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LUTHER AND THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY
IN RELIGION

PART II*

Having in Part I of this article given some account of the development, in Luther's religious experience and his career as a Reformer, of the principle of the supreme normative authority of the sacred Scriptures, we shall now try to indicate the main features of his teaching in regard to the nature of this authority.

It is well to recall—indeed, the significance of the fact cannot be overestimated—that it was by a singularly deep and rich experience of the grace of God in Christ Jesus that Luther had come to the double conviction that he was himself a saved man, and that the subject matter of the Bible, culminating in the assurance of the free gift of eternal life through faith in the Son of God, is true and trustworthy. In this experience lay the germ of his power to refashion the religious life of his age.¹ Inheriting the medieval ideas concerning the relative functions of the Scriptures and the Church, he presently found himself constrained, by the logic of his spiritual necessities, to oppose one after another of the traditional authorities that kept thwarting his advances toward full evangelical freedom. One of the greatest conservatives that ever lived,

* For Part I, see this REVIEW, October, 1917, pp. 553-603.

¹ Preuss, *Die Entwicklung des Schriftprinzips bei Luther bis zur Leipziger Disputation*, p. 6, aptly remarks: 'Es ist der Ausgangspunkt und mit ihm das ganze weitere Werden des Reformators ein religiöser, kein humanistischer, ein positiver, kein negativer, ein erlebter, kein erdachter, ein errungener, kein übernommener.' On the importance of interpreting "the whole Luther" in the light of his formative evangelical experience, cf. Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, iii⁴ p. 835.

THE FULNESS OF CHRIST*

There are two lines in Charles Wesley's great hymn—"Jesus, Lover of My Soul"—which express in simple yet sufficient language the central idea of the Epistle to the Colossians:

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want.
More than all in Thee I find."

Another great Christian, who found in Christ his all in all, has testified out of his experience as to the dominant idea of Colossians. Pascal in his "Thoughts on Religion" declares: Jesus Christ "is the center of everything and the object of everything; and he who does not know Him knows nothing of the order of the world and nothing of himself. For not only do we not know God otherwise than by Jesus Christ; we do not know ourselves otherwise than by Jesus Christ. . . . In Him is all our felicity, our virtue, our life, our light, our hope; apart from Him there is nothing but vice, misery, darkness, despair, and we see only obscurity and confusion in the nature of God and in our own." Whenever I read Colossians I am reminded of the well-known passage in Browning, where the most spiritual poet of the nineteenth century gives expression to the same thought as that of the apostle:

"I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ, accepted
by thy reason,
Solves for thee all questions in the earth and out of it,
And has so far advanced thee to be wise."

That is the ever-abiding message of Colossians: Jesus Christ is himself the solution of all questions in the earth and out of it.

"Yea thro' life, death, thro' sorrow and thro' sinning
He shall suffice me, for he hath sufficed:
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ."

—F. W. H. Meyers' *St. Paul*.

* The first of this series of articles appeared in the April number of this REVIEW.

But why go *outside* of the epistle to find the statement of its theme? In three outstanding passages the apostle himself clearly states the central idea of his epistle to be the perfect sufficiency of Christ for every human need. In i. 18 we read: "That in all things he might have the pre-eminence." Here Paul claims for the Lord Jesus a universal and absolute and unshared pre-eminence. In the second passage (ii. 9-10) this idea is expressed more explicitly: "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full." Here two distinct statements are made. First, Christ is complete; "in him dwelleth all the fulness of God." Second, all who are *in Christ* are likewise complete, that is, every need of the soul is supplied; "and in him ye are made full." *Complete in a complete and all-sufficient Savior.* The third outstanding passage is iii. 11: "Christ is all and in all." He is everything to every believer.

