

COLOSSIANS

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

The Colossians, to whom this epistle is written, were not the Rhodians, by some called Colossians, from Colossus, the large statue of the sun, which stood in the island of Rhodes, and was one of the seven wonders of the world; but the inhabitants of Colosse, a city of the greater Phrygia, in the lesser Asia, near to which stood the cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis, mentioned in this epistle. Pliny^{f1} speaks of it as one of the chief towns in Phrygia, and^{f2} Herodotus calls it the great city of Phrygia; it is said to have perished a very little time after the writing of this epistle, with the above cities, by an earthquake, in the year of Christ 66, and in the tenth of Nero^{f3}; though it was afterwards rebuilt; for Theophylact says, that in his time it was called Chonae. When the Gospel was brought hither, and by whom, is not known, nor who was the founder of the church in this place; for the Apostle Paul was not, since his face had never been seen by them, (~~5:11~~ Colossians 2:1), though it is said that Epaphras, the same name with Epaphroditus, was fixed by him pastor of this church; and others say Philemon was set over it by him. The occasion of this epistle was this, Epaphras, who had preached the Gospel to the Colossians, and very likely was the first that did, came to Rome, where the Apostle Paul was a prisoner, and gave him an account of them, how they had heard and received the Gospel, and of their faith Christ, and love to the saints; and also declared to him in what danger they were through some false teachers that had got among them, who were for introducing the philosophy of the Gentiles, the ceremonies of the law of Moses, and some pernicious tenets of the followers of Simon Magus, and the Gnostics; upon which the apostle writes this epistle to them, to confirm them in the faith of the Gospel Epaphras had preached unto them, and which was the same he himself preached; and to warn them against those bad men, and their principles; and to exhort them to a discharge of their duty to God, and men, and one another. It was written by the apostle, when in bonds at Rome, as many passages in it show, and about the same time with those to the Philippians and Ephesians; and the epistle to the latter greatly agrees with this, both as

to subject and style. Dr. Lightfoot places it in the year of Christ 60, in the second of the apostle's imprisonment, and in the sixth of Nero's reign.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS 1

This chapter contains the inscription of the epistle; the apostle's usual salutation; his thanksgiving to God on behalf of the Colossians for grace received; his prayers, that more might be given them; an enumeration of various blessings of grace, which require thankfulness, in which the glories and excellencies of Christ are particularly set forth: and it is concluded with an exhortation to a steadfast adherence to the Gospel, taken from the nature, excellency, and usefulness of the ministry of it. The inscription, and the salutation, are in (~~5100E~~Colossians 1:1,2), and are the same with those in the epistle to the Ephesians, only Timothy is joined with the apostle here, and the Colossians have the additional character of brethren given them. The thanksgiving is in (~~5100B~~Colossians 1:3-5), the object of it is God, the Father of Christ; the time when made, when in prayer to him; its subject matter, the faith and love of the saints; to which is added, their happiness secured for them in heaven, their hope was conversant with: and whereas the Gospel was the means by which they came to the hearing and knowledge of it, this is commended from the subject of it, the doctrine of truth; from the spread of it in the world; and from its efficacy in bringing forth fruit in all, to whom it came in power, and that with constancy, (~~5100F~~Colossians 1:5,6), and also from the testimony of Epaphras, a faithful minister of Christ, and theirs, who was dear to the apostle, and of whom he had the above account of them, (~~5100G~~Colossians 1:7,8). And then follow his prayers for them, that they might have an increase of spiritual knowledge, and that they might put in practice what they knew; and for that purpose he entreats they might be blessed with strength, patience, and longsuffering, (~~5100D~~Colossians 1:9-11). And in order to excite thankfulness in himself and them, he takes notice of various blessings of grace; of the Father's grace in giving a meetness for eternal glory and happiness, by delivering from the power of darkness, and translating into the kingdom of his Son, (~~51012~~Colossians 1:12,13), and of the Son's grace in obtaining redemption by his blood, and procuring the remission of sins, (~~51014~~Colossians 1:14), which leads the apostle to enlarge upon the excellencies of the author of these blessings, in his divine person, as the image of God, and the first cause of

all created beings, (⁵⁰¹⁵Colossians 1:15), which he proves by an enumeration of them, as created by him, and for his sake, by his pre-existence to them, and their dependence on him, (⁵⁰¹⁶Colossians 1:16,17), and in his office capacity, as Mediator, being the head of the church, the governor of it, and the first that rose from the dead; by all which it appears that he has, and ought to have the pre-eminence, (⁵⁰¹⁸Colossians 1:18). And this is still more manifest from his having all fulness dwelling in him, to supply his body the church, of which he is the head, (⁵⁰¹⁹Colossians 1:19), and from the reconciliation of all the members of it to God by him, (⁵⁰²⁰Colossians 1:20), which blessing of grace is amplified partly by the subjects of it, who are described by their former state and condition, aliens and enemies, and by their present one, reconciled by the death of Christ in his fleshly body; and partly by the end of it, the presentation of them holy, blameless, and irreprovable in the sight of God, (⁵⁰²¹Colossians 1:21,22). Wherefore it is a duty incumbent on such to abide by the Gospel of Christ, which brings the good tidings of peace and reconciliation, and is the means of faith and hope; and the rather, since they had heard it themselves, and others also, even every creature under heaven; and the apostle was a minister of it, (⁵⁰²³Colossians 1:23), and on his ministration of it he enlarges, by observing his sufferings for the church on account of the Gospel, which he endured with pleasure; and therefore they should, by his example, be encouraged to continue in it, (⁵⁰²⁴Colossians 1:24). Moreover, he argues the same from his commission of God to preach it for their sakes, (⁵⁰²⁵Colossians 1:25), and from the nature and subject matter of it, being a hidden mystery, and containing riches and glory in it; yea, Christ himself, the foundation of hope of eternal glory, (⁵⁰²⁶Colossians 1:26,27), and from the end of preaching it, which was to present every man perfect in Christ; which end the apostle laboured and strove to obtain through the power and energy of divine grace, which wrought in him, and with him, (⁵⁰²⁸Colossians 1:28,29).

Ver. 1. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ*, etc.] The apostle puts his name to this epistle, by which he was known in the Gentile world, as he usually does in all his epistles; and styles himself “an apostle”, as he was, having seen Christ in person, and received his commission, doctrine, and qualifications immediately from him, with a power of doing miracles to confirm the truth of his mission. This he chose to make mention of, partly because the false teachers everywhere insinuated that he was not an apostle; and partly to give the greater sanction and authority, and

command the greater regard and credit to what he should say; as well as to excuse his freedom in writing to them whom he had never seen, since he was an apostle of the Gentiles, and so to them; (see ^{<5113>}Romans 11:13 ^{<5117>}1 Timothy 2:7 ^{<5111>}2 Timothy 1:11); he calls himself an apostle “of Jesus Christ”; not of men, he was not sent out by men, but by Christ, who appeared to him, made him a minister of his, gave him his Gospel by revelation, abundantly qualified him for the work, sent him forth unto the Gentiles, in whose name he went as an ambassador and messenger of his, and whom he preached, and by whom he was greatly succeeded, to the conversion of many souls, who were seals of his apostleship in every place, (^{<4111>}1 Corinthians 9:2): into which office he came

by the will of God; not by the will of men, for he derived no authority and power, nor received any doctrine from men; nor by his own will, of his own head, by any usurpation of his; he did not take this office upon him of himself, but was invested with it, according to the secret will and purpose of God, from everlasting, who had ordained and appointed him to this service, and according to his will of command made known to him in time, when he told him what he should do, and openly separated, and sent him forth to do the work he had called him to; and which arose not from any merits or worthiness of the apostle, but from the sovereign good will and pleasure, free grace and favour, of God, to which the apostle continually ascribes it in all his epistles:

and Timotheus [our] brother; who joined with the apostle in this epistle, and whom he calls a “brother”; partly because of the Christian relation he stood in to him, and them, they being all brethren, children of the same Father, partakers of the same grace of regeneration, belonging to the same family, and so should own and love one another as brethren; and partly and chiefly because of his being a brother, companion, fellow soldier, and a fellow labourer in the Gospel. He mentions him, either because he was known unto them, or that he might be so; and to show the agreement there was between them in the doctrine of Christ, which might have the greater weight with them to abide in it.

Ver. 2. *To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ*, etc.] This is the inscription of the epistle, in which the persons wrote unto are described as “saints”, or holy men; not by birth, for all are unholy and unclean by nature; nor by baptism, for that neither takes away sin, nor gives grace; nor merely externally, by an outward reformation; but by separation, being by an act of

eternal election set apart for God, for holiness, and happiness; and by imputation, Christ being made sanctification to them; and by the sanctifying grace of the Spirit of God in regeneration, being called with an holy calling, and having principles of grace and holiness wrought in them, and they formed as new men in righteousness and true holiness: and as “brethren”; being born of God, having him for their Father, and being of his household, and a part of the family in heaven and earth named of Christ, and heirs together of the grace of life, and of the heavenly glory: and as “faithful” ones; true and sincere believers in Christ, constant and persevering in the faith of him; faithful to the Gospel, and their profession of it, and to Christ, whose name they bore, and to one another, to whom they stood in the relation of brethren: and all this “in Christ”; and by, and through him; they were saints in him; they were chosen in him, and sanctified in him their head, and received all their holiness from him; they were brethren in him the firstborn of them; his God being their God, and his Father their Father; and had their faith and faithfulness from him, as well as it was exercised towards, and on him: and they are further described by the place of their abode,

which are at Colosse: a city of Phrygia:

grace [be] unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the salutation, and which stands in this form in most of Paul’s epistles; (see Gill on “~~ROM~~ Romans 1:7”). The Syriac version puts “peace” before “grace”, and leaves out the last clause, “and the Lord Jesus Christ”; as does also the Ethiopic version.

Ver. 3. *We give thanks to God*, etc.] Meaning himself and Timothy. This is the beginning of the epistle, which is introduced with a thanksgiving to God; to whom praise and thankfulness are always due as a Creator and preserver, as the author of all good things, as the Father of mercies, temporal and spiritual, and as the covenant God and Father of his people through Christ: wherefore it follows,

and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the sense of which either is, that God the Father, who is the object of praise and thanksgiving, is both the God of Christ, and the Father of Christ, the God of Christ, as Christ is man, and the Father of Christ, as Christ is God; or the latter is exegetical of the former, and may be rendered thus, “God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”: and very properly are thanks given to him under this character, because it is as he is the Father of Christ that he blesses his

people with all spiritual blessings; and because he is their God, as well as his God; and their Father, as well as his Father, though in a different sense, his by nature, theirs by adoption. Moreover, as all their blessings come from God, as the Father of Christ, and through Christ, and for his sake, so it is very proper that thanks should be returned unto him under that character; and through Christ, by whom alone such sacrifices of praise are acceptable to God: it is added,

praying always for you; which, as it is expressive of the constant discharge of the duty of prayer, and the continual remembrance of these saints in it, and shows the affection the apostle had for them; so it points out the time when, and the way and manner in which Paul and Timothy gave thanks to God on account of them; it was when they were at the throne of grace, and in their frequent prayers to God; thankfulness for mercies received, both by ourselves and others, being a branch of the duty of prayer.

Ver. 4. *Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus,* etc.] This expresses the matter of their thankfulness, or what it was they gave thanks to God for, their faith in Christ; by which is not only meant their hearty assent to the whole doctrine of faith, concerning the person, offices, and grace of Christ, their soundness and steadfastness in it, and their sincere and constant profession of it; but the grace of faith in them, the operation of the Spirit of God in their souls, which had not Moses, nor any mere man, but Christ for its object; by which they looked unto him as a Saviour, went unto him as such, ventured on him, committed themselves unto him, leaned and relied upon him; that grace which comes from him, has him for its author and finisher, and returns unto him, and lives on him. This Paul and Timothy had heard of by their minister Epaphras; and it shows that they made no secret of it, did not keep it to themselves, but declared, confessed, and published it to others, as is the duty of all believers to do; and thanks being given for it to God, makes it a clear point that it was not of themselves, but was the gift of God, otherwise there would have been no need of thankfulness for it; as also, that it is a very eminent grace, and of great use and service to such who are possessed of it.

