

## BIC1503 Commentary Notes:

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(1) Word Biblical Commentary:

9. διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς, ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν κτλ. “For this reason, since the day we heard about you ...” Paul picks up the thread of his prayer-report of verses 3–5 and, as we have seen, goes out of his way to link the petition with the thanksgiving. The “we” (ἡμεῖς) stresses the identity of the ones who intercede with those who have given thanks. From the day he learned of their progress as Christians, the apostle not only offered constant thanksgiving to God the Father, he also added regular intercession for them. The word “asking” (αἰτούμενοι) is used synonymously with “praying” (προσευχόμενοι; cf. Mark 11:24, where the verbs have an exact parallel, “Whatever you ask in prayer [προσεύχεσθε καὶ αἰτεῖσθε], believe that you receive it, and you will”; against Meyer, 262, who understands the latter word to refer to general prayer), and together the two verbs probably indicate that the apostle along with his colleagues prayed to God with great intensity so that his request might be granted (Lohse, 25).

ἵνα πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ. The content (ἵνα) of the petition is that God (the passive πληρωθῆτε shows it is he who supplies this knowledge in abundance) might fill the Colossian Christians with a perception of his will, which consists of an understanding of what is spiritually important. This would result in conduct that is pleasing to the Lord, i.e. a harvest of good deeds and growth in understanding (v 10). The power that would enable them to act in such a manner exercising patience and long-suffering would be derived from God’s glorious might (v 11). At the same time, they would give thanks to the Father for an eternal inheritance, deliverance from the power of darkness, and the forgiveness of sins (vv 12–14). Thus, Paul’s actual petition is for the discernment of God’s will and the power to perform it (cf. Moule, 47; note Phil 1:9–11 as a parallel).

The ideas of “fullness,” “abundance” or “riches” feature frequently in Paul’s prayers (cf. 1 Cor 1:5; Phil 1:9; 4:19; 1 Thess 3:12; 2 Thess 1:3). The motif of “fullness” recurs frequently in this epistle (note the different terms used at 1:19, 24, 25; 2:2, 3, 9, 10; 4:12, 17), and it seems that the false teachers boasted that they offered the fullness of truth and spiritual maturity, while Epaphras had only instructed the Colossians in the first steps (Beare, 156). On the contrary, Epaphras had taught “the word of truth” (v 5) while Paul and his colleagues had consistently prayed (cf. 4:12) that the Colossians might receive fullness of blessing from God’s gracious hand (note the passive πεπληροφορημένοι), and he indicates in the prayer that unfolds what that fullness is.

ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ. The readers are to be filled “with a knowledge of his will.” The words which follow define what this means, i.e. the “perception of God’s will consists in wisdom and understanding of every sort, on the spiritual level,” to use Moule’s paraphrase (53). These and the following words find clear OT parallels (on the Greco-Roman links see Lohse, 26, and Schweizer, 40). So “his will (τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ; Ps 103 [LXX 102]:7; 143 [142]:10), “knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις), “wisdom and understanding” (σοφία καὶ σύνεσις), and their conjunction with πνεῦμα “spirit” turn up in the OT (cf. Exod 31:3; 35:31, 35; Deut 34:9; 1 Chron 22:12; Isa 11:2; etc, also the fourth benediction of the Tefillah), and are no doubt to be understood against this background (so Harder, Paulus, 118, 119, Lohmeyer, 32, 33). Furthermore, similar ideas appear in the writings of the Qumran community (for detailed parallels see Lohse, 25, 26). These three qualities of “knowledge,” “insight” and “wisdom” were understood as gifts of God which he had imparted by his Spirit (1QS 4:3, 4; 1QSB 5:25) to the faithful members of the community.

“Knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις) occurs twice in this intercessory request of Paul (vv 9, 10) while the cognate verb “know” was used in the thanksgiving as well (v 6). In fact, because the Colossians had come to know God’s grace when they were converted (ἐπέγνωτε is probably an inceptive aorist), they might now be expected to grow in “knowledge,” or “perception” as Moule (53) puts it.

“Knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις) occurs as an important subject of Paul’s intercessory prayers in each of the Captivity Epistles (Eph 1:17; Phil 1:9; Philem 6). L. Cerfaux (Christ in the Theology of St. Paul. Tr G. Webb and A. Walker [New York: Herder, 1959] 402–438, especially 404) considered that the importance given to knowledge in these letters was due to its relationship to the “mystery.” This mystery, which was Paul’s gospel, had its accent on the salvation of Gentiles. It was in the churches of Asia that Paul became used to speaking of the gospel as a mystery, Cerfaux claims, and Christians were bound to advance in a knowledge of it. Such knowledge involved every facet of the Christian’s life, hence the prayer that the Colossians might be “filled” with it. In addition to Cerfaux’s suggestions, which do not adequately account for the appearance of “knowledge” in the prayers of Philippians (1:9) and Philemon (v 6), one needs to take note of Paul’s own personal circumstances. In prison, aware that he might not be able to visit and strengthen the churches to which he wrote, he saw the need for them to increase in the knowledge of God and his will, and with this God’s mystery, Christ. Also the requirements of the churches demanded a further exposition of the gospel to combat fresh dangers and heresies that were arising.

Paul’s use of “knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις) here might be by way of contrast with the much-canvassed gnosis of the false teachers. Heretical gnosis was speculative and theoretical while the knowledge for which the apostle prayed concerned the “will of God” (θέλημα θεοῦ; cf. Rom 12:2; Eph 5:17; 1 Thess 4:3; 5:18)—it was comprehensive and demanded an obedience visible in a person’s actions. This perception of God’s will consisted “in wisdom and understanding of every sort” (the πᾶς, “all,” applies to both nouns), while the addition of πνευματικός (“spiritual”), in an emphatic position, indicates that both the wisdom and the understanding are on a spiritual level. As such they stood in sharp contrast to the wisdom of the false teachers, which at best was only a show (λόγος σοφίας, 2:23), an empty counterfeit calling itself “philosophy” (φιλοσοφία, 2:8). At the same time “spiritual” suggests that the full knowledge of God’s will, for which Paul prays, comes through the insight God’s Spirit imparts.

Later in the letter the apostle will have further things to say about wisdom and knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις 2:2; 3:10; σοφία 1:28; 2:3, 23; 3:16; 4:5; σύνεσις 2:2). He has prepared the way, in this intercessory prayer report, for further instruction on knowledge. At the same time it has been indicated that apart from the activity of God on their behalf (πληρωθῆτε), filling them with true discernment, they would not know as they ought to, nor grasp what he had to say in the following sections of the epistle. The prayer for knowledge precedes the exposition of Christ’s lordship in creation and redemption (1:15–20), its ramifications (1:21–23) and the detailed interaction with the “philosophy” of the false teachers (2:6–23).

10. περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν. Although there is perhaps greater emphasis on knowledge and wisdom in this petitionary prayer than in any other of Paul’s letters (though cf. Eph 1:17–19; 3:16–19)—and this includes a strong intellectual element to enable them to combat error—in true Hebraic fashion it leads to right action and conduct. The Colossians are “to walk worthily of the Lord so as to please him in every way” (cf. Percy, *Probleme*, 126). περιπατῆσαι (“to walk”) is an infinitive of purpose (this fits the context better than the suggestions that the infinitive is one of result, or of explanation), indicating that the knowledge for which Paul prayed was designed to lead to righteous behavior. Paul often characterizes the life and behavior of the Christian by this verb “walk” (περιπατέω: Gal 5:16; cf. v 25; Rom 6:4; 8:4; 14:15; 2 Cor 4:2; Eph 2:10; 4:1; 5:2, 15; Phil 3:17; etc) and in this he is indebted to the OT (Seesemann, TDNT 5, 944. There are no parallels in classical Greek). The word is equivalent to the Hebrew *hālak/hithhallēk* which is found frequently in the Qumran texts to describe the activity of those who walk in “the ways of darkness” (e.g. 1QS 3:21), or, of those who showing themselves to be true sons of light walk before God in an upright manner (1QS 1:8). The

latter “walk according to God’s will” (1QS 5:10; 9:24; cf. Lohse, 27), refusing to please themselves (contrast CD 3:12). The Colossian Christians are to live in a manner that is worthy of the one whom they confess as Lord.

In secular Greek ἀρεσκεία (“pleasing”) usually signified the behavior by which one sought to gain a favor, and therefore was most often employed with a negative connotation meaning “obsequiousness.” However, it could also be used in a positive sense (cf. BAG, 105; Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, 224; MM, 75), and frequently in Hellenistic Judaism referred to what was “well pleasing to God” (especially Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.300; cf. Lohse, 27, 28). The cognate verb “to please” (ἀρέσκω) is found in Paul’s letters on fourteen occasions, with reference to the necessity of pleasing God (or, of pleasing others as a result of one’s obedience to God) rather than pleasing oneself (Rom 8:8; 15:1, 2, 3; 1 Cor 7:32; etc cf. BAG, 105). There is no doubt that in the context of this intercessory prayer, and in the light of the apostle’s use of the cognate verb, ἀρεσκεία refers to pleasing the Lord (so rightly Schweizer, 41; against Foerster, *TDNT* 1, 456, and Lohmeyer, 34)—and that in all things.

καρποφοροῦντες ... αὐξανόμενοι ... δυναμούμενοι ... εὐχαριστοῦντες. As mentioned above the four participles which follow, “bearing fruit” (v 10), “increasing” (v 10), “being strengthened” (v 11) and “giving thanks” (v 12), spell out more precisely what is involved in “walking worthily of the Lord.” The first two, “bearing fruit and increasing,” recall the words in Paul’s thanksgiving about the powerful spread of the gospel (no distinction is intended between the middle voice, καρποφοροῦμενον of v 6 and the active here). It had borne fruit and spread throughout the whole world particularly at Colossae. But here in his intercessory prayer the apostle indicates that the words, with a slight change of meaning (cf. Moule, 51), are applied to the recipients of that gospel as well.

Some commentators consider that the two participles καρποφοροῦντες (“bearing fruit”) and αὐξανόμενοι (“increasing”) are to be held together (so Lohmeyer, 35, Beare, 157, Lohse, 29, and Martin, *NCB*, 52), and related to the source of progress in maturity. On this view, the bearing of fruit and increasing are effected through the knowledge of God and they become visible “in every good work” (cf. Schweizer, 42).

Our preference, however, is to see in the clauses an instance of the verbal arrangement of chiasmus (abba), so that ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ (“in every good work”) is to be taken with καρποφοροῦντες (“bearing fruit”), while τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ (“in the knowledge of God”)—a dative of reference—is joined to αὐξανόμενοι (“increasing”). Accordingly, Paul is asking God that the fruit of good works might appear in greater abundance in their lives—and this because of the seed sown in their midst (v 6)—while they continue to make progress in the knowledge of God. During their pagan days, the Colossians had expressed their hostility to God by “doing evil deeds” (ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς πονηροῖς, 1:21; cf. 3:7). But now the fruit of good works (ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ) should appear in their behavior (cf. Rom 13:3; 2 Cor 9:8; Gal 6:10; Eph 2:10; 1 Tim 2:10; 5:10; 2 Tim 2:21; etc). Since the participles which define the walking worthily are all in the present tense and stress the notion of progress, it is probably right to conclude that the Colossian Christians would receive further knowledge as they were obedient to the knowledge of God they had already received (Bruce, 186).

Paul’s language in the intercessory prayer is reminiscent of the interpretation of the parable of the sower (in its Markan form: 4:1–9, 13–18). If the Sitz im Leben of the parable and its interpretation were the ministry of Jesus (and the arguments against this do not appear to be sufficiently weighty), then Paul’s treatment could be a development of this, on the one hand applying the words to the gospel which he and his associate Epaphras preached (vv 6, 7), and on the other hand relating the terms to the recipients of that gospel, at the same time defining more precisely what was meant by each of the two ideas (on the application of dynamic verbs to the gospel and its recipients, see O’Brien, *NTS* 21 [1974–75] 144–55).

11. ἐν πάσῃ δύναμει δυναμούμενοι κτλ. The third clause “strengthened with all power ...” indicates how the conduct, worthy of the Lord, was to be achieved. The standards set before the Colossians were far higher than those of the false

teachers. And nothing short of God's almighty power at work within them would enable them to live so as to please him in all things.

Two aspects of God's power are stressed by Paul in prayer contexts: first, that in calling and equipping him as an apostle to the Gentiles (cf. 1 Tim 1:12; 2 Cor 12:9); and secondly, that power of God which indwelt the Christian community enabling them to walk in a way that was pleasing to him (cf. Eph 1:18, 19). Here it is the latter which is in view.

God's power is a prominent motif in both Colossians and Ephesians (Col 1:29; 2:12; Eph 1:19; 3:7, 16, 20; 6:10). Here in his intercession, by heaping up several synonymous terms, Paul has accented (1) that it is nothing less than God's indwelling power which is required; (2) that "his glorious might" (τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ; in the LXX κράτος occurs some fifty times, the overwhelming majority of which are references to the power of God) is more than adequate for the Colossians' needs; and, (3) that this strength will be provided as the varying circumstances are confronted (δυναμούμενοι; the present participle denotes the steady accession of strength).

God's mighty power will strengthen the community "for all endurance and long-suffering" (εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν), in the face of trials and opposition, ὑπομονή ("endurance"; the noun and its cognate verb ὑπομένω can be directed to God and so mean to "wait on him," or to the world connoting to "endure, be steadfast") signifies that kind of perseverance which enables one to hold the position already taken in battle against enemy attacks from without (Lohse, 30). By this "endurance" the Colossian community will stand firm in every respect (πᾶς goes with both nouns)—especially by holding out against the pressure of evil forces in the Lycus valley that would lead them astray as well as make them dispirited. This kind of endurance, however, does not derive from personal bravery or stoical fortitude. Rather, as in the OT and later Judaism (cf. Lohse, 30), it is seen to spring from God who is its source (cf. "the God of steadfastness," ὁ θεὸς τῆς ὑπομονῆς, Rom 15:5; this is a wish prayer). Thus he may be petitioned for it (as here; cf. 2 Thess 3:5), or thanked when it is evident in the lives of believers (1 Thess 1:3; cf. 2 Thess 1:4). At the same time Christians are summoned to endurance (cf. Rom 8:25; 15:4) and by it they prove their standing in the faith. With such endurance they persevere through suffering (2 Cor 1:6), as they direct their attention toward the final day (though cf. Martin, NCB, 53).

"Long-suffering" (μακροθυμία) in both Old and New Testaments is used of the patience of God and of his people—note especially Exodus 34:6, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (italics mine). Because of God's dealings with his people this word, which was not very significant in secular Greek, was given a new and unexpectedly profound importance, so that the human attitude of "long-suffering" (μακροθυμία) is now set in a new light. God's patience with his people means they ought to act in a similar manner toward others (cf. the parable of the wicked servant, Matt 18:23–35, and 1 Thess 5:14). "Long-suffering" is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), unable to be produced from the individual's own resources.

The apostle thus prayed that the believers at Colossae, empowered by God's glorious might, would demonstrate "all patience and long-suffering" in the face of opposition, thereby showing that they had their hope set on him.

12–14. As already noted verses 12–14 bring us to the closing section of Paul's petitionary prayer-report rather than introduce a new section, the so-called introtit to the hymn of verses 15–20, in which the community is urged to praise God with a thanksgiving.

It has been argued by Käsemann and others that the language and ideas of verses 12–14, which were not Pauline, "hark back ... to the language of the LXX and revive many of its liturgical and cultic formulations" (Essays, 154, 155; note Schweizer, 44–50). The words, according to Käsemann, showed that the setting of the hymn (vv 15–20) was that of a baptismal liturgy (Bornkamm, Studien, 196, regarded vv 12–14 as the community's confession of faith offered at the eucharist; cf. Dahl, ST 1 [1948] 69–95).

It is possible that Paul, in his petitionary prayer-report, has selected terms and ideas that were current in early Christian worship. Käsemann may be right in noting that “deliver” (ῥύεσθαι), “transfer” (μεθιστάναί), “light” (φῶς), “share” (μέρις) and “lot” (κλήρος) were known in a baptismal context (Schweizer, 49, admits this is difficult to prove; he prefers to call the language of v 12 “conversion terminology”). But the remembrance of being transferred from darkness to light, of receiving redemption and the forgiveness of sins would have been repeatedly the occasion for joyful thanksgiving. Further, if these motifs had been used in a baptismal context (and we have no certain means of knowing), and were in fact pre-Pauline, then it is quite understandable for Paul to remind the readers of these truths, so as to inculcate joyful thanksgiving to the Father. At the same time we may suppose that Paul has used these terms and ideas, with their unmistakable OT and Jewish ring, in his actual prayers for the Colossians. He is, after all, reporting his prayer in this epistolary style.

LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

1QS Serek hayyahad (Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline)

1QSb Appendix B (Blessings) to 1QS

TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

1QS Serek hayyahad (Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline)

1QS Serek hayyahad (Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline)

1QS Serek hayyahad (Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline)

CD Cairo (Genizah text of the) Damascus (Document)

BAG W. Bauer, W. F. Gingrich, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, (Chicago: Chicago U. P., 1979)

MM J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament (London: Hodder, 1930)

Philo, Philo, De Specialibus Legibus

Spec. Leg. Philo, De Specialibus Legibus

TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

NCB New Century Bible [Commentary] (new ed.)

NTS New Testament Studies

LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

NCB New Century Bible [Commentary] (new ed.)

LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

ST Studia theologica

[Peter T. O’Brien, Colossians, Philemon, vol. 44, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1982), 20–25.]

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(1) New Interpreter's Bible:

Colossians 1:9–12, Intercessory Prayer Report

COMMENTARY

The link with v. 8 through “for this reason” suggests that “since the day we heard” has in view the reception of the news about the readers from Epaphras. Certainly, the report of the intercessions made on their behalf appears to be in the light of the full situation that Epaphras is depicted as having communicated. The stress in the first part of the report is on their growth in knowledge both of God’s will and of God, a knowledge that involves spiritual wisdom and understanding (vv. 9–10). Again, and again the letter will emphasize the true source of wisdom and knowledge (e.g., 1:27–28; 2:2–3; 3:10, 16). Together with the labeling of the rival teaching as a “philosophy” in 2:8 and the assertion in 2:23 that for all its claims it only has the appearance of wisdom, these emphases suggest that the prayer report has an eye on the alternative teaching being offered. The same may well be true of the language of growth and fullness it contains (see 2:9–10, 19). The writer’s prayer for the readers, then, is for more, not less, than what others are offering; but he believes this will be found in an ever-increasing appropriation of what they already have in the gospel. In the OT, wisdom frequently involves practical knowledge—that is, the ability to choose right conduct—and here in Colossians the wisdom and insight produced by the Spirit have an explicitly ethical dimension. They are meant to enable the readers to “walk” (a Hebraism common in the LXX and taken up in the Pauline letters to refer to ethical conduct or a way of living) in a manner consistent with their confession of Christ as Lord and fully pleasing to him.

The writer elaborates on such a way of life in the four participial clauses that follow in vv. 10b–12. The first two participles were previously employed in v. 6 to speak of the activity of the gospel itself both in the world and among the readers. Now the fruit bearing and growth that were marks of the gospel are the characteristics to be desired for the readers. The fruit produced is to be good works, and the growth is to be in their knowledge of God. The good works contrast with and replace the “evil works” (v. 21) of the readers’ previous way of life, a juxtaposition elaborated in the vices and virtues contained in the paraenesis in 3:5–17. For the undisputed Pauline letters, too, it should be remembered, authentic faith showed itself in doing good (see Rom 13:3; 2 Cor 5:10; Gal 6:10; 1 Thess 5:15); and the expression “every good work” is found in 2 Cor 9:8 (see also 2 Thess 2:17).

The third participial clause (v. 11) focuses on the power the readers will require to enable them to live lives that are fully pleasing to their Lord. It combines two nouns and a verb referring to power or strength and adds “all” before the first noun and “of glory” after the second in order to convey an impression of something of the divine might available to the readers and to make its point as forcefully as possible. Nothing less than God’s glorious power at work within them will be necessary to live worthily of their Lord. But it is worth noting that this power is not for its own sake or for displays of wonder-working; it is “for all endurance and patience.” The ability to face trials, distractions, and opposition in faithfulness requires more than a survivor instinct or stoic fortitude. Divine resources are needed; it is no accident that patience or long-suffering, which will be mentioned again in the paraenesis in 3:12, is depicted as a fruit of the divine Spirit in Gal 5:22.

The fourth and final participial clause indicates that the life worthy of the Lord, which the writer has requested in his prayer for the readers, will be marked by thankfulness and joy. Joy, of course, is yet another fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22; see also Rom 14:17; 1 Thess 1:6). It is a natural accompaniment to the activity of giving thanks to God, who is designated as Father (cf. v. 3), preparing the way for Christ to be called “his beloved Son” in the following verse. Thankfulness to God for all that God has done for believers in Christ is clearly one of the most essential Christian qualities for this writer; he will call for it again and again in his exhortations (see 2:7; 3:15, 17; 4:2). It is possible that this emphasis is made because thankfulness and joy were in short supply in philosophy, with its severe ascetic regulations (see 2:20–23). The

writer's own extended thanksgiving, within which this explicit mention of thankfulness occurs, can be seen as his modeling of the virtue he wishes to see in others.

Three activities of the Father that provide cause for believers' thanksgiving will be specified. The most immediate, in the relative clause that completes v. 12, is that God has qualified them "to share in the inheritance of the saints in light." In the Jewish Scriptures the inheritance of God's holy people was primarily the promised land. In fact, the two terms used together here in Colossians, *μερίς* (*meris*, "share" or "portion") and *κληρος* (*klēros*, "inheritance"), are frequently used together in the LXX with reference to the land (e.g., Deut 10:9; 32:9; Josh 19:9). But Yahweh as the source of salvation could also be seen as the portion of the people's inheritance (Ps 15:5 LXX). Here in Colossians, too, the inheritance of God's people moves beyond the terrestrial and is rather the transcendent realm of light. Light has connotations both of transcendent splendor, the environment of the heavenly world, and of holiness, ethical purity.

In the Qumran literature, with its dualism between light and darkness, the concept of inheritance had already been developed in this direction, so that the portion of God is that of light<sup>52</sup> and God's people inherit or share the portion of the Holy Ones,<sup>53</sup> the angels in heaven. Some have suggested that *ἅγιοι* (*hagioi*, "holy ones") in v. 12 should also be taken as "angels." With an eye on the rival teaching's veneration of angels (see 2:18), the writer would then be claiming that God had already provided for communion with the angels. Elsewhere in the Pauline writings "holy ones" can include angels in its range of meanings when the context requires (see 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 1:7, 10), but ordinarily it is employed to refer to the saints—that is, to Christian believers. Since the writer uses the term "angels" in 2:18, if he had wanted the readers to find a reference to angels here, he would more likely have used the same term, particularly when he has just previously employed "holy ones" to designate believers as God's holy people in 1:2, 4 and will take up the same term in a similar way in 1:26 (see also 3:12). The thought here, then, is that God has enabled the readers to share with all God's chosen people an inheritance in the realm of light. It is a functional equivalent to the notion that their hope is already secure in heaven (1:5). Later in the paraenesis a future aspect to the inheritance will emerge, as in 3:24 it is viewed as still to be conferred; but here in the context of the thanksgiving the emphasis is that God has already enabled believers to share in the present in this inheritance in the realm of light.

Even if this reading does not present quite as striking and direct a counterpart to the philosophy, the latter may still be in view in two ways. First, if the realm of light has a transcendent heavenly dimension, then again the readers are being reminded that they already have the access to heaven that was of such concern for the rival teachers. Second, the reminder is underlined by the emphasis that God has already qualified them for access to heaven, in which case there can be no reason at all for allowing anyone to disqualify them by insisting on fasting, "the worship of angels," and visionary experience (2:18) as necessary for such access.

## REFLECTIONS

The thanksgiving (1:3–8) and intercessory prayer (1:9–12) are not actual prayers but reports that now serve conventional epistolary functions. They do not, therefore, provide a warrant for using public prayer to preach or to direct subtle messages to the congregation. It is, however, essential to the effectiveness of teaching and preaching that the congregation sense that the exhortations addressed to them come from someone who has identified with their needs, who is genuinely appreciative of their faith and commitment, who prays thankfully and faithfully for them, and whose prayers are directed toward growth and enrichment in their journey with God.

1. The prominence of hope in the thanksgiving is a reminder of the security of a salvation that is centered in Christ in the transcendent realm; it is not dependent on the feelings or efforts of humanity, not confined to the perspectives of this world. Later it will also be stressed that it is possible to shift away from this hope (1:23) and that what is distinctive about such salvation, as compared to the rival teaching, is that it is worked out within the structures of everyday life in this world (3:1–4:1). The tensions between assurance and the necessity of continuing in the faith and between

transcendent and immanent aspects of salvation are vital parts of the preacher's theological framework. The discernment of knowing when to emphasize which pole, when to reassure or when to challenge, is an essential skill in the preacher's pastoral repertoire. Here, in the context of thanksgiving and as an antidote to any suggestion that the gospel message is inadequate, the emphasis on assurance and on the transcendent security of believers' hope in the exalted Christ is the writer's initial and appropriate pastoral stress.

2. There is a host of different ways in which contemporary believers can be tempted to feel that the basic gospel message is inadequate and that it needs to be supplemented by additional religious rites or disciplines, more sophisticated knowledge, or some compelling experience, if they are to be accepted by God or to reach their full potential as human beings. They need to hear that, although the gospel has riches that are yet to be fathomed and implications for all areas of life that are yet to be explored, there is no inadequacy about its basic message. They need to know that the hope that is at the heart of it and inseparable from the person of Christ is secure and that such hope is the potent incentive to a life of faith and love.

3. In a worthy desire to avoid abstraction and to do justice to the concreteness of their lives, perhaps too often Christians' prayers for one another remain at the level of immediate physical needs or specific direction in life or problems of relationships. Sometimes this may be because we wait to pray for others until they have a problem that requires attention or because we have a view of God in which God's primary role is to "fix" things for us. Sometimes such praying also unconsciously reveals our preoccupation with empirical reality and masks doubts about the reality of such dimensions to life as growth in the knowledge of God, spiritual wisdom, or divine empowering for patient and joyful endurance. These reports of prayers of thanksgiving and intercession teach us about holding individuals and communities before God in the whole of their relationship with God and, therefore, not being afraid to pray, both in thankfulness and in petition, in this large and more general way about their equally real spiritual well-being and progress.

4. What is striking in this initial section, even allowing for the hyperbole it contains, is the writer's confidence about the dynamic force and the progress of the gospel. Without such a perspective there can be, on the one hand, a lack of expectancy about any lives being transformed as a result of one's witness to the gospel. On the other hand, there may be an overreliance on one's own persuasive powers or on the latest communication techniques to produce results. The gospel that preachers are privileged to proclaim has its own inherent power. As Paul put it in Rom 1:16: "I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who has faith" (NRSV). And the writer of Colossians is confident in his praying that the very dynamic of the gospel is also able to reproduce itself in and shape the lives of believers, as it bears fruit and grows (cf. 1:6 with 1:10).

5. Colossians 1:1–14 appears in Year C of the lectionary cycle paired with Old Testament readings emphasizing justice and Luke's parable of the Samaritan who acts as neighbor to the victim in the ditch. The broader theme can aid reflection on the significance of the discussion in Colossians of the spiritual wisdom and understanding that entail bearing fruit in every good work (1:9–10) and serve as a reminder that such good work will later be elaborated in terms of justice and fairness (4:1). In turn, the distinctive contribution of Colossians to the overall theme might well be seen in its stress on the hope of the gospel as the motivation for the faith and love that find their expression in the pursuit of justice.

LXX Septuagint

LXX Septuagint

LXX Septuagint

52 1QM 13.5.



53 1QS 11.7–8; 1QH 11.7.

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

[Andrew T. Lincoln, “The Letter to the Colossians,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck, vol. 11 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994–2004), 592–595.]

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{3} New International Greek Testament Commentary

#### Prayer for the Colossian Recipients (1:9–14)

9 That is why we also,<sup>1</sup> from the day we heard, have not ceased to pray on your behalf and to ask<sup>2</sup> that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, 10 that you might walk worthily of the Lord, wholly pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, 11 being empowered with all power in accordance with his glorious might, for all patience and endurance, with joy<sup>3</sup> 12 giving thanks to the Father,<sup>4</sup> who has qualified<sup>5</sup> you<sup>6</sup> for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the authority of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of the son of his love, 14 in whom we have redemption,<sup>7</sup> the forgiveness of sins.

The second part of the extended thanksgiving elaborates the reassurance given in 1:3 that Paul and Timothy pray for the Colossians (see the introduction to 1:3–23). Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* 24, notes how much of the language in 1:9–11 echoes that already used in 1:4–6: “all” (vv. 4, 6, 9–11), “from the day you/we heard” (vv. 6, 9), “came to know the grace of God/knowledge of his will/knowledge of God” (vv. 6, 9–10), “bearing fruit and growing/increasing” (vv. 6, 10).

Equally striking is the sequence of terms not characteristically Pauline in 1:12–14: “qualify” (v. 12—only here and in 2 Cor. 3:6 in the New Testament), “share of the inheritance” (μερίς—elsewhere in Paul only in 2 Cor. 6:15, the Pauline authorship of which is also questioned), “saints in light” (v. 12), aorist tenses (v. 13), “transferred” (v. 13—elsewhere in Paul only in the proverbial 1 Cor. 13:2), “authority,” denoting domain (v. 13), “kingdom of the son of his love” (v. 13), and “forgiveness” (v. 14). Elsewhere Paul never rounds off his opening with a call to thanksgiving (v. 12; Lohmeyer 38).

This could suggest that 1:12 begins a fresh line of thought, with εὐχαριστοῦντες functioning as an imperatival participle and 1:12–14 drawing on preformed liturgical material as “a sort of introit which introduces the solemn hymn sung by the community” (Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* 32–33).<sup>8</sup> But that would detach it from the preceding participles and run counter to the imperatival style used in the rest of the letter (see further O’Brien, *Thanksgivings* 71–75; Aletti, *Épître aux Colossiens* 76–77; Wolter 57–58, 61–62). Nor is it obvious that the setting envisaged for such liturgical usage would be baptism in particular (so, e.g., R. P. Martin, *Colossians and Philemon* 55; Ernst, *Philipper, Philemon, Kolosser, Epheser* 164–65; Pokorný 51, 54–55; Sappington 196): baptism was evidently a much more spontaneous affair in the earliest days of Christianity (Dunn, *Unity* 141–47); and no doubt, as now, congregations in their worship often recalled the spiritual blessings they had received, without particular reference to baptism as such (cf. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* 25). The more elaborate suggestion of Käsemann that 1:12–20 is actually “a primitive Christian baptismal liturgy” has not won much support (Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* 40 n. 63; Gnllka, *Kolosserbrief* 45–46; in contrast Eckart, “*Exegetische Beobachtungen*,” in particular, wants to include vv. 9–12 as the “Eingangsparanese” of a three-part baptismal liturgy).

Perhaps most striking of all is the very Jewish character of the language: “knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (v. 9), “walk,” “knowledge of God” (v. 10), “empowered with all power,” “his glorious might” (v. 11), “the share of the inheritance of the saints in light” (v. 12), God as deliverer<sup>9</sup> from the authority of darkness, “the son

of his love” (v. 13), and “redemption” (v. 14; in each case see the following commentary). This emphasis on (or assumption of) the Jewish character of the gospel to which the Colossian Christians were committed is unlikely to be accidental. It suggests that Paul and Timothy thought it desirable to emphasize just this fundamental feature of their common faith. The most obvious reason is that the Colossians were confronted by local Jews who were confident of the superiority of their own religious practice and who denigrated the claims of these Gentiles to share in their own Jewish heritage (see further pp. 29–35 in the Introduction, and on 2:8, 16, and 18).

1:9 διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς, ἀφ’ ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν, οὐ παυόμεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι καὶ αἰτούμενοι, ἵνα πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ. Having completed his thanksgiving (1:3–8) and in view of having had so much to give thanks for, Paul turns from thanksgiving to prayer, more or less repeating what he has already said in the second half of 1:3. “From the day we heard” is perhaps a deliberate echo of the same phrase already used in 1:6: as they were fruitful from the very day they heard the gospel, so Paul and Timothy have been prayerful from the very day they heard of their response to the gospel. Note again the plural, in contrast to Phil. 1:9 and Phm. 4–7 (but as in 1 Thes. 3:9–10 and 2 Thes. 1:11–12). The intensity of prayer is marked—“from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray on your behalf and to ask” (cf. Rom. 1:9–10; 1 Thes. 1:2–3; and especially Eph. 1:15–16)—and introduces the “fill/fullness” motif that comes to be a feature of the letter (1:9, 19, 24, 25; 2:2, 9, 10; 4:12, 17; O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* 20). The middle voice αἰτεῖσθαι (“ask”) appears elsewhere in the Paulines only in Eph. 3:20 (cf. 1 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 3:13).

It is not surprising that the prayer focuses on “knowledge of his (God’s) will.”<sup>10</sup> For a theist who believes that God’s active purpose determines the ordering of the world, lies behind events on earth, and shapes their consequences, one of the most desirable objectives must be to know God’s will. The corollary, spelled out in the following phrases, is that such knowledge gives insight into and therefore reassurance regarding what happens (often unexpected in human perspective) and helps direct human conduct to accord with that will. Such desire to know and do God’s will is naturally very Jewish in character (e.g., Pss. 40:8; 143:10; 2 Macc. 1:3; Testament of Issachar 4:3) and was, not surprisingly, shared by Jesus (Matt. 6:10; 7:21; Mark 3:35; 14:36; Luke 12:47) and the first Christians (e.g., Acts 21:14; Eph. 5:17; 6:6; 1 Thes. 4:3; Heb. 10:36; 13:21; 1 Pet. 3:17; 1 John 2:17; see also on 1:1). No doubt the knowledge prayed for here included the teachings that follow in the letter (Wolter 59), but hardly need be limited to that.

A characteristic claim in Jewish tradition was that the necessary knowledge of God’s will came through the law: “Happy are we, Israel, because we know what is pleasing to God” (Bar. 4:4); “you know his will and approve the things that matter, being instructed from the law” (Rom. 2:18; cf. Wis. 15:2–3; 4 Ezra 8:12). But for Paul in particular there was now a better and surer way of knowing God’s will and of discerning what really mattered: by the personal transformation that flowed from inward renewal (Rom. 12:2, probably set in deliberate contrast to Rom. 2:18), so that he can sum up the call to Christian conduct in terms of walking in accordance with the Spirit (Rom. 8:4, 13–14; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25).

However, there is no simple contrast here between Judaism and Christianity so far as the quality and stimulus for ethical conduct is concerned. For the recognition that obedience to the law must spring from inner consecration is familiar also in Jewish thought (e.g., Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:26–27). Even the claim that Paul’s Spirit ethic was distinctively eschatological in character (the hopes of Jeremiah and Ezekiel now fulfilled) does not enable us to draw a clear line of contrast with his Jewish contemporaries, as the DSS remind us. For they, too, claim a knowledge (of God’s will) given directly by the eschatological Spirit, though a knowledge that, as is also evident, focuses on a very sectarian interpretation of Torah (see, e.g., 1QH 4:9–12; 6:10–12; 11:7–10; 12:11–13; 16:11–12; 1QS 5:8–10; 9:13; 11:15–18; see further Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* 25). Thus, although the orientation to Torah comes out differently in each case (“the law of Christ” facilitating Paul’s inclusive gospel in contrast to Qumran’s introverted and exclusivist interpretation), the eschatological-psychological dynamic is similar.

The spiritual source and character of this knowledge is reinforced by the qualifying phrase, “in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” which could equally well be rendered “in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (RSV/NRSV, NIV, Harris), or “with all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives” (GNB). The language and aspiration were widely shared by Greco-Roman philosophy, as classically expressed in Aristotle’s numbering σοφία and σύνεσις (“wisdom” and “understanding”) with φρόνησις (“prudence”) as the highest virtues (*Ethica Nicomachea* 1.13).<sup>11</sup> But the more immediate background for the thought here is again, doubtless, Jewish, since the combination of “wisdom and understanding” is a repeated feature of Jewish writings.<sup>12</sup> Here, too, the wisdom in particular is understood as given through the law (Deut. 4:6; 1 Chron. 22:12; Sir. 24:23–26; Bar. 3:36–4:1), but it is equally recognized that such wisdom can come only from above (as in Wis. 9:9–10). And particularly to be noted is the recognition that wisdom and understanding come only from the Spirit (Exod. 31:3; 35:31; Isa. 11:2; Wis. 9:17–19; Sir. 39:6; Philo, *De gigantibus* 22–27; 4 Ezra 14:22, 39–40). It is certainly this thought that is taken up here (“spiritual” as given by and manifesting the Spirit—cf. 1 Cor. 2:12–13; 12:1, 4; 14:1–2). Whether there is an implied rebuke of an alternatively conceived or false wisdom<sup>13</sup> is less clear since in that case we might have expected more emphasis on the point (as in 1 Corinthians 1–2); but the allusion in 2:23 does indicate that a claim to wisdom was part of the teaching in Colossae that called forth the response of this letter (see also 2:2–3).

All this reflects the charismatic and eschatological character of Christian self-consciousness, not least in the transition from conviction to praxis: charismatic in the sense of the immediacy of wisdom and insight that Christians (or Paul in particular) expected to provide their lives with direction and motivation (the parallel with Phil. 1:9–10 is very close)<sup>14</sup> and eschatological in that they (or Paul in particular) were convinced that this knowledge of God’s will was the outworking of the eschatological Spirit and renewal looked for in the prophets (hence the enthusiastic “filled with” and “all”; cf. Isa. 11:2; 33:6).

1:10 περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν, ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ. As already implied, the object or value (the infinitive signifying object or result) of knowledge of God’s will, of wisdom and understanding, is that it enables appropriate conduct. The metaphor “walk” denoting conduct in the walk of life is untypical of Greek thought (BAGD s.v. περιπατέω; H. Seesemann, TDNT 5.941) but characteristically Jewish (e.g., Exod. 18:20; Deut. 13:4–5; Ps. 86:11; Prov. 28:18; Isa. 33:15; 1QS 5:10; CD 19:4; the corresponding Hebrew verb *halak* gives rise to the technical term “halakhah” to denote rabbinic rulings on how the law should be interpreted in daily life). Similar exhortations appear in other Pauline letters, but never quite as a standard formula: “conduct yourselves (πολιτεύεσθε) in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 1:27), “walk worthily of God” (1 Thes. 2:12), and “walk worthily of your calling” (Eph. 4:1; cf. Rom. 6:4; 8:4; 13:13; 1 Cor. 7:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 5:16). Here the thought is of conduct worthy of the Lord, that is, of Jesus (though see Aletti, *Épître aux Colossiens* 72–73). That is particularly understandable in a letter where the significance of Christ is so much in focus, but it also underlines the degree to which Christian conduct was informed and directed by the traditions regarding Jesus’ own manner of life (see on 2:6).

Somewhat unnecessarily, but wholly in keeping with the continuing rather florid style (“all” occurs five times in 1:9–11), Paul adds “to all pleasing” (literally). The noun (ἀρεσκεία) occurs only here in the New Testament (in the LXX only in Prov. 31:30) and in wider Greek usage usually has a negative connotation (“obsequiousness”; cf. 3:22). But it does occur in a positive sense, and Philo uses it a number of times of pleasing God (BAGD s.v. ἀρέσκεια; Lohmeyer 34 n. 2; Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* 27–28; Wolter 61). Paul also uses the verb in the same connection, usually with reference to God (Rom. 8:8; Gal. 1:10; 1 Thes. 2:4, 15; 4:1), but in 1 Cor. 7:32 with reference to pleasing “the Lord,” as by implication here. It is worth noting how in several passages the thought is of conduct modeled on that of Christ (Rom. 15:1–2; 1 Cor. 10:33–11:1; 1 Thes. 4:1; see again on 2:6).<sup>15</sup>

The test of this conduct, as with all conduct, will be what it produces. The imagery of “bearing fruit and increasing” echoes 1:6, but this time clearly in reference to moral maturity (see on 1:6). Such is the intensity of some traditional

Reformation polemic against the thought of any merit adhering to “good works” that it might come as a surprise that Paul should ever have spoken in commendatory fashion of “good works” (cf. Lindemann, Kolosserbrief 21; contrast Aletti, *Épître aux Colossiens* 74: “typically Pauline”). In fact, however, he does so on a number of occasions (Rom. 3:7; 13:3; 2 Cor. 9:8; Gal. 6:10; Phil. 1:6; 2 Thes. 2:17; also Eph. 2:10); Paul would think typically of almsgiving and hospitality (Rom. 12:8, 13). Any hint of post-Pauline authorship here derives not from the rather odd inference that Paul thought good works were displeasing to God but from the fact that the phrase became an intensive feature of post-Pauline usage (with fourteen occurrences in the Pastorals).

The basis from which or means by which the fruit bearing and growth “in every good work” is to come about is the “knowledge of God.”<sup>16</sup> Repetition of the same possibly intensive form (ἐπίγνωσις) as in 1:9 doubles the insistence that such conduct can only grow from such knowledge. The term here includes “knowledge of his will” (see on 1:9), but is much larger in scope, including knowledge of God’s grace (see on 1:6, which uses the equivalent verb; Eph. 1:17–23 is a rich elaboration of the theme). Another characteristic Jewish theme, “knowledge of God,” includes experience of God’s dealings (e.g., 1 Sam. 3:7; Ps. 9:10; Isa. 43:10; Mic. 6:5) and acknowledgment of God in appropriate action (e.g., Deut. 4:39–40; Prov. 9:10; Dan. 11:32; Hos. 8:1–3).<sup>17</sup> According to Paul, failure thus to know and acknowledge God is at the root of human sin (Rom. 1:21; cf. Wis. 16:16). The interdependence of experience of the divine and practical conduct is a feature both of the phrase and of the present passage. Gal. 4:9 and 1 Cor. 13:12 are reminders that the initiative in this experiential knowledge is always God’s, a point that Colossians immediately goes on to underline.

1:11 ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν. The sentence runs on with continued emphasis that such fruitful living is wholly dependent on divine enabling. The power of God is a familiar Pauline theme (e.g., Rom. 1:20; 9:17; 1 Cor. 1:18, 24; 6:14; 2 Cor. 13:4) and prominent in Ephesians (1:19; 3:7, 16, 20; 6:10). It is also deeply rooted in Jewish thought (see, e.g., W. Grundmann, TDNT 2.291–94; Wolter 63), and though there seems to have been a heightened interest in the theme in Greco-Roman religion of the period (C. E. Arnold, ABD 5.444–45), the Semitic doubling (“empowered with all power”) is sufficient indication that the thought world here is still preeminently Jewish.<sup>18</sup> Particularly noticeable in Paul’s usage is the claim actually to have experienced this power and to have been its instrument in his mission (Rom. 1:16; 15:19; 1 Cor. 2:4–5; 2 Cor. 4:7; 12:9; 1 Thes. 1:5).<sup>19</sup> It is this experience of sustaining, empowering grace (“the power of the Holy Spirit” —Fee 644) for which Paul prays for the Colossians (cf. again particularly Eph. 1:19; see also on 1:29).

As if the point were not already clear beyond doubt, the sense of complete dependence on divine enabling is reinforced with a further flourish: “according to the might of his glory” (a Semitism = “his glorious might”). κράτος (“might”) is an understandable variant for δύναμις (“power”), though it appears only in the late (disputed) Paulines; its use in Eph. 1:19 strengthens the parallel with this verse. Still more characteristically Jewish is the talk of divine glory (δόξα), which hardly occurs in Greek writing apart from Jewish influence (see, e.g., BAGD s.v. δόξα 1a). Like Hebrew kabod, it denotes the awesome radiance of deity that is the visible manifestation of God in theophany (e.g., Exod. 16:10; 24:16–17; 40:34; Lev. 9:23; Pss. 63:2; 102:16; Isa. 6:3; 66:18–19). Particularly influential in Jewish thought was the theophany of Exod. 33:17–23, which served as a constant reminder that no one, not even Moses, can ever see God (cf., e.g., Deut. 4:12; Ps. 97:2; 1 Enoch 14:21; Apocalypse of Abraham 16:3; Philo, *De specialibus legibus* 1:45; John 1:18; 6:46; see also on 1:15), despite the longings of the Jewish mystics influenced even more by Ezek. 1:26–28.

Particularly notable here is the thought of divine glory as a manifestation of power (like the radiant energy of the sun), a thought equally rooted in the folk memory of the fearful numinous power (*mysterium tremendum*) of such theophanies (Exod. 19:16–24; Num. 16:19–35; Isa. 6:4–5). In Paul this is understood as beneficial power, transforming for the better (Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 3:18; the parallel with Ephesians here is 3:16), though with double effect in 2 Thes. 1:9–10. Since transformation into heavenly splendor (glory) is part of the hope for heaven (see also on 1:27 and 3:4),<sup>20</sup> the prayer is in effect for that process to be forwarded already here on earth (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16–5:5; see also 1:27; H. Hegemann, EDNT

1.346–47). That this train of thought is in mind here is confirmed by the strong eschatological and realized eschatological note in the next two verses.