Epaphras, the young pastor of the church at Colossae, had journeyed all the way to Rome to ask Paul what would be the best way to combat certain heresies that were threatening the Colossian Christians. Paul's answer was summed up in the one word "Christ." Paul tells Epaphras that the best way to refute the false teachers is "not by indignant controversy, nor by personal authority, but by the direct presentation of counter truths" (Farrar), and these truths are summed up and embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full."

In regard to the dominant thought of Colossians the great commentaries and Biblical interpreters are in substantial agreement. Practically all of them fix on the idea of the perfect sufficiency of Christ for our salvation as the central current of the book. It is when we turn to consider the structure and arrangement of Colossians that we find not only no agreement but no serious effort on the part of the commentators to show that the book is a literary unit; not merely possessing a clear cut theme but also un-

folding that theme step by step to its climax and conclusion. Most of the commentaries are content to follow Lightfoot in his three main divisions: doctrinal, polemical, and hortatory. Lightfoot calls this an "analysis"; but, as a matter of fact, it is only a loose, general description of the contents of the epistle. Not one of those who adopt Lightfoot's so-called "analysis" makes any attempt to show the logical thread tying these main divisions together. I am convinced that such an attempt, however, is bound to fail; for the simple reason that Lightfoot and those who follow him have failed to discover the true organic structure of Colossians. On the other hand, the moment we ascertain the real literary arrangement of the book, we shall behold each section, paragraph and sentence falling into its proper place and performing its rightful function. So I now propose to give a brief discussion of the organism of Colossians. We shall take a rapid survey of the epistle in order that we may see how Paul unfolds his mighty conception of the Pre-eminence of Christ.

The first fourteen verses are manifestly introductory; containing, as is customary with Paul, the salutation (i. 1-2) and the opening prayer (i. 3-14). The prayer is divided into thanksgiving (i. 3-8) and petition (i. 9-14). At verse 3 we read: "We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then Paul proceeds to thank God for the faith, love and hope of the Colossians. At verse 9 Paul passes to petition. "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and to make request for you that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will." Nothing less than fulness of knowledge will satisfy Paul. He prays that this knowledge may tell in a practical way on the daily lives of the Colossians; that it may enable them to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, to bear fruit in every good work, to increase in the knowledge of God, to be strong and joyful in afflictions, and to be ever thankful for the blessings of redemption.

The last twelve verses (iv. 7-18) form the conclusion to

the epistle. Striking off, therefore, i. 1-14 as introductory and iv. 7-18 as the conclusion, we have left i. 15-iv. 6 as the body of the epistle. Let us now try to uncover the organic structure of this section.

At i. 15 begins one of the greatest paragraphs in all the Pauline writings. It deals with a theme very close to Paul's heart—the Pre-eminence of Christ—and extends through verse 23. This paragraph is the heart of Colossians: in its center we have the statement, "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." This statement sums up the central truth of the paragraph. It is the heart of the paragraph, and thus "the heart of the heart" of Colossians. We do well to consider it closely. It begins with the conjunction "that," which expresses purpose. In verse 15, where Paul speaks of Christ as the first-born of all creation—that is, the first-born *over* or *before* all creation—we are carried back into eternity before time began. And in verses 22-23, at the close of the paragraph where he refers to the Colossians as "holy and without blemish and unreprouvable" before God, we are carried forward through time to eternity to come, when the Church redeemed from sin will stand holy before God's throne. Now we are prepared to see the force of the conjunction "that" introducing the statement, "that in all things he should have the pre-eminence." These two eternities, past and future, and the whole period lying between are united and controlled by one purpose running through them all, and that is God's purpose to make Jesus Christ pre-eminent in all things. It is as if God through his apostle had said: "Know this—in all I have ever done, and all I do, and in all I shall ever do, I have had just one aim and thought, namely, to make Jesus Christ supreme." Here Paul uncovers one of God's great secrets, one of the greatest secrets in the eternal heart, one of the deep things of God. "This is the root secret of the universe, the true philosophy of history. God ever works towards this single goal. He ever operates under the inspiration of this one motive, the splendid purpose of the Father, enthroning the

Son," that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. This is the "one far-off divine event, to which the whole creation moves." In Ephesians Paul teaches that the formation of one universal Church in Christ Jesus is the purpose running through the ages. In Colossians he declares that the pre-eminence of Christ is the single goal towards which God ever works. Paul does not contradict himself. These two purposes are really one, looked at from different angles. The one is the complement of the other. Jesus Christ will receive his pre-eminence in his headship over the Church, which is his body, the completion of him who is on his way to fill the universe. And the Church will become one and universal only in the supreme pre-eminence of her head.

