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1

The fullness of Christ.

For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the
Godhead bodily. Col. 2:9.

The connexion shows that the individual spoken of in the text, is the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle introduces the epistle by informing the Colossians of his great joy on account of their piety, especially their faith, and assures them of their interest in his prayers and thanksgivings to God. He then mentions Jesus Christ, and holds him up as the source of their blessings in all that follows to the words of the text. Now he asserts; that, "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell"; again; that, "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"; and, in the text that "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily." In the context he warns them against the seductions of "Philosophy and vain deceit." The best sense of the term "Philosophy" is love of wisdom. But the wisdom sought and obtained

2
by too many, consists in vain speculations, often-
times about things not well understood: and
they are not only unnecessary to the right under-
standing of the sacred scriptures, and the culti-
vation of true piety, but prejudicial thereto,
and productive of pride and vanity. He warns
them and us against trusting to the natural pow-
ers of our understandings, and to the specula-
tions of ourselves and others - against indul-
ging in, ^{mere} ~~a priori~~ reasoning about God and
his dealings with his creatures, and counsels
us to look to Jesus Christ alone as revealed in
his word and by his Spirit: for in him dwell-
eth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

The text plainly implies the Divinity of our
Lord and Saviour, and confutes all those who
make him any thing less than the infinite,
eternal, unchangeable God.

It is the glory of the Christian religion that
it possesses a system of truth, and a source
of life adapted to all men. It is calculated to
spread abroad and embrace all, because that
by diffusion it loses none of its strength.

3
The apostle here holds up Christ as the sum of
the whole matter: by presenting him he would
show ^{Col.} ~~these~~ the insignificance of all other
subjects. Thus while the Christian religion
possesses all of a religious kind that is worthy
of attention, and stamps a new value on our
common mercies, Christ is the heart of the Chris-
tian religion, and imparts to it all its power
to bless and save. We conclude therefore that
his character is the most profitable subject of
our contemplation.

Without giving particular attention to his
fullness in other respects, we will endeavour to con-
template him as the wisdom, righteousness, sanc-
tification, and redemption of his people.

I His wisdom. His being wisdom unto his people
embraces two things - wisdom without, and within
them. By his being wisdom without his people, I
mean, that he disposes of all things with reference
to their good, and in that manner which most tends
to their advantage. When the Saviour himself discoursed
on this subject he was remarkably interesting.

"I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for the body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ^{or} Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink, or ~~where~~ ^{wherewithal} shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all

these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Again we are exhorted "My brethren count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." And again, All things work together for good to them that love God. The sense of these quotations is Be always perfectly assured of the wisdom and goodness of God. Never for one moment allow yourself to be anxious for anything except to know and do his will. If this doctrine were ~~more~~ properly believed, it would be destructive of a large part of the foolish and wicked thoughts and conversation of professed christians. Our ~~growing~~ murmuring and complaining, our wishing for different kind of weather, food, and clothing, our anxious solicitude about secular things of every kind, is highly agreeable to Satan, but offensive to God, and grievous

to his people. There is another kind of feeling often manifested by speech which seems to be in disregard of the wisdom and faithfulness of Divine Providence. The following expressions are of the kind referred to. 'It's trying to rain. It's trying to be cold. It would snow if it could. Do not such expressions imply an agent endeavouring to effect something, in which he either does not succeed at all, or succeeds badly? And who does the Christian recognize as the guide and controller of the elements unless Jehovah? If ^{we} would reflect carefully we would find that such expressions imply a want of reverence ^{for} if not a denial of his workings. Dear hearers, let us not forget that Jesus Christ alone controls all things in heaven earth and hell ~~by~~ according to his infinite wisdom, with reference to the interests of his body - the church.

He is wisdom to his people, in that he gives them his word for their instruction. The Bible may be ascribed to Jesus Christ because if he had not borne our sins we had never received

it. How varied, and, extensive, and precious are its instructions no tongue can tell or heart conceive: we can only say they are infinite.