In the meantime, however, that is, in the circumstances of life in the present, one of the ways this powerful empowering of glorious might comes to most effective expression is in “all patience and endurance” (REB: “ample strength to meet with fortitude and patience whatever comes”). The two nouns are near synonyms. Both are included not so much because of their distinctive meanings but to reinforce the point that hope of heavenly glory in the future requires patience and endurance now (not least in the face of alternative religious claims) and that both the present patience and the future transformation are the outworking of the same glorious might. “Patience” (ὕπομονή) was highly prized both within wider Hellenism, particularly by the Stoics, as steadfast resistance of evil and fortitude under hardship (F. Hauck, TDNT 4.582–83), and in contemporary Judaism (frequently in 4 Maccabees to denote the steadfastness of the martyrs—1:11; 7:9; 9:8, 30, etc.). In the later Greek translations the use of ὑπομονή in Job markedly increases (cf. Jas. 5:11). Paul, like other New Testament writers, gave it a prominent place among the Christian virtues, not least, as here, as a quality that those hoping for higher things must display (Rom. 2:7; 5:3–4; 8:25; Luke 21:19; Heb. 12:1 Jas. 1:3–4; Rev. 3:10; 13:10). “Endurance” (μακροθυμία)<sup>21</sup> is less frequently used in the New Testament, and sometimes of divine forbearance (Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 1 Tim. 1:16; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:15). In Paul, more often the late Paul, it appears in lists of Christian virtues (2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; 2 Tim. 3:10; 4:2). Somewhat surprisingly, but presumably because these two words are such close synonyms, they appear only occasionally together (2 Cor. 6:4–6, 2 Tim. 3:10; Jas. 5:10–11; 1 Clement 64; Ignatius, Ephesians 3:1).

1 Moule, Colossians and Philemon 52 takes the καί with the first two words: “this is precisely why.” See also discussion in Aletti, *Épître aux Colossiens* 68–69.

2 “And to ask” (καὶ αἰτούμενοι) is omitted by one or two witnesses (including B), perhaps in recognition that it is both unusual in Paul (only 1 Cor. 1:22; but also Eph. 3:13 and 20) and tautologous here.

3 RSV, NEB, and JB follow the old verse division (supported by  $\mathfrak{B}^{46}$ , which adds “and” after “joy”) by linking “with joy” to what precedes (e.g., NEB “with fortitude, patience, and joy”), but in each case the revisers (NRSV, REB, and NJB) have followed NA26 and UBS3 in linking the phrase with what follows (e.g., REB “and to give joyful thanks”). Otherwise, see, e.g., Pokorný 50 n. 23; earlier discussion in Abbott 205. There is a similar problem in Phil. 1:4.

4 Some significant manuscripts and versions have evidently replaced the more strongly attested “the Father” (τῷ πατρὶ) with “God” (τῷ θεῷ), presumably because designation of God simply as the Father absolutely is unusual in the New Testament outside the Johannines (in the Paulines only Rom. 6:4; Eph. 2:18; 3:14) and unexpected here (Metzger 620).

5 The reading “who called” (ΤΩΚΑΛΕΣΑΝΤΙ) may have been the result of confusion (with ΤΩΙΚΑΝΩΣΑΝΤΙ) or the deliberate substitution of a better known word for one that occurs in only one other passage in the New Testament (Metzger 620).

6 In contrast to 1:7, the weight of evidence here favors “you” rather than “us” (preferred by RSV).

7 Some late witnesses have harmonized the text with Eph. 1:7 by adding “through his blood.”

8 Vawter suggests that 1:12–14 represent an earlier redaction of the christological hymn (1:15–20) prior to its use in Colossians.

9 Hoppe 168 notes the theo-logical emphasis in the section, with “the Father” as the subject of the three action verbs in vv. 12–13.

10 On whether the prefix ἐπι- significantly strengthens the force of γνῶσις (“knowledge”) see Lightfoot 136; Bruce, Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians 46 n. 30; Harris 30; and above on 1:6. Note the more or less synonymous use of ἐπίγνωσις and γνῶσις in 2:2 and 3.

DSS Dead Sea Scrolls

RSV Revised Standard Version

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

NIV New International Bible

GNB Good News Bible

11 Lightfoot’s exposition (136) is still of value: he defines σοφία as “mental excellence in its highest and fullest sense”; “while σύνεσις is critical, φρόνησις is practical; while σύνεσις apprehends the bearings of things, φρόνησις suggests lines of action.” See also H. Conzelmann, TDNT 7.889; Lohse, Colossians and Philemon 26.

12 Exod. 31:3; 35:31, 35; Deut. 4:6; 1 Chron. 22:12; 2 Chron. 1:10–12; Job 8:10; 12:13; 28:20; 39:17; Pss. 49:3; 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 2:2–3, 6; Isa. 10:13; 11:2; 29:14; Jer. 51:15; Dan. 1:17; 2:21; 5:14; Jdt. 8:29; Wis. 9:4–6; Sir. 1:4; 14:20; 15:3; 24:25–26; 37:22–23; 39:6, 9–10; 50:27; Bar. 3:23; Testament of Zebulun 6:1. For DSS see particularly 1QS 4:3 and further Lohse, Colossians and Philemon 25. Note the practical orientation of so much Jewish wisdom (see, e.g., G. Fohrer, TDNT 7.484–88).

13 As suggested, e.g., by Lightfoot 137; Abbott 202–3; Masson 93–94; Gnllka, Kolosserbrief 41; O’Brien, Colossians, Philemon 22.

14 Cf. particularly Dibelius, Kolosser, Epheser, Philemon 7; Percy, Probleme 122–27; see further my Jesus 222–25; Fee 641–44.

BAGD W. Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, ed. W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979)

TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

BAGD W. Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, ed. W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979)

15 Wolter 60–61 prefers to take the clause in the sense of conduct that brings to expression the Colossians’ belongingness (Zugehörigkeit) to the Lord.

16 Taking τῇ ἐπίγνωσει τοῦ θεοῦ as an instrumental dative (so most, e.g., Abbott 203). Dibelius, Kolosser, Epheser, Philemon 8, and O’Brien, Colossians, Philemon 23, prefer to take it as a dative of reference: “in the knowledge of God”; but in that case the author could hardly have failed to complete the balance of the sentence by inserting ἐν (“in”), as several scribes realized in copying the text.

17 “The pious life of the Jew consists in gift and task (Gabe und Aufgabe), a continuous interaction (Ineinander) of recognition and act” (Lohmeyer 32).

TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

ABD The Anchor Bible Dictionary, ed. D. N. Freedman (6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992)

18 “A devout Jew could request God his Father for a way of life pleasing to God no more clearly and intimately than does Paul here” (Lohmeyer 33). “If one were to remove the basis given for Christian conduct by means of the words ‘worthy of the Lord,’ then the rest of the passage could easily appear in a Jewish text” (Lohse, Colossians and Philemon 31 [my translation of the German original]).

19 Here again we may note a parallel with the Qumran community; see Lohse, Colossians and Philemon 30.

BAGD W. Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, ed. W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979)

20 Note particularly Segal’s thesis that Paul uses the language of transformation gained through contact with Jewish mystical apocalypticism to express the hope of ultimate salvation (Paul ch. 2; see also Morray-Jones, “Transformational Mysticism”).

EDNT Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. H. Balz and G. Schneider (3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–93)

REB Revised English Bible

TDNT G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

21 The Greek term means literally “the ‘long breath’ which can hold out in face of failure or opposition” (Schweizer, Colossians 44). On the importance of God’s forbearance within Jewish thought see my Romans 552 and 558.

[James D. G. Dunn, The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans Publishing; Paternoster Press, 1996), 67–75.]

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{4} Sacra Pagina Commentary series

### 3. Prayer on Behalf of the Colossians (1:9–14)

9. Because of this we also, from the day on which we heard it, have not ceased to pray on your behalf, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10. so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, pleasing to him in every respect, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God, 11. being strengthened with all the strength, in accordance with his glorious might, for all endurance and patience, while joyfully 12. giving thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light, 13. who delivered us out of the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son 14. in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

#### NOTES

9. Because of this we also, from the day on which we heard it: This construction reinforces the close connection between vv. 9–14 and the preceding verses. Each section constitutes one long sentence in Greek and they share many words and phrases. Thanksgiving and intercession both flow from the report the apostle has received from Epaphras concerning the Colossians (1:7–8). This report is central to the nature of the apostle’s relationship with the Colossians at present and it shapes the instructions he is about to give. The term kai in the Greek text here means “also” and it is

employed to communicate the fact that not only does Paul offer thanksgiving to God for the Colossians, but he “also” intercedes on their behalf (see Harris 29).

***have not ceased to pray on your behalf, asking:*** What is being stressed by the use of the verbs “[not] cease” (pauō), “pray” (proseuchomai), and “ask” (aiteō) is uninterrupted intercession on behalf of the Colossians. Paul’s never-ceasing intercession is also highlighted in 1:3—an indication of the close connection between this section and the thanksgiving of 1:3–8. In 4:3 Paul asks the community to pray for him. Prayer is portrayed as an important feature of community life in Colossae (cf. Col 4:2, 12).

***that you may be filled with knowledge of his will:*** This phrase explains the content of the apostle’s intercession on behalf of the Colossians. Paul asks God to fill the Colossians with knowledge of his will (“his” refers to God’s will). The compound noun translated as knowledge here, epignōsis, can mean full or complete knowledge or insight (see the translations in NJB; REB). But it seems more likely that the addition of *epi* to the general term *gnōsis* in this case serves the grammatical purpose of expressing knowledge directed toward a particular object, i.e., God’s will (see Harris 30; see also the notes on 1:6). This view of knowledge is also found in the writings of the Qumran community (e.g., 1QH 4:9–12; 1QS 5:8–10; 11:15–20). The triad of “knowledge, wisdom, and understanding” in this verse recalls the gifts that are granted to those who live their lives under the direction of the Spirit of Truth (1QS 4:1–6; for a full discussion of parallels with QL see Lohse 25). Knowledge of God is an important concept in Colossians (cf. Col 1:6, 9, 10; 2:2, 3; 3:10). How one attains such knowledge is at the heart of the dispute involving the false teachers. The use of the verb *plēroō* (“fill”) as a means of describing the process of spiritual transformation is intriguing. A similar use of the term is found in 2:10. The related term “fullness” (*plērōma*) is employed to describe the means by which God infuses the universe through Christ (1:19; 2:9). This terminology is even more extensive in Ephesians (cf. Eph 1:10, 23; 3:19; 4:10, 13; 5:18); it plays a vital part in the unique christologies/theologies of these documents.

***in all spiritual wisdom and understanding:*** “In” (*en*) should probably be understood as referring to instrument: the means through which God’s knowledge is both attained and made manifest (cf. NIV). (On the relationship between wisdom and understanding [insight or discernment] in Jewish writings see Deut 4:6; Dan 2:21; cf. Bar 3:23.) “Spiritual” (*pneumatikos*) may refer to what relates to the human spirit or to what is given by the Spirit—the gifts of the Spirit (cf. Rom 1:11; 1 Cor 2:12–13; 12:1, 4; 14:1–2). In order to make this latter meaning clear Eduard Lohse renders the phrase as “in all wisdom and insight worked by the Spirit” (27). Given the extensive recognition that wisdom and understanding come only from the Spirit (cf. Exod 31:3; 35:31; Isa 11:2; Wis 9:17–18; Sir 39:6; Philo, *De gigantibus* 22–27; 4 Ezra 14:22, 39–40; cited in Dunn 71), it is likely that this thought is taken up here as well. The ability to discern is especially critical because of the problem with false teaching in the community (cf. 2:8–23). It is valuable to contrast the positive evaluation here of the role of wisdom in Christian existence with the negative evaluation of the claims to wisdom by those who adhere to false teaching. The measures adopted by the opponents have only the appearance of wisdom (2:23). The first chapter of Colossians contains many instances of the term *pas* (all, every). The occurrence in this verse is the first in a cluster (1:9–11; cf. 1:4, 6): Wholeness, completeness, and fullness are closely related themes that run throughout this epistle.

***10. so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, pleasing to him in every respect:*** The verb *peripateō* refers to how one lives the whole of one’s life. Hence most modern translations refer to “living a life” or “leading a life” that is worthy of the Lord. But the more literal translation “walk” better captures the active dimension of the concept. The verb also occurs in 2:6, an important text summarizing the teaching in the first part of the epistle and offering a transition to the discussion of false teaching. In 3:7 the verb *peripateō* is used to draw attention to the way of life of nonbelievers, which has now been rejected by community members, and in 4:5 it refers to how believers should conduct themselves in relation to nonbelievers. Paul frequently employs this verb to describe the conduct of believers (e.g., Gal 5:16; 1 Cor 7:17; 2 Cor 5:7), apparently influenced by the metaphorical reference to walking in Jewish thought (e.g., Exod 18:20;



Deut 13:4–5; Ps 86:11; Prov 28:18). The life that is worthy of the Lord involves walking in the world and visibly demonstrating the fruits of Christian existence. The verb *peripateō* occurs in a very similar expression in 1 Thess 2:12. It is also central to the ethical exhortations in 1 Thess 4:1–12, which highlight the contrast between the morality of believers and the standards of the outside world and offer advice as to how one should interact with the nonbelieving world. In Rom 8:4 Paul employs the term to describe the identity of believers as those “who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (NRSV; see interpretation below). The noun “pleasing” (*areskeia*) occurs only here in the NT (cf. LXX Prov 31:30). In the wider Greek literature it most often carries negative connotations: obsequiousness (BAGD 105), but here it is clearly used in a positive sense. Paul frequently makes use of the related verb “to please” (*areskō*) to refer to pleasing God (e.g., Rom 8:8; Gal 1:10; 1 Thess 2:4, 15; 4:1).

***bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God:*** Bearing fruit and growing are the first two of four participles describing the characteristics of walking in a manner that is worthy of the Lord. To bear fruit in every good work (“all kinds of good deeds”; BAGD 405; cf. 2 Cor 9:8) is to demonstrate what has transformed one inwardly. In Pauline Christianity good works seem to be understood as central to the community’s interaction with the outside world. This can be seen especially clearly in Rom 13:3 where good works are viewed as contributing to the approval of believers by civic authorities. In Gal 6:10 Paul lays special emphasis on benefiting the members of the household of faith, but also speaks of the necessity of working for the good of all people. In some texts the verb “to bear fruit” (*karpophoreō*) refers to “practical conduct as the fruit of inner life” (BAGD 405; Philo, *Cher.* 84; *Odes Sol.* 11.23; cf. Rom 7:4; Pol. Phil. 1:2). Growth—an important theme in Colossians—is mentioned here, as in 1:6, but the meaning is slightly different. In 1:6 growth is the expansion that occurs as the gospel is spread throughout the world; it refers to outward expansion. Growth in 1:10 refers to the intensifying experience of God shared by believers; this is inward expansion. It is important to note, however, that an alternate understanding of this phrase is grammatically possible, as is made clear by Lohse’s translation: “that you bear fruit in every good work and grow through the knowledge of God.” In this case the knowledge of God is the means through which the bearing fruit and growing take place rather than being the subject of growth itself (see Lohse 28–29). On knowledge see the notes on 1:9.

***11. being strengthened with all the strength, in accordance with his glorious might:*** “Being strengthened” is the third of four participles describing the characteristics of walking in a manner that is worthy of the Lord (v. 10). This participle is a cognate of the noun “power” or “strength” (*dynamis*), which also occurs here and is closely related in meaning to the term here translated as “might” (*kratos*). The focus on God’s power in Colossians is in keeping with the significance attributed to God’s transcendence and rule of the universe. The same power through which God reigns also infuses Christians (cf. 1:29). These ideas become even more important in Ephesians (Eph 1:19; 3:16, 20; 6:10). According to Eph 3:16 believers are strengthened in power by the Spirit.

***for all endurance and patience:*** “Endurance” (*hypomonē*) means fortitude and perseverance especially in relation to an external threat or enemy. In 2 Cor 1:6 Paul reinforces his solidarity with the Corinthians by speaking of the kind of endurance that must persevere in hope through suffering: “if we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering” (NRSV; see Lohse 30–31). There are indications in Colossians that believers are experiencing hostility or the threat of hostility at the hands of outsiders (see the notes on 4:5–6). Under such circumstances their commitment requires great fortitude and patience (*makrothymia*). Patience is a gift of the Spirit in Paul’s letters (cf. Gal 5:22; 1 Cor 13:4). In 3:12 believers are called to clothe themselves with patience.

***while joyfully:*** A more literal translation of the phrase would be “with joy” (see NAB). It has been rendered here as “while joyfully” (as in the NRSV) because the phrase fits more naturally with the following verse: “while joyfully giving thanks.” A very similar construction is found in Phil 1:4. Lohse views vv. 12–14 as a summons to give thanks that has been influenced by traditional liturgical language of prayer, thanksgiving, and celebration. He believes that vv. 12–14 have

been placed before the Christ-hymn to serve as a type of introit, introducing the hymn sung by the community. The singing of the hymn by the community should open with the sound of joy (cf. 1 Thess 5:16–18; Phil 4:4–6; see Lohse 32–33). On the relationship between the Christ-hymn of 1:15–20 and this section see also the notes on 1:13 below.

**12. giving thanks to the Father:** Giving thanks is the final participle describing the characteristics of walking in a manner that is worthy of the Lord (v. 10). It has sometimes been judged to be the equivalent of an imperative: “Give thanks with joy” (see Lohse 32; Taylor and Reumann 122–23). The interests of the thanksgiving in 1:3–8 are reiterated here. This verse is subject to a variety of variant readings (see Metzger 620). These seem to have been caused by the unusual designation of God simply as “the Father” (tō patri) when Christ has not been named. This led some copyists to modify the phrase, adding either “of Christ” (tou Christou), or in some cases “God” ([tō] theō).

**who has made you fit to share:** As is made clear by the alternate readings proposed by the NRSV there are two textual variants to consider here. The unusual expression “made fit” (hikanoō) is strongly attested (e.g., ⱼ46 A C Dc K L P), but the alternate term “called” (kaleō) is also contained in several Western manuscripts (e.g., D\* F G 33 436 1175 itd,g copsa goth arm eth). The unusual use of the phrase “to make fit” or “to qualify” may have led copyists to choose the more common term. In the NT hikanoō is found elsewhere only in 2 Cor 3:6. In addition, several manuscripts refer to “us” (e.g., A C D G K P Ψ 33 614 Byz Lect it vg syrph,h copbo al) rather than “you” (e.g., κ B 1739 syrhm g copsa goth arm eth), but the substitution was probably the result of an attempt to harmonize v. 12 with v. 13 (see Metzger 620).

**the inheritance of the saints in the light:** This phrase should be compared to Acts 26:18 (cf. Acts 20:32)—a summary of Paul’s teaching that contains both the term “inheritance” or “lot” (klēros) and a reference to those who are sanctified (i.e., the saints or holy ones; a cognate of the expression hoi hagioi occurs). It has been suggested, based largely on the Qumran evidence (e.g., 1QS 11:7–8; 1QH 11:11–12), that hoi hagioi refers to the angels that figure prominently in the religiosity of Colossians (e.g., 2:18; see Lohse 36; Taylor and Reumann 123–24; see also BAGD 9). But the fact that “saints” is usually used in the more general sense, referring to those who belong to the people of God (cf. 1:2, 4, 26, etc.; see the notes on 1:2), as well as the similar terminology in Acts have led others to argue that this interpretation is unlikely (see Harris 34–35). It is not easy to decide the matter, but the fact that apocalyptic thought includes the notion of fellowship with angels or the righteous being in communion with angels tips the balance in favor of “saints” referring to angels (1 Enoch 51; Matt 22:30; cf. 1QS 4:20–23; Pol. Phil. 12:2; cited in Dunn 52; see also the notes on Eph 1:18; 2:1). On “the inheritance” see the note on 3:24 (cf. Eph 1:14, 18; 5:5). The reference to the light is probably to the nature of the kingdom in which the believers now dwell. This is the kingdom of God’s beloved Son mentioned in v. 13—the antithesis of the power of darkness. Similar concepts occur in the QL (cf. 1QM 13:4–18; for further parallels and more extensive discussion of this relationship see Lohse 35–37).

**13. who delivered us out of the power of darkness:** Verses 13–14 are sometimes taken together with vv. 15–20 (see REB; NJB). They are in fact closely related to the christological hymn of vv. 15–20. With these verses the focus is shifted toward the Son and away from the Father in the first instance, but vv. 15–20 have often been viewed as an independent unit (see below). Moreover, vv. 13–14 continue the interests of previous verses in spelling out the grounds for offering thanksgiving to the Father, and the reference to “darkness” in v. 13 clearly offers a parallel to the focus on light in the previous verse. Thus vv. 13–14 are best read as closely related to vv. 9–12, but acting as transitional verses in relation to the next section (this sense of transition is clearly visible in v. 14). The notion of deliverance here recalls the Exodus (Exod 6:6; 14:30; Judg 6:9, 13) and God’s rescue of God’s people generally (e.g., Judg 8:4; Ps 77:11–15). The preposition ek is usually rendered in this case as “from” (from the power of darkness). Yet “out of the power of darkness” captures more forcefully the sense of rescue and deliverance from an existence that is devoid of hope. Ek in this case refers to “situations and circumstances out of which someone is brought” (BAGD 234). There is a very strong sense of transference from one realm to the other. The term (exousia) translated here as “power” is a central concept in Pauline thought. It is used elsewhere clearly to establish Christ’s reign; Christ conquers all other powers—even those that rule in

the spiritual world (cf. 1:16; 2:10, 15). Exousia can carry a wide variety of meanings in the NT, including publicly recognized power that sets one apart as an authority (such as in the case of apostolic authority; cf. 2 Cor 10:8; 13:10). In 1:13 the term should be read in relation to the concept of kingdom. It refers to the realm or domain in which power is exercised (BAGD 278). This domain is characterized by darkness (on the similarity between this language and concepts in the QL see the notes on 1:12). That this “power of darkness” is meant as the most negative and menacing of all dominions is made clear by the use of the same expression in Luke 22:53, which offers Jesus’ reaction to those who wish to arrest him: “When I was with you day after day in the Temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!” (NRSV).

**and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son:** Both the verbs “deliver” and “transfer” emphasize the Father’s initiative in securing the salvation of the Colossians. The Father has led believers into a new domain; their citizenship is now in a new kingdom. This language recalls the powerful experience of baptism for believers. The emphasis is on the present reality of existence and their present participation in the kingdom. A similar emphasis on the present is found in Eph 5:5 where believers are described as sharing the inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (cf. 2 Tim 4:1, 18). The kingdom clearly belongs to both Christ and God. The reference to the kingdom of Christ is quite unusual in the NT; the usual expression is “kingdom of God.” That the kingdom is said to belong to Christ (or in this case, to “his beloved Son”) seems to stem from the notion of the Son’s agency in establishing the Father’s rule (cf. 1 Cor. 15:23–25; and see Harris 36). The use of the concept of “kingdom” here as the domain of present salvation is very much in keeping with the theology of Colossians. Outside of the synoptic gospels, however, references to the kingdom of God are comparatively rare. In the undisputed letters of Paul the notion is frequently employed with a clear future dimension (e.g., 1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:21). Although it is possible that v. 14 should be understood as referring to the Son who is begotten of the Father’s love (tou huiou tēs agapēs autou), it is much more likely that the reference to love should be understood as qualitative, as is made clear by the translation “beloved Son” (NRSV; NAB), “dear Son” (REB), or “the Son that he loves” (NJB; see Harris 36; cf. Mark 1:11; 9:7; 12:6).

**14. in whom we have redemption:** Verse 14 clearly sets the stage for the Christ-hymn below (see the notes on 1:13). “In whom” refers to incorporation into Christ as in 1:2 (see discussion of “in Christ” in the notes on 1:2). The term for “redemption” or deliverance here (apolytrōsis; cf. Eph 1:7, 14; 4:30) literally means release (cf. Heb 11:35), drawing its origin from the notion of “buying back a slave or captive, making him free by payment of a ransom” (BAGD 96). One can detect the close connection with release from slavery in Paul’s use of the term in Rom 8:23. In Rom 8:21–23 slavery serves as a metaphor for that from which Christians have been delivered. There is a significant amount of language of bondage and release in Colossians (see the notes on 2:14, 15). This is particularly interesting since the condition of slaves is one of the social issues addressed by the letter (Col 3:23–25). Although the reading is not well attested, some manuscripts have “redemption through his blood,” harmonizing the text with Eph 1:7.

**the forgiveness of sins:** Redemption is defined as the forgiveness of sins. This precise formula does not occur in the undisputed letters of Paul; the closest parallel is in Rom 3:24–25. It may seem like an overly brief description of salvation, but it is most likely meant to encapsulate the powerful transformation that occurs in baptism. In the Acts of the Apostles “the forgiveness of sins” acts as a formula for the content of salvation (Acts 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18). The relationship between this concept and baptism can be seen clearly in Acts 2:38, where the forgiveness of sins is identified as the purpose of baptism: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (NRSV). The phrase is a particularly apt definition of redemption for Colossians since the meaning of baptism is in all likelihood central to the dispute between the author and the false teachers (see the notes and interpretation on 2:8–15).

## INTERPRETATION

The prayer on behalf of the Colossians is very closely related to the thanksgiving of vv. 3–8. Similar concepts and terminology shape both sections. This is made clear by v. 12, which returns once again to the theme of thanksgiving. Both sections draw upon the language of prayer and worship, with liturgical influences especially evident in vv. 9–14. Taken together they prepare the way for the citation of the Christ-hymn in vv. 15–20, which is of central importance to the shape of the letter. One subtle difference between vv. 3–8 and vv. 9–14, however, is that to a great extent the latter section leaves behind the concrete concerns of community life (such as the relationship between the community and Paul’s fellow workers; cf. 1:7), instead concentrating mainly on the nature of the Colossians’ relationship with God—the basis of their salvation. That Colossians 1:9–2:23 pays close attention to the doctrinal foundation of community life has often been recognized. In fact, the letter has frequently been viewed as divided rather neatly between doctrine (chs. 1–2) and ethics (chs. 3–4). While this distinction is correct in very general terms, it is also somewhat artificial. In the section presently under discussion, for example, ethical concerns are clearly evident in v. 10 where believers are instructed to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, bearing fruit in every good work. It should also be noted that while Colossians (like Ephesians) has a very interesting doctrinal component it needs to be examined as integrally related to the way of life of community members, involving both ethical comportment and ritual practices.

Part of the reason why commentators have emphasized doctrine at the expense of other features of the work is that the conflict with false teachers (2:8–23) appears to be fundamental to the document’s purpose (see Introduction). Moreover, traditionally the tendency among scholars has been to value theological ideas above all other features of NT works. Thus the conflict at Colossae has been viewed as mainly about beliefs. An interest in identifying the precise shape of heretical ideas has dominated interpretation of the work, even the interpretation of verses that are not explicitly concerned with responding to heretical beliefs. Commentators have evaluated a section like this one, for example, examining the concepts and terms in the hope of finding indirect evidence of the nature of the false teaching by means of the response. Those who argue in favor of the opponents being Gnostic (or proto-Gnostic) in orientation might, for example, wonder if the focus on knowledge in vv. 9–10 is an attempt to respond to opponents who argue that salvation is based on a special claim to higher knowledge. The main difficulty with such an interpretation is that the manner in which knowledge, wisdom, and understanding are treated in these verses is very much in keeping with contemporary Jewish literature (see Pokorný [1991] 47) and by no means necessarily reflects a particular teaching of the author in response to the opponents (see the notes on 1:9). As is explained below, in 1:9–14 it is in fact possible to detect the author’s strategy for responding to opponents, but it is not possible to infer from these verses any information about the doctrines at the heart of the dispute between author and opponents.

Despite the considerable information revealed about features of the opponents’ stance in 2:16–23 there has been no consensus among scholars about their identity. New work on the contemporary evidence, including ancient inscriptions, has demonstrated that key elements of the teaching were present in local groups, including local Jewish groups, but many questions remain (see, e.g., the discussion of the work of Clinton Arnold [1995] in the Introduction, and the notes and interpretation on 2:16–23). In the face of a wide variety of theories (see Introduction) concerning the identity of the Colossian opponents, ranging from Judaism to Gnosticism to such philosophical schools as Cynicism and Pythagoreanism, some scholars now believe that it is best to think of the document as responding to “a set of traditions widely affirmed and practiced” rather than to the position of one particular party (see D’Angelo 319). Moreover, recent work has stressed the probability that the author of Colossians and the opponents may have shared core Christian beliefs (D’Angelo 320; see also Attridge 498). But if beliefs were not at the heart of the conflict at Colossae, what was causing the problems? Social-scientific criticism has helped interpreters to understand that community conflict can result for reasons other than purely doctrinal debates. As is argued throughout this commentary, it is best to think of the conflict at Colossae as centered in the significance of what is experienced in the midst of ritual. In particular the transition from the anti-structured liminality experienced during central religious rituals such as rites of passage (e.g., baptism) to the world of social structures that frames the living out of experience in everyday life has proved

problematic (for a full discussion see the notes and interpretation on 2:8–15). At the heart of the conflict is how to live out the meaning of the profound experiences that lead one into the community and continue to foster commitment.

Colossians 1:9–14 reflects the author’s strategy for responding to the problems among the Colossians. It is a strategy of remembrance: it recalls for believers the core experience of God they attained during baptism and that they sense in the midst of prayer and worship. The recollection of baptism seems especially central to the author’s response to the problems in the community (cf. 1:12–14; 2:9–15; 3:1–3, 10–11). The hope seems to be that if community members are brought back to the joy they experienced in baptism they will see the futility of the strongly ascetic measures adopted by the false teachers (2:8–23).

As is made clear by the phrase “growing in the knowledge of God” (1:10), the author is aware that intense religious experience is central to the life of the Colossians. But the prayer on behalf of the Colossians is for discernment (1:9). Believers have shared in the powerful experience of God, but they must know how to live with and worship God. Ethical deportment is a priority. Walking (*peripateō*) in the manner that is worthy of the Lord clearly refers to interaction between believers, but it is important to realize that the ethical stance demanded of believers also involves interaction with nonbelievers and the world in general. The use of the term *peripateō* in 3:7 and 4:5 reveals this dual perspective clearly (see the notes on 1:10).

It is interesting to compare the use of the term “to walk” (or “to live”) in 1 Thess 4:1–12 with the usage in Col 1:10. The former passage begins with general exhortations to live (*peripateō*) and to please God (1 Thess 4:1) that resemble those in Col 1:10. Throughout 1 Thess 4:1–12 the ethical standards of the community are defined with reference to the life of nonbelievers. Even marriage between believers is described with a view to the standards of the nonbelieving world (1 Thess 4:4–5; see the alternate translation of the Greek text in the notes on 4:4 in NRSV). The Thessalonians passage culminates in the instruction that believers should behave (*peripateō*) “properly” toward outsiders (v. 12). An ethical standard that calls for “proper” or “reputable” behavior in relation to outsiders is surprising to modern readers, especially considering the abundance of NT texts that stress the need to set aside the concerns of the world and even to separate oneself from the evil world. In fact sometimes NT interest in the reaction of outsiders appears at first glance to be motivated by little more than a concern for social respectability (e.g., 1 Tim 3:7). But two aspects of the social setting of an early church community need to be kept in mind when we seek to understand such priorities. First, living in an honor-shame society (see the notes and interpretation on 1:3–8), first-century community members defined their identities to a great extent through public acknowledgment of their reputation. Second, the general cultural concern for gaining public acknowledgment was played out in a group that combined a call for a clearly distinguishable identity with a commitment to universal mission. An attempt to balance these two elements is reflected in 4:5–6 where believers are instructed in how to walk (*peripateō*) in relation to outsiders.

As illustrated by the discussion in the notes on 1:10, the reference to good works probably also should be understood as pertaining not only to works (or deeds) that are part of the interaction between community members, but also to works involving interaction between believers and nonbelievers. In the deutero-Pauline letters the authors seem particularly aware of the visibility of good works, their potential for revealing commitment and for demonstrating the value of faith (e.g., Col 3:17; Eph 2:10; for full discussion of several parallel texts see Lohse 29–30). In the Pastoral Epistles “good works” are an attribute of pious women (1 Tim 5:10). There is good reason to believe that in these documents the interest in directing the behavior of women is in response to public criticism of the behavior of believing women (see M. Y. MacDonald [1996] 154–78). In contrast, the error of false teachers is revealed, for they are unfit for any good work (Titus 1:16). Similarly, the previous life of the Colossians involved doing evil deeds (Col 1:21). As the Pauline communities developed beyond the first generation of their existence they were troubled both by internal deviance and by increasing hostility from outsiders. A broad reference to the model conduct of Christians in daily life such as is contained in the phrase “every good work” needs to be understood in light of this background. The author’s prayer for the Colossians is

that they may be strengthened by an all-powerful God and be granted patience and endurance. That the deeds of community members are gaining a new significance in an increasingly tense atmosphere (cf. Col 4:5–6) is further suggested by the development of the household code (3:18–4:1), which introduces into Pauline Christianity a series of rule-like ethical exhortations governing daily life.

The prayer for the empowerment of the Colossians in v. 11 is followed immediately by a thanksgiving for what the all-powerful God has accomplished in Christ in vv. 12–14. These verses recall baptism and give thanks for the new citizenship of believers; believers have been transferred into the kingdom of God's beloved Son. Verses 12–14 may in fact constitute a doxology that was once part of a baptismal liturgy. The themes of authority and empowerment continue in these verses from v. 11 on, even if the language is not explicit. Believers have been rescued and have received redemption. God is the ultimate authority. Such language may well have conjured up images of release from bondage (see the notes on 1:14) and spoken powerfully to the slave members (cf. 3:22–25) of the community (see also the notes on 2:14, 15).

As in the undisputed letters of Paul, one of the main ways in which the identity of believers is communicated in Colossians is through language of belonging and language of separation (see M. Y. MacDonald [1988] 32–39, 98–100; Meeks [1983] 87–90). NT interpreters who draw upon insights from the social sciences have noted the importance of such language in maintaining a sectarian identity—a very strong commitment to create a community that is set apart from the outside world. The reference to “sharing in the inheritance of the saints in the light” is language of belonging, boldly announcing that believers ultimately belong to a transformed world. But strong language also expresses what has been rejected; believers have separated themselves from the power of darkness. Yet to say that the Colossian community has a “sectarian” identity should not be taken to mean that the community had no interest in relations with outsiders. On the contrary, Colossians displays considerable interest in a universal mission (e.g., Col 1:6, 18–20, 23; 2:19; 3:15). In fact the Pauline churches display the type of tension between the desire to win new members and the need to remain separate that has been noted in modern “conversionist” sects. This tension generally exposes the community to certain difficulties; for a full discussion of this topic see the notes and interpretation on 4:2–6, as well as M. Y. MacDonald [1988] 97–102. (On sectarian identity in Ephesians see the notes and interpretation on Eph 2:1–10.)

Colossians 1:13–14 offers an excellent example of the language of belonging-separation typically found in Colossians and Ephesians. In these documents language of belonging-separation takes the form primarily of a remembrance of conversion—a remembrance of transference from the evil world outside into the realm where salvation is now to be found (cf. 1:21–23; Eph 4:17–24). Typically remembrance of the initial acceptance of the gospel and baptism is followed by ethical exhortations setting the behavior apart from that of internal enemies and nonbelievers. Colossians 1:13–14 might be viewed as a particularly succinct statement of a sentiment that runs from 1:1–2:7. Taken as a whole this longer unit proclaims the reconciliation of the estranged, explains the significance of the Christ event, and celebrates Paul's role. It recalls for believers all that has taken place and the means through which God has transformed the universe. This longer section culminates in the following summary statement, which draws upon many of the ideas found in 1:9–14: “As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving” (2:6–7). Having undertaken this remembrance, the author turns specifically to the problem at the heart of the dispute with false teachers in 2:8–23.

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NJB New Jerusalem Bible

REB Revised English Bible

1QH Thanksgiving Hymns

1QS Rule of the Community

1QS Rule of the Community

QL Qumran Literature

NIV New International Version

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

LXX Septuagint

BAGD Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, edited by William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979)

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BAGD Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, edited by William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979)

Cher. Philo, The Cherubim

Odes Sol. Odes of Solomon

Pol. Polycarp, Letter to the Philippians

Phil. Polycarp, Letter to the Philippians

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

NAB New American Bible

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1 Enoch Ethiopic, Slavonic, Hebrew Enoch

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NRSV New Revised Standard Version

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

AnBib Analecta biblica

MSSNTS Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series



[Margaret Y. MacDonald, Colossians and Ephesians, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 17, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 46–57.]

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## {5} Hermeneia Commentary

### Intercession

#### Colossians 1:9–11\*

1

9 Therefore, from the day we heard of it we are also not ceasing to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and insight worked by the Spirit, 10/ to conduct lives worthy of the Lord, toward all good pleasure that you bear fruit in every good work and grow through the knowledge of God, 11/ [being] strengthened with all power according to the might of his glory for all endurance and patience.

The intercession is closely connected with the preceding thanksgiving.<sup>1</sup> The phrase of v 3\*, “we thank ... always when we pray for you” (εὐχαριστοῦμεν ... πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι) is connected to v 9\* by the words “therefore ... we have not ceased to pray for you” (διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς ... οὐ παυόμεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι). Beyond this, several words and phrases which were used in the thanksgiving reappear in vss 9–11\*:

9\* “from the day”—v 6\* “from the day”

ἀφ’ ἧς ἡμέρας — ἀφ’ ἧς ἡμέρας

9\* “we heard”—v 4\* “we heard”

ἠκούσαμεν — ἀκούσαντες

9\* “the knowledge”—v 6\* “understood”

τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν — ἐπέγνωτε

10\* “bearing fruit t... and growing”—v 6\* “bearing fruit and growing”

καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι — καρποφορούμενον καὶ αὐξανόμενον

10\* (cf. v 9\*) “in the knowledge”—v 6\* “understood”

τῇ ἐπιγνώσει — ἐπέγνωτε

In both sections “all” (or other translations of πᾶς) serves to emphasize the concepts it modifies:

4\* “the love which you have for all the saints”

τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχετε εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους

6\* “in the whole world”

ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ

9\* “in all wisdom and insight worked by the Spirit”

ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ

10\* “fully pleasing to him in all good works”

εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρέσκειαν, ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ

11\* “with all power ... for all endurance and patience”

ἐν πάσῃ συνάμει εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν

The resumption of these phrases and concepts clearly indicates that the thanksgiving and intercession are closely connected.<sup>2</sup>

Following the main verb, “we have not ceased to pray” (οὐ παύομεθα ... προσευχόμενοι v 9\*) there is a ἵνα- clause which gives the intent of the prayer, “that you may be filled,” (ἵνα πληρωθῆτε). Then an infinitive construction of purpose (“to conduct lives” περιπατῆσαι) is added with the participles “bearing fruit ... growing ... being strengthened” (καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι ... δυναμούμενοι v 10\*). Loosely joined to this is the participial phrase “giving thanks” (v 12\* εὐχαριστοῦντες), which then introduces the invitation to the hymn which the community should begin to sing.

■ 9\* The word “therefore” (διὰ τοῦτο) makes an inferential connection and carries forward the train of thought. Paul often uses the particle καί (and) with the sense of “also” or “then,”<sup>3</sup> and in this case it belongs to the verb.<sup>4</sup> There is no particular emphasis in the “we” (ἡμεῖς), for it merely expresses the identity of those who are thanking and praying.<sup>5</sup> Ever since the apostle has heard reports about the community they have been closely bound to each other.<sup>6</sup> He has been making constant and earnest prayers for them, similar to 1 Thess 1:2\*; 2:13\*; Rom 1:9\*; and Eph 1:15\*. This is also indicated by the use of both “to pray” (προσευχόμενοι) and “to ask” (αἰτούμενοι).<sup>7</sup> This prayer is made to God with great intensity so that he may grant it.<sup>8</sup>

The intent of the prayer is what appears in the ἵνα-clause,<sup>9</sup> and only God can effect<sup>10</sup> the fulfillment of this request.<sup>11</sup> The life of the community should be completely shaped by the gifts which God provides (cf. Rom 15:13f\*).<sup>12</sup> The “knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις) for which the community intercedes is not that of higher worlds, but rather concerns the “will of God” (θέλημα θεοῦ). The will of God demands an obedience that is visible in one’s actions. This view of “knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις) is determined by Jewish presuppositions,<sup>13</sup> such as have been clearly developed in the writings of the Qumran community.<sup>14</sup> God, without whose will nothing takes place, teaches all understanding (1 QS XI, 17f; III, 15). He reveals what is hidden and makes his mysteries known (1 QpHab XI, 1; 1 QS V, 11; 1 QH IV, 27; etc.). The will of God is made known to the members of the covenant community in the covenant, i.e., the legal statutes given by God (1 QS III, 1; VIII, 9f). This knowledge includes the obligation to do the will of God (1 QS I, 5; IX, 13; etc.) and to conduct one’s life according to the will of God.<sup>15</sup> Some of the gifts which are granted to those who lead their lives under the direction of the Spirit of Truth are “understanding” (שכל, “intelligence” (בִּינָה) and “mighty wisdom” (חכמת גבורה) in 1 QS IV, 3. These three appear in the prayer in Col as “knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις), “wisdom” (σοφία), and “insight” (σύνεσις). Wisdom and understanding were regarded by the Qumran community as gifts of God which were received through the spirit (cf. 1 דעת רוח QS IV, 4; 1 Q Sb V, 25). He who prays praises God as the “God of understanding” (אל הדעות) and says “And I, gifted, with understanding, I have known Thee, O my God, by the Spirit which Thou hast given to me” (1 QH XII, 11f).<sup>16</sup> “Thou hast favored me, Thy servant, with the Spirit of knowledge” (1 QH XIV, 25).<sup>17</sup> (ברוח דעה) Corresponding to this view of understanding as a gift from God is that of the Christian community, for they count “wisdom” (σοφία) and “insight” (σύνεσις) as God’s gifts, brought by the Spirit.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, in the instruction of primitive Christianity, understanding of the will of God is always connected with the command to follow God’s will and to do it. The servant “who knew his master’s will but did not make ready or act according to his will” will receive a severe beating (γνοὺς τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ καὶ μὴ ἐτοιμάσας ἢ ποιήσας πρὸς τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ Lk 12:47\*). Only those who do the will of the Father who is in heaven will enter into the kingdom of

God (Mt 7:21\*).<sup>19</sup> The Jew is reminded “you know his will” (γινώσκεις τὸ θέλημα Rom 2:18\*), and Paul asks this in order to ask what the Jew’s situation is regarding obedience to the commandments recognized as God’s will. The Christian community, however, is told “understand what the will of the Lord is” (συνίετε τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου Eph 5:17\*). Whoever does the will of God shall receive the fulfillment of the promise (Heb 10:36\*: cf. 13:21\*). “But he who does the will of God abides for ever” (ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα 1 Jn 2:17\*<sup>20</sup>

Since the intent of this prayer of intercession is that the community be filled with the understanding of God’s will, the train of thought moves toward exhortation.<sup>21</sup> The correct understanding of God’s demonstration of his grace, as this is proclaimed in the gospel (cf. 1:6\*; 2:2\*), is also understanding of his will which binds one to his commandments and directs the conduct of the believers (cf. 3:10\*). God’s will is understood through probing (Rom 12:2\*), leads to sanctification (1 Thess 4:3\*), and is praised with thanksgiving (1 Thess 5:18\*). Not only “knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις), but also “wisdom” (σοφία) and “insight” (σύνεσις) are characterized by this practical orientation and are thus opposed to a speculative view of “wisdom.” “Wisdom” and “insight” are linked frequently, not only in the tradition of the Old Testament and Judaism,<sup>22</sup> but also in Greco-Roman philosophy.<sup>23</sup> Aristotle regarded “wisdom or intelligence and prudence” as the highest virtues (ἀρεταί) of the human intellect (σοφίαν μὲν καὶ σύνεσιν καὶ φρόνησιν Eth. Nic. 1, 13, p. 1103a). Wisdom (σοφία) is the perfect form of knowledge (Eth. Nic. 6, 11, p. 1141a).<sup>24</sup> Intelligence (σύνεσις) however, is subordinate to prudence (φρόνησις), because in distinction from prudence, intelligence can only judge, but it cannot command (Eth. Nic. 6, 11, p. 1143a).<sup>25</sup> Among the Stoics, wisdom was defined as the “knowledge of the affairs of both the gods and men.” (ἐπιστήμη θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρωπείων πραγμάτων).<sup>26</sup> In striving after knowledge, man attempts to comprehend in a knowledgeable way the interrelatedness of the entire universe. Col, however, clearly does not presuppose the view developed by Hellenistic philosophy. Instead, it follows the tradition of the Old Testament and Judaism, joining wisdom and insight with the understanding of the will of God. The believer has received a rich measure of insight (2:2\*), i.e., the “knowledge of God’s mystery, Christ” (ἐπίγνωσις τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ), in whom all the treasures of “wisdom” (σοφία) and “knowledge” (γνώσις) are hidden. (2:2f\*). This wisdom is distinguished from everything that only has the “appearance of wisdom” (2:23\* λόγον σοφίας), and those who are filled with it have the obligation henceforth to “conduct yourselves wisely” (ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε 4:5\*).

