**The Letter to the Colossians**

**The Gospel in Heathen and Multi-Religious Society - #5**

**The Mystery of God in Jesus Christ**

**Colossians 2 – Selected verses**

*This lesson for Feb. 22 was originally planned for Feb. 8, but class was cancelled due to weather. Feb. 15 the class did not meet due to E91 guest speaker Alycia Woods.*

**Colossians 2:1**

*2:1 “You see, I want you to know how great is the struggle I am making for you, those in Laodicea and all who have not seen me face to face.”*

Over the next four verses he reveals as well the affection he has for them.

**Notes**

1. Paul expressed his worry as a pastor and this is expressed in the next verse. 2:2 “*So that their hearts may be encouraged*.” Paul did not say “Yours” but “theirs,” that is, those who had not yet seen Paul.
2. Encouragement is strengthened in love: so that the whole community may live in harmony in Christ.
3. Disharmony erodes peace, and creates more space for strive. The more we complain the less our problems are solved, for complaining takes away hope and the more we are negative about anything the less will be a solution.
4. Hope and encouragement look for the future, for love has the vision and the strength to be planning the future.

**The Divine Mystery**

In the Bible we read frequently how God is the one who knows all things, even that which the human mind could never know or finds incomprehensible. Thus God sees the secret thoughts and the hidden intentions of human hearts ([Ps 139:1-4](http://www.biblestudytools.com/passage/?q=Psalms+139:1-4) [Ps 139:23](http://www.biblestudytools.com/psalms/139-23.html); [Matt 6:4-6](http://www.biblestudytools.com/passage/?q=Matthew+6:4-6); [Rom 2:16](http://www.biblestudytools.com/romans/2-16.html); [1 Cor 4:5](http://www.biblestudytools.com/1-corinthians/4-5.html); [14:25](http://www.biblestudytools.com/1-corinthians/14-25.html); [Heb 4:13](http://www.biblestudytools.com/hebrews/4-13.html) ). God alone comprehends the immeasurable mysteries of the universe ([Job 38:1-39:30](http://www.biblestudytools.com/passage/?q=Job+38:1-39;Job+38:30)) and, more important, God knows the whole generations and all the chapters of human history. God wills many things that can happen to accomplish his own purpose ([Dan 2:37](http://www.biblestudytools.com/daniel/2-37.html); [5:21](http://www.biblestudytools.com/daniel/5-21.html); [Rom 11:25-36](http://www.biblestudytools.com/passage/?q=Romans+11:25-36)).

People, on the other hand, both because of their sin and because of their human limitations, remain ignorant of God's purpose when left to their own reckoning ([Dan 2:27](http://www.biblestudytools.com/daniel/2-27.html) [Dan 2:30](http://www.biblestudytools.com/daniel/2-30.html); [Mark 4:10-12](http://www.biblestudytools.com/passage/?q=Mark+4:10-12); [Luke 19:41-44](http://www.biblestudytools.com/passage/?q=Luke+19:41-44)). God graciously responds to this human inadequacy by revealing his purpose to his people. When God's purpose is revealed in this way, the Bible frequently refers to it as a "mystery."

The content of the divine mystery is painted in historical events in the OT. In the NT the Mystery of God is revealed in Jesus Christ and this was narrated in details in the Gospels, and receives its finishing touches in Paul's letters. In the book of Daniel where the term “mystery” first appears –***Raz רָז***  in Aramaic – it is always translated in Greek ***mysterion*** in the LXX).

**What is a mystery?**

1. A mystery is God's hidden will that was revealed in the symbols in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, symbols that stand for the rise and fall of human empires and to the eventual establishment of God's own, eternal kingdom ([2:44](http://www.biblestudytools.com/daniel/2-44.html); cf. [Rev 1:20](http://www.biblestudytools.com/revelation/1-20.html); [Rev 17:5](http://www.biblestudytools.com/revelation/17-5.html), 7). The details of these events were not given in Daniel.
2. The mystery of God's purposes gains greater specificity in the Gospels, where Jesus, particularly in his parables, reveals the "mystery of the kingdom of God” ([Mark 4:11](http://www.biblestudytools.com/mark/4-11.html); cf. [Matt 13:11](http://www.biblestudytools.com/matthew/13-11.html); [Luke 8:10](http://www.biblestudytools.com/luke/8-10.html)). It is clearly revealed in Christ ([Col 2:2](http://www.biblestudytools.com/colossians/2-2.html); [4:3](http://www.biblestudytools.com/colossians/4-3.html)). Paul provided us with three ways of how the mystery of Christ is proclaimed:

a. In the gospel of Christ's atoning death on the cross ([1 Cor 2:1](http://www.biblestudytools.com/1-corinthians/2-1.html))

b. It was God’s plan, through Christ's atoning death to redeem the world ([Eph 2:13-16](http://www.biblestudytools.com/passage/?q=Ephesians+2:13-16)) to bring the Gentiles to the blessing of Abraham.

