

*Put on the Graces of Christ (3:12–17)*¹

Bibliography

Jervell, J. *Imago*, 249–256. **Larsson, E.** *Christus*, 210–23. **Merk, O.** *Handeln*, 210–14. **Schrage, W.** *Einzelgebote*. **Zeilinger, F.** *Der Erstgeborene*, 66–68. (See also the bibliography to 3:5–11 concerning the New Testament lists of sins and graces.)

Translation

¹² *Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt compassion, kindness, lowliness, gentleness and longsuffering.* ¹³ *Bear with one another and forgive each other if one has a complaint against another; as the Lord^a has graciously forgiven you, so you should also forgive one another.* ¹⁴ *In addition to all these graces put on love which is the bond that leads to perfection.* ¹⁵ *Let Christ's peace rule in your hearts. It was also to this peace that you were called in one body. And be thankful.* ¹⁶ *Let the Word of Christ^b dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom by means of Spirit-inspired psalms, hymns and songs, singing thankfully to God^c with your whole being.* ¹⁷ *And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father^d through him.*

Notes.

¹Peter T. O'Brien, vol. 44, *Word Biblical Commentary : Colossians-Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 195ff.

^a 13.a. The reading κύριος (“Lord”) which has the strong support of P⁴⁶ as well as the best witnesses of both the Alexandrian and Western texts (A B D* G it^{d,e} vg etc) was interpreted, quite correctly, by copyists as Χριστός (“Christ”). But the latter is not the original reading; nor are the other variants (φεός, “God,” and φεός ἐν Χριστῷ, “God in Christ”) which seem to be scribal assimilations to Ephesians 4:32 (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 625; cf. Moule, 123, and Lohse, 148).

^b 16.b. In place of the unusual expression “the Word of Christ,” several witnesses substitute the more customary “the Word of God” or “the Word of the Lord.” In addition Χριστοῦ (“of Christ”) has the strong support of P⁴⁶ ⚭^c B C² D G etc

^c 16.c. The Textus Receptus in accordance with Ephesians 5:19 reads τῷ κυρίῳ (“to the Lord”). But the early and widespread manuscript evidence is in favor of τῷ θεῷ (“to God”: P⁴⁶ ⚭ A B C* D* etc).

^d 17.d. The unusual expression of τῷ θεῷ πατρί (“to God the Father”), which has widespread support P⁴⁶ (apparently) ⚭ A B C 81 etc, was emended by copyists who inserted καί (“and”) to bring it into line with Ephesians 5:20 (*note* 1:3 and 12).

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Form/Structure/Setting

With the introductory imperative of verse 12, ἐνδύσασθε (“put on”), which governs the sentence structure to verse 13c, the positive exhortation begins; it stands in contrasting parallelism with the preceding section, verses 5–11, which also began with an aorist imperative (νεκρώσατε, “put to death”), the conjunction οὖν (“therefore”) and a list of five items. This positive exhortatory material naturally falls into two sections: (a) verses 12–14, and (b) verses 15–17. In the former the imperatival sentence contains a fivefold catalog of virtues (v 12) which stands in contrast to the fivefold vice catalog of the preceding paragraph (vs 5, 8). The imperative is continued in the two parallel participial clauses (v 13a, ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων, “forbearing one another,” and v 13b, χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς, “forgiving each other”) with which is linked a conditional sentence (v 13c, ἐάν τις πρὸς τινα ἔχη μομφήν, “if one has a complaint against another”). The remainder of verse 13, with its balancing καυῶς ... οὕτως construction

P Peshar (commentary)

A Codex Alexandrinus

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

D Codex Bezae or Deuteronom(ist)ic

G Greek translation: as published in *Septuaginta*, LXX ed. A. Rahlfs, 1935. In Daniel, G includes both OG and Th, as published in J. Ziegler’s ed., 1954.

vg Latin Vulgate (as published in Weber’s edition)

cf. *confer*, compare

C Codex Ephraemi Syri

(“as ... so”) sets forth the motive for mutual forgiveness—the activity of the Lord who has first forgiven them. Finally, verse 14, which appears to be dependent on the introductory imperative, ἐνδύσασθε (“put on” of v 12), speaks of ἀγάπη (“love”) as the bond that leads to perfection. The structure may be set forth as follows:

- 12a ἐνδύσασθε οὖν ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ...
 b σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ
 c χρηστότητα—ταπεινοφροσύνην
 d πραῦτητα—μακροθυμίαν
- 13a ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων
 b καὶ χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς,
 c ἐάν τις πρὸς τινα ἔχη μομφήν.
 d καθὼς καὶ ὁ κύριος ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν—
 e οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς.
- 14a ἐπὶ πᾶσιν δὲ τούτοις τὴν ἀγάπην,
 b ὃ ἐστὶν σύδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος.
- 12a “Clothe yourselves, therefore, as God’s chosen ones ...
 b heartfelt compassion
 c kindness—lowliness
 d gentleness—longsuffering
- 13a Bear with one another
 b and forgive each other,
 c if one has a complaint against another.
 d As the Lord has graciously forgiven you—
 e so you too (should forgive).
- 14a In addition to all these (put on) love,
 b which is the bond that leads to perfection.”

The second section, comprising verses 15–17, stands as a unity. Verse 15 contains three clauses each of which is, in effect, introduced by καί (“and”): a cohortative clause, καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Χριστοῦ βραβεύετω ... (v 15a, “and let the peace of Christ rule ...”); a dependent relative clause, εἰς ἣν καὶ ἐκλήθητε (v 15b, “into which also you were called ...”); and a short, independent imperatival clause, καὶ εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε (v 15c, “and be thankful”). Verse 16, like the preceding verse, commences with a cohortative clause, ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖτω ... (“let the word of Christ dwell...”). It is followed by three participles διδάσκοντες, νοθετοῦντες and ἄδοντες (“teaching,” “admonishing” and “singing”). The concluding verse contains a relative clause (πᾶν ὃ τι, “whatever”) with a condition inserted (ἐὰν ποιῆτε, “if you do”), a principal clause (πάντα (ποιεῖτε) ἐν ὀνόματι ..., “do all in the name of ...”) and a participial construction (εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ ..., “giving thanks to God ...”). Verses 15–17 may be structured as follows:

- 15a καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Χριστοῦ βραβεύετω ...
 b εἰς ἣν καὶ ἐκλήθητε ...
 c καὶ εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε

- 16a ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖτω ...
 b ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ διδάσκοντες καὶ νουνετοῦντες ...
 c ἐν τῇ χάριτι ἄδοντες ...
- 17a καὶ πᾶν ὅ τι ἐὰν ποιῆτε ...
 b πάντα ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ
 c εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ δι' αὐτοῦ.
- 15a “And let Christ’s peace rule ...
 b into which also you were called ...
 c And be thankful.
- 16a Let the word of Christ dwell in ...
 b in all wisdom teaching and admonishing ...
 c singing with thanksgiving ...
- 17a And whatever you do ...
 b [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus
 c giving thanks to God the Father through him.