Since “wisdom” and “insight” are so intimately connected, the preceding “all” (πάση) and the following “worked by the Spirit” (πνευματικῇ) are also to be joined to these two terms.<sup>27</sup> Wisdom and insight are not virtues which man could achieve by his own ability;<sup>28</sup> rather, they are granted by God as gifts of the Spirit.<sup>29</sup> For this reason the request is made of God that he grant this gift in full measure; this gift is basically different from all “earthly wisdom” (σοφία σαρκική 2 Cor 1:12\*) or the “wisdom of men” (σοφία ἀνθρώπων 1 Cor 2:5\*, 13\*) or the “wisdom of this world” (1 Cor 2:6\*). Thus the phrasing “in all wisdom and insight worked by the Spirit” (ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ). Wisdom and insight should, however, unfold in a comprehensive sort of activity: “in all good works” (1:10\* ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ).

■ 10\* This correct understanding actualizes itself in the fulfillment of the right conduct of life.<sup>30</sup> In Greek, the work “to conduct a life” (περιπατῆσαι)<sup>31</sup> is an infinitive of purpose, and corresponds to the Hebrew <sup>32</sup>התהלך-הלך. As the teaching of the Qumran community expresses it, the conduct of a person’s life can proceed in the obstinacy of a guilty heart and lead to evil events (1 QS I, 6f; II, 14, 26; etc.). However, man should not be led by the spirit of perversity to travel that path; rather, he should be led by the spirit of truth (1 QS III, 18f) that he “may live perfectly before him in accordance with all that has been revealed” (1 QS I, 8f; cf. also II, 2; III, 9, 20f; etc.).<sup>33</sup> When he does this he will be “walking in the way of His delight” (1 QS V, 10. והתהלך ברצונו). Thus, as one who has freely pledged himself, he will “cling to all His commandments according to His will” (1 QS V, 1, צוה לרצונו, “to do the will of God” (1 QS IX, 13 לעשות את כל מצוותיו). Consequently he will no longer act according to what seems to be good to him (CD III, 12 לעשות איש את רצונו אל). (רצונו); rather, nothing will be pleasing to him except what is also pleasing to God (1 QS IX, 24 יחפוץ [א] לו [א]).

This passage states that the Christian should lead a life that is “fully pleasing” (εις πᾶσαν ἀρέσκειαν). The Greek word ἀρέσκεια usually signifies the behavior by which one seeks to gain favor, and thus most often is used with a negative connotation.<sup>34</sup> But this word can also be used in the positive sense of the recognition from society or God which one receives regarding his behavior.<sup>35</sup> This word was used repeatedly in Hellenistic Judaism to mean what was “well pleasing to God.” Thus Philo writes that the Levites left their parents, children, brothers and all other mortal kin “for the sake of being well pleasing to God” (ἔνεκα ἀρέσκειας θεοῦ Fug. 88). “Those who are minded to live with God for their standard and for the good pleasure of Him who truly is ...” [Trans.] will despise carnal pleasures (Spec. Leg. 1.176 κατὰ θεὸν καὶ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ ὄντως ὄντος ἀρέσκειαν). True relation and friendship are recognized by only one sure sign, the effort to please God (ἢ πρὸς θεὸν ἀρέσκεια Spec. Leg. 1.317). The first man is described as a “citizen of the world” (κοσμοπολίτης) and “he earnestly endeavored in all his words and actions to please the Father and King” (πάντα καὶ λέγειν καὶ πράττειν ἐσπούδαζεν εἰς ἀρέσκειαν τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ βασιλέως Op. Mund. 144).<sup>36</sup> Where the meaning of ἀρέσκεια is clearly indicated by the context, Philo uses this word for divine pleasure without further explanation. God demands of the soul that it tread every path that will please him (διὰ πασῶν ἰέναι τῶν εἰς ἀρέσκειαν ὁδῶν Spec. Leg. 1.300). Of course, the motivations which lead men to please God are of many different sorts: “For however different are the characters which produce in them the impulses to do my pleasure” (οἱ τρόποι διαφέρουσιν, ἀφ’ ὧν ποιοῦνται τὰς πρὸς ἀρέσκειαν ὁρμάς Abr. 130).

Col uses the short expression “fully pleasing” (εις πᾶσαν ἀρέσκειαν) to modify the phrase “conduct your lives” (περιπατῆσαι), but it does not state who is to be the one to acknowledge such well pleasing conduct.<sup>37</sup> Thus several questions must be raised: was a secular expression taken into Christian speech?<sup>38</sup> Is the reference to the good pleasure of the community chosen by God?<sup>39</sup> Or is it not rather a reference to the good pleasure of God?<sup>40</sup> The latter meaning, which places God as the sole judge of human conduct, is not only supported by the context, but is suggested above all by a comparison with the sentences previously cited from the writings of the Qumran community. No human tribunal may pass judgment on the conduct of the community; this is for God alone to do. Just as the pious Jew is intent on conducting his life in accordance with God’s will and on finding God’s “good pleasure” or “favor” (,ויצא so it is with the conduct of the community: their only goal is to please God.<sup>41</sup> Since this applies to all areas of life, the words are “toward all good pleasure” (εις πᾶσαν ἀρέσκειαν),<sup>42</sup> for everything depends on pleasing God (cf. θεῷ ἀρέσαι Rom 8:8\*) or to be pleasing to him (cf. εὐάρεστοι αὐτῷ εἶναι 2 Cor 5:8\*). Or Paul can say that one should think “how to please the Lord” πῶς ἀρέση τῷ κυρίῳ 1 Cor 7:32\*) or “how one must live and please God” (πῶς δεῖ ... περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέσκειν τῷ θεῷ 1 Thess 4:1\*).

This description of the conduct of the Christian life closely follows the Jewish conceptions already known at the time, but this traditional world of thought was given a clearly Christian orientation by the words “worthy of the Lord” (ἀξιῶς τοῦ κυρίου). Paul often describes the life conduct of the Christians by a closer characterization of the verb περιπατεῖν:<sup>43</sup> “conduct your lives by the Spirit” (πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε Gal 5:16\*); “in us, who conduct ourselves not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (ἡμῖν τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα Rom 8:4\*); “we live by faith” (διὰ πίστεως περιπατοῦμεν 2 Cor 5:7\*); “let everyone lead the life ... in which God has called him” (ἐκαστον ὡς κέκληκεν ὁ θεός, οὕτως περιπατεῖτω 1 Cor 7:17\*); “to lead a life worthy of God” (εις τὸ περιπατῆσαι ὑμᾶς ἀξιῶς τοῦ θεοῦ 1 Thess 2:12\*); and “let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ” (ἀξιῶς τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε Phil 1:27\*).<sup>44</sup> The phrase “worthy of the Lord” (ἀξιῶς τοῦ κυρίου) does not only demand behavior that is worthy and suitable; it binds the conduct of the Christian to undivided obedience to the Kyrios. He is the Lord over all powers and principalities, he has received dominion over all things, and he is the Lord over his own, so that they can conduct themselves “worthy of the Lord” only if they follow the summons given in 2:6\*, “as therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so conduct yourselves in him” (ὡς οὖν παρελάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον, ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε).

The images of bearing fruit and growing were used to illustrate the increase of the gospel in all the world (1:6\*); now these images<sup>45</sup> are applied to the conduct of the believers.<sup>46</sup> If the good news has been accepted in that it is recognized to be the truth (1:6\*), then this knowledge (cf. 1:9\*) leads to the growth and maturing of the fruit.<sup>47</sup> Thus the words τῆ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ do not indicate growth “in the knowledge of God” but rather by what means the growth is produced: “through the knowledge of God.” The hearing of fruit and increasing which are effected by the knowledge of God, however, become visible “in every good work” (ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ).<sup>48</sup>

The demand for good works appears regularly in Jewish exhortatory material. Thus, in the opening of the Qumran Community Rule, the admonition which is to guide the pious ones in all their life conduct states that the sons of light should “abstain from all evil” but “cling to all good works” (1 QS I, 4f). Paul, too, says that faith is active (Gal 5:6\*) and that all men, but especially those of the household of faith, should be the recipients of good works (Gal 6:10\* and 2 Cor 9:8\*). Civil authorities are not the only ones who pay attention to what citizens do, and approve good works (Rom 13:3\*). God himself inquires concerning actions when he judges, and on this basis he will pass judgment (Rom 2:7–10\*; 2 Cor 5:10\*; etc.). Yet men’s deeds can never open the way to salvation, for Paul is adamant that “a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law” (Rom 3:28\*). Without any mention of the relation between faith and works,<sup>49</sup> Col states the admonition that is so much a part of common Christian exhortation: the community should manifest its growth and maturation through good works. The words “in every” (παντί) again underscore the point that this demand extends to all actions and dealings of the Christian.<sup>50</sup>

The exhortations in the deutero-Pauline letters continue to put stress on the demand for good works. We are God’s “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (ποίημα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς, οἷς προητοίασεν ὁ θεὸς ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν Eph 2:10\*). Right conduct of life and good works go hand in hand. False teachers are unmasked when their actions are considered, for they are “unfit for any good deed” (πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἀδόκιμοι Tit 1:16\*). The proclaimer is therefore charged to remind the community continuously “to be ready for every good work” (πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐτοίμους εἶναι Tit 3:1\*). This is important, for by good works even faith is now recognized (1 Tim 2:10\*; 5:10\*; 2 Tim 2:21\*; 3:17\*; etc.). Col takes up this common demand. If, during their pagan days, the Colossians expressed their hostility toward God by “doing evil deeds” (ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς πονηροῖς 1:21\*; cf. 3:7\*), they should now manifest their knowledge of the truth “in all good works” (ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ). Whatever the Christians may do “in word or in deed” (ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ), everything should be done “in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God to Father through him” (πάντα ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ 3:17\*).

■ 11\* In order to be able to maintain this life conduct worthy of the Lord, the community is to be strengthened and filled with the power of God. This reference to the might of divine glory which strengthens the life of the believers again employs Jewish expressions.<sup>51</sup> Those praying in the Qumran community are aware that God’s “power” (גבורה) supports them, and they confess “the rock of my steps is the truth of God and His might is the support of my right hand” (1 QS XI, 4f). Only by the Spirit of God is the conduct of the children of men made perfect, “that all His creatures might know the might of His power, and the abundance of His mercies toward all the sons of His grace” (1 גבורתו בכוח QH IV, 31–33). The “might of God” (גבורת אל) assists the warriors in the struggle against the hosts of Belial, so that they hold the field and win the battle.<sup>52</sup> Supported by God’s power (1 QS XI, 19f; 1 QH XVIII, 8; etc.), the pious man is certain that God reveals his glory and power, that by the judgment over the wicked he is glorified and shows his power in the pious man in the presence of the sons of men. (1 QH II, 24f). Thus God is praised with the words “it is in Thy purpose to do mightily (להגביר) and to establish all things for Thy glory” (1 לכבודכה QH XVIII, 22). At Qumran the community’s praise of God rose to this height of elaborate description which circumloquated his sublimity: “Summit of Glory and Almighty Eternal Majesty” (1 QS X, 12).<sup>53</sup>

The admonishing intercession of Col takes up such fulsome expressions of God's praise by praying: may God's might (δύναμις) strengthen (δυναμοῦν)<sup>54</sup> the community. In this way the power of his glory will demonstrate itself,<sup>55</sup> for God remains true to himself and acts in agreement with (κατά) the demonstration of his power and glory he has already made.<sup>56</sup> The words "power" and "glory" (κράτος, δόξα) often appear in doxologies together, used to praise God: "to him belong glory and power for ever and ever." (ὃ ἔστιν ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων).<sup>57</sup>

God's mighty power should strengthen the community "for all endurance and patience" (εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν). The word "endurance" (ὑπομονή) signifies the kind of perseverance which is to be proven in battle by holding the position one has taken against all enemy attacks.<sup>58</sup> By this "endurance" it will become evident whether the Christian is able to hold out and stand firm.<sup>59</sup> "Endurance" also persists in "good works" (ἔργον ἀγαθόν Rom 2:7\*), and it produces "character" (δοκιμή Rom 5:4\*). It also perseveres through suffering (2 Cor 1:6\*) and maintains unwaveringly the certain hope of the fulfillment of the divine promises (Rom 8:25\*; 15:4\*). Thus the "endurance" of the community should prove a steadfast power of resistance in every respect (πᾶσα).<sup>60</sup> "Endurance" refers to defence against all opposition from without, and thus "patience" (μακροθυμία) is directed toward the relationship with one's fellowmen. It means the deep breath which enables one to wait patiently.<sup>61</sup> Paul reckons "patience" (μακροθυμία) as one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22\*), praises love for its "being patient" (μακροθυμεῖν 1 Cor 13:4\*), and urges the community "be patient with them all" (μακροθυμεῖτε πρὸς πάντας 1 Thess 5:14\*).<sup>62</sup> The Christians are summoned to "put on ... patience" (ἐνδύσασθε ... μακροθυμίαν Col 3:12\*) and thus are reminded that patience springs from the divine source of power which also enables them to endure. Thus the words "endurance" and "patience" together are the sure sign of the loyal Christian, for he is not swayed from his hope by any power, nor does he grow weary in love.<sup>63</sup>

As the exegesis has shown, verses 9–11\* are full of words and expressions which come largely from Jewish tradition. If one should remove the basis given for the life conduct of the Christian, the words "worthy of the Lord" (ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου 1:10\*), then the rest of this passage could easily appear in a Jewish text.<sup>64</sup> The early Christian style of prayer is to a rather great extent rooted in the OT-Jewish heritage. But this close reliance on Jewish tradition finds reason also in the subject matter.<sup>65</sup> The great emphasis on the knowledge of God's will and the consequent obligation to conduct one's life obediently have been thoughtfully placed at the opening of the letter in order to oppose a speculative understanding of "wisdom" to this sober description of wisdom wrought by the Spirit. The intercessions in Pauline letters always have an exhortatory accent,<sup>66</sup> and so Col emphasizes that correct understanding is "understanding of his will" (ἐπίγνωσις τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ). God's will, however, demands obedience in leading a life that is worthy of the Lord.<sup>67</sup>

## I. Theological Instruction

### The Universal Lordship of Christ

\* 9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

10 so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

11 May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully

### Colossians 1:9–11 (NRSV)

1 Concerning the connection of thanksgiving and intercession in the Pauline letters, cf. above pp. 12f.

\* 3 In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Colossians 1:3 (NRSV)

\* 9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Colossians 1:9 (NRSV)

\* 9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

10 so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

11 May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully

Colossians 1:9–11 (NRSV)

\* 9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Colossians 1:9 (NRSV)

\* 6 that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God.

Colossians 1:6 (NRSV)

\* 9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Colossians 1:9 (NRSV)

\* 4 for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,

Colossians 1:4 (NRSV)

\* 9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Colossians 1:9 (NRSV)

\* 6 that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God.

Colossians 1:6 (NRSV)

\* 10 so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

Colossians 1:10 (NRSV)

\* 6 that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God.

Colossians 1:6 (NRSV)

\* 10 so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

Colossians 1:10 (NRSV)

\* 9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Colossians 1:9 (NRSV)

\* 6 that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God.

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\* 4 for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,

Colossians 1:4 (NRSV)

\* 6 that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God.

Colossians 1:6 (NRSV)

\* 9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Colossians 1:9 (NRSV)

\* 10 so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

Colossians 1:10 (NRSV)

\* 11 May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully

Colossians 1:11 (NRSV)

2 Cf. Schubert, Pauline Thanksgivings, 89, "Col 1:9–12\* is, structurally speaking, the ἵνα-clause of the Colossian thanksgiving and is very explicitly paraenetical."

\* 9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Colossians 1:9 (NRSV)

\* 10 so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

Colossians 1:10 (NRSV)

\* 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.



Colossians 1:12 (NRSV)

\* 9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Colossians 1:9 (NRSV)

3 Cf. 1 Thess 2:13\* "for this reason we also thank" [Trans.] (καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς εὐχαριστοῦμεν) and Rom 3:7\* "why then am I still being condemned as a sinner?" [Trans.] (τί ἔτι κἀγὼ ὡς ἁμαρτωλὸς κρίνομαι). Cf. Lietzmann, Römer, p. 46; and also 1 Thess 3:5\*; 2 Cor 6:1\*; Rom 5:3\*; 8:11\*, 24\*; 9:24\*; 13:6\*; 15:14\*, 19\*; Eph 1:15\* etc.

4 Cf. Dibelius-Greeven, ad loc.

5 Thus it is not emphatic, "we, too" as Lohmeyer, ad loc., has it.

6 Eph 1:15f\* summarizes the statements of Col 1:4f\* and 9\*: "For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers ..." (διὰ τοῦτο κἀγὼ, ἀκούσας τὴν καθ' ὑμᾶς πίστιν ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην τὴν εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους, οὐ παύομαι εὐχαριστῶν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν μνεῖαν ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου).

\* 2 We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly

1 Thessalonians 1:2 (NRSV)

\* 13 We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NRSV)

\* 9 For God, whom I serve with my spirit by announcing the gospel of his Son, is my witness that without ceasing I remember you always in my prayers,

Romans 1:9 (NRSV)

\* 15 I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason

Ephesians 1:15 (NRSV)

7 The middle voice of the verb αἰτεῖσθαι (to ask) appears in only one other place in the Pauline corpus, Eph 3:20\*. The active form αἰτεῖν is used in 1 Cor 1:22\* for the Jews' demand for signs. Cf. also Eph 3:13\*. If the words καὶ αἰτούμενοι in the mss. B and K are deleted, the text is assimilated to the usual expression: προσευχόμενοι (to pray) by itself.

8 Cf. Mk 11:24\* "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will." (πάντα ὅσα προσεύχεσθε καὶ αἰτεῖσθε, πιστεύετε ὅτι ἐλάβετε, καὶ ἔσται ὑμῖν).

9 The word ἵνα (that) often appears after a verb of requesting; cf. Blass-Debrunner, sec. 392, 1c.

10 The passive from πληρωθῆτε (that you be filled) paraphrases the name of God: "may God fill you." Cf. Gerhard Delling, TDNT 6, 291.

11 Cf. Phil 1:9\* "And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ... v 11\*: filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ ..." (καὶ τοῦτο προσεύχομαι, ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη ὑμῶν ἔτι μᾶλλον καὶ μᾶλλον περισσεύῃ ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει ... v. 11\* πεπληρωμένοι καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης τὸ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).

\* 13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

14 I myself feel confident about you, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another.

Romans 15:13–14 (NRSV)

12 For the use of the accusative with the passive, cf. Blass-Debrunner, sec. 159, 1. Cf. 1 Cor 12:13\* “we ... were made to drink of one Spirit” (ἐν πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν).

13 Correctly noted by Lohmeyer, ad loc.

14 Cf. Eduard Lohse, “Christologie und Ethik im Kolosserbrief” in *Apophoreta*, Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen, BZNW 30 (Berlin: 1964), 167; also W. D. Davies, “‘Knowledge’ in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Matthew 11:25–30\*,” HTR 46 (1953): 113–139, reprinted in *Christian Origins and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 119–144.

1 QS Serek hay-yahad, the Rule of the Community

1 QpHab Peshar Habakkuk, the Commentary on Habakkuk

1 QS Serek hay-yahad, the Rule of the Community

1 QH Hodayot, the Psalms of Thanksgiving

1 QS Serek hay-yahad, the Rule of the Community

1 QS Serek hay-yahad, the Rule of the Community

15 E.g., 1 QS V, 10; III, 9, 20; VIII, 18, 21; IX, 6, 8f, 19; 1 Q Sb I, 2; V, 22; 1 QH IV, 21, 24; VI, 6; XVII, 24.

1 QS Serek hay-yahad, the Rule of the Community

1 QS Serek hay-yahad, the Rule of the Community

Q Qumran documents:

1 QH Hodayot, the Psalms of Thanksgiving

16 The Hebrew text: ואני משכיל ידעתיכה אלי ברוח אשר נתתה בי.

1 QH Hodayot, the Psalms of Thanksgiving

17 This statement relates directly to the OT view (cf. Lohmeyer, ad loc.) wherein wisdom and understanding are gifts of the Spirit; cf. Ex 31:3\*: Bazaleel is filled with “the Spirit of God” (רוח אֱלֹהִים i.e., “with wisdom and with intelligence and with knowledge” (בְּחֵכְמָה וּבְתִבּוּנָה וּבְדַעַת). In the LXX this is πνεῦμα θεῶν σοφίας καὶ συνέσεως καὶ ἐπιστήμης, (“with the divine Spirit of wisdom, and of insight, and of understanding” [Trans.]). Cf. also Ex 35:31\*, 35\*; Deut 34:9\*; Isa 29:14\* (= 1 Cor 1:19\*); 1 Chr 22:12\*; 2 Chr 1:10f\*; Job 12:13\*; Dan 1:17\*; Sir 39:6\*, 9f\*; Isa 11:2\* where רוח חֵכְמָה וּבִינָה = πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ συνέσεως (“Spirit of wisdom and insight”; [Trans.]).

18 Contra Lohmeyer, ad loc., who states, “by means of a single word ... Paul has ‘Christianized’ the matter: the wisdom is also ‘Spirit-given’.” (Translator’s note: the German “geistgegeben” refers to the Greek πνευματικῆ.)

\* 47 That slave who knew what his master wanted, but did not prepare himself or do what was wanted, will receive a severe beating.

Luke 12:47 (NRSV)

\* 21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

Matthew 7:21 (NRSV)

19 Cf. Jn 4:14\*; 7:17\*; 9:31\*; Acts 13:22\*.

\* 18 and know his will and determine what is best because you are instructed in the law,

Romans 2:18 (NRSV)

\* 17 So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Ephesians 5:17 (NRSV)

\* 36 For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

Hebrews 10:36 (NRSV)

\* 21 make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:21 (NRSV)

\* 17 And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever.

1 John 2:17 (NRSV)

20 Further examples appear in Gottlob Schrenk, TDNT 3, 57–59.

21 Cf. Schubert, Pauline Thanksgivings, 89, “All Pauline thanksgivings have either explicitly or implicitly paraenetic function.”

\* 6 that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God.

Colossians 1:6 (NRSV)

\* 2 I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ himself,

Colossians 2:2 (NRSV)

\* 10 and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.

Colossians 3:10 (NRSV)

\* 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2 (NRSV)

\* 3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication;

1 Thessalonians 4:3 (NRSV)

\* 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NRSV)

22 Cf. above p. 25, n 17. Also, cf. Deut 4:6\*; Dan 2:20\*; Bar 3:23\*. In like manner, the adjectives “wise” (σοφός) and “understanding” (συνετός) are often used together; cf. LXX Deut 1:13\*, 15\*; 1 Kg 16:18\*; Isa 3:3\*; 19:11\*; 29:14\*; Jer 4:22\*; Hos 14:10\*; Eccl 9:11\*; Dan 1:4\*; and, in the NT, Mt 11:25\*, par.; etc.

23 Cf. Lightfoot, ad loc.

24 Cf. Ulrich Wilckens, TWNT 7, 471f.

25 Cf. Hans Conzelmann, TWNT 7, 877.

26 For examples, cf. Wilckens, TWNT 7, 473.

\* 2 I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ himself,

Colossians 2:2 (NRSV)

\* 2 I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ himself,

3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Colossians 2:2–3 (NRSV)

\* 23 These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-imposed piety, humility, and severe treatment of the body, but they are of no value in checking self-indulgence.

Colossians 2:23 (NRSV)

\* 5 Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time.

Colossians 4:5 (NRSV)

27 Cf. Abbott, ad loc.

28 Cf. Eduard Schweizer, TDNT 6, 437, n 704. Cf. Col 1:8\* “your love in the Spirit” (τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι). The word πνεῦμα appears again in Col only in 2:5\*, and πνευματικός only in 3:16\*.

29 Concerning the Jewish background of this formulation, cf. above, p. 25.

\* 12 Indeed, this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience: we have behaved in the world with frankness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God—and all the more toward you.

2 Corinthians 1:12 (NRSV)

\* 5 so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

1 Corinthians 2:5 (NRSV)

\* 13 And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

1 Corinthians 2:13 (NRSV)

\* 6 Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish.

1 Corinthians 2:6 (NRSV)

\* 10 so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

Colossians 1:10 (NRSV)

\* 10 so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

Colossians 1:10 (NRSV)

30 The concept “understanding” (ἐπίγνωσις) from v 9\* is taken up again at the end of v 10\*, “through the knowledge of God” (τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ). The texts Ψ and 1611 al place the preposition ἐν before this word, and the Imperial text clearly endeavors to smooth this over by changing it to εἰς τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θεοῦ (for the knowledge of God). But this destroys the sense of the statement, for understanding is not the goal of growth, but rather, genuine growth is made possible by understanding.

31 The Koine text adds ὑμεῖς (you) for clarification, i.e., “to conduct your lives.” Cf. 1 Thess 4:1\*, τὸ πῶς δεῖ ὑμεῖς περιπατεῖν (how you ought to live) and Eph 4:17\*, ὑμεῖς περιπατεῖν (you [must] live).

32 Cf. Blass-Debrunner, sec. 392.

1 QS Serek hay-yaḥad, the Rule of the Community

1 QS Serek hay-yaḥad, the Rule of the Community

1 QS Serek hay-yaḥad, the Rule of the Community

33 Numerous phrases which sound similar could be added: “walk in the way of Thy truth” (1 QH IV, 21, 24; VI, 6f); “walk before Thee” (1 QH VII, 14); “walk in all that Thou lovest” (1 QH XVII, 24); “walk according to the command of the law” (CD XIX, 4). Cf. also 1 QS VIII, 18, 21; IX, 6, 8f, 19; 1 Q Sb I, 2; V, 22; CD I, 20; etc.).

1 QS Serek hay-yaḥad, the Rule of the Community

1 QS Serek hay-yaḥad, the Rule of the Community

1 QS Serek hay-yaḥad, the Rule of the Community

CD The Cairo Genizah Damascus Document

1 QS Serek hay-yaḥad, the Rule of the Community

34 Cf. Werner Foerster, TDNT 1, 456; Bauer, s.v.

35 Cf. Inscr. Priene 113.73 “for the pleasing of the populace” (trans.) (πρὸς τὴν εἰς τὸ πλῆθος ἀρέσκειαν); and P. Oxy. IV.729.24 “they shall irrigate ... to the satisfaction of Serapion” (ποιήσονται τοὺς ποτισμοὺς ... πρὸς ἀρεσκίαν τοῦ Σαραπίωνος).

[Trans.] translator of this volume of Hermeneia

36 Cf. also Spec. Leg. 1, 297 “for the pleasure of God” [Trans.] (πρὸς ἀρέσκειαν θεοῦ): and Congr. 80 “for honor and pleasure of God” (trans.) (θεοῦ τιμῆς καὶ ἀρεσκείας ἔνεκα).

37 Cf. Foerster, TDNT 1, 456 “‘to every kind of pleasing attitude’; towards whom is not clearly specified.”

38 Cf. Dibelius-Greeven, ad loc., with reference to Phil 4:8\*.

39 Cf. Lohmeyer, ad loc.

40 Cf. Theodoret, ad loc. “so that you may accomplish all the things that are pleasing to God” [Trans.] (ἵνα πάντα τὰ ἀρέσκοντα τῷ θεῷ διαπραττήσθε).

41 In the texts from Qumran, the suffix makes it clear that God’s “good pleasure” (רצון) is meant. In Greek the suffix can be absent and the word can still have the same meaning. Cf. 1 QH IV, 32f בני רצונו (sons of His good pleasure) = Lk 2:14\* ἄνθρωποι εὐδοκίας (men of good pleasure [Trans.]). Also, cf. 1 Cor 16:22\* תא מרנא (Our Lord, come!) = Rev 22:20\* ἔρχου κύριε Ἰησοῦ (Come, Lord Jesus).

42 The noun ἀρέσκεια is a hapaxlegomenon in the NT, but the verb ἀρέσκειν appears several times.

\* 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:8 (NRSV)

\* 8 Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:8 (NRSV)

\* 32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord;

1 Corinthians 7:32 (NRSV)

\* 1 Finally, brothers and sisters, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more.

1 Thessalonians 4:1 (NRSV)

43 Cf. Heinrich Seesemann, TDNT 5, 944f.

\* 16 Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16 (NRSV)

\* 4 so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:4 (NRSV)

\* 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7 (NRSV)

\* 17 However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches.

1 Corinthians 7:17 (NRSV)

\* 12 urging and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

1 Thessalonians 2:12 (NRSV)

\* 27 Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel,

Philippians 1:27 (NRSV)

44 Cf. also Eph 4:1\* “to lead a life worthy of the calling” (ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως).

\* 6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him,

Colossians 2:6 (NRSV)

\* 6 that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God.

Colossians 1:6 (NRSV)

45 Both participles καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι (bearing fruit and growing) are in the nominative case instead of the accusative which is actually demanded by connecting them to the verb περιπατῆσαι. The participial expressions, therefore, follow rather independently. Knox’s assumption that this pair of Greek words was a slogan of the false teachers against whom this letter was written, remains an unproven supposition. Cf. Wilfred Lawrence Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), 149, n 5; 156f.

46 Cf. the parable about the four kinds of soil. The seed that fell on good soil “brought forth fruit, growing up and increasing” [Trans.] (ἐδίδου καρπὸν ἀναβαίνοντα καὶ αὐξανόμενα Mk 4:8\* and par). The explanation of the parable applies this; these are the ones who “hear the word, accept it and bear fruit” (οἵτινες ἀκούουσιν τὸν λόγον καὶ παραδέχονται καὶ καρποφοροῦσιν Mk 4:20\* and par).

\* 6 that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God.

Colossians 1:6 (NRSV)

\* 9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Colossians 1:9 (NRSV)

47 For the comparison of “bearing fruit” (καρποφορεῖν) with the conduct of the believers, cf. Rom 7:14\*, “in order that we may bear fruit to God” (ἵνα καρποφορήσωμεν τῷ θεῷ). For that of “growing” (αὐξάνεσθαι), cf. 2 Cor 10:15\*, “as your faith increases” (αὐξανομένης τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν); Eph 4:15\* “we are to grow up in every way into him” (αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα); 1 Pt 2:2\* “that by it (i.e., pure spiritual milk) you may grow up to salvation” (ἵνα ἐν

αὐτῷ αὐξηθῆτε εἰς σωτηρίαν); 2 Pt 3:18\* “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (αὐξάνετε δὲ ἐν χάριτι καὶ γνώσει τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).

48 Since “bearing fruit and growing” (καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι) form a pair of concepts, these verbs also connect “through the knowledge of God” (τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ) with “in every good work” (ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ), through Dibelius-Greeven ad loc. take this differently. The growth comes about through the understanding, and produces good works. Cf. Abbott, Lohmeyer, ad loc.; and Percy, *Probleme*, 123, n 93.

1 QS Serek hay-yahad, the Rule of the Community

\* 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love.

Galatians 5:6 (NRSV)

\* 10 So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

Galatians 6:10 (NRSV)

\* 8 And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8 (NRSV)

\* 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval;

Romans 13:3 (NRSV)

\* 7 to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life;

8 while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury.

9 There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,

10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.

Romans 2:7–10 (NRSV)

\* 10 For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NRSV)

\* 28 For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.

Romans 3:28 (NRSV)

49 Cf. the letter of James, whose collection of exhortatory sayings is guided by the theme that “faith” (πίστις) without “works” (ἔργα) is “dead” (νεκρά), as seen in Jas 2:17\*, 26\*. Cf. Eduard Lohse, “Glaube und Werke—zur Theologie des Jakobusbriefes,” *ZNW* 48 (1957): 1–22.

50 Cf. also 2 Cor 9:8\* “that you ... may provide in abundance for every good work” (ἵνα ... περισσεύητε εἰς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθόν); and 2 Thess 2:17\* “establish them in every good work and word” (στηρίζαι ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ ἀγαθῷ).



\* 10 For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Ephesians 2:10 (NRSV)

\* 16 They profess to know God, but they deny him by their actions. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

Titus 1:16 (NRSV)

\* 1 Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,

Titus 3:1 (NRSV)

\* 10 but with good works, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God.

1 Timothy 2:10 (NRSV)

\* 10 she must be well attested for her good works, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way.

1 Timothy 5:10 (NRSV)

\* 21 All who cleanse themselves of the things I have mentioned will become special utensils, dedicated and useful to the owner of the house, ready for every good work.

2 Timothy 2:21 (NRSV)

\* 17 so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:17 (NRSV)

\* 21 And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,

Colossians 1:21 (NRSV)

\* 7 These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life.

Colossians 3:7 (NRSV)

\* 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:17 (NRSV)

\* 11 May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully

Colossians 1:11 (NRSV)

51 Cf. Lohse, "Christologie und Ethik," 167.

1 QS Serek hay-yahad, the Rule of the Community

1 QH Hodayot, the Psalms of Thanksgiving

52 Cf. 1 QM I, 11, 14; III, 5, 8; IV, 4, 12; VI, 2, 6; etc.

1 QS Serek hay-yahad, the Rule of the Community

1 QH Hodayot, the Psalms of Thanksgiving

1 QH Hodayot, the Psalms of Thanksgiving

1 QH Hodayot, the Psalms of Thanksgiving

1 QS Serek hay-yahad, the Rule of the Community

53 The Hebrew text is רום כבוד וגבורת כול לתפארת עולם.

54 The verb δυναμοῦν “to strengthen” is used elsewhere in the NT only in Heb 11:34\* and Eph 6:10\* v.l. The form ἐνδυναοῦν appears in Rom 4:20\*; Phil 4:13\*; Eph 6:10\*; 1 Tim 1:12\*; 2 Tim 2:1\*; 4:17\*.

55 Cf. the intercession of Eph 1:18f\* “what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might” (τί τὸ ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ).

56 Cf. Lk 1:51\* “He has shown strength with his arm” (ἐποίησεν κράτος ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ).

57 Cf. 1 Pt 4:11\* and 1 Pt 5:11\*; Jude 25\*; Rev 1:6\*; 5:13\*. In the NT κράτος is never used for human power, and is not used by Paul elsewhere, although it occurs in the deutero-Pauline letters, e.g., Eph 1:19\*; 6:10\*; 1 Tim 6:18\*.

58 Cf. the concept מעמד which can designate the perseverance of the faithful, according to the Qumran texts: 1 QH II, 22; XI, 13; XVI, 13; etc.

59 Cf. Lk 8:15\* “and (they) bring forth fruit with patience” (καὶ καρποφοροῦσιν ἐν ὑπομονῇ).

\* 7 to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life;

Romans 2:7 (NRSV)

\* 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

Romans 5:4 (NRSV)

\* 6 If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering.

2 Corinthians 1:6 (NRSV)

\* 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Romans 8:25 (NRSV)

\* 4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.

Romans 15:4 (NRSV)

60 Cf. Friedrich Hauck, TDNT 4, 586–88.

61 The words אַרְךְ אַפַּיִם and μακροθυμία stand for God’s patience which does not give way to his anger (Ex 34:6f\*; Num 14:18\*; etc.) as well as for the human virtue which should correspond to divine forbearance, Eccl 7:8ff\*. Cf. Johannes Horst, TDNT 4, 376–79.

\* 22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness,

Galatians 5:22 (NRSV)

\* 4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant

1 Corinthians 13:4 (NRSV)

\* 14 And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 (NRSV)

62 For “patience” as used by Paul, cf. Horst, TDNT 4, 382–85.

\* 12 As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

Colossians 3:12 (NRSV)

63 Both concepts also appear together in the Test. Jos. 2:7 “... endurance is a mighty charm, and patience giveth many good things.” (μέγα φάρμακόν ἐστὶν ἡ μακροθυμία, καὶ πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ δίδωσιν ἡ ὑπομονή). Cf. also 2 Cor 6:4\*, 6\*; 2 Tim 3:10\*; Jas 5:10f\*; 1 Clem 64; Ign Eph 3:1.

\* 9 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

10 so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

11 May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully

Colossians 1:9–11 (NRSV)

\* 10 so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

Colossians 1:10 (NRSV)

64 One could achieve the same effect by understanding the word κυρίος in the Jewish sense of the title for God.

65 Mention need only be made of the numerous Jewish parallels to the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer. Cf. Billerbeck 1, 406–24; Lohmeyer, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 32–62; Karl Georg Kuhn, *Achtzehngebet und Vaterunser und der Reim*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 1* (Tübingen: 1950); Joachim Jeremias, *The Lord’s Prayer*, tr. John Reumann, *Facet Books, Biblical Series 8* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), reprinted in John Reumann, *Prayers*, ch. 3.

66 Cf. also pp. 13, 26 above.

67 Karl-Gottfried Eckart, “Exegetische Beobachtungen zu Kol. 1:9–20\*,” *Theologia Viatorum* 7 (1959–60): 87–107; and “Urchristliche Tauf- und Ordinationsliturgie (Kol 1:9–20\*, Acts 26:18\*)” *Theologia Viatorum* 8 (1961–62): 23–37. Eckart has accurately observed that verses 9–12\* contain traditional expressions. He pushes this insight too far, however, when he maintains that the whole complex (1:9–20\*) is a baptismal liturgy. This ignores the fact that in Pauline letters the

intercessions always have an exhortatory orientation. Above all, it overlooks the fact that verses 9–20\* are composed from variously formed pieces and do not constitute a complete liturgical unit. Thus it is incorrect to characterize verses 9–12\* as a tightly-formulated liturgical exhortation (“Exegetische Beobachtungen,” 99) and to exclude the words “according to the might of his glory” (κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δοξῆς αὐτοῦ) as a secondary interpretational addition (ibid., 92).

[Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon a Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 24–32.]

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{6} Harper’s Bible Commentary

1:9–14, The Intercession and Thanksgiving.

The intercession (1:9–11) is intimately connected to the general thanksgiving (1:12–14) by means of a participial clause (“giving thanks,” 1:12). The thanksgiving makes frequent use of traditional Christian material. It employs in both vv. 13 and 14 a liturgical baptismal formula (cf. the shift from “you” in v. 12 to “us” and “we” in vv. 13 and 14). Baptismal language is present as well in the opposition of the two dominions, “darkness” and “the kingdom”—a transfer caused by the punctual act of God’s saving deliverance in Christ (as shown by the tense of the Gk. verbs in v. 13). Moreover, the unusual phrase “his beloved Son” (v. 13) is reminiscent of baptismal phraseology (Mark 1:11; cf. 9:7; 12:6; Eph. 1:6); so is the interpretation of “redemption” as “forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14; cf. Acts 2:38; 10:43, 47; Mark 1:4).

vv. verses

v. verse

vv. verses

Gk. Greek

v. verse

v. verse

[James Luther Mays, ed., *Harper’s Bible Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 1227.]

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{7} The International Critical Commentary

III

## INTERCESSION FOR THE COLOSSIANS

(1:9–14)

[9]For this reason we for our part, since the day we heard, do not cease praying on your behalf, and entreating that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, [10]that you may walk worthily of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; [11]that you may be strengthened with all power according to the might of his glory for all endurance and forbearance. [12]Give thanks with joy to the Father who made you fit for the lot of the inheritance of the saints in light, [13]who delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, [14]in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Following the statement of the grounds for thanksgiving in vv. 4–8, v. 9 picks up the theme of intercession from v. 3; as Lohse (24) notes, the close connection of these sections is indicated by the repetition in the intercession of several words and phrases (or their cognates) from the earlier section: ἀφ’ ἧς ἡμέρας (vv. 6, 9); the verb ἀκούω (vv. 4, 9); ἐπίγνωσις (vv. 9, 10; cf. ἐπέγνωτε in v. 6); καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι (v. 10; in v. 6 this phrase is used of the gospel, here it is the goal which the Colossians are exhorted to achieve). In Eph. 1:15–16 there is a similar resumption following the εὐλογητός period which replaces the thanksgiving period in Col.: διὰ τοῦτο κάγω ἀκούσας τὴν καθ’ ὑμᾶς πίστιν ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην τὴν εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους (cf. 1:3–4 above; Philem. 5) οὐ παύομαι εὐχαριστῶν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν μνεῖαν ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου (cf. Philem. 4; Rom. 1:9–10). The content of the prayer is that the Colossians may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will (v. 9), so that they may lead lives worthy of the Lord, bearing fruit in all good works (v. 10) and in their turn giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled them to share in the inheritance of the saints in light (v. 12). Verses 13 and 14 are both relative clauses, the first relating to the Father, the second to the Son, which lead naturally into the ‘hymn’ of vv. 15–20, itself introduced by the relative pronoun ὃς.

9. διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς According to Lightfoot, who cites 1 Thess. 2:13 (cf. Eph. 1:15), the καὶ ‘denotes the response of the Apostle’s personal feeling to the favourable character of the news’, and he translates ‘we on our part’. Moule, however, (52, adding 1 Thess. 3:5; Rom. 3:7) thinks that it is ‘to be regarded as belonging to the διὰ τοῦτο rather than to the ἡμεῖς: “that is precisely why”’, while Lohse (24) claims that it belongs with the verb—three different interpretations for one small word, all of them citing more or less the same passages in support! Aletti in a rather more nuanced discussion (68f.) notes that the author can attach the καὶ to the verb, as is shown by v. 8 above (ὁ καὶ δηλώσας), but there are other possibilities in Pauline usage. Lohse, he says, is correct in not translating ‘we also’, for that would presuppose mention of the prayers of others; but we cannot separate the καὶ from the ἡμεῖς. The text in fact marks a change of subject, from Epaphras in v. 8 to Paul and Timothy, hence his rendering ‘quant à nous’—which is in effect a return to the view of Lightfoot.

οὐ παύομεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι As the parallels adduced above show, both Eph. and Philem. have the singular instead of the plural, and use μνεῖαν ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου in place of the προσευχόμενοι, which of course prompts speculation about the relationship of these passages. On the traditional view, Paul is merely exercising a certain freedom in his use of the words, rearranging them to suit the needs of the moment; but when the question of authenticity has been raised consideration must be given to other possibilities. If Col. is dependent on, or inspired by, Philem. then the author has introduced his own modifications; if Eph. is dependent on Col., then the writer of that letter has gone right back to the source and followed Philem. more closely, although still with his own modifications. It may be that the real solution is that both Col. and Eph. are inspired by Philem. independently, each making his own alterations. On the positive side, these words provide confirmation of the interpretation of the πάντοτε in v. 3 as indicating constant and unceasing prayer for the addressees.

καὶ αἰτούμενοι This phrase is omitted in B K and some mss of the Vulgate, which would attach the ἵνα clause directly to the preceding προσευχόμενοι. The addition is not, however, tautologous: as Peake notes, προσευχόμενοι is more general, αἰτούμενοι more specific, referring to the content of the petition. The latter verb is used in the middle only here and at Eph. 3:13, 20 in the Pauline corpus, although the active appears at 1 Cor. 1:22 (of the Jews’ demand for signs; citation of Eph. 3:13 here is an error). Lightfoot notes as an exact parallel Mark 11:24: πάντα ὅσα προσεύχεσθε καὶ αἰτεῖσθε.

ἵνα πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ Cf. Eph. 3:19, ἵνα πληρωθῆτε εἰς πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ. In regard to the construction, Aletti (70 n. 77) observes that πληρώω in the passive may be followed by the genitive (Rom. 15:14; but 15:13, which he also lists, has the verb in the active), the dative (Rom. 1:29; 2 Cor. 7:4) or the accusative (cf. Phil. 1:11, πεπληρωμένοι καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης; but some mss here read καρπῶν) of the content that is put in; cf. also

BAGD 671 s.v. 1b.<sup>1</sup> Masson, like Peake before him, wished to claim this as an accusative of respect, but Moule (52) notes that while the construction with the accusative is rare it is not unknown; as he says, the general sense is not affected by the choice between the alternatives: the prayer is that the Colossians may be filled with the knowledge of God's will.

