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NOTES FOR THEOLOGY STUDENTS

COLOSSIANS

For a preacher the book of Colossians provides wonderful opportunities for profound sermons on the person and work of Jesus Christ, but it also holds a hidden danger. There are few books of the Bible which are as capable of misleading you. The hidden rock under the surface of these otherwise blue and enticing waters is the so-called ‘Colossian Heresy’ or ‘Colossian Error’. As theologians we all assume that Paul had a purpose in mind when he loosened his tight muscles, focused his mind and began to discuss this epistle in his prison cell with his scribe. We believe that he had the intention of emphasizing certain doctrines and combatting some mistakes. If we are to be true to our task as preachers we feel obliged to bring these underlying reasons to our handling of the text, but these assumptions of what we believe to be behind the letter colour our understanding and exposition. If our assumptions are wrong then we will misunderstand and misapply the text. These dangers are always present and we are well aware of our own failings when it comes to poor Biblical exposition. Colossians presents us with a big challenge.

It is generally believed that the Colossian Heresy is the main motive behind the letter, and so the inclusion of long Christological passages and warnings against over-interest in angels or adherence to dietary regulations were a deliberate attempt to combat it. But what was this heresy? Did it in fact exist at all? If it did, was it doctrinal or was it about practical issues, the *praxis* of spirituality? In a weak moment I gave way to our preaching team in Penrallt and agreed to a short series of sermons on Colossians which resulted in my dealing with large sections of text per sermon and having no time to tackle the issue of the Colossian Heresy directly. However, it is an unavoidable question, and we need to confront it.

WHAT WAS THE ‘COLOSSIAN HERESY’?

Nearly fifty different answers to this question have been noted over the last century or so of debate, most of them now rejected by modern scholarship. Much debate was held concerning its link with Gnosticism, and you still hear in sermons categorical statements along the lines “The problem that the Apostle Paul was combatting in the Colossian church was a heresy known as Gnosticism.” It was not, but, sadly, generations of congregations are now convinced that it was. Originally Lightfoot had a major hand in this line of thought when he compared the epistle with the life and teaching of the Essenes, and concluded that the apostle was combatting a form of Essenic Gnosticism.¹

With Paul’s emphasis on the supremacy of Christ (Col 1:15-20; 2:9-12), warnings about speculation concerning angels (Col. 2:18), the *mystery of God* and the *treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Col 2:2,3), and references to the *basic principles of the world* (*stoicheia tou kosmou*) (2:8, 20), one can see parallels to second century Gnosticism. However, it would be wrong to make a direct connection. Gnosticism was a wide movement which had some followers in the church. It was characterized by its syncretism, greedily drawing in ideas from a wide range of sources. That some of those ideas were around in the first century is no surprise, but we should not label them ‘Gnostic.’ Earle Ellis wisely combatted such connections: “Because of its emphasis on placing Scripture in its

historical environment modern biblical scholarship has often tended to convert parallels into influences and influences into sources.”ⁱⁱ Roy Yates probably goes too far with even this cautious statement: “We have here what seems like an early stage in a trajectory which leads from the interests of Judaism, through contact with Christianity in an Hellenistic environment, to the late Gnosticism attested in the Nag Hammadi documents which the anti-Gnostic Fathers opposed.”ⁱⁱⁱ Frankly, we would make more sense of the Colossian Error by eliminating the word Gnostic from our sermons altogether.^{iv} We would do well to heed Kiley on this subject:

“ . . . the old debate as to whether the Colossian heresy should be thought of as Gnostic or Jewish is now a thing of the past. We can certainly see here pointers in the direction of the later Gnosticism but the Colossian Heresy is beyond question not yet a developed Gnosticism such as we find in the classic systems of the second century. On the other hand it is significant that the most recent proposals all in some way look back to Judaism in some form, to apocalyptic, to Merkabah mysticism, to Jewish magic, to Jewish Wisdom circles.”^v