(cf. Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 66–68).

Comment

12. ἐνδύσασθε οὖν. As God’s chosen ones who have already put on the new man (v 10) they must don the graces which are characteristic of him. In the preceding paragraph the apostle had set forth the negative requirements in the admonitions “put to death” (v 5) and “put off” (v 8); here he spells out the positive exhortation which, like the injunction of verse 5 with its οὖν (“therefore”), follows as a direct consequence (οὖν, “therefore”) of what has previously been said. The graces with which they are to be clothed are those qualities predicated of God or Christ (note the treatments of Larsson, *Christus*, 210–20, and Jervell, *Imago*, 251, 252). It is, thus, not unusual that Paul should exhort the Roman Christians to “put on (ἐνδύσασθε) the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 13:14). The imperative ἐνδύσασθε (“put on”), like its counterpart in verses 5 (νεκρώσατε, “put to death”) and 8 (ἀπόεσθε, “put off”) is an aorist tense signifying a decisive initial act which introduces a settled attitude (Schweizer, 153).

ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἅγιοι καὶ ἠγαπημένοι. “As elect of God, holy and be-loved.” The members of the congregation are addressed by means of exalted titles: they are the chosen, holy and beloved people of God. These descriptions are important not only because they were used of Israel as God’s own possession—and as Lightfoot, 219, claimed are now transferred to the Colossians as the new people of God—but also since they are designated of Christ, thereby underlining the point of their similarity to and identification with him, features that are all the more significant in a context where they are encouraged to put on his graces. ἐλεκτός (“chosen,” “elect”; BAG, 242, Schrenk, *TDNT* 4, 181–92; cf. G. Delling, “*Merkmale der Kirche nach den*

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)

Neuen Testament,” *NTS* 13 [1966–67] 305) was employed in the LXX of men of God in salvation history (Num 11:28; Ps 105:23, etc), the land of Palestine (Jer 3:19; Zech 7:14), the city of Jerusalem (Tob 13:13) and Israel as the people of God (Isa 43:20; 65:9, 15, 23; Pss 104:43; 105:5, etc: cf. Schrenk, *TDNT* 4, 182, 183). Although the word-group (including ἐκλέγομαι, “choose,” and ἐκλεκτός, “chosen”) occurs relatively infrequently in the New Testament (in Paul ἐκλεκτός, “elect,” “chosen,” is found at Rom 8:33; 16:13; Col 3:12; 1 Tim 5:21; 2 Tim 2:10; and Titus 1:1; ἐκλογή, “election,” at Rom 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28; and 1 Thess 1:4; and ἐκλέγομαι, “choose,” at 1 Cor 1:27, 28 and Eph 1:4) in comparison with the LXX (where ἐκλέγομαι, “choose,” and ἐκλεκτός, “elect,” turn up 245 times), ἐκλεκτός is used of Christ as the “elect one” (Luke 23:35; cf. 9:35; John 1:34; 1 Pet 2:4, 6) as well as of the Christian community: “But you are a chosen race (γένος ἐκλεκτόν), a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people,” 1 Peter 2:9.

Believers are “God’s elect” (ἐκλεκτοὶ θεοῦ) against whom he will never lay any charge for it is he who justifies them (Rom 8:33). This term, together with others akin to it (e.g. the καλέω group with reference to “calling”), emphasizes the gracious initiative of God in drawing men and women to himself (the Qumran community regarded itself as the assembly of the chosen ones: 1QpHab 10:13, “God’s elect”; cf. 5:4; 1QH 14:15; &4QpPs; 37.2.5, “the community of his elect”). The parallel terms ἅγιοι (“holy”) and ἠγαπημένοι (“beloved”) are best taken as predicates of ἐκλεκτοί (“elect”; against Lohmeyer, 145, ἐκλεκτοί does not designate the heavenly “communion of saints” and so the “angels,” and ὡς, “as,” is not meant to distinguish Christians from them as another group; rather it simply emphasizes the Colossians’ identity with the elect; so Larsson, *Christus*, 210, Lohse, 146, Martin, *NCB*, 109): his choice souls are those whom he has set apart for himself and placed his love upon them (so Abbott, 286, Procksch, *TDNT* 1, 107; cf. Delling, *NTS* 13 [1966–67] 305, and Lohse, 146). Again it is important to note that ἅλιος (“holy”; see on chap. 1:2) is employed of Jesus as the “Holy One” (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; John 6:69; cf. Acts 4:27, 30) while ἀγαπητός (“beloved,” is akin to the sparsely used ἀγαπημένος which appears at 1 Thess 1:4 and 2 Thess 2:13 in the context of election and describes Christians as “beloved by God”) turns up in the Gospels as a messianic designation for Jesus (Matt 3:17 and parallels; 12:18; 17:5 and parallels).

σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ χρηστότητα, ταπεινοφροσύνην, πραΰτητα, μακροθυμίαν. “Heartfelt compassion, kindness, lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering.” In verses 5 to 8 two catalogs were listed, each enumerating five vices that were to be put away with the old man. Now five virtues, which are not strictly opposites of the preceding vices, are to be put on. These are elsewhere

NTS New Testament Studies

LXX The Septuagint, Greek translation of the OT

e.g. *exempli gratia*, for example

1QpHab *Peshar on Habakkuk* from Qumran Cave 1

1QH *Hôdâyôt (Thanksgiving Hymns)* from Qumran Cave 1

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

designated as the graces and actions of God or Christ. σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ means “heartfelt compassion” (BAG, 561; lit. “bowels of compassion,” οἰκτιροῦ is a genitive of quality) and appears first, οἰκτιρμός (Bultmann, *TDNT* 5, 159–61, Esser, *NIDNTT* 2, 598) in the LXX is predicated first and foremost of God who is described as “compassionate”: he has acted graciously and compassionately on behalf of his people (LXX Pss 24:6; 50:1; 102:4; 144:9; cf. Neh 9:19, 27, 28, etc; the plural is normally used, perhaps partly to describe concrete acts of compassion [so BDF para. 142; Robertson, *Grammar*, 408], but no doubt due to the influence of the Hebrew *rah^amîm* as well; there is no difference in meaning with the singular. Also cf. LXX Exod 34:6; 2 Chron 30:9; Neh 9:17, 31; Pss 85:15; 102:8; 110:4; 144:8; Joel 2:13; and Jon 4:2, where the adjective οἰκτόρων, “compassionate,” “merciful,” makes the same point about God’s gracious actions). In the Qumran literature “mercies” (Hebrew *rah^amî*) first of all describe God’s compassion (1QS 1:22; 1QH 1:31; 1QM 11:4) though as in the OT the term can also refer to the godly person who lives according to God’s will (note especially 1QS 4:3 in a list of virtues describing the behavior of the new people of God; cf. 2 Chron 30:9; Ps 106:46). οἰκτιροί (“mercies”) in the NT describes God’s compassion: at Romans 12:1 it denotes his concrete acts of mercy in his Son, while at 2 Corinthians 1:3 as the “Father of mercies” (πατήρ τῶν οἰκτιρῶν) he is the “compassionate Father” (a genitive of quality), and the “Father from whom all compassion comes” (a genitive of origin), cf. O’Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 241, 242; note also Luke 6:36; James 5:11.

σπλάγχνον (almost always in the plural, meaning literally “inward parts,” BAG, 763; cf. Köster, *TDNT* 7, 548–59, Esser, *NIDNTT* 2, 599, 600) comes to be used figuratively of the seat of the emotions, i.e. the “heart.” In fact, like other anthropological terms the word is found in Paul for the whole man, expressing strongly and forcefully what concerns the personality at the deepest level, especially in his capacity of loving (Köster, *TDNT* 7, 555; note the references in Philemon, vv 7, 12, 20). The few references to σπλάγχνα and the cognate verb σπλαγχνίζομαι (“have pity,” “feel sympathy”) in the LXX occur mostly in the later books where there is no

lit. literally

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

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

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

1QM *Milḥāmāh (War Scroll)* from Qumran

OT Old Testament

NT New Testament

i.e. *id est*, that is

Hebrew original. The predominant meaning “merciful,” “show mercy,” is found in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and this prepares the way for the NT usage. The love of God is signified in these Testaments by both noun (*T. Levi* 4:4, *T. Zeb* 8:2; *T. Napht.* 4:5) and verb (*T. Zeb* 8:1). The NT tendency is to employ both terms of God or Christ. So in the Synoptics the verb *σπλαγχνίζομαι* describes (a) the attitude of Jesus as it characterizes the divine nature of his acts (Matt 9:36; 14:14; Mark 1:41; 9:22; Luke 7:13), and (b) the actions of key persons in three of Jesus’ parables (Matt 18:27; Luke 10:33; 15:20) who make the unbounded mercy of God visibly plain, while at Philippians 1:8 where the noun is employed (*ἐν σπλάγχνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ*, “with the affection of Christ Jesus”), Christ is seen to be “the source of the love that embraces and lays claim to the apostle’s whole personality” (Esser, NIDNTT 2, 600; cf. Phil 2:1; and Luke 1:78, “through the tender mercy [*διὰ σπλάγχνα ἐλέους*] of our God”). In this context of Colossians the joint expression means “a compassionate heart” or “merciful compassion” (it is not necessary to posit a literary dependence on “affection and compassion” [*σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί*] of Phil 2:1; the almost identical phrase “heart of mercy” is used at Luke 1:78; cf. *T. Zeb* 7:3).

χρηστότης, (“goodness,” “kindness,” “generosity,” BAG, 886; Weiss, *TDNT* 9, 483–92; Beyreuther, NIDNTT 2, 105, 106) is a quality which God himself demonstrates in concrete actions. Both noun and cognate adjective (*χρηστός*, “good,” “kind”) are favorite words in the LXX for expressing the abundance of his goodness which he displays to his covenant people—indeed to all men as his creatures. His constant mercy and readiness to help are essential themes of the psalms (e.g. Pss 25[LXX 24]:7; 31[30]:19; 65[64]:11; 68[67]:10; 85[84]:12) as well as in the prophets where the kindness of God is all the more amazing in the face of his people’s sin (Jer 33[LXX 40]:11; cf. 24:2, 3, 5). In the Qumran literature the sect expected its members show mercy to one another thereby reflecting the kindness each had received from God (1QH 7:30; 10:16; 11:6, 9, 31; 12:21; 13:16 with 1QS 4:3). The predominant number of NT references to the word-group appear in the Pauline letters (the adjective *χρηστός*, “kind,” “good,” occurs at Matt 11:30; Luke 5:39 and 6:35; all other instances are in Paul) where the apostle turns repeatedly to the incomprehensible kindness of God: *χρηστότης* denotes God’s gracious attitude and acts toward sinners. He desires the salvation of the sinner, not his death (Rom 11:22; Eph 2:7; Tit 3:4), while his kindness and forbearance are designed to lead the impenitent to repentance (so Rom 2:4). As a response to God’s merciful kindness the person who has put on the new man, the Lord Jesus Christ, is to show kindness to others. This does not come naturally; nor can it be produced from one’s innate ability. Along with “patience” it is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), and according to 1 Corinthians 13:4 is a direct outworking of love (itself a fruit of the Spirit): “love is patient and kind.”

