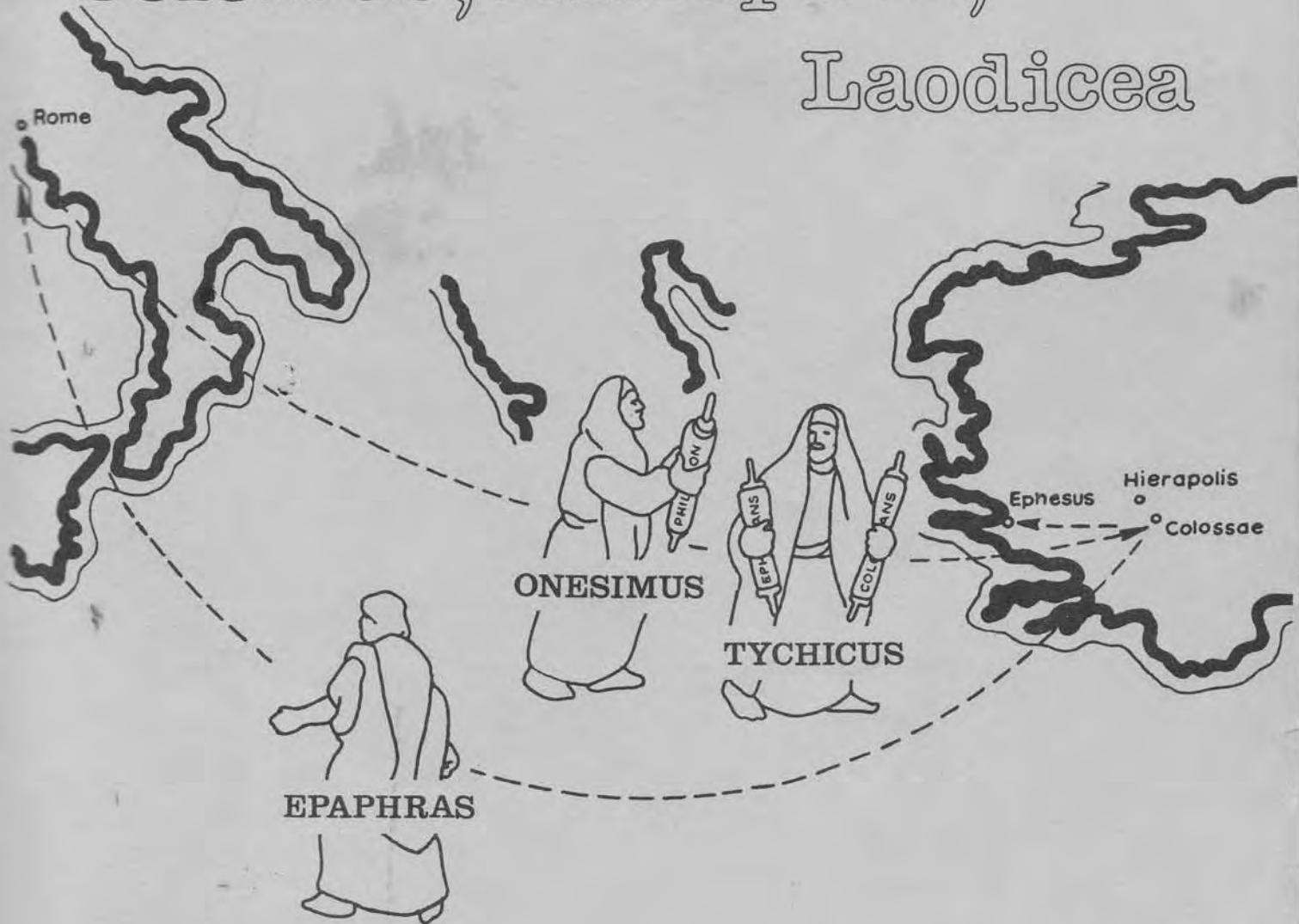


the ECCLESIAS  
in the

# LYCUS VALLEY

Colossae, Hierapolis,

Laodicea



“Walk worthy of the Lord...” (Col.1:10)

As the introduction to these notes is being written, the sun is setting in a glow of fire behind a large bank barn silhouetted by pine trees. It is the longest day of daylight in Canada, while on the other side of the world it is the shortest day of winter. Shortly, the sun will be rising on the ecclesial world of New Zealand, Australia, Fiji and the Philippines. In a way, this setting reflects the international scope of these studies.

Colossians and Philemon were commenced in Adelaide ( 1970 ) in what was affectionately known as "Canada House." Some of those who looked up many of the Greek words in the concordances have since married and settled in Australia.

In Canada, summary notes on Philemon were produced as part of a "cluster concept" approach to Bible study for the Niagara Falls Study Weekend in 1973. Additional notes were produced by brethren in Detroit. Through the studies, many of us grew in our appreciation of the "riches of the treasures" contained in the epistles.

Ten years of intermittent study continued in the Great Lakes area, in the midst of many other studies. In 1981, preparation was undertaken for the Lidcombe lectures and the biennial preaching campaign in Sydney, Australia. However, extensive work was required for the publication of "Quenching all the Fiery Darts of the Wicked" for the Rathmines Bible School, and it was not possible to complete the Lycus Valley notes. Further modification and expansion of the material was undertaken for the studies in Perth Central and Stirling Ecclesias of Western Australia, and for the Dunedin Fraternal weekend in New Zealand.

Upon returning to Canada, it was determined to bring the work to completion. After many late nights and very early mornings, this has been accomplished. It has been a team effort in Shelburne in the fullest sense of the words, and the help of many has been very much appreciated. In this respect, the words of Bro. Roberts pinned over my desk, provided great encouragement:

"Nothing useful was ever done without a towering resolution that went far in purpose and desire beyond what it was possible to accomplish."

It is hoped that these notes will provide something useful by way of review for those who participated in the Lycus Valley studies. During the next week, many young students will study the Lycus Valley ecclesias at the Manitoulin Island Youth Camp. May these notes assist them, too, to plumb the depths and scale the heights of spirituality contained in this wonderful section of God's Word.

May you all "be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding . . . to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work . . ." ( Col. 1:9,10, RSV ).

July 1982

Ron Abel,  
Shelburne, Ontario

HOW TO USE THESE NOTES:

(1) Sources - The notes are analytical - providing supporting references for the definition of Greek words and historical information. To simply say "the Greek word means . . ." is frequently of limited value if one discovers the definition only exists in an obscure lexicon or does not represent the usual use of the word ( or worse still - cannot be located in any lexicon! ) Sometimes words are defined differently in the various lexicons and by noting the source, the weighting of definitions can be greatly assisted.

(2) Visuals - Visuals are used freely. Some of these are summary in nature, and will appear somewhat elementary to the advanced student. Other visuals attempt to reduce a complex idea to what is more easily grasped. This is one of the most time consuming and difficult tasks in note preparation. For the more inexperienced student this is an important help. Verse by verse notes can obscure overall themes in the wealth of smaller detail.

(3) The Cluster Study - It is not possible to study a Biblical book in isolation from other books which relate directly to its understanding. For example, Colossians and Philemon are mutually complementary, as the background notes show. Revelation 3:14-22 provides the assessment of the Lord some thirty years later on the Laodicean ecclesia ( which also read the Colossian epistle ). It is for this reason, that the study relates to the Ecclesias of the Lycus Valley and not simply to Colossians or Philemon.

AV	"Authorized" <u>King James Version</u>
cf.	compare
ch.	chapter
Companion Bible-	E. Bullinger, <u>Companion Bible</u> , ( London: The Lamp Press, n.d. )
CV	<u>Concordant Literal New Testament</u> , ( Saugus, California: The Concordant Publishing Concern, 1966 )
Diaglott	Benjamin Wilson, <u>The Emphatic Diaglott</u> , ( New York: Fowler & Wells Co., 1902 )
e.g.	for example
Gk.	Greek
Heb.	Hebrew
<u>ibid.</u>	Quoted from the same source as previous footnote
i.e.	that is
LXX	<u>Septuagint</u> Translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek about 3rd century B. C.
mg.	alternative translation given in margin
MS	( plural MSS ) manuscript
NASB	<u>New American Standard Bible</u> ( 1963 )
Nestle	<u>The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament: The Nestle Greek Text with literal English Translation</u> , ( London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1958 )
NIV	<u>New International Version</u> , ( Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978 )
RSV	American <u>Revised Standard Version</u> ( 1952 )
RV	<u>Revised Version</u> ( 1885 )
Stg	James Strong, <u>Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible</u> , ( New York: Abingdon Press, 1970 )
Vine	W. E. Vine, <u>Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words</u> , ( London: Oliphant's, 1970 )
Weymouth	R. F. Weymouth, <u>The New Testament in Modern Speech</u> , ( London: James Clarke & Co., 1908 )
Yg	Robert Young, <u>Analytical Concordance</u> , ( London: Lutterworth Press, 1965 )

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction . . . . .	(i)	19.
2. How to Use these Notes . . . . .	(ii)	20.
a) Sources		
b) Visuals		
c) The Cluster Study		
3. Abbreviations Used . . . . .	(iii)	21.
4. The Founding of the Colossian Ecclesia . . . . .	1	
5. Preaching the Gospel in Phrygia . . . . .	2	
6. Composition of the Ecclesia . . . . .	3	
a) Jews		
b) Gentiles		
c) Size		
7. Members of the Colossian Ecclesia . . . . .	4	22.
8. The Ecclesial Interrelationships . . . . .	5	23.
9. Lycus Valley Map . . . . .	6	
10. Dating of Colossians and Philemon . . . . .	7	
11. The "Twin Epistles:" A Comparison between Colossians & Philemon . . . . .	8	
12. THE CHRIST BODY METAPHOR . . . . .	9	
13. A Compilation of References to the Christ Body . . . . .	12	
14. That "the Whole Body be Nourished and Knit Together" . . . . .	14	
a) The Jewish Problem		
b) The Relationship of John Mark to the Problem		
c) Organization of the Preaching Work		
d) Conflict between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark . . . . .	15	
e) "Building up the Body of Christ" . . . . .	17	24.
f) "Ye are Called in <u>One</u> Body" . . . . .	18	
g) "We are to grow up in every way into Him who is our Head"		
h) Conclusions drawn from the Christ Body Metaphor . . . . .	19	
15. Topical Breakdown of Colossians . . . . .	20	
16. Verse by verse exposition commences . . . . .	21	
17. Time Frame of the Apostle's Work . . . . .	25	
18. Conceptual Diagrams:		
a) Plēroō - "to be filled" . . . . .	27	
b) "Built up in him" . . . . .	28	
c) "Walk worthy of the Lord" . . . . .	29	
d) Patience - makrothumia and hupomone . . . . .	31	
e) Translated for the Kingdom - an historical background . . . . .	33	
f) The Structure of the Argument - 1:13 - 1:19 . . . . .	34	
g) God - Christ - the believer. . . . .	39	
h) The Father Son relationship . . . . .	39	
i) Christ - the firstborn . . . . .	40	
j) "Warn every man" . . . . .	50	
k) "According to human precepts and doctrines" . . . . .	58	

19. "LET NO ONE TAKE HIS STAND ON VISIONS:" . . . . . 64

- a) Warning to contemporary charismatics
- b) Comparative translations of Col. 2:18 . . . . . 68

20. "The whole body joined and knit together" - a parallel . . . . . 69

21. "YOUR LIFE IS HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD" - the parallels . . . . . 73

- a) "Put to death what is earthly in you" . . . . . 75
- b) "Be clothed" . . . . . 79
- c) "Elect of God" . . . . . 81
- d) "Called" . . . . . 84

22. PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS . . . . . 86

23. PHILEMON

- a) Structure of the Epistle . . . . . 98
- b) Purpose of the Epistle
- c) Slavery in New Testament Times
- d) The Slave-Master Relationship
- e) Paul and Slavery . . . . . 100
- f) The Tactful Appeal . . . . . 101
- g) Date of Writing . . . . . 102
- h) Philemon - a Member of the Colossian Ecclesia . . . . . 103
- i) Verse by verse exposition . . . . . 104
- j) The Contrasts . . . . . 114

24. LAODICEA . . . . . 116

- a) Chapter Breakdown . . . . . 117
- b) Dating of the Revelation . . . . . 118
- c) Laodicea - Its Background . . . . . 119
- d) The Lord Jesus Christ -the faithful and true witness . . . . . 121

## THE FOUNDING OF THE COLOSSIAN ECCLESIA

1. There is no certain evidence that Paul personally visited the Lycus Valley or that he was responsible for the ecclesial development there. However, Paul's preaching work took him through the area of Phrygia on two occasions:

"And they [ Paul, Silas and Timothy ] went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia" ( Acts 16:6, RSV )

"And he [ Paul ] departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples" ( Acts 18:23 ).

Where did these converts reside? We are not told, yet the principal cities of Phrygia were in the Lycus Valley. Paul may have skirted the Lycus Valley, travelling further west. If so, then there is no record of any ecclesias being formed in these areas.

2. "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh" ( Col. 2:1 ). This verse is often cited in proof that Paul did not visit the Lycus Valley, but the wording may only imply that many converts had been made through the efforts of Epaphras and others in the interval between Paul's visits and his writings.

3. The early work of Peter on the Day of Pentecost with the Jews from Phrygia ( Acts 2:10 ) may have borne fruit and provided the early beginnings of the ecclesias. Does this account for John Mark's involvement in the Lycus Valley? John Mark became Peter's son in the faith ( 1 Pet. 5:13 ). "Commandments" were received regarding him and a visit was anticipated ( Col. 4:10 ).<sup>1</sup>

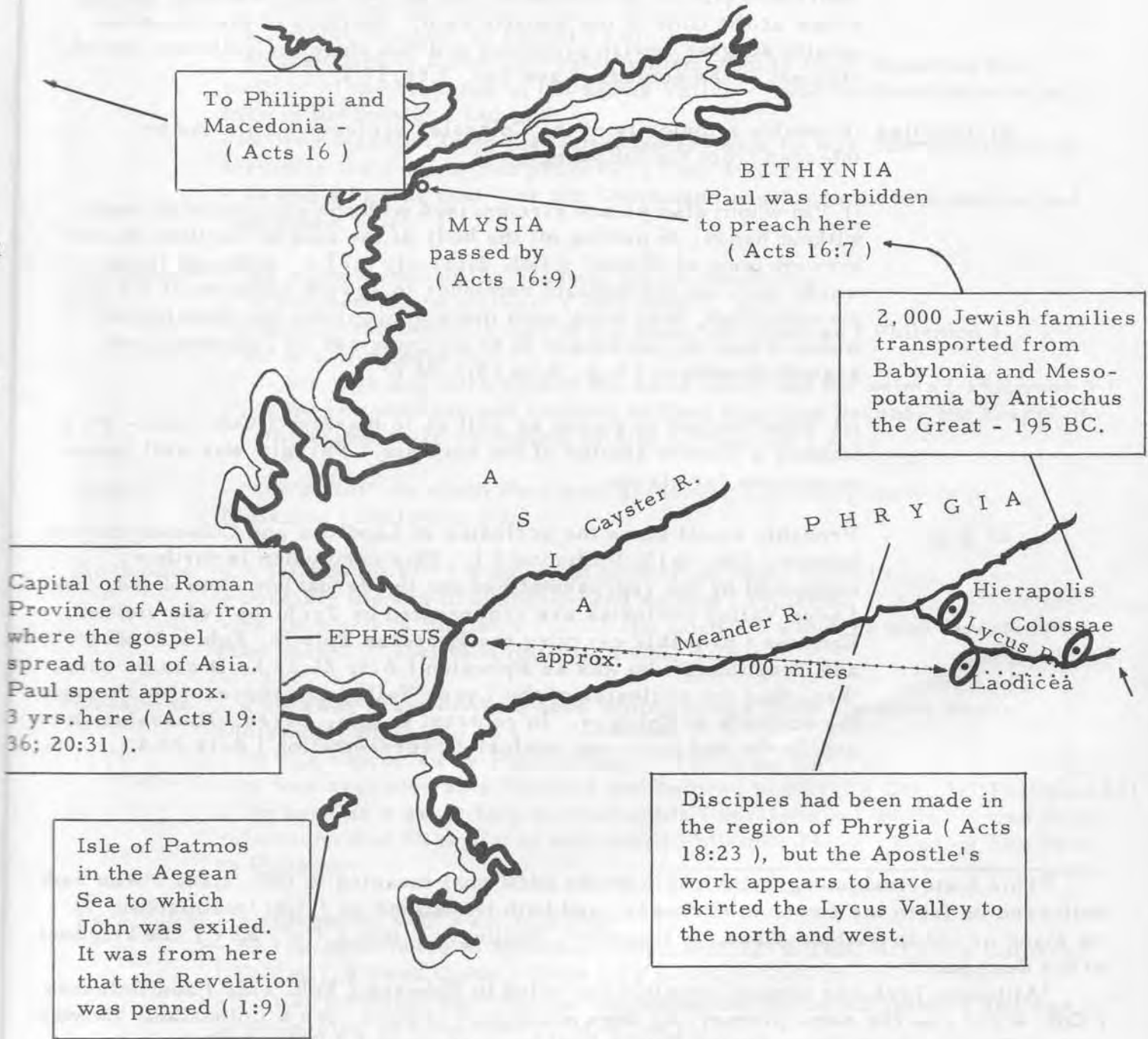
4. Information about the dangers of false doctrine and other ecclesial matters would be conveyed to Paul in Rome by Epaphras ( Col. 1:8; 4:12 ). He was with Paul at the time of the writing of Colossians and may have temporarily replaced Onesimus as a helper.

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<sup>1</sup>If this line of reasoning is accurate, Peter's work with the circumcision ( Gal. 2:7 ) further suggests the significantly Jewish make up of the ecclesia.

Capita  
Provi  
where  
sprea  
Paul :  
3 yrs  
36; 20

PREACHING the GOSPEL in PHRYGIA



The Jews were sufficiently large in numbers and in influence that they appealed to the Roman governor and were granted the right to follow their religious practices ( Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, xiv, 10.20 ). The Jews were particularly attracted to the luxuries and hot springs of Phrygia - so much so, that the Jerusalem Jews complained!



## COMPOSITION OF THE ECCLESIA

- a) Jews - Antiochus the Great transported<sup>2</sup> 2,000 Jewish families from Mesopotamia and Babylonia to Lydia and Phrygia. They evidently flourished since it is estimated that 50,000 Jews inhabited these areas at the time of the Apostle Paul. Sections of the Colossian epistle suggest Jewish problems and therefore a significant Jewish element in the ecclesia ( see Col. 2:16,17 ).
- b) Gentiles -Probably a majority of the Colossian ecclesia. This can be inferred from the following:
- i) "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" ( Col. 2:11, cf. 1:27 ). Although these words were an appropriate reminder to Jewish converts of the real circumcision, they were even more appropriate for Gentiles for whom it was not necessary to be circumcised as Judaisers had argued elsewhere ( e.g. Acts 15:1,24 ).
  - ii) Exhortations to slaves as well as to masters ( Col. 3:22 - 4:1 ) implies a Gentile section of the ecclesia. Phrygia was well known as an area for slaves.
- c) Size - Probably small since the ecclesias at Laodicea and Colossae met in houses ( Col. 4:15; Philemon 2 ). This conclusion is further supported by the representatives for the Jerusalem Poor Fund. The Lycus Valley ecclesias are represented by Tychicus<sup>3</sup> who visited Ephesus ( probably carrying the Ephesian Epistle, Eph. 6:21,22 ) and Trophimus who was an Ephesian ( Acts 21:29 ). It can be seen then, that the ecclesias of the Lycus Valley are represented through the ecclesia at Ephesus. In contrast to this, Berea, Thessalonica and Derbe had their own ecclesial representation ( Acts 20:4 ).

<sup>2</sup>This historical background may provide additional meaning to Col. 1:13: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us / Gk: 'methistēmi' = 'to stand or set in another place, to transfer', Bullinger\_ / into / 'to', RSV\_ / the kingdom of his dear son. "

<sup>3</sup>Although Tychicus almost certainly travelled to Ephesus ( Eph. 6:21 ) and Colossae ( Col. 4:7-9 ) on the same journey, he does not appear to have been a Colossian. He was sent to Ephesus from Rome during Paul's final imprisonment ( 2 Tim. 4:12 ) and may have travelled to Crete in another mission ( Titus 3:12 ).

MEMBERS OF THE COLOSSIAN ECCLESIA

- Epaphras** - a dear fellow servant to Paul ( Col. 1:7 )  
 - a faithful minister of Christ ( Col. 1:7 )  
 - he travelled to Rome conveying information to Paul regarding the welfare of the brethren in the Lycus Valley - "who declared unto us your love in the Spirit" ( Col. 1:8 )  
 - while separated from his Colossian ecclesia he was "always labouring fervently for them in prayers" ( Col. 4:12 )  
 - he had a "great zeal" for the Colossians and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis ( Col. 4:13 ).
- Philemon** - the slave owner of the runaway slave, Onesimus  
 - "a beloved fellow worker" ( Philemon 1, RSV )  
 - probably the ecclesia met in his house in Colossae ( Philemon 1, 2 )  
 - He is commended for:  
   - his love and faith toward the Lord Jesus and the saints ( Philemon 5 )  
   - he provided joy and comfort to Paul in prison because the hearts of the saints were refreshed by him ( Philemon 7 ).
- Apphia** - "the sister" to whom Paul sent greetings - possibly the wife of Philemon ( Philemon 2 ).
- Archippus** - "a fellowsoldier" - a spiritual soldier cf. Eph. 6:10-18  
 - possibly the son of Philemon and Apphia ( Philemon 1, 2 )  
 - he received "a ministry . . . in the Lord" to which he was directed "to take heed . . . that thou fulfil it" ( Col. 4:17 ).
- Onesimus** - a runaway slave who may have stolen things from his slave owner, Philemon ( Philemon 18 )  
 - he was converted by Paul in Rome ( Philemon 10 )  
 - he was regarded as a "faithful and beloved brother" ( Col. 4:9; Philemon 16 )  
 - he became a great help to Paul in his imprisonment so that it was with reluctance that Paul parted with him ( Philemon 11-13 ) sending him back to Philemon.
- Tychicus** - a companion with Paul in Rome  
 - he travelled twice to Ephesus ( Eph. 6:21,22; 2 Tim. 4:12 ) to Colossae ( Col. 4:7, 8 ) and Crete ( Titus 3:12 )  
 - he was probably carrying the Colossian and Ephesian epistles and was accompanied by Onesimus ( Col. 4:7-8 )  
 - his purpose in journeying to Colossae was to "know your estate, and comfort your hearts" and to provide details about "all things which are done here in Rome" ( Col. 4:8, 9 ).

## THE ECCLESIAL INTERRELATIONSHIPS

The ecclesias of the Lycus Valley had much in common. This is indicated by the following:

a) Although the Colossian epistle is sent specifically to the Colossians, it was also intended to be read by the Laodiceans:

"And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the ecclesia of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea" ( Col. 4:16 ).

b) Epaphras, the probable founder of the Colossian ecclesia ( Col. 1:6-7 ), was also zealous in his efforts for the other two ecclesias in the Lycus Valley:

"For I [ Paul ] bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis" ( Col. 4:13, RSV ).

c) Greetings in the Colossian epistle are addressed to the Laodiceans as well as to the Colossians:

"Give my greetings to the brethren at Laodicea and to Nympha and the ecclesia in her house" ( Col. 4:15, RSV ).

d) Although the subject matter of the Colossian epistle is intended for the Colossian ecclesia, Paul's concern was also for the Laodiceans: "For I want you to know how greatly I strive for you, and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not seen my face. . . ." ( Col. 2:1, RSV ).

It can be determined from the above that ecclesias are not cut off from one another - they are part of the one Christ Body ( Col. 3:15 ). Ecclesias close to each other have a special responsibility in this regard. Doctrinal integrity and faithfulness in discipleship can either weaken or encourage other ecclesias. For example, the initial enthusiasm shown by the ecclesias of Achaia ( Corinth and Cenchrea ) for the Jerusalem Poor Fund was used by the Apostle Paul to encourage the participation of the ecclesias in Macedonia ( 2 Cor. 9:1-2 ). However, when the enthusiasm waned through difficulties within the Corinthian ecclesia, Paul wrote:

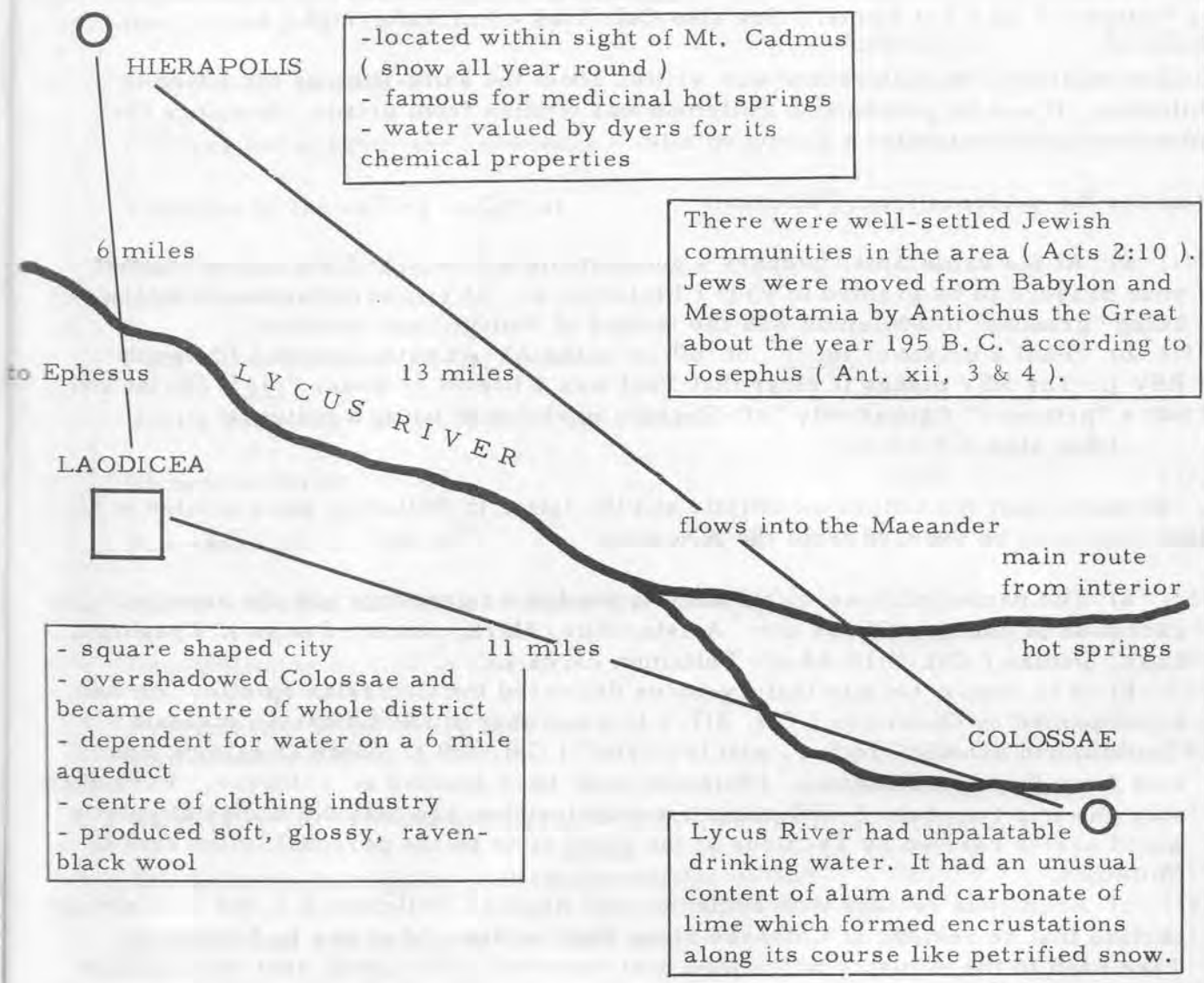
"Lest if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we be humiliated - to say nothing of you - for being so confident"  
( 2 Cor. 9:4, RSV ).

Similarly, the example of the Thessalonians was noted by the Apostle Paul:

"So that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia, . . . your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything" ( 1 Thess. 1:7-8, RSV ).

Ecclesial standards are reflections of individual applications to the study and practice of the Word of God. Just as individuals within ecclesias can have an encouraging or weakening effect on ecclesial life, so ecclesias can significantly affect regional areas.

THE LYCUS VALLEY



It is not possible to study "Colossians" in detail without regard for its setting in the Lycus Valley. In fact, the very concept of the Christ Body developed so comprehensively in the epistles, portrays individual ecclesias as members of the Christ Body. The Christ Body was composed not only of the ecclesia at Colossae, but Hierapolis and Laodicea as well. Similarly, in today's ecclesial world, regional areas carry a special responsibility in this regard. Their interrelationship is fundamentally important. More workers with a "great zeal" like Epaphras are always needed.

## DATING OF COLOSSIANS AND PHILEMON

1. The Colossian epistle does not state the place from which Paul wrote. It is certain however, that Paul was in prison because he requested that the ecclesia "remember my bonds" ( Col. 4:18 ). Paul cannot be using "bonds" with a figurative meaning since in this respect his lot was common with all other believers. His distinctive bonds were his "fetters" ( RSV ) of Rome. ( See also Col. 1:24 - 'my sufferings ' ).

2. The epistle to the Colossians was written about the same time as the letter to Philemon. It can be proven that Philemon was written from prison, therefore the Colossian epistle was also a prison epistle.

Consider the evidence from Philemon:

a) "At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be granted to you" ( Philemon 22, RSV ). The hindrance to Paul being "granted" to Philemon was the fetters of Roman imprisonment.

b) "Paul a prisoner for / not 'of' as in the AV / Christ Jesus" ( Philemon 1, RSV ). The RSV makes it clear that Paul was a literal prisoner "for" Christ and not a "prisoner" figuratively "of" Christ, by virtue of being a believer.

c) See also v. 9, 10, 23.

3. Evidence that the Colossian Epistle and the letter to Philemon were written at the same time may be deduced from the following:

a) The names of those with Paul who send their greetings are the same with the exception of Justus. These are: Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus ( Justus ), Epaphras, Luke, Demas ( Col. 4:10-14 cf. Philemon 23, 24 ).

b) It is almost certain that Tychicus delivered the Colossian epistle. He was accompanied by Onesimus ( Col. 4:7-9 ), a member of the Colossian ecclesia - a "faithful and beloved brother, who is of you" ( Col. 4:9 ). Since Onesimus was sent from Rome to Philemon, Philemon must have resided at Colossae. Presumably only one trip ( approx. 1,000 miles ) was undertaken, so that the ecclesial epistle would arrive carried by Tychicus at the same time as the personal letter sent to Philemon.

c) Archippus resided with Philemon and Apphia ( Philemon 2 ), but it is almost certain that he resided at Colossae since Paul writes: "And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" ( Col. 4:17 ).<sup>4</sup>

These deductions are important because of the instructions regarding slaves and masters in the Colossian epistle which would have direct relevance to Philemon and Onesimus ( e.g. 3:22-25; 4:1, 6 ). The private appeal of Paul to Philemon in the letter ( carried by Onesimus? ) would be supplemented by the Colossian epistle read publicly!

<sup>4</sup>This point might be contended by arguing that Archippus was a member of the Laodicean ecclesia ( see Col. 4:16 ). Stress might be placed on "And say" ( v. 17 ) as if to imply that Archippus belonged to another ecclesia close by, but was not a member of the Colossian ecclesia. The evidence from Philemon - "the ecclesia in thy house", however, seems to require Archippus to reside at Colossae since the Laodicean ecclesia met in the house of Nymphas ( Col. 4:15 ) not that of Philemon.

THE "TWIN EPISTLES": A COMPARISON BETWEEN COLOSSIANS AND EPHESIANS

Ephesians and Colossians are twin epistles. Many expressions, words and phrases are unique to these epistles. Some do not occur elsewhere in the New Testament.

Some topics are introduced in the same order. Note the correspondence between the following:<sup>5</sup>

	<u>Colossians</u>	<u>Ephesians</u>
Prayers for believers	1:3, 9	1:16
Prayers for wisdom and knowledge	1:9, 10	1:17, 18
The hope of the calling in Christ	1:5	1:18
The content of the hope - his glorious inheritance in the saints	1:12	1:18
Paul's thankfulness for the ecclesia	1:3	1:16
Paul's knowledge of the faith of the ecclesia	1:4	1:15
Riches in Christ	1:27	1:7, 18
Pre-eminence of Christ	1:18	1:21
Christ - head of all rule and authority	2:10	1:21
Reconciliation by God in Christ	1:20	1:6-7; 2:13-14
Presentation of believers holy and blameless in Christ	1:22	5:26-27
Exhortation to be rooted and grounded in Christ	2:7	3:17
The believer to be filled with the knowledge of God	2:9, 10	3:19; 1:21-23
Strengthened with might in the inner man	1:11	3:16
The maturity of believers	1:28	4:13
The mystery of Gentile inclusion in the gospel	1:26	3:2-9
Warnings against cunning errorists	2:4	5:6; 4:14

<sup>5</sup>This list is only representative. By checking the marginal references from Colossians to Ephesians a very lengthy list can be compiled.

# the CHRIST – BODY METAPHOR

ACTS 9:4

COL. 1:18, 24  
2:19  
3:15

1 COR. 12:12—27

“JOINED and KNIT TOGETHER

by EVERY JOINT with which it is

SUPPLIED ” (EPH. 4:16 RSV)

ROM. 12:4,5

EPH. 1:22

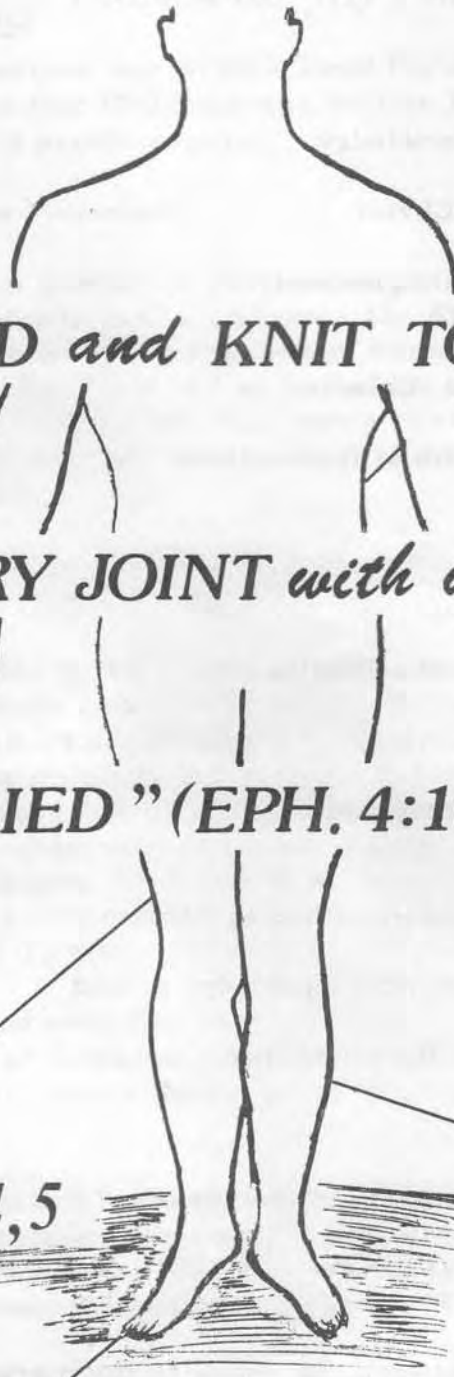
2:16

3:6

4:4, 12, 16

5:23, 30

MATT. 25:35—45



## THE CHRIST BODY METAPHOR

The most extensively used metaphor in the epistle is that of the Christ Body - a comparison of the brethren and sisters in their relationship to each other as a body knit together through its joints and ligaments.

This body is nourished by its head - Christ and receives a growth which is from God. The concept is firmly rooted in Scripture.<sup>6</sup> Note the following:

1. Paul - learned that his treatment of the disciples was equivalent to his treatment of Jesus:

"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he [ Paul ] said, Who art thou Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" ( Acts 9:4, 5 ).