He is wisdom within his people by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the great expounder of the Bible. It is given to the people of God for this purpose. "But ye have an unction from the holy One and ye know all things." But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things and is truth, and is no lie, as it hath taught you ye shall abide in him. Thus the Holy Spirit dwelling in the saints supplies with light. He makes them to understand the scriptures and to love and obey them, and enables them to discharge their duty. In accordance with this view the Psalmist prays "Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation, and grant me thy free Spirit: so shall I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

The Bible teaches us to look to God for guidance and protection under vexations and trying circumstances in our common affairs. The humble christian recognizes the hand of God in all his mercies and in all his crosses. When the Lord hedges up his path, so that he knows not how to proceed he will look to ^{him} God; and committing his way to his God, he believes that his steps will be directed. There are many promises in the Bible of a general nature upon which he may rest his faith: such as "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, nor fruit be in the vines the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the rock of my salvation." We may have difficulty in conceiving the manner of divine interference in many cases; and it may be very different from our expectations, but we ought always to remember its reality and wisdom.

II. I remark second; That Jesus Christ is righteousness to his people. All mankind are sinners. There is none that doeth good, no not one. God is holy and will not do violence to his law. It is easier for heaven and earth to fail pass, than for one tittle of the law to fail." Divine wisdom found a way for the restoration of this race of sinners to the approbation of justice. It is worth while to remark, that man had not only sinned, but he was an habitual sinner. The imagination of the thoughts of his ~~only~~ evil heart is only evil continually. By nature he is enmity itself against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. If we could have retained ^{the rectitude} of Adam's first estate except only the stain of one sin the law would have involved us all in ruin; how much more, when sin had taken full possession of our nature - when every part was defiled. We have been attending to the wisdom of Jesus Christ in reference to his people. How astonishing does the Divine wisdom appear, in devising a way for the salvation of men! Jesus Christ undertook, by the consent and

and authority of his Father to become righteousness for man. He undertook to stand between the law and its violator. Justice recognized his undertaking, and dealt with him as a criminal. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one ~~into~~ to his own way and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all."

We will be more particular.

1st Jesus Christ did not become a sinner. He was the great antitype foreshadowed by the ceremonial law. The beast offered in sacrifice, must necessarily be a perfect animal. An injury, or natural defect, debarred it from the altar. So Jesus Christ was morally perfect. In the language of the Bible he "Was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." If some passages speak of him as a sinner, ~~for~~ as made sin for his people, they must be understood in a modified sense.

2nd Jesus Christ was never for one moment

the object of his father's anger: but during all his existence, before his assumption of our nature, during his state of humiliation, and in the state of glory which he now occupies, he is equally his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased. Taking upon him human nature and human guilt, far from alienating the Father's affections, were acts infinitely well pleasing to him. It may be said that the Father hid his face from him when he was in his agony, and called for a sword to inflict the fatal blow, saying, "Awake O sword against my shepherd; and against the man my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered, and I will turn my hand upon the little ones. Jerk. 13:7. But this does not teach that ~~anger~~ towards him existed in the bosom of the Father.

He looked on him as taking man's place — as an innocent being making satisfaction for the guilty: he regarded him as holy, but for man's sake, treated him as an offender. That Jesus Christ was always the object of his father's love will be manifest when we remember the effects

which proceeded from his death. His resurrection attests the removal of the hand that laid him in the tomb - the acceptance of his satisfaction for human guilt - and the favor of his father.

This people are blessed for his sake: neither of which could have taken place, if the Father had been displeased with him.

3rd. But while we ought to remember that Jesus Christ was never in any sense a sinner nor ever for one moment lost his father's confidence or love, let us not turn to the opposite extreme, and suppose that he did not truly suffer, and die. I am not disposed to debate the question "Did his divinity suffer?" It is enough for me to know that a divine person suffered in human nature, and that his righteousness is received as his resurrection attests. Possessed of humanity in perfection he died, and by death he paid the price of man's redemption. The Christian relies upon this as the ground of his hope. Call it substitution of Christ's righteousness or by any better name you please; the death of Jesus Christ as an offering for sin, and his acceptance

by the Father manifested in his resurrection and glorification at the right hand of power, is the foundation of the hope of all true Christians, of being reckoned just by the judgment of God.

III Having attended somewhat to Jesus Christ's fullness, as the wisdom and justifying righteousness of his people, we are now to contemplate him as their sanctification.

