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*"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"*

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*Editor:* A. McDONALD REDWOOD

# EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLOSSIANS

## Chapter 2, verse 7

*Errhizōmenoi kai epoiōdomoumenoi en autō* (rooted and builded up in Him). The connection with the preceding clause (ver. 6) is maintained in spite of the mixed metaphors. "What", remarks Maclaren, "are rhetorical improprieties as long as they more vigorously express the apostle's thought". Note the three verbs in vs. 6 and 7, which are linked by "*in Him*"—"So *walk . . . rooted . . . built up in Him*". The Christian is—

- (1) to *walk* in Christ—since Christ is "the Way" (Jn. 14:6);
- (2) to be *rooted in* Christ—for He is "the *Life*", as the tree draws its life from the ground;
- (3) to be continually *builded up* in Christ—since Christ is "the *Truth*".

Thus Christ is the holy "Sphere of action"; the controlling Cause, the true Motive, and the sustaining Energy. The Gnostic doctrine would entice the Christian from his dependence upon and relationship to the Head. That is ever the tendency of every system of philosophy in which Christ is merely a 'theme' and not the central principle. The Colossians were beset by two evils: A subtle mysticism on the one hand, and certain ascetic mortifications of the body, on the other. The one related to Gnostic philosophy, the other had its root in Judaism. Paul now approaching the heart of his message, gives to Christ the place of preeminent centrality, the place which is not only His by right but because there was *no other*. He would or could occupy in *any* philosophy or system which had any right to existence. He IS *all*—or nothing! And the sooner that is accepted the better for the world and suffering humanity in particular.

We have already dwelt upon the Christian 'walk'.\* Now note the three participles descriptive of the stabilising power of the Christ-life for character and testimony. "*Rooted . . . built up . . . strengthened*". The tenses are instructive. 'Rooted' is a perfect participle, 'built up' and 'strengthened' are present. We may render them freely as—"having been rooted in the past once for all, and now continuing to be built up and made firm."†

\* See page 143 of No. 3 issue. Also notes on ch. 1: 10.

† See 'grounded' and 'steadfast' in ch. 1: 23, and our notes thereon in earlier articles.

*Errhizōmai* occurs only here and in Eph. 3:18 (q.v.), and contains the twofold idea of 'fixity', with that of "derived or developing life" (Moule). *Epoikōdomeō*, from *oikōdomeō*, has the meaning of building upon an existing foundation (in the active, four times in 1 Cor. 3:10-14; also Acts 20:32; and Jude 20; and in the passive here and in Eph. 2:20 only). In the Ephesians passage Christ is the Corner-Stone of the spiritual fabric, here the verb refers more to the *process* of building up the Christian life and character *in* Christ (cf. 1 Pet. 2:4, 5), Christ being "the binding Element" rather than the foundation (Lightfoot; who takes Eph. 2:20 similarly). Radford's remark is also pertinent: "Much doctrinal exposition, constructive or controversial, has gone astray through being based upon the idea of the Church as a *completed* Building rather than a process of building, or at most a building *in process*." Note it is "*in Him*" that the building rises to completion and perfection.

*Kai bebaioumenoi* (*en*) *te pistei, kathōs edidachthēte* (and stablished in your faith, even as ye were taught). A further continuing and increasing *result* of having been firmly rooted. *Bebaioumenoi* (from *bebaioō*) used of persons only in three other passages (1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:21; Heb. 13:9) but in the Corinthian epistles it is rather the idea of "making sure" in a *legal* sense, unlike its use here and in Hebrews. "In the faith" is taken by some, including Moule, as the instrumental dative, "by your faith". But others (Radford, Alford and Ellicott) read "*in* your faith", the dative of reference as in Jude 20. The Colossians needed grounding in their faith (cf. v. 5) as they were taught by Epaphras (see ch. 1:7 and our note there on *kathōs*).

*perisseuontes* (*en autē*) *en eucharistia* (abounding in thanksgiving). With another change of metaphor the Apostle brings in two other favourite expressions of his, *abounding* and *thanksgiving*. The former word occurs five times in Philippians (q.v.). "Nothing short of spiritual *wealth* and its full employment ever satisfied Paul" (Moule). Compare his use of the related noun "riches" (*ploutos*) in his epistles to the Romans and Ephesians.

The exhortation to thanksgiving is found in this brief epistle no less than six times (q.v.) and each occurrence is worth careful study (see notes on ch. 1:3). Moule remarks helpfully, "there is a great and profoundly reasonable power in holy thanksgiving to bring home to the soul the reality of the treasure for which the thanks are given" (*Colossian Studies*, p. 130). On this passage Moffat rightly insists upon the pertinence of this 'apparently

irrelevant' phrase; "gratitude to God, as Paul implies, means a firmer grasp of God." It is of peculiar interest that the words thankful, give thanks, thanksgiving, occur in Paul's writings *alone* of the Apostolic *epistles*.

The variant reading *en autē* (therein) after *abounding* is very often (as in A.V.) uncertain. "Though in itself *en autē* is more difficult yet its undoubted presence in ch. 4:2 makes it possible that it was introduced thence" (Lukyn Williams). The R.V. omits it, but gives it in the margin. If retained, we may translate either (i) 'abounding in your faith *with* thanksgiving', i.e. growing ever richer in faith, and in thanksgiving for that growth; or, (ii) 'in that very faith abounding in thanksgiving', i.e. practice the duty of thanksgiving as an essential accompaniment of a living faith.