2. Jesus - in the parable of the sheep and the goats the same principle is illustrated:

"Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" ( Matt. 25:40 ).

3. Similarly in Matt. 18:5:

"And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me"

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" ( Matt. 18:20 ).

The Christ Body is composed of all ecclesias. Any one ecclesia is part of the Body but not the whole Body. Ecclesias have responsibilities to preserve the unity of the Body. This cannot be achieved by ignoring error and weakness in other ecclesias, nor by perpetuating a non-co-operation policy of ecclesias. If ecclesias are in the Christ Body, the help must be provided.

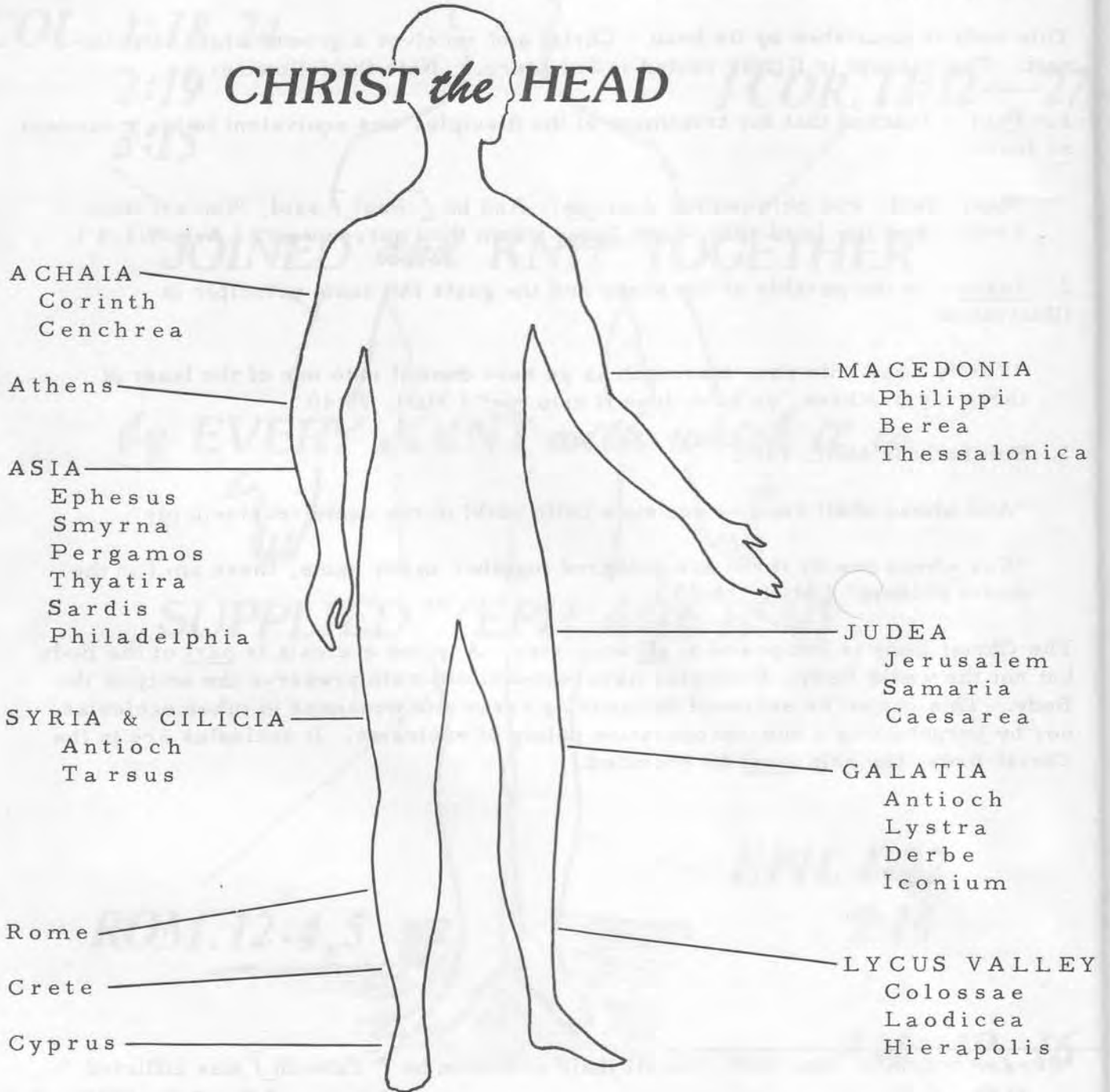
<sup>6</sup>See for example, Isa. 63:9: "In all their affliction he [ Yahweh ] was afflicted."



“SO WE BEING MANY MEMBERS  
ARE ONE BODY IN CHRIST...”

(ROM. 12:5)

**CHRIST *the* HEAD**



A COMPILATION OF REFERENCES TO THE CHRIST BODY

Reference	The comparison	meaning
<u>Colossians</u>		
1:18	Christ the <u>head</u> of the body - the ecclesia	- the pre-eminence of Christ
1:24	the body = the ecclesia	- Paul completes the work of Christ with the Gentiles. His afflictions are for their inclusion in the gospel.
2:19	The importance of the Head to the Christ Body - it provides the nourishment and the means whereby the joints and ligaments could be knit together	- the errorists at Colossae were not holding fast to the Head - Christ.
3:15	there is one body "to the which also ye are called"	- The peace of Christ is to rule in the heart of the believer. Grudges and disagreements are incongruous with the perfect harmony of the call in the <u>one</u> body.
<u>Ephesians</u>		
1:23	Christ is the head over all things for the ecclesia which is his body	- Christ's authority, pre-eminence - the ecclesia is complete in him "which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all" ( RSV ).
2:16	one body = Christ	Gentiles have become one with the Jews in the Christ Body
3:6	the same body for Jew and Gentile	There is not a Christ Body ( ecclesia ) for Jews and another for Gentiles. The Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the <u>same</u> body.
4:4	one body = Christ Body = the ecclesia	lowliness and meekness, patience and forbearance in love should be the demeanour of the disciple in Christ to preserve the unity of the <u>one</u> body.

Reference	The comparison	meaning
<u>Ephesians</u> 4:12	the body of Christ = the ecclesia	The Spirit gifts had their function for the work of ministry, building up the <u>body</u> of Christ - the ecclesia
4:15-16	Christ = the head of the Christ Body - growth of the ecclesia depends on the proper functioning of the parts of the body	The Christ Body, the ecclesia is <u>joined</u> and <u>knit</u> together by <u>every</u> joint ( each one is necessary in the ecclesia ) - "with which it is supplied" ( RSV ) indicates the divine arrangement of the parts of the body - the growth of the ecclesia ( the Christ Body ) is dependent upon each member working properly and making bodily growth.
5:23, 30	Christ the head of the ecclesia Christ nourishes and cherishes the Christ Body, so man should nourish and cherish his wife	- As a man loves his own body, so Christ loves the ecclesia - we are members of his body - the relationship of man-woman parallels Christ-ecclesia
<u>Romans</u> 12:5	The human body has many parts - hands, feet etc. so in the ecclesia there are many contributing parts, individually arranged as members one of another	Do not have an inflated idea of one's position in the ecclesia. As with the human body all parts are required, so in the Christ Body there are many members with different contributions to make. Therefore be of the same mind and "condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits" ( 12:16 ).

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THAT "THE WHOLE BODY / BE / NOURISHED AND KNIT TOGETHER . . ." ( Col. 2:19 )

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The Jewish Problem

The Colossian Epistle provides the information that Barnabas and John Mark were cousins ( Col. 4:10 ). Furthermore, it provides additional information that the work of the truth had taken John Mark to the Lycus Valley ( Col. 4:10; cf. Philemon 24 ). This detail might ordinarily pass as rather incidental, but when it is seen in the broad panorama of the great issues in the first century, it is highly significant.

The greatest issue to confront the fledgling ecclesias was the Jewish reluctance to accept Gentiles into the Christ Body on an equal footing.<sup>7</sup> Nearly every epistle deals with this issue, and whole sections of Galatians, Romans and Hebrews are extensively preoccupied with the problems. The Jerusalem meeting was convened in Acts 15 to resolve the matter.

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The Relationship of John Mark to the Problem

When it is remembered that the Lycus Valley contained a significant number of Jewish families, it may be inferred that this ecclesial area would not be untouched by the wider problem.<sup>8</sup> The involvement of John Mark is a most interesting component, especially from the point of view of the Christ Body and the very human factors which relate to this concept.

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Organization of the preaching work

In the first century, Peter was chiefly associated with the work of preaching to the Jews, but not exclusively so, since Acts 10 records his work with the Gentiles. The Apostle Paul was specifically sent to the Gentiles ( Gal. 2:9 ) although his work overlapped the work with the Jews as indicated by his custom of going to the synagogue first before commencing his work with the non-Jewish population ( cf. Acts 17:2, 3 ). The work therefore can be summarized as follows:

<sup>7</sup>The doctrinal issue is set out in Acts 15: "But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved'" ( Acts 15:1, RSV ).

<sup>8</sup>This conclusion is strengthened by the Jewish nature of the problems in Col. 2:11-18: circumcision, sabbath-keeping, meats, holy day observance.

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	<u>JEWES</u>	<u>GENTILES</u>
1. Sphere of Activity	( Peter - Gal. 2:7 )	( Paul - Gal. 2:8 )
2. Withdrawal - John Mark leaves Paul	John Mark probably returns to Jerusalem to his mother's house ( Acts 12:12 )	John Mark is associated with Barnabas and Paul in the early work ( Acts 12:25 ), but in Pamphylia he withdraws <sup>9</sup> ( Acts 13:13 )
3. CONFLICT - The conflict widens to include Barnabas		Paul refuses to take John Mark because of his earlier withdrawal ( Acts 15:37-40 ). Barnabas insists on Mark's inclusion ( they were cousins: Col. 4:10, RSV) <sup>10</sup> Barnabas separates from Paul <sup>11</sup> and returns to preach in Cyprus - his home country ( Acts 13:13-14 ). He is accompanied by John Mark
4. SONS in the FAITH John Mark becomes Peter's son in the faith ( 1 Pet. 5:13 )	Mark, presumably becomes involved with the Jewish work alongside Peter	Timothy becomes Paul's "son in the faith" ( Phil. 2:22 ).

<sup>9</sup>It is not known why John Mark left Paul. It may have been the looming conflict with the Jews in Galatia or even the arduous nature of the work itself ( 2 Cor. 11:23-29 ). Paul may have become seriously ill at this time, since he spoke of his work in Galatia as having commenced because of a bodily ailment ( Gal. 4:13, RSV ). This section is expanded in the notes on the "Jerusalem Poor Fund".

<sup>10</sup>The AV "sister's son to Barnabas" would imply an uncle-nephew relationship. The Greek, "anepsios" is understood to be "cousin". See W. Nicoll ( ed. ), The Expositor's Greek Testament, ( Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1970 ), p. 546. However, the Amplified New Testament gives "relative"; "first cousin", Rotherham; "cousin", RSV; NIV; NASB; Companion Bible.

<sup>11</sup>This must have been a sad parting. Barnabas had stood up for Paul - vouching for his credentials before the Jewish brethren in Jerusalem ( Acts 9:26, 27 ). Barnabas was a very distinguished brother. He was renamed by the apostles ( Acts 4:36 ) and was included in the list of the prophets and teachers ( Acts 13:1 ).

JEWES

GENTILES

5. The CONFLICT WIDENS  
Conflict between Paul and Peter ( Gal. 2:7-14 ) over the treatment of Gentiles in the Christ Body

Peter gives in to Jewish prejudice and refuses to eat with Gentiles

Paul "withstood him / Peter / to the face, because he was to be blamed. "

6. Barnabas also gives in to Jewish prejudice ( Gal. 2:13 )

7. The conflict between Paul and Peter is preserved in writing and then publicly circulated throughout the ecclesial world as the "Galatian Epistle"

8. RECONCILIATION

The work of Paul and John Mark overlaps: "Mark . . . concerning whom you have received instruction" ( Col. 4:10, RSV )

John Mark becomes involved in the work of the Lycus Valley - Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea

9. Paul endorses the work of Mark: "if he comes to you, receive him" ( Col. 4:10, RSV )

10. Peter's commendation of Paul

"our beloved brother Paul / who / wrote to you according to the wisdom given him" ( cf. Paul's comments in Gal. 2 ), ( 2 Pet. 3:15, RSV )

11. Reconciliation of the respective sons in the faith

Paul writes to Timothy ( his son in the faith ) to bring with him Mark ( Peter's son in the faith ) because he "is very useful in serving me" ( 2 Tim. 4:11, RSV ).

"BUILDING UP THE BODY OF CHRIST, UNTIL WE ALL ATTAIN TO THE UNITY OF THE FAITH" ( Eph. 4:12,13 )

This historical record is a wonderful triumph of the unity of the Christ Body over human weakness. Peter's treatment of the Gentiles in Antioch ( out of deference to conservative brethren<sup>12</sup> who arrived from Judea ) would have further polarized the brotherhood and precipitated a division in the ecclesial world on Jew/Gentile lines. The forthright action taken by the Apostle Paul was necessary to preserve the unity of the Christ Body.

Peter's response to Paul's public reproof is a remarkable victory of the truth over natural inclination. There was no attempt by Peter to engage in a program of vilification of Paul or self-justification. When Peter writes to Jewish brethren, he refers to the "beloved brother Paul, who wrote according to the wisdom given him" ( even Galatians 2 which records Peter's own weakness! ). This is an indication of the stature of Peter and a victory for a Christ-like attitude. Surely, such a powerful example will not go unnoticed by lesser mortals in whatever leadership responsibilities they assume.

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<sup>12</sup>Paul recounts this event in these words: "I saw that they / Peter, Barnabas and the Jewish brethren from James / walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel . . ." ( Gal. 2:14 ). Peter's capitulation to pressure from the conservative Jews on this matter is even more astonishing since he had been strengthened by God through a vision ( Acts 10 ) for the acceptance of the Gentiles. After the vision Peter concluded: "Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" ( Acts 10:34 ). Yet this was just what he did in Antioch!



The considerable significance of the reference to John Mark in Colossians and Philemon can now be appreciated. After his rebuff by Paul, John Mark may have refused to work with Paul again. The fact that he was "very useful" in his service indicates his personal growth ( through the influence of Peter? ). His work is another illustration, alongside that of Peter, of the triumphing of the principles of godliness over personal feeling.

"YE ARE CALLED IN ONE BODY" ( Col. 3:15; Eph. 2:16; 4:4 )

The personal growth of John Mark, Peter and others in the midst of the great issues of the first century is most instructive. It provides a lesson difficult to learn and easy to forget that there is a doctrine of unity in the Christ Body. The number of divisions which have occurred in our own 120 year history are in marked contrast to the ONE Christ Body doctrine of Scripture. The idea that different fellowships are all "in Christ" and candidates for the Kingdom of God is entirely unscriptural ( some individuals fellowship no-one else ). It betrays weakness and not strength. Weakness which, in the first century, if unchecked, would have split the ecclesial world in two in Galatia. The potential split was not on doctrinal error ( that is, erroneous belief ) but rather in the application of beliefs to walk. It was the capitulation of "strong brethren", "pillars in the ecclesia" to the opinions of those upon whom support depended. The Jews who came from James were a pressure group akin to the peer group of a teenage student in high school.

"WE ARE TO GROW UP IN EVERY WAY INTO HIM WHO IS THE HEAD, INTO CHRIST"  
( Eph. 4:15 )

Significant too, is the fact that even fathers in the faith can make mistakes as did Peter, yet still be teachable like a child. This is a wonderful characteristic to find in a leader and is the essence of overcoming evil with good. In the Colossian epistle the exhortation in this respect is stated as follows:

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony"

( Col. 3:12-14, RSV ).

### Conclusions drawn from the Christ-Body Metaphor

(1) There is one Christ Body. Those who leave the Christ Body and set up other "fellowships" have placed themselves outside the ecclesia of God. There is only one Christ Body and the individual members are "joined" and "knit" together ( Eph. 4:16 ). If, however, the Christ Body ceases to be such, through error in doctrine or practice, then there is no nourishment and no hope of salvation in the community. It is impossible to maintain a separate fellowship like the Bereans, Dawns, Old Paths, Family Journal etc. while acknowledging brethren in Christ in the Central Fellowship. If the Central Fellowship is the Christ Body, then logically the metaphor precludes different "bodies", when there is only one Christ Body.<sup>13</sup>

(2) The Christ Body is composed of members interrelated into a whole. It is in the body that attributes of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, patience and forgiveness are developed ( Col. 3:12-15 ). Those who choose to live in isolation "to get away from the city", "to get closer to nature and to God", to be "away from the squabbles of ecclesial life" are making a big mistake. They are removing themselves from the very training ground which God has provided for them. Service in the Christ Body is preparation for service in the Kingdom.

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<sup>13</sup>Furthermore, there are no examples of ecclesias in the first century out of fellowship with other ecclesias, yet still regarding each other as "brethren in Christ". This is the case despite many examples of ecclesial interrelationships, e.g. the Jerusalem conference; the collections for poor Jews in Judea and the extensive travel of believers.

TOPICAL BREAKDOWN OF COLOSSIANS

- 1:1-2 Shared greetings of Paul and Timothy
- 1:3 Thanksgiving for the Colossians' faith
- 1:4-12 Prayer for the Colossians' spirituality
- 1:13-22 Redemption secured in Christ
- 1:23 The Colossian obligation
- 1:23-29 Paul's ministry to the Gentiles
- 2:1-3 Paul's concern for the spirituality of the Colossians and Laodiceans
- 2:4-8 Warning against the imminent danger of errorists
- 2:9-15 The exclusiveness of belief in Christ
- 2:16-23 Freedom in Christ not to be replaced by other claimants to revelation
- 3:1 Exhortations regarding direction in life
- 3:2-9 Put to death "the old man"
- 3:10-17 Put on the "new man"
- 3:18-25 Exhortations to husbands, wives, children, fathers, servants
- 4:1 Exhortation to masters
- 4:2-3 Paul solicits prayers for his preaching
- 4:4-6 Relationship to the outsider
- 4:7-17 Greetings of Paul's fellow labourers
- 4:18 Salutation

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1:1-2 GREETINGS

1:1 I Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timotheus/our/ brother -  
Paul introduces himself as the writer of the letter.

an apostle - Gk: "apostolos", "one sent forth" (Yg). The word is used of others beside the twelve ( e.g. Epaphroditus - a messenger / Gk: 'apostolos' /, Phil. 2:25 ).

by the will of God - He was an apostle by the will of God, i. e., his apostleship was not self-assumed ( Gal. 2:8-9; Acts 26:17 ). There does not appear to have been a challenge to his apostleship at Colossae as there was at Corinth ( 2 Cor. 11,12 ), and Galatia ( Gal. 4:12-20 ). Paul does not refer to his apostleship when writing to the Thessalonians or to the Philippians because he was well known to them and his apostolic authority was not under challenge. Why then does he mention it here? Presumably he was not well known to them. There were those whom he said, had "not seen my face in the flesh" ( 2:1 ).

Timotheus - Timothy - "honoured of God" (Yg). Paul's "son in the faith" ( 1 Cor. 4:17 ) who evidently was in Rome with Paul at this time.

Timothy often accompanied Paul and sends his greetings in 2 Cor.; Philipians; 1 Thess. and Philemon.

1:2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace / be /  
unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ

saints - Gk: "hagios", "set apart, separate, holy" (Yg). It is not used in the singular, e.g. "Saint" Jerome as it is used by the Roman Church. Scriptural saints are set apart by their belief and obedience to the gospel ( Col. 1:6,12-14 ). The name "saint" applies to the Christ Body as a whole and is not reserved for those regarded as worthy of special veneration as is the popular religious usage. It is for this reason that Christadelphians do not read "Saint" Matthew, "Saint" Mark etc. as the AV erroneously places at the top of the chapters in the gospels. Versions like the RSV; RV; NIV delete these.

faithful brethren in Christ - This is the Greek from which the name "Christadelphian" is taken. See also Heb. 2:11; Rom. 8:29.

Gk: "adelphois en Christō"  
brethren in Christ

Grace be unto you - This is the usual salutation of Paul in the epistles ( e.g. Eph. 1:2; Rom. 1:7 ). Similar salutations were used in secular writings as indicated by the papyri.

and peace - Gk: "eirēnē" has the meaning of peace effected by reconciliation between God and man. "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" ( Col. 3:15 ).

This is a wonderful blessing for the disciple. It cannot be attained in any other way, money cannot buy it; influence cannot acquire it.

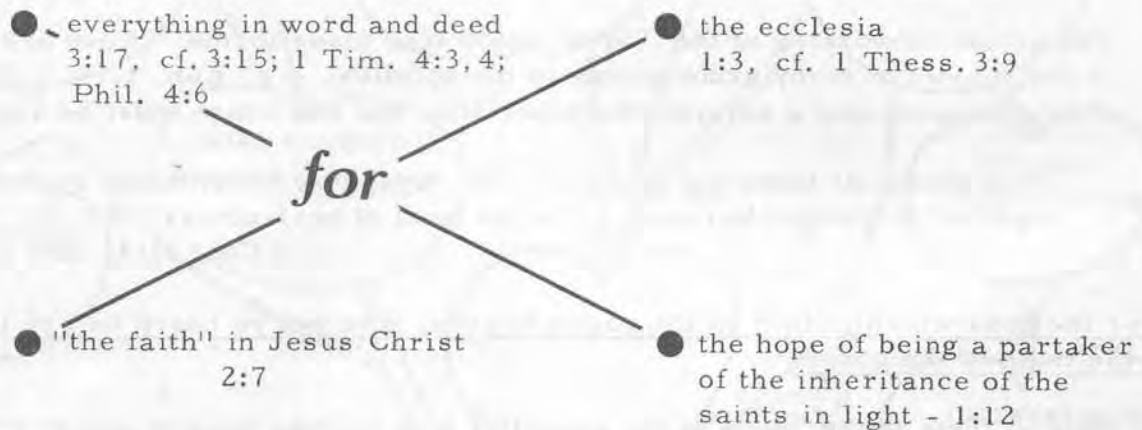
from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ - The co-operation of the Father and Son in the atonement is further indicated by their concern for the spiritual well-being of the Colossians.

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

we give thanks - This is an example worthy of note. Paul may never have seen many of those at Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea, but he prayed for their spiritual welfare ( cf. Eph. 1:16 ). The "we" implies that Timothy prayed for them, too.

Repeatedly Paul returns to this theme:

## Be THANKFUL ...



It was not only the believers at Colossae that he remembered - he affectionately remembered the Ephesians ( many of whom he would know from his three year stay there - Acts 20:31 ):

"I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers" ( Eph. 1:16 )

to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ - Although the Colossian epistle speaks of Christ in the most exalted terms ( e.g. 1:13-20 ), Paul gives thanks to God ( not directly to Jesus, as do many of the charismatics and evangelicals ). The pattern to be followed is set out below:

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" ( Col. 3:17 ).

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

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus - Paul's knowledge of their faith and

love came from Epaphras, a founder member of the Colossian ecclesia ( Col. 4:12 ) but who at the time of writing was with Paul in Rome as a "fellowprisoner" ( Philemon 23 ).

There was a two-fold concern:

a) the faith - or soundness of doctrinal standing ( belief and conviction ) - zeal for the truth.

b) the Christ Body - the interrelationship of believers.

This pattern is repeated in Eph. 1:15.

the love / which ye have / to all the saints - The "love" encompasses the relationship of a believer to others in the Christ Body - i. e. , all the saints - primarily in one's own ecclesia, those close by and to others ( when possibly at a distance ).

The actual outworking of the "love" could take many forms. "Love of the brethren" is the subject of many exhortations in the epistles, e. g. Eph. 1:15; 1 Thess. 3:12. It is not essentially a natural characteristic, but one which must be acquired:

"And above all these put on love / Gk: 'agapē' /, which binds everything together in perfect harmony / 'is the bond of perfectness', AV /"  
( Col. 3:14, RSV ).

1:5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel

the hope - This is the "hope of the gospel" ( 1:23 ) - "the hope of glory" ( 1:27 ).

"When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" ( 3:4 ). The glory relates to his "inheritance in the saints" ( Eph. 1:18 ).

which is laid up for you - Since it is "laid up", it is not a present possession.

in heaven - Gk: "ouranois" - literally, "in the heavens" ( plural ).

Some have read these verses to mean that since the reward is in heaven, the believer must go there to obtain it.<sup>2</sup> However, this is not the hope of the gospel, nor the "one hope of your calling" ( Eph. 4:4 ).

Rather the hope relates to the life of the believer ( his affections, ambitions, aspirations ) focussed on Christ, "who is our life." As for earthly ambitions - "set your affection / 'mind', mg. / on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" ( Col. 3:2-3 ).

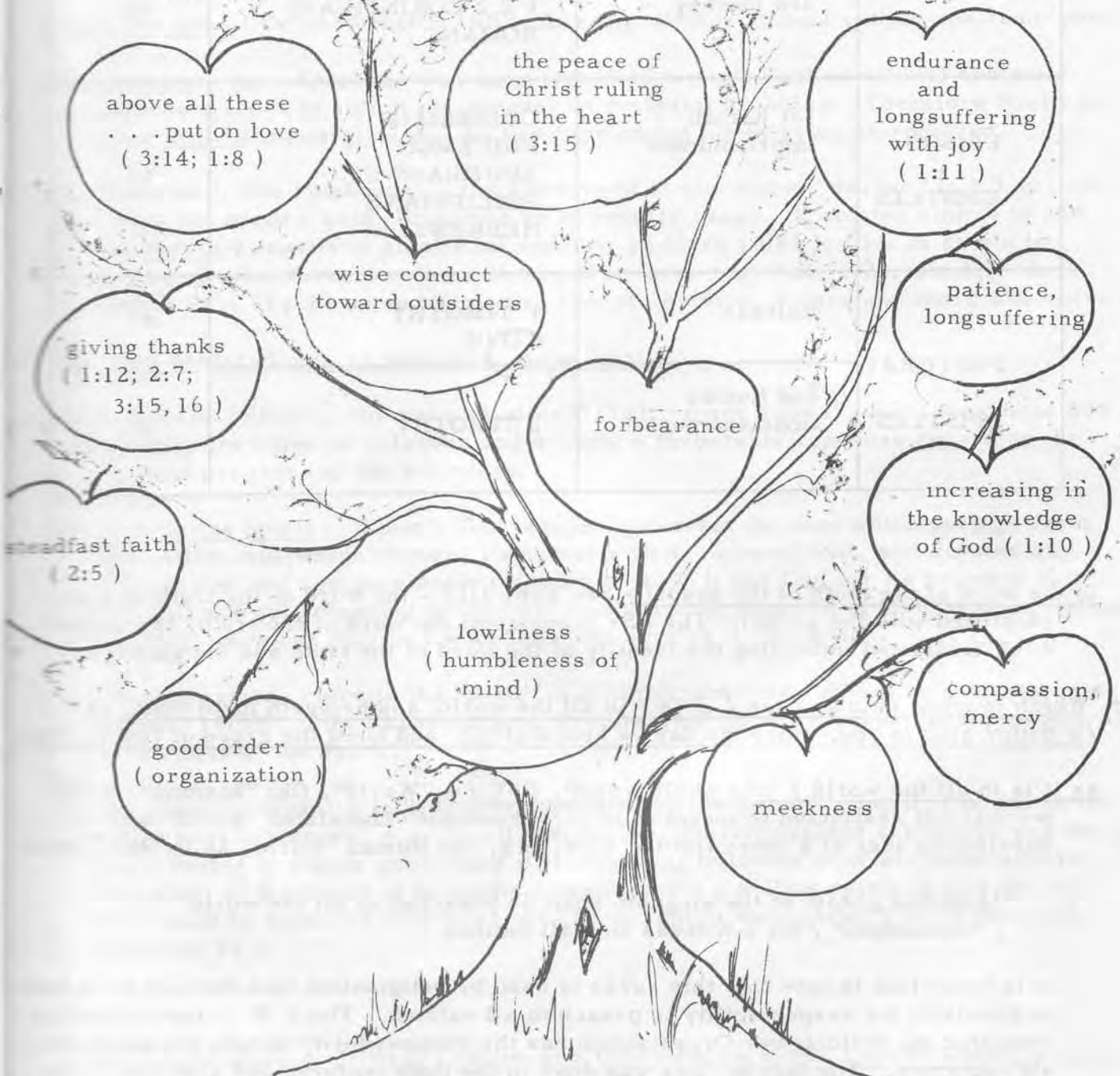
whereof ye heard before - Instruction appears to have been intensive for new converts, cf. 2 Thess. 2:5 re. the "Man of Sin" prophecy probably developed from its antecedents in Dan. 7:11; Isa. 11; 14; Zech. 5 and Ezek. 28:

"Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?"

<sup>2</sup>See R. A. , Wrested Scriptures, ( Pasadena, Calif.: The Christadelphians ), p.115.

1. 4:12 ) and bringeth forth fruit - The fruit is the Christ-like character developed in the lives of the believers. This is the very purpose of the preaching of the gospel. It is the preparation of believers for "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" ( Eph. 1:18 ).

**"BEARING FRUIT *in* EVERY GOOD WORK ..."(Col. 1:6,10)**



***rooted in Christ and grounded in love  
(Col. 2:7 ; Eph. 3:17)***

THE TIME FRAME OF THE APOSTLE'S WORK

	Setting	Epistle	Approx. date
TRAVEL	Between 1st and 2nd journeys	GALATIANS	46-48
EPISTLES	2nd journey	1 & 2 THESSALONIANS	52
	3rd journey	1 & 2 CORINTHIANS ROMANS	55
PRISON EPISTLES	1st Roman imprisonment	COLOSSIANS PHILEMON EPHESIANS PHILIPPIANS HEBREWS?	61
PASTORAL	Release	1 TIMOTHY TITUS	62
EPISTLES	2nd Roman imprisonment	2 TIMOTHY	67

in the word of the truth of the gospel - See Eph. 1:13 - the word of the truth is again identified with the gospel. The RSV translates: the word of the truth, the gospel" ('of' is deleted indicating the identity of the word of the truth and the gospel).

1:6 Which is come unto you, as / it is / in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as / it doth / also in you, since the day ye heard/of it /, and knew the grace of God in truth

as it is in all the world / 'the whole world', RSV / - "World", Gk: "kosmos". This word is not restricted in meaning as is "oikoumenē" translated "world" which carries the idea of a more limited view, e.g. the Roman "world" as in Matt. 24:14:

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world / 'oikoumenē' / for a witness unto all nations."

It is important to note that this verse is used by religionists like Herbert W. Armstrong to proclaim his responsibility to preach to all nations. The J.W.'s have a similar view that the Watchtower Organization has the responsibility to take the gospel to all countries. The fact is, this was done in the first century. See also Col. 1:23:

"the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven . . ."



since the day ye heard / of it / - Evidently the spirituality of the ecclesia had enjoyed steady growth.

1:7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear / 'beloved', RSV / fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ - See note on v. 4. Although Paul is an apostle, the subject of prophecy in Isa. 49, he still regards himself as a servant (literally, Gk: 'doulos' = 'fellow slave' ). In this respect, Paul is like Christ - who although all power has been committed to him in heaven and earth, he still stands at the door and knocks ( Rev. 3:20 ).

who is for you - "On our behalf", RSV; RSV mg. "other ancient authorities read 'your'."

a faithful minister - Epaphras may have travelled to visit Paul on official ecclesial business - i. e. , to solicit his counsel on ecclesial problems. Therefore Paul calls him a faithful minister, i. e. , he has carried out his mission as required.

"Minister", Gk: "diakonos" - the same word is translated "deacon" in 1 Tim. 3:8. It does not mean a paid clergyman as in popular usage. It relates simply to one who serves ( usually in an official capacity ) ( Mark 10:43 ). This is shown by looking up all references where the word occurs, e. g. Col. 1:23, 25; 4:7. It is used of Paul, Tychicus and Timothy, Christ, Apollos, rulers and those who serve.

1:8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit

declared - Gk: "dēloō", "to make manifest" (Yg); "made known", RSV. Epaphras had evidently travelled to Colossae and brought a favourable response regarding the spiritual progress of the believers.

your love in the Spirit - "Love", Gk: "agapē", "denotes the love which springs from admiration, and which chooses its object with decision of will, and devotes a self-denying and compassionate devotion to it."<sup>3</sup> It has God for its primary object. Self-will and self-pleasing of the "old man" are the negation of love to God. Humanly speaking, love can only be known from the actions it prompts.

The expression, "love in the Spirit" is difficult to define. There is a counterpart in Rom. 15:30: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit."

The apparent meaning is "the love generated by the Spirit". Spirit, that is, in its widest possible sense, e. g. Spirit-gifted men, Spirit-inspired scripture, and the Spirit vested in angels exercising a providential influence over ecclesial affairs. The effect of the Spirit is to produce agapē love - a willing spirit in contrast to what could be expected otherwise out of exaction or compulsion ( cf. 2 Cor. 9:5; Philemon 14 ).

<sup>3</sup>E. W. Bullinger, A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament, ( London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1957 ), p. 469.

1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard / it /, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding

since the day we heard / it / - Probably the day of Epaphras' arrival in Rome when Paul and Timothy learned of the spiritual progress of the believers. Epaphras would inform Paul of the Spirit-generated love ( 1:8 ), their "order" and "steadfast faith" ( 2:5 ).

do not cease to pray for you - see comment on v. 3. The like-mindedness of Paul and Epaphras is indicated by what Paul records:

"Epaphras . . . greets you, always remembering you earnestly in his prayers" ( Col. 4:12, RSV ).

The expansive nature of the Apostle's concerns in prayer are indicated by his concern for other ecclesias, too:

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all / Philippians / making request with joy" ( Phil. 1:3-4 ).

He wrote to the Corinthians:

"Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the ecclesias" ( 2 Cor. 11:28 ).

How often do you pray for the spiritual development of the ecclesia? How much interest do you show in the welfare of the ecclesia?

that ye might be filled - Gk: "plēroō", "to fill, make full" (Yg). This word occurs frequently in Ephesians ( 1:23; 3:19; 4:10; 5:18 ).

## MADE FULL — COMPLETE *in* CHRIST



### Plēroō = "to be filled"

- with the knowledge of his will
- with all the fullness of God

"that ye may grow up unto him in all things" ( Eph. 4:15 )

**(Col. 1:9, 19)**

the knowledge of his will - "Knowledge", Gk "epignōsis", "full knowledge", (Yg); ( Nestle ). Hence the double emphasis - "you might be filled with the full knowledge of his will." If this were the case there would be no room left for philosophy and vain deceit and the traditions of men ( Col. 2:8 ).

in all wisdom - "Wisdom", Gk: "sophia", "is the insight into the true nature of things" ( Vine ). The emphasis is on theoretical knowledge.

and spiritual understanding - "Understanding", Gk: "sunesis", "a sending together, intelligence" (Yg). "Sunesis" is the "ability to test and to distinguish and to criticize and to evaluate and to form judgments."<sup>4</sup>

Knowledge can puff up ( 1 Cor. 8:1,2 ). Therefore it requires wisdom and spiritual understanding to use it properly to produce fruit in the work of the truth.

The background to this section is almost certainly the prayer of Solomon, "Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people . . . ( 2 Chron. 1:10 ).

Paul's request for Colossian wisdom ( theoretical knowledge ) and understanding ( critical faculty ) was no doubt related to the error which threatened the ecclesia.

## "BUILT UP IN HIM" Col. 2:6 —

### *the PURPOSE*

( of the life of discipleship )

"to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work . . . ( Col. 1:10, RSV )

### **UNDERSTANDING**

Gk: "sunesis"

- discernment - the critical faculty
- to distinguish truth from error, right from wrong

### **WISDOM**

Gk: "sophia"

- comprehensive insight into God manifestation

### **KNOWLEDGE**

Gk: "epignōsis"

- exact or full knowledge, obtained from the reading and study of the Scriptures<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>W. Barclay, New Testament Words, ( London: SCM Press, 1964 ), p.261.