c. The mystery is the reconciliation of all things to God ([Eph 1:9-10](http://www.biblestudytools.com/passage/?q=Ephesians+1:9-10))

1. The divine mystery is also the revelation of God’s grace. God is so gracious that He is willing to reveal the mystery of his purposes to his servants the prophets and through them to other people ([Rev 10:7](http://www.biblestudytools.com/revelation/10-7.html); cf. [Amos 3:7](http://www.biblestudytools.com/amos/3-7.html)). God graciously reveals his mysteries to Daniel to save him from the king's cruel sentence of death upon the royal wise men for their inability to interpret the king's dream ([2:16-19](http://www.biblestudytools.com/passage/?q=Daniel+2:16-19)). Daniel recognizes the graciousness of God and he is quick to acknowledge before the king that the dream's interpretation has come from God, not from Daniel's wisdom or abilities as a counselor ( [Dan 2:27](http://www.biblestudytools.com/daniel/2-27.html) [Dan2:30](http://www.biblestudytools.com/daniel/2-30.html) ).
2. Similarly, Jesus graciously explains the parable of the sower to his disciples with the comment that, although the parables baffle those on the outside, the mystery of the kingdom of God has been given to the apostles ( [Matt 11:25-26](http://www.biblestudytools.com/passage/?q=Matthew+11:25-26) ).
3. The position of the believers is that of the privileged people who have been called to experience the fulfillment of the mystery of God's purposes that was predicted in the Scriptures, but remained a mystery and was kept silent for long ages ([Rom 16:25-26](http://www.biblestudytools.com/passage/?q=Romans+16:25-26)), hidden for generations past ( [Col 1:26](http://www.biblestudytools.com/colossians/1-26.html); cf. [Eph 3:5](http://www.biblestudytools.com/ephesians/3-5.html); [Eph 3:9](http://www.biblestudytools.com/ephesians/3-9.html), 11) that it might be revealed to apostles and prophets such as Paul himself and through them to believers ([Eph 3:1-12](http://www.biblestudytools.com/passage/?q=Ephesians+3:1-12); cf. [1 Peter 1:10-12](http://www.biblestudytools.com/passage/?q=1%20Peter+1:10-12)). Paul describes his calling to reveal the mystery of God to the Gentiles as "*the grace of God given to me for you*” ([Eph 3:2](http://www.biblestudytools.com/ephesians/3-2.html)), and a few verses later, in a magnificent work of the "*the gift of the grace which God gave to me according to his effective power*" (Eph 3:7).
4. Christ in you, the hope of glory ([Col 1:26-27](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+1%3A26-27&version=ESV)) is the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*.”

**Dialogue with Philemon**

**In what way is ‘Christ In Us’?**

**I**

**Shepherd and Physician**

The Apostle Paul said “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” We have to recognize these two important elements of that great gift of communion between us sinners and Jesus Christ our Lord. The first one is that Christ lives among us as the Good Shepherd who has this office to protect his sheep. And second, he is our Savior and Physician who attends our sickness and failure and this office is his commitment to those who are called to inherit the kingdom of heaven. He attends us as a Physician who comes to visit the sick sometimes to comfort and sometimes to admonish or to rebuke us with His extreme tenderness and compassion. I have limited myself to these areas because this is what I experience myself. As the Shepherd of my life he calls me sometimes in the inner voice where we can hear his voice clearly while we are praying or walking or in that dangerous moment when we are about to sleep and are not fully aware we exist. Sometimes I hear the voice of the Lord speaking to me clearly. He quotes the scriptures and that gives me great joy because I get to know the words of the Scriptures which he loves to quote to me and I repeat them in my prayers saying to him “you have told me these words which you have spoken to the Prophets and the kings of Israel and the Apostles.” What a privilege and joy that the Shepherd calls us the lost sheep and tells us about His love and leads us to the fold where we learn how to abide. This office of Christ as a good Shepherd allows the Lord to be in our life as the one who guides and protects and brings enlightenment. He sees the dark spots in us and treats that by a word of knowledge.

