 9, 10; Luke xiii. 32; Eccles. iii. 1—8). In Eph. v. 16 the reason is added, "because the days are evil." In Dan. ii. 8 (LXX) the verb ἐξαγοράω ("to buy out" or "up," a word of the market) has precisely this sense and connection, and the idiom occurs in classical writers. The verb is middle in voice: "buying up for yourselves," "for your own advantage." In Gal. iii. 13 the compound verb is somewhat differently used. *The opportunity* is the fit time for each step of a well-conducted walk, the precise juncture of circumstances which must be seized at once or it is gone. This wary promptitude is always needful in dealing with men of the world, both to avoid harm from them and in seeking to do them good. The latter thought, it may be, connects this verse and the next.

Ver. 6.—(Let) your speech (literally, *word*) (be) always with grace, seasoned with salt (Eph. iv. 29, 31; v. 3, 4; Titus ii. 8; Matt. xii. 34—37; Luke iv. 22; Ps. xlv. 2). "Word" (λόγος) has its common acceptation, as in ch. iii. 17; ii. 23; Titus ii. 8; 2 Tim. ii. 17; Jas. iii. 2. "With grace" (ἐν χάριτι) gives the pervading element of Christian speech; as "in wisdom," of Christian behaviour (ver. 5). "Grace," here without the article, is not, as in ch. iii. 16, where the article should probably be read, "the (Divine) grace," but a property of speech itself, "gracefulness"—the kindly, winning pleasantness which makes the talk of a good and thoughtful man attractive: comp. Ps. xlv. 2 (xlv. 3, LXX); Eccles. x. 12 (LXX); Sir. xxi. 16. "Salt" is the "wholesome point and pertinency" (Ellicott) *seasoning* conversation, while grace *sweetens* it. The clause which follows indicates that "salt" denotes here, as commonly in Greek (instance the phrase, "Attic salt"), an intellectual rather than a moral quality of speech. In Eph. iv. 29 the connection is different, and the application more general (comp. Matt. v. 13; Mark ix. 49, 50). *That you may know how you ought to answer each one* (ver. 4; 1 Pet. iii. 15; Phil. i. 27, 28; 2 Thess. ii. 17). The Colossians were to pray for the apostle that he might "speak the mystery of Christ . . . as he ought to speak;" and he bids them seek for themselves the same gift of *παρρησία*, liberty of speech and readiness to "every good word." For their faith was assailed by persuasive sophistry (ch. ii. 4, 8, 23) and by brow-beating dogmatism (ch. ii. 16, 18, 20, 21). They were,

like St. Paul, "set for the defence of the gospel," placed in the van of the conflict against heresy. They needed, therefore, "to have all their wits about them," so as to be able, as occasion required, to make answer to each of their opponents and questioners, that they might "contend" wisely as well as "earnestly for the faith." 1 Pet. iii. 15 is a commentary on this verse: the parallelism is the closer because that Epistle was addressed to Churches in Asia Minor, where the debates out of which Gnosticism arose were beginning to be rife; and because, likewise, "the hope that was in them" was a chief object of the attack made on the Colossian believers (ch. i. 5, 23, 27; ii. 18; iii. 15).

With this exhortation the Christian teaching of the Epistle is concluded. In its third and practical part (ch. iii. 1—iv. 6) the apostle has built up, on the foundation of the doctrine laid down in the first chapter, and in place of the attractive but false and pernicious system denounced in the second, a lofty and complete ideal of the Christian life. He has led us from the contemplation of its "life of life" in the innermost mystery of union with Christ and of its glorious destiny in him (ch. iii. 1—4), through the soul's interior death-struggle with its old corruptions (vers. 5—11) and its investment with the graces of its new life (vers. 12—15), to the expression and outward acting of that life in the mutual edification of the Church (vers. 16, 17), in the obedience and devotion of the family circle (ver. 18—ch. iv. 1), in constant prayerfulness and sympathy with the ministers and suffering witnesses of Christ (vers. 2—4), and, lastly, in such converse with men of the world, and in the midst of the distracting debate by which faith is assailed, as shall fittingly commend the Christian cause.

VERS. 7—18.—SECTION X. PERSONAL MESSAGES AND GREETINGS. St. Paul concludes his letter, first, by introducing to the Colossians its bearer, Tychicus, along with whom he commends to them their own Onesimus, returning to his master (vers. 7—9); then, according to his custom, he conveys greetings from his various friends and helpers present with him at the time, in particular from Mark, who was likely to visit them, and from Epaphras their own devoted minister (vers. 10—14); thirdly, he sends greeting to the neighbouring and important Church of Laodicea, specially mentioning Nympha, with directions to exchange letters with the Laodiceans, and with a pointed warning to Archippus, probably a Colossian, having some charge over that Church (vers. 15—17). Finally, he appends, with his own hand, his apostolic greeting and benediction

(ver. 18). The personal references of this section, though slight and cursory, are of peculiar value, bearing themselves the strongest marks of genuineness, and decisively attesting the Pauline authorship of the Epistle. At the same time, we gather from them several independent facts throwing light on St. Paul's position during his imprisonment, and on his relations to other leading personages of the Church.

Ver. 7.—All that relates to me (literally, *the things concerning me*) Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant (*bondman*), will make known to you (Eph. vi. 21, 22; Titus iii. 12; 2 Tim. vi. 12; i. 8; 1 Thess. iii. 2; Phil. ii. 25). Tychicus appears first in Acts xx. 4, where he is called an "Asian" (of the Roman province of Asia, of which Ephesus was capital), along with Trophimus, who, in Acts xxi. 29, is styled "the Ephesian." He accompanied the apostle on his voyage to Jerusalem (A.D. 58), with a number of others representing different Churches, and deputed, as Lightfoot thinks, in conformity with the directions of 1 Cor. xvi. 3, 4, to convey the contributions raised for "the poor saints at Jerusalem." Trophimus was with St. Paul in Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 29), and so, probably, his colleague (the words, "as far as Asia," in Acts xx. 4, are of very doubtful authority). He is now with the apostle in his imprisonment at Rome, about to be sent home with these two letters (comp. Eph. vi. 21, 22), and in charge of Onesimus, on whose account the apostle sends a private letter to Philemon. In the interval between the first (present) and second imprisonment (2 Timothy), the apostle revisited the Asiatic Churches (so we infer from 1 Tim. i. 3), and Tychicus rejoined him; for we find St. Paul proposing to send him to Titus in Crete (Titus iii. 12), and finally sending him from Rome once more to Ephesus (2 Tim. vi. 12). These facts sustain the high terms in which he is here spoken of. "In the Lord" belongs both to "minister" and "fellow-servant." This language is almost identical with that used of Epaphras in ch. i. 7 (see notes). Tychicus is "minister" (*διδάσκων*), not to Paul himself (Acts xix. 22; xiii. 5, *ὁδηγῶν*), nor in the official sense of Phil. i. 1, but "of Christ," "of the gospel," or "the Church" (1 Thess. iii. 2), as St. Paul himself (ch. i. 23, 25). He is "a beloved brother" to his fellow-believers, "a faithful minister" of the Lord Christ, and "a fellow-servant" with the apostle (ch. i. 7; iv. 10; Phil. ii. 25).

Ver. 8.—Whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know how it is with us (literally, *the things about us*), and that he may comfort your hearts (Eph. vi. 22). The Received Text reads, by a

slight confusion of similar Greek letters, *that he may know the things about you* (see Lightfoot's 'Notes on some Various Readings'). This is the only clause exactly identical in Colossians and Ephesians. There would be great anxiety on St. Paul's account amongst the Gentile Christians everywhere, and especially in the Asiatic Churches, after the ominous words of his address to the Ephesian elders (Acts xx. 22—25; comp. vers. 37, 38). The Colossians had sent through Epaphras messages of love to him (ch. i. 8). To know that he was of good courage, and even in hope of a speedy release (Philem. 22), would "comfort their hearts."

Ver. 9.—*With Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is (one) of you* (ver. 7; Philem. 10, 16; ch. i. 2; 1 Pet. v. 12). "In Christ there is no slave" (ch. iii. 11). Onesimus, like Epaphras and Tychicus, is a *brother, to be trusted and loved* (comp. Philem. 10—17). This language strongly supports the appeal of ver. 1, and would further the purpose of the apostle's intercession to Onesimus' master. And Onesimus even shares with the honoured Tychicus in the privilege of being the apostle's messenger! All things that are happening here they will make known to you (ver. 7; Eph. vi. 21). There is, therefore, no need for any detailed account of the writer's circumstances. The solicitude which he assumes that these stranger Colossians (ch. i. 8; ii. 1) feel on his behalf shows how commanding his ascendancy over the Gentile Churches had become.

Ver. 10.—*Aristarchus, my fellow-prisoner, saluteth you* (Philem. 2, 23; Phil. ii. 25; Bom. xvi. 7). Aristarchus, as a Thessalonian, accompanied the apostle to Jerusalem, along with Tychicus the Asian (Acts xx. 4), and was his companion at least during the first part of his voyage to Rome (Acts xxvii. 2). In Philem. 23, 24 his name follows that of Mark as a "fellow-worker" (comp. ver. 11) and of Epaphras "my fellow-prisoner" (comp. Bom. xvi. 7). "Fellow-prisoner" (*αἰχμαλωτός, captive, prisoner of war*) differs from the "prisoner" (*δεσμιός, one in bonds*) of Eph. iii. 1; iv. 1; Philem. 9; 2 Tim. i. 8. The supposition that these men were permitted as friends to share St. Paul's captivity in turn, is conjectural (see Meyer). Possibly the incident recorded in Acts xix. 29 was attended by some temporary joint imprisonment of St. Paul and Aristarchus. As "a soldier of Christ Jesus," the apostle was himself now "a prisoner of war" (2 Tim. ii. 3, 4; 2 Cor. x. 3—6); and therefore those who shared his sufferings were his "fellow-prisoners," as they were his "fellow-soldiers" (Philem. 2; Phil. i. 30) and his "fellow-

servants" (ch. i. 7; iv. 7). And Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, about whom you received commandments—if he should come to you, welcome him (Philem. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 11; 1 Pet. v. 13). It is pleasant to find John Mark, who deserted the apostle in his first missionary journey (Acts xiii. 13), and on whose account he separated from Barnabas (Acts xv. 37—40) ten years before, now taken again into his confidence and friendship (comp. 2 Tim. iv. 11). And indeed it is evident that there was no permanent estrangement between the two great Gentile missionaries; for Mark is called "cousin of Barnabas" by way of recommendation (comp. 1 Cor. ix. 6; Gal. ii. 1, 9, 13). Mary, the mother of John Mark, was a person of some consideration in the Church at Jerusalem (Acts xii. 12), and through her he may have been related to Barnabas, who, though a Cypriot Jew, had property near Jerusalem (Acts iv. 36, 37), and was also highly honoured by the mother Church (Acts ix. 27; xi. 22—24; xv. 25, 26). Mark is, moreover, a link between the Apostles Paul and Peter. It is to the house of his mother that the latter betakes himself on his escape from Herod's prison (Acts xii. 12). In 1 Pet. v. 13 he appears, along with Silvanus (Silas), St. Paul's old comrade, in St. Peter's company, who calls him "my son." St. Peter was then at Babylon, where Mark may have arrived at the end of the journey eastwards which St. Paul here contemplates his undertaking. The striking correspondence of language and thought between St. Peter's First Epistle (addressed, moreover, to Churches of Asia Minor) and those of St. Paul to the Ephesians and Colossians (and, in an equal degree, that to the Romans) suggests the existence of some special connection at this time between the two writers, such as may well have been afforded by Mark, if, leaving Rome soon after the despatch of these letters, he travelled in their track by way of Asia Minor to join St. Peter at Babylon. At the time of St. Paul's second imprisonment, about four years later, Mark is again in Asia Minor in the neighbourhood of Timothy, and the apostle desires his services at Rome (2 Tim. iv. 11). When or how the Colossians had received already directions concerning Mark, we have no means of knowing. His journey appears to have been postponed. The apostle must before this have communicated with the Colossians. The visit of Epaphras to Rome may have been due to some communication from him. "If he should come to you, give him a welcome," is the request the apostle now makes.

Ver. 11.—And Jesus, called Justus—the only name of this list wanting in Philemon. Nor is this person mentioned elsewhere.

"Jesus" ("Joshua," Acts vii. 45; Heb. iv. 8) was a common Jewish name. "Justus" ("just," "righteous") was frequently adopted by individual Jews, or conferred on them, as a Gentile (Latin) surname (comp. Acts i. 23; xviii. 7); it implied devotion to the Law, and was the equivalent of the Hebrew *Zadok* (see Lightfoot). Its Greek equivalent, *δικαιος*, is the standing epithet of James, the brother of the Lord, and the head of the Church at Jerusalem; and is emphatically applied to Christ himself (Acts iii. 14; vii. 52; xxii. 14; 1 Pet. iii. 18; 1 John ii. 1). Who are of the circumcision, —these only (my) fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, (men) who have been a comfort to me (Philem. 1, 24; 1 Thess. iii. 2; Rom. xvi. 3, 9, 21; 2 Cor. viii. 23; Phil. ii. 25; iv. 3). Aristarchus, therefore, was a Jew, as well as Mark and Jesus Justus. "These only," etc., must be read as in close apposition to the previous clause. This statement accords with the apostle's complaint in Phil. i. 15—17; ii. 19—24; but the still stronger language of the latter passages seems to point to a later time when he was yet more solitary, having lost Tychicus and Mark, and perhaps Aristarchus also, and when he had a more definite prospect of release. The title "fellow-worker" he frequently confers on his associates (see references). In Philem. 24 it is applied to Luke and Demas also. "The kingdom of God" was, in ch. i. 13, "the kingdom of his Son;" as in Eph. v. 5 it is "the kingdom of Christ and God." On his arrival at Rome, St. Paul is described as "testifying, and preaching the kingdom of God" (Acts xxviii. 23, 31; comp. Acts viii. 12; xiv. 22; xix. 8; 1 Thess. ii. 12; 2 Thess. i. 5). On the force of *οἰκτιρες* ("men who," "such as"), see ch. ii. 23; and for *ἐγερθήσαν* ("proved," "became in point of fact"), comp. ch. iii. 15. Παρηγορία, *comfort*, a word found only here in the Greek Testament, is a medical term (compare "paregoric"), implying "soothing relief."

Ver. 12.—Epaphras, who is (one) of you, saluteth you, a servant (*bondman*) of Christ Jesus (Rom. i. 1; Phil. i. 1; Titus i. 1; Gal. i. 10; 2 Cor. iv. 5; 1 Cor. vii. 22; 1 Thess. i. 9; 2 Tim. ii. 24; Acts iv. 29; Jas. i. 1; 2 Pet. i. 1; Jude 1; Rev. i. 1; xxii. 3, 6). "Of you," like Onesimus (ver. 9). He was a native of Colossæ, as well as evangelist and minister of the Church there (ch. i. 7, 8). "Bondman of Christ Jesus" is the title the apostle so often claims for himself (see references), only here put by him on any one else. Is there an implied reference to Onesimus (ver. 9), who was "a bondman after the flesh," but "the Lord's freedman" (Philem. 16), while Epaphras, "the freeman," is "Christ's bondman" (comp.

1 Cor. vii. 22)? We are reminded again of ch. ii. 6 (see note). Always striving on your behalf in his prayers, that ye may stand fast, (being) perfect and fully assured in all the will of God (ch. i. 9, 23, 29; ii. 1, 2, 5; Rom. xv. 30; Eph. vi. 11—14; Phil. i. 27; iv. 1; 1 Cor. xvi. 13; 1 Thess. iii. 8; 2 Thess. ii. 15). Epaphras "strives" ("wrestles") for his spiritual charge, like the apostle himself (ch. i. 29, see note on ἀγωνίζομαι, ch. ii. 1; Rom. xv. 30; Luke xxii. 44). Προσκαρτερῶ in ver. 2 denotes the patient persistence, this word the intense energy, of prevailing prayer. For "stand" (where Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort, and other critical editors read the stronger σταθῆτε for στήτε), comp. ch. i. 23; ii. 7; it is four times repeated in the stirring appeal of Eph. vi. 11—14. For Churches threatened by the attacks of heresy it was above all things needful "that they should stand fast." On "perfect," see ch. i. 28; also ch. iii. 14; the word bears a primary reference to "knowledge," and implies a fully instructed and enlightened condition (Phil. iii. 15; 1 Cor. xiv. 20; Heb. v. 14; vi. 1), attended with corresponding spiritual advancement (Eph. iv. 13). "Fully assured" (πεπληροφορημένοι, Revised Text) carries us back to ch. ii. 2 (see notes; on this verb, compare Lightfoot's exhaustive note). It bears the same sense in Rom. iv. 21 and xiv. 5; a slightly different one in Luke i. 1. From the tenor of the letter it appears that the Colossians needed a deeper Christian insight and more intelligent and well-grounded convictions respecting the truth "as in Jesus." "All (the) will" is strictly distributive (*every will*); θέλημα (ch. i. 9) differs from our *will* in having a concreto rather than abstract sense, denoting an act or expression of will.