And of love [which ye have] to all the saints; this is another thing for which thanks are given to God. The object of this grace are “saints”; all men indeed are to be loved, and even our very enemies; and good is to be done to all, but especially to holy and good men, to the household of faith; and these are “all” to be loved and respected; nor is any respect or

difference of persons to be made on account of country, or natural relation, as Jews or Gentiles, or of outward state and condition, as rich or poor, bond or free, or of greater or lesser gifts and grace, weak or strong believers, or of different sentiments in the lesser matters of religion. It denotes both the grace of love itself, which is a fruit of the Spirit implanted in regeneration, and is an evidence of the new birth, and always is where true faith in Christ is, for faith works by it; and also the effects of it, which lies not in bare words, in expressions of spiritual affection and friendship, but in deeds, by serving one another in love, by relieving in necessity, sympathizing in distress, praying with and for one another, and the like; all which these saints were famous for.

Ver. 5. *For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven*, etc.] These words may be considered either in connection with the foregoing, and express the reason or motive which encouraged these saints to believe in Christ, and to go on believing in him, and hold fast the profession of their faith in him, and to love the saints, and show it upon all occasions, and in every case; because of the rich treasure of glory and happiness in reserve for them in heaven, which they were hoping and waiting for; this encouraged their faith in Christ, and enlarged their love and beneficence to the saints: or else with the thanksgiving of the apostle, and so contains fresh matter of it, that as thanks were given for faith and love, so for “hope”; by which is meant, not the grace of hope, for that is not in heaven, though it enters within the veil, and is conversant with heavenly things, but is in the heart; and though it supposes it, and which these persons had; they were not without it; they had a good hope through grace of eternal glory, for faith, hope, and love, always go together: nor Christ the foundation of hope; there are many things in him, which are a ground of hope of happiness, as his sufferings, and death, and redemption thereby; his resurrection from the dead, his intercessions and preparations; the promise of life in him, and the thing itself being in his gift; his righteousness and grace, which, give a title to it, and meetness for it; and he is also in heaven, but then he cannot be said to be laid up there: but the thing hoped for, everlasting happiness, is intended; (see ⁵⁰²³Titus 2:13) (⁴⁰⁸⁵Galatians 5:5 ⁵⁰⁴⁸2 Timothy 4:8); which is so called, because it is the object of hope; is not yet possessed; is future; is not seen; is difficult, and yet possible to be enjoyed: this is said to be “laid up”; which denotes the preciousness and valuableness of it, it is a treasure, an inheritance, a kingdom, and riches of glory; and the secrecy and hiddenness of it, it consists of things invisible to the bodily eye, and which are out of

the reach of carnal sense and reason, of which faith only has some small glimpse; and also the safety of it, it is hid in Christ, it is reserved “in heaven”, and cannot be come at, and spoiled by men or devils; and likewise the free grace and goodness of God in laying up and providing things of such a nature for his children and friends: the place where it is, in heaven, where moth and rust corrupt not, and thieves cannot break through and steal; and so is safe, and must be of an heavenly nature, as it is for heavenly persons: “for you”; the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, for those who were chosen in Christ, for whom it was prepared from the foundation of the world; for this is not laid up for any, for everyone, but for the chosen of God, and precious; whom God has distinguished by his grace, Christ has redeemed by his blood, and the Spirit regenerates and sanctifies, and who have faith, hope, and love, given unto them; and this was not only laid up for them, but they knew of it, they were made acquainted with it:

whereof ye heard before; before the writing of this epistle, under the ministry of their faithful teacher Epaphras:

in the word of the truth of the Gospel; or in the true word of the Gospel; which comes from the God of truth, is indited by the Spirit of truth, is concerning Christ the truth, and which contains nothing but truth, and lies in the Scriptures of truth: or “in the word of truth”, even the Gospel; which explains what word of truth is meant. The law is the word of truth; and many of the words of men, of the philosophers, were words of truth; but it was not in either of them they had heard of eternal life laid up in heaven; of which there were hopes to be entertained by sinful creatures, enjoying it through Christ: this is what only the Gospel brings an account of; life and immortality are only brought to light by the Gospel; which not only speaks of it, but lays that before men, which give them ground and encouragement to hope for it.

Ver. 6. *Which is come unto you*, etc.] That is, the Gospel, which came to them from God, from heaven, from Christ, out of Jerusalem, from whence the word of the Lord was to come, by the ministers of the Gospel, who being sent, came to Colosse, and there preached it; and so the Syriac version renders the words **tzrktad yh**, “which is preached unto you”. And a wonderful instance of the free grace of God this was; they did not seek, inquire for, and go after the Gospel, but it came to them; and so Christ was found of them by it, who sought him not, and made manifest in his person, grace, and righteousness to them that asked not after him: for

this Gospel came not to them in, word only, but with the power of the Holy Spirit: it was come, *εις υμας*, “into you”, as the phrase may be rendered, into their very hearts, and wrought effectually there, enlightening, convincing, comforting, and instructing them; where it had a place, and remained; for the words may be read, as they are by the Arabic version, “which is present with you”. The Gospel is always in one place or another, and will be to the end of the world; but it is not always in the same place; but as yet it was not removed from Colosse; it was still with them in the external ministry of it, and it remained in their hearts in the powerful and comfortable experience of it:

as [it is] in all the world; as it was come into, and preached to all the world, and was made useful, and continued in all the world at that time. Christ gave his disciples a commission to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature; it was no more to be restrained to a particular nation, but was made general and common to all the nations of the world, and accordingly they preached it to all; and by this time had delivered the joyful message to the greater part of the world, which is sometimes meant by all the world, and the whole world; or it had been now preached in all the known and habitable parts of the world by one apostle and another, some being sent into one part, and some into another; so that the grace of God appeared to all men, and the doctrine of it had been preached to every creature under the heaven, according to Christ's commission; the Gospel of the kingdom was to be preached in all the world, for a witness to all nations, before the end of the Jewish state came, or before the destruction of Jerusalem, which was not many years after the writing of this epistle. Now this shows, that it was the same Gospel which had been preached at Colosse by their faithful minister there, as had been preached in other areas, and in all parts of the world by the apostles; which is said in the commendation of the Gospel, it being one, uniform, consistent, and all of a piece in every place, and as preached by every faithful minister, and might serve greatly to confirm the Colossians in their faith of it:

and bringeth forth fruit: by which is meant, either the conversion of sinners, the fruit of the Gospel ministry, when attended with a divine blessing and power; or the graces of the Spirit, as faith, hope, love, repentance, humility, self-denial, etc. with all the effects thereof, in new obedience, and a godly conversation, which come from Christ, the green fir tree, and are produced by the Spirit, through the preaching of the Gospel. The Vulgate Latin adds, “and increaseth”; the Syriac version has the same;

and it is so read in some Greek copies, as in the Alexandrian copy, two of Stephens's, and in the Complutensian edition; and may intend the spread of the Gospel among others, besides those who first received it, and the growing fruitfulness of the professors of it under its influence:

as [it doth] also in you, since the day ye heard [of it]; as soon as ever it came among them they hearkened to it, they were inclined to hear it externally, and a divine power going along with it, giving them hearing ears, and understanding hearts, they heard it, so as to know it, love it, and believe it; and from that time it brought forth fruit, and increased in them, and they continued in the faith and profession of it; so that as the Gospel is commended both from the large spread and efficacy of it, as well as its uniformity in every place, these Colossians also are commended for their hearing of it, both externally and internally, and for their perseverance in it: and which is further illustrated in the following clause,

and knew the grace of God in truth: by “the grace of God” may be meant the love and favour of God, in the mission and gift of his Son, to be the Saviour and Redeemer of lost sinners, displayed in the Gospel, of which they had a comfortable experience, it being shed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit; or the blessings of grace revealed in the Gospel, as free justification by the righteousness of Christ, full pardon of sin, according to the riches of grace, and adoption of children, arising out of the love and free favour of God, of which they had had a real application made to them through the Gospel, by the Spirit of God; or rather the doctrine of grace itself, so called because it is a declaration of the free grace of God in the salvation of sinners and the means of implanting grace in the heart. This they knew not merely in a notional and speculative manner, but experimentally; for the Gospel was not only come to them, but into them; they had a spiritual knowledge of it, and affection for it; they felt the power of it in their hearts, and tasted and relished the sweetness of it; and owned and “acknowledged” it, as the word here used may be rendered; for as with the heart they believed it so with the mouth they made public profession of it: and this they did “in truth”; they came by the knowledge of the love of God, and the blessings of grace, and the doctrines of it, by the Gospel, the word of truth; in and through that they became acquainted with these things; and having known and embraced the doctrine of the Gospel of the grace of God, in the truth of it, without any mixture of error, as it had been purely, and without adulteration, truly and faithfully preached by their minister, they professed it truly heartily, and sincerely, and without

hypocrisy; which is another part of their commendation, and involves in it the praise of their minister also, which is enlarged upon in the following verses.

Ver. 7. *As ye also learned of Epaphras*, etc.] To know the grace of God, believe the truth of the Gospel, and to own and profess it sincerely.

Our dear fellow servant; a “servant” of Christ he was, and a “fellow” servant of the apostles, jointly engaged with them in preaching the Gospel; which character, as it greatly commends Epaphras, and shows him to be a very considerable preacher of the word, so it expresses the great humility and condescension of the apostle, in putting him upon a level with himself, though he was not in that high office of the apostleship he was. And “dear” this precious servant of Christ was to him, and his fellow ministers, on account of the grace and gifts bestowed on him, because of his usefulness in the ministry, and his faithfulness and integrity in the discharge of it; and whose company and conversation in the prison greatly endeared him to them, for he was a fellow prisoner, as well as a fellow servant, (~~50123~~ Philemon 1:23). It follows,

who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; one whom Christ had made a “minister” and not man, who was qualified, and sent forth, and made successful by him in his service; and who preached none but Christ, and him crucified, in the business of salvation: and he was a “faithful” one; one that sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him; nor to please men, but his master; who concealed no part of his message, but freely and fully declared the whole; he was faithful to Christ, who put him into the ministry, and to the souls of men, to whom he ministered: and therefore it is said, he was such an one “for you”; for them, not for himself; for their spiritual good and advantage; he sought not theirs, but them; he had a great zeal for them, dearly loved them, and spent his time and strength, and made use of his gifts and talents while among them, for their use and benefit.

Ver. 8. *Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.*] Not only their love to God, and Christ, and to all the saints, which is before mentioned, but their love to the apostle; though they had only heard of him, and of his great capacity for, and faithfulness and usefulness in preaching of the Gospel, which had greatly endeared him to them. This, he says, was in the Spirit; it was spiritual love, to distinguish it from a carnal and worldly one; they loved him for the spiritual grace that was in him, the spiritual gifts

bestowed on him, the spiritual service he was engaged in, and the spiritual usefulness he was of: or they loved him in, and with their spirits, with all their hearts, sincerely, and without dissimulation; and though they had never seen him in the flesh, yet being, as it were, present with him in spirit, their affections were knit unto him: or this their love was “in the Holy Spirit”, as the Ethiopic version reads it; it was a fruit of the Spirit of God, which he had implanted in their hearts in regeneration, as is also love to God, and likewise to Christ.

