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EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLLOSSIANS

Ch. 3: 10b (cont.)

kat'eikōna tou ktisantos autou (after the image of him that created him): The whole sentence should be read in conjunction with Eph. 4:22-24. The noun *eikōn* occurs frequently in the Gk. versions of the O.T. as a translation of the Hebrew *tselem*. It implies "an archtype of which it is the copy" (Ltft.), and contains the two ideas of "representation" (as a *derived* likeness) and "manifestation". In chap. 1:15 we have the expression "the image of the invisible God" (see also 2 Cor. 4:4), referring to Christ. The particular sense of the word must be derived largely from the context. In ch. 1:15 its meaning is that the Son is the image of the Father in character, nature and essence; or as Ellicott puts it, "the Son is the Father's image in *all* things save only in being the Father." And Liddon: "The Image is the Organ whereby God, in His Essence invisible, reveals Himself to His creatures". It is descriptive of the eternally inherent character of the relationship between Father and Son in the Godhead. But when used of the believer as in the present context it is generally understood to refer back to Genesis 1:26, 27 as the analogy of the new creation, the "new man" born again; regenerated, in the likeness of God, and now "partaker of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 2:4*). "The new birth was a recreation in God's image; the subsequent life must be a deepening of this image thus stamped upon the man" (Ltft.). Then, "*image of him*" is a reference to God the Father, not the Son, for Christ is never described as Creator but the Agent of creation (ch. 1:16). See the parallel in Eph. 4:24 = "created *after God*."

Verse 11

hopou ouk eni Hellēn kai Ioudaios, peritomē kai akrobustia, barbaros, skuthēs, doulos, eleutheros, alla panta kai en pasin Christos (where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, bondman, freeman, but Christ is all, and in all). See Gal. 3:28. "*Where*" = either in the regenerate life, or "in Christ" as the New Man. Moule prefers the latter; Christ is the sphere or "*locality*" of the "new man". Alternatively, Ltft., reads — "in this regenerate life, in this *spiritual region* into which the

* Note the aorist emphatic in this reference: Not that "they might become partakers", but "might be partakers."

believer is transferred in Christ". It is perhaps a fine distinction, and probably the former sense will appeal to most students.

Ouk eni="cannot exist" (Moule, Ltft., Williams), i.e.= "impossibility." But it may also mean that such distinctions as enumerated simply "*do not exist*" in that realm (Abbott, A. T. Robertson); the idea of "impossibility" does not arise. "The point of the Greek text is that distinctions which divide humanity . . . disappear in the one spiritual fellowship" (Radford). The Gospel recognises none of these accidental or artificial distinctions and barriers; Christ obliterates them as it were (Eph. 2:11-14).

The eight discriptives which follow are generally paired: The first is *national*; the Jews considered all non-Jews as 'Greeks', i.e. Gentiles (John 7:35; Acts 11:20; 14:1, etc.). The second pair is *religious*, which is the same as the first, but with the emphasis on Circumcision, the distinctive religious rite (see ch. 2:11; cf. Gal. 5:6; 6:15, etc.). The third refers to *culture* but they are not properly a contrast. The word "Barbarian" literally means one who speaks an unintelligible language (1 Cor. 14:11, R.V.). At first it included Romans but "from the Augustan age the name belonged to all tribes which had no Greek or Roman accomplishments", i.e. culture (*Gk. Lex., L. & S.*). "Scythian" ("an intensification of the previous word") was the lowest type of Barbarian. To the Jews it was name of terror and savagery in their past history, for in the reign of Josiah their hordes swept down from the north upon Palestine and Western Asia and created great havoc, an invasion which seems to be referred to by Ezekiel (chs. 38, 39) and Jeremiah (ch. 1:13-16; 6:1 ff.), and is described in the books of the Maccabees. The fourth pair, "*bond or free*", refers to a distinction found in every Christian congregation in Paul's day when slavery was in vogue. The reference is particularly relevant because one of the messengers, Onesemus, who carried this letter to Colossae, was himself a runaway slave from his master Philemon (in whose house the church met for worship). The apostle's point here is that such a state is now done away with in Christ. (Read the epistle to Philemon.)*

* In juxtaposition to this allusion to "bond nor free", Dr. Moule's Note on Ephes. 6:5 is worth quoting: "With impartial hands it (i.e. "the great Gospel doctrine of the believer's 'slavery' to His Master, Christ") not only sanctions but sanctifies, *subordination to constituted authority* (Rom. 13), and meanwhile ennobles the individual, in respect of all that is highest in the word *liberty*, by putting him in direct and conscious relations with God". See the whole Note; found in his *Ephesians* in the series, "Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges."

