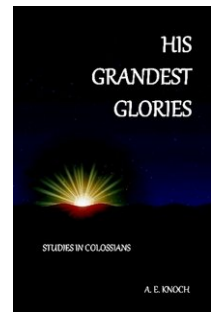


His Grandest Glories

Studies in Colossians

A.E. Knoch (1874-1965), Excerpts from Unsearchable Riches Magazine

*Excerpts & Notes by Bob Evely
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All is created in Him in the beginning, and all is reconciled to Him at the consummation (Colossians 1:16-20).

Colossians and Ephesians compared (p. 5-6)

Colossians and Ephesians are very similar, for they reach the same truth, though from different standpoints.

Colossians deals with Christ's relation to the present. Ephesians was especially concerned with the place of the saints, especially the Uncircumcision (the non-Jewish people).

The two epistles are complementary. In Ephesians the emphasis is on the members of the body, while Colossians presses Christ's headship over the ecclesia (those "called-out" by God). Ephesians elaborates the relation of the members to God and to one another, as well as to Christ Himself. Colossians is largely confined to our connection with Him alone.

The bulk of Ephesians is concerned with an orderly and positive presentation of the truth. Colossians, however, devotes the corresponding space to the correction of departures from the truth.

Ephesians is general, with no local allusions. Colossians is concerned with a special situation, and a particular ecclesia.

Colossians compares Christ's limited glories in Israel, in flesh – with His vast spiritual glories among the nations and in the entire universe.

In Ephesians the body of Christ is the complement of the universe (Ephesians 1:23). In Colossians (2:10) we are complete in Him. Here the ecclesia is the final factor in bringing all under the headship of Christ.

Our blessings are among the celestials (p. 7)

Our blessings are among the celestials (Ephesians 1:3). All was created in and through and for Him (Colossians 1:16). We are joint-members of the body (Ephesians 3:6). He is Head of the body (Colossians 1:18). We are His complement as He completes the universe (Ephesians 1:23).

Apostasy from Paul (p. 13)

The apostasy from Paul started in his lifetime and has continued ever since. [See Paul's later epistles and note that nearly all had turned away from him, rejecting the truth he was proclaiming.]

More Colossians-Ephesians comparisons (p. 14)

Colossians is the complement of the doctrinal section of Ephesians. Ephesians *teaches* the truth, while Colossians *corrects* departure from it.

The body of Colossians deals with the secret of Christ, that great revelation concerning Him which had been hitherto withheld or only partially made known, but is now necessary since the saints have a place among the celestials.

Following the doctrine portion of Colossians we find a portion related to deportment (behavior). Perhaps a better description on the doctrine and deportment sections would be warnings in reference to teaching, and exhortation as to walk.

The secret of Christ in Ephesians (p. 16)

The first intimation of the secret of Christ in Ephesians is found in the marvelous opening: *Making known to us the secret of His will ... to head up all in the Christ – in the heavens as well as on the earth.*

Hitherto the headship of Christ had been confined to the earth. His heavenly headship had been kept secret. But now that an election out of the earth is to share His celestial glories, this must be made known. This, then, is the essence of the secret of Christ – *His universal headship.*

The throne of David is still vacant. The Son of Mankind has not yet taken His seat as earth's Suzerain. He was rejected on earth, but He was acclaimed in the heavens.

The secret of Christ in Colossians (p. 18)

Before we come to Colossians, the secret was concerned almost wholly with the future. The holy nation will rule the earth in His name. The ecclesia which is His body will be His administrator in celestial spheres.

Colossians reveals the secret of Christ in all its fullness. It is fully revealed in relation to all creation, on earth as well as among the celestials, including the nations as well as Israel, the celestial hosts as well as the members of His body. He is not only Israel's Messiah and the Saviour of the nations, but the Head of the entire universe and the Reconciler of all.