If not Gnosticism, what is the opponent that Paul is facing? An attempt was made by Dibelius to link the practices of the Colossian errorists with pagan initiation rites.^{vi} This is illuminating, if not entirely convincing, and reminds us that the market place of ideas in the ancient world must have had many intellectual wares which found themselves into the thinking of some Christians of the time. Schweizer examines the influence of Pythagorean and Platonic influence on the world inhabited by the Colossians, and opts for the former, suggesting that the errorists stressed purification of the soul from everything earthly so that it could ascend to the heavenward where Christ dwells.^{vii} It is possible that some degree of Jewish/Pagan syncretism existed, but F. F. Bruce is cautious: “Some outward conformity with pagan rituals on the part of influential Jews in Phrygia may be taken as established: but it would be precarious to draw conclusions from this about forms of syncretism which might be reflected in the beliefs and practices deprecated in the letter to the Colossians.”^{viii}

We cannot, then, ignore the Jewish influences. In a helpful summary article on recent Bible commentaries, Nijay Gupta comments that “within the modern discussion is the important question is(*sic*) whether this philosophy can be understood as fully Jewish (accepting that Judaism at that time was extremely diverse) or as combining Jewish and non-Jewish practices, viewpoints, and traditions.”^{ix}

It certainly seems plausible that Jewish elements were present in the Colossian Error. The spirituality of which Paul is critical in Chapter 2 resonates well with some elements of Jewish apocalyptic literature. 2 Baruch sees a higher level for those who seek God above all: “For they shall see that the world which is now invisible to them, and they will see a time which is now hidden to them. And time will no longer make them older. For they will live in the heights of that world and they will be like the angels and be equal to the stars (51:8-10).” There is a longing for higher wisdom through revelation. Thomas Sappington explains that “in their view, it seems, revelations come only to those who are wise and righteous; conversely, such experiences and the teaching they convey lead those who are receptive into a deeper experience of wisdom and righteousness.”^x Prayer, fasting, confession, meditation, place (by a river, in the desert, etc.), time (such as night or day, etc.), and sexual abstinence are common practices associated with revelations of this nature. This kind of spiritual elitism might well be a target of Paul’s displeasure in chapter 2. Christopher Rowland writing on Daniel and the Revelation of John argues that “the unifying factor which joins both these apocalypses and separates them from other contemporary literature is the conviction that runs through both, that man is able to know about the divine mysteries by means of revelation, so that God's eternal purposes may be disclosed, and man, as a result, may see history in a totally new light.”^{xi} The apocalyptic authors believed that wisdom is hidden for this age in the heavenly sphere so Paul’s argument would be

very powerful against this, namely that the wisdom of heaven is precisely this mystery which is now revealed in Christ.

So, was the background to the Colossian Error pagan or Jewish, or a mixture of the two? You will find commentators to be divided on the answer to that. However, it seems to me very possible that influences of both would be found in the common religious views of people in the church of Colossae or any Greek city of the time. This leads on to another question. Was the Colossian Error Christological in character or was it characterized by a false spirituality, or was it both? Before we examine that, we must stop here and ask for a moment if there was a Colossian Heresy at all.

In 1983 Morna Hooker argued that Paul's letter should be read as a general exhortation rather than as a specific attack on a group of heretics.^{xii} We see in Galatians how vehement Paul becomes when he feels that the place of Christ in the salvation plan of God is threatened. Such strident argument is missing from Colossians. She warns against the inevitable danger of circularity when we use the sparse information in a letter to build a false picture of events, and then read this back into an interpretation of the letter itself. Perhaps there was no specific Colossian error, just the general danger of the ideas in circulation at the time. Paul's teaching in Colossians, she concludes is "quite as appropriate to a situation in which young Christians are under pressure to conform to the beliefs and practices of their pagan and Jewish neighbours, as to a situation in which their faith is endangered by the deliberate attacks of false teachers."^{xiii} I find her argument quite persuasive as far as the Christological content is concerned. If Paul is, as is commonly asserted, quoting hymns in his exaltation of Christ, then it might just be with a sense of general inspirational encouragement. It would certainly strengthen his arguments in the following chapter to remind them that they are not subject to the spiritual powers or principles of this world. However, the complaints of Chapter 2 seem quite definite about the ideas and values with which the Colossian Christians were coming into contact. Paul had something specific in mind. But what was it? Some group or some individuals were trying to "kidnap" the Colossian Christians (2:8). Who were they?