Ver. 9. *For this cause we also*, etc.] Not merely for their love to the apostle, and the rest that were with him; which sense is too much contracted, and carries some appearance of meanness and selfishness; but because of their faith in Christ, their love to all the saints, and the good hope they had of eternal happiness; and because they had heard the Gospel, and truly knew it, and sincerely professed it: therefore,

since the day we heard [it], do not cease to pray for you, and to desire; which shows that the apostles prayed without ceasing; not that they were every moment praying, without intermission, but that they were frequent and constant every day at the throne of grace; and as often as they were there, they were mindful of these Colossians, even ever since they heard of their reception of the Gospel, of their profession of it, and of the fruit it brought forth in them; and in their petitions “prayed” and “desired”, earnestly and importunately entreated God on their behalf:

that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will; the will “of God”, as the Syriac version reads it, by which is meant, not the secret will of God, according to the counsel of which he does all things in nature, providence, and grace, but his revealed will; and that either as it is signified in the law, which declares the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God, relating to what he would have done, or avoided by his creatures; or rather, as it is exhibited in the Gospel, which contains the will of God respecting the salvation of his chosen ones; as that it is his will that Christ should obtain eternal redemption for them, to do which he voluntarily substituted himself in their room, came into this world, and has accomplished it; and that all those that are redeemed by Christ should be regenerated by the Spirit; and that whoever sees the Son, and believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life; as also, that all those whom he has chosen in Christ, and given to him, and he has redeemed by his blood, and who are sanctified by his Spirit, none of them should be lost, but that they should be all saved

with an everlasting salvation. Now the apostle does, not pray that they might have a “knowledge” of this will of God, for some knowledge of it they had already; they had heard of the hope laid up in heaven, in the truth of the word of the Gospel; they had not only had the external, revelation, and had heard the Gospel outwardly preached, but they had known truly the grace of God; and therefore what he asks for is, that they might be “filled” with the knowledge of it; which supposes that they had knowledge, but it was not full and complete; it was imperfect, as is the knowledge of the best of saints in this life; and that they might have a larger measure of it, and such a fulness of it as they were capable of in the present state, and not such an one as the saints will have in heaven, when they shall know even as they are known. He adds,

in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; his meaning is, that they might be led into all the wisdom of God, which is so largely displayed in the revelation of his will concerning the salvation of his people, which is made in the Gospel; which is the manifold wisdom of God, wherein he has abounded in all wisdom and prudence; and contains such a scheme of things, so wisely contrived and formed, that angels desire to look into it; and that they might have a “spiritual understanding” of the mysteries of grace, without which they cannot be discerned to spiritual advantage, nor indeed without the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of them: and the Ethiopic version renders it, by “the prudence of the Holy Ghost”: who searches the deep things of God, and reveals them to the saints, and improves and increases their spiritual and experimental knowledge of them, which is what is here intended.

Ver. 10. *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord*, etc.] The Vulgate Latin version reads, “of God”; to which the Ethiopic version agrees; but rather the Lord Jesus Christ seems to be designed: and to “walk worthy” of him, is to walk by faith in him; to walk after his Spirit, and according to his word, and in his ordinances; to have the conversation as becomes his Gospel, and worthy of that calling wherewith the saints are called by grace to the obtaining of his kingdom and glory. The apostle prays that their knowledge might issue in practice; for knowledge, without practice, is of no avail: he first asks for knowledge, and then practice, for how should men act according to the will of God, or Christ, unless they know it? and when they know it, they should not rest in their knowledge, but put it in practice:

unto all pleasing. The Syriac reads it, “that ye may please God in all good works”: an unregenerate man cannot please God in anything; without faith in Christ it is impossible to please him by anything man can do; Christ only could, and did always the things that pleased his Father; there are many things done by believers which are displeasing to God; nor is there anything they can do that is pleasing to God but through Christ, in whom their persons and, services are accepted; good works being done in faith, and from a principle of love, and with a view to the glory of God, are acceptable unto him through Christ; and therefore are to be carefully maintained, and studiously performed by all those that have a spiritual understanding of the will of God, and believe in Christ their Lord and Redeemer:

being fruitful in every good work; saints are trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord; good works are the fruit, which, under the influence of divine grace, they bring forth; and this is not of one sort only, as trees usually do, but of every kind; being ingrafted into Christ the true vine, and deriving life, sap, and nourishment from him, they are filled with the fruits of righteousness by him, which they bring forth and bear, to the glory of his heavenly Father; and being such, they are pleasant plants to him, as fruit bearing trees are to the owner of them: wherefore, in order to the saints walking in their lives and conversations unto all pleasing, or pleasing in all things, the apostle prays they might be fruitful in good works, and that in everyone, in every kind of good works:

and increasing in the knowledge of God; not barely of his nature and perfections, as they are displayed in the works of creation; but of his mind, and will, and the mysteries of his grace, as they are revealed in the Gospel; of the knowledge of him in Christ, as the God of all grace, and as a covenant God and Father. The apostle had before prayed for an increase of the knowledge of the will of God, previous to his request, for the putting of it in practice; and now suggests, that an increase of the knowledge of God himself may be expected in a practical use of means, an attendance on the ordinances of Christ, and a diligent performance of good works: from the whole of these petitions, it may be observed by the apostle's asking for them, that all our knowledge, and the increase of it, and all our fruitfulness in good works, are all from the Lord; and therefore we have no reason to boast of our knowledge, nor depend upon our works, but frankly to own, that notwithstanding all we know, and do, we are but unprofitable servants.

Ver. 11. *Strengthened with all might*, etc.] This is still a continuation of the apostle's prayer for these believers; for having prayed for an increase of spiritual knowledge, and that this might be put into practice, he proceeds to pray for strength for them, that they might be enabled to practise what they had knowledge of; to walk worthily, to please God in all things, to bring forth fruit with patience, to persevere in knowledge, practice, fruitfulness, and in an increase thereof. It implies, that believers are weak in themselves, and insufficient to do or bear anything of themselves, but stand in need of strength from above, even of "all might"; of all kind of spiritual might and strength, proportionate to the various kinds of services, temptations, and trials they are called unto, and exercised with: they have need of every kind, degree, and supply of strength, to enable them to resist the temptations of Satan, to stand against them, and bear up under them; to oppose the corruptions of their own nature, that great company which comes upon them, wars against them, threatens to carry them captive, and destroy them, and against which they have no power of their own; to bear the cross, which, without the presence and grace of Christ, is very heavy, and all afflictions and adversities of every sort, which are grievous to the flesh, and at which it recoils; to perform the various duties of religion, and the whole of the work of their generation; which though they have a will unto, yet often know not how to perform, they want renewed strength their souls; and also to persevere in faith and holiness, and hold on and out to the end: and which strength they cannot expect to have from themselves, or from any creature, but

according to his glorious power; the glorious power of God. Power belongs to God, is a perfection of his nature, and has been, and is gloriously displayed in many things; as in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the upholding of all things in their being; in the redemption and salvation of sinners; in their faith and conversion; in supporting the saints under various trials and exercises; and in the safe keeping them through faith unto salvation: from this glorious power of God saints may hope to be supplied with all might, or a sufficient supply of strength for every service, and for every difficulty; as also from the grace that is in Christ, who has strength as well as righteousness for his people, who is the glorious power and arm of the Lord, without whom they can neither do, nor bear anything, but through him strengthening them, they can do, and bear all things; as likewise from the Spirit of the Lord, who is the finger of God, by whom Christ wrought his miracles; and is that glorious power from on high, with

which the apostles being endued, did the wondrous things they did; and it is by the same Spirit that believers are strengthened with might in the inner man:

unto all patience; to bring forth fruit with patience; to run with patience the race set before them; to bear patiently all afflictions and tribulations; to wait patiently for the things promised by God, and for the coming and appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the heavenly glory or hope laid up for them in heaven:

and longsuffering; to be slow to anger, and not easily provoked to wrath; to be ready to forgive injuries; and to bear long, and with patience, all reproaches and persecutions for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel; all which require daily fresh supplies of grace and strength, especially to endure all

with joyfulness, as well as with patience and longsuffering, with a cheerful spirit, or with joy in the Holy Ghost; to esteem reproach for Christ's sake above the riches and honours of this world; to rejoice when counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. This requires strength above that of nature, and a renewed supply of that of grace. This last clause, “with joyfulness”, the Syriac version connects with the following verse, reading it, “with joy do ye give thanks”, etc.

Ver. 12. *Giving thanks unto the Father*, etc.] To God the Father, as the Vulgate Latin and the Syriac versions read the clause; and the Complutensian edition, and some copies, “God and the Father”; who is both the Father of Christ by nature, and of all his people by adoption. The Ethiopic version renders it, as an exhortation or advice, “give ye thanks to the Father”; and so the Syriac version: but the words rather seem to be spoken in the first, than in the second person, and are to be considered in connection with (⁵¹⁰⁰Colossians 1:9). So when the apostle had made an end of his petitions, he enters upon thanksgiving to God:

which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; by the “inheritance”, or “lot”, is meant not the common lot of the children of God to suffer persecution for the sake of Christ, and through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom, which they are by God the Father counted and made worthy of, with the rest of saints called out of darkness into light; nor their present state and condition, having a power to become the children of God, and to be fellow citizens with the saints, to

enjoy communion with them, under the Gospel dispensation, called “light”, in opposition to Jewish and Gentile darkness, to be brought into which state is an high favour of God; but the heavenly glory, so called, in allusion to the land of Canaan, which was divided by lot to the children of Israel, according to the will and purpose of God; and because it is not acquired by the works of men, but is a pure free grace gift of God, and which he, as the Father of his people, has bequeathed unto them; and which they enjoy through the death of the testator Christ; and of which the Spirit is the earnest; and because this glory is peculiar to such as are the children of God by adopting grace. It is no other than that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and which fades not away, reserved in the heavens; and designs that substance, or those solid and substantial things they shall possess hereafter; that kingdom, salvation, and glory, they are heirs of; and includes all things they shall inherit, and even God himself, who is their portion, their inheritance, their exceeding great reward, and of whom they are said to be heirs. This is the inheritance “of the saints”, and of none else; who are sanctified or set apart by God the Father in eternal election; who are sanctified by the blood of Christ, or whose sins are expiated by his atoning sacrifice; who are sanctified in Christ, or to whom he is made sanctification; and who are sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, or have the work of sanctification begun upon their souls by him; in consequence of which they live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world. And this inheritance of theirs is “in light”; unless this clause should be read in connection with the word “saints”, and be descriptive of them; they being called and brought out of darkness into light, and made light in the Lord, light being infused into them; in which light they see light, sin to be exceeding sinful, and Christ to be exceeding precious: or this phrase should be thought to design the means by which the Father makes meet to partake of the inheritance; namely, in or by the light of the Gospel, showing the way of salvation by Christ, and by the light of grace put into their hearts, and by following Christ the light of the world, which is the way to the light of life: though it rather seems to point out the situation and nature of the heavenly inheritance; it is where God dwells, in light inaccessible to mortal creatures, and who is light itself; and where Christ is, who is the light of the new Jerusalem; and where is the light of endless joy, and uninterrupted happiness; and where the saints are blessed with the clear, full, and beatific vision of God in Christ, and of Christ as he is, seeing him, not through a glass darkly, but face to face. This may be said in reference to a notion of the Jews, that the “light” which God created on the first day

is that goodness which he has laid up for them that fear him, and is what he has treasured up for the righteous in the world to come^{f4}. Now the saints meetness for this is not of themselves; by nature they are very unfit for it, being deserving of the wrath of God, and not of an inheritance; and are impure and unholy, and so not fit to partake of the inheritance of saints, or Holy Ones, and much less to dwell and converse with an holy God; and being darkness itself, cannot bear such light, or have communion with it: but God the Father makes them meet, which includes all the acts of his grace towards them, upon them, and in them; such as his choosing them in Christ, and their inheritance for them; in preparing that for them, and them for that; blessing them with all grace, and all spiritual blessings in Christ; putting them among the children by an act of adoption, of his own sovereign will and free grace, and thereby giving them a goodly heritage, and a title to it; justifying them by the righteousness of his Son, and so making them heirs according to the hope of eternal life, and forgiving all their trespasses for Christ's sake; cleansing them from all in his blood, so that being the undefiled in the way, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, they are fit for the undefiled inheritance; regenerating them by his Spirit, and implanting principles of light and life, grace and holiness, in them, without which no man shall see the Lord, or enter into the kingdom of heaven. One copy, as Beza observes, reads it, "which hath called us to be partakers", etc. and so does the Ethiopic version. And all such as the Father has thus called, and made meet, shall certainly be partakers of the inheritance; they partake of it already in Christ their head, and in faith and hope, having the Spirit as an earnest and pledge of it, and will wholly and perfectly enjoy it hereafter: for though, like Canaan's land, it is disposed of by lot, by the will, counsel, and free grace of God, yet will it not be divided into parts as that was; there is but one undivided inheritance, but one part and portion, which all the saints shall jointly and equally partake of, having all and each the same right and title, claim and meetness. For which they have abundant reason to give thanks to the Father, when they consider what they were, beggars on the dunghill, and now advanced to sit among princes, and to inherit the throne of glory; were bankrupts, over their head in debt, owed ten thousand talents, and had nothing to pay, and now all is frankly, forgiven; and besides, a title to, and meetness for, the heavenly inheritance, are freely bestowed on them; and particularly when they consider they are no more worthy of this favour than others that have no share in it, and also how great the inheritance is.

