

Epistle to the Colossians

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(1986 and 1998 Studies)

The following notes on the Epistle to the Colossians were compiled from two Bible studies led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1986 and 1998. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Each paragraph preceded by “**Comment**” or “**Q**” (an abbreviation for “**Question**”) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original studies did not follow a prepared text but were extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the studies, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1986)

Col. 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,

Col. 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.

Colosse was situated close to Laodicea and Hierapolis. At the end of this epistle, the Apostle Paul asked that it be read to the class at Laodicea and apparently also to a certain individual named Archippus (Col. 4:16,17).

The epistles of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians were all written while Paul was a prisoner under house arrest at Rome. In Ephesians 3:1 and 4:1, Paul called himself a “prisoner.” And Philippians 1:1 is similar to Colossians 1:1, showing not only that Timothy was with Paul when these two letters were written but that they were written about the same time. However, Timothy was not necessarily with Paul when Ephesians was written earlier.

In Philippians, Paul used the word “bonds” to indicate he was a prisoner in Rome (Phil. 1:13). As Colossians is studied, we will see evidence that he was a prisoner then too. Paul was wealthy at this time in his life. Thus when his case was due to be heard at the end of his house arrest, he actually appeared in the presence of the Caesar, who was Nero.

Col. 1:3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

The Greek word *kai*, translated “and,” should be “even.” “We give thanks to God, *even* the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.”

Col. 1:4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

Verse 4 indicates Paul had never visited Colosse. Someone else, probably Epaphras, had started the ecclesia. Evidently, Epaphras (Epaphroditus) received instruction from Paul at Ephesus and then returned to Colosse, where he was resident, and started the class there (Col. 4:12).

Apparently, it was through Philemon that Paul heard of the love the Colossians had “to all the saints.” Paul sent a special letter to Philemon about his servant Onesimus, a runaway slave who had become a Christian. Philemon was a wealthy man, and Paul was trying to get Onesimus back into his master’s good graces. The “love” the Colossians gave “to all the saints” might have been financial help and support from some personages in Colosse, of whom Philemon was one. Incidentally, because Hierapolis was a pleasure resort with its white cliffs and mineral springs, wealthy people had estates there.

Col. 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;

Paul was praying (verse 3) that the hope laid up for the Colossians in heaven would come to fruition. He was praying that they would retain that hope and ultimately finish their course successfully.

Col. 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:

Up to the point in time that Paul was contacting them, the faith and love of the Colossians had been warm and constant. Nevertheless, he was earnestly taking them before the throne of grace in the hope that they would successfully conclude their career.

Col. 1:7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

Epaphras was “a faithful minister of Christ” for the Colossians. Evidently, he had a great deal to do with nurturing them in the truth. There is evidence to this effect elsewhere in Scripture.

Col. 1:8 Who [Epaphras] also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

Col. 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;

Ever since Paul heard about the Colossians, he kept them in his prayers. Notice that he wanted them to develop in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Their faith was unquestioned, and their love and desire to please God were manifest in their actions. However, he wanted them to develop a greater maturity in understanding.

The *Diaglott* rendering for the last half of the verse is, “... that ye may be filled, as to the *exact knowledge* of his will, with all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” Paul desired more doctrinal understanding for the Colossians.

How encouraging for Paul there in prison to realize that one he had taught, Epaphras, was spreading the gospel and that a class had been started as a result! This news was joyous indeed, for at other times, he received discouraging news. And that has been the experience of the Church down through the Gospel Age. Paul said, “All they which are in Asia be turned away from me [have forsaken me]” (2 Tim. 1:15). Although *individuals* such as Timothy, Aquila, Priscilla, and Epaphras remained faithful and loyal to Paul, the *ecclesias* did not hold to his teachings, for inroads were made that denigrated their respect for him as an apostle. A damaging philosophy (mostly Asian) subtly entered the Church—not as an enemy but as a friend. It added to the gospel message, but in doing so, it actually subtracted and thus had devastating effects upon the Church at that time.

Col. 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;

Col. 1:11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

The emphasis was as follows: “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto *all* pleasing, being fruitful in *every* good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with *all* might, according to his glorious power, unto *all* patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.”

Col. 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

As in verse 3, the emphasis is on the *Father*, who does the initial work in each Christian by or through Jesus.

The Vatican manuscript rendering of part of verse 12 is that the Father “hath called and

qualified us.” In other words, He made us fit to be “partakers of the inheritance” of the Little Flock. The Father initiates the whole process. He draws us through Jesus to consecration and dedication. It is a progressive process of drawing, calling, consecration, justification, Spirit begetting, etc. After being obedient to all these leadings, we will become a part of the Little Flock if we remain faithful and continue to grow into Christlikeness. Begetting with the Holy Spirit is the earnest, pledge, or down payment of what awaits us if we are faithful. In other words, the earnest of the inheritance is received in the present life, and it will become an actual possession if we develop properly and remain loyal and steadfast to the end of our course.

Col. 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

God has delivered us. The term “his dear Son” is rendered “the Son of his love,” a tender expression, in the King James margin and the *Diaglott*.

In this epistle, Paul pursued a theme quite different from that in his letter to the Philippians; namely, he pursued the theme of Jesus’ role. Paul gave the advice, yet in this very area, the Colossians fell as a *class*. Individuals, however, were faithful and steadfast. Thus Paul’s advice was a safeguard to those who heeded it.

To start with, Paul emphasized the Father, showing Him to be the Author of salvation, but he could see that there would be a forsaking of Jesus—that the Colossians would not give Jesus the role in their lives that he should have. Paul was aware of the dangerous philosophy that would come in, and thus he harped on the role of Jesus. He even feared for the Philippian brethren, despite the fact he considered them to be the most loyal and dearest possession, his “joy and crown” (Phil. 4:1). He anticipated that some would come into the ecclesia and cause a lot of damage. Nevertheless, he was hopeful that the *majority* in Philippi would respond properly. In other locations, such as Colosse, only a *minority* responded properly.

As was done in verses 12 and 13, Paul frequently contrasted light and darkness in his writings.

Col. 1:14 In whom [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

Col. 1:15 Who [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

Verse 15 emphasizes Jesus not as the Logos but as the firstborn of the *New Creation*. Proof is verse 18, which stresses Jesus’ preeminence as the Head of the body. Also, it calls him “the firstborn from the dead.” Thus the emphasis is on the New Creation in Christ Jesus, which God had in mind.

Verse 14 verifies this thought because there was no redemption and deliverance *until* Jesus died on Calvary. Therefore, the reference is not to the original creation of the Logos but to the “firstborn” of the Church.

Jesus is the “image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” Angels are called the sons of God, and even man was created in God’s image. However, verse 15 is speaking of the *express* image of God. When raised above thrones, principalities, and powers, Jesus became the *express* image of God on the *divine* plane of being. The one who obtained to the *express* image of God was once down here in the flesh, manifested to men. The angels also beheld his character, doctrine, and behavior. Now Paul was emphasizing: “Look what became of Jesus, the one we knew or heard about. Our Savior obtained the high plateau on the *divine* plane, and the New Creation will be a *divine* family with Jesus as the *Head* under the Father.”

Col. 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:

The *Diaglott* interlinear is good with regard to preposition changes. Earlier Paul gave thanks to the Father, but these things were done in the Son. Some of the Greek prepositions can be variously translated. Obviously, those with Trinitarian prejudices selected prepositions to support their view.

God had in mind a pyramidal structure. In heaven, there is to be a divine family, listed in descending order: God, Jesus, Little Flock, angels. Then comes the earthly realm. All (except the Father, who is above *all*) are to be submissive to the Son. God purposed a New Creation with Christ as the Head, through whom all will be brought into subservience. God is the Author above the whole arrangement.

The prepositions and the second rendering of the verb as “created” must be adjusted to avoid a conflict with Revelation 4:11, which speaks about the Father. “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou [the Father] hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” There the priority goes to the Father.

Verse 16 is showing that there is the physical creation and there is also the spiritual creation. However, what starts as a new spiritual creation with the Little Flock will become physical later on. For example, the Ancient Worthies existed under a former arrangement, but they will be princes in all the earth under the new arrangement (Psa. 45:16). In addition, there will be a new Israel and a new world of mankind—all resulting from Jesus’ death on the Cross. All of this work started with a *spiritual* New Creation, which will eventually filter down to the physical realm. Hear Jesus’ words: “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5). They were created once in the past, but this New Creation will embrace, in the final analysis, the whole saved world of mankind and the disobedient angels who are reclaimed, or saved. Jesus said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). Both the Cross and the resurrection had to come first. Then all except the Father will be lifted up under Jesus.

Incidentally, God did not live in a vacuum before He created Jesus. Other beauties in the spiritual realm were created by Him previously.

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

The *Diaglott* interlinear reads, “And he is in advance of all, and the things all in him has been placed together.” The *Diaglott* translation is, “And he precedes all things, and in him all things have been permanently placed.”

The King James word “consist” reminds us of the pyramidal structure. All things will be bound together under the new arrangement.

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

Jesus is “the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” Paul was emphasizing Jesus’ role as the Head and the beginning of the New Creation. His preeminence is under the Father, as shown by the next verse. Jesus’ preeminence in importance, as well as in time, is shown in the Tabernacle offerings of the Old Testament. He is the beginning—the one who *first* ran the race course (1 Cor. 9:24; Heb. 12:1).

Col. 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

The Father was pleased “that in him [Jesus] should all fulness dwell.” This verse refutes the Trinity by showing that the Father, a *separate* personality, masterminded the plan to subordinate all things under Jesus. It pleased the Father to bring forth a plan to elevate His Son.

The words “the Father” are italicized, and thus supplied, but the context bears them out. (See verse 12 on.) Verse 19 is part of a continuing exposition in a *unit* of thought.

Col. 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.

Again the starting point is shown to be the blood of the Cross. All things in heaven and earth are, and will be, related to the Cross and, of course, Jesus’ resurrection.

He will “reconcile all things unto himself ... things in heaven [that is, the repentant fallen angels, who will be retrieved].” The holy angels, who did not sin at the time of the Flood, do not need reconciliation.

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

“And you [brethren at Colosse], that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.” Jesus reconciled the Colossian brethren to the Father.

Col. 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* through death.” Jesus reconciled “you,” the Colossian brethren (and of course us), through the sacrifice of the *flesh* of his body (his human nature).

The great danger to the churches in Asia Minor was the Eastern philosophy, part of which was the thought that Jesus was like a phantom—that he did not really die but only appeared to do so. Our redemption is not merely because Jesus was a way-shower (one who showed the way), but because he was the Redeemer in a much more realistic sense. *Blood* was involved. The false philosophy claimed Jesus was all spirit, not human, and that he only appeared to suffer but did not actually do so.

The philosophy gained strength that those Christians who repented for sins and suffered disease, violence, and death through persecution were not living up to their privileges. They were regarded as *lesser* Christians, not God’s elite. Feeling that the elite class lived above the sufferings, followers of this philosophy did not see the need for suffering and humility. They wanted all the honors, emoluments, and prestige—the *future* honors of the reign—without any of the suffering. Over and over Paul tried to show that his role as an apostle was made valid *by his sufferings*. What he suffered was a mark of his *apostleship*, not the reverse. Those with the wrong thinking argued that if he were an apostle, he would not suffer. By extension, then, they reasoned that Jesus could not have really suffered or died. This erroneous philosophy made tremendous inroads into the Church as time went on. This thinking fit right into the Trinitarian doctrine later on—that God could not die, that He was immortal, and that Jesus was God.

However, the Scriptures show that *blood* redemption and the giving of Jesus’ *flesh* were essential. It would have been deceitful if Jesus had only *pretended* to die. The same principle applies to the followers of Jesus. Without suffering, there will be no crown. If we are legitimate

children, we must suffer for truth and righteousness' sake. We must be chastened and disciplined (Heb. 12:6-8).

“In the body of his flesh.” Paul was trying to counteract the Eastern philosophy that was beginning to make inroads as he was passing off the scene. (This letter to the Colossians was written near the end of his life.) The Apostle John took over and wrote more on this subject in his epistles. Although his writings are usually not understood, John decried this philosophy.

Col. 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;

“The hope of the gospel ... was preached to every creature” in a qualified sense, for certainly Paul did not preach to every single individual. He went around to main cities in the then known Roman world. As an *indirect* result of his ministry, the gospel message got to Colosse, even though he did not go there personally. Paul instructed Epaphras and others who, in turn, preached to the Colossians.

The *Diaglott* interlinear is more accurate: “... of that having been published in all [the] creation that under the heaven...” The gospel was published throughout an area but was not preached to every single person.

Col. 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 church:

Paul filled up “that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ” in his *flesh* for the body's sake. He was imprisoned for the cause of Christ and suffered many afflictions for the *body's* sake; that is, even though he did not personally know the Colossian brethren, he was indirectly responsible for their understanding the truth, to the degree that they did, through his instructing of others, who then instructed the Colossians.

Just as Jesus suffered in the *flesh* on the Cross—his *humanity* was involved—so Paul and other Christians suffered in their *flesh*. It is true that Jesus' “body” is the Church in the spiritual sense, but here Paul was saying that the vessel in which the new creature resides *must have* some discomfiture and hard experiences along the narrow way. The sin offering was not just the blood being taken into the Most Holy but also the consumption of the *flesh* on the altar.

Col. 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;

Instead of the word “dispensation,” the *Diaglott* has “stewardship.” When Paul initially received the vision on his way to Damascus, God told what was planned for him. “Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Not only was Paul a steward, but he was a steward in the areas of Asia Minor, Rome, etc.

The King James margin matches the *Diaglott* interlinear: “to *fully* set forth [or preach] the word of God.” Elsewhere Paul said, “For I have not shunned to declare unto you *all* the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Paul more fully expounded the Scriptures than any other apostle.

The *Diaglott* reads, “of which I became a servant, according to that stewardship of God which was given to me for you, *fully* to declare the word of God.”

Col. 1:26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is

made manifest to his saints:

Col. 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:

Paul was to declare to the Gentiles the “mystery,” or secret, of “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” The implication is that the class at Colosse consisted predominantly of *Gentiles*.

Trinitarians say the Trinity is a mystery, yet here Paul was saying that the “mystery” was in the *past*. It was hidden, or concealed, for ages but “now is made manifest to his saints.” The “mystery” is that the Messiah is not merely an individual (Jesus) but a *class*—a composite body (the Church, the Little Flock) with Jesus as its Head. The anointing is in us as Christians; hence we have the “hope of glory.”

Col. 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:

The teaching responsibility includes *admonition*. The object of teaching “all wisdom” is that each of the consecrated might become mature in Christlikeness. Balanced teaching includes both comforting hopes and admonitions. It is a blending of strict justice with mercy and love.

Comment: The pronoun “we” shows that it is a group effort or responsibility to build up one another. We have a responsibility not just for ourselves but for our brethren too.

Reply: At the time the epistle was penned, Paul probably had in mind “we the *apostles*” in a specialized sense because of the newness of the religion. The apostles were Christ’s special representatives, and in that early period of the Church when the Bible was not available, Christians had to associate with one or another of the apostles to get their questions answered. Only the Old Testament was reasonably available to early Christians.

Q: Since the epistle was addressed to the Colossians from Paul and Timothy, wouldn’t the “we” in verse 28 refer to them?

A: We are not inclined to think so. Timothy was also mentioned in the beginning of Philippians, but just two verses later Paul made it obvious that the letter was really from him: “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you” (Phil. 1:1,3). Timothy had no input in the letter. Probably Paul’s reason for mentioning Timothy’s name was to acquaint the classes with the close association between the two of them. Paul knew his time in the present life was drawing to a close. It was now about AD 64, and approximately two years later he was executed. He called himself “aged” (Philem. 9). Thus it was necessary to recommend a faithful brother who could teach the brethren after his demise. In chapter 4, Paul mentioned Aristarchus, Marcus, etc., but not Timothy. Thus by mentioning Timothy right at the beginning, Paul was recommending one who could carry on in his absence. Between Paul’s death and John’s arrival in Ephesus from Jerusalem, there was at least a three-year period in which Timothy took a leading role. Apparently, Paul never went to Colosse.

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

The *Diaglott* has, “For which I also labor, ardently contending, according to that energy of his which operates in me with *power*.”

It is interesting that Paul wrote this epistle as a *prisoner*. While in that condition, the truth invaded right into Caesar’s household. Considering that Caesar at that time was *Nero*, it seems

almost like an impossibility that the truth could have penetrated the household. Nero was against both Jews and Christians, even though he had a Jewish consort. In certain times of crisis, she prevailed on him to be more lenient with the Jews, but he generally opposed them. In fact, Aquila and Priscilla, both prominent Jewish Christians, had to leave Rome in accordance with a decree. They stayed at Corinth for a while and then took up residence in Ephesus.

Col. 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;

Paul had great “conflict,” that is, fear and care, for the brethren at Colosse and Laodicea. His use of the word “conflict” indicates that he was troubled over what might happen to them. He urged them to keep their focus on the *primacy of Christ*. Laodicea was very close to Colosse, almost a stone’s throw away. From the right vantage point at Colosse, one could even see the white cliffs of Hierapolis, which were on the other side of Laodicea.

Paul gave *much* thought to the nature of this letter, as will be seen. Evidently, someone new in the class at Colosse, perhaps an Alexandrian Jew, introduced wrong doctrine. He was subtly undermining the class by introducing teachings they could not cope with unless they received additional knowledge and understanding. In this epistle, Paul prepared the class at Colosse by providing the proper reasoning to refute this error.

Epaphras, originally from Colosse, was more or less responsible for founding the church there, but he had gotten the gospel message from Paul earlier in Ephesus. Ephesus was the natural center for the brotherhood at that time.

While Paul had not been to Colosse to see the brethren in the flesh, he was thoroughly aware of them and their progress. Epaphras was now with the Apostle Paul, describing the situation, and this letter manifested the apostle’s interest in and concern for them. Incidentally, some of the Colossians would have seen Paul’s “face in the flesh” if they had gone to Ephesus or its suburbs earlier.

Col. 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;

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

The phrase “and of the Father” is spurious according to the Revised Standard Version and the *Diaglott*.

Verse 2 gives a clue as to what was on the apostle’s mind—the general thrust or slant—when he wrote this epistle. He was preparing or helping the Colossians with a particular experience they were having; namely, an Eastern philosophy known as Docetism was making inroads. Webster’s definition of Docetism is “a belief opposed as heresy in early Christianity that Christ only seemed to have a human body and to suffer and die on the cross.” Docetists regarded brotherly love as an evidence of weakness and a lack of understanding. They were sophists; that is, they felt they were in the deep secrets of God, whereas actually they were leading away from Christ and the Father.

It is surprising that this heresy entered Christianity within a century. Its adherents believed that Jehovah was not the Almighty God but a secondary being, that Christ was one of many and not *the way* or *the truth*, and that other angels or powers could be tapped into to get valuable insights into truth. This philosophy was introduced very subtly.

A letter from Hermogenes to Titus was reproduced in the *Reprints*, showing the superior attitude that some with this philosophy adopted. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians provides an idea of the error that crept into the Church. Many gave a listening ear to this erroneous philosophy because of the *boldness* of its proponents. Their teaching led away from Christ as the only way. Consequently, many made shipwreck of their faith. Hermogenes is mentioned in 2 Timothy 1:15 as having turned away from Paul. The apostle's second letter to Timothy was written after Colossians.

Eventually Docetists deprecated Jehovah of the Jew, but they did it cleverly by befriending the Jew at first. As time went on, they embraced some radical beliefs. A number of sects developed that respected Christ with different degrees of intensity (or laxity).

Now we can understand Paul's use of superlatives in verses 2 and 3: "*all riches*," "*full assurance of understanding*," and "*all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*." *In God and Christ* "are hid *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*."

Docetists assumed the posture that truth was even greater than Jehovah God of the Hebrews and Jesus the Messiah. God and Jesus were regarded as just manifestations of the *direction* of truth, rather than being the *source* of truth.

