

*Put Away the Sins of the Past (3:5–11)*¹

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Translation

⁵*Therefore put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire and covetousness which is idolatry.* ⁶*Because of these things the wrath of God is coming.* ^a ⁷*You too used to walk in these ways in the life you once lived.* ⁸*But now put them all*

¹Peter T. O'Brien, vol. 44, *Word Biblical Commentary : Colossians-Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 173ff.

NTS New Testament Studies

JBL Journal of Biblical Literature

WUNT Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament (Tübingen: Mohr)

RevExp Review and Expositor

ed. edited, edition(s), editor

AGSU Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums

NTAbh Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen

BZNW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft [ZNW]

^aa. ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας. Although there is widespread and early testimony supporting the longer reading which includes these words “upon the sons of disobedience” (ⲛ A C D F etc, most

away: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. ⁹Stop lying to one another since you have put off the old man with his practices, ¹⁰and have put on the new man which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of his creator. ¹¹Here there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, but Christ is all and in all.

Notes

a. ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας. Although there is widespread and early testimony supporting the longer reading which includes these words “upon the sons of disobedience” (⌘ A C D F etc, most miniscules, it vg cop^{bo} and several other versions) it is likely that they represent an intrusion into the text from Ephesians 5:6, and were omitted by P⁴⁶ B cop^{sah} and several of the fathers. The phrase is a Hebraism, meaning “disobedient people” and denotes those whose lives are characterized by defiance of the law of God (contrast 1 Pet 1:14, “children of obedience”).

Form/Structure/Setting

If the preceding paragraph (3:1–4) serves as an important transition piece in the letter, functioning as the conclusion to Paul’s polemic against the “philosophy” of the false teachers and presenting a true alternative to that teaching, then this paragraph begins the lengthy paraenetic section of chapters 3:5–4:6. Four distinctive catchwords of early Christian catechesis are found at the head of their respective paragraphs: “put to death” (3:5–11; cf. also “put off,” v 8); “put on” (3:12–17); “be subject” (3:18–4:1) and “watch and pray” (4:2–6).

The first of these, verses 5–11, has been called the “negative paraenesis” (Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 63) since it contains the injunctions νεκρώσατε (“put to death,” v 5) and ἀπόθεσθε (“put off,” v 8) together with two catalogs of vices (v 5, 8). The first injunction with its οὖν (“therefore”), νεκρώσατε (“put to death”) and τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (“the members which are on earth”) is designed to recall what has been previously written (see the comment on v 5). As the particular objects of the imperative “put to death” five vices are listed (grammatically they are in apposition to τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, “[your] earthly members”):

miniscules, it vg cop^{bo} and several other versions) it is likely that they represent an intrusion into the text from Ephesians 5:6, and were omitted by P⁴⁶ B cop^{sah} and several of the fathers. The phrase is a Hebraism, meaning “disobedient people” and denotes those whose lives are characterized by defiance of the law of God (contrast 1 Pet 1:14, “children of obedience”).

A Codex Alexandrinus

C Codex Ephraemi Syri

D Codex Bezae or Deuteronom(ist)ic

F Codex Ambrosianus

P Peshier (commentary)

B Codex Vaticanus or MT MS, edited by Jacob ben Chayim, Venice (1524/25)

cf. *confer*, compare

- v 5: πορνείαν —ἀκαθαρσίαν
πάθος —ἐπιθυμίαν
καὶ τὴν πλεονεξίαν ἣτις ἐστὶν εἰδωλολατρία.
v 5: sexual immorality —impurity
lust —evil desire
and covetousness which is idolatry.

The last πλεονεξία (“covetousness”) is specially emphasized by the addition of καί (“and”; it is not used to separate the others in the list), the presence of the definite article τὴν (“the”; the article does not appear before the other nouns) and the relative clause ἣτις ἐστὶν εἰδωλολατρία (“which is idolatry”). Three further relative clauses with verbs in the indicative mood follow, and they describe the pagan past of the readers in relation to the vices previously mentioned (vv 6, 7).

By means of the “once-now” antithesis (see on 1:21, 22 and 2:13) the Colossians are shown how they ought to behave now in contrast to their past (vv 7, 8). This schematic form is used to tie in the second catalog of vices with the first (the antecedent of ἐν οἷς, “in which,” v 7, is the first list of vices, v 5, while τὰ πάντα, “all,” v 8, is the object of the second imperative and is defined more precisely by the second catalog). (On the chiasmic structure of the two sentences see below 186). Once again five sins are mentioned: they stand in apposition to τὰ πάντα, “all,” and as in the first list so here also the last member is specially emphasized by an addition:

- v 8: νυνὶ δὲ ἀπόνευσε καὶ ὑμεῖς τὰ πάντα
ὀργήν —θυμόν
κακίαν —βλασφημίαν
αἰσχρολογίαν ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν.
v 8: “But now put them all away,
anger —rage
malice —slander
filthy language from your lips.”

The opening words of verse 9 continue the series of imperatives and they are most naturally connected with the preceding themes of “slander” and “abusive language”: μὴ ψεύδεσθε εἰς ἀλλήλους (“Stop lying to one another”). Two parallel aorist participial clauses give the twofold reason for this abandonment of evil ways:

- v 9: ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον
σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ
v 10: καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον
εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν.
v 9: “(Since) you have put off the old man
with his practices,
v 10: and have put on the new man which is being renewed in
knowledge in the Creator’s image.”

According to verse 11 within this realm of the new man (ὅπου, “where”) the barriers that divided people from one another are abolished. A strong negative (οὐκ ἔστι, “there is not”) is followed by four pairs of subdivisions of the human family, the first two of which are linked by καί (“and”). Finally, the concluding triumphant words contrast (ἀλλά, “but”) the centrality of

Christ with the divisions that separate people in the world (note the emphasis of the statement which falls on the last word Χριστός, “Christ”):

- v 11: ὅπου οὐκ ἔνι
Ἕλληνα καὶ Ἰουδαῖον,
περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία
βάρβαρος—Σκύθης
δοῦλος—ἐλεύθερος,
ἀλλὰ [τὰ] πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός.
- v 11: “where there is no
Greek or Jew,
circumcised or uncircumcised,
barbarian—Scythian,
slave—free;
but Christ is all and in all.”

Comment

The exhortations to “seek the things above” and to “set the mind on the things above” find concrete expression and application in the following imperatives: “put to death” (νεκρώσατε, v 5), “put away” (ἀπόθεσθε, v 8; cf. “do not lie,” μὴ ψεύδεσθε, v 9), and “put on” (ἐνδύσασθε, v 12). Being heavenly minded does not mean living in the clouds! The believer who obeys the apostolic injunction to aim at the things above will be involved in an ongoing spiritual warfare here below as he or she puts to death sinful propensities and pursuits, and allows the new nature to find outward expression in a godly life. Because they are new persons in Christ they are to live like new persons. Having exposed and refuted the claims of a false asceticism (2:20–23), the apostle now strongly urges a positive line of self-control that is opposed to indulgence (vv 5–8) and affirms a life style that is consistent with Christ himself, the image of the Creator (vv. 10, 11; cf. Martin, NCB, 102).

5. νεκρώσατε οὖν τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature” (NIV). The wording of Paul’s first injunction in this paraenetic section is designed to recall what he has written previously in the earlier part of the letter: “therefore” (οὖν) harks back to the general context of chapters 2:20–3:4, in particular verses 3 and 4 where the theological basis is set forth (cf. Lohmeyer, 135; Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 63; W. Nauck, “Das οὖν-paräneticum,” *ZNW* 49 [1958] 134, 135), “put to death” (νεκρώσατε) recalls the union with Christ in his death (2:20; 3:3; cf. 2:11, 12), “the things on earth” (τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) picks up the language of verse 2, “[do not set your mind on] the things on earth,” while “members” (μέλη) is best understood against the background of “the body of sin” (τὸ σῶμα τῆς σαρκός, 2:11) which has been stripped off in the circumcision of Christ. Paul’s imperative is based upon the previous indicatives which spell out what God has done in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

NIV The New International Version (1978)

ZNW Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

νεκρώω (“put to death”; cf. BAG, 535; Bultmann, *TDNT* 4, 894), which is used in a literal sense at Romans 4:19 and Hebrews 11:12 (both in the perfect passive with reference to Abraham, meaning “worn out,” “as good as dead”), is employed figuratively by Paul here (so most commentators, cf. Bultmann, *TDNT* 4, 894; regarding the figurative use of the adjective “dead,” νεκρός, see on 2:13; so also Luke 15:24, 32; Rom 6:11; 7:8; 8:10; Eph 2:1, 5; Col 2:13; Heb 6:1; 9:14; James 2:17, 26; Rev 3:1; and as a substantive: Matt 8:22; Luke 9:60; John 5:25). This is similar to his use of “count yourselves dead to sin” (λογίζεσθε ἑαυτοὺς νεκρούς) at Romans 6:11 (cf. the indicative “you put to death,” θανατοῦτε, Rom 8:13): in the Colossian injunction the aorist tense points to a decisive initial act which introduces a settled attitude (as expressed by the present tense in Romans).