Ver. 13. *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness,* etc.] That is, from the power of Satan; (see ^{448B}Acts 26:18), who, though once an angel of light, is now darkness itself, and is reserved in chains of darkness; he is a ruler of the darkness of this world; his kingdom is a kingdom of darkness; and he blinds the minds of them that believe not, keeps them in darkness, and increases the natural darkness of their minds; he delights in works of darkness, and tempts men to them; and his everlasting state and portion will be blackness of darkness: his power over men, in a state of unregeneracy, which he usurps, and is suffered to exercise, is very great; he works effectually in them, and leads them captive at his will; and nothing less than the power of God, who is stronger than the strong man armed, can deliver out of his hands; and which is at least one part of the mercy for which thanks are here given; (see Gill on "^{402B}Luke 22:53"); with the Jews, one of the names of Satan is אַחֲרַי , "darkness"^{f5}. Moreover, the darkness of sin, ignorance, and unbelief, with which God's elect, while in a state of nature, are surrounded, and, as it were shut up and imprisoned, so that they have not the least spark of true spiritual light and knowledge, may be also meant; under the power of which they are to such a degree, that they know nothing of God in Christ, of the way of salvation by him, or of the work of the Spirit on their souls, or of the doctrines of the Gospel in an experimental manner; and so they continue, till, by an almighty power, they are turned from darkness to light; when, by powerful grace, they are plucked as brands out of the burning, and delivered from wrath to come, and from that utter darkness of misery and destruction their ways of sin and darkness led and exposed them to. This deliverance is wrought out for them in the effectual calling, when they are internally called, and powerfully brought out of this darkness, by introducing light into them, revealing Christ in them, causing the prince of darkness to flee from them, and the scales of darkness and blindness to fall from their eyes; and which is both an instance or the wonderful grace of God, and of his almighty power, and in which lies in part the saints' meetness for the inheritance; for these words are, in some sort, explanative of the former; for so long as a person is under the power of darkness, he cannot be meet for an inheritance which is in light: it follows, as another branch of this mercy, for which thanks are given,

and hath translated [us] into the kingdom of his dear Son; not into the kingdom of glory; for though the saints are heirs of it, and rejoice in hope of it, they have not yet an entrance into it; which they will have abundantly

when Christ shall introduce them into it, not only as his Father's, but as his own kingdom and glory: but the kingdom of grace is here meant, or that state of grace, light, and life, which such are brought into, when rescued out of Satan's hands, and recovered out of their former state of ignorance and infidelity; when they are by the drawings of the Father, by his powerful and efficacious grace, brought to Christ, and, in the day his power on their souls, are made willing to submit to his righteousness, and to embrace him as the alone Saviour and Redeemer, and be subject to him as King of saints, observing his commands, keeping his ordinances, and walking in his statutes and judgments with other saints, in a Gospel church state; which is Christ's kingdom here on earth, where he reigns as King over God's holy hill of Zion, being set there by his Father, from whom he has received this kingdom, and will deliver it to him, when it is complete and perfect. Now those whom Jehovah the Father snatches out of Satan's hands, and breaks in upon their souls with divine light and knowledge, he brings into such a state, and into this kingdom of Christ, who is called "his dear Son": or "the Son of his love"; or "his Son of love"; who being his Son by nature, of the same nature with him, and equal to him, always was, is, and will be, the object of his love, complacency, and delight; as he cannot be otherwise, since he is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; and even as this Son of his is in an office capacity, as the Mediator between God and man, he is his elect, in whom his soul delights; and he is always well pleased with all the chosen ones in him, who are the sons of God through him, and always beloved in him. This clause is added, partly to distinguish the kingdom of Christ, into which the saints are brought in this life, from the kingdom of the Father, or the ultimate glory they shall possess hereafter; and partly to express the security of the saints, and their continuance in the love of God, being in the kingdom, and under the care and government of the Son of his love; and also to make way for what the apostle has further to discourse concerning the person, office, and grace of Christ, in the following verses.

Ver. 14. *In whom we have redemption*, etc.] Which is an excellent and wonderful blessing of grace saints have in and by Christ; and lies in a deliverance from sin, all sin, original and actual, under which they are held captive, in a state of nature, and by which they are made subject to the punishment of death; but through the sacrifice of Christ it is taken, and put away, finished, and made an end of; and they are freed from the damning power of it, or any obligation to punishment for it; and in consequence of

this are delivered from the enslaving governing power of it by his grace and Spirit, and will hereafter be entirely rid of the very being of it: it consists also of a deliverance from the law, the curse and bondage of it, under which they are held on account of sin, the transgression of it; but being delivered from sin, they are also from the law, its accusations, charges, menaces, curses, and condemnation; as likewise out of the hands of Satan, by whom they are led captive; for through the ransom price paid by Christ they are ransomed out of the hands of him that was stronger than they, the prey is taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered by him that has led captivity captive: in short, this redemption is a deliverance out of the hands of all their enemies, and from all evils and misery, the effects of sin, from death, and hell, and wrath to come. The author of it is Christ, the Son of God, the Son of his love, his dear Son: he was called to this work in the council of peace, in which the affair of redemption was consulted; and he agreed to undertake it in the covenant of grace, of which this is a principal article; and being in his constitution, as Mediator, every way fit and proper for it: as man, the right of redemption belonged to him, being the near kinsman of his people, and, as God, he was mighty and able to perform it; as man he had something to offer, and, as God, could make that sacrifice valuable and effectual to all saving purposes; as man, he had compassion on human nature, and, as God, was concerned for things pertaining to his honour and glory. And thus being every way qualified, he was sent, and came on this errand, and has obtained a redemption, which is precious, plenteous, complete and eternal: it is now with him, and “in him”; and he is made this, and everything else to his people, that they want. The subjects of this blessing are, not angels, but men; and not all men, but some that are redeemed from among men, out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation; who are called by the name of Jacob, the people of Christ, a peculiar people, and the church of God; and evidentially are such, who have faith in Christ, love to the saints, and good hope of eternal life; who know the grace of God in truth, are made meet to be partakers of the eternal inheritance, being delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of Christ, and are designed by the we in this text: the means by which this blessing is procured, is

through his blood. This phrase is left out indeed in the Syriac and Ethiopic versions, and in the Complutensian edition, and in some copies; but rightly stands here, as it does in (Ephesians 1:7), where there is another clause added, which is here omitted, at the end of the verse, “according to the

riches of his grace". This is the blood of Christ, his own blood, and not the blood of bulls and goats, and the same with that of the persons he redeems, but untainted with sin; the blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and blemish, of original or actual sin, otherwise it would not have been a sufficient redemption price for his people; nor even then, were it not as it was the blood of the Son of God, of one that was God as well as man, whereby it came to have a proper value and efficacy in it to obtain this blessing: Christ's shedding his blood freely on this account is a proof of his great love to his redeemed ones; the efficacy that was in it to answer this purpose shows the dignity and greatness of his person; and it not being to be effected without it, demonstrates the strictness of divine justice, and that the redemption of men is brought about in a way entirely consistent with the righteousness and holiness of God. A particular branch of this blessing follows, and which serves, in some sense, to illustrate and explain it,

[even] the forgiveness of sins; of all sin, original and actual; of heart, lip, and life, secret and open, past, present, and to come; which lies in a non-imputation of sin, a remembrance of it no more, a removing of it entirely out of the way, a covering and blotting it out of sight, so as to be no more visible and legible: this is in Christ, where all spiritual blessings are; nor is it to be had or expected from an absolute God, but from God in Christ, and through him, through his propitiatory sacrifice; for as redemption, so forgiveness of sin is through his blood, which was shed for it; so that it proceeds upon the foot of satisfaction made to the justice of God by a price paid, and is an act of justice as well as grace, and belongs to the same persons as redemption does; hence those that are redeemed are represented as without fault before the throne; and indeed, the reason why their iniquities are blotted out, and will be remembered no more against them, is, because they are redeemed.

Ver. 15. *Who is the image of the invisible God*, etc.] Not of deity, though the fulness of it dwells in him; nor of himself, though he is the true God, and eternal life; nor of the Spirit, who also is God, and the Spirit of the Son; but the Father, called "God", not to the exclusion of the Son or Spirit, who are with him the one God: "and he is invisible"; not to the Son who lay in his bosom, and had perfect and infinite knowledge of him; nor, in some sense, to angels, who always behold his face, but to men: no man hath seen him corporeally with the eyes of his body, though intellectually with the eyes of the understanding, when enlightened; not in his essence and nature, which is infinite and incomprehensible, but in his works of

creation, providence, and grace; nor immediately, but mediately, in and through Christ, in whom he gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of his person and perfections; and this not perfectly now, but in the other state, when the saints shall see him face to face. But chiefly the Father is said to be invisible, because he did not appear to Old Testament saints; as his voice was never heard, so his shape was never seen; he never assumed any visible form; but whenever any voice was heard, or shape seen, it was the second person that appeared, the Son of God, who is here said to be his “image”, and that, as he is the Son of God; in which sense he is the natural, essential, and eternal image of his Father, an eternal one, perfect and complete, and in which he takes infinite complacency and delight: this designs more than a shadow and representation, or than bare similitude and likeness; it includes sameness of nature and perfections; ascertains the personality of the Son, his distinction from the Father, whose image he is; and yet implies no inferiority, as the following verses clearly show, since all that the Father hath are his. Philo, the Jew^{f6}, often speaks of the **λογος**, or Word of God, as the image of God. Also, this may be understood of him as Mediator, in whom, as such, is a most glorious display of the love, grace, and mercy of God, of his holiness and righteousness, of his truth and faithfulness, and of his power and wisdom:

the firstborn of every creature; not the first of the creation, or the first creature God made; for all things in (^{<50116}Colossians 1:16) are said to be created by him, and therefore he himself can never be a creature; nor is he the first in the new creation, for the apostle in the context is speaking of the old creation, and not the new: but the sense either is, that he was begotten of the Father in a manner inconceivable and inexpressible by men, before any creatures were in being; or that he is the “first Parent”, or bringer forth of every creature into being, as the word will bear to be rendered, if instead of **πρωτοτοκος**, we read **πρωτοτοκος**; which is no more than changing the place of the accent, and may be very easily ventured upon, as is done by an ancient writer^{f7}, who observes, that the word is used in this sense by Homer, and is the same as **πρωτογονος**, “first Parent”, and **πρωτοκτιστης**, “first Creator”; and the rather this may be done, seeing the accents were all added since the apostle's days, and especially seeing it makes his reasoning, in the following verses, appear with much more beauty, strength, and force: he is the first Parent of every creature, “for by him were all things created”, etc. (^{<50116}Colossians 1:16), or it may be understood of Christ, as the King, Lord, and Governor of all

creatures; being God's firstborn, he is heir of all things, the right of government belongs to him; he is higher than the kings of the earth, or the angels in heaven, the highest rank of creatures, being the Creator and upholder of all, as the following words show; so the Jews make the word "firstborn" to be synonymous with the word "king", and explain it by רִצְוֹן *l wdj*, "a great one", and "a prince"^{f8}; (see ~~882~~ Psalm 89:27 ~~800~~ Hebrews 1:2,6).