ταπεινοφροσύνη has already been used twice in the letter (2:18, 23) by the Colossian opponents to denote “mortification,” “self-denial” or even ascetic practices such as fasting that were a prelude to receiving visions of the heavenly mysteries (see 142, 153). Here, however, it signifies the grace of “lowliness,” “humility” (BAG, 804; cf. Grundmann, *TDNT* 8, 21–23, Esser,

T. Testament of Levi (from Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs)

T. Zeb Testament of Zebulun (in *T. 12 Patr.*)

T. Napht. Testament of Naphtali

NIDNTT 2, 259–64). It is well-known that in profane Greek literature the term occurs on only a few occasions, and then usually in a derogatory sense of servility, weakness or a shameful lowliness. In the OT although the noun ταπεινοφροσύνη (“humility”) is lacking, ταπεινός (“lowly,” “humble”) and its cognates turn up about 270 times. Particularly significant are those references to the Lord’s acting in history to bring down the proud and arrogant and to exalt the lowly: (a) the prophets express it in warnings of judgment (Amos 2:6, 7, 13; 8:6, 7; cf. Isa 2:9, 11, 17; 5:15; Zeph 2:3; 3:12, etc), (b) the historical books spell it out with reference to events (Judg 4:23; 6:15; 1 Sam 1:11, 16; 7:13; 2 Sam 22:28, etc), (c) the psalmists express the theme in their prayers (Pss 10:17, 18 [LXX 9:38, 39]; 25:18 [24:18]; 31:7 [30:8], etc), while (d) in proverbs of the wisdom literature “humility” is spoken of as the fruit of experience and as a rule of life (Job 5:11; Prov 3:34; 11:2; 15:33, in some manuscripts “humility” is parallel with “the fear of the Lord” 16:2, 19, etc; for further references see Esser, NIDNTT 2, 260, 261). In the NT ταπεινοφροσύνη signifies the “lowliness” with which one serves Christ (Acts 20:19) or is submissive to other Christians (Eph 4:2; Phil 2:3; 1 Pet 5:5). The pattern or model is Jesus who invited people to come to him as the one who is “meek and lowly (ταπεινός) in heart” (Matt 11:29). The twin themes of humiliation and exaltation, noted in the OT material, come to their clearest expression in the hymn of Philippians 2:6–11 where it is stated that Jesus humbled himself (ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν, v 8) even to death on a cross and God exalted him (v 9), bestowing on him the name above every name. The hymn provides the basis for the preceding exhortation (2:1–5), and Christ’s action in humbling himself is the pattern for believers who, in humility (τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ, v 3), are to esteem others better than themselves and to be concerned about others’ welfare (v 4).

πραΰτης (“gentleness, “humility, “meekness, BAG, 699; cf. Hauck/Schulz, *TDNT* 6, 645–51, Bauder, NIDNTT 2, 256–59) turns up in the Pauline writings of the NT some eight times (1 Cor 4:21; 10:1; Gal 5:23; 6:1; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12; 2 Tim 2:25; Tit 3:2; in addition it occurs at James 1:21; 3:13; 1 Pet 3:15) but the cognate adjective πραῦς (“meek,” which is found at Matt 5:5; 11:29; 21:5; 1 Pet 3:4) does not appear in Paul. Like the earlier terms this word-group needs to be understood against an OT background. In the LXX our terms were used to designate the poor in Israel, those without landed property, many of whom were victims of unscrupulous exploitation (Isa 32:7; Ps 37:14; Job 24:4). The “poor” (Heb. *ānî*) are the defenseless, those without rights, who are oppressed, cheated and exploited (cf. Pss 9, 10). However, Yahweh is the God of those without rights (Pss 25:9; 149:4; 34:2); he comforts those who find no mercy from their fellow-men (Isa 29:19; Job 36:15) and will finally reverse all that is against them (Isa 26:6; Ps 37:11; 147:6). The term “poor” comes to be applied to those who in deep need humbly seek help from Yahweh alone (e.g. Ps 40:17; Zeph 2:3; 3:12; Isa 41:17, etc). At Zechariah 9:9 the term πραῦς (“meek”) is a title of honor given to the Messiah. “Meekness” is one of the marks of Jesus’ rule. He fulfills the role of the messianic king who brings salvation without using force (Matt 21:5 = Zech 9:9), describing himself as “meek” (πραῦς, Matt 11:29). Paul mentions the “meekness of Christ” (πραΰτης ... τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 2 Cor 10:1) as characteristic of Jesus’ behavior toward men during his life on earth, and exhorts the Corinthians on the basis of this example. “Meekness” is to characterize the lives of Christians in relation to fellow-believers who have sinned (Gal 6:1, 2, by bearing one another’s burdens they “fulfill the law of Christ”; 2 Tim 2:25, cf. 1 Cor 4:21), as well as outsiders (Tit 3:2; cf. Phil 4:5). It is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:23)

standing in lists of graces as a concrete expression of Christian love (cf. 1 Tim 6:11; 1 Pet 3:4). This gentleness is not to be confused with weakness (as contemporary Hellenistic thought understood it), but contains the elements of (a) a consideration for others, and (b) a willingness to waive one's rights (cf. Martin, NCB, 111).

μακροθυμία. (In addition to the treatment at chap. 1:11 see Horst, *TDNT* 4, 374–87, Falkenroth and Brown, *NIDNTT* 2, 768–72). It denotes that “longsuffering” which endures wrong and puts up with the exasperating conduct of others rather than flying into a rage or desiring vengeance (cf. L. H. Marshall, *The Challenge of New Testament Ethics* [London: Macmillan, 1947] 294, cited by Martin, NCB, 111).

Each of the five graces with which God's elect are to be clothed show how Christians should behave in their dealings with others, particularly with fellow-believers.