That which is to be put to death is somewhat unusually described: “the members which are upon earth” (τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς), and these are set in apposition to a list of five vices commencing with “fornication” (πορνείαν). μέλος (“member,” “part,” “limb,” BAG, 501, 502; cf. Horst, *TDNT* 4, 555–68, Schütz, *NIDNTT* 1, 229–32, and Schweizer, *Abraham*, 437–39) was employed in the ancient world with a wide range of meanings and applications, being used in secular Greek of the “member of the body” (so Homer with reference to both men and animals: *Od* 18, 70; 24, 368), an “organ” (in relation to thought, so Parmenides, *Fr* 16, 3), or in the sense of a “melody” or “song” (in Plato, *Rep* 3, 398d). In the LXX the term denotes the bodily members of men (e.g. Judg 19:29; Job 9:28) and animals (e.g. Exod 29:17) as well as signifying a song or melody (either a song of pleasure: Ecclus 32:6, or a lament: Ezek 2:10; Mic 2:4; μέλος is not used in this sense in the NT). Within the NT the word is employed literally of various parts of the human body (so Matt 5:29, 30; Rom 6:13, 19; James 3:6, etc). But Paul is not here referring to the actual members of the human body (as Meyer, 423, thought) nor does he mean quite the same thing as Jesus intended when he spoke of cutting off the offending hand or foot, or plucking out the offending eye if entrance into life could not otherwise be gained (Matt 5:29, 30; 18:8, 9; Mark 9:43–47). The point seems clear from the catalog of vices which is set in apposition to the word “members.”

Yet the conjunction of this list with the term “members” is rather abrupt and various attempts have been made to ease the difficulty. Lightfoot (209), for example, placed a period after “earth” (γῆς) and regarded the following nouns (“fornication, uncleanness ...” πορνείαν, ἀκαθαρσίαν κτλ.) as “prospective accusatives” governed by a verb such as “put off” or “put away”

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

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)

NIDNTT C. Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary, of New Testament Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975–78)

LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

e.g. *exempli gratia*, for example

NT New Testament

(ἀπόθεσθε) as in verse 8. Accordingly, Paul intended to make these accusatives directly dependent on the verb “put off,” but he introduced the intervening clauses which led to a change in the construction of the sentence. Although such breaches are not uncommon in Paul, had he intended this he would probably have placed the imperative before the list of nouns (cf. Bruce, 267, though note Moule, 116). In order to remove the difficulty, Masson proposed that “the members” be understood as a vocative and refer to Christians as limbs of Christ’s body (142; he appealed to BDF para. 147[2] in support; cf. Turner, *Insights*, 104, 105). But this suggestion has not commended itself to scholars (it has been argued that such an absolute use of “members,” μέλη, would be possible only if their membership in the body of Christ was made plain in the immediate context: so Dibelius-Greeven 41, Bruce, 268).

Lohse agreed it was hardly possible to interpret “members” here as man’s bodily members. Instead, he regarded it as a reference to a traditional form of expression: in Iranian thought a man’s members were his good or bad deeds out of which his heavenly self was constituted and so his other-worldly fate was decided (137, following Richard Reitzenstein. Note his *Mystery-Religions*, 338–51. cf. Dibelius-Greeven, 41, Conzelmann, 150). Five virtues and five vices are mentioned in each instance in the Iranian tradition. Two catalogs of vices (3:5, 8) and the list of virtues (3:12) are based on this enumeration. Without being conscious of the history of religions connections (much less the myth of the two cosmic “men” with their five members, as Käsemann argued) the author, according to Lohse, used “members” in this traditional way and adopted the existing fivefold schema to spell out in his exhortations the kind of life demanded of the Christian.

But there is no need to look to Persian analogies (see the treatment below). Paul is moving wholly within OT and Jewish categories (cf. Schweizer, *Abraham*, 437–39, who has claimed that the close juxtaposition of “members” and “sin,” in which sins were localized in the members, can be paralleled in Jewish texts such as 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 49:3, “these entrammelling *members*, which are now involved in evils, and in which *evils* are consummated,” [Charles’ translation]; see further his *Commentary*, 138). At Romans 6:13, 19 the apostle points out that the readers’ bodily members can be offered, on the one hand, to sin as instruments of wickedness and impurity, or, on the other, to God as instruments of righteousness and holiness. At chapter 7:23 of the same letter he refers to the “law of sin which is in my members” (ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου). In Colossians 3:5 Paul goes further and practically identifies the readers’ members with the sins those members committed. They had been used as instruments of sin in the old life (this is the point of the qualifying phrase “which are upon earth,” τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; it has nothing to do with the Greek view whereby the spirit or soul of each man already lives “above,” while the members in which sin still works are said to be held fast “below”; cf. PhiloDetPotIns 85, who considered the feet of man were rooted on earth while his mind and senses were already linked with the circuits of air and heaven). So the term “members” (μέλη) comes to be extended beyond its ordinary sense to comprehend “the various kinds of sin which were committed by their means and in which the ‘flesh’ (the old nature) expressed itself actively” (Bruce, 268). Here the

BDF F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (University of Chicago/University of Cambridge, 1961)

OT Old Testament

2 Syriac *Apocalypse of Baruch*

practices and attitudes to which the readers' bodily activity and strength had been devoted in the old life is in view (Moule, 115, who regards the whole phrase, τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, as "meaning 'your limbs as put to earthly purposes,' the use of your limbs [or organs] for sensuality," cf. 1 Cor 6:15, and note Gundry, *Sōma*, 42, who arrives at much the same conclusion when he states: "we should probably treat 'the members' as a figurative expression for sins which constitute the earthly 'old man' [v 9]"). A similar extension of meaning can be seen with reference to the related term "body" (σῶμα): "the body of sin" (Rom 6:6), "this body of death" (7:24), and "your body is dead because of sin" (8:10). In these references it is not simply the physical body that is in view; rather σῶμα denotes "the whole personality organized for, and geared into rebellion against God" (Robinson, *Body*, 31).

Putting to death those members which partake of the old nature is not the same as "mortification of the flesh" traditionally understood, for as Moule, 114, has pointed out this latter phrase during its long history has acquired certain associations, often standing for self-inflicted bodily pain through flagellation as practiced by ascetics, or for "self-denial" in the form of abstaining from what one enjoys so as to gain control over the body or acquire merit. But true "mortification" in the context of Colossians 3:5 has to do with a transformation of the will, a new attitude of the mind (cf. Rom 6:11), "a radical shifting of the very centre of the personality from self to Christ, such that 'death' to selfishness is by no means too strong a description" (Moule, 115).

πορνείαν, ἀκαθαρσίαν, πάθος, ἐπιθυμίαν κακὴν, καὶ τὴν πλεονεξίαν κτλ. Five sins are identified with the earthly members: fornication, impurity, lust, evil desire and covetousness in general—a movement from the outward manifestations of sin to the inward cravings of the heart, the acts of immorality and uncleanness to their inner springs.

This is the first of two catalogs of vices, the second series of five appears in verse 8, "anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language" (NIV), and it is then followed by a list of five graces, verse 12, "compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (NIV) which the readers are to put on like new clothing.