This philosophy was just beginning to enter the early Church as Paul was phasing out. Later the Apostle John wrote defensively in his epistles when a *great number* had entered the Church with this Asian thinking. He used a tactic that was different from that of Paul; namely, he used a *practical* approach. When he spoke of love, he was not referring to what is *secretly* in the heart but was saying that the very acts of kindness were absent. These proponents of error were cruel; right in front of brethren, they said evil things. They looked down on brethren not in "their category." Thus *literal* problems were occurring. Therefore, by *spiritualizing* John's epistles, we lose the point of what he was saying. He was stating *obvious* things, not things that require deep meditation. Paul said, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha" (1 Cor. 16:22). The Docetists made statements deprecating Jesus, claiming there was a step higher. They thought of him as a way-shower but by no means the end. They might generously consider Jesus as the beginner but not the finisher of their faith. Therefore, Paul concentrated on Jesus' role throughout this Epistle to the Colossians, as indicated in the first chapter (Col. 1:14-22). Paul was showing the importance of Jesus—that he is "all, and in all" to the Christian (Col. 3:11).

The Colossians and others of the early Church were having trouble with *brethren*. Some dared to demote John as an apostle, let alone Paul. False teachers expelled from the class any who sympathized with John (3 John 9,10). Hence John more or less told the faithful brethren to meet elsewhere.

"In whom" in verse 3 refers to both God and Jesus but especially to Jesus, for he sent out the apostles. *Jesus is the Messiah—he died on the Cross*. As recorded in the Gospels, Jesus gave parables and sermons, so the burden of the apostles' message was, first, to acquaint those with a hearing ear with Jesus and, second, to show that the primacy was with God as the Author. The apostles were preaching a new doctrine—that *Jesus was "sent" of God* (John 3:17; 5:23,30; 6:39; etc.). *Jesus is the true way, the path of light and understanding*. *Jesus is God's representative*. Many believed in a god or many gods and ascribed various characteristics and messages, so they needed proper instruction.

Paul was emphasizing that the religion which came from Israel in the person of Jesus was *the truth*. Jesus espoused that he was sent of the Father and that the words he spoke did not originate with him but had been received from the Father. From this standpoint, one who goes to Christ is led to God in a very emphatic way.

Reprint No. 2963, "Hermogenes to Titus," under the section "Views from the Watch Tower," purports to be a letter written by Hermogenes to Titus. It exposes the error Hermogenes was introducing.

Hermogenes to Titus

"Perhaps the best article which has yet appeared in the religious press bearing upon the higher criticism, came out in the last number of *The Wesleyan Christian Advocate* over the title of 'The Epistle of Hermogenes to Titus,' written in archaic style, belonging to the apostolic days and purporting to explain many passages of Scriptures which have furnished the bones of contention in recent controversies. Every Bible student will enjoy reading it. In part, the article reads as follows:

"Hermogenes, a servant of God, and a minister of Christ, and a teacher of the true faith of the Gospel, according to the ripe judgment of the present age; to Titus, mine own brother, whom I greatly love in the truth: Grace, mercy and peace be unto thee.

"Thou hast heard, beloved, of our aged brother Paul, that he hath written epistles to Timotheus; and I hear, also to thee; in the which he hath set forth many things in exhortations unto each one of you. In some of these he hath sought to hinder my usefulness with thee, and with many others. Remember, brother, that he is old and hath divers infirmities, and hath little knowledge of sound philosophy which edifieth. Therefore, I bear no malice toward him. But I write to set in order for thine instruction a more reasonable Gospel, which will make thee wise and will enable thee to instruct others also.

"Thou hast heard how our brother Demas hath written Timotheus, to teach him how he may gain favor with them that be somewhat in authority above us; and, moreover, with high esteem among them that will not endure the hard doctrines declared by Paul in his preaching and epistles. I know thee, thy promise and great talent, and earnestly desire that thou mayest rise above this Timotheus. Thou hast gifts many, and I would that thou mightest be a bishop over the church. Give heed, therefore, to my counsel.

"This Paul hath a lively imagination, such as maketh him exceedingly superstitious concerning the Scriptures, and an unsafe guide for such as would be wise; whilst I am yet young and have had long training in the schools of men skilled in reasoning concerning divine things, being in their company no less than sixty and seven days. Those great men instructed me fully in the approved laws, by the which we may know of the things which cannot be taken; wherefore, I think myself able to lead thee in a broad way. I will now set in order unto thee that which I have learned.

"The fathers did teach that Moses hath written how God made the heaven and the earth, having been instructed in this of God. Know thou, therefore, that Moses did beguile them. He obtained many accounts of a tradition of creation among several ancient peoples, and did patch them together for the Hebrews. That Paul accepteth this book of Moses as true history, doth show him to lack sound judgment.

"Thou knowest also that it hath been taught that the law and the prophets were given by inspiration of God. Herein is grievous error. The priests of the people of Israel, greatly desiring to lead our fathers into righteousness and to make of them a great nation, devised those great books. It is true, I cannot make known unto thee by which way this is proved; but beware of questioning my knowledge in this thing; thou wilt show thyself ignorant shouldst thou at all call in question our judgment. None but the

instructed can fully understand these matters. The simple and unlearned must needs believe what we teach. If they fail to hearken, they are blind and cannot see into the deep things of our wisdom.

“We now conclude that at the least one thousand scribes were required to devise the law and the prophets; and peradventure, if that number doth not appear sufficient we can enlarge it to be even five thousand. It was a great work of imagination, and God must needs have many men to imagine each a little. Moreover, in these books the wise find many things contrary to sound reason. I will inform thee concerning some of them, in order that thou mayest be able to explain them to thy people. The writing which beareth the name of Moses doth declare that God did feed our fathers in the wilderness with manna from heaven. It is most confidently taught among us who are wise that they did lick with their tongues a honey, which is found on the leaves of the trees in the wilderness, and named it manna. The rock which gave forth water when this Moses did strike it flowed from a deep well, which he and his servants bored through a great rock by night while the people slept. The great pillar of cloud by day and fire by night which followed the people was produced by cunningly mixed powders. Moreover, this Moses was a wise magician, and did charm these people into a deep sleep, and while they slept, with his chosen helpers, he prepared many vessels into which, when full of water, they did cast a fine powder. After this they soaked the garments of all the people in the vessels of water, and it was so that they could no more wear out. Give heed concerning what we declare to be the truth of the record of the walls of Jericho, how they fell. They that be searchers after truth set forth that the horns and trumpets which the men of Israel did blow, mightily made a great commotion in the air, insomuch that the walls began to tremble greatly, which continuing many days they were shaken down and did fall. Know thou also that Joshua did, by cunning magic, cause the ignorant people to imagine that the sun obeyed him to stand still. They were deceived, for their own good, that it might profit them withal. Joshua did cause their memory to stand still. But we are wiser than to teach men that reason that this record is more than a fable.

“I will instruct thee, moreover, concerning the book which beareth the name of Esaias. The learned now show unto us that many men did bear that name, and every one a little part hath written; how many it doth not yet appear. When the searching in the matter hath ended, it may be shown that peradventure a score of scribes had part in making the book as it now is. We are now assured that Esaias prophesied nothing concerning the sufferings and glory of Christ. He spake only of the sufferings of all Israel for the sins of King Ahaz. (Why Israel should be called to suffer because of wicked Ahaz’s sins, or why Esaias did write of this, it doth not concern us.) The book speaketh nothing of Jesus Christ. Then we say, and if any teach otherwise, he is thereby shown to be in ignorant company, with Paul and Peter and John, who have fallen into error, and teach old wives’ fables, which the instructed reject.

“We have, also, a deep knowledge of the truth of Daniel and his prophecy, which will greatly edify thee, and will satisfy those who doubt concerning the miracles. Daniel was a man acquainted with many strange secrets. He knew how to charm the lions that they should not devour him when he should be cast into their den. So he feared not to pray; and when he was thrown to the lions, he cast a spell over them, that they could not bite or hurt him. Thou seest he saved himself, and gave God the praise. The record of the three Hebrew children and their trial in the fiery furnace hath also been shown to be according to reason. It hath been made known unto us by the teachers of science at whom Paul doth only sneer, that at the center of the hottest fire there doth always remain a cool place which will neither burn nor scorch garments, nor flesh. These Hebrew children were aforetime instructed regarding this; and therefore they feared not the wrath or power of the king; and when cast into the fire they knew immediately

the place of safety and so were protected. See how reason doth make clear things hard to be believed, brother....

“Finally, I declare unto thee the true explanation of the record of Jonah. He fled before the Lord that he might not perish at Nineveh. He had not sought that appointment and rebelled against going. When he took ship, the Lord ordered a vessel bearing the name “Great Fish” to follow Jonah’s ship. So when the sailors did throw Jonah overboard he was picked up by the crew of the “Great Fish” and tarried with them three days. These earnestly persuaded him to accept his appointment, and had such weight with him that he consented, and so went to Nineveh.

“Thou seest, brother, how our views do appeal to reason and sound judgment. I am assured that thou wilt gladly accept them, and assist us in spreading them, especially since Paul hath proven himself unable to lead the thinking classes of this great age. Thou mayest now be a leader in our school and get unto thyself a great name, for much learning, if thou dost act with us in this great warfare of the wise against the dull and ignorant. Paul hath had the help of Peter, John, James and Jude in this contention against us, but we faint not and continue to teach the people everywhere this doctrine, which maketh faith an easy matter. Meditate on these things I have written, and thy profiting will appear to all. When thou hast fully understood this, I will instruct thee in the correct knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ in another epistle. The salutation of me, Hermogenes, by mine own hand. Farewell.”

This *Reprint* article is a gross example of “higher criticism.” Gnostics (meaning “I know”) claimed to have superior knowledge. No wonder those at the health center in Pergamos, where this type of thinking prevailed, used hypnotic spells and had a tunnel of whispering voices. The leaders felt it was all right to do any kind of trickery in the name of religion.

Flattery was used plus the suggestion that there was a higher echelon of knowledge. As time went on, even Almighty God was downgraded. Things went from one extreme to the other (from asceticism, or flagellation of the flesh, to the opposite extreme of debauchery). With regard to debauchery, the argument was that God was pleased with the new creature and disregarded the flesh. This thinking, which separated the old creature from the new creature, led to all kinds of gratification of the flesh, for which the new creature was considered not accountable. These proponents of error *selectively* used Paul’s writings out of context to justify their error.

Notice the boldness of Hermogenes and his condescending attitude toward Titus. If Titus wanted to be a bishop, he was to listen to Hermogenes. Paul was discredited as aged and infirm, and his sufferings and persecutions were regarded as meaningless, rather than as marks of his apostleship and being a slave of Jesus Christ.

Hermogenes suggested that most were in “grammar school” and that for a Christian to go on to “college,” he must adopt this higher thinking. Flattery encouraged others to study the wrong philosophies. It is obvious why Paul worried that this error would creep into the ecclesia and influence the brethren.

Hermogenes wrote this letter to the same Titus whom Paul addressed in his epistle—and also the same Titus who ultimately forsook the way (2 Tim. 4:10). Apparently, Titus listened to this wrong counsel, although we do not know the whole story. At any rate, it does not look good for him. Paul wrote to Timothy, “This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes” (2 Tim. 1:15).

The proponents of error did not regard morals as being especially important. “Knowledge”

was stressed but not purity of morals. The mind was deemed important—it soared above the body—whereas the flesh was considered common, not worthy of consideration. What an evil strategy—like the serpent in the Garden of Eden, which ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree and was wise above all other creatures, thus giving the lie to what God had said.

In time, the thinking of Hermogenes developed into clericalism, whereby the Nicolaitan spirit lorded wisdom over the majority. The elite element claimed that the “mystery” belonged only to them, and they, in turn, revealed it to the common communicants. Thus the communicants became “children of the *church*” rather than brethren with only Jesus as their Master. Only the ordained clergy of different levels—cardinals, bishops, etc.—were considered brethren.

The Greeks loved wisdom, which was a national trait. In many cities in Asia Minor, the Grecian influence was considerable. Hence Greek philosophies were a temptation to early Christians.

Morals are *part* of knowledge, not separate from or subordinate to it. “Doctrine” includes morals. In fact, “doctrine” pertains to everything in God’s Word, including dispensational truth, chronology, Christian living, and understanding mysteries.

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

Flattery is dangerous. “If you want to be above Timothy,” wrote Hermogenes, establishing a rivalry. Paul sent Timothy to Corinth earlier, but Timothy, who was a faithful representative, was not nearly as well received as Titus later. Many prefer more *lenient* teaching whether scriptural or not. The *Diaglott* interlinear warns against deceiving with “plausible speech,” that is, with *seemingly* believable speech.

Col. 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 stedfastness of your faith in Christ.

“Order” means “harmony.” At this point, the class was still harmonious, but some ideas were starting to be presented that concerned Paul. Although there was no adverse effect in the class to date, eventually a serious problem developed regarding the vain philosophy Paul was cautioning against (verse 8).

Paul got this news from Epaphras, a resident of Colosse who was instrumental in starting the class originally. Probably he was in Ephesus sometime during Paul’s three-year stay there. Epaphras accepted the truth and then returned to Colosse and started the ecclesia.

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

Verse 6 shows that progression and development are expected of the Christian. Those of Laodicea and Colosse had received the truth and had an understanding of the responsibilities of being a Christian. Now Paul was advising them to fulfill those responsibilities—to “*walk*” in Christ and make progress.

Notice, Paul was not talking about minor doctrines, but as they had received *Christ Jesus the Lord*, they were to walk in him as the *Lord*. Their trial came subsequently when some denigrated Jesus.

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

Paul emphasized “rooted,” “built up,” and “stablished”—with “thanksgiving” mixed in. A good *Reprint* article entitled “Trees of Righteousness,” No. 5557, amplifies the switch in Paul’s

analogy to a tree that has roots going down deep into the soil to get nutriments and water so that the branches will grow heavenward and develop fruit. “Fruit” signifies fruits of the Holy Spirit, and “nutriments” are the Word of God and the water of truth. Excerpts from “Trees of Righteousness” follow.

Trees of Righteousness

“... the Apostle then uses a forceful illustration to show how we are to progress in Christ. Turning from the figure of a man walking in Christ as a member of his body, St. Paul gives us the picture of a tree, the root of which goes downward and the trunk of which reaches upward, to obtain that nourishment which will give it strength and stability. As the roots of a tree push themselves downward and imbibe the nutriment of the soil, while at the same time the trunk and the branches reach up into the atmosphere to obtain through the leaves the necessary elements of growth, so the mentality of the Christian takes hold of the great and precious promises of the Word of God, while at the same time he is building character through his heart appreciation of these promises, in connection with the experiences of life. The roots of faith push down deep into the knowledge of the divine plan, while the tree of character grows higher and higher, developing and maturing the rich fruits of the holy Spirit of God; for instruction is a form of construction.

“While the Christian is thus growing up in character likeness to our Redeemer, and his roots of faith are reaching deep down into the deep things of the Word of God, he is becoming established, settled. A tree that is well rooted in the earth is hard to uproot. It has a wonderful strength, a wonderful hold upon the earth, and requires years to die out. So it is with the Christian whose faith has been properly established; he should be so fixed, so established in the promises of God’s Word, that no wind of doctrine could overturn his faith....

“As a tree does not breathe the same element at all times, and as it is not always flooded with sunshine, but needs also the rains and storms for its development, so the child of God needs varied experiences and sometimes change of environment to best develop all the fruits of the holy Spirit. The great Husbandman knows just what experiences and surroundings each one of his ‘trees’ needs—how much sunshine, how much rain, how much cold and how much heat, how much pruning—and he will supply just what is best adapted to each case. He knows how to vary these conditions, environments, etc., without disturbing the process of rooting and upbuilding, but developing it. This we do not know how to accomplish, but would bring upon ourselves spiritual disaster. So we need to keep ourselves continually under the care of the skillful Husbandman and earnestly cooperate with him, that we may grow and become strong and immovable—firmly established.

“The depth and the spread of the roots of a tree are shown by the vigor and fruitage of the tree. A tree that is not deeply and firmly grounded can neither bring forth rich, luscious fruit nor furnish cool, refreshing shade to man. Depth of root is absolutely essential. So the Christian’s faith must be deeply grounded in Christ; and thus shall we also grow up into him, learning more and more what is the divine will as expressed in him. The rooting process is unseen, and can be judged only by its outward manifestations. When there is luxuriant foliage there is good rooting. But the growth must not stop there; fruit must be borne. And so the spiritual life of the child of God will manifest itself more and more in its likeness to Christ. To vary the figure, the Christian will not only be a branch in the vine, but will bear rich clusters of fruit, which should become more choice in quality and size year by year....

“The general sentiment among the teachers of false doctrine, and even among the world in general, who do not believe in the necessity or the advisability of being established in faith, is that to be established is to be bigoted. Those who are so unfair in mind as to receive and tenaciously hold what they have never proven, either by sound logic or by the authority of the Word of God, are rightly called bigots. But one who in simple, childlike faith accepts and firmly holds to what God has inspired, what he has caused to be written in his Word for our instruction, is not a bigot, but a strong, established character, and will stand when all the structures built upon the numerous theories and imaginings of men shall have fallen....

“The difference between a strong and steadfast Christian and a bigot is that one is established in truth, and the other is established in error....

“Only by continual scrutiny of ourselves in the light of God’s Word can we make real progress in the narrow way in which our Master walked. Truth is to become brighter and fuller and more luminous as we go onward. To this end, we must keep close to the Word and in line with his program. The Lord will not accept little, undeveloped sprouts for the kingdom, but he wants those that have grown and matured—strong, sturdy ‘trees of righteousness.’—Isaiah 61:3.

“Delve into the promises of God more and more. As you do this, the roots of faith will draw up the nutriment and send it out into your life, and you will grow, just as a tree grows, because nourished, fed. Thus alone will you become established in The Faith, and not in your imaginings nor the imaginings of others. Our faith is to grow stronger and more vigorous day by day. It is not to be a faith in ourselves or in anything apart from the Lord. Faith is what we started with in the beginning, and we shall need it in increasing measure as we go on in our upward way—faith in God and in his sure Word. All that we know as children of the Lord has come to us through the channel of Jesus, his holy apostles, and the prophets of old, and we are to continue feeding at this same table with thanksgiving.”

The progression is in two directions: downward and upward. Growth downward is essential for growth upward. Downward growth, or “rooting,” indicates our responsibility to *search the Scriptures* for instruction on the Christian life. We must *dig* for knowledge and understanding that are so essential to our Christian walk, growth, and maturity. As we get understanding, we become capable of growing upward. We look into the Word for “nutriment” (instruction and information). As we apply this instruction, we grow upward, are “built up.”

“Stablished in the faith” means “not wavering.” We are not to be blown about by “every wind of doctrine” but are to strive for maturity (Eph. 4:14). In the beginning of our walk, we desire the sincere milk of the Word. A baby searches for the mother’s breast to get the nutriment, but as the baby grows, he desires stronger food, stronger meat. Desire is essential to make progress, but the desire must be satisfied. Thus the Christian searches the Word for instruction, help, guidance, etc., as to how to be Christlike. The process is progressive. One starts as an infant and keeps desiring food unto the meat of the Word to, hopefully, become mature and established up to the capacity of his understanding. (Note: The *variety* of understanding should *never* cease.) We should become mature in *essential* doctrine along the lines of dispensational truth, morals, etc. In that regard, we can reach “perfection” as individuals, that is, up to each one’s capacity. Therefore, if one is in the process of being rooted and built up, the hope is that he will reach a level of *maturity* as a “tree.” A tree is first a seed, then a sprout, next a sapling, and eventually a sturdy, mature “tree” of righteousness, fully “stablished in the faith.”

The “rooting” and growing (or being built up) are *progressive*, whereas the condition of being “stablished in the faith” is a *fixed* state. One who is established is, hopefully, *not moved*, for he is

mature with a heart fixed in Christ and in God.

“Abounding therein with thanksgiving.” This should be our attitude toward *God* regardless of the circumstances around us. Let nothing happening around us—within or without the Church—cause a depressed state. We should always abound in thanksgiving no matter what others may or may not do. Our *overall joy in the Lord* should not be affected. Think of all that Paul experienced and endured, yet he could make this statement. And this was written near the *end* of his ministry. After so much persecution and trial, he still abounded in thanksgiving and rejoiced.