Our Lord Jesus Christ as our Physician sees our sickness both of the soul and the body. He cares more about the sickness of the soul and puts His divine wisdom into the service of healing. As for the sickness of the body, which will perish in the dust, he also takes care of but the sickness of the soul is more important. It doesn’t matter whether we are healed physically or not because that healing is not eternal but it does matter if we are inwardly and eternally healed. I have not been physically ill as some of the brothers in the community. In fact, I enjoyed very good health and have not suffered long illness. I thank God for that but my eyes are focused on the inner sickness and I believe that Jesus my Physician dwells in us as a physician who does not give us a prescription but a dose of His life. I have seen in my heart the deep longing of the Lord to make me obedient to the Father as He was and is but that has not matured in my life to the extent of what I have seen in the life of my enemy who never uttered a word except that of the Scriptures in the name of the Lord. He did this whenever we talk to him even when we ask him about his health and how he feels he will quote verses from the Psalms or from the new Testament and one day he told me that the Lord Jesus Christ submerged his mind in the Holy Word of the Bible that he felt that he must not utter anything at all but the words of the Scriptures. I have not reached that level yet but here is a man who has enjoyed the indwelling of Christ in his heart that he limited his inner life to the Word of God. At the moment I am enjoying the silence of the monastery where guests are not allowed during lent. And I lock myself in my cell to ask the Lord to reveal to me the depths of His indwelling in my sinful life. Let me warn you that the offices of Our Lord, which I have mentioned, are my very limited experiences but there are more that we should learn in our fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Lastly, that mystery in the indwelling in us cannot be defined because we sinners have the tendency to control what we define and that is why the indwelling of Christ is the hope of the glory to come, and which we have in this life in a limited way in order that we may remain faithful to the Lord.

**II**

**How should we recognize Christ in us?**

I must say that our weakness is the first realm in which our Lord manifests his indwelling in us. Do not be surprised because even in the struggle of Antony the great, the Lord told him that he was waiting for Antony to call for help. We have inherited from the first Adam the tendency to be autonomous and independent. This is one among many other illnesses which invaded our being and rested in our life since then. Our Lord sometimes waits for us to experience the drowninh like Peter when he tried to walk on the water. We need to learn that we are left alone to learn our weakness and to learn that the Lord does not despise the weak but carries them on his shoulder. Then in weakness we discover our inability to be independent and alone.

My elder said to me one day, “Is the eternal inheritance in heaven your goal of being here? And if this is so, do you think that you will have that without fellowship and communion with the Lord? If your answer is negative, then learn how to do everything with Christ and for Christ. This does not come to us just by thinking and accepting but by two great powers, love and fear.” I was not expecting to hear about fear, and he realized that I am puzzled and added, “Fear of being outside the Kingdom of heaven in the outer darkness will encourage you to purify yourself from autonomy. Fear will show you all the dark and hidden corners in your heart where autonomy is hidden.”

Now after these years I learned how to be for Christ and to live for him. It was not easy. First it is the intention of the heart to seek how to please our Redeemer. Second it is the motivation which is caught between self-satisfaction and seeking the Lord. This is the true crucifixion of our being and that takes years. Gradually I have noticed that love closes the gap, for your sake Lord I accept nothing at all and I do not want to be anything but your love, which is the greatest prize.

For many days and in fact it took me a long time to understand our union with Christ. There was no teaching given to me when I was consecrated a monk, but my spiritual father was a good monk and he guided me first to this deep relationship by meditating on the union of the divinity of our Lord with us, I mean his humanity. Then he told me that the great events in the life of our Lord were a declaration of the progress of this union. The incarnation remains the foundation of that union. His temptation is our victory over the devil. Jesus did not exorcise demons before his temptations in the wilderness not because he was not able to do that but because Jesus wanted our humanity to be victorious. But before his temptations he received the Holy Spirit on our behalf to keep him in communion with our humanity. Then came the teaching and the miracles which revealed to us his the new teaching of Jesus and his power. As for the cross is was preceded by the transfiguration to reveal to us that Jesus is the Lord of glory. On the cross our Lord defeated death and crucified condemnation and abolished its power bringing to us total freedom. What should we learn?