Ver. 13.—For I bear witness to him that he hath much labour (πόνον for ζῆλον, Revised Text) for you (ch. i. 29; ii. 1; Phil. ii. 19—23; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; 1 Tim. v. 17; 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16). Πόνος occurs in the New Testament besides only in Rev. xvi. 10, 11 and xxi. 4, where it means "pain;" in classical Greek it implies "painful, distressful exertion" (comp. κοπιᾶν, ch. i. 29). It indicates the deep anxiety of Epaphras for this beloved and endangered Church. There is nothing here to point to "outward toil" (Lightfoot), any more than in ch. ii. 1. The apostle loves to commend his fellow-labourers (ch. i. 7; Phil. ii. 20—22, 25, 26; 2 Cor. viii. 16—23). And for those in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis (vers. 15—17; ch. ii. 1). The Church in Hierapolis is added to that of Laodicea, singled out in ch. ii. 1 as a special object of the apostle's concern (on these cities, see Introduction, § 1). Whether Epaphras were the official head of these Churches or not, he could not but be deeply concerned in their welfare. Ver. 17

indicates the existence of a personal link between the Churches of Colossæ and of Laodicea.

Ver. 14.—**Luke the physician, the beloved, saluteth you** (Philem. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 11). This reference to Luke's profession is extremely interesting. We gather from the use of the first person plural in Acts xvi. 10—17, and again from xx. 5 to the end of the narrative, that he joined St. Paul on his first voyage to Europe and was left behind at Philippi; and rejoined him six years after on the journey to Jerusalem which completed his third missionary circuit, continuing with him during his voyage to Rome and his imprisonment. This faithful friend attended him in his second captivity, and solaced his last hours; "Only Luke is with me" (2 Tim. iv. 11). His being called "the physician" suggests that he ministered to the apostle in this capacity, especially as "his first appearance in St. Paul's company synchronizes with an attack of St. Paul's constitutional malady" (Lightfoot: comp. Acts xvi. 10 and Gal. iv. 13—15; the illness referred to in 2 Cor. i. 8—10 and iv. 7—v. 8 may partly have led to Luke's rejoining St. Paul in Macedonia). St. Luke's writings testify both to his medical knowledge and to his Pauline sympathies. His companionship probably gave a special colouring to the phraseology and cast of thought of St. Paul's later Epistles. (On the relations of St. Luke and St. Paul, see a valuable Paper by Dean Plumptre in the *Expositor*, first series, vol. iv. pp. 134—156.) "The beloved" is a distinct appellation, due partly to Luke's services to the apostle, but chiefly, one would suppose, to the amiable and gentle disposition of the writer of the third Gospel. It is not unlikely that he is "the brother" referred to in 2 Cor. viii. 18, 19. *Lucas* is a contraction for *Lucanus*; so that he was not the "Lucius" of Acts xiii. 1, nor, certainly, the "Lucius my kinsman" of Rom. xvi. 21, who was a Jew. He was probably, like many physicians of that period, a freedman; and, since freedmen took the name of the house to which they had belonged, may have been, as Plumptre conjectures, connected with the family of the Roman philosopher Seneca and the poet Lucan. **And Demas** (Philem. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 10), who alone receives no word of commendation—a fact significant in view of the melancholy sentence pronounced upon him in 2 Tim. iv. 10. His name is probably short for *Demetrius*.

Ver. 15.—**Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea** (ver. 13; ch. ii. 1; Rev. i. 11; iii. 14—22). Perhaps the brethren in Hierapolis (ver. 13) were not formed into a distinct Church as yet (comp. ch. ii. 1). The Church in Laodicea early became a flourishing and wealthy community (Rev. iii. 17).

And Nympha (or, *Nymphas*), and the Church (literally, *assembly*) **at her (or, *their*) house.** *Nύμφα* may be either masculine or feminine accusative. The reading "her" (*αὐτῆς*) is adopted by Westcott and Hort without alternative, and seems on the whole the most probable. The Revised Text follows Tischendorf, Tregelles, Meyer, Alford, Lightfoot, who read "their" (*αὐτῶν*). "His" (*αὐτοῦ*) is evidently a later correction. Lightfoot says, indeed, that "a Doric form of the Greek name (sc. *Nύμφα* for *Nύμφην*) seems in the highest degree improbable;" but he allows, on the other hand, that *Nυμφᾶς* as a contracted masculine form (for *Nυμφόδαρος*) "is very rare." This person was apparently a leading member of the Laodicean Church, at whose house Church meetings were held (comp. Acts xii. 12; Philem. 2; Rom. xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xvi. 19). "The Church at her house" can scarcely have been an assembly distinct "from the brethren that are in Laodicea." Both expressions may relate to the same body of persons, referred first individually, then collectively as a meeting gathered at this place. Others suppose a more private gathering to be meant, as e.g. of Colossians living at Laodicea (Meyer). Many older interpreters identified this Church with the household of Nymphas. If "their" be the true reading, the expression must include *Nympha and her family*. *Nympha* (or *Nymphas*), like Philemon and his family, St. Paul had doubtless met in Ephesus.

Ver. 16.—**And when this letter has been read among you, see to it (literally, *cause*) that it be read also in the Church of (the) Laodiceans** (1 Thess. v. 27). For these two Churches were closely allied in origin and condition, as well as by situation and acquaintanceship (ch. ii. 1—5; iv. 13). The leaven of the Colossian error was doubtless beginning to work in Laodicea also. The words addressed to Laodicea in the Apocalypse (iii. 14—22) bear reference apparently to the language of this Epistle (i. 15—18); see Lightfoot, pp. 41, etc. The phrase, "Church of Laodiceans," corresponds to that used in the salutation of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, but is not found elsewhere in St. Paul. And that ye also read the letter from Laodicea, What was this letter? Clearly a letter from St. Paul which would be received at Laodicea, and which the Colossians were to obtain from there. The connection of this sentence with the foregoing, and the absence of any other definition of the words, "the letter (from Laodicea)," make this evident. Nothing further can be affirmed with certainty. But several considerations point to the probability that this missing Epistle is none other than our (so-called) Epistle to the Ephesians. For: (1) Both letters were sent at the same time, and by the same

messenger (Eph. vi. 21; ch. iv. 7). (2) The relation between the two is more intimate than exists between any other of St. Paul's writings; they are *twins*, the birth of the same crisis in the condition of the Church and in the apostle's own mind. Each serves as a commentary on the other. And there are several important topics, lightly touched upon in this letter, on which the writer dilates at length in the other (comp. ch. i. 9b and Eph. i. 17, 18; ch. i. 23b-25 and Eph. iii. 1-13; ch. i. 18a, 24 b, ii. 19 and Eph. iv. 4-16, v. 23-32; ch. i. 21, 27, ii. 11-13, iii. 11 and Eph. ii.; ch. i. 18 ("Firstborn out of the dead"), ii. 12b and Eph. i. 19-23; ch. iii. 12 ("God's elect") and Eph. i. 3-14; ch. iii. 18, 19 and Eph. v. 22-33). On the other hand, the main arguments of the Colossian letter are, as it seems, assumed and presupposed in the Ephesian (comp. Eph. i. 10, 20b-23, ii. 20b, iii. 8b-11, 19b, iv. 13b with ch. i. 15-20, ii. 9, 10; Eph. iv. 14 with ch. ii. 4, 8, 16-23). (3) The words *ἐν Ἐφέσῳ* in Eph. i. 1 are of doubtful authenticity; and there is much in the internal character of that Epistle to favour the hypothesis, proposed by Archbishop Usher, that it was a *circular letter*, destined for a number of Churches in Asia Minor, of which Ephesus may have been the first and Laodicea the last (compare the *order* of Rev. ii., iii.). In that case a copy of the Ephesian Epistle would be left at Laodicea by Tychicus on his way to Colossæ. (See Introduction, § 6; compare that to Ephesians.) (4) Marcion, in the middle of the second century (see Tertullian, 'Against Marcion,' v. 11, 17), entitled the Epistle to the Ephesians, "To the Laodiceans." It does not appear that his heretical views could have been furthered by this change. Probably his statement contains a fragment of ancient tradition, identifying the Epistle in question with that referred to by St. Paul in this passage. (5) The expression, "the letter from Laodicea," would scarcely be used of a letter addressed simply to the *Laodiceans* and belonging properly to them; but would be quite appropriate to a more general Epistle transmitted from one place to another. There is extant in Latin a spurious epistle 'Ad Laodiceenses,' which is traced back to the fourth century, and was widely accepted in the Middle Ages; but it is "a mere cento of Pauline phrases, strung together without any definite connection or any clear object" (Lightfoot). (On this curious forgery, and on the whole subject of "the Epistle from Laodicea," see Lightfoot's masterly discussion, pp. 274-300; also p. 37.) Meyer, on the other

hand, in his 'Introduction to Ephesians,' pronounces strongly against "the circular hypothesis."

Ver. 17.—And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou receivest in (the) Lord, that thou fulfil it (Acts xx. 28; 1 Tim. i. 18, 19; iv. 6, 11-16; vi. 13, 14, 20, 21; 2 Tim. ii. 15; iv. 5). From the connection of this verse with the two preceding, it seems likely that "the ministry" of Archippus related to the Laodicean Church. Hence he is not addressed directly. If he was, as we gather from Philem. 1, 2, the son of Philemon, whose house formed a centre for the Colossian Church (Philem. 2), the warning would be suitably conveyed through this channel. In the letter to Philemon, the apostle calls him his "fellow-soldier" (comp. ch. iv. 10; Phil. i. 29, 30). Both from this fact, and from the emphasis of the words before us, it would appear that his office was an important one, probably that of chief pastor. This warning addressed so early to the minister of the Laodicean Church is premonitory of the lapsed condition in which it is afterwards found (Rev. iii. 14-22); see Lightfoot, pp. 42, 43. (For "ministry" (*διακονία*), comp. ch. i. 7, 23; 1 Cor. iv. 1, etc. For "received," comp. note, ch. ii. 6.) "In the Lord;" for every office in the Church is grounded in him as Head and Lord (ch. i. 18; ii. 6; iii. 17, 24; iv. 7; Eph. i. 22; iv. 5; 1 Cor. viii. 6; xii. 5, etc.), and must be administered according to his direction and as subject to his judgment (see 1 Cor. iii. 5; iv. 1-5; 2 Cor. x. 17, 18; xii. 10; Gal. i. 1; 1 Tim. i. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2). "Fulfil" (comp. ch. i. 26; 2 Tim. iv. 5; Acts xii. 25). This admonition resembles those addressed to Timothy in the Pastoral Epistles.

Ver. 18.—The salutation with mine own hand—of Paul (2 Thess. iii. 17, 18; 1 Cor. xvi. 21-24; Gal. vi. 11-18). So the apostle appends his authenticating signature to the letter, written, as usual, by his amanuensis, himself inscribing these last words (see parallel passages). The Epistle to Philemon he appears to have penned himself throughout (Philem. 19). Remember my bonds (ch. i. 24; Philem. 9, 13; Eph. iii. 1, 13; iv. 1; vi. 20; 2 Tim. ii. 9). This pathetic postscript is thoroughly characteristic (comp. Gal. vi. 17). Grace be with you; literally, *the grace* (comp. ch. iii. 16). The apostle's final benediction in all his Epistles; here in its briefest form, as in 1 and 2 Timothy. In the Ephesian benediction "grace" is also used absolutely. 2 Cor. xiii. 14 gives the formula in its full liturgical amplitude.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2—6.—Sect. 9. *Prayer and social converse.* I. PRAYER. (Vers. 2—4.) 1. *Prayer must be habitual and persistent.* "Continue steadfast in prayer—keeping awake therein" (ver. 2); "Ask, . . . seek, . . . knock" (Matt. vii. 7). It is not an occasional exercise of the soul, called forth by special emergencies, but the necessity of its daily life. For that life is a fellowship with God in Christ (ch. iii. 1—3; 1 John i. 3; John xiv. 23), maintained on his part by the continual communication of his Spirit (Luke xi. 13; Eph. i. 13; ii. 22; Rom. viii. 14—17, 23, 26, 27; 1 Cor. xii. 4—11; 2 Cor. xiii. 14), and on ours by the constant responsive utterances of praise and prayer. (1) Wherever two persons are associated in a mutual life, there must be *converse*—interchange of thought and feeling and service; so (reverently be it said) it must needs be where the soul is "alive unto God." God and the soul, the all-wise, almighty Father and the human child, all want and ignorance, having speech with each other—that is the life of religion. "The soul is a stupendous want, having its supplies in God" (comp. Phil. iv. 19). Prayer is the expression and the index of the soul's vital appetite. The necessity of prayer, therefore, must be daily and regular in its recurrence. It will have its "set times" and stated seasons, its chronic demands for satisfaction. "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and thou shalt hear my voice" (Ps. lv. 17; Dan. vi. 10; Acts x. 30); "Seven times a day do I praise thee" (Ps. cxix. 164). It will have its appointed place of privacy. "Enter into thy closet and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father which is in secret" (Matt. vi. 6; Mark i. 35). (2) Prayer being a social as much as a private necessity, concerned with the common as truly as with the individual wants and interests of men, the prayerful Christian will observe, as far as possible, all public occasions for its exercise, whether found in the family, the social circle, the community, the church (the "house of prayer"), or in the events of national life (Isa. lvi. 7; Acts iii. 1; vi. 6; xii. 12; xvi. 13; xx. 36; xxi. 5; xxii. 17; 1 Tim. ii. 8; John xvii. 1). (3) But prayer, while it fills, should overflow these limits, and may not be confined within the framework of mechanical habit and fixed order. It should find its way into all the interstices of life, seizing upon its vacant moments and leisure thoughts. Under pressing need, and in the hurry and tumult of business, the soul may send up a short, swift cry for help, as a winged arrow that finds its way to the heart of God. This is *ejaculatory* prayer. And in the quiet ongoing of ordinary work the mind may the more easily maintain its secret converse with him in whom it "lives and moves and is," making the common incidents of life and the familiar sights and sounds of nature reminders of his presence, and the experience of every hour occasion for some brief act of adoration, or confession, or supplication, or intercession. This is to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. v. 17); "to let our requests be made known unto God in all things" (Phil. iv. 6). The soul's hidden life in God is maintained by this activity, even as the life-blood of the body is vivified and cleansed from moment to moment by the ceaseless play of the breathing lungs. 2. *Prayer must be attended with thanksgiving.* The one must be habitual and constant as the other. They are two elements of the same state, two parts of the same act (Eph. v. 29; 1 Thess. v. 17, 18). (See homiletics, sect. 1, III. 2 (3).) How unseemly it is to come to God with urgent petitions for new blessings, when we have made no due acknowledgment of those already bestowed! We dare not act thus towards any earthly benefactor. And this thoughtless ingratitude deprives us of those strong arguments and cheering encouragements which are afforded by the remembrance of past mercies. "The Lord hath been mindful of us;" then surely "he will bless us" (Ps. cxv. 12); he "began a good work in you," and you may be "confident," therefore, that it is his will to "perfect it" (Phil. i. 6). God requires and expects that by "offering praise" we should "glorify him" (Ps. l. 23), "abundantly uttering the memory of his great goodness" (Ps. cxlv. 7). To this end every Christian is ordained a "priest unto God," that he may "offer up a sacrifice of praise continually, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name" (1 Pet. ii. 9; Heb. xiii. 15). And to do this is in itself "pleasant and comely" (Ps. cxlvii. 1); "Yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful." 3. *And intercession must be joined to supplication and thanksgiving.* (1 Tim. ii. 1.) "Withal praying for us also," says the apostle. And in so saying he embodies the appeal which our Christian brethren every-

where make to us, especially the ministers of Christ "set for the defence of the gospel" (Phil. i. 17); and yet more especially our fathers and teachers in Christ, through whom we have received the word of our salvation, and on whose fidelity and efficiency our spiritual life so largely depends. The interests of our own Church in its special circumstances as known to us; the larger necessities of associated Churches, of the Church in our own land, in its colonies and dependencies abroad, in other Christian nations; the necessities of missionary Churches amongst the heathen, and of the sheep of Christ that are "scattered abroad" unshepherded; the great cause of the kingdom of Christ in the earth, connected as it is with everything that concerns the progress and welfare of mankind; the claims of "kings, and all that are in authority;" of those in "sorrow, trouble, need, sickness, or any other adversity;" the wants of "all sorts and conditions of men," and especially of our kinsfolk, friends, and neighbours;—all these demand our intercession and seem to say unitedly, "Withal praying for us also!" In particular, and on behalf of the gospel, the apostle desires the Colossians to pray (1) that he may have "*an open door* to speak the mystery of Christ" (ver. 3). The world will not willingly open its door to Christ. It will leave him to "stand at the door and knock" (Rev. iii. 20). It has "no room for him" (Luke ii. 7) when he comes to be its guest. Much has yet to be done to "prepare the way of the Lord." But "the prayer of faith" can "remove mountains," and open doors that are fast shut. Obstructions and prejudices are to be broken down; hindrances political and material, intellectual and sentimental, to the progress of Christian truth, are to be overcome. "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough ways smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke iii. 4—6). And this is to be effected, in great measure, by the prayers of "God's elect" (Luke xviii. 7), even as the walls of Jericho fell at the shout of Israel (Josh. vi. 1—20). (2) But the open door is of little use unless the Church is *prepared to enter it*. Never, perhaps, were there in the world so many "open doors set before" the Church as there are now, with so few comparatively who are able and willing to enter them. Favouring circumstances—liberty to preach and teach, a waiting people, a willing audience,—all is vain without some one to "speak the word," and to speak it fitly. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. x. 14). And how shall they hear unto salvation if the preacher speaks feebly, or coldly, or confusedly, without "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power"? (3) The apostle had laboured long and with extraordinary success, "more abundantly than they all" (1 Cor. xv. 10); and yet felt his need of the *constant renewal of the Divine anointing*. Again and again he acknowledges his dependence on the prayers of the Church (Rom. xv. 30—32; 2 Thess. iii. 1, 2, etc.). Nay, even Christ himself sustained his human strength of soul by the constant refreshment of prayer, and sought, in the crisis of his anguish, the watchful sympathy of his disciples (Luke v. 16; John xi. 41; Matt. xxvi. 38). How much more is this needful for us! That ministry alone can be spiritually pure and strong which is drawn from secret fountains of prayer, and which commands the sympathetic intercession of all prayerful hearers.