13. The exhortation continues with the two participles ἀνεχόμενοι (“bear with”) and χαριζόμενοι (“forgive”; on the imperatival use of the participle see on 3:9), while the reason or justification for such a conciliatory attitude is: “the Lord has forgiven you.” The exercise of forbearance (ἀνέχομαι means “endure,” “bear with,” “put up with,” so BAG, 65) by Christians toward “one another” (ἀλλήλων, in the genitive case after a verb of emotion, so BDF para. 176[1]; Robertson, *Grammar*, 508, indicates that putting up with other members of the congregation is in view) results from their being clothed with “longsuffering” (μακροθυμία, v 12; according to Lohmeyer, 146, the fivefold list of v 12 is a unity which is tied in with the two admonitions of v 13). That forbearance is to be continual (the verb ἀνέχομαι has a linear connotation while the present tense shows it is ongoing) and reciprocal (cf. Eph 4:2; see also 2 Cor 11 where the note of mutual forbearance is struck several times: vv 1 [twice], 4, 19, 20; cf. Falkenroth and Brown, *NIDNTT* 2, 765, 766). In addition, believers' relationships (although it is possible Paul has in mind a concrete situation in the Colossian church, the reference is probably more general; cf. Lohse, 147, 148, and Martin, NCB, 112) with each other (ἑαυτοῖς; older commentators drew a distinction here between ἀλλήλων, “one another,” and ἑαυτοῖς, “each other,” although the significance of the distinction varied; but there does not seem to be any difference in meaning: the change is for the sake of stylistic variety, cf. BDF para. 287, and Robertson, *Grammar*, 690) should be characterized by mutual forgiveness, χαρίζομαι (“give freely or graciously as a favor,” “give” = “remit,” “forgive,” “pardon,” BAG, 876, 877, and note Conzelmann, *TDNT* 9, 372–402) is not the common word for remission or forgiveness (which is ἀφίημι, “cancel,” “remit,” or “pardon”), but one of richer content emphasizing the gracious nature of the pardon (at Luke 7:42 in our Lord's parable of the two debtors the AV renders the word “frankly forgave”; it is found elsewhere in the Pauline corpus of God's gracious giving or forgiving at Rom 8:32; 1 Cor 2:12; Gal 3:18; Eph 4:32; Phil 1:29; 2:9; Col 2:13; note also 2 Cor 2:7, 10; 12:13; Philem 22). The present tense of the verb (χαριζόμενοι) makes it plain that this forgiveness is to be unceasing, even unwearied (a point which Jesus himself taught when instructing his disciples that forgiveness ought to be “until seventy times seven,” Matt 18:22; cf. vv 21–35), while the conditional sentence, “if one has a complaint against another” (ἐάν τις πρὸς τινα ἔχη μομφήν), recognizes that within the congregation there will be grounds for grievance from time to time (μομφή, “blame,” “cause for complaint,” BAG, 527, cf. Grundmann, *TDNT* 4, 571–74, appears only here in the Greek Bible, occurring elsewhere only rarely and in poetry). “One against another” (τις πρὸς τινα) is a general reference suggesting that legitimate complaints

might be directed by any member of the community against any other. But whenever these grievances arise the readers are to forgive.

The ground and motivation for this response are of the highest order: “as the Lord has forgiven you, so you should also forgive one another” καθὼς καὶ ὁ κύριος ἔχαρισατο ὑμῖν οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς. The two halves of this sentence, as noted above, are balanced by an “as ... so” construction (καθὼς καὶ ... οὕτως καί) which is paralleled elsewhere in Paul’s letters (Rom 15:7, 8; Eph 5:2, 25, 29; cf. Rom 15:3; Mark 10:45; 1 Pet 2:21; 3:18). This is part of what has been described as his “conformity”-teaching in which the full impact of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is set forth as a paradigm of the life style to which the believer “conforms”—it is not simply Christ’s human life which is a model to be imitated by following in his earthly steps (the “imitatio” of later piety). cf. Dahl, *Jesus*, 34, 35, and Martin, NCB, 112. Because Christ has forgiven us we ought to forgive one another. κύριος (“Lord”) is the better attested reading (see above) and refers to Christ himself rather than God (so Lohse, 148, against Ernst, 228, and Merk, *Handeln*, 211, who incorrectly appeals to 1:10 in support of the view that κύριος is a reference to “God”). It is a singular expression, however, for usually it is God who is said to forgive: so Colossians 2:13 and the parallel passage, Ephesians 4:32, “God in Christ forgave you.” Clearly Christ’s mighty work of reconciliation (1:22) is the basis on which that forgiveness of sins is provided. And here the apostle reproduces Jesus’ insistence on the close connection between divine forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others (cf. the Lord’s Prayer, Matt 6:12 and Luke 11:4).

14. Finally, “love” is the crowning grace which the new man has to put on as part of his distinctive dress (ἀγάπην, “love,” is another object of the imperative ἐνδύσασθε, “put on,” v 12). If each of the graces previously mentioned was seen to be characteristic of God or Christ then this is preeminently so of ἀγάπη (“love”), as a concordance will quickly show, and one needs only to refer to 1 Corinthians 13:4 in support for this statement about love so clearly reflects the character of Christ (Larsson, *Christus*, 221, 222). “Above all” (ἐπὶ πᾶσιν δὲ τούτοις) may convey the idea of “on top of all the other ‘articles of clothing’ ” (so Moule, 123. BDF para. 235[3], and Robertson, *Grammar*, 605, agree that here the preposition ἐπί with the dative means “in addition to”). Elsewhere the apostle asserts that “love” is the motive power of faith (Gal 5:6); according to 1 Corinthians 13:13 it is the supreme Christian grace, while at Romans 13:9, 10 all the commandments are summed up in the one commandment, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” “Love” is the fulfilling of the law (πλήρωμα νόμου) because it does nothing but good to a neighbor.

But what is meant by the explanatory clause, “[love] which is the bond of perfection (σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος)” (The explanatory phrase ὃ ἐστίν, “which is,” as a special idiom is used without much regard to the gender or number of either antecedent [ἡ ἀγάπη] or predicate [σύνδεσμος], so Robertson, *Grammar*, 411, 703, and BDF para. 132[2]; note also 1:24, 27; 2:10, 17.) The word σύνδεσμος (a “bond” that holds something together [so BAG, 785] is used of the sinews of the body at Col 2:19) has been taken by some as the link which unites and binds together all the previously mentioned graces of verse 12, so producing the fullness of Christian living. It is the “perfect bond” (τῆς τελειότητος, “of perfection,” is regarded as a qualitative or descriptive genitive) which joins all the other virtues to form an organic unity. Commentators who advocate this line point out that the Pythagoreans regarded “friendship” (φιλία) in much the same way. It was much more highly honored than any other quality being called the “bond of all the virtues” (σύνδεσμον ... πασῶν τῶν ἀρετῶν, Simplicius’ saying in *Epictet*, p. 208; cf. Plato, *Polit* 310a for σύνδεσμος ἀρετῆς, “the bond of virtue,” which Fitzner, *TDNT* 7, 859, claims has