1. That we are not forsaken at all even if we sin, because our sins demand healing and care.
2. Our Lord assumed his offices as the teacher of life and as the priest who reconcile us with God the Father, not because the reconciliation which he established by his death and resurrection is repeated when we sin, but Jesus our Lord reconcile us by renewing in us the flow of his life.
3. When we say that Jesus is the priest and the sacrifice, let it be clear to you that his duality means that the offer of his life as the eternal sacrifice is once for all (Hebrews) but it does not come to an end for integrating the two, the priesthood and the sacrifice and uniting both of them in his divine and human person, Jesus comes to dwell in us as both the sacrifice of the love of the Father and of the Holy Spirit and being the priest he cleanses us constantly when we call on him to heal us.

**III**

**The Power of the Divine Love**

For many days I have asked the Lord to tell me why love is the foundation of everything in the new covenant? I throw myself on the flour of my cell begging the Lord to speak to me and to give me this grace. I started to read and to recite the whole NT. Lord Jesus Christ open my stupid and dull mind. Days passed and I was determined not to give up. I prayed the Jesus Prayer and added to the words, open my heart to discover why love is the foundation of everything?

It was about the weak before the Lord’s Resurrection, when the Lord in the inner heart told me, that I am foolish indeed, because I am asking about the reason why his nature is love. Jesus told me, what kind of nature do you want me to have other than love? If you think of power alone without love that will be what humans want to have for fulfill their dreams and their lusts. Power without love is the slavery which sinful beings seek. The whole creation was given the freedom of choice. This is the foundation of love. Those who deviated added their knowledge of how life should be and distorted their being by mutilating their freedom of choice and directing it to their lusts. The devil and humans lost the perception that true life is the gift of love, both consider that their life is theirs and that the Father denies them freedom, they not know that if freedom does not spring from love but springs from their desires to be other than and image of us, (the Trinity) then in that fallen state, life and love are separated, freedom is no longer freedom but is the salve of sin, knowledge is no longer proceeds from love but proceeds from self-preservation. This kind of blindness is what many humans have. You follow me, carry your cross, the cross of your distorted life and I will liberate you. That was hard but his inner voice gave me hope because Jesus my Lord asked me to follow him.

Dialogue two April 1960

**The Mystery of the Trinity**

Colossians 2:3 *“With a view to recognizing the mystery of the God and Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”*

Paul brought out the mystery of the plan of our salvation common to the Father and the Son; and he said all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ, since through him will be revealed to all people in the future life the purpose of the incarnation and the dwelling of God in us.

Why is this a mystery?

1. God’s work is not like any other thing we know, thus we are warned not to look at it in the light of the ordinary.
2. Being beyond definition and unfamiliar, the mystery remains what we are called to explore.

**Baptism is the Circumcision of Christ**

Colossians 2:11 “*In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision not done by human hand, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh through the circumcision of Christ.”*

1. It was not made by hand for what was made by hand was the way of life of the Law.
2. It is not of the flesh by but the spirit, not done by human hand but divine, not a removal of a fragment of flesh but freedom from all corruption.
3. It is not the Law that is responsible for this but Christ the Lord, the giver of the Law; he says, note, in him also you were circumcised, and again, through the circumcision of Christ. By putting off the body of the sins of the flesh he referred to saving baptism: in it we put off the soiled garment of sin. In the life to come, on the other hand, the body, rendered incorruptible and immortal, can no longer be affected by the stain of sin. Now, to the fact that this refers to baptism the sequel verse testifies.
4. (Colossians 2:12) “*Buried with him in baptism*”.

Since he called saving baptism a type of death (implying this in buried), he gives the good news of resurrection: in whom you were also raised. And since we still have a mortal nature, he went on, through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead: believing in the power of God we await the resurrection, having the resurrection of Christ the Lord as a pledge.

**The Divine Atonement**

Colossians 2:13 *“And you, dead as you were in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made alive with him, forgiving you all your trespasses.”*

1. Sin destroyed us all, imposing on us the sentence of death. But the God of all made us sharers in the life of Christ the Lord, and bestowed on us forgiveness of sins.
2. By uncircumcision of the flesh he referred to wickedness, explaining that whereas uncircumcision of the body causes no harm to those in that condition, uncircumcision of the soul harms both body and soul. From this he shows that bodily circumcision is of no benefit to the circumcised; on the other hand, it is removal of wickedness that brings about true salvation.