Ver. 16. *For by him were all things created*, etc.] This is a reason proving Christ to be before all creatures, to be the common Parent of them, and to have the government over them, since he is the Creator of them. The creation of all things, by him, is not to be understood of the new creation, for whenever that is spoken of, the word "new" is generally used, or what is equivalent to it, or some clause or phrase added, which determines the sense, and is not the case here: besides, all things that are in heaven are said to be created here: which, to say nothing of the sun, moon, and stars, which are not capable subjects of the new creation, to restrain them to angels, cannot be true of them; for as for those who were once in heaven, but kept not their first estate, and quitted their habitation, these find no place there any more; they never were, nor will be renewed and restored by Christ; and as for the good angels, since they never sinned, they stand in no need of renovation. Moreover, all things that are on earth are also said to be created by him, and are, but not anew: for to confine these only to men, all men are not renewed in the spirit of their minds; all have not faith, nor a good hope through grace, nor love to God and Christ, the greater part of the world lies in open wickedness; and all that profess religion are not new creatures, these are a chosen generation, and a peculiar people: wherefore these words must be understood, not metaphorically, but literally; in which sense all things are created by Christ, not by him as an instrument, but as the efficient cause; for the preposition "by" does not always signify the former; but sometimes the latter; (see ~~400~~ 1 Corinthians 1:9 ~~800~~ Galatians 1:1); nor to the exclusion of the Father and Spirit, who, with the Son, were jointly concerned in the creating of all things out of nothing: and these "all things" can only refer to the things that are made: eternal things can never be said to be created; this is a contradiction in terms; the Father is not created by him, nor he himself as the Son of God, nor the Spirit; but everything that is made is created by him: hence it follows, that he himself is no creature, otherwise he must create himself, which also is a contradiction, since every creature is made by him; and consequently he

must be God, for he that made and built all things is God. These are divided as to the subject of them, or place where they are, into things

that are in heaven, and that are in earth. The things that are in heaven, are the things that are in the airy and starry heavens, and in the heaven of heavens. The things in the airy heavens, the fowls thereof, were on the fifth day created by him; and the things in the starry heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, were on the fourth day ordained by him; and the inhabitants of the third heaven, the angels, were made by him, (~~SC007~~ Hebrews 1:7); and, as the Jewish writers ^{f9} say, on the second day of the creation, though some say on the fifth. The earth comprehends the whole terraqueous globe, consisting of land and sea; and the things in it are all that are in the seas, the fishes and other things in it; and all that are in the bowels of the earth, as well as on the surface of it, all metals and minerals, all plants, herbs, and trees, every beast of the forest, the cattle on a thousand hills, the fowls on the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field, and all human creatures. Again, these all things are, as to the quality of them, distributed into

visible and invisible, both in heaven and in earth: the visible things in heaven are the fowls that fly in the airy heaven, the sun, and moon, and stars in the starry heaven, and the bodies of those saints that have been either translated, or raised, in the third heaven; the visible things in the earth are all creatures, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, all bodies, all corporeal and material beings: the invisible things in earth are not only those that are in the innermost parts of it, but the spirits or souls of men; and those in heaven are not the invisible God, Father, Son, and Spirit, but the angels, who are incorporeal and immaterial spirits, and so invisible: and which,

whether [they be] thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, are all made by him; by these some understand civil magistrates among men, and the various degrees and orders of them. By “thrones” they think kings, or monarchs, are meant, who sit on thrones; and by “dominions”, little petty kings, or lords, dukes, and earls; and by “principalities”, governors of provinces and cities; and by “powers”, interior magistrates; and indeed, political governors are sometimes called dominions, dignities, principalities, and powers; and there are different orders of them, the king as supreme, and governors under him; (see ~~SC008~~ Jude 1:8 ~~SC009~~ Titus 3:1 ~~SC010~~ 1 Peter 2:13,14). But since these seem rather to be said of the invisible things in heaven, and to be an explanation of them, angels may rather be thought to

be intended; and are so called, not as denoting different orders and degrees among them, which some have rashly ventured to describe, but because of the use that God makes of them in the government of the world, and the executions of the various affairs of Providence relating to particular persons and kingdoms; though these several names are not so much such as the apostle chose to call them by, as what they were called by others; the three latter are indeed elsewhere used by himself, (⁴⁰²¹Ephesians 1:21 3:10 ⁵⁰²⁰Colossians 2:10); but not the former, “thrones”, which yet are used by Jewish writers, and given to angels. Thus, in a book of theirs, which they esteem very ancient, and ascribe to the patriarch Abraham, it is said ^{f10},

“there is no angel in which the name Jehovah is not found, which is everywhere, as the soul is in every member; wherefore men ought to allow Jehovah to reign in all the members, *˘ysrk l kbw*, “and in all the thrones”, and in all the angels, and in every member of men.”

And elsewhere, speaking of the garments of God,

“by these (say they ^{f11}) *˘ysrk hbq arb*, “the holy blessed God created the thrones”, and the angels, and the living creatures, and the “seraphim”, and the heavens, and the earth, and all that he created.”

And the thrones in (²⁰⁰⁹Daniel 7:9); are interpreted ^{f12}, of

“the superior princes, *˘yynj wr ˘ykal ml*, “the spiritual angels”, who sit first in the kingdom; and they are called in the words of the Rabbins, “the throne of glory”; for so is the way of kings, that their princes sit before them, everyone on his throne, according to their dignity.”

Now the apostle's sense is, that the angels, the invisible inhabitants of the upper world, are all created by Christ, let them be called by what names they will, that the Jews, or the false teachers, or any sort of heretics of those times thought fit to give them, whether they called them thrones or dominions, etc. And so the Arabic version, rather interpreting than translating the words, renders them thus, “whether you say thrones, or whether you mention dominions, or whether you understand princes, or whether you say powers”; speak of them under what title or appellation you please, they are all the creatures of the Son of God. The apostle seems to have in view, and to oppose some notions of some heretics of his time,

the followers of Simon Magus, who held, that the angels were created by his Helena; or, as others, by what they call “Ennea”, and that these angels created the world, and are to be worshipped; but he here affirms, that

all things were created by him, by Christ, even all the angels; and therefore he, and not they, are to be worshipped, a notion he afterwards takes notice of in the following chapter: and as all things are affirmed to be created by him, which demonstrates the dignity and deity of his person, so likewise

for him; that is, for his pleasure, that he may take delight and complacency in them, and in his own perfections displayed by them; and for his service and use, as the angels, to worship him and minister to him and for others, he sends them to: elect men are made to serve and glorify him with their bodies and spirits, which are his; and even the non-elect are made to subserve his mediatorial kingdom and interest; yea, the whole world is built and kept in being purely on his account, until he has finished the great affair of the salvation of his people, in the application of it to each of them, as he has completed the impetration of it; and then he will dissolve the heavens, and burn up the earth and all the works that are therein: all are made for his glory, and that end is, and will be answered by them in one way or another.

Ver. 17. *And he is before all things*, etc.] Not only in dignity, being preferable to angels and men in his nature, names, offices, and works, and worthy of more honour than all creatures; but he is before them in existence, as he must needs be, since they are all made by him; he was not only before John the Baptist, his forerunner, before Abraham who saw his day and was glad, before the first man was made, but before the angels were in being, or the heavens and the earth, or any creature were formed; and therefore must be God, who is from everlasting to everlasting:

and by him all things consist; he upholds all things by the word of his power; the heavens have their stability and continuance from him; the pillars of the earth are bore up by him, otherwise that and the inhabitants of it would be dissolved; the angels in heaven are confirmed in their estate by him, and have their standing and security in him; the elector God are in his hands, and are his peculiar care and charge, and therefore shall never perish; yea, all mankind live and move, and have their being in him; the whole frame of nature would burst asunder and break in pieces, was it not held together by him; every created being has its support from him, and its consistence in him; and all the affairs of Providence relating to all creatures

are governed, directed, and managed by him, in conjunction with the Father and the blessed Spirit.

Ver. 18. *And he is the head of the body, the church*, etc.] By “the church” is meant, not any particular congregated church, as the church at Colosse, or Corinth, or any other; but the whole election of grace, the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven in the Lamb's book of life; the church which Christ has given himself for, and has purchased with his blood, and builds on himself the rock, and will, at last, present to himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; this is compared to an human body, and therefore called “the body”; which is but one, consisting of many members in union with each other, set in their proper places in just symmetry and proportion to each other, and subservient to one another, and are neither more nor fewer; (see ~~1~~1 Corinthians 12:12-14), etc. and of this body, the church, Christ is “the head”; he was the representative head of this body of elect men from all eternity, and in time; he is a political head of them, or in such sense an head unto them, as a king is to his subjects; he reigns in them by his Spirit and grace, and rules them by wholesome laws of his own enacting, and which he inscribes on their hearts, and he protects and defends them by his power; he is an economical head, or in such sense an head of them, as the husband is the head of the wife, and parents and masters are the heads of their families, he standing in all these relations to them; and he is to them what a natural head is to an human body; of all which (see Gill on ~~1~~1 Corinthians 11:3”). The Messiah is called one head, in (~~2~~2 Hosea 1:11); which Jarchi explains by David their king, and Kimchi on the place says, this is the King Messiah:

who is the beginning; which either denotes the eternity of Christ, who was not only in the beginning, and was set up from the beginning, from everlasting, but is also the beginning and the end; and who is, indeed, without beginning of days, or end of life: or his dominion; he is the principality, as the word may be rendered; he is the principality of principalities, the head of all principality and power, the angels; he is the Prince of the kings of the earth; he is King of saints; the kingdom of nature and providence is his, and the government of his people in a special manner is on his shoulders: or this may design his being the first cause of all things; he is the beginning of the creation of God; the efficient cause of all created beings; he is the beginning of the church, of which he is the head; as Eve was from Adam, so is the church from Christ; it is a body of his preparing,

and a temple of his building, and where he sits as a priest on his throne, and has the government of it: the second number, wisdom, in the cabalistic tree of the Jews, is called “the beginning”^{f13}, as is the Logos, or Word, by Philo the Jew^{f14}:

the firstborn from the dead; the first that rose from the dead by his own power, and to an immortal life; for, though others were raised before him, and by him, yet not to a state of immortality; the path of life, to an immortal life, was first shown to him as man; and who also is the firstfruits of them that sleep, and so the pledge and earnest of the future resurrection of the saints; and is both the efficient and exemplary cause of it; the resurrection of the dead will be by him as God, and according to his own, as man:

that in all [things] he might have the pre-eminence; or might be the first and chief over all persons, angels, and men; having a superior nature, name, and place, than the former, and being the firstborn among many brethren designed by the latter: and in all things he is the first, and has the precedence and primacy; in sonship, no one is a Son in the sense he is; in election, he was chosen first, and his people in him; in the covenant, he is the surety, Mediator, and messenger of it, he is that itself; in his human nature, he is fairer than the children of men; in redemption, he was alone, and wrought it out himself; in life, he exceeded all others in purity, in doctrine, and miracles; and in dying he conquered death, and rose first from it; in short, he died, revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord both of dead and living; and he ought to have the pre-eminence and first place in the affections of our hearts, in the contemplations of our minds, in the desires of our souls, and in the highest praises of our lips.