The word “knowledge” is the Greek *gnosis*, and the *gnosis* philosophy prevailed in the early Church. It was just beginning at the end of Paul’s ministry but gained prominence and prevailed during John’s subsequent ministry and onward. Paul was now being phased out, that is, at the time of this letter to the Colossians, and John, the second messenger, was being prepared to follow the work of Paul. John moved to Asia Minor and lived to be 100 years old or more. The problem Paul was hinting at became prominent after his death, and John had to combat it. *Gnosis* is a different type of knowledge, not the knowledge of Scripture. Some use the text “Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth” to prove that those with too much scriptural knowledge get heady, but that is not what Paul was saying (1 Cor. 8:1). *Gnosis* knowledge was dangerous and later became known as Gnosticism. Gnostics taught about the “mysteries” of God, but they were not the ones in the Bible. They used *human* theories and applications and felt *superior* to the other brethren. This fancied “superiority” was not in the Scriptures or in Christ but in *other* subjects.

“Love” is not what *we* think it is but what the Bible describes. We should strive for *God’s* love, for even the unconsecrated can have maternal love and be noble, for example. To have God’s love, we must study *His* Word, *His* actions. It is wrong to say that love is *always* nice. The *general* characteristic is that love is nice, but there are exceptions.

Col. 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.

“Rudiments” are basics and principles. Paul was telling the Colossians to avoid the philosophies of the world. The phrase “rudiments of the world” has a wider application that includes the Law, for a Christian is under grace. If the Christian is a Jew, he has been released from his former condemnation under the Law and should, therefore, not go back under the Law. The Christian—Jew or Gentile—is not to observe the holy days, dietary restrictions, etc., of the Law. Paul was zeroing in on what he saw to be the gravest danger at that particular time. Later *both* the Alexandrian and the Eastern philosophies infiltrated the Church. In John’s day, the Eastern philosophy made headway. In Paul’s day, the Judaizing influence, or element, caused the most problem.

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit.” Proponents of these wrong philosophies boldly and vainly considered themselves to be superior, as several epistles show. They doubted Paul’s apostleship but not their own position. They doubted Paul because he was not with Jesus during the 3 1/2 years of his ministry. They downgraded him and tried to advance themselves. Therefore, the “vain deceit” aspect was very manifest in Paul’s day. And later Diotrephes would not receive the Apostle John and associates and forbid others in the *ecclesia* to do so (3 John 9,10). This was another example of “vain deceit” because Diotrephes considered himself superior not only to an apostle but also to the apostle’s advice.

“Beware lest any man spoil you ... after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world.” Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, “Instead of God’s commandments, you teach the doctrines and traditions of men” (Mark 7:9,13 paraphrase).

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

“For in him [Jesus] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead [Deity] *bodily*.” Verse 9 is almost a repeat of Colossians 1:19. A theme of this epistle was to show the relationship of the Father and the Son. Trinitarians use this Scripture to say that the “Godhead” is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit,” yet in both the RSV and the *Diaglott*, the word “Deity” is used and is correct.

The word “bodily” is important because the proponents of the later erroneous philosophy did not regard Jesus as the only way of salvation. They did not see his coming in the *flesh* as necessary for paying the Ransom. Instead they considered him a manifestation of God in the sense of a way-shower but thought that others should be similarly so regarded. In fact, the leaders of this philosophy each wanted to also be considered the way of salvation. Thus many of the heresies in the early Church had personalized names of those who claimed to be the way of salvation (for example, Manichaeism). This temptation is a great danger to all of us but especially to those in a teaching capacity. Some televangelist personalities attach undue importance to their own work. In other words, they advocate listening to them personally and to what they think the Bible teaches as being the only way, but we must search the Scriptures *ourselves*. We look to others as teachers *if* they are in harmony with the Bible, but our faith must be substantiated by the Scriptures. Leading personalities often encourage the thought that if we do not follow with them, we are on the outside. They do not promote the thought that there can be individuals in Christ apart from them. Unfortunately, the Truth movement is developing a similar attitude. “The truth” is interpreted as Pastor Russell, the *Reprints*, etc., but our consecration is to *Christ—he* is our Teacher and Head. We are to follow *Christ* no matter where that path might lead. “Thus saith the LORD” should be our proof, not “thus saith Pastor Russell.” True, we look for the advice of others, and especially of the seventh messenger, but the advice should be compared with the Bible and retained only if we can prove it. Of course sometimes we can misunderstand the Bible, and that is why we need help from various individuals. If we are truly *Bible Students*, we should be as familiar with the Bible as with the writings of any man. The Volumes organize thinking along a certain line and then supply Scriptures as substantiation. In perhaps 98 percent of the cases, the thought is correct but not 100 percent. The Volumes should be a *reference*, not a final word of proof.

Paul was harping on the theme of Jesus’ *physical body* prior to his crucifixion. In Jesus dwelled all the fullness of the Deity *bodily*. Colossians 1:22 stresses the same point: “In the body of his *flesh* through death.” Jesus came in the *flesh*, and he *actually died*. Two major theories counteracting these points existed in the early Church. It is interesting that Paul brought up both of them near the end of his ministry. When John’s ministry gained such prominence subsequently, he was right in the thick of these erroneous beliefs.

Jesus had the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34). Therefore, if all the *fullness* of the Deity was in Jesus, then *all* wisdom and understanding have to be considered in the light of Jesus and his instructions, and we do not have to go to outside sources. Since Jesus authorized his apostles to also teach and since he spoke favorably of the prophets, those are all that are needed—that is, the *Bible*. Messengers aid us in studying the Bible, but the apostles were the “sent out ones” of Jesus. He appointed the Twelve after praying to the Father in regard to their selection and approval. Then he gave them nicknames such as Cephas and sons of Boanerges.

In his Epistle to the Colossians, Paul was emphasizing the importance of Jesus’ role in his ministry of 3 1/2 years while here on earth in the *flesh* (Col. 1:19-22; 2:9). Paul talked of the risen Lord on other occasions, but his words here were particularly slanted to rebut the erroneous philosophy he anticipated would intrude into the class at Colosse. Some said that Jesus was only a messenger of truth and not *the* representative of God. They said he did not

really suffer or die on the Cross, that his death was only a pretense. Proponents of this heresy looked down on those who were persecuted and/or poor temporally. Suffering for Christ and for righteousness' sake was not seen as an evidence of faithfulness. In an effort to combat this error, Paul had to state that all of his sufferings and persecutions were marks of his apostleship. Instead the erring element regarded the sufferings as indications of *disfavor*. Principles of true Christianity were compromised, and eventually, many just *blindly* followed a leader.

Col. 2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Verse 10 continues the thought started in verses 6 and 7, namely, that as we have received Jesus, we are to walk in *him*, being rooted and built up in *him*, for in *him* dwelled the fullness of the Deity bodily. And Colossians 1:18 states that Jesus is the Head of the Church, the beginning of the New Creation, the firstborn from the dead. In all things, *he* has the preeminence.

A danger was threatening the area of Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. In this epistle, Paul was trying to warn Christians in all three towns (Col. 4:13,16). The thrust of his warning in verse 10 is that there was no need to consult other principalities and powers because, in the gospel, we deal *directly with* Jesus and we petition the Heavenly Father *through* Jesus. We have direct access to Christ. If he is the top, or Head, of all principalities and powers, then the erroneous philosophy of consulting angels detracted from Christ's role as Advocate for the Christian (1 John 2:1). We "are complete in *him*, which is the head of all principality and power."

Incidentally, this Eastern philosophy, which is still inherent in the Roman Catholic Church, has given birth to praying not only to Mary and Joseph but also to different saints. Anciently, angels were prayed to and names were assigned to them. Today a person in an automobile is supposedly protected by having a statue of a particular saint on the dashboard. When an individual "consecrates," he is specially dedicated to a saint. This thinking is purely *human* speculation, for the Christian is dedicated to *Christ* and is complete in *him*.

Col. 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:

This portion (and onward) of Colossians may seem puzzling because Paul was addressing the *whole* ecclesia. The church at Colosse was mixed, containing both Jews and Gentiles. Paul was not addressing just one segment but the entire ecclesia, both Jew and Gentile.

If faithful to his covenant, the Christian, whether Jew or Gentile, is *spiritually* circumcised. The words "of the sins" are missing in some manuscripts. Paul was emphasizing more than just this one aspect.

Col. 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.

Both Jewish and Gentile Christians were buried with Christ in baptism. To try to apply these verses to only one segment causes conflicts and problems, for all Christians (Jew and Gentile) are baptized with Christ into his death.

Col. 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Verse 13 likewise applies to both Jews and Gentiles. The Jew, who was *physically* circumcised, and the Gentile, who was *not physically* circumcised, were both *spiritually uncircumcised* prior to consecration. Physical circumcision pertains to only a *small portion* of the body, whereas spiritual circumcision includes the *whole* body. Therefore, when the entire body of flesh is

considered, both Jew and Gentile were “uncircumcised” prior to becoming Christians.

As children of Adam, the Jews were dead in sins and the uncircumcision of their flesh. However, since Jews and Gentiles were both children of Adam, the death penalty upon the body of flesh was equally on both. In another epistle, Paul argued from a different standpoint, namely, that Abraham was circumcised before the Law even came into existence. Not until Moses’ day, when the Law was inaugurated, was the ritual of physical circumcision required on the eighth day, yet circumcision existed previously.

Col. 2:14 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;

The “handwriting of ordinances” was the Law Covenant. To those Jews who accepted Christ, these ordinances were no longer obligatory. They did not have to keep the letter of the Law regarding the ritualistic ceremonies. Paul was trying to show that *all* fullness was in Christ *regardless* of one’s background. In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, bond nor free (Gal. 3:28).

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

Christ is the Head of all principalities and powers (Col. 2:10). “Principalities and powers” are unseen superior beings, both good (the holy angels) and evil (the fallen angels). In other words, Christ is the Head of all the holy angels, and he is also the Head of all the fallen angels in that they are incarcerated in chains of darkness, awaiting the “judgment of the great day” (Jude 6). Paul referred to principalities and powers several times in his epistles, sometimes meaning the holy angels, sometimes the demon powers, and sometimes both.

“Spoils” were the booty, or prizes, of war. The victor got the spoils; that is, the spoils were accomplished with regard to captivity.

In all of the heathen religions, the deity, or god, was pictured as terrible and awesome—as a being that must be appeased, or placated. In the Eastern religions, there was a pressure on conscience. The worshippers were constantly reminded that they must pay a penalty again and again. The connotation was that the deity was opposed to them; therefore, different levels of pacification were sought. Various angelic orders and beings were consulted to intercede on their behalf and appease the wrath of the deity.

Paul was saying that these principalities and powers, which bore down on the early Christian Church when the Asian philosophies entered, made some brethren think extra gospel works were needed, extra penalties. The Law appealed to them because animal sacrifices were needed to appease God, but they failed to realize that the animal sacrifices were merely *pictures*, not the reality, and that the animals represented *spiritual* things in the gospel dispensation. They took the letter of the Law to justify them in thinking that sacrifices were needed to appease God. They contended that one of the sacrifices was to *obey the Law*, that is, holy days, feasts, cleansing from death, dietary restrictions, etc. (see verse 16).

“Principalities and powers” could be either spiritual or human; they were any element that was trying to exact a control over the early Church and draw brethren away from the primacy of Christ. That was the point in a nutshell. Paul was even hinting that an *individual* in the class was promoting and introducing this error. The individual was not named but was referred to. Verse 8 says, “Beware lest any *man* spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit.” Verse 16 reads, “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.” And verse 18 states, “Let no *man* *beguile* you of your

reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels.” Paul gave these warnings, even though at this time, the class as a whole was faithful. Not only had Paul received a good report, but he admired the Colossians’ steadfastness of faith (verse 5). In other words, the Colossians were trying to hold to what they had learned as the truth—that they were separate from the condemnation of the Law. But the other party in their midst was continually bringing up this matter. Paul was fearful that eventually the individual would gain control of the class, and that is what happened later—a little after John’s day. In that very locality, the Christians began to worship angels. History records this deviation as a fact.

Q: Was there enough of a time gap that some of these brethren Paul was writing to were off the scene and a second generation of converts embraced such error?

A: Yes, that is correct.

The famous church council that was held at Laodicea denounced the worship of angels—and even singled out Colosse as being a center of angel worship. Another account tells of a church that was built to honor the archangel Michael, who had “delivered” them. Angel worship became a definite problem, and it detracted from Christ.

Incidentally, in Java, Sumatra, India, and Burma, etc., *multiple* spirits, gods, and deities were worshipped. In India, for example, there were ten leading spirits. To be complete, one had to be in harmony with all ten. Each person had to be well schooled in the meaning of the ten spirits and what they represented. Paul was saying, “We are complete in Christ *alone*. There is no need to study others.” Of the principalities and powers, the *unholy* angels inculcated the doctrines of demons in the early Church, fostering and prospering them. Paul was trying to remove that kind of fear and show that our relationship is in *Christ alone*. Although opposition cannot be avoided, we must not fear it but, instead, must *fight* it.

This erroneous element used the condemnation of the Law as a weapon. By this means, many were brought under their control, thinking they had to observe a lot of rituals. But faith in Christ and the Law cannot be mixed. We are first justified by *faith*; then that faith must be accompanied by some works to prove it is a *living* faith, but *faith* is what justifies us.

Col. 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:

“Let no man *therefore* judge you in meat [food], or in drink, or in respect of an holyday,” etc. The false teachers, the Judaizing element, said the Christian had to obey the Law as well as Christ. This faction called attention to those who did not observe the Law, making comments such as “You are eating pork” or “You did not observe the holy day.” They condemned those who remained loyal to the original teaching that the Christian is no longer under the Law. The Judaizing element used the Old Testament to emphasize condemnation for the one who would not observe the ritualistic ordinances. They also bore down on the *conscience* of the Christian to make him feel he was sinning. *Fear* of sin was used as a weapon of *control*. The believers, *fearing* that maybe this element was right, submitted in many cases. (Similarly, fear of hellfire has subsequently been used as a weapon of control over religious bodies of people.) Here Paul was talking about only one faction that introduced false doctrine. He talked about other factions a little later.

How does one judge “in meat,” etc.? The Judaizing element tried to force the Christian to be under the restrictions of the Law as well. “Meat” restrictions included meat offered to idols and the meat of unclean animals. “Drink” restrictions meant that the Judaizing element tried to force Christians to take the Nazarite vow. This vow was to be voluntary and could be taken for varied lengths of time up to one’s whole life, but it was part of the *Law*, not the *gospel*

dispensation. Those who drank wine were thus condemned by the Judaizing element.

There were many holy days under the Law and many prohibitions and restrictions attached thereto. For example, the soul was to be afflicted on the Day of Atonement. The Passover entailed slaying a lamb and applying the blood to the lintels and the doorpost of the home. Not only did “sabbath days” occur once a week, but there were weekly sabbath days and holy high sabbath days.

The “new moon” referred to a blowing of trumpets at the beginning of the new month with attendant sacrifices. In counteracting the false teachings of the individual in Colosse, Paul answered in fullness. Probably this individual was not advocating animal sacrifices, but Paul gave a comprehensive answer in case *another* aspect of the Law was stressed later on. In other words, Paul not only answered the specific problem at the moment in Colosse but also warned against possible future problems.

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

Verse 17 shows the *superiority* of the gospel. Everything that happened under the Law was to teach a lesson pointing *forward* to Christ. Why should Christians go back to the “shadow” when the substance, the reality, had come? The shadow pointed to and was supplanted by the *reality* in Christ. To return to the Law would be to return to the *lower* basic lessons, which were important but in a lesser category.

Col. 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,

“Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility” means in a humility without reason, that is, with excessive, unauthorized, demonstrative humility. *Excessive* humility in putting oneself down was regarded as a sign of real piety. Some went around with just the clothing on their backs and depended on others for support, food, and lodging, yet were not necessarily preaching the gospel. Their faith was considered strong, but the premise was faulty. The holy men of India sit and pray all day, and others are expected to feed them, for example. They are falsely regarded as very holy. This principle also applies to nuns and priests, who are expected to wear particular garments, take certain vows, shut themselves away in monasteries, etc. The world tends to regard as religious those who take ridiculous vows, sealing themselves off from humanity and society. Such a life may seem to be great humility, but the Scriptures do not authorize it. Christians are to let their lights shine (Matt. 5:16).

Later on in this same Epistle to the Colossians, Paul spoke of the need for humility. Humility is in order but *not excessive*, *demonstrative* humility that is designed to *impress others* with how humble and religious a person is.

“Let no man beguile you of your reward in a ... worshipping of angels.” In *principle*, we use this Scripture to prove we should not exalt messengers (human beings) as leaders, but Paul was referring to *literal* angels back there. Mythology had *numerous* unseen gods. A multitude of deities was worshipped to gain certain things or to get help. There was actually a man in the Colossian class who was teaching these ideas and thus was intruding “into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.” Paul was saying that this individual was preaching nonsense, that he was speaking about things of which he had no knowledge. They were fantasies of his imagination.

In what sense was the man “*vainly* puffed up”? He thought he had the ideal spiritual walk. His being “*vainly* puffed up” ties in with the next verse in that he was “not holding the Head” but

was promoting himself into a position of preeminence. Not only did he promote himself as an authority, but he centered attention on other unseen spiritual powers.

So much enlightenment is available today that the present danger is worshipping an individual in the Church *more than Christ*. Back there the reference was to the more obvious literal angels, but now an individual could be worshipped and almost considered equivalent to a “Thus saith the LORD.” Mariolatry and worship of the office of the Papacy are two examples.

Gnosticism and Docetism were prevalent in the early Church, but here the warning was against those who punished the body. Another group went to the other extreme by indulging in all sin. They believed that they became knowledgeable by experiencing all types of sin, and they felt that *knowledge* justifies. Consequently, the lack of morality in one’s personal life was considered immaterial. This type of thinking is a common practice in heathen worship.

Thus there are all kinds of extremes. One extreme is becoming monks and going out to live in the desert isolated from society or to sit on a mountain or in a cave all alone. The other extreme is actually indulging in sin in the belief that doing so enables one to speak with authority. The confessional booth permits all kinds of indulgences of the flesh. One can sin flagrantly and then just go to the priest for forgiveness. Even gangsters are given a church funeral.

Col. 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.

Christ is the center of Christian development, the *only* way of approaching God.

Col. 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,

“Rudiments” are pagan ordinances and worldly philosophies, basics, and principles—all of which are in opposition to the thinking of the Lord. “Rudiments” and “ordinances” are somewhat synonymous in this verse.

The Law Covenant is not included in these “rudiments” because they will all “perish” (see verse 22), and the Law will not cease from the standpoint that its principles and some of the ceremonies will be applied in the next age. True, the Old Law Covenant will perish but not the New Law Covenant, which will be much like the old.

Col. 2:21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

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

Verse 21 shows a progression of increasing contact or involvement with the arena the Christian should avoid: (1) touch not, (2) taste not, and (3) handle not. Paul was saying, “Do not get involved in these rudiments, even to the least extent. Verse 21 and the first half of verse 22 are a parenthetical statement: “(Touch not; taste not; handle not; ... all [pagan ordinances, rudiments, and worldly philosophies] are to perish with the using;).” From another standpoint, the implication is that those who did the touching, tasting, and handling—thus becoming completely involved—would perish.

The main thought starts with verse 20 and concludes with the last half of verse 22. “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, after the commandments and doctrines of men?”

Paul was warning the Colossians to refrain from exploring the unseen, the mystical, the supernatural—to not touch, taste, or handle such things. In some respects, a natural inquisitiveness or creativity seems to be implanted in the minds of men, but this quality can be controlled if the Christian is totally submissive to the Word of God. The Scriptures are the foundation, the guide.

From another standpoint, Paul was warning against making the commandments and doctrines of men mandatory. If a false messenger, or teacher, made multiple beliefs mandatory, the danger was the setting up of creeds. The exception would be fundamental teachings such as God is the Creator and the Author of the divine plan of salvation, Jesus is the Head of the Church, Jesus gave his life a Ransom for all, and Jesus is the Mediator between God and men. To go much beyond these fundamentals allows human philosophy and the commandments of men to enter. As Jesus said, the scribes and Pharisees made “the word of God of none effect” through their tradition (Mark 7:13).

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

In verses 20-23, Paul was speaking of that which originated not with God but with *man*. Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, “Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition” (Matt. 15:6). Therefore, the “rudiments” could include Jewish *worldly* traditions, which are of *man* and not of God.