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS MEN OF THE WORLD. (Vers. 5, 6.) 1. "Walk in wisdom," says the apostle, "towards those without" (ver. 5). Nowhere is Christian wisdom more needed, and nowhere is it seen to greater advantage, than in dealing with worldly men. "Be ye therefore *wise as serpents*," says the Saviour, in sending his disciples on their mission to the world (Matt. x. 16). It is not necessary that "the sons of this world should be wiser for their own generation than the sons of light" (Luke xvi. 8). This wisdom, while resting on a knowledge of God and of Christian truth (ch. i. 9; ii. 2, 3), and furnished out of his Word (ch. iii. 16; Matt. xiii. 52), requires a practical knowledge of men and things. It "cometh down from above," being "asked of God" (Jas. i. 5, 17; iii. 13—18), and is "pure, peaceable, and gentle;" but it has to be practised in a human world and in the service of men as they are; and therefore it must be discerning, well-informed, and practical. The Christian should not be inferior to any man in his own walk of life in the knowledge of his business and of the duties of his secular position. Indeed, his earnestness and diligence, his calmness of temper, and fairness of judgment, and soundness of conscience, and finer sympathies, will usually give him an advantage amongst his fellows: "Godliness is profitable unto all things" (1 Tim. iv. 8). How often earnest attempts to do good miscarry for want of judgment,

and the Christian cause is damaged in the eyes of the world by those most anxious to promote it through their unwisdom and narrow-mindedness! "I am become all things to all men," said St. Paul, "that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. ix. 20—22). And his bearing towards men of so many different ranks and classes in the strangely mixed society in which he moved, shows that this was no vain boast. (1) The first condition of success in seeking to influence others for their highest good, next to an earnest desire to do so, is that one should *understand* them. And this is impossible without pains and study and a large-hearted Christian sympathy. So with the missionary amongst the heathen; so with the minister at home; so with the private Christian seeking to win to Christ his worldly friends or business associates; if he is to *persuade men* (2 Cor. v. 11), he must understand the truth in its persuasive power, and he must understand men and how they are to be persuaded. (2) But the Christian must be wise for himself as well as for others. His wisdom must be *circumspect*. It is his first business to "keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. i. 27); to take care that, being "in the world," he be not "of the world" (John xvii. 14—18). He should have "good testimony from them that are without," especially if he hold any office in the Church (1 Tim. iii. 7)—such a repute as will "adorn his Saviour's doctrine;" and yet he must rejoice if "men say all manner of evil against him falsely for Christ's sake" (Matt. v. 11). The wisest and most careful behaviour cannot always avoid suspicion, where malice and slander are busy. 2. To wisdom must be added *promptness and alert activity*. There must be a quick eye for each opportunity as it arises, and an instant, vigorous effort to take advantage of it. The right occasion makes the right action. A thing well done or well said at one time may be malapropos if timed a little sooner or later. (1) We must cherish a keen sense of the value and the shortness of time itself—of our own personal lifetime, the single *opportunity* granted us for doing God's work on earth, the seed-time for an eternal harvest, "the day" with its "twelve hours" when the day's work must be done, or left undone for ever (John ix. 4; Ps. xxxix. 4; xc. 12; 1 Cor. vii. 29; Heb. iii. 7, 13). (2) At the same time, we must have a proper understanding of the *work* assigned us, a sense of our individual calling in life, a recognition of the particular "will of God" respecting ourselves as from time to time it may be indicated. We must acquaint ourselves with the conditions of our time and of our work, so that each may be fitted to the other, and that we may not waste our strength by misdirection or "fight as one that beateth the air," but may be able to "serve the counsel of God for our own generation" (Acts xiii. 36). (3) And, finally, we must be animated by a vigorous, earnest spirit—unhasting, unresting—neither dulled by sloth nor fretted by impatience. So, "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. iv. 10), we shall turn every moment and every opportunity and every endowment of our nature to the best account, and shall be able "at his coming" to render back to our heavenly Master "his own with usury" (Matt. xxv. 27). And this is "redeeming the time" (ver. 5). 3. Where a wise, and wisely energetic, Christian man has the gift of *apt and winning speech* (ver. 6), his Christian usefulness is largely multiplied. Indeed, the ordinary talk of an ordinary Christian, who cannot shine in the brilliant gifts of eloquence or wit, will at least be free from everything foolish and inept, from everything gross and ill-mannered. Though he be but a plain and unlettered man, his conversation will manifest a thoughtful, observant mind, and a pure and chastened disposition. Living a life of prayerful communion with God and with eternal things, "meditating in his Law day and night" (Ps. i. 2), he will be "taught of God;" and when he speaks, "the opening of his lips will be right words." It is astonishing how much shrewdness and kindly good sense and helpfulness, how much of the highest and homeliest moral wisdom, drawn from the everyday experience of life and the lessons of nature, is found sometimes in men who know scarcely any book but their English Bible, and have had little culture but that which is given by prayer (Jas. i. 5). A simple Christian man of this kind will often know better than the practised scholar "how to answer" concerning his hope, and will baffle the questionings of a clever scepticism. And when fine culture has been employed upon good abilities under the teaching of the Spirit of truth, and large knowledge has been gathered from books and men, the outcome in the man's conversation ought to be something rich and valuable in a high degree. (1) Attractive speech is one of God's "greater gifts" (1 Cor. xii. 31), to be humbly sought and diligently improved and wisely and seriously used. There is none more

commonly and lamentably abused. How much that is said in Christian circles would be left unsaid if only that which is "good unto edifying" (Eph. iv. 29) were allowed to pass the lips! (2) But this rule by no means forbids kindly humour and the play of wit. The "salt" that "seasons" conversation (ver. 6) contains these wholesome ingredients. A dull, uniform gravity is not the most edifying style of discourse. But the purpose and the effect of a Christian man's speech should always be serious, however light and graceful the form which on proper occasions it may assume. The conversation of the social circle is one of the greatest "opportunities" to be "redeemed" for Christ; and is afforded to us all. And especially when we meet those who are not Christians, the prejudiced, the sceptical, the wavering, much may depend on our being "ready" with "the meekness of wisdom" to "give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us" (1 Pet. iii. 15). The *private conversation* of the Church in its daily intercourse with the world should be a powerful ally to the public ministry of the Word (vers. 4, 6).

Vers. 7—18.—Sect. 10. *Personal messages and greetings.* The last section of this letter is of a more purely epistolary character, and is not, therefore, so directly available as the foregoing sections for public instruction, belonging to its framework or setting as a piece of Christian teaching. Nevertheless, these closing verses have their own peculiar interest and value—great value for historical and critical purposes, connecting the Epistle as they do by the most authentic notes of circumstantial association with the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles, and bracing it firmly into the whole coherent structure of the history of the apostolic Church. Moreover, in the brief but pointed and striking notices here given us, aided by what we know from other sources of the persons mentioned, we may find not a little of indirect and incidental profit "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for discipline in righteousness" (2 Tim. iii. 16).

I. ST. PAUL'S ASSOCIATES. 1. *Tychicus, the faithful messenger.* (Vers. 7, 8: comp. Eph. vi. 21; Acts xx. 4; Titus iii. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 12.) His association with the apostle in his last journey to Jerusalem, attended with so many affecting circumstances and terminating in his long imprisonment, seems to have led to a devoted attachment on the part of Tychicus to St. Paul. After returning home, as we may suppose, from Jerusalem, he had journeyed again to Rome, very possibly at the request of the Ephesian Church, to assist and comfort the imprisoned apostle and to bring back news of him. And he returns with these three priceless letters in his charge (Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon), with Onesimus whom he is to accompany as far as Colossæ, and as the bearer of reassuring tidings from St. Paul. Again, some years later, when the apostle's friends were fewer and devotion to his cause still more hazardous, we find Tychicus employed on similar commissions. (1) The apostle has found him to be, what every Christian should be to his fellow-Christians, "a brother beloved;" what every officer of the Church, whether in higher or lower capacity, must strive to be—"a faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord," faithful to the Lord and faithful in all brotherly love and "good fidelity" to his fellow-servants. So Tychicus is a blessing both to the apostle and to the distant Asiatic Churches. (2) While the Christian depends for strength and consolation in the first place on the fellowship of Christ in the Spirit (2 Cor. i. 3—7; 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17; John xvi. 33), yet how precious and helpful is such communion as this with Christian friends at a distance (1 Thess. iii. 6—10; Phil. iv. 10; 2 Cor. vii. 6), with faithful sufferers in Christ's cause, with those who bring tidings and words of cheer from brethren far off in other lands! (3) They are, indeed, "brethren beloved" who, like Tychicus, pass from land to land, from Church to sister Church, in honourable embassy, as "the messengers of the Churches and the glory of Christ" (2 Cor. viii. 23). 2. *Onesimus, the converted slave.* (Ver. 9.) His position and character will be more fully discussed under the Epistle to Philemon. (1) He is commended to the Christian circle at Colossæ on account of *his character*—"a faithful and beloved brother." The apostle had learned to love and trust him, as "the child of his bonds," as "his very heart," for his goodness and proved fidelity and helpful service to himself (Philem. 10—13). Greatly had he wished to retain him, but it was the servant's duty to return to his master. The qualities the apostle marks in him deserve equal respect from us in whatever grade of life they appear. The master who fails to recognize in his loyal and humble Christian servant "a brother

beloved in the Lord," is wanting in the simplicity and elevation of the Christian character, and has yet to learn that "in Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free" (ch. iii. 11; Gal. iii. 28). It was, however, for Philemon and his Colossian friends a severe test of Christian conviction and of their confidence in St. Paul to be required to take back this runaway slave as "a faithful and beloved brother." (2) He is commended to them by his *Colossian origin*. "Who is one of you." It is a natural and kindly feeling that prompts this reference. Ties of neighbourhood and early association, as well as those of kindred, are providentially formed, and belong to the divinely constituted framework of human life (Acts xvii. 26). This claim of Onesimus is not destroyed by his being a slave, at the very bottom of the social scale; nor was it forfeited by his misconduct. Now that he repents and returns, he is to be received by his Christian fellow-townsmen as one of themselves. 3. *Aristarchus, the devoted comrade*. (Ver. 10.) He was a representative of the Macedonian Churches (Acts xx. 4), who were dearest to the apostle of his children in the faith (1 Thess. ii. 19; Phil. i. 5), in writing to whom he laid aside his official title and was simply *Paul*, whom alone he allowed to minister to his personal needs (Phil. iv. 10—18; 2 Cor. xi. 8—10). And he, along with Luke, shared the hardships of the apostle's perilous winter voyage to Rome (Acts xxvii. 2). Indeed, he had been with him before he set out from Ephesus, and was seized by the Ephesian mob at the time of the riot there, being evidently a person of some note and distinction. We know nothing more of his services to the cause of Christ, beyond this record of his assiduous and self-sacrificing attendance on St. Paul. How much the apostle, with his physical infirmities and his sensitive nature, owed to such friendship, and how much the Church owes on his account, we cannot tell. Those who may not have great gifts for public usefulness may serve Christ most effectually oftentimes by serving his servants, by their private friendship and aid cheering the hearts and strengthening the hands of those on whom fall the heavier responsibilities of the Church's care and strife, and who but for such timely help might haply sink beneath their burdens. Little as we know of this man, with what a bright distinction his name is marked, and what a place of honour will be his in the book of life, whom the apostle designates, "Aristarchus, my fellow-captive, who has been a comfort to me"! 4. *Mark, the recovered friend*. (Ver. 10.) He, like Onesimus to his master, had been "aforetime unprofitable" to St. Paul (Acts xiii. 13; xv. 36—41); and his unprofitableness had caused a serious breach between the two great Gentile missionaries. But now, and again at a later time, he is marked out as "useful for ministry" (2 Tim. iv. 11). St. Paul's firmness and fidelity in refusing, at whatever cost, to take with him an untrustworthy man, had, we may presume, helped to rouse in Mark a better spirit. (1) At any rate, the position in which he now appears and the honour which belong to his name in the Church of Christ, shows that *one false step or unworthy act in a Christian life need not be absolutely fatal* (Gal. vi. 1). The immediate result of any lapse must be evil; and it may be followed throughout life by painful consequences. Yet Mark, like Peter, rashly generous and apt to over-estimate his strength at first, when chastened and corrected by experience, becomes the trusted and honoured friend of the two chief apostles, as well as of his only less illustrious kinsman Barnabas. And to him it was given to write the priceless second Gospel, which, in its freshness and simplicity of tone, and in its vivacity and dramatic energy of style, indicates those qualities in John Mark which, in spite of his early failure, made him so much valued and beloved. (2) And *St. Paul's treatment of Mark throws an interesting light on his own character*. With all his uncompromising sternness and the intensity of his passionate nature, there was no bitterness or suspiciousness, no cherishing of personal resentment in his heart. Some men will never trust again a friend or servant who once, under any circumstances, has failed them. But the apostle shows a more Christian and a wiser disposition. As he bids others, so he acts himself, "forbearing and forgiving if he have blame against any" (ch. iii. 13): compare the crucial instance of 2 Cor. ii. 5—11. As "the Lord forgave" Peter who denied him, so the apostle forgives Mark who had deserted him. And by the way in which he commends him to the regard of this distant Church, he shows how entirely Mark has his approval and confidence. We note also how once more he takes the opportunity of a kindly reference to Barnabas. 5. *Jesus Justus, a Catholic-minded Jew*. (Ver. 11.) He is known to us here only; but as one of the three (with Aristarchus and Marcus)

who alone "of the circumcision" were the apostle's "fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God," and "a comfort unto him." Aristarchus and Mark were old friends and associates of St. Paul, attached to him by many ties. Jesus Justus, we are inclined to think, was a Christian Jew of Rome, and in that case was, it appears, the only member of that community—a tolerably large one, as we should gather from the Epistle to the Romans—who heartily supported the apostle in this hour of his need and danger. Many of the Jewish brethren at Rome openly opposed him (Phil. i. 16); others regarded him with a cold and suspicious indifference. At a later period he has sorrowfully to say of his friends at Rome, "All forsook me" (2 Tim. iv. 16). But, whether Jesus Justus belonged to Rome or not, the fact that he was found at this time by St. Paul's side says a great deal for his courage, as well as for his largeness of heart and enlightened views. The three pillar-apostles at Jerusalem rather acquiesced in St. Paul's principles and the policy he had pursued than actively supported them (Gal. ii.); and their professed followers in the Jewish Churches denounced them and set up a counter-agitation. If for no other reason, then, it was fitting that the name of this Jesus should be honourably recorded. To the apostle who had been in so many "perils from his own countrymen" and "from false brethren" (2 Cor. xi. 26), every "fellow-labourer of the circumcision" was an especial "comfort." His cognomen *Justus* attests his reputation amongst his compatriots for legal strictness and uprightness; and this high character would make his attachment to St. Paul the more valuable.

6. *Epaphras, the earnest minister.* (Vers. 12, 13.) With the name of Epaphras we are familiar already (see homiletics, sect. 1, II. 2). Though absent from his people, he is none the less concerned for their welfare. When he can do nothing less, he can pray for them all the more. We note: (1) *The intensity of his ministerial solicitude*; "always striving [wrestling] for you in his prayers" (ver. 12); "he hath much [painful] labour for you" (ver. 13). The critical state in which he had left his charge at Colossæ, the insidious and ominous character of the errors introduced amongst them and with which he had found it so difficult to cope, were constantly weighing upon his mind, and kept him unceasingly active in earnest wrestlings of prayer for his people's souls.

(2) *The extent of his care.* "For you, and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis." The neighbouring cities with their little Christian flocks, exposed, or likely to be exposed, to the same perils that threatened Colossæ, share his solicitude. And the responsibility of the Christian minister cannot at any time be strictly confined to his own immediate charge. Each member shares in the joys and griefs, the dangers and trials, which belong to the whole body of Christ. And Churches bordering on his own and connected with his people by ties of acquaintanceship and frequent intercourse must especially attract his pastoral sympathies and intercession.