Ver. 19. *For it pleased [the Father]*, etc.] The phrase, “the Father”, is not in the original text, but is rightly supplied; since he is expressly mentioned in the context, as he who makes the saints meet to be partakers of the heavenly glory; who deliver, them from the power and dominion of sin, and translates them into the kingdom of his dear Son; and who, by Christ, reconciles all things to himself, (⁵⁰¹²Colossians 1:12,13,20), and whose sovereign will and pleasure it is,

that in him should all fulness dwell: by which is meant, not the fulness of the deity, though it is read by some the fulness of the Godhead: which seems to be transcribed from (⁵⁰¹⁹Colossians 2:9); but though all the perfections of God are in Christ, as eternity, omnipotence, omniscience,

omnipresence, immutability, independence, and necessary existence, and every other, or he would not be equal with God; nor could all the fulness of the Godhead be said to dwell in him, should anyone be wanting; yet this is a fulness possessed by him, that does not spring from, nor depend upon the Father's good will and pleasure; but what he naturally and necessarily enjoys by a participation of the same undivided nature and essence with the Father and Spirit: nor is the relative fulness of Christ intended, which is his church, so called, (~~4023~~ Ephesians 1:23); and will be so when all the elect are gathered in, and filled with all the gifts and graces of his Spirit, and are arrived to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; for though every believer dwells in Christ, and Christ in him, yet the church is not said to dwell in Christ, but Christ in the church; moreover, as yet she is not his fulness, at least in the sense she will be, and much less can she be said to be all fulness: nor is this to be understood of Christ's fulness of fitness and abilities, as God-man and Mediator, to perform his work and office as such; though this may be taken into the sense of the text as a part, yet is not the whole; but rather chiefly that dispensatory communicative fulness, which is, of the Father's good will and pleasure, put into the hands of Christ to be distributed to others, is here designed. There is a fulness of nature in Christ; the light of nature is from him, and communicated by him to mankind; the blessings of nature are the blessings of his left hand, which he distributes to his people as he thinks fit; and all things in nature are subservient to his mediatorial kingdom and glory. There is a fulness of grace in him, out of which saints receive, and grace for grace, or a large abundance of it; the fulness of the spirit of grace, and of all the graces and gifts of the Spirit is in him; and of all the blessings of grace, as a justifying righteousness, pardon of sin, adoption, sanctification, even of all that grace that is implanted in regeneration, that is necessary to carry on and finish the good work upon the soul; there is a fulness of all light and life, of wisdom, and strength, of peace, joy, and comfort, and of all the promises of grace, both with respect to this world and that which is to come; and there is also a fulness of glory in him, not only the grace, but the glory of the saints, is laid up and hid with him, and is safe and secure in him: this is said to dwell in Christ, which implies its being in him; it is not barely in intention, design, and purpose, but it is really and actually in him, nor is it in any other; and hence it comes to be communicated to the saints: and it also denotes the continuance of it with him; it is an abiding fulness, and yields a continual daily supply to the saints, and will endure to the end of time, and be as sufficient for the last as the first believer; it is like the subject of it, the same

yesterday, today, and for ever: and it also intends the safety of it: the saints' life both of grace and glory is hid with Christ, and is secure, it is out of the reach of men and devils, and can never be lost, or they deprived of it; and all this is owing not to any merits of men, to their faith and holiness, or good works, which are all the fruits of this fulness, but to the good will of God; "it pleased the Father" to place it here for them; it was owing to his good will to his Son, and therefore he puts all things into his hands; and to his elect in him, for, having loved them with an everlasting love, he takes everlasting care of them, and makes everlasting provision for them; it was his pleasure from all eternity to take such a step as this, well knowing it was not proper to put it into the hands of Adam, nor into the hands of angels, nor into their own at once; he saw none so fit for it as his Son, and therefore it pleased him to commit it unto him; and it is his good will and sovereign pleasure, that all grace should come through Christ, all communion with him here, and all enjoyment of him hereafter; which greatly enhances and sets forth the glory of Christ as Mediator, one considerable branch of which is, that he is full of grace and truth; this qualifies him to be the head of the church, and gives a reason, as these words be, why he has, and ought to have, the preeminence in all things.

Ver. 20. *And by him to reconcile all things to himself*, etc.] This depends upon the preceding verse, and is to be connected with that phrase in it, it pleased the Father, (^{<small>5019</small>}Colossians 1:19); and the sense is, that it was the good will and pleasure of God from all eternity, as to lay up all fulness in Christ for his chosen people, so to reconcile them to himself by him; and which is another reason why Christ is, and ought to be considered as the head of the church, whose reconciliation he has procured, and why he ought to have the chief place in all things, and among all persons. Reconciliation supposes a former state of amity and friendship, and in such an one man was originally with God; and a breach of that friendship, which was made and issued in real enmity in the heart of man; and also a restoration to friendship again: and it is to be understood not of a reconciliation of God to men, which the Scriptures nowhere speak of, but of men to God; and is a reconciliation of them, not to the love of God, which his elect always shared in, but to the justice of God, offended by the transgression of a righteous law; and is indeed properly a reconciliation, atonement, and satisfaction for their sins, and so of their persons, and whereby all the perfections of God are reconciled to and agree with each other in the salvation of such sinners: now this takes its first rise from God

the Father; it is owing to his sovereign good will and pleasure; he took the first step towards it; he knew what a state of enmity and rebellion his people would fall into; his thoughts ran upon their peace and reconciliation from everlasting; he called a council of peace about it, and in it drew the model of it; he entered into a covenant of peace with his Son, and, in consequence of it, sent him in the fulness of time to effect it, laying on him the chastisement of their peace; it was his pleasure that this affair of reconciliation should be brought about, not by the means of angels, in whom he could put no such trust and confidence, and who, though they rejoice at peace being made on earth, could never have effected it; nor that it should be done by men, who have no knowledge of the way of it, no inclination to it, nor power to make it; but “by him”, his Son Jesus Christ, whom he appointed and called to this work, and sent to do it; and who is therefore, in prophecy, before this reconciliation was actually made, styled “Shiloh”, the Prince of peace, and the peace: and this, when made, was made “to himself”; meaning either to Christ, in whom all the elect were gathered together, as in one head, and were reconciled in one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, through him; or rather to God the Father, to whom they were enemies, yea, enmity itself, and to whom the satisfaction and atonement were made; it being his law that was broken, and his justice that was injured, and to whom they are always in Scripture said to be reconciled; though not to the exclusion of the Son and Spirit, the one God with the Father: moreover, the sense of this phrase may be, that the reconciliation of the elect made by Christ, in a way of full satisfaction to law and justice, is to the glory of God, the glory of all his perfections; as of his grace and mercy, wisdom, power, and faithfulness, so of his righteousness and holiness: the means by which Christ has enacted it are, his sacrifice, sufferings, and death, expressed in the following clause;

having made peace through the blood of his cross. This was what man could not do, what Christ was appointed and sent to do, and what he was every way qualified for as God and man; as man he had blood to shed, and could make reconciliation for sin in the nature which had sinned, and, as God, could draw nigh to his Father, and treat with him about terms of peace, and perform them; and so a fit daysman and Mediator between, God and man: this peace he has made by his “blood”, that is, by the shedding of it, by his death as a sacrifice, which he underwent on the cross; partly to denote the shame, and chiefly to signify the curse he endured in the room of his people: all which shows the malignant nature of sin, the strictness of

justice, and that peace is made in a way of full satisfaction, is upon honourable terms, will be lasting, as it is joyful, being attended with a train of blessings:

by him, [I say], whether [they be] things in earth, or things in heaven: by which are intended not the whole universe and fabric of the world, all creatures and things, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, which have been cursed for the sin of man, and have proved unfriendly to him, but, in consequence of redemption and reconciliation by Christ, will, as some think, in the time of the restitution of all things, be restored to their former state, and to their friendly use to mankind; nor elect men and elect angels, and their reconciliation together, for the apostle is not speaking of the reconciling of these things together, but of the reconciling of them to God, which though it is true of elect men, is not of elect angels, who never fell, and though they have confirming grace, yet not reconciling grace from Christ, which they never needed; nor Jews and Gentiles, for though it is true that God was in Christ reconciling the world of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews to himself, and the chosen of God among both are actually reconciled to God by the death of Christ, yet the one are never called things in heaven, or the other things on earth, in distinction from, and opposition to each other; but rather all the elect of God are here meant, the family of God in heaven and in earth; all the saints that were then in heaven, when actual reconciliation was made by the blood of Christ, and who went thither upon the foot of peace, reconciliation, and redemption, to be made by his sacrifice and death; and all the chosen ones that were or should be on the face of the earth, until the end of time; all these were reconciled to God by Christ: and then the apostle proceeds particularly to mention the Colossians, as also being instances of this grace, good will, and pleasure of God by Christ.

Ver. 21. *And you that were sometime alienated,* etc.] The general blessing of grace and reconciliation, which belongs to the whole body of Christ, the church universal, all the elect of God, whether in heaven or in earth, is here particularly applied to the saints at Colosse, who were eminent instances of it; and that the free grace of God towards them in it might more illustriously appear, the apostle takes notice of what they were before the coming of Christ in the flesh, before the Gospel came among them, and while in a state of unregeneracy, as that they were “alienated”: that is from God, not from his general presence, power, and providence, which reach to all his creatures, but from the life of God; (see ~~4018~~ Ephesians 4:18); from

living agreeably to the will of God, being estranged from him who is the fountain of moral and spiritual, as well as natural life; from the law, the rule of life, and from a principle of life in themselves; and altogether disapproving of such a life, as contrary to their carnal affections and lusts: and which alienation from God greatly lay in their forsaking him, the one only and true God, and following and serving strange gods, not attending to the dictates and light of nature; and being destitute of a divine revelation, they went further and further off from God, and from his people, worship, and ordinances; and were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise; the source of all which was sin, and was owing to themselves: God did not alienate himself from them first; they alienated themselves from him; their sins separated between God and them, set them at a distance from him, and at enmity to him, and which very early appeared, for they were estranged from the womb:

and enemies in [your] mind by wicked works. They were enemies to God, the true God, and were lovers and worshippers of idols; they were enemies to the being and perfections of God, as all men in a state of nature are; and more or less show it, by either denying there is a God, or wishing there was none, or fancying him to be such an one as themselves; or they dispute his sovereignty, deny his omniscience, arraign his justice and faithfulness, and despise the riches of his grace and goodness; they are enemies to his purposes, providences, and word; cannot bear that he should determine any thing concerning them or others; their eye is evil to him because he is good to others; they reply against him, they run upon him, and charge his decrees with unrighteousness and cruelty; murmur at and quarrel with the dispensations of his providence, as unequal and unjust; cast away the law of the Lord, will not be subject to it, and condemn the revelation of his will. They are enemies to Christ in one shape or another; either to his person, denying his proper deity, or real humanity; or to his offices, not hearkening to him as a prophet, trampling on his blood and sacrifice as a priest, and unwilling to have him to rule over them as a King; or to the way of salvation by him, of pardon by his blood, atonement by his sacrifice, justification by his righteousness, and acceptance with God through his person; or to his doctrines and ordinances, which are unsuitable to their vicious tastes, carnal affections, and appetites: they are enemies to the Spirit of Christ, by either denying his deity and personality, or by ridiculing the operations of his grace; or treating with contempt, and as foolish, everything of his, the Bible and all the truths contained in it, dictated by

him. They are enemies to the people of God, exceeding mad against them, hate them and persecute them, reckon them the faith of the world, and the offscouring of all things, living in malice to them, and hateful and hating one another: and this enmity to everything divine and good is seated “in the mind”; the mind is not the object of this enmity, as some read the words, “to the mind”: for the mind of a carnal man is enmity itself against God; but it is the subject of it, where it has its chief place, and from whence it proceeds, and shows itself in evil actions; and though the word “your” is not in the original text, it is rightly supplied; for the meaning is not that they were enemies “of his mind”; of the mind of the Lord, of his counsels and will, as some read and explain the words, though there is a truth in this, but in their own minds: so that not the body but the soul is the seat of this enmity; and not the inferior faculties of the soul only, the sensitive appetite and passions, but the understanding, the judgment and will, the more noble and rational powers of the soul; from hence spring all the malice and enmity expressed in word and actions: where then is man's free will to that which is good? and hence it is that the mind stands in need of being renewed, enlightened, cleansed and sanctified, and renovation begins here, which is the effect of almighty power; for nothing else can remove the rooted enmity in the heart of men; and which, as deep and as secret as it is, sooner or later, in one way or another, shows itself “by wicked works”; and that frequently, as by loving what God hates, and hating what he loves; by omitting what he commands, and committing what he forbids; by maintaining friendship with the world, and by harbouring his professed enemies, and persecuting his dear friends; and by their wicked words, and evil lives and conversations; and by the various works of the flesh, which are manifest, some being more directly against God, others by which they wrong themselves, and others by which they injure their neighbours:

yet now hath he reconciled; which may be understood either of the Father's reconciling them to himself by his Son; and so the words are a continuation of the account of the Father's grace, as to all the elect in general, so to the Colossians in particular, notwithstanding the black characters in which they stand described in their natural estate: or else of Christ's reconciling them to his Father, by the sacrifice of himself, which he voluntarily offered for them, though this was their case, and of enemies made them friends: and may be meant either of the impetration of reconciliation for them by his sufferings and death; or of the virtue and efficacy of it in the application of it; in the former sense the “now” refers to the coming of Christ into the

world, and the time of his death, and the offering up of his body once for all, when peace and reconciliation were completely made at once for all God's elect; in the latter sense it refers to the time of the conversion of these Colossians, when Christ by his Spirit, in consequence of reconciliation made in the body of his flesh, through death reconciled them to God; to his mind and will, to the way of salvation by himself, to the saints the excellent in the earth, to the Gospel and the ordinances of it, and to all his ways and worship.