formal similarities with Col 3:14. Note also BAG, 785, Moule, 123, 124, and Bruce, 281). But it is doubtful whether this is what the apostle meant. Nowhere else does he regard love as a uniting force linking other virtues, and this thought is not found in other NT statements about love. In addition, questions have been raised about the relevance of the extrabiblical parallels (Du Plessis, *Perfection*, 201, rightly notes that Paul was not a champion of a hierarchy of virtues, of which he conceived love to be the supreme or dominating principle; cf. Percy, *Probleme*, 407, and Schmauch, 80–82). Consequently an alternative interpretation has been proposed, that is, to regard the genitive “of perfection” (τῆς τελειότητος) as one of purpose, so meaning that love is the bond that leads to perfection (A. Fridrichsen, “Charité et perfection. Observation sur Col. 3, 14,” SO 19 [1939] 41–45, Percy, *Probleme*, 407, Dibelius-Greeven, 44. Several consider the genitive to be objective, but the significance is the same = “the bond which produces perfection,” so BDF para. 163, Turner, *Syntax*, 212, Delling, *TDNT* 8, 79, Du Plessis, *Perfection*, 201, Larson, *Christus*, 221. For a full discussion see Schmauch, 80–82). Love binds together the members of the congregation (rather than the graces previously mentioned) into unity in the body of Christ (the variant reading τῆς ἐνότητος, “of unity,” though secondary, captures the apostle’s thought) so producing perfection (Lohse, 149). Paul is concerned with the readers’ corporate life and the perfection he sets before them is not something narrowly individual. It is attained only as Christians, in fellowship, show love to one another. It is by this love, one of the graces of Christ, that his body is built up.

15. From love Paul passes on to peace (at Eph 4:3 peace rather than love is the “bond,” σύνδεσμος, in which the unity of the Spirit is to be maintained), and in so doing leaves behind the motifs of the old man and the new which have been central to the thought of the chapter from verse 9 on. The prayer for peace frequently turns up in Paul’s letters (e.g. Phil 4:7, “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus”; cf. the opening and closing epistolary greetings [see above], and Gal 6:16; 2 Thess 3:16; note also Rom 16:20; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23; and see Wiles, *Prayers*). Here peace occurs in an exhortation to the readers (not a prayer as Lohse, 149, claims) to let Christ’s peace hold sway in their lives as they relate to one another (note the context of vv 11, 13 and 14). The distinctive phrase “the peace of Christ” (ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Χριστοῦ) designates that peace which he both embodies and brings (cf. John 14:27). As the “Lord of peace” (κύριος τῆς εἰρήνης; elsewhere God is called the “God of peace,” Rom 15:33; 16:20; 1 Cor 14:33; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23) he gives peace to believers (2 Thess 3:16); indeed, he himself is that peace (Eph 2:14).

βραβεύω which occurs only here in the NT (at Col 2:18 the compound καταβραβεύω, “condemn,” is used) originally referred to the function of the umpire (βραβευτής) who presided over and presented prizes at the games (evidence for this comes from the time of Euripides, fifth century B.C.; cf. Stauffer, *TDNT* 1, 637, 638, BAG, 146, Pfizner, *Paul*, 155, Field, *Notes*, 196). But there is considerable evidence to show that the verb was normally used in the more general sense of “judge,” “decide,” “control,” or “rule” (BAG, 146; for examples see Field, *Notes*, 196; against Lightfoot, 221, who presses the point about Christ’s peace acting as umpire: “the idea of a *decision* and an *award* is prominent in the word”). ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, “in your hearts,” does not point to some private and inward peace of the soul or some peaceful disposition of spirit. Rather, “heart” is being employed in its customary OT sense to denote the center of one’s personality as the source of will, emotion, thoughts and affections (cf. Behm, *TDNT* 3, 611–13,

see on 2:2). The peace of Christ is to hold sway over the whole of the readers' lives as they relate to one another (cf. D. Wiederkehr, *Die Theologie der Berufung in den Paulusbriefen* [Studia Friburgensia, NS 36; Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1963] 196; the phrase "in your hearts" is picked up in v 16 with the words "in you," ἐν ὑμῖν); Christ himself is to be present and ruling in their midst.

εἰς ἓν και ἐκληθητε ἐν ἐνὶ σωματι. "Into which also you were called in one body." Since the Colossians are said to have been called into the peace of Christ (and that through the gospel), then the latter expression must designate the realm or sphere in which the new man now lives. So Foerster (*TDNT* 2, 414) calls it "a kingdom in which the believer is protected" (cf. Lohse, 150). As such it is almost equivalent to salvation (see Masson, 146, and E. Biser, "Die Idee des Friedens nach den paulinischen Gefangenschaftsbriefen," *GuL* 27 [1954] 165–70). ἐν ἐνὶ σωματι, "in one body," indicates not the purpose of the believers' calling but the manner or mode (Masson, 147, Schmauch, 82; cf. Turner, *Syntax*, 264): it is to the peace of Christ that they were summoned "as members of a single body" (Moule, 124). Because the phrase contains neither definite article (τῷ, "the") nor explicit reference to Christ (Χριστοῦ or αὐτοῦ, "his") it must in the first instance be interpreted to mean "inasmuch as you belong to a single organism" (Moule, *Origin*, 76), denoting the unity of the group, the local congregation at Colossae (Moule, *Origin*, 76, 77, interprets the parallel passage of Eph 2:15, 16 along similar lines as denoting one, coherent organism, "in a single body"). Accordingly, those who have been reconciled to God (1:20, 22), who have peace with him through Christ, should manifest that peace among themselves. But is there more than a passing reference to the body metaphor, more than an allusion to communal life? It is possible, as most commentators suppose, that Paul implies Christ's body is this organism and it is depicted as the place of peace (Ernst, 228, claims that the linking of the motifs of peace and body reminds one of the Colossian hymn, 1:15–20. Christ is the head of the body and the origin of peace and reconciliation. What is seen there in a world-wide context, he claims, is here actualized for a special church and its problems). In it men and women are reconciled to one another and to God: it is the sphere of redemption (Best, *Body*, 154; cf. W. Bieder, *Die Berufung im Neuen Testament* [ATANT 38; Zürich: Zwingli, 1961] 77–79; Schweizer, 156, in the light of the earlier references [1:18, 24; 2:19], understands the phrase as referring to the body of Christ, although he does concede that it could refer simply to the unity of the group).