(3) *The aim of his ministry.* "That ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God" (ver. 13). This is the end of Christ's redemption and of his whole administration of the Church (ch. i. 22). This was the end of the apostle's labours (ch. i. 28, 29). Every true Christian minister will set the same mark before him, namely, the individual and collective perfection of his people in all that goes to make up a complete Christian manhood (Eph. iv. 13). And, partly as resulting from, partly as contributing to, their moral perfection, he must seek that their Christian convictions may be deepened and confirmed, may be more intelligently as well as more heartily and practically, and so in every way more surely, held (Eph. iv. 13—16). (See homiletics, sects. 1, III. 1; 3, I.; and 4, I. 2).

7. *Luke, the beloved physician.* (Ver. 14.) Of all the apostle's friends, none was dearer to him or more serviceable than St. Luke. He was with him to the very last (2 Tim. iv. 11). His writings, while they keep the writer's personality modestly out of sight, betray in him a man of a careful and diligent habit of mind, of considerable breadth of culture, and of a tender and sympathetic heart. The Acts of the Apostles show him to have been a warm and admiring, yet impartial, friend of St. Paul. And his Gospel is penetrated with that Pauline universalism which both he and his master first found in Christ. The apostle probably owed not a little to Luke's medical care. And we are all indebted to this quiet and skilful physician, who understood so well St. Paul's peculiar temperament and the value of his life to the Church, and whose intelligence and special training made his companionship so pleasant and so useful to the apostle. The medical profession is that which stands nearest to the ministry of Christ in the honours of self-sacrifice and devotion to humanity. There is

no vocation that demands a higher combination of intellectual and moral powers, or that puts a greater strain upon a man's best qualities. It may bring, and often does bring, the physician into a sympathy with the mind and with the mission of Christ closer and more real in some respects than any other work can do. Its best services are beyond all material and earthly reward. Exercised by a wise and faithful Christian man, it becomes a ministry of unspeakable blessing to soul as well as body, reaching, as did Christ's miracles of healing, the soul oftentimes through the body. *Medical men* Christ, "the good Physician," claims above other men for his followers and fellow-workers. 8. *Demas, the backslider.* (Ver. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 9, 10.) This man must have been valued greatly by the apostle, to be mentioned in such company. In his second imprisonment he urgently requires Timothy's presence, "because Demas had forsaken him." He appears to have depended hitherto upon Demas, and to have prized his aid. Demas had chosen his lot with the persecuted apostle, and for some time served him steadily and well; and then at the last, when the need was greatest, he deserted him, not through fear of danger, it appears, but for the sake of worldly gain—"having loved this present world." Whether he was ever restored to Christian fidelity or not, we cannot tell. His case is so much worse than Mark's, in that the latter gave way to fear under sudden impulse, and in the unexpected hardships and dangers of his first probation; while Demas seems to have forsaken the apostle deliberately and heartlessly, and when he was no mere novice in the service of Christ. He is an example of those in whom the good seed takes root and grows through the frosts of spring to a fair summer promise, and then "the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (Mark iv. 19).

II. THE MESSAGE TO LAODICEA. (Vers. 15—17.) This passage assumes a peculiar interest in connection with the after history of the Laodicean Church, and the terrible rebuke addressed to it by Christ in Rev. iii. 14—22. It is the only instance in which the apostle salutes one Church in writing to another. If the letter received from him by the Laodiceans was our (so-called) Epistle to the Ephesians, inasmuch as there is no particular greeting to any Church appended to it, we can understand why he should add this kindly salutation here. The Churches of the Lycus valley were so closely linked together that the state of one was to a large extent the state of all. We are not surprised, therefore, that the contagion of the Colossian evil spread to Laodicea. In that wealthy and luxurious city it bore disastrous fruit, in the corruption that Christ himself through St. John afterwards denounced in his Apocalyptic message. (1) The Colossians and Laodiceans are bidden to exchange Epistles (ver. 16), as they share the apostle's greetings and alike excited his anxiety (ch. ii. 1). Their similar condition and common dangers called for the same warnings and instructions, and the two Epistles largely explain and supplement each other. And indeed, wherever local circumstances permit, as in the freedom and ease of communication amongst ourselves it is so largely possible, Christian intercourse should be promoted, concerted measures should be taken, the forces of the Church should be combined in resistance to the spread of error and the contagion of vice. "Union is strength." (2) *Nympha* (or *Nymphas*) is greeted by name (ver. 15), according to the apostle's custom, who loves to single out for honour those who serve the Church by the readiness by which they place their house and means at her service (1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16; Rom. xvi. 3—5, 23). (3) The most significant sentence of this passage is the warning addressed to Archippus (ver. 17), whom we suppose to have held an office of trust in the Church at Laodicea. He is the son of St. Paul's honoured friend Philemon, and had been on some former occasion (probably at Ephesus) so closely associated with the apostle in circumstances of labour and danger that, in writing to his father, he calls him "my fellow-soldier." And yet symptoms of negligence have appeared in his conduct of affairs at Laodicea, that call forth the gentle yet serious admonition, "Take heed to the ministry that thou receivest in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." How grave his responsibility if this warning failed to take effect, and if the all but apostate state of the Laodicean Church some years afterwards was in any degree due to the unfaithfulness of its first pastor!

III. THE APOSTLE'S FAREWELL. (Ver. 18.) These brief, affecting words proceed from the author's own hand, the large and difficult characters themselves a reminder of his afflictions in the gospel. 1. He bids the Colossians *remember his bonds* (comp. Philem.

10, 13; Phil. i. 7, 17; Eph. iii. 1, 13; vi. 20; 2 Tim. ii. 9, 10; see homiletics, sect. 3, I. 4)—so sore a trial to him, so great an advantage and glory to them, calling for their tender and prayerful sympathy, and for their most regardful heed to all that he had written. 2. He wishes them *grace*—*grace* first and last (comp. ch. i. 2, and homiletics); the *grace* they had received already (ch. i. 6, 12, 21, 27; ii. 6; iii. 12, 13; Eph. i. 3) being the pledge and the earnest of all the fulness of that “superabounding grace” which reigns “through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. v. 20, 21; 2 Cor. ix. 8; Eph. i. 3; John i. 16).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*The duties of masters.* “Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”

I. THE DUTY OF MASTERS. It is here enforced only on its positive side. 1. *Justice.* Masters must give their servants what is according to contract, or according to what is just in itself, as to work, wages, food, correction, and example. 2. *Equality.* Masters sometimes treat servants unequally in demanding inconvenient service, an unreasonable amount of work, in withholding wages. They ought to treat them so that they may serve them cheerfully and efficiently.

II. THE REASON TO ENFORCE THIS DUTY. “Knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.” God’s majesty and man’s authority stand together. The Lord in heaven is the Master of masters, and will avenge the wrongs they may inflict on their servants.—T. C.

Ver. 2.—*Exhortation to constant prayer.* The apostle then gives some special concluding exhortations: “Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving.”

I. THE DUTY OF PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER. 1. *This does not imply that we are to devote all our time to prayer*; for it would be inconsistent (1) with other duties; (2) with man’s mental and moral nature; (3) with the design of prayer itself. 2. *It implies that we are to be often engaged in prayer.* (1) There is nothing more sanctifying and refreshing and strengthening to the soul. (2) Continuance in prayer brings larger blessings from on high. (3) The Scripture contains many examples of continuance in prayer (David, Daniel, Paul, our Lord himself). (4) The delay in the answers to prayer ought to lead us to persevere therein, because (a) it may lead to a deeper sense of want; (b) our faith and patience need to be tried; (c) the time for the answers may not have come.

II. THE DUTY OF WATCHFULNESS IN PRAYER. 1. *We must be watchful as to the spirit of prayer*, not indolent and remiss. 2. *We must watch for arguments in prayer.* 3. *We must watch for suitable praying seasons.* 4. *We must watch against watchlessness.* 5. *We must watch for the answers to prayer.* 6. *Remember Christ’s example as he watched in prayer.* (Matt. xiv. 23, 25.)

III. THE DUTY OF JOINING THANKSGIVING WITH OUR SUPPLICATIONS AND OUR WATCHING. 1. *We must always in prayer give thanks for mercies received.* (Phil. iv. 6; 1 Thess. v. 16, 17.) 2. *We must thank him in praises.* 3. *God answers according to our gratitude for mercies received.*—T. C.

Vers. 3, 4.—*Prayer for the apostle and his companions.* “Withal praying for us also, that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ for which I am also in bonds; that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”

I. EVEN THE GREATEST IN THE CHURCH NEEDS THE PRAYERS OF THE LEAST. 1. *It is the duty of the people to pray for their ministers.* 2. *It makes prayer profitable to interest ourselves in the welfare of others by intercessions for them at a throne of grace.* 3. *The progress of the gospel depends much upon the prayers of the saints.* (2 Thess. iii. 1.)

II. THE SUBJECT OF THE PRAYER. It was that the apostle and Timothy and Epaphras might have abundant opportunity of preaching the gospel, as well as liberty, power, and success. The prayer implies: 1. *That God can open a way for the gospel*

among the hearts of men. It was the Lord who opened Lydia's heart (Acts xvi. 14), and "opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts xiv. 27). 2. *That God could liberate the apostle from prison as a condition of carrying on his apostolic work.* 3. *That the apostle's imprisonment was caused by his devotion to the "mystery of Christ,"* which was the admission of the Gentiles to salvation on equal terms with the Jews, or, in other words, "Christ in them the Hope of glory" (ch. i. 27). He would not have been in prison if he had been preaching a gospel with Judaic restrictions. His bonds were due to the strength of Jewish prejudices. But "the truth of the gospel" was so dear to him that he was content to suffer for it, and even to forego the opportunities of enlarged usefulness out of prison. 4. *That he might be able to use his opportunities with boldness and success.* People ought to pray that their ministers may be able to preach the Word with power (1 Thess. v. 5); with urgency (2 Tim. iv. 2, 3, 5); with patience, constancy, and fear (1 Cor. iv. 9; 2 Cor. vi. 4; iv. 8); with faithfulness (1 Cor. iv. 2); with zeal (2 Cor. v. 11; 1 Thess. ii. 12),—approving themselves in the sight of God to their hearers' consciences (2 Cor. ii. 17).—T. C.

Ver. 5.—*The behaviour of Christians in the world.* "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." Consider—

I. THE PERSONS WHO ARE TO BE INFLUENCED BY OUR WALK. "Them that are without." Christians are those who are within (1 Cor. v. 12). Unbelievers are "without"—outside the Church, without God, without Christ, without hope in the world. They are those whom "God judgeth" (1 Cor. v. 13). Believers ought to have regard to such persons, not only in their prayers, but in the wisdom of their personal walk.

II. THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE BELIEVER'S WALK BEFORE THE WORLD. "Walk in wisdom, . . . redeeming the time." 1. *It is a wise walk.* "Be ye wise as serpents" (Matt. x. 16). Zeal is not enough. Love is not enough. Walk circumspectly, so as to give no offence or put occasions of reproach in the way of sinners. This is done by believers (1) walking in the light of God's Word (Ps. cxix. 1); (2) walking in all faithfulness of their calling (1 Thess. iv. 11, 12; 1 Tim. vi. 1); (3) walking in love to one another, without murmurings or disputings (Phil. ii. 15, 19); (4) walking in meekness toward all men (Titus iii. 1, 2; Jas. iii. 13); (5) walking in all patience and constancy under rebuke or injury (1 Pet. iii. 13—16). 2. *Such a walk is influential toward unbelievers.* (1) A believer ought to be more careful of his walk before them than before believers. (2) Such a walk has a winning effect upon the world, which thus sees the reality of true religion. Believers are to be "living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men" (2 Cor. iii. 3). (3) A foolish walk will cause the enemy to blaspheme. 3. *Believers ought to seek constant opportunities of obeying this command.* "Redeeming the time." External opportunities are to be sought for, and never to be neglected. Ministers must preach while the door is open; people must pray at every opportunity (Eph. vi. 18; Luke xxi. 36). They must walk in the light before the night comes. The times may not always be favourable.—T. C.

Ver. 6.—*The importance of seasonable speech.* "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how to answer each one." The conversation of believers is to have reference to "those without" as well as their personal behaviour.

I. THE NATURE OF SEASONABLE SPEECH. 1. *It is to be "always with grace."* (1) It is to spring out of some grace of God in the heart, such as knowledge, joy, love, fear; to be seasoned with the recollection of God's grace to us in Christ (Ps. xl. 11); and to minister grace to the hearers (Eph. iv. 29). 2. *It is to consist of gracious words.* (1) Not words of railing, or blasphemy, or corruption; (2) but words that are (a) seasonable (Prov. xv. 23), (b) wholesome (Eph. iv. 29), (c) kindly (Prov. xxxi. 26), (d) hopeful. 3. *The conversation of believers is to be uniformly with grace.* The precept is always in force. Much depends upon the continuity of a gracious habit of talk. It is to be exercised in all places, at all times, yet with due regard to what is seasonable or timely. 4. *It is to be seasoned with salt.* It is not to be insipid and without point, so as to be incapable of edifying man's spirit. It must have penetrative force, either for the purpose of directing the inquirer or answering the scoffer. "The tongue of the wise is as choice silver;" "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his

lips" (Prov. x. 20; xvi. 23). Our Lord said, "Every one must be salted with fire, every sacrifice must be salted with salt" (Mark ix. 49). The person is salted first; the salt is found in his words and deeds afterwards.

II. THE END OF SEASONABLE SPEECH. "That ye may know how to answer each one." This implies: 1. *That the truth will be spoken against.* (1) It is the heritage of "the sect everywhere spoken against" (Acts xxviii. 22). (2) It is hard for carnally minded men to understand it, and therefore they gainsay it. (3) There are men who "hold down the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. i. 18). 2. *That believers are to learn how to give a right answer to objectors.* We are to "give a reason of the hope that is in us with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. iii. 15). It must be done (1) prayerfully; for "the answer of the tongue," as well as "the preparation of the heart," "is from the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 1). (2) With faith in God's promise and hope (Ps. cxix. 42; Matt. x. 19). (3) With a good conscience (1 Pet. iii. 16). Thus objectors will be put to shame who "falsely accuse our good conversation in Christ." (4) With a due consideration for the circumstances of each objector, whether he be sincere or insincere, ignorant or malicious. We are "to answer each one" according to the necessities of each case (Prov. xxv. 11; xxvi. 4, 6).—T. C.

Vers. 7—9.—*The bearers of the Epistle to the Colossians.* Though the apostle had but few friends at this time in Rome to comfort him in his "bonds," he spares two of them to comfort the Colossians.

I. THE PERSONS WHO CARRY THE EPISTLE TO COLOSSE. Tychicus and Onesimus.

1. *Tychicus.* (1) His history. He was a native of Asia Minor (Acts xx. 4), and probably of Ephesus (2 Tim. iv. 12). He accompanied the apostle at the close of his third missionary journey (Acts xx. 4). He was now again with the apostle at Rome, near the end of the first Roman captivity; and he appears again with him at the very end of the apostle's life, when the apostle is sending him to Crete and to Ephesus (Titus iii. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 12). The name Tychicus appears on Roman inscriptions as well as on inscriptions in Asia Minor. (2) His character and work. He receives three titles of distinction and praise. (a) A beloved brother, in relation to the whole Christian Church; (b) a faithful minister, in relation to his evangelistic services to the apostle (Acts xx. 4); (c) a fellow-servant in the Lord, a co-operator with the apostle in Christian labours. 2. *Onesimus.* This was doubtless the runaway slave of Philemon, whose conversion is recorded in the Epistle to that Colossian brother. (1) He was a native of Colossæ—"who is one of you." (2) His changed character—"the faithful and beloved brother." (a) He was lately unfaithful, now he is faithful; he was lately an object of contempt and dislike, he is now an object of love. (b) The repentance of a sinner is a fact to be gratefully recorded. His former sins ought to be no disparagement to his present standing and repute. "Where God forgives, men should not impute." (c) The apostle is not ashamed of a poor slave, and commends him to the love of the Church.

II. THE DESIGN OF THE SENDING OF TYCHICUS AND ONESIMUS TO COLOSSE. "Whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our estate, and that he may comfort your hearts." There are two objects. 1. *To make known the affairs of the apostle and of the Roman Church.* It was not necessary, therefore, that he should give them any information about himself or the cause of Christ in Rome. The Colossians would hear all by word of mouth. 2. *To comfort the hearts of the Colossians.* They would comfort them (1) by their very presence; (2) by bringing the Epistles from Rome; (3) by their news concerning the apostle; (4) by their practical exhortations, enforcing the doctrine of the Epistle and the duty of perseverance in faith and grace to the end.—T. C.

Vers. 10, 11.—*Greetings from three loyal friends of the apostle.* The Epistle ends with salutations, first from three Jews, and then from three Gentiles.