"That in all things *he* might have the pre-eminence." The pronoun "he" is written out in the Greek, and the emphatic form of the pronoun is used. We may translate, that *he himself and no other* might have the pre-eminence. "Why does Paul employ this emphatic pronoun? There is a reason, a historical reason." At Colossae in the Church a heresy had sprung up. Some of the people had the notion of a great multitude of angels reaching from the throne of God down to the earth, an infinite series of mediators between God and man. To these angel-mediators were assigned divine attributes and powers according to their rank and nearness to God in the great chain. By this emphatic pronoun—"he himself and no other"—Paul says: "It doesn't matter how many and glorious and exalted these supposed angel-mediators may be, you can never place Christ in a series along with them. He holds a place which no other being can share. He is to enjoy an incommunicable and unshared supremacy."

"That *in all things* he might have the pre-eminence." There is no limit to the pre-eminence Christ is destined to possess. Everything in God's great universe will one day be put beneath the feet of Christ. Verses 15-18 emphasize the absolute comprehensiveness and universality of Christ's pre-eminence. In the first place, says Paul, he is supreme in

the Godhead. He is the image, that is, the very likeness and substance of the invisible God. In the second place, Christ is declared to be pre-eminent in the work of creation. He is the first-born *before* or *over* all creation. He is the Lord of creation. He is God's agent in the work of creating the universe—both the visible and the invisible, the material and the spiritual, universe; whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. The false teachers at Colossae may people the space between God's throne and man's earth with angels as thick as motes in a sunbeam. Christ made them all and is supreme over them all. Paul advances a step higher in his statement that "all things were made for Christ." He is the goal towards which all creation converges. All things come from his creative hand at the beginning and all things are focusing upon him as the final end. He is both the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of creation, the first and the last; he both initiates and winds up all history. What a sublime philosophy of creation! All things came forth from Christ in the beginning; all things will return unto him at the end. "The end of all the majesty of creation is that Christ's solitary figure may stand out clearly as center and Lord of the universe and his name be lifted high over all."

In the third place, the apostle asserts, Christ is pre-eminent in the providential guidance of the world. "In him all things consist," or hold together. In him the universe is preserved and its unity is maintained. Lightfoot says: "Christ is the principle of co-hesion in both the physical and moral universe; in him is its binding and sustaining power. Universal nature coheres and maintains an orderly unity in him. He impresses upon creation that unity and solidarity which makes it a cosmos instead of a chaos. Thus the action of gravitation, which keeps in their places things fixed and regulates the motion of things moving is an expression of his mind."

In the fourth place, Jesus Christ is pre-eminent in redemption: "And he is the head of the body, the Church;

who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead" (i. 18). There is something more wonderful than creation and providence. More wonderful than to create and sustain the world is to redeem it.

"'Twas great to call the world from naught,
'Twas greater to redeem."

"Creation is a miracle of matter; redemption is a miracle of spirit. The end of all the glories of redemption is the exaltation of Christ." He is the head of the Church, "the inspiring, ruling, guiding, combining, sustaining power, the main-spring of its activity, the centre of its unity, and the seat of its life." (Lightfoot.)

Thus the pre-eminence of Christ is universal and unshared. He is pre-eminent in the Godhead, in creation, in providence, and in redemption; "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."