“Will-worship” is self-devised worship. It would be doing one’s *own* will or the will of *others*, rather than God’s will, in matters of worship.

“Humility” is good if *sincere*, but humility is not good when it is done to be seen of and to impress man. Verse 18 mentioned “voluntary humility,” which is humility that is unwarranted or without reason. For example, one could go beyond respect for Pastor Russell and have a form of “voluntary humility” toward him, which would be manifested by a *blind* acceptance of his statements without reasoning on and proving them. Respect, consideration, and recognition are one thing, but reverence is another. And this is true not only of the seven messengers but also of *any* individual who is loyal, faithful, and well versed in the Scriptures. However, “voluntary humility” is more of an abject or unreasonable submission.

A “show of wisdom” would be an outward demonstration for an ulterior motive of wanting to impress others.

“Neglecting of the body” is punishing the body. Some actually physically punished themselves to be seen of men as performing an act (or acts) of piety. This practice occurred on various occasions in the first few centuries of early Church history.

Punishing the body was a perverted twist of the thought of keeping the body under (1 Cor. 9:27). It was like an outward flagellation of the flesh where one tortured his body or fasted abnormally to be seen by others. Another example would be to go to a monastery and sleep on a board or wear burlap. In other words, “neglecting of the body” is any open show to call attention to the fact that one is depriving himself.

“Not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.” Self-flagellation, for example, can be gratifying to the flesh in that it puffs up the individual with a feeling of piety and self-worth. The flesh is tortured, but the ego expands. What we eat, how we dress, etc., are all important. We must make sure our motives are pure. Some wandered from place to place, not working but depending on the donations of others for food, lodging, etc.

Verse 23 helps to clarify the term in verse 22 “commandments and doctrines of men,” which were the teachings of various philosophers. Some advocated punishing the body, for example.

Paul wrote these admonitions because this philosophy was beginning to be broached in the class at Colosse. Evidently, an individual in the class was promoting these ideas on the side.

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

“Seek those things which are above.” The implication is that when one consecrates, it does not automatically follow that his thoughts are suddenly all heavenly. One must *seek and set* his mind and affection on the things above (verse 2). The natural tendency, unless we fight it, is to gravitate toward earth, even when we are consecrated. Paul had just told the Colossians to leave worldly philosophies alone. Now they should *work* to lift their minds above.

The natural tendency is to seek *earthly* things, such as what we eat, drink, wear, etc., plus pleasure, entertainment, and pagan or worldly philosophies that are not Christ-centered. The commandments and teachings of *men* are also of *earth* origin. Notice how frequently in this epistle Paul called attention to the primacy of *Christ*—over and over again.

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

“Mind” is a better word, for “affection” limits the application to the emotion. “Set your *mind* [King James margin] on things above, not on things on the earth.” We are to set our minds, thoughts, purpose, and intent on heavenly things. Some of the worldly philosophies were stoic in nature and thus were devoid of emotion. For example, the Stoics could accept pain without any outward expression of anguish. Others regarded them as strong in willpower and living above the flesh, admiring them accordingly as having strong characters. They showed neither emotion nor affection. The word “mind” embraces both types of philosophy. Paul was urging the Christian to concentrate on neither worldly philosophy (the one that included affection and the one that did not). In other words, the word “mind” is more inclusive than just pinpointing the Stoic philosophy as one to be avoided.

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

In baptism, or consecration, the human will dies and the person becomes alive to God, as expressed and shown in the life and teachings of Christ. But why was verse 3 inserted? In addition to the human will dying, the flesh is reckoned dead. In Colossians 2:23, Paul warned against gratification of the flesh by doing things such as punishing the body to impress others. Now he was showing the radical change to the opposite extreme for the Christian. One’s life is “hid with Christ”; that is, the Christian is dead to certain things but very much *alive* to, interested in, and dedicated to *living* hopes, aims, and ambitions in Christ. (Verse 3 harmonizes well with Colossians 2:10-12.) The Colossians were to follow Christ rather than the distracting elements that were troubling the Church.

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

Verse 4 was inserted to show that glory and gratification are *future*. At present, our “life is hid.” Glory and honor will come when Jesus returns and the Church is with him. For now the flesh is reckoned as dead, and we are to be inconspicuous with regard to our sufferings, generally speaking. (Christian martyrs are the exception.) We do not look for admiration of men in the present life. The Christian’s reward and demonstration of worthiness will be openly manifested in the future, in the Kingdom Age. Now the Little Flock is virtually unknown.

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

What does the command “Mortify therefore your members” suggest? At first, it might appear to be a contradiction, but it is not. Although the flesh is reckoned dead, there is the danger of immorality, where the flesh is allowed to take the ascendancy. The mortification of the flesh that others were advocating was of an *outward* kind, having to do with manner of dress, for example, and had nothing to do with morals. Mortification of the flesh for the Christian is not outward flagellation of the flesh or “will-worship” but control of the flesh from the standpoint of its action in society along the lines of character and morals.

“Evil concupiscence” includes the aspect of passion and is the desire for forbidden things or people, such as another’s wife. “Inordinate affection” is strange sexual behavior, that which is unnatural, such as homosexuality or anything inordinate; it is abnormal behavior as opposed to the normal affection of the husband-wife relationship and family affection. Parental and filial affection is normal, but filial affection can become abnormal if it develops into homosexuality or lesbianism. To a large extent, our conscience knows the line dividing the ordinate from the inordinate.

“Covetousness” includes worshipping or idolizing either self or others. Another form of this sin is to desire something that someone else has such as money or a house. Covetousness is setting our affection on something *apart from God*.

“Idolatry” includes all of these sins: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness.

Col. 3:6 For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

Verse 6 reminds us of the beginning of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. All down through history, God has been very displeased with sin and disobedience, but He has been patient lest His plan be changed by interference and showing His displeasure prematurely. Thus the permission of evil has continued. Sometimes God’s wrath comes upon an individual, although it may not be recognized as such and is thought of as just a happening. For the most part, however, God’s wrath has been delayed down through the ages.

Col. 3:7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

Our *former* conduct is contrasted with the *present*. Now we live a consecrated life (compare verses 7 and 8).

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

Verse 7 refers back to verse 5. Prior to consecration, we walked in gross sins like fornication, inordinate affection, and covetousness. Verse 8 lists less gross, though nonetheless dangerous, sins the new creature is to put off. If practiced, these sins can also keep one from getting life. The gross behavior of verse 5 is more easily recognized, whereas the sins of verse 8 are usually not as apparent, for they are only occasionally manifest. However, all of the sins in verse 8 are dangerous and could be outward manifestations of grosser sins (verse 5) being secretly indulged in. Statements from the mouth are not hidden from the Church. In summary, verse 5 lists deeds of a wrong lifestyle. Verse 8 lists sins of the mouth that seem to be less important but are actually symptomatic of a serious condition.

“Anger” can be either held within or manifested by a look or a word. “Wrath” is an *outward* expression of anger. It can be accompanied by remarks or physical blows and thus is a more pronounced manifestation of anger. “Malice” is bearing ill will toward someone. “Blasphemy” is slander (see RSV).

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

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

“Lie not one to another.” Deception and hypocrisy of thought or practice are not to occur with the new creature.

“Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him [God] that created him [the new creature].” Notice the emphasis on *knowledge*. We must have the instruction in order to act upon it—and to be more and more sanctified. We are to copy *God’s* image as manifested in His Son. Jesus is our example, but he is an image of the *Father*.

How does God “create” us? He begets us with the Holy Spirit as new creatures. The “old man” is the old will, the human will. The “new man” is the new creature, the new mind.

We are to pattern our life after the image of Christ and his behavior subsequent to Jordan—his sacrificial life, his putting down the flesh, with the hope of *future* glory. The glory he *partly* received when he was raised from death, high above all powers and principalities, will be *fully* revealed in the last times. The Church, too, awaits their future reward.

In this epistle, Paul was showing that *Christ* is the outward manifestation of God (God manifest in the flesh), and that in *Jesus* dwells all the fullness of Deity bodily. In contrast, *God* is the Creator, the Emperor of the universe.

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

According to *Smith’s Bible Dictionary*, “Scythian” is a generalized term for rude, ignorant, degraded nomadic tribes who dwelled mostly on the north of the Black and Caspian seas and on into Asia. Some of these, as well as the more normal “Barbarians,” became Christians. Paul did not use the term “Gentile” here, but “Barbarian” conveys that thought.

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

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

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

Verses 12-14 more or less continue the theme of kindness, gentleness, etc. Why did Paul go into all this detail and description? Suppose that a certain experience was occurring in the class. These various categories would highlight the experience and help the Colossian brethren to get the point better than if Paul had just used the word “love,” or “charity,” as a broad term.

Incidentally, humility and meekness were looked down upon by many in the early Church who thought the Christian should be noble, cultured, educated, and proud. Christians who

were “poor” in health, money, appearance, and education were often regarded as inferior. Paul wrote this epistle a year or two before the end of his life, and things were changing. By this time, there had been numerous converts, relatively speaking, of diverse backgrounds and beliefs, and they brought certain opinions into the Church with regard to what the Christian should aspire to—*false* opinions not backed up by the Word of God. An epistle has survived where an elder at Ephesus was told about another class where sick and imprisoned brethren were not visited. In fact, they were regarded as inferior. Also, there were actual physical confrontations, and some wondered whether or not these attitudes were right—whether there was justification for them. The Apostle John tried to combat these wrong attitudes in his epistles with such expressions as “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer” (1 John 3:15) and “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar” (1 John 4:20). Some outwardly manifested this hatred—it was not just secretly in their hearts—by openly demeaning others.

“Bowels of mercies” are tender mercies that genuinely well up from within. The bowels are affected by strong emotions. What about “kindness”? Mercy is usually an *inward* disposition or thinking toward someone, whereas kindness is an *outward* act. Kindness is revealed or manifested in some way.

“Humbleness of mind” is humility. Humility can be secret, whereas there is more action with “meekness,” which is teachableness. One might be very humble yet not be teachable. These are two different characteristics.

What is the distinction between “longsuffering” and “forbearing one another.” Long-suffering is patient endurance; forbearing is exercised toward another. Again there is a similarity, but the former can be secret and the latter is manifested.

Verses 12-14 tell what our attitude should be toward the *faults* of others. (Transgressions and violations of principle are another matter.) If one is prone to be contentious, he will be active full-time in this capacity. If one is not prone to be contentious, he will be so only when circumstances warrant it.

“Forgiving one another [freely] ... even as Christ [freely] forgave you.” “Forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any.” The word “quarrel” is rendered “complaint” in the King James margin. Forgiveness that is granted so freely would be for relatively minor things—for complaints, faults, little differences, ethnic characteristics, etc., as opposed to violations of doctrine or principle that are of a more serious nature. Stated another way, with regard to the unpleasant characteristics of others that disturb us, we should be kind, long-suffering, and forgiving.

All of the above qualities are *general* attitudes of the heart and mind of the Christian. On the one hand, Gentiles who came into the early Church had very little (if any) Old Testament background. Not only were the documents unavailable, but it takes *time* to study the principles of the Law. Thus they did not have the advantage we possess today with our Bibles. Coming from foreign, or alien, backgrounds into a new arrangement that required a lot of learning, the Gentiles naturally brought in considerable uncouth behavior, mannerisms, and expressions that *in time* would be smoothed out as the Holy Spirit operated on and changed their lives. As they developed in understanding, the changes took place. Thus forbearance was essential in the early Church. Jewish Christians, on the other hand, had the advantage of a past education under the Law. As a result, they were less apt to forbear with the Gentiles and tended to regard them as inferior. The Jewish Christians needed to be patient and forbearing toward the Gentiles, making an allowance for their background, habits, etc. In other words, faults were more apparent in the early Church than they are today.

We should also keep in mind that the various ecclesias in the early Church had just the Old Testament and the Gospels—plus perhaps the epistle especially directed to them and personal instruction from an apostle or a Christian like Timothy for a short time. They did not have the whole Bible as we do.

“And above [over] all these things put on charity [love], which is the bond of perfectness [completeness].” Love is like the girdle that embraces, or includes, all of the foregoing qualities. Paul also said, “Above all, ... [put on] the shield of faith”; that is, faith is the big shield that covers the other pieces of armor (Eph. 6:16). In other words, “love” is the summation of all the points just mentioned. It is the sum of all the graces and the rounding out of them. Love is not a new subject but the “bond” that holds the others in place. Thus the “bond of perfectness” is the bond of completeness or maturity.

Col. 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.

If one had the *opposite* characteristics of those listed in verses 12-14, there would not be peace in the individual or in the class. Class disputes and quarrels do not result in the brethren going home happy and rejoicing. Instead they feel they did not get anything out of the meeting. When trouble dominates a class, the brethren bring the trouble home.

Peace is desired and is important in our Christian development—but not at any cost. The Song of Solomon speaks about feeding on the “lilies,” which represent constructive, beautiful, helpful thoughts (Song 4:5).

The *Diaglott* has “the Anointed” instead of “God,” the thought being, “Let the peace of *Christ* rule in your hearts.” And verse 16 continues, “Let the word of *Christ* dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” Christ is certainly emphasized in this epistle as the Teacher of the Church, and not the pagan or worldly philosophies. Verse 17 also mentions Jesus: “Do all in the name of the *Lord Jesus*.” Of the three verses, only the end of verse 17 raises the thought up one level to the Father: “Giving thanks to God, even the Father, by him.”

Col. 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.

It is interesting to see the prominence Paul gave to psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. These are a part of Christian faith, especially the Book of Psalms. Music has its place.

Q: How would psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs be used to teach and admonish?

A: It would be appropriate to sing a song for a testimony (a solo) if one were so moved. An occasional from-the-heart “Amen” is also in order. The wording in the Psalms is often an expression of desiring closeness to the Lord, of wanting His mercy, forgiveness, or grace. In reading or singing a hymn (even as a group), we can receive instructions. For example, “Savior, more than life to me, I am clinging, clinging, close to thee” teaches humbleness of mind. Many hymns have helpful expressions and are reminders of what is taught in the Word. Thus they are a form of teaching and admonishing without personalizing the words.

“Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” The New American Standard translates “grace” as “thankfulness.” We should be thankful as we sing. When we have a special experience, very often a particular hymn will come to mind. And poetry is certainly a way to praise the Lord.

Emotion has some definite benefits to the Church when it is under control. Of course the exception would be an unusual situation such as a death. Emotion is good where it does not distort reason. Sometimes a psalm or a hymn helps us to express a feeling or sentiment we are unable to say in our own words.

Some of the psalms are prophetic and will be sung in Ezekiel's Temple in the future. However, the psalms that were *intimately* written to the Church itself may not be sung by the world in the Kingdom. In other words, some psalms that are applicable to the Church will be sung in the Temple, for the world will appreciate what the Little Flock has done, but other psalms are just too intimate and personal, being intended solely for the Church. Perhaps 125 out of the 150 psalms will be sung in the Kingdom.

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

The Greek word *kai*, translated "and," should be "even"—"even the Father."

Col. 3:18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

Col. 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

Verses 18 and 19 pertain to various matrimonial intimacies. In addition, they are general rules and guidelines where principle and conscience are not involved.

Husbands are instructed, "Be not bitter against them [your wives]"; that is, "Do not be harsh or sharp to your wives." Paul gave this instruction to consecrated husbands whether or not their wives were consecrated. In some countries, the husband regards the wife as a servant or a commodity and accords her no respect. Paul was counteracting such a tendency by saying not to speak or act harshly or inconsiderately. "Bitter," from the Greek *pikraino*, means "to make sharp or pointed." The same word is used in Revelation 10:10, where John ate the "little book," which was sweet in his mouth and bitter in his belly. If a husband is unreasonable to his wife, his attitude could lead to varying degrees of coolness and perhaps even to the extent of harshness. A Christian husband should not so act.

Col. 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is wellpleasing unto the Lord.

Verse 20 applies to children who are minors. When consecrated, the children answer to the Lord first, and to parents second, where conscience and principle are concerned. Incidentally, the epistles of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon were all written about the same time. Hence there is a similarity and an overlapping of some expressions.

Col. 3:21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

Verse 21 balances out verse 20. Both fathers (or parents) and children have responsibilities and requirements. If a child is criticized and scolded too much, his respect for the parent is squelched. The very purpose of the instruction is defeated.

And there is a higher lesson. We are told to present our bodies a living sacrifice, and this is a *reasonable* service to the Heavenly Father. On a much more elementary plane, would not the principle be the same with the natural parent? The child should render a *reasonable* service but not be expected to give an *unreasonable* service.

Col. 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:

Col. 3:23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

The advice to servants was that no matter how ill-tempered or unreasonable a master was, the servant was to try to obey with a good spirit (where principle was not violated), thereby bringing honor to the Christian cause. If the proper attitude is not appreciated in the present life, it certainly will be in the next life (see verse 24).

Servants were to obey and serve their masters with “singleness of heart ... as [un]to the Lord,” as long as there was not a violation of conscience. That is also true with regard to the parent-child relationship. A child should not necessarily obey the parent in every single matter because the parent may go astray. In an extreme case, the parent might even turn against God.

Col. 3:24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

Q: Since we usually think of the Father as determining the honors and the glory, is the thought that they will be dispensed through Jesus?

A: The calling is of God, but when the saints come to the heavenly plane, they will see Jesus first. Jesus will receive and then later present them to the Father, confessing their names before Him and all the holy angels (Rev. 3:5). We are called Christians, that is, followers and disciples of *Christ*. We are not called Theists, even though we reverence God to the highest degree. Hence there is a decorum when one is resurrected. In other words, the initial reception or handshake, as it were, will be first to Jesus; then maybe to the apostles, messengers, etc.; and later to the Father. Throughout eternity, we will get to know the Father better, but Paul was referring to the initial decorum here. Christ will do the presentation.

Col. 3:25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

The pronoun “he” refers to anyone who does wrong, whether consecrated or unconsecrated, and whether the individual is a father, child, servant, master, husband, or wife. This verse is an encouragement to Christians who are under unreasonable masters, husbands, etc. Rewards are not to be expected in the present age, but they *will come* sooner or later. And punishment for wrongdoing *will come* sooner or later.

Most slaves hoped that someday they would be either granted liberty or accepted into the master’s household on a higher plane. For the unconsecrated, that was about as much as could be hoped for. With a Christian slave, however, the goal or aim should not have been the same. If freedom was granted, that was fine, but it was *far more important* to receive the “inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12).

Q: The Church and the Great Company receive retribution in the present life, but what about the consecrated who prove to be incorrigible and go into Second Death (Rev. 2:11; 20:6)? Will they receive *all* retribution now in order to balance the scales?

A: Second Death is the *ultimate* penalty. However, those who get life must have retribution, even in minor cases, in the present life in one fashion or another. All, even the Second Death class, will get some compensation for good that is done, but retribution for wrongdoing becomes immaterial for a person who merits Second Death.

Q: Will the Second Death class even know the acts of wrong they have committed?

A: No. If a person goes into Second Death, that awareness and understanding are not necessary. If he had the understanding, he would probably correct the wrong, but he is *incapable* of receiving the correction because his conscience is seared.

Another aspect is brought out in the Book of Revelation with regard to the world of mankind. Those who have maligned and persecuted the Lord's little ones during the Gospel Age will, in the Kingdom, have to come before the feet of such and confess that they now recognize their faithfulness and identity (Rev. 3:9). In other words, some in the world will get retribution along this line in the next age. What they previously did will be brought to their attention, and amends will have to be made. Primarily, of course, it has been members of the *professed* Church who have maligned those of the *true* Church.

Some sins go beforehand to judgment, and some come after (1 Tim. 5:24). With regard to wrongs done by the master to the slave, the husband to the wife, etc., some will receive retribution in the present life and some in the future. But God will see that justice is done in His own way and time. If the Christian serves as faithfully as he can, he will receive his inheritance, and the other individual will also receive his inheritance or retribution. They are *separate* individuals.

“There is no respect of persons.” A person's position in life was an influencing factor. One who was wealthy or in the ruling family was accorded more esteem and honor, but with the Christian, these things are meaningless. We do not want to be favored in this way if doing so will cause the new creature to suffer.

Col. 4:1 Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

“Masters” were slave owners in the days of the early Church. Today's equivalent would be employers. “Servants” were literal slaves formerly and are employees currently.