Ver. 22. *In the body of his flesh through death*, etc.] Or “through his death”, as the Alexandrian copy and some others, and all the Oriental versions, read. These words express the means by which that reconciliation was made, which in the virtue and efficacy of it was applied particularly to these Colossians at their conversion whereby their minds were actually reconciled to God, as “in” or “by the body of his flesh”; that is, by the offering up of his body on the accursed tree, in which he bore the sins of his people, and made reconciliation for them: and it is so called either to distinguish it from his mystical and spiritual body the church, of which he is the head before spoken of; or from his glorious and immortal body, as now raised and exalted at God's right hand; and to denote the truth of his human body, that it was a real fleshly body, consisting of flesh and blood as ours does, and the same with ours, and not an aerial, celestial bony, or a mere phantom; and also to signify the infirmity and mortality of it, being, excepting sin, in all points like to ours, and subject to death; and that it was in that body his Father prepared for him, and he assumed; and as he was clothed with it in the days of his flesh, or mortal state, that he made reconciliation for the sins of his people, and that “through death” in it; even the death of the cross, by which he bore the penalty of the law, the curse of it, made satisfaction to justice, obtained life, abolished death, and destroyed him that had the power of it, and fixed a sure and lasting peace for all his saints; his end in which was,

to present you holy and unblamable, and unproveable in his sight. This presentation of the saints by Christ is either in his own sight, “before himself”, as the Arabic version reads it; and is here in this present state, they being considered by him both as sanctified and as justified; he taking delight in the graces of his Spirit, and the exercise of them on himself, though imperfect, and in them as clothed with his spotless righteousness, in which they are perfectly comely, all fair, and without spot: or in the latter day glory, the New Jerusalem church state; when the church will be as a

bride prepared for her husband, will be brought into his presence in raiment of needlework, in fine linen clean and white, the righteousness of the saints, and be presented to himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; or in the ultimate glory, when all the saints shall be for ever with him, continually before him, and in his sight; which is what his heart was set upon from everlasting, which he had in view in his sufferings and death, and still has in his prayers and preparations: or else this presentation is what has been or will be made before his Father, and in his sight; and which was partly done, when he gathered together all the elect in himself, and represented them on the cross, in the body of his flesh; and partly is now doing in heaven, where he appears in the presence of God for them, bears their names on his breastplate, presents their persons and their cases; and especially will be done at the last day, when he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and say, lo, I and the children thou hast given me: and who will be presented “holy” by him; he being their sanctification, and they having all their sins expiated by his sacrifice, and their persons washed and cleansed in his blood, and their hearts sanctified by his Spirit; which sanctification though it is imperfect in this life, yet will be completed by the author of it at death; without perfect holiness no man shall see God, or be presented in his sight: and this is in consequence of the death of Christ and reconciliation by it and a fruit of electing grace, by which persons are chosen in Christ, that they should be holy and without blame; and as here, “unblamable and unproveable”: as they are, not now in themselves, but in Christ, as arrayed with his robe of righteousness and garments of salvation, being all glorious within, and their clothing of wrought gold, in which they will be introduced and presented to himself, and to his Father, faultless, with exceeding joy, and stand so before the throne, and that to all eternity.

Ver. 23. *If ye continue in the faith,* etc.] In the doctrine of faith which they had received and embraced; and in the grace of faith, and the exercise of it which was implanted in them; and in the profession of faith which they had made: not that the virtue and efficacy of Christ's blood, sufferings, and death, and reconciliation of their persons to God thereby, depended upon their faith, and abiding in it; but that faith and continuance in it were necessary means of their presentation in unblemished holiness and righteousness; for if they had not faith, or did not abide in it or if the good work of grace was not wrought upon their souls, and that performed until the day of Christ, they could not be presented holy and blameless: this shows the necessity of the saints' final perseverance in faith and holiness,

and is mentioned with this view, to put them upon a concern about it, and to make use of all means, under divine grace, to enjoy it; and nothing could more strongly incline and move unto it, than the blessed effect of Christ's death, reconciliation and the end of it, to present the reconciled ones blameless; in order to which it is necessary they should hold on and out to the end: hence the Ethiopic version reads the words, not as a condition, but as an exhortation enforced by what goes before; "therefore be ye established in the faith": it follows,

grounded and settled; not on the sandy foundation of man's own righteousness, and peace made by his own performances; but upon the foundation and rock, Christ, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail; and so shall never finally and totally fall away, being rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith of him, in the doctrines of faith, respecting peace by his blood, justification by his righteousness, and life by his death; and so continue steadfast and immovable, always abounding in his work:

and [be] not moved away from the hope of the Gospel; the hope of eternal life and happiness, which as set before us in the Gospel; which that gives a good and solid ground and foundation of, in the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ; and is the instrumental means, in the hand of the Spirit, of begetting to it, and of encouraging and increasing it: the law gives no hopes of eternal life to a poor sinner; it works wrath, and ministers death; there is nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment by it; but the Gospel encourages to hope in the Lord, from the consideration of rich mercy and plenteous redemption in him; and this hope of the Gospel is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and not to be let go; this confidence and rejoicing of the hope is to be kept firm unto the end:

which ye have heard; that is, which Gospel they had heard from Epaphras their faithful minister, and that not only externally, but internally; they had heard it and believed it, and it had brought forth fruit in them; for it came to them not in word only, but in power; which is said in commendation of it, and to engage them to continue in it, and abide by it; as is also what follows:

[and] which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; and therefore since it was the same which was everywhere preached, they might depend upon the truth of it, should have the greater value for it, and by no means relinquish it. This must be understood not of every individual creature, even human and rational, that was then, or had been in, the

world; but that it had been, and was preached far and near, in all places all over the world, to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews; who are sometimes styled “every creature”, “the creature”, “the whole creation”, “all men”, etc. (see ^{<1165>}Mark 16:15 ^{<1189>}Romans 8:19-22) (^{<3011>}Titus 2:11); and of this, the first preaching of the Gospel by Peter after our Lord's resurrection, was an emblem and pledge, (^{<4014>}Acts 2:14-36); and some time after that, the sound of all the apostles went into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world:

whereof I Paul am made a minister; by Jesus Christ, who appeared unto him, and called, qualified, and sent him forth as such; and this is mentioned to encourage the Colossians to abide by the truths of the Gospel, since what they had heard and received were what were everywhere preached by the faithful ministers of the word; and particularly by the apostle, who was ordained to be a teacher and preacher of it to the Gentiles. The Alexandrian copy reads, “a preacher and an apostle, and a minister”; (see ^{<5017>}1 Timothy 2:7).

Ver. 24. *Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you*, etc.] The apostle, as soon as he had made mention of his being a minister of the Gospel, thinks and speaks of his “sufferings”; for those are what always more or less attend persons in such an office; they are appointed to them by God; Christ has foretold them of them; they are necessary for them; they must expect them, and patiently endure them: the apostle was under them now at this present time, for he wrote this epistle in his bonds when a prisoner at Rome, not for any immorality, any crime he had committed, but for Christ's sake, for his Gospel's sake, for the sake of the churches of Christ to whom he preached, for the confirmation of them, and so of these Colossians; and therefore he says, “for you”; and which he mentions to animate them to abide by the Gospel, for which he was suffering, that it might continue with them and others: nor was he distressed and discouraged at his afflictions, he “rejoiced” in them, because he had the presence of God in them, the Spirit of God and of glory rested on him, and God was glorified by them; he esteemed it an honour done him that grace was given, and he counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ; and as well knowing that he should live and reign with him, since he suffered with him and for him: and what greatly caused and increased his joy was what follows,

and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh; by which are meant not the afflictions or sufferings of Christ in his own

person; for these were all over, he was now entered into his glory, was exalted at the Father's right hand, and was crowned with glory and honour: there was nothing left behind of his sufferings, to be undergone by any of his people; he had drank of the cup and all the dregs of it; he had sustained the whole of his Father's wrath, and all the curses of the law, being abated nothing, but was made perfect through sufferings; having perfectly suffered all, he suffered once and once for all, he will suffer no more; nor is there any need of his suffering more or again, for he has finished sin, wrought righteousness, made peace, and obtained eternal redemption; nor had he any partner in his sufferings, nor did he need any, or left any part of his sufferings to be filled up by others; for he endured all and the whole, which the law and justice of God could require in his own body, in the body of his flesh through death; of these sufferings the apostle does not speak, but of such which he filled up in "his" own "flesh"; and design the afflictions of Christ in his members, which are called "his", because of that near union there is between Christ and them; so that what befalls them may be predicated of him; when anyone of them suffers, he suffers with him, as the sufferings of a part of the body are ascribed to the whole person; and because of that sympathy there is between them, he has a fellow feeling with his people in all their infirmities; in all their afflictions he is afflicted: if Saul persecutes his saints, he persecutes him; whatever injury is done to them, he takes it as done to himself, who are to him as the apple of his eye. Moreover, hereby they are conformed unto him, and made like him; as he was, so are they in this world; there is a good deal of likeness between the afflictions of Christ and his people, though in some things there is a great disparity; add to this, that the afflictions of the saints are endured for Christ's sake, for the sake of his Gospel, and the profession of his name, and therefore called his, and the more cheerfully bore by them: now of these there were some remains to be filled up by the apostle; not that all the afflictions of the whole body of Christ were to be, or have been filled up by him; there was a great deal left behind by him to be filled up by others, and which has been filling up ever since, and still is, and yet all is not fulfilled to this day, nor will be till the end of time; but he speaks only of that part and measure of them, which was to be filled up in his flesh; he had his measure of afflictions allotted to him, great part of which he had endured already, but some remained, the measure was not yet full, though pretty near being completed, which gave him pleasure; it was just filling up, and the time of his departure was at hand, when there would be no more sorrow; for it was only while he was in the flesh he was filling up this measure, and would be

quickly up; and what added to his joy was, that as these were the afflictions of Christ, and the measure of them was appointed by his heavenly Father, to be filled up by him in this mortal state, so they were

for his body's sake, which is the church; not in the room and stead of the church, and people of Christ, as were the sufferings of Christ personal; or to exempt them from sufferings who all have their share in this life; nor for their sins to make reconciliation for them, and procure the remission of them; nor to redeem them, or obtain salvation for them, all which is completed by Christ; but for their good and profit, that the Gospel might continue and be blessed to the conversion of many, for the increase of the church and additions to it, and for the furtherance of the Gospel, and that such who professed it might be established and confirmed in it, by the sufferings of the apostle for it: and such good effects did follow upon his sufferings and afflictions; they were for the consolation of many souls, the strengthening of weak believers, and causing even preachers of the Gospel to wax more confident, and more boldly preach the Gospel without fear of man.