Markus Bockmuehl comments on the "hodge-podge of practices (some conventional, some heterodox, some mystical) encountered in the synagogue"^{xiv} and such plurality was even more obvious in pagan society. While contemporary scholars are divided as to whether the Colossian threat came from Jewish or a mixture of Jewish and non-Jewish sources, the background of folk religion is now strongly taken into consideration. Clinton Arnold's work on folk religion as the source of the Colossian problems examines extra-canonical Jewish writings and Greek mystery religions as well as ancient inscriptions, magical amulets, etc., exposing how they shared in common fear of evil forces and believed that magical practices could protect them.^{xv} He concludes that

"Referring to itself as 'the philosophy,' the leaders of this faction had adapted the Pauline gospel to aspects of Phrygian-Lyidian beliefs and practices as well as to local Judaism. They advocated the invocation of angels for protection from the hostile powers. They appear to have overemphasized the transcendence of God and underemphasized the exalted position of Christ, functionally viewing him as a mediator, perhaps on the same level as angels. As a means of countering this teaching and giving the Colossians perspective on the relationship of Christ to the powers, Paul gives eloquent expression to a cosmic Christology. Jesus existed before the powers, he in fact created them, he defeated the hostile powers on the cross, and he will intervene in the future and bring about a universal peace in heaven as well as on earth."^{xvi}

While we may not completely agree that fear of evil spirits was at the heart of the Colossian threat, it does show why Paul exalts Christ's supremacy, while at the same time specifically attacking

certain spiritual practices. The three warnings in Colossians 2, however, are striking:

- “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ” (2:8);
- “Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day.” (2:16);
- “Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind.” (2:18).

It is noteworthy that these three warnings do not necessarily imply some kind of Christological heresy. Some suggest that the Colossian threat (I have down-graded it from a heresy or error to a threat) was not directly Christological but was a set of practical issues of how Christians were to grow spiritually and to what they could aspire. Sappington examines an earlier approach by Fred Francis^{xvii} who, basing his study on Jewish, Christian, and Gnostic sorcerers, including later Merkabah Mysticism argued that the problem was not directly Christological, but centred around questions of praxis. Rather than a cult of angels it was that “Christians at Colossae were attempting to gain a visionary experience of heaven and to participate in the heavenly worship that the angels offer to God. Such mystical experiences resulted from various ascetic practitioners, some of which are mentioned in Colossians 2. This form of piety was highly destructive since it created divisions in the church, with some Christians standing in judgement over others who did not follow this practice.”^{xviii} While the methodology of using later spiritual practices to explain the Colossian epistle seems to me to be dubious, it does help to bring into focus the kind of world views and spiritualities to which the new Colossian Christians were exposed and from which they had emerged.

The Colossians were in danger of being misled into thinking that certain spiritualities could protect them from harm and lead them to God automatically, and thus were by-passing their direct relationship with Christ which already granted them all they wished. It is hard to pin down precisely what was the philosophy behind this, mainly because it has proved very hard to determine exactly what Paul means by certain key terms in chapter 2: “principles of the world” (stoicheia tou kosmou), “the fullness (pleroma) of God”; “the shadow (skia) and substance (soma) of what is to come”; “goes into great detail about (embateuein)” These words had associations with both Jewish and pagan religions, but always have bearing on the practical mechanics of spiritual life.