According to Lightfoot, the compound ἐπίγνωσις 'is an advance upon γνώσις, denoting a larger and more thorough knowledge'. He notes that Paul himself contrasts γινώσκειν and γνώσις with ἐπιγινώσκειν and ἐπίγνωσις 'as the partial with the complete' (cf. Rom. 1:21, 28; 1 Cor. 13:12). J. A. Robinson (Ephesians, 248–54) argued that ἐπίγνωσις is not a fuller knowledge but knowledge directed towards a particular object; but H. A. A. Kennedy (St Paul and the Mystery Religions, 172 n. 2) finds his arguments unconvincing. Bultmann (Gnosis (1952), 37) claims that 'the compound ἐπίγνωσις, like the compound verb, is almost a technical term for the decisive knowledge of God which is involved in conversion to the Christian faith', and adds, 'it is always presupposed that Christian knowledge includes a corresponding attitude in life'. We have already met with the verb ἐπιγινώσκειν (see p. 93 above), and it was noted that in some cases the preposition makes its influence felt, whereas in others the compound is practically equivalent to the simple verb. In other words, we must pay due attention to the context in which the word is used, and the same may apply to the noun. According to BAGD (291) it is in the NT and related literature limited to religious and moral things—consciousness of sin in Rom. 3:20, knowledge of God's mystery in Col. 2:2, or knowledge of his will here in 1:9; in particular it refers to knowledge of God, or in Rom. 1:28 to acknowledgment of him. Moule in a note on the knowledge of God (159–64; cf. also his comment on 1:9, p. 53) remarks that the vast preponderance of these words in the NT 'is concerned with the perception of God's will or the recognition of him in his self-revelation in Jesus Christ'. Two points in his comment deserve special attention: (1) that this and kindred phrases do not mean 'merely a mental grasp of abstract propositions', but rather '“the perception of God's will as seen in Christ, and the response to it (or rather, to him)” ... carrying all the implications of a changed life and conduct', for which Moule refers especially to the context of the present passage; and (2) that 'our “knowledge of God” in this sense is dependent upon our being known by God—1 Cor. 13:12; Gal. 4:9—and is in sharp contrast to the ψευδώνυμος γνώσις, the “knowledge falsely so called”, of 1 Tim. 6:20' (cf. Bultmann, 43).

The distribution of these terms is not without interest: γνώσις occurs twenty times in the major Pauline letters (Rom. 2:20; 11:33; 15:14; 1 Cor 1:5; 8:1 (bis), 7, 10, 11; 12:8; 13:2, 8; 14:6; 2 Cor. 2:14; 4:6; 6:6; 8:7; 10:5; 11:6 and Phil. 3:8) and once each in Col. (2:3) and Eph. (3:19), while ἐπίγνωσις appears four times in the major letters (Rom. 1:28; 3:20; 10:2; Phil. 1:9), four times in Col. (1:9, 10; 2:2; 3:10) and twice in Eph. (1:17; 4:13). The frequency of γνώσις in the Corinthian letters is of course in some measure due to Paul's strictures, particularly in the eighth chapter, on the 'knowledge' on which some Corinthians prided themselves, the knowledge which 'puffs up' (1 Cor. 8:1); but a careful examination of these passages will serve to show that he can also use the word in a positive sense, notably at several points in 2 Cor. What is clear is that he does not employ ἐπίγνωσις in order to avoid the use of γνώσις, as if the latter were already a catchword of the heretics and therefore unsuited to 'orthodox' use. The very form of the phrase in 1 Tim. 6:20 implies that there is a true γνώσις, which is not merely a knowledge about God but a relationship with God which entails obedience to his will. The phrase itself may occur only in 1 Tim., but the distinction implied goes back a great deal further. γνώσις, in brief, can have quite a range of meaning. In secular usage it may refer simply to knowledge, and is often so used in the Wisdom literature (Bultmann, Gnosis, 23; cf. also his list of Christian uses of γινώσκειν 'in the everyday sense of knowing', 30–31). LXX, however, 'shows a clear leaning towards a religious reference' (ibid. 23), i.e. it relates to knowledge of God (for the OT see ibid. 14–18), and it is this OT background that is the primary influence in the NT usage of the term. Finally there is the specifically 'gnostic' γνώσις, which has been described as 'knowledge of the divine mysteries reserved for an élite' (Bianchi (ed.), Le Origini, p. xxvi).<sup>2</sup> Some, like Bultmann, would see in the NT an influence from and reaction against this 'gnostic' γνώσις, but the early history of the Gnostic movement is still an obscure area about which it may be dangerous to make confident statements. We do not know what stage of development this movement might have reached at any given point in the first century. γνώσις in LXX renders the

Hebrew *da'ath*, and it was in part the occurrence of the latter word and its cognates in the Dead Sea Scrolls which led to the suggestion that these texts represent a form of Jewish Gnosticism; but as noted in the Introduction (p. 40 above and n. 77) these claims soon subsided.

ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ The two adjectives should probably be taken as qualifying both nouns—the wisdom as well as the understanding is wrought by the Spirit, and the author's prayer is that his readers may be endowed with both in full measure (cf. 1:28; 3:16, where the reference is to instruction 'in all wisdom', but without the qualification 'spiritual'). As Moule (53) notes, these words seem to define the preceding phrase: 'perception of God's will consists in wisdom and understanding of every sort, on the spiritual level'. σοφία and σύνεσις are frequently found together, not only in the OT but also in Graeco-Roman philosophy (for references cf. Lightfoot, 204): Aletti (71 n.) observes that exegetes quote above all Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* i.13, according to which σοφία, σύνεσις and φρόνησις are the highest intellectual virtues, but adds that the most direct model for Col. 1:9 is biblical and Jewish (cf. Lohse, 26, with references to the relevant Qumran texts on the preceding page). The third of these terms, φρόνησις, appears in a partial parallel at Eph. 1:8: ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσει.

σοφία (BAGD 759f.; TWNT vii. 465–526—for Eph. and Col. see 524f.) is for Aristotle the highest of the virtues, but the NT references show a number of gradations: in contrast to the wisdom which God imparts there is a merely human wisdom (ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία, 1 Cor. 2:13, cf. σοφία ἀνθρώπων, 1 Cor. 2:5), a wisdom of the wise, of this world, of the present age (1 Cor. 1:19, 20; 2:6); 2 Cor. 1:12 can speak of a σοφία σαρκική, and Jas. 3:15 of a σοφία ἐπίγειος, ψυχική, δαιμονιώδης. σοφία λόγου at 1 Cor. 1:17 is neatly defined by BAGD as 'cleverness in speaking'. Koester (*Ancient Christian Gospels* (1990), 56) notes that the word occurs sixteen times in the first four chapters of 1 Cor., but only three times elsewhere in Paul's letters (Rom. 11:23; 1 Cor. 12:8; 2 Cor. 1:12); he finds 'quite striking' the frequent references in Eph. (1:8, 17; 3:10) and Col. (1:9, 28; 2:3, 23; 3:16; 4:5). The frequency of occurrence in the early chapters of 1 Cor. is, of course, due to the fact that Paul is there contrasting the wisdom of this world with the wisdom of God, once hidden in mystery (1 Cor. 2:7) but now revealed in Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24). Of the occurrences in Col., 2:23 relates to human ordinances which have indeed an appearance of wisdom, but are of no real value; of the rest, 2:3 speaks of Christ in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden away, while the others refer to that 'spiritual' wisdom which is the gift of God.

Wisdom, of course, figures prominently in the Wisdom literature, where some interesting development can be traced. In Job 28:23–28, according to R. H. Fuller (*Foundations*, 73), it is 'a pre-existent entity, independent of God, but scarcely as yet a hypostatized figure'. In Proverbs, particularly at 8:22–31, she is a creation of God (note the change in the pronoun), 'present when God created the world, though as yet she played no active role in creation'.<sup>3</sup> Here Wisdom is 'figuratively personified', but 'hardly as yet a hypostatization'. In the book of Wisdom she is 'now fully hypostatized' (but for Schürer (iii. 570) 'it almost, but not entirely, becomes an independent hypostasis side by side with God'). Wisdom then 'plays a prominent part in the thinking of Philo' (Fuller, 74); for Schürer (iii. 571) 'we already have here (i.e. in *Soph. Sol.*) in an unworked form the same elements from which Philo formed his doctrine of the *logos* (= reason and word of God) as a hypostasis mediating between God and the world'. This 'wisdom tradition' was later to become a factor in the development of Christology, notably in the *Logos* doctrine of the Fourth Gospel, but not only there.<sup>4</sup>

J. M. Robinson (*Trajectories*, 43) speaks of 'a trajectory that led from wisdom literature to Gnosticism', with Q as 'one of the connecting links between the hypostasizing of *Sophia* in Jewish wisdom literature and the gnostic redeemer myth attested in the second century systems'.<sup>5</sup> It would, however, be a mistake to think of a single trajectory, as if the whole process moved smoothly and without a break from beginning to end. Kurt Rudolph ('*Sophia und Gnosis*', 224) notes that some features are gnostic *Eigengut*, peculiar to the gnostic systems; this would suggest that they were introduced at a later stage. A. H. B. Logan (*Gnostic Truth*, 32) would see the *Sophia* myth 'as the contribution of the Gnostics of Irenaeus 1.29 and 30 to Valentinus and Christian theology': 'It was the Gnostics who created it'. In *Gnosticism Sophia* (i.e.

Wisdom) is one of the aeons, who is ultimately responsible for the creation of the world, and hence for the human predicament, the unhappy fate of immortal souls imprisoned in mortal bodies in a world that is alien to their true nature.<sup>6</sup> This Gnostic Sophia myth cannot simply be traced back without more ado to Jewish sources: there is Jewish influence, beyond doubt, Jewish material, but this material has been changed and adapted to suit the needs of Gnostic theory, and we need if possible to trace when and where these changes were made.

The later development of the Gnostic Sophia myth is not directly relevant to the study of Colossians, but it is sometimes important to be aware of the final outcome. It is also important to beware of reading back such later developments into earlier texts for which they may have no real relevance.<sup>7</sup> The developed myth of the second-century systems serves to show how far we have to travel from the ‘incipient Gnosticism’, if such it is, which we find in this letter. Here we are dealing not with a personified divine Wisdom, nor with the Gnostic aeon Sophia, but with that quality of wisdom which is the gift of God.

σύνεσις, the second in the Aristotelian triad, is (1) ‘the faculty of comprehension, intelligence, acuteness, shrewdness’ or (2) ‘insight, understanding in the religio-ethical realm ... such as God grants to his own’ (BAGD 788b; cf. also TWNT vii. 886–94); here it is obviously the latter sense that is required. For Aristotle, incidentally, σύνεσις is subordinate to φρόνησις, because it can only judge, but not command (Eth. Nic. vi.11; cf. Conzelmann, TWNT vii. 887); ‘while σύνεσις apprehends the bearings of things, φρόνησις suggests lines of action’ (Lightfoot). Where the two words are found together, σοφία normally precedes σύνεσις, but not in Josephus, Ant. viii.24, where in response to Solomon’s prayer (cf. 2 Chron. 1:7–12) God gives to him ‘understanding and wisdom such as no other man ever had, whether of kings or of private individuals’ (cf. also Wisd. 7:7).

πνευματικός, as Lightfoot notes, is emphatic because of its position; this is no ordinary human wisdom or understanding, but wrought by the Spirit (cf. BAGD 679, s.v. 2αβ). It should perhaps be emphasized that the reference is not to something otherworldly, ethereal, holy, ‘religious’ and remote from reality: according to Gal. 5:22 the fruit of the Spirit is ‘love, joy, peace, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control’ (NRSV)—all eminently practical virtues for the conduct of human relationships. There is of course, as already noted, a difference between merely human wisdom, a ‘fleshly’ wisdom, and the wisdom that is the gift of God, a difference between the sacred and the secular, between the spiritual and the merely material, but sometimes the search for a ‘spiritual’ significance must be bluntly considered misguided. Schweizer notes (‘Christus und Geist’, 301) that Col. no longer shows Paul’s reserve about wisdom and knowledge, and Paul does not speak of ‘spiritual wisdom’ as here. There is a similar phrase, ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῆς, at Eph. 1:3; the other occurrence of the word in Col. (3:16, ψαλμοῖς ὕμνοις ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς) is paralleled in Eph. 5:19, while Eph. 6:12 (πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας) is a reminder that spiritual forces are not necessarily always good (cf. the ‘unclean spirits’ in the Gospels). As with σοφία, the majority of the occurrences of πνευματικός in Paul’s major letters are in 1 Cor., but not all of them are due to the Corinthian situation.

The Valentinians later were to develop a threefold classification of humanity: the πνευματικοί, who alone were assured of full salvation, the ψυχικοί, who might if they made the proper choices attain to a kind of secondary salvation, and the ὑλικοί, χοϊκοί or σαρκικοί, for whom there was no hope whatever; they were doomed to perish. This belongs to a later age. There have been attempts to find such distinctions in Paul’s use of the terms in 1 Cor., or in Gal. 6:1, but here there is a danger of reading back second-century ideas into first-century documents (cf. B. A. Pearson, *The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology* (1973); R. A. Horsley, ‘Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos: Distinctions of Spiritual Status among the Corinthians’, *HTR* 69 (1976), 269ff.). At any rate there is no such distinction here in Col.

10. περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν Cf. 1 Thess. 2:12; Eph. 4:1 (ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως); Phil. 1:27. περιπατεῖν (BAGD 649, esp. 2α; TWNT v. 944–45: for LXX see 942–43) means literally ‘to walk’ (e.g. Mark 2:9



par; 5:42; John 5:8–12), but is also used, and particularly in Paul (e.g. Rom. 6:4; 8:4; 1 Cor. 3:3; 7:17; 2 Cor. 4:2; 5:7; Gal. 5:16), in a figurative sense of the conduct of life (Phil 1:27 uses πολιτεύεσθαι); in both these senses it corresponds to the use of the Hebrew halak (Dunn, 71 notes that this verb ‘gives rise to the technical term “halakha” to denote rabbinic rulings on how the law should be interpreted in daily life’). The aorist infinitive here has been interpreted in various ways: as an infinitive of purpose (Lohse, 27; Aletti, 72), or as denoting ‘the consequence (not necessarily the purpose) of the spiritual enlightenment’ just described (Lightfoot), or as an imperatival infinitive (O’Neill, ‘Source’, 90), but whatever the precise grammatical usage the meaning is not in doubt: the wisdom and understanding just mentioned are not merely theoretical—they are to lead to right conduct. The readers are to ‘walk worthily of the Lord’, to whom they owe allegiance.

κύριος in this context would seem to refer most naturally to Christ, but 1 Thess. 2:12 reads εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ, and 4:1 πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέσκειν θεῷ (cf. 2:15 of those who ‘displease God’, also Rom. 8:8). These might seem to suggest that the reference is to God, but Lightfoot already notes that ‘St Paul’s common, and apparently universal, usage requires us to understand ὁ Κύριος of Christ’. Aletti (73) observes that if we take Col. as a whole, the title κύριος is given to Christ (1:3; 2:6; 3:17; 3:24b), but never to God, which prompts to caution in those cases where κύριος stands by itself (1:10; 3:13, where, however, some mss read Χριστός, others θεός; 3:16, again with variants; 3:18, 20, 22, 23, 24a; 4:1b, 7, 17); the use of κύριος here, with τοῦ θεοῦ at the end of the verse, suggests two different referents, the former relating to Christ, the latter to God the Father. This yields a perfectly natural sense.

These parallels in 1 Thess. show certain minor differences, which should be noted as well as the similarities: the present infinitive in both cases, where Col. has the aorist; the articular infinitive in 2:12, where Col. has the simple infinitive; and the insertion of καὶ ἀρέσκειν at 4:1, whereas Col. has the noun ἀρεσκεία. Once again we may ask: are these due to the same author varying his form of expression, or do they suggest different writers, one of whom may have had some knowledge of the other’s work?

εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν is literally ‘to all pleasing’, with no indication as to who is to be pleased with this conduct<sup>8</sup> (O’Neill, 91 translates ‘to be entirely pleasing’); ‘pleasing to him’ in the translation above (so also NEB, RSV, NRSV) links it with the nearest person mentioned, but see below. The noun, which occurs only here in the NT, is used ‘mostly in a bad sense’ (BAGD 105, citing Aristotle and Theophrastus, both already quoted by Lightfoot), of obsequiousness or cringing, ‘ingratiating oneself with a sovereign or potentate’ (Lightfoot; cf. ἀνθρωπάρεσκοι at 3:22 below, also Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4). It can also be used, however, in a positive sense, of what is pleasing to God, as in several passages in Philo (Fug. 88; Spec. Leg. i.176, 317; Op.M. 144 etc.). Lightfoot remarks, ‘As this word was commonly used to describe the proper attitude of men towards God, the addition of τοῦ Θεοῦ would not be necessary’ (quoting other passages from Philo). It is probably this that has led some to think that the κύριος earlier in the verse must refer to God, but in view of the usage of Col., already mentioned, it is better to take it as referring to Christ.

ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ Cf. v. 6 above, where these two verbs are used of the gospel (with καρποφορέω in the middle voice); here they are applied to the readers: they are to bring forth fruit in every good work and increase in the knowledge of God. Moule (54) notes that this phrase ‘provides a striking instance of the verbal arrangement (a b b a) called “chiasmus” ’:

The alternative is to take the dative τῇ ἐπιγνώσει as instrumental (so Lightfoot: ‘The simple instrumental dative represents the knowledge of God as the dew or the rain which nurtures the growth of the plant: Deut. 32:2; Hos. 14:5’; cf. also his paraphrase of the passage, p. 203). In this case the verbs must be taken together, and link ‘through the knowledge of God’ with ‘in every good work’ (so e.g. Peake, 499, who translates: ‘bearing fruit and increasing in every good work by the knowledge of God’; cf. Lohse, 29 n. 48: ‘The growth comes about through the understanding, and produces good works’). The interpretation in terms of chiasmus, however, would seem to be more natural and straightforward (so also Aletti, 72–75). The passage evidently caused difficulty to scribes, for some mss read ἐν τῇ

ἐπιγνώσει, others εἰς τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν (Lightfoot in his comment speaks of ‘unsuccessful attempts to define the construction’). Strictly speaking, the two participles should be in the accusative, agreeing with the implied subject of περιπατῆσαι above, but according to Peake, ‘the continuation of an infinitive by a nominative participle is frequent in classical Greek, and occurs several times in Paul’; his four examples, however, are all from Eph. (4:2, 3) and Col. (2:2; 3:16), both of which are often considered post-Pauline; moreover the two cases in Col. are not infinitive constructions and only Eph. presents a real parallel (ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι ... ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων ... σπουδάζοντες).

The reference to good works may appear strange in view of Paul’s regular condemnation of ‘the works of the law’, i.e. of any attempt to achieve salvation by righteous conduct, but as Aletti (74) notes the ‘good works’ here in view are ‘only the first sign of a believing life that is worthy of the Gospel’, the fruit of divine grace and not the result of human effort. The difference is quite simply that between works done in order to achieve salvation, which are condemned, and those which are the fruit of salvation and expected of those who have experienced the grace of God in Christ. Paul constantly enjoins his readers to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of their calling.<sup>9</sup> They are still subject to the strains and stresses of this earthly life, but ‘in Christ’ they have already been introduced into a new order of being, and must conduct themselves accordingly.

11. ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν ‘The universal scope of the apostolic gospel appears ... in the letter’s extensive use of formulations with πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν—over thirty of them’ (Wilson, *The Hope of Glory*, 73). This is a perfectly valid statement in terms of its immediate context: ‘The gospel bears fruits and grows in “all” the world (1:6), having been preached to “all” creation under heaven (1:23). Paul admonishes “all” people and teaches “all” people so as to present “all” people before God as perfect<sup>10</sup>—but not every formulation with πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν belongs in this context. We have already encountered the phrases ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ (v. 9) and εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν, ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ (v. 10), where the reference is not to universality but rather to fullness and completeness (for the range of meaning cf. BAGD 631a–33a). The prayer is that the Colossians may be filled with all wisdom, that they may conduct themselves in a manner fully pleasing to the Lord, bearing fruit in every good work. Here in v. 11 the prayer continues with a reference to equipment<sup>11</sup> with all the power that is necessary for full endurance and forbearance (on the terms ὑπομονή and μακροθυμία see below).

Greek has several words commonly rendered by ‘power’, ‘strength’ or ‘might’ in English (e.g. ἐξουσία, δύναμις, κράτος, ἰσχύς), and failure to recognize nuances of meaning (or reliance upon an English translation) may lead to misleading conclusions. At Acts 1:7–8, for example, AV reads, ‘It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you’; but what the disciples are promised is not that they will receive the power which belongs to the Father alone (ἐξουσία), it is that they will be given a dynamic force (δύναμις) to sustain them amid the trials that lie ahead. At John 1:12 those who receive the Logos are given the right (ἐξουσία) to become the children of God, but they still have to exercise that right, and fulfil the obligations which it entails, if they are truly to be God’s children. A subscription to a sports club conveys the right to make use of its facilities, but not the ability to excel in the sport—which has to be gained by practice and training. The problems for the interpreter are complicated by the fact that some of these words have a range of meanings which sometimes overlap.

Here the word is δύναμις (BAGD 207a; TWNT ii. 286–318), which in this context implies all the spiritual resources necessary to their Christian life. Peake (499) comments, ‘This equipment with Divine power is not, as we might have expected, said to be given with a view to deeds of great spiritual heroism, but for the practice of passive virtues, since this often puts the greater strain on the Christian’s strength’. ὑπομονή he defines as ‘endurance, steadfastness in face of trials, temptations and persecutions’ (cf. BAGD 846a; TWNT iv. 589–93), and μακροθυμία as ‘forbearance, the patience of spirit that will not retaliate’ (cf. BAGD 488a; TWNT iv. 377–93). It has to be remembered that for the first three centuries of the Church’s life Christians were a minority group, exposed to hostility and even to outright persecution,

with all the temptation to conform to the habits of their neighbours which that involved. There was a real need for steadfastness and endurance, and it is not surprising that these terms, especially ὑπομονή, feature regularly in the New Testament. Aletti (76) notes that there is nothing triumphalist in the existence of believers; the power received from God does not act as a talisman to ward off tribulation, but it does enable the believer to remain unshakeable amid all trials. To speak of ‘passive’ virtues may, however, be somewhat misleading; what is called for is rather fortitude, an attitude summed up in a classic passage in Ephesians (6:10–17) with its reference to putting on the whole armour of God ‘that you may be able to withstand in that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm’ (NRSV). As Scott (18) puts it, the patience of the Christian ‘is not a dull Stoical endurance, but is accompanied with joy, since the believer can be confident that all his trials are leading to some great end’. Superficially the Stoic ἀταρκεία, the Epicurean ἀταραξία and the Christian ὑπομονή may appear to be very similar, but a closer inspection reveals that there are very real differences.<sup>12</sup>

κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ Moffatt translates ‘his glorious might’, taking τῆς δόξης in Hebrew fashion as adjectival (BAGD 203b offers ‘majestic power’, and at 449a ‘his glorious [divine] might’; cf. Aletti, 75 n. 100: ‘il s’agit d’un se’mitisme à traduire “selon sa puissante gloire”’, which, however, takes τὸ κράτος as adjectival, rather than τῆς δόξης). On the other hand Moule (Idiom Book, 175) observes that ‘it is a mistake to claim a Semitic Genitive where a good Greek Genitive makes better sense’, and this may be a case in point: a simple literal translation makes perfectly good sense. As Lightfoot puts it, δόξα stands ‘for the majesty or the power or the goodness of God, as manifested to men’ (he refers to Eph. 1:6, 12, 17; 3:16 and compares v. 27 below). Originally the word meant (1) opinion (hence orthodox, i.e. holding ‘right opinions’) or (2) reputation, but in LXX it was used as the equivalent for the Hebrew kabod, ‘the usual word for the splendour or glory of God’ (Moule, Colossians, 83; cf. Brockington in Studies in the Gospels, 1–8; TWNT ii. 236–56).<sup>13</sup> NT usage corresponds not to that of classical Greek but to that of LXX (TWNT ii. 250), so much so that BAGD 203b gives as the primary meaning ‘brightness, splendour, radiance’ (although Moule, 84 detects the ‘secular’ meaning in John 5:44, where the ‘glory’ received from others is dramatically contrasted with that bestowed by God; cf. John 7:18; 8:50; 1 Thess. 2:6; BAGD 204, s.v. 3. This is reputation or fame in contrast with true glory). It is in the first place the glory of God, ‘in light inaccessible hid from our eyes’, but by his grace may be shared by others: ‘the “wealth of glory” represented by the Incarnation, and, since then, by the presence of God in his Church through the Holy Spirit, is the ground for the Christians’ “confidence” (ἐλπὶς) “in a glorious destiny to come”’ (Moule, 84).

As already noted, κράτος (BAGD 449a; TWNT iii. 905–08) is one of several Greek words for ‘power’ or ‘strength’, but it is not used in any of the major Pauline letters; moreover there is no passage in the New Testament where it is said that man can either possess or obtain this power (TWNT iii. 907). At Heb. 2:14 the reference is to ‘the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil’, but elsewhere κράτος is always the power of God or of Christ. Ephesians (1:19; 6:10, ἐν τῷ κρᾶτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ, cf. Isa. 40:6 LXX) twice links it with ἰσχύς, in the first case referring to God, in the second to Christ (apart from 1 Tim. 6:16, these two verses with Col. 1:11 are the only occurrences in the Pauline corpus). Like δόξα, and sometimes associated with it (1 Pet. 4:11; Rev 1:6; 5:13), it frequently occurs in doxologies (1 Pet. 5:11; 1 Tim. 6:16; Jude 25).

μετὰ χαρᾶς In the translation above these words are taken with what follows, in agreement with the text of NA27 (cf. NRSV, and NEB translators’ note); the text in UBS, 3rd edn takes them with what precedes (so AV, RSV, NEB; cf. also the punctuation apparatus in UBS, 3rd edn). Ancient manuscripts had no punctuation, and the verse division is a comparatively modern invention (devised by Stephanus for the NT in 1551); it is therefore sometimes difficult to determine whether a word or phrase belongs with what precedes or with what follows, and a decision has to be made on the basis of the content of the passage. In the view of some scholars, the εὐχαριστοῦντες clause introduces a new thought: ‘The subject is no longer the conduct of life of the believers; rather the community is now urged to praise God with thanksgiving, as they are reminded of the saving action of God extolled in the confession’ (Lohse, 32; the confession follows in vv. 12–14). Thanksgiving for deliverance is then naturally associated with joy. Peake, however, long ago

objected that this ‘would be tautological and throw a false emphasis on these words’ (500). Taken with the preceding ὑπομονή καὶ μακροθυμία, the phrase ‘forms a very necessary addition, for the peculiar danger of the exercise of these qualities is that it tends to produce a certain gloominess or sourness of disposition. The remedy is that the Christian should be so filled with joy that he is able to meet all his trials with a buoyant sense of mastery.’ More recently Barth (183) says the words are ‘most likely part of the preceding statement, for Paul speaks of joyful suffering or joyful endurance in the face of suffering also elsewhere’ (referring to Rom. 5:3; 12:12; 1 Thess. 5:16; 1 Pet. 1:6; 4:13; compare Acts 5:41; Jas. 1:2ff.). Only three of Barth’s references are, however, actually Pauline; the occurrence of the theme in the other passages suggests that this was a common motif in early Christian teaching: the writers knew that they and their readers were exposed to hostility, even to actual persecution, but their attitude was not one of despair; it was to focus on the joy that was set before them, the hope of the life everlasting, in this following the example of their Lord and Master (cf. Heb. 12:2).

In favour of the reading adopted here, it may be noted that each of the two preceding participles is preceded by a prepositional phrase (ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγάθῳ καρποφοροῦντες, ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι), which suggests that the third also should have such a phrase before it (cf. also Phil. 1:4: μετὰ χαρᾶς τὴν δέησιν ποιούμενος; on the other side, cf. already Lightfoot, 206, who rejects these arguments). The three participles are certainly closely linked, although it is convenient in translation to make a break at v. 11 and begin a new sentence at μετὰ χαρᾶς εὐχαριστοῦντες. What is important here is the note of joy, even in the face of suffering and hardship: too often Christianity appears to be stern and sombre, puritanical in its attitude to even harmless pleasures. The true note is that of Phil. 4:4: ‘Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.’ The word χαρά itself occurs quite frequently in the NT.

12. εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ πατρὶ τῷ ἰκανώσαντι ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί<sup>14</sup> Lohse (32 n. 1) writes, ‘In Jewish texts the participle often appears with an imperatival meaning’ (referring inter alia to D. Daube, ‘Participle and Imperative in I Peter’, in E. G. Selwyn (ed.), *The First Epistle of St Peter* (1949), 467–88), and later adds, ‘Since the participle εὐχαριστοῦντες is only loosely attached to the preceding verses, the translation as an imperative is completely justified.’ Aletti, however, demurs (76f.), urging that we consider the use made of participles in Col. and setting out half a dozen passages (Col. 2:6–7; 3:9–10; 3:12; 3:16; 4:2; 4:5), in each of which an imperative is followed by one or more participles in a structure similar to that of our passage. A participle may have imperatival force, but that does not mean that it always does; moreover in the present case it would seem rather awkward to have two participles normally used, followed by a third with imperatival meaning. In a sense all three could be taken as imperatival, since they spell out what is meant by the περιπατήσαι of v. 10, but it would seem better to regard all three as participles, rather than take two as participles and the third as an imperative; the participles would appear to be more closely linked than Lohse allows. As already noted, the translation above makes a break and begins a new sentence, with an imperative, but that is simply because this is a convenient point, and does not imply that the third participle is to be taken as grammatically an imperative.

This verse shows a string of variants, some of which, however, do not really affect the sense: a καὶ before εὐχαριστοῦντες in P46 and 1175 suggests that some scribes thought the μετὰ χαρᾶς should go with what precedes; but the support is not really very strong, nor is that for ἅμα after εὐχαριστοῦντες (P46 B). The insertion of θεῷ before πατρὶ in κ and other mss indicates that some devout scribe felt the simple τῷ πατρὶ to be deficient in reverence; but the variant θεῷ καὶ in C3 etc. suggests that we have here a growing text. Moule (55) notes that ‘Except in the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine epistles, “(the) Father” (without the addition of “God” or of a qualifying genitive or possessive) is not common in the N.T.’; so scribes may have written what they expected. More important is the variant καλέσαντι (D\* F G etc.) for ἰκανώσαντι (P46 κ A C D2 etc.): scribes evidently found the latter word difficult, since it is used in an unusual sense (see below). This is a case where the more difficult reading should be preferred. The καλέσαντι καὶ ἰκανώσαντι of

B is an obvious conflation. Finally the ὑμᾶς (x B etc.) presents another case of the common variation between the first person plural and the second (see p. 95 above): A C D F G with other mss and the Majority text read ἡμᾶς, possibly influenced by the first person pronoun in the following verse.

This verse calls upon the readers to give thanks to the Father, ‘who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the Light’ (NRSV), and thus provides part of the motivation for the thanksgiving to which they are called. The participial phrase in this verse is followed by a relative clause in v. 13, which provides a further motivation (see below). The only other occurrence in the NT of the verb ἰκανόω is at 2 Cor. 3:6: ὃς καὶ ἰκάνωσεν ἡμᾶς διακόνους καινῆς διαθήκης, but as noted in the Introduction (p. 28) it would be a mistake to assume a special link between these letters on the strength of just a few words. It means to make sufficient, to qualify, ‘perhaps shading into the sense empower, authorize’ (BAGD 374b): by the grace of God the readers have been qualified to take their place in the inheritance of the saints in light.<sup>15</sup> Lightfoot (317) already notes that confusion between ΤΩΠΚΑΝΩΣΑΝΤΙ and ΤΩΙΚΑΛΕΣΑΝΤΙ would be easy in a period when the iota was written adscript and not subscript, ‘while at the same time καλέσαντι would suggest itself to scribes as the obvious word in such a connexion’ (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9 τοῦ ἐκ σκότους ὑμᾶς καλέσαντος).<sup>16</sup> If we read ἡμᾶς here, the author is including himself, and other Christians, but since this may be the result of assimilation to the first person pronoun in the following verse it is probably better to read ὑμᾶς.

μερίς (BAGD 505) means ‘part of a whole that has been divided’, and hence a share or portion; at Acts 16:12 it appears to refer to one of the four districts into which the province of Macedonia was divided (see most recently R. S. Ascough, NTS 44 (1998), 93–103). In the Pauline corpus the word occurs only here and in 2 Cor. 6:15, where it is differently used. κλῆρος (BAGD 435a; TWNT iii. 757–63, esp. 762–63) means ‘lot’, with reference to the casting of lots (cf. Mark 15:24 and parallels; Acts 1:26), and hence something apportioned by lot, a share or portion. It occurs only here in the Pauline corpus. The two words are close to one another in meaning (Lohse, 35), but not quite synonymous: μερίς is primarily a part, κλῆρος a portion appointed for someone; it often comes close in meaning to κληρονομία (see Foerster, TWNT iii. 758–60 on the relation of these terms in LXX: the Promised Land is the lot appointed for Israel, the inheritance into which by the grace of God they are destined to enter. In Deut. 10:9 the Levites are given neither part nor portion among their brothers when the land is distributed, because the Lord himself is their portion; at Num. 18:20 he is their κληρονομία). In Acts 26:18 there is an interesting parallel to the present verse: τοῦ λαβεῖν αὐτοὺς ... κλῆρον ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις (this participle is equivalent to a substantival ἅγιοις; cf. also Acts 20:32, δοῦναι τὴν κληρονομίαν ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις πᾶσιν). The words μερίς and κλῆρος appear together in Acts 8:21 (in Peter’s rejection of Simon Magus), which itself echoes passages in LXX such as Deut. 10:9; 12:12. Lohse (35) notes that the Hebrew equivalents are often used in the writings of the Qumran community; particular interest attaches to 1QS XI.7f.: ‘God has given them [the blessings listed in the preceding lines] to His chosen ones as an everlasting possession, and has caused them to inherit the lot of the Holy Ones. He has joined their assembly to the Sons of Heaven’ (tr. Vermes, Dead Sea Scrolls in English (1962)).

As noted above (p. 71), the context of Ps. 89:5–7 suggests that the ‘holy ones’ there are heavenly beings:

Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD,  
your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones.

For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD?

Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD,  
a God feared in the council of the holy ones,

great and awesome above all that are around him? (NRSV)

The imagery here is that of God seated in a heavenly council, surrounded by the angels and other heavenly beings who minister in his service. In the light of these and similar passages, particularly from Qumran, it has been argued that the 'saints' of Col. 1:12 should be understood as referring to the angels: 'The "holy ones" (ἅγιοι) are the angels, and the Christian community has been authorized to participate in their "portion of the lot" (μερίς τοῦ κλήρου)—this is unmistakably clear from the parallel statements from the Qumran community' (Lohse 36, cf. Best, Ephesians, 167–68 on Eph. 1:18). To this Barth (186) objects (1) that in Col. 'saints' is never used to designate angels, 'but rather always human persons chosen by God' (referring to 1:2, 4, 22, 26; 3:12); (2) account must be taken of Acts 26:18, where οἱ ἀγιάσμενοι 'are unequivocally the believers in Christ'; (3) in the further course of the letter, the angels are not given such significance, and the salvation of God is not presented in such a way as to suggest that the hope of the readers should be seen as participation in 'the lot of the angels' (but what of the theory that the θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων in 2:18 is the worship offered by the angels, in which they hope to share?). Barth also notes that in this context 'saints' has 'a more circumscribed meaning' than in earlier occurrences: 'As in the OT, the word is used to designate the covenant people Israel, in whose inheritance the "former outsiders" are now entitled participants'. Something similar to this nuance had already been noted by Benoit (87): 'Il s'agirait plus précisément des chrétiens d'origine juive, ceux de Jérusalem, les premiers appelés au salut du Christ': the 'saints' are the Jewish Christians in contrast to Gentiles. It appears notably where Paul is concerned with his great collection for the poor in Judaea (cf. also Eph. 2:19, where the former 'strangers and aliens' have become fellow-citizens with the saints, i.e. Christians originating from the 'city of Israel'; but cf. Best, Ephesians, 277–78).

Benoit notes that the view which sees the ἅγιοι here as angels has good support in the texts, but that in the NT the use of the substantive in the sense of 'angels' is much more rare, and even doubtful. He lists just three Pauline texts, apart from our present verse: in 2 Thess. 1:10 he suggests an antithetic parallelism, in which the Lord is glorified in his saints, the angels, and admired in those who believe in him, i.e. human beings; at 1 Thess. 3:13 'it seems preferable to recognise angels in the "saints" of this passage'—unless we extend the term to include both angels and people who have become their companions; as for Eph. 1:18, the ἅγιοι here could represent angels just as much as beatified people. But why not both? Exegetes, he says (95), too often proceed on the basis of an 'either/or', when the author may have wished to embrace complementary aspects which are not mutually exclusive. It may be added that Lohse continues (36): 'The host of those chosen by God is joined to the angels and they are likewise called "Holy Ones". As God's possession, they are holy ones (cf. 1:2 "saints") who will receive the heavenly inheritance'. The heavenly host includes not only angels but the elect who have kept the faith and finished their course.

ἐν τῷ φωτί Cf. with this and the next verse Acts 26:18, τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι ἀπὸ σκότους εἰς φῶς καὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σατανᾶ ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν; also 1 Pet. 2:9, τοῦ ἐκ σκότους ὑμᾶς καλέσαντος εἰς τὸ θαυμαστὸν αὐτοῦ φῶς. The contrast of light and darkness is common in the Bible: at the very beginning, in the creation story, we are told that 'God separated the light from the darkness' (Gen. 1:4). Echoing that, 2 Cor. 4:6 says, 'it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. In Isa. 9:2: 'the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light'. According to 1 John 1:5, 'God is light and in him is no darkness at all', and in the next verse the conclusion is drawn that those who would be in fellowship with God must 'walk' in the light (cf. Eph. 5:8).<sup>17</sup> The War Scroll from Qumran (1QM) is 'not a military manual, but a theological consideration of a perpetual struggle between good and evil', the war of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness (G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*) (1978), 51; for a translation see Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 122–48). The terms are thus used both naturally, for light and darkness in the ordinary sense, and also metaphorically, light representing the good and darkness evil.

This contrast is not confined to the Bible: Lightfoot already notes, ‘As a classical parallel, Plato Resp. vii. p. 518A, ἐκ τε φωτὸς εἰς σκότος καὶ ἐκ σκότους εἰς φῶς, is quoted’ (cf. TWNT vii. 424–46 on σκότος; ix. 302–49 on φῶς; also Hübner’s excursus, ‘Licht und Finsternis’, 228–32). The most obvious reference is, of course, to Zoroastrianism, but the motif appears in other religions also; indeed, Moule (57) says, ‘it would be surprising to find any religion in which this obvious but telling metaphor was ignored’. This ‘dualism’ is sometimes claimed as evidence of Gnostic influence, but we must consider in such cases how far the idea in question is specifically Gnostic, and how much may be due to common dependence on the same background of thought and ideas. Cf. Lightfoot’s comment (210) on terms used in connection with the idea of the λόγος: ‘their use in Alexandrian writers, such as Philo, cannot be taken to define, though it may be brought to illustrate, their meaning in St Paul and St John’. Some terms are definitely ‘Gnostic’ within the context of a Gnostic system, but are they ‘Gnostic’ outside of that system? It may be dangerous to draw conclusions from a superficial similarity in language and terminology: both Gnostics and orthodox were using the language and ideas of their time. In the present case we need to remember that there are several different kinds of dualism (cf. U. Bianchi, Encyc. Britannica (1974 edn) 1066–70 and ‘Il dualismo come categoria storico-religiosa’, R. storia e lett. religiosa ix (1973), 2ff.; Huppenbauer, *Der Mensch zwischen zwei Welten*), and not all of them are strictly Gnostic.

13. ὃς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ As already noted, this verse provides a further motivation for the thanksgiving to which the community is summoned: God ‘has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son’ (NRSV; the relative pronoun refers back τῷ πατρὶ in v. 12). The verb ῥύομαι (BAGD 737b) means ‘rescue, save, deliver, preserve’; it occurs for example in a petition of the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6:13, ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ), while the present participle is used of Jesus in 1 Thess. 1:10 (τὸν ῥυόμενον ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης; cf. the quotation of Isa. 59:20 at Rom. 11:26). The aorist here would seem to indicate that the author thinks of this deliverance not as something now in process, but as an accomplished fact: by virtue of their conversion and their baptism into Christ, Christians have already been delivered from the power of darkness and belong to the realm of light. It is therefore incumbent upon them to live as children of the light and of the day, not of the night (1 Thess. 5:4–8; cf. Eph. 5:8). This is one of the points at which our author seems to some scholars to go further than Paul himself does: for Paul there is always a certain tension between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’—a decisive change has indeed taken place, but the full consummation is yet to come (cf. Rom. 6:5, ‘if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his’; note the future in the second clause); for our author, Christians are not only buried with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:4–5) but already raised with him (Col 2:12; 3:1). It is, however, possible, as will be seen, to interpret such statements in Col. in thoroughly Pauline terms, so that it is by no means certain that there is such a difference.<sup>18</sup>

BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago and London, 1979)

1 Aletti adds: ‘La souplesse avec laquelle le passif est utilisé interdit qu’on parle trop vite pour Col 1:9 de construction non paulinienne’.

BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago and London, 1979)

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2 This ‘gnostic’ γνῶσις is further delimited in para. B II on the following page: ‘Not every gnosis is Gnosticism’. 1 Tim. 6:20 refers to a ψευδώνυμος γνῶσις, ‘a passage that can safely be regarded as directed against an incipient Gnosticism’ (Pearson, *Emergence*, 154), but a gnosis falsely so-called implies the existence of a true gnosis. Cf. Pearson’s discussion of the use of the phrase in Eusebius (153–67).

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77 Cf. W. D. Davies, *Christian Origins and Judaism*, 119ff., 136ff.; B. Reicke, *NTS* 1 (1954/55), 137–41; H. Ringgren in Bianchi (ed.), *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo*, 379–84; M. Mansoor in Bianchi (ed.), *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo*, 389–400; M. Wilcox in *The Scrolls and Christianity*, ed. M. Black (1969), 88–93; I. Gruenwald, *Israel Oriental Studies*, iii (1973), 63–107; Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, 151–56; Huppenbauer, *Der Mensch zwischen zwei Welten*, 12. Davies (157ff.) observes that the Scrolls ‘present what seem to be specific points of contact with the Colossian heresy’, but he also notes certain differences.

BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago and London, 1979)

TWNT *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, 11 vols (Stuttgart, 1932–79); *ET Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, tr. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, 1964–73)

BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago and London, 1979)

3 ‘The picture painted is that of a child in his father’s workshop (vv. 30f.)’.

Schürer E. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, English edn revd G. Vermes and F. Millar (Edinburgh 1973–86)

Schürer E. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, English edn revd G. Vermes and F. Millar (Edinburgh 1973–86)

4 For later Christian use of the book of Wisdom, cf. Schürer, iii. 573–75; see also e.g. M. J. Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology and Law in Matthew’s Gospel* (1970); R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence, Wisdom and the Son of Man* (1973); R. A. Piper, *Wisdom in the Q Tradition* (1989); Pokorný, *The Genesis of Christology*.

5 Cf. also the references in the index to the volume, s.v. ‘Wisdom’.

6 It is not possible to discuss this theme in detail here. See further Zandee, ‘Die Person der Sophia’; Stead, ‘The Valentinian Myth of Sophia’; MacRae, ‘The Jewish Background of the Gnostic Sophia Myth’, 86–101; Schenke, ‘Die Tendenz der Weisheit zur Gnosis’; Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 76–86 (and index); D. J. Good, *Reconstructing the Tradition of Sophia in Gnostic Literature* (1987). For the Gospel of Philip see G. S. Gasparro, ‘Il personaggio di Sophia nel Vangelo secondo Filippo’, *VigChr* 31 (1977), 244–81.

7 Cf. Rudolph (‘Sophia und Gnosis’, 223f.) on attempts to read back complexes of ideas to Jewish ‘models’. U. Wilckens, whose *Weisheit und Torheit* is mentioned in this connection, later changed his opinion (see ‘Zu 1 Kor 2.1–16’, in Andresen and Klein (eds), *Theologia Crucis—Signum Crucis*, 501–37). E. H. Pagels (in Hedrick and Hodgson (eds), *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity*, 278) notes that the exegesis of Gen. 2 in the Hypostasis of the Archons ‘reflects the influence of Paul’s own exegesis of the same chapter (and of other passages in which the apostle refers to spiritual conflict with hostile cosmic powers: cf. 1 Corinthians 2; Colossians 1; Ephesians 5–6).’ Cf. her appendix (279–85) discussing passages parallel to the Hypostasis in the Pauline corpus and Proverbs.

BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago and London, 1979)

TWNT *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, 11 vols (Stuttgart, 1932–79); *ET Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, tr. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, 1964–73)



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BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago and London, 1979)

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

HTR Harvard Theological Review

BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago and London, 1979)

TWNT Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, 11 vols (Stuttgart, 1932–79); ET Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, tr. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, 1964–73)

LXX Septuagint

8 ‘wem gegenüber, ist nicht sicher auszumachen’ (Foerster, TWNT i. 456).