What are we to understand by sanctification? The word *Agasao* and its derivative *agrasmos* usually translated sanctify and sanctification signify purity. Sometimes the ~~thin~~ thing intended is illustrated by the purity of the Divine character. As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. It seems to be necessary in order to investigate this subject successfully that we have the influence of the Holy Spirit. Some writers by lowering the claims of the Divine Law, make conformity thereto very easy, while others some esteem sanctification, or purity to be attained only at death. Let us inquire

only at the Bible calling no man master upon the earth. I will first endeavour to show that sanctification is a part of the work of Jesus Christ in the hearts of his people in the present life.

1st His name. He is called Jesus because he saves his people from their sins. If by means of his death he only delivered his people from their liability to punishment, this name would not properly belong to him.

2nd He prays that his people may be sanctified, without intimating that he desired or expected it to be deferred to a distant period, but as if he contemplated a speedy answer. "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth."

3rd. He makes obedience or sanctification the condition of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of his children. "If a man love me he will keep my words and my Father will love him, and ^{we will} make our abode with him". And (Prov. 28:9), "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law even his prayer shall be abomination."

1 John 3:24. And hereby we know that he abideth in him and he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him and he in him.

3rd 4th. Keeping the commandments of God is the only comfortable evidence of true discipleship. I say "comfortable evidence" because I believe that the children of God may have strong hope that they shall be kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation, when at the same time their affections are in a low and languid state, and they feel themselves under the dominion of sin. — When they are in the habit of known sin. But although such a state may be possible it is only possible and very uncomfortable. To one in such a state holy comfort and joy are impossible. That soul dwells not aright in God, nor God in him.

Nor can such ever be the case until he cries out, ^{with his whole heart} "Have mercy upon me O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions and cleanse me from my

sin. For is ever before me. Against Thee, thou only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden parts thou wilt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness that the bones thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart O God; and renew within me a right spirit. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Thus humbled before his God he is enabled to draw near to him and God in due time grants him the light

of his countenance and those joys of his salvation for which he longs. But so long as the flesh rules, so long as sin and Satan dominate over his soul; it is impossible that he should be happy. But when the spirit of God is freely given him it is not that he may maintain a christian character and name without care and diligent strife against sin. But while he remembers and is conscious that God is working in him he ~~is to~~ works by means of strength imparted by God. In the language of the bible he works out his own salvation knowing that it is God who worketh in him to will and to do of his good pleasure. He fights the good fight of faith, and so lays hold of eternal life, even he himself.

4th. We will now endeavour to learn directly from plain scripture declarations whether we are to believe that men ^{may} in this life attain to deliverance from known transgressions. Job was a perfect and upright man one that feared God and eschewed evil. Nathaniel was an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile. Enock had

Before his translation testimony that he pleased
God. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not:
whosoever sinneth hath not seen him neither known
him. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit
sin; for his seed remaineth in him and he can-
not sin because he is born of God. These passa-
ges have been explained to mean much less than
they say. Suppose an individual unbiassed by
creeds to read these passages for the first time,
would he think that the idea conveyed was
that they meant only that these persons sinned
less than some others? Could he believe that a weaker
idea than the absence of all wilful sin was inten-
ded. The use of the term wilful sin because
the holy law of God is unchangeable and will not
lower its claims because to suit the present frail
state of human judgment. The Christian at his
best state is erring, and for the errors of every
day he needs an atonement. These errors are
many if not all of them the consequences of the
face; ^{And in so far as they are so} they must be atoned for. But how differ-
ent, these errors from wilful sin. It is probably

with reference to these errors that the Psalmist
prays "Cleanse thou me from secret faults:" and
he refers to the other when he says Keep back
thy servant also from presumptuous sins
let them not have dominion over me: then
shall I be upright, and I shall be free from the
great transgression. Texts might here be mul-
tiplied: such as He that is born of God sin-
neth not. The psalmist prays Search me O
God and know my heart, try me and know
my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked
way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.
If he himself knew of evil ways in him, why
appeal to God as though he hoped he was in the
path of rectitude, and in a manner which implies
that he knew no such thing.

IV. He is redemption to his people. Having
prepared them for his presence he receives
them into it where are pleasures evermore.
There they shall Thinger no more neither
thirst any more, neither shall the sun light
on them nor any heat, but the Lamb who
is in the midst of the Throne shall feed
them, and lead them unto living fountains
of water; and God shall wipe away all
tears from their eyes.
April 13th 1847. R. Hopkins

Sustained
S W Pond Moderato