A Note on the New Testament Ethical Lists

1. Background

Lists of virtues and vices meet us in the NT, particularly in the writings of Paul (Rom 1:29–32; 1 Cor 5:9–11; 6:9, 10; Gal 5:19–23; Phil 4:8; 1 Tim 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Pet 4:3, etc). They were a common form among pagan moralists and, at least as far as the vices were concerned, in the antipagan polemic of Jewish propagandists. Some have argued that these lists in the NT were indebted to Jewish proselyte catechism as the church took over lists of ethical qualities required by its self-understanding as a neo-levitical community (so P. Carrington and G. Klein). This suggested origin has been challenged recently, particularly by those who have traced the genesis of such lists to Stoicism (Easton, *JBL* 51 [1932] 1; Vögtle *Lasterkataloge*) or to Iranian influences, mediated through sectarian Judaism, such as the Qumran community (Wibbing, *Lasterkataloge*). But Christian borrowing from Stoicism was limited; there is no Stoic parallel to Paul's identification of virtues with the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22, 23); the four cardinal virtues (wisdom, manliness, self-control, righteousness) and corresponding vices (folly, cowardice, intemperance, injustice) are not present in the NT catalogs (cf. Wibbing, *Lasterkataloge*, 86); and several of the so-called virtues in the NT lists were regarded as vices in Stoicism. So, for example, "humility" (ταπεινοφροσύνη) was a term of opprobrium in Greek

thought (Grundmann, *TDNT* 8, 2), while in the Qumran literature (1QS 5:3, 4; cf. 1QS 2:24; 4:3, 4; 5:25) and in Paul (cf. Phil 2:3; Col 3:12) it denoted the “practice of living together in community before God in such a way that other people are given a dignity and respect as they too are seen in God’s sight ... The ‘humility’ of Christ becomes a model” (Martin, *NIDNTT* 3, 928).

Kamlah (*Form*) varied Wibbing’s suggestion of an Iranian origin of the NT catalogs by distinguishing two forms, a “descriptive” catalog which closed with a promise of salvation and a threat of destruction (e.g. Gal 5:19–23), partly based on the *lex talionis*, “destruction to the destroyer” (cf. E. Käsemann, “Sentences of Holy Law in the New Testament.” *New Testament Questions of Today*. Tr W.J. Montague [London: SCM, 1969] 66–81), and a “paraenetic” one, a putting off of the old life as a prelude to putting on the new (e.g. Col 2:20–3:17), which he traced to the Hellenistic syncretism of the mystery cults. However, Schroeder (*IDBSup*, 546) has argued against this on the ground that the NT lists manifest the ethical dualism of the OT particularly the apocalyptic promises and threats which contain lists of blessings and curses (Deut 27–30)—note the closing appeal: “See, I have set before you this day life and prosperity, death and destruction ... blessing and curses. Now choose life” (30:15, 19; cf. Jer 21:8; Ezek 18:5–9, 15–17).

Virtues and vices recur in the “Two Ways” scheme, found in *Didache* 1–5; Barn 18–20 and Hermes, *Man* 6:1; cf. Ignatius, *Magn.* 5; 2 *Clem* 4. It has been suggested that underlying this is the Jewish proselyte catechism with its way of light and way of darkness, governed by the spirits of truth and error (Test Levi 19:1; Test Judah 20:1; and especially 1QS). The contrast of men walking in two ways is typically an OT one (Ps 1:6; 16:11; 119:33; Deut 5:33; 11:22; Josh 22:5; Prov 8:13; Jer 21:8; Zech 1:4; cf. Martin, *NIDNTT* 3, 929).

2. Characteristics of Paul’s Ethical Lists

Several features of the Pauline catalogs are to be noted: (a) it is evident that considerable variety exists in both their form and content. No hypothetical original list appears to have existed (Easton, *JBL* 51 [1932] 7); there is too much variety, not only in the number of items but also in their sequence, to suggest there were fixed general rules for their logical construction (Wibbing, *Lasterkataloge*, 81–83; cf. Kamlah, *Form*, 176, who claims they were multiform regarding both their content and form).

(b) However, it is going too far to say that the sins or virtues listed have little or nothing to do with the contexts in which they appear (cf. Lohse, 137, 138); the items specifically mentioned are often significant or exemplary (cf. Col 3:5, 8 and note below) and may change according to the situation (Schweizer, *Rechtfertigung*, 476). In most cases they are not full or exhaustive catalogs, a point that is made specifically at the conclusion of the list of vices in Galatians 5:19–21, “... envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like” (καὶ τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις).

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

SCM Student Christian Movement

IDBSup Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume, ed. K. Crim (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976)

Magn. Ignatius, Letter to the Magnesians

2 *Clem* 2 *Clement*

(c) Paul's lists of vices are frequently set within the framework of God's judgment and the final day: so evildoers, the unrighteous and those who practice such sins will not inherit the kingdom of God, according to 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, Galatians 5:21 and Ephesians 5:5; while Romans 1:29–31 indicates that those who commit these transgressions or encourage others to do the same deserve death. Following the list of pagan vices at Colossians 3:5 the apostle goes on to assert that on account of these things the wrath of God falls (v 6).

(d) These catalogs are not to be understood in a moralistic sense or as some kind of new law so that the avoidance of the sins or the exercise of the virtues listed would lead to the achievement of righteousness or the acquiring of merit. Rather, they describe the walk of the Christian (Rom 1:29–31 is a catalog of pagan vices). So the persons who clothe themselves with the graces of Christ, such as compassion, kindness, humility, and so on, are addressed as “God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved” (Col 3:12). They have already been raised with Christ (3:1, 3), and have put on the new man (v 10). The graces produced in their lives are the fruit of God's Spirit (Gal 5:22–23; cf. Eph 5:8–11; James 3:13–18, esp. v 18; Matt 7:16–20; Kamlah, *Form*, 182, claims that the influence of Ps 1:3 is discernible in these passages). Similarly, they are to reject pagan ways, such as fornication and idolatry, from their pre-Christian past (Col 3:5; cf. 1 Cor 6:9, 10; 1 Pet 4:3, “For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry” [NIV]) because they have already been united with Christ in his death (Col 2:11, 12, 20; 3:3). Getting rid of a repulsive collection of habits (as one might cast aside old clothes) such as anger, quick temper, malice together with slander and foul talk is to be effected because they have stripped off (ἀπεκδυσάμενοι) the “old man” that they once were, together with the practices he loved to indulge in (3:8, 9). Obedience to the apostolic injunctions to reject sin and be clothed with the graces of Christ is necessary for men and women who are in a new relationship with God through Christ and have become part of God's new creation (Wibbing, *Lasterkataloge*, 123–27).

Comment

The five sins listed are those which belonged to their pagan past (v 7). These were vices for which the Jews especially reproached the pagans (cf. Wisd 14 and note Easton, *JBL* 51 [1932] 1–12, who has drawn attention to the presuppositions of the Hellenistic Jewish apologetics which he considers are visible in the NT lists of virtues and vices).

πορνεία (“prostitution,” “unchastity,” “fornication,” of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse, BAG, 693) which is mentioned first in the list is always emphatically forbidden. Paul regularly brings to the attention of Gentile Christians the incompatibility of πορνεία and the kingdom of God. It is the first of the works of the flesh (Gal 5:19) from which believers are to abstain (1 Thess 4:3) or shun (1 Cor 6:18), since no “sexually immoral person” (πόρνος) will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9; cf. 5:9–11; Eph 5:5). The term πορνεία carries several shades of meaning in the NT, ranging from extramarital sexual relationships (1 Thess 4:3) to marriages contracted with partners within illicit degrees of kinship (so probably Acts 15:20, though see M. Simon, “The Apostolic Decree and its Setting in the Ancient Church,” *BJRL* 52 [1969/70] 437–60, who understands the decree as a condensed code of levitical purity based mainly on Lev 16–18, but also as regards mixed marriages, on Exod 34:15–16; πορνεία should be understood as a general term including all sorts of sexual impurities). It denotes any kind of

illegitimate sexual intercourse (cf. BAG, 693; Hauck/Schulz, *TDNT* 6, 579–95; Reisser, NIDNTT 1, 497–501; this however has been questioned by B. Malina, “Does *Porneia* Mean Fornication?” *NovT* 14 [1972] 10–17; note, however, J. Jensen, “Does *Porneia* Mean Fornication? A Critique of Bruce Malina.” *NovT* 20 [1978]: 161–84, who argues that the term and its cognates in the NT describe wanton sexual behavior including fornication) and the word-group was employed in the LXX (rendering the Hebrew *zānâh*) to denote unchastity, harlotry, prostitution and fornication (Gen 34:31, 38:15; Lev 19:29; Deut 22:21). In later rabbinic literature, *zēnūt* (= πορνεία) was understood as including not only prostitution and any kind of extramarital sexual intercourse (&Abot 2:8) but also all marriages between relatives forbidden by rabbinic law (cf. Str-B 2, 729, 730). Incest (Test Rub 1:6; Test Jud 13:6; cf. Lev 18:6–18) and all kinds of unnatural sexual intercourse (e.g. Test Ben 9:1) were regarded as fornication (πορνεία). One who surrenders to it indicates ultimately that he has broken with God (Wisd 14:27, 28; cf. Reisser, NIDNTT 1, 499). In contrast to the loose living that prevailed in the Hellenistic world the NT, and in particular Pauline, teaching requires unconditional obedience to the prohibition against “fornication” (cf. Vögtle, *Lasterkataloge*, 223–25, Hauck/Schulz, *TDNT* 6, 593, 594, and Lohse, 138).