NEB New English Bible

RSV Revised Standard Version

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago and London, 1979)

9 ‘The expression “in every good work” is certainly Pauline, as witnessed by the presence of the same vocabulary in Rom. 2:7, 10; 13:3; 2 Cor. 9:8; Gal. 6:10; Phil. 1:6’ (Aletti, 74 n. 95). He refers also to Eph. 2:10 and the ‘almost identical syntagma’ in 2 Thess. 2:17, ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ ἀγαθῶ, and to the ‘massive presence’ of the combination in the Pastorals (even more notable when we include cases with καλός). But his remark that we find analogous expressions in the Judaism of the time (e.g. 1QS 1.4–5) shows, together with the Pastorals, that the usage is not purely Pauline.

10 The reference (not supplied) is to Col. 1:28. A footnote refers back to p. 54 n. 14, where it is noted in the text that ‘the teaching of sages like Socrates, owing to the nature of their vocation, takes on universal dimensions; these venerable figures become, in effect, the tutors of all humankind’. The philosophical paraenesis, as Wilson shows, certainly provides interesting parallels which are important for the background of Col., but it is not necessarily to be inferred that our author was influenced by these writings. It is well to recall E. Earle Ellis’s remark about the danger of converting parallels into influences, and influences into sources (St Paul’s Use of the Old Testament, 82). Authors writing independently, in the same period and in similar circumstances, might well show a measure of agreement which might deceive the modern reader into thinking the relationship between them closer than it actually was.

BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago and London, 1979)

11 The verb δυναμώω occurs several times in LXX, but not elsewhere in the NT apart from Heb. 11:34 and as a variant reading at Eph. 6:10. The form normally used is the compound ἐνδυναμώω (Acts 9:22; Rom. 4:20; Eph. 6:10; Phil. 4:13; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 2:1; 4:17), which is read by some mss at Heb. 11:34 also.

AV Authorized Version

BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago and London, 1979)

TWNT Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, 11 vols (Stuttgart, 1932–79); ET Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, tr. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, 1964–73)

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NRSV New Revised Standard Version

12 For a comparison of Paul and Stoicism, taking due note of the differences, see Esler, 'Paul and Stoicism': 'Throughout the course of Rom. 12 Paul works closely with ideas and language that have parallels in Stoicism and yet thoroughly subverts them as he paints his own very distinctive picture' (124).

BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago and London, 1979)

LXX Septuagint

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13 In the Nag Hammadi Tractatus Tripartitus (110.17–18) a literal translation of the Coptic does not make sense: 'these are glories and theories'. The meaning required is 'opinions and theories'. The error is, however, easily explained on the basis of a Greek Vorlage: the translator, more familiar with the biblical than the classical sense of δόξα, did not realize that in this case the biblical sense did not fit (see Thomassen, *Le Traité Tripartite* (1989), 10–11). The mistake is the more understandable in that there are numerous cases of the biblical sense in this text.

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LXX Septuagint

NA B. Aland, K. Aland et al. (eds), in succession to Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th edn (Stuttgart, 1993)

27 B. Aland, K. Aland et al. (eds), in succession to Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th edn (Stuttgart, 1993)

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

NEB New English Bible

UBS United Bible Societies

AV Authorized Version

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14 On this verse cf. Benoit, “Ἅγιοι en Colossiens 1.12’.

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago and London, 1979)

15 Benoit (83) notes that the sense is ‘ “rendre capable de, apte à”, mais non pas “rendre digne”: dignos de la Vulgate est inexact, mieux idoneos’.

16 As already noted, the καλέσαντι καὶ ἰκανώσαντι of B is a fairly obvious conflate reading.

BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago and London, 1979)

NTS New Testament Studies

BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago and London, 1979)

TWNT Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, 11 vols (Stuttgart, 1932–79); ET Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, tr. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, 1964–73)

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17 For 'light' in the Gospel of John cf. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 201ff.

TWNT *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, 11 vols (Stuttgart, 1932–79); *ET Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, tr. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, 1964–73)

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

BAGD W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago and London, 1979)

18 For the theme in Pauline theology cf. Schnelle, 'Transformation'.

[R. McL. Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon*, ed. G. I. Davies and G. N. Stanton, *International Critical Commentary* (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 98–115.]

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{8} *International Critical Commentary* (old series)

9–12. Prayer for their advancement in spiritual knowledge, not speculative, but practical

9. Διὰ τοῦτο. On account, namely, of all that has preceded from ver. 4; cf. 1 Thess. 2:4. Chrys. strikingly observes: καθάπερ ἐν τοῖς ἀγῶσιν ἐκείνους μάλιστα διεγείρομεν τοὺς ἐγγύς ὄντας τῆς νικῆς· οὕτω δὴ καὶ ὁ Παῦλος τούτους μάλιστα παρακαλεῖ τοὺς τὸ πλεον κατωρθωκότας. Cf. Eph. 1:15. καὶ ἡμεῖς, "we also," by its position emphasizes the transition from the conduct of the Colossians to its effect on the apostle and his friends.

ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν echoes the similar expression in ver. 6. So the apostle's prayer was, as it were, an echo of their faith. An encouragement to them to proceed as they had begun.

οὐ πανόμεθα προσευχόμενοι. Cf. Eph. 1:16. Called by Ellicott an "affectionate hyperbole"; yet it is hardly to be called a hyperbole, for it would at no moment be true to say that he had ceased to pray for them. It is not asserted that the expression of the prayer was uninterrupted. As they did not cease to grow and bear fruit, so he did not cease to pray. Cf. Acts 5:42, οὐκ ἐπαύοντο διδάσκοντες, κ.τ.λ., and contra, Acts 13:10, οὐ παύση διαστρέφων, and 1 Sam. 12:23. καὶ αἰτούμενοι, κ.τ.λ., adds the special request to the more general προσευχόμενοι. Compare Mk. 11:24, ὄνα προσεύχεσθε καὶ αἰτεῖσθε.

ἵνα after words like θέλειν, αἰτεῖσθαι, signifies merely the purport of the wish or prayer; cf. Phil. 1:9, where τοῦτο as object of προσεύχομαι is explained by ἵνα πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν. For the accusative, compare Phil. 1:11, πεπληρωμένοι καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης, "that ye may be perfected in," Oltramare. ἐπίγνωσιν, stronger than γνῶσις; see 1 Cor. 13:12. The difference, however, seems to be rather that the former word implies a more active exercise of a faculty, and hence lends itself better to the expression of practical knowledge. This distinction agrees well with Rom. 1:21, 28. Compare on the verb, ver. 6. Lightfoot remarks that ἐπίγνωσις is a favourite word in the later Epistles of St. Paul; but, in fact, although it occurs four times in this Epistle and twice in Eph., it is used only once in Phil. (1:9), whereas it is thrice used in Rom. In the later Epistles, however, it is always used in reference to spiritual knowledge. See Trench, *Syn. lxxv*.

τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ. The following context, vv. 10–12, shows that what is meant is the Divine will as to their conduct, as in 4:12; 1 Thess. 4:3, 5:18; Rom. 12:2; not the χάρις mentioned as the object of their knowledge in ver. 6 (διὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ προσάγεσθαι ἡμᾶς αὐτῷ, οὐκέτι δι' ἀγγέλων, Chrys., etc.). The knowledge which is here meant is, in fact, the

consequence of that which is there attributed to them. Knowing the χάρις, they should know also that what God required of them was nothing but conduct corresponding thereto. This in opposition to the false teachers and the doctrines of their φιλοσοφία.

ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ. “In all spiritual wisdom and understanding,” ἐν introducing the manner in which the πληρωθῆναι is carried out, and πάσῃ and πνευματικῇ being taken with both substantives. To connect πν. with συνέσει alone would be to give the inappropriate meaning, “wisdom of all kinds and spiritual understanding.”

Ὁν σοφία see Eph. 1:8, where the words are ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσει. These three, σοφία, φρόνησις, σύνεσις, are reckoned by Aristotle as the three intellectual ἀρεταί or excellences (Eth. N. i. 13), the first being the most general and thorough, embracing the knowledge of first principles as well as that of particulars; while he distinguishes φρόνησις as the practical knowledge of particulars from σύνεσις, which is critical; ἡ φρόνησις ἐπιτακτικὴ ἐστίν ... ἡ δὲ σύνεσις κριτικὴ (Eth N. vi. 7. ii). Demosth. (269. 24) defines σύνεσις, ἣ τὰ καλὰ καὶ αἰσχρὰ διαγνώσκειται, which agrees with Aristotle’s κριτικὴ. It would appear, therefore, that σύνεσις was the faculty of deciding what was right or wrong in particular cases, while σοφία apprehended the general principles. But σύνεσις is used by St. Paul in a more general sense; see Eph. 3:4; cf. Luke 2:47. The two words frequently occur together in the O.T., e.g. Ex. 31:3; Isa. 29:14; Eccles. 14:20; (1 Cor. 1:19 is a quotation), and the corresponding adjectives in Matt. 11:25.

πνευματικῇ, given by the Spirit. Compare 1 Cor. 12:8, ὧ μὲν διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος δίδοται λόγος σοφίας.

The word is emphatic in this position, marking the contrast with the false teaching, which had λόγον σοφίας, a pretence of wisdom (2:23) which really proceeded from ὁ νοῦς τῆς σαρκός (2:18). We have the apostle’s σοφία σαρκική, 2 Cor. 1:12; ἀνθρωπίνη, 1 Cor. 2:5, 13; τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, 1 Cor. 2:6, etc.

10. περιπατῆσαι ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ Κυρίου. A similar expression occurs 1 Thess. 2:12, ἀξίως τοῦ Θεοῦ: and Eph. 4:1, τῆς κλήσεως, “in a manner worthy of,” i.e. befitting your connexion with Him. The infinitive expresses the consequence (and proof) of πληρωθῆναι, ἀεὶ τῇ πίστει συζεύγνυσι τὴν πολιτείαν, Chrys.

If ὑμᾶς after περιπατῆσαι were genuine (Text. Rec.), the infinitive might conceivably be regarded as dependent on προσευχόμενοι; but it is certainly spurious, being omitted by κ\* A B C D\* G 17, al. Clem., Boh. It is added in κc Dc K L P, most MSS. Chrys., Theodoret, Arm.

εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκειάν. i.e. “so as to please God in every way.” Compare 1 Thess. 4:5, πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέκειν Θεῷ. In classical authors ἀρεσκεία has generally an unfavourable sense, “obsequiousness,” and it is so defined both in Eth. Eudem. (τὸ λίαν πρὸς ἡδονήν, ii. 3) and by Theophrastus (Char. 5). Polybius uses it especially of trying to gain the favour of a sovereign. Similarly Philo, πάντα καὶ λέγειν καὶ πράττειν ἐσπούδαζεν εἰς ἀρεσκειάν τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ βασιλέως (i. p. 34), but he also uses it of pleasing God. The ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκειν is disavowed by the apostle in Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4; compare ch. 3:22. The verb is used, however, without any unfavourable connotation, in Rom. 15:2 (τῷ πλησίον ἀρεσκέτω) and elsewhere.

ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ qualifies the following, as ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει qualifies the following participle. Most commentators separate καρποφοροῦντες and ἀυξανόμενοι; but then ἀυξ. τῇ ἐπίγνωσι becomes tautologous with πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν, ver. 9. Moreover, the combination καρποφορούμενον καὶ ἀυξ. in ver. 6 seems to require that the two participles here also should be taken together. What is true of the gospel in the world and amongst the Colossians is also to hold good of those whose lives are inspired by its teaching. The participles refer to the logical subject of περιπατῆσαι, not to πληρωθῆτε (Beza, Bengel). Cf. Eph. 4:2. τῇ ἐπίγνωσεῖ τοῦ Θεοῦ, “by the knowledge of God,” instrumental dative, a frequent use of the dative with ἀυξαν. (So Alford, Eadie, Ellicott, Lightfoot, Soden, RV.mg.) The fruitfulness and growth are wrought through the ἐπίγνωσις τοῦ Θεοῦ, and this again results from the practice of his will, ver. 9.

Some commentators take the dative as one of reference, as in Rom. 4:20 (?), “increasing in the knowledge of God” (Moule, RV. text), which, after πληρωθήτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν., ver. 9, would be somewhat of a tautology.

τῇ ἐπίγνωσει is the reading of κ A B C D\* G P 17, al. Amiat., Arm. al. ἐν is prefixed in κc 47, and a few others, Chrys., Old Lat. and Vulg-Clem. have “in scientia Dei,” which is doubtful. Text. Rec. has εἰς τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν, with Dc K L most MSS., Theodoret, Theoph. Oec. This appears to be an attempt to simplify the construction. Meyer, on the contrary, regards the dative as an explanation of the more difficult (?) εἰς τὴν ἐπ., which, he thinks, is also confirmed by the parallelism in structure of the other participial clauses, which conclude with a definition introduced by εἰς. He understands it as “in respect of,” that is, always more fully attaining to a knowledge of God, εἰς indicating the final reference, or direction of the growth, comparing Eph. 4:15 and 2 Pet. 1:8. As to the comparative difficulty of the readings, Alford’s judgment, that the simple dative “is by far the most difficult of the three readings,” is surely more correct than Meyer’s. εἰς τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν would, in fact, present no difficulty to the ordinary reader.

11. ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι. Theodoret takes this ἐν as instrumental, τῇ θείᾳ ῥοπῇ κρατυνόμενοι, and so Eadie, Ellicott, and Meyer. “Strengthened with all (every form of) strength,” Ell. (a translation which is itself ambiguous).

It is simpler and more natural to understand ἐν π. δ. as “in (i.e. in the matter of) all strength” (Alford, Lightfoot). It thus corresponds with ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ and ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ, which are both subjective. δυναμούμενοι, present, “becoming strengthened.” The simple verb is not used elsewhere by St. Paul, who, however, employs ἐνδυναμοῦσθαι several times. But δυναμοῦσθαι is in Heb. 11:34, and B has it in Eph. 6:10. It is frequently used by the Greek translators of the O.T., but is not a classical word. The connected virtues here, ὑπομονή and μακροθυμία, indicate that what is referred to in this clause is steadfastness under trial, as the former referred to active conduct.

κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ. “According to the might of His glory.” Strength is supplied in a manner correspondent with the power which belongs to the glory of God, i.e. His majesty as manifested to men. Compare Eph. 1:19. The rendering of AV. (Beza, etc.), “His glorious power,” is sufficiently refuted by αὐτοῦ. Thomas Aquinas understands by “His glory,” “His Son Christ Jesus.” But although the Son may be called ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ, it would not be intelligible to use ἡ δόξα αὐτοῦ as a substitute for His name. Lightfoot remarks that κράτος in N.T. is “applied solely to God”; but see Heb. 2:14 τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου, τοῦτ’ ἔστι τὸν διάβολον.

εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν. “To all endurance and longsuffering.” “Patience” is a very inadequate rendering of ὑπομονή, which includes perseverance or steadfast continuance in a course of action. Thus we have καρποφοροῦσιν ἐν ὑπομονῇ, Luke 8:15; ὑπομονῇ ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ, Rom. 2:7; δι’ ὑπομονῆς τρέχωμεν, Heb. 12:1. Even the ὑπομονή of Job, to which James refers, was by no means the uncomplaining endurance of suffering to which we give the name of “patience.” Job was, in fact, the very reverse of “patient”; but he maintained his faith in God and his uprightness in spite of his sore trials. μακροθυμία comes much nearer to our notion of “patience” (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4); not so much, however, patience under suffering, but “the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong.” It is the opposite of ὀξύθυμία. Chrysostom distinguishes the two words thus: μακροθυμεῖ τις πρὸς ἐκείνους οὐς δυνατὸν καὶ ἀμύνασθαι· ὑπομένει δὲ οὐς οὐ δύναται ἀμύνασθαι; but this, though correct as to μακροθυμεῖ, is clearly inadequate for ὑπομένει.

Boh Bohairic. Cited by Tisch. as “Coptic,” by Tregelles as “Memphitic,” by WH. as “me.”

MSS manuscripts

Arm Armenian.

Arm. Armenian.

MSS. manuscripts

Ell. Ellicott.

[Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1909), 201–205.]

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{9} Handbook on Paul's Letters

Colossians 1:9

The phrase for this reason should not refer specifically to the love which the believers in Colossae had manifested, but to all of their experience in Christian faith. It may, therefore, be necessary in some cases to use a transitional expression which will be more inclusive, for example, "because of all this," or "because of all you have experienced," or "because of all that has happened to you."

We have always prayed represents the Greek "we never stop praying," which is not to be taken literally, of course. In the place of we have always prayed, one may more appropriately translate this in some instances as "we continued to pray."

Ever since we heard about you may be rendered as "beginning the first day we heard about you and even until now" or "we began praying for you when we first heard about you and we still do."

We ask God to fill you represents the passive "asking that you be filled"; the active is used in order to make God explicit, as the one who does the filling. Other ways may be sought to express the idea of "fill": compare TNT "you may be completely certain"; Brc "have complete insight"; NEB "you may receive from him ... for full insight."

To fill you with the knowledge is essentially a causative expression and, therefore, may be best rendered in some languages as "to cause you to have knowledge" or "to cause you to experience." In those instances, in which languages require direct discourse, one may say, "We ask God, Cause the believers in Colossae to know ..."

Knowledge is here the compound noun, related to the verb "to know" in verse 7. As commentators point out, this is not merely intellectual perception, but living relationship.

His will is, in this context, God's design, purpose, plan, intention for his people. The knowledge of his will is really "to experience what God wants for you." This may be expressed as "to experience what God wants you to do," but more likely as "to experience what God wants you to experience."

Wisdom and understanding: the word "wisdom" (sophia) is used often in NT, and in Colossians it appears further in 1:28; 2:3, 23; 3:16; 4:5; "understanding" (sunesis) appears once more in (Colossians 2:2), and in 5 other places in the NT: Mark 12:33, Luke 2:47, 1 Cor 1:19 (from Isa 29:14), Eph 3:4, 2 Tim 2:7. No sharp difference in meaning is to be sought between the two words: they are joined together for emphasis to denote complete apprehension, knowledge, of God's will.

The relation of "all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (RSV) to the preceding the knowledge of his will, as expressed by the preposition "in" (RSV), is perhaps one of means; it is by means of all spiritual wisdom and understanding that the Colossians will have the knowledge of God's will. Since wisdom and understanding are essentially the means by which the believers in Colossae would experience God's will, this relationship may be expressed as a causative, "being wise and having understanding will cause you to know God's will."

That his Spirit gives translates the Greek adjective "spiritual." Many translate "all spiritual wisdom and understanding," which may better represent the intention of the text. Only GeCL and FrCL do as TEV has done, making it an explicit

reference to God's Spirit as the source of wisdom and understanding (so Abbott, Peake). Or it can also be taken to mean "wisdom and understanding about spiritual matters." But it may be said that with Paul such "spiritual" knowledge is ultimately from (the Spirit of) God. Since the relationship of the Spirit of God to wisdom and understanding is perhaps best interpreted as causative, one may say "which God's Spirit causes you to have." This causative relationship may, therefore, be combined with the previous as "God's Spirit causes you to be wise and have understanding and this causes you to know God's will."

#### Colossians 1:10

Then you will be able to live represents the infinitive of the verb "to walk," expressing the result or purpose of being filled with the knowledge of God's will. The Greek verb is often used in the metaphorical sense of manner of life (as the Heb *h@älak*). Paul always uses it in a figurative sense: Col 2:6, 3:7, 4:5, 1 Thes 2:12, 4:1.

The transitional adverb then is not so much temporal as conditional, for example, "if then that is so" or "that being so."

Able to live is not a reference to a standard of living but to a manner of life or behavior. This may be expressed in some cases as "able to conduct yourself," or "able to do," or "able to carry on."

As the Lord wants is an adverbial phrase "worthily of the Lord," that is, in a manner that is required by their status as the Lord's people (see "to walk ... worthily of God" in 1 Thes 2:12). JB has "the kind of life which the Lord expects of you"; Phps "your lives ... may bring credit to your master's name"; SpCL "that you conduct yourselves as people should who belong to the Lord"; GeCL "so to live as to bring honor to the Lord."

Always do what pleases him: the noun *areskeia* occurs only here in the NT; the verb *areskō*, with God or the Lord as object, is found in Rom 8:8, 1 Cor 7:32, 1 Thes 2:15 (not pleasing God), and 1 Thes 4:1, which offers the closest parallel: "to walk and to please God." "To please a person" may be expressed in some languages as "to cause a person to be happy." On the basis of such an expression, one may translate the latter part of the first sentence of verse 10 as "will always do what causes God to be happy."

All kinds of good deeds is joined to produce in TEV and others (so RSV "bearing fruit in every good work"), but it may be connected with the preceding to live. The literally figure known as chiasmus (a-b-b-a) is here employed: "in every good deed bearing fruit, and growing in the knowledge of God." The first line is attributive and verb, the second line verb and attributive.

It may not be possible to say "your lives will produce all kinds of good deeds." It is not literally the life which produces such deeds but the individual himself. Therefore, one may say "because of the way in which you live, you will produce all kinds of good deeds." The phrase all kinds of good deeds may be rendered as "you will do good in all different ways."

Your knowledge of God: God is the object of knowledge, not the subject.

A verb meaning "grow" may seem to be very strange in combination with a phrase such as "your knowledge, and therefore one may say "and you will know God more and more" or "your experience of God will be greater and greater."

#### Colossians 1:11–12

The initial participial clause, "being empowered with all power according to the might of his glory," may be taken as a circumstantial clause, "as you are made strong," or absolutely (as participles in Greek New Testament often are) as a wish or a command (as "give thanks" in verse 12).



This expression of Paul's wish for the believers in Colossae must be expressed in a number of languages as a type of prayer, for example, "I pray that you may be made strong." It may, however, be important to introduce God as agent, for example, "I pray that God will cause you to be strong."

A literal rendering of be made strong with all the strength may seem quite strange and even unintelligible, but the real problem is involved in relating this increase of strength with his glorious power. The connection may be made by a restructuring, so as to translate "I pray that God by using his glorious power may cause you to be exceedingly strong." This strength, however, must not be understood in terms of physical strength or prowess. It is obviously related to the enduring of hardships with patience and therefore in some languages one must translate "strong in your spirits" or "strong in your hearts," for this is psychological strength and not physical strength.

His glorious power (so most translations) is an inadequate translation of "the might of his glory," since the noun *doxa* almost always (as its Heb counterpart *kābōd*) represents the self-revelation of God as his presence with his people with his people to save them. This characteristic of God is described in terms of light (compare Ex 16:10, 1 Kgs 8:10–11, Ezek 10:3–4). TC has "the power manifested in his Glory," Gpd "so mighty is his majesty," GeCL "his complete godly power and might." His glorious power may be rendered in some languages as "his power which is so wonderful" or even "the fact that he is so wonderfully powerful."

Endure ... with patience represents two nouns in Greek whose meanings overlap each other; "steadfastness" (*hupomonē*) occurs in the NT more often than "endurance" (*makrothumia*). TNT "stand firm and be patient," NEB Brc "fortitude and patience," Mft "endure and be patient," Gpd "endurance and forbearance."

In some instances, it may be essential to indicate the nature of what is to be endured, for example, "endure persecution" or "remain firm despite troubles." In some languages, patience is best expressed as a negation of some negative quality, for example, "enduring without complaining" or "enduring and not being resentful."

With joy may go with what precedes (so Lightfoot, Moule, RSV NEB Phps NAB Brc SpCL JB Mft Gpd) or with what follows (Abbott, TNT NIV). If the phrase with joy is to be related to what precedes, one may say "to endure persecution without complaining and with happiness" or "... while continuing to be happy." In a number of languages, joy is expressed figuratively, for example, "with a happy heart," or "with dancing in one's heart," or "with a heart that sings."

If the phrase with joy is to be combined with the giving of thanks, it is often possible to employ a coordinate phrase such as "be happy and give thanks."

Give thanks represents a participle, understood by TEV as an injunction or command, not as a circumstance ("as you give thanks") or as a participle of means, dependent on the main verb "to live" in verse 10, that is, "by giving thanks" (so NIV).

It is frequently impossible to speak of God as "the Father," since a kinship term such as "father" must be possessed, that is to say, a father is always the father of someone. In certain languages, the closest equivalent of the Father is "the father of us all." In other instances, it may be necessary to use an expanded phrase such as "God our father." It is important not to conclude that one can communicate the meaning of father in this context merely by a device such as capitalization. The Scriptures are heard far more widely than they are read, and obviously capitalization does not show up in pronunciation.

Has made you fit: the verb *hikanoō* is causative, to make someone *hikanos*, that is, fit, qualified, competent, sufficient (see the verb in 2 Cor 3:6; the noun in 2 Cor 3:5; and the adjective, in this sense, in 2 Cor 2:16, 3:5; 2 Tim 2:2). JB "made it possible for you"; NIV "qualified"; Gpd "entitled you"; Phps "you are privileged." In some languages, the concept of fit

may be expressed as “cause you to be the kind of person who can share” or “cause you to be the type of person who is worthy to share.”

In verse 12, RSV lists “us” as a variant reading (for “you”); “you” is the form better supported by external evidence; some commentators and translators, however, prefer us which, if adopted, is inclusive, meaning “all of us Christians.”

Your share of what God has reserved for his people: the noun klēros “lot” means that which is allotted or assigned to someone; it is a biblical word whose meaning springs from its application to the Promised Land, as the territory allotted by God to the Israelites as their exclusive possession. It became a figure of all of God’s blessings for his people, especially those reserved for the future; whence the use of “inherit eternal life,” etc. The use in English of “inheritance” (so RSV, compare NEB JB NIV) is not recommended (compare TNT note), since it implies the transference of property as the result of the original owner’s death.

Your share may be expressed as “what rightfully belongs to you” or literally “your part.”

The clause of what God has reserved for his people may be expressed as “of what God has designated for his people,” or “... set aside for his people,” or even “... promised to give to his people.”

His people: see 1:2.

In the kingdom of light represents the Greek “in the light.” The clue for the use of kingdom comes from the next verse, and it (or “realm”) is used here also by GeCL FrCL NIV Gpd Brc TNT TC. The kingdom of light is here a synonym for “the kingdom of God,” with emphasis on “the light,” that is, God’s own life, which shines on God’s people. Because of the extensive use of the figurative language for “light” and “darkness,” it is important to preserve the figurative significance and not to adopt merely an equivalent such as “the kingdom of God.” Some translators have employed a compromise expression such as “the kingdom of God, who is light” or even “the kingdom of God’s light.” At this point, it may be relevant to employ a footnote to identify the figurative significance of “light” versus “darkness,” for the contrast is not a matter of knowledge versus ignorance but of (1) moral and ethical truth in contrast with sin and disobedience, and (2) life in contrast with death. In a number of languages, there are very distinct words for “light” depending upon the nature of the light: (1) general light as in the case of daylight; (2) the light which radiates from a particular source such as a torch or lamp; and (3) unusual forms of light, as in the case of the northern lights (aurora borealis). Even the light of day may be subdivided into different aspects, for example, dawn before sunrise, early morning, midday, late afternoon, and twilight. In general the term which identifies the bright light of the day has the potential for greatest generalization of meaning and therefore is usually to be preferred to terms which may suggest only partial light or light coming from a lamp or a fire.

TNT Translator’s New Testament

Brc Brazilian common language translation/Barclay

NEB New English Bible

RSV Revised Standard Version

RSV Revised Standard Version

GeCL German common language translation

FrCL French common language translation

TEV Today’s English Version

JB Jerusalem Bible  
Phps Phillips  
SpCL Spanish common language translation  
GeCL German common language translation  
TEV Today's English Version  
RSV Revised Standard Version  
TC Twentieth Century New Testament  
Gpd Goodspeed  
GeCL German common language translation  
TNT Translator's New Testament  
NEB New English Bible  
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TC Twentieth Century New Testament

[Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, A Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 14–19.]

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{10} Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament

Continuing Petition for the Colossians (1:9–11)

And so (literally, “on account of this also”) refers back to the good report about the Colossians’ Christianity brought by Epaphras, as does from the day we heard of it. Good news as well as bad prompts prayer. The content of what Paul and friends keep asking for their sisters and brothers in Colossae is that you may be filled with the knowledge of his (God’s) will ... (v. 9), this, in turn, for a moral purpose, to lead a life worthy of the Lord. What kind of life that is we find spelled out in three participles (bearing fruit, increasing, being strengthened), the first two in reverse order (“chiastic” or X-shaped sequence) in Greek:

in every good work

bearing fruit,

and increasing

in the knowledge of God (v. 10),

being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience ... (v. 11).

It is God who makes this life possible.

One is struck first by how much the wording of vv. 9–11 echoes 1:3–8—in v. 9: “from the day,” cf. v. 6; “we [have] heard,” cf. v. 4; “pray,” cf. v. 9; “for you,” cf. v. 3; “knowledge,” cf. v. 6, “understood” (the literal Greek meaning was described above); in v. 10: “bearing fruit and increasing,” cf. v. 6 (same Greek, though translated “growing” in RSV); and “knowledge” again. Similarly one notes the frequency of “all” (v. 9; v. 11, twice) and “every” (v. 10) (the word “fully” in v. 10 is from the same Greek term); while this may be reminiscent of the “worldwide” emphasis noted in vv. 4 and 6, here the direction is intensive (magnifying, e.g., the strength from God in v. 11), not extensive in outreach.

The stress in these verses on knowledge (vv. 9, 10) and phrases like in all spiritual wisdom and understanding have sounded “gnostic” to some commentators, and it has been thought possible that these verses anticipate the section on the false teachers (2:8ff.) by using some of their terminology. Perhaps so, but investigations of materials from Qumran over the last 30 years have turned up many parallels precisely to these details in the Dead Sea scrolls. For example, a phrase in v. 10 when rendered by the KJV “unto all pleasing” suggested conduct ingratiating to other people; Qumran evidence helps verify that it means fully pleasing to him, i.e., pleasing to God in every walk of life. God will be the judge of our conduct, not the false teachers (2:15). All this points to the observation that the content of the intercession by Paul and friends is thoroughly Jewish and Old Testament in nature, including reference to “good works” and walking worthy of the Lord. It is identification of the Lord as Jesus Christ (1:3; 2:6) that makes it specifically Christian. To speak of wisdom as our passage does—in Jewish-Old Testament terms—is scriptural, in contrast to a speculative approach. As so often, Paul’s prayer has turned out to be ethical, hortatory, and instructional.

RSV Revised Standard Version

KJV King James Version

[Walter F. Taylor Jr. and John H. P. Reumann, *Ephesians, Colossians, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985), 120–122.]

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{11} Anchor Yale Bible commentary series

**9 Therefore we also do not cease, since the (first) day when we heard (the good news about you), to pray for you.** We ask (literally: to pray and to ask). Thanks and intercession are two aspects of one and the same thing, because in both phrases, the verb *proseuchomai* (to pray) is used.<sup>3</sup> Paul uses *proseuchomai* also in the special sense of “to ask,”<sup>4</sup> but that is probably not the case here. In a synonymous usage of the verbs *proseuchomai* and *aiteomai*, one could recognize the special force with which the prayer is brought before God.<sup>5</sup> But that is hardly applicable here, since the emphasis is not so much on the request but rather on the thanks to which the former connects. The use of synonyms in pairs is a stylistic peculiarity of the liturgical style, which can also be observed in these verses. But analogously to v 3, *proseuchomai* should be understood in its general meaning of “to pray” and *eucharisteō* (to thank) as an explanatory addition. *kai* (and) then has an explanatory function. We need to consider that the origin of the intercession is not caused by worrisome circumstances in the community of the Colossians, but rather by the good news that Epaphras has delivered. The verb form “we have heard” in v 9 has no object. This can only be supplemented from 1:8.

Once again Paul refers to the thanksgiving by taking up almost literally an expression from 1:6. There he wrote: “... since the day when you heard ...” Here he formulates: “... since the day when we heard ...” Hereby the corresponding expression of the thanksgiving is recalled to the readers’ consciousness and the following thought-combination is intimated to them: just as the word “bears fruit and grows” among the Colossians since the (first) day on which they heard it, so also Paul and his co-workers do not cease to pray since the (first) day on which they received news of the “fruit bearing and growing.” The petition is directed at the sovereign working of the word among the Colossians in the present as well as in the future. If it seems that Paul is praying for something here that already exists, then Phil 1:9 may

offer a further explanation, where Paul prays that love may overflow more and more.<sup>6</sup> If Paul here prays that fruit bearing and growing may overflow, it is impossible to become lazy and satisfied with the things obtained and achieved in the past; then rather a prayer as it is formulated in Col 1:9–10 becomes significant and necessary.

In front of “we do not cease” stands *kai* (also/and). As in 1 Thess 2:13, it most likely modifies the verb, not the following personal pronoun<sup>7</sup>; it means, “we also do not cease....” An emphatic “we too,” as though, in addition to Paul and his co-workers others too perform this intercession, does not make sense in this context.<sup>8</sup>

**that God may fill you with the knowledge of his will (literally: that you may be filled).** The possessive pronoun *autou* (his) is used, although the pertinent noun is not expressly named. We can conclude that the passive form “to be filled” is a so-called *passivum divinum*, which in the Jewish tradition circumscribes the name of God.<sup>9</sup> This “knowledge” stems not from human capability, but is a gift from God. In 1:6, this same “knowledge” was called “knowing the grace of God,” because there also “knowing” designates something practical, the love for all the saints. There is no contrast between 1:6 and 1:9, no difference between theory and praxis, between dogmatics and ethics.

Israel also understood the law in the OT not as opposition to the grace of God, but rather as the sign of divine election.<sup>10</sup> According to OT witness, God revealed himself not by abstract truths from a distance; rather he put the witness into his service. He revealed what was to be done as a blessing to many. “To know God” means to do his will, in the OT much as for Paul.<sup>11</sup> Based on this, it is comprehensible that Paul can simply speak of the knowledge of God rather than of the knowledge of the will of God in the next verse. The reverse, the synonymous use of the two expressions in vv 9 and 10, confirms the background cited for the concept of “knowledge.”

Instead of the common genitive, we have an accusative here after a verb of “to fill,” as in LXX Ex 31:3; 35:31 (cf. LXX 2 Chr 5:14; Phil 1:11).

**by the gift of all spiritual wisdom and all spiritual understanding (literally: in all spiritual).**

Since “wisdom and understanding” (*sophia kai synesis*) is a firmly established and well-known figure of speech from the OT (LXX), the preceding *pas* (each/all) and the following *pneumatikē* (spiritual) modify both substantives. The adjective *pneumatikē* gives primary emphasis to the Greek phrase, since it is placed at the end of the sentence. The knowledge meant here is differentiated from one that inflates the ego, for example, or that is inconsiderate of the weak brother and does not build him up (cf. 1 Cor 8:1ff.). It arises from the idea that God fills man “with all spiritual wisdom and all spiritual understanding.” Thus, it is not knowledge that is the predecessor and that only later or eventually carries the fruit of wisdom and understanding. The order rather is reversed. Knowledge originates only from conferred wisdom and conferred understanding. That corresponds to the concept, based on the OT, in which the expression “*sophia kai synesis*” occurs repeatedly (in the LXX).<sup>12</sup> Here, we are dealing with attributes of God. With *sophia* or with *synesis* God created the world (LXX Prov 3:19; Ps 135[136]:5). God bestows gifts on those whom he calls into his service, and he equips them for this ministry.<sup>13</sup> More than once and so also in Col 1, “wisdom” and “understanding” denote not intellectual abilities but rather manual skills and craftsmanship.<sup>14</sup> The extent to which we are dealing with God-given gifts and also with the practicalities of “wisdom” and “understanding” becomes especially clear in Deut 4:6: the keeping of the commandments is Israel’s “wisdom” and “understanding.” When the other nations hear those commandments, they will say: What “wise” and “understanding” people!<sup>15</sup>

The two concepts “wisdom” and “understanding” can hardly be separated.<sup>16</sup> We are doubtless dealing with synonyms.<sup>17</sup> Their use in LXX Ex 31:3–6 illustrates this fact. “God’s spirit of wisdom and understanding and skill (*epistēmē*)” is reduced to “understanding” (*synesis*). There, the Hebrew word *ḥokmâ*, which LXX Ex 31:3 translates by *sophia*, is rendered three verses later by *synesis* in v 6.<sup>18</sup>

The parallel expressions in Eph 1:17–18 show that the plea for “wisdom and understanding” is comparable in meaning to the plea for the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup> The adjective pneumatikē (spiritual) in Col 1:9 is probably closest in meaning to the genitive compound “spirit of wisdom” in Eph 1:17.<sup>20</sup>

The expression “wisdom and understanding” is also more closely determined by pas (each/all), in addition to the adjective “spiritual.” Bo Reicke<sup>21</sup> divides the variation of meaning of pas into four groups: (1) if a unity or aggregate is meant independently, then a summarizing sense prevails; (2) if we are dealing with an “inclusion of all the individual parts or representatives of a concept,” we have an implicit meaning; (3) if the concept extends “to relatively independent particulars,” we have an example of a distributive meaning; (4) if we are dealing with the attainment of greatest depths or expansion of a concept, then we are dealing with an elative (or amplificative) sense.

We most likely have the elative meaning in Col 1:9. In the NT, this occurs only in connection with abstractions.<sup>22</sup> Here, we are dealing with unparalleled wisdom, which is the one true wisdom. The multiple use of pas, as we observe it in 1:9ff, is certainly a characteristic of the liturgical style, but it is difficult to imagine that we should therefore regard the pas only as a stylistic device without deeper theological significance.<sup>23</sup> A relationship to assertions that Christ is creator and propitiator of all things (1:15–18), that in him lives the total fullness of God (1:19; 2:9), and that in him are kept all riches of wisdom and understanding, lead us to expect God to bestow not less than “all” wisdom and “all” understanding.

**10 so that you will have a life worthy of the Lord, pleasing in all things (literally: walking worthy in the Lord).** The possibility of misunderstanding Paul in what he means by “knowledge” is now further decreased. “Knowledge ... in order to walk” is the intended meaning. Paul makes the closest association possible by choosing the Greek infinitive peripatein (to walk), thus connecting this expression with the preceding verb. The verb “to walk,” which occurs more than thirty times in the Pauline corpus, means the total conduct of life. The application of the word corresponds to the usage of the Hebrew verb halak (“to walk”). Parallels in the Classical Greek are not extant (cf. H. Seesemann, ThWNT V, 941, 6).<sup>24</sup> What is understood by this conduct is outlined in three ways: (1) to bring forth fruit and to grow, (2) to be made powerful with all strength, and (3) above all, to give thanks, because Paul puts most emphasis on this, and he repeatedly invites the Colossians to do so.

It is not clear, whether kyrios (Lord) indicates God in harmony with the LXX use of this title. In 1 Thess 2:12, we have almost the same expression, but there it says clearly: to walk worthy of God. The statements in the epistle to the Ephesians also point in the direction of such an interpretation when they deal with becoming “God’s imitators” (Eph 5:1), with the appointment “to the praise of his (God’s) glorious grace” (Eph 1:12; cf. Eph 1:14). However, “Lord” in Col occurs elsewhere only as a designation for Jesus. Thus, in chap. 1 (cf. 1:3, 3:17) Paul refers expressly to “God the Father” and “our Lord Jesus Christ.” In chap. 2 (2:6), we read, “As you have now received the Messiah Jesus, the Lord” (with emphasis on the designation “Lord”) and in chap. 3, after reference is made several times to the “Lord” without a closer determination (3:13, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24; cf. 4:7, 17), this declaration in 3:24 becomes unequivocally clear: “you serve the Lord Christ.”

The statement “pleasing in all things” also has multiple meanings. Paul will not have meant his own pleasure, as though his own conduct in life were gaining its true destiny thereby. It is characteristic of him to point toward Jesus and away from himself.<sup>25</sup> Also, the Colossians should hardly have been called upon to determine their lives according to opinions and concepts of human beings in order to please them.<sup>26</sup>

This does not exclude a different sense, which prevails in passages such as Matt 5:16. The intended meaning,<sup>27</sup> can still be the pleasure of people: “Let your light so shine before men that they see your good works and praise your Father in heaven.”<sup>28</sup> Specifically, because a closer determination is missing and also because pas is used, divine pleasing is not excluded.

Areskeia (well pleasing) occurs in the LXX only once, in Prov 31:30, and then in a different context. But frequently, the formula with the same meaning, “to do that which is well pleasing (to areston, ta aresta) before God,” is used.<sup>29</sup> This can have influenced the formulation in Col 1:10. Paul does speak expressly of something well-pleasing before God in other places.<sup>30</sup> We may say, along with E. Lohmeyer (p. 34), that both are meant here, the pleasing of men and of God, according to the Jewish pattern of thought.

He who lives thus brings forth fruit and grows (literally: bringing forth fruit and growing). Notably, the participles are not in the accusative, as we might have expected in the Greek after the infinitive “to walk,” but rather in the nominative.<sup>31</sup> This grammatical problem can be solved if one understands the participles imperatively. Such participial imperatives do not determine legalistic regulations. Rather, they appeal to the status of the addressee. Paul addresses the Colossians as those who are already filled with the knowledge of God, and he suggests that which should be further self-evident.<sup>32</sup> Here, the intercession clearly fulfills a parenetic function, as P. Schubert has assumed for all Pauline expressions of thanksgiving, and especially for those in Col.<sup>33</sup>

“To bring forth fruit and to grow” is a citation from 1:6. Here, as there, we have a hendiadys, as was earlier observed, so that both closer determinants, “in every good work” and “through the knowledge of God,” modify both verbs and are thereby also closely tied to each other.<sup>34</sup> An intellectualistic misunderstanding of “knowledge” is thus again avoided.

Both elucidations designate the means or specifically the medium through which the fruit bearing and growing occur. The goal and purpose of this growing, however, are not mentioned. This problem has found its expression in a variety of textual renderings. The majority of texts and a correction of Codex Claramontanus (sixth century) have “for (eis) the knowledge of God” in place of the dative “through the knowledge of God.” This variant, however, is not only poorly attested, but must also be suspected as a later assimilation of the two following imperative participles which are connected to statements introduced by eis.

Since the participles are close contextually to the declaration in v 10a, the same indication of purpose is applicable to all of them: “pleasing in all things.” This will help clarify the aim of the first invitation (1:10b), since another indicator is missing here. The idea of things being well-pleasing before God and men (see above) is at least a part of that which Paul intends by “bringing forth fruit and growing.” Thus the reference to 1:6 means not only that the dynamic, which is particular to the gospel, is also inherent in the Colossians. Rather, Paul intended to intimate to his readers that their fruit bearing and growing is a form of the same fruit bearing and growing described in 1:4–8.

**in every good work.** As also in LXX Ex 35:5, the particle pas signifies that the equipment which God gives is sufficient to do all that should be done according to his will.<sup>35</sup>

Agathon/ kalon ergon (good work) also elsewhere has positive significance for Paul. In Rom 13:3, Paul speaks of “the good work” in contrast to “the bad,” and Paul offers the invitation to do “the good.” The context of Rom 13:1–7 (12:9–21; 13:8–10) determines this good work more precisely through love. Only a few things that are listed in this connection will be given here: in addition to the invitation, they are to burn in the Spirit, to serve the Lord, to be patient in trouble, and to pray continuously. Paul admonishes his parishioners to take up the needs of the saints, to give refuge gladly, to bless those who “curse you,” to rejoice with the joyful, to weep with the weeping, to give food and drink to the hungry enemy, etc. In 2 Cor 9:8, the collection for the community of Jerusalem is meant by “every good work.”<sup>36</sup> In the rabbinic literature, the corresponding Hebrew expression is a set concept that does not contradict the Pauline one. It designates “works of compassion,” such as visits to the sick, refuge for strangers, comfort for the grief-stricken, dowry for the newly married poor.<sup>37</sup> This tradition forms the background for the Pauline usage of “good work.”

**through the knowledge of God!** See Notes to “the knowledge of his will” in 1:9.



**11 He lets himself be made powerful with all power according to his glorious strength (literally: in all power made powerful according to the strength of his glory).** For the translation of the middle voice of this imperative participle, cf. BDR 317.

Here words which are related in meaning and are equal in significance occur in more cumulative fashion than in the previous line. The liturgical stylistic elements become more and more compact, to the point that we have a hymn worked into the epistle with the unfolding of the third participle (thanking ...). This gradation of liturgical language attests to the contextual weightiness of this verse: the thanksgiving is of special concern in this letter.

The substantive *dynamis* (power) and the verb *dynamō* (to make powerful)<sup>38</sup> are joined through the related meaning of the stem, which adds emphasis to the statement.<sup>39</sup> Here also, the passive circumscribes the name of God (see above). The contrasting idea of the weakness of the Christian, who is mighty only through God, is brought to the forefront.