What is the difference between that which is “just” and that which is “equal”? There can be many interpretations and examples. People should be paid according to their qualifications; that is, they should be paid justly for the *type of work they are performing*. “Equality” pertains to a *given level of work or performance*. All employees should not be paid the same wage when there are differences of service. For example, one person might do the work of two or three people—and should be paid accordingly. However, even here, there can be extenuating circumstances. For example, a handicapped person could be paid the standard wage even with a below-standard output *if his attitude was proper and if he was performing up to capacity*.

Employees and servants should be treated justly, respectfully, and fairly, not like dumb animals. If a person's work productivity is *clearly* above average, he should be equivalently compensated. Other employees, even if jealous, should respect the superior employee.

Unfortunately, an unqualified employee is sometimes rewarded because of personality or personal favor. That is unjust and unfair to the others, for there should be equal pay for equal *productivity*. For example, women should not expect pay equal to that of men in jobs where they cannot perform equivalently (such as firemen and auto mechanics).

“Fair play” should be exercised by the “master” on the part of those under his employ. Employees should be given their due. Not only should promotions be deserved, but conversely, reprimands, punishments, and demotions should be administered as deserved and not in excess of what is merited. For example, the jailer observed that Joseph was beneficial not only to himself but also to the other prisoners, and favored him accordingly (Gen. 39:21-23).

Knowing that they have a “Master in heaven” should keep the employer and the slave owner from getting heady with power and authority. All have to answer to Jesus sooner or later. Paul used the same tactic with husbands and wives. The husband is the head of the wife, but Christ is the Head of the husband. As bondservants or slaves of *Christ*, we should keep the proper perspective.

Col. 4:2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

After giving counsel to husbands, wives, children, fathers, servants, and masters, Paul now gave general advice to all. Some translations have the thought “Continue the *habit* of prayer, and watch and be thankful.”

When we pray, we should *watch* for the answer. When the answer comes—whether yes or no—we should be *thankful*. It is a privilege to be able to go to the Lord in prayer.

Col. 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:

Col. 4:4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

Paul was “in bonds” because of his faithfulness to the truth. He was preaching all the time, yet he asked the Colossian brethren to remember him in their prayers that a door of opportunity would be opened to him. He wanted to be able to speak as effectively as possible, to be fluent and discreet according to the situation. One might have the talent yet be tongue-tied under certain circumstances, so prayer is important. “That I may make it [the mystery of Christ] manifest, as I ought to speak.”

Col. 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

“Them that are without” would be the world, the unconsecrated. Why is “redeeming the time” coupled with the thought of walking in wisdom toward the unconsecrated? We should be careful in our associations with others (in business, with neighbors, etc.) that we do not spend more time in fellowship with them at the expense of the truth. Courtesies are to be extended to those in the world, but we should not cultivate worldly friendships to the extent that they limit our serving the truth.

Knowing this *in advance*, we should be on guard lest we become ensnared with obligations, appointments, socializing, etc. We should walk wisely, realizing that the time is short and ever keeping this precaution in mind.

Col. 4:6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Grace is to characterize our speech—grace seasoned with salt. We have a responsibility to see that our words are gracious and appealing, and not offensive or rude. Some people are good conversationalists for long periods of time, but the sum and substance is entertainment—nothing is learned. To the contrary, our speech is to have “salt” *with* the graciousness.

Salt has a little bite to it. Hence our words should be wholesome, purifying, practical, and beneficial, especially along *spiritual* lines. When having a conversation, many brethren think, “How can I introduce the truth?” and they try all kinds of techniques. No doubt the Lord appreciates such effort, even if the results are not great. The *intention* is significant, and practice makes one more adept. We should try to develop this habit—even if by nature we are timid and not good conversationalists.

We should think on these things so “that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” “Answer,” as used here in the sense of teaching and explaining, does not mean a question has to precede. It can simply mean to declare or state.

Col. 4:7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:

Tychicus was the messenger who delivered this letter to the Colossians and to the brethren in Hierapolis and Laodicea. He not only bore the message but could additionally tell the brethren tidbits of information about Paul and Paul’s circumstances, that is, details not in the letter.

Col. 4:8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;

After telling the brethren there about Paul and his circumstances, Tychicus would return to Paul and report the circumstances and welfare of the churches at Colosse, Hierapolis, and Laodicea. Having known Paul personally, Tychicus would be able to respond to various kinds of questions—for example, how Paul handled a particular situation (Acts 20:4). Therefore, not only did Tychicus bring news from Paul and learn of the condition of the brethren in this area he was visiting with the epistle, but he could help them and “comfort” their hearts, perhaps solving some of their problems thereby.

Col. 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.

Tychicus had the priority, for Paul said he could help in many ways. However, Onesimus, who accompanied Tychicus, was commended for serving well, as were the others who stayed in Rome.

Onesimus was Onesiphorus, the former slave of Philemon. Philemon lived in Colosse, and Paul had given Onesimus a letter (the Epistle to Philemon) to deliver unto him. In other words, Tychicus was bearing the letter to the Colossians, and Onesimus was carrying the letter to Philemon.

Col. 4:10 Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

Aristarchus and Marcus remained in Rome but sent greetings to the Colossians. They did not accompany Tychicus. “Marcus” was John Mark, a nephew (“sister’s son”) of Barnabas. The fact John Mark was in Rome at this time shows that he and Paul were reconciled. Paul had been quite upset with Mark (and Barnabas) with regard to the first missionary tour (Acts 15:37-39).

Aristarchus was a “fellowprisoner,” that is, a literal prisoner of the Romans (Acts 27:1,2). He was from Macedonia, an area that included Thessalonica, Philippi, and Berea (Acts 19:29). He was in close communication with Paul while both were prisoners in Rome. Otherwise, he could not have been included in the greeting in this way.

In Philemon 24, Paul called Aristarchus his fellow laborer. Perhaps Paul requested and was granted a sharing of house arrest with Aristarchus. Apparently, Paul received a large sum of money that enabled him to be under house arrest rather than in the dungeon or in the common prison. The money was probably left to him when his parents or someone else died. Money would then be the reason Paul was treated with respect, for Christianity was not popular, and neither were Jews.

“Marcus, ... (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)” Evidently, Paul gave John Mark some sort of ministry or missionary tour. Paul was telling the Colossians to welcome him; that is, Paul was recommending him. If John Mark should visit the Colossians, they were to receive him.

Marcus is a Roman name, another example being Mark Anthony. Some Jews had adopted Gentile names to avoid unnecessary problems while living in the Gentile world.

Col. 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.

Jesus (Justus) also sent greetings to the Colossians. The clause “who are of the circumcision” suggests that the others (Col. 4:9-11) were all Jews, even though some had Gentile names due to varied circumstances (such as a mixed marriage).

Col. 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Col. 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.

Epaphras is the same personality who was called Epaphroditus in Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians (Phil. 2:25; 4:18). Originally from Colosse, he established the class there, and he continually remembered the brethren from Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis in prayer.

Col. 4:14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

Luke and Demas did not come from this area. Luke studied under Galen, the famous doctor at Pergamos, where the false god Aesculapius was worshipped. Of Greek mythology, Aesculapius was related to the healing arts.

Pergamos was a great center of learning with the world’s largest library, although Alexandria, Egypt, gets the credit. Mark Anthony gave Cleopatra a gift of books from the Pergamon library, and she, in turn, donated the books to Alexandria. The Pergamon library was subsequently destroyed. Parchment was invented at Pergamos. Egyptian papyrus came later.

Luke, Demas, Epaphras, and Nymphas (verse 15) were Greek, although some or all of them may have had a Jewish parent. Demas later departed the faith. “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica” (2 Tim. 4:10). Only two years later Paul wrote this information to Timothy. What a change occurred in two years!

Col. 4:15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

Several translations render the name as “Nympha” (female) and read, “The church which is in her house.” However, the name was Nymphas (male) as in the *Diaglott*. Those in the early Church frequently met in private homes in simplicity. Ornate churches, choirs, special vestments, etc., are not necessary. Jesus will be where “two or three are gathered together” in his name (Matt. 18:20).

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

Col. 4:17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

The King James Version gives the impression that another letter was written to the Laodicean brethren, and so do many other translations. Although there is no hard evidence of such a letter, the Laodiceans may have written a letter to Paul, and he felt the Colossians should be made aware of it.

Tychicus and Onesimus brought two letters from Rome. Tychicus was especially responsible for the letter to the Colossians (Col. 4:7,8), whereas Onesimus carried the letter to Philemon, who also lived in Colosse. Onesimus (Onesiphorus), the runaway slave, was particularly concerned about returning to his owner, Philemon. In the letter, Paul urged Philemon to receive Onesimus back not as a slave but as a real brother in Christ.

In addition to bringing the letter to the Colossians, Tychicus probably read it to them. Having come all the way from Rome, and having seen Paul in person in Rome, Tychicus would logically be given this honor. The letter would have been read and reread because its contents could not be absorbed in one hearing. In this way, the brethren could examine the letter to note certain points. In other words, "When this epistle is read and reread among you, cause that it be read also in the church of Laodicea."

Notice that Hierapolis is not mentioned. The Laodiceans, who were from the city of Laodicea, met as a church in Hierapolis. Thus the Epistle to the Colossians was read to the church at Colosse and also to the church of the Laodiceans in Hierapolis.

Archippus was to "take heed to the ministry," so he may have been very zealous at one time and then cooled off a little. Paul was telling him to take heed to the responsibility he had and the talents he possessed. Archippus was probably the son of Philemon (Philem. 2).

Paul thought very highly of Onesimus because Onesimus had been a great help to him at Ephesus and Rome. Now, when returning him to his rightful owner according to the custom of that day, Paul movingly pleaded to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus. Subsequently, Onesimus diligently searched for Paul and found him in the dungeon at Rome.

Col. 4:18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

By *personally* writing the salutation, Paul put his seal of approval on the epistle. Because of poor eyesight, he had to write in large letters. Seeing Paul's own handwriting would have touched the hearts of those who received the letter, for it called to mind that this one, who was so talented, had to live with a handicap. Luke often assisted Paul by doing much of the writing; that is, Paul dictated as Luke wrote.

"Remember my bonds." Hebrews 13:3 amplifies this thought. "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." Paul was saying to remember the brethren who are in bonds as if being bound with them. In other words, they were not just to sympathize but were to enter into the experience.

Second Century Alexandrian Philosophy (AD 100-200)

The Apostle John lived up to the beginning of the Alexandrian philosophy. Right after John's death, it blossomed forth and then burned out by the year 200.

This philosophy advocated the *literal* crucifixion of the flesh, for "keeping the body under" was

thought to be a *physical* mortification (1 Cor. 9:27). Literal punishment of the flesh was regarded as a mark of spirituality. Instead of persecution occurring because of faithfulness to the truth, punishment was *self-inflicted* to impress others how holy one was.

This practice was, and is, followed by many Asian religions. For example, advocates will sit motionless, doing no work, and people bring food to them lest they starve to death. Hindus and maharajahs pursue this course. At Baalbek, an individual lived on a large pillar for 20 years, summer and winter. Food was raised up to him with a rope arrangement. Supposedly, this lifestyle was to praise God, but such self-mortification served no real purpose.

That was one aspect of the Alexandrian philosophy. Then there was another aspect with regard to the Old Testament. It was thought that Jehovah was not *the* God of the universe but *a* God. Not only was Jehovah given a secondary rank, but so was Jesus. Other ways of serving God were stressed, in addition to recognizing Jesus, so right away Jesus was vitiated as “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Anyone who tries to approach God other than through Jesus is a thief and a robber (John 10:1). Someone who regards Jesus as only a leader does not really appreciate him. How can one truly believe Jesus is the Messiah if several of his statements are considered erroneous?

A third aspect was also from Asia. According to this thinking, there were seven different ways of receiving information. Instead of a Christian having the Holy Spirit to enlighten him with regard to God’s plan and purposes when he reads the Bible, it was considered that there were *various* sources and *various* degrees of elevation and standing as a teacher. In fact, Paul’s teaching was considered to be on a kindergarten or first-grade level. In other words, Paul’s teaching was regarded as the ABC’s, and then one could go higher with other teaching. This standpoint magnified self in a way the Bible does not encourage in the least. By putting down God, Christ, and the Apostle Paul, these teachers were wolves in sheep’s clothing—a form of antichrist. This thinking was cleverly introduced, for its adherents said, “Yes, we believe in the Bible.” However, they considered the Bible to be educational and not the final word. In other words, the Bible was considered helpful on a *lower* level.

The teachers felt they were in a *higher* category, and they analyzed others—their value and their merit—not from the scriptural standpoint but from their philosophical viewpoint. This opened the door for Grecian philosophy, as well as Hindu and other Asian philosophies, to creep into the Church. The result was that they began to look down on the brotherhood. *True* brotherly love was considered effeminate and weak, for the flesh had to be literally crucified or punished. Widows were not provided for, Christians in prison were not visited, etc. John’s epistle warned against this element, who did not have the spirit of Christ.

The problem was that when these people came into the Christian Church, they brought their previous training and prejudices with them. They liked to look upon Christ as a way of hope of a resurrection, of a kingdom of blessings, of a better day coming, etc., because the heathen philosophies all taught forms of punishment and “torture.” Their gods were gods of retribution only, with no mercy, love, or hope. The wrath of their gods had to be continually appeased. Consequently, the Christian religion appealed to some because they realized their lack, but unfortunately, in accepting Christianity, they did not discard their previous beliefs and views. Later on, some of the church fathers exposed this error.

The self-inflicted persecution of the flesh was an artificial and fallacious way of keeping the body under. Paul’s letters and the Bible were viewed as historical documents. Some of the false teachers even thought they were apostles and Paul was not.

EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1998)

Col. 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,

Col. 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.

As with the previous study, the Epistle to the Philippians, Paul and Timothy greeted the brethren to whom the epistle was addressed. Both letters were written at the same time.

Colosse was near Hierapolis and Laodicea. "To the saints, even the faithful brethren in Christ," is the thought, so verse 2 is a commendation.

Col. 1:3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

In his prayers, Paul evidently called to remembrance the various churches he had been instrumental in starting. He would have prayed by ecclesia name, generally speaking, and by individual names for those who had a particular need.

Col. 1:4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

Paul had not personally visited Colosse, but he had *heard* of the faith the brethren had in Christ Jesus and of the love they had shown "to all the saints" probably through temporal gifts.

Col. 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 sequence in verses 4 and 5 is faith, love, and hope, whereas 1 Corinthians 13:13 mentions faith, hope, and love.

Comment: The clause "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven" indicates that when one consecrates, the call is genuine, and a crown is available to run for. Some have the erroneous thought that a person waits in the wings until a crown becomes available.

Reply: In doing the calling, God knows who will finish their course faithfully, but if He was guided entirely by that foreknowledge in the selectivity of the call, there would be no Great Company.

Col. 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:

"Which is come unto you, as it is in all the [Roman] world; and bringeth forth fruit." At Thessalonica the enemies of Paul and the other brethren said they were turning the world upside down with the gospel (Acts 17:6).

Col. 1:7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

Epaphras, who was probably Epaphroditus, may have been considered an elder (Phil. 2:25). Incidentally, sometimes one is considered an elder of more than one class. For example, the

Pastor was the “elder” of many classes.

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

Paul said that Epaphras, “a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Col. 4:12). Epaphras considered the spiritual welfare of the Colossians. Therefore, “love in the [Holy] Spirit” probably referred to the Colossians’ fervency, or zeal.

Col. 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 Paul heard of the Colossians’ faith, love, and hope, he did not cease to pray for them, and he was quite familiar with what was going on there. He desired that they be “filled with the [exact] knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” In other words, they were to have more than just a general knowledge of God’s plan. Paul desired for them a *maturity* in wisdom that was strictly in conformity with the teaching of the Heavenly Father’s will.

Col. 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;

Those who are evangelically inclined are sometimes not too interested in obtaining an exact knowledge of the truth. They will say, “Jesus has satisfied,” implying that what they know about God and Jesus has so filled their hearts that they do not feel the need for more understanding. However, Paul wanted the Colossians to *grow* in the understanding, the knowledge, and the wisdom of God. There was room for improvement. Their faith in Jesus and their love for the brotherhood had clearly been manifested, but he wanted more for them.

Paul desired that the brethren would be “fruitful in every good work.” Many feel that numbers are an evidence of God’s favor. That can be true, but it is not necessarily the case, for some churches are filled with thousands of people, yet there is little understanding.

Comment: The point of getting this exact knowledge in all wisdom and spiritual understanding was so that the Colossians “might walk worthy of the Lord” and be pleasing in all things. Only to the extent that they would understand God’s will and principles could they please Him.

Reply: Just as we want the Lord’s will to be more developed in our own life, so our desire for others is that they might mature in a similar fashion. Some groups are interested in having a lot of spiritual babies, but to leave them in that state would be pathetic. One who is a baby for years is a spiritual dwarf, for that individual has not grown. The thought is that all one needs to know is 1 Corinthians 13, the “love” chapter, and Matthew 5–7, the Sermon on the Mount. A sufficiency is felt on this level.

Comment: A friend raised her baby on nothing but milk for the first year, and now that baby has digestive problems with solid food.

Reply: Peter said, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may *grow* thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). In the world are people with no sense of responsibility. They create babies but are not fathers or mothers in the real sense. This can likewise happen in the spiritual world.

Col. 1:11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

The brethren were to be “strengthened with all might,” the source being God’s power, “unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” Based on two different words in the Greek, there are two kinds of “patience.” Patient endurance is long-suffering, as opposed to cheerful endurance. Both qualities of patience are desirable and can be developed.

Col. 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

Paul was beginning to exult in the wonderful hope that is presented to the Church, namely, the mystery “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

Q: The *Diaglott* has the thought of giving thanks to the Father, “who called and qualified us for the portion of the saints’ inheritance in the light.” Was Paul saying that not only is the calling necessary but for a consecration to be accepted, the individual has to be begotten of the Holy Spirit?

A: That question is a little difficult to answer. Paul addressed the epistle “to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ.” On the one hand, some accept the truth because of the influence of parents or a friend, for example; that is, they have other motives and become identified with the truth as a sort of society. “Faithful brethren” are those who are truly immersed, or submerged, in the truth. On the other hand, we *all* start as babes. Paul seems to be suggesting, as mentioned earlier, that the Colossians were very fervent in spirit and zealous, but they needed to give more serious thought to the obligations of a Christian. The calling is *exceedingly high*, being for an “inheritance of the saints in light.” Thus Paul was trying to motivate the brethren to hunger for more knowledge of God and for more wisdom as to how to apply that knowledge.

It is hard to mathematically address the situation. Paul was now going to remind the brethren of the exalted theme. The point is that this Epistle to the Colossians was something like his Epistle to the Ephesians, one of his noblest letters, showing that the Church, as well as Jesus, was created before the foundation of the world and that the calling is very, very high.

Col. 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

God has “delivered us from the power of darkness” and has “translated us into the kingdom” of the Son of His love, His darling, His beloved. This verse was one of the themes used by Bro. Krebbs, who marveled that we are miracles of grace. He used the picture of a miner down in the bowels of the earth, working in dim light. When the miner came up out of the mine and into the light, the sensation that he experienced was blinding. Paul was speaking similarly here. Once we were blind, but now we can see. And not only can we see, but the light is startling, for we have gone from the miry pit into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son. What a terrific translation, spiritually speaking! It is not a physical translation, but it is very REAL—into a new situation.

Col. 1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

Col. 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

We have been translated not only from darkness into light but into the Kingdom of God’s *precious* Son, and God designs to *honor* this Son. Paul was saying to the Colossians, “You have received a bona fide induction into this Kingdom-hope arrangement.” When we consecrate, we are taken from outside the Tabernacle into the Holy condition with the capability of a more

intimate knowledge and relationship with Christ, the High Priest, and the underpriesthood is our new family. The Holy consists of two cubes, and one of those cubes will go into the Most Holy with Jesus and God.

Col. 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:

Practically all of the translations were done by Trinitarians. Tyndale, who originally translated the Bible, knew both the Greek and the Hebrew. The Coverdale and the Bishops' Bible followed and were based on Tyndale's erudition, but little changes were made. When 1611 came, the king who authorized the King James Bible told the translators to go by the past translations, particularly the Bishops' Bible. As a result, the concept of the Trinity is embedded in verses 16-18. If a person is biased, he subconsciously makes changes, and we hope those changes were done unwittingly. At any rate, here is a good illustration, for we feel that the New Testament in no way shows that Jesus was the co-Creator. Verses 16-18 are used to try to prove that Jesus was somehow connected with creation, so we will examine them.