<sup>5</sup>In the first century, this information was also provided by apostles, evangelists, pastors, prophets and teachers ( Eph. 4:11-14, cf. 1 Cor. 12 ).

1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God

walk - Gk: "peripateō" - ordinary word for walk, but it is used figuratively for the "walk" to the Kingdom, e.g. 1 Thess. 4:1.

The exhortation to "walk worthy" is set out elsewhere as follows:

"I, therefore . . . beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" ( Eph. 4:1 );

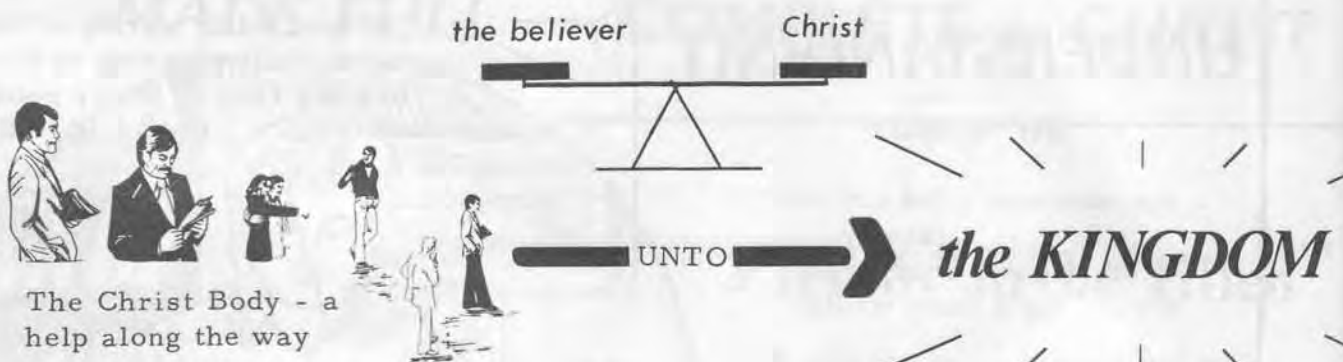
"That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" ( 1 Thess. 2:12 ).

worthy - Gk: "axios", "suitably, in a becoming manner; in a manner of equal value with the thing referred to"<sup>6</sup> - equivalent to "as becometh saints" ( Rom. 16:2 ). How does a believer walk worthy of the Lord? By a demeanour or behaviour which is appropriate to the calling in Christ. In this walk, the hope of the calling ( 1:23, 27 ) and the forgiveness of sins ( 1:14 ) are provisions which God has made for the believer.

of the Lord - Jesus, cf. v. 7, where "Christ" is the closest antecedent.

## "WALK WORTHY of the LORD ..."

"That is, in a becoming demeanour, worthy of, or of equal value to the thing referred to."



Be Christ-like in thinking and action! So "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" ( Titus 2:10 ). The practical application of these is set out in many places in Scripture - e.g. Titus 2<sup>11-14</sup>: "For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" ( Titus 2:11-13, RSV ).

<sup>6</sup>E. W. Bullinger, A Critical Lexicon, p. 904.

unto all pleasing - Gk: "areskia", has the idea of giving "pleasure" (Yg). It is clearly equivalent to 1 Thess. 4:1: "as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God . . ." Right conduct must be founded on right thinking, but right thinking must also lead to right conduct.

This is what Enoch did - "for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God" ( Heb. 11:5 ). Faith is an essential characteristic to please God ( Heb. 11:6 ). In the future such will walk with Christ - "they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" ( Rev. 3:4 ).

being fruitful in every good work - This is the purpose of discipleship. The "every good work" is all encompassing. The call of discipleship is all embracing, cf. 2 Pet. 1:8: "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

and increasing in the knowledge of God - "Increasing", Gk: "auxanō", "to increase, grow" (Yg). "Knowledge", Gk: "epignōsis", "exact or full knowledge, discernment" ( Vine ).

The importance of Bible reading and study is indicated by the focus on full knowledge. Paul said to the Ephesians:

"I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" ( Acts 20:32 ).

Knowledge is essential for the growth of the new man as Paul exhorts the Colossians:

"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" ( Col. 3:10, cf. Rom. 12:2 ).

11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness

strengthened - Gk: "dunamoō", "to make powerful" (Yg).

might - Gk: "dunamis", "power" (Yg).

glorious - Gk: "tēs doxēs", "the glory" ( Nestle ).

power - Gk: "kratos", "might" ( Nestle ).

patience - Gk: "hupomonē", "endurance, continuance" (Yg); lit. "an abiding under", ( 'hupo', 'under'; 'menō', 'to abide' ). Steadfastness in the face of trials ( cf. James 1:3, RSV ).

longsuffering - Gk: "makrothumia", "patience", RSV; NASB; NIV. This characteristic is to accompany the proclamation of the word - "preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching" ( 2 Tim. 4:2, RSV ).

PATIENCE - WITH A DIFFERENCE<sup>6</sup>

MAKROTHUMIA<sup>7</sup>

- patience - 1 Thess. 5:14, RSV
- does not retaliate when the opportunity may present itself
- it is a characteristic of agapē
- "slow to lose patience" ( 1 Cor. 13:4, Phillips Translation ).

HUPOMONĒ

- translated 'patience', AV, but better endurance, steadfastness
- bear up under pressure, does not give up in adversity, ( 2 Thess. 3:5, note context )
- grows in trial, Jas. 1:3, cf. Rom. 12:12

joyfulness - Gk: "chara". Patience and longsuffering are not always associated with joy. However, the power that God provides in the gospel message is more than sufficient to ensure this. This accounts for the repetition of "power", "empowered". The exhortation is also given in Eph. 6:10: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us / qualified us', RSV / meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light

giving thanks - Gk: "eucharisteō".

partakers - Gk: "meris", "division, portion" (Yg).

inheritance - Gk: "klēros", "a lot, possession" (Yg). The allusion here appears to be to the division of the land by lot when the children of Israel received their inheritance.

Ultimately, God is our portion or inheritance:

"The LORD is my chosen portion<sup>8</sup> and my cup;  
thou holdest my lot.

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
yea, I have a goodly heritage" ( Psa. 16:6, RSV, cf. 119:57; 142:5 ).

"The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him"  
( Lam. 3:24 ).

<sup>6</sup>Because the AV sometimes translates both Greek words by "patience", the distinction between the words is obscured.

<sup>7</sup>The noun "makrothumia" ( occurs 14 times ) and the verb "makrothumeō" ( occurs 10 times ) have not been found in classical Greek literature. They are essentially Biblical words.

<sup>8</sup>An example of what this means is found in 1 Thess. 2:2, RSV. When recounting his experience in Philippi, Paul wrote: "But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the face of great opposition."

The future inheritance is likewise set out in the Revelation:

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" ( Rev. 21:7 ).

In contrast to this future promise, the rejected - liars, unbelievers etc. "shall have their part / Gk: 'meros', 'lot', RSV / in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" ( Rev. 21:8 ).

in light - both real - the Shekinah glory of the Almighty:

"The city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb" ( Rev. 21:22-26, RSV ).

Figurative 'light' - the things relating to God in contrast to the world ( Eph. 5:7-10 ):

"For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of the light ( for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true )" ( Eph. 5:8-9, RSV ).

The believer has been called "out of darkness into his marvellous light" ( 1 Pet. 2:9, RSV ) to declare the wonderful deeds of God's salvation.

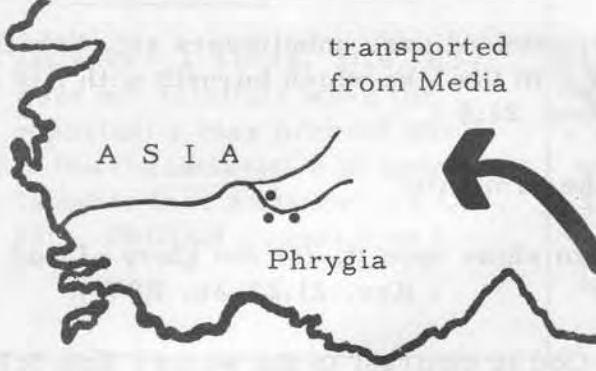



13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated / us / into the kingdom of his dear Son

delivered - Gk: "rhuomai", "to rescue" (Yg); NIV.

power - Gk: "exousia".

translated/us - Gk: "methistēmi", "to put over, translate" (Yg); "transferred", RSV; NASB; "to change, remove, ( 'meta', impl. change, 'histēmi', to cause to stand )", ( Vine ); "to cause a change of position; to remove, transport, transfer", ( Thayer ).

For Jews who remembered the transportation of Jews from Mesopotamia to Phrygia this verse would afford a remarkable parallel.

<b>HISTORICAL</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>
 <p>transported from Media</p> <p>ASIA</p> <p>Phrygia</p>	 <p>DOMINION OF DARKNESS</p> <p>TO/FOR THE KINGDOM OF HIS BELOVED SON</p>
<p>2, 000 Jewish families transported by Antiochus the Great</p>	<p>Transference of the believer from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom</p>
<p><b>the dominion of</b></p> <div data-bbox="267 987 893 1837" style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>DARKNESS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">( Eph. 2 )</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "dead" in trespasses and sin</li> <li>- following the course of this world - the prince of the power of the air</li> <li>- the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience</li> <li>- passions of the flesh - desires of mind and body</li> <li>- by nature children of wrath</li> <li>- separated from Christ</li> <li>- alienated from the commonwealth of Israel</li> <li>- strangers to the covenants of promise</li> <li>- having no hope</li> <li>- without God in the world</li> <li>- afar off</li> </ul> </div>	<div data-bbox="1104 756 1347 1249" style="text-align: center;">  <p><b>LIGHT</b></p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- raised with Christ to sit in the heavenlies</li> <li>- fellow citizens</li> <li>- members of the household of God</li> <li>- access to the Father</li> <li>- peace</li> <li>- brought near</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="917 1564 1534 1942" style="text-align: center;">  </div>



## THE STRUCTURE OF THE ARGUMENT<sup>1</sup>

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

1:13 The Significance of transference to Christ's kingdom  
What does this mean?

1:14 (1) Redemption - forgiveness of sins  
(2) Why is this important? Because of the pre-eminence of God's dear Son

1:15 a) He is the image of his Father  
b) He is the firstborn of every creature

1:16 c) In him and for him all things were created  
- in the heavens and on earth  
- things seen and unseen  
- thrones - lordships ( dominions ) - rulers ( principalities )

1:17 d) He is superior to all  
e) In him all things hold together

1:18 f) His relationship to his ecclesia  
- He is its "head"  
- He is its beginning ( chief )  
- He is the firstborn from the dead

### Conclusion:

1:18 Therefore he is pre-eminent in everything

1:19 SUMMARY STATEMENT

It pleased the Father ( this arrangement ) that in Christ  
all fullness should dwell.

<sup>1</sup>It is of fundamental importance in this section of the epistle to understand the argument.

into the kingdom of his dear Son - This verse is used by the Church of Christ to prove that the kingdom = the "church" which was set up at Pentecost. Great stress is placed by the Church of Christ on the words "hath" and "into". It is argued that Colossian believers were already in the kingdom, implying that the kingdom must be the "church". The following points should be noted:

(1) The "church" was not set up at Pentecost. Stephen refers to the Israelites as the ecclesia ( Acts 7:38 ). Individuals in all dispensations who walked faithfully before God were members of Christ's ecclesia. It requires stressing that "the gospel was preached unto Abraham" ( Gal. 3:8 ).

(2) Believers are not changed into the kingdom, but for the kingdom<sup>9</sup>. The preposition "eis" translated "into" in this verse is translated "for" in verse 16 - "all things were created by him and for him". The passage in question, therefore, can read: "Who delivered us from the dominion of darkness, and changed us for / not into / the kingdom of the Son of his love." This reading is supported by a later reference, "These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God . . ." ( Col. 4:11 ). The companions of the Apostle were workers "unto", not "in" the kingdom. ( 'Unto' is translated from the same Greek preposition 'eis' ). This argument ought to be appreciated by the Church of Christ since their expositors in emphasizing the forgiveness of sins in baptism, stress that "eis" means "for" or "in order to" in Acts 2:38.

(3) That this is the correct interpretation of this passage is supported by the following:

a) The <u>status</u> of a baptized believer is changed	
<u>from</u>	<u>to</u>
the power of darkness ( 1:13 )	the power of the risen Christ ( 1:11 )
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The effect of the change of status is to transfer the individual for the kingdom of God, the future "reward of the inheritance" ( Col. 3:24 ).

b) Paul speaks of the inheritance in other terms implying its future character:

- i. "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance . . . ( Col. 3:24 ). But if, as the Church of Christ contends, that by being baptized, the believer enters the kingdom, then the Apostle could not speak of the future nature of the inheritance. Therefore, believers have not yet entered the kingdom.
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the promised thrones are thrones of glory ( cf. Rev. 3:21; Matt. 19:28 ).

(4) Other references in the New Testament likewise indicate that the kingdom is the future inheritance of believers. Consider the following:

- a) "Then shall the king say unto them at his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom . . ." ( Matt. 25:24 ). The invitation to inherit the kingdom is only given after the Shepherd has divided the sheep from the goats. This has not yet happened, and many who now think they are sheep will in the future find out that they are goats ( Matt. 7:22-23 ).
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In whom we have redemption through his blood / even / the forgiveness of sins

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(2) What was the redemption or "loosing away" price? The answer is "the blood of Christ". The "blood" is synonymous with the life ( Deut. 12:23 ) the giving of himself for us ( Titus 2:14 ), but it accentuates the sacrificial nature of the death. As such, his blood was precious ( 1 Pet. 1:19 ).

(3) To whom was the redemption price paid?<sup>12</sup> Scripture does not state an answer. Although a parallel is given in the O. T., God redeemed Israel out of Egypt ( Exod. 6:6; Deut. 7:8 ). The redemption price was Egypt - which was destroyed.

the forgiveness of sins - Gk: "aphesis", "denotes a dismissal, release" ( Vine ); in the verb form "aphiēmi", means to send forth, send away ( 'apo', from; 'hiēmi', to send ). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them . . ." ( 2 Cor. 5:19, RSV ). Forgiveness of sins is a wonderful provision by the Almighty. It is granted at baptism ( Acts 2:38; 22:16, cf. 3:19 ) and thereafter upon the request of the sinner ( when an attitude of faith and repentance is demonstrated - cf. Heb. 4:14-16 ).

It is a Roman Church view that forgiveness of sins is granted at the Eucharist. The breaking of bread service is a reminder of how redemption was obtained and our relation to it, but forgiveness of sins is granted through prayer not the partaking of the emblems.

1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature / 'All creation'RS

the image - Gk: "eikon" - the word involves the two ideas of representation and manifestation" ( Vine ). The image does not relate to a physical resemblance since Christ is the image of the invisible God. The image relates to the moral characteristics of God. The image can be discerned by "with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord" ( RSV ) and so the believer can be "changed into the same image" ( 2 Cor. 3:18 ). "God hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" ( 2 Cor. 4:6 ).

The parallel passages in Ephesians make this apparent:

"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" ( Eph. 4:24 ).

What greater satisfaction can a father have than to have a son in his moral image? ( Much more so a morally perfect Heavenly Father ).

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<sup>12</sup>This question has puzzled non-Christadelphian expositors like Barclay who do not understand the Atonement. See Barclay, New Testament Words, p. 196.

creature - Gk: "ktisis", "a making, thing made" (Yg).

Mistakenly, some interpreters have regarded "every creature" as meaning Christ existed before the birds and animals of the Genesis account.<sup>16</sup> However, the context relates to the regeneration of men and women - and has nothing to do with Genesis. Christ is the firstborn from the dead ( Col. 1:18 ). "Every creature" emphasizes that he is the supreme firstborn superseding the Levites, Israel and the firstborn sons in Israel.

It was important for this point of emphasis as errorists were undermining the importance of the Headship of Christ.

1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether / they be / thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him

by him - Gk: "en" - this preposition is translated in him - RSV; RV; NASB; Nestle.

The trinitarian argument goes as follows:

All things were created by Jesus Christ  
Therefore it follows he is older than creation  
and, by implication,  
He must be part of the Godhead.

Paul's argument may be summarized as follows:

All things were created in him  
Therefore, he must be supreme  
Hence the futility of worshipping angels ( Col. 2:18 ).

created - Gk: "ktizō", "to make, produce" (Yg). This creation does not relate to the Genesis account since it includes things in heaven, ( and would infer that God was created by Jesus! ). "Ktizō" relates to the regeneration of men and women - they are remade:

- a) "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" ( Eph. 2:10, cf. 4:23, 24 ).
- b) "For to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace" ( Eph. 2:15 ).
- c) See also Col. 3:9, 10, RSV; Gal. 6:15; Jas. 1:18; 2 Cor. 5:17.

that are in heaven - Literally, "in the heavens" - even angels have a new arrangement in Christ - as firstborn, they too are now subject to him: "let all the angels of God worship him" ( Heb. 1:6 ).

<sup>16</sup>For a more comprehensive treatment of the passage as a "wrested scripture" see R. A., Wrested Scriptures, p. 201-202.



<u>GOD - CHRIST - THE BELIEVER</u>		
It is helpful to see the way in which attributes and characteristics of God are applied to Christ and then to the believer in Christ.		
<u>GOD</u>	<u>CHRIST</u>	<u>THE BELIEVER</u>
"all in all" ( 1 Cor. 15:28 )	"all in all" ( Col. 3:11; Eph. 1:23 )	"That we may present every man mature in Christ" ( Col. 1:28, RSV )
	the fullness of God ( Col. 2:9 )	The fullness of life in Christ ( Col. 1:9, 10; 2:10, 11 )
	God in Christ ( 2 Cor. 5:19 )	"Christ is in you" ( Col. 1:27 )
	in him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ( Col. 2:2, 3 )	the wisdom and knowledge of Christ in the believer ( Col. 1:9 )
	Christ chosen of God ( 1 Pet. 2:4 )	God's chosen ones ( Col. 3:12 )

The Father-Son relationship in the faith is illustrated in the following passages:

Paul to Corinthians:

"I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides / Gk: 'paidogogos' = child trainer / in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me" ( 1 Cor. 4:14-16, RSV ).

Paul and Timothy:

"Therefore I sent to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every ecclesia" ( 1 Cor. 4:17, RSV ).

"I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare . . . But Timothy's worth you know, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel" ( Phil. 2:20, 22, RSV ).

Peter and Mark:

"She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark" ( 1 Pet. 5:13, RSV ).

But could there be a son, the image of his father and co-eternal with his father? Image implies that the model differs from its representation in point of time, therefore Jesus ≠ co-eternal, "Very God".

invisible - Gk: "a horao" = "a, negative, 'horao', to see". Cf. 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:27.

firstborn - Gk: "prototokos". "Firstborn" even as a title implies something created otherwise the title has no meaning - to speak of a firstborn "God" as Trinitarians attempt to do is a misuse of language. "Born" in itself presupposes creation.

The "firstborn" is rich in Old Testament association. Note the following summary:

#### The FIRSTBORN

(1) It was a legal term since it related to rights of the firstborn ( e.g. Deut. 21:15-17 ).<sup>13</sup> See also the distinctive: "I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau" ( Gen. 27:32 ) also Zech. 12:10.

(2) The firstborn received a "double portion of all that he ̄ the father ̄ hath" ( Deut. 21:17 ).

(3) The legal position of firstborn could be lost through personal unworthiness and a younger son appointed as firstborn. ( E.g. Reuben lost his birthright to the sons of Joseph, 1 Chron. 5:1 ). Note also Esau and Jacob ( Gen. 25:23-34; cf. Heb. 12:16; Gen. 27:19-46 ); Ephraim and Manasseh ( Gen. 48:17-19 ).

(4) Israel as firstborn - Israel was regarded as a national son by God ( Exod. 4:21-23, cf. Jer. 31:9; Hos. 11:1 ) - although there were older nations inhabiting Canaan.

#### JESUS CHRIST THE FIRSTBORN<sup>14</sup>

(1) The "firstborn" was a Messianic title - "Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth" ( Psa. 89:27 ). Cf. Psa. 2:7: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" - the legal rights then follow - "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession" ( Psa. 2:8, RSV, cf. also Heb. 1 ). Because it is a Messianic title, his ecclesia is called an "ecclesia of the firstborn ̄ ones, plural ̄" ( Heb. 12:23 ).

(2) Adam lost his rights ( as did Reuben ) through personal unworthiness - so these have been transferred to the second Adam - Christ ( 1 Cor. 15:47 ).

(3) His "double portion" included his brethren<sup>15</sup> - "his glorious inheritance in the saints" ( Eph. 1:18, RSV ). All of these are to be "conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" ( Rom. 8:29 ).

<sup>13</sup>The regard for a firstborn is illustrated in Jacob's comments on Reuben - "thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power . . ." ( Gen. 49:3 ).

<sup>14</sup>The firstborn was holy. "Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel" ( Num. 3:13 ). Similarly Christ is "holy" ( Lk. 1:35; Heb. 7:26 ).

<sup>15</sup>There may have been a priestly function of the firstborn. This is implied in God's choice of the Levites, Num. 3:44, 45 - "Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel . . ." Similarly Christ is an high priest ( Heb. 4:14 ).

# CHRIST — *the* FIRSTBORN

YAHWEH

GEN. 1

LUKE 1

- Receives firstborn rights as Son of God
- New creation in him ( the regeneration of men and women )
- This creation commenced with his resurrection from the dead

1st ADAM

2nd ADAM

5000 yrs.

- the firstborn, but lost "rights" of firstborn through personal unworthiness

All things were created in, by, through, for him

- things visible
- things invisible
- thrones
- dominions
- principalities
- authorities

THAT *in* EVERYTHING HE MIGHT *be*  
PRE — EMINENT

in earth - "On / Gk: 'epi' / the earth"; "on earth", RSV; all the governments, rule, authority and power are his.

visible and invisible - "things seen and things unseen", Weymouth.

thrones - Gk: "thronos", "seat" (Yg); i. e. , the power and authority which the throne or seat represents ( cf. Matt. 19:28 ).

dominions - Gk: "kuriotēs", "lordship" (Yg) - used of governments in Jude 8 and 2 Peter 2:10.

principalities - Gk: "archē" translated "rulers" ( Titus 3:1, RSV ). It conveys the idea of authority vested in rulers.

powers - Gk: "exousia" translated "authorities" ( Titus 3:1, RSV ). It conveys the idea of power vested in rulers.

These words have little to do with Genesis 1. When were these rulerships transferred to Christ? At his death and resurrection - as first-begotten from the dead ( cf. v. 18 ). It is for this reason that the "manifold wisdom of God" is to be set forth to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies ( Eph. 3:10 ).<sup>17</sup>

This passage should be studied along with Eph. 1:19-22, RSV:

" . . . according to the working of his great might  
which he accomplished in Christ  
when he raised him from the dead  
and made him sit at his right hand  
in the heavenly places,  
far above all rule / Gk: 'archē' /  
and authority / Gk: 'exousia' /  
and power / Gk: 'dunamis' /  
and dominion / Gk: 'kuriotēs' /  
. . . and he has put all things under his feet . . . "

all things were created - Gk: "ktizō" - the same word as occurs earlier in this verse. In the LXX "ktizō" is not used for the creation of Genesis.

by him - Gk: "dia", "through", RSV; NASB; RV. It is for this reason that Christ was "foreordained before the foundation of the world, but manifest in these last times for you" ( 1 Pet. 1:20 ).

and for him - Gk: "eis". How this would ultimately be accomplished is set out in 1 Cor. 15:23-28. Again it is God who "put all things under him" ( 1 Cor. 15:28 ).

This argument clearly maintains the supremacy of Christ against any argument for the worship of angels which errorists might attempt to introduce at Colossae.

<sup>17</sup>This point is expounded in Quenching all the Fiery Darts of the Wicked , ( Adelaide, S.A.: C.S.S.S., 1981 ). p. 54.

1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist

before - Gk: "pro", "before, in front of". "Before" in time? or in importance? This is an important question which must be answered. Trinitarians use this expression to attempt to establish the personal existence of Jesus before ( in time ) everything else. In this regard several points should be noted:

- a) If he were before all things as "Very God" then the argument is inconsequential - of course God is before all things.
- b) Even Trinitarian expositors recognize the point a). For example: "The course of the argument seems to require that the stress should lie on the lordship of the Son rather than his priority to creation. For what Paul is concerned to prove is the superiority of Christ to the angels, and for this the idea of priority is not relevant, but that of dominion is."<sup>18</sup>
- c) He is "the beginning of the creation of God" ( Rev. 3:14 ) - ( therefore not very God since he was created ). This creation of which he is the beginning is "firstborn from the dead"; "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence" ( Col. 1:18 ).
- d) "Pro" as a preposition can bear the meaning of pre-eminence or superiority as it does in the following passages. However, trinitarian biases are sometimes evident.<sup>19</sup>

James 5:12 - "But above all things pro Gk: 'pro' = 'before all things', Nestle pro my brethren, swear not."

1 Pet. 4:8 - "And above all things pro Gk: 'pro' = 'before all things', Nestle pro have fervent charity . . ." <sup>20</sup>

Context determines which meaning it should bear, and the context is clear - "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence" ( Col. 1:18 ).

by him - Gk: "en" literally "in him", Nestle; RSV; NASB; RV; NIV .

all things consist - Gk: "sunistēmi", "to set apart, put together" (Yg); "all things hold together", RSV; "all has its cohesion in Him", CV. Further proof of this is now presented in Christ's relationship to the ecclesia.

1:18 And he is the head of the body, the ecclesia: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all / things / he might have the preeminence

the head of the body - There can only be one head of a body - so the worshipping of angels ( as the errorists had contended - Col. 2:18 ) had no place in the divine arrangement.

"The body" is used figuratively for the ecclesia.

<sup>18</sup>W. Nicoll, The Expositor's Greek Testament, p. 503.

<sup>19</sup>E. g. NASB mg. v. 17, "or has existed prior to".

<sup>20</sup>The use of the preposition "pro" = superiority is confirmed for example by the Companion Bible, Appendix 104, p. 150.

beginning - Gk: "archē" - the beginning of the ecclesia as the rest of the verse explains.  
See note on Rev. 3:14.

firstborn - Gk: "prototokos" - see note on 1:15.

Christ is the beginning of the creation of God ( Rev. 3:14 ) - the chief. This was illustrated in his resurrection to immortality - as "firstborn from the dead".

preeminence - Gk: "prōteuō" = "to be first" (Yg) - not in point of time, but in supremacy - "holding the first place".

This is the whole point of this section. However, the pre-eminence was not because he was inherently God, but because he was obedient - faithful unto death, therefore he was highly exalted ( Phil. 2:8-11 ).

1:19 For it pleased / the Father / that in him should all fulness dwell

pleased - Gk: "eudokeō", "( 'eu', well, and 'dokeō', please )," ( Vine ). The same word is used in Matt. 3:17 - "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

/ the Father / - Delete, it is italicized in the AV to supply the sense of the passage, but there is not an exact equivalent in the Greek text.

all fulness - Gk: "plērōma" - same word as in 1:9 translated "filled".

If the fulness of God dwells in Jesus Christ and he is the pre-eminent one, then clearly there are no rivals to his position - whatever errorists may teach to the contrary with beguiling speech ( Col. 2:4 ).

dwell - Gk: "katōikeō"; cf. Col. 2:9 - "For in him the whole fullness / Gk: 'plerōma' of deity / Godhead / dwells bodily", RSV.

While extolling the greatness of Christ, it is still apparent that the fullness dwelt not by virtue of his being a personage in the Godhead - "very God" inherently, but rather by a decision of God.

1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, / I say, / whether / they be / things in earth, or things in heaven

peace - Gk: "eirēnē". This peace relates to the atonement ( not the cessation of war , cf. Eph. 2:15 ).

by the blood - i. e. , by what the blood stands for - a poured out life ( Lev. 17:11-14 , cf. Heb. 10:12,19,20 ). "If we walk in the light . . . the blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin" ( 1 Jn. 1:7 ).

of his cross - Gk: "stauros", "denotes primarily, an upright pole or stake."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup>To be distinguished from the ecclesiastical form of a two beamed cross. The shape of the latter had its origin in ancient Chaldea, and was used as the symbol of the God Tammuz ( being in the shape of the mystic Tau, the initial of his name ) in that country and in the adjacent lands, including Egypt . . . Hence the Tau or T, in its most frequent form with the cross-piece lowered, was adopted to stand for the cross of Christ." See Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, for an informative history of the "cross" in Christendom, p. 256.

by him - i. e. , Christ.

to reconcile - Gk: "apokatallottō", "to change thoroughly from" (Yg). Cf. Eph. 2:15-16.  
 "To reconcile completely, to change from one condition to another so as to remove all enmity and leave no impediment to unity and peace" ( Vine ).

all things - i. e. , men and women.

unto himself - i. e. , God. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-21 - "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself", RSV.

by him - i. e. , Christ.

I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven / Gk: 'the heavens' /<sup>22</sup>  
Everything has been changed thoroughly. Even the angels have a new role cf. notes on v. 16.

1:21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

you - both Jew and Gentile, although in Ephesus similar language is used of the Gentiles, Eph. 2:11-17.

sometime - Gk: "pote", "once, at some time or other" (Yg). Cf. 3:7.

alienated - Gk: "apallotrioō", "to give to others" (Yg); "estranged", RSV; CV; "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" ( Eph. 4:18 ).

and enemies - Gk: "echthros", "enemy, opponent" ( Yg); "hostile in mind", NASB.

in your mind - As a result of the fall of man, his nature is characterized by the "old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" ( Eph. 4:22 ). As a result, the thinking of the flesh is enmity with God ( Rom. 8:7 ).

With this assessment of the natural man, what the world may consider a "good man" is regarded by God as an enemy and estranged apart from reconciliation.

by wicked works - These are set out in 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 2:3; Gal. 5:19-21.

1:22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight

in the body of his flesh - "gave himself" ( Eph. 5:25-26; Titus 2:14 ); "by his blood" ( Eph. 2:13; Rom. 5:9 ).

through death - a very high price was paid - so Colossians, do not treat the matter lightly! Cf. Rom. 7:4; Rom. 5:10.

<sup>22</sup>It is sometimes expounded that "heavens" relates to those who will be rulers in the Kingdom of God since nothing in heaven requires reconciliation. However attractive the explanation may seem, "heaven" is parallel to "earth" as it is in v. 16 and consistency requires the word "heavens" bear a literal meaning.

to present you - Gk: "paristēmi", "to set alongside" ( Yg ); cf. 2 Cor. 4:14; 11:2.

holy - Gk: "hagios", "separate, set apart, holy" (Yg) - "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it / the ecclesia / should be holy and without blemish", ( Eph. 5:27 ).

unblameable - Gk: "amōmōs", "unblemished" (Yg); "blameless", RSV; NASB. This word is used in the LXX to refer to the sacrifices, especially in Leviticus and Numbers.

and unreprieveable - Gk: "aneḡklētos", "not to be called in, unchallengeable" (Yg); "that which cannot be called to account" (Vine ); "irreproachable", RSV; "beyond reproach", NASB. This can only be obtained through forgiveness of sins in Christ ( Col. 1:14 ).

in his sight - This is the great purpose of God - "even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" ( Eph. 1:4, RSV ). The important word to note is in him. Our standing before God is dependent upon this as the next verse shows.

1:23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and / be / not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, / and / which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister

if ye continue - "provided that you continue", RSV. The great salvation is of personal benefit only if one continues in Christ. At baptism the name of the believer is written in the Book of Life ( Phil. 4:3 ) but it can be removed ( Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 22:19 ).

in the faith - synonymous with the Truth ( 1 Tim. 2:4; 3:15 ) in contrast to the Colossian errorists ( cf. 2 Thess. 2:12 ).

grounded - Gk: "themelioō", "to lay a foundation" (Yg); ( same word is used in Eph. 3:17 ); "stable", RSV; "established", NASB; NIV; "having been founded", Nestle. The word signifies "to lay the foundation of" ( Vine ).

and settled - Gk: hedraios", "seated, settled" (Yg); "steadfast", RSV; NASB; "firm", NIV.

A similar exhortation was required for the Corinthians: "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" ( 1 Cor. 15:58, RSV ).

and be not moved away - Gk: "metakineō", "to move away or over" (Yg); "not shifting from", RSV.

the hope of the gospel - A hope centred in Christ. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" ( Titus 2:13 ).

preached - Gk: "kērussō" = "to herald"; "to cry or proclaim as an herald" (Yg).



Notice the different words used for preaching:

kerussō	=	to herald ( Yg ) - Col. 1:23
kataġġellō	=	to tell thoroughly ( Yg ) - Col. 1:28
euaġġelizō	=	to tell good news or tidings, to evangelize (Yg) - Eph. 2:17
laleō	=	to talk, discourse (Yg) - Acts 8:25.

to every creature - This commenced in Jerusalem, then to Judea, Samaria and "unto the uttermost part of the earth" ( Acts 1:8 ) - even to Rome itself. The word of truth went forth to "all the world" ( Col. 1:6 ).

whereof I Paul am made / 'became', RSV; NASB mg. / a minister - "Minister", Gk: "diakonos", "servant", NASB mg. This is the same word as occurs in 1:7; 1:25. His service was based on divine selection. See Acts 13:47<sup>23</sup> and divine commission - 2 Cor. 2:14-17, RSV.

1:24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the ecclesia

who - "I", RSV.

rejoice - Gk: "chairō", "be glad" (Yg); cf. notes on v.11.

in my sufferings - Gk: "pathēma", "suffering, affection" (Yg). His early ministry was introduced by a prophecy to this effect: "For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name" ( Acts 9:16, RSV ). Paul, however, regarded "the sufferings of this present time / as / not worth comparing with the glory to be revealed to us" ( Rom. 8:18, RSV ).

fill up - Gk: "antanaplēroō", "to fill up instead of" (Yg); "to supplement" (Stg); "to fill up in turn ( or one's part )" (Vine).

behind - Gk: "husterēma", "what is behind" (Yg); "lacking", RSV. It is not that Christ's sufferings were insufficient, but rather that as the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul was an extension of Messiah's work. The preaching work of Jesus was primarily restricted to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" ( Matt. 10:6; 15:24 ).

the afflictions - Gk: "thlipsis", "pressure" (Yg). There are many examples of these - see 2 Cor. 1-2, especially for the ecclesia, "apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the / ecclesias /" ( 2 Cor. 11:28, RSV

of Christ - as Paul wrote to the Philippians: "that I may know him / Christ / and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead" ( Phil. 3:10,11, RSV ).

for his body's sake, which is the ecclesia - Nothing seemed too great to endure, so great was Paul's love and regard for the risen Lord. This is a wonderful attitude to have - a willingness to endure joyfully whatever adversity the preaching of the gospel and the life of discipleship might bring.

Notice how "his body" is used figuratively for the ecclesia ( cf. v.18 ).

<sup>23</sup> This point is considerably expounded in the notes on 2 Corinthians, chs.1-5 and 8-9 ( Adelaide, S.A.: C.S.S.S., 1979 ), p.11-14.

1:25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God

a minister - Gk: "diakonos", see v. 23 where the word also occurs.

dispensation of God - Gk: "oikonomia", "law or arrangement of a house" (Yg); "divine office", RSV; "stewardship", Nestle; NASB. Paul was the divinely appointed steward over Messiah's house - ( cf. 1 Cor. 4:1 where the word also occurs; also the parallel passages in Eph. 3:2 ).

In the absence of the owner of the house - Messiah, Paul was "filling up the sufferings" as Messiah's deputy.

to fulfil the word of God - The Apostle's ministry was the subject of Old Testament prophecy in Isaiah 49.<sup>24</sup> His special ministry related to the Gentiles - cf. Rom. 15:15-16 - "Because of the grace given me by God to be a minister / Gk: 'leitourgos', i. e., as a priest / of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit", RSV.