This, I think, is the crucial point of the Colossian ‘heresy’, ‘error’, ‘philosophy’, ‘teaching’ or ‘threat’. It was a practical matter of spiritual discipline which had implications for Christology. It was a spiritual elitism which created a false hierarchy in the church, a false confidence in salvation, and a diminished theology of the centrality of Christ. It looked less to the completed salvation by Christ’s death and resurrection, and more to the efforts and rites of the individual. Marianne Meye Thompson expresses it thus: “. . . the Colossians may have simply misinterpreted the Christian vocabulary of knowledge, maturity, and growth, succumbing to the belief – still popular today! - that there is some gimmick, some experience, some secret that will unlock greater depths of insight than have heretofore been obtained.”^{xix} While I think she has understated the magnitude of their error, I agree with her in seeing the same kind of problems today. Let me give you an example from my own experience as a missionary in the interior of Brazil. A local lady, member of a fervently evangelical and rapidly growing Pentecostal church attracted much attention when she proclaimed that she had experienced a vision of Hell. At the centre of her vision was the tomb in Hell of a well-known TV children’s presenter (in reality an ex- model and ex-porn actress) whose worldliness was a constant affront to

such Pentecostal groups. The vision caused great excitement among the faithful members of the church, as well as considerable derision among those who were rather more skeptical of such visions. Soon the air was thick with stories of similar visions of Hell, and, rather suspiciously, it was observed that the inhabitants of Hell according to these visions always seemed to include Christians who did not agree with the Pentecostal dress code for women of long hair, long sleeves and long skirts. I am not the only one who makes such connections of dubious modern day spiritual elitism with the Colossian threat. In an interesting on-line article Dr. Eddie L. Hyatt describes the experience of delivering a lecture on the Colossian Heresy and then going straight to hear a guest speaker.

“The point seems to be that the Colossians had developed a “religious” fascination with angels and visions. As I sat on the platform and listened to this “big name” guest speaker, I was amazed at how closely what I was hearing coincided with The Colossian Heresy that I had just delineated. This person talked almost exclusively of visions, prophecies and angelic visitations. This individual emphasized the importance of prayer, not for knowing Christ, but as a means of experiencing these sensational phenomena. Jesus certainly was not front and center and I am not even sure if He was mentioned. It was incredible!”^{xx}

As long as the Colossian threat is seen as a Gnostic or Christological error our exposition of this book could be weakened. After all, Gnosticism was an esoteric second century belief, and the Christological questions were debated and defined in the fourth century, so it is hard to apply them to the twenty-first century. When we begin to compare the false spiritual elitism with some of their equivalents today we begin to understand why Paul draws us back to Christ. We are programmed by modern post-modern thinking to accept all spiritualities as equally valid. Paul would not be so pluralistic. There is only one Christ. We must not fool ourselves that we are doing by own efforts what he has already achieved.

I do not want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Paul himself was no stranger to heavenly revelations and visions. I myself have been greatly blessed by prophetic messages which have spoken into my situation. Such acts of the Holy Spirit are real and contemporary. But how do you tell them from the false? We can too easily be drawn into a kind of spirituality where in order to attain higher levels of spiritual maturity we must access hidden mysteries. So we might be persuaded to observe sacred seasons and ritual abstinences from food and material pleasure or practice extreme asceticism in order to be initiated into the higher levels of heaven, or receive mind-blowing visions of heavenly realms. As Ralph Martin observes: “Paul quickly discerned that such a wrong-headed theology meant a derogatory attitude to Jesus Christ.”^{xxi} We are, Paul would say, already hidden with Christ in heavenly places and our spirituality should begin there. If the message is not Christ-centred it is not of God.

The problems of expounding this book do not end there, of course. We have to get our heads around the concept of “making up for what is lacking with regard to the sufferings of Christ” (1:24). We still have to try to understand what “the worship of angels” (2:18) meant in the Colossian context. We must still wrestle with how the household code of 3:18–4:1 complied and differed from secular household codes of Paul’s day. But our main task is done. Colossians reminds us that we already live with Christ in heavenly places, so we are to bring the supremacy of Christ and his values into our daily living.

A FEW CRITICAL QUESTIONS

I have assumed throughout that Paul was the author of the book of Colossians. Although recent scholarship has been pretty equally divided over the question, objections to Paul's authorship have been based on only a few issues.