**Christ liberated us**

Colossians 2:14 “*Erasing the bond against us with its decrees, which was not in our favour, and removing it from notice by attaching it to the cross.”*

1. Some commentators claimed the bond is the Law: after its curse “the people said,” Scripture says, “We shall do all that the Lord our God has said, and we shall. But that was the Jews’ bond, not all people.
2. So my view is that our body is also called bond: through it we commit every unlawful action — with our eyes looking without restraint, with our tongue speaking inappropriately, with our ears taking in harmful teaching, committing theft and greed and homicide by hand. God the Word, therefore, in taking on our nature, kept it free of all sin and erased the record of our debts incurred by us in it to our detriment. By allowing it to be attached to the cross, he cancelled the debt of us all; and by fulfilling the Law he brought it to an end, useful though it proved of old to Jews alone, but in no way suitable for us. Instead, he gave us the evangelical decrees, promising us salvation through observance of them.
3. “*Despoiling the principalities and the authorities, he boldly held them up to ridicule, triumphing over them through it*” (v.15): since the demons had influence over us through the body’s passions, Jesus by being clad in a body proved superior to sin. He abolished the influence of the adversaries, and made their weakness obvious to all people, granting all of us the victory over them through his own body.

**Freedom through the death of Christ**

Colossians 2:16-17) *“So let no one judge you in matters of food or drink, or a particular festival or new moon or Sabbath, which are a shadow of what is to come.”*

1. Here, after having learned that the Law has come to an end, do not in any way be deceived by those endeavouring to sow among you a different seed of the Law’s observances.
2. The phrase “a particular festival” was well put: they were not in a position to celebrate them. I mean, how would it be possible to make your way from Phrygia to Judea three times a year to celebrate the feasts in Jerusalem in accordance with the Law, and especially since Pentecost is close to Easter, when a journey of more than fifty days is involved? By a shadow of things to come he referred to the Law to bring out that the grace of the New Covenant was prefigured in it; he went on to say as much. But the body is Christ’s — in other words, the evangelical way of life fills the role of a body, whereas the Law the role of a shadow. Now, the shadow precedes the body when the light is rising, so that while the Law is a shadow, grace is a body and Christ the Lord is a light.

**What was happening in Colossae? Occult and Philosophy**

Colossians 2:18 *“Now, I say this in case anyone should deceive you with plausible arguments”*

The Colossians faced the empty and deceitful philosophy, against which Paul warned Christians to be on their guard (Col 2:8). It was named as “false teaching” which may have been well known at Colossae.

**Were there false teachers in Colossae?**

Yes, there were false teachers in Colossae.

The only source of information about their false teaching is the Letter to the Colossians itself. Paul did not give a detailed account because Paul has been all the time interested in the essence of things not in the details. “How did the false teaching lead human away from God in Christ?” was Paul’s main point rather than a complete refutation of a philosophical systems.

A good example of dealing with the essence rather than with the details was the doubt that seems to have spread at Corinth and disbelief in future resurrection of the body. The same can be seen in the way Paul argued with the Galatians, where circumcision was treated as of no value since Justification is God’s gift taken by faith.

Paul’s main point is that the Colossian interest in philosophy and its systems is that such system is based on “*the tradition of men, and the vitality of the elementary principles of the world, rather than on Christ*" who is the Creator of all (Col. 2:8). Humans created it and at the end it will turn those who embrace it to what is human and has nothing divine. Some of Colossian Christians had at one time been subject to those "elemental forces," seeking some higher knowledge and even a good life in ascetic practices. For Paul this means a denial of their union with Christ and of their faith by which they had "died" in relation to those “elemental forces” which can’t give grace. Those who do ascetic exercises are bound to obey them by seeking life from human and created systems (Col. 2:20). The "elemental forces" are all external elements that “originally” were created by Christ as part of the cosmos. So, they themselves are “impotent” and “powerless.” This is the same argument in both Colossians and also in Galatians (See, Gal 4:3, 9) where Christians who were either from Jewish or Gentile origin by birth want to submit to circumcision and similar requirements of the Jewish Law are described as reverting to enslavement to the “elemental forces” that is what God has created to be used for practical use not to bestow on using them a special communion with God.

 So, according to Paul's submission to the prohibitions *"Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"* (Col. 2:21) involves re-entry into the state of bondage from which believers in Christ have been delivered by His crucifixion. The Law and all its obligations were nailed to the cross, (a practice was known in the days of Paul to nail a legal debt document which made it no longer valid).

 The above prohibitions referred to daily life where prohibitions had in the mind of those who do them ethical value attached to the practice. Food, according to Paul, is good for the Good God created it but “Do not gave it handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!" is rather treating that various kinds of food restrictions as attributing impurity to God’s Creation.