"These are overwhelming ideas when we think of Jesus of Nazareth, a Galilean carpenter, who had not where to lay his head." And the question is bound to arise: Is it right that Jesus should be lifted to such supremacy? "Are we to assert that all things whatsoever are to be determined by Him; all nature, all history, all revelation, all redemption, have as their ultimate purpose his honor and his exaltation? Are we to say that the universe is to be reconstructed with him as its center, the principle of its unity, and its goal?" *We are.* Then we ask: Upon what does this supremacy rest? what is the ground of it? what is its basis? This question presses for an answer just at this point. Hence we find the apostle in vss. 19-23 setting forth the two-fold basis, or, we might say, the two great pillars upon which the pre-eminence of Christ rests. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." The word "fulness" means the entire number, the full measure, perfection. It was a favorite word with the false teachers at Colossae; they meant by it, the absolute perfection of deity, all the attributes and energies of deity. Some of these teachers asserted that only

a fragment of this fulness dwelt in Christ. But Paul declares: No, not a fragment but *all* the fulness, the full fulness, the perfection of deity dwells in him. Others taught that the full fulness of God dwelt in Christ only for a short time. So Paul uses the word which expresses permanent and not temporary dwelling; the full fulness of the deity has its permanent, eternal home in the Son. Paul piles words upon words in his effort to express the full-orbed and perfect deity of Jesus Christ. Is Jesus Christ God exactly? He is. Is Jesus Christ God absolutely? He is, answers Paul. Is there not some essential thing in God that is not in Christ Jesus? Paul answers, No. We see readily why Paul asserts at this particular place the perfect deity of Jesus Christ. Only one who is very God has a right to this position of absolute and universal supremacy.

Next the apostle proceeds to indicate the second basis of Christ's pre-eminence. "And through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross: through him, I say, whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens." The second pillar upon which rests our Savior's pre-eminence is his restoration of the lost harmony of the universe by the blood of his cross. "Through him the universe came into being, and through him the universe is to be reconciled to God. The object of reconciliation is not merely the world of sinful men, but a world on a grander scale. The work of reconciling sinful men is only a part of a vaster work"; and so Paul explains the "all things" by adding "whether they be things in earth or things in heaven"—the reconciliation extends throughout the ends of the universe. Now a work of reconciliation presupposes opposition, enmity, and deranging of forces. Yet the Bible clearly teaches that there is no sin or estrangement in heaven. How then can the inhabitants of heaven be said to be reconciled? Again the Bible is equally clear as to the doom of the finally impenitent. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment." The Bible holds out no ray of hope for the salvation of the fallen angels or of Satan or

of the finally impenitent of human beings. How then can the reconciliation be universal? I am persuaded that the answer is to be found in Paul's use of "the all things," that is, the universe as a whole or an unit. The universe is one. "It is all created by one glorious person, upheld and sustained by him, and it is converging upon him as its goal. Christ's person, therefore, has not merely historical significance, but also cosmical significance. He is not merely a second Adam, the head of a new humanity; he is the center of the universe, and in his blood shed on the cross we have the dissolving of all discords, not only in the life of man, but in the universe at large. He is the source of all creation, the principle of its unity, and its goal, and hence the efficacy of what he has done extends throughout it all. The power of the cross pierces the heights and the depths of the universe." The blessings of his cross shall flow far as the curse is found. Surely over a universe reconciled by his blood Jesus Christ has a right to be supreme.

So far the apostle Paul has asserted the absolute and universal supremacy of Jesus, and has indicated the two-fold basis of his pre-eminence—his full-orbed and perfect deity and his restoration of the lost harmony of the universe by the blood of his cross. That is the first great division of Colossians and brings us through i. 23.

Observe the "now" at the beginning of verse 24. It is logical, not temporal. It has the force of "therefore," and indicates that Paul is preparing to draw from the doctrine of Christ's pre-eminence certain conclusions. It looks back to what precedes in chapter one and forward to what is to follow in the remaining chapters. It is thus the link that binds together the two main divisions of Colossians. It is the hinge on which revolves the organism of the whole book. It has the same force as "therefore" in Romans xii. 1, which links together the doctrinal and practical portions of Romans.