Firstly, the style differs from the other letters which are generally considered to be authentically Pauline. For example, there are a number of unusual genitival combinations: e.g. "the reward of the inheritance" (3:24), "putting off the body of . . . flesh" (2:11), "the increase of God" (2:19), "the hope of glory" (1:27). The style is more laboured, with more subsidiary clauses, as in 1:9-23 and 2:9-15. There are many synonyms such as "praying and asking", "spiritual wisdom and understanding", "holy and blameless and irreproachable". "The style is cumbersome, verbose, and surfeited to opacity with subordinate clauses, participial and infinitive constructions or substantives" complains Kummel.^{xxii} The vocabulary varies from the other epistles. There are 34 words which only appear here. Absent are key words like *dikaioune*, *dikaiwsis*, *nomos*, *swteria*, *apocalupsis*.

Secondly, there is the absence of some major Pauline themes. There is, for example, no mention of justification by faith. Christian virtues stem from our spiritual position in the heavenly realm rather than by direct action of the Holy Spirit. The eschatological tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet' has been replaced by a tension between 'things above' and 'things below'. The eschatology has become realized in this epistle. Lohse claims that "Pauline Theology has undergone a profound change in Colossians, which is evident in every section of the letter and has produced new formulations in Christology, ecclesiology, the concept of the apostle, eschatology, and the understanding of baptism."^{xxiii}

However, support for Pauline authorship is strong, especially because of the association of the epistle with the Epistle to Philemon which is generally acknowledged to be one of the original Pauline letters. The differences between Colossians and the rest of the Pauline corpus are not difficult to explain:

- The peculiarities are strongest when Paul is attacking the errorists, where his vocabulary and ideas are subordinated to the problem he is tackling. The polemical passages of the book contain twice as many of those "one-off" words than the rest of the epistle.
- He is often considered to have quoted early hymns and liturgical material in his passages on the supremacy of Christ, thus bringing about changes from his more usual expressions.
- Faith hope and love are still the fundamental values of his thinking.
- The eschatology is broader than in other Pauline works. The "hope of glory" (1:27) is a perfectly eschatological phrase, but placed in a wide, cosmic framework.
- Paul was something of an uneven author, perhaps influenced by the scribe he was using at any one time, or maybe just because he threw out so many ideas and exhibited such strong emotions that the words tumbled out in unpredictable ways. He had no word-processor to tidy it all up afterwards. Maybe he discussed it with his scribe before anything was put down in ink, thus avoiding corrections on very expensive materials. We know for a fact that typically he does vary his vocabulary considerably. Barth and Blanke observe, "No one would dare to dispute the genuineness of First Thessalonians and First Corinthians because in the totality of their twenty-one chapters the word "righteousness" is used but once (in 1 Corinthians 1:30)."^{xxiv}
- The early church hated those who wrote treatises in the name of the Apostles. Tertullian (*De Baptismo* 17) records that a presbyter who wrote the *Acts of Paul* was removed from office

when he confessed, although he said that he did it out of love for Paul. We should not lightly assume that pseudographia crept its way into general acceptance. There is no direct evidence that it did.

Where and when was the epistle composed? We know from Tacitus that Laodicea which was 10 miles from Colossae was leveled by an earthquake in 61 or 62AD. As the earthquake and its aftermath are not mentioned we might assume that this proves the letter was written before then. Possibly, however, Paul being Paul, he might not have mentioned it in his anxiety to get onto what he considered to be the more important things. Opinions vary as to whether it was written from prison in Rome, Ephesus or Caesarea. There is no evidence that there ever was an Ephesian captivity, and one would imagine Onesimus the runaway slave would have tried to reach the safety and anonymity of Rome rather than hide out in Ephesus, so close to home. Rome seems to have the majority opinion its side as the place of origin of the epistle, so in my sermons I will follow the majority.