"*Christ is all*", etc. Williams points out "the overwhelming emphasis in the position (in the phrase) of *Christos*", implying that He is *everything* to the believer; but more, He is *in* every believer (so Weymouth translates). Christ has "substituted Himself for all these" distinctions of race, religion, and caste, and "such was the union of every believer with Him, that each was to each an embodiment as it were of His presence" and life (Moule).

The list of sins in vs. 5-7 are against purity and simplicity; those in vs. 7 and 8 against fellowship amongst believers, and the oneness of the Body. The reasons given for the appeal were, the certainty of divine judgment against sin (v. 6), they had put away the old habits (v. 9), and put on the "new man", and now belonged to Christ in a unique spiritual fellowship (vs. 10-11).

Verse 12

Endusasthe oun hōs eklektoi tou Theou, hagioi kai ēgapēmenoi (Put on therefore as God's elect, holy and beloved.) Not only put off the evils of the old life, but put on the virtues of the new. *Endusasthe* connects with *endusamenoī* in verse 10 and is aorist for the same reasons as there (see Notes on v. 10). The 'therefore' carries the argument to its logical consequences of the preceding statements: They should put into practice the fellowship arising out of the new state, and the fellowship itself is expressed in many ways. "*God's elect*" has the emphasis on 'election'—i.e. their being chosen of God in His sovereign purpose, so that they would fulfil all that is implied in that choice. They should *be* the evidence of that in daily life. "*Holy and beloved*" are simply fresh epithets which develop the same thought. "Thus *hagaiōi* as set aside for God's use out of a sinful world, and *ēgapēmenoi* as being the objects of special divine love" (Williams). Further, the latter is a perfect participle (as in 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13) and indicates, what Moule terms, "the settlement and fixity of the Divine love"—those on whom *God has set His love*. The same three epithets are used of Christ Himself—*eklektōs* in 1 Pet. 2:4; *hagios*, Mark 1:24; *ēgapēmenoi* in Eph. 1:6. Such are the unspeakable virtues we share with Christ!

The remainder of the verse is taken up with five descriptive substantives:—

Splagchna oiktirmou = a heart of compassion, the R.V. renders more closely the English equivalent of the Gk. "*bowels*" (A.V.). "The Gk. word in the classics means, strictly, 'the nobler vitals',

including the heart" (Moule), the viscera being considered the seat of the emotions. *Chrēstotēta* = kindness or sweetness of temper. The substantive occurs in Rom. 2:4; 11:22; 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22, Tit. 3:4, etc. *Tapeinophrosunēn* = humility (see our Note on 2:18); "the attitude of a soul which has lost its pride in the discovery of the mercy (of God) in its salvation" (Moule). *Prautēta* = meekness, "the grace of submission under trial" (Eph. 4:2); the opposite of rudeness or harshness (see Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:25). *Makrothumian* = longsuffering, the opposite of malice, resentment, or revenge (see 1 Tim. 1:16; 1 Pet. 3:20; James 5:7-11). Griffith Thomas remarks, "those who are humble in mind will naturally be slow to resent wrongs and will never for an instant contemplate revenge".

Verse 13

Anechomenoi allēlōn kai charizomenoi heautois (forbearing one another, and forgiving each other). Passing from the abstract substantives Paul adds two concrete present participles as illustrative of these Christian virtues in operation. "Forbearing" literally means "holding yourselves back from one another", when tempted to break loose and fly at one another. The parallel in Eph. 4:2 adds "*in love*". Love gives vivid reality to the forbearance and forgiveness. "Each other" (*heautois*) is reflexive rather than reciprocal = "yourselves", as in Eph. 4:32, and is understood as emphasising, more than *allēlois* would, what Moule calls "the solidarity of the Body within which the reciprocity takes place", so that if one member errs (and repents) it is the corporate Body who must forgive, besides the particular member injured.

ean tis pros tina echē momphēn; (if any man have a complaint against any) *Echē* is present subjunctive = "keeps on having a complaint". The provocation may be great, but forgiveness will have the ultimate victory. The A.V. "quarrel" is an archaicism now having the meaning of "wrangling", which is not the real sense of the Gk., hence the R.V. "complaint" is better. It really means, if any man has a cause of complaint, let there be no quarrel, let him forgive. For a practical illustration see 1 Cor. 6:7 (R.V.).

kathōs kai ho Kurios exharisato humin houtōs kai humeis: (even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye:) See ch. 2:13. Note the R.V. "Lord" instead of "Christ", supported by strong MS authority, but generally agreed as referring to Christ. In Eph.