If we are right in our view of the "now" in Colossians i. 24, then it follows that we have two main divisions in the

epistle: (a) The Pre-eminence of Christ (i. 15-23) and (b) The Practical Effects of Christ's Pre-eminence (i. 24-iv. 6). Accordingly we find that the section i. 24-iv. 6 deals with certain blessed results for believers that flow from Christ's Pre-eminence.

The first practical effect is on Paul himself, the preacher (i. 24-ii. 7). It is altogether natural that the apostle should refer first to the effect of Christ's pre-eminence upon *himself*. This is precisely what he does. He declares that the thought of this unique and universal supremacy of Jesus Christ made him rejoice that he had such a glorious and all-sufficient Savior to preach, even though he had to suffer for it. This joy is two-fold. In the first place, it is the joy that comes from the thought of what Christ himself, when made known by a suffering ministry, can do for all men and every man (i. 24-29). "Now I rejoice," he says, "in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ . . . whom we preach, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ; whereunto I labor also striving according to his working which worketh in me mightily" In the second place, it is the joy that comes from the thought of the blessings that flow out to others from our own sufferings endured for Christ's sake (ii. 1-7). "For I would have you know," continues Paul, "how greatly I strive for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love and unto all riches of the full assurance of the understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden." By proclaiming an all-sufficient and all-pre-eminent Savior, Paul in his ministry of suffering had blessed people whose face he had never seen; and the thought of the many souls, unknown to him personally, who nevertheless had been blessed by his ministry filled his heart with joy and made him rejoice in the midst of his suffer-

ings. Thus the first practical effect of Christ's pre-eminence is upon the preacher himself; it makes him rejoice that he has such a complete and all-sufficient Savior to proclaim to others, even though he has to suffer for it.

The second practical effect of Christ's pre-eminence is that it corrects a false philosophy of the Christian life (ii. 8-23). In one brief yet comprehensive statement Paul describes the erroneous conception of the Christian life as taught by the false teachers at Colossae. Verse eight of chapter two reads: "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." The apostle declares that the conception of the Christian life as held by the Colossian errorists is only a man-made philosophy. It is a vain, that is, empty, deceit; an error which produces nothing that is good. It has been handed down from generation to generation of false teachers; it is "after the tradition of man." It is likewise "after the rudiments of the world"; that is, it consists simply in elementary rules which concern only the externals of life, not reaching the real inner man of the soul. Lastly and worst of all, it is not after Christ; it is contrary to Christ.

Having told us what this false conception of the Christian life is, the apostle now declares that it is worthless to the Christian, who in Christ has all he needs (ii. 9-15). "In Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full" (ii. 9-10). The believer is complete in a complete and all-sufficient Savior. Paul now proceeds to give the proof that Christ is an all-sufficient Savior. Christ's completeness and sufficiency as the Savior is seen in that he satisfies the three greatest needs of the sinner. Every lost sinner is in a three-fold condition; a condition of death, of sin, and of slavery. Christ not only saves the sinner from this triple estate; he brings him into the opposite estate of life, of holiness, and of victory. Christ bestows upon the believer a new life out of the dead by the imparta-

tion of a new nature. "In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God. . . . And you did he make alive together with him" (ii. 11-12). Furthermore, Christ delivers the believer out of the estate of condemnation and brings him into the estate of acceptance before God. "Having forgiven us all our trespasses, having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (ii. 13-14). That is not all. Finally, Christ defeats all our spiritual foes; "having despoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (ii. 15). These, then, are the three greatest needs of the soul which Christ and Christ alone perfectly and forever satisfies—a new life out of death, the forgiveness of sins, and victory over every foe. Surely the Christian can say:

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
More than all in Thee I find."