I. THE THREE JEWISH FRIENDS OF THE APOSTLE. 1. *Aristarchus.* "Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you." He was a native of Thessalonica (Acts xx. 4), who accompanied the apostle in his third missionary journey. He was seized along with the apostle at Ephesus (Acts xix. 29), and accompanied him in his voyage to Rome (Acts xxvii. 2). He now shared the apostle's imprisonment at Rome. Adversity does not

lessen his affection for the apostle. 2. *Marcus*. "And Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him)." This was the author of the second Gospel, who was associated with the apostle in his earlier missionary labours, and afterwards forsook him at Pamphylia, under circumstances that led to a rupture between Paul and Barnabas (Acts xv. 39). He is now affectionately commended to the Colossians—for he had evidently recovered the confidence and love of the apostle—as "one useful to him for the ministry" (2 Tim. iv. 11). Mark was now resident in Rome. It is not possible to know what were the commands which the apostle had sent to the Colossians concerning him; probably they were to bespeak a hospitable reception for him, as the Pauline Churches may have suspected his fidelity. 3. *Jesus*. "And Jesus, which is called Justus." He is only mentioned in this place. He is not probably the same as Justus of Corinth (Acts xviii. 7). He was attached to the apostle. It is curious that a disciple who bore the name of our Lord should have also borne his title of "the just one."

II. THE APOSTLE'S HIGH COMMENDATION OF THE THREE FRIENDS. "These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort unto me." 1. *They were Jews*. "Who are of the circumcision." 2. *They were exceptions to the rule of anti-Pauline animosity on the part of Christian Jews*. The exception is limited, probably, to those Jews in Rome, who preached Christ "through strife and envy," hoping thus to "add affliction to his bonds" (Phil. ii. 20). But these three comforted him by hearty co-operation and their kindly sympathies. The best and greatest men need the comfort of the very humblest, who in their turn rebuke the conduct of those who grieve God's servants and are thorns in their sides.—T. C.

Vers. 12—14.—*Greetings from three Gentile friends of the apostle*. I. *EPAPHRAS* 1. *His relation to the Colossians*. "Who is one of you." A native of their city, like Onesimus. 2. *His office*. "A servant of Jesus Christ"—a title often applied to the apostle by himself, and once applied to Timothy (Phil. i. 1)—to indicate his considerable services in the cause of Christ's gospel. He was the founder of the Church at Colossæ. 3. *His love to them*. "Always wrestling for you in prayers that ye may stand fast, perfect and fully assured in all the will of God." His love was manifest in his constant and anxious prayers for his flock. Consider: (1) The manner of his prayers. "Always wrestling for you in prayers." (a) He was in an agony of prayer for them (a) because of the greatness of the dangers that encompassed them; (β) because of the fear of his prayers being lost; (γ) because of the tenderness of his love for them. He was truly "fervent in spirit." (b) He was always wrestling in prayer for them, (a) We must be constant in prayer (1 Thess. v. 16). (β) It maintains fervency of spirit. (γ) It has the greater prospect of a favourable answer. (2) The matter of his prayers. "That ye may stand fast, perfect and fully assured in all the will of God." It is a prayer for the stability of the Colossians, in view of the possible dangers of apostasy. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). "God is able to establish us" (1 Cor. xv. 1). This stability is manifest in two things. (a) *Maturity*. "Perfect." Epaphras prays that the flock may stand fast in a complete and universal obedience. This they cannot do without labouring for much knowledge (1 Cor. xiv. 20), exercising themselves in the Word of righteousness (Heb. v. 14), allowing patience to have her perfect work (Jas. iii. 1; i. 5). (b) *Firm persuasion*. "Fully assured in all the will of God." There was to be no vacillation or falling away, but a sure conviction of the truth of God's will. The Judæo-Gnostics made a pretension to a perfection of wisdom, and found its sphere in the secrets of heavenly existence. Believers find it in the sphere of God's will. 4. *His zealous labours for the welfare of all the Churches in the Lycus valley*. "For I bear him witness, that he hath much labour for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis." He was probably the founder of all three Churches, which were within a short distance of each other. The apostle commends him to the Colossians that he may increase their respect and love for him on his return from Rome.

II. *LUKE*. "The beloved physician." This was the evangelist, who had travelled with the apostle on his last journey to Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 1), and then from Jerusalem to Rome two years later (Acts xxvii. 2), and now again was in his company. He was apparently the apostle's only companion at the end of his second imprisonment (2 Tim.

iv. 11): "Only Luke is with me." He was doubly beloved, both as physician and evangelist, for the weak health of the apostle, both in prison and out of it, needed his professional care.

III. DEMAS. 1. *He was probably a Thessalonian.* (2 Tim. iv. 10.) Twice again his name occurs in company with that of Luke (Philem. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 10). 2. *There is here a bare mention of his name, without a word of commendation.* Perhaps the apostle had an insight into his real character. His name occurs significantly last of all among the six who greet the Colossians. 3. *He deserts the apostle in the near prospect of his end.* "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. iv. 10). Yet, at present, he keeps his standing among the companions of the apostle and receives a due recognition.—T. C.

VERS. 15—17.—*Salutations and parting counsels to friends.* "Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the Church that is in their house."

I. THE SALUTATION. 1. *To the brethren of Laodicea, who are called also "the Church in Laodicea."* The apostle had a deep interest in them, because they were exposed to the same spiritual dangers as the Colossians. They dwelt in a rich, commercial city, and seem to have degenerated spiritually many years afterwards (Rev. iii. 14—16). 2. *To Nymphas and the Church in their house.* This was an eminent Christian of Laodicea, probably a rich man, and certainly full of zeal for the cause of God, for his house was the meeting-place of a Church. He was evidently a centre of religious life in this important locality.

II. HIS COUNSEL TO THE COLOSSIANS. "And when this Epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans; and that ye also read that from Laodicea." 1. *The nearness of these Churches to each other, as well as their exposure to the risks of the same heretical teaching, explains this counsel.* The letter from Laodicea was probably the Epistle to the Ephesians, which was of an encyclical character, and was now carried by Tychicus to the Churches of Proconsular Asia. 2. *It is the privilege as well as the duty of private Christians to read the Scriptures.* (John v. 39.) 3. *This is a plain proof that the Scriptures are to be read publicly in the Church.* (Acts xiii. 15.)

III. HIS INDIVIDUAL COUNSEL TO ARCHIPPUS. "And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." 1. *The position of Archippus.* He was a member of the household of Philemon, and probably his son (Philem. 2). He held some office in the Church, for he is called "a fellow-soldier" of the apostle. If he was a minister at Laodicea, as some suppose, the counsel addressed to him throws a significant light upon the condemnation of the Laodiceans many years afterwards for their lukewarmness. If, however, he was a minister at Colossæ, as is more natural, the apostle's counsel recognizes the right of the Colossian Christians to exercise discipline or reproof in the case of their teachers. 2. *The admonition to Archippus.* He was to fulfil his ministry. (1) *It was a ministry received by him.* (a) He was not self-appointed. (b) He received it, not only from the Lord, but in the Lord, whose grace prepared him for it and kept him in it. Therefore his responsibility was all the more serious. (2) *It was a ministry to be fulfilled.* He was "to make full proof of his ministry" like Timothy (2 Tim. iv. 5). He was to "stir up the gift of God" (2 Tim. ii. 6). He was to hold on till the end, shaking off lethargy and listlessness, showing the people the whole counsel of God, refuting all sorts of sins and errors, and being "instant in season, out of season" (2 Tim. iv. 2) in all labours for Christ. (3) *There was need for the apostle's warning counsel.* "Take heed." This individual warning would not have been sent in an Epistle designed for the whole Church if there had not been some failure of effort or duty on the part of Archippus. There is always need for ministers to "take heed to their ministry," considering (a) the dignity of their office; (b) the value of immortal souls; (c) the risks to which the flock are exposed from errors, sin, and worldliness; (d) the account that is to be given to God.—T. C.

VER. 18.—*Autograph salutation.* "The salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you."

I. THE AUTOGRAPH WAS TO ATTEST THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE EPISTLE.

II. THE REFERENCE TO HIS IMPRISONMENT WAS TO BESPEAK, NOT ONLY THEIR SYMPATHY, BUT THEIR INCREASED INTEREST IN THE GOSPEL. "He who is suffering for Christ has a right to speak on behalf of Christ."

III. HIS PARTING WORD IS, "GRACE BE WITH YOU." He has exalted God's grace. He prays that the Colossians should not lose the grace they had received, that it should abide with them for ever, as the spring of power, holiness, and fidelity to truth.—T. C.

Vers. 2—6.—*The life of prayer and sympathy.* Having shown how Christianity elevates the household, Paul next encourages the Colossians to prayerful and sympathetic lives. They shall find themselves in contact with others in the walks of public service, and they are to go forth to meet others prayerfully, sympathetically, graciously. Public life can only be properly utilized when based upon constant prayerfulness.

I. CONSIDER WHAT CONSTANT PRAYER IS. (Ver. 2.) It is lingering at the source of inspiration that our souls may be fitted for their public work. It is the attitude of felt dependence upon God—the confession that without his grace we can do nothing. It is the abnegation of self-confidence and the prostration of the soul before the Lord. It is the secret of public power. Hence Paul exhorts the Colossians to be always prayerful, and to be grateful as they prayed. If they have the sense of obligation implied by thanksgiving and a sense of need expressed by prayer, they shall be fitted for public work. Prayerless and thankless souls only miss and mar the opportunities of usefulness afforded them.

II. THEY MUST PRAY FOR OTHERS AS WELL AS THEMSELVES, ESPECIALLY FOR THE IMPRISONED PREACHER. (Vers. 3, 4.) Intercession will be a large part of enlightened prayer. It is so in the Lord's Prayer. For prayer makes us unselfish. We only seek the supply of personal need that we may be public benefactors. Hence we recognize at once the privilege and duty of intercession. All men need our prayers. Kings and those in authority, as well as those in more private stations, need our intercession. But among all the subjects of our intercession, none deserve better from their fellows than the preachers of the gospel. They are the most important and influential persons in the world. And their utterance is of more moment than that of statesmen or of kings. Hence, when Paul asks an interest in the intercessions of the Colossians, it is that he may be enabled to speak the mystery of Christ with increasing boldness, and may have a door of utterance opened widely to him. The most important message for mankind is the gospel. The intercessions of saints should largely be that preachers may be delivered from all limitations in the utterance of their message, and may issue from every "imprisonment" into the large liberty and impassioned utterance of the gospel.

III. THEY ARE TO EMBRACE THEIR OPPORTUNITY OF USEFULNESS WISELY. (Ver. 5.) Prayer and intercession will greatly help in this respect. It is when we enter upon our opportunity with the sense of the overshadowing presence; it is when we believe that God is with us and with all our fellow-workers, for whom we have interceded, that we can hopefully embrace the opportunity. How many chances, to use the world's term, have we lost just through deficiency in prayer! We have been like the disciples in the valley, helpless before the lunatic child because prayerless before the opportunity came; whereas, had we been transfigured with our Master on the mount, we should have had no difficulty in improving our opportunity and being most helpful unto others.

IV. ABOVE ALL THINGS THEY ARE TO CULTIVATE A GRACIOUS CONVERSATION. (Ver. 6.) The filthiness of the conversation in heathen lands is beyond conception. The ear is more rudely assailed than even the eye. Hence the necessity of rousing converts to a gracious conversation. When the oaths and impurity and maledictions, not to speak of the idle words of heathenism, are given up, and in their stead considerate, kindly, gracious words always spoken, then the world wonders at the change and is impressed and improved by it. In other words, the Colossians are to speak out of hearts steeped in prayer and filled with the Spirit. If we would take up and practise this idea, that we ought to speak and live as *inspired* men, the world would soon surrender to the claim of Christianity. Alas! the saints are often anything but inspired in their conversation, and it is no wonder that the world is not much moved by them. Until we realize our responsibility in this matter more, the kingdom of God cannot be much hastened.—R. M. E.

Vers. 7—18.—*The apostle's entourage.* At the time when this Epistle was written Paul had a considerable band about him. Though a prisoner in Rome, he has gathered round him a troop of friends. The time has not come when he has to say, "Only Luke is with me" (2 Tim. iv. 10). It is interesting to notice those he has at this time around him.

I. THE LETTER-CARRIERS. (Vers. 7—9.) These are Tychicus and Onesimus. They carry each a letter—Tychicus this letter to the Church, Onesimus the letter for Philemon. The freeman and the slave are to journey together as brothers in the Lord, carrying tidings of the imprisoned preacher and the love-tokens in his Epistles. What beautiful harmony has Paul summoned forth! Christianity recognizes not the distinctions of the world, but bond and free realize their unity in Christ.

II. THE JEWS. (Vers. 10, 11.) He has with him as "fellow-prisoner" Aristarchus, the faithful companion who had risked himself in the theatre at Ephesus, and who seems to have voluntarily shared the imprisonment with the apostle. Mark also, the cousin of Barnabas, is with him, not very reliable or certain in his movements, but with whom Paul has long ago made up his quarrel and can dwell in peace. Jesus also, another Jew, a loyal citizen as his additional name Justus implies, is with Paul, and they are such genuine converts from Judaism as to be most comforting "fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God." The large-hearted Jewish apostle has attracted to his side magnanimous, large-souled Jews also to co-operate in the missionary enterprise.

III. THE GENTILES. (Vers. 12—15.) We have three Gentiles as a set-off to the three Jewish companions. These are Epaphras, who has come from Colossæ to aid the work, and who seems to have been a specially prayerful man, making his native district the burden of his constant intercessions. Next there is "Luke, the beloved physician," the medical attendant and fast friend for many years of the great apostle. It was he who lingered with him during his second imprisonment, when all the rest had forsaken him, and who saw his end. His writings, the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, constitute him the "Josephus of the Christian Church," and form the natural and indispensable introduction to the Pauline Epistles. And, lastly, we have Demas, whose loyalty had not been tested at this time fully, but whose sad history is written by Paul later on in the brief words, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. iv. 10). It would thus appear that just as Jesus had a Judas in his band of disciples, so Paul had a Demas in those attracted to his side. The best of men cannot exclude the insincere from the work in which they need "fellow-workers." And it is best, for the hostile at heart are admirable witnesses of the private life of the Christian leaders. Neither Judas nor Demas ever bore bad witness about their masters!

IV. THE PUBLIC USE TO BE MADE OF THIS EPISTLE. (Vers. 15, 16.) It was to be handed about to neighbouring Churches, and other letters sought in exchange. Paul was writing, not for Colossæ alone, but for all Churches to which his Epistle would come. It was therefore a public Epistle. The letter Onesimus had in his pocket was private. It was intended for Philemon alone, and yet, blessed be God, it too has become public property. But the other Pauline Epistles were meant by their author to be public documents. We may well rejoice that such precious literary remains have come down to us.

V. THE SPECIAL SALUTATION TO ARCHIPPUS, THE MINISTER IN CHARGE. (Ver. 17.) This must have been a solemn and yet a salutary word. The ministry had been received "from the Lord," as some put it. Archippus looked past apostle and all terrestrial officials to Jesus as his Master, and it was a ministry in the Lord he had received. But at the same time he will receive cordially such an exhortation, and his responsibilities shall in consequence be more carefully discharged. It is in increased ministerial conscientiousness that the progress of a Church is to be realized. And thus it is with pathetic warning the interesting Epistle ends. As the apostle puts his bold signature to the document and asks to have his bonds remembered, this Epistle of the captivity goes forth complete to the world-wide mission intended by the Spirit.—R. M. E.

Vers. 2—6.—*Prayer and prudence.* I. PRAYER. 1. General. (1) *Steadfastness in prayer.* "Continue steadfastly in prayer." There is the same direction in Rom.

xii. 12, "Continuing steadfastly in prayer." We shall not be able to carry out the direction unless we pray from principle. And that implies, not only that we have a deep conviction of the obligation of prayer, but also that we have a distinct conception of the form which the obligation is to take, as to our times of prayer and our subjects of prayer. Having an intelligent conviction of the duty, we are to hold to it steadfastly, in the face of all temptations to interrupt it. It is said of the disciples after the Ascension, that they continued steadfastly in prayer. They had a special subject of prayer, and they held to it uninterruptedly for ten days, until it was answered in the descent of the Holy Ghost. (2) *Wakefulness in prayer.* "Watching therein." This is brought in as an element without which steadfastness would be of no use. Prayer is a duty in which our whole being is to be awake. There is to be the absence of all sleepiness whatsoever. Especially are we to be wakeful, spiritually. We are to be wakeful to the truth and promises of God. We are to be wakeful to our own wants. We are to be wakeful to the wants of others. And not only are we to be wakened up in the directions noted, but wakened up so that our powers have full play. We have in Jacob one whose wakefulness was kept up to the highest point through the hours of night till he obtained the blessing. "With thanksgiving." Thus again is the subordinate feature in the Epistle introduced. The thought is, that we are to be wakeful toward God for benefits obtained. Wakefulness toward God for past benefits is the best state of preparation for the reception of future benefits. 2. *Particular.* "Withal praying for us also." They were not only to pray for themselves, for others, about other affairs, but specially for Paul and his coadjutors, and as he here directs. (1) *Immediate object.* "That God may open unto us a door for the Word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds." Next to having the Word is having a door opened for the Word, i.e. an unhindered opportunity for its going forth. By the Word was meant more particularly the mystery of Christ, i.e. the gospel with reference to the Gentiles. The mystery was to go forth in it being *spoken*. In regard to that he was hindered at present. For not only was he called to speak the mystery of Christ, but also (so much had he entered into it) to be in bonds for it. And others were detained with him. And he prayed, and wished them to pray, for his liberation from captivity, that he and the others might go forth with the mystery. (2) *Ultior object.* "That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak." The situation of the apostle here has been described as *tragic*. He was possessed with a burning desire that the Gentiles might have the gospel. He had exalted ideas of the *requirements* of his apostolate. He was conscious, too, of the apostolic energy stirring within him. There was a certain outlet for that energy. For he was allowed to speak the Word to all that came unto him. And he was enabled to write this Epistle and other Epistles, which have laid the Church under lasting obligation. But he wanted to make the mystery manifest on a far wider scale. He wanted to have freedom in moving from place to place, in combating error on the spot, in forming Churches. And it was in this his restrained position that he asked to be assisted by their prayers.