#### B. Warning against Speculative Philosophy (ch. 2: 8-15)\*

##### Verse 8

*Blepete mē tis humas estai ho sulagōgōn* (Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you). The apostle now develops more definitely the caution already given in verse 4. It is not improbable that Ephaphras had told Paul of one or more particular leaders who were spreading the heretical teaching. The danger to the church was very real. Hence the apostle's warning was pointed—"Look out"! (*blepete*)—cf. Heb. 12:25. Robertson points out that the usual construction with *blepete* is *mē* followed by the *subjunctive*, as in Lk. 21:8; Matt. 24:4; but here the future indicative (*estai*= 'shall be') calls attention to the peril more emphatically (cf. Heb. 3:12; Mark 14:2). "It individualizes the spoiler" (Eadie). For the same reason is the "strange juxtaposition of *tis* and *humas*".

The verb *sulagōgōn*, from *sulē* (booty) and *agō* (to carry off) is rare, found only here in the N.T. (also in later Gk. writers). Its proper meaning is "carry off as booty" (= to kidnap, or seduce a woman); see 2 Tim. 3:6. The false teachers were out not only to rob the Colossians "of certain spiritual convictions and blessings, but would lead them away as captives, as their deluded adherents and devotees" (Moule). This is exactly the danger today with Christian Scientists, Russellites and Seventh-Day Adventists flooding (even India and the East) with their literature and teachings.

*dia tēs philosophias kai kenēs apatēs* (through his philosophy and vain deceit). This describes the means employed by the false

\* See B. S. issue No. 2, page 94, for the divisions of this section II, ch. 2: 4-23.

teachers. They posed as great intellectualists, and made a fair show of their speculative and esoteric 'gnosis', or 'higher knowledge'—hence the term Gnostics used later to describe them and their teaching. Paul calls it "falsely-named knowledge" (1 Tim. 6:20), not "science" in our modern use of the term. The word philosophy (*philo-sophia* = love of wisdom) occurs only here in N.T. Paul does not condemn *all* philosophy—he was never an obscurantist—but he asserts Christianity is not primarily a philosophy, but a divine revelation. He is repudiating every philosophical system which is divorced from such revelation. Moule quotes aptly from Quesnel: "Folly indeed to seek to establish a science wholly Divine on foundations wholly human. And this is what they do who seek to judge the things of faith by the principles of philosophy."

The apostle makes clear his use of the word by adding *kenēs apatēs*, i.e. the teaching was a "philosophy *which is* an empty deceit." *Kenēs* = hollow, with no core of reality. *Apatēs* is deceit opposed to "the word of the truth" (ch. 1:5), and to "wisdom and knowledge" (ch. 2:3).

*kata tēn paradōsin tōn anthrōpōn* (after the tradition of men). The 'tradition' was in contrast to the word communicated by divine revelation and handed on through the divinely inspired writings. The false teachings were "man-made", whatever their content. Similarly note the use of the term by Christ Himself as given in Mark 7:3, 8, 9, 13 (cf. Gal. 4:3, 9). On the other hand Paul uses it in a totally different context and manner in 1 Cor. 11:2, 23; 15:3 (cf. Jude 3) where obviously it refers to the teachings of the Apostles divinely communicated. The context will always determine the sense.

*Kata ta stoicheia tou kosmou kai ou kata Christon* (after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ). In Gal. 4:9 we have "beggarly elements" (*stoicheia*). The Gk. word signifies primarily the letters of the alphabet, like our phrase 'the A B C' of any subject, the rudiments of knowledge. Apart from Heb. 5:12; 2 Pet. 3:10, where the meaning is clear, it refers to that knowledge (specially speculative theory) which in degree and quality is elementary, inferior and useless in comparison with divine Truth and therefore to be repudiated in matters of the soul. The apostle leaves us in no doubt here of their value—they are "*not of Christ*". "Christ is neither the Author nor the Substance of their (false) teaching" (Lftt.).

We may gather up the many grounds on which Paul condemned the false teachings which threatened the Church:

- (i) It is a *vain deceit*—empty, misleading.
- (ii) It is *traditional*—and therefore quite unsatisfactory.
- (iii) It is *of men*—whereas the Gospel is of God.
- (iv) It is *rudimentary*—the doctrine of Christ aims at spiritual maturity and perfection (ch. 1:28).
- (v) It is *of the world*—Christianity is from above.
- (vi) It is *not* of Christ—in contrast to “Christ in you the hope of glory” (ch. 1:28).

(To be continued)

## THE HITTITES\*

A. W. BRUSTAL

The Hittites were descendants of Heth, son of Canaan, and inhabited the rugged mountain country of Judah. They are described as “short, thick-set and plain,” and are thought to be of Aryan or Indo European origin.

This powerful nation is first mentioned in Genesis 15:20 together with the Kenites, Kenizites, Kadmonites, Perizzites, Rephaims, Amorites, Canaanites, Gergashites and Jebusites. The land occupied by all these nations was promised to Abraham and his progeny by the Lord.

No less than forty-eight times are the Hittites mentioned in the Old Testament.

They are referred to as “Kheta” in the archaeological monuments of Egypt, and as “Khaat-tu” in the Assyrian inscriptions. Until recent years there was no record of the Hittites in secular history. All that we knew about them was revealed in Scripture.

The modern critics of the Bible made the most of this silence of secular history regarding the Hittites to heap opprobrium upon the Word of God. They branded the Biblical references to the Hittites as mythological and legendary. They were vociferous in condemning the Bible as a collection of fairy tales and fables.

\* The story of the ancient empire of the Hittites has been taken up more seriously during the last half century, and is still a subject of archaeological research. In our July issue (back cover) we remarked on Mr. F.F. Bruce's recent book *The Hittites and the Old Testament*, which is full of real interest to the Bible Student for it shows how this new knowledge of an ancient people tallies very remarkably with any allusions Scripture contains regarding them. The above short article (taken from *The Religious Digest*) gives some little indication of the subject.—Ed.