1:26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints

mystery - Gk: "musterion", "what is known only to the initiated" (Yg). It always refers to something veiled in prior time, but explained for the believers. It does not refer to something inherently unknowable. The word "mystery" in Rev. 17:5 is associated with the apostasy whose doctrines of transubstantiation, trinity etc. indeed are mysterious - defying reason and contrary to God's revelation.

hid from ages - Gk: "aion", "age, dispensation" (Yg). Although the gospel's inclusion of the Gentiles was the subject of Old Testament prophecy, it remained for New Testament prophets and apostles to expound these truths ( see Eph. 3:1-13 ).<sup>25</sup>

generations - Gk: "genea", literally "generations".

manifest - Gk: "phaneroō", "to make manifest" (Yg).

to his saints - See notes on v. 2. With this new knowledge there was an urgency in the preaching of the gospel so that not only the common man heard the good news, but that a witness was made to those in government and religious circles:

"That through the / ecclesia / the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities / Gk: 'archē' / and powers / Gk: 'exousia' / in the heavenly / places /" ( Eph. 3:10, RSV ).

1:27 To whom God would make known what / is / the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory

<sup>24</sup>This point is elaborated in 2 Corinthians chs. 1-5 and 8-9 , p. 82.

<sup>25</sup>See Quenching all the Fiery Darts of the Wicked , p. 54.

riches - spiritual riches. It is often used to describe the divine blessings, e.g. Col. 2:2; 3:16. See also Rom. 9:23; Phil. 4:19.

mystery - see note on 1:26.

Christ in you - The conversion of the person generated by a belief in the Gospel.

Note the parallel passage in Eph. 3:17 - "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith . . ." ( cf. 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 4:19 ). This produces the image of Christ ( see note on 1:15 ).

the hope of glory - lit. "the hope of the glory" - "the glory of God" ( Rom. 5:2 ); "the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" ( 2 Thess. 2:14 ). This is the salvation "which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" ( 2 Tim. 2:10 ). This glory has a present aspect when a oneness is shared with Christ through sanctification through the truth ( cf. Jn. 17:11, 14, 17, 20, 21 ). "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them the disciples ; that they may be one, even as we are one" ( Jn. 17:22 ).

This "oneness" is the "complete man" in Christ - the very aim of preaching, "that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" ( Col. 1:28 ).

This hope will be realized when Christ returns to his inheritance in the saints:

"that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints"

( Eph. 1:18, cf. Deut. 9:29; 32:9,10; 1 Thess. 2:19-20 ).

1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus

we preach - "Preach", Gk: "kataġgellō", "to tell thoroughly" (Yg); "proclaim", RSV; NASB; NIV.

The word is used of Jesus' ministry to "proclaim shew", AV; Gk: 'kataġgellō' light both to the people and to the Gentiles" ( Acts 26:23, RSV ).

The "we" either indicates Paul's companions in Rome listed in Col. 4 as sending greetings or the apostles. To preach Christ was more than the atonement ( as Evangelicals have argued ); it related to the good news regarding the Kingdom which Paul preached. Similarly Philip preached Christ to the Samaritans ( Acts 8:5 ), but this included Christ not only as Saviour, but also as king:

"Philip went down to a city of Samaria and proclaimed Gk: 'kerussō', 'to cry or proclaim as an herald', Yg. to them the Christ" ( Acts 8:5, RSV ).

"But when they believed Philip as he preached Gk: 'euāġgelizō' = evangelize good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" ( Acts 8:12, RSV ).

# warn every man

\* Do not be deceived / 'misled', AV /

"the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God . . . immoral, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers" ( 1 Cor. 6:9,10, RSV ).

"bad company ruins / 'corrupts', NASB, NIV / good morals" ( 1 Cor. 15:33, RSV, cf. Eph. 5:3-7 ).

"God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that will he also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" ( Gal. 6:7-8, RSV ).

"for that day / of Christ's return / shall not come except there come a falling away / Gk: 'apostasia' / first . . ." ( 2 Thess. 2:3 ).

\* Beware / 'see to it', RSV; 'watch out', NIV / lest any man spoil you / 'no one makes prey of you', RSV; 'take you captive', NASB; NIV / through philosophy / the wisdom of man - regarded by God as folly - 1 Cor. 1:20 / and vain / 'empty', RSV / deceit" ( Col. 2:8 ).

"of dogs / Judaisers /, beware of evil workers" ( Phil. 3:2 ).

"lest you be / 'being led away', AV / carried away with the error of lawless men / 'the wicked', AV / and lose your own stability / "steadfastness", AV /" ( 2 Pet. 3:17, RSV ).

\* Shun - "abhor / 'hate', RSV; NIV / that which is evil; cleave / 'hold fast', RSV / to that which is good" ( Rom. 12:9 ).

\* Abstain from "all appearance / 'every form', RSV; NASB / of evil" ( 1 Thess. 5:22 )

immorality ( 1 Cor. 6:18, RSV )  
the worship of idols ( 1 Cor. 10:14, RSV )  
youthful passions ( 2 Tim. 2:22, RSV )  
the love of money ( 1 Tim. 6:10-11, RSV ).

\* Take heed / 'care', RSV /

"how he builds upon it / the one foundation in Christ /" ( 1 Cor. 3:10, RSV )

"let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" ( 1 Cor. 10:12 )

"to a more sure word of prophecy" ( 2 Pet. 1:19 ).

warning - Gk: "noutheteō", "to put in before the mind" (Yg); "admonish", RV; NIV; NASB. The idea of the word is conveyed in the following:

Paul's warning to believers -

"Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" ( Acts 20:31 ).

Paul to the Corinthians -

"I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you"  
( 1 Cor. 4:14 ).

The word "noutheteō" also occurs in Col. 3:16 although it is translated "admonish" in the AV: "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs . . ."

In regard to the use of this word which is of great significance in preaching to the outsider and to the admonition of the insider, Vine comments as follows:

"Admonition differs from remonstrance, in that the former is warning based on instruction; the latter may be little more than expostulation / protesting /. For example, though Eli remonstrated with his sons, 1 Sam. 2:24, he failed to admonish them, 3:13, LXX."<sup>26</sup>

"Just preach the positive gospel" it has often been said. But the warning of every man goes much further than simple positive statements - it involves warning people of their religious errors<sup>27</sup> unpleasant though this might be in debate or public argument.

teaching every man - "Teach", Gk: "didaskō".

Our association of a teacher with a chalkboard and students sitting at desks is too narrow and too comfortable a view of the work of teaching. Often the teaching or witnessing was opportunistic - by a riverside at Philippi where women were gathered ( probably Jewish women gathered for prayer, Acts 16:12-13 ); in the market place where philosophers, devout persons and others "chanced to be there" ( Acts 17:16-17, RSV ); in the lecture hall of Tyrannus ( Acts 19:9-10, RSV ); in the synagogues ( e.g. Acts 19:8 ); and in a mob scene in Jerusalem ( Acts 21 ). Efforts to warn every man and to teach every man were often accompanied by difficulty.

Opportunistic teaching is well illustrated in the Apostle Paul's experiences at Jerusalem. The Spirit-gifted prophets had indicated that "bonds and afflictions" awaited him in every city ( Acts 20:23 ). Upon his arrival at Jerusalem, Jews from Ephesus stirred up the people, and the whole city was in an uproar. "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching men everywhere against the people and the law and this place" ( Acts 21:28, RSV ). Paul was arrested and beaten. No doubt with dishevelled hair and torn clothes he seized the opportunity to give an open air witness. It was a rousing exposition given on the stairs ( Acts 21:40 ) while fettered by two chains ( Acts 21:33 ) - our witnessing may look timid and quiet in comparison. The Apostle went straight to the issue - Gentile inclusion in the bonds of the gospel ( Acts 22:21 )! The result was further abuse: "up to this word they

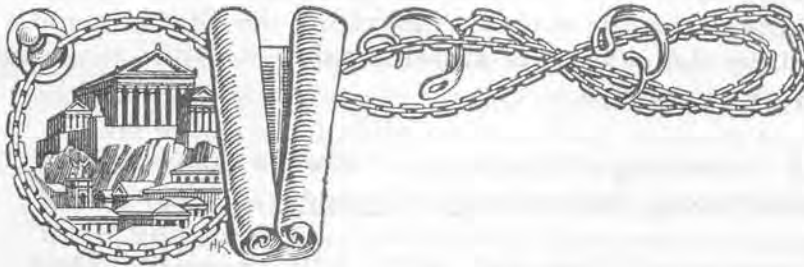
<sup>26</sup>Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, p. 31.

<sup>27</sup>This is what Paul did in the synagogues, e.g. Acts 18:4-8, and elsewhere for the Gentiles, Acts 17:22-34; 19:26.

listened to him; then they lifted up their voices and said, 'Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he ought not to live.'" ( Acts 22:22, RSV ).

Acts of the Apostles records in chapter after chapter what it means to warn every man and to teach every man, often at the expense of personal safety, comfort and convenience.<sup>28</sup>

every man - The admonition included both Jew and Gentile.



in all wisdom - Paul's aim was to win converts for the kingdom of God. In order to do this he made unimportant concessions to gain open doors for the preaching work.<sup>29</sup> This very point was made forcefully to the Corinthians:

"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law - . . . that I might win those under the law; to those outside the law I became as one outside the law - not being without law toward God . . . that I might win those outside the law . . . I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I might share in its blessings" ( 1 Cor. 9:19-23, RSV ).

that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus - "Perfect", Gk: "teleios", "mature", RSV; Nestle; "complete", NASB.

There are times when the truth of the gospel involves arguing, reasoning, and debating as it did in the first century, but these are all restricted in their usefulness unless the ultimate purpose is kept in view - to present every man mature in Christ. This is a very great work which should command one's closest attention and effort.

1:29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily

I also labour - "Labour", Gk: "kopiaō", "to labour, be wearied out", (Yg). The Amplified New Testament gives the sense: "For this I labour unto weariness".

<sup>28</sup>It is through door to door invitation and open air preaching that lower classes of society are sometimes reached. All too often, current teaching is restricted to one's own social class composition. The "every man" included quite a list of people, see 1 Cor. 6:9-11.

<sup>29</sup>See notes on 1 Corinthians chs. 9-11, ( Adelaide, S.A.: 1970 ).

Note the change from the "we" to the "I" in this verse. This introduces a highly personal section which continues into 2:1-5. Paul wrote similarly to the Corinthians:

"But by the grace of God, I am what I am: and his grace which ̄ was bestowed ̄ upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" ( 1 Cor. 15:10 ).

striving - Gk: "agōnizomai", "to agonize, contend" (Yg). This is a strong word. It occurs again in 2:1 translated "conflict". It comes from "agōn" which was a place of assembly especially where the Greeks assembled for the Olympic and Pythian games.<sup>30</sup> It was used for the contest of athletes and has within it the idea of conflict either against foes or internal.

Note especially its use in 4:12 - speaking of Epaphras - "always labouring ̄ Gk: 'agōnizomai' ̄ fervently for you ̄ Colossians ̄ in prayers."

according to his working - Gk: "energeia", "energy", RSV, NIV; "power", NASB.

which worketh ̄ Gk: 'energeō' ̄ in me mightily ̄ Gk: 'dunamis', 'power', Yg ̄

Nestle translates this section: "for which I do labour struggling according to the operation of him operating in me in power. "

This verse has its parallel in Eph. 1:19:

"And what is the ̄ exceeding greatness ̄ Gk: 'dunamis' ̄ of his power ̄ Gk: 'dunamis' ̄ to us-ward who believe, according to the working ̄ Gk: 'energeō' ̄ of his mighty ̄ Gk: 'kratos' ̄ power ̄ Gk: 'ischus' ̄."

This verse has been the subject of repeated controversy. It has been argued that the power which worked mightily in Paul can work in the believer today through the Holy Spirit power. However, there is nothing in the context to suggest an inner dwelling of the Holy Spirit power.

Rather the indwelling is the work of God and Christ through faith - "and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead " ( Col. 2:12, RSV ). Even when the Holy Spirit is referred to ( Eph. 1:13, 14 ) the inworking is still faith ( Eph. 1:15 ).

<sup>30</sup>Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, p. 226.

2:1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and / for / them at Laodicea, and / for / as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

For I would that ye knew - expression occurs similarly in 1 Cor. 11:3; Phil. 1:12.

great conflict - Gk: "agōn", "agonize" in English comes from this word. It is cognate with "striving" in 1:29. It is better rendered "strive", consistent with its earlier usage ( this is done in the RSV ); "how much I am struggling for you" ( NIV ). Why did Paul struggle for the Colossians and Laodiceans when it would appear that he had more than enough to do at Rome? Presumably he struggled, as did Epaphras, "labouring earnestly / Gk: 'agonizomai' / in his prayers", NASB.

not seen my face - Paul's concern was not only for his friends in the fellowship, but his concern was even for those whom he did not know personally. ( See the background notes re. Paul's relationship to these ecclesias ).

Would those who had not seen Paul be more likely to be beguiled by the errorists? Even Epaphras who established the earlier ecclesia shared Paul's prayerful struggle ( 4:12 ).

in the flesh - "Not met me personally", ( NIV ). It is sometimes thought that this proves that Paul never visited Colossae, but he may only be referring to recent converts that he had not seen. No doubt some Colossians and Laodiceans would be known to him from his earlier work in Phrygia and in Ephesus.

2:2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

hearts - Gk: "kardia". Why is "splaḡchnon" not used ( the usual Greek word translated "bowels" in the AV and carries the figurative idea of 'heart' in English )? The reason relates to the meaning of "kardia" in Greek. It goes much further than its English equivalent, carrying the idea of intellect and will.<sup>1</sup> It is important to note this since "full assurance" is related to understanding - not simply "a feeling".

comforted - Gk: "parakaleō", "encouraged", RSV. It is the usual word translated "exhort" in the AV.

knit together - Gk: "sumbibazō", "to cause to coalesce, to join or knit together" ( Vine ), cf. Eph. 4:16: "From whom / Christ / the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth . . ."

in love - Gk: "agapē". See note on 1:8. Divisiveness caused by errorists required the encouragement Paul is now giving.<sup>2</sup> Love is the bond of unity in Christ ( Col. 3:14, cf. Eph. 4:2, 3 ).

unto all the riches - see note on 1:27.

of the full assurance - Gk: "plērophoria", "full conviction" (Yg); "assured understanding" RSV; "complete understanding", NIV.

<sup>1</sup>See W. Nicoll, The Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. III, p. 518.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 518.



understanding - Gk: "sunesis", see note on 1:9.

to the acknowledgement - Gk: "epignōsis" - see note on 1:9.

the mystery - see note on 1:27. Christ is the mystery of God - a veiled teaching until its reality - a subject which even angels desired to look into ( 1 Pet. 1:10-12 ); "without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness" ( 1 Tim. 3:16 ).

of God, and of the Father, and of Christ - This is an inaccurate translation. "And of the Father" is not found in the best MSS. It implies that the "Father" is someone additional to God. Note the alternative translations:

"of God's mystery, of Christ", RSV;

"God's mystery, that is Christ Himself", NASB;

"the mystery of God, namely Christ", NIV.

It was through Christ that the fullness of God was revealed. "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father" ( Jn. 14:9 ).

### 2:3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge

hid - Gk: "apokruphos", "hid away" (Yg). Hid from the common gaze. Effort is required "to seek" to find ( Matt. 7:7 ).

treasures - Gk: "thēsauros". The disciple can be a vessel to hold this treasure: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us" ( 2 Cor. 4:7, RSV - note the similarity of context ).

wisdom - Gk: "sophia" - see note on 1:9. The wisdom of God conveyed in the atonement ( 1 Cor. 1:23, 24, 30 ) was in marked contrast to human efforts to acquire knowledge.

"He ̄ God ̄ is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made ̄ no equality of persons in the Godhead here! ̄ our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption" ( 1 Cor. 1:30, RSV ).

knowledge - Gk: "gnōsis". See note on 1:10.

If all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were to be found in Christ, then clearly the beguiling speech of the errorists had nothing to offer with their humanly contrived philosophy ( v. 4 ).

### 2:4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words

beguile - Gk: "paralogizomai" ( 'para', from, amiss, 'logizomai', to reason ); "to reason wrongly" (Yg); "delude", RSV; NASB.

enticing words - Gk: "pithanologia", "persuasive speech" (Yg); Nestle; "beguiling speech" RSV. Similar approaches by errorists were made at Rome. The divisions were caused by those who "serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" ( Rom. 16:17-18 ).

### 2:5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ

in the spirit - Though imprisoned in Rome his thoughts and prayers were with them.

See note on 1:3 ( cf. 1 Cor. 5:3,4 ).

joying - Gk: "chairō". See note on 1:11

beholding your order - Gk: "taxis"; "good order", RSV; "ordered array", NASB mg.

The word "taxis" = order had military overtones referring to an ordered arrangement.<sup>3</sup>

The Amplified Version captures this idea: "delighted at the sight of your / standing shoulder to shoulder in such / orderly array and the firmness and the solid front . . ." It was necessary in ecclesial life that "all things should be done decently and in order" ( 1 Cor. 14:40, RSV ). Especially with the advent of errorists, it was necessary that the ecclesia be prepared like a defending army.

stedfastness - Gk: "stereōma", "firmness", RSV; "stability", NASB.

Despite evident problems there was a commendable stability and order to ecclesial life at Colossae.

2:6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, / so / walk ye in him

The initial teaching of the Colossians had been sound ( 1:6, 7,23 ), they now had to continue in the faith. Similar exhortations were addressed to the Corinthians ( 1 Cor. 11:23 ), the Galatians ( Gal. 1:12 ) and the Thessalonians ( 1 Thess. 2:13 ).

Christ Jesus the Lord - the full title - implying his supremacy and completeness ( cf. 2 Cor. 4:5 ).

walk ye in him - see notes on 1:10.

2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving

rooted - Gk: "rhizomai". This is the Greek word from which "rhizome" is derived in English. ( All farmers recognize twitch grass! ). Literally, "having been rooted", ( Nestle ). Cf. Eph. 3:17.

built up - Gk: "epoikodomeō" - built upon ( epi-upon ) - continuous tense is used = being built upon. See note on 1:6. Note the parallel in 1 Cor. 3:11, cf. Eph. 2:20-22.

stablished - Gk: "bebaioō", "to confirm" ( Vine ) - continuous tense is used = being established.

as ye have been taught - see note on 1:6, 7.

abounding / 'therein' not in Gk. / - Gk: "perisseuō", "to be over and above" ( Yg ). This expression frequently occurs in Philippians ( 1:9; 4:12,17,18 ).

thanksgiving - "in thanksgiving", RSV. See note on Col. 1:12. A frequent theme in this epistle - Col. 1:12; 3:15,17; 4:2.

<sup>3</sup>See W. Nicoll, The Expositor's Greek Testament, p. 520.

2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ

Beware - Gk: "blepō", "to behold" (Yg); "see to it", RSV, NASB.

spoil you - Gk: "sulagōgeō", "to lead off as plunder" (Yg); "makes a prey of you", RSV; "takes you captive", NASB. The Amplified Version is expressive: "See to it that no one carries you off as a spoil or makes you yourselves captive by his so-called philosophy and intellectualism . . ."

philosophy - Gk: "philosophia", "love of wisdom" (Yg). The word does not carry in itself a bad connotation. Philosophy is erroneous when based solely on human reasoning apart from divine revelation.

vain - Gk: "kenos", "empty" (Yg); RSV.

deceit - Gk: "apate", "deception", NASB; "seduction", CV.

tradition - Gk: "paradosis", "a giving over, handing down" (Yg), relates to what is "handed down" (Vine). Traditions can be either good or bad. The apostle provided good ones (1 Cor. 11:2 - ordinances = traditions; 2 Thess. 3:6). The tradition of men, however, only reflects the unenlightened thinking of a fleshly mind (cf. 2:18 - 'vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind').

rudiments of the world / Gk: 'kosmos' / - "Rudiments", Gk: "stoicheion", "one of a row or series; the word denotes an element, first principle (from 'stoichos', a row, rank, series)" (Vine).

It is not certain what is meant here. Evidently the elements were in opposition to Christ. The same Greek word, "stoicheia" occurs in Gal. 4:9<sup>4</sup> where it relates to elements of the Mosaic Law. There is evidence that it bears the same meaning here.

Note the Jewish characteristic of the next verses:

- circumcision (v. 13);
- handwriting of ordinances (v. 14);
- food and drink (v. 16);
- holy days (v. 16);
- ordinances, external regulations (v. 20);
- fasting (v. 23).

2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily

dwelleth - Gk: "katoikeō", see note on 1:19.

fulness - Gk: "plērōma", see note on 1:19.

Godhead - Gk: "theotēs", "deity", RSV; NASB; NIV.

bodily - The emphasis is that the divine character - "full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14) "abundant in goodness and truth" (Exod. 34:6, cf. 33:18, 19) was fully manifest in one place - in Jesus Christ - "who being the brightness of his glory, and the express

<sup>4</sup>The verb "stoicheō" means "to walk or march in rank" (Vine).

and DOCTRINES” (Col.2:22)

The harmful doctrines and practices were plausible, having an appearance of promoting rigour of devotion and self-abasement ( 2:23, RSV ) but were of no value in checking the indulgence of the flesh.

The problems can be categorized as "Jewish" and "Gentile".

• JEWISH

- "shadows" given attention rather than the reality in Christ
- regulations imposed
  - circumcision
  - drink
  - sabbath ( weekly and special )
- rudiments - elements of the Law

• GENTILE

- Philosophy
- Empty deceit
- Human tradition, rather than Christ
  - asceticism - self-abasement
  - subjectivism - mysticism
    - worship of angels
    - taking stand on visions ( puffed up without reason by sensuous minds )

the TRUE  
DOCTRINE  
of  
GOD

MANIFESTATION



image of his person . . ." ( Heb. 1:3 ).

There was no room for errorists to claim other intermediaries like angels or other Messiahs.

2:10 And ye are complete / 'have come to fulness', RSV / in him, which is the head of all principality and power

complete - Gk: "pleroō", see note on 1:9, 19; literally, "having been filled", Nestle. Everything required for the life of discipleship and acceptability before God has been provided in him. There was no need for additional regulations imposed upon believers by errorists ( cf. 2:23 ).

which is the head - A return to the Christ Body metaphor. In Ephesians the metaphor is repeated ( cf. note on 1:18 ), but in Colossians the emphasis is on the headship of Christ, implying the challenge of the teaching of the errorists to the supremacy of Christ.

principality / 'archē' = rule / and power / 'exousia' = 'authority' / - See note on Col. 1:16.

2:11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ

putting off - Gk: "apekelusis", "a stripping off or away" (Yg).

of the sins - delete, not in the best MSS.

the body of the flesh - the impulses of wayward human nature. See note on 1:21. Those who are Christ's have "crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" ( Gal. 5:24, RSV ). Circumcision, a sign of the Abrahamic covenant ( Gen. 17:8-14 ) also had a further spiritual lesson to teach ( Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4 ) - a "circumcision of the heart" ( Deut. 10:16; cf. Rom. 2:28, 29 ). In Christ there is a cutting off of the body of the flesh, not just the foreskin. We know that our old self was crucified with him, "so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" ( Rom. 6:4, RSV ).

the circumcision of Christ - This does not relate to his own circumcision on the eighth day as a Jewish boy, but the atonement whereby his crucifixion of the flesh enables the believer to be encompassed within its scope at baptism.

True circumcision is identified as follows:

"We are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh" ( Phil. 3:3, RSV ).

2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with / him / through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead

buried with him in baptism - The death of Christ was not a substitute - Christ did not die instead of the believer, rather the believer is buried with him in baptism

( Rom. 6:4 ). See also Col. 3:1-3.

ye are risen with him - When buried with Christ - a death to the old self - at baptism newness of life commences. "For ye are dead to the old life and your life is hid with Christ in God" ( Col. 3:3, cf. Rom. 6:1-11 ).

through the faith of the operation of God<sup>4</sup>"Operation", Gk: "energeia", "energy, inworking", (Yg); "working", RSV. A belief in God and His wonderful provision of salvation ( cf. Eph. 2:4, 5, 6; 1.Pet. 1:21 ), a belief that "God is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing . . ." ( Jude 24, RSV ).

who hath raised him from the dead - This is only possible by faith in the one hope, one baptism ( Eph. 4:4 ).

Note the parallel passage in Eph. 1:19, 20:

"And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead . . ." ( Eph. 1:19, 20, RSV ).

13 And you, being dead in your sins / 'trespasses', RSV / and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses

being dead in your sins - See the parallel passage in Eph. 2:1-5.

uncircumcision of your flesh - walking "in the passion of lust like the heathen", ( 1 Thess. 4:10, RSV ); living "in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind" ( Eph. 2:3, RSV ).

quickened - Gk: "sunezōopoieō", "to make alive with" ( Vine ), cf. Eph. 2:5. The newness of life in Christ - raised to a position of status in the heavenlies<sup>5</sup> ( Eph. 2:6 ).

trespasses - Gk: "paraptōma", "falling aside" (Yg) - the same word is translated "sins" earlier in the verse. The RSV translates both occurrences of "paraptōma" as "trespasses".

Regarded by God as "dead" it is only by this provision in Christ and the believer's identification with him in his death and resurrection that forgiveness of sins is made possible.

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross

blotting out - Gk: "exaleiphō", "to smear out" (Yg); "wiping out", Nestle. Documents were written on papyrus or vellum ( animal skins ) and the ink could easily be sponged away ( cf. its usage in Acts 3:19 ).

<sup>5</sup>See Quenching all the Fiery Darts of the Wicked , p. 54.

handwriting - Gk: "cheirographon". "It literally means an autograph: but its technical meaning which everyone would understand - was a note of hand signed by a debtor acknowledging his indebtedness. It was almost exactly what we call an IOU. It was a signed admission of debt and default."<sup>6</sup>

Many translations give this sense:

"having cancelled the bond which stood against us", RSV;

"having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us", NASB

ordinances - Gk: "dogma". These were the regulations of the Mosaic Law: "the law of commandments and ordinances" abolished in "his / Christ's / flesh" ( Eph. 2:15, RSV ).

that was against us - The law was just and good but the nature of man being weak and prone to sin was unable to keep it ( Rom. 7:12,14; cf. Gal. 3:10 ). Therefore it became a "ministration of death, written and engraven in stones" ( 2 Cor. 3:7 ).

contrary to us - Gk: "huperantios", "set over against" (Yg); "hostile", NASB.

took it out of the way - cf. Eph. 2:16; Gal. 3:13.

nailing it - The jurisdiction of the Law terminated ( Gal. 3:13, 14, 24; 4:4, 5 ).

to / his / cross - See note on 1:20; "to the cross", RSV - omit "his".

2:15 / And / having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it

spoiled - Gk: "apekduomai", "to strip off, unclothe" (Yg). Cf. Col. 3:9 where "apekduomai" occurs again. The Greek is in the middle voice, therefore the RV translates as follows: "having put off from himself"; "divested himself", NASB mg.

principalities / and power / - Gk: 'archē' / and power / Gk: 'exousia' / - See note on Col. 1:16.

shew / of them openly - Gk: "en parrhesia", "bluntness, publicity" (Stg); "boldly" ( Eph. 6:19 ); "made a public example of them", RSV; "public display", NASB; "public spectacle", NIV.

triumphing over them in it - Gk: "thriambeuō", "denotes to lead in triumph, used of a conqueror with reference to the vanquished" ( Vine ). See its only other occurrence in 2 Cor. 2:14.

The powers of darkness were arrayed against the Lord. This was King Sin using his subjects ( cf. Rom. 6:12 ). Jesus said, "But this is your hour, and the power / Gk: 'exousia' / of darkness" ( Lk. 22:53, RSV ).

<sup>6</sup>W. Barclay, The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians, quoted in J. Styles and W. Robinson, Paul's Epistles to Philemon, Colossians and Christ's words to Laodicea, ( Detroit: n. d. ) p. 26.

That power was in the hands of the rulers - principalities / archē and authorities - powers / exousia. "Then Jesus said to the chief priests and captains of the temple and elders / 'scribes and principal men', RSV, Lk. 19:47 / who had come out against him, 'Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs?' ( Lk. 22:52, RSV, cf. Lk. 19:47 ).

This sin power constituted a great trial for Christ ( Jn. 14:30; 15:18-20; 12:31 ). "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered" ( Heb. 5:8, RSV ). No temptation is ultimately a temptation unless it appeals to something within. Therefore Christ stripped off or divested himself from the pull of the flesh by triumphing over its demands ( so that the believer can be exhorted to 'put off the body of the flesh' by being in him - Col. 2:11 ). He became "obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him" ( Phil. 2:8, 9, RSV ).

All of this was public, since he died by crucifixion: "Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth / 'publicly portrayed as', RSV / crucified . . ." ( Gal. 3:1 ).

All of the appearances at his crucifixion were deceptive. It appeared as if he were a sinner being punished, when in effect it was God condemning sin in the flesh where it had exercised its kingly reign over the rest of humanity ( Rom. 8:3, cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:12-14 ).<sup>7</sup>

2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath / days /

judge - Gk: "krinō", the idea here is to "call in question" ( cf. Stg ) as in Rom. 14:3, 4; 1 Cor. 10:23-32; 1 Cor. 8.

meat - Gk: "brōsis", "act of eating food" (Yg) - not simply meat, i. e., flesh of an animal, cf. Lev. 11; Deut. 14 - clean and unclean food - cf. Acts 10:9-29.

drink - Gk: "posis". There were a number of regulations regarding beverages: Aaron and his sons were forbidden to drink wine when entering the tabernacle ( Lev. 10:8-9 ); strong drink forbidden to the Nazarites ( Num. 6:3 ); water from an unclean vessel ( Lev. 11:34-36 ).

holyday - Gk: "heortē", "a feast, festival" (Yg); "festival", RSV; NASB; cf. Lev. 23:2 - Passover, Pentecost, Atonement, Tabernacles ( Booths ).

new moon - Special feasts were held: e.g. Psa. 81:3 - "Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day" ( RSV ), cf. 1 Sam. 20:5.

sabbath days - Gk: "sabbatōn" - plural in the Greek - but it does not refer only to special sabbaths ( as Seventh Day Adventists argue )<sup>8</sup> but to the Sabbaths held weekly. This is proven by the plural use of "sabbatōn" in the LXX of Exod. 20:8 - "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy" where it certainly does refer to the weekly sabbath. See also Exod. 35:3; Num. 15:32, 33.

<sup>7</sup>See the notes on The Flora and Fauna of Canada - Lessons for youth , ( Manitoulin Is. Youth Camp notes: 1980 ), p. 42-43.

<sup>8</sup>This argument is expounded in Wrested Scriptures, p. 40.



2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body / is / of Christ

shadow - Gk: "skia" - an image cast by an object and representing the form of the object.

This point is illustrated in the sabbath, which was a "shadow" of the rest which a disciple experiences by ceasing from his own works of the flesh, and its typical significance of the millennial rest ( Heb. 4:1-11, cf. 3:9-19 ).

the body / is / of Christ - Gk: 'soma' / is of Christ - "the substance belongs to Christ", RSV; NASB; "the reality, however is found in Christ", NIV.

The problem at Colossae required a similar exposition to the letter to the Galatians. Note especially Gal. 4:9-11. Why should the Colossians be side-tracked in discipleship to a preoccupation with non-essential "shadow" matters when the reality in Christ eliminated these ( cf. Col. 2:20 )?

2:18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind

beguile - Gk: "katabrabeuō", "arbitrate against" (Yg); "to give judgment against" ( cf. AV mg. ); "The verb was used of an umpire's decision against a racer" ( Vine ).

"Let no one defraud you by acting as an umpire and declaring you unworthy and disqualifying you for the prize" ( Amplified Version ).

The exhortation of Jesus is relevant: "hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown" ( Rev. 3:11, RSV, cf. Jas. 1:12 ).

of your reward - This English translation has followed the meaning given for "katabrabeuō" which Stg. defines as "to award the prize against, fig. to defraud, beguile of a reward." The RV gives "rob ( you ) of your prize". However, Vine provides an alternative: "to give judgment against, to condemn ( 'kata', against, and 'brabeus', an umpire; cp. 'brabeion', a prize in the games, 1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:14 and 'brabeuō', to act as an umpire, arbitrate, Col. 3:15 ), occurs in Col. 2:18, RV, 'let ( no man ) rob ( you ) of your prize.' Another rendering closer to the proper meaning of the word, as given above, is 'let no man decide for or against you' ( i. e., without any notion of a prize ); this suitably follows the word 'judge' in v. 16, i. e., 'do not give yourselves up to the judgment and decision of any man' ( AV mg. 'judge against' )."

The RSV; Nestle; CV follow Vine and delete the reference to "reward", but the translations vary - the NASB and Companion Bible support the AV.

voluntary humility - Gk: "tapeinophros", "lowliness of mind" (Yg); "insisting on self-abasement", RSV; "delighting in self-abasement", NASB; "delights in false humility", NIV.

worshipping - Gk: "thrēskeia", "signifies religion in its external aspect . . . especially the ceremonial service of religion" ( Vine ).

of angels - Angels are not to be worshipped as Christ or God, cf. Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9.

Presumably angels were worshipped as intermediaries having rulership and authority ( cf. Col. 2:8-10 ). This was not only unscriptural, but removed Christ from his unique role as mediator.

intruding - Gk: "embateuō", "primarily, to step in, or on ( from 'embainō', to enter ) . . . is used metaphorically in Col. 2:18 . . . RV mg. 'taking his stand upon'" ( Vine ); "taking his stand on visions", RSV.

things which he hath / not / seen - "Not" is supplied to give the sense, "taking his stand on visions", RSV. See the summary of translations.

vainly - Gk: "eikē", "easily at random" ( Yg ) - not the same as 'kenos' in Col. 2:8; "without cause" ( Vine ); NASB; "without reason" ( RSV ). In other words, the errorists were imposing non-Biblical ideas under the guise of special "visions".

puffed up - Gk: "phrisioō", "inflated", NASB.

by his fleshly mind - "sensuous mind", RSV.

#### LET NO ONE TAKE HIS STAND ON VISIONS

"Let no one disqualify you . . . taking his stand on visions . . ." is the RSV translation of Col. 2:18.<sup>9</sup> It affords one of the most effective rejoinders to the religious subjectivists who champion the "testimony" as the criterion for truth in religion. In America, a popular multi-million dollar TV program, "700 Huntley Street", occupies prime TV time, grosses millions of dollars in "contributions" and offers a get-saved, instantaneous salvation. The program consists of a series of testimonies and experiences in which "tongue speaking", "miracle working" and "prophecies" are presented as evidence of genuineness. In this respect there is a remarkable parallel between the errorists at Colossae and the charismatic movement today. The Apostle Paul's instructions to the Colossians: "Let no one take his stand on visions" was a rejoinder to errorists who used personal visions as an alternative and competing source of revelation.<sup>10</sup> Their teaching could disqualify believers in Christ from their candidacy for life eternal ( Col. 2:18, RSV ). The visions, however, were the result of "fleshly thinking" and the recipients were "puffed up without reason" ( RSV ).

The environment in the Lycus Valley was conducive to mysticism and subjective experiences. The Meander River contained carbonates which resulted in unusual formations along its banks and the whole area of the Lycus Valley ( the ecclesias were located at Hierapolis, Laodicea and Colossae ) was subject to recurrent volcanic activity. Both of these - the river formations and the volcanic activity - contributed to the unexplained.

<sup>9</sup>The RSV is supported by the RV mg. ; NASB ( 1960 ); Weymouth ( 1908 ); among others. The chief difference between the AV and the RSV is the inclusion of the negative "not" which is absent from the Greek text.

<sup>10</sup>E. g. insisting on self-abasement and the worship of angels ( Col. 2:18, RSV ).

The admixture of Judaism<sup>11</sup> and Gentile philosophy<sup>12</sup> combined to challenge the foundation of the new converts. Hence the exhortation to hold fast to the Head ( Christ - Col. 2:19 ) rooted and built up in him and established in the faith ( Col. 2:7 ).

"We warn every man . . ."

Today the charismatic movement has mounted a similar challenge to the Truth to the one posed by the Lycus Valley errorists. The charismatics, once regarded as a fringe area of the Evangelical Movement, are now a very widespread, well-organized movement which has made inroads into many established denominations, even affecting the Brotherhood in nearly every geographical region. The Charismatic stand or underpinnings are ultimately subjective and unprovable just like those who took their stand on visions in Colossae.