II. DUTY TO THEM THAT ARE WITHOUT. How is a Christian society to advance its ends with them that are outside? That is a question which has not lost its importance. 1. *Walk.* "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." It is said in Ephesians, "Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil." It is the same precept here, with special application to them that are outside. (1) *Wisdom.* One end for which a Christian society exists is *self-preservation*. It was very important for them to act so that they did not unnecessarily bring persecution upon themselves. Another and higher end for which a Christian society exists is *extension*. For this end zeal is necessary, but at the same time it must be zeal tempered with discretion. Christian wives would naturally be deeply interested in the conversion of their heathen husbands, but how did the Apostle Peter enjoin them to act? "In like manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, even if any obey not the Word, they may without the Word be gained by the behaviour of their wives; beholding your chaste conversation coupled with fear." The position of the members of a Christian society is similar. We have to win over them that are outside. Where the Word by itself fails (men obeying not the Word), we may do this *without the Word*, viz. by our Christian behaviour, by quietly and steadily showing what our religion is, especially in the

production in us of those elements which those outside can more readily appreciate—purity, honour, charitableness, unselfishness, gentleness. There is action of a more direct kind toward them that are outside, for which wisdom is needed. The apostles supply a remarkable instance of failure in this respect. Not sure of their action, they referred it to Christ. "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy Name, and he followed not us, and we forbade him, because he followeth not us." This man was certainly at an outside, but, as on the way to higher things, Christ said, "Forbid him not: for there is no man, that shall do a miracle in my Name, that shall lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us." This saying of our Lord throws great light on what should be the manner of our procedure toward them that are without. We are to accept of the slightest acknowledgment of Christianity. We are to turn back no one whose face seems turned in the right direction, though he does not yet join himself to us or work by our methods. This, and not the mistaken "We forbid you," is the way to encourage men toward our position. (2) *Urgency*. For the end of self-preservation, the *moment* was to be well thought of by the Colossians. For the unwise use of one moment they might have to suffer for years. So for the end of winning over them that are outside, the moment is to be well thought of by us. We are not to contract debt in connection with it. We are to make it our own for our end. We are to leave nothing undone to persuade, to entice, them that are without to come within the pale of the Christian Church. We are ever to be acting as on a motion of urgency, viz. the salvation of our fellow-travellers to eternity, during their brief time of probation. 2. *Speech*. There are given three qualities of good speech, with primary reference to them that are outside. (1) *Pleasingness*. "Let your speech be always with grace." There is a pleasing and an unpleasing way of saying a thing. We are to study to have always a pleasing mode of speech. It is said of Jesus that they wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth. The reference was not merely to the contents of the words, but also to the winning form in which they were put. (2) *Healthfulness*. "Seasoned with salt." The language proceeds upon the conception of speech as an article of food, or as having nutriment in it to be communicated. The idea of pleasingness is carried forward in the flavouring. It is to be flavoured, so as not to be insipid. But the salt, with which the flavouring is to be effected, adds the idea of healthfulness. By salt in speech, we may understand seriousness of aim. Even in our moments of rest and of social enjoyment we are to have a feeling of the solemnity of life. We are to occupy our conversation with things according to their relative importance. We are to show a preference for the useful. We are not to use speech to communicate poison, but to communicate right sentiments. We are to show that we attach supreme importance to the gospel of Christ. This is healthfulness to be combined with pleasingness. (3) *Aptness*. "That ye may know how ye ought to answer each one." The idea of pleasingness is still carried forward, and is further to be combined with aptness. In those days questions were often put to the Christians about their religion. They were expected to be able to give an account of the articles of their faith, of the facts of Christianity, of its institutions, of benefits derived, of losses entailed. These questions were not always put by sincere inquirers. They were often put from curiosity or with evil intention. In no case were they to show resentment. They were always, with all pleasingness, to give the answer which the question demanded, in the hope that it might commend itself to the inquirer. In these days questions are not so often put to Christians. It would be well if they were oftener put, and if we could put the right answer in pleasing form.—R. F.

Vers. 7—18.—*The personal*. I. *AFFAIRS OF THE APOSTLE*. He gives his reason for not entering on these in his letter. The paragraph is similar in construction to Eph. vi. 21, 22. The difference is confined to two points. 1. *The designation of Tychicus as fellow-servant*. "All my affairs shall Tychicus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord: whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our estate, and that he may comfort your hearts." He characterizes what Tychicus was in the Lord, i.e. within the sphere where Christ appoints and animates. Within that sphere he had the qualities which made him beloved as a brother (an important point in a mission). He

had also the qualities which, as they made him fit to be entrusted with the gospel, also made him fit to be entrusted with a mission from the apostle. He was, besides, a fellow-servant on an equality with the apostle in being at the call of the Master in services to Churches, and they were to receive him at Colossæ in the Lord's name. His mission extended beyond the mere bearing of the letter (which is not mentioned), to conveying intelligence regarding the circumstances, spirit, work, prospects of the apostle and others with him, as would be fitted to cheer their hearts. 2. *The association of Onesimus with Tychicus.* "Together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that are done here." Onesimus is mentioned as affectionately as Tychicus. The only difference is the absence of any official designation. His being called "brother" illustrates the principle laid down by the apostle in this Epistle, that there is not bondman nor freeman. The renewal after the image of God had commenced, and was going on, in this slave. And therefore he acknowledges him as a brother. Prominence is given to his being a *faithful* brother. He had formerly been unfaithful, in the service rendered to his master Philemon, and in running away from that service. He had been so effectually transformed that already (and much time cannot have elapsed) Paul can vouch for his trustworthiness. His being called "beloved brother" shows that he had exhibited singular qualities of heart, which is very touchingly brought out in the Epistle to Philemon. The interesting circumstance is mentioned, that Onesimus was one of them, a native of Colossæ (we may understand), one whose name was to be added to their roll of membership, and who would be no mere nominal addition, but an addition to their working strength. Paul trusted him in much, after having trusted him in little, when he associated him with Tychicus, not only in bearing the letter, but in declaring to the Church at Colossæ all things which were done at Rome.

II. SALUTATIONS FOR THE COLOSSIANS. 1. *From three Jewish Christians.* (1) *Aristarchus.* "Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you." That he was an active helper of the apostle, may be gathered from his being classed in the Epistle to Philemon among his fellow-workers. The beautiful thing regarding him is, that he is so near to the apostle in seasons of danger. In his connection with him, he was subjected to the violence of the multitude in Ephesus. Then a plot of the Jews brings him into connection with the apostle. Then he appears as a companion of the apostle on his journey as a prisoner to Rome. And here he is styled "fellow-prisoner." He was not ashamed of the apostle's chains. He was not afraid to endanger his own life for his sake. From the fact of his being styled "fellow-worker" and Epaphras "fellow-prisoner" in the Epistle to Philemon, which was transmitted along with the Epistle to Colossæ, it has not unreasonably been concluded that Paul's friends voluntarily shared his imprisonment by turns. (2) *Mark.* "And Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him)." It was an honourable circumstance, which Paul with good feeling notes, that Mark was connected with *Barnabas*. He seems to have been included within the apostolic circle. He began his Christian career by divesting himself (in no monastic spirit) of the *embarrassment of riches*. "He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." He had the advance of Paul in Christian service, and generously introduced him to the Church at Jerusalem, and afterward, when the work could not be overtaken at Antioch, knowing the fitness of Paul, he went forth to Tarsus to seek for him, and when he had found him, brought him on to Antioch. For a long time they laboured conjointly, and for a time we read of Barnabas and Paul as though the older in service exercised an influence over the younger, not yet fully conscious of his powers. But their plans diverged with regard to the kinsman of Barnabas who is mentioned here; and so sharp was the contention between these good men that they parted asunder, one from the other. It may be assumed that Mark was blameworthy in not going with them to the work. He was apparently swayed at the time by some reason of personal convenience. Whether Paul or Barnabas was right in regard to his again being associated with them in service, is a different question. It appears from this notice that Mark had won his way back into the apostle's confidence. Already commandments touching him had been sent on, and now there is bespoken for him a favourable reception, should it fall in with his plans to pay a visit to Colossæ. (3) *Jesus Justus.* "And Jesus, which is called Justus." He lived a life upon which light shall one day be cast. All that we

know of him is from the notice here. He commended himself to the apostle, as interested in the *health* of the Colossian community. And he comes in for his share of commendation in the language which follows. *The three commended.* "Who are of the circumcision: these only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort unto me." There would be unbelieving Jews at Rome who would not be sorry for his chains. But there were others (apparently) who had advanced from Judaism to Christianity. It might have been expected, on common Christian grounds, that these would have shown sympathy with him. It is against them (by implication) that he makes complaint. He does not deny altogether that they were helpers, but they were not his fellow-helpers; they were not his fellow-helpers toward the kingdom of God in the wide sense in which he understood it. They stood aloof from him because of his estimate of the Law. All the more honour, then, to the three in Rome who, free from prejudice, had stood by him, and been a comfort to him when he needed it. 2. *From three Gentile Christians.* (1) *Epaphras.* "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, saluteth you." This Epaphras, who (probably after he had come under the influence of Paul at the Asiatic centre, Ephesus) founded the Colossian Church, was himself a Colossian. He was formerly styled "fellow-servant;" here, without relation to others, he is styled "a servant of Christ Jesus." It would be absurd to translate it "bond-servant," though it holds that Christ is absolute Disposer of his servants. Epaphras was a servant in an official sense, at the call of Christ for special service in the Churches. As their minister, he is naturally the first of the Gentile three who sent their salutations to the Colossian Church. *The character in which he appears here is that of a minister absent for a time from his flock.* (a) *His prayerfulness.* "Always striving for you in his prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God." A minister is sometimes necessitated, by the state of his health, to be absent from the sphere of his work proper. In these circumstances his great resort is prayer. Paul had difficulty in telling how greatly he strove for as many as had not seen his face in the flesh. Here he tells how Epaphras was always striving for the Colossians in his prayers. How much they must have been in his thoughts, that they came so much into his prayers, and, when they did come, occasioned so much *wrestling*! It was a comprehensive object for which he wrestled. It was that they might stand perfect and fully assured in every separate will of God. If we think of a single division of time or single set of circumstances, the prime necessity is to know the will of God regarding it. If we think of our relation to that will, it implies three things. We must not only know, but must stand without wavering in the will of God. Then we must stand, not in part, but in the whole of the will of God, relative to time and circumstances. Lastly, we must not only stand in the whole of the will, but have the full assurance that we are standing. This last is the climax of our relation to it. Beyond all knowledge and rightness of disposition, it is to be desired, for our own comfort, that, before and in the doing of the Divine will, we have an unwavering persuasion that it is really the Divine will, and no *ignis fatuus* of our own imagination, that we are following. This, indeed, is contained in promise: "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." (b) *His labour.* "For I bear him witness, that he hath much labour for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis." There is a very beautiful association with the name Mizpah: "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another." The Lord's servant, Paul, was witness between Epaphras and the Colossians, and he vouches for their minister's *labour* in his absence. It is a word which approaches in meaning to "anguish." It comprehended much more than his prayers. He was often engaged, by himself and in consultation with Paul, on the Colossian problem. He was often seen (when not sharing the apostle's confinement) about the city after business affecting the Colossian Church. Nor was his burdensome labour confined to the one Church. It extended to the Church of Laodicea, and to the Church of Hierapolis. These were Churches in the neighbourhood. The three towns were situated in the valley of the Lycus. Colossæ was the least important of the three, but it was there, probably, that by means of Epaphras the gospel had been first received, and from which, by his means also, the gospel had been extended to Laodicea and to Hierapolis. If we understand his having had an equal interest in the formation of the three Churches, it was only natural

that his anxious labour extended to the three. (2) *Luke*. "Luke, the beloved physician." What is the ideal of a physician? He is, in the first place, one who enters thoroughly into the duties of his profession. He is one who keeps abreast of medical knowledge, and may be able at some sacrifice to make contributions to it. He is one who has skill in the practice of his profession, and does not grudge labour, fatigue, even exposure to danger, in seeking to remove disease and alleviate pain. Such a physician has in his hands the means of powerfully attaching men to him, by services rendered to them. He is also one who has Christian sympathies, who enters into the spirit and follows the example of him who, while ministering to men's bodies, ministered also to men's souls. He is one who embraces the opportunities which his profession presents of speaking words of warning and of comfort. He, who thus attaches men to him by a double bond, may well be called *the beloved physician*. The third Gospel, and the Acts of the Apostles, bear evidence to the general culture of Luke. It has been made out that the first of these bears evidence of special medical knowledge. It may be inferred that Luke rendered to Paul valuable professional assistance. He may have been, under God, the means of saving his life. From his being called, in the Epistle to Philemon, a "fellow-helper," it may be inferred that his help to the Christian cause was not confined to his professional services nor to his literary services, but that he directly took part in the proclamation of the gospel. (3) *Demas*. "And Demas salute you." From the honourable mention of him here, and from his being numbered among the fellow-helpers in the Epistle to Philemon, it is evident that at this time he stood in the confidence of the apostle. When we remember his subsequent desertion of the apostle ("Demas forsook me, having loved this present world"), it is remarkable how he is mentioned here without any epithet such as "beloved" or "faithful."

III. SALUTATIONS FOR THE LAODICEANS TO BE COMMUNICATED BY THE COLOSSIANS. "Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the Church that is in their house." It is not to be wondered at that there should be a Church gathering connected with a private house. Where there was a place of general gathering for a Church at that time, it would be very unimportant. We can understand that, as a rule, there would be little gatherings from evening to evening, in private houses, of Christians in the immediate neighbourhood. These at times would grow into large gatherings. The apostle had never been at Laodicea, but he may have seen Nymphas. He had at least heard of him, and he had pleasant associations with him and the little gathering in his house. And, among the brethren in Laodicea, he singles them out for his salutations. The medium of the apostle's salutations to the Laodicean Church was to be the Colossian Church. They were as a Church to say, "We in Paul's name salute you." It was an act fitted to promote good fellowship between the two Churches.

IV. READING. "And when this Epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans and that ye also read the Epistle from Laodicea." This letter was to be read at a general gathering of the Church in Colossæ. There was another letter, which had been addressed at a previous period to the Church at Laodicea (salutations only are sent at this time). It was not the will of the Head of the Church that the letter should be preserved. The apocryphal letter to the Laodiceans is only a cento made out of Paul's writings. There would be what was peculiar in each of these letters, but, being addressed to neighbouring Churches, there would be much that was adapted to them both. And so he instructs that both should be read in both places.

V. INSTRUCTIONS FOR ARCHIPPUS BY THE CHURCH. "And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." We are not told what the ministry was, but the probability is that he ministered in the gospel in the absence of Epaphras. It cannot with certainty be inferred that he had shown remissness in his duties. It is an injunction which may be laid on a minister in any circumstances. It is specially to be laid on a minister, in view of a more critical condition of the Church to which he ministers. There are advantages and incitements, but there are also difficulties and temptations connected with a sacred position. The interests involved are very great, and it is fitting that we should seek to fulfil that service which we have received in the Lord, with a deep feeling of our responsibility to the Lord. In the fact of the injunction being laid on Archippus by the Church, there is an implied rebuke of the hierarchical spirit.

VI. CONCLUSION. "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you." The apostle has, from necessity of his position, employed an amanuensis. When the amanuensis has done his work, Paul takes the pen in hand, and adds, "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand." And feeling the difficulty of using the pen in consequence of his bonds, he adds, very naturally and very affectingly, "Remember my bonds." This bore evidence to the depth of his interest in them and in the truth. He had not the paths of dalliance trod. He had gone the length of bonds. It is principally to be regarded as a powerful enforcement of all that he has said, including his request that they should pray for his liberation. There is added the briefest form of benediction: "Grace be with you." Never, however pressed for space or inconvenienced, can he leave out the thought of the Divine bestowal on us in our unworthiness.—R. F.