Now if Christ satisfies every need of the Christian, and if the conception of the Christian life as held by the false teachers at Colossae is consequently worthless, then it follows that every Christian should reject such a conception of the Christian life. Hence, in the closing paragraph of chapter two (vss. 16-23) Paul urges the Colossians to turn away from this mistaken conception and hold fast to Christ the head.

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's. Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast the Head, from whom

all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God. If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances. Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh."

Thus Paul declares the second practical effect of Christ's pre-eminence to be deliverance from a false philosophy of life (ii. 8-23). He points out in logical order, first, the nature of this false philosophy (ii. 8); second, its worthlessness to the Christian (ii. 9-15), who has in Christ all he needs; and lastly, its consequent rejection (ii. 16-23).

But the doctrine of Christ's pre-eminence not merely delivers us from this false philosophy. It is not only negative; it is positive in its blessed effects. Hence, the apostle advances in his discussion and presents the third effect of Christ's pre-eminence; namely, it establishes the true doctrine of the Christian life (iii. 1—iv. 6). In developing this point, Paul naturally begins by telling us what the true doctrine of the Christian life is. This he does in iii. 1-4.

"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." Christ who is our life! Those five words sum up the whole of the true philosophy of the Christian life. "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Union with the living Christ in his resurrection-life; that, declares Paul, is the true doctrine of the Christian life.

In order to show that this is true—that union with Christ creates the Christian life—the apostle is forced to show that

everything we call Christian flows from union with Christ. In other words, we need just at this juncture in the organic structure of the epistle a setting forth of the necessary, inevitable, spontaneous fruits of union with Christ. This is precisely what we have in iii. 5-iv. 6.

In this section Paul mentions five fruits that the Christian will surely produce, all coming from his union with the living Christ. As we give a rapid survey of these fruits, you will observe that they embrace substantially everything that we identify with Christ and Christianity.

The first fruit is the killing of "the old man" of sin (iii. 5-9). "Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience: wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things; but now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth."

The second fruit is the putting on the "new man" of of righteousness (iii. 10-11). "And have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him."

The third fruit is the clothing of the new man with the garments of holiness (iii. 12-14). "Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering: forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye."

The fourth fruit is the transformation of all the relationships of life (iii. 18-iv. 1). Christ supreme in the life will transform the duties of wives and husbands, children and fathers, servants and masters. Paul views these duties from the standpoint of the believer's union with Christ. "Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting *in the Lord.*" "Children obey your parents, for this is well-pleasing *in the Lord.*" "Servants, obey your masters in all

things; whatsoever ye do, work heartily as *unto the Lord*, knowing that *from the Lord* ye shall receive the recompense; ye serve the Lord Christ." "Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven."

The fifth fruit of our union with Christ is a life of prayer and activity for the progress of the gospel (iv. 2-6). "Continue stedfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving; withal praying for us also, that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds; that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."

We are deeply impressed with the completeness of Paul's presentation of the true doctrine of the Christian life. No essential feature is wanting. First of all, he tells us what is the essence of the Christian life. It is union with the risen and glorified Christ in his resurrection-life. Then he unfolds the necessary fruits of that union—these five: killing of the "old man" of sin; putting on of the "new man" of righteousness; the clothing of the new man in the garments of holiness; the transformation of all the relationships of life; and lastly, a life of prayer and activity for the progress of the gospel.

The remainder of the epistle (iv. 7-18) is concerned with the conclusion, in which Paul refers to certain personal matters, speaks of the joys of Christian fellowship, sends farewell salutations, and closes with the benediction: "Grace be with you."

We have completed our survey of the epistle to the Colossians. We believe we have demonstrated our position that it is a perfect literary unit, an organism, with one central theme, which is developed and unfolded step by step and point by point to its conclusion and climax. Every paragraph, every verse, every expression is in its rightful place and performs perfectly its proper function in the organic structure of the book.

Richmond, Va.

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