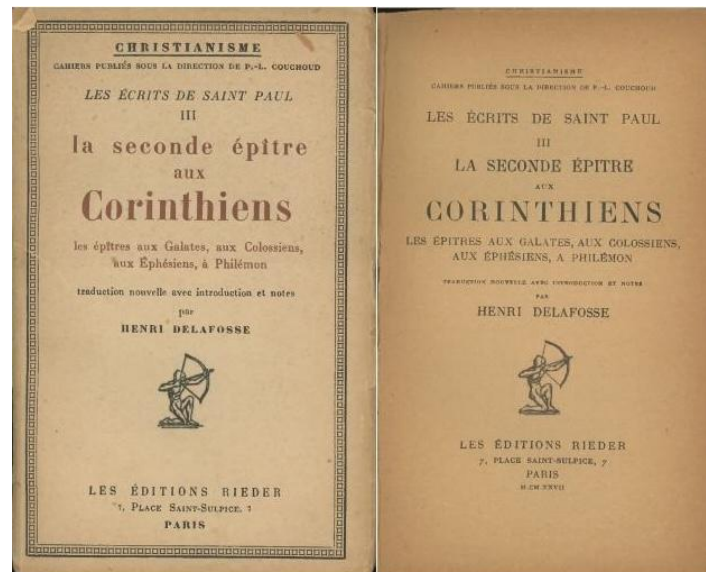


This translation was created October 2021 as a translation for my personal use and without any thought of sharing publicly at the time. I only ask that you keep that in mind when using it. I have made a copy of the French text available at

<https://archive.org/details/turmel-les-ecrits-de-saint-paul-iii-la-seconde-epitre-aux-corinthiens>

Neil Godfrey - November 2023



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EPISTLE TO PHILEMON

Onesimus, slave of Philemon, fled and took refuge in Rome. Paul, who meets him, converts him then sends him back to his master. Philémon is a rich and generous Christian whose house serves as a meeting place for his co-religionists. Paul writes to him to urge him to take back Onesimus who, from now on, will never leave him and whose running away has resulted in transforming him into a “beloved brother”, that is to say, into a Christian. At the same time he praises the beneficence of Philemon.

If a forger had been there he would not have failed to indulge in dogmatic or moral considerations. The letter to Philemon contains neither dogma nor morality. It does not even penetrate into the domain of the beyond, because verse 15 where the theologians believed to see eternity intervene, limits itself to saying that Onesimus will henceforth be in the service of his master perpetually. On the other hand, it mentions “the church

which is in the house” of Philemon and this is an archaism that a forger would not have thought of. In short, the authenticity of the epistle to Philemon (subject to the observations which follow) can be considered guaranteed both by what the epistle says and by what it does not say.

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The exegetes believe they know that Philemon lived in Colossae, and they base this feeling on the coincidences presented by the greetings in the epistle to Philemon compared to the greetings in the epistle to the Colossians. Certainly the consequence would be unassailable if the texts from which it is deduced owed, on both sides, their origin to Paul. But we know that this is not the case and that the greetings which end the epistle to the Colossians are, in large part, foreign to the apostle. Under these conditions we do not have the right to say that Philemon lived in Colossae.

On the other hand, we are able to affirm that he did not live there. This is why Paul, who is counting on his imminent deliverance, wants to go to the city where Philemon lives and he asks the latter to prepare accommodation for him. Paul must necessarily have thought of a city where he had stayed, where he had ties; let's add to a city of easy access for him which was beginning to feel the weight of the years. But he had never been to Colossae which, moreover, was lost in the depths of the land. Let us conclude that the domicile of Philemon must be placed either in Thessalonica, or in Philippi, or in Corinth, or in Ephesus, in a word wherever one wishes rather than in Colossae.

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Let us return to the greetings of the two epistles. Today they have several common names; originally they contained only one, that of Archippus [Col., IV, 17; Ph., 2). In reality these two names designate two different characters since the Archippus of Col., is a Marcionite missionary around 140. But when we proceeded with the Catholic edition of the Pauline epistles we did not look at it so closely. . The two Archippus were identified and it was concluded that Philemon the friend or perhaps the father of Archippus lived in Colossae since the Archippus of Col., IV, 17 lived in this city. It was Archippus who made Colossae the homeland of Philemon.

Once the principle had been acquired, we took care to illustrate it. This result was obtained by means of loans mutually granted by the two epistles. The epistle to Philemon assigned Onesimus who became an apostle of Colossae and was placed in Col., IV, 9. It also gave Demas and Luke to whom Col., IV, 14 was assigned. For its part,

the epistle to the Colossians lent Epaphras, Mark and Aristarchus. As a result of these mutual loans it became evident that Philemon was a wealthy Christian from Colossae.

[erratum note to be added from volume iv. . . .]

Today they have several common names; originally they contained only one, that of Onesimus (Col. IV, 9; Phi, 10). This name designates two different characters, since the Onesimus of Col. is a companion of Paul and that the second is a slave of Philemon. But, when we proceeded with the Catholic edition of the Pauline epistles, we did not look at it so closely. The two Onesimus were identified and it was concluded that Philemon, Onesimus' master, lived in Colossae, since the Onesimus of Col. lived in this town. It was Onesimus who made Colossae the homeland of Philemon. Once the principle had been acquired, we took care to illustrate it. This result was obtained by means of loans mutually granted by the two epistles. The epistle to Philemon ceded Demas and Luke, to whom Col. was assigned. IV, 14. For its part, the Epistle to the Colossians lent Archippus, Epaphras, Mark and Aristarchus.