Vers. 2—4.—*An exhortation to prayer.* Paul had been, as we have seen, describing noble and difficult duties of husbands, children, etc. He evidently felt they were so noble that they ought to be attained, and yet so difficult that he must at once suggest one way to their attainment. He has shown the goal, now he shows the path. That path is prayer. Husbands, wives, all who would become what I have described, "continue in prayer." In his exhortation to prayer we may notice—

I. SOME ELEMENTS IN ALL TRUE PRAYER. And of these elements there is in the very front: 1. *Constancy.* "Continue steadfastly," as the Revised Version has it. Not fitfully, occasionally, irregularly, but with steady constancy, pray. (1) There ought to be constancy because of the need there is. The need is perpetual, for the duties to be discharged to which prayer alone can help, and the dangers to be avoided from which prayer alone can deliver, are ever with us. (2) There can be constancy, because the opportunity is always granted. There are avenues of religious help a man may close against his brother, but not 'this. Excommunicated, exiled, tortured, imprisoned, he can still pray. Wherever God is and a human soul is, there prayer can be. So Daniel, Jonah, Stephen, found. 2. *Wakefulness.* "Watching." Not as a sleeper, but as a sentry, must the man be who prays. Understanding, emotion, will, must be awake, as he who guards the city is awake to hear the first footfall of a foe, to catch the first shadow of a danger. Not in dreamy lethargy can men pray. "No arrow of prayer can reach the sky that does not fly from a heart strongly bent as some elastic bow." 3. *Gratitude.* "With thanksgiving." Thus the conception of prayer is widened, beyond that of mere petition, to that of intercourse. Prayer becomes a Eucharist. Indeed, thanksgiving is the crown and goal of prayer. Elsewhere the apostle similarly exhorts, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God."

II. A SPECIAL SUBJECT FOR INTERCESSION. Paul thus bespeaks prayer for himself and his fellow-workers both, to link himself in humbleness of heart to the Colossians. It is as though he said, "I need prayer as well as you." And doubtless he also asks their prayers because he is conscious of necessity for such help as prayer can bring. For himself and his fellow-workers he asks: 1. *Prayer that they may have opportunity for work.* "That God may open unto us a door." To the mystery of the gospel there is the great obstacle of minds closed by prejudice, hearts closed by antipathy. The preacher, like his Lord, has to stand at the door and knock. 2. *Prayer that shall be sympathetic with their sorrows.* For he reminds them that he is "in bonds." In every one of the Epistles of his captivity the apostle mentions this coupling chain which he felt to be thwarting, galling, humiliating. And their prayers must seek either that the chain be broken or the prisoner strengthened to endure. 3. *Prayer that they may have fitness for their work.* The one pressing want of their condition was "boldness." Sometimes the main want is wisdom, sometimes patience, sometimes gentleness. Here, because of all that was around him and before him, he felt the supreme want was courage. And indeed, when is this not wanted by those who have to proclaim such a message as the gospel, to such souls as proud, selfish, self-willed men, for such a Master as the Christ who travails till victory is won?—U. R. T.

Vers. 5, 6.—*The Christian and the world.* We have here some suggestions as to—

1. THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD. It is implied: 1. *That he is to*

be distinct from the world. To him all "men of the world" are, in character, aims, pursuits, to be as "them that are without." There is to be a contrast between him and them as between those who are "within" and those who are "without" the assembly of the righteous, the Church of the loving and the pure. But it is taught : 2. *That he is to have intercourse with the world.* This is in contradiction to the Colossian heresy of asceticism, and in contradiction, too, to the pietism that some sects affect in England to-day. "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without." This is the very opposite of walking away from them, in separation, into seclusion. Indeed, on this point we notice that seclusion from the world is: (1) *Impossible.* Even those who shun the social and political life of the world are drawn into its commerce very willingly, and in their best moods into its philanthropy also. (2) *Undesirable.* It leads either to bigotry, as of the Pharisees, or to fragile life, as of hot-house plants. (3) *Unlike Jesus Christ.* The streets, the cities, the houses of men, and of sinful men, their feasts, and their funerals, were frequented by the Holiest, who has left us an example that we should follow in his steps. 3. *What is to mark the intercourse of the Christian with the world.* Two directions are given: (1) "Walk in wisdom." This is more than knowledge, more than discretion. It is a right use of knowledge, of the knowledge of God and of man. In that element of godly thoughtfulness a Christian man is to move. (2) "Redeeming the time." In the time you spend with men, buy up the time and make the best use of it for themselves and for you. No squandering of anything so precious as their time and yours is to be permitted in your intercourse with men. Thus it is taught the Christian must have to do with the world.

II. *THE CHRISTIAN'S CONVERSATION WITH THE WORLD.* It is to be distinguished by "grace," pleasantness of the highest sort—"salt," pungency of the truest kind. In a sentence, we may say the influence of his conversation is to be good. 1. Because it is to be *persuasive.* The higher form of "grace," Divine acceptableness, may be implied here. The other form of it, human convincingness, is certainly indicated. For this it must be appropriate, (1) as to topic, (2) as to time, (3) as to manner. 2. Because it is to be *distinctive.* Not talk of tasteless insipidity, making no impression, but conversation as clear and definite in purifying influence as Christ meant the disciples themselves were to be when he said, "Ye are the salt of the earth." "Certain it is," says Jeremy Taylor, "that as nothing better can do it, so there is nothing greater for which God made our tongues, next to reciting his praises, than to minister comfort to weary souls. And what greater pleasure can we have than that we should bring joy to our brother, who with his weary eye looks to heaven and round about, and cannot find so much rest as to lay his eyelids together? Then thy tongue should be tuned with heavenly accents, and make the weary soul to listen for light and ease. This is glory to thy voice, and employment fit for the brightest angel. I have seen the sun kiss the frozen earth, which was bound up with the images of death and the cold breath of the north, and then the waters break from their enclosures, and melt with joy, and run in useful channels. So is the heart of a sorrowful man under the discourses of a wise comforter. He breaks from the despairs of the grave; he blesses God, and he feels his life returning. God is pleased with no music below so much as in the thanksgiving songs of rejoicing, comforted persons."—U. R. T.

Vers. 7—18.—*Christian greeting.* As we read this last paragraph of our Epistle, we are struck: 1. *With the humanity of our holy religion.* There is a natural tone about the ending of every one of Paul's letters; there is the naming of men, the greeting of friends, the talk about personal affairs. If the Bible were concerned only with systems, institutions, theories, doctrines, arguments, it would never be, as it surely is, the great heart-book of the world. Its charm is its humanness. And it is so of Christianity because its Founder and its Theme, its Alpha and its Omega, is the Son of man. 2. *With the mutual fellowship of the early Churches.* Between the Christians at Rome and at Colossæ, though the waters of the Mediterranean rolled between them, there was, as these greetings indicate, intimate and intelligent personal fellowship. Passing from these introductory considerations of the great principles to be found here, let us notice three things about Christian greetings.

I. *TRUE CHRISTIAN GREETING RECKONS VERY LITTLE OF SOCIAL POSITION.* Who would know, from the form of the greeting, how vastly different were the social positions

of Epaphras the Colossian citizen, Luke the cultured Jewish physician, and Onesimus the runaway slave? It has been well said, "Men are not united to the Church of Christ by reason of similarity of calling, of knowledge, or of position; not as rich or poor, learned or ignorant, but as possessors of a common human nature, of common feelings, sorrows, joys, and hopes. Once within its pale, his riches drop from the rich man, and his poverty from the poor, and each beholds a brother soul."

II. TRUE CHRISTIAN GREETING RECOGNIZES FULLY THE INDIVIDUALISM OF MEN. There is here no dealing with the mere mass, the group; no speaking of all with the same tones of unctuous endearment as is common in some Churches to-day. No; each has a separate niche in the esteem and affection of the apostle. In the light of this greeting we see the Church is not a huge piece of mechanism, but a family of dissimilar though related souls.

III. TRUE CHRISTIAN GREETING HONOURS GREATLY CHRISTIAN SERVICE. The only letter of introduction to a Church Paul ever wrote is to commend not some wealthy or famous man, but a converted runaway slave. His epithets of praise are not those that describe rank or riches, or even culture, but usefulness. That he honours, and that the Church of Christ ought above all else to honour: come the day when it will. Amen.—U. R. T.

Vers. 2—4.—*Conditions of success in prayer.* St. Paul draws the attention of the Colossians to two things.

I. GENERAL CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS IN PRAYER. 1. *Perseverance.* "Continue steadfastly in prayer." It is part of our spiritual education, teaching us dependence, trust, and patience. No "stock" of blessings given, but daily grace, bread, etc. Blessings may be withheld for a time because, in our present spiritual state, we cannot receive the full supply we shall be capable of after the discipline of persevering prayer. The gift will be in proportion to our faith (cf. Matt. ix. 29; Mark viii. 22—25). Hence the many exhortations to perseverance by parables (Luke xi. 5—9; xviii. 1—8), precepts (Rom. xii. 12; Eph. vi. 18; 1 Thess. v. 17, etc.), and recorded examples (Gen. xxxii. 24; Exod. xxxii. 9—14; Matt. xv. 21—28; Acts i. 14; ii. 1—4. Paul's prayers (Phil. i. 4; 2 Tim. i. 3, etc.; ch. iv. 12). Story of James the Just (Eusebius, bk. ii. 23). If time forbids long continuance, there may be energy in brevity and steadfastness in persistent renewal of prayers (Ps. lv. 17; cxix. 164, etc.). 2. *Watchfulness.* Be watchful during prayer, for the constant enjoyment of the inestimable privilege tends to routine, and our spiritual foes are ever ready to distract our minds and spoil our prayers. Chrysostom saith, "The devil knoweth how great a good prayer is." The messenger prayer is too often despatched without any definite message. "Ye know not what ye ask;" "Ye have not because ye ask not." Contrast our Lord's prayers and St. Paul's with the vague, sleepy supplications we know too much about. If we thus watch in prayer we may watch after it, expecting the blessings which are on their way to us (cf. Dan. ix. 23; x. 12). 3. *Thanksgiving.* (Phil. iv. 6.) Our thanksgiving will include that Divine system of mediation and intercession by which we sinners have access to God; all the past answers to prayer we have received through Christ (Ps. lxiii. 7; cxvi. 1, 2), and all the promises he has given. In this spirit we shall also be able to thank him for what he has deferred (Illustrations: Job and "the end of the Lord," Jas. v. 11) and what he denies. For if we pray with submission for temporal blessings, we lay upon God the responsibility of choosing for us. Plato ('Alcibiades,' bk. ii.) praises one of the ancient poets for prescribing this form of prayer: "Grant to us thy blessings whether we pray for them or withhold our prayers, and repel from us all evils even though we pray for them." With fuller knowledge we may offer the same prayer for temporal blessings "with thanksgiving" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11; Matt. vi. 32), while in regard to spiritual blessings there need be no such conditional uncertainty (Matt. vii. 9—11; John xiv. 13, 14).

II. SPECIAL SUBJECTS FOR PRAYER. (Vers. 3, 4.) The requests are very personal, for Paul, Timothy, Epaphras, etc. The apostle's condition imposed limitations which he desired might be removed "for the gospel's sake." These prayers were answered (Philem. 22). By prayer doors were opened in the first century (Rom. xv. 19, etc.), and still are (China, Africa, Madagascar, etc.). This spread of the gospel may still be used as an argument for the divinity of the gospel, as it was by Clement of Alexandria:

"The Grecian philosophy, if any magistrate forbade it, immediately died away; but our doctrine, even from the first preaching of it, kings, generals, and magistrates prohibited it; nevertheless, it does not droop like human doctrine, but flourishes the more." Similar prayers for pastors and missionaries are still needed, and may be enforced by various motives; e.g.: 1. *Our necessity*; for the work is too great for us apart from the help given through prayer. 2. *Our trials*. Illustrate from Paul's ordinary sources of anxiety (2 Cor. xi. 1—3, 28, 29; Gal. iv. 19, etc.). 3. *Our dangers*. For we are the mark of many of the fiery darts of the wicked one, and if we fall it is "as when a standard-bearer fainteth." 4. *Our responsibilities*. (Heb. xiii. 17.) We have to speak "the mystery of Christ," and desire "to make it manifest as we ought to speak." How much this implies (Eph. vi. 19, 20)! We aim at the sublimest results (ch. i. 28, 29). 5. *Our equitable claims*. A plea especially appropriate to pastors, called by a Church to their post of duty and of trust. To restrain prayer is the most lamentable meanness, for it impoverishes the pastor's or missionary's soul (2 Thess. iii. 1, 2, etc.).—E. S. P.

Vers. 5, 6.—*The Christian's conduct and conversation in the world*. In these closing exhortations we are taught—

I. THE PRINCIPLES WHICH SHOULD GUIDE US IN OUR INTERCOURSE WITH THE WORLD. (Ver. 5.) In no Pharisaic spirit we have to speak of "them that are without" (*needlessly, guiltily* outside the family of God), but are in close contact with us "within;" who are not called to judge them or to "have no company" with them, but to live in such a way as to bless and save them (1 Cor. v. 9—13; ix. 19—22). The wisdom demanded includes: 1. *Consistency*, as its most essential element. Life for others is a law running through God's universe, and finding its highest illustration in the life and cross of Christ and of Christians "in him" (John xii. 24, 25; Rom. xiv. 7). To benefit others spiritually, the chief qualification is not gifts, but character. The lives of Christians are the world's Bible (2 Cor. iii. 2, 3). See that the text is not corrupted or illegible. Live so that the more you are known the more you will be esteemed (let not "distance lend enchantment to the view"), so that the anxious or the dying would naturally send to you for guidance, and your judgment or reproof would carry with it the weight of a holy character. Beware of the "dead flies" which mar this wisdom (Eccles. x. 1; Eph. v. 15—17; Phil. ii. 14, 15; 1 Pet. ii. 11, 12). But while the whole of our "walk" must be consistent, the wisdom which is to mark it includes more than this (Matt. x. 16; Rom. xvi. 19). Some may remember what were their chief hindrances caused by the characters of Christians while they were still "without;" let them guard against these. 2. *Christian cheerfulness*. So as to refute the libels of Satan and his satellites (Job xxi. 14, 15; Mal. iii. 14, 15), and prove the sincerity of our avowed belief (Ps. xxxiv. 8; lxxxiv. 11, 12). 3. *Christian charitableness*. Be very strict in judging yourselves, but do not set up your own consciences as an infallible test for others (cf. 1 Cor. xi. 31 with Matt. vii. 2). Seek to purify and enlighten the heart, rather than to denounce acts that may not seem wrong to the half-enlightened doer (Matt. xii. 33). Illustrate from Elisha's treatment of Naaman (2 Kings v. 15—19). 4. *Well-regulated zeal*. Zeal is implied in "redeeming the time," letting no opportunity slip you of seeking to do good in these evil days (Eph. v. 16), even though at times it might appear to some to be "out of season" (2 Tim. iv. 2; Gal. vi. 10). But wisdom is needed here, or our efforts may be like random shots in a battle, injuring friends more than foes (e.g. Mark ix. 38; Luke ix. 54). Silence may at times be more "golden" than speech. Matt. vii. 6 must be combined with Mark xvi. 15.

II. THE SPECIAL WISDOM NEEDED FOR PROFITABLE CONVERSATION. (Ver. 6; Prov. xviii. 21.) By "always with grace" is not meant always religious, but always consistent with "this grace wherein we stand," and calculated to win the favour and promote the highest good of those who hear us (Eph. iv. 29). Therefore we must seek that it be "seasoned with salt," which preserves from corruption and gives relish to our food. Both senses are probably included. Vital religion being distasteful to the natural heart, care is needed that in our conversation we neither degrade the religion we profess nor increase aversion to it by the insipidity of our talk (cf. Job vi. 6; xxvi. 3). Let our rule be Elihu's (Job xxxiii. 3; cf. Ps. xxxvii. 30, 31; Prov. xv. 4). One object of this care is "that ye may know" etc. We must be prepared to be questioned and cross-questioned on our holy faith. Prov. xx. 4, 5 may both need to be observed (as by

our Lord, Matt. xxi. 27; xxii. 21, 29). When questioned as to "the hope that is in us" (1 Pet. iii. 15) a weak answer may confirm doubts. Take as models the various answers and vindications of his faith given by St. Paul before the pagans of Athens, the Jews of Jerusalem and of Rome, Felix and Agrippa. But if our tongues are to speak aright, our hearts must be kept full of the fire of the love of God tempered by "the wisdom that is from above" (Matt. xii. 34; Jas. iii. 17).—E. S. P.