Ver. 25. *Whereof I am made a minister,* etc.] Not of Christ, or of the Gospel as before, though both were true; but of the churches for whose sake he endured afflictions; and which carries in it a reason of his suffering for them: he was not a saviour of the body, nor a redeemer of the church, nor Lord of it; but a minister, a servant of it, that ministered to it in holy things, in the word and ordinances; not a deacon, as the word, sometimes signifies, nor an ordinary minister, or a pastor of a particular church; but a minister of the church in general, being an apostle sent to preach the Gospel everywhere: he was made a minister of it, not by men, or anything he received from men; nor by himself, not by usurpation, he did not thrust himself into this office, or take it upon him of himself; but was put into it by Christ, who counted him faithful, he appeared to him, and made him a minister, qualified him for this office, called him to it, and sent him to perform it: and which he executed

according to the dispensation of God: or divine economy, which denotes such an authority and administration as is used in a family. The church is God's family, it is called the house and household of God, and the household of faith, part of which is in heaven and part on earth; God is the householder or master of the family; Christ is the Son over his own house; ministers are stewards in it, and their work is to give to everyone their

portion of meat in due season; their authority from God to do so, and the exercise of it, are the economy or dispensation of the Gospel committed to them: this is of God and not man, for none but God can give them a power to dispense it, and which is purely of his grace, called therefore the dispensation of the grace of God, (~~4002~~Ephesians 3:2); and here said to be given,

which is given to me for you; not according to any merits of his, who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an injurious person to Christ and his Gospel; but according to the pure grace of God, and that not for himself, but for the good of others, for the Gentiles especially, and so for the Colossians:

to fulfil the word of God; either the promises and prophecies contained in the word of God, respecting the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles, and their conversion by it; which had in a great measure their accomplishment through the ministry of the apostle: or to fill all places with the word of God and Gospel of Christ, as the apostle did from Jerusalem, and round about to Illyricum, diffusing the savour of the knowledge of Christ in every place; and sinners being converted, churches were planted and daily filled with such as should be saved; or to preach fully and faithfully the Gospel, keeping back nothing that was profitable, but declaring the whole counsel of God, continuing faithful to it to the end, as he did: to fill up or fulfil words is an Hebraism, and signifies to confirm them, or act according to them; (see ~~1004~~1 Kings 1:14) and the Septuagint there.

Ver. 26. [*Even*] *the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations*, etc.] This is said, as explanative of the word of God; signifying that he did not mean the Scriptures in general, which are the word of God, and every part of them; some part of which is historical, another prophetic, another practical, and another doctrinal; nor the law, which also is the word of God, but the Gospel, called “the mystery”, as it often is; because it contains things, which, though revealed, are mysteries to a natural man; and even to enlightened persons, who have the clearest view of them, the “modus” of them is not to be accounted for; such as the doctrines of the Trinity, of the union of the two natures in Christ, the incarnation of the Son of God, the union and communion of the church with Christ, the resurrection of the dead, etc. And though perhaps great and special regard may be here had to the calling of the Gentiles, which,

though revealed in the prophecies of the Old Testament, was in a great measure hid in them, and not so clearly known in ages and generations past as now, yet the whole may be applied to the Gospel mystery in general; which was first hid in the heart of God, in his thoughts and purposes, in his counsel and covenant, and in his Son, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and then in the ceremonies and shadows of the law, which but few had any insight into, and discerning of; and, during that dispensation, was wholly hid from the Gentiles; and but in part known by the Jews, and but by a few, and comparatively by them very darkly; and not so clearly by the angels themselves, who pry into these mysteries, and now, under the Gospel dispensation, learn from the church the manifold wisdom of God; and indeed it was hidden from all men, Jews and Gentiles, in a state of nature, and even from the wise and prudent of this world:

but now is made manifest to his saints; now under the Gospel dispensation, since the coming of Christ; there is an external revelation of the Gospel by him, more clearly, by whom grace and truth came, called the revelation of Christ; and an internal revelation of it by his Spirit, who is the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him; which is made to saints, the holy apostles and prophets, who are the saints to whom this faith, and the mystery of it, were first delivered with so much power and evidence; and to all the elect of God, whom he has separated for himself in eternal election; whom Christ has sanctified by his blood, and to whom he is made sanctification; and who are called with an holy calling, have principles of grace and holiness wrought in them by the Spirit of God, and therefore called “his” saints; these have only a spiritual discerning of the Gospel, for the natural man neither knows nor receives it.

Ver. 27. *To whom God would make known*, etc.] The spring and cause of the manifestation of the Gospel to the saints, and chosen of God, is not their works, for God does not call them with an holy calling according to them, but according to his own grace; nor any preparations and dispositions in them before such manifestation, towards the Gospel and the truths of it, for there are none such naturally in men, but all the reverse; nor a foresight of their better improvement of it, when made known, for this is not the method of divine grace, witness the instances of Sodom and Gomorrha, Tyre and Sidon; nor any holiness in them, or because they were sanctified, for they became so by the power of divine grace, through the Gospel revelation; but it is the pure sovereign good will and pleasure of God; (see ⁴⁰⁰Ephesians 1:9 ⁴⁰²⁵Matthew 11:25,26); as appears from what

they were before the Gospel came unto them, what is made known to them in it and by it; and from this, that they and not others, equally as deserving, are favoured with it:

what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles. The apostle, besides calling the Gospel a “mystery”, as before, ascribes “glory” to it; it is a glorious mystery, there is a glory in all the mysteries of it; it is a glorious Gospel, as it is often called, in its author, subject, matter, use, and efficacy: and also “riches” of glory, or glorious riches; containing rich truths, an immense treasure of them, comparable to gold, silver, and precious stones; rich blessings of justification, pardon, reconciliation, adoption, and eternal life; and rich promises, relating both to this life, and that which is to come; all which were opened and made known, not to the Jews only, but “among the Gentiles” also; who before were aliens, enemies, exceeding wicked, poor, blind, and miserable, but now, through the Gospel, were become rich and glorious, wise, knowing, and happy:

which is Christ in you, the hope of glory; this is to be connected with all that goes before: Christ is the riches of the Gospel; the riches of the divine perfections, which the Gospel more clearly displays than the works of creation or providence, are all in Christ, the fulness of them dwells in him; and this is the grace the Gospel reveals, that he, who was rich with all these, became poor to make us rich; the rich promises of the Gospel were all made to Christ, and are all yea and “Amen” in him; the rich blessings of it are all in his hands, righteousness, peace, and pardon, the riches both of grace and glory; the rich treasures of its divine truths are hid in him; and he is the substance of everyone of them: Christ is also the glory of the Gospel, inasmuch as he is the author, preacher, and subject of it; it is full of the glory of his person, both as the only begotten of the Father, and as the only Mediator between God and man; it is the glass through which this is seen: moreover, the glory of God in him is expressed hereby; the glory of his wisdom and power, of his truth and faithfulness, of his justice and holiness, of his love, grace, and mercy, and every other perfection, is eminently held forth in the Gospel; as this is great in the salvation and redemption of his people by Christ, which the Gospel brings the good news of; add to this, that that glory which the saints shall have with Christ, and will lie in the enjoyment of him to all eternity, is brought to light in the Gospel: Christ is also the mystery of the Gospel; he is one of the persons in the mystery of the Trinity; the mystery of his divine sonship, of his divine person, being God and yet man, man and yet God, and both in one person, and of his

incarnation and redemption, makes a considerable part of the Gospel: and Christ, who is the sum and substance of it, is “in” his people; not only as the omnipresent God, as the author of the light of nature, as the Creator of all things, in whom all live, move, and have their beings, but in a way of special grace; and the phrase is expressive of a revelation of him in them, of their possession of him, of his inhabitation in them by his Spirit and grace, particularly by faith, and of their communion with him, in consequence of their union to him; and being so, he is the ground and foundation of their hopes of glory. There is a glory which the saints are hoping for, which the glories of this world are but a faint resemblance of; which is unseen at present, and which the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared unto; what is eternal, and which Christ has entered into, and took possession of; and what will greatly consist in beholding his glory, and in everlasting communion with him; this through grace saints have a good hope of, and are waiting for, and even rejoice at times in the hope of it; of which hope Christ is the foundation; for not only the promise of it is with him, but the glory itself is in his hands; the gift of it is with him, and through him; he has made way by his sufferings and death for the enjoyment of it, and is now preparing it for them, by his presence and intercession; his grace makes them meet for it, his righteousness gives them a title to it, and his Spirit is the earnest of it, and the substance of it will be the fruition of himself.

Ver. 28. *Whom we preach*, etc.] Under the above considerations; as the riches, the glory, and the mystery of the Gospel; as the hope set before lost sinners to lay hold upon; as the only Saviour and Redeemer, by whose righteousness believers are justified, through whose blood their sins are pardoned, by whose sacrifice and satisfaction atonement is made, and in whose person alone is acceptance with God: Christ and him crucified, and salvation by him, were the subjects of the ministry of the apostles; on this they dwelt, and it was this which was blessed for the conversion of sinners, the edification of saints, the planting of churches, and the setting up and establishing the kingdom and interest of Christ:

warning every man; of his lost state and condition by nature; of the wrath to come, and the danger he is in of it; of the terrors of the Lord, and of an awful judgment; showing sinners that they are unrighteous and unholy, that their nature is corrupt and impure, their best righteousness imperfect, and cannot justify them before God; that they stand guilty before him, and that

destruction and misery are in all their ways; and therefore advise them to flee from the wrath to come, to the hope set before them in the Gospel:

and teaching every man in all wisdom; not natural, but spiritual and evangelical; the whole Gospel of Christ, the counsel of God, the wisdom of God in a mystery, and all the branches of it; teaching them to believe in Christ for salvation, to lay hold on his righteousness for justification, to deal with his blood for pardon, and with his sacrifice for the atonement of their sins; and to observe all things commanded by Christ, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly: by these two words, “warning” and “teaching”, the several parts of the Gospel ministry are expressed; and which extend to all sorts of men, rich and poor, bond and free, greater and lesser sinners, Gentiles as well as Jews; and who are chiefly designed here, and elsewhere, by every man and every creature:

that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus; not in themselves, in which sense no man is perfect in this life; but in the grace, holiness, and righteousness of Christ, in whom all the saints are complete: or it may regard that ripeness of understanding, and perfection of knowledge, which, when arrived unto, saints become perfect men in Christ; and is the end of the Gospel ministry, and to which men are brought by it; (see ⁴⁰¹³ Ephesians 4:13); and to be understood of the presentation of the saints, not by Christ to himself, and to his Father, but by the ministers of the Gospel, as their glory and crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ.

Ver. 29. *Whereunto I also labour*, etc.] In the word and doctrine, by preaching Christ, warning sinners of their danger, teaching them the way of salvation, and their duty; with this view, that, in thee great day of account, he might bring a large number of them, and set them before Christ as the seals of his ministry, as instances of the grace of Christ, and as perfect in him:

striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily; meaning either in his prayers, earnestly entreating of God that he would succeed his labours, and bless them to the conversion of many; which sense is favoured by the Syriac version, which renders it, Pçk tmw, “and make supplication”; that is, with that effectual fervent prayer, which was powerfully wrought in him: or in his ministry, combating with many enemies, fighting the good fight of faith; not in his own strength, but through the power of Christ; which enabled him to preach the Gospel far and near, in season and out of

season; which supported his outward man, and strengthened his inward man for that service, and made it effectual to the good of the souls of many: some refer this to the signs, wonders, and miracles, which Christ wrought by him, for the confirmation of the Gospel; but the other sense, which takes in both the power by which he was assisted in preaching, both in body and soul, and that which went along with his ministry to make it useful to others, is to be preferred.