"Assembly" or "Ecclesia" (p. 19)

The Concordant Version uses the word *ecclesia* rather than "church" for the Greek *ekklesia*. The word "church" has acquired a meaning quite foreign to that which the etymology of the word demands.

Any company *OUT-CALLED* is an ecclesia. The Concordant Version chose the word *ecclesia* [a transliteration of the Greek word] with the hope that it would never be applied to a building, or restricted to a particular company, but applied to any assembly or group of believers consisting of members *called out* of a larger number.

Paul an apostle (p. 20)

Paul presents himself in Colossians as an apostle, for he has been commissioned and has authority to write and set forth the truths and reveal the secrets which it contains.

Jesus Christ vs. Christ Jesus (p. 21)

Jesus Christ is the humble, despised, rejected, crucified Messiah. His glories wait until the future, at the time of His return to earth. At present He has no place down here.

But Christ Jesus! Already He is highest in the heavens, seated at the right hand of God.

Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians (p. 38)

Paul prays for the Colossians because of the expectation which is reserved for them *in the heavens*. In a similar strain he had prayed in Ephesians for a spirit of wisdom and revelation that they might perceive the expectation of His calling (Ephesians 1:17,18).

In Ephesians, also, the scene of blessing is not left on earth but is immediately transferred to heaven (Ephesians 1:3).

Philippians also puts us in a heavenly realm (Philippians 3:20).

So the three ranking epistles unite in raising us above the terrestrial to our place supreme among the celestials. [Note: These three epistles are "ranking" as they contain the highest revelation Paul relays to us, with a heavy focus on the celestial realm – and they speak of the *secret of Christ* not previously revealed.]

He is expected by Israel. We are now pre-expectant, since we wait for Christ to come before His advent to Israel.

The secret of Christ (p. 46)

The secret of Christ comprises the creation of all *in* Him at the commencement, and the reconciliation of all *through* Him at the consummation (Colossians 1:16-20).

Pray for guidance? (p. 47)

It is the secret of His will to head up all in heaven as well as upon earth in Christ. Let us not degrade the apostle's petition to a mere request for individual guidance in each step of our career. If we know His will concerning Christ and ourselves, that will shine upon our path and remove the need of being led like a blind man every step of our way.

Guidance should not be a matter dependent on external circumstances or inward impulses, but of wisdom and spiritual understanding. The lack of these has left the saints to the mercy of the forces of evil. Many who imagine that the holy spirit has given them a special and definite revelation are the dupes of evil spirits. They do that which is contrary to the will of God because they are not acquainted with it. They imagine that the Scriptures are not sufficient and need to be supplemented by direct revelations of His will as occasion arises, forgetting that, in the Scriptures, the man of God is fitted out for every good act (2 Timothy 3:17).

Let us pray, then, that the saints may be filled with a realization of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, for only thus can we walk worthily of the Lord for all pleasing, and bear fruit in every good work. (Colossians 1:9-10)

The realization of God (p. 48)

That God may be All in all is the universal goal. All of His operations during the eons are directed to this end.

As this is unfolded to our hearts we should grow in our appreciation of God and thus approach the final goal ahead of others of His creatures. May God become All in us in increasing measure as we contemplate the secret of Christ and see His hand and head and heart engaged in drawing His creatures to Himself through sin and salvation.

Endued with all power (p. 48)

Power is often associated with great physical manifestations. But we are endued with power for a different purpose. It is not manifest in the conquest and removal of evil, but in endurance and patience with joy.

Allotment of the saints (p. 49)

Along with the joy which His power imparts in the midst of trial and distress, our heart should overflow with thanksgiving for the lot which has fallen to us. From dupes of darkness we have become saints in light. We were deceived by the Adversary like all the rest, groping in the gloom of this world's illumination. But now all is light. All is out of, and through, and to God. We know whence we came, and whither we are bound. We know that every moment of our lives is in His loving care. Light has come into our lives.

When this wicked eon ends and the Adversary who is deceiving the nations is in the abyss, the sun will rise, and darkness and its forces will not again hold sway over mankind. The knowledge of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the floor of the sea.