Vers. 7—18.—*Personal salutations and pastoral cares.* The personal references in Paul's Epistles are valuable in several ways. "Proper names, although they be recited alone in the Scriptures, are not to be despised" (2 Tim. iii. 16). "For like as if any one should find dry herbs, having neither fragrance nor colour that was pleasing, arranged in the surgery of a doctor, however mean may be their appearance, will yet guess that some virtue or remedy is concealed in them; so in the pharmacopœia of the Scriptures, if anything occurs that at first sight may seem to be despised by us, yet may we determine of a certainty that there is some spiritual utility to be found in it; because Christ, the Physician of souls, we may suppose, would place nothing insignificant or useless in his pharmacopœia" (Origen). These personal references are useful: 1. As supplying "undesigned coincidences" (Paley's 'Horæ Paulinæ,' ch. vi., viii., and xiv.; and Birks' 'Horæ Apostolicæ,' ch. vi.). 2. As correcting errors; e.g. the alleged episcopacy of St. Peter at Rome from A.D. 42—68 is rendered incredible by the silence of St. Paul in all his Epistles from Rome (vers. 10, 11). 3. As helping us to form a vivid idea of the apostle's circumstances at different periods, and their bearing on his life's work and teaching. From these twelve verses we gather such facts as these, each of which may suggest some useful lessons. He was a prisoner, adding his autograph message "in a chain" (Eph. vi. 20); enjoying for the present considerable indulgence (Acts xxviii. 30, 31), and hoping for a speedy release (Philem. 22). He enjoyed the company of friends both old and new. Here is *Tychicus*, probably from Ephesus, a tried companion in toil and peril (Acts xx. 4; Eph. vi. 21); and *Onesimus* (a trophy of Divine grace, a jewel rescued as from the common sewer of the corrupt metropolis; teaching us to despair of no one). These two are being sent to tighten the bonds between the Churches in Asia and the apostle at Rome (vers. 7—10; Eph. vi. 22). Others remain to aid and cheer him. *Aristarchus* of Thessalonica, one of the firstfruits of Europe, now a voluntary prisoner (Acts xix. 29; xx. 4; xxvii. 2). *Mark*, now enjoying the fullest confidence of St. Paul (2 Tim. iv. 11): an encouraging illustration of how "patient continuance in well-doing" may cast early errors into oblivion and win back confidence once withdrawn; and a caution even to an apostle against too stern a judgment on a young brother. *Jesus Justus*, the only other Hebrew Christian mentioned, otherwise unknown, yet worthy of honour in all ages, because "a comfort" to the apostle: an encouragement to workers little known in the annals of the Church (Matt. x. 40—42). *Epaphras*, probably the founder of the Colossian Church, who had often preached to them and now prayed much for them. *Luke*, the first medical missionary, a minister to the soul as well as to the body of the sorely tried apostle. Last comes *Demas*, mentioned without any commendation; still a fellow-labourer (Philem. 24), but in whom St. Paul may have already detected signs of that worldly-mindedness which led him afterwards to withdraw from duty and danger, if not altogether to make shipwreck of faith (2 Tim. iv. 10)—a caution against backsliding in heart (Prov. xiv. 14; 1 John ii. 15). The salutations to brethren at Colossæ further remind us of the social life and limited conditions of the primitive Christians ("Nymphas, and the Church that is in their house"), of the value of an earnest ministry to the Church (ver. 17), and of the duty of cherishing fraternal sympathy with other Churches (vers. 15, 16). This reference to the Epistle to Laodicea suggests to us that, though a letter may be lost and a Church may languish or die (Rev. iii. 14—22), the Word of the Lord in the letter and to the Church endureth for ever. Many of these references group themselves around the names of those who were pastors or evangelists, and suggest final thoughts respecting a minister's *responsibilities, anxieties, and encouragements*. 1. *Responsibilities.* (Ver. 17.) The ministry was "in the Lord." In union with and in subordination to him he was to exercise it; and only by the utmost vigilance and energy could he fulfil it. To every minister such a charge is given as 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 5, and such promises as 1 Tim. iv. 16. Responsibility inspires zeal (2 Cor. iv. 1, 2; v. 9; vi. 3—10), and

fosters that spirit of dependence which ensures the blessing (1 Cor. iii. 7). 2. *Anxieties*. (Vers. 12, 13.) A faithful minister can aim at nothing less. He cannot adapt the standard of the gospel to the maxims of the day. He has to educate the mind and the conscience, that his flock may be "perfect and fully assured in all the will of God." He must teach and warn, applying general principles to practical details, being himself an example to the flock (1 Tim. iv. 12) in labours and in prayers, so that those who know him best may bear such witness to him as Paul does to Epaphras. 3. *Encouragements* from three sources: *sympathy*, such as Paul enjoyed from friends at Rome and at Colossæ; *co-operation* from "fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God;" *affection*, such as love to the one Lord and labours for him promote in men of different temperaments, so that we find Paul speaking of many of his colleagues, not only as honoured fellow-soldiers, but beloved friends (vers. 7, 9, 14; Rom. xvi. 12). For all such the apostle breathes the concluding prayer in one comprehensive term, "*Grace be with you.*"—E. S. P.

Ver. 2.—*Steadfastness in prayer*. I. IT IS GREATLY NEEDED. The seven deacons were chosen partly in order that the apostles might not be hindered by temporal affairs from continuing steadfastly in prayer (Acts vi. 4). St. Paul exhorts the Roman Christians to this same steadfastness (Rom. xii. 12). It is requisite on many accounts. 1. There are *never wanting subjects* that claim our prayers. 2. When we are *least inclined to pray we are in most need of prayer*. 3. Only constant prayer can be *profoundly spiritual*. It is the ever-flowing stream that wears the deep water-course. The bird that soars high must be much on the wing. 4. Steadfastness in prayer is *rewarded by Divine responses*; e.g. Abraham's intercession for Sodom, the parable of the importunate widow, etc.

II. IT IS A SIGN OF SPIRITUAL HEALTH. After the ascension of their Lord the early Christians continued steadfastly in prayer (Acts i. 14); so did the converts of the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 42). 1. It shows a *spiritual tone of mind*. We may pray in special need without this, and we may pray at set seasons of devotion without it. But to live in an atmosphere of prayer, to pray because it is natural to us to talk with God, because we love communion with him, because prayer is our vital breath, and so to pray without ceasing from inward devotion rather than from external prompting,—all this is a sign of true spirituality. 2. It shows *spiritual vigour*. Such prayer is no mere listless droning of empty phrases, no sudden burst of temporary ejaculations. It implies a strong, deep energy of devotion.

III. IT IS DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN. It is easy to cry out to God in great extremities. Prayerless men pray under such circumstances. It is easy, too, to pray when we are in a mood of devotion. The difficulty is to continue steadfastly in prayer. The hindrances are numerous. 1. *Lack of interesting subjects of prayer*. There may be nothing that touches us as a great want or strongly appeals to our sympathies at some seasons like the dire needs and touching claims that inspire our petitions at other times. 2. *External distractions*. The pressure of business, the din of the world's affairs, uncongenial society, even too absorbing Church work, especially in this age of rich activity and meagre contemplation, check prayer. 3. *Internal hindrances*. We are not always in the mood for prayer. Sometimes—

"Hosannas languish on our lips,
And our devotion dies."

This may result from physical weariness. The spirit may be willing though the flesh is weak. We should then turn aside and rest awhile from the tiring work of the world. But it may result from sin. Sin is the greatest hindrance to prayer.

IV. IT MAY BE MAINTAINED BY THE GRACE OF GOD. 1. It is *not to be revived in weakness by greater assiduity in formal devotion*. It is a fatal mistake to confound long prayers with steadfast prayers, and to suppose that spending more time in saying prayers will strengthen our enfeebled spirit of prayer. It will have the opposite effect. Nothing hinders true prayer so much as continuing the form of devotion without the power. 2. *The secret is to seek the reviving Spirit of God*. If prayer is growing faint, there may still be energy for uttering the petition, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy Word" (Ps. cxix. 25). All true prayer is an inspira-

tion. The deepest prayer comes from the striving of God's Spirit within us. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities . . . the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. viii. 26).—W. F. A.

Ver. 5 (first clause).—*The wisdom of the Church in its relations to the world.* I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS WISDOM. The Church needs wisdom. Christians must be wise as serpents as well as harmless as doves. We are to blame for lack of wisdom as well as for lack of other graces, for this is a gift of God (Jas. i. 5). 1. This wisdom is *practical*. It concerns itself with behaviour rather than with speculation. 2. It must be *pure*. There must not be the slightest unfaithfulness to Christ, tampering with truth, or casuistic deviation from the highest principles.

II. THE OCCASIONS FOR THIS WISDOM. It was most necessary in the apostolic age, when the Christians existed only as small communities scattered about among adverse populations. But it is always more or less called for. 1. *For lawful self-protection*. If persecuted in one city the servant of Christ was to flee to another. He was not to court opposition. Martyrdom is only a glory when it comes in the path of duty, and never when men go out of that path to seek it. Then it degenerates into little better than suicide. 2. *To conquer opponents*. The Church has a mission to the world, and she will fail in this mission if she cannot win her enemies over to her own side. For Christ's sake, and for the good of men who need his gospel, this wisdom must be observed in conciliating foes that they may themselves be brought into the Church.

III. THE MANNER OF EXERCISING THIS WISDOM. 1. *In understanding those who are without*. We often provoke opposition because we do not study the weaknesses and prejudices of others. On the other hand, Christians have shown a needless scorn for the good in others. True charity will take note of all that is admirable, and think of whatsoever things are worthy in the world outside the Church. 2. *In an attractive exhibition of the blessings of Christianity*. Souls are not saved by rating and scolding men. The world must be drawn, not driven, to Christ. A morose Church will only repel an unsympathetic world. Wisdom towards them that are without will forbid the scandal of quarrelling among Christians.—W. F. A.

Ver. 6.—*Salt*. Our speech is to be "seasoned with salt." The context shows that this advice is given especially in regard to the conversation of Christian people with men of the world. It is part of the "wisdom towards them that are without." Instead of offensive fault-finding, haughty self-assertion, or morose indifference, our speech is to be courteous—"with grace;" and pleasant—"seasoned." Salt stands for wit in Greek references to it as seasoning speech. But with St. Paul it seems rather to mean a pleasant, kindly, interesting characteristic of speech.

I. SPEECH SHOULD BE COURTEOUS. "Be courteous" is advice that comes to us from the sturdy fisherman (1 Pet. iii. 8). If we cannot agree with another there is no reason why we should treat him unkindly. If we must even oppose him, still we can do it with consideration and gentleness of manner. In general intercourse it is well that an affability of behaviour should characterize the Christian. How courteous Christ was with all classes! St. Paul is a model of the true Christian gentleman. The essence of courtesy is sympathy for others in small things. It is hollow if we manifest hostility or selfishness in large things. The courtesy of a Chesterfield has a flavour of hypocrisy about it because it is based on selfishness. Still, if we are sympathetic in serious matters we may be much misunderstood, and we may really give much pain by a needless brusqueness of manner.

II. SPEECH SHOULD BE INTERESTING. Salt is seasoning. It gives pungency. Something similar should be found in our conversation. Dulness is an offence. It is an infliction of intolerable weariness on the listener. On the part of the speaker it shows either want of interest in his subject (in which case he should let it alone), or want of interest in his hearer (which is a direct result of lack of sympathy). Moreover, the Christian is called to be frequently bearing testimony for his Master. He weakens that testimony by giving it in an uninteresting manner. He should study his words. But, better than that, he should have his theme so much at heart as to speak with the eloquence of enthusiasm.

III. SPEECH SHOULD BE PURE. Salt is antiseptic. The Christian should not only

avoid unwholesome topics and styles of speech; he should bring into conversation a positive, purifying influence. This does not mean that he should be always quoting texts and set religious phrases, or always dragging in religious subjects out of place and season. He degrades them, provokes his hearers, and stultifies himself by so doing. But he should seek to elevate the tone of conversation, to guide it from unworthy subjects and to infuse into it a pure tone. There are Christ-like men whose very presence in a room seems to rebuke evil talk and to breathe a higher atmosphere into the conversation. How purifying was the conversation of Christ!—W. F. A.

Ver. 16.—*A friendly exchange.* I. SCRIPTURE IS INTENDED FOR GENERAL READING. The two Epistles are to be read in the Churches. They are not to be reserved for the bishops, the more initiated or the more advanced Christians. All members of the two Churches, young and old, slaves and freemen, illiterate and cultured, imperfect and spiritual-minded, are to hear the two Epistles. Now, these Epistles contain about the most advanced doctrine of all writings of the Bible. They approach nearest to what is analogous to the inner Gnostic doctrines of all Scripture teaching. If, therefore, any portions of revelation should be reserved for the few, it would be these. If these are for public perusal, surely the simpler Gospels and psalms must be also public property. The Bible is a book for the people. It is free to all. No man has a right to bar access to the tree of life on the plea that the ignorant do not know how to help themselves from it and must have its fruits doled out by official guardians. The greatest philosopher may find unfathomable depths in Scripture; but a little child may also read clear truths therein. If it be said that the ignorant will misunderstand, the reply is—They will gain more truth on the whole, in spite of misunderstanding, by free access to the Bible than when only led to it by others. God can take care of his own truth; the Bible was written for the people, and the people have a right to their own. No guardians of Scripture who are to measure it out to others at their discretion were ever appointed by Christ or by his apostles.

II. THE SCRIPTURE THAT IS USEFUL TO ONE CHURCH WILL BE USEFUL TO ANOTHER. The two letters were written with special regard to the peculiar circumstances of the two Churches. Yet they were to be exchanged. Much more, then, should Christians who have not had any private Epistle of their own benefit by the public Scriptures. Special wants are not primary wants. The great need of revelation is common to all. The fundamental truths of the gospel are needed by and offered to all. The highest glories of revelation are for all.

III. OUR READING OF SCRIPTURE SHOULD NOT BE CONFINED TO ISOLATED FRAGMENTS. A Church which had been honoured by receiving an apostolic Epistle written expressly for itself would be tempted to depreciate other apostolic writings, or at least to consider that for its own use its own Epistle was of paramount if not of exclusive importance. It would be in danger of making its one Epistle its own New Testament, to the disregard of all the rest. But the advice of St. Paul shows that such an action would be a mistake. 1. *Our reading of Scripture should be wide and varied.* We must beware of confining our attention to favourite portions. By doing so we get one-sided views of truth, and probably, even if unconsciously, select what seems to support our own notions to the neglect of what would modify them. We may most need to read those Scriptures in which we feel least interest. 2. *Scripture balances and interprets Scripture.* The doctrine of the Christ which is the leading theme of the Epistle to the Colossians is closely related to the doctrine of the Church which is the central subject of the so-called Epistle to the Ephesians (that, probably, referred to by St. Paul as the Epistle to the Laodiceans).

IV. THERE SHOULD BE INTERCOMMUNION BETWEEN CHRISTIAN CONGREGATIONS. There is too much corporate selfishness in the Church. We should be the better for more ecclesiastical altruism, or rather communism. 1. This is most to be looked for between neighbours. Laodicea was near to Colossæ. 2. And it should be cultivated between the prominent and the obscure. Laodicea was an important city, Colossæ a small town. Yet the Churches in the two places were to show brotherly sympathy on equal terms and to be mutually helpful to one another. While the strong should help the weak, the weak should beware of selfishness and do their best to serve the strong.—W. F. A.

Ver. 18.—“*Remember my bonds.*” St. Paul’s occasional references to his bonds are never thrust forward in the spirit of the histrionic martyr and never expressed in a murmuring tone, but they evince the irksome restraints under which he laboured, and they give a certain pathos to his entreaties. To be always chained to a soldier, possibly one of rude and coarse manners, must have been peculiarly distressing to a man of sensitive, refined disposition like St. Paul. Feeling the burden of his bonds, the apostle prays his readers to remember them.

I. REMEMBER THEM IN SYMPATHY. It is something to know that friends are feeling with us, when they can do nothing directly to remove the cause of trouble. The lowliest may help the greatest by his sympathy. An apostle seeks the sympathy of obscure Christians. Christ looked for the support of his disciples’ sympathy in the hour of his greatest agony, and had the last drop of his bitter cup in the failing of that sympathy (Matt. xxvi. 40).

II. REMEMBER THEM IN PRAYER. When we cannot work for our brother’s release from trouble, we may pray. With all the power of Rome at his back, Nero cannot prevent the feeble Christians from having recourse to the mighty weapon of prayer. Let us beware of a selfish narrowness of sympathy in prayer. There are always many calls for prayers of intercession. Very touching is the ancient prayer that has come down to us from the dark ages of persecution, and is presented in the so-called ‘Divine Liturgy of St. James:’ “Remember, O Lord, Christians sailing, travelling, sojourning in strange lands; our fathers and brethren, who are in bonds, prison, captivity, and exile; who are in mines, and under torture, and in bitter slavery.”

III. REMEMBER THEM IN GRATITUDE. St. Paul was suffering for the gospel. The real cause of his imprisonment was the persecution of the Jews, who were more bitter to his liberal version of Christianity than to the more Judaistic Christianity of the other apostles. Thus he described himself, “I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles” (Eph. iii. 1). Therefore his bonds merit our grateful memory; and the sufferings of the champions of Christian liberty merit similar reverent and grateful recollections. It is well that these memories should be handed down from father to son, that the stories of the heroes of Christendom through whose toils and sufferings we now enjoy so many privileges should be taught to our children.

IV. REMEMBER THEM IN REVERENCE FOR ST. PAUL’S AUTHORITY. His bonds lend weight to his words. They prove his sincerity. They are a reason for listening to his entreaties. By his sufferings he entreats us to walk worthily of our Christian calling. So the greater sufferings of a greater Friend give force to his persuasion when he bids us follow him.—W. F. A.

HOMILETICAL INDEX

TO

THE EPISTLE OF

ST. PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS.

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