CONCLUSION

It is time to bury the suggestion of any link between this book and the Gnostic heresy. Colossians is Paul's appeal to young Christians under pressure to conform to a false spirituality, one based on human effort rather than Christ-granted privilege. Whether it was an organized group, or just some strong personalities who were attempting to "kidnap" them to their brand of spirituality is not clear. Either way, some, perhaps most, of the Colossian church was being made to feel inferior and being drawn into a too-ascetic spirituality, seeking visions and revelations that had little to do with Christ, but a lot to do with massaging the ego of those who allegedly received them. Paul's principal answer to such influences is to draw us back to a spiritual life where Christ rules, and encourage us never to accept being judged by those who would see themselves as superior to us because of their self-imposed spiritual disciplines. Paul's arguments would counter the Jewish mystics, the pagan initiates to the mysteries, the Jewish apocalyptic groups, the sectarian ascetics or any combination of these. It is Christ, our hope of glory who should control our lives. Today it is not uncommon to find a sect, movement or denomination competing to persuade others that they are the best or even the only way to a deeper spiritual life. As a pastor I often have to defend church members against judgmental Christians who see themselves as superior to others. Paul brings us back to the one basic point: we are servants of one Christ in a diversity of styles. It is he and he alone whose opinion should hold sway in the local congregation.

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- ⁱ J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (London: MacMillan, 1879; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959 reprint), pp.73-113.
- ⁱⁱ E. Earle Ellis, *St. Paul's use of the Old Testament*, 82 (Edinburgh Oliver & Boyd, 1957). Quoted by R. McL. Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, The International Critical Commentary (London & New York: T. & T. Clark, 2005), p. xii.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Roy Yates, *The Epistle to the Colossians* (London; Epworth Press, 1993), p. xvi..
- ^{iv} "In its widest sense, Gnosticism was an atmosphere breathed in by many other systems than those which affected the Christian Church, including most contemporary thought, Hermetica, philosophy and mysteries. But such a wide use of the term can lead only to confusion in New Testament studies." Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (London: IVP, 1961), p. 547. See also R. P. Casey, 'Gnosis, Gnosticism and the New Testament,' *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, W.D. Davies and D. Daube (eds.) (Cambridge: CUP, 1956), pp.52-80. Casey concludes that "The New Testament requires no explanation, either as a whole or in any of its parts, in terms of an hypothetical primitive Gnosticism." p.80.
- ^v M. Kiley, *Colossians as Pseudepigraphy* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), p. 57.
- ^{vi} M. Dibelius, 'The Isis Initiation in Apuleius and Related Initiatory Rites,' in *Conflict at Colossae* trans. and ed. F.O. Francis and W.A. Meeks (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), pp.65-121.
- ^{vii} Eduard Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians*, trans. Andrew Chester (London: SPCK, 1982), pp.125-134.
- ^{viii} F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 12f .
- ^{ix} Nijay Gupta, 'New Commentaries on Colossians: Survey of Approaches, Analysis of Trends, and the State of Research', Themelios, Volume 35, issue 1, April 2010. <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/publications/35-1/new-commentaries-on-colossians--survey-of-approaches-analysis-of-trends-and-the-state-of-research>
- ^x Thomas J. Sappington, *Revelation and Redemption at Colossae*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series 53 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), p.65.
- ^{xi} C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p.13.
- ^{xii} M. D. Hooker, 'Were there false teachers in Colossae?' in B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley (eds.), *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament* (Cambridge: 1973), pp. 315- 331.
- ^{xiii} *ibid.*, p.329.
- ^{xiv} Markus Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity*, WUNT 2/36 (Tubingen: Mohr, 1990) p.180.
- ^{xv} Bob DeWaay, 'Exegesis of Colossians 2 that Identifies the Nature of the Colossian "Philosophy"', on-line article <http://cicministry.org/commentary/issue69.htm>
- ^{xvi} Clinton E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism - The Interface between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), p 311.
- ^{xvii} F.O. Francis, 'A Re-Examination of the Colossian Controversy' (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1965).
- ^{xviii} Sappington, p.18.
- ^{xix} Marianne Meye Thompson, *Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2005), p.9.
- ^{xx} Eddie L. Hyatt, 'The Colossian Heresy Revisited: Has the Prophetic Stream Lost Its Focus?' <http://www.eddiehyatt.com/article08.html>
- ^{xxi} Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians: The Church's Lord and The Christian's Liberty* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1972), p.6.
- ^{xxii} W. G. Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1966), p.241, quoted in Wilson, p.13.
- ^{xxiii} E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), p.180, quoted by Wilson, p10.
- ^{xxiv} Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians*, trans. Astrid B. Beck (New York: Doubleday, 1994), p59.