In our individual experience we have already passed out of this dark eon into the next. We have already been transported out of the authority of darkness and into the kingdom. Not, indeed, in fact, but in figure. The earthly kingdom has not yet come. The Adversary is not yet bound. But thanks be to our Father we are no longer subject to his will, nor are we victims of his deception.

Image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15) (p. 52)

Being invisible and unapproachable, God has made an Image of Himself, and a Complement through Whom He can come into contact with His creation.

This can only be accomplished by means of a Mediator, an Image which portrays in visible form the invisible essence of the Supreme. This was God's "Creative Original" – the *firstborn* of all creation, not only first in time but first in dignity and honor.

Why is there a creation? (p. 54)

Why is there a creation at all? Here is the answer. God's love demands response. Creation is not an end in itself. Although it displays God's wisdom and power, its underlying purpose goes far deeper, for it was created in love.

The reconciliation of all (Colossians 1:20) (p. 64)

The two paramount points in universal history are the creation, and the resurrection of the Son of God. Through His death and vivification He will yet more than restore the lost creation to the Father.

The Son will reconcile all God's enemies with him when the eons have run their course. Reconciliation is effected by the revelation of God's love in the deepest display of human hate.

O that we all may learn what we really are in the light of the cross! This will burn out all our pride and prepare the way for peace. And thus it is that reconciliation comes.

But if the cross only revealed what is in man, it could not reconcile the race but would rather destroy it. Thanks be to God that it also reveals what is in God! It is the fullest revelation of His love.

Today the cross avails to *conciliate* the world, and to *reconcile* those who receive the conciliation. But this will by no means exhaust its power. It will be the basis of all blessing in the eons to come and will bring immortality and peace to all at the consummation.

Here we have not merely the salvation or the justification of all, but the reconciliation of the universe. Colossians 1 is concerned with salvation only insofar as it is included in the reconciliation.

All of His coming acts will have this grand goal in view, and we will have our share in the work of reconciling God's creatures among the celestials, for we are His complement.

In Colossians the reconciliation is extended to include those in the heavens as well as those on the earth. All are embraced by it, so that no enmity remains in God's universe.

Christ among the nations (Colossians 1:21 – 2:7) (p. 52)

In its realization the secret of Christ varies according to the administration in which it operates. In this economy it anticipates in spirit what will take physical form on the earth in the last two eons. We already have the kingdom and the new creation, for which the world still waits. We

already have the presence of Christ which will make those future eras so glorious. But all is in spirit and in expectation. Yet the conciliation may be received and enjoyed by all who believe.

Those that oppose God (p. 73)

It is quite possible to be charitable and philanthropic with a mind that defies and decries the Deity. The attitude of heart is far more vital than external conduct in our relationship to God, especially with reference to ultimate reconciliation.

Men may not be conscious that the enmity in their comprehension is against God, for they have no personal acquaintance with Him. For their good they are not thankful, and for their evil they blame him.

Failure of the saints (p. 75)

Many of the saints still lack the peace which is theirs, and fail to fully enter into the conciliation.

All of creation (p. 75)

The complete restoration of peace to which the evangel gives rise is not confined to the breasts of believers. It embraces all, the creature above as well as below mankind.

When man becomes the enemy of God he dragged down the lower creation with him. It has become subject to vanity in expectation of being freed from the slavery of corruption when the sons of God are unveiled (Romans 8:19-22).

The creation on earth will have its part in the glorious future! What a relief from the narrow outlook of a "personal" salvation with a few favored companions, while all the rest of creation left to its fate – is this grand and glorious reconciliation which embraces all that is now out of harmony with God.

Our work today (p. 76)

But this is a future expectation. We are far from its realization yet. The task for the present is to make it known, to herald it abroad. It will be our special privilege to herald the evangel to the hosts of heaven when we are glorified. But now our special task is to dispense it on earth among men, especially among the saints.

