inTRODUCTION.] THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS. [cu. vu.   
   
   
 and controversially. He could not, consistently with the effect which   
 he would produce on them, dive into the depths of the divine counsels   
 in Christ with regard to them. At every turn, we may well conceive,   
 he would fain have gone out into those wonderful prayers and revela-   
 tions which would have been so abundant if he had had free scope: but   
 at every turn the Spirit bound him to a lower region, and would not let   
 him lose sight of the cantionary matter-of-fact pleading, which forms   
 the ground-tone of this Colossian Epistle. Only in the setting forth of   
 the majesty of Christ’s Person, so essential to his present aim, does he   
 know no limits to the sublimity of his flight. When he approaches   
 those who are Christ’s, the urgency of their conservation, and the duty of   
 marking the contrast to their deceivers, cramps and confines him for the   
 time.   
 5. But the Spirit which thus bound him to his special work while   
 writing to the Colossians, would not let His divine promptings be in   
 vain, While he is labouring with the great subject, and unable to the   
 Colossians to express all he would, his thoughts are turned to another   
 Church, lying also in the line which Tychicus and Onesimus would   
 take: a Church which he had himself built up stone by stone; to which   
 his affection went largely forth: where if the same baneful influences   
 were making themselves felt, it was but slightly, or not so as to call for   
 special and exclusive treatment. He might pour forth to his Ephesians   
 all the fulness of the Spirit’s revelations and promptings, on the great   
 subject of the Spouse and Body of Christ. To them, without being   
 bound to narrow his energies evermore into one line of controversial   
 direction, he might lay forth, as he should be empowered, their founda-   
 tion in the counsel of the Father, their course in the satisfaction of the   
 Son, their perfection in the work of the Spirit.   
 6. And thus,—as a mere human writer, toiling earnestly and con-   
 scientiously towards his point, pares rigidly off the thoughts and words,   
 however deep and beautiful, which spring out of and group around his   
 subject, putting them by and storing them up for more leisure another   
 day : and then on reviewing them, and again awakening the spirit which   
 prompted them, playfully unfolds their gcrms, and amplifies their sug-   
 gestions largely, till a work grows beneath his hands more stately and   
 more beautiful than ever that other was, and carrying deeper conviction   
 than it ever wrought:—so, in the higher realms of the fulness of Inspira-   
 tion, may we conceive it to have been with our Apostle. His Epistle to   
 the Colossians is his caution, his argument, his protest: is, so to speak,   
 his working-day toil, his direct pastoral labour: and the other is   
 the flower and bloom of his moments, during those same days, of de-   
 votion and rest, when he wrought not so much in the Spirit, as the   
 Spirit wrought in him. So that while we have in the Colossians, system   
 defined, language elaborated, antithesis and logical power, on the surface   
 66 :