“According to his glorious strength” is probably a Semitism, because in the Hebrew the genitive construction is preferred to the adjective.<sup>40</sup> Through this locution, the compounding of related concepts for “strength” becomes especially noticeable. Not only the quantity, the overly great abundance of strength, which is to be imparted to the Colossians, is to be indicated, but also the quality of the strength that is to be conferred.<sup>41</sup>

*Kratos* (strength) occurs twelve times in the NT. Among the epistles which name Paul as author, it occurs in Col 1:11, in Eph 1:19; 6:10, and in 1 Tim 6:16. It is noticeable that the word is used mostly in liturgical hymnic contexts.<sup>42</sup> Usually, it designates the strength of God.<sup>43</sup> In the LXX, it occurs more frequently, but most of the instances are found in writings which do not belong to the canon of the Hebrew Bible. When the discussion concerns the strength of God, the reference, in most cases, is not to an irrational, arbitrary force for which everything is possible.<sup>44</sup> Rather, in most cases, the concern is with the strength that comes to the aid of weak, miserable Israel in a struggle against its enemies, or even to the individual who finds himself in a similar situation.<sup>45</sup> *Kratos* comes close to the concept of godly compassion. The quintessence of the saving action of God toward his people can also be found in Eph 1:19, where “strength” is expressed in connection with the power of God: God’s power triumphs when God raises the messiah from the dead and elevates him to his right hand.

**for all endurance and patience.** The conferred strength enables one to withstand life situations that require endurance and patience, and thus does not free man from such situations.<sup>46</sup> Here also, the particle *pas* (all/each) certifies that God equips those who are called by him to a life that is sufficient according to their appointment.

In Paul, we can recognize a trend in the use of the two concepts that enables us to differentiate (1) *hypomonē* (endurance) from (2) *makrothymia* (patience):

1. Paul views *hypomonē* in close connection with “hope” and “suffering/sadness,” and similar things. Because the children of God have not yet been revealed as such, because creation is still subject to futility, because the redemption of our body is still to come, in brief, because our salvation is based on “hope,” *hypomonē* is necessary. Hope and *hypomonē* belong together,<sup>47</sup> because “to hope” means to wait in *hypomonē* (Rom 8:24f.). Because the redemption of the body is still to come, because all of creation is still “groaning,” “the present” time is characterized by groans and sufferings (Rom 8:18). Thus hope and thereby *hypomonē* have great significance. The statements in 2 Cor 1:6ff. may illustrate this point: hope in the God who awakens the dead (cf. Eph 1:19f.) makes suffering in *hypomonē* possible especially when the suffering exceeds purely human abilities,<sup>48</sup> and makes Paul ponder despair. Because “perseverance” or “patient endurance” plays a significant part in the use of this Greek concept, it has been translated as “endurance.”<sup>49</sup>

2. We can then consider the meaning of *makrothymia*. In contrast to “endurance,” where we are dealing with demeanor in suffering, despair, etc., in the human condition, *makrothymia* characterizes a certain relationship with one’s fellow man, or God’s with mankind.<sup>50</sup> That is specifically demonstrated in Rom 9:22, where *makrothymia* describes the

circumstance in which God holds back his anger.<sup>51</sup> In lists, this concept is often paired with words like “gentleness,” “friendliness,” “goodness,” and it thus receives a special coloring.<sup>52</sup>

Beyond the Pauline corpus, the range of meaning of these two words becomes fluid. In Jas 5:10f., the two concepts are used synonymously. In Heb 6:12, makrothymia is used where hypomonē would be expected, according to the differentiation above. In view of the liturgical context of the text before us, both concepts may well have the same meaning.

**with joy!** Disagreement reigns among the commentators as to whether “with joy” belongs to v 11 or to the following verse, which would relate it to “thanksgiving.”<sup>53</sup> In favor of the latter interpretation is the fact that a prepositional phrase precedes the first two participles (“in ...”). For reasons of symmetry one could presume that the third prepositional phrase (with joy) belongs to the third participle (thanking); in this case, en (in) would have been replaced by meta (with).

Such strict symmetry does not prevail in vv 9–11 to the point that the argument would be decisive. A phrase beginning with eis (“for all endurance ... [v 11]”; “for the portion ...” v 12) is added to the second and third participial clauses, but not to the first (“bearing fruit ...” v 10). The symmetry is further disrupted by the additional phrase “according to his glorious strength.” Further, the replacement of en with meta in v 11 does not argue in favor of a strictly parallel construction of the individual lines of this section.<sup>54</sup>

“With joy” is most likely part of the preceding statement, for Paul speaks of joyful suffering or joyful endurance in the face of suffering and sadness also elsewhere.<sup>55</sup> Further, the two other participles are connected to the larger context. “To bear fruit and to grow” is literally attached to 1:3–8, and the “thanksgiving” is elucidated in 1:13–20 in detail. In addition, the key words “strength,” “suffering,” and “joy” all recur in 1:24–29 (1:24) and are closely related to “perseverance and patience”; we therefore conclude that the term “with joy” belongs in v 11. Paul participates in the mission to proclaim the Messiah, through the power which works within him. He fulfills this commission in a special way: through suffering in which he is joyful.

**12 He thanks the Father, who has qualified you (literally: thanking the Father).** The change from the second-person plural (you plural)<sup>56</sup> to first-person plural (we) in v 13 gives these verses special emphasis and demonstrates that Paul thinks and speaks from the Jewish perspective. Those who previously were considered strangers and enemies (1:21), the non-Jews in Colossae (cf. 1:27), are invited to join in thanks with (Christian) Jews within the framework of the prayer of intercession. V 21 is reconnected to v 12 by the address “you” plural, and v 27 testifies that the abundance of the grace of God is revealed in the fact that these previous strangers to Israel may praise the Messiah as their hope. Non-Jews have received a portion of the inheritance which was first promised to Israel—this bequest has qualified them. The Greek verb hikanoō and the corresponding adjective hikanos mean basically “to make, to be sufficient, ample, abundant, (being) relatively much or relatively large.”<sup>57</sup> The adjective occurs frequently in the NT as an indicator of quantity, time, or quality.<sup>58</sup>

The verb is found only in one other place in the NT besides the one mentioned above, namely in 2 Cor 3:6, together with the corresponding adjective and substantive. The word group there designates the “capability” tendered by God to be servants of the New Covenant.<sup>59</sup>

3 In Phil 1:9; 2 Thess 1:11 (compare Rom 1:10; Eph 1:16), the intercession has been set off from the thanksgiving.

4 Compare Phil 1:9; 2 Thess 1:11; 3:1; Col 4:3. In 1 Cor 11:4, 5, proseuchomai is used to describe prophecy, in 1 Cor 14:14 to describe speaking in tongues.

5 Compare E. Lohse (p. 56).

6 In Col 2:7, Paul invites “to overflow in thanksgiving.”

7 Compare, among others, E. Lohse (p. 56).

8 The pronominal placement of “and” would be sensible and possible if Paul wanted to produce the following thought sequence: “The word is effective with you in Colossae, and we, here, pray for its effectiveness.” The “and we” could then be rendered with “we, for our part.” We could see this relationship established through the literal citation “since the day.” This translation was still not chosen, however, because the expression “therefore we also ...” can also be found in Paul without our being able to establish a similar relationship as here in Col 1:3/9.

9 In Rom 15:13–14, however, Paul writes expressly, “May the God of hope fill you with ...”

10 Compare esp. M. Noth, “Die Gesetze im Pentateuch. (Ihre Voraussetzungen und ihr Sinn),” in *Ges. Aufsätze zum AT*, ThBAT 6 (München: Kaiser, 1957), pp. 9–141. M. Noth convincingly works out the idea that the laws in the Pentateuch are conditioned by the bond between God and his people, which constitutes the original ordering of their basic premise.—See also G. v. Rad, *Theol.d. AT I*, pp. 192–202; on p. 193, he writes, “Und da kann nun kein Zweifel sein, dass sich mit der Ausrufung des Dekalogs über Israel die Erwählung Israels verwirklicht.” Based on this, compare Paul’s positive statements concerning the law: Rom 3:1–3; compare 2:17f.; 7:12, 14; 9:4.

11 E. Lohse (p. 156) refers especially to examples from Qumran, which make the Jewish prerequisites for this concept “cognizance” very clear (1 QS III:15; XI:17f.; and others).

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12 See, among others, Ex 31:3; 35:31, 35; Deut 4:6; 1 Chr 22:12; 2 Chr 1:10ff.; 2:12; Isa 11:2; 29:14; Dan 2:21.

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13 God calls the artisans for the building of the tabernacle and empowers them for their handiwork by giving them (and others) the “spirit of wisdom and understanding” (Ex 31:2f.). Solomon pleads with God for “wisdom and understanding,” so that he may be capable of judging his people Israel. While the false prophets speak lies, Micah is equipped to fulfill his prophetic office: he is filled with strength in the spirit of the Lord (Micah 3:5–8).

14 See esp. Ex 31:3ff.; 35:31ff.; 1 Kgs 7:14; 2 Chr 2:12(13).

15 Also in the Qumran, “wisdom and understanding” are perceived as gifts from God. Compare E. Lohse (p. 57), who refers esp. to 1 QS IV:3; 1 QH XII:11f.

16 Differently in Aristotle (and in his followers among the Stoics), for whom *sophia* is the “most complete form of knowledge,” and to which knowledge of the primary origins, *synesis*, is subordinated (Nic Eth VI 2–13, 1139b–1145a). Probably following this differentiation, J. B. Lightfoot (p. 204), for example, and many others before and after him, have explained *synesis* (and *phronesis* (comp. Eph 1:8)) as “applications of *sophia* to details” and have differentiated *synesis* from *phronēsis* in that the former concept is assigned to a “critical” and the latter to a “practical” sense.

17 As also *sophia* and *phronēsis* in Eph 1:8; compare M. Barth, *AB* 34, pp. 84f., 119–23; compare 162f.

LXX Septuaginta, ed. A. Rahlfs, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1935

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18 Compare also LXXEx 35:35; Deut 34:9.

19 We have the same situation in statements in the LXX. “Wisdom” and “understanding” are also characteristic attributes of the “divine spirit” there (comp. Ex 31:3ff.; Isa 11:2).

20 Compare E. Lohmeyer (p. 33).

21 ThWNT V, pp. 885–89.

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22 B. Reicke, *op. cit.* (p. 886), points out that, outside the NT, this meaning occurs in material objects, for example: *pan agyrion*, all kinds of silver.

23 Compare E. Schweizer (pp. 23, 40), who is of the opinion that *pas* (all) has a purely plerophoric meaning.

ThWNT Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament

24 The expression “walking in a way worthy of the Lord” can be found in the NT only in Col 1:10. In 1 Thess 2:12, Paul summons, “walking worthy of God;” in Eph 4:1, “walking worthy of the calling;” and in Eph 5:9, “walking as children of light.”

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25 Rom 3:27; 4:2; 1 Cor 1:29, 31; and others.

26 Not only Gal 1:10 (“If I were also pleasing to human beings, then I would not be the servant of Christ”), but also Col 3:22 speak against this.

27 In the Classic Greek, *areskeia/areskō*, and others, occur frequently in a negative sense (ingratiante, cringe) when a human demeanor is intended; compare also J. B. Lightfoot (p. 205); E. Lohse (p. 59); E. Lohmeyer (p. 34); and others. See also 1 Thess 2:4; Gal 1:10; but different in 1 Cor 10:33.

28 Expressed somewhat more irresolutely, this thought is also in Phil 2:14f., “Do all things without grumbling and without questioning, so that you may be without blame and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”—Compare also the already cited statement, Deut 4:6. 1 Cor 10:33 should also be understood in this sense, where Paul writes that he (tries) “to please everyone in every respect.”

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29 See in the LXX, among others, Ex 15:26; compare Lev 10:19; Deut 6:18; 12:25, 28; 2 Ezra 10:11; Tob 4:3; Prov 21:3; Isa 38:3; Dan 4:37a.

30 Compare 1 Cor 7:32; 2 Cor 5:9; 1 Thess 4:1.—Also in Qumran, reference is made to being well pleasing to God (i.e., 1 QS VIII:6). In Philo, *eureskeia*, of being pleasing to God, occurs without additional comment whenever the context is unambiguous (Spec Leg I 300).

31 Some have attempted to explain this by determining that the logical grammatical sentence construction has now been left behind (E. Schweizer, p. 41), some have perceived here an abruptly broken sentence construction (so-called “*anacoluth*”), or some even determined “schematic errors” or “stylistic incapability” (compare BDR 468, fn. 4).

32 We encounter such imperative participials frequently in Paul. Compare esp. Rom 12:9–15; Eph 4:1–3; and in Col 3:9–10, 12–17, esp. 16; 4:2–5. Compare also D. Daube, “Participle and Imperative in 1 Peter,” in E. G. Selwyn, *The First*

Epistle of St. Peter (London: Macmillan, 1947), pp. 467–88; H. G. Meecham, “The Use of the Participle for the Imperative in the New Testament,” *ET* 58 (1946/47) 207–8; M. Barth, *AB* 34, p. 372, par. 23.

33 P. Schubert, *Form and Function*, op. cit., p. 89, “All Pauline thanksgivings have either explicitly or implicitly paraenetic function. This is definitely true of the hina- clauses of the eucharistō periods. Col 1:9–12 is, structurally speaking, the hina- clause of the Colossian thanksgiving and is very explicitly paraenetical.”

34 K. G. Eckart, “Exegetische Beobachtungen zu Col 1:9–20,” *ThViat* 7 (1959/60) 87–106:93; “Urchristliche Tauf- und Ordinationsliturgie (Col 1:9–20; Acts 26:18),” *ThViat* 8 (1961/62) 23–37:26f. separates both participles and refers “bringing fruit” only to “in every good work,” and “grow” to “cognizance of God.”

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35 Here in v 6 is the explanation “so that they can do everything that I have ordained for you.”

36 Compare further: Rom 2:7; Eph 2:10; 2 Thess 2:17. In Phil 1:6, the working of God among the Philippians is described as “good works.” The expression occurs frequently in the Pastoral Epistles—1 Tim 2:10; 3:1; 5:10, 25; 6:18; 2 Tim 2:21; 3:17; Titus 1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14—with the meaning which hardly corresponds with that in the uncontested Pauline Epistles.

37 St. B. IV, 536.

BDR Blass, F.; Debrunner, A.: *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*

38 The verb *dynamoō* occurs otherwise in the NT only in Heb 11:34. In other places, Paul uses *endynamoō*: Rom 4:20; Eph 6:10; Phil 4:13; compare 1 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 2:1; 4:17; Acts 9:22.

39 Compare BDR 153; for the Hebrew GK 117, 2.

40 Compare GK 135n.

41 Compare also E. Lohse (p. 63), who interprets *kata* (corresponding to his power) that God remains true to himself, that he acts in accordance with the evidence which he has already demonstrated.

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42 Compare—aside from Eph and Col—1 Tim 6:16; 1 Pet 4:11; 5:11; Jude 25; Rev 1:6; 5:13. Luke 1:51 (the song in praise of Mary) focuses on the power of God which nobody can defy.

43 In Heb 2:14, *kratos* is used of the power of death and thus of the devil.

LXX Septuaginta, ed. A. Rahlfs, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1935

44 Only in Job 12:16 can we recognize statements with such an orientation.

45 Compare in the LXX, 2 Ezra 8:22; Jude 9:11, 14; 11:7; 13:11; Ps 58(59):10; 61(62):13; 85(86):16; Wis 15:2f.; Sir 18:5; 47:5; Isa 40:26; 2 Macc 3:34; 7:17; 9:17; 11:4; 12:28; and others. Ps 89(90):11 concerns the force of divine wrath, Wis 11:21 divine force in general which human beings cannot resist.

46 Compare esp. also 2 Cor 1:6ff.; 12:1–10; Phil 4:13. God proves his power in this weakness, so that all glory will accrue to him.

47 Compare also the statements in 1 Thess 1:3; compare 4:13; 2 Thess 3:5.

48 Compare Rom 5:3f.; 2 Cor 6:4; 2 Thess 1:4. Also Rom 15:4 belongs among these. Bearing the powerlessness of the weak means here bearing their invectives or abuse, and thus suffering tribulation. When God is called “the God of perseverance” in Rom 15:5, it is not so much because this is one of his attributes, but rather because he bestows this attribute.

49 In Luke 8:15, the concept of “bearing fruit” is used. There also the question is a rational component of constancy. In Luke 21:19, we are dealing with perseverance. Compare also Heb 10:36; 12:1; Jas 1:3, 4; 5:11; Rev 1:9; 2:2f., 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12.

50 But that does not mean that the hypomonē is without reference to human beings. Thus, for example, in 2 Cor 1:6ff., suffering in hypomonē serves to express comfort to the Corinthians.

51 Thus in the LXX, the Hebrew expression “to be slow to express anger” is translated as makrothymia.—See also F. Horst, ThWNT IV, pp. 377–90.

52 See also Rom 2:4; 2 Cor 6:6; Gal 5:22; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12; comp. 2 Tim 3:10. The corresponding verb occurs in the Pauline corpus also in 1 Thess 5:14, “be patient with everyone,” and in 1 Cor 13:4, where it is described as an attribute of love. According to 1 Tim 1:16, God’s mercy to Paul is a signal expression of divine “patience.”

53 This interpretation to v 11 is advocated by, among others, Thomas Aquinas, J. Calvin, J. A. Bengel, J. B. Lightfoot, W. M. L. de Wette, E. Haupt, C. F. D. Moule, E. Schweizer, R. P. Martin, P. T. O’Brien; for the subsequent, among others, John Chrysostom, H. von Soden, E. Lohmeyer, E. Lohse, J. Gnilka, F. F. Bruce.

54 J. Gnilka (p. 43, fn. 34) points out that prepositional figures with eis are better suited as conclusion, but that a prepositional figure with meta would fit better with the subsequent verb. He does, however, leave room for the idea that “the characteristic connecting participles do not infrequently leave transitions hanging.”

55 Rom 5:3; 12:12; 1 Thess 5:16; 1 Pet 1:6; 4:13; compare Acts 5:41; Jas 1:2ff.

56 For the change of person of the personal pronoun, see esp. Gal 4:4–6; compare also Rom 6:14f.; 12:1–6; 1 Thess 5:5. Further, see Comment II to 1:3–8.—Reliable text readings (i.e., Codex Alexandrinus) here read “we” as in v 13. This reading, however, is probably an assimilation of just this personal pronoun in v 13.

57 Compare K. H. Rengstorf, ThWNT III, p. 294.

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58 Compare Matt 28:12; Luke 7:12; 8:27; and others—Luke 8:27; 20:9; 23:8; and others—Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16; 7:6. The adjective is found a total of three times in Matt, three times in Mark, six times in the Pauline Corpus. All other instances (twenty-seven times) are in the Lukan writings.

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59 Compare also 1 Cor 15:9, 10, “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy (hikanos) of being called apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am....” In this context, compare also Matt 3:11 par.; 8:8 par.

[Markus Barth, Helmut Blanke, and Astrid B. Beck, *Colossians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 34B, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 173–184.]

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{12} Pulpit Commentary series

Vers. 9–14.—The opening prayer rises out of the foregoing thanksgiving and leads up to the chief doctrinal statement of the Epistle (vers. 15–20: compare, for the connection, Eph. 1:15–23; Rom. 1:8–17). The burden of this prayer, as in other letters of this period, is the Church's need of knowledge (comp. Eph. 1:17, 18; Phil. 1:9, 10). Here this desire has its fullest expression, as the necessity of the Colossians in this respect was the more urgent and their situation, therefore, the more fully representative of the stage in the history of the Pauline Churches now commencing. He asks for his readers (1) a fuller knowledge of the Divine will (ver. 9); to result in (2) greater pleasingness to God (ver. 10 a), due (3) to increased moral fruitfulness and spiritual growth (ver. 10 b), to (4) patience under suffering (ver. 11), and to (5) thankfulness for the blessings of redemption (verse 12–14).

Ver. 9.—For this cause we also (Eph. 1:15–17; 1 Thess. 3:6–13). Timothy and I, in return for your love to us (ver. 8) and in response to this good news about you (verse 4–6). From the day that we heard (it); an echo of “from the day that ye heard it” (ver. 6). Do not cease praying for you, and making requests. The former is a general expression (ver. 3), the latter points to some special matter of petition to follow. This second verb St. Paul only uses elsewhere of prayer to God in Eph. 3:13, 20 (see Trench's 'Synonyms' on αἰτέω, αἴτημα). That ye may be filled with (or, made complete in) the knowledge of his will (ch. 2:10; 4:12; Eph. 3:18, 19; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 13:21). On “knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις), see note to ver. 6, and Lightfoot's note here. “With the knowledge” represents the Greek accusative of specification (as in Phil. 1:11, where see Ellicott); and the verb πληρωθῆτε (comp. note on pleroma, ver. 19), as in ch. 2:10 and 1:25, denotes “fulfilled” or “made complete,” rather than, “made full”—“made complete as to the full knowledge,” etc. “His will” (“God's will,” ver. 1; ch. 4:12) need not be limited to the original purpose of salvation (Eph. 1:9), or to his moral requirements respecting Christian believers (ver. 10; so Meyer), but includes “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) made known to us in Christ (vers. 26, 27). In all spiritual wisdom and understanding (ch. 2:2; Eph. 5:17; Phil. 1:9; 1 Cor. 14:20). Wisdom, in its highest sense, is the sum of personal excellence as belonging to the mind; it implies a vital knowledge of Divine truth, forming the sentiments and determining the will as it possesses the reason. Hence the word occurs in a great variety of connections: “Wisdom and knowledge” (ch. 2:3), “and prudence” (Eph. 1:8), etc. For this Church the apostle asks specially the gift of understanding or comprehension (comp. ch. 2:2; only in Eph. 3:4 and 2 Tim. 2:7 besides, in St. Paul; 1 Cor. 1:19 from LXX), the power of putting things together (σύν-εσις), of discerning the relations of different truths, the logical bearing and consequences of one's principles. For the errors invading Colossæ were of a Gnostic type, mystic at once and rationalistic; against which a clear and well-informed understanding was the best protection (comp. notes on “truth,” in verses 5, 6; also ch. 2:4, 8, 18, 23; Eph. 4:13, 14). This “wisdom and understanding” are “spiritual,” as inspired by the Divine Spirit (comp. the use of “spirit,” “spiritual,” in 1 Cor. 12:1–11; Gal. 6:1 and 5:16, 25; Eph. 1:17; 3:16–19), and opposed to all “wisdom of the flesh,” the unrenewed nature of man (ch. 2:18; 1 Cor. 2:4–6, 13–15; Jas. 3:15).

Ver. 10.—To walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing (Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:1; 2 Thess. 1:5, 11; 1 John 2:6; Rev. 3:4; Heb. 13:21); so as to please him in every way. “The end of all knowledge, the apostle would say, is conduct” (Lightfoot). Spiritual enlightenment (ver. 9) enables the Christian to walk (a Hebraism adopted also into biblical English) in a way “worthy of the Lord” (Christ, ch. 2:6; 3:24; Acts 20:19, etc.), becoming those who have such a Lord and who profess to be his servants. And to be “worthy of Christ” is to “please God” (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4, 5, 11; 1 Cor. 1:9). This is the ideal and the aim of the religious life throughout the Bible (comp. 1 Sam. 13:14; Micah 6:6–8; Heb. 11:5, 6; John 8:29; Rom. 8:8). The characteristics of this walk are set forth by three co-ordinate participial phrases (vers. 10 b–12), standing in the half-independent nominative case instead of the more regular accusative (as agreeing with the understood object of the infinitive περιπατῆσαι: see Winer's 'N. T. Grammar,' p. 716: compare, for the idiom, ch. 3:16, also 2:2). In every good work bearing fruit (Eph. 4:28; Gal. 6:9, 10; 1 Thess. 5:15; 2 Thess. 2:17; 1 Tim. 5:10; Titus 3:8; Heb. 13:16; Acts 9:36). “Good work” is that which is beneficial, practically good (see parallel passages). “In every good work” might grammatically qualify the foregoing “pleasing” (so R.V. margin and many older interpreters), but appears to be parallel in position and sense with “in all power” (ver. 11). On “bearing fruit” (active in voice where the subject is

personal: comp. ἐνεργέω in ch. 1:29 and in Phil. 2:13), see note to ver. 6. While doing good to his fellow-men, the Christian is growing by (or, in) the knowledge of God (ch. 2:19; Eph. 4:13–16; 2 Pet. 3:18; 1 Cor. 3:1, 2; 14:20; 16:13; Heb. 5:12–14). His own nature becomes larger, stronger, more complete. Here it is individual (internal) growth, in ver. 6 collective (external) growth (of the gospel, the Church) that is implied; the two are combined in Eph. 4:13–16. The dative τῇ ἐπιγνώσει (so best copies and Revised Text: the Received, unto the knowledge, is a repetition of ver. 9) is “dative of instrument” (Alford, Lightfoot) rather than “of respect” (in the knowledge; so R.V.).

Ver. 11.—In all power being empowered, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness (vers. 24, 29; Eph. 1:19; 3:16; 6:10; 1 Cor. 16:13; 2 Tim. 1:7, 8; 2:1, 3, 9, 10; 1 Pet. 5:10). The same word is repeated as noun and verb (δύναμις, δυναμόω, power, empower) with a strong Hebraistic sort of emphasis (otherwise in Eph. 3:16). In all (every kind of) power gives the mode, according to the might of his glory the measure, and unto all patience, etc., the end of this Divine strengthening. “Might” (κράτος), in distinction from “power” (δύναμις) and other synonyms (comp. ver. 29; Eph 1:19; 6:10), implies “mastery,” “sovereign sway,” and, except in Heb. 2:14 (“might of death”), is used in the New Testament only of the power of God. “Glory,” as in Phil. 3:21, bears a substantive meaning of its own, and is not a here attributive of “might.” It is the splendour of God’s revelations of himself, in which his might is so conspicuous. Gazing on this glory, especially as seen in Christ (2 Cor. 4:6) and the gospel (1 Tim. 1:11, R.V.), the Christian discerns the might of him from whom it streams forth, and understands how that might is engaged in his behalf (Eph. 1:19, 20; comp. Isa. 40:28, 29; 13:5, 6); and this thought fills him with invincible courage and endurance. Patience is steadfastness and stout-heartedness under ill fortune (not a mere resigned patience); long-suffering is gentleness of temper and magnanimity under ill treatment (comp. ch. 3:12; and see Lightfoot, in loc., and Trench’s ‘Synonyms’). Christ, in his earthly life, was the supreme example of patience (2 Thess. 3:5, R.V.; 1 Pet. 2:21–23; Heb. 12:3, 4), which is “wrought by tribulation” (Rom 5:4): long-suffering finds its pattern in God’s dealing with “the unthankful and evil” (Rom. 2:4; 1 Tim. 1:16; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:15). “With joyfulness” belongs to this clause (Theodoret, Calvin, Bengel, Alford, Lightfoot) rather than the next, and lends a more vivid force to the foregoing words, while comparatively needless if prefixed to those that follow (so, however, Chrysostom, Erasmus, Meyer, Ellicott—“with joy giving thanks.” etc.). This paradox is genuinely Pauline, and arises from personal experience (comp. ver. 24; Phil. 1:29; Rom. 5:3; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Cor. 1:4–8; 6:10; 12:9, 10).

[H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., Colossians, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 4–6.]

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### {13} Interpretation Commentary series

#### Colossians 1:9–11

##### Paul’s Prayer

The apostle’s prayers are full of meaning, far removed from glib sentiments (“God bless you!”) and superficial wishes. The prayers enter into the readers’ situation and lift the mind to see that situation in the light of God’s purpose for the church.

Yet another historical notice (v. 9) sets the stage. When news came to him that as a result of Epaphras’s initial evangelism the Colossians had responded well, Paul was gladdened and expressed his joy in his prayers (v. 3).

The section 1:9–11 gives the content of his pastoral prayer, based on the report of verses 6–8. Many of the thoughts in the earlier section (e.g., “bearing fruit and growing”) are picked up in the prayer speech of the later verses.



The main components of Paul’s prayer idiom are listed as “knowledge,” “wisdom,” and “understanding.” It is a likely conjecture that these are the exact terms drawn from the teachers who had invaded the Colossian assembly. Paul is evidently aware of their “beguiling speech” (2:4). His strategy to warn against it is interesting. He apparently has taken over the very terms used and disinfected them by his own additional qualification, drawn from his Old Testament Jewish tradition. Thus “knowledge” is not something secret or esoteric but related to the practical business of knowing and doing God’s will (see, e.g., Jer. 22:16). The other two terms are qualified by the adjective “spiritual,” which is not courtesy reference but a direct appeal to the Holy Spirit whose help is invoked to make it a valid prayer request. “Wisdom” stands in the Old Testament Jewish tradition of obedience to God’s way in practical affairs (Job 28:12–28), just as “understanding” speaks of perception when moral choices are to be registered. Moreover, these spiritual qualities are part of the believer’s desire to please God in the whole range of life’s activities, not just the religious or sacred. Even when hardships ensue and there is opposition, “endurance” and “patience” are needful attitudes for which prayer is made. It is characteristic of the author who wrote Gal. 5:22–23 (the fruit of the Spirit) to add in the note of “joy” and to celebrate, with a return to the theme of thanksgiving (v. 12), the mighty acts of God in redemption and liberation, leading to incorporation in the new age of God’s kingdom-in-Christ (1 Cor. 15:25–28).

[Ralph P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1991), 102–103.]

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#### {15} Handbook on the Greek Text

##### Colossians 1:9–14

9 For this reason also, since the day we heard (this), we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, 10 so that you would walk worthily of the Lord, so that you fully please him, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you for a share of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

1:9 Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς, ἀφ’ ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν, οὐ παύομεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι καὶ αἰτούμενοι, ἵνα πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ,

Διὰ τοῦτο. Causal. The demonstrative pronoun probably has as its antecedent the whole unit 1:4–8.

καὶ. Correlation. This use establishes a mutual relationship of items of equal status.

ἡμεῖς. Nominative subject of παύομεθα.

ἀφ’ ἧς ἡμέρας. Temporal, indicating the point from which something begins.

ἠκούσαμεν. Aor act ind 1st pl ἀκούω. Perfective aspect here implicates a summary Aktionsart. See “Verbal Aspect and Aktionsart” in the Introduction.

παύομεθα. Pres mid ind 1st pl παύω Imperfective aspect here implicates a progressive Aktionsart. See “Verbal Aspect and Aktionsart” in the Introduction.

προσευχόμενοι. Pres mid ptc nom masc pl προσεύχομαι (complementary). On the voice, see “Deponency” in the Series Introduction.

καὶ. Connective.

αἰτούμενοι. Pres mid ptc masc nom pl αἰτέω (complementary).

ἵνα. Introduces a clause that indicates the content of the prayer request (Wallace, 475).

πληρωθῆτε. Aor pass subj 2nd pl πληρόω.

τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν. Accusative direct object of πληρωθῆτε.

τοῦ θελήματος. Objective genitive.

αὐτοῦ. Subjective genitive.

ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ. Manner. Moule takes this PP as defining the preceding phrase, so that “perception of God’s will consists in wisdom and understanding of every sort” (Moule 1958, 53). This, however, would be an unusual understanding of the function of ἐν. It more likely functions to express the manner in which the Colossians will be filled with the knowledge of God’s will.

1:10 περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν, ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ,

περιπατῆσαι. Aor act inf περιπατέω (purpose). The metaphor of “walking” to denote life-conduct is “untypical of Greek thought ... but characteristically Jewish” (Dunn, 71; see Exod 18:20; Deut 13:4–5; Ps 86:11; Prov 28:18; Isa 33:15; 1QS 5:10).

ἀξίως. Manner.

τοῦ κυρίου. Genitive with ἀξίως.

εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν. Result. While this could indicate purpose (so Harris, 31–32), it is better understood as the result of the purpose infinitive περιπατῆσαι, since it is natural to read “so that you fully please him” as a direct consequence of walking worthily of the Lord.

ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ. Circumstance under which bearing fruit takes place.

καρποφοροῦντες. Pres act ptc masc nom pl καρποφορέω (adverbial, modifying περιπατῆσαι).

αὐξανόμενοι. Pres mid ptc masc nom pl αὐξάνω (adverbial, modifying περιπατῆσαι).

τῇ ἐπιγνώσει. Dative of reference/respect.

τοῦ θεοῦ. Objective genitive.

1:11 ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν. Μετὰ χαρᾶς

ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει. Instrumental.

δυναμούμενοι. Pres pass ptc masc nom pl δυναμόω (adverbial, modifying περιπατῆσαι).

κατὰ τὸ κράτος. Standard.

τῆς δόξης. Attributive genitive.

αὐτοῦ. Possessive genitive.

εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν. Purpose.

Μετὰ χαρᾶς. Manner.

Aor aorist

act active

ind indicative

1st first person

pl plural

Pres present

mid middle

ind indicative

1st first person

pl plural

Pres present

mid middle

ptc participle

nom nominative

masc masculine

pl plural

Pres present

mid middle

ptc participle

masc masculine

nom nominative

pl plural

Aor aorist

pass passive

subj subjunctive

2nd second person

pl plural

Aor aorist

act active

inf infinitive

1QS “The Manual of Discipline” (Dead Sea Scrolls)

Pres present

act active

ptc participle

masc masculine

nom nominative

pl plural

Pres present

mid middle

ptc participle

masc masculine

nom nominative

pl plural

Pres present

pass passive

ptc participle

masc masculine

nom nominative

pl plural

[Constantine R. Campbell, Colossians and Philemon: A Handbook on the Greek Text, ed. Martin M. Culy, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 6–8.]

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{16} Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible

OUR PRAYERS FOR YOU AND OUR COMMON DESTINY IN CHRIST

(1:9–14)

1:9–14 And so, from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be completely strengthened by

virtue of his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transported us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Several things are significant by way of summary. First, the language in these six verses reverberates from what has already been said in the preceding text. Prayer was referred to in 1:3; knowledge in 1:6; God's will in 1:1; spirit in 1:8; bearing fruit and increasing in 1:6; giving thanks in 1:3; Father in 1:3; saints in 1:2, 4. Second, Paul here focuses on what can be said of his concerns on their behalf (1:9–11), but again with a clear sense of a common destiny shared by them and by Paul and his associates (1:12–14); indeed, the cosmic scope of what is at stake is never relinquished even through 1:23. And finally, the verses move forward as well as backward to extend what was expressed in 1:3–8, for by speaking of the common destiny carved out for them by the Father's action in the Son (1:12–14) the space is opened up for a focus on their relationship one to another, as set forth in shimmering detail in the passage to follow (1:15–20).

As noted above, Paul picks up on his language of "the day they heard and understood" in Colossae and refers it now to the day in his own context, that is, the day we heard of it. The concerns mentioned in these first verses flow naturally from the context of enthusiasm and joy that Paul and his friends have noted. It is important that a purported false teaching not be given center stage when it has yet to make any appearance. The gospel is bearing fruit and growing in all the world, and so Paul wants to underscore that the prayers that are unceasing on their behalf have as their outcome the same fruitfulness, outwardly (in every good work) and inwardly, in the increase in the knowledge of God. The recycling of language from 1:3–8 is a clear signal that Paul is continuing in the same basic vein. What has come to them by way of Epaphras is to be augmented, now by virtue of Paul and Epaphras's (and others') common and unceasing prayer on their behalf. Unceasing (pantote) thanksgiving (1:3) has its precise counterpart in the prison praying of Paul and his associates. The general and unspecified realm of this augmentation and growth is made evident by the repetition of all: so "in all [pasē] spiritual wisdom" (1:9); "fully [pasan] pleasing" (1:10); "in every [panti] good work" (1:10); "in all [pasē] power" (1:11); "for all [pasan] endurance" (1:11). Paul does not give indication that his prayerful petitioning for them is occasioned by a specific problem hounding them in their religious environment. Rather, his prayers are for their growth in the knowledge of God and their response to that—in every and all exhibition, including endurance and patience. This is all to happen in the context of joy, which spills into eucharistountes, the shared thanksgiving life (1:12).

I discussed above the preference for staying with the first-person-plural reading (so NA27) consistently throughout 1:12–14. The one Father of Paul and the Colossians has given common reason for thanksgiving, as in his action in Christ he has made them all saints in light. God's holy people have become Jew and Gentile both, in consequence of the Father's action of rescue and transporting. The term inheritance, as noted by commentators, is redolent of Old Testament implication. It can draw on the promise of inheritance in the ancestor narratives and can also refer to the promised land. The promised inheritance of the Suffering Servant is also a theme of Isa. 53 and the final chapters of Isaiah (54–66), where the servants of the servant proliferate and also find the dividing wall of Israel and the nations collapse, as now fully in Christ. The wilderness darkness of rebellion and sin and death, figurally repeated in exile, birthed a new generation in the former day and in the latter day a forgiven Zion, servants, and children she knew not, by the accomplishment of the servant. The promises to David extended to the servants (Isa. 55:3) is a prefigurement of the kingdom of his beloved Son (Col. 1:13), by means of the redemption and forgiveness Isaiah referred to and Christ prosecuted by the cross. Thus far, however, the emphasis in Colossians is on the Father's initiative in all this. He qualified, rescued, and transported us. With this emphasis in place, Paul will now shift his focus to the identity and achievement of the Son (1:15–20).

Paul has brought the story of creation, redemption, inheritance, and kingship/dominion into a shared narrative of the saints, now enclosing the Colossians and aiming at the entire world as its creation-intended target. Nothing in these

verses is focused on anything more specific in the realm of false teaching or the anticipation of that. Paul is seeing the Colossians and the spread of the gospel through a wider lens than had previously been his instinct, precisely due to his imprisonment and the emergence of a new form of apostolic life, in prayer and letter address, an extension of these vocations against a now wider canvas. His prayerful exertions and the form he gives expression to them in the letter thus far serve to emphasize growth in knowledge and increase in good works generated by thanksgiving for what God the Father has done for them all. The narrative of redemption and the manifold patterns of that, in Genesis–Joshua or in Isaiah, leech inevitably into Paul’s fresh articulation of the gospel as he conveys this in thanksgiving to “those brought near” in Colossae.

#### Excursus: The Knowledge of God

When Paul prays that the Colossians will increase in the knowledge of God, what does he have in mind? Does one move through various grades in the knowledge of God, in terms of quantification? Is this what he means? In some measure, the answer is yes. One comes to know God more and more. To come into relationship with God is in the nature of the case to be brought more deeply, by that relationship, in obedience, to the knowledge of him. One goes from sight to sight, even against the backdrop of seeing darkly compared to what we will know when he is seen face to face. So at the burning bush God reveals himself as “I am who I am” and yet the knowledge of him unfolds in relationship to obedience or to disobedience and judgment: “The LORD is compassionate and merciful, slow to anger and of vast kindness, but by no means will clear the guilty, visiting on generations.” In the visitations of kindness, forbearance, and judgment, the revealed Lord makes himself known. He begins with particular relationships and by means of these he witnesses and is witnessed to. So, Ruth comes to know and to name the LORD and to live in his light. The sailors bound for Tarshish come to know the LORD by virtue of his judgment over a disobedient prophet—the ironic prophetic announcement of Jonah after all. Nebuchadnezzar praises the God of Daniel when he is sundered in his pride and brought low. The non-Israelite (or pre-Israelite) Job confesses that he was aware by hearsay but knows by perseverance that he beholds God as God is, an adumbration of the “I am” whose disclosure to Moses extends and augments what was known by the ancestors and by Job in promise and in pledge. The great ’elohim who is YHWH “will make himself known” to Israel, the nations, and all creation, as the narratives of Exod. 3–15 display that.<sup>1</sup>

When Paul speaks of the action of the Father in Col. 1:3–14, does he refer to YHWH the Triune God or to the Father of Jesus Christ, or can that be untangled? Luther famously experimented with a translation of the opening line of Ps. 110, “Der HERR sprach zu meinem HERR” and by orthographic means sought to distinguish in the one YHWH an ontological distinction being made known—as a gift of the Holy Spirit—to David. The one LORD (HEER) speaks within his divine identity to the Son, “my Lord” (HERR). David was the prophet who spoke by the Holy Spirit, and for Luther that meant, who could see the inner life of YHWH in certain special places, like Ps. 2 or Ps. 110.<sup>2</sup>

The issue is important precisely because Paul is bringing the one horizon of the oracles of God entrusted to the Jews into coordination—because God has so made it known to him—with the new life of the Colossians in Christ, making him and them “saints” both in a new creation. The YHWH who is the willing and active *kyrios* of scriptural declaration, the protagonist in a drama from creation to new creation, has qualified his saints to an inheritance he promised as that protagonist to an elect people. A kingdom eternally guarded and kept by solemn promise and covenant is by YHWH being enlarged by virtue of his Son’s obedient work, now enclosing all who in various ways lived in darkness and sin. The Father is he who raised Jesus from the dead, but at the same time YHWH is God and by his word and Spirit he is eternally who he is. The ambiguation cannot be underdetermined (YHWH and the Son are unrelated) nor overdetermined (YHWH is the Father alone).

The challenge for Christian theology is proper handling, appropriate to its character as a two-testament witness, the biblical witness to God in Christ. The easiest paths are (a) emphasizing diversity by simple fact of the sheer majesty and range of the two Testaments, together and apart, by historical-critical or by literary-critical declension; (b) turning the

Old Testament into a falsely “Lutheran” melodrama, in the manner of Jung or Walter Brueggemann, whereby God’s “dark side” is evolving haphazardly into self-knowledge and individuation; (c) Kantian selection, where who God is comes to us by naturally imparted Geiger counter in the form of “God can’t be like that” and so “must be like that instead”; and (d) economic educationalism, where God hides behind language accommodating itself to the seasons of his otherwise genuine, but unstated, life with creation. Over against these options, Paul the Biblical Theologian shows us a better way.

His scriptures are not christotelic in some “tradition-historical” or “salvation-historical” sense primarily, whereby they live their own life in route to an economic denouement, whose culminating chapter Paul happens to share in time. Rather, they contain within their own providential unfolding an organic connective tissue that partakes of Christ and his work. The point will be made insistently in the unit to follow (1:15–20). But it also inheres with what he has been saying of God’s work in Christ thus far (1:3–14), whereby the pattern of redemption stretching from creation to inheritance is shown to be figurally operative with Israel as a type that informs and clarifies the present life of the saints. YHWH’s promise and fulfillment in relation to Israel, his “I will be with you as I will be with you,” is what it is for the saints of former days, but also at “the same time” the Father’s action of redemption, inclosing Gentiles and Jews by one cross in one dominion marked by Christ’s forgiving blood. The economic unfolding of YHWH’s triune life with creation, Israel, the saints, is inextricably a disclosure of his character and his ontology, the love of the Father for the Son, as the Spirit makes it known.

The scriptures that Paul calls the “oracles of God” are not a receptacle of diversities to be correlated after the fact by theological labor. Theology properly speaking follows Paul in apprehending who God is as disclosed in scripture, and how the work of God in Christ accords with that, economically and ontologically. Paul rehearses the significance of the pattern of redemption, as this has been his own theological DNA, and at the same time the extensional potential of that pattern sheds light on Christ’s work of redemption in time, backward and forward. The figural dimension of scripture is paramount, not its salvation-historical “BC over here and then AD.” And this serves as well to explain the next chapter of his address to the Colossians and why it follows in this place. Having spoken of the Father’s action in qualification, rescue, and transfer, Paul now explains how this is at the same time the work of the Son, who is his very image. To know God and to increase in the knowledge of him is to see as deeply as possible how the scriptures speak of YHWH and in doing so speak of the Father and the Son as the Spirit has disclosed and is disclosing that.

A Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece, edited by B. Aland et al., 27th edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993)

27 Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece, edited by B. Aland et al., 27th edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993)

1 See “The Call of Moses and the ‘Revelation’ of the Divine Name” (Seitz, *Word Without End*, 229–50).

2 Christine Helmer, “Luther’s Trinitarian Hermeneutic and the Old Testament,” *Modern Theology* 18 (2002): 49–73.

[Christopher R. Seitz, *Colossians*, ed. R. R. Reno et al., *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014), 81–85.]

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#### {17} A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles

There is much repetition of language from vv. 4–6 in vv. 9–11 (e.g., “all,” “from the day you/we heard,” “came to know the grace of God/knowledge of his will/knowledge of God”),<sup>18</sup> which is typical of Asiatic rhetoric. Rhetorically the redundancy is a means of reinforcement and emphasis but also of building to a climax. The specific part of the prayer

that goes beyond thanksgiving to petition is made known in v. 9. Paul is concerned that the Colossian Christians pursue the gospel knowledge they have received from Epaphras to its full extent and not exchange it for some false teaching or Colossian Jewish philosophy. They are to fulfill the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Paul is probably not talking about mere recognition of God's will, although the term in question, *epignōsis*, could be translated that way in vv. 6, 9, and 10. What we likely have in the use of this term instead of the simpler *gnōsis* is rhetorical flourish of the Asiatic sort.<sup>19</sup>

Knowledge is a crucial part of Christian life and growth. The Christian faith is not just about what one has experienced but also about what one knows. Paul is not, however, talking about some sort of abstract knowledge, but rather a knowledge that leads to praise and seeking to please God "in all good works." For Paul, theology and ethics are always integrally linked and should not be radically separated. The truth of the gospel is the motive for action and for worthy living, whether it is a truth about the character of God or about something God has already done or will yet do in Christ. Here Paul is referring to knowledge that comes to the believer through the Holy Spirit, which is why it is called spiritual understanding here (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9–15). Wisdom and understanding are said to come from God's Spirit in numerous Jewish texts (Exod. 31:3; 35:31; Isa. 11:2; Wis. 9:17–19; Sir. 39:6; 4 Ezra 14:22), but it is also striking that Aristotle enumerates wisdom and understanding as two of the highest virtues (Nicomachean Ethics 1.13).