A recent extensive lecturing tour throughout Australia and New Zealand resulted in question periods being dominated by charismatics. In city after city in Australia charismatics have purchased large buildings for expanding memberships. Even minority groups like the Italians, once firmly within the conservative Roman Church, now have contemporary charismatic churches. One of these is located within earshot of the largest Christadelphian ecclesia in the world, located in South Australia. There is new urgency in the Apostle's words: "Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ" ( Col. 1:28, RSV ).

Hooked on Highs?

Only recently, during the 70's and early 80's have the endorphins come under close analysis. Now they are the most intensively studied area of the life sciences.<sup>13</sup> What are "endorphins"? They are natural opiates produced by the brain. An endorphin is a peptide, a small protein made up of about 30 amino acids ( a normal protein has 1,000 or so ).<sup>14</sup> Endorphins can relieve pain and produce feelings of well-being. These naturally produced opiates are thirty-three times more potent by weight and volume than morphine. Once formerly disparate phenomena now have a common explanation- jogging, acupuncture, yoga, transcendental meditation and the charismatic experience.

The Endorphin-Charismatic Link

It is known that the endorphin capability of the body can be triggered, not only by stress ( real or perceived ) but by suggestion. The charismatic who responds to the carefully sequenced conversion meeting - the appropriate music, oratory, and emotional climate<sup>15</sup> may in fact have an experience. The euphoria is real enough,

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<sup>11</sup>Col. 2:11-17.

<sup>12</sup>Col. 2:8-10.

<sup>13</sup>G. B. Sinclair, "Nature's Opiates", Saturday Night Magazine, March 1981, p.15.

<sup>14</sup>Naomi Mallovy, "The Natural Way to Get High", University of Toronto Graduate Magazine, Jan./Feb. 1981, p.6.

<sup>15</sup>Augmented by rhythmic hand-clapping, shaking hands with those around, responsive hand raising and audience participation - "Do you love the Lord - then say you do!", tarrying, repetitive "Hallelujahs", "Praise the Lord".

but it is not essentially different in origin from that produced by jogging, acupuncture or meditation. As with hypnotism,<sup>16</sup> as long as there is sufficient suggestibility, the experience is almost guaranteed, but it has nothing whatever to do with the Holy Spirit.

Anthropologist Sheila Womack was working with a neo-Pentecostal church in Texas. It was discovered that members ( many were former drug abusers and alcoholics ) experienced withdrawal symptoms<sup>17</sup> when several days lapsed without tongue speaking and uninhibited religious responses. Womack concluded: "I'm convinced that what we have here is the substitution of reliance on an exogenous [ external ] opiate system for reliance on an endogenous [ internal ] one."

#### "Puffed up without Reason"

Many Christadelphians who have taught and worked with charismatics have noted the irrationality with which they almost<sup>18</sup> invariably cling to experiences attributed to the Holy Spirit, despite irrefutable evidence to the contrary. If the connection between endorphins and the charismatic experience is valid, then there is of course further reason for the statement: "the man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument." The man with an experience, however, may not only be

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<sup>16</sup>Hypnotists claim that there is nothing done at charismatic meetings which cannot be duplicated by them. Those who have witnessed being "slain in the spirit" in which the subjects fall down "like pole-axed steers" will readily see the point being made by the hypnotists. "Strange as it may seem, this religion which claims to have no time for hypnotism, is itself based on the very science which it condemns. Their technique is based on heterosuggestion, autosuggestion and the self-hypnosis in that order. [ Heterosuggestion - 'You must receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost and speak with new tongues'; autosuggestion - 'I must receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost and speak with new tongues'; self-hypnosis - a reaction to autosuggestion - a deception now believed ]. In the emotional atmosphere of a religious meeting of this nature, emotion runs high, and is strengthened by the singing of bright religious hymns and various rituals. It is here that we find some people believing almost anything they want to believe, but these people only achieve what a hypno-therapist would achieve for them." E. C. Radford, Hypno-therapist and Psychotherapist, Member of the Australian Hypnotherapy Association; Member of International Association of Hypnotists; Registered Hypnotist with College of Somnotherapy and Psychology ( London ); Member of International Federation of Naturopaths; Member of Psychological Research Clinic for Nervous Disorders ( London ). Preface to A.S. Hill, Modern New Tongues: Mental and Spiritual Slavery, ( Melbourne, Australia: The Austral Printing and Publishing Co. - not dated ), p. 5-6.

<sup>17</sup>Similarly joggers have related withdrawal symptoms when absent from the track for a few days.

<sup>18</sup>"Almost" is a necessary qualification since the writer of this article is personally aware of a number of converts through open air speaking and personal contact.

a psychological convert, like joining a church, but a physiological<sup>19</sup> convert, addicted to religious rhapsody like the drug abuser to his heroin or the alcoholic to his liquor. The tragedy is that the road to recovery may be just as difficult and the defense mechanisms pressed into service just as effectively.

With predictable regularity the charismatic defends the genuineness of his religious experience by taking recourse to that which is subjective and unprovable. If the discussion relates to tongue-speaking, then contemporary tongue-speaking will be restricted to unintelligible utterances ( not the foreign languages and dialects of Acts 2 ) otherwise the charismatic claim could be put to an appropriate test.<sup>19</sup>

If the discussion relates to the gift of prophecy, then prophecy is narrowly restricted to mean only "forthtelling", not foretelling the future as did Agabus with his gift of the Spirit ( Acts 11:27-29 ). If a revelation is purportedly received, it confers no new information for the recipient that is open to check. It is invariably sufficiently ambiguous and so general as to be incapable of falsification. At every possible juncture just when proof might be expected<sup>20</sup> the charismatic takes refuge in the subjective.<sup>21</sup>

Apostasy would be characterized by "power and with pretended signs and wonders and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved" ( 2 Thess. 2:10, RSV ). May our own community heed the warning - "let no one . . . / take / his stand on visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous / 'fleshly', AV /mind, and not holding fast to the Head" ( Col. 2:18-19, RSV ). For we "have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" ( 2 Cor. 4:2, RSV ).

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<sup>19</sup>This explanation was offered by William Sargant in the book, Battle for the Mind .

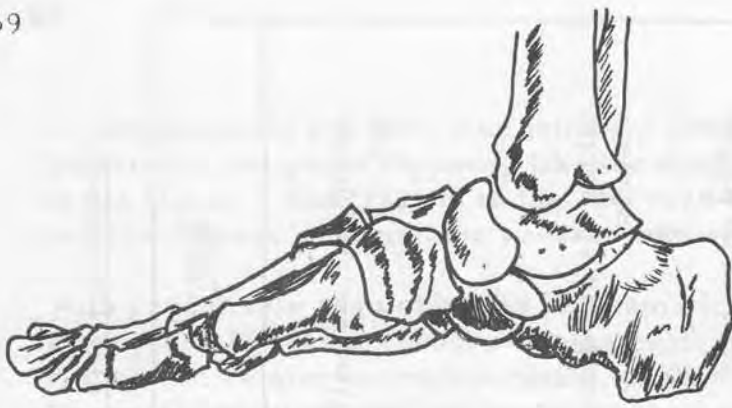
<sup>20</sup>Only infrequently is there a charismatic group which actually contends foreign languages are spoken. On two occasions when tests were applied the charismatics' claims were shown to be counterfeit.

<sup>21</sup>For example, a pre- and post- test for all healing candidates. This was proposed and rejected by the charismatics in a test case in England.

<sup>22</sup>Healings, for example, do not include the replacement of limbs of amputees or sight restored to those with glass eyes. Such should be no more difficult for the Holy Spirit to restore than to rectify complaints such as arthritis and cancer.

## Colossians 2:18 - Comparative translations in support of the RSV - "Let no one take his stand on visions!"

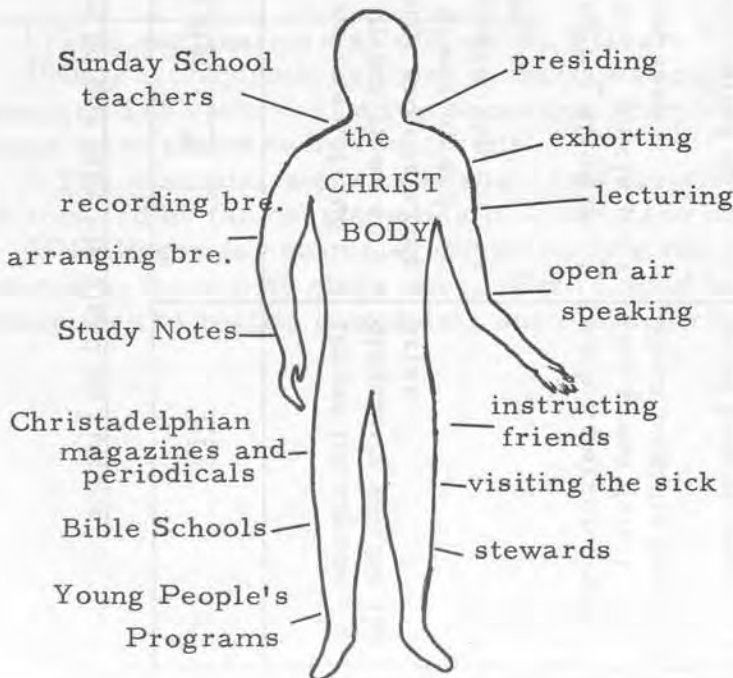
<u>RSV</u>	<u>NASB</u>	<u>Weymouth</u>	<u>Amplified N. T.</u>	<u>NIV</u>
<p>Let no one disqualify you</p> <p>taking his stand on visions</p> <p>puffed up without reason</p> <p>by his sensuous mind</p>	<p>Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize</p> <p>taking his stand on visions he has seen</p> <p>inflated without cause</p> <p>by his fleshly mind</p>	<p>taking his stand on visions he has seen</p> <p>and idly puffed up</p> <p>with his unspiritual thoughts</p>	<p>Let no one defraud you by acting as an umpire and declaring you unworthy and disqualify you for the prize</p> <p>taking his stand on visions / he claims / he has seen</p> <p>vainly puffed up</p> <p>by his sensuous notions and inflated by his unspiritual thoughts and fleshly conceit</p>	<p>Do not let anyone . . . disqualify you for the prize</p> <p>such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen</p> <p>puffs him up with idle notions</p> <p>his unspiritual mind</p>



*“the WHOLE BODY  
JOINED and KNIT TOGETHER  
by EVERY JOINT with which  
it is SUPPLIED”*



*the* **PARALLEL**



SERVICE IN THE ECCLESIA

- the body fitly joined together
- by that which every joint supplieth
- compacted, united, knit
- "according to the effectual working in the measure of every part / 'when each part is working properly, RSV\_7"
- maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love ( Eph. 4:16 ).

2:19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God

not holding / 'fast', RSV / the Head - Acceptance of the worshipping of angels and extra-Biblical visions had the effect of severing those beguiled from Christ.

all the body - i. e., the Christ Body. See note on Col. 1:18.

by joints and bands - "Joints", Gk: "haphē", "a joint, fitting together" (Yg). "Bands", Gk: "sundesmos", "what binds together" (Yg); "ligaments", RSV, NASB.

Apart from the scriptural truths relating to Christ there is no binding influence in the Christ Body.

having nourishment ministered - One word in the Greek: "epichorēgeō" means "an abundant supply" (Vine); literally, "being supplied", Nestle.

knit together - Gk: "sumbibazō". See note on Col. 2:2.

increaseth - Gk: "auxanō", "grows with a growth that is from God", RSV.

Eph. 4:15-16, RSV should also be studied with this verse:

"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love."

2:20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances

dead - a figurative use of the word. It means dead to the things of the world by a definite decision, i. e., at baptism; lit. "died" - "If with Christ you died", RSV.

rudiments - Gk: "stoicheia". See note on Col. 2:8.

are ye subject - "subject yourselves", NASB; "why . . . you submit to its rules", NIV. Having been delivered from bondage they were returning to regulations, the very things which had enslaved them.

ordinances - Gk: "dogmatizomai", "regulations", RSV; "decrees", NASB; "rules", NIV.

2:21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not; - These regulations were like those imposed by the Pharisees (Matt. 15:1-20). They were only burdens without spiritual value.

2:22 Which all are to perish with the using; ) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

perish - Gk: "phthora", "corruption" (Yg); literally "all for corruption in the using", Nestle.

commandments - Gk: "entalma", "injunctions", Nestle; "human precepts", RSV.



doctrines - Gk: "didaskalia", "teachings", Nestle; NASB. Note the words of Jesus:

"Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" ( Mark 7:7 ).

2:23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh

shew - Gk: "logos", "a repute", Nestle; "appearance", RSV; NASB.

wisdom - Gk: "sophia". See note on Col. 1:9.

will worship - Gk: "etheluthreskia", "worship springing from self-will" (Yg); "self-imposed worship", Nestle.

humility - Gk: "tapeinophros", "lowliness of mind" (Yg). See note on 2:18.

neglecting of the body - probably asceticism - involving fasting; "severity to the body", RSV.

not in any honour - not of any value; "of no value", RSV.

to the satisfying - Gk: "plēsmonē", "fullness" (Yg). See Rom. 7:23-24.

of the flesh - "are of no value, serving only to indulge the flesh" RSV mg.; "but are of no value against fleshly indulgences", NASB.

The humility, self-imposed worship and asceticism only pampered the flesh. There is a very real lesson for disciples in this regard. A tendency to regulate others in dress codes, beards, hair length must be regarded with caution. These can have an appearance of God-likeness without an inner discipline and responsibility reflecting one's attitude to spiritual principles. Mormons, for example, are among the best-dressed religionists, but in doctrine and understanding far removed from the truth. Conformity to man-made regulations has always been mistaken for religious righteousness. Jesus was condemned by his peers for his lack of conformity in this regard, as were his disciples ( Mark 7:1-5 ). Others too, must learn from the Colossian lesson.

3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God

If then - "If this is the case".

risen with Christ - "Have been raised", RSV; NASB; "ye were co-raised", Nestle. See note on Col. 2:12, 20. At baptism the old way of life is "put to death", and a newness of life is commenced in Christ - this is the significance of "have been raised".

seek - Gk: "zēteō", "coveting earnestly", Vine; "set your mind", NASB. "To pursue".

those things which are above - "Above" since this is where Christ is the head of the ecclesia, i. e., by seeking the kingdom of God first ( Matt. 6:33 ). Eternal life will only be given to those "who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality . . ." ( Rom. 2:7 ). "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" ( Matt. 6:21 ).

where Christ sitteth - not literally, see Acts 7:56 - Stephen saw him "standing". "Sitteth" is symbolic for authority ( Matt. 22:44, cf. Psa. 110:1 ).

right hand of God - Cf. Mark 16:19. This passage is expanded in Eph. 1:20, 21, RSV:

"When he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly / places / far above all rule and authority and power and dominion . . ."

3:2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth

affection - Gk: "phroneō", "to mind, think" ( Yg ); "minds", RSV.

on things above - Since this is where Christ is - the Head - and will return to earth to bring with him the realization of the promises ( e. g. 2 Tim. 4:1, 8 ). See also Phil. 3:20-21, RSV: "But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body . . ."

not on things on the earth - Things on the earth - obtaining a living, providing for one's family are not wrong, but are not to be pre-occupations. However, the world represents all that is opposed to God. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" ( 1 John 2:15 )

3:3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God

For ye are dead - as far as the old man is concerned - the Godless ways of thinking and acting. See note on Col. 2:12.

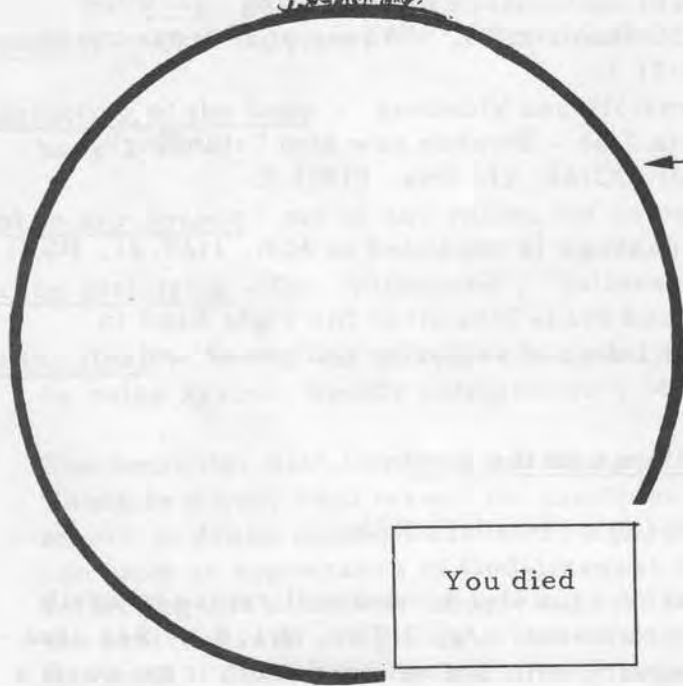
and your life - the new life in Christ - as Paul wrote: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me . . ." ( Gal. 2:20, RSV ).

(COL. 3:1-4)



"Set your minds  
(affection)  
on things above."

"When Christ who  
is our life appears,  
then you will also  
appear with him in  
glory."



*the* PARALLELS

You died



**BAPTISM**

the  
Death of Jesus

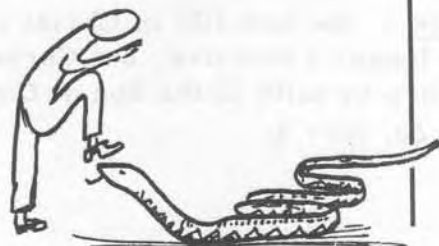
Risen with  
Him  
-----  
Life hid with  
Christ



**NEW LIFE!**

the  
Resurrection  
of Jesus

Put to death  
the earthly



is hid - Gk: "kruptō", "to hide" (Yg), the English equivalent is "cryptic". It is related to the word "en kruptō" used in Col. 1:26 - "the mystery which hath been hid from ages . . ." See also Col. 2:3: "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Like a treasure, life eternal is concealed for the present with Christ, but it will become manifest in the future. Similarly the manna is "hidden" ( Rev. 2:17 ).

However, life eternal will be open to view, for "when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" ( Col. 3:4, RSV ).

with Christ in God - an expression indicating the close relationship of Christ and God. See also John 17:21, 23.

3:4 When Christ / who / is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory

when Christ / who / is our life - Our life is not only hid in Christ, but Christ is our life - "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" ( 2 Tim. 1:10 ).

shall appear - Gk: "phaneroō",<sup>1</sup> "to make manifest" (Yg).

then shall ye also appear / with him - Cf. 1 Pet. 5:4: "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear / 'phaneroō' /, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" ( cf. Rom. 8:17, 18, 21 ).

in glory - Gk: "doxa". When this body of humility is fashioned like his glorious body, ( Phil. 3:21 ).

3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry

Mortify - Gk: "nekroō", "to put to death, deaden" (Yg). This exhortation is parallel to "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts" ( Gal. 5:24 ). The aorist tense is used implying a single decisive act.

your members - Gk: "melos", "a member, limb, part of the body" (Yg); "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live" ( Rom. 8:13, RSV ).

"Members" is real enough, but it is used figuratively. By the figure of speech metonymy, the cause is put for the effect. This can be seen by noting Rom. 7:5, 23.

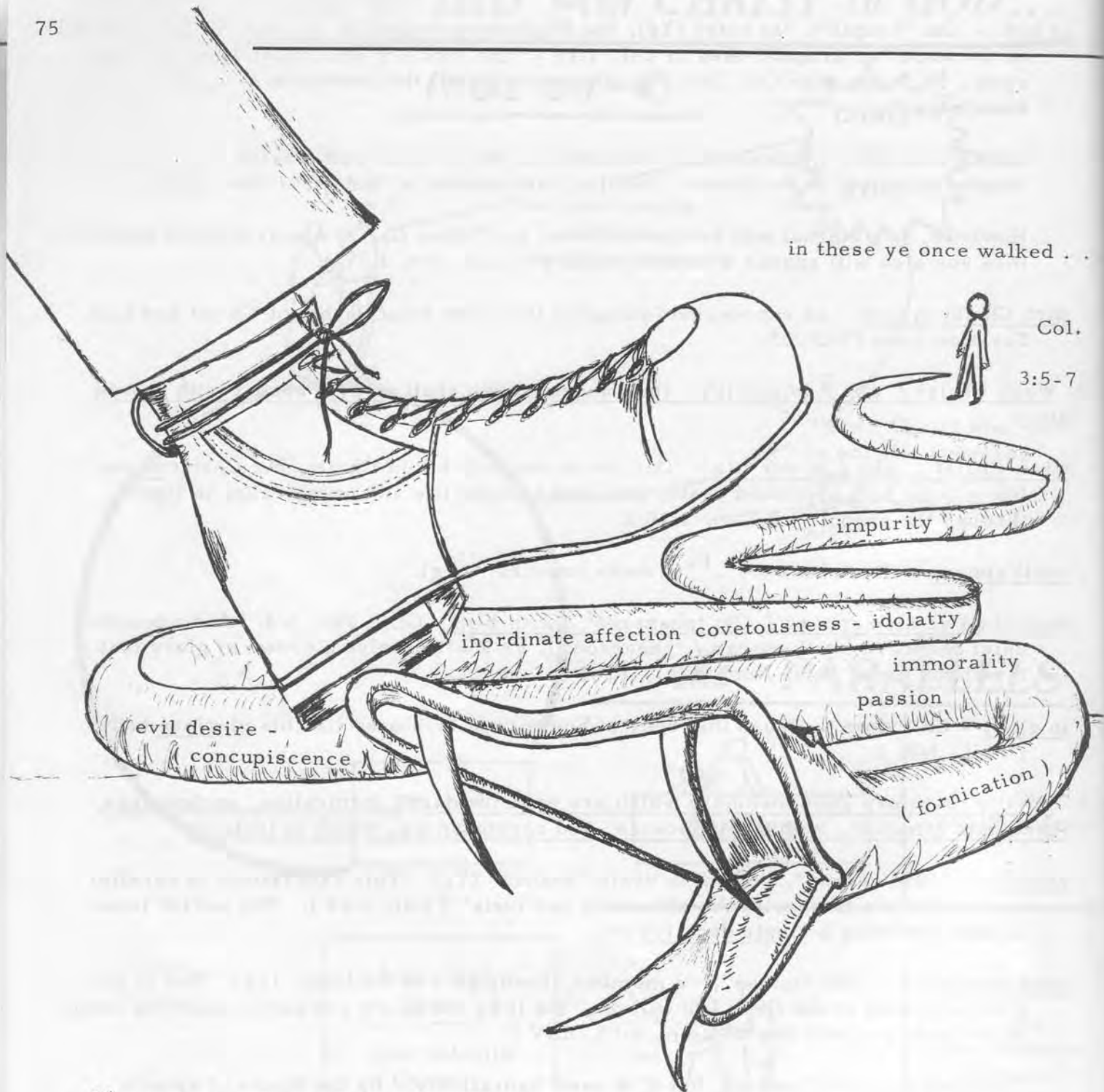
"While we were living in the flesh / unenlightened by the Gospel /, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death" ( Rom. 7:5, RSV ).

<sup>1</sup>A number of Greek words are used to describe the return of Jesus to the earth, these are detailed in Wrested Scriptures, p.66.

in these ye once walked . .

Col.

3:5-7



**“PUT to DEATH**

**what is earthly in you...” (Col. 3:5 RSV)**

ca  
its  
bu  
he  
in  
big  
CM

"For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members" ( Rom. 7:22-23, RSV ).

The problem, therefore, is with the law of sin which dwells in one's members. As long as mortality is possessed, this problem continues. The life of discipleship is to dethrone sin - "let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" ( Rom. 6:12 ).

which are upon the earth - equivalent to "the flesh" - the wayward pull of human nature - the things which come from within man and defile ( Mark 7:21 ). This is the wisdom which is "earthly, unspiritual, devilish" ( James 3:15, RSV ).

The question arises, "if you are dead" ( 'have died', RSV ), why is the believer exhorted to put to death members ( bodily parts )? The reason rests in the great resilience of the "old man" to survive - as long as there is life, there is the pull of fleshly desires. For this reason, life in the kingdom requires a change of nature.

fornication - Gk: "porneia", "immorality", RSV, NASB - unchastity. See also 1 Cor. 6:18; Eph. 5:3.

The word is also used to denote spiritual apostasy and wickedness ( Rev. 18:3; 17:5; cf. Hos. 4:7-19 ).

uncleanness - Gk: "akatharsia", "uncleanness, impurity," (Yg); "impurity", RSV; NASB. See Eph. 5:3, RSV - "But immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints". Note the wide meaning of the word in Eph. 4:19; 1 Thess. 2:3; 4:7, note context; 2 Cor. 12:21; Rom. 1:24; 6:19.

inordinate affection - Gk: "pathos", "feeling, passion", (Yg); "passion", RSV; NASB. Cf. Rom. 1:26. "Whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved / brought in bondage', AV /" ( 2 Pet. 2:19, RSV ).

evil concupiscence - Gk: "epithumia", "evil desire", RSV, cf. Jn. 8:44.

and covetousness - Gk: "pleonexia", "the wish to have more"<sup>2</sup> (Yg); the desire for more and more - an insatiable greed, cf. Eph. 5:5; 4:19. It pierces through the heart "with many sorrows" ( 1 Tim. 6:10 ).

This sin is classified along with other debasing sins since it secures the affections and desires which rightfully belong to the Almighty.

<sup>2</sup>See article, "Avaromania - the inordinate desire to get money and the things that money can buy": "The world pays homage to those who have it / money / in abundance, and reserves its admiration for those who make it consistently. But its limitations are evident. It can buy houses, food, soft beds, doctors and influence. It cannot buy homes, appetite, sleep, health and love. It can command the biggest and the most ostentatious. Think of the man in the parable - everything about him was big because of his love of wealth. Big barns, big house, big dinners - big funeral." Bro. D. Gillett, Diseases of the Soul, ( Birmingham: CMPA, 1975 ), p. 14.

which is idolatry - Gk: "eidōlolatrea" - things which preoccupy one's attention to the exclusion of the things of God. This is a subtle yet terrible 20th century sin - materialism!

- 3:6 For which things' sake / 'on account of these', RSV / the wrath / Gk: 'orgē', cf. v. 8 / of God cometh / 'on the children of disobedience', deleted RSV, Nestle, NASB / - The wrath of God almost certainly refers to the day in which "God will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" ( Acts 17:31, cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; Rom. 2:5; 5:9 ). The wrath is described in 2 Thess. 1:8, 9:

"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

- 3:7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them - Their way of life prior to enlightenment by the gospel, cf. 1 Pet. 4:3.

"Some may say that even before they found the truth they never did any of these things. This may be true, but, because we never had the opportunity to act out a sin, doesn't mean we will not be judged for it. We will be judged for our thoughts and intents ( Matt. 5:28 ) whether or not we were able to complete them in action . . . We can control our actions and deceive everyone but God, or we can direct our life to God . . ." <sup>3</sup>

\*Verses 8-10 are parallel to Eph. 4:22-24, 25, 31.

- 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth

But now - an apostolic contrast - your life has changed, so put off these sins.

ye also - you, Colossians, as well as other believers.

put off - Gk: "apotithemai", "put away", (Yg); Nestle; RSV; in the Greek this is an imperative. Although in Acts 7:58 it is used for putting off clothes, see Heb. 12:1 where this word is used for stripping away sin. This is only accomplished by renewing the "inner man" daily - 2 Cor. 4:16.

anger - Gk: "orge" - cf. Eph. 4:31; 1 Tim. 2:8 - seething hatred; settled anger ( Expositor's ). See its use in reference to God, 3:6.

wrath - Gk: "thumos", "hot anger" (Vine ); "rage", NIV. It is also differentiated from anger in Eph. 4:31 - "a sudden and passionate outburst" ( Expositor's ). It is used of the rioting crowd at Ephesus ( Acts 19:28 ) and the incensed Jews in the synagogue at Nazareth when they attempted to kill Jesus ( Luke 4:28, 29 ).

malice - Gk: "kakia", badness in quality . . . the vicious character generally" (Vine ). See its use in 1 Cor. 5:8; 14:20; Titus 3:3.

<sup>3</sup>J. Styles and W. Robinson, Paul's Epistles to Philemon and Colossians, p. 30.

blasphemy - Gk: "blasphēmia", "slander", RSV, NASB; used of the Jewish reaction to Paul's preaching at Pisidian Antioch when "full of envy" they blasphemed ( Acts 13:45 ). Since all of the sins in this list are sins against men ( as well as against God ) "blasphemers" is generally translated by slander.

filthy communication - Gk: "aischrologia", "shameful discourse" (Yg); "foul talk", RSV; "abusive speech", NASB; "filthy language", NIV; "abuse", Nestle - foul-mouthed abuse.

All of this instruction is in the aorist tense implying to "put off" with one decisive act, i. e. , at baptism.

3:9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds

lie not - The tense of this verse has changed from the aorist - one decisive act - to the present.

All liars have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone to be ultimately destroyed ( Rev. 21:8 ). Similarly the great apostasy is characterized by belief of "a lie" ( 2 Thess. 2:11 ). However, such conduct is unbecoming in the Christ Body - "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing" ( Eph. 5:27, RSV ).

seeing that = because, note the parallel in Eph. 4:25, where additional reasons are given "for we are members one of another".

ye have put off - Gk: "apekduomai". This word occurs in 2:15, but it is a different word from "apotithemai" translated "put off" in v.8. It means "to strip off clothes or arms" (Vine ) from oneself ( since it occurs in the Greek middle voice ).

"Put off" is a figure of speech referring to the rejection of the old, unregenerate, unenlightened way of life.

the old man / Gk: 'anthropos' / - Cf. Rom. 6:6. This expression is elaborated in Eph. 4:22 - "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."

with his deeds / 'practices', RSV; NASB; Nestle / - These have just been listed in 3:5, 8, 9.

3:10 And have put on the new / man /, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him

put on - Gk: "enduō", "to clothe" (Yg). Just as the old man was stripped off, so the new is put on - by a single act ( Gk: aorist ) - at baptism. One must exercise great care. The Laodicean ecclesia did not know they were naked ( Rev. 3:17 ) and were instructed by Jesus to "buy . . . white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed" ( Rev. 3:18 ).

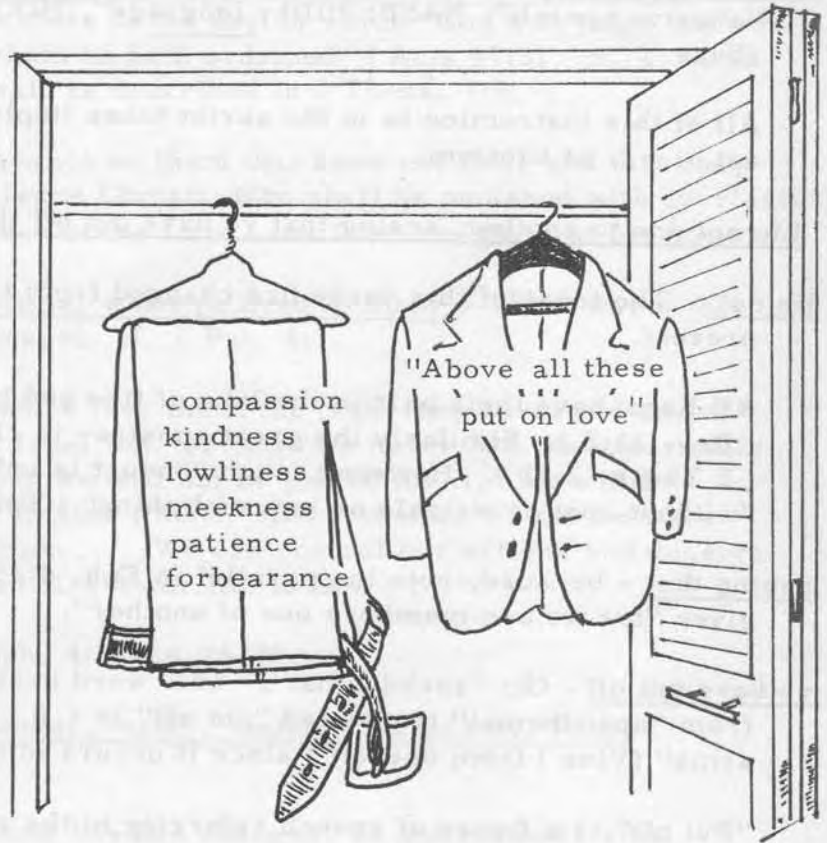
renewed - Gk: "anakainoo", "( ane = back or again; kainos, new )" ( Vine ). This is a continuous process ( since the present participle is used in the Greek text ). The believer has to feed the new man to ensure growth:

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever . . . As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby"

( 1 Pet. 1:23; 2:2 ).



# Be CLOTHED with the NEW MAN



## UNCLOTHE

### the OLD MAN



covetousness  
( which is idolatry )

in knowledge - Gk: "epignosis" - see note on 1:9. Note Eph. 4:23, 24, RSV - "be renewed in the spirit of your mind."

Knowledge is a basic requirement for spiritual growth requiring discipline, application and time.

image - Gk: "eikon", see note on 1:15.

that created him-created by God through Christ, "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" ( Eph. 4:24, cf. 2 Cor. 4:14, see also Col. 2:10 ).

3:11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian Scythian, bond / nor / free: but Christ / is / all, and in all

Where there is neither - "Here there cannot be", RSV, i. e., in the new man.

Greek nor Jew - no distinction based on country of birth or race.

circumcision nor uncircumcision - no distinction on the basis of the Jewish point of view.

Barbarian - "foreigner, alien" (Yg); "one whose speech is rude, or harsh; uncouth" ( Vine ). Cf. 1 Cor. 14:11.

Scythian - lowest class of savage.

bond - Gk: "doulos", slaves.

free - non-slave, "freeman", Nestle.

Christ is all - He is the source of the unity.

in all - by the creation of the new man ( cf. Eph. 1:23 ) - therefore prior distinctions on nationality, social class, etc. have no validity. Notice the similarity with 1 Cor. 15:28. See the parallel passage in Gal. 3:26-29.