Dispensing the evangel of the reconciliation of all among men in Christendom, especially among zealous adherents of narrow-hearted orthodoxy, has been and always will be followed by persecution and affliction.

Present every man mature (Colossians 1:29) (p. 81)

Is not Christ, as proclaimed among the more faithful in Christendom, far smaller than He is here revealed? With commendable zeal He is set forth as their *personal* Savior, and the end of all things seems to have been reached in delivering them from the effects of their sins.

But such selfish happiness is not permanently satisfying, especially when associated with the realization that millions, if not most of God's creatures, are suffering, or as orthodoxy insists, always will suffer. There is something repulsive about happiness which is not affected by the woes around it.

We are assured that the Scriptures so teach and God will make our hearts impervious to the pains of others. How horrible is this thought!

To be delivered from such false notions of God's salvation is itself a cause for much thankfulness. Our choice by God is not an end in itself. We were selected, not to be blessed so much as to be blessers. And in making others happy is the only true and abiding happiness.

How blessed is the place of Abraham and his seed! For in them shall all the families of the earth be blessed. As members of Christ's body we will bring blessing to all the creatures of the empyrean (the celestial/heavenly realm). Through us He will rule the celestial hosts, and through us they will be brought into living contact with the grace and love of God.

We will be the channel of blessing to the countless creatures who come within scope of Christ's celestial rule ... reconciling a whole universe to God ... so that He may take His true place in every heart He has created.

Such is the supreme revelation brought by Paul, which leads us out of the partial and immature conceptions of His plans into a mature and complete grasp of His full purpose.

The rites of religion and the reasonings of philosophy have effectually robbed them of this wonderful wealth. Though the words will stare at us in the Bible, faith fails to see them, because it is blinded by false flares of human tradition.

Prayer (Colossians 4:2-6) (p. 85)

The bulk of Paul's epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians is largely composed of *his* prayers for the saints, that *they* may realize the grace and truth which he reveals to them.

It is not our duty, in prayer, to instruct God what to do, or how or when to do it, but to recognize our utter incapacity to dictate these details, and to rejoice that they are in His skillful hands, so that we may thankfully acquiesce in every particular, even if it is contrary to our own will.

Paul did not urge the saints in his day to use every avenue of publicity, but to pray to open a door. The fact is that all doors are shut and locked against the entrance of this truth. No human effort is able to open them.

There is more need for prayer now than ever before that God will open doors for its manifestation.

Walking in wisdom (Colossians 4:5) (p. 88)

"In wisdom be walking toward those outside" (Colossians 4:5). Here is another of those delicate touches which distinguish [Colossians from Ephesians], for the secret of Christ brings us into much closer relation to unbelievers, by creation and reconciliation, in which they share, than the secret of Ephesians in which they have no part.

When we see the place of everyone in God's plans, it will soften our hearts and steady our heads, and we will be enabled to recognize His handiwork in the most worthless and most antagonistic of His creatures.

But the world as a whole seems to be slipping down into an abyss instead of climbing up into a paradise. God will yet make excellent use of [this]. Man's day will reveal man's failure and futility. There is surpassing worth in humbling man and in bringing him to accept and appreciate God's grace. In this way this wicked era will be reclaimed in due time.

Far from harsh condemnation, we will sympathize with them in their condition, and speak and act in faith, knowing that they will yet fulfill the object of their creation, when God becomes All in them.

Objections to universal reconciliation in Colossians 1 (p. 91)

One of the first reasons given for rejecting the reconciliation of all is that the word "all" in Colossians 1:20 refers to *things*, not to persons – to creation, not to creatures.

But there is no estrangement between "things" and God – and therefore there can be no reconciliation.

The universality of this passage cannot be confined to earthly conditions. He is not the Reconciler of the soulless stone on which you stand, but He is *your* Reconciler!