ἀκαθαρσία (“impurity,” i.e. moral uncleanness, though on occasion it described ceremonial impurity: Matt 23:27; cf. Num 19:13) which occurs frequently with πορνεία (“fornication”) and denotes immoral sexual conduct, underscores Paul’s injunction (according to Schweizer, 143 and *Rechtfertigung*, 475, the meaning of the first member, πορνεία, is developed through the following three). “Impurity” like “fornication” is a work of the flesh (Gal 5:19) and incompatible with life in the Spirit (1 Thess 4:7, 8, “For God did not call us to be impure [ἐπὶ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ] but to live a holy life ... he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit”; 2 Cor 12:21; Rom 1:24; Eph 5:3, 5; cf. Hauck, *TDNT* 3, 427–29). Like the other members of this list it points to the immoral state of the pre-Christian life, to the behavior of the man whose actions are determined by his commitment to his natural lusts; and yet it was all too easy for Gentile converts to slip back into pre-conversion ways—hence the admonition.

πάθος (“passion”) was used by the Stoics to describe the person who allowed himself to be dominated by his emotions, and therefore could not attain “tranquility” (ἀπάθεια; cf. Vögtle, *Lasterkataloge*, 208–210). In the NT references, all of which occur in Paul (Rom 1:26; Col 3:5 and 1 Thess 4:5), it does not turn up in this Stoic sense; rather it denotes shameful passion which leads to sexual excesses (1 Thess 4:5; the vices of homosexuality at Rom 1:26; note Michaelis, *TDNT* 5, 928).

ἐπιθυμία (“desire,” “longing”) was employed in a positive fashion to describe a variety of aims including the longing to see a Christian congregation (1 Thess 2:17) or the desire to depart and be with Christ (Phil 1:23; cf. Luke 22:15; the verb “desire,” ἐπιθυμέω, can also be used in a good sense: Matt 13:17; Luke 17:22; 1 Tim 3:1; Heb 6:11; 1 Pet 1:12; cf. Büchsel, *TDNT* 3,

NovT Novum Testamentum

Str-B H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 4 vols. (Munich: Beck’sche, 1926–28)

i.e. *id est*, that is

168–71). Here the desire is characterized negatively with the addition of the adjective “evil” (κακήν) so that it describes wicked concupiscence (Büchsel, *TDNT* 3, 170, 171, points out that the noun and the verb usually indicate evil desires which may then be expanded with reference to the object of the longing: Matt 5:28, a woman; Mark 4:19, other things; 1 Cor 10:6, evil things; or the direction: Gal 5:17, against the Spirit; or the vehicle or origin: Rom 1:24, the heart; Rom 6:12, the body; Gal 5:16; Eph 2:3; 1 John 2:16; 2 Pet 2:18, the flesh, and so on). Evil desire is a manifestation of the sin which dwells in the natural man and which controls him. It reveals his carnality (Gal 5:16, 24), his separation from God and his subjection to divine wrath (Rom 1:18–24).

The final member of the list “covetousness” (πλεονεξία, lit. “a desire to have more,” so meaning “greediness,” “insatiableness,” “avarice,” BAG, 667; see Delling, *TDNT* 6, 266–74, and Selter, *NIDNTT* 1, 137, 138) is especially accented as a gross sin: “and that chief vice, covetousness which is idolatry” (so BDF para. 258[1], who note, “the addition of the relative clause ἥτις etc occasions the use of the article by making the preceding noun definite”; cf. Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 64; Schweizer, 143, 144). It breaks the sequence by turning attention from sexual vices to the more general sin of greed (Martin, *NCB*, 103). In some contexts, of course, covetousness can have sexual overtones (cf. the cognate πλεονεκτέω at 1 Thess 4:6; the noun was used by Plato and Aristotle to include sexual desire), but normally it refers to the sin of acquisitiveness, the insatiable desire to lay hands on material things. The word group appears only occasionally in the LXX, occurring chiefly in the denunciations and warnings of the prophets about dishonest gain and the enrichment of the politically powerful by means of violence (Jer 22:17; Ezek 22:27; Hab 2:9). The ungodly and thoroughly bad character of covetousness comes out in the LXX references (cf. 2 Macc 4:50). Accordingly, the psalmist prays that he may be preserved from it (Ps 119:36 [LXX 118:36]). Even in the Greco-Roman world covetousness was repudiated; there was no place for it in a just and equitable society.

The NT warns again and again about the sin of covetousness, particularly as a means of security (Luke 12:15, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed [ἀπὸ πάσης πλεονεξίας]). In the catalogs of vices covetousness is the mark of a life which lacks the knowledge of God (Rom 1:29; cf. 1 Cor 5:10, 11; 6:10, 11; Eph 5:3). Its presence along with other kinds of wickedness is evidence, according to Paul, of the power of sin in the ravaging of human relationships (Delling, *TDNT* 6, 272) and a sign that God has given men and women over to a depraved mind (Rom 1:28). For Christians involved in the ministry of God’s Word there is a particular danger of covetousness. The temptation to abuse one’s position and to exploit the preaching of God’s Word for personal gain was a danger from which the early church did not escape. Paul refutes the suggestion that he and his co-workers had exploited anyone at Corinth, desiring to enrich themselves by their ministry (cf. the cognate πλεονεκτέω, “cheat,” “defraud,” used at 2 Cor 7:2 and 12:17). In his missionary work at Thessalonica, as elsewhere, he was free not only from self-seeking motives (1 Thess 2:4, 5) which might have been hidden behind an unselfish activity (v 3) but also from covetousness; when he preached he had no ulterior purpose of enriching himself (“nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed [οὔτε ἐν προφάσει πλεονεξίας],” v 5; cf. Delling, *TDNT* 6, 273). Although the charge could not stick in the case of Paul, for it was wholly unfounded, there were others who abused their position to satisfy their greed: Paul’s opponents at Corinth are described as “peddlers of God’s word” (καπηλεύοντες

τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, 2 Cor 2:17), while according to 2 Peter 2:3, 14 the false teachers exploited the congregation, being motivated by their greed for material gain—in fact, they are said to be experts in greed! But it was not only those involved in the ministry of God’s Word who were open to the temptation of covetousness. Paul’s exhortation here in verse 5 is addressed to *all* the readers. Like immorality and impurity, covetousness is to be put to death by *all* who died and rose with Christ.

The danger of covetousness is stressed emphatically because it is so closely related to idolatry: rather suprisingly the former is equated with the latter (τὴν πλεονεξίαν ἣτις ἐστὶν εἰδωλολατρία). The two sins stood together in Jewish exhortations and were condemned as part of the horrors of paganism. According to the Testament of Judah (19:1) greed seized control of a man, led him away from God and held him captive in idolatry: “The love of money leads to idolatry; because, when led astray through money, men name as gods those who are not gods.” Elsewhere in Jewish thought greed was soundly condemned (by Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1:23–27; cf. Delling, *TDNT* 6, 270; for rabbinic examples see Str-B 3, 606, 607; and note the negative judgment on possessions in the writings of the Qumran community: 1QpHab 6:1; 8:11, 12; 1QS 10:19, 11:2, etc). Since a man can serve only one master, God or mammon, but not both (Matt 6:24), then if he sets his heart on wealth, he adores false gods and abandons the one true God (Lohse, 139; Schweizer, *Text*, 200, aptly remarks: “When man has lost God, he is at the mercy of all things, because his own covetousness takes the place of God”). Instead of setting his aims and whole orientation on the things above, at the center of which is the exalted Christ, he is seeking the things below. He worships and serves the creature rather than the Creator (Rom 1:25). The apostle’s words in Romans 7:7, 8 indicate how the commandment revealed to him the special deadliness of this subtle sin. Perhaps it is the more dangerous because it may assume so many respectable forms.