Verse 16 starts, "For *by* him were all things created." The Greek word *en* means "in," and can in no sense be properly translated "by." "For *in* him [Jesus] were all things created"; that is, God designed "all things" in Jesus, as illustrated by a pyramid. The top stone is Jesus, the next layer is the Little Flock, followed by the Great Company, the Ancient Worthies and Israel, and the saved world of mankind. This pyramid is a visual representation of what is expressed in Colossians, Ephesians, and other places in Scripture.

"For in him were all things created, that are in heaven." The same Greek word *en* is in the phrase "*in* heaven" and is thus a proof that this verse should begin with "For *in* him." In other words, the translators correctly rendered the prepositional phrase "in heaven" but incorrectly rendered the phrase that begins verse 16.

The next phrase to be considered is "in earth"—"For in him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth." In the latter case, the Greek word is *epi*, which means "upon." "For in him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are *upon* earth." These fine distinctions are not seen, for having the Trinity in mind sort of intoxicated or stupefied the reasoning power of the translators. If a very intellectual person drinks a little too much liquor, his thinking gets fuzzy. Accordingly, we are told to "be filled with the [Holy] Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). However, down through the Gospel Age, some in the nominal system have been filled with this mixed Trinitarian doctrine. As a result, the Greek prepositions are confused.

"For in him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are upon earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." Then comes the last clause: "all things were created by him, and for him." This time the word rendered "by" in the phrase "by him" is still another Greek word: *dia*. We feel *dia* should be translated "on account of." Therefore, verse 16 should read, "For *in* him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are *upon* earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created *on account of* him, and for him." God had Jesus in mind when He began to work out the details of His universe, of which this earth is only a small fragment.

Dia with the genitive case has about six meanings, but "on account of" fits the usage in verse 16 like a hand in a glove. The Greek word is so translated in the *Emphatic Diaglott* in several places in the interlinear. Thus Dr. J. J. Griesbach may not have been a Trinitarian.

The Greek word *eis* in the last prepositional phrase is properly translated "for"—"for him."

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

In reading verse 17, we have to insert a modifying phrase, for Jesus could not have been “before” God.

Comment: And Jesus was not “before” other things, such as the universe.

Reply: Yes, the Scriptures indicate that the universe, in some form, existed before Jesus.

Again the phrase “by him” should be “in him,” for the Greek word is *en*. In fact, *en* is in this same first chapter of Colossians at least 12 times.

We are presenting a radically new thought, for in 60 years of Bible study, we have never heard anyone mention that in the New Testament Jesus in no sense is the Creator. Of course the Jews would be the exception, for they do not believe Jesus is the Messiah. And when we examine the beliefs of Unitarians, it is difficult to even think of them as Christians. At least the nominal Church recognizes the Father and the Son and has some understanding of the gospel.

In verse 17, Paul was saying that God has made Jesus the Chief, the Head. In other words, “Let no one ever meditate the thought that he might be like Jesus and equal to him” because God said in advance, “I have determined that Jesus is going to be not only the Head of the Church but also the Chief One under Me.” The situation was similar with Joseph in Egypt under Pharaoh. Joseph rode in the second chariot, but nevertheless, that second chariot was so important that people had to bow the knee in acknowledgment.

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

Jesus was made “the head of the body, the church” after he was faithful unto the ignominious death of the Cross and was resurrected and ascended to his Father in heaven. This elevation of Jesus was in God’s plan before the foundation of the world, but it did not become a reality until after his faithfulness at Calvary (Heb. 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:19,20; Rev. 13:8).

Jesus was the “beginning” of the New Creation back at the First Advent. Since there are several “beginnings,” we need to qualify the word here. Jehovah is not only the Emperor of the universe but THE Creator. That distinction separates Him from all created beings. On the one hand, God is the *Creator*, and everyone else is *created*. On the other hand, God does not want to demean His Son, so He is saying that Jesus is Chief under Him. Jesus is the beginner and the finisher of the faith (Heb. 12:2).

Jesus was “the firstborn from the dead” at the same time—that is, when he was raised from death—so “that in all things he might have the preeminence.” In the process of going into death, sacrificing his blood, and being raised from death, he obtained human life rights to give to Justice. Stated another way, he has the right to human life because he obeyed the Law perfectly. He sacrificed his perfect life in obedience to God’s will so that it would provide a ransom for the Church first and for mankind subsequently.

In his reasoning, Paul did not go into cosmology. Rather, he was saying that this gospel which he preached was new and startling. Prior to Jesus’ coming down here, everything was darkness, but he brought life and immortality to light (2 Tim. 1:10). Isaiah prophesied that the people of Zebulun and Naphtali, who walked in darkness and ignorance, would see a great light (Isa. 9:1,2). When Jesus began his ministry, he spoke as no man had ever before spoken (John 7:46). In due time, history will confirm that Israel was blessed as a people.

Col. 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

“For it pleased the Father that in him [Jesus] should all fulness dwell.” Paul was talking about the history of planet Earth and saying that when Christ came, a most startling phenomenon occurred for mankind. Again the preposition “in” is the Greek *en*, and here it is properly translated.

Col. 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.

Paul was talking about conditions down here on earth—the drama and history of mankind and what the introduction of Christ at his First Advent signified. The “things in heaven” that needed to be reconciled have to do with the fallen angels, who deflected at the time of the Flood.

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

Before we consecrated, we were alienated by wicked deeds and thinking, but Jesus has since reconciled us. We are blessed because we live in a land where the Bible is superior to the Koran. Although there are noble-minded people living in Muslim countries, they were bypassed in the present age. Generally speaking, it is the Western world underneath the influence of the Bible that has been blessed.

Incidentally, all of the consecrated had natural faith to begin with, for spiritual faith develops after consecration. In the world, doubt is an enemy. (Questions such as the following are asked: Why does God permit evil? Why did He choose the Jew?) When one consecrates and comes into the family of God, doubt becomes an enemy again but on a higher plane. Faith that overcomes spiritual doubt is a superior faith. In fact, it is the bottom rung of the triumvirate: faith, hope, and love. If we get to the next level of *true* hope, the final step of love is beyond the veil, and such hope will not be ashamed (Rom. 5:5). For those who have gone out of the truth all down the age, hope is ashamed.

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

Col. 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;

In what way has the gospel been “preached to every creature which is under heaven”? Paul was speaking in broad terms. In his going through Asia, Greece, Italy, etc., many heard about him and that a religious fanatic was causing an uproar in various places, but they were not interested. The point is that the effect of Paul’s ministry was much larger than the actual cities where he spoke in the synagogue or in a home. The thought of Jesus’ being the Messiah was very different from what the various peoples were accustomed to hearing, especially with their multiplicity of gods. Thus the gospel was available to the people *if* they wanted to search it out.

Only in our day has the Bible been published in all the languages (not all the dialects) of earth. Therefore, although Paul was speaking in a modified sense when he said the gospel was preached to every creature, the statement reveals his energy in proclaiming the good news. He was a firebrand, a zealot, in the highest sense of the word, and the news spread far and wide in the Western world.

Col. 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 church:

Verse 24 shows the partnership arrangement of sufferings and afflictions in Christ. If one member of the body suffers, the whole body suffers, not only because of the communal arrangement but also because Christians are partners of hope.

The Pastor used this verse as one proof of the Church's share in the sin offering.

Col. 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;

The dispensational calling of the Gospel Age is the privilege of being translated into the Kingdom of God's Son. Stated another way, the present dispensation pertains to the calling out of the class who are to become kings and priests in God's Kingdom. The dispensational truth is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (verse 27). Other truth was applicable in prior dispensations.

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

Col. 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:

The mystery is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." The phrase "in *you*" is very significant, for it indicates that the gospel is open not just to the Jews but also to the Gentiles, who had no history or prior training under the Law. Hence the Gentiles were in double darkness.

Col. 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:

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

Paul laid down his life for the brotherhood in that he wanted to present the brethren not as babes but as Christians developed in maturity to the extent possible. If they prospered, he would see them in the Kingdom. How gratifying it would be to see that they had made their calling and election sure!

Jesus' power worked "mightily" in Paul. When the apostle woke up each morning, he had the objective in mind to labor in "teaching every man in all wisdom"; that is, his chief concern was the development of the Church. Jesus made Paul his messenger to the Gentiles in a special sense, for Paul was to witness before kings, nobles, and others. All Christians are to seek "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and [then] all these [necessary temporal] things shall be added" (Matt. 6:33). Paul might go hungry at times, but he was provided for during his entire ministry, and this is true of all Christians whose main object is to make their calling and election sure.

Col. 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;

This epistle is addressed to the Colossians, but Paul was also writing for the benefit of the brethren at Laodicea, for the two cities were near one another. Since Paul had difficulty writing letters, it was practical to write one letter for both places.

Today the ruins of Laodicea can be seen in Turkey, but the city did not amount to much, spiritually speaking, as far as faith was concerned. Accordingly, Jesus said he would “spew” Laodicea out of his mouth (Rev. 3:16). The ruins are extensive, but what is unusual is that they seem to be only about three feet high. In contrast, the extensive ruins in Ephesus are rather large buildings. The one thing that remains relatively intact at Laodicea is the amphitheater, and not far from there is an interesting graveyard.

Paul had a “great conflict” for the Colossian and Laodicean brethren and “for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh,” for he had not visited there. Epaphras had come from that locale, and certainly he knew Paul and had seen him elsewhere, but many of the others had not. Since Paul’s missionary journeys did not include Colosse and Laodicea, any who had seen him in person had had that experience in Ephesus, a commercial and religious center that was a little distance away. Paul had stayed in Ephesus for about 3 1/2 years.

As a side note, it is appropriate that Paul was the “angel,” or messenger, to Ephesus, the first of the seven churches in the Gospel Age (Rev. 2:1). Moreover, the Lord had used Paul to found the church at Ephesus. John, the “angel” to Smyrna, the second stage of the Church, took up residence in Ephesus around AD 68, just before the holocaust in Israel from AD 69 to 73.

Col. 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;

“That their [the Colossians’ and the Laodiceans’] 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 Christ.” The remainder, “and of the Father,” is spurious and should be omitted.

The “mystery” is mentioned four times in this epistle: Col. 1:26,27; 2:2; and 4:3. Moreover, the message sounds much like Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians, which mentions the wonderful “mystery” six times: Eph. 1:9; 3:3,4,9; 5:32; and 6:19.

Incidentally, for the sake of memory, we feel it is proper to have one translation of the Bible in our brain, and then the other translations can be used for reference. The King James Bible is appropriate as the basic Bible. Otherwise, if multiple translations are used frequently and interchangeably, we do not have a proper framework. One stable, connected translation should be in our mind. This technique has been used from time immemorial for science and other subjects; that is, one should start with the ABC’s and then subsequently go into extenuating avenues of research.

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

“The mystery ... in whom [God and Jesus] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” It is *God’s* plan; the mystery is of *God*, yet the mystery is said to be “*Christ* in you, the hope of glory.” Here there is such a close comparison between God and Jesus that we can think of the mystery as being of both.

“All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” are hidden in God and Jesus. When we try to disclose this *wonderful* mystery to others, they are not interested, generally speaking. God calls the Christian, but it is in and through Christ that subsequently one has a connection with God in prayer. The Christian can commune with God because Jesus’ merit covers sin.

Isn’t it marvelous to think about what God’s plan has meant? We know a little about the

universe, planet Earth, who created it and for what purpose, and what God intends to do eventually, as such subjects have been laid out for us in these latter days primarily through “that servant,” who has given us the basic framework (Matt. 24:46). With the advance in technology, we can see things very realistically that in the past we believed and accepted by faith. Now there is substantive evidence that such things exist.

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

Why did Paul say, “Lest any man should beguile you with enticing words”? In those days, and to a certain extent today, a Christian could live in the middle of a big city yet be in a wasteland, spiritually speaking. Colosse was on a lesser trade route, which was nothing like the route a little to the north that was used by the Roman soldiery. Thus the Colossian brethren were off the beaten path. They had consecrated and given their hearts to Jesus, but then along might come a Christian from another area to visit the town. The brethren would courteously open their doors to this individual, but there was a danger because they were affording him opportunity to take advantage of their hospitality. Instead of staying a day or two, a week or two, or even a month or two, he might stay indefinitely if the ground was fertile for ideas that conflicted with the basic truths of God’s Word. And so, in the Colossians’ hunger and desire for fellowship, which is normal, a problem could develop. To want to hear the news was all right, but Paul was telling the brethren to be cautious when they did not know the background of an individual. The Bereans were commended for listening in humility to what was being said, and then afterward searching the Scriptures to see if what they had heard was true (Acts 17:10,11). In other words, that which we prove to be worthy and acceptable we are thankful for, but we are to cast out the rest.

Comment: The *Diaglott* has the thought that such individuals may deceive you “with plausible speech,” so the words sound good and very believable.

Comment: Ephesians 4:14 reads, “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”

Reply: Through Paul’s brief discussion, we get an insight into practices that were presented back there, namely, the fancies or inventions of man, and not the doctrine of God.

Col. 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.

Paul must have received good news about the zeal of the brethren in that area, for they gave evidence of being truly begotten of the Spirit. However, one has to be always on guard in connection with Christian growth.

Comment: Of course it was a negative situation, but in 1 Corinthians 5:3, a similar expression is used: “For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present.” This Scripture is a second witness of Paul’s identity with the brethren whether he had to thunder a correction, offer a suggestion, or extend sympathy.

Reply: Here in Colossians, Paul was joyful. As he did on other occasions with other ecclesias, he first commended the good, and then he gave advice, admonitions, and corrections on error in practice and doctrine. For example, it is obnoxious to see a young brother teaching an older brother who is a teacher and has been a long time in the truth. Brethren should be tactful, careful, and considerate.

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

The purpose of our calling is to grow in Christlikeness and be faithful unto death. The objective is to absorb Christ's character as much as possible so that we might be pleasing to God. Unfortunately, some get sidetracked and spend a whole life in one little facet of truth, and thus they do not grow in the proper proportion of doctrine that is taught in the Word. Others are consumed by evangelizing, whereas we need to be rounded out and developed with the whole counsel of God. By birth we usually have a bent in thinking along a certain line, but to be instructed by God, we have to study His Word.

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

We are to be “rooted and built up” in Christ. This advice implies growth in two directions: rooted downward and built upward. How simple and yet beautiful—in so few words—this illustration is! Moreover, we are to be established in the faith. The Colossians were to do these things as they had “been taught” and “received” (verses 6 and 7).

“*Abounding therein with thanksgiving*” means to *grow*. The fundamentals, such as why we gave ourselves to Christ and why we call him Lord and Master, are essential throughout our Christian walk, but in addition, we are expected to grow and enlarge.

Comment: The rooting downward would be in the teachings of God's Word, and the building upward would be in the fruits of the Spirit.

Col. 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.

In verse 4, Paul said, “Lest any man should beguile you with enticing words,” and now he added, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit.” Examples are the traditions of men and the rudiments of the world. Back there the most successful tactic in drawing brethren out of the truth was the Judaizing teaching that one must obey the Law of Moses as well as Christ.

Paul was warning against the philosophies of Docetism and Gnosticism. With regard to “the tradition of men,” some of the Jewish Christians taught that Christians were still under the Law. In addition, unconverted Jews tried to bring converted Jews back into the mainstream of obeying the Law, but what Law? Not being satisfied with the simple Pentateuch, they added the traditions of men. At the First Advent, the Pharisees' opposition to Jesus involved not just the writings of Moses but also *man's* ordinances and practices, which were sanctimonious added rituals. There were times way back in Israel's history when certain things were proper because they were typical of attitudes that one should have. At that time, these things did have to be observed.

God told Adam, “You can eat freely of all the trees in the Garden of Eden, but do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or you will die.” It was a very simple commandment of obedience. Evidently, the problem of sin entered when Eve wondered *why* God did not want her to eat of that tree. However, sin might not have entered the world if the Adversary had not catered to the *inquisitiveness* that is inherent in mankind. Inquisitiveness is good when it is kept under control, modified, and governed, but it can be very dangerous when it is not kept within certain limits. The serpent, which was wiser than all of the other animals, ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree. Then Satan asked Eve, “Did God say that you shall not eat of every tree in the garden?” Satan was ready to give a reason, but it was the *wrong* reason. Therefore, we have to proceed with humility and listen, being careful and analyzing what we hear.

What is the gospel? Many think Christianity is doing good works—going out and feeding the poor and visiting the sick, for example—but it is character development, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). The basic instruction is to do good unto all as we find opportunity, but if we are very busy in the true work of the gospel, we will not have much time to devote to works.

Another deception is for the Christian to get involved in politics. Many believe they should be Christianizing the evil government. They reason, “If enough of us get into government, we can save America.” But what did James say? “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). Statements such as this one keep us from inordinate worldly desires.

Regarding “the rudiments of the world,” Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees that they “made the commandment of God of none effect” by their tradition (Matt. 15:6). As Bible Students, we have to be careful not to set rules and regulations apart from the Word, thus making traditions. If the Apostle Paul were here today and was addressing the different conventions, we do not think he would be flattering us. He would commend what he thought was good, and then he would have plenty of admonitions and warnings. In fact, he would not be invited back as a convention speaker—or even as a visiting speaker—because of speaking the truth. The truth should not hurt if it changes us.

In the past, I told a brother about a strong talk that was very moving, and I am not often moved at certain conventions because of the nature of the talks. In telling about the talk, I apparently spoke effectively to this brother, for he replied, “Good news to the new creature, bad news to the flesh.” The old man and the new man are incompatible, for they are at enmity, the one with the other.

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

The corrected translation is, “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Deity [God] bodily.” If God were to come down here in human flesh, He would behave like the Lord Jesus, but the Emperor of the universe cannot come down to the level of the creature. However, He can come down with sympathy and communication in prayer, and He has a vital interest in us as new creatures. As the Prophet Isaiah wrote, “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose *name is Holy*; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa. 57:15). Since Jehovah is the Emperor of the universe, everything depends on His being in the heavens as the stabilizing force to guarantee the future as it will be.

Col. 2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

In chapter 1 was a pyramidal arrangement with Christ as the top stone, in whom the fullness of the Deity dwells, and we are to become conformed to his likeness. If the top stone is removed, we are left with a truncated pyramid. In fact, what is left is a mastaba of death. With the top stone on the pyramid, we conform to its slant and proportion as our Head, each stone being in its own place and function. The stones below have a face, *one side*, that is developed completely in harmony with the angle of the top stone. Thus there is individuality; there is diversity of personality and temperament—beauties of perfection that we see in nature. That very variety is beauty in itself—a variety of form, color, scent, etc. Stated succinctly, there is variety, but there is also a conformity of obedience to the will of God, and Jesus is our example. God is saying, “You are to become like my Son. If you look at him, learn of him, and become like him, you will be my son in a very intimate sense in the high calling.”

Col. 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:

Probably the majority of the Colossians Paul was addressing were not circumcised because they were Gentiles. For the Judaizing element, the first step was to get the Gentiles circumcised. Yes, in the Old Testament, to not be circumcised was a mark of disfavor because circumcision was a type. In the Christian era, what is important is circumcision of the flesh as a *new creature*. The new creature was circumcised when we consecrated; that is, the flesh was cut off. We are “beheaded” for the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 20:4).

Comment: Jeremiah 4:4 reads, “Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.”

Reply: Jeremiah was speaking figuratively. The Israelites were already circumcised in the flesh, but he wanted them to be circumcised in the *heart*.

Verse 11 reminds us of the stone being cut out of the mountain “without hands” (Dan. 2:45). That “stone” is The Christ class, Jesus and the Little Flock, who will smite the nations in the near future. Jesus promised, “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father” (Rev. 2:26,27). What was promised to the faithful more-than-overcomers of each of the seven churches applies to all 144,000. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto [all] the churches” (Rev. 2:29). Those who become members of the Little Flock will smite the image.

Col. 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.