In the pluralistic world in which the Colossians lived, the notion that one could achieve the highest level of generally recognized civic virtue by means of aid of the Holy Spirit would be welcome news and an impetus to continue to cultivate one's Christian faith. Notice the emphasis on that which is "pleasing (*areskeia*, found only here in the NT) to all" (v. 10). In a deliberative discourse we would expect such an emphasis, for deliberative rhetoric is meant to talk about that which is pleasing and beneficial and will aid the audience in the future if they behave in a pleasing fashion. Paul is perhaps thinking of the need to be winsome as one lives out the gospel. The aim of obtaining such knowledge then was practical—so that one could live a good and virtuous life, or, in the Jewish way that Paul puts it, so that one might walk in a worthy fashion, noted for one's good deeds. Paul does not hesitate to commend good works (Rom. 3:7; 13:3; 2 Cor. 9:8; Gal. 6:10; Phil. 1:6; 2 Thess. 2:17; Eph. 2:10). He simply does not see them as a means of salvation.

The Colossians are called to walk worthily of the Lord, which they will do by desiring to please in all good works. God provides the power (note the three words for power or strength and two for patient endurance in v. 11).<sup>20</sup> Were there those who were offering an alternate source of power through mystical ascent into heavenly worship? It is possible (see pp. 153–160 below). God's power will give the Christians the fortitude and patience with joy to wait for the completion of what God promised without attempting a ritual or mystical shortcut. Paul may actually be countering something of an over-realized eschatology that suggests that "the future is now" through visionary or mystical experience.

18 Rightly pointed out by E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), p. 24.

19 See rightly, Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, p. 62. The Asiatic style loves polysyllabic words. Why use a two-syllable word when a three-syllable synonym that sounds more grandiose is available?

20 Asiatic rhetorical redundancy reaches a new height here in v. 11: "empowered with all power (*en pasē dynamēi dynamoumenoi*) according to the might (*kratos*) of his glory," followed by two near synonyms that refer to patient endurance, *hypomonē* and *makrothymia*.

[Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 123–125.]



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{18} Pillar New Testament Commentary series

9 As we noted above, Paul regularly moves from thanksgiving to petition in these opening sections of his letters. Thus, after giving thanks for the Colossians' reaction to the proclamation of the gospel in their midst (vv. 3–8), Paul now prays that they might continue on the course they have begun. In the Greek text, vv. 9–14 is a single complex sentence that may usefully be broken down into three main parts. There is (1) Paul's assertion of regular prayer on behalf of the Colossians along with the basic content of that prayer: knowledge of God's will and the manifestation of that knowledge in a lifestyle pleasing to God (vv. 9–10a); (2) a further description of what this lifestyle looks like, employing (in the Greek) four participles: "bearing fruit," "growing," "being empowered," and "giving thanks" (vv. 10b–12a); and (3) a rehearsal of the deliverance from sin provided to the readers by God the Father through the Son (vv. 12b–14). A noteworthy feature of this prayer are the number of parallels with the thanksgiving section:

|                                  |                                       |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| "since the day you heard" v. 6   | "since the day we heard" v. 9         |
| "thank" v. 3                     | "giving ... thanks" v. 12             |
| "always" v. 3                    | "not stopped" v. 9                    |
| "when we pray for you" v. 3      | "praying for you" <sup>46</sup> v. 9  |
| "understood" v. 6                | "knowledge" <sup>47</sup> v. 9, v. 10 |
| "bearing fruit and growing" v. 6 | "bearing fruit ... growing" v. 10     |

The parallels are numerous enough to suggest that Paul is deliberately echoing the language of the thanksgiving in his petition. The effect is to subtly remind the Colossians again that they must continue on the course they have already begun.

Paul's petition for the Colossians proceeds directly from his thanksgiving for them, as the connecting phrase for this reason makes clear.<sup>48</sup> Especially in the face of the threat posed by the false teachers, the Colossians' good start and genuine progress should lead not to complacency but to renewed effort.<sup>49</sup> Yet it is not simply the threat of false teaching that stimulates Paul's prayer for them, for he has been regularly praying for the Colossians ever since he first heard about their conversion through the ministry of Epaphras. Paul uses two verbs to indicate his prayer: "praying" (*proseuchomenoi*) and "asking" (*aitoumenoi*). (For stylistic reasons—to break up an otherwise intolerably long sentence—the TNIV has put the verbs in separate sentences.) They form a hendiadys, with "asking" perhaps added to enforce the idea of petition in the otherwise general "praying."<sup>50</sup>

What<sup>51</sup> Paul prays for is that the Colossians "might be filled with the knowledge of his [God's] will." The verb (*plērōthēte*) is a "divine passive," with God as the implied agent: "filled by God." Several English translations, including the TNIV, express this idea by explicitly adding a reference to God and turning the verb into an active: we continually ask God to fill you (cf. also NIV; NLT; NET; REB). The language of "fulfill" or "fullness" occurs at some crucial junctures in Colossians (1:19; 2:9–10), leading some interpreters to suggest that the language may have played a role in the false teaching. We think this is probably the case, although it must be noted that Paul does use this verb in similar contexts elsewhere (Rom. 15:13; Eph. 3:19; Phil. 2:2; 4:19; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:4). Paul has given thanks that the Colossians have truly understood (*epegnōte*) God's grace; now he correspondingly prays that they may be filled with the knowledge (*epignōsin*) of his will. What Paul has in mind is not some particular or special direction for one's life (as we often use the phrase "God's will"), but a deep and abiding understanding of the revelation of Christ and all that he means for the universe (vv. 15–20) and for the Colossians (vv. 21–23).<sup>52</sup>

Paul makes clear just what kind of knowledge he is talking about by adding the phrase through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives. Indeed, the TNIV's through suggests that the phrase describes the means by which God will fill the Colossians with knowledge of his will. But it is better to view the phrase as qualifying knowledge by indicating two other qualities that are to accompany it.<sup>53</sup> Wisdom (*sophia*) and understanding (*synesis*) are two of the three chief "intellectual" virtues, according to Aristotle (the third is *phronēsis*, "prudence"; cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.13); and they are frequently paired in the Greek Old Testament and in Judaism. Some sense of the meaning of the pairing arises from the contexts in which it is used. These virtues are essential to the godly leader (e.g., Moses [Exod. 31:3; 35:31]; Solomon [1 Chron. 22:12; 2 Chron. 1:10, 11, 12]; the "shoot from the stump of Jesse" [Isa. 11:2]) and are given to those who fear the Lord (Prov. 1:7; 2:2, 3, 6; 9:10; 24:3; Job 12:13; 28:20).<sup>54</sup> The combination thus suggests the ability to discern the truth and to make good decisions based on that truth. Of course, as the Old Testament contexts make clear, this truth comes only from God, a claim that Paul elaborates in a christological way in 2:3: in Christ (and in Christ alone) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. As the TNIV interprets it, the adjective "spiritual" (*pneumatikos*) is getting at this same point: the Spirit is the source of the wisdom and understanding that the Colossians require as they negotiate their way through the maze of first-century worldview options.<sup>55</sup>

10 Spirit-given insight into the will of God, as important as it is, is not an end in itself. Echoing a consistent biblical theme, Paul indicates that the Colossians' mental and attitudinal realignment is to produce behavioral transformation. The verb at the beginning of v. 10, an infinitive in Greek (*peripatēsai*, "to walk"), might indicate either result—"with the result that you will walk"—or purpose—"with the purpose that you might walk."<sup>56</sup> The difference between these two ideas in the context of a prayer is slight, but perhaps purpose, with its implied exhortation, fits better. Paul's use of the verb meaning "walk" (see also 2:6; 3:7; 4:5) picks up a common Jewish and biblical idiom, according to which a person's lifestyle is pictured as a road that one travels along. Frequently, especially in Wisdom literature, two paths or ways are contrasted as a way of confronting the righteous with the decisive choice that they must make; and the command to "walk" (Heb. *hlk*) is naturally used in these contexts.<sup>57</sup> Representative is Proverbs 2:12–20:

Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, who have left the straight paths to walk in dark ways, who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways. Wisdom will save you also from the adulterous woman, from the wayward woman with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God. Surely her house leads down to death and her paths to the spirits of the dead. None who go to her return or attain the paths of life. Thus you will walk in the ways of the just and keep to the paths of the righteous.

Some English versions choose to retain the idiom and its associated ideas (e.g., ESV; NASB; HCSB), while most (losing the metaphor but gaining clarity for many English readers) interpret the metaphor, often with the language of "live" (NIV; TNIV; NRSV; NLT; NET; NJB; REB).

Paul describes the nature of this new "walk": it is to be worthy of the Lord and to please him in every way. The decision of the TNIV to view these two constructions as parallel descriptions of "live" (followed also by NIV; NLT; NET; REB) is one possible way to construe the Greek syntax.<sup>58</sup> But it is also possible that the second phrase elaborates the first phrase (cf. ESV: "to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him") or that it indicates the purpose or result of the first phrase (cf. NAB: "to live in a manner worthy of the Lord, so as to be fully pleasing").<sup>59</sup> Paul elsewhere urges believers to live "worthily" of the gospel (Phil. 1:27), their calling (Eph. 4:1), and God (1 Thess. 2:12). Here it is the Lord who sets the standard of our "worthy walk." The immediate context (see esp. 1:3; 2:6), as well as the syntax of this particular construction,<sup>60</sup> suggests that the Lord is Jesus Christ—yet another example of the very high Christology that typifies this letter. The Greeks often used the language of "pleasing" with a negative nuance, signifying an obsequious attitude of currying favor. But it was also frequently used in a positive way, and this usage, of course, determines the meaning of the language here. "Pleasing" God is not a common Old Testament expression, but is found more often in Judaism and

in the New Testament (in Paul; cf. Rom. 8:8; 1 Cor. 7:32; 1 Thess. 2:4; 4:1).<sup>61</sup> The Greek text has nothing that explicitly corresponds to the *him* found in most English translations, and a few commentators have thought that Paul might be referring to actions that please both the Lord and other people.<sup>62</sup> But the context strongly suggests a limitation to behavior that is pleasing to the Lord.

The end of v. 10 provides a further description of the life that is worthy of the Lord and that pleases him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.<sup>63</sup> The two participles are bound closely together (connected with *kai*, “and”) and probably are intended to be read together. Paul echoes the language of v. 6: the Colossians are to continue to do what the gospel is already accomplishing among them.<sup>64</sup> As we noted in our comments on v. 6, bearing fruit and growing is language rooted in the creation story, carrying the implication, perhaps, that God is seeking through response to the gospel to confirm his original purpose in creation and establish human beings in his own image. In v. 6, the focus was on the extension of the gospel to many people; here, however, it is the intensive growth within each believer that is the focus.<sup>65</sup> The clause has a chiasmic structure in Greek, with the two participles in the “center” surrounded by qualifying phrases. “Bearing fruit” is to manifest itself in “every kind of” (the force probably of *panti*;<sup>66</sup> cf. NJB; REB) good work. And growing happens in some relationship to the “knowledge of God” (the preposition translated in by TNIV is *en*). The relationship could be one of sphere, paraphrased nicely in the NLT: “you will learn to know God better and better.”<sup>67</sup> Or the *en* could have instrumental force: growing takes place by means of our knowledge of God.<sup>68</sup> The importance of a clear understanding of God and his purposes in this opening section (see vv. 6, 9) points to the former as the better option.

11 Paul continues the syntax that ended v. 10 by adding another participle to his list: a life worthy of the Lord and that pleases him (v. 10a) will consist in (1) bearing fruit and growing (v. 10b); and (2) being strengthened. As O’Brien notes, this clause indicates “how the conduct, worthy of the Lord, was to be achieved.”<sup>69</sup> Living a life worthy of the Lord is a high and difficult calling. In typical New Testament fashion, Paul reminds us that God gives what he demands. And the form of the participle (the present tense) suggests that God’s provision of strength is continuously available to his people. References to the Spirit are surprisingly sparse in Colossians (only 1:8; but *pneumatikos* in 1:9 and 3:16 probably also alludes to the Spirit). But Paul’s broader teaching certainly justifies our thinking that this divine enablement comes through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Verse 11 describes the extent and purpose of God’s empowerment of the believer. First, the strengthening comes with all power. The word “all” (Gk. *pas*) has a variety of nuances. Here it signifies a “marker of the highest degree”: “complete,” “unlimited” power.<sup>70</sup> The word power is closely related to the word “strengthen” (*dynamis* and *dynamōō*, respectively): we might paraphrase “strengthened by God with the greatest strength imaginable.”

Paul further emphasizes the extent of God’s empowering, as well as making explicit its source, with the next description: according to his glorious might. *Might* translates a word that is typically associated with God in the New Testament; in fact, half of its occurrences are in doxologies (1 Tim. 6:16; 1 Pet. 4:11; 5:11; Jude 25; Rev. 1:6; 5:13; see also Luke 1:51; Acts 19:20; Eph. 1:19; 6:10; Heb. 2:14). As so often in Colossians, the closest parallel is in Ephesians: “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms” (1:18–20). The translations are almost unanimous in using the adjective “glorious” to qualify this divine might, echoing the opinion of most commentators that *doxēs* should be construed as a qualitative genitive.<sup>71</sup> But one might wonder if this interpretation gives appropriate value to the very significant word “glory.” This word occurs frequently in Scripture as a very basic characterization of God, signifying his “weighty,” overwhelming presence. The English “glorious” is too easily cast loose from this God-focused meaning (as when we speak of a “glorious sunset”). It might,

then, be preferable to take the genitive as possessive: the strength that God supplies his people is in accordance with (and is the expression of) his own intrinsic glory.<sup>72</sup>

Paul, second, says that the purpose of God's strengthening is that the Colossians may have great endurance and patience. Great translates *pas*, the third time we have encountered this word in a verse and a half: every good work (v. 10b); all power (v. 11a); great endurance and patience (*pas* probably modifies both nouns). As in v. 11a, the word probably connotes degree: "the very greatest possible endurance and patience." Paul's decision to use two words naturally leads us to ask about a possible distinction in their meanings. Some commentators think that the former (Gk. *hypomonē*) connotes the ability to "bear up" (corresponding to the etymology of the Greek word) under difficult circumstances, while the latter (*makrothymia*) suggests long-suffering toward people. As Wright puts it: "[Endurance] is what faith, hope and love bring to an apparently impossible situation, [patience] what they show to an apparently impossible person."<sup>73</sup> Contemporary linguistics properly encourages wariness about these kinds of distinctions—especially when they are so homiletically attractive! But, without insisting that this difference between the two is always to be assumed, the usage of the relevant words in the New Testament does suggest that a general distinction of this sort may be justified.<sup>74</sup>

46 The Greek is slightly different, with the preposition *περί* in v. 3 and *ὑπέρ* in v. 9.

47 The Greek root is the same: *ἐπιγινώσκω* in v. 6; *ἐπίγνωσις* in v. 9.

48 The *τοῦτο* in the phrase *διὰ τοῦτο* thus almost certainly refers to the whole of vv. 3–8 (Harris, 29).

49 See David Pao, *Thanksgiving: An Investigation of a Pauline Theme* (NSBT 13; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2002), 107.

TNIV Today's New International Version

50 See also the only other place in the NT where both verbs are used together, Mark 11:24, where most English translations treat the construction as a hendiadys: "ask in prayer" (e.g., ESV; TNIV; NAB). While *αἰτέω* is quite common in the Gospels as a way of indicating prayer, this usage is rare in Paul (only here and in Eph. 3:13, 20). The middle form of *αἰτούμενοι* is probably not to be distinguished from the active in meaning (BDAG; see also Jas. 4:2–3, where little difference between active and middle can be discerned).

51 The Greek conjunction *ἵνα* that Paul here uses to introduce the prayer generally indicates the content of the prayer rather than the purpose of the prayer (BDAG; they point out that the *ἵνα* clause functions in a way similar to an infinitive construction).

TNIV Today's New International Version

NIV New International Version

NLT New Living Translation

NET Neotestamentica

REB Revised English Bible

52 Paul's use of the compound *ἐπίγνωσις* in preference to the simple noun *γνώσις* is taken by some commentators as connoting a special sense of "knowledge": either, e.g., a more thorough knowledge (Lightfoot, 138) or the direction of the knowledge (MacDonald, 47). But no consistent difference in meaning between *γνώσις* and *ἐπίγνωσις* (or between *γινώσκω* and *ἐπιγινώσκω*) can be discovered in Paul; and so we should probably not attach any special nuance to the word here.

TNIV's Today's New International Version

53 TNIV's through translates ἐν, which can be rendered several ways in English. In preference to the instrumental interpretation (for which see, e.g., Harris, 30; MacDonald, 47), we prefer an associative rendering ("with"; cf. Wright, 58).

54 Dunn again finds in the phrase a polemic against a torah-based false teaching, since Deut. 4:6 specifies that God's decrees and laws produce σοφία and σύνεσις (70).

TNIV Today's New International Version

55 The translation "spiritual" found in many English versions is accurate enough, but leaves open a myriad of possible interpretations, especially in a culture like ours where "spiritual" can mean so many different things. As Fee emphasizes, however, Paul's view of what is "spiritual" is overwhelmingly determined by his experience of the Holy Spirit; and the TNIV rendering that the Spirit gives highlights this idea (God's Empowering Presence, 641–43). As O'Brien puts it, wisdom and understanding "comes through the insight God's Spirit imparts" (22; cf. also Dunn, 71). Πνευματικός, as also the adjective πάση that precedes the phrase, modifies both nouns (e.g., Abbott, 202; Lohse, 27).

56 Result: Harris, 31; Lightfoot, 139; Dunn, 71; purpose: Lohse, 27; O'Brien, 22; Gnllka, 41.

57 As Lohse (27) especially emphasizes, this imagery is common in the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g., 1QS 3:17–26; 5:8–11). The imagery is so widespread, however—as are the other parallels between Colossians and the DSS that Lohse notes here—that conclusions about any special dependence on Qumran ideas are speculative.

ESV English Standard Version

NASB New American Standard Bible (rev. ed.)

HCSB Holman Christian Standard Bible

NIV New International Version

TNIV Today's New International Version

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

NLT New Living Translation

NET Neotestamentica

NJB New Jerusalem Bible

REB Revised English Bible

TNIV Today's New International Version

NIV New International Version

NLT New Living Translation

NET Neotestamentica

REB Revised English Bible

58 The second phrase, please him in every way, is preceded by the preposition εἰς, which these versions are apparently assuming is to be connected to the main verb, περιπατήσαι.

ESV English Standard Version

NAB New American Bible

59 In this case, εἰς will depend on the phrase ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου (“worthy of the Lord”).

60 When Paul uses an article before κύριος (“Lord”), as he does here, he usually refers to Christ (e.g., Harris, 31).

61 In the Old Testament, the expression (with the verb ἀρέσκω) occurs only in Num. 23:27; Ps. 68:32; Prov. 24:18; Isa. 59:15; Mal. 3:4. Philo uses the language quite frequently.

62 E.g., Barth/Blanke, 178.

63 The participles Paul uses here—καρποφορούμενοι and αὐξανόμενοι—are in the nominative case. Since participles dependent on an infinitive—περιπατήσαι at the beginning of the verse—should technically be accusative, it is possible that the participles should be construed as dependent on πληρωθῆτε (“that you might be filled”) in v. 9. But it is perhaps more likely that they are loosely attached to περιπατήσαι (see Lohse, 28).

64 In v. 6, Paul used the middle participle καρποφορούμενον. His shift to the active form here (καρποφοροῦντες) is probably not indicative of any change in meaning (see O’Brien, 23).

65 See Harris, 32, for this distinction.

66 See BDAG, Def. 5 for πᾶς.

NJB New Jerusalem Bible

REB Revised English Bible

TNIV Today’s New International Version

NLT New Living Translation

67 See Harris, 32; Wright, 58.

68 Lightfoot, 139; Abbott, 203; Lohse, 29. In either case, the genitive τοῦ θεοῦ (“of God”) is objective: it is God who is the “object” of our knowing (see Wallace, Greek Syntax, 119).

69 O’Brien, 24.

70 The relevant definition in BDAG.

71 E.g., Bruce, 47; Dunn, 73. Many commentators, indeed, appear to assume that the meaning is so obvious as not to require comment.

72 Paul uses the genitive δόξης as a qualifier of a noun or pronoun twenty other times. In Eph. 1:17, a qualitative interpretation might be preferable (“the glorious Father”). But in all the other verses, “glory” is best seen as an important entity in its own right; see, e.g., Col. 1:27b: “the hope of glory”; and the formula “the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). See also Rom. 5:2; 8:21; 9:23; 1 Cor. 2:8; 2 Cor. 4:4, 6, 17; Eph. 1:18; 3:16; Phil. 3:21; Col. 1:27a; 2 Thess. 2:14; 1 Tim. 1:11; Titus 2:13. See, on Col. 1:11, Moule, 54; Masson, 95; Wilson, 111.

73 Wright, 60; see also Lohse, 30–31; similar are Lightfoot, 140; Barth/Blanke, 182–83.

74 “Endurance” (ὑπομονή) does not occur elsewhere in Colossians; the one other occurrence of μακροθυμία (3:12) denotes an attitude that enables believers to “bear with each other” (3:13). The two words (and their cognate verbs) occur in fairly close proximity in the NT elsewhere in Rom. 2:4–7; 1 Cor. 13:4–7; 2 Cor. 6:4–6; 2 Tim. 3:10; Jas. 5:7–11.

[Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 92–99.]

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#### {19} Expositor’s Greek Testament Commentary

Vv. 9–14. PAUL’S UNCEASING PRAYER FOR THAT MORAL DISCERNMENT WHICH WILL ENABLE THEM TO PLEASE GOD IN ALL THEIR CONDUCT, THAT STRENGTH WHICH WILL GIVE THEM ENDURANCE IN FACE OF ALL PROVOCATION AND TRIAL, AND THAT THANKFULNESS TO GOD, WHICH BEFITS THE GREAT DELIVERANCE HE HAS ACHIEVED FOR THEM THROUGH HIS SON.—Ver. 9. διὰ τοῦτο. The good report from Colossæ prompts Paul’s prayer. Apparently the reference is to all that has been said in vv. 4–8, though Haupt confines it to ver. 8.—καὶ ἡμεῖς: “we also,” i.e., as the Colossians had prayed for Paul, so he had made unceasing prayer for them. Similar assurances are common in the letters of the period, but their conventional character must not in the case of one of so intense a nature as Paul’s lead us to degrade them into polite commonplaces.—προσευχόμενοι καὶ αἰτούμενοι. The former verb is general, the latter special, referring to the definite request. Soden thinks the middle (αἰτούμενοι) is chosen to express Paul’s personal interest, but there seems to have been no distinction between the middle and active of this verb in later Greek.—ἵνα πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν. After verbs of praying, etc., ἵνα is used in a weakened sense to express the content of the prayer. πληρ. with the accusative is not precisely the same as with the genitive or dative. So here “filled with respect to”. ἐπίγνωσις is stronger than γνώσις. Meyer defines it as the knowledge which grasps and penetrates into the object.—τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ. This does not mean God’s counsel of redemption (Chrys., Beng., De W., Kl.), nor “the whole counsel of God as made known to us in Christ” (Findl.), but, as the context indicates (ver. 10), the moral aspect of God’s will, “His will for the conduct of our lives” (Mey., Sod., Haupt, Abb.).—ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ: to be taken with the preceding, not (as by Hofm.) with the following words. σοφία is general, σύνεσις special. σοφία embraces the whole range of mental faculties; σύνεσις is the special faculty of intelligence or insight which discriminates between the false and the true, and grasps the relations in which things stand to each other. The addition of πνευμ. shows that both are to proceed from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They thus stand in opposition to fleshly wisdom (2 Cor. 1:12), and especially, it would seem, though Haupt denies this, to the false wisdom, by which the Colossians were in danger of being ensnared (Cf. τοῦ νοῦς τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ, 2:18). The repetition of πᾶς in this context should be noticed. The early part of the Epistle is strongly marked by repetition of particular words and phrases.

Ver. 10. περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ Κυρίου (Cf. Eph. 4:1). This lofty wisdom and insight is not an end in itself. It must issue in right practice. Doctrine and ethics are for Paul inseparable. Right conduct must be founded on right thinking, but right thinking must also lead to right conduct. The infinitive expresses result “so as to walk”. τοῦ Κυρ., i.e., of Christ, not of God (Hofm., Ol.). In 1 Thess. 2:12 τοῦ Θεοῦ is used, but ὁ Κύρ. in Paul means Christ.—ἀρεσκείαν in classical Greek used generally in a bad sense, of obsequiousness. But it often occurs in Philo in a good sense; see the note on the word in Deissmann’s *Bible Studies*, p. 224. καρποφοροῦντες καὶ αὐξανόμενοι. For the collocation Cf. ver. 6. The participles should probably be connected with περιπατῆσαι, not (as by Beng., Hofm., Weiss) with πληρωθῆτε, which is too far away. The continuation of an infinitive by a nominative participle instead of the accusative is frequent in classical Greek, and occurs several times in Paul (2:2, 3:16, Eph. 4:2, 3). They should not be separated. The whole clause should be translated “bearing fruit and increasing in every good work by the knowledge of God”. Fruit bearing is one of Paul’s favourite metaphors.—τῇ ἐπιγνώσει: not as R.V. and Moule “in the knowledge,” for Paul has already spoken of this in ver. 9, but “by the knowledge,” the knowledge of God being the means of their spiritual growth. Meyer, against the

overwhelming weight of evidence, reads εἰς τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν, “as regards the knowledge”. This would make knowledge the goal of conduct (Cf. John 7:17), whereas previously the relation is reversed.

Ver. 11. ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει: “with all power,” ἐν being instrumental. κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ. The equipment with power is proportioned not simply to the recipient’s need, but to the Divine supply. God’s glory is His manifested nature, here as manifested in might.—εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν. This equipment with Divine power is not, as we might have expected, said to be given with a view to deeds of great spiritual heroism, but for the practice of passive virtues, since this often puts the greater strain on the Christian’s strength. ὑπομ. is endurance, steadfastness in face of trials, temptations and persecutions; μακροθ. is forbearance, the patience of spirit which will not retaliate. “The one is opposed to cowardice or despondency, the other to wrath or revenge” (Lightf.). There seems to be no reference in μακροθ., as Alford supposes, to their attitude in conflict with error.—μετὰ χαρᾶς: not to be taken (as by Mey., Ell., Hofm., Weiss, Abb.) with εὐχαριστ., which would be tautological and throw a false emphasis on these words, but with ὑπομ. κ. μακροθ. It forms a very necessary addition, for the peculiar danger of the exercise of those qualities is that it tends to produce a certain gloominess or sourness of disposition. The remedy is that the Christian should be so filled with joy that he is able to meet all his trials with a buoyant sense of mastery.

Ver. 12. εὐχαριστοῦντες: not to be taken with οὐ παυόμεθα, ver. 9 (Chrys., Beng.). Usually it is co-ordinated with the two preceding participial clauses. Haupt objects that it would be strange if thankfulness for participation in salvation were mentioned only after its consequences for Christian conduct had been deduced. He thinks it is a more precise development of μετὰ χαρᾶς; joy being produced by our thankful consciousness of the benefits thus secured to us. There is force in this, though the form of expression strongly suggests the common view, and considerations of order should not, perhaps, be so rigidly pressed.—τῷ πατρὶ. The word is selected to emphasise God’s Fatherly love as the source of their redemption; though Soden thinks that, as in Rom. 6:4, Paul has in mind God’s relation to Christ (so Alf.).—τῷ ἱκανώσαντι ὑμᾶς: “who qualified you”. The reference is to status rather than character.—εἰς τὴν μερίδα ... φωτί. Lightfoot thinks τ. μερ. τ. κλ. is the portion which consists in the lot, κλήρου being a genitive of apposition (so Sod., Abb.). But probably κλ. is the general inheritance in which each individual has his μέρος. The lot is the blessedness awaiting the saints. More controverted is the connexion of ἐν τῷ φωτί. Meyer connects it with ἱκανώσας and takes ἐν as instrumental “by the light”. This is harsh, and φωτί in contrast to σκότους (ver. 13) cannot mean the Gospel. Others connect it with ἀγίων, either in the sense of angels (so Kl., Franke and Lueken) or saints (so Ol. and others). But the angels are never in the N.T. called οἱ ἅγιοι, though this term is used for them in the O.T. and Jewish Apocalyptic. Further, the contrast with the “darkness” of ver. 13 loses its force unless the “holy ones” are Christians as opposed to non-Christians. And if Paul had meant this he would have expressed himself more plainly. Nor is any such reference probable in an Epistle directed especially against over-valuation of the angels. If saints are meant, unless (with Ol.) we give φωτί merely an ethical sense, they must be saints in heaven, for which we should have expected τῶν ἐν φωτί, as the object of the addition would be to distinguish them from saints on earth. ἐν φωτί should therefore be connected either with μερίδα (Beng.), μερίδα τ. κλήρου (Alf., Lightf.), or κλήρου (De W., Ell., Sod., Haupt). The difference is slight, and it seems simplest to connect with κλ., “the lot of the saints [situated] in the light”; ἐν being probably local, and not expressing, as in Acts 8:21, the idea of a share in the light. The precise sense of φῶς is disputed. Oltramare takes it of the state of holiness in which Christians live, so that the distinction between saints on earth and in heaven does not arise. But the immediate impression of the phrase is that the heavenly kingdom, where God dwells in light, is referred to.

Ver. 13. Paul now explains how God has qualified them for their share in the heavenly inheritance. On this passage Acts 26:18 should be compared; the parallels extend to ver. 12, 14 also.—ἐρύσατο. The aorist refers to the time of conversion. The metaphor implies the miserable state of those delivered and the struggle necessary to deliver them.—ἐξουσίας: “ubi τῆ βασιλείᾳ opponitur, est tyrannis” (Wetstein, so also Chrys., Lightf., Kl.). This would heighten the contrast between the power of darkness and the “kingdom of the son of His love”. But Abbott argues forcibly against this view, especially with relation to the N.T. usage. He quotes Rev. 12:10, ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ ἐξουσία τοῦ



Χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ, where the contrast obviously cannot be maintained. Grimm takes the term as a collective expression for the demoniacal powers; and Klöpffer says that in Paul ἐξ. is not a mere abstract term, but signifies the possessors of power. Here, however, he rightly sees that the contrast to βασιλ. makes this meaning inappropriate, and that for it ἐρύς. ἀπό would have been expected rather than ἐρύς. ἐκ. Accordingly he interprets it as the dominion possessed by the (personified) darkness.—τοῦ σκοτούς: taken by Hofmann as a genitive of apposition, but the obvious interpretation is to take it as a subjective genitive, the dominion which darkness exercises. We should have expected simply “out of darkness” to correspond to “in light,” but Paul changes the form, partly to insist that the darkness is not a mere state but exercises an active authority, partly to secure a parallel with the kingdom of God’s Son. But we are not justified (with Meyer, Kl.) in personifying σκοτός, for the primary contrast is with φωτί not υἱοῦ.—μετέστησεν. Wetstein quotes Jos., Ant., ix., 11, 1 (Tiglath-Pileser’s deportation of N.E. Israel), and Lightfoot thinks that this use of the word suggested the choice of it here, and this is made more probable by the addition of εἰς τ. βασιλ. Meyer, however, quotes a striking parallel from Plato, where no such reference is present: ἐκ τε φωτός εἰς σκοτός μεθισταμένων καὶ ἐκ σκοτούς εἰς φῶς (Rep., p. 518 A).—βασιλείαν. Meyer insists that this is the Messianic kingdom, and as the realisation of this lay in the future to Paul the clause must have a proleptic reference, citizenship in the kingdom being guaranteed by their conversion. But the argument rests on a false premiss, for in 1 Cor. 4:20, Rom. 14:17, the sense is not eschatological. Nor, indeed, can it be so here, for the translation into the kingdom must have taken place at the same time as the deliverance.—υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ. Augustine, followed by Olshausen and Lightfoot, takes ἀγάπης as a genitive of origin, and interprets, the Son begotten of the essence of the Father, which is love. This has no parallel in the N.T., and rests, as Meyer points out, on a confusion of the metaphysical with the ethical essence of God. The phrase is practically equivalent to His beloved Son, but is chosen for the sake of emphasis to indicate His greatness and the excellence of His kingdom. There is, perhaps, the further thought that the love which rests on the Son must rest also on those who are one with Him.

Ver. 14. This verse is parallel to Eph. 1:7. ἐν ᾧ: not by whom, but in whom; if we possess Christ, we possess in Him our deliverance.—ἔχομεν: (present) we have as an abiding possession.—ἀπολύτρωσιν: “deliverance”. The word is generally interpreted as ransom by payment of a price, for which Mark 10:45, δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν, may be compared. But it is not certain that the word ever has this meaning. It is very rare in Greek writers (see reff.). The passage from Plutarch refers to pirates holding cities to ransom. But obviously the word here does not mean that we procure release by paying a ransom. The word is often used simply in the sense of “deliverance,” the idea of ransom having disappeared. (So in Rom. 8:23, Eph. 4:30, Luke 21:28.) It is best therefore to translate “deliverance” here, especially as this suits better the definition in the following words. The remission of sins is itself our deliverance, whereas it stands to the payment of the ransom as effect to cause. The elaborate discussion in Oltramare may be referred to for fuller details, with the criticism in Sanday and Headlam’s note on Rom. 3:24; also Abbott on Eph. 1:7; Westcott on Heb., pp. 295, 296; Ritschl, Rechtf. und Versöhn. ii., 222 sq.—τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν. The similar definition of ἀπολ. in Eph. 1:7 tells against Lightfoot’s view that it is added here against erroneous definitions by the false teachers, who very probably did not employ the term. The precise phrase does not occur elsewhere in Paul. τ. ἄμ. depends simply on τ. ἀφ., not, as Hofmann thinks, on it and τ. ἀπολ., for the latter is not used with the object from which deliverance is effected.

Kl. Klöpffer.

Kl. Klöpffer.

Kl. Klöpffer.

Kl. Klöpffer.

[A.S. Peake, “The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians,” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament: Commentary*, vol. 3 (New York: George H. Doran Company, n.d.), 498–502.]

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{20} Expositor's Bible Commentary, Abridged

### C. Prayer of Petition (1:9–14)

To the thanksgiving of vv.3–8, the apostle adds a fervent petition. He prays that the Colossians may be so filled with the knowledge of God's will (v.9) that they may be enabled to live worthily of the Lord, pleasing him in everything (v.10a). This worthy life involves fruitfulness in every good work (v.10b), growth in the knowledge of God (v.10c), patience and long-suffering (v.11), and gratitude to God for the blessings of redemption (vv.12–14).

9 The words "for this reason," referring back to vv.3–8, show that this petitionary prayer is Paul's response to the news that had come to him of the Colossians' experience in Christ. He was grateful for what had already happened to them and prays now for the further enrichment of their lives.

His prayer contains two requests. The first, and the one on which the rest of the prayer is based, is that God might fill the readers "with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding." The word "knowledge" (GK 2106) is used in the NT only of moral and religious knowledge. It denotes thorough knowledge, i.e., a deep and accurate comprehension. Such knowledge of God's will is the foundation of all Christian character and conduct. Already here Paul may be touching on the fact that some in Colosse were failing to attain true knowledge by engaging in wild speculations of a philosophical wisdom.

The "will" of God in its broadest and most inclusive sense is the whole purpose of God as revealed in Christ. In this passage the term perhaps has special reference to God's intention for the conduct of the Christian life.

To be "filled" (GK 4444) with the knowledge of the divine will suggests that such knowledge is to pervade all of one's being—thoughts, affections, purposes, and plans. There is an unusual emphasis on "fullness" in this letter. The recurrence of this idea suggests that the Colossian errorists claimed to offer a "fullness" of blessing and truth not found in the preaching of Epaphras. Paul answers by stressing the true fullness available only in Christ (cf. especially 2:9). We acquire knowledge of the will of God by "wisdom" and "understanding." These two words should be looked on as expressing a single thought, something like practical wisdom or clear discernment. The use of the two words gives completeness to the statement and thus deepens its impression on the reader.

10 Paul's second petition, built on and growing out of the request for knowledge of the divine will, is that the Colossians might "live a life worthy of the Lord"; living a worthy life is thus represented as a result of knowing God's desire for one's life. This suggests that knowledge of God's will is not imparted as an end in itself; it is given with a practical intent—so that one's conduct may be godly.

"Live a life" translates a single word (lit., "walk"; GK 4344), one that is often used in Scripture to depict life in its outward expression (cf. 2:6; 3:7; 4:4; et al.). To live a life "worthy of the Lord" probably means to live a life that is commensurate with what the Lord has done for us. It may also suggest acting in conformity with our union with Christ and with his purpose for our lives. The ultimate aim of all this is to "please him [God] in every way." To "please" (GK 742) suggests an attitude of mind that anticipates every wish. Believers want to do anything to meet the wishes of God; that is the surest path to our own highest development and gain.

Verses 10b–14 underline some of the constituent parts of the kind of life that is pleasing to the Lord. The leading ideas are expressed by four participles: "bearing fruit" (v.10b), "growing" (v.10c), "being strengthened" (v.11a), and "giving thanks" (v.12). (1) "Bearing fruit" (GK 2844; cf. v.6) means that the Christian life is to exhibit continual fruitfulness (cf. Gal 5:22–23). The fruit itself consists in "every good work"—Paul lays great stress on good works in his letters (cf. Eph 2:10;

Gal 5:5; Tit 1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:8, 15; et al.). In his discussion on good works, he represents them as the fruit, not the root, of a right relationship with God.

(2) The Christian should also experience continual personal spiritual enlargement, an idea expressed in the words “growing [GK 889] in the knowledge of God.” The preposition in suggests that the knowledge of God is the sphere or realm in which spiritual growth takes place. It is possible, however, to translate the phrase as “growing by the knowledge of God.” When rendered like this, the text affirms that the knowledge of God is the means by which the Christian grows. What rain and sunshine are to the nurture of plants, the knowledge of God is to the growth and maturing of the spiritual life.

11 (3) “Being strengthened with all power” is the next element in the life pleasing to God. Christians are engaged in moral conflict with the cosmic powers of a darkened world (cf. Eph 6:12), and nothing short of divine empowerment can enable them to stand. “Strengthened” (GK 1540) translates the same root word used in Php 4:13: “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”

This empowerment is “according to his [God’s] glorious might.” That is to say, it is not proportioned simply to our need, but to God’s abundant supply. “His glorious might” is literally translated “the might of his glory.” We should probably retain this rendering and understand the thought to be the might of God’s own manifested nature. In this interpretation “glory” stands for the revealed splendor or majesty of God—the sum total of his divine perfections.

The twofold issue of such empowerment is “endurance and patience.” The first term (GK 5705) denotes the opposite of cowardice and despondency; it is the capacity to see things through. “Patience” (GK 3429) is the opposite of wrath or a spirit of revenge. It speaks of even-temperedness, the attitude that in spite of injury or insult does not retaliate.

It is debatable whether “joyfully” should be construed with “endurance and patience” or with “giving thanks.” A distinctively Christian quality (cf. Gal 5:22; Php 1:18; 2:17; 3:1; et al.), joy is often associated in the NT with hardship and suffering.

12 (4) The crowning virtue of the worthy Christian life is “giving thanks.” One reason for gratitude to God is that he has “qualified” believers “to share in the inheritance of the saints.” In themselves believers have no fitness for sharing in the heritage of God’s people. They can experience this only as God qualifies them for such a privilege. This God has done for the Colossians and does for any believer at the time of his or her conversion.

To “share in” the inheritance of the saints is to have a portion of the heritage belonging to God’s people. There is an obvious allusion to the inheritance of ancient Israel in the Promised Land and the share of the inheritance each Israelite had. Christians, as the new people of God, also have an inheritance, and each believer has a share allotted to him or her.

“In the kingdom of light” seems to mark the inheritance as future and heavenly. But the following verse affirms that Christians have already been rescued from the dominion of darkness and are even now in the kingdom of God’s Son. The kingdom of God is all around us—in our homes, our families, our businesses—in sum, in everything that makes up our lives.

13 The proof that God has qualified us for a share of the inheritance of the saints is that he has “rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.” “Rescued” (GK 4861) means to liberate, save, or deliver someone from something; that from which Christians have been rescued is a “dominion of darkness” (Jesus used the same phrase at the time of his arrest in Gethsemane; see Lk 22:53). “Darkness” in Scripture is symbolic of ignorance, falsehood, and sin (cf. Jn 3:19; Ro 13:12). But Paul probably had the Colossian heresy in mind, because the principalities and powers to which the false teachers urged Christians to pay homage are designated by him “the powers of this dark world” (Eph 6:12).

God's action in behalf of his people does not stop with deliverance from the authority of darkness. He has also "brought [them] into the kingdom of the Son he loves." "Brought" (GK 3496) was a word used in reference to removing persons from one country and settling them as colonists and citizens in another country. This took place at the time of the Colossians' conversion. The "kingdom" (GK 993; see comment on Mk 1:15) is not to be interpreted as a future realm; it was for the Colossians a present reality (cf. Jn 3:3-5). Nor is the kingdom to be interpreted as an area designated on a map; it is the sovereign rule of the Lord Christ over human hearts. The expression "the Son he loves" is reminiscent of the words of the Father at the baptism and the transfiguration of Jesus (Mt 3:17; 17:5).

14 By virtue of union with Christ, redemption and forgiveness are ours. "Redemption" (GK 667), a term that speaks of a release brought about by the payment of a price, was used of the deliverance of slaves from bondage or of prisoners of war from captivity. "We have" teaches that the believer's redemption is a present possession. "Forgiveness" (lit., "a sending away"; GK 912) speaks of the removal of our sins from us, so that they are no longer barriers that separate us from God. By putting redemption and forgiveness in apposition to each other, Paul teaches that the central feature of redemption is the forgiveness of sins.

GK Goodrick/ Kohlenberger number

GK Goodrick/ Kohlenberger number

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[Kenneth L. Barker, *Expositor's Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition: New Testament)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 817-819.]

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{21} Word Studies in the New Testament

9. We also. Marking the reciprocal feeling of Paul and Timothy with that of the Colossians.

Pray—desire (προσευχόμενοι—αιτούμενοι). The words occur together in Mark 11:24. The former is general, the latter special. Rev. make request is better than desire. The A. V. renders indiscriminately ask and desire. Rev. alters desire to ask. Desire in the sense of ask occurs in Shakspeare and Spenser.

Knowledge (ἐπίγνωσιν). See on Rom. 3:20; Philem. 6. Full knowledge. See Rom. 1:21, 28; 1 Cor. 13:12, where Paul contrasts γινώσκειν to know, γνώσις knowledge, with ἐπιγινώσκειν to know fully, ἐπίγνωσις full knowledge. Here appropriate to the knowledge of God in Christ as the perfection of knowledge.

Wisdom and spiritual understanding (σοφία καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ). Rev., better, applies spiritual to both—spiritual wisdom and understanding. The kindred adjectives σοφός wise and συνετός prudent, occur together, Matt. 11:25; Luke 10:21. For σοφία wisdom, see on Rom. 11:33, and on wise, Jas. 3:13. For σύνεσις understanding, see on Mark 12:33, and prudent, Matt. 11:25. The distinction is between general and special. Understanding is the critical apprehension of particulars growing out of wisdom, which apprehension is practically applied by φρόνησις prudence, see on Luke 1:17; Eph. 1:8. Spiritual is emphatic, as contrasted with the vain philosophy of false teachers.

10. Walk worthy (περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως). The phrase occurs Eph. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:12. Rev. gives the correct adverbial rendering worthily.

Unto all pleasing (εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρέσκειαν). So as to please God in all ways. Compare 1 Thess. 4:1, Ἀρέσκεια pleasing, only here in the New Testament. In classical Greek it has a bad sense, obsequiousness, cringing. Compare men-pleasers, ch. 3:22.

In the knowledge (εἰς τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν). Lit. unto the knowledge. The best texts read τῇ ἐπιγνώσει “by the knowledge:” by means of.

11. Strengthened (δυναμούμενοι). Only here in the New Testament, but found in Septuagint. The compound (ἐνδυναμώω to make strong) is frequent in Paul, Rom. 4:20; Eph. 6:10; Philip. 4:13; 1 Tim. 1:12.

Power—might (δυνάμει—κράτος). See on 2 Pet. 2:11; John 1:12.

Glory. See on Rom. 3:23.

Patience—long-suffering (ὑπομονὴν—μακροθυμίαν). See on 2 Pet. 1:6; Jas. 5:7.

With joyfulness. Compare ver. 24; Jas. 1:2, 3; 1 Pet. 4:13. Some connect with giving thanks, ver. 12, and this is favored by the construction of the previous clauses: in every good work bearing fruit: with all power strengthened: with joy giving thanks. But Paul is not always careful to maintain the symmetry of his periods. The idea of joy is contained in thanksgiving, which would make the emphatic position of with joy inexplicable; besides which we lose thus the idea of joyful endurance (ver. 24) and of joyful suffering expressing itself in thanksgiving. Compare Rom. 5:3.