6. δι’ ἃ ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ [ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας]. These are the things for which men and women will be punished with divine retribution. Several of the NT lists of vices conclude with a reference to God’s judgment on sin. So in his great arraignment of the pagan world at Romans 1:18–32, the apostle sets his lengthy catalog of vices within the context of God’s wrath (v 18) and concludes that men who practice such things deserve death (v 32). At 1 Thessalonians 4 when dealing with the related issues of sexual immorality (πορνεία, v 3) and covetousness (πλεονεκτέω, v 6), Paul states that the “Lord will punish men for all such sins” (v 6), while at the conclusion of a list of vices in 1 Corinthians 5:13, the note of God’s judgment is struck again. A similar motif appears at 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 and Galatians 5:21 (cf. Eph 5:5, 6) in conjunction with these catalogs, this time in terms of people who live in a pagan way not inheriting the kingdom of God. The serious note of God’s judgment on those who practice these vices was written to Christian congregations and served as a solemn reminder of what would have happened to them had they continued to live in their former pagan ways. And indirectly, if not explicitly, an added reason is set forth for avoiding these sins, for putting to death the members upon earth.

The expression “the wrath of God” (ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ) turns up in both Old and New Testaments to describe God’s holy anger against sin and the judgment that results (cf. 1 Thess

Philo, Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus*

1QpHab *Pesher on Habakkuk* from Qumran Cave 1

1:10; 2:16; note especially the treatment of Stählin, *TDNT* 5, 419–47, who recognizes that although ὀργή in most NT passages is the divine work or judgment of wrath [cf. Rom 2:5; 3:5; 12:19, etc] the idea of an actual attitude of God cannot be disputed in many NT verses, any more than this is possible in the case of “love” or “mercy.” In sum, the NT, like the Old, presents ὀργή as “both God’s displeasure at evil, His passionate resistance to every will which is set against Him, and also His judicial attack thereon” [425]). Unlike the wrath ascribed to pagan deities of the ancient world this phrase and its equivalents denote neither God’s vindictive anger nor his outbursts of passion (the term θυμός, “passion,” “wrath,” “rage,” turns up at Rom 2:8 with reference to the wrath of God but it is used synonymously with ὀργή; the occasional heaping up of such terms [Rom 2:8, 9; cf. Rev 16:19] serves not to describe unbridled and hence unrighteous revenge, but to enhance the shattering impression of the reality of the divine wrath, cf. Stählin, *TDNT* 5, 422). Many of the Pauline passages speak about “wrath” (ὀργή) without the qualifying genitive “of God” ([τοῦ] θεοῦ: Rom 2:5 [twice], 8; 3:5; 4:15; 5:9; 9:22 [twice]; 12:19; 13:4, 5; Eph 2:3; 1 Thess 1:10; 2:16; 5:9; contrast Rom 1:18; Eph 5:6; Col 3:6 where the qualifying genitive appears). Accordingly the suggestion has been advanced that “wrath” in Paul is an autonomous entity alongside God, either as an independently operating though personified force, or as a *principle* of retribution that is not to be associated closely with the personality of God. Concerning the former alternative it was argued that this personification of “wrath” was prefigured in the OT when reference was made to the instruments of wrath together with the many figurative impressions of the sending, coming and passing of wrath (e.g. Isa 10:6; 26:20; cf. Isa 63:5: “Then my fury helped me;” see Stählin, *TDNT* 5, 414, 424, for references). Judaism developed the line still further and this “absolute” view in the NT is a continuation of this development. C. H. Dodd was an energetic exponent of the latter, though closely related, alternative. He points out that Paul never uses the verb to “be angry” with God as subject, and claims that wrath meant “not ... the attitude of God to man, but ... an inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe” (*The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* [London: Hodder, 1932] 23; cf. G. H. C. Macgregor’s essay, “The Concept of the Wrath of God in the New Testament,” *NTS* 7 [1960–61] 101–109).

However, against both variations it needs to be argued, first, that in the above-mentioned references “the wrath” (ἡ ὀργή) and “wrath” without the article (ὀργή) decisively point to God’s holy anger (just as εὐδοκία, “good pleasure,” and θέλημα, “will,” can be used without qualification of the good pleasure or will of God). Second, one cannot on the basis of several figurative references personify wrath over against God himself (see below). In both Old and New Testaments it is indissolubly related to God (cf. H. C. Hahn, *NIDNTT* 1, 107–13). Third, the wrath of God is not to be set in sharp contrast with the love and mercy of God. It is so often asserted that if God is truly love he cannot be angry. But wrath and love are not mutually exclusive. In the NT as well as in the Old, in Jesus as in the prophets and apostles the proclamation of God’s mercy is accompanied by the preaching of his wrath. A holy God does not stand idly by when men act unrighteously, transgress the law, show disdain to him as their creator or spurn his love and mercy. He acts in a righteous manner punishing sin in the present and especially on the final day. Yet God also acquits the guilty, and only the person who understands something of the greatness of his wrath will be mastered by the greatness of his mercy. The converse also is true: only he who has experienced the greatness of God’s mercy can understand something of how great that wrath must be (Stählin, *TDNT* 5, 425).

7. You used to practice these same vices on account of which God’s wrath is coming; in fact, your lives were characterized by them. At verses 7 and 8 the “once-now” antithesis is repeated

(see on 1:21, 22 and 2:13, and note Tachau, *Einst*, 123–25) as the readers (cf. the emphatic “and you,” v 7) are shown how they ought to behave now in contrast to their past. In the two earlier contexts (1:21, 22 and 2:13) the antithetical statements described their previous lost condition and their present standing in Christ. Here, however, the “once-now” antithesis functions rather differently. The past behavior is characterized by the indicative mood (περιπατήσατε, “you walked” and ἐζήτε, “you lived,” v 7), but instead of following this with another indicative to describe their present standing the apostle employs an imperative “put away” (ἀπόθεσθε, v 8; cf. Rom 6:15–23; 7:4–6; Gal 4:8–11; Eph 5:8) to spell out their new responsibilities in Christ. At the same time the two catalogs of vices (vv 5, 8) are joined together through the “once-now” schema (the antecedent of ἐν οἷς, “in which,” v 7, is the first list of vices, v 5, while τὰ πάντα, “all,” v 8, is defined more precisely by the second catalog) in two sentences which are constructed chiasmatically (cf. Tachau, *Einst*, 124):

ἐν οἷς καὶ ὑμεῖς	περιπατήσατέ ποτε ...
νυνὶ δὲ	καὶ ὑμεῖς τὰ πάντα
ἀπόθεσθε	
lit. “In which also	walked once, ...
you but now	(you also) them
put away	all.”

ἐν οἷς καὶ ὑμεῖς περιπατήσατέ ποτε “you too used to walk in these ways.” If Paul has been drawing upon traditional lists of vices (see above) then he is applying them to the readers (hence καὶ ὑμεῖς, “you also”), reminding them of their pre-Christian past (so Vögtle, *Lasterkataloge*, 19, Jervell, *Imago*, 235, Lohse, 140, Martin, NCB, 104; ἐν οἷς is neuter, “in which,” if the shorter reading of v 6 is followed [see the note above, 173], and designates the vices of v 5 on account of which God’s wrath comes; if, however, one reads “upon the sons of disobedience” [ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας] of v 6 then ἐν οἷς would be masculine meaning “among whom”; the shorter reading is preferred for the reasons given). The Colossians had conducted their lives (on the verb περιπατέω, “walk,” a favorite Pauline metaphor, drawn from the OT and Jewish tradition, for a way of life see above on 1:10 and 2:6) by doing evil deeds (cf. 1:21). Their outward behavior corresponded with their established attitudes and sentiments (Caird, 205; the ὅτε [“when”] clause expands on the preceding: the imperfect tense of the verb ζάω, “live,” draws attention to a continuing state with its fixed attitudes, while ἐν τούτοις, “in them,” is more emphatic and condemnatory than the expected ἐν αὐτοῖς, so Lightfoot, 211), and they were dead in their sins (cf. 2:13).

8. νυνὶ δὲ ἀπόθεσθε καὶ ὑμεῖς τὰ πάντα κτλ. But a change has occurred, (on the “once-now” antithesis see on v 7; cf. Stählin, *TDNT* 4, 1121) and they are to discard their old repulsive habits like a set of worn-out clothes. ἀποτίθημι meaning to “put away” was used literally with reference to clothes at Acts 7:58 (cf. 2 Macc 8:35; Jos *Ant.* 8, 266) and in a metaphorical and ethical sense at Romans 13:12; Ephesians 4:22, 25; Hebrews 12:1; James 1:21; and 1 Peter 2:1. For the representation of behavior or character as a garment see Job 29:14; Psalm 35:26; 109:29; 132:9; Isaiah 11:5; 59:17; 61:10; Romans 13:12, 14; and 1 Thessalonians 5:8. The notion is extended to the putting off of the old (terrestrial) body and the putting on of the new (celestial) one (in 1 Cor 15:53, 54; 2 Cor 5:2–4; cf. Bruce, 271). In Colossians 3 although there is no

specific reference to having put off the old man until verse 9, the object of the putting aside in verse 8 is a totality (τὰ πάντα) and best understood as a reference to the entire sinful nature (cf. Kamlah, *Form*, 183, and Lohse, 140; at Heb 12:1; James 1:21; 1 Pet 2:1 the same verb “put off” is joined to “all”). The readers (καὶ ὑμεῖς underscores the contrast with what they once were) are to put aside everything that was done in connection with the old man.