3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering

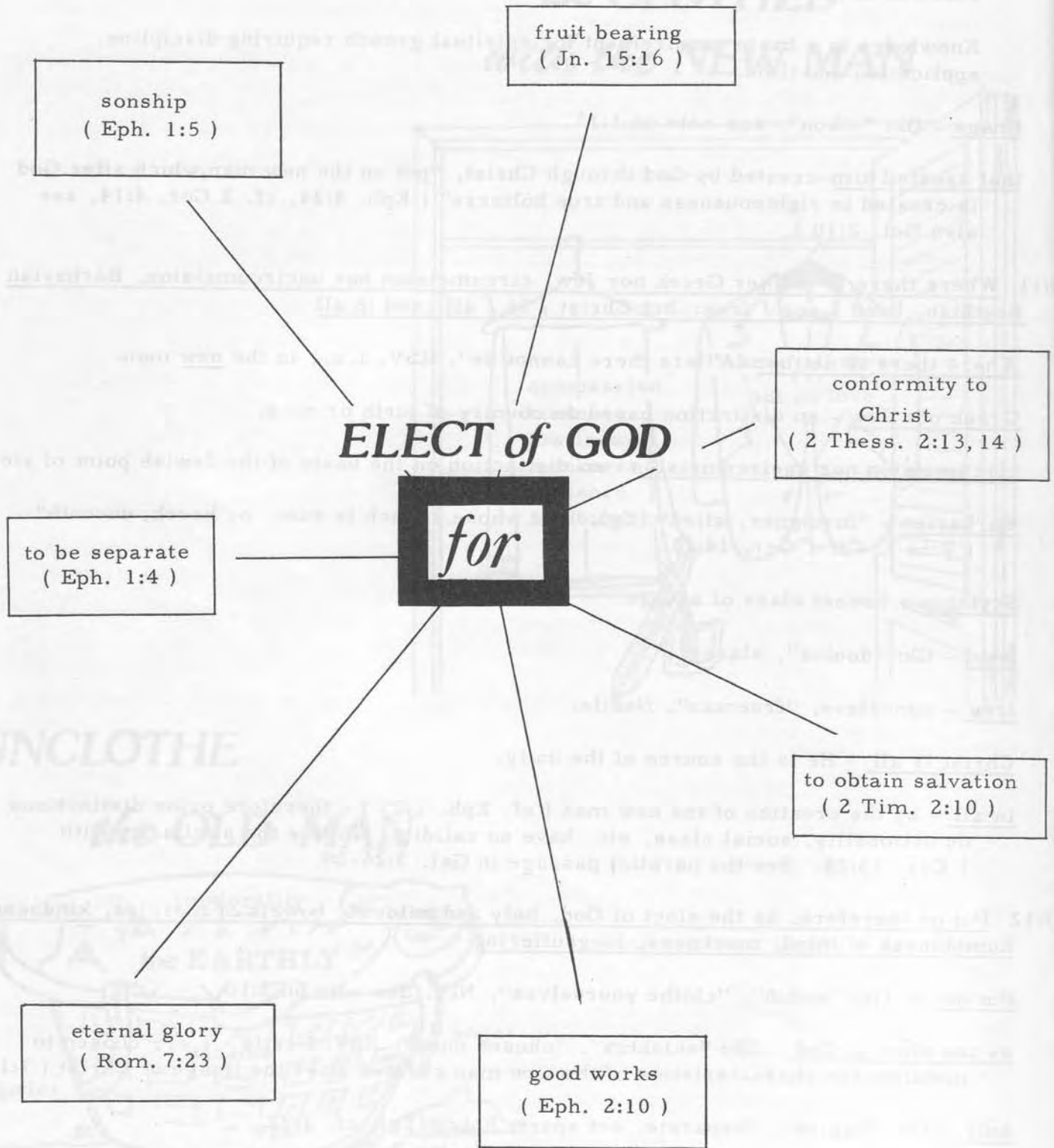
Put on - Gk: "enduō", "clothe yourselves", NIV. See note on 3:10.

as the elect of God - Gk: "eklektos", "chosen ones", RSV; Nestle - i. e., chosen to manifest the characteristics of the new man created after the image of Christ ( 3:10 ).

holy - Gk: "hagios", "separate, set apart, holy" (Yg), cf. 1:22.

beloved - Gk: "agapaō", "having been loved", Nestle. Cf. Philemon 2.

bowels - Gk: "splaǵchnon", literally refers to the intestines ( Vine ), but means the seat of the affections; in English the heart is used synonymously. See note on Philemon 7, 12.



mercies - Gk: "oiktirmos", "pity, merciful, compassion" (Yg). It is equivalent to "tenderhearted" in Eph. 4:32.

kindness - Gk: "chrēstotēs", "goodness of heart" (Vine ).

humbleness of mind - Gk: "tapeinophros", ( tapeinos = 'low lying', phrēn = 'the mind' )  
lowliness of mind - cf. notes on Col. 2:18, 23 and Eph. 4:2. This was the way the  
Apostle Paul served the Lord, "with all humility of mind, and with many tears . . ." ( Acts 20:19 ).

meekness - Gk: "praotēs", "mildness" (Yg). Note 2 Tim. 2:24-25 - "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves . . ."

longsuffering - Gk: "makrothumia", ( makros = 'long'; thumos = 'temper' ) - forbearance; "patience", RSV; NASB. See note on Col. 1:11.

3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ /'Lord', RSV / forgave you, so also/do / ye

Forbearing one another - Gk: "anechomai", "to hold self back or up", (Yg). Cf. Eph. 4:2. This requires self-discipline and wisdom - it is the reverse of "speaking one's mind" without forethought.

forgiving one another - cf. Eph. 4:2. The forgiveness of one's own sins is dependent upon doing this ( Matt. 6:14 ).

a quarrel - Gk: "momphe", "complaint", AV mg.; RSV; NASB; "grievance", Companion Bible. Note the words of the Master in the parable of the unforgiving creditor in Matt. 18:21-35:

"So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" ( v. 35 ).

3:14 And above all these things /̄ put on /̄ charity, which is the bond of perfectness

above all - Gk: "epi", upon. The figure of clothing is continued - placing a top garment over underclothing, "over all these", Nestle. It does not mean "in addition to all these".

/̄ put on /̄ - italicized. Not in the Greek text, but supplied to give the sense.

charity - Gk: "agapē". Cf. note on Col. 1:4, 8. This is the cohesion for all the clothing of the disciple - it is the glue which cements all the attributes in a complete unity.

bond - Gk: "sundesmos", "which binds everything together", RSV.

of perfection - Gk: "teleiotes", "completeness" (Yg); Nestle; "in perfect harmony", RSV. The clothing is complete.

It is easy to be deceived about spiritual clothing. The Laodicean ecclesia thought it had no need of clothing, yet it was assessed by the Lord, "and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked . . . I counsel thee to buy . . . white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed" ( Rev. 3:17, 18 ). See notes on these verses.

3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful

the peace - Gk: "eirēnē". This peace is effected by reconciliation. Since Christ is our peace ( Eph. 2:14 ) - the peace his teaching imparts ( Jn. 14:27 ) should arbitrate in the life of the believer.

Cf. Phil. 4:7: "And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus".

of God - should be "Christ", Nestle, RSV.

rule - Gk: "brabeuō", "to act as a judge or president" (Yg); "an umpire" ( Vine ). This is the older use of the word - it carries the meaning of "rule" or "decide" in late usage. Cf. note on Col. 2:18.

in your hearts - Gk: "kardia", cf. note on Col. 2:2.

called - Gk: "kaleomai", cf. Eph. 4:1,4. If love is the bond of unity, the peace which will pervade the Christ Body must be the directive for each member.

one body - See note on 1:18; 2:19, cf. Eph. 4:4.

be ye thankful - Gk: "eucharisteō", cf. Eph. 5:20, see note on Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 5:18. This is the "fruit of the lips", Heb. 13:15, cf. also Col. 1:12.

3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord

the word of Christ - this is equivalent to Scripture. Jesus said, "He that heareth you, heareth me" ( Lk. 10:16; cf. Jn. 17:20-21 ).

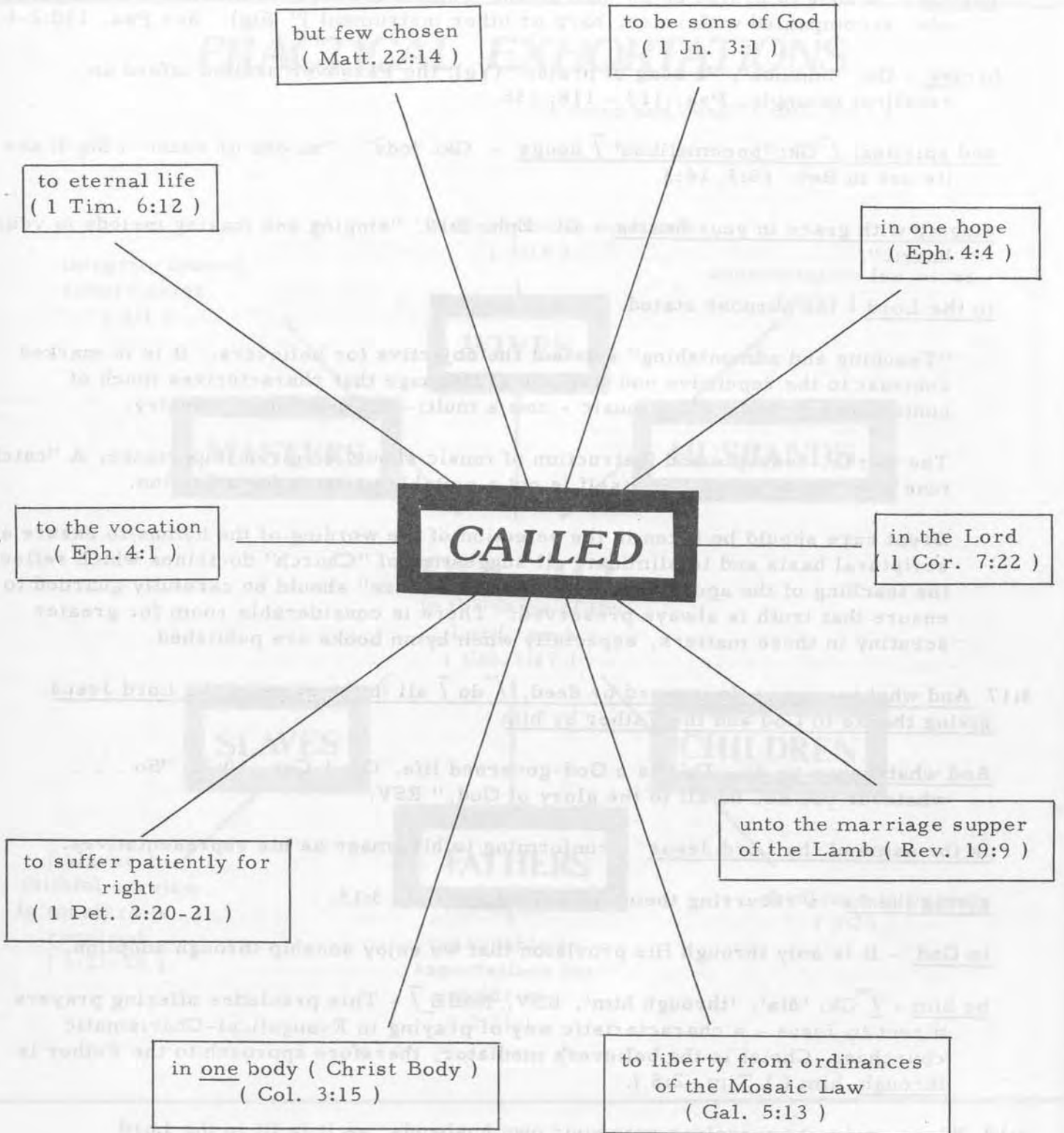
dwell - Gk: "enoikeō", "to be in a house" (Yg).

richly - Gk: "plousiōs", cf. note on Col. 1:27.

in all wisdom - See note on Col. 1:28; 2:3. Wisdom was needed to select hymns appropriate for the occasion.

teaching - Gk: "didaskō", cf. note on Col. 1:28.

and admonishing - Gk: "noutheteō", "to put in mind" (Yg). Note how this is done in the Psalms, e.g. Psa. 95:1-7.



psalms - "a song of praise on an instrument" (Yg); "a set piece of music ( i. e. , a sacred ode accompanied with voice, harp or other instrument )" (Stg). See Psa. 150:2-6.

hymns - Gk: "humnos", "a song of praise" (Yg); the Passover psalms afford an excellent example, Psa. 113 - 118; 136.

and spiritual / Gk: 'pneumatikos' / songs - Gk: "odē", "an ode or chant" ( Stg ); see its use in Rev. 15:3; 14:3.

singing with grace in your hearts - Cf. Eph. 5:19, "singing and making melody in your heart."

to the Lord - the purpose stated.

"Teaching and admonishing" sets out the objective for believers. It is in marked contrast to the repetitive non-scriptural language that characterizes much of contemporary evangelical music - now a multi - million dollar industry.

The words, concepts and instruction of music should be given importance. A "catchy tune" or "modern beat" in itself is not a suitable criteria for selection.

Great care should be taken in the selection of the wording of the hymns to ensure a scriptural basis and to eliminate all suggestion of "Church" doctrines which reflect the teaching of the apostasy. Even "poetic licence" should be carefully guarded to ensure that truth is always preserved. There is considerable room for greater scrutiny in these matters, especially when hymn books are published.

3:17 And what soever ye do in word or deed, / do / all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him

And whatsoever ye do - This is a God-governed life. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:31: "So . . . whatever you do, do all to the glory of God," RSV.

in the name of the Lord Jesus - conforming to his image as his representatives.

giving thanks - a recurring theme in Colossians, cf. 3:15.

to God - It is only through His provision that we enjoy sonship through adoption.

by him - / Gk: 'dia', 'through him', RSV, NASB / - This precludes offering prayers direct to Jesus - a characteristic way of praying in Evangelical-Charismatic churches. Christ is the believer's mediator, therefore approach to the Father is through him ( 1 Tim. 2:5 ).

3:18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord

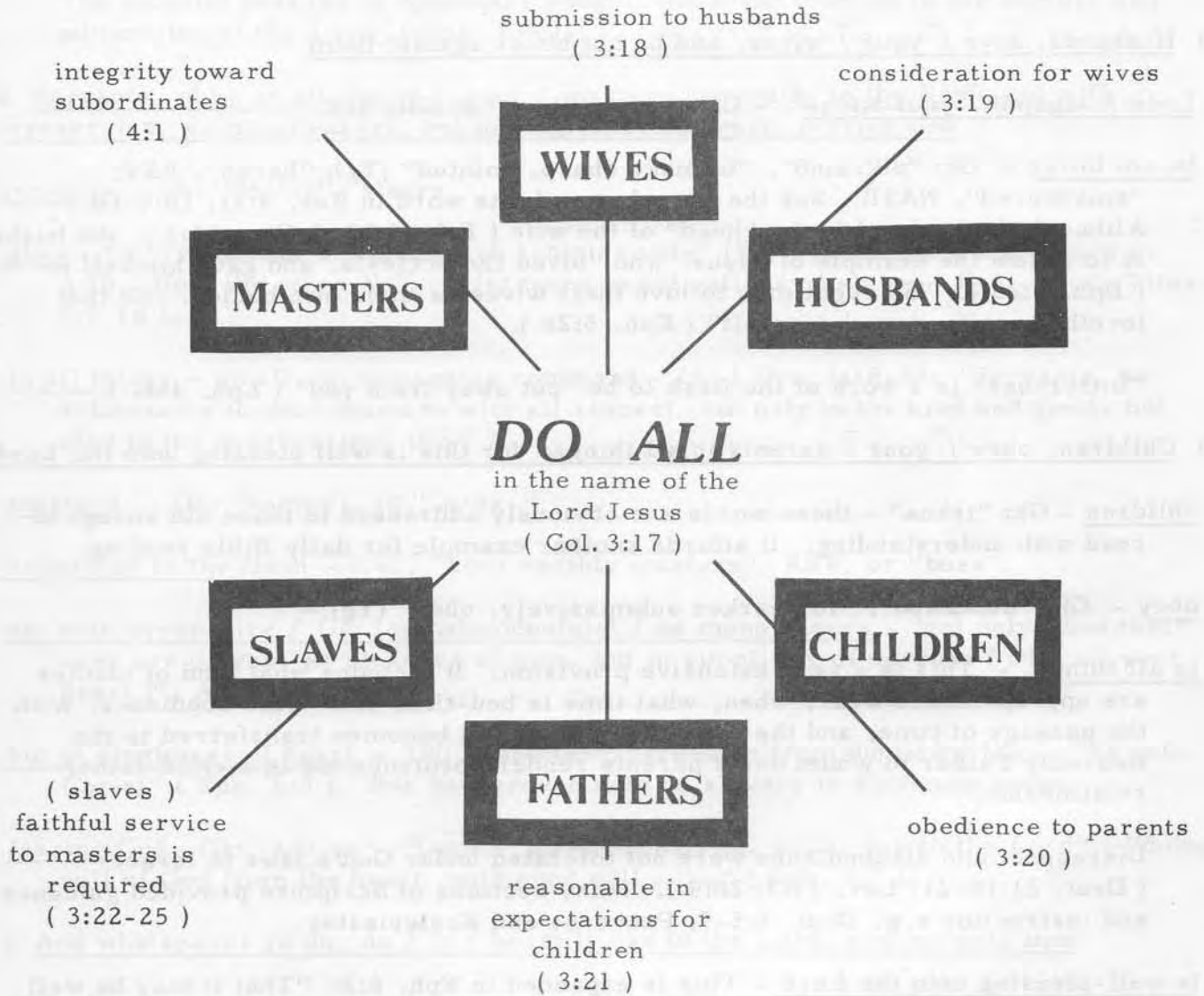
submit - Gk: "hupotassō", "to set in array under" (Yg); "to subordinate, to obey, in subjection,<sup>4</sup> submit self unto" (Stg).

Note Eph. 5:22, 24: "Let the wives be / subject / to their own husbands in every thing." " / Wives, be / obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." ( Titus 2:5 ). The wives are also instructed to "reverence" their

<sup>4</sup>See Let Her Be Covered: The Hats of Christadelphian Sisters ( Grand Valley Ecclesia p. 2-3. Also the notes on 1 Corinthians, chs. 9-11.

# PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS

"in word and deed" ( Col. 3:17 )





husbands ( Eph. 5:33 ).

as it is fit in the Lord - as becoming those "walking worthy of the Lord", cf. note on Col. 1:10. See the similar reason given for faithful service of slaves to masters in Col. 3:23; 4:1; Eph. 6:7.

Marriage with an unbeliever makes this instruction impossible to follow ( in the way intended ). This verse affords another reason why "unequal yoking" is wholly out of character for a believer, cf. 2 Cor. 6:14.

3:19 Husbands, love / your / wives, and be not bitter against them

Love / 'agapē' / your wives<sup>5</sup> - Cf. note on "love" in Col. 1:8.

be not bitter - Gk: "pikrainō", "to make sharp, pointed" (Yg); "harsh", RSV; "embittered", NASB. See the literal use of this word in Rev. 8:11; 10:9-10. Although the husband is the "head" of the wife ( Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 11:3 ), the husband is to follow the example of Jesus, who "loved the ecclesia, and gave himself for it" ( Eph. 5:25 ). "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself" ( Eph. 5:28 ).

"Bitterness" is a work of the flesh to be "put away from you" ( Eph. 4:31 ).

3:20 Children, obey / your / parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord

children - Gk: "tekna" - these words are obviously addressed to those old enough to read with understanding. It affords another example for daily Bible reading.

obey - Gk: "hupakauō", "to hearken submissively, obey" (Yg).

in all things - This is a very extensive provision. It includes what kind of clothes are appropriate to wear, when, what time is bed-time etc. This obedience, with the passage of time, and the maturity of the child becomes transferred to the Heavenly Father to whom one's parents render obedience too in a child-father relationship.

Disrespect and disobedience were not tolerated under God's laws to Israel ( Deut. 21:18-21; Lev. 19:3; 20:9 ). Many sections of Scripture provided guidance and instruction e.g. Deut. 6:5-9; Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

is well-pleasing unto the Lord - This is expanded in Eph. 6:3: "That it may be well with thee and that thou mayest live long on the earth" ( cf. Deut. 5:16; Exod. 20:12 )

3:21 Fathers, provoke not your children / to anger /, lest they be discouraged

provoke - Gk: "erethizō", "to rouse to strife" (Yg); "exasperate", NASB.

/ anger / - Delete, not in the Greek text.

<sup>5</sup>See an expansion of this in The Way of a Man with a Maid, ( Adelaide, S. A. : C.S.S.S., 1980 ), p. 33, 48.

discourage - Gk: "athumeō", "to be disheartened, lose heart" (Yg); "discouraged", RSV.

By constant fault-finding, irritability of temperament, the child may give up trying to please, since nothing he/she does meets with approval. There is great practical advice in these words as every parent with older children will recognize.

The parallel passage in Ephesians adds: "But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" ( Eph. 6:4 ).

3:22 Servants, obey in all things / your / masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God

servants - Gk: "doulos", slaves.

obey - Gk: "hupakouō", "to hearken submissively" (Yg). The same word occurs in 3:20. Note the other N. T. references to obligations of slaves ( Eph. 6:5, 6; Titus 2:9, 10 ).

in all things - an all-encompassing command - cf. 1 Pet. 2:18-20: "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to the kind and gentle but also to the overbearing" (RSV ).

masters - Gk: "kurios", lit."lords."

according to the flesh - i. e., "your earthly masters", RSV, or "boss".

not with eyeservice / as menpleasers - Gk: 'ophthalmouleia' / "not only when their eyes are on you, as pleasers of men, but in simplicity of purpose ( with all your heart )", Amplified Bible.

but in singleness of heart - Gk: "haplotēs", "freedom from duplicity"(Yg) - "as unto Christ" ( Eph. 6:5 ). See background note on slavery in Philemon notes.

fearing God - Gk: "kurios" = "Lord," RSV; NASB. Cf. v. 23, "as to the Lord" - "doing the will of God from the heart, with good will . . ." ( Eph. 6:7 ).

3:23 And whatsoever ye do, do / it / heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men

and whatsoever ye do - "whatever your task", RSV.

do it heartily - Gk: "ek psychē", "out of the soul" (Yg); "from the soul", NASB mg.; i. e., with one's whole being.

as to the Lord, and not unto men - see note on v. 22.

3:24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ

knowing - Gk: "oida", "to see, have seen, known" (Yg).

that of the Lord - There is a higher consideration than service to a master, however important that might be.

ye shall receive the reward - "Reward", Gk "antapodosis", "(anti='in return'; apo = 'back'; didomi = 'to give' ), to recompense" ( Vine ). Cf. Luke 14:12. This word only occurs here. "The inheritance as your reward", RSV.

of the inheritance - Gk: "klēronomia",<sup>6</sup> "what is obtained by lot", (Yg); "a lot" (Vine ); cf. Acts 20:32, see note on 1:12. This inheritance relates to immortality ( Rev. 2:7 ) in the "kingdom of Christ and of God" ( Eph. 5:5 ). The recompense the believing slave would receive was in marked contrast to non-believing slaves who receive no inheritance whatsoever. Only a son ( of God ) could be an heir to an inheritance i. e., through the gospel ( cf. Gal. 4:7 ).

for ye serve - Gk: "douleuō" - i. e., as a slave.

the Lord Christ - the head of the Christ Body. Although a just recompense may not be received from earthly masters, a servant can take encouragement from the just recompense of the all-knowing heavenly Master.

The absence of the definite article is noteworthy. "It emphasizes the position rather than identifies the Person of Him who gives the reward."<sup>7</sup>

3:25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons

But he that doeth wrong - Does this relate to the slave or the master? Certainly it would apply to believing masters and slaves, cf. Eph. 6:9.

shall receive for the wrong which he hath done - When? This is not stated. It could be providentially through God's intervention in the ordinary course of events as He has done in the past ( e. g. Acts 12:21-23 ) or it may refer to the day of Judgment ( Rom. 2:1-12 ).

and there is no respect of persons - Gk: "prosopolepsia", cf. its use in Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9. "For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality" RSV.

The judgment seat of Christ will reveal the secrets of the heart irrespective of whether a person is a slave or a master ( cf. 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 4:4,5, RSV ).

<sup>6</sup>The word "clergy" is derived from "klēros" ( a lot given or cast - believed erroneously to be a means of obtaining divine direction ).

<sup>7</sup>See Expositor's, p. 543.

4:1 Masters, give unto / your / servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven

Masters - Gk: "kurios", lit. "lords" - those baptized. See note "The Slave-Master Relationship", introduction to Philemon.

give - Gk: "parechō", "bring, do for, keep, minister, offer, show" (Yg). "Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair", NIV.

just and equal - "Treat your slaves justly and fairly", RSV; i. e., as a brother in Christ and as enlightenment in the gospel requires.

knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven - Cf. Col. 3:25 - the same exhortation is given to masters as to slaves, since in this respect they were all one in Christ Jesus ( Col. 3:11 ).

4:2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving

continue - Gk: "proskartareō", "to persevere toward ( anything )" (Yg); "continue steadfastly" RSV; "devote yourselves", NASB; NIV.

in prayer - This was the practice of the early believers, Acts 1:14; 2:46.

and watch - Gk: "grēgoreō", "to be awake, vigilant" (Yg); "keep alert", NASB; cf. Eph. 6:18.

in the same with thanksgiving / Gk: 'eucharistia' / - cf. Col. 1:12.

4:3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds

withal praying - Lit. "praying together also concerning us", Nestle; "pray for us also", RSV. This would be a collective prayer by the ecclesia. A similar request was made to the Ephesians: "/ pray / . . . also for me, that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly . . . that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak" ( Eph. 6:19,20, RSV ).<sup>1</sup> Cf. note on Philemon 22.

also for us - Paul in prison in Rome ( see background notes ) and those with him ( Col. 4:10-14 ).

God would open - as he did at Troas and Ephesus.

unto us a door of utterance / Gk: 'logos' - 'a word' / - Note the earlier comment of the Apostle while at Ephesus: "But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries" ( 1 Cor. 16:8,9, RSV ), cf. 2 Cor. 2:12: "When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord . . ." ( RSV ).

<sup>1</sup>An analysis of the words used for preaching is set out in Quenching all the Fiery Darts of the Wicked, p. 63.

91 to speak the mystery / Gk: 'mysterion' / of Christ - See note on Col. 1:26,27 - equivalent to "preach the gospel of Christ" ( 2 Cor. 2:12; 'the mystery of the gospel', Eph. 6:19 ).<sup>2</sup>

for which I am also in bonds - equivalent to "for which I am an ambassador in chains" ( Eph. 6:20, RSV ). Cf. Philemon 10,13.

4:4 That I make make it manifest as I ought to speak

manifest - Gk: "phaneroō", "to make manifest" (Yg). See note on Col. 3:4.

as I ought to speak - Paul was always concerned that he might be "delivered from unreasonable / 'perverse', Nestle; 'absurd', AV mg. / and wicked men" ( 2 Thess. 3:2 ) and that "by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" ( 2 Cor. 4:2, RSV ).

4:5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time

walk in wisdom - "Conduct yourselves wisely", RSV. This is developed in v.6. Note the similar passage in Ephesians: "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise" ( Eph. 5:15, RSV ); cf. note on Col. 1:9.

toward them that are without - i. e., the non-baptized. See Paul's conduct in 1 Cor. 9:19-23.

redeeming - Gk: "exagorazo", ( 'ex', out of; 'agorazō', to buy ), "to acquire out of the forum" (Yg). The word relates to the "agora" - the market place or forum where purchases were made for oneself ( cf. Acts 17:17 ). This background is reflected in Ramsay's translation: "making your market fully from the occasion."<sup>3</sup> Weymouth captures the idea: "Buy up your opportunities."

Just as opportunistic preaching is required, so early opportunity should be seized to advance the cause of the truth generally ( cf. note on Col. 1:28,29 ). "Because the days are evil" is added in Eph. 5:16, RSV.

the time - Gk: "kairos" translated "opportunity" ( Acts 24:25 ).

4:6 Let your speech / be / always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man

Let your speech / Gk: 'logos' /

be always with grace - "always be gracious", RSV. The idea of pleasantness and courtesy is implied.

seasoned with salt<sup>4</sup> - No doubt a reference to the words of the Lord: "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you season it?" ( Mark 9:50, RSV ). In Col. 4:6, however, the idea is not that of preservation from corruption, but rather as salt brings out the flavour of food, so the wisdom imparted by the gospel ought to provide the believer good judgment in answering foes, critics and interested friends.

<sup>2</sup>This point is expanded in Quenching all the Fiery Darts of the Wicked, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>W. M. Ramsay, Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen, ( Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962 ), p. 149.

<sup>4</sup>Salt has great significance in Scripture. It was used in the sacrifices ( Lev. 2:13 ) and was associated with the Davidic covenant ( 2 Chron. 13:5, cf. Num. 18:19 ).

to answer every man - Cf. 1 Pet. 3:15-16: "Always be prepared by study to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence . . . so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame", RSV.

In this way if the gospel is hid, it is hid to those who are blinded ( 2 Cor. 4:3,4 ) not by our inappropriate and insensitive choice of words, and manner, but by the god of this world - King Sin ( cf. 2 Cor. 4:3-4 ). See also 2 Tim. 2:23-26.

4:7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister, and a fellowservant in the Lord

All my state - I. e., everything concerning my welfare in Rome - "will tell you all about my affairs", RSV.

Tychicus - "Fortunate", (Yg). See the parallel passage in Eph. 6:21-22.

beloved brother - See Col. 3:12. "Beloved" was a good description of the Colossian ecclesia as well. See also notes on Col. 4:14.

faithful minister - Gk: "diakonos". See note on Col. 1:7. The same description is used of Epaphras.

a fellowservant / Gk: 'doulos' in the Lord - Lit. a fellow-slave. Although the apostle was specially chosen and commissioned, he still regarded himself as a fellow-slave. This is an example of humility worthy of note.

When a collection was taken for poor Jews in Judea, Tychicus travelled as an ecclesial delegate from Asia ( accompanied by Trophimus - an Ephesian ). Therefore, he represented the ecclesias of the Lycus Valley ( cf. Acts 20:4,5 ). He was the bearer of the Colossian epistle from Paul in Rome, v. 8,9. Later, he was sent to Titus in Crete ( Titus 3:12 ). Tychicus was sent to Ephesus while Paul was imprisoned in Rome on trial for his life ( 2 Tim. 4:12 ).

4:8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts

whom I have sent - "I am sending" ( Expositor's ).

for the same purpose - Gk: "auto touto" = "this itself" (Yg); "very purpose", RSV.

that he might know your estate - Gk: "ta peri", "the things concerning you" (Yg); "that you may know how we are", RSV; "that you may know about our circumstances", NASB. ( The AV gives the idea that Tychicus wanted to know about the welfare of the Colossians ). See the parallel in Eph. 6:21,22.

and comfort your hearts - "And that he may encourage your hearts", RSV. See note on Col. 2:2. Note the comparison with the language used of Epaphroditus, the Philippian representative who ministered to Paul in Rome ( Phil. 2:25-30; 4:18 ).

4:9 With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is / one / of you. They shall make known unto you all things which / are done / here

Onesimus - Gk: "profitable", (Yg). "Who is one of you" must have been a Colossian. See notes on Philemon 10. This verse indicates that Onesimus was travelling with Tychicus. Tychicus probably went from Colossae and the Lycus Valley ecclesias to Ephesus carrying the Ephesian Epistle ( Eph. 6:21 ), or he may have delivered the Ephesian epistle if he landed at Ephesus before travelling to the Lycus Valley.

4:10 Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth / 'greeteth', RSV / you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, ( touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

Aristarchus - "Best ruler" (Yg) - a native of Thessalonica, Acts 19:29; cf. 20:4; 27:2. See note on Philemon 24.

Marcus - Mark - undoubtedly the Mark of Acts 12:12 - "John whose other name was Mark", RSV. See note on Philemon 24.

sister's son to Barnabas - Gk: "anepsios", "cousin", RSV; NASB; NIV; Nestle. Delete "sister's son" as this is not in the Greek text. They joined together in the early preaching work, Acts 12:25; 13:5; 13:13.

Barnabas - His name was "Joseph" but renamed "Barnabas" which means "son of encouragement" - a Levite, a native of Cyprus ( Acts 4:36 ).

Barnabas took the Apostle Paul and brought him to the apostles testifying to the believers of Paul's legitimate standing in the gospel ( Acts 9:26-29 ).

The significance of his name is reflected in his discipleship. He sold land and gave the money to the apostles for use by the brethren ( Acts 4:36-37 ) and worked with Paul to assist in the collection of aid for the poor Jews in Judea ( Acts 11:29-30 ).

He preached in Antioch ( Acts 13:1-2 ) and Cyprus ( Acts 13:4-7 ) and was sent with Paul to carry the recommendations of the Jerusalem conference to Syria and Asia Minor ( Acts 15:22-31 ).

A sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas developed over John Mark and it resulted in separate endeavours. Barnabas took Mark and went to Cyprus ( Acts 15:36-41 ) while Paul took Silas and left on his second missionary journey.

In Galatia, Barnabas became "carried away with their dissimulation / insincerity and hypocrisy /" ( Gal. 2:13 ) when James and certain Jews arrived from Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> He was with Peter on this occasion, who was 'withstood . . . to the face, because he was to be blamed' ( Gal. 2:11 ). This is the last time that Barnabas' activities are recorded.

touching whom ye received commandments - "Commandments", Gk: "entolē", "thing

<sup>5</sup>This point is expanded in the notes on 2 Corinthians chs. 1-5, p. 9-12.

given in charge" (Yg); "instructions", RSV; NASB; NIV; "order", NASB mg. What these were we do not know. The fact that Mark is linked to Barnabas for identification may suggest that Mark was not well known to the Colossians.

if he come unto you receive him;) - This in effect, endorses the work of Mark. Evidently he had matured and was profitable for the work.

In order for Mark to send greetings, he must have visited Paul in Rome, although he presumably worked for the most part with Peter as his son in the faith ( 1 Pet. 5:13 ). Perhaps the sizeable Jewish community in the Lycus Valley required the attention of Mark since Peter was sent to the circumcision ( Gal. 2:8,9 ).

The fact that Paul writes the way he does about Mark might suggest that he was allaying any concern or prejudice that the Colossians might feel toward Mark as a result of Paul's early refusal to work with him in preaching ( cf. Acts 15:36-40 ).

4:11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only / are my/ fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me

And Jesus - The Greek form of the Hebrew, "Joshua".

Justus - This is the only reference to this disciple. His name is the only one not repeated in Philemon.

who are of the circumcision - a Jew.

fellowworkers - Gk: "sunergos", cf. 1 Cor. 3:9 - "For we are labourers together with God."

unto / Gk: 'eis', 'for', RSV / the kingdom of God - Cf. note on Col. 1:13.

these only - "These are the only men of the circumcision", RSV. In other words, there were Jews who wanted no part of work with Paul - thinking that he had gone too far to accommodate Gentiles ( cf. Phil. 1:13-18 ).

which have been a comfort unto me - Gk: "parēgoria", "a soothing" (Yg); "an encouragement", NASB - as was Onesiphorus - "for he often refreshed me; he was not ashamed of my chains" ( 2 Tim. 1:16,17, RSV ).

4:12 Epaphras, who is / one / of you, a servant / Gk: 'doulos' / of Christ, saluteth / 'greeteth', RSV / you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God

Epaphras - See note on Col. 1:7; Philemon 23.

always labouring fervently for you in prayers - Gk: "agonizomai", "to agonize, contend, wrestle" (Yg). See note on Col. 2:1; 1:9; "remembering you earnestly", RSV; "wrestling in prayer for you", NIV; "struggling", Nestle. See Rom. 15:30: "Strive / 'agonizomai' / together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf . . ." (RSV).

that ye may stand complete - Gk: "teleios", "complete" (Yg); "stand mature and fully



assured", RSV. See note on Col. 1:28 - note the use of toil and striving ( 'agonizomai' ) in Col. 1:29.

4:13 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them / that are / in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis

For I bear him record - Gk: "martureō", "to bear testimony or witness"(Yg); "bear witness", Nestle; RSV; "vouched for", NIV.

a great zeal - Gk: "zelos", not in the Greek text. The word is "ponon" which means "distress", Nestle; "the deep concern", NASB; "worked hard", RSV is interpretive.

and those at Laodicea - See background notes. Laodicea was the more prosperous city economically of the three cities.

and them in Hierapolis - "Holy city" - named such because of the large number of temples there. Hierapolis was situated a few miles N.W. of Colossae near the junction of the Lycus and Meander Rivers. "Today its ruins are called 'Pambuck-Kulasi', or the Cotton Tower, on account of the white cliffs which lie round about it. It is now utterly forsaken and desolate, but the ruins are so magnificent as to show that it was one of the most splendid cities in the East. It was celebrated for the hot springs in its vicinity, and , on account of the numerous temples erected there, it received the name of Hierapolis, or the holy city."<sup>6</sup>

4:14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you

Luke - a Macedonian, not a Jew since he is excluded from the company of the circumcision, cf. Col. 4:11. See note on Philemon 24.

the beloved - Gk: "agapētos" - note its frequent use for Onesimus ( Philemon 16 ); Philemon ( Philemon 1 ); Apphia ( Philemon 2 ); Tychicus ( 4:7 ) and the Colossian ecclesia generally ( Col. 3:12 ).

physician - This may imply that he served as a doctor to minister to Paul's needs.

Medical terms have often been noted in Acts.

Demas - later forsook the truth, "having loved this present world", see 2 Tim. 4:10, and note on Philemon 24.

4:15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the ecclesia which is in his house

Salute - Gk: "aspazomai", "greet", Nestle.

brethren - Gk: "adelphoi" a comprehensive term which included the sisters also. The "man of God" is similarly comprehensive ( 2 Tim. 3:17 ).

which are in Laodicea - The geographical proximity of the ecclesia suggests the interrelationship which must have taken place between and among the ecclesias.