Another bolt which has been used to keep the door from opening to allow the secret of Christ to enter is the claim that Colossians is concerned only with the church, which is Christ's body, hence reconciliation can refer only to them. But where, in all the secret scrolls, is the range of the context any greater than in this passage? "Every creature" cannot be confined to the church which is Christ's body. "All in the heavens and on the earth" is as wide a scope as can well be imagined.

Beware (p. 94)

In Ephesians we are warned to beware how we *walk* (Ephesians 5:15). In Philippians we have a threefold warning as to our *service* (Philippians 3:2). But in Colossians [the warning] is applied to a departure from the great *doctrine* of Christ as the Complement of all.

The saints as a whole have been despoiled through philosophy and empty seduction, in accord with human tradition, in accord with the elements of the world (Colossians 2:8).

Perhaps no better example can be given of the vanity of human [reasoning] where God's glory is denied than the imbecility of the evolutionary hypothesis. There has never yet been found a single fact on which to form a logical syllogism on which to base the theory of evolution, yet the great majority of western scientists swallowed it whole, and sneer at all who do not share their infatuation. The real basis of the theory lies in its irrational commencement without a Creator. It robs God of His glory and gives Him no thanks.

Philosophy and religion (p. 99)

Ritual can only be countered by the precious truth of completeness in Christ. Religion implies incompleteness and demands that something be done to fill our lack. Circumcision, baptism, the keeping of decrees, of festivals, and all religious rituals are intended to make us more acceptable to God in ourselves, though none of them is more than a mere shadow. Christ is the Reality which they portray, and, in Him, we have the substance. Hence we do not need the shadow.

Few things are more needed in these days than a knowledge of our completeness in Christ.

[By way of example], to repeat the rite [of baptism] now that we have the reality is to deny the great truth that we have all of which it speaks, in Christ our Complement. The great proof that we have had the real baptism is that we are roused and vivified jointly with Him. As He is, so are we, in spirit.

[As for the Sabbath], instead of ceasing work on a Saturday we look above and see Christ seated at God's right hand, His work on our behalf completed. Not our work, or even our cessation from work, makes us meet for glory, but our position in Christ has already placed us there in spirit.

Ritual calls for the intervention of intermediate messengers, such as priests or clergy, and these take the place which belongs to Christ as the Head of the body. Ritual demands an organization rather than a living organism, in which each member is in living connection with the Head.

Religion seeks to deal with the sensations rather than the spirit, hence lacks permanent power. Philosophy and religion are essentially soulish, not spiritual. Christ and His cross and His crown are the only satisfactory solution to the riddle of the universe.

That which is above (p. 107)

Our bodies have not yet been raised to celestial spheres, but, in spirit, we have been *vivified* together with Christ (Ephesians 2:5) and *roused* with Him (Colossians 3:1). Hence come the great conflicts in our conduct, for while we are on earth in flesh, our spirit and our soul belong above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. The body apart from the spirit is dead. As our life is hid together with Christ in God, we are dead to the things of this nether sphere.

This includes far more than death to sin as set before us in Romans 6. The exhortation [of Ephesians and Colossians] is not based on Christ's *descent* for us, but on His *exaltation* among the celestials. It does not appeal to His past suffering for our sakes, but to His future glory and our public manifestations with Him in it. The power of that glory is already operating in our spirits and attracts our souls as a magnet to the empyrean [the heavens]. Our life is an invisible one, even as Christ is hid from mortal gaze. We belong to the celestials.

Correct conduct consists in conformity to truth. All our acts should fit the facts.

We are to leave off anger, fury, malice, calumny, obscenity, and falsehood. These are no fitting garment for the young humanity which has Christ as its Image. Such should put on the very opposite. Anger, fury, malice, should be replaced by compassion and kindness – malice and calumny by humility, meekness, patience, gracious forbearance.

Conclusion (p. 114)

Thanks be to God, the time is coming when all will find in Him their All. The day is approaching when all will see in Him, God's Complement, One [Who is] competent to reconcile to God all that is now estranged.

Notes by Bob Evelyn