4:32 = "God in Christ forgave you", the Father being the Ultimate Source of forgiveness, and the Son the Channel. Moule compares Acts 5:31. For the kind of spirit here inculcated see Matt. 6:14, 15; 18:32, 33.

Verse 14

epi pasi de toutois tēn agapēn, ho estin sundesmos tēs teleiōtētos. (And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.) The metaphor is that of an outer garment put on in addition to the others, and in that sense "over all"; but it may also have the idea of a "girdle" which holds them together in place. So Abbot, "love binds the virtues into a harmonious whole". Others read *teleiōtētos* as a genitive of apposition; love is that which binds Christians together *in one body* and so leads to perfection (M. Jones, Haupt, Peake). But there is much to be said for the suggestion offered by Robertson, Moule, and Lightfoot, which Williams puts thus: "Love binds (the several graces), and maintains them bound in such way that lacking it they would cease to have perfection." This construction appears to have the least difficulty. It is interesting to recall here the three references to the girdle: The girdle of truth (Eph. 6:14); the girdle of peace (Eph. 4:3), and the girdle of love here.

THE BIBLE

You open the familiar, the well-worn Book. Does it strike you how emphatically it is the speech to you, 'in the world' of your unseen Lord? It is a piece of human literature; its contents are all conveyed through the manifold operation of human faculties of thought, writing, arrangement; it is the record, very largely, of human lives under ascertainable conditions of place and time. It is not a monologue from the clouds; it is a marvellous complex and harmony of things done and words said upon the earth. Yet all the while these things visible and audible 'in the world' are full of eternity. God is in them everywhere. And man is everywhere in them as the mysterious creature made by Him, capable of Him, fallen from Him, to be restored to Him, with eternal issues, dark or infinitely bright awaiting him in the unseen. You read the Book 'as another book,' but the more you do so, with genuine openness of attention and reverential thought the more you find it is not as another book. It is exactly like other literature in that it was from first to last in human speech. 'spoken in the world.' It is quite unlike other literature, in its unique and solemn claim wrought into its very texture and structure all along, to inform us about the worlds we cannot see. And both aspects unite to constitute its mystery, its permanence, its power.—HANDLEY MOULE, D.D.

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(Continued from page iv)

This interesting volume seeks to answer three pertinent questions relating to the life and work of the Christian Church: Is the New Testament teaching about the constitution, policy and practises of the Church adequate or merely rudimentary? Is a pattern given and principles set forth which provide guidance for all time for the life of the congregation as for the life of the individual believer? Or are we to believe that all the vast changes in the ordering of the Church's life since apostolic days are due to the guidance of the ever-present Holy Spirit? Nineteen writers, among whom are such well-known names as W. E. Vine, A. Rendle Short, Frederick A. Tatford, Montague Goodman and others, have sought to answer the above queries on the basis of the Word of God. The Scriptures are set forth as the only certain and sufficient guide for the policy and practises of the Church. Various subjects are dealt with for example: The Church: What is it? Church Life and Fellowship; Government in the Churches; Priesthood and Worship; The Christian Ministry; The Witness of a Local Church and others, all of which combine to formulate an excellent treatise on a significant theme. It is a volume worth reading and studying with prayerful concern.

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EDITORIAL REMARKS

To all our prayer-partners and readers who have helped by prayer and practical interest in the circulation of this magazine during the past year, we offer our most grateful thanks. This partnership we greatly value, in fact without it, it would be difficult to carry on in the face of stern difficulties. We earnestly appeal to each and all to *continue* in this ministry of fellowship for us who carry on the production of the paper; we greatly feel the need of it. And we feel sure that its results are not limited merely to increased circulation, but include the spiritual help and blessing of those who read the studies contained therein. That is the *real objective*: That the Word of the Truth may lay hold of heart and mind as it is studied by the help of the several articles, and lead to spiritual growth in knowledge, character, and testimony. Let us, therefore, be encouraged to help one another in this way, for the glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

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