<sup>6</sup>Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament, ( Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1972 p.1078.

Nymphas - May be masculine or feminine ( Expositor's ).<sup>7</sup>

and the ecclesia which is in his house - Was the Laodicean ecclesia located in the house of Nymphas? Or was this a smaller satellite ecclesia? The ecclesias frequently met in houses, e.g. the house of Aquila and Priscilla in Rome ( Rom. 16:5 ) and Ephesus ( 1 Cor. 16:19 ) and Philemon in Colossae ( Philemon 2 ). See notes on Philemon, and background notes. These ecclesias were probably smaller than the one in Jerusalem where the Temple facilities were used for some time ( e.g. Acts 2:46; 3:1-2 ). This large facility was necessary to accommodate the thousands which were baptized ( although some were only temporary visitors ) - see Acts 2:41; 4:4 - "and the number of the men was about five thousand".

4:16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the ecclesia of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the / epistle / from Laodicea

cause that it be read also in the ecclesia of the Laodiceans - There must have been considerable travel among the ecclesias of the Lycus Valley. The news from Paul which would be carried both in the letter and by personal conversation with Tychicus would be welcome indeed! The exhortation, the problems and the expositions would no doubt be relevant in Laodicea if required in Colossae. Problems in the one ecclesial area would likely affect the others sooner or later.

The canon of Scripture was established by this practice of general reading of the epistles. The "Council of Trent" did not establish the canon of Scripture as Roman Catholics contend.

and that ye likewise read the / epistle / from Laodicea<sup>8</sup> - It has rightly been said, "The question, 'What was this "Epistle from Laodicea"?' has given birth to a crowd of conjectures . . ." <sup>9</sup>

This could refer to the Ephesian letter - which would be delivered in person by Tychicus ( see background ) to the Ephesians and then returned to Laodicea with Tychicus. The epistle to the Ephesians does not bear the title "To the Ephesians" in the Greek text, and although, no doubt sent to Ephesus, it would be sufficiently applicable to the Lycus Valley, that it could be called the "epistle from the Laodiceans".

If however, the "epistle" refers to one sent specifically to the Laodiceans - then it is lost, as was one of the Corinthian epistles, cf. 1 Cor. 5:9-11.

<sup>7</sup> P. 547. See also C. J. Ellicott, A New Testament Commentary for English Readers, Vol. III, ( London: Cassell and Co., 1896 ), p. 117. The MSS vary.

<sup>8</sup> There was a Latin script called "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Laodiceans", but it is universally acknowledged to be a forgery.

<sup>9</sup> See Ellicott, A New Testament Commentary, p. 118.

<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed analysis of this point see W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, The Life and Epistles of Paul, ( London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1897 ), p. 702-705.

4:17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it

Archippus - a resident at Colossae ( Philemon 2 ), although in this verse it would suggest that he may have lived at Laodicea.

Take heed - Gk: "blēpō" - see the use of this word in notes on Col. 2:8.

to the ministry - Gk: "diakonia" - see note on Col. 1:7. It is used here in the sense of 2 Tim. 4:5: "make full proof of thy ministry."

which thou hast received in the Lord - No doubt, this would be by the Spirit, though the gift of revelation was possibly from Paul himself.

that thou fulfil it - The Holy Spirit gifts did not guarantee either their use or even their intended use ( see e.g. 1 Cor. 14, how they were misused at Corinth ). Timothy had to be encouraged to "stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my / Paul's / hands" ( 2 Tim. 1:6 ), and a similar exhortation is addressed to Archippus.

4:18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace / be / with you. Amen.

The salutation - Gk: "aspasmos", "greetings", Nestle.

by the hand of me Paul - See also Philemon 19; 2 Thess. 3:17. "I Paul write this greeting with my own hand", RSV. This was the mark of authenticity - like a signature. The rest of the epistle would be written by a scribe - an amanuensis.

Remember my bonds - "Fetters", RSV, cf. Col. 4:3; Philemon 9; see also Eph. 3:13; 6:20; Phil. 1:13; 2:17.

Paul expected release from prison as a result of the prayers of Philemon ( v.22 ).

Grace be with you - Gk: "charis", cf. also Rom. 16:20, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you".

Amen, - Delete, not in the Greek text

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## TO PHILEMON in Colossae

RE. Onesimus your runaway slave,  
now a brother!

### verses

1-3	Greetings	
4-6	Thanksgiving in prayer	
7	Refreshment of saints	
8-10	Appeal for restoration	
11-16	Onesimus	
	before	after
	useless	useful
	brief parting	united forever
	slave	brother
	in the flesh	in Christ
17-19	Receive him as me, Paul	
	Debts will be repaid	
20	Exchange benefits!	
21-22	Prepare accommodation	
	Paul's expected release	
	through prayer	
23	Salutations	
	- Epaphras	
	- Mark	
	- Aristarchus	
	- Demas	
	- Luke	
24	Prayer for Christ's favour	

## FROM the APOSTLE PAUL

Imprisoned in Rome

PHILEMONPURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE

The letter of Paul to Philemon is a personal appeal by the Apostle for the acceptance by Philemon of Onesimus, his runaway slave. Onesimus had become a convert to the Truth in the time since he left Philemon. It is important to see this appeal within the background of slavery as it existed in the society of that time.

SLAVERY IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

The population of Europe and Asia consisted of an immense number of slaves, outnumbering those who were free persons. In the province of Attica alone there were 400,000 slaves, and only 31,000 freemen. In Corinth there were 460,000 slaves. It was not uncommon in Rome for a rich man to possess 10,000 - 20,000 slaves. The Greek colonies in Asia Minor were the major sources of the supply of slaves, chiefly obtained from the interior of Asia.

Slaves not only worked in the households and on farms, but served as architects, sculptors, painters, poets, musicians and physicians. They were so numerous that it has been estimated that not a tenth part of the slaves knew their masters.<sup>1</sup> But no matter what his particular station in life, in the eye of the law, the slave was a chattel, a thing to be inventorized with oxen, and to be sold, exchanged, or seized for debt.<sup>2</sup>

THE SLAVE-MASTER RELATIONSHIPa) Secular Information:

There were two kinds of slaves:

- i. oiketēs ( purchased )
- ii. oikotrips ( born in the master's house ).

Regardless of how the slave was obtained, he was entirely subject to the caprice of his master. In Phrygia, the area from which Onesimus had escaped, it was proverbial, "a Phrygian / slave / is the better and more serviceable for a beating."<sup>3</sup> Punishment for disobedience could mean scourging, branding in the forehead, or being forced to carry the "furca," a frame shaped like a 'V' and placed over the back of the neck on the shoulders, the hands being bound to the thighs. He might even be crucified or thrown to wild beasts and voracious fish.<sup>4</sup>

It was contrary to the law to receive or assist a fugitive slave. He could not be legally sold by a new possessor, and to conceal him from pursuit was equivalent to theft.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Petronius, referred to in C. Briggs ( ed. ), The International Critical Commentary, ( Edinburgh: E. T. Clark, 1902 ), p.158.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>3</sup>Suidas, quoted by Cicero, ibid., p.158.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.163.

<sup>5</sup>Briggs, ibid., p. iv.

b) Biblical Information:

Specific instructions were given to slaves and masters who were converts to the Truth. From these instructions, the general behaviour of each may be inferred:

- (i) slaves - despised masters ( 1 Tim. 6:2 )
- insubordinate ( 'be obedient in all things', Titus 2:9 )
  - insolent ( 'not answering again', Titus 2:9 )
  - thieves ( 'not purloining', Titus 2:10 )
  - worked with "eye-service" as men-pleasers ( Eph. 6:6 )
  - lacked goodwill from the heart ( Eph. 6:5-7 ).

It can be seen that even when emancipation was achieved, the slave often carried with him the habits, deportment and morality of the slave.

- (ii) masters - threatened ( Eph. 6:9 )
- defrauded ( 'give unto your servants that which is just and equal knowing that you also have a master in heaven,' Col. 4:1 ).

PAUL AND SLAVERY

The letter to Philemon has been variously regarded as committing Paul to the rightfulness and divine sanction of slavery, or it has been read as a condemnation of slavery since Paul, it is claimed, deliberately undermined the institution of slavery by fostering "Christian sentiment." An analysis of Paul's statements regarding slavery indicates that neither of these positions is wholly accurate. Consider the following:

1. If slavery were regarded as morally wrong for believers, then it would have been classified with fornication, murder, thefts etc. ( Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 5:9-11 ), but slavery is never once mentioned in these comprehensive lists of evils.

2. Slavery is "accepted" by the Apostle as part of the fabric of society. As such it is set out having opportunities for discipleship similar to other occupations. Note the following instructions:

a) Slaves are required to serve their masters as if serving God ( Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22, 23; Titus 2:9-10 ).

b) Freedom may be obtained by a slave-convert if offered ( 1 Cor. 7:21 ), but freedom is not considered to be essential for service to God ( 1 Cor. 7:24 ).

c) Even when both slave and master become converts, Paul did not demand freedom for the slave, but rather instructed: "let them / slaves / not despise them / their masters /, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit."  
( 1 Tim. 6:1-2 ).

"And have put on the new man . . . where there is neither Jew nor Greek . . . bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" ( Col. 3:10-13 ).

But there was also instruction for Onesimus:

"Servants / Gk: 'doulos', 'slave', Yg. / obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God . . . But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons" ( Col. 3:25 ).

The relationship between the slave, Onesimus, and his master, Philemon, would certainly be open to ecclesial scrutiny, since instructions were ecclesially given which directly governed the conduct of each.

### THE TACTFUL APPEAL

(1) "GRACIOUS SPEECH" ( Col. 4:6, RSV )

- FAMILY "beloved", "dearly beloved"
- apostle - "fellovsoldier"
- yet
- an equal "fellowlabourer", v. 1, 2
- the ECCLESIA

(2) THOUGHTFULNESS ( Col. 3:12, 13 )

- prayers for ecclesia, v. 4
- concern for progress, v. 5, 6

(3) APPEAL, NOT A 'CHARGE' ( Col. 3:14 )  
WILLINGLY, NOT OF NECESSITY

- "for love's sake", v. 8, 14

(4) LOWLINESS, KINDNESS, MEEKNESS  
( Col. 3:12 )

- an apostle, yet regards himself as a slave
- a prisoner, yet appeals "receive as myself"

The master-slave relationship in the Truth may be summarized in this way:

IN THE FLESH

IN THE TRUTH

master  
|  
slave

1. GOD  
|  
master-slave

2. IN  
master-slave  
CHRIST

3. CHRIST  
|  
master-slave

The master-slave distinction is unimportant before God since with Him there is no respect of persons ( Col. 3:25 )

Neither the master nor the slave is a "slave" in Christ. In him there is neither bond, nor free, "but Christ is all, and in all" ( Col. 3:11, cf. Gal. 3:28 )

Both masters and slaves are "slaves" of Christ ( e.g. Titus 1:1 )

DATE OF WRITING

A LETTER FROM PRISON

Philemon is a prison epistle along with others ( e.g. Colossians, Col. 4:18; Philippians, Phil. 1:7, 13, 14; 4:22 ) written by Paul while in the custody of the Roman authorities. This is proven by the following:

a) v. 22 - "I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you." The verse implies circumstances beyond Paul's control which kept him from visiting Philemon; also implied is the expectation of imminent deliverance through prayer.

b) Note the allusions to prison in the letter:

- "Paul, a prisoner of / 'for', RSV / Jesus Christ," ( v. 1 )
- "in my bonds / Gk: 'desmios', 'band, ligament, shackle,' Stg. /" ( v. 10 )
- Epaphras "my fellow prisoner", ( v. 23 ).

PAUL'S FIRST IMPRISONMENT IN ROME - APPROXIMATELY A. D. 63

There are three recorded imprisonments of Paul:

a) Caesarea - ( for two years ) while Paul was in transit to Rome for trial there ( Acts 23:23-26:32 ).

b) Rome - First imprisonment - upon arrival from Caesarea ( Acts 28:14-31 ).

c) Rome - Second imprisonment ( 2 Tim. 4:6-18 ).



Which imprisonment does Paul refer to in his letter to Philemon? The evidence supports b) - Paul's first imprisonment. Note the following reasons:

(i) Paul expected imminent release ( v. 22 ), but there is no indication of such an expectation while he was detained at Caesarea. Nor did Paul expect deliverance from his second imprisonment: "For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand" ( 2 Tim. 4:6 ).

(ii) Onesimus, a runaway slave, would have far easier access to Paul in Rome than at Caesarea where he was confined ( 'let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him', Acts 24:23 ) and during the latter part of his detention was under heavy guard in Herod's praetorium ( Acts 23:35; 24:27 ). Paul at Rome was given freedom to receive "all that came in unto him . . . preaching the kingdom of God . . . with all confidence, no man forbidding him" ( Acts 28:30, 31 ).

(iii) Since Timothy shares Paul's greetings to Philemon ( v.1 ), this suggests that he was present with Paul at the time of writing. It is known that Timothy was with Paul during his first imprisonment in Rome ( Phil. 1:1 cf. v. 13; 4:21, 22 ) but there is no Biblical evidence that he was with Paul at Caesarea.

#### PHILEMON - A MEMBER OF THE COLOSSIAN ECCLESIA

There is strong evidence to suggest that Philemon and Onesimus belonged to the Colossian ecclesia. Consider the following:

a) Onesimus is identified with the ecclesia at Colossae: "with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother who is one of you" ( Col. 4:9 ). Since Onesimus the runaway slave, was sent back by Paul to Philemon ( Philemon 12 ), therefore Philemon must also be a member of the Colossian ecclesia.

b) Archippus, who met with the same ecclesia as Philemon ( 'and to the ecclesia in thy house', Philemon 2 ), had a ministry at Colossae ( Col. 4:17 ), therefore the Colossian brethren must have met in the house of Philemon.<sup>6</sup>

The Colossian epistle was almost certainly carried from Rome to Colossae by Tychicus ( Col. 4:7, 8 ) accompanied by Onesimus ( Col. 4:9 ). The latter would no doubt carry the personal letter of Paul to Philemon - a personal letter, not then intended for the general ecclesia. It should be remembered that at about the same time as Philemon received his personal letter, he would also be hearing the Colossian epistle addressed to the whole ecclesia. Notice the relevant contents in the epistle to the Colossians to the master-slave relationship of Philemon and Onesimus:

#### Instruction for Philemon:

"Masters, give unto your servants  $\int$  Gk: 'douloi', 'slaves', Yg.  $\int$  that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a master in heaven" ( Col. 4:1 ).

<sup>6</sup>There is, however, a possibility that the ministry of Archippus relates to Laodicea ( cf. Col. 4:15 ).

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO PHILEMON

1-3 - SALUTATION

v.1 Paul - His name means "little" (Yg), ( because he was short? ). His Hebrew name was "Saul" ( Acts 13:9 ) and his Gentile name "Paul." Since Paul is addressing a personal letter to Philemon, he does not include reference to his apostolic office ( e.g. 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1 ) as he does in his other epistles. The evident close friendship between Paul and Philemon ( e.g. vs. 7, 22 ) would not require Paul to state his apostolic authority. This would be known and recognized by Philemon.

a prisoner of Jesus Christ - "Prisoner", Gk: "desmios", "one bound" (Yg); "a captive" (Stg). Paul was writing during his first imprisonment in Rome ( see background analysis ). Although Paul was literally a prisoner of Rome, it was because of his stewardship as Messiah's deputy ( under-rower - Gk: 'hupēretēs', 1 Cor. 4:1 ) that he was imprisoned - "for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" ( Acts 23:11 ). Hence the RSV: "a prisoner for Christ Jesus."

"Jesus", Gk: "Iēsous", "from the Heb. Y<sup>e</sup>howshua, ( Jehoshua, Joshua )", (Stg) = Saviour; "he shall save his people from their sins" ( Matt. 1:21 ).

and Timothy our brother - "Timothy", Gk: "Timotheus", "honoured of God" (Yg); "dear to God" (Stg). Greek text - "the brother", Nestle,<sup>7</sup> not "our brother."

Timothy was Paul's "beloved child in the faith" ( 1 Tim. 1:2; 1 Cor. 4:17 ) replacing Mark who joined his cousin Barnabas ( Acts 15:33-40; 16:1-3 ). He was a cherished fellow-worker in proclaiming the gospel and building up the new ecclesias ( 1 Cor. 4:14-17; Phil. 2:19-22 ). He shares Paul's greetings in 2 Corinthians; Philippians; Colossians and 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Timothy may have known Philemon and the Colossian ecclesia if the ecclesia was founded during Paul's 3 year residence in Ephesus ( cf. Acts 19:22 ).

unto Philemon ( pronounced Philē'mon ). His name means "friendly" (Stg).

Although he is not referred to elsewhere in the New Testament, Philemon was converted by Paul ( v. 17-19 ) and was a man of some means - a slave owner, possessor of a home sufficiently large to serve as an ecclesial meeting place ( v. 2 ), and to accommodate overnight visitors ( v. 22 ).

our dearly beloved - Gk: "agapētos", from "agapaō" ( Vine ), an affectionate greeting used also of Quartus ( Rom. 16:23 ); Sosthenes ( 1 Cor. 1:1 ) and Apollos ( 1 Cor. 16:12 ) as well as ecclesias ( Rom. 1:7 ).

and fellow labourer - Gk: "sunergos", "joint-worker" (Yg), ( from 'sun', 'together, with', and 'ergo', 'to work' ).

<sup>7</sup>All references to Nestle are to The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament: The Nestle Greek Text with a literal English Translation, ( London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1967 ).

v. 2 And to our / 'the', Greek text / beloved Apphia - "And Apphia our sister", RSV. The Greek text has "adelphē", not "agapētos" as the AV<sup>8</sup> infers, hence RSV rendering "adelphē", "a sister" (Yg). "Adelphē" is the feminine of "adelphos" ( 'brother' ). Probably Apphia was the wife of Philemon and Archippus their son. This is suggested by the fact that an official ecclesial letter was received at the same time as this personal letter and delivered by the same messengers. It would seem appropriate that in a matter so personal to Philemon that salutations be confined to his own family.

and Archippus - His name means "chief groom" (Yg). Archippus had a special ministry ( Gk: 'diakonia' ) at Colossae: "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" ( Col. 4:17 ).

our / 'the', Greek text / fellow soldier - Gk: "sustratiōtēs", "from 'sun', 'together, with', and 'stratiōtēs', 'soldier'" ( Vine ) - also used of Epaphroditus ( Phil. 2:25 ). This is a figurative use of the word. The believer is regarded as a soldier of Jesus Christ on active duty prepared to give absolute obedience and to resist entanglement with civilian pursuits - the world ( 2 Tim. 2:3-4 ).

and to the church / 'ekklēsia' / - "Church", Gk: "ekklēsia", "that which is called out" (Yg) - from "ek", "out of" and "kaleō", "to call". "Ekklēsia" is used of a body of citizens gathered together to discuss the affairs of the State ( Acts 19:39 ), and of the nation of Israel in the wilderness ( Acts 7:38 ). The LXX<sup>9</sup> uses "ekklēsia" for the Hebrew word "qahal" translated "company" in Ezekiel 38:4, 7, 13, 15. The Gogian confederacy is an ecclesia called out for a sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel ( Ezekiel 39 ). It is God who puts hooks into the jaws to bring the northern power into the land of Palestine.

It is important to stress that "church" usually conveys the idea of a building or religious denomination which does not accurately represent the force of "ekklēsia" when used of those called out by the one Gospel. Christadelphians have historically rejected the use of "church" to describe their halls or communities, and rightly so! The Concordant Version ( for the above mentioned verses ) retains "ecclesia" untranslated.

in thy house - "Thy", Gk: "sou" is singular, which poses a problem - whose house is intended? Archippus'? Or Philemon's? It is likely that the antecedent refers to Philemon since the letter is addressed to him. Likewise, "you" ( verses 4-24 ) is singular suggesting that the house belongs to Philemon in which Archippus lives, since it is certainly Philemon who is addressed by the singular "you" in the subsequent verses.

Right of assembly was granted to the Jews by Julius Caesar and Augustus!<sup>10</sup> ( At this time the Truth was viewed by Rome as a Jewish sect ). But there is no mention of ecclesial halls in the literature extant until 202 A. D. Prior to this time ( outside Jerusalem ) it appears that the ecclesial meetings were held in homes. E. g., Priscilla and Aquila ( Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19 ); Nymphas ( Col. 4:15 ).

<sup>8</sup>AV is an abbreviation used in these notes for the "Authorized" King James Version.

<sup>9</sup>LXX is the usual designation for the Septuagint Translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek about the 3rd century B. C. ( LXX = 70 scholars thought to have worked on this translation ).

<sup>10</sup>Josephus, Antiquities xiv, 10, 8.

- v. 3 Grace to you - Gk: "charis" - a request for Divine favour. The secular greeting was "chairein", "greetings" ( Acts 23:26 ), but Paul's greetings were:
- a) "grace, mercy and peace" ( 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4 ).
  - b) "grace to you and peace" ( Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; Gal. 1:3 ).

and peace - Gk: "eirēnē", refers to the harmony between God and man that is effected by a belief and obedience to the Gospel. It is a promised blessing in this life: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you . . ." ( Jn. 14:27 ). This peace "surpasseth understanding" ( Phil. 4:7 ) and is the special possession of those who are spiritually minded ( Rom. 8:6 cf. Num. 6:24-26 where grace and peace are first associated ).

from God our Father - God is the source of grace and peace made available through the sacrificial work of His Son.

and the Lord Jesus Christ - The Son was the willing manifestation of the Father ( e.g. Matt. 26:39,42 ). "Lord", Gk: "kurios", "lord, sir, master" (Yg). "Jesus", ( see verse 1 ). "Christ", "anointed" (Yg). Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit at his baptism ( Acts 10:38; Matt. 3:16 ) when he was declared to be the Son of God. The word "Christ" is equivalent to the Hebrew word "Messiah" ( Dan. 9:25,26 cf. Jn. 1:41; 4:25 ).

#### 4-7 TACTFUL PRELUDE

- v. 4 I thank my God making mention of thee always in my prayers - The word order in the Greek text is ambiguous, allowing the following two interpretations:
- a) Whenever Paul prayed he always remembered Philemon.
  - b) When I remember you, I always thank God.

The latter appears to be the most likely interpretation, since Paul instructed: "pray without ceasing". Many other persons and circumstances would have preoccupied his mind periodically. Hence, "I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers."

"Thank", Gk: "eucharisteō", "to thank, be thankful" (Yg); "to be grateful, express gratitude" (Stg). "Prayers", Gk: "proseuche", "a prayer pouring out" (Yg); "used of prayer in general" ( Vine ).

Paul customarily begins his letters on a note of thanksgiving and with assurance that his prayers are for them ( e.g. Col. 1:3 ). His prayers included remembrance of the Romans ( Rom. 1:9 ); Ephesians ( Eph. 1:16 ); and the Thessalonians ( 1 Thess. 1:2 ).

- v. 5 Hearing of thy love - "Love", Gk: "agapē", "denotes the love which springs from admiration, and which chooses its object with decision of will, and devotes a self-denying and compassionate devotion to it."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup>E. W. Bullinger, A Critical Lexicon and Concordance, ( London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1957 ), 8th edition, p. 469.

and faith - Gk: "pistis", "primarily, firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing ( akin to 'peithō', 'to persuade' )" ( Vine ). Faith works by love and love exercised toward the saints was a work of faith.

which thou hast toward / 'pros', accusative / the Lord Jesus and toward / 'eis' / all / 'the', Gk. text / saints - How did Paul know this? Possibly through Epaphras, the founder of the Colossian ecclesia who was with Paul in Rome ( Col. 1:7, 8; 4:12 ) or possibly from Onesimus. So great was Paul's identification with spiritual things that faithful discipleship was for him a cause of joyous thanksgiving to the Father.

"Saints", Gk: "hagios", "set apart, separate, holy" (Yg). The word is usually used of living believers separated from the world by the Truth. It relates to those "washed, sanctified and justified" ( 1 Cor. 6:9-11 ) at baptism, upon an intelligent, repentant belief of the Gospel. "Saint" is never used in the New Testament as a special designation for writers of Biblical books ( e.g. as 'St. Matthew' - deleted in the RSV ), nor is the word used to designate persons of exceptional holiness, or those thought by men to be meritorious after their death ( as is done by the Roman Church ).

v. 6 That the communication / 'sharing', RSV / of thy faith / 'pistis' / - "And I pray", RSV, is not in the Greek text. "Communication", Gk: "koinōnia", "act of using as common" (Yg); "partnership, participation" (Stg); "fellowship", CV; Nestle.

may become effectual - Gk: "energēs", "in working" (Yg); "active, operative", (Stg). Another proof that faith cannot merely be quiescent or theoretical ( James 2:24 ).

by the acknowledging of every good thing - "Acknowledging", Gk: "epignōsis", "full knowledge" (Yg); "full discernment" (Stg); "to know thoroughly ( 'epi', intensive, 'ginōskō', 'to know' ): to recognize a thing to be what it really is" ( Vine ).

"Good thing", "agathos", "describes that which, being good in its character and constitution, is beneficial in its effect, as distinct from 'kalos', 'intrinsically good'" (Vine).

which is in you / 'eis', 'for', CV / Christ Jesus - These words are full of significance in terms of Paul's appeal to Philemon. Will the love and faith of Philemon now be extended to Onesimus as one of the saints? Will Philemon's full discernment include and encompass the good in Onesimus in Christ Jesus?

v. 7 For we have great joy and consolation in thy love / 'agapē' / - "Joy", Gk: "chara", "joy, delight ( akin to 'chairo', 'to rejoice' )" ( Vine ). "Consolation", Gk: "paraklēsis", "'calling to one's side' ( 'para', beside, 'kaleō', to call ) as distinct from 'paramuthia' ( 'para', near, 'muthos', speech ) merely 'speaking closely to anyone' " ( Vine ).

because the bowels of the saints / 'hagios' / - "Bowels", Gk: "splağchnon", "always in the plural, properly denotes the physical organs of the intestines ( used this way, Acts 1:18 )" ( Vine ); "pity or sympathy" (Stg ).

have been refreshed through thee, brother - "Refreshed", Gk: "anapauō", "to give rest again" (Yg); "repose" (Stg); "to give intermission from labour ( 'ana', back, 'pauō', to cause to cease )" ( Vine ). Paul's commitment to the Truth is so

complete that the great joy and consolation which he received came from Philemon's service to others.

#### THE APPEAL OF LOVE, NOT COMPULSION BY COMMANDMENT

v. 8 Wherefore, though I might be bold in Christ - "Might" is not in the Greek text. The RSV is too abrupt: "According though I am bold enough in Christ". CV is to be preferred: "Wherefore, having much boldness in Christ to be enjoining you".

"Boldness", Gk: "echo pollen parrhēsia", "to have much free utterance"(Yg). "Parrhēsia", "outspokenness, frankness" (Stg); "('pas', all, 'rhesis', speech) denotes primarily 'unreservedness of utterance'" (Vine ).

The stress here is that Paul could command Philemon on the basis of apostolic authority.

To enjoin thee - "Enjoin", Gk: "epitassō", "to arrange over or about"(Yg); "charge", Nestle; "command" (Vine ).

that which is fitting - "Fitting", Gk: "anēkō", "to have come up to, be becoming"(Yg); "befitting", Nestle; "( 'ana', up, and 'hēkō', to arrive )" (Vine ).

v. 9 Yet for love's / 'agapē' / sake - There are two possible interpretations:

a) Yet for the love which our personal relationship ( i. e. , Paul and Philemon ) has engendered.

b) Yet for the principles inherent in an act of love rather than compulsion out of duty. The latter is to be preferred.

I rather beseech thee - "Beseech", Gk: "parakaleō", "( 'para', with, 'kaleō', to call )" (Vine ); "to call to one's side" (Yg).

being such an one as Paul the aged - "Aged", Gk: "presbutēs", "aged, advanced in years" (Yg)<sup>12</sup> The NEB; RSV ( mg. 'an old man') translate "ambassador" ( cf. Eph. 6:20 - 'For which I am an ambassador / "presbeuo" / in bonds', see also 2 Cor. 5:20 ). This rendering, however, is unlikely, since it is not appropriate to Paul's attitude of entreaty which has been carefully developed apart from recourse to his apostolic office.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup>According to Hippocrates a man was called "presbutēs" from 49-56, and after that a "gerōn". See C. Briggs (ed. ), The International Critical Commentary, ( Edinburgh: E. T. Clark, 1902 ), p.184.

<sup>13</sup>It might be thought that if Archippus is the son of Philemon, the age of Paul and Philemon would be about the same and there would be no point in Paul appealing to his age. But this assumes what we do not know - how old Archippus was when he received his ministry. He might have been a very young man like Timothy, in which case Philemon might only be 40 years old, whereas Paul - 50-60 years old.

and now also a prisoner of / 'for', RSV / Jesus Christ - "Prisoner", Gk: "desmios", "one bound" (Yg); as in verse 1 relates to Paul's imprisonment in Rome. In this verse Paul has appealed on three grounds:

- (i) Paul's person - ( 'I, Paul' )
- (ii) his age
- (iii) his position - a prisoner.

#### THE ISSUE

- v. 10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus - "Beseech", Gk: "parakaleō", "to call to one's side" (Yg). "Son", Gk: "teknon", "child, dependant" (Yg). "Onesimus", "from 'onēsis', profit" ( Vine ) - a common name for slaves. Paul implores Philemon for his child Onesimus. Imagine Philemon's reaction to this!<sup>14</sup> Paul has tactfully taken nine verses before coming to the point! His appeal is neither curt nor abrupt.

whom I have begotten in my bonds - "whose father I have become in my imprisonment", RSV. "Begotten", Gk: "gennaō", "to regenerate, gender" (Stg). "Bonds", Gk: "desmios", "bond, band, fetter" (Stg). Onesimus had learned the Truth from Paul while imprisoned in Rome. He was "begotten" by Paul, since Paul was the instrument of his conversion.

#### ONESIMUS SENT BACK

- v. 11 Which in time past was to thee unprofitable - This verse is read parenthetically in the RSV - a slight digression in the theme ( there are many of these in the epistles ).

"Time past", Gk: "pote", "then ( formerly )", Nestle.

"Unprofitable", Gk: "achrestos", "useless, worthless" (Yg); "inefficient ( detrimental )" ( Stg).

but now profitable to thee and to me - "Profitable", Gk: "euchrēstos", "very useful" (Stg) ( emphatic ). There is a deliberate play on Onesimus' name, the slave named "useful", formerly useless, is now useful - living up to his name. Notice the stress in this verse: Onesimus formerly useless to thee . . . before I had known him. Now he is profitable to us. How could Philemon refuse a request with this force of emphasis?

- v. 12 whom I have sent again - "Sent again", Gk: "anepempsa", the Greek "epistolary aorist" by which the writer puts himself back into the situation. Literally: "whom I send".

thou therefore receive him - Not in the Greek text and deleted from RSV; Nestle; CV.

<sup>14</sup>It was also the Law of the Sanhedrin: "If one teaches the son of his neighbour the law, the Scripture reckons this the same as though he had begotten him." See Briggs, The International Critical Commentary, p. 185.

that is mine own bowels - "Bowels", Gk: "splaḡchnon", "always in the plural, properly denotes the physical organs of the intestines ( Acts 1:18 ), which were regarded by the Greeks as the seat of the more violent passions, by the Hebrews as the seat of the tender affections; hence the word denotes 'tender mercies'" ( Vine ); "my very heart", RSV; a "part of myself", NEB.

- v. 13 Whom I would have retained with me - "Would have", Gk: "eboulomai", variously translated: "be disposed, minded, willing, to intend". Indicates deliberation with an accompanying indecision. "Whom I have resolved with myself to retain", Nestle. A paraphrase might be: "I was inclined to keep him, and was turning over the matter in my mind".

that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds / 'desmios' / of / 'for', RSV / the gospel / 'euangelion' / - "That", Gk: "hina", "in order that", Nestle. "Ministered", Gk: "diakoneo", "to wait upon" (Stg). "in thy stead", Gk: "huper", "on behalf of thee", Nestle.

Paul implies that Onesimus has been serving for Philemon, i.e., what Philemon has not been able to do, Onesimus has. There is the delicately expressed suggestion that the slave has done and could do what the master could not. How could Philemon reject Paul's request to receive back Onesimus, when Onesimus has been ministering on behalf of Philemon?

- v. 14 But without thy mind I would do nothing - "But I preferred to do nothing without your consent", RSV. "Without", Gk: "choris", "apart from" (Yg). "Mind", Gk: "gnōmē", "knowledge, opinion, decision" (Yg).

"Nothing", Gk: "oudeis", "not even one" (Yg).

Such an attitude of mind expressed by the apostle to his friend in the Truth was sure to win favour with Philemon.

that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity but willingly - "In order that goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will", RSV. "Benefit", Gk: "agathos", "good" (Yg). "Necessity", Gk: "anaḡkē", "constraint ( implied distress )", (Stg). "Willingly", Gk: "katahekousion", "voluntarily" (Yg).

Paul could have kept Onesimus at Rome legally by merely gaining the consent of Philemon. Although Onesimus was very useful in serving Paul, why did he send him back to Philemon? The following reasons can be inferred:

(1) No opportunity would be given to slander the Truth. Paul was having difficulties in Rome ( Phil. 1:14-16 ) and no opportunity would be given for slanderous charges that Paul disobeyed civil law ( harbouring a slave ) for his own needs, and that he encouraged slaves to withdraw from their masters under the pretext of the Truth ( cf. Rom. 13:1-9 ).

(2) If there were a decision for Onesimus to return to Rome after he had been sent back to Colossae this decision must come from Philemon himself - the



rightful owner. A return visit by Onesimus to Rome ( to assist Paul ) would only be the result of a willing compliance of Philemon and could not be construed as a heavy-handed action by Paul ( if only written consent were achieved ).

(3) There was an appropriateness in Onesimus returning to Philemon as a practical demonstration of faith in action. It also showed that conversion to the Truth did not nullify obligations accrued prior to immersion.

(4) As so often in Paul's epistles, the motivation for the action is stressed ( see 2 Cor. 9:7 - 'Every man according as he purposeth in his heart . . . not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver'; see also 1 Cor. 13 ). Philemon's response would be one of love, not compulsion.

- v. 15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season - "Perhaps this is why he was parted from you for a while", RSV. "Perhaps", Gk: "tacha", "possibly" (Stg). "Departed", Gk: "chōrizō", "to put apart" (Yg). "Season", Gk: "hora", "an hour, time" (Yg).

Paul softens Philemon's reaction to the runaway slave by suggesting that he departed ( not 'ran away' ) for a while because this was in the Divine providence ( like the evil Joseph suffered from his brethren: 'Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life', Gen. 45:5 ).

that / 'hina' - 'in order that', Nestle / thou shouldest receive him for ever - "Shouldest" suggests that he ought to, but this idea is not contained in the Greek word, "apechēs"; hence "might have", RSV; "mightest receive", Nestle. "For ever", Gk: "aiōnios", "age-lasting" (Yg).

Philemon lost a slave for an hour, but gained a brother "for ever". The bond between master and slave would no longer be that of ownership by purchase ( or birth ) which death could dissolve, but their common relationship to Christ which made them brethren now and in the Kingdom - for evermore ( if faithful ).

- v. 16 Not now as a servant / 'doulos', 'slave' / - "Not now", Gk: "ouketi", "no longer", Nestle; RSV.

Paul is not saying that Philemon is to receive Onesimus freed, and no longer as a slave, but rather ( whether he remains a slave or not ) he must not be regarded as a slave, but as a beloved brother.

but above a servant / 'doulos' / a brother / 'adelphos' / beloved - "Above", Gk: "huper", ( accusative ), "over, above, in behalf of" (Yg); "beyond", Nestle; "more than", RSV. "Beloved", Gk: "agapētos", see verse 1.