Baptism is pictured by water immersion, so the thought is “buried *in the water* with Christ in baptism.” Water represents the grave. How dramatic it would be to dig a pit and put the consecration candidate in that grave! He would lie down and be covered with dirt to picture his death. That is the exact lesson, but the Lord was commiserative to use water instead so that we could be totally immersed and then be pulled up out of the water to newness of life. The actual lesson is that we are *dead* in Christ, and henceforth we walk as new creatures, as children of light.

The Lord God Almighty spoke very, very highly of Jesus in chapters 1 and 2, just *heaping* honor and glory on him, but Paul was always careful to put God *first*. Paul had in mind that God is the source, the Author, the One who has the mystery, the all in all, but the one who most beautifully represents His character in the manner we seek is Jesus. We do not see the throne God is sitting on, nor do we see the detail of any trees or houses in heaven. It is only by faith that we know God has a universe in the heavens. However, when Jesus came down here, people could see him. We are told what Jesus did, how he talked, how he sat, what his mannerisms were, etc.—things that are very helpful in instructing us how to walk down here.

Col. 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Paul’s statement “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh” suggests that the majority of the Colossian brethren were Gentiles. These “hath he [God] quickened together with him [Jesus], having forgiven you all trespasses.” The “all trespasses” are the sins *before* consecration. Many do not make a distinction between the sins after consecration and the sins before consecration, and thus they apply the laws for forgiveness of sins *before* consecration to sins *after* consecration. However, the Scriptures tell us the steps that

are to be taken with a person who trespasses *after* he consecrates. With regard to initially coming to the Lord, those who repent and come into the truth, giving their hearts to Him in consecration, can be told with certainty that their past sins have been forgiven. Nevertheless, if possible, past sins should be rectified to the best of one's ability. Thus there is not one rule; rather, we are to use the rule of God *as it pertains to the situation at hand*.

Col. 2:14 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;

Some of the Colossian brethren were Jews, but based on the entire epistle, we feel they were a minority. On the other hand, when one has not been indoctrinated with the Bible in his youth but becomes familiar with it later in life, he begins to see what God does not like. The Law shows what God disapproves of, and that is part of our education. Paul was saying that those who come into the truth, whether Jew or Gentile, have been forgiven their trespasses, and the ordinances, the rituals, have been blotted out. Basically, then, the rituals of the Law are what have been nailed to the Cross. Certainly, for example, the commandment to love God with all one's heart, mind, soul, and strength was not nailed to the Cross. Therefore, Paul was referring to the ordinances, the ceremonial aspects, of the Law. Of the Ten Commandments, the only command we have some freedom from is the keeping of the sabbath (Exod. 20:8-11).

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

Paul was discussing a theme here. Jesus triumphed over "principalities and powers" on the Cross, being faithful unto death. When Jesus was on the Cross, he did not have a crown of jewels but a crown of thorns, humiliation, shame, and pain. It is true that in reading the pages of history, we see some marvelous warriors—Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and Napoleon, to name a few—but compared to Jesus' act of submission to the will of God in being nailed to the Cross, the others pale by comparison. Jesus is head and shoulders over not only the world but even the Church. He triumphed over all other kings and nobles of the past. When they come forth from the grave and look on Jesus in a proper light, they will see that they should hang their heads in shame before him. Similar in principle, when the king first heard Handel's *Messiah*, he stood up for the singing of the "Hallelujah" chorus. And in the future, in the Kingdom, earth's past kings will acknowledge Jesus in his proper role.

Jesus "made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Proverbs 16:32 says that the person who rules his spirit is better than the one who takes a city. Capturing a city required a lot of planning, such as cutting off the water supply, having an abundance of supplies so that a siege could be laid, and making sure there was no escape route for the inhabitants. But in God's estimation, all of these plans were nothing compared to a Christian who makes his calling and election sure. That individual is greater than any of earth's past generals.

Comment: Like Jesus the faithful Christian is fighting demons, principalities, and powers.

Reply: Yes, many of the Christian's battles are in the mind.

Col. 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:

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

A type is a shadow, and when the light is sufficient, the shadow disappears. The shadow can be very real in appearance, but it is a type, a picture. When the substantive body comes, when the reality or fulfillment takes place, the type loses a great deal of its significance. The practice of

the type would then cease. Some types are perpetuated, but they are relatively few. For instance, the Memorial looks back to Christ, and evidently, the Feast of Tabernacles will be perpetuated in the Kingdom. The very fact that the Feast of Tabernacles will be made mandatory suggests that some of the other practices will be dropped. As a ceremony, Passover is centered around Christ, and Pentecost is centered around the two loaves of leavened cakes, the Little Flock and the Great Company. The “Passover” is Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, and the gospel started with Pentecost. When the spiritual class of the Gospel Age is fulfilled, the Feast of Tabernacles will be meaningful for the world. Thus the Feast of Tabernacles will be practiced throughout the Kingdom Age, during which the general resurrection will occur in waves, with one generation after another coming out of the grave. The last to be raised will be Adam. It will be interesting to find out on what date of history that event takes place. Mankind are to be acquainted with the plan of God and the hope for obtaining everlasting life.

“Let no man therefore judge you” is another way of saying, “Lest any man should beguile you” with regard to “meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days” (Col. 2:4). The basic meaning of “meat” pertains to the Jewish distinction in partaking of clean (but not unclean) meat. However, to draw the lesson down to our day, because these requirements are not viewed in the same light now, we would say that while diet does have a bearing on the health of an individual, one should be very careful not to make it a gospel. We have known a few Christians who talked and fellowshiped not on God’s Word but on diet. Diet is all right in its place, for each individual makes his own decisions on food, but we should not pressure others to think as we do on these subjects. One can reason and give advice, but others do not have to heed the advice. As Paul said to Timothy, “Be careful not to get sidetracked into genealogy and lineages.” The areas covered in verse 16 are all ceremonial: meat, drink, holy days, the new moon, and sabbath days.

In this second chapter, Paul preached against the monastic type of Christianity. Some actually lacerated the flesh, feeling that inflicting punishment on oneself prepared the individual to pray to God and to receive an answer. This concept of crucifying the flesh was abnormal and inordinate. What was important was to receive and worship Christ and to try to obey his instruction and that of the apostles and the Old Testament prophets.

Col. 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,

“Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels.” One example of a voluntary “worshipping of angels” would be to worship an extremely talented representative of truth. With the word “angel” meaning “messenger,” the seven “angels” of the Book of Revelation are seven prominent individuals whom God used down through the Gospel Age. Revelation 19:10 tells what not to do with regard to the seventh messenger: “And I [John] fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” When John kneeled down, the other individual, who represents Pastor Russell, said, “Do it not, for I a fellow servant and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus.” When John fell down a second time, the “angel” was Jesus. “And I John ... fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God” (Rev. 22:8,9). Thus *even Jesus* gave the same advice to John when the latter worshipped him, for worship in the highest sense is to go to God.

From another perspective, the “worshipping of angels” would include statues, which represent

human beings. The most prominent statues today are of the Virgin Mary. Some are even calling her the Mediatrix, thus putting her on a par with God's Son. Catholics are told to petition Mary, who will petition the Son, so that he can petition the Father.

Comment: The clause "intruding into those things which he hath not seen" refers to spiritual angels. There is a tendency to worship literal angels.

Reply: The word "angels" can be taken either way, the spiritual interpretation being the more important. A statue is a product of human imagination. The Epistle to the Romans tells that God is depicted by all kinds of objects and creatures that are emblematic of various gods. In addition, people pray to their favorite saints, hoping the saint will approach Mary, Mary will approach Jesus, and Jesus will approach God. Although they do not think of their prayers this way, they are using this "chain of command."

The warning of verse 18 can also include elders, for brethren could inordinately esteem the leaders in an ecclesia. Yes, we can appreciate teachers, but we are to appreciate them *as they lead us in a proper way to know God*.

At a recent convention, there was a reference to a text in Jude that was a discussion in defense of the most holy faith. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 20 and 21). Since the epistle concerns doctrine and the practice of immorality, the emphasis should be not just on "faith" but on the "most holy faith," and the word "holy" is to be emphasized. Among the examples given was a dispute about the body of Moses. "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 9). We think now that this "worshipping of angels" would also be taking a "thus saith Pastor Russell" as being equivalent to "thus saith Scripture, the Word of God." To the contrary, the emphasis is, first, on a "thus saith the LORD," and then one can look to the messenger. Moses was certainly a grand character who was to be highly respected, so what was the problem? Satan wanted Moses' body, for he knew that the people would use it as an icon, bringing it right into their worship.

Another object of worship—a fetish or an icon—was the serpent on the pole (Num. 21:8,9). King Hezekiah "removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan [a piece of brass]" (2 Kings 18:4). "Nehushtan" was like the Lord sarcastically saying, "The serpent on the pole is stone. It cannot walk or talk, yet it is worshipped."

If we bring the warning down to the context of this Epistle to the Colossians, it means that some were idolizing individuals. For example, Diotrephes was pointed out by name because he put himself above the Apostle John (3 John 9-11). In fact, he threatened excommunication to anyone who would believe like the Apostle John, so there were people who were "vainly puffed up" in their own minds as being superior to true "angels," true messengers. Such individuals were *false* messengers.

Comment: Verse 18 would include Mormonism.

Reply: Yes, for that religion almost puts the words of Joseph Smith and the angel Moroni on a par with Scripture.

Thus, not only can dangers and problems exist among ourselves, but they are all around us and have to be dealt with. Various lessons can be drawn from verse 18, but no matter what

level we take, the bottom line is that these deceptions detract from Jesus and the apostles, from whom we should be heeding instruction. The Word of God is the safe source.

Col. 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.

The Pastor's comment about teachers is appropriate, and Paul was saying the same thing here. Teachers can be respected, but they should not be worshipped. God communicates with mankind through various human agencies. The Head, Jesus, is in heaven, the spirit realm, but the body with the joints is down here. Paul was saying in effect, "It is correct that the Head communicates through the various joints of the body, but we have to be careful that the individual with the instruction is connected to the Head." Whether we consider "angels" on a literal level as humans or we spiritualize the term, Jesus is the Head, and the chain of command is that we communicate with the Father through Jesus.

Comment: There are brethren who "talk" with their guardian angels, thanking them for doing such a good job. However, it is one thing to thank the Lord for providing the guardian angels, and it is another thing to try to communicate with them.

Reply: The guardian angels are following instructions and doing what they are told. We have to be on guard lest we be misled.

Col. 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,

Col. 2:21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

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

Paul's question was, "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, after the commandments and doctrines of men?" The parenthetical words describe the ordinances. Paul was saying, "To some extent, we see behavioral conduct along these lines in the world. People follow a man, a woman, an object, or something else, and with the rudiments of the world, there is always the danger of an invasion or intrusion into the truth itself." Thus Paul warned to watch and be on guard so that we will disconnect ourselves from even exploring in these areas, for the unseen, the mystical, the supernatural, has an attraction. In some respects, that desire was implanted in the minds of men at the time of creation, for there seems to be a natural inquisitiveness, not just with women and their desire for approval but also with men. However, the *Bible* is the foundation and guide, so in any thinking we do on the unseen, we must make sure that we have a connection with the Bible and that we are not purely fantasizing from the elements of the world—that is, "as though living in the world." Many people are attracted by the mystical, Nostradamus and Edgar Cayce being two well-known examples. But every moment we take to study in these areas is dangerous time away from meditation on the Scriptures. The mystical appeals to the inquisitive nature that seems to be in man, but it can be controlled by being totally submissive to God's Word.

What about the parenthetical words "Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using"? With our inquisitive nature, we are not to touch, taste, or handle the mystical. Even just a little bit is like arsenic. Paul was warning in progressive degrees about not going into the untouchable arena. "Handle not" would be the strongest involvement. All who succumb will "perish with the using," that is, through the use or practice of the mystical.

Q: Since this warning was directed to Christians, is the thought that those who get involved in spiritism will go into Second Death?

A: Involvement would certainly lead to Second Death unless one repented and was extricated. Usually those who seek the mystical become more and more involved with the result that it is all-encompassing, so extrication would be the exception, not the general rule. The implication is that those who touch, taste, and handle, becoming completely involved, will perish.

Comment: In 1 Timothy 4:1, Paul said, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”

Reply: That is an apt description of what is happening today.

Some make “the commandments and doctrines of men” mandatory. When a false “angel,” or messenger, makes a string of mandatory beliefs, there is great danger, for the result is a creed. We cannot go much beyond fundamental beliefs, such as Jesus is the ransom sacrifice, he will be the Mediator between God and men in the Kingdom, and God is the Author of the divine plan of salvation. Otherwise, human philosophy enters and becomes the commandments of men. As Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees, “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9). Through the commandments of men, they made null and void the commandments of God.

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

The commandments and doctrines of men have “a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body.” “Will-worship” is self-devised worship, meaning that it is of human origination or imagination. This “humility” is false; it is a pious and hypocritical self-righteousness. Those who preach true humility but practice the opposite are in a dangerous condition. Along a similar line, the Catholic religion has candles, statues, incense, the sign of the Cross, kneeling and blessing oneself, etc. Someone who practices these things appears very religious.

Comment: On a tour, a small group of us were standing in the square at the Vatican in Rome. When the pope appeared at the window and started to speak in Italian, all of the other people got down on their knees while we continued to stand. Without thinking, one individual in our group also started to bow down, so there was peer pressure for a moment. That is why we should not be confident in ourselves as to what we would do under pressure.

Reply: We should consider these matters in advance and pray for the determination to be faithful, for we do not know the true mettle of our characters, especially when peer pressure is being exerted.

“Neglecting of the body.” This was an admonition not to punish the body, as with self-inflicted flagellation, for example. Those who did such things thought they were showing their love for God, but crucifying the flesh led to pride.

The voluntary show of “will-worship” was worship in which some thought that punishing the flesh of their physical bodies commended them to God. Then Paul added, “Not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.” Some people eat just enough to live and do not consume any of the dainties. Thus there are different degrees of this irregular monastic type of existence leading to asceticism, where one becomes so zealous that he does very abnormal things. An example would be the whirling dervishes, who cut themselves and got into a furor until they fell from exhaustion. They even handled and ate scorpions. Such religious fervor and fanaticism

are not taught in God's Word, yet the devotees think they are doing God a service by this practice.

Comment: In the past and even today, certain groups in the South handle snakes as part of their religious beliefs. People get bitten and even die.

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

Among the Colossian brethren were probably some neophytes who were listening to the truth but had not yet consecrated. Paul was advising such individuals to avoid these other attractions—to touch not, taste not, and handle not. Those who had “risen with Christ” were to seek the things that “are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” We should be thinking of meeting Jesus and seeing God. Our communication with the Father and the Son is through the Scriptures, and we should pray to Jesus to help us to *personally* love him and to respect and honor God.

Today, rather than to punish the flesh through flagellation, for example, the tendency is toward works—to justify oneself by zeal in works. The purpose of the works is intended to show our love for God. Certainly the Apostle Paul manifested his love for God by his witnessing, but instead of works being an evidence of our love for Christ and God, they can actually drop down to being a desire for honor from those of like precious faith; that is, brethren esteem us because of our works. Sometimes the level of reverence does not ascend higher. We have heard others say, even in talks from the platform, how they long to see Pastor Russell, but they did not mention desiring to see Christ or God. How strange! We think we appreciate the Pastor as much as anyone else, but it was *Jesus* who provided the spiritual food of present truth when he returned in 1874. Who has been feeding the brethren since the Pastor's death in 1916? The *Volumes* are important and should be a part of our study, but *Jesus*, as High Priest and Chief Reaper, is the supplier of truth. *He* is the Head of the body.

Q: Is the clause “If ye then be risen with Christ” a reference to baptism?

A: Water baptism is the start, but the real baptism is into Jesus' death. The death of the human will is pictured by submersion into water and being lifted up to newness of life. However, there is also the baptism of actual death. In speaking of this baptism, Jesus said in Luke 12:50, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” We have a dual mind. First comes the theoretical continual dying of the flesh. It would be one thing if we could shoot the old man so that he would be really dead, leaving just the spirit, but it is the fight of the new mind against the old mind that gives spiritual exercise. Paul mentally put a stake through the heart of the old man, for he meant business, but nevertheless, he had to fight discouragement, a serious physical illness, and other obstacles. In addition to the flesh, we have to fight the world and the Devil. The world is peer pressure—what others think about us. And if we did not have guardian angels, we would be quickly extinguished by the Adversary. We thank God for the measure of strength that He gives each of us in trying to make our calling and election sure.

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

Jesus said to “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Matt. 6:20).

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

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

glory.

This appearance with Christ in glory is also called the *epiphania*. Both Greek words—the *epiphania* and the *apokalupsis*—refer to the future revelation of Christ to the world. At that time, the Little Flock will be with Jesus.

Christ “is our life.” We must hold to Jesus as the Head, for we would be absolutely nothing without him.

Comment: “For in him [Jesus] we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

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

Verses 5-8 are very direct and personal as to conduct. “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.” Sample things to mortify are “fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” The *Diaglott* reads, “Put to death, therefore, those members on the earth; fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and inordinate lust, which is idol-worship.” The Amplified has, “So kill (deadens, deprive of power) the evil desire lurking in your members—those animal impulses and all that is earthly in you that is employed in sin: sexual vice, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires, and all greed and covetousness, for that is idolatry [the deifying of self and other created things instead of God].” Most of these desires of the flesh are the base instincts that the Christian has to especially fight.

Q: What is “concupiscence”?

A: The word means “unholy desires.” These terms are more or less similar, but the repetition covers practically every kind of filthy desire one might have and should fight against until it is slain and mortified. The flesh keeps popping up, but the more positively it is dealt with, the more successful the Christian is—for example, by rushing to the throne of grace for help and forgiveness. We should try to nip these desires in the bud. Our thoughts and the reading material and media we use need to be screened. Indeed we live in “perilous times” (2 Tim. 3:1).

Col. 3:6 **For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:**

With the world being immersed in these things, God is just in visiting punishment. In the past, at least to a certain extent, semantics made a distinction between what was legal and what was ethical because people considered the Bible to be the proper standard, but today, with few exceptions, that is not true. There is merit in studying the Law in the Old Testament. Even though Christians are not under the Law, it gives us God’s thinking on a variety of subjects. The Law teaches us how to exercise discrimination in connection with conduct that is to be expected and heeded.

Q: Who are the “children of disobedience”?

A: All are children of disobedience before consecration because the whole world lies in wickedness or the Wicked One, Satan (1 John 5:19). Paul was saying to the Colossians, “This is Gentile thinking. Now that you are new creatures, these evil desires are to be avoided.” The old man is “desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). When we become new creatures, the flesh is to be suppressed. If it starts to talk, we try to put our hand over our mouth and push it away as much as we can. If we have difficulty along these lines, we need to pray for help. These urgings are part of the conflict in the “good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12).

Note: Although “children of disobedience” is not in the *Diaglott*, the term does not do harm to the context.

Comment: The flesh wars against the spirit, the new mind (Gal. 5:17).

Col. 3:7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

When many Christians consecrate, there is some leftover business from the old creature that is on the agenda of the new creature. An example would be smoking, which is a filthy habit, although it is not comparable to the base instincts of verse 5. Some have even had trouble with cursing, for it was so much a part of their vocabulary prior to consecration that it takes quite a lot of diligence to keep a word from popping out from time to time. Several individuals have testified to this effect, but they were able to overcome the habit.

Years ago some of the talks were so idealistic that it was preached from the platform that the sins listed in this chapter were gone and were no longer any trouble for the new creature. The point was made that Paul was referring to *spiritual* fornication. But that is not true, for the flesh is a real enemy of the new creature and must be resisted until death.

Comment: How discouraging for the brother or sister who is trying to fight these unholy desires to hear such talks!

The very fact that Paul mentioned these desires means the warning was (and is) necessary. If verse 5 were removed from the Bible, the epistle would be more pleasant to read, but more of the consecrated would go astray.

Comment: Ephesians 5:5,6 reads, “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”

Reply: Paul spoke similarly here in Colossians. Not only are portions of the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians very much alike, but they were written about the same time, AD 64, along with Philippians and Philemon.

Q: Is the “wrath of God” of verse 6 a reference to the great Time of Trouble?