ὀργήν, θυμόν, κακίαν, βλασφημίαν, αἰσχρολογίαν ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν. The content of this “all” (τὰ πάντα) is spelled out in the fivefold catalog of vices (which may have been taken over from traditional material, as many suggest but which were entirely relevant to the concrete situation addressed, cf. Moule, *RevExp* 70 [1973] 488); “all” looks forward prospectively to the list of five vices which follow (so Moule, 118, though cf. his article, *RevExp* 70 [1973] 488; Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 64, and Lohse, 140, rather than referring *back* to all the evils just mentioned in v 5 and adding a further characterization of them in terms of other sins [cf. Lightfoot, 212, Williams, 128, Meyer, 429]). The sins to be put off are anger, quick temper, malice and the language which accompanies these things, slander and foul talk. (Commentators like Caird, 205, who consider the phrase “from your mouth” belongs to the verb “put away” rather than with the last noun in the list regard all five vices as forms of intemperate speech; but there are difficulties with this view: first, “wrath” and “passion,” as well as “evil,” have to be restricted to sins of the tongue, cf. Williams, 128; and, second, the expression “from your mouth” is distant from the verb “put away”.)

ὀργή (“wrath”) and θυμός (“anger”) go together and although Stoic thinkers distinguished the two, the one denoting a more or less settled feeling of hatred, the other a tumultuous outburst of passion (for references see Lightfoot, 212), there appears to be little difference between them here: as outbursts of temper they are destructive of harmony in human relationships (cf. Büchsel, *TDNT* 3, 168; Moule, 118) and both must be put away (cf. Eph 4:31). (On the almost totally negative appraisal of human anger in the NT see Stählin, *TDNT* 5, 420, 421; note the exception at Eph 4:26, “If you are angry, be careful not to sin”.) The rage of anger (plural θυμοί) belongs to the “works of the flesh” (Gal 5:19, 20) and ought not to be found among Christ’s people (2 Cor 12:20).

Along with these, “malice” (κακία) is to be removed since it is an evil force that destroys fellowship. The term is a general one (cf. BAG, 397, Grundmann, *TDNT* 3, 482–84) ranging from “trouble” (with no moral implications, Matt 6:34), to a definitely culpable attitude of “wickedness.” It might denote a single iniquity such as the grasping desire of Simon Magus (Acts 8:22) or be used more generally for the evil men do to one another. Martin includes it as one of the sins of speech (NCB, 104, 105; he claims that at 1 Cor 5:8; 14:20; Rom 1:29 and Eph 4:31 it depicts the havoc to human society wrought by evil-speaking), though it is possible to regard it here as “malice,” that is, the deliberate intention to harm which is subsequently expressed in evil speech such as “slander” and “abusive language.”

βλασφημία (“slander,” “defamation,” “blasphemy,” BAG, 143; cf. Beyer, *TDNT* 1, 621–25) in biblical Greek most frequently referred to “speech against God,” for even when the object of the attack was human, it was usually in some sense as God’s representative (2 Kings 6:22; 19:4; Isa 52:5; Ezek 35:12, 13; 2 Macc 8:4; 9:28; 10:4, 34; cf. Moule, 118; Währisch/Brown, *NIDNTT* 3, 341, 342). In NT times “blasphemy” was directed immediately against God (Rev 13:6; 16:11, 21), against the name of God (Rom 2:24; 1 Tim 6:1; Rev 16:9), against the word of God (Tit 2:5), against Moses and God, and so against the bearer of the revelation in the law (Acts 6:11; Beyer, *TDNT* 1, 622, 623). In nonbiblical Greek the term often meant “abuse” or “slander,” and probably has this sense of defamation of human character here in an ethical list rather than to a

curse directed against God (so many recent commentators including Martin, NCB, 105, Lohse, 140, and Schweizer, 145; Beyer, *TDNT* 1, 624, on the other hand, claims that the predominantly religious connotation of blasphemy against God is present in the lists of offenses even when it is not explicitly mentioned: Mark 7:22; Matt 15:19; Eph 4:31; Col 3:8; 1 Tim 6:4; 2 Tim 3:2; this presumably could arise when Christians were under persecution or in the company of derisive non-Christians). Accordingly, it covers any type of vilifying of man, either by lies or gossip. The Christian is commanded to “slander no one” (Tit 3:2).

The last of the five vices, αἰσχρολογία (“foul talk”) like its counterpart in the previous list (“covetousness,” v 5), is especially emphasized this time by the additional words “out of your mouth” (cf. Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 44; some commentators take the phrase as applying to both “slander” and “foul talk,” so for example Abbott, 283; others, as we have noted above, link the phrase with the verb “put off”). αἰσχρολογία occurs only here in the NT but outside the Bible covers the ideas of obscene speech or abusive language (Lightfoot, 212, who supposes that the two notions of “filthiness” and “evil-speaking” are included here; cf. BAG, 25). Such language ought to be stopped before it comes out of their mouths.

9. You used to tell lies to one another as though it was the natural thing to do; don’t do it any more (this is probably the significance of the present imperative, so Bruce, 272, though cf. Moule, *Idiom Book*, 20, 21). μὴ ψεύδεσθ εἰς ἀλλήλους continues the series of imperatives and is most naturally connected with the preceding notions of “slander” and “abusive language.” As Martin (NCB, 105) rightly points out this injunction does not come as an anticlimax. The “social effects of untrustworthy promises and pledges are enormous.” The expression “to one another” (εἰς ἀλλήλους) shows that the exhortation has particular reference to believers in their relations within the Christian community. This, of course, in no way suggests that Christians could take the question of truth less seriously when speaking to outsiders. The apostle is simply asserting that in their regular contact with fellow-believers they must speak “the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.”

The twofold reason for this abandonment of evil ways is now given: (1) you have put off the old man with his practices (v 9), and (2) you have put on the new man ... (v 10). Many exegetes consider that the two aorist participles ἀπεκδυσάμενοι (“having put off,” v 9) and ἐνδυσάμενοι (“having put on,” v 10) are to be understood in an imperatival sense, so that in effect Paul is continuing his appeal begun with the injunction, “Don’t lie.” Accordingly, the readers are urged to give up the old nature with its habits and to replace it by putting on the new man. Grammatically this interpretation is possible (cf. Merk, *Handeln*, 205), and the use of the participle for the imperative was a genuine Hellenistic development (Moulton, *Grammar* 1, 180–83), with instances in the NT (e.g., Rom 12:9) while examples of this phenomenon were common enough in rabbinic usage (as D. Daube has demonstrated, cf. his “Participle and Imperative in 1 Peter,” in E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St Peter* [London: Macmillan, 1947] 467–88; note also E. Lohse, “Paränese und Kerygma im 1. Petrusbrief,” *ZNW* 45 [1954] 75, 76, and his commentary, 141). However, the alternative view of treating the two verbs as true participles which describe the past event, in which the readers have already put off the old nature and put on the new, as the basis for the abandonment of evil ways, is preferable since it is more in keeping with Paul’s teaching elsewhere in Colossians (the parallel passage in Ephesians 4:22–24 supports the imperatival translations though the point being made there, using infinitives rather than participles, is somewhat different). In the paraenetic sections of Colossians the apostle grounds his exhortations in what has already occurred to the readers when they were incorporated in Christ (2:6, 7 and 2:16–3:4; Jervell, *Imago*, 236, has argued this point forcibly;

cf. Abbott, 283; Masson, 143; Larsson, *Christus*, 198; Maurer, *TDNT* 6, 644; Merk, *Handeln*, 205; and Martin, NCB, 106). Paul often refers back to the readers' life-changing event; he does so by means of an aorist participle or an aorist indicative (1:6, 7, 13, 22; 2:6, 7, 11–15, 20; 3:1, 3). It is therefore natural to regard these participles of verses 9 and 10 in a similar light, indicating that the readers had stripped off the old man when baptized into Christ's death and put on the new man. Verse 12 with its exhortation to put on the graces of Christ (or God) is then grounded in the fact that they had put on the new man.