What this meant in practical terms is contained in the letter addressed to the whole ecclesia: "neither bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another and forgiving one another . . ." ( Col. 3:11-13 ).

especially to me - "Specially", Gk: "malista", "most of all, chiefly" (Yg); "most particularly" (Stg). On many occasions in his epistles, Paul speaks with great affection of his converts ( e.g. Gal. 4:19; 1 Thess. 2:7, 8, 19 ).

but how much more unto thee both in / the / flesh, and in / the / Lord / 'kurios' /  
In the "flesh" - ( Gk: 'sarx' ) as a slave. Onesimus' conversion gave him new incentive to be a useful slave. The Colossian letter instructed slaves to "obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God " ( Col. 3:22 ).

"And in the Lord" - as a brother. Onesimus had already proven his worth in service to Paul in Rome. Paul infers that fruitful service can be expected of Onesimus in the ecclesia if he is regarded as a brother and not as a mere slave.

- v. 17 If thou count me therefore a partner - "Count", Gk: "echeis", "hold possession" ( Stg); literally: "If therefore me thou hast ( as ) a partner", Nestle; "So if you consider me your partner", RSV. "Partner", Gk: "koinonos", "sharer, associate" (Stg).

receive him as myself - Paul intercedes for Onesimus in an irresistible manner. Onesimus is no longer a mere slave but Paul's delegate - to be received as if Paul himself were coming to Philemon's house! How can Philemon refuse to receive Onesimus as a brother when he regards Paul as a fellow-labourer and when Paul intends after his release to visit Philemon personally ( v. 22 )? A rebuff to Onesimus would be an insult to Paul himself.

- v. 18 If he hath wronged thee - "Wronged", Gk: "adikeō", "to do injustice or unrighteousness" (Yg).

or oweth / thee / ought - Gk: "opheilō", "to be indebted" (Stg).

It would be very unlikely that Paul lacked information from Onesimus about his offence. The hypothetical manner ( 'if' ) in which Paul presents the case requires Philemon to press his case without Paul assuming Onesimus' innocence in these matters. Onesimus may have defected from Philemon while in Rome on his master's business or he may have stolen money in order to travel all the way to Rome. In actual fact in a secular court, a slave could be neither a debtor nor a creditor.

put that on mine account - Literally: "touto emoi elloga" = "this to me reckon". ( 'Ellogēō' = 'reckon', Stg. ).

- v. 19 I Paul have written / it / with mine own hand - Paul in effect writes a promissory note and authorizes the debit by his own handwriting.

"Written", Gk: "egrapsa" is another 'epistolary aorist'. The CV captures the flow of thought by providing the parenthesis: "I, Paul ( I write with my own hand ), I will refund it. "

I will repay / it / - "Repay", Gk: "apotinō", "to pay in full" (Stg). It is unlikely that Paul in prison would have large funds at his disposal. Paul either knew that if money had been taken from Philemon it was a small amount, or that he was prepared to work for Philemon to make restoration. But in terms of what follows how could Philemon press a case?

albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides - "Albeit", Gk: "hina", "in order that" (Stg). "Owest", Gk: "prosopheilō", "to be indebted additionally" (Stg).

Paul is saying, "Philemon, you are my debtor not only to the amount for which I have become responsible, but also to your own self. Even if you remit the debt, you still owe me yourself!" Paul elsewhere stressed the spiritual debt owed by others ( e.g. of Gentiles to Jews - for the Jerusalem Poor Fund, Rom. 15:27; of converts to the maintenance of the apostles, 1 Cor. 9:11 ). The CV is worth noting: "( Not that I may say to you that you are owing me even yourself! )". The parenthesis more vividly captures Paul's contrast.

- v. 20 Yea, brother, / adelphos / let me have joy of thee in the Lord / kurios / - "Joy", Gk: "oninēmi", "to have joy, pleasure or advantage" (Yg);<sup>15</sup> "to have profit, derive benefit" ( Vine ). "Yes, brother I want some benefit from you in the Lord", RSV.

The CV, in recognition of the fact that Paul is continuing the "credit-debit" metaphor, translates "oninēmi" by "profiting". "Yea, brother, may I be 'profiting' from you in the Lord! Soothe my compassions in Christ." There is obvious irony in verses 19, 20 which is retained in the CV and which is more apparent when the section is now read as a whole:

"I, Paul ( I write with my own hand ), I will refund it. ( Not that I may say to you that you are owing me even yourself! ) Yea, brother, may I be 'profiting' from you in the Lord! Soothe my compassions in Christ!"

refresh / anapauō /, see v. 7 / my bowels / splagchnon /, see v. 7 / in the Lord - "Lord", Gk: "Christos", Christ, RSV, Nestle.

- v. 21 Having confidence in thy obedience - "Confidence", Gk: "peithō", "to persuade" (Yg). "Obedience", Gk: "hupakoē", "hearkening submissively" (Yg); "compliance" ( Stg). The obedience would result not from a commandment on the basis of Paul's apostolic authority, but from the "love" engendered by belief of the Truth - a regard for the commandments of Christ ( Jn. 15:14; 1 Jn. 5:3 ).

I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say - "I wrote" - epistolary aorist. "Knowing", Gk: "eidō", "to see, have seen, known" (Yg). "More", Gk: "huper", "over, above, on behalf of" (Yg); "beyond", Nestle. The confidence of successful intercession - but how ironical - a prisoner intercedes for a slave!

<sup>15</sup>The verb, "oninēmi" is related to the adjective, "onesimus" ( beneficial ).

- v. 22 But withal prepare me also a lodging - "Withal", Gk: "hama", "together with" (Yg); "at the same time", CV; RSV. "Prepare", Gk: "hetoimazō", "to make ready" (Yg). "Lodging", Gk: "xenia", "a place for strangers" (Yg); "hospitality" (Stg). This is the frankness of one who knows his presence will be esteemed an honour and a pleasure. "At the same time" as what? The context would suggest as the receiving of Onesimus - what an incentive for compliance this would be!

for I trust that through / 'dia' / your prayers I shall be given unto you - "Trust", Gk: "elpizō", "to hope" (Yg). "Prayers", Gk: "proseuchē", "a prayer, pouring out" (Yg). "Shall be given", Gk: "charizomai", "to grant as a favour" (Yg).

Paul presents his expected, imminent ( 'at the same time' ) release from prison in Rome as a Divine favour granted by God in response to the prayers of Philemon. The implication is worthy of note - God responds to the prayers of other brethren and sisters for the welfare of oneself. How much time do you spend in prayer for others in the Truth?

Paul expected, when released, to go to Philippi ( Phil. 2:24 ), but the language of v. 22 "at the same time" suggests that Colossae would be the first place he would visit. Either plans changed between the writing of the two epistles, or Paul might have intended to visit Philippi ( on the great highroad between Europe and Asia ) on his way to Colossae.

### SALUTATIONS

- v. 23 There salute thee Epaphras - "Salute", Gk: "aspazomai", "to salute, embrace, draw together" (Yg); "to enfold, welcome" (Stg). "Epaphras", his name means "devoted to" (Stg). Epaphras was an important founder of the ecclesia at Colossae ( Col. 1:7; 4:12 ).

my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus - "Fellowprisoner", Gk: "sun" ( with ), "aichmalōtos" ( prisoner ), "fellow captive" (Yg). The expression may be used figuratively as spiritual soldiers, e.g. Andronicus and Junia ( Rom. 16:7 ); Aristarchus ( Col. 4:10 ).

- v. 24 Marcus - Probably John Mark of Acts 12:12 - a prominent brother in Jerusalem. Mark defected from the early work in Galatia to Jerusalem, and later became the subject of contention between Paul and Barnabas ( Acts 15:36-40 ). Mark was Peter's "son in the faith" ( 1 Peter 5:13 ), and had either visited Colossae or sent letters there ( Col. 4:10 ). It is noteworthy that Timothy ( Paul's 'son in the faith' ) who replaced Mark is instructed to bring him to Rome "with thee; for he is profitable for me for the ministry" ( 2 Tim. 4:11 ). The preachers to the Gentiles and Jews are united through their sons in the faith in their work despite the personal cleavage in Antioch ( Gal. 2:11 ).

Aristarchus - His name means "best ruling" (Stg). He was the Thessalonian delegate to carry their ecclesial contribution to the Jerusalem Poor Fund ( Acts 20:4 ). He accompanied Paul to Rome ( Acts 27:2 ).

Demas - His name is probably a contraction of Dēmētrios, probably a Thessalonian ( 2 Tim. 4:10 ). Although a faithful disciple initially ( Col. 4:14 ) he later fell prey to the world ( 2 Tim. 4:10 ).

Lucas - The beloved physician who accompanied Paul to Macedonia ( Acts 16:10 ) and was there about 7 years later when Paul visited Philippi ( Acts 20:5,6 ). He accompanied Paul to Jerusalem ( Acts 21:15 ).

my fellowlabourers - Gk: "sunergos", from "sun" (with), "ergos" ( to work ). Paul had other fellow workers - Phil. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:2, just as he had "fellow prisoners".

v. 25 The grace / 'charis' / of our Lord Jesus Christ / be / with your spirit. Amen - "Spirit", Gk: "pneumatos". "Your" is plural, but "spirit" is singular.

\* \* \* \* \*

### THE CONTRASTS

- (1) A PRISONER APPEALS FOR A SLAVE (10)
- (2) THE AGED INTERCEDES FOR HIS CHILD (9, 10)
- (3) THE USELESS HAS BECOME PROFITABLE (11)
- (4) ONESIMUS PARTED FOR A WHILE RETURNED FOREVER (15)
- (5) THE SLAVE HAS BECOME FREE (16)



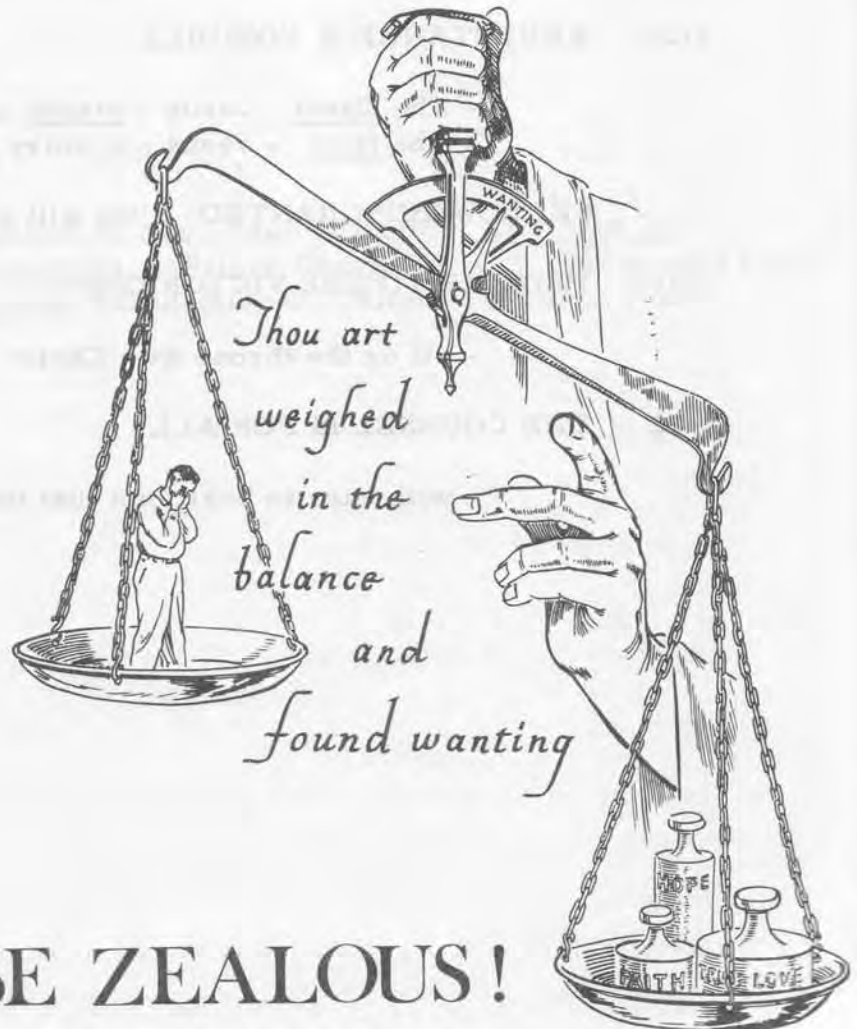
* self-deceived	"thou sayest"
* well-to-do	"I am rich"
* materialistic	"increased with goods"
* self-sufficient	"need of nothing"

# LAODICEA—

“I KNOW THY WORKS...”

And knowest not that thou art:

- \* miserable
- \* pitiable
- \* poor
- \* blind
- \* naked



REPENT, BE ZEALOUS!

REV. 3:14-22 - CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

3:14 INTRODUCTION ( taken from "one like the Son of Man", cf. 1:5 )

3:15 EVALUATION OF SPIRITUALITY

- a) No commendation
- b) Unacceptable works - "neither hot nor cold"
- 3:16 c) Lukewarm spirituality will be rejected
- 3:17 d) Self-deceived about spiritual values and standing

3:18 ENCOURAGEMENT

- a) Seek the true "riches"
- b) Put on the proper clothing
- c) Give attention to the sight which really matters

3:19 THE PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

- to reclaim by rebuke and correction
- zeal and repentance required and expected!

3:20 REPENTANCE IS POSSIBLE

- The Guest - Jesus - stands at the door and knocks
- The Host - Jesus - if entry requested

FELLOWSHIP GRANTED - "he will have dinner with me / Christ /"

3:21 PROMISE TO THE VICTORIOUS

- sit on the throne with Christ

3:22 THE COUNSEL IS FOR ALL

- with ears to hear, not just the Laodicean believers!

### Dating of the Revelation<sup>1</sup>

There is some uncertainty, but the evidence favours A. D. 96.

(1) "I will remove thy lampstand" is a warning to the Ephesian ecclesia of Asia Minor ( Rev. 2:5 ). If the troops of Vespasian and Titus had already taken Jerusalem ( A. D. 70 ) then the removal of the Jewish lampstand - which literally took place - would provide stark emphasis to the Jewish-Gentile readership of the various ecclesias.

(2) If the warning to the ecclesia at Laodicea was given prior to A. D. 70 ( which the early date requires ) very little time was given to the ecclesia to rectify the errors and effect significant repentance. It is known that Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake, A. D. 66. If however, A. D. 96 is the date of writing, this would have given some 30 years for the city to be rebuilt ( which it was ) and for the ecclesia to reestablish itself. On the other hand, if the Revelation was written A. D. 68 it seems improbable that the city could have been rebuilt, and the ecclesia restored to material prosperity within such a short period of time.

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<sup>1</sup>This question is given greater attention in Bro. Paul Billington, The Book of Revelation: An Appeal for Right Understanding, ( Prince George, B. C., 1982 ), pp.13-15. See also F. Bilton, Apocalypse and Gospels, ( Southport: F. Bilton, 1955 ), p.1-2.



REVELATION 3:14-22 - LAODICEA - ITS BACKGROUND

1. Laodicea means "Justice of the people". It had been called by earlier names of Diosopolis and Rhoas, but was given "Laodicea" in honour of Laodice, the wife of Antiochus II, B. C. 261-246.
2. Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake, A.D. 66 and was later rebuilt by Marcus Aurelius.<sup>2</sup>
3. According to Gibbon, The Council of Laodicea which convened 200 years after the writing of Revelation, almost decided to delete Revelation from the canon of inspired books!
4. These letters were personal messages sent by Jesus Christ to the ecclesias with the often repeated words ( 14 times ) "he that hath an ear, let him hear". This expression was used by Jesus ( as recorded in the gospels, e.g. Matt. 11:15; 13:9 ) showing the continuity of his intimate concern - "I know thy works" as he walks "in the midst of the lampstands" ( cf. Rev. 1:13, RSV ).

Allusions in the Revelation to life in Laodicea

a) Rev. 3:16 - "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

The city lacked a permanent water supply, so the water was piped from Hierapolis. The water which came from the thermal springs contained soda which made it unpalatable and even caused vomiting.

b) Rev. 3:18 - "I counsel thee to buy . . . white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed . . ."

Laodicea produced raven-black fleece from its sheep ( as can be seen in New Zealand today ). This resulted in glossy, black, soft-textured wool. The contrast could not be more apparent!

c) Rev. 3:17 - "Because thou sayest . . . I have need of nothing ."

Destroyed by an earthquake, the self-sufficiency of Laodicea was such that offers of help to rebuild by the Roman Senate were declined and the city was rebuilt by the Laodiceans themselves.<sup>3</sup>

The spiritual independence and self-sufficiency were mirrored in the earlier commercial and material self-sufficiency.

d) Rev. 3:18 - "anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

Laodicea had a famous school of medicine<sup>4</sup> and the manufacture of Collyrium,

<sup>2</sup>See Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary, ( Chicago: Moody Press, 1974 ), p. 644.

<sup>3</sup>Tacit. Ann., xiv, 27, alluded to in The Expositor's Greek Testament, p. 371.

<sup>4</sup>Expositor's, p. 372.

an eyesalve, provides the background for the spiritual lesson. They were blind spiritually and required the eyesalve provided by the Spirit.

e) Rev. 3:17 - "thou art naked."

The famous exporters of clothing ( the chalk impregnated waters were used in the dyeing industry ) were told they were naked!

\* \* \* \* \*

3:14 And unto the angel of the ecclesia of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God

angel - Gk: "aǵgellos", "messenger", Nestle. Almost certainly the person in Laodicea overseeing the ecclesial work. Note the way "aǵgellos" is used for human messengers ( those of John - Lk. 7:24 ).

of the ecclesia - Gk: "ekklēsia". See note on Philemon 2.

of the Laodiceans - Why are Colossae and Hierapolis not mentioned? It is possible that with the devastating earthquakes which destroyed cities of the Lycus Valley, that Laodicea ( which was rebuilt ) became the dominant ecclesia or that the believers all moved to Laodicea. Colossae was so completely destroyed that it was only recently discovered with considerable difficulty. See note on Col. 4:15.

write - When? See background notes - about A. D. 96 - some 30 years after Paul's epistle to the Colossians had been read ( cf. Col. 4:16 ).

Amen<sup>5</sup> - Gk: "amēn", "Amen, steadfast" (Yg). "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God" ( 2 Cor. 1:20, RSV ).

Note the Old Testament background in Isa. 65:16.

the faithful - Gk: "pistos", "faithful, steady" (Yg).

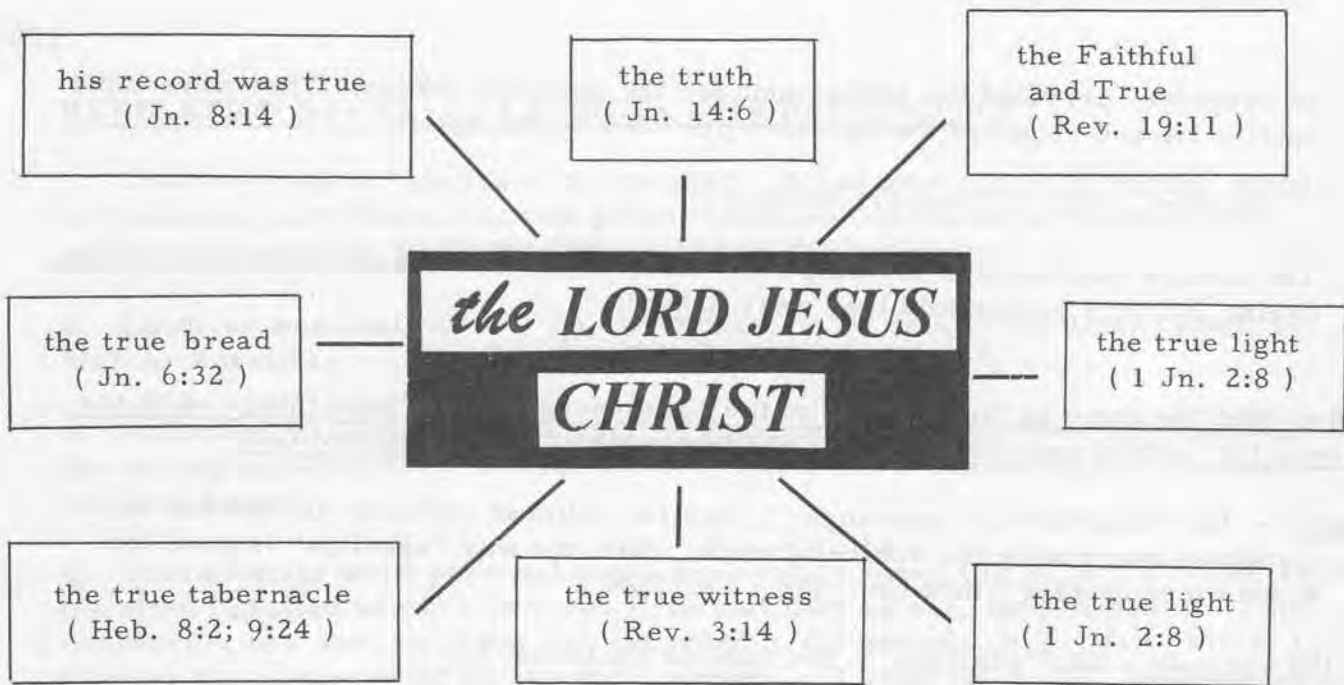
The "faithful witness" of Rev. 1:5. Note the Old Testament background in Psa. 89:37.

Christ was faithful in all the appointments of his Father. He conveyed all the words of his Father to his disciples ( Jn. 17:8; 14:10 ) as the means of their sanctification and the sanctification of those who would believe as a result of their preaching ( Jn. 17:17, 19-22; cf. 15:3 ).

and true witness - His detractors had rejected his claims on the grounds: "Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true" ( Jn. 8:13 ). His witness to himself, however, was true and was shown to be such by his resurrection to life eternal. He is the "firstbegotten" / Gk: 'prōtotokos' = 'firstborn', Nestle / of the dead, and the prince / Gk: 'archōn' = 'ruler', Nestle / of the kings of the earth" ( Rev. 1:5 ). These references obviously continue the earlier theme of Col. 1:15, 18 - see notes on these verses.

"True" is often used to describe the Lord Jesus Christ:

<sup>5</sup>"Amen" does not occur in the Greek text of Rev. 1:18 and is therefore deleted in the RSV, NASB.



Note the words of Jesus to Pilate - "for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice" ( Jn. 18:37 ).

The disciples, too, were set out to be witnesses - "you shall be my witnesses<sup>6</sup> in Jerusalem . . . and to the end of the earth" ( Acts 1:8, RSV ).

the beginning<sup>7</sup> of the creation of God - "Beginning", Gk: "archē", cf. its use in Rev. 21:6. Even if the creation is the creation of Genesis 1-2, it would imply that Jesus was created. If created then he is neither "very God" nor "God the Son".

The sense in which he is the beginning is explained in Rev. 1:5 - "the firstborn of the dead." His rulership over kings of the earth likewise relates to the new creation in him. See notes on Col. 1:15,16. There is an evident continuity of thought between the Colossian epistle ( which was read at Laodicea - Col.4:16 ) and this section of the Revelation.

Note the context, Rev. 3:12, new Jerusalem; new name - all relating to the new creation. See the use of the verb "ktizō", "to create" in Col. 3:10; Eph. 2:10; 3:9; 4:24 - where it is used of the new creation.

<sup>6</sup>The "Jehovah's Witnesses" have, therefore, selected the wrong name on two accounts. Firstly, the name of God is not "Jehovah" ( see the introduction to the RSV ) and the witnesses were to be witnesses of Jesus.

<sup>7</sup>See Wrested Scriptures, p. 209, for a more detailed reply to the "pre-human existence" doctrine. Some commentaries try to make "archē" mean "origin", e.g. The Amplified New Testament: "These are the words of the Amen, the trusty and faithful and true witness, the origin and beginning and author of God's creation." However, the word will not bear this idea as can be seen from checking all references in a concordance. "The word properly refers to the commencement of a thing, not its authorship, and denotes properly primacy in time, and primacy in rank, but not primacy in the sense of causing anything to exist." Barnes' Notes on the New Testament, p. 1569. This is even more impressive when the author, Barnes, is an inveterate trinitarian!

3:15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot

I know - Gk: "oida" - the idea is to see. The background is Isa. 66:18. This knowing is based on personal observation - everything was "naked and opened" ( Heb. 4: 12-13 ).

thy works - Gk: "ergon" - the list of what he knew varies among the ecclesias of Asia Minor - their toil, patience, tribulation, poverty, the place of residence, love, faith, reputation etc.

neither cold / Gk: 'psuchros' / nor hot / Gk: 'zestos' / - Either state is refreshing in common experience - a cold drink of water or a hot cup of coffee/tea.

I would that thou wert cold or hot - Either one would be a preferable condition. As lukewarm they had allowed the allurements of the world - its friends and materialism to reduce discipleship to that which was nauseating to the Lord who died for them. They were supposed to be "dead" with their life hid in Christ ( Col. 3:1-3 ).

3:16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth

lukewarm - Gk: "chliaros", ( only used here ) - an unpalatable drink. The drinking water of Laodicea may have been lukewarm!

I will - Gk: "mello", means "I am about to"<sup>8</sup> or have in mind. Does not necessarily imply immediate action.

spue thee - Gk: "emeō", "vomit", Nestle; NASB mg.; "spit", NASB. A very strong comparison - the Laodicean ecclesia would be rejected as readily as lukewarm water.

How this would take place is not stated. Total rejection is implied by the figure.

out of my mouth - Although strong language is used to show the repugnance of the Lord to the nominal association the Laodiceans had with the Christ Body, time was given for repentance. "Repent" was the call of Christ - their reaction would determine whether or not rejection would follow.

It may be assumed that if lukewarm, they were once aglow with the things of the Spirit. Paul's encouragement to the Romans was timely for the Laodiceans:

"Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit,<sup>9</sup> serve the Lord"  
( Rom. 12:11, RSV ).

3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked

Because thou sayest - Implied is the self-deception "but knowest not". This was a widespread problem; at Ephesus there were some "who call themselves apostles

<sup>8</sup>See E. W. Bullinger, The Companion Bible, ( London: The Lamp Press Ltd., n. d. ), p. 1889.

<sup>9</sup>"In spirit glowing", CV.

but are not" ( Rev. 2:2, RSV ). The Colossian ecclesia also had those who "took their stand on visions" apart from divine revelation ( Col. 2:18, RSV ).

I am rich - / Gk: 'plousios' / - They were evidently materially prosperous, as the rest of the verse indicates.

Note the similarity between the Laodicean response and that of Ephraim:

"Ephraim has said, 'Ah, but I am rich, I have gained wealth for myself', but all his riches can never offset the guilt he has incurred."  
( Hos. 12:8, RSV ).

and increased with goods - "I have prospered", RSV. Cf. the lesson of the parable of the rich man - Lk. 12:16-21. A man's life "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" ( Lk. 12:15 ).

Material prosperity should be regarded as an opportunity for further service: "to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed" ( 1 Tim. 6:18,19 ). If this is not done, the "cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches" might choke spirituality.

and have need of nothing - This self-satisfaction takes the "old man" altogether too casually. For although the "old man" was crucified - put to death at baptism, there was still the need to "mortify" - put to death, the deeds of the flesh ( Col. 3:3,5 ).

and knowest not - Like Israel of old, it could be said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" ( Hos. 4:6 ).

thou art wretched - Gk: "talaipōros", "miserable" (Yg); lit. "the wretched one", Companion Bible. See its use in Rom. 7:24.

and miserable - Gk: "eleeinos", "an object for kindness" (Yg); "pitiable", RSV; Nestle. See its use in 1 Cor. 15:19.

and poor - Gk: "ptōchos" "poor, trembling" (Yg).

and blind - Gk: "tuphlos".

and naked - Gk: "gumnos". They did not retain the clothing set out in the Colossian epistle 30 years earlier. See Col. 3:10,12,14.

3:18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and /that / the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see

I counsel thee - Gk: "sumbouleuō", "to give full counsel" (Yg).

Jesus held out hope even for Laodicea when, unlike the other ecclesias, no commendation is merited. In this there is a valuable lesson of counsel and patience needed for "weak" ecclesias.

to buy - Gk: "agorazō", "to use the market place" (Yg). Cf. use of "exagorazō" in Col. 4:5. The buying is figurative. Time, effort and commitment are required. The background here is Isa. 55:1-3: "He that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price . . . Incline your ear, and come unto me."

of me - He afforded the model. His exhortation "to overcome" ( v. 21 ) was true exhortation - calling to one's side - for he said, "even as I also overcame" (v. 21).

gold tried / Gk: 'puroōmai', 'to be set on fire', Yg / in the fire / Gk: 'puros' / -  
 "Having been refined", Nestle; "refined", RSV. Cf. 1 Pet. 1:7 for a related thought: "the trial / Gk: 'dokimion', 'a trial, test', Yg / of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried / Gk: dokimazō, 'to try, assay, prove', Yg / with fire / Gk: 'puros' /." See also 1 Pet. 4:12: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial / Gk: 'purōsis', 'a burning', Yg / which is to try you."

that thou mayest be rich - "Rich in good works" ( cf. 1 Tim. 6:18 ) generated by a renewed faith as were those at Smyrna ( Rev. 2:9 ) although they were impoverished in material things and persecuted by those without.

and white raiment / 'clothing', RSV / - Quite a contrast to the raven black fleece for which Laodicea's sheep were noted. However, the Laodiceans ( if they followed the exhortation of the Colossians ) had put off ( Gk: 'apekduomai' - 'to strip off' ) the old man ( see note on Col. 3:9 ) - like taking off clothes and were now to put on white raiment in contrast perhaps to the black clothing of the prevailing styles in Laodicea.

See the symbolic use of white clothing = "the righteous deeds of the saints" in Rev. 19:8, RSV; Nestle.

that thou mayest be clothed - Gk: "periballō", "to cast around" (Yg).

It is of great significance that the metaphor used is that of clothing because of the rich imagery in Col. 3 ( see note on Col. 3:10, 12, 14 etc. ) and because clothing was a major industry at Laodicea.<sup>10</sup> In the very city in which famous clothes were dyed and exported, the ecclesia was told it was naked! See the use of white clothing in Rev. 3:5; 4:4; 7:9.

and that the shame of thy nakedness / Gk: 'gumnotēs' / do not appear - Nakedness in scripture is associated with shame and sin, cf. Gen 3:7; Exod. 20:26.

Note its use in Revelation:

"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" ( Rev. 16:15 ).

and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve - Gk: "kollyrium", literally means "a small cake" (Yg). Laodicea exported "tephra phrygia" - a Phrygian powder sold in tablets

<sup>10</sup>See Expositor's Greek Testament, p. 372.

which were in the form of little rolls. It was used as an eyesalve for tender eyes<sup>11</sup> in the famous medical school at Laodicea.

that thou mayest see - This is, of course, related to spiritual discernment: "May /God/ give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you . . ." ( Eph. 1:17, 18, RSV ). Cf. note on Col. 1:9.

3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent

as many as I love - Gk: "phileō".

I rebuke - Gk: "elegchō", "to convince, convict" (Yg); "reprove", RSV; NASB; "convict" ( Companion Bible ); cf. Jn. 16:8.

Even Laodicea was regarded kindly by the Lord. The severe evaluation received in which nothing commendable was noted is tempered by an explanation of the purpose of the severity. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" ( Prov. 27:6 ). Encouragement to zeal follows.

and chasten - This was a characteristic of the Almighty: "For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth" ( Prov. 3:12, cf. v. 11 ); "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" ( Heb. 12:6, cf. v. 7-13 ).

be zealous therefore - See note on Rev. 3:15. The continuous imperative is used - "continue to be zealous."

and repent - Gk: "metanoēō", "to have another mind" (Yg) is in the aorist tense implying that the change was a single act - once for all.

There is no charge against the Laodiceans of doctrinal error, rather the ecclesia reflects a materialistic self-satisfied state which sapped spiritual vitality. This may reflect the response of the Laodiceans to Paul's stern warnings in Colossians 2 about the appealing doctrines of men which were threatening Colossae.

3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me

Behold - Gk: "idou", "See, Lo!" (Yg) - a matter of urgency!

I stand - as the head of the body ( Col. 1:18 ) - his service for its well-being has been continued even after his ascension ( cf. Jn. 13:3-5 regarding his service prior to his ascension ).

at the door - Even for Laodicean brethren - "lost sheep" ( Lk. 15:3-7 ) and "prodigal sons" ( Lk. 15:11-32 ) though they were.

and knock - Gk: "krouō", "to knock ( at a door )", (Yg). Note the parable in Lk. 12:36 - "and

<sup>11</sup>See Expositor's Greek Testament, p. 372.

be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks" ( RSV ).

This is one of the great lessons in humility in Scripture. The "beginning of the creation of God" ( 3:14 ), the firstborn of God's creation ( Col. 1:15, RSV ) and the one to whom all dominion, power and authority has been delivered ( Col. 1:16 ) stands at the door and knocks! Clearly there is no room for pride, envy or jealousy in the things of God. There may also be an allusion to Song of Solomon 5:2.

if any man hear my voice - i. e., "responds with understanding to what I am saying."

and open the door - No forcible entry is attempted - although for the Lord of the universe this would not be difficult! Willing compliance is required ( see note on Philemon 7, 8, 14 ). Note too, the continued allusions to Lk. 12:36, 37.

I will come in to him - Cf. Eph. 3:17: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" or "a habitation of God through the Spirit" ( Eph. 2:22 ). This is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" ( Col. 1:27 ).

and will sup with him - Gk: "deipnon" - "to eat with him", RSV; "dine with him", Nestle; NASB. This implies fellowship, cf. 1 Cor. 11:20-34, also Lk. 22:29, 30.

"I will sup with him" is yet another allusion drawn from the parables in Luke 12. Although the master comes to the door, it is the master ( not the servants ) who "will gird himself and have them / the servants / sit at table, and he will come and serve them" ( v. 37, RSV ).

Note Jn. 14:23: "If any man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." However the ultimate reference must be to the return of the Master - "behold the judge standeth before the door" ( Jas. 5:9 ).

and he with me - This proves that the indwelling of Christ relates to a fellowship now by walking in the light generated by an understanding and appreciation of the principles of discipleship ( cf. 1 Jn. 1:7; cf. Col. 1:9-12 ).

3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne

to him that overcometh - Gk: "nikaō", "to gain the victory" (Yg); "to subdue, conquer, prevail, get the victory" ( Stg ). This is a spiritual warfare, the armour for which is set out in Eph. 6:10-18.<sup>12</sup>

will I grant to sit with me in my throne - This refers to Psa. 110:1: "The Lord said unto my Lord, 'Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.'"

even as I also overcame - He provided the model - by hearing the words of his Father ( Jn. 17:8 ) "and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" ( Phil. 2:8 ).

<sup>12</sup>This point is considerably expanded in Quenching all the Fiery Darts of the Wicked, p. 46-59.



and am set down with my Father in his throne - Cf. Heb. 10:12, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" ( cf. Psa. 110: 1-2 ), "we have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" ( Heb. 8:1 ).

3:22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias

He that hath an ear - expressive for "he who has a willing heart." Cf. Isa. 55:3, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

let him hear - Gk: "akouō". This is an imperative similar to the "charge" that Paul gave Timothy, e.g. 1 Tim. 6:17: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches . . ." No doubt the background to this expression is rooted in the prophets: "the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness" ( Ezek. 33:31, cf. v.32, 33 ). The Laodiceans thought they were clothed, but did not recognize their position from the divine point of view. The ear that heareth must hear what the Spirit saith ( not simply hearing the appraisal of others ) with a readiness to do what is right. ( Note the general failure of Israel in this regard as recorded in Heb. 4:2 ).

what the Spirit - The revelation was given by God to Jesus who communicated "to John . . . by an angel" ( Rev. 1:1 ). This chain - God-Christ-an angel -John is reduced to "the Spirit". The spirit is similarly personified in Acts 13:2 - "The Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul . . ." when in fact the mode of speech was Spirit-gifted men ( cf. Acts 13:1-3 ).

saith unto the ecclesias - Specifically each ecclesia named, but it relates to others then and now.

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May these notes have assisted our understanding  
of the ecclesias of the Lycus Valley and the lessons  
which can be learned from their ecclesial history.

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