The maximum ethical significance of such practice was no more than a “Voluntary self-denial” which has a very limited in values and can be a helpful those who seek “self-discipline”.

**Was there a mystery cult at Colossi?**

From Colossians where Paul described someone who professes an advanced degree of spirituality as "taking his stand on visions" or as trusting in "the things which he has seen at his initiation".

The Greek text is hard to translate. Several attempts were made since in 1913, William Ramsay wrote that the verb ***ἐμβατεύω,*** meaning “enter, set foot on” was used in the cult for those who enter. This according to William Ramsay is the same meaning as in the inscriptions that had been discovered in the temple of Apollo at Claros, a few miles northwest of Ephesus. In these inscriptions it apparently signifies not the initiation itself but the next stage, the initiate's entrance into the sacred area in order to see the mysteries, which, however, could well be described in more general terms as "the things, which he has seen at his initiation." The readers would readily catch the suggestion that the person alluded to had formally entered on his higher experience like someone being admitted to secret rites (from which the uninitiated were excluded) and was now appealing to that superior enlightenment in support of his teaching.

 (William M. Ramsay. "*Ancient Mysteries and Their Relation to St. Paul*." *Athenaeum*. January 25. 1913. Pp. 106-7: idem. *The Teaching of Paul in Terms of the Present* *Day* (London: Hodder & Stoughton. 1913). pp. 286-304)

**The Loss**

Colossians 2:18 *“Let no one disqualify you*.”

1. Disqualify means the loss of Christ as they have imported a substitute to what the Creator has revealed and has given.
2. So since those who combined the observances of the Law with the Gospel, they have diverted themselves from better things to worse from the Creator to the creature.
3. He was right to say, let no one disqualify you. Then he brings out more clearly the resultant harm:

a. Opting for self-abasement and angel worship, following directions beyond what was revealed by God and so, idly puffed up with the human products of imagination.

b. Those who supported the Law encouraged them to worship the angels, claiming in this to respect the Law; this affliction persisted in Phrygia and Pisidia for a long time, that the in Laodicea in Phrygia forbade by law praying to the angels (*Canon 35 of the Council of Laodicea 4th century “* [Christians](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm) must not forsake the [Church of God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm), and go away and invoke [angels](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm) and gather assemblies, which things are forbidden. If, therefore, any one shall be found engaged in this covert [idolatry](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07636a.htm), let him be [anathema](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01455e.htm); for he has forsaken [our Lord Jesus Christ](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08374c.htm), the [Son of God](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14142b.htm), and has gone over to [idolatry](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07636a.htm).”

c. The phrase “puffed up” is not inconsistent with self-abasement: for man is God’s Image but outside divine revelation, man is less than the image of God. The phrase, following directions beyond their ken, means adopting their own ideas.

d. He went on to say as much. “Idly puffed up with human opinions, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, supplied and supported by its ligaments and sinews, will grow with a growth that is from God” (verses 18-19). Again he called Christ the Lord head, and the reality and also the structure of the Church is being the body of Christ. Just as in the case of the body, the head is the root of the nerves, and through the nerves the body has the senses, so from Christ the Lord the body of the Church receives both the founts of instruction and the spring of salvation. What sinews are in the body, so apostles, prophets and teachers are in the structure of the Church.

**You can’t get freedom from a creature**

Colossians 2:20-22 *“So if with Christ you died to the elements of the world, why do you submit to regulations as though living in the world? No touching, no tasting, no handling — which are all to do with corruption through use, according to the commands and teachings of human beings.”*

You were buried with Christ in baptism, you became dead to the Law; so how do you put up with those teaching this, and believe some foods are lawful and others unlawful, ignoring the fact that none of this is fit and proper? By commands and teachings he referred not to the Law but to these people’s obsolete instruction.

Colossians 2:23 *“All these things have an appearance of wisdom in recommending supposed devotion, self-abasement and rigorous asceticism, but are of no value in checking indulgence of the flesh.”*

He showed them to be invested with appearances, not reality. Supposed devotion suggests as much, meaning, they introduce their own beliefs, they do not subscribe to the Law’s intention, they deceive with specious words, referring to the observance of the Law as self-abasement, and claiming that no liberties should be taken with what is given by God, and that rigorous asceticism involves not being free to enjoy anything. Now, this is obvious servitude and abolition of the dignity given to us: abstinence by free will is required, not as though from loathsome things but as pleasurable.

***Pope’s Notes***

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