Rev. Revised Version of the New Testament.

A. V. Authorized Version.

Rev. Revised Version of the New Testament.

Rev. Revised Version of the New Testament.

Rev. Revised Version of the New Testament.

Lit. Literally.

[Marvin Richardson Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, vol. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 465–466.]

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{22} Synoptica Annotationis Sacrae

9. ἵνα πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, “that ye may be filled with divine knowledge.” At ἐπίγνωσιν must be understood κατὰ. Of αὐτοῦ the antecedent is Θεοῦ at ver. 6. The θελ. is explained by Rosenm. of the divine precepts; and thus ἐπίγν. τοῦ θελήματος τοῦ Θεοῦ, will be, “a knowledge of what God would have us know, believe, and do.” But I prefer, with Heinr., to understand it of the divine plans for the salvation of men by Christ. So Theophyl. well explains: θέλημα γὰρ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ εὐδοκία, τὸ τὸν. Υἱὸν δοθῆναι ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, οὐχὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους. He also observes, that the πληρ. implies that that knowledge was yet incomplete and imperfect. On the sense of the rest of the verse see the notes on Ephes. 1:8. and Doddr. in loc.

10. περιπατῆσαι ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ Κυρίου εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν. At περιπατ. must be understood εἰς τὸ. The preposition here, as often, indicates the end and tendency. For a life and conduct worthy of Christ and his religion was the fruit to be expected from a right knowledge. At εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν subaud τοῦ Θεοῦ, from the next clause. The term ἀρεσκεία signifies the study of pleasing others, and is therefore capable both of a good, and a bad sense. In the Classical writers it is almost always used in the latter: but examples of the former are found; as Polyb. (cited by Raphel) ἡ τοῦ βασιλέως ἀρεσκεία· and, what is more to the purpose, Philo 33 c. (cited by Loesner) where it is said of Adam: εἰς ἀρεσκείαν τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ βασιλέως.

The words following suggest how this ἀρεσκεία may be accomplished, namely, 1st, by perseverance in rendering the fruit of good works; 2dly, by patience and constancy in temptation and adversity. On καρποφοροῦντες, see the note supra ver. 6. There is an enallage for καρποφοροῦντας; though some refer all the nominatives to πληρωθῆτε. The ἐν παντὶ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες, evidently refers to good works; the αὐξανόμενοι εἰς τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ Θεοῦ, to that correct knowledge of God's will by which alone good works can be produced. The εἰς is rendered by Storr. quod attinet ad. But this is too feeble a sense: and I remember no example of εἰς after αὐξ. in this sense. Heinr. renders it suitably to, which makes a good sense, but not, I think, that which the Apostle intended. Besides, it would require κατὰ. The interpretation is, however, supported by Theophyl.: νῦν αὖθις ἀπαιτεῖ αὐξάνειν ἐν τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἔργοις, εἰς τὸ ἅμα καὶ τὸν Θεὸν ἀγαθοῖς ἔργοις, εἰς τὸ ἅμα καὶ τὸν Θεὸν ἐπιγινώσκειν· ἐκάτερον γὰρ ἐκατέρου συστατικόν. After all, I see no reason to desert the common interpretation, by which αὐξ. εἰς is taken as synonymous with αὐξ. ἐν, which is found in some MSS., or αὐξ. by itself; which is found in many others, and is received by Griesb. (and so 2 Pet. 3:18.); but (I think) on insufficient grounds. It savours of a gloss, and the common reading is sufficiently defended both by its greater difficulty, and by a similar construction in the Twin Epistle (Eph. 4:15.) αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν (i.e. Christ), where see the note. When the nature of the term αὐξάνειν is considered, such a construction will not seem strange. The Apostle has placed the two particulars together, the increase of knowledge and that of virtue, well knowing that they always tend to mutually produce each other.

11. ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ, for ἐνδυναμούμενοι πάσῃ δυνάμει. This very energetic expression ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κ. τ. κ. δ. (where τῆς δόξης is for the cognate adjective) must denote those powerful and extraordinary aids of the holy spirit then vouchsafed to faithful Christians; though the ordinary influences of the same blessed spirit are given to all of every succeeding age to profit withal.

The words εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομονὴν καὶ μακροθυμίαν μετὰ χαρᾶς, show the end and purpose of such extraordinary aids, namely, that they might bear every sort of temptation and persecution with patience, nay, even alacrity. For such is the sense of this condensed, and therefore obscure, clause. Μακροθυμία must here denote, not (as the ancients say) a

slowness to anger, but, as appears from the following words μετὰ χαρᾶς (which stand in the place of a cognate adjective), patience of endurance.

[S. T. Bloomfield, *Recensio Synoptica Annotationis Sacrae*, vol. 8 (London: C. and J. Rivington; Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1826–1860), 5–7.]

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German Commentaries:

{23} Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament Aus Talmud Und Midrasch*

1, 6: Fruchtbringend u. wachsend.

καρποφορούμενον καὶ αὐξανόμενον entspricht der Wortverbindung פְּרָה וְרָבָה „fruchtbar sein u. sich mehren“; doch wird diese im Rabbinischen nur in eigentlicher, nicht in übertragener Bedeutung gebraucht. Im letzteren Sinn wird „Frucht tragen“ wiedergegeben mit עָשָׂה פִּירוֹת.

Qid 40a: Eine Sünde, die Früchte trägt פִּירוֹת שְׁעוֹשָׂה (die schlimme Folgen hat, zu neuen Sünden Veranlassung gibt), hat Früchte (Straffolgen für den Täter in dieser Welt); wenn sie aber keine Früchte trägt, hat sie keine Früchte (sie bleibt ungestraft in dieser Welt, damit das Strafkapital קָרָן des Sünders in der jenseitigen Welt ein möglichst großes werde). — Ferner s. die Zitate bei Mt 7, 16 A S. 466 u. bei Mt 12, 33 S. 638.

1, 12: Anteil am Erbesitz der Heiligen.

Dt 10, 9 koordiniert nebeneinander חֵלֶק וְנַחֲלָה „Teil u. Erbesitz“. — LXX: μερίξ καὶ κληῖρος. — Targ Onk u. Jerusch I: חוּלְקָא וְאַחְסָנָא „Teil u. Eigentum“ (Besitz).

Dn 12, 13: Stehe auf zu deinem Lose . לגורלך || Hen 48, 7: Er (der Messias) bewahrt das Los der Gerechten. || Schab 118b: R. Jose (um 150) hat gesagt: Möge (einst) mein Teil חֵלְקִי bei denen sein, die drei Mahlzeiten am Sabbat halten. R. Jose hat gesagt: Möge mein Teil bei denen sein, die das Hallel täglich ganz sprechen.... R. Jose hat gesagt: Möge mein Teil bei denen sein, die mit Eintritt der Dämmerung (morgens u. abends) beten.... R. Jose hat gesagt: Möge mein Teil bei denen sein, die an einem Unterleibsleiden sterben (ein solches sollte wegen seiner Schmerzhaftigkeit Sühnkraft haben). R. Jose hat gesagt: Möge mein Teil bei denen sein, die auf dem Wege einer Gebotserfüllung sterben. R. Jose hat gesagt: Möge mein Teil bei denen sein, die in den Sabbat in Tiberias eintreten (hier begann man den Sabbat frühzeitig), u. bei denen, die aus dem Sabbat in Sepphoris austreten (hier endete man den Sabbat möglichst spät). R. Jose hat gesagt: Möge mein Teil bei denen sein, die zum Sitzen (Verbleiben) im Lehrhaus, u. nicht bei denen, die zum Aufstehen (Weggehen) im Lehrhaus veranlassen. R. Jose hat gesagt: Möge mein Teil bei denen sein, die die Almosen einziehen (erheben), u. nicht bei denen, die die Almosen verteilen (denn diese machen dabei leicht Mißgriffe). R. Jose hat gesagt: Möge mein Teil bei demjenigen sein, den man verdächtigt, während nichts (keine Schuld) an ihm ist. || pBerakh 4, 7d, 57: R. Jochanan († 279) pflegte (nach Beendigung des Achtzehngebetes) zu beten: Möge es dein Wille sein, Jahve, unser Gott, ... daß wir uns freuen über unser Teil בְּחֵלְקֵינוּ im Gan 'Eden.... — In der Parallelstelle Berakh 16b lauten die Schlußworte: Daß du (uns) unser Teil gebest im Gan 'Eden.

Qid Qidduschin

Schab Schabbath

B Berakhoth

e Berakhoth

rakh Berakhoth

B Berakhoth

e Berakhoth

rakh Berakhoth

[Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament Aus Talmud Und Midrasch (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Oskar Beck, 1922–1926), 625.]

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#### {24} Erklärung Des Briefes Pauli

V. 9. An den Dank schliesst sich an das Gebet um weitere christliche Erstarkung (vgl. Eph. 1, 15 ff.) mit Einflechtung des in Christo dargebotenen Reichsgenusses V. 9 bis 14, woran sich dann eine besondere Darstellung der Majestät Christi schliesst, und seines Erlösungswortes V. 15 bis 22, mit Anwendung auf die Kolosser und die Botschafterstellung Pauli selbst V. 23–29. — ἠκούσαμεν) rückbeziehend auf V. 8 τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην. — προσευχόμενοι) allgemein, wie V. 3, mit specieller Angabe des Gegenstandes καὶ αἰτούμενοι. Ueber ἴνα s. zu Eph. 1, 17. — πληρωθῆτε) s. zu Eph. 3, 19. Ueber die Construction mit Acc. s. Winer § 32, 5. — ἐπίγνωσιν) vgl. Eph. 1, 17. Auch hier dies die Basis der christlichen Lebens-Erkenntniss; wenn einmal der Glaube da ist und keine Hemmnisse: πληροῦσθαι. — ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ) die christliche ἐπίγνωσις unterscheidet sich von der falschen nicht durch engere Schranken, sondern durch ihren Grund, σύνεσις und ihr Object: Gott in Christo, namentlich τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ. Der Er, zu dem er lenkt, ist der Vater (V. 3. Eph. 1, 17); sein Heilswille (1 Tim. 2, 4), τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος (Eph. 1, 9) bildet das grosse Mysterium, das die Welt nicht erkennt. Vgl. 2, 2. ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει gehört zu πληρωθῆτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν, wie V. 10 ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῶ καρποφοροῦντες zu περιπατῆσαι. Die Vollendung der Erkenntniss erfolgt in Weisheit und Einsicht. σοφία καὶ σύνεσις s. zu Eph. 1, 8. 17. 3, 4, ηἰσθητὴ καὶ ἡγία Deut. 4, 6. — πνευματικῇ im Gegensatz zu σαρκική (1 Kor. 1, 26. 2 Kor. 1, 12. Jak. 3, 15) geistlich gewirkt und wirkend.

V. 10 f. περιπατῆσαι, Infinitiv des Resultats, der vollen Ausbildung der Erkenntniss in Weisheit und Einsicht, wie Jak. 3, 13; Erweise der Weisheit und Verständigkeit s. Eph. 5, 15–17. — ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου) vgl. Eph. 4, 1. — ἀρέσκειαν) gefälliges Betragen als Streben zu gefallen und wirkliche Wohlgefälligkeit, vgl. Prov. 31, 30 .יָן — καρποφοροῦντες) nähere Bestimmung des würdigen Wandels: eben daher gehört ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῶ als bestimmendes Object zu καρποφοροῦντες, nicht zu περιπατῆσαι, das schon mit αὐξανόμενοι εἰς τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θεοῦ das Guthandeln einschliesst. — εἰς τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν) durch Gotteserkenntniss eben immer fruchtbarer werdend und wachsend in allem Guthandeln gegenüber der unfruchtbaren, kraftlosen, thatlosen Erkenntniss. — ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει δυναμούμενοι κατὰ τὸ κράτος κ. τ. λ.) ist vermittelnd für V. 10. Die Erkenntnissfülle bildet sich zur Fruchtbarkeit im würdigen Wandel aus, indem sie innerlich gekräftigt werden in jeglicher Geisteskraft vermöge der göttlichen Machtwirkung = δυνάμει κραταιωθῆναι Eph. 3, 16 vgl. ibid. V. 20. — Ueber κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ als πατὴρ τῆς δόξης vgl. Eph. 1, 17. Zweck und Wirkung ist innere Kräftigung, feste Ausdauer und Unverdrossenheit (μακροθυμία) mit Freude, s. zu Eph. 4, 2. Letzteres ist mieder vermittelt

[Johann Tobias Beck and Julius Lindenmeyer, Erklärung Des Briefes Pauli an Die Epheser Nebst Anmerkungen Zum Brief Pauli an Die Kolosser (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1891), 249–250.]

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#### {25} Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar Über Das Neue Testament



V. 9. Fürbitte bis V. 12. — διὰ τοῦτο) weil ihr so glaubens- und liebevoll seid, V. 4–8. Diese Beziehung wird durch ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν gefordert, welehes auf V. 4. ἀκούσαντες etc. zurückweist, und daher die πίστις und ἀγάπη der Leser zum sich von selbst verstehenden Objecte hat. — καὶ ἡμεῖς) gehört zusammen, und gestattet καὶ weder zu διὰ τοῦτο (de Wette) noch gar zu προσευχ. (B. Crus.!) zu verbinden. Es ist zu fassen: auch wir (ich und Timoth.) unsererseits, so dass καὶ die Leser und Briefsteller in einer Wechselwirkung darstellt; nachdem V. 4–8. gesagt worden, was von den Lesern geschieht (das Glauben und das Lieben), wird nun gesagt, was zur Weiterförderung dieser christlichen Verfassung auch von Seiten der Briefsteller geschehe. — προσευχ.) „precum mentionem generatim fecit V. 3.; nunc exprimit, quid precetur,“ Beng. — καὶ αἰτούμενοι) fügt das Specielle (bitten) zum Generellen (beten). Vrgl. Matth. 21, 22. Mark. 11, 24. Eph. 6, 18. Phil. 4, 6. Ueber das populär hyperbolische οὐπαυόμ. vrgl. z. Eph. 1, 16. Zu ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, sofern es auch mit zu κ. αἰτούμ. gehört, vrgl. Lys. c. Alc. p. 141. — ἵνα πληρωθ.) Inhalt des Bittens in Form seiner Absicht. Vrgl. z. Phil. 1, 9. — τὴν ἐπίγν. τοῦ θελ. αὐτοῦ) mit der Erkenntniss seines Willens, Accus, wie Phil. 1, 11. αὐτοῦ geht auf Gott als das Subject, an welches Gebet und Bitte gerichtet ist; dass aber mit seinem θέλημα nicht der Erlösungsrathschluss (Eph. 1, 9.) gemeint sei (Chrys., Oecum., Theophyl. u. V. auch Huther u. Dalmer), sondern (Matth. 6, 10.) was Gott in sittlicher Beziehung will (so schon Theodoret., welcher einen Gegensatz mit den νομικαῖς παρατηρήσεσιν macht), ergiebt der Context durch V. 10. Vrgl. Rom. 2, 18. 12, 2. Eph. 5, 17. 6, 6. Kol. 4, 12. Den Unterschied von γνῶσις und ἐπίγνωσις, welches auch hier und V. 10. 2, 3, 10. die das Object erfassende, eindringende Erkenntniss ist, hat auch hier Olsh. mit Unrecht geleugnet. S. z. Eph. 1, 17. — ἐν πάσῃ etc.) instrumentale Modalbestimmung, wie nämlich jenes πληρωθῆναι τὴν ἐπίγν. τ. θελ. αὐτοῦ (welche Erkenntniss nicht das Erzeugniss der bloßen menschlichen Geistesthätigkeit, sondern der objectiv göttlichen Begabung durch den heil. Geist sein soll) hergestellt werden müsse: durch jedwede geistliche Weisheit und Einsicht (durch deren Mittheilung). Zu πνευματικός, vom heiligen Geiste herrührend\*), vrgl. Rom. 1, 11. 1. Kor. 2, 13. 12, 1. Eph. 1, 3. 5, 19. al. Die σύνεσις ist die auf Urtheil und Schluss beruhende Einsicht in theoretischer und (vrgl. z. Mark. 12, 33.) praktischer Beziehung, Eph. 3, 4. 2. Tim. 2, 7. Gegentheil der pneumatischen σύνεσις: 1. Kor. 1, 19. Zur σοφία verhält sich dieselbe wie Besonderes zum Allgemeinen, da sie speciell der Ausdruck der Intelligenz ist, die σοφία aber sämmtliche Geistesfacultäten, Erkenntniss-, Willens- und Empfindungsthätigkeit, betrifft, deren Richtung und Leben harmonisch dem erkannten höchsten Zwecke dient, wenn die Weisheit πνευματική ist; ihr Gegentheil ist die σοφία σαρκική (2. Kor. 1, 12. Jak. 3, 15.), menschlich und ungöttlich nach Zweck und Strebung. Die σύνεσις kann mit der φρόνησις, je nachdem diese subjectiv vorgestellt, oder objectivirt wird, entweder gleichbedeutend (Eph. 1, 8. Dan. 2, 21.), oder als Eigenschaft derselben (Sir. 1, 4.: σύνεσις φρονήσεως) betrachtet werden.

V. 10. Praktischer Zweck, welchen jenes πληρωθῆναι erfüllen soll; ἀεὶ τῇ πίστει συζεύγνυσι τὴν πολιτείαν, Chrys. — ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου) so dass euer Wandel in sittlich angemessenem Verhältnisse zu Christo steht. Vrgl. Rom. 16, 2. Eph. 4, 1. Phil. 1, 27. 1. Thess. 2, 12. 3. Joh. 6. — εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν) behuf jedweder Gefälligkeit, d.h. um auf jede Weise ihm zu gefallen. Das Wort nur hier im N. T., öfter bei Polyb., Philo al. auch Theophr. Char. 5. LXX. Prov. 31, 30. (30, 30.) Symm. Ps. 80, 12. Zu πᾶσαν ἀρ. vrgl. Polyb. 31, 26, 5.: πᾶν γένος ἀρεσκείας προσφερόμενος, Bei Griechen steht ἀρεσκεία (so zu accentuiren, s. Winer p. 48. Buttm. neut. Gr. p. 11.) meist im Sinne des Gefallsüchtigen. Vrgl. Prov. 29, 27.: ψευδεῖς ἀρεσκεῖαι. — ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ etc.) Es folgen nun drei Expositionen zur Näherbestimmung der Art und Weise des περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως etc. Man beachte dabei die gleichartige Anlage der drei Sätze, von denen jeder mit einem präpositionellen Verhältnisse des Participialbegriffs anhebt (1) ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ etc., 2) ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει, 3) μετὰ χαρᾶς), und mit einer durch εἰς ausgedrückten Beziehung ausläuft (1) εἰς τ. ἐπίγν. τ. θεοῦ, 2) εἰς πᾶς. ὑπομ. κ. μακροθυμ., 3) εἰς τὴν μερίδα etc.). Noch gleichmässiger wäre der Bau, wenn im dritten Satze statt μετὰ χαρᾶς geschrieben wäre: ἐν πάσῃ χαρᾷ (Rom. 15, 32.), was aber die Beweglichkeit der Vorstellungsform des Ap. leicht verhinderte. — ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφ. gehört zusammen (und dann wieder αὐξανόμε. εἰς τὴν ἐπίγν. τ. θεοῦ): indem ihr durch jedes gute Werk (dadurch, dass ihr jedes sittlich gute Werk vollbringet) Frucht traget, — wie gute Bäume, vrgl. Matth. 7, 17. Vrgl. auch z. 1, 6. Das ἐν παντὶ ἔργ. ἀγ. mit εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκ. zu verbinden (Oecum., Theophyl., Erasm. Paraphr.: „placeatis non praetermittentes ullum opus bonum“ u. M. auch Steig.), verkennt und zerstört den Gleichbau der Rede. — καὶ αὐξανόμε. εἰς τ. ἐπίγν. τ. θ.) und indem ihr bei diesem sittlichen Fruchtbringen zugleich wachset hinsichtlich der Erkenntniss Gottes,

ihn immer völliger, lebendiger, wirksamer u. s. w. erkennt. Wechselwirkung der christlichen Gotteserkenntnis und Sittlichkeit. Wie diese durch jene gefördert wird, so wächst auch die Erkenntnis durch die Sittlichkeit vermöge der Kraft der innern Erfahrung des göttlichen Lebens (der ζωὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ Eph. 4, 18.), durch welche sich Gott (nicht blos sein Wille) immer mehr dem inwendigen Menschen enthüllt. Dass hier nicht wieder τοῦ θελήματος Θεοῦ, sondern überhaupt τοῦ Θεοῦ gesagt ist, entspricht der dargestellten fortschreitenden Entwicklung; es liegt etwas Klimaktisches darin. Zu εἰς von der Beziehung des Wachstums vrgl. z. Eph. 4, 15. Jene Wechselwirkung aber nicht genug beachtend, hat man εἰς entweder convenienter — — cognitioni (Heinr., Böhmer; vrgl. Theophyl.: κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς γνώσεως), oder gleich ἐν genommen (Beza u. M.), wodurch dieses ἐν selbst in den Text kam (Minusk., Verss., Chrys.), während jedoch das Interpretament τῆ ἐπιγνώσει (nach der instrumentalen Fassung des für ἐν genommenen εἰς) in die wichtigsten Codd. eindrang (befolgt unter den Auslegern von Olsh., de Wette, Huther u. M.). S. d. krit. Anm. — Wegen der Nominativi Partic., welche nicht zu πληρωθ. gehören (Beza, Bengel, Reiche u. M.), sondern sich auf das logische Subject von περιπατ. ἀξίως beziehen, vrgl. Eph. 4, 2. u. dazu d. Anm.

V. 11. Dem vorherigen ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ — Θεοῦ coordinirt. — ἐν πάσῃ δυν. δυναμ.) ἐν instrumental: mittelst jedweder (sittlichen) Kraft (durch deren Verleihung von Gott) gekräftiget werdend. δυναμῶ (Lobeck ad Phryn. p. 605.) findet sich nicht bei Griechen und nur hier u. Hebr. 11, 34. Lachm. im N. T., bei den LXX.: Cohel. 10, 10. Dan. 9, 27. Ps. 68, 31. Aq. Hiob 36, 9. Ps. 64, 4. Paulus gebraucht sonst ἐνδυναμοῦν. — κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξ. αὐτ.) gemäss der Gewalt seiner Majestät; dieser göttlichen Gewalt (s. über κράτος z. Eph. 1, 19.), durch deren mächtigen Einfluss jene Kräftigung ihnen zu Theil werden soll, soll sie auch entsprechend sein, womit die hohe Stärke und Wirksamkeit derselben charakterisirt ist (anders ist κατὰ Eph. 1, 19.). τὸ κράτος τ. δόξ. αὐτ. ist nicht seine herrliche Macht (Luther, Castal., Beza u. M. auch Flatt u. Bähr; vrgl. Heinr.: „κράτος magnum et invictum“), wovor schon αὐτοῦ hätte warnen sollen, sondern τὸ κράτος ist die betreffende Eigenschaft der göttlichen Majestät (des herrlichen Wesens Gottes). Vrgl. Eph. 3, 16. Das κράτος ist nicht die Herrlichkeit Gottes (Böhmer), sondern diese hat jenes, — und die δόξα ist nicht auf eine einzelne Seite der göttlichen Grösse (Grot.: Macht; Huther: Liebe), sondern auf ihr glorreiches Ganze zu beziehen. Vrgl. z. Rom. 6, 4. — εἰς πᾶσαν ὑπομ. κ. μακροθ.) in Bezug auf jedwede Ausdauer (in Bedrängnis, Verfolgung, Versuchung u. dergl., vrgl. Rom. 5, 3. 2. Kor. 1, 6. 6, 4. Jak. 1, 3 f. Luk. 8, 15. Rom. 2, 7. al.) und Langmuth (gegen die Beleidiger und Verfolger), d. i. um durch jene göttliche Kräftigung diese Tugenden in aller Weise ausüben zu können. Die Unterscheidung des Chrys.: μακροθυμεῖ τις πρὸς ἐκείνους οὐς δυνατὸν καὶ ἀμύνασθαι· ὑπομένει δὲ, οὐς οὐ δύναται ἀμύνασθαι, ist willkürlich. S. dagegen z. B. Hebr. 12, 2. 3. Eben so willkürlich Schenkel: jenes gehe auf die Dauer, ὑπομονή auf die Grösse des Leidens. Andere anders; aber man beachte, dass μακροθυμία, dessen Gegentheil ὄξυθυμία (Eur. Andr. 729. Jak. 1, 19.) und ὄξυθύμησις ist (Artem. 4, 69.), immer im N. T. auf das Verhältniss zu Beleidigern sich bezieht. Vrgl. 3, 12. Gal. 5, 22. Rom. 2, 4. Eph. 4, 2. Jak. 5, 10. — μετὰ χαρᾶς) wird von Theodoret., Luther, Beza, Castal., Calvin, Grot., Calov., Bengel, Heinr. u. V. auch Olsh., Bähr, Steiger, de Wette, B. Crus., Dalmer mit πᾶσαν ὑπομ. κ. μακροθ. verbunden, so dass die wahre, freudige Geduld (vrgl. V. 24.) bezeichnet werde. Allein der Gleichbau der Rede (s. z. V. 10.), in welcher auch den vorigen beiden Participien eine präpositionelle Bestimmung voranging, zeigt die Verbindung mit dem Folgenden (Syr., Chrys., Oecum., Theophyl., Erasm., Estius u. M. auch Lachm., Tisch., Böhm., Huther, Ewald) so natürlich, dass sie nicht ohne Willkür zu verlassen ist. Auch geht ja dabei der Gedanke der freudigen Geduld, welcher allerdings apostolisch ist (Rom. 5, 3. 1. Petr. 1, 6. Rom. 12, 12. vrgl. Matth. 5, 12.), nicht verloren, wenn zu der Geduld die freudige Danksagung hinzutritt.

\* daher ἢ ἄνωθεν σοφία Jak. 3, 15. 17.

) daher ἢ ἄνωθεν σοφία Jak. 3, 15. 17.

[Heinr. Aug. Wilh. Meyer, Kritisch Exegetisches Handbuch Über Die Briefe Pauli an Die Philipper, Kolosser Und an Philemon, Dritte, verbesserte und vermehrte Auflage., vol. 9, Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar Über Das Neue Testament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht's Verlag, 1865), 190–194.]

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Spanish Commentaries:

{26} Comentario Bíblico Latinoamericano: Nuevo Testamento,

1:9. Reaparece aquí un pensamiento: el de la «sabiduría e inteligencia» unida a la del «conocimiento» (1:6, 9, 10; cf. 2:2; 3:9–10). Estas ideas podrían tener un trasfondo griego: Ética Nic. I, 13; VI,7. Se trata allí de las más altas virtudes de la mente humana. Pero en Col no se presupone este contexto, sino el veterotestamentario (cf. Éx 31:3; Dt 34:9; Is 11:2; Eclo 39:6; Sab 9:17). En efecto, el contenido de este conocimiento y de esta ciencia es la voluntad de Dios (cf. 1:9; Rom 2:18 y Lc 12:47). Se trata, por consiguiente, de la comprensión de las exigencias del Señor, que pide la obediencia. Es un don del Espíritu (1 Cor 2:14–15; 12:8). Difiere de la sabiduría de este mundo (1 Cor 2:6).

1:10. «Así podréis caminar en una forma digna del Señor» (cf. Flp 1:27; 1 Tes 2:12; Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 7:7). El «caminar» refiriéndose a la vida no es extraño al AT (2 Re 20:3; Prov 8:20; Sal 11:7; Is 59:9). «Fructificando en toda clase de obras buenas y creciendo en el conocimiento de Dios» (cf. comentario a 1:6). La comparación de la vida espiritual con las plantas es del gusto de la apocalíptica: «Ahora siembro mi Ley en ti y ella producirá fruto en ti y tú alcanzarás una gloria eterna» (4 Esd 9:31; cf. 3:20) (Lohse, Commentary, 27s).

1:11. La triple mención del poder de Dios sirve para subrayar su acción: esta acumulación significa la plenitud del poder de Dios en la obra salvadora. El poder y la gloria suelen ir juntos, por ejemplo en las doxologías: 1 Pe 4:11; 5:11; Jud 25; Ap 1:6; 5:13. La constancia (hypomonê) es la perseverancia en las dificultades. Perdura en las buenas obras (Rom 2:7) y produce carácter (Rom 5:4). Al mencionarse la paciencia con la palabra makrothymía se indica la paciencia en las relaciones con otro. Es un fruto del Espíritu (Gál 5:22); el amor es paciente (1 Cor 13:4).

[César Mora Paz, “Carta a Los Colosenses,” in Comentario Bíblico Latinoamericano: Nuevo Testamento, ed. Armando J. Levoratti, Elsa Tamez, and Pablo Richard (Estella, España: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2010), 964.]

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{27} Comentario Del Intérprete Bíblico

1:9–20 Esta es una sola frase en griego. Se trata de una oración de Pablo por estos creyentes. Los versículos 15–18 posiblemente sean una cita de un antiguo himno cristiano o una oración de confesión (para otros posibles himnos, ver Fil 2:6–11, 1 Ti 3:16, 2 Ti 2:11–12). Esta es una de las confesiones cristológicas más importantes en los escritos de Pablo.

1:9 «lo supimos» Pablo no comenzó esta iglesia, y tampoco conocía a sus miembros personalmente. Sabía acerca de su fe y amor a través de su fundador, Epafras (ver 1:7–8).

- «no hemos cesado de orar por vosotros» Ver Tema especial: LA ORACIÓN INTERCESORA.
- «que seáis llenos» Este es un SUBJUNTIVO AORISTO PASIVO. Los creyentes no pueden llenarse a sí mismos, sino que tienen que dejar y cooperar con el Espíritu (ver Ef 5:18). «Llenar» es el verbo principal de los vv. 9–12. Es la primera de dos peticiones que Pablo hace a Dios en nombre de los Colosenses. La otra es para que su andar sea digno (v. 10). Note que él enlaza el conocimiento de Dios con un estilo de vida piadoso (ver Ef 4:1, 17; 5:2, 15). La fe sin obras está muerta (ver Stg 2:14–26).
- «conocimiento de su voluntad» El contenido de este conocimiento (epignosko, ver v. 6) es el evangelio. El evangelio es tanto un cuerpo de verdad para creer como una persona para recibir y una vida para vivir imitando a esa persona. La voluntad de Dios es que cada persona responda a Cristo quien es la meta de toda «sabiduría espiritual y conocimiento». Este versículo hace referencia a la teología de los falsos maestros. Esto es confirmado por (1) el uso de Pablo de «Llenos»

(pleroma), uno de los términos favoritos de los gnósticos y (2) su énfasis en un conocimiento secreto. Para Pablo, toda plenitud y conocimiento estaba en Cristo, quien era la sabiduría de Dios (sophia, ver 1:28; 2:3, 23; 3:16; 4:5; Ef 1:8, 17; 3:10) y la convergencia de toda verdad (sunesis, ver 2:2).

1:10 «para que andéis como es digno» Este es un AORISTO INFINITIVO ACTIVO. Es definido por cuatro PARTICIPIOS PRESENTES (ver vv. 10–12) que describen un caminar digno (ver 2:6; 3:7; 4:5; Ef 2:10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 15; 1 Ts 2:12; 4:1). La voluntad de Dios es que sus hijos reflejen su carácter a diario.

- «dando fruto en toda buena obra» Este es el primero de cuatro PARTICIPIOS PRESENTES (ver vv. 10–12) los cuales describen vidas dignas.

La voluntad de Dios es que los creyentes vivan vidas santas. ¡La transformación moral de los creyentes es evidencia que la imagen de Dios ha sido restaurada! Sirve como un puente hacia el evangelismo. Refleja las nuevas características familiares del creyente y demuestra quien es nuestro verdadero padre—Dios.

La salvación bíblica es un regalo gratuito, el cual tiene que dar como resultado una vida nueva y diferente (ver Mt 13; Ef 2:8–9 y 10).

- «creciendo en el conocimiento de Dios» Este es el segundo PARTICIPIO PRESENTE. Se trata de un término compuesto fuerte para conocimiento de experiencia (epignosko, ver vv. 9, 10; 3:10; Ef 1:17; 4:13). Los creyentes deben continuar entendiendo el significado del evangelio y viviendo sus implicaciones.

1:11 «fortalecidos con todo poder» Este es el tercer PARTICIPIO PRESENTE que significa «recibiendo todo el poder». Al igual que la salvación, la vida cristiana es un regalo sobrenatural, no un enorme esfuerzo o compromiso humano sin ayuda alguna (ver Gá 3:1–3). Los creyentes deben rendirse al Espíritu para producir vidas santas y eficaces (ver Ef 5:18). Este término siempre es usado para la fuerza sobrenatural (ver Ef 1:19; Fil 4:13).

- «según la potencia de su gloria» Esta frase describe la manera en como los creyentes deben ser «fortalecidos con todo poder». Deben rendirse al Espíritu de Dios, ¡la energía, poder y la gloria son de Él!

- «toda perseverancia y paciencia» Uno se pregunta si estas fueron usadas como sinónimos ya que tienen enfoques ligeramente diferentes. Perseverancia (hupomone) significaba una resistencia paciente y constancia, mientras que paciencia (makrothumia) significaba soportar pacientemente todo mal o sufrimiento. Ambas eran advertencias frecuentes de parte de Pablo (ver 2 Co 6:4, 6; 2 Ti 3:10). La única manera que los creyentes son capaces de producir estas dos cualidades es a través del poder de Dios. Estos términos eran usados con frecuencia para describir la manera cómo Dios trata a la humanidad caída (ver Ro 2:4; 9:22; 1 Co 6:6) y cómo los humanos redimidos deberían tratarse los unos a los otros (ver Gá 5:22–23; Ef 4:2; Col 3:12).

- «gozo» Esto se puede relacionar gramaticalmente con el v. 11 (LBLA, NTV, BJL) o v. 12 (RVR60).

LBLA La Biblia de las Américas

NTV La versión Nueva Traducción Viviente

BJL La Biblia de Jerusalén Latinoamericana

RVR60 La Biblia Reina-Valera 1960

[Bob Utley, La Carta de Pablo a Los Colosenses Y a Filemón: Pablo Encadenado, El Evangelio Liberado: Cartas Desde La Prisión, ed. Patricia Cabral and Gisela Ramos, trans. José González, Comentario Del Intérprete Bíblico (Marshall, TX: Lecciones Bíblicas Internacional, 2015), Col 1:9–11.]

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## {28} Conozca Su Biblia

### B. Acción de gracias y oración (1:3–14)

La carta continúa con una acción de gracias (1:3–8) y oración por los colosenses (1:9–14). Estas partes de la carta tienen la función de introducción (exordium). Pablo alude en esta introducción a los temas a tratar en el resto de la carta. A continuación presentamos estos temas, y comentamos brevemente sobre éstos y dónde los encontramos en otras partes de la carta. (Lo que aparece en letra negrita se refiere a la sección que estudiamos ahora, y las otras referencias señalan otros lugares de la epístola donde cada tema aparece).

#### 1. El señorío y la obra de Cristo (1:3, 13–14; 1:15–22; 2:9–15, 19; 3:1–3, 11)

Pablo menciona el tema del señorío y la obra de Cristo al inicio de su acción de gracias al referirse a Dios como «Padre de nuestro Señor Jesucristo» (1:3)—aunque ya en su saludo característico de desear gracia y paz lo había mencionado. Estratégicamente Pablo establece el señorío de Cristo desde el inicio de su carta, ya que es este el punto más importante a tratar. Recordemos que uno de los errores que las falsas enseñanzas promovían en la iglesia de Colosas era el no reconocer la supremacía de Cristo. Encontramos este tema nuevamente en la parte final del exordium, donde Pablo declara que Dios nos libró del poder de las tinieblas y nos trasladó «al reino de su amado Hijo, en quien tenemos redención por su sangre, el perdón de pecados» (1:13–14). La palabra «trasladar» conlleva la idea de un rey victorioso que traslada al pueblo conquistado a su reino. Aquí el reino es de Cristo. Es más común que Pablo hable del «reino de Dios» en sus cartas (Ro 14:17; 1 Co 6:9, 15:50; Gl 5:21), aunque en 1 Corintios 15:24–28 habla del reino de Cristo, que finalmente entregará al Padre. La base para este traslado al reino es la persona de Cristo y su obra redentora, no alguna filosofía. Es por esto que en los versículos que siguen a la introducción Pablo trata este tema ampliamente, al presentar un himno a Cristo que habla de su obra reconciliadora y de su preeminencia (1:15–20). Pablo vuelve a retomar el tema de la supremacía de Cristo en el capítulo 2 (2:9–15), después de amonestarlos para que no sean engañados con «filosofías y huecas sutilezas» (2:8). Asimismo, al presentarle a la iglesia una serie de exhortaciones éticas (3:5–4:1), las introduce primero haciendo un llamado a poner «la mira en las cosas de arriba» (3:1) y estableciendo nuevamente la preeminencia de Cristo y su obra en la persona creyente (3:1–4).

#### 2. La fe, el amor y la esperanza en Cristo (1:4, 8; 1:23, 27; 2:5–6, 12; 3:4, 14, 24)

Pablo introduce los temas del amor, la fe y la esperanza en Cristo desde el inicio en su acción de gracias. Es característico en Pablo presentar estos tres elementos juntos (1 Co 13:13; Gl 5:5–6; Ef 4:2–5). Pablo conocía de la fe y el amor de esta iglesia. Recordemos que Epafras le ha informado sobre los colosenses (1:8). Nótese que esta fe es «en Cristo» (1:3). Esto habla de en quién está fundamentada la fe y de la verticalidad de esa fe. El amor es para «todos los santos» (1:4), lo que indica una relación horizontal. Se puede decir que la verticalidad de la persona creyente en su fe y relación con Dios le lleva a una respuesta práctica en su relación con las demás personas. Lo que causa este amor y fe en los colosenses es la esperanza que «está guardada en los cielos» (1:5). Esta frase denota seguridad de la gloria venidera. La esperanza es Cristo (1:27; 3:4) y está en los cielos porque Cristo está ahí a la diestra de Dios (3:1).

En el v. 4 Pablo vuelve a reconocer la fe de sus destinatarios. Aunque Pablo aplaude la fe y esperanza de los colosenses, más adelante les exhorta a permanecer firmes en ellas (1:23) y a vestirse de amor (3:14). Este llamado a la firmeza en la esperanza, fe y amor tiene relación directa con lo que amenaza a la iglesia. Posiblemente las falsas enseñanzas que estaban penetrando en la iglesia intentaban robar o negar estos aspectos del mensaje del evangelio, y Pablo quiere dejar claro que el evangelio centrado en Cristo da seguridad.

#### 3. La palabra verdadera del evangelio (1:5; 1:23, 25; 3:16; 4:3)

La palabra verdadera del evangelio había llegado a los colosenses. Nótese que Pablo usa el adjetivo «verdadera» (1:5) para describir la palabra del evangelio. La idea veterotestamentaria de que los mandamientos de Dios son verdaderos (Sal 119:43, 142, 160) está presente aquí. El evangelio es el verdadero mensaje. Esto está en contraposición con las falsas doctrinas y filosofías que amenazan a la iglesia. La «gracia de Dios en verdad» (1:6) que oyeron se refiere nuevamente a la palabra del evangelio. Observemos que esta gracia es «en verdad», repitiéndose la idea de que la palabra es verdadera. Los colosenses habían recibido esta palabra a través de Epafras, del cual Pablo dice que es «consiervo» y «ministro» (1:8). Estos términos son los que Pablo usa para referirse a sí mismo y a quienes trabajan con él. Al reconocer a Epafras de esta forma, confirma que el evangelio presentado por él a los colosenses tiene la aprobación apostólica, lo que implica a su vez tener la aprobación divina. Para Pablo es crítico que los colosenses entiendan que han recibido la palabra de verdad, ya que hay quienes quieren engañarles con enseñanzas falsas.

Por cuanto el evangelio es la palabra verdadera ha producido fruto en los colosenses. Pablo personifica esta palabra cuando dice que «lleva fruto y crece» (1:6) desde el día en que los colosenses la oyeron. Con la imagen agrícola de «llevar fruto», Pablo les muestra lo que ya ha ocurrido en sus vidas. Por lo tanto, cuando más adelante les inste a llevar fruto y seguir creciendo en el conocimiento de Dios (1:9–10; 2:2; 3:10), esta iglesia podrá comprender que esto es alcanzable por cuanto la palabra del evangelio ya está produciendo frutos en sus vidas. Aquí en Colosenses «llevar fruto» debe referirse al desarrollo de las virtudes cristianas (1:10), que es una de las formas en que Pablo usa esta imagen. El llevar fruto también puede referirse a traer otras personas al evangelio.

4. El crecimiento en el conocimiento de la gracia y voluntad de Dios, (1:6, 1:9–10; 1:27; 2:2; 3:10; 4:3–4), y en sabiduría e inteligencia espiritual (1:9; 1:28; 2:3, 19; 3:16; 4:5)

Los temas del conocimiento y la sabiduría espiritual aparecen repetidamente en esta carta. Precisamente porque Pablo está hablando acerca de personas que quieren engañar a la iglesia con conocimiento falso es que este tema es predominante. Pablo afirma lo que los colosenses ya tenían: habían conocido «la gracia de Dios en verdad» (1:6). Como hemos visto, esto lo dice en relación al evangelio (1:5). El mensaje que han recibido es el verdadero, y se centra en la gracia de Dios que es verdadera. Además, Pablo ora para que los colosenses puedan tener conocimiento, sabiduría e inteligencia (1:9–10). Frente al «conocimiento» de las falsas filosofías, Pablo habla del conocimiento de la voluntad de Dios y de sabiduría espiritual (no terrenal o humana).

Estos temas se repiten cuando habla de su ministerio (1:25–2:3; 4:3–4) y del crecimiento que da Dios al cuerpo (2:19). Además, el tema de la sabiduría lo encontramos nuevamente en las exhortaciones éticas (3:16; 4:5), y también el del conocimiento (3:10). El verdadero conocimiento y la verdadera sabiduría conducen a vivir como agrada a Dios. En el trasfondo veterotestamentario el conocimiento de Dios lleva a obedecer sus mandamientos. En el Antiguo Testamento el conocimiento y la sabiduría se relacionan con la obediencia práctica. Pablo afirma este mismo principio en su carta.

5. El andar como es digno del Señor (1:10; 2:6–8, 20–23; 3:1–4:1, 5)

El tema de andar como es digno del Señor es característico de Pablo (como vimos en la carta a los Filipenses), y en esta carta está directamente relacionado con los temas del conocimiento, la sabiduría y la inteligencia. Los vv. 1:9–10 indican que cuando hay este conocimiento y sabiduría es posible andar como es digno y así agradar al Señor. Este tema se repite cuando Pablo les llama a andar en el Señor «arraigados en él, sobreedificados en él y confirmados en la fe» (2:6–7). A su vez el agradar al Señor tiene implicaciones éticas. Es por esto que Pablo les da a sus destinatarios una serie de exhortaciones prácticas (3:5–4:1, 5).

6. El ser fortalecidos con poder (1:11; 1:29; 2:6)

Este tópico se presenta en el contexto del tema del conocimiento y sabiduría. Cuando hay conocimiento y sabiduría la persona creyente es fortalecida con poder, y esto «conforme a la potencia» (1:11) de la gloria de Dios. El conocimiento

de la voluntad de Dios equipa con poder divino para vivir la vida cristiana. A su vez, el poder de Dios operando en la persona creyente le habilita para perseverar y tener paciencia y gozo (1:11–12), aún más en las circunstancias presentes de los colosenses y en su espera de la herencia por recibir (1:12). La frase la «herencia de los santos» (1:12) puede ser una referencia a la promesa a los israelitas de heredar la tierra prometida, y Pablo usa esta idea para hablar de la herencia en Cristo. También puede ser una metáfora de cuando al retirarse de sus labores, a los soldados romanos se les concedían terrenos por causa de la labor realizada. Dios concede una herencia no merecida o ganada, y esta herencia no es terrenal, sino celestial.

En esta introducción a la carta, Pablo presenta el tema de la fortaleza en el poder de Dios en oposición al poder de las tinieblas, del cual la persona creyente ha sido librada (1:13). Además, en el v. 1:29, al hablar de su ministerio, el apóstol afirma que él trabaja según la fuerza de Dios, quien actúa poderosamente en él, presentándose a sí mismo como ejemplo. Pablo quiere que los colosenses estén equipados y fortalecidos en Dios para enfrentar las falsas enseñanzas y para vivir la vida cristiana.

[Awilda González-Tejera, Filipenses, Colosenses, 1 Y 2 Tesalonicenses, Filemón, Conozca Su Biblia (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2009), 49–53.]

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