The picture of putting on and putting off a garment was widespread in the ancient world and was employed in the mystery religions with reference to the action of initiation. The putting on of the garment consecrated the initiate so that he was filled with the powers of the cosmos and shared in the divine life. In Gnostic texts the donning of the garment indicates that redemption had come, a redemption that would be subsequently perfected (so Käsemann noted by Lohse, 141). But the background of the expression "putting off the old man" and "putting on the new man" was neither Gnosticism nor the mystery religions. The clothing metaphor was common in Hebrew and Greek writings, but not with "man" as an object. (Against the background of initiation into the Isis-mysteries as described by Apuleius in his *Metamorphoses* XI, 23f. and cited by Lohse, 141, three objections have been raised: (a) none of the parallels cited is pre-Christian; (b) most parallels belong to a different sphere of ideas; and (c) a literal parallel, i.e., putting on or putting off a "man," has not yet been found). In the OT the notion of being clothed with moral and religious qualities is found, e.g. strength (Isa 51:9; 52:1), righteousness (Ps 132:9; Job 29:14), majesty (Ps 93:1), honor and majesty (Ps 104:1; Job 40:10), and salvation (2 Chron 6:41), cf. dishonor (Ps 109:29) and cursing (Ps 109:18); while the rabbinic literature refers to clothing with spiritual and ethical qualities, e.g. the Torah clothes with humility and reverence (&Abot□; 6:1; cf. Str-B 2, 301, for further references), which are analogous to Colossians 3:12 and 3:8 (for a discussion see P. W. van der Horst, "Observations on a Pauline Expression," *NTS* 19 [1972–73] 181–87.)

So the Pauline expression is without an exact literal parallel. Also the terms "the old man" (τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον) and "the new (man)" (τὸν νέον) do not simply describe an individual's condition (e.g. one's old, bad character and the new, Christian character), but also carry corporate associations denoting an old and a new order of existence (Moule, 119, 120; cf. Tannehill, *Dying*, 25, 50–54; Martin, NCB, 107; Jervell, *Imago*, 240, states that "no parallel to this unique concept has been found in non-Christian sources" [cf. 240–48 for his detailed treatment]; neither in Gnostic texts nor in Judaism was there any idea of an antithesis between the old and the new man—see below.) The "old man" here, as in Romans 6:6 and Ephesians 4:22, designates the whole personality of man when he is ruled by sin. At the same time it signifies his belonging to the old humanity in Adam (cf. Larsson, *Christus*, 197, and Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 197). Verse 9 speaks of the old man "with his deeds" (σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ) being stripped off. These "practices" (on πρᾶξις see BAG, 697, 698; Maurer, *TDNT* 6, 642–44) evidently include the two lists of vices in verses 5 and 8. The connection between the old man and these vices is expressed in another way at verse 5 where the list of vices stands in apposition to the "members on earth" (τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; cf. Tannehill, *Dying*, 50). Fornication, covetousness and the like are "members" of the old man (just as the virtues of v 12 might aptly be styled "members" of the new man). Since the old man and his practices have been put off in Christ's death, the readers are to have no truck with false speaking or any of the other repulsive habits mentioned.

10. καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον. The new man has been put on in place of the old. The Greek adjective νέος (“new”; cf. BAG, 535, 536; Behm, *TDNT* 4, 896–901) stands in contrast to παλαιός (“old”) and means the same as the synonym καινός (“new”; cf. BAG, 394; Behm, *TDNT* 3, 447–54; older exegetes [notably R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969 = 1880, 219–25] regarded νέος primarily as a temporal adjective meaning “young” while καινός had qualitative connotations: as “new” it actually supplants the old and calls it into question in a qualitative manner. But these distinctions are difficult to maintain: both terms can imply a qualitative as well as a temporal significance; here τὸν νέον is followed by a compound of καινός—τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον, “which is being renewed”—and may have been chosen simply for the sake of stylistic variety; in the parallel passage of Eph 4:23, 24, conversely the verb contains νέος and the adjective is καινός; cf. R. A. Harrisville, “The Concept of Newness in the New Testament,” *JBL* 74 [1955] 69–79; Larsson, *Christus*, 200; Moule, 119).

To another group of Christians Paul states: “as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ” (Gal 3:27; note the corresponding imperative of Rom 13:14, “put on the Lord Jesus Christ”). Here the “new man,” like its opposite “the old man,” has a twofold significance—singular and corporate. On the one hand, it has an individual reference, designating the new nature which the Colossians had put on and which was continually being renewed (the present participle ἀνακαινούμενον indicates an ongoing process; cf. Rom 12:2) in accordance with the Creator’s image. The point about the renewal of the new man is to be compared with what Paul says about the “inner man” (ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος) of 2 Corinthians 4:16 which is also being renewed from day to day (ἀνακαινοῦνται). According to Ephesians 3:16, through a similar process the addressees are strengthened with power by God’s Spirit “for the inner man” (εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον; cf. Rom 7:22). On the other hand, the expression, “the new man,” has a corporate reference designating the new humanity in Christ. Just as the “old man” is what they once were “in Adam,” the embodiment of unregenerate humanity, so the “new man” is what they now are “in Christ,” the embodiment of the new humanity. Verse 11 with its statements about the abolition of racial, religious, cultural and social barriers underscores this corporate aspect (cf. Schnackenburg, *Schriften*, 392–411; and for forceful statements in favor of this corporate emphasis see Robinson, *Body*, 58–67, and Tannehill, *Dying*, 25). The renewal refers not simply to an individual change of character but also to a corporate recreation of humanity in the Creator’s image. Christ is the “new man” whom the Colossians have put on. He is the second Adam, the head of a new creation (cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15).

τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν. Grammatically it seems best to regard the prepositional phrase κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν (“after the image of its Creator”) as modifying τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον (“which is being renewed”; cf. Larsson, *Christus*, 198; this is preferable to its being attached to ἐπίγνωσιν, “knowledge”: for a discussion of this and other alternatives see Jervell, *Imago*, 248, 249, and Merk, *Handeln*, 205). Accordingly, the image of the Creator serves as the model or archetype for the renewal of the new man—a renewal that has in view the readers’ progressive increase in true knowledge (Eph 4:24 speaks of the creation of the new man but not, as does Col 3:10, of its constant renewal).

κατ’ εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν. “After the image of its Creator.” Even though this phrase is not an explicit Scripture citation one cannot miss the allusion to Genesis 1:27, where the first Adam is said to have been created by God “in his own image” (κατ’ εἰκόνα θεοῦ). However, the first Adam is now regarded as the “old man” that has been discarded so that the believer may put on the new man. Although Chrysostom and some modern writers regarded the words τοῦ

κτίσαντος as designating Christ as the Creator it is, in fact, a description of God (cf. Eph 4:24 where it is stated that the new man is created κατὰ φεόν, lit. “according to God,” or as the RSV puts it “after the likeness of God”; in the Pauline material as well as in the rest of the NT God is the subject of κτίζω, “create”: Rom 1:25; Eph 3:9; cf. 1 Cor 11:9; Eph 2:10; 4:24; 1 Tim 4:3; Matt 19:4; Mark 13:19; 1 Pet 4:19; Rev 4:11; 10:6; while in Col 1:16, as we have already shown, God is the logical subject of the passive verb “created,” ἐκτίσθη and ἔκτισται; cf. Moule, 120, Jervell, *Imago*, 249, 250, G. Dellling, “Partizipiale Gottesprädikationen in den Briefen des Neuen Testaments,” *ST* 17 [1963] 25, Merk, *Handeln*, 207, Lohse, 143, and Martin, NCB, 107). However, to say that the new man is being renewed “according to the image of God,” in the light of the hymnic paragraph where Christ is praised as the εἰκὼν (“image”) of God (1:15; see 42–44) and Paul’s Christological teaching elsewhere (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 4:4; and Phil 2:6) means that God’s recreation of man “is *in the pattern of Christ*, who is God’s Likeness absolutely” (Moule, 120). This is not at variance with the apostle’s statements elsewhere which speak of the Christian’s transformation *into* the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18; Phil 3:21), for while the former makes it clear that the redeemed become the “new man” or καὶνὴ κτίσις (“new creation”) to whom the image of Gods—which Adam lost—has been restored, the latter denotes that this restoration of the divine image is nothing other than their transformation into the image of Christ (Kim, *Paul’s Gospel*, 406, cf. 295, 296). The expression “him that created *him*” (αὐτόν refers to the “new man”) does not imply that Christ personally is a created being even though he is the new man whom believers have put on: “the new man who is created is the new personality that each believer becomes when he is reborn as a member of the new creation whose source of life is Christ” (Bruce, 273; cf. Larsson, *Christus*, 209).

εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν (“in knowledge”) occurs here in an absolute sense as in Philippians 1:9: “that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment.” The renewal of the new man has in view (cf. von Soden, 61) the readers’ progressive increase in the ability to recognize God’s will and command (cf. Col 1:9; see Lohse, 143), something which the old man did not possess. This true knowledge leads to a conduct that is in conformity with the Creator’s will.

11. Within this new humanity (ὅπου, a particle denoting place, is here employed figuratively to denote the circumstances or presupposition of what has gone before = “in the realm of the new man,” Dibelius-Greeven, 42) the barriers that divided people from one another—racial, religious, cultural and social—are abolished (Lightfoot, 214, claims that οὐκ ἔνι means: “Not only does the distinction not exist, but it *cannot* exist”; cf. Martin, NCB, 108; for a contrary view see Abbott, 285). The theological reason is that “all were baptized into the one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free” (1 Cor 12:13). Elsewhere in the Pauline letters similar subdivisions of the human family are listed: e.g. Galatians 3:28, where Paul states that for those who have been baptized into Christ and put on Christ “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (cf. Rom 1:14). Here the teaching of Galatians is repeated and expanded, no doubt in accordance with the needs of the Colossian readers (so Lightfoot, 214, 215, Jervell, *Imago*, 251, and Martin, NCB, 108; against Lohse, 143, who regards the verse as traditional; Bruce, 275, suggests that the choice of antitheses in Gal

3:28 is made with “a view to overthrowing the threefold privilege which a pious Jew recalls morning by morning when he thanks God that He did not make him a Gentile, a slave or a woman”). Further, the list of social distinctions mentioned throws light on the kind of frictions the Christian faith had to overcome (Moule, 121).

Ἕλλην καὶ Ἰουδαῖος, περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία. “Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised.” Greeks and Jews are mentioned first in the series to describe the whole of humanity (cf. 1 Cor. 1:24; 10:32; 12:13; Gal 3:28; Greeks are mentioned as the outstanding representatives of the Gentiles; on the “Jew” in Paul see Gutbrod, *TDNT* 3, 380–82, and on “Greek” Windisch, *TDNT* 2, 512–16). Normally the Jews appear first as an expression of their privileged place in salvation history. Here the order is reversed, probably because the majority of the readers were Gentile Christians (cf. 1:21, 22; 2:13). In Christ the old distinction between Jew and Gentile was abolished—a remarkable achievement of the gospel. So “circumcision” (Meyer, *TDNT* 6, 82, 83; Hahn, *NIDNTT* 1, 307–12) and “uncircumcision” (Schmidt, *TDNT* 1, 225, 226) have lost their meaning; it is the “new creation” (καὶνὴ κτίσις, Gal 6:15) that really counts (in both Galatians and Colossians it was necessary for Paul to underscore the abolition of the distinction between Jew and Gentile in the light of the Jewish stamp of the teaching he was countering, so Bruce, 275). βάρβαρος, Σκύθης. “Barbarian, Scythian.” The list of terms overlaps somewhat. “Barbarian” (Windisch, *TDNT* 1, 546–53) and “Scythian” (Michel, *TDNT* 7, 447–50) are not contrasted like “Greek” and “Jew,” or “bondman” and “freeman.” Rather, they stand over against “Greek” when the latter is used in its cultural sense. The “barbarian” (cf. Rom 1:14; 1 Cor 14:11; Acts 28:2, 4) is the non-Greek, who did not speak that language (the Greeks themselves divided mankind into two main categories—Greeks and barbarians). Yet Paul’s apostolic ministry was directed to them both (Rom 1:14, “I am under obligation to both Greeks and barbarians [Ἕλλησίν τε καὶ βαρβάροις]”). The “Scythian” represents the lowest kind of barbarian who was probably also a slave; the term was applied to tribes around the Black Sea from which was drawn a wretched slave class (Lightfoot, 216, cf. BAG, 758; Michel, *TDNT* 7, 449, 450, suggests the possibility of the Scythian being mentioned separately from the barbarian because of some special situation at Colossae; but against this see Lohse, 144). Josephus (Ap 2, 269) said: “they are little better than wild beasts” (they were occasionally figures of fun in Greek comedy because of their uncouth ways and speech, cf. Bruce, 276). But the gospel breaks down these cultural barriers, overcoming the offense which a Scythian might give to another’s natural sensibilities.

δοῦλος, ἐλεύθερος. “Slave, free.” Likewise “in the realm of the new man” (Dibelius-Greeven, 42) distinctions of social position are irrelevant. A slave in the ancient world was, legally speaking, not a person but a piece of property, “a living tool” according to Aristotle (see below regarding Paul’s treatment of Onesimus). But in the Christian community the slave as well as the freeman was the brother for whom Christ died. The apostle is not speaking about some natural equality of all persons nor about a morality that is binding on all. When in Galatians 3:28 he says that in Christ “there is no male or female” he does not mean that the distinctive functions or capacities of men and women are abolished, for they like Greeks and Jews, slaves and free, continue to live in the various roles the word assigns them (see Bouttier, *NTS* 23 [1976–77] 1–19). But in Christ there is no inferiority of the one sex to the other, or one class to another; men and women of completely diverse origins are gathered together in unity in Christ through a common allegiance to their Lord. There is no difference in spiritual status between them.

ἀλλὰ [τὰ] πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός. The concluding triumphant words, “but Christ is all and in all,” contrast the centrality of Christ with the divisions that separate people in the world.

Similar expressions are found at 1 Corinthians 15:28 (“that God may be all in all”) and Ephesians 1:23 (“the fullness of him who fills all in all”) where, in the former at least and possibly also the latter, the relationship of God himself to the cosmos is in view. Here, however, the phrase is applied to Christ. The καί (“and”) suggests that both halves of the phrase are important (note Eph 4:6). The first half states in an emphatic way that Christ is “absolutely everything” (see Moule, 121, 122), or “all that matters,” while the words he is “in all” (ἐν πᾶσιν), which in the light of the preceding statement of verse 11a should probably be regarded as masculine (rather than neuter), mean that he permeates and indwells all members of the new man, regardless of race, class or background (cf. Schnackenburg, *Schriften*, 408, and Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 159; note however Lohse, 145). Christ lives in those who believe (cf. Col 1:27; Gal 2:20; 4:19).

Explanation

Paul’s previous exhortations to the Colossians to aim at the things above (3:1–4), which were based on their union with Christ in his death and resurrection, find concrete expression and application in the further injunctions which follow: “put to death” (v 5), “put away” (v 8; cf. “do not lie,” v 9) and “put on” (v 12). The first of these imperatives (“put to death”) recalls the union with Christ in his death (2:20; 3:3; cf. 2:11, 12): because they have died with him, then they are to put to death whatever belongs to their earthly nature. Five sins are identified with these earthly members as the apostle describes first the outward manifestations of sin (“sexual immorality” or “fornication”) and then the inward cravings of the heart (“ruthless greed”), the acts of immorality and uncleanness and then their inner springs. Here Paul employs the first of two catalogs of vices, similar to those found among pagan moralists and in the anti-pagan polemic of Jewish propagandists (the second series of five appears in verse 8, while five graces, which the readers are to put on like new clothing, follow in verse 12). Here, as often elsewhere, the list of pagan sins is set within the context of God’s judgment: “on account of such the wrath of God is coming” (v 6). By means of a preaching form, the “once-now” antithesis of verses 7 and 8, the readers are shown how they ought to behave now in contrast to their pagan past. They are to discard their old repulsive habits of improper speech like a set of worn-out clothes. The twofold reason for this abandonment of evil ways is that: (a) they have already put off the old man with his practices (v 9), and (b) have put on the new man which is being renewed in the Creator’s image (v 10). The expressions, the old man and the new, carry both individual and corporate connotations: the former designates the whole personality of man when he is ruled by sin, at the same time signifying his belonging to the old humanity in Adam. The latter also has an individual reference, designating the new nature which the Colossians had put on and which was continually being renewed in accordance with the creator’s image. At the same time the new man has a corporate reference, denoting the new humanity in Christ. Within this realm of the new man there is no inferiority of one class to another; men and women of completely diverse origins are gathered together in unity in Christ, sharing a common allegiance to their Lord. Christ is all that matters; he permeates and indwells all members of his body, regardless of race, class or background.