A: Yes, when we think of the verse in a collective, dispensational sense, but there is also an individual application. God said, “Fret not thyself because of the evildoer. Vengeance is mine; I will repay” (Rom. 12:19 paraphrase). Sometimes the Christian gets so discouraged as he looks out on society that he forgets God will take care of the situation in due time. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” applies to both Christians and non-Christians (Gal. 6:7). At any rate, Colossians must have been written close to Ephesians, for the nature of the thinking is so similar.

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

In the beginning of the Christian walk, a relative minority have a little difficulty with some of the more lurid types of sin. With these sins, the distinction can easily be made between black and white, but there are also gray areas. For instance, some people delight in using innuendos, making suggestions sometimes in a joke form with a double meaning. Christians who were given to innuendos in the past need to fight this problem. If we did not read the Bible, if Paul or Jesus Christ himself in the Gospels did not advise us, we would have a problem in discerning

our faults more clearly.

We are to “put off” anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication. Although the situation would be very rare indeed, two brothers in an ecclesia that has been in existence for many years could, when least expected, almost get into a fistfight, a slapping, or have a verbal onslaught. This has happened, so if we are not on guard, if a man does not examine himself, one could commit such an act and somehow think of it as righteous indignation.

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

In other words, “Do not lie to one another, for you have stripped off the old (unregenerate) self with its evil practices.” One might give a false witness, for example. Another form of lying would be exaggeration, which is a slight infringement, but since it can enlarge itself into a more repulsive nature, we must all scrutinize ourselves.

Comment: These “lies” do not have to be big things. One can habitually lie in little things.

Reply: Some of these tendencies have to be fought vigorously, for we have “this treasure” in an *earthen* vessel, and little things crop up (2 Cor. 4:7).

A witness can be false, so that is why it is necessary in some cases to go to the source. Instead of accepting a matter through a second or a third witness, we should go to the one who is supposed to have transgressed. In our own experience, we find that very few follow that procedure. In one instance, we thought an apology was due us, but only two out of 30 or more individuals that we knew of admitted the wrong that was done. We must watch lest we ourselves fail to render an apology that should be given to others.

Comment: Our yea should be yea, and our nay should be nay (Matt. 5:37).

Reply: Yes, simplicity is good. Proverbs 10:19 states, “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.”

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

We are to put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of God, who created the new creature.

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

Why did Paul bring this thought into the context here?

Comment: One should not feel superior to another because of background.

Reply: One might ask, How could a brother feel superior to the other on both sides? Being trained in the Law, the Jews could see the faults of the barbarians, but in reading the Old Testament, the barbarians could see that God criticized the Jews many times, so the barbarians could have concluded that the Jews were cast off for good. They could forget Romans 11, which speaks of retrieval. The Gentiles should not brag, for they are branches grafted into the *Jewish* tree, but in the same epistle Paul turned the situation around and showed that the Jews thought they were superior. The point was to forget these things and concentrate on the one example they were supposed to copy: Jesus, the standard bearer. As the perfect image of God, he is the model, so we are to follow him and do as he says. Doing so would eliminate a

tremendous amount of stress both in the ecclesia and in the person's own mind and heart.

“Christ is all, and in all,” meaning that whether one was a Greek, a Scythian, a Jew, or a barbarian, all were alike in Christ. All who are in Christ are in the same family.

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

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

Now Paul showed the opposite, positive qualities, which the new creature is to put on: bowels of mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, and forbearing and forgiving one another. When I first came in the truth, the attitude was more puritanical, more conservative, and sometimes, without having bowels of mercies and tender kindness, there was the extreme that came from the Puritans, who tried to live a godly and pure life. However, today we are in an era of liberalism. Everything is “love,” and this liberal thinking is in the Christian world, as well as in the Laodicean period. The actual standard is in between these two extremes.

In earlier verses, we were reading what the apostle said not to do. If, as a visiting speaker, we knew of some grievous sin in the class along any one of these lines and we called attention to it—even if done tactfully—our remarks would not be received too well with many. The message of truth is a mixture of both qualities: being liberal, merciful, and forgiving but also admonishing against certain actions and attitudes. If we leave out the warning element, we are not preaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

A part of the Laodicean attitude is feeling rich and in need of nothing. Those in the nominal Church feel that they have accepted Christ and been forgiven, so they will go to heaven. Believing they are “saved,” they do not feel the need for any more edification. That attitude can occur in our midst in the form of being quite content and self-righteous. Many think that self-righteousness is shown by a stern attitude, but the *reason* for the sternness should be examined, for the very ones who are so merciful can be judging. Some talented people have very pleasing temperaments, yet they make unjustified cutting remarks while speaking sweetly. In other words, they are judging, but their judgmental attitude is hard to recognize because of their smooth talk. To the contrary, it is obvious when one who is cruder and rougher is judging.

“Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” How did Christ forgive? The forgiveness comes from asking; it is not automatic. When we pray, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,” we are asking God for forgiveness in Jesus’ name to the degree of our sincerity. We are petitioning the Heavenly Father for the covering of any transgression. As for forgiving those who have trespassed against us and harmed us, many quote the Lord’s Prayer as justification for granting *carte blanche* forgiveness to others without their asking for it. Strangely, this is probably the majority opinion, whereas the steps for forgiveness should be followed. In Luke 17:3,4, Jesus said, “If thy brother trespass against thee, *rebuke* him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.” We are talking about a transgression of a little more serious nature. In other words, we are to rebuke the individual, and if he repents and asks for forgiveness, we are to grant it. Even if this occurs seven times in a day, we are *obligated* to forgive if the individual goes through the formality of personally coming to us and asking for forgiveness. After all, we ask God daily (and sometimes multiple times in a day) to forgive us our trespasses. If we do not forgive the other party, we should not expect God to forgive us.

Q: If a person kept committing the same transgression over and over, how could his asking for

forgiveness be sincere?

A: Of course a grievous sin is a different situation. For example, if someone committed adultery with our wife and then came and said, “Forgive me,” we would not forgive him that easily, for the nature of that type of sin is so gross that it involves God’s truth and the brethren, as well as the individual and ourself. Therefore, we have to balance things according to the nature of the grievance.

God and Jesus forgave our past sins when we consecrated, so even there we have to make a distinction. If God threw over His shoulder the sins we committed *before* consecration and we made restitution to the extent that is reasonable, just, and possible, then we were forgiven and were given the robe of Christ’s righteousness. However, there is a distinction with the sins committed *after* consecration. “Even as Christ forgave you” [past tense] refers to sins prior to giving our heart to the Lord. The *Reprints* tell of a murderer who came into the truth, and he started to confess to the brotherhood that he had committed this sin before consecration. The Pastor said such confession was very unwise because what was done prior to consecration was between him and God. But a grievous sin done after consecration is a different matter.

A well-known saying is, “Familiarity breeds contempt.” When a person with grievous sins in his past comes into the truth, some brethren have difficulty detaching the past of that individual from his current status. But that attitude is wrong. The repentance of some individuals who consecrate is so obvious that we *know* they have been forgiven, and very moving testimonies are given along that line.

Although an oversimplification, it is said that there are three different levels of examination: the trivial, the more meaningful, and the gross. The three are not handled the same after consecration, but if they occurred before consecration, they must be forgiven.

In reading these statements of Paul, we need to compare them with other Scriptures. As an example, we recently heard a talk on the fifth chapter of Matthew where Jesus made certain statements, but he made *modifying* statements elsewhere, so we have to consider *all* Scriptures on a subject.

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

For “charity” in the Old English, we would use the word “love” today. Love is the “bond of perfectness [maturity].”

Col. 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.

If the “peace of God” rules in our hearts, we will not be given to wrangling and railing. Also, “ye [Jews and Gentiles] are called in one body.” This statement means that brethren are “one body” now regardless of what a person might have been involved in before consecration.

Col. 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.

Q: How would we “admonish” with a hymn?

A: The words “I want the first approach to feel of pride or fond desire” are an admonition to self. Other hymns stress kindness, such as “I want to feel humble, more simple, more mild, more like my blest Master and more like a child.” Sometimes the hymns pertain to our own

personal being, and sometimes they pertain to how we treat others—and that would be teaching and admonishing. Moreover, David's Psalms contain a lot of teaching and admonishing. Many "spiritual songs" are instructional, such as "The Love of God" and "Song of Faith." Beautiful thoughts are expressed in music.

Comment: Teaching in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" is not restricted to brothers, for sisters can teach with this method too.

"Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Sometimes a person can sing very beautifully, but the words of the hymn may not correspond with the heart of that individual. For instance, a lead singer for a performance of Handel's "Messiah" was in a sister's home, and when she explained to him what the Isaiah Scriptures meant, he was surprised. His mind had been solely on the technical aspects of the singing and not on the intent of the words. Thus verse 16 is saying, "Sing to the Lord with *grace* in your *heart*, as well as with voice."

Comment: These things are nearly impossible to do when we are working in the public, for our minds are constantly being pulled in the other direction.

Reply: Yes, these are perilous times. For many, many centuries, the industry was agrarian, and people were engaged in hard work. They did not have time for frivolities and baser conversation and conduct. But today people sit in an office and have liberties of talking without physical exercise. Conversation and dress are often inappropriate, and loyalty to the employer is lacking.

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

To live this way is consecration. Verse 17 shows that the Father is separate from the Son: "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and [even] the Father *by him* [Jesus]."

Col. 3:18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

Col. 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

Col. 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is wellpleasing unto the Lord.

Verses 18-20 are expressing general principles where conscience is not involved. Of course we are living in the days when children are disobedient to parents.

Col. 3:21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

The words "to anger," supplied by the translators, are proper, although fathers could provoke their children in other ways as well.

Col. 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:

Again this verse is a general principle. Servants should obey their masters so long as conscience permits, as indicated by the term "fearing God." Today many find fault with Scriptures such as this one because they feel slavery is being condoned. However, the point was to be submissive to authority as far as conscience allowed in whatever role existed: wives, children, slaves, employees, etc.

We are bond slaves of God and of Christ, so in principle we are expected to "obey in all

things.” Christians are even spoken of as being “beheaded for the witness of Jesus,” meaning that theoretically we have no head or will of our own, but because we have a dual nature with the flesh of the old man warring against the spirit of the new creature, there is a battle (Rev. 20:4).

Comment: Also, we are servants of each other.

Reply: Jesus illustrated this thought when he washed the feet of the disciples on the night he instituted the Memorial.

Comment: The command for servants to obey their masters “according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart” certainly applies to the Christian with regard to Jesus and the Heavenly Father, for they know all that we say and do.

Col. 3:23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

The *Diaglott* reads, “Whatever you may do, work it from the soul, as for the Lord, and not for men.”

Col. 3:24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

Col. 3:25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

“Respect of persons” is a subject in itself. There is to be no respect of persons in matters of judgment. For example, some people bend justice for the poor, but the Law tells that in judgment we are not to discern the face of the poor. “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour” (Lev. 19:15). However, that command does not mean we are to be merciless. In our day, the tendency is to make improper judgments based on emotional attachments to the poor, the wise, the noble, or the rich. We should try to do that which is right and proper and good in all circumstances.

Especially for the Little Flock, “he that doeth wrong shall receive [retribution in the present life] for the wrong which he hath done.” As with the Apostle Paul, there will be retribution for what God considers wrong. The trial period for the consecrated is the present age, whereas the world’s trials will occur in the next age.

Col. 4:1 Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

Although Paul was addressing those Christians who had servants, his simple maxim can be carried through our whole tenor of life. The Golden Rule—“Do unto others as we would have them do unto us”—is somewhat along the same line (Matt. 7:12; Luke 6:31). The “Master” in heaven is God Himself or, depending on context, it could be Jesus.

Comment: The Apostle Paul said, “And, ye masters, do the same things unto them [your servants], forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him” (Eph. 6:9).

Col. 4:2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

Comment: We are to have the *habit* of prayer and then watch for the answer, being thankful

whether the answer is yes or no.

Reply: Yes, and that is especially true when we are looking for certain providences. There is to be no discontent when our prayers are answered, for “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6).

Col. 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:

Col. 4:4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

Comment: If Paul asked for prayers to be able to speak effectively, how much more we need to do so!

Reply: Yes. He was praying for opportunities to witness while in prison, which is the proper attitude. Some who are in the hospital under conditions of constraint have given wonderful testimonies.

Col. 4:5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

Comment: Ephesians 5:16 states, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” The environment is evil among “them that are without,” the unconsecrated.

Reply: When we quote from other epistles of Paul, we notice certain repetitive phrases and expressions.

Comment: The Amplified reads, “Behave yourselves wisely—living prudently and with discretion—in your relations with those of the outside world (the non-Christians), making the very most of the time and seizing (buying up) the opportunity.”

Col. 4:6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Comment: “Seasoned with salt” indicates having a preservative influence. Our words should be gracious, wholesome, and constructive in a spiritual sense.

Reply: Yes, just as salt has a tiny bite to it, so our words should be incisive and bring out good qualities. With regard to “grace,” our conversation is to be edifying, educational, and instructive—it should have value. Certainly the conversation of a Christian should stand out in an office as being quite different from that of worldly-minded individuals with their innuendos, invectives, gossip, and coarse language.

Comment: Sometimes it is difficult to say the right thing at the right time. We pray that we may know how we ought “to answer every man.”

Reply: Some people have remarkable tact. Two sisters who came into the truth toward the end of Bro. Russell’s ministry were very, very successful in selling *Volumes*. Sr. Sanford was particularly effectual with people of great education. She went down to Wall Street and got into conversations very easily and naturally, whereas Sr. Magnuson was gifted in speaking with anyone she met. For example, going into the subway, she sat down in a seat, made a comment to the person next to her, and was witnessing almost immediately. She spoke so naturally that the person did not feel she was intruding into his or her privacy. Possessing such tact and using it are a wonderful blessing.

“That ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” On the one hand, most of us may not have inherent tact in opening up conversations, but on the other hand, all of us have a responsibility when a conversation is initiated by the other party, who asks a question or makes a comment that gives us the opportunity to witness. We have to study how to make good use of opportunities that may open to us. Unfortunately, in some cases, we muffle a wonderful opportunity to witness because of having to reply so quickly. Such situations of regret should be stepping-stones to help us try to be prepared, if possible, when other sudden questions are addressed to us. As we become well versed in truth, we have an ability to turn almost any question from others in a profitable direction.

Col. 4:7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:

Col. 4:8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;

Col. 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.

Tychicus was mentioned first, perhaps because he was the more talented brother or because he was more conspicuous in his presence among the brotherhood. In many Bibles, there is a note that the Epistle to the Colossians was delivered by either Tychicus or Onesimus. We think it was the former.

Comment: As a servant, Onesimus might not have been so well educated.

Reply: Yes, that is what we are saying in an indirect way, but he was very faithful. Paul made sure that Onesimus was given a commendation.

Combining the thoughts of verses 7 and 9 is helpful. “All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord... Onesimus ... [is also] a faithful and beloved brother.... They [Tychicus and Onesimus] shall make known unto you all [profitable] things which are done here.”

Comment: The implication is that Onesimus and Tychicus were careful to give out complete facts so that a matter was not misunderstood.

Reply: Paul sent Tychicus unto the Colossian brethren “for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts.” In other words, information went both ways: from Paul to the brethren, and from the brethren back to Paul.

Comment: Paul wrote similarly to the brethren at Ephesus. “But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts” (Eph. 6:21,22).

Reply: Yes, Tychicus was mentioned in four epistles and the Book of Acts, and the epistles were written almost at the same time and sent to different places.

Comment: In this short Epistle to the Colossians, almost the entire fourth chapter gives the names of brethren either with Paul or going to the ecclesia of the Colossian brethren. This proportion shows that where there is true fellowship in the precious bonds of Christ, it is very good to remember one another.

Reply: Yes, and usually brethren traveled with Paul.

“Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, ... is one of you.” The Colossian brethren knew Onesimus. Whether or not this was his home class is debatable, but certainly he lived in the area before he resided in Ephesus for a short time. Onesimus moved around. Laodicea, Colosse, and Hierapolis were in a triangle, all being very close together.

Col. 4:10 Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister’s son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

Aristarchus, Paul’s fellow prisoner, and Marcus (that is, John Mark) saluted the Colossian brethren. John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas, was reinstated to favor after Paul’s sharp contention over his desertion on an earlier missionary journey (Acts 15:37-40). This reinstatement toward the end of Paul’s ministry suggests that Peter was martyred before Paul. When John Mark was left without service, he went over to Paul to see how he could help.

Paul added about John Mark, “touching [concerning] whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him.” In hearing the possibility of John Mark’s visiting that site, Paul may have given additional instruction to him that was not necessarily in the epistles to Philemon and the Colossians. It is interesting that John Mark, who wrote the Gospel of Mark, was given to short, terse, precise statements. In contrast, the Gospel of Matthew is voluminous.

Comment: Aristarchus is mentioned in three places in the Book of Acts. “And the whole city [of Ephesus] was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul’s companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre” (Acts 19:29). “And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus” (Acts 20:4). “And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us” (Acts 27:2).

Reply: Yes, Aristarchus came from Thessalonica.

Col. 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.

This Jesus was called Justus. He is mentioned in Acts 18:7, “And he [Paul] departed thence, and [went to Corinth and] entered into a certain man’s house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.”

Q: Wouldn’t anyone, especially in the early Church, who had this name want to immediately change it to something else so that it would not detract from the Head, Jesus?

A: Yes, that is why this individual was called Justus.

Aristarchus, Marcus, and Justus were “a comfort” to Paul (verses 10 and 11).

Col. 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Col. 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.

Epaphras was probably Epaphroditus. The spelling of the names changed depending on who

was writing the epistle. Yes, they were all Paul's epistles, but basically speaking, someone else did the writing.

Epaphras labored earnestly and fervently for the Colossians in his prayers. Some people by nature are given to prayer on almost every occasion. Lapis lazuli, the sixth jewel in the high priest's breastplate, depicts this characteristic, the tribe being Simeon, which means "hearing." The burden of the prayers was that the brethren might "stand perfect [mature] and complete [fully assured] in all the will of God." In addition, Epaphras had "a great zeal" for the brethren in this locale: Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. Colosse was a village, whereas at one time Laodicea was one of the most important cities in Asia Minor.

Col. 4:14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

Comment: It is sad that Demas departed. "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica" (2 Tim. 4:10).

Col. 4:15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.

Evidently, the brethren in Laodicea met in the home of Nymphas, a brother.

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

In considering Paul's letter to the Ephesians, our personal deduction is that the epistle was written to the Gentiles because the word "Ephesus" is not in the early manuscripts. One fairly ancient writer felt that the Epistle to the Ephesians should have been called the "Epistle to the Laodiceans." However, we question that thought because this verse mentions that the Epistle to the Colossians was to be read to the church of Laodicea. If Paul had sent an epistle to the Laodiceans with that title, it would not make sense for him to use the Epistle to the Colossians to benefit those in Laodicea, who did not get a message from him. There are other reasons too. And verse 16 mentions an epistle "from Laodicea." Evidently, the Laodiceans had written a letter to Paul, which he thought would be profitable for the Colossians to read because of its content.

Col. 4:17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

Archippus, who was in either Colosse or Laodicea, was to "take heed to the ministry," so at one time he may have been very zealous but then cooled off a tiny bit. Paul was saying, "Take heed to the responsibility you have and to the talents you possess."

Comment: Philemon 2 says that Paul was writing "to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house."

Reply: Yes, Philemon was nearby too but not quite as close. Philemon's residence, Colosse, Hierapolis, and Laodicea were all in one area on the less traveled, more circuitous southern route, which, while it was not much of a commercial route, the wealthy liked, whereas the northern route, an industrial Roman road, was starker and more barren. Each time Paul traveled by land, he took the northern route and then circled down to Ephesus. The Romans were interested in speed so that they could keep matters under control. Therefore, the southern route was not used as much because it was more time-consuming, but it was very picturesque, especially with the view of the sea from the hill areas.

Col. 4:18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.

Paul himself wrote the salutation, which was a seal of approval indicating that the epistle was from him. Similarly, papal bulls have a stamp of approval, showing that the document is official. To see Paul's handwriting would have been very touching for the brethren, for it called to mind that this one, who was so talented, had to live with a handicap. It is marvelous when people who are missing two legs or two arms, try to contribute to society in some way instead of crying and lying down and dying. The character of such individuals to persevere under very trying circumstances is commendable. In theory the Christian is to develop along the same lines.