και εὐχαριστοι γινεσθε. "And be thankful." Once again in the letter the note of thanksgiving is struck (cf. 1:3, 12; 2:7; 3:17; 4:2). The Greek refers not simply to a grateful attitude or a thankful disposition (so the rendering "be grateful" does not quite get the point), though this is obviously included. Within the Pauline letters the εὐχαριστεω word-group regularly denotes gratitude that finds outward expression in thanksgiving; there is an emphasis in Paul on the public aspect of thanksgiving. By mentioning what God has graciously done in his Son other Christians are encouraged to praise him also; and as thanksgivings abound so God is glorified (2 Cor 4:15; cf. 1:11; on this theme see P. T. O'Brien, "Thanksgiving within the Structure of

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Pauline Theology,” *Pauline Studies in Honour of Professor F. F. Bruce*, ed. D. A. Hagner and M. J. Harris [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980] 50–66). From this general exhortation (cf. also v 17; see below for the view that v 15b is a sort of rubric to the next topic of catechetical instruction) it is clear that thanksgiving is an integral part of the Christian life (εὐχάριστος, “thankful,” occurs only here and at Prov 11:16 in the Greek Bible; the imperative γίνεσθε, lit. “become,” rather than ἔστε, “be,” according to Meyer, 446, draws attention to the “constant striving after this exalted aim as something not yet attained”; cf. Abbott, 290); indeed the regular offering of thanks to God is almost synonymous with being a Christian (see A. Hamman, *La Prière. I. Le Nouveau Testament* [Tournai: Desclée, 1959] 291, 292). By contrast, pagans who possess the raw materials of the knowledge of God, as his creatures were bound to render glory and thanksgiving to him as their creator (Rom 1:21), i.e. to recognize his lordship and live in grateful obedience. But they were destitute of that thanksgiving which the knowledge they possessed should have drawn forth (cf. the ἀχαριστοι, “ungrateful,” of 2 Tim 3:2 which describes the character of men in the last days), and the original image of God was defaced (Merk, *Handeln*, 213). Here at verse 15 the grounds for thanksgiving are not spelled out, though previously in the letter the readers were encouraged to praise God for having delivered them from a tyranny of darkness and transferred them into the kingdom of his beloved Son (1:12–14). Elsewhere in Paul’s letters, while the grounds for the giving of thanks are manifold, the great emphasis falls upon the mighty work of God in Christ bringing salvation through the gospel. God’s activity in creation is, on occasion, mentioned as a basis for the expression of gratitude (cf. Rom 1:21 and the thanksgivings said over food: Rom 14:6; 1 Cor 10:30; 1 Tim 4:3, 4). But the majority of the Pauline references are in the context of God’s grace given in Christ (1 Cor 1:4; cf. 2 Cor 9:15 with 8:9; Rom 1:8; 2 Cor 1:11; Eph 1:16; Phil 1:3, etc). At Colossians 3:15 such thanksgiving, which is inculcated upon those who are in one body, will be offered as the readers “sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (v 16). However, it will not be restricted to these corporate occasions (at v 17 the giving of thanks to God as Father is to be the accompaniment of every activity), as it is to be offered “under all circumstances” (ἐν παντι, 1 Thess 5:18), being the appropriate response of those who are filled with God’s Spirit (Eph 5:18–20).

16. As the Colossians were exhorted to let the peace of Christ rule their lives (v 15), so now they are admonished to let the Word of Christ (ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ is parallel to ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Χριστοῦ, “the peace of Christ”) dwell richly among them. The expression, “the Word of Christ” (ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ), is used here instead of “the Word” (ὁ λόγος, 4:3), “the Word of God” (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, 1:25) or “the Word of the Lord” (λόγος κυρίου, 1 Thess 4:15; 2 Thess 3:1). The change from “of God” or “of the Lord” may have been due to the Colossian situation; certainly the present expression is in keeping with the rest of the letter with its emphasis on the person and work of Christ (von Soden, 64, and Abbott, 290). While the genitive “of Christ” (τοῦ Χριστοῦ) might be subjective indicating that Christ himself is the speaker when his word is proclaimed (cf. Lightfoot, 222, Meyer, 447, Bruce, 283), it is probably objective referring to the message that centers on Christ, that Word of truth or gospel (ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, 1:5; cf. Gal 1:7; 1 Cor 9:12; 2 Cor 2:12) which came to the Colossians and took up a firm place in their lives from the time Epaphras first preached it to them. As such it is normative and ought to control their lives.

That Word is to dwell richly in their midst. ἐνοικέω (“live in,” “dwell in,” “indwell”; so BAG, 267) appears only in a metaphorical sense in the New Testament (all six occurrences are in the Pauline corpus). So God himself will dwell among his people (2 Cor 6:16 citing Lev 26:11, 12), and the Holy Spirit dwells in believers (Rom 8:11 [cf. v 9]; 2 Tim 1:14; cf. 1 Cor 3:16). Not only the Word of Christ but also faith (2 Tim 1:5) may be said to dwell among God’s own (contrast Rom 7:17 regarding the indwelling sin). ἐν ὑμῖν has been taken to mean “in your hearts” (so Lightfoot, 222, who understands the statement to refer to “the presence of Christ in the heart as an inward monitor”), “among you” (Masson, 147; cf. Schrage, *Einzelgebote*, 91) or “in you,” that is, “in your church . . ., as a whole, being compared to a house, in which the word has the seat of its abiding operation and rule” (Meyer, 448; cf. Abbott, 290). Bruce, 283, claims that Paul would not have wished to be pinned down too firmly to the alternatives of either “within you” (as individual Christians) or “among you” (as a Christian community). He does add, however, that “if one of the two had to be accepted, the collective sense might be preferred in view of the context.” πλουσίως (“richly,” “abundantly”) describes the manner of the Word’s indwelling. Elsewhere in the epistles this adverb is found in statements which describe God’s gracious and rich bestowal of his gifts: at 1 Timothy 6:17 it is used of “God who richly (πλουσίως) furnishes us with everything to enjoy,” in contrast to the “rich in this world”; while at Titus 3:6 the Holy Spirit is “poured out upon us richly (πλουσίως) through Jesus Christ our Savior,” and in 2 Peter 1:11 an “entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly (πλουσίως) provided.” Here in Colossians πλουσίως (“richly”) appears within an exhortation: the gospel is to have its gracious and glorious way in their lives. If the double reference of ἐν ὑμῖν (“within you” and “among you”) is in view then this rich indwelling would occur when they came together, listened to the Word of Christ as it was preached and expounded to them (see Schrage, *Einzelgebote*, 91, Ernst, 229, and Schweizer, 157) and bowed to its authority. By this means Christ’s rule would be exercised in their lives. As the Spirit of God indwells believers (Rom 8:9, 11; 2 Tim 1:14; cf. 1 Cor 3:16) so the “Word of Christ” should reside among them in rich abundance, producing great blessing (cf. Ernst, 229, and Lohse, 150).

ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ διδάσκοντες καὶ νουθετοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς κτλ. As the word of Christ richly indwells the Colossians, so by means of its operation they will “teach and admonish one another in all wisdom by means of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (this lengthy clause gives a modal definition of the preceding, so Meyer, 448). “Teaching and admonishing” (διδάσκοντες καὶ νουθετοῦντες; some exegetes consider that these dependent participles occur with an imperatival force, so Lightfoot, 222, Lohse, 150, etc; if they are taken as true participles then the nominative plurals following the subject ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, “the word of Christ,” are constructed according to sense, so Turner, *Syntax*, 230, cf. Meyer, 448, and note the similar instance at 2:2—either way the teaching and admonition in all wisdom arise from the indwelling of the word, cf. Delling, *TDNT* 8, 498, Ernst, 229, and Dunn, *Jesus*, 237) were previously mentioned as activities of Paul and his co-workers, for it was by such instruction and admonition that the public proclamation of Christ as Lord was effected (see on 1:28). Here, however, it is the members of the congregation (so most commentators including Behm, *TDNT* 4, 1022 [cf. Rom 15:14; 1 Thess 5:14], but contrast Schrage, *Einzelgebote*, 137) who teach and admonish one another (ἑαυτοὺς, “yourselves,” which does not really differ from ἀλλήλους, “one another,” being reflexive in a reciprocal sense [so Robertson, *Grammar*, 690, BDF para. 287, Turner, *Syntax*, 43], binds the two participles together). The phrase “in all wisdom” (ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ) is attached to the following words indicating the manner in which the teaching and admonition are to occur (although Lightfoot, 221, 222, argued that the phrase, on the basis of 1:9; Eph 1:8; 5:18, 19,

should be taken with the preceding clause [cf. AV, RV], the other alternative is favored by the sense of 1:28, where teaching and admonition occur in all wisdom, and it is balanced by ἐν χάριτι ᾄδοντες, “singing with grace or thankfulness,” so ASV, RSV, NEB, NIV; cf. Bruce, 283, Lohse, 151, Schweizer, 157), that is, in a thoughtful and tactful manner (Bruce, 283; see also Bratcher and Nida, 90).

The motif of wisdom (σοφία) turns up on several occasions in Colossians: so Paul prays that the Colossians might be filled with a knowledge of God’s will, and the perception of that will consists in wisdom (ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ) and understanding of every sort, on the spiritual level (1:9). At chapter 1:28 the apostolic ministry of admonition and teaching is effected “in all wisdom” (ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ). In Christ all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge have been stored up (2:3), while by contrast the taboos which the false teachers propounded were merely human inventions having only the appearance of wisdom (2:23, λόγον ... σοφίας). At chapter 4:5 “wisdom” has to do with practical and realistic behavior in Christians’ dealings with those outside the congregation. Here at chapter 3:16 it is possible that the phrase “in all wisdom” (ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ), as at chapter 1:28, stands in contrast to the heretics’ claim to wisdom. At the same time this true wisdom, for which Paul had previously prayed, shows itself in a practical way: the teaching and admonition are given in a thoughtful and tactful manner.

ψαλμοῖς, ὕμνοις, ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς. This mutual instruction and warning are to take place “by means of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” The ASV punctuates the sentence along these lines (cf. also the AV and RV) although the RSV renders the Greek “and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (cf. NIV) so linking these three nouns with the following participle ᾄδοντες (“singing”). It is not patently clear as to which is the correct interpretation and commentators are as divided on the point as the versions (so, for example, Delling, *TDNT* 8, 498, Lohse, 136, 151, Schweizer, 153, and Barrels, *NIDNTT* 3, 675, link the noun with the following participles, while Meyer, 448, Lightfoot, 222, Percy, *Probleme*, 395, and Bruce, 283, 284, opt for the other alternative). Our preference for joining “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” with “teaching and admonishing one another” is for the following reasons: (a) the two participial clauses ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ διδάσκοντες ... (“in all wisdom teaching ...”) and ἐν (τῇ) χάριτι ᾄδοντες ... (“with thanksgiving [or grace] singing ...”) are symmetrically balanced with their prepositional phrases (both commencing with ἐν, “in”) at the head of each clause and the participles immediately following (cf. Meyer, 448). By contrast the other alternative with ψαλμοῖς κτλ. being attached to the following involves an overweighting of the final participial clause (a criticism noted by Bruce, 284). (b) The RSV rendering necessitates the insertion of “and” before “singing” (ᾄδοντες, cf. NIV) but this does not appear in the original

RV Revised Version, 1881–85

ASV American Standard Version, American Revised Version (1901)

RSV Revised Standard Version (NT 1946, OT 1952, Apoc 1957)

NEB The New English Bible

NIV The New International Version (1978)

opt optative

(cf. Schweizer, 157, against Delling, *TDNT* 8, 498). (c) The parallel passage in Ephesians 5:19 (which interestingly enough the RSV renders as “addressing [λαλοῦντες] one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart”) gives the same general sense as our interpretation. (d) The objection that mutual teaching and admonition would not take place in such psalms, hymns and spiritual songs is not valid. If the apostle had in mind antiphonal praise or solo singing for mutual edification in church meetings (Bruce, 284) then mutual instruction and exhortation could well have been possible. Further, recent study of NT hymnody (note the bibliography to 1:15–20 and see also R. P. Martin, “Approaches to New Testament Exegesis,” *New Testament Interpretation. Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. H. Marshall [Exeter: Paternoster, 1977] 235–41 American edition [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977]) has shown that within early Christian hymns both didactic and hortatory elements featured.

It is not possible to distinguish sharply between each of the three terms “psalms,” “hymns” and “songs” (so most recent writers, cf. Schlier, *TDNT* 1, 164, and note Lohse’s treatment, 151; against Lightfoot, 222, 223). ψαλμός (“song of praise,” “psalm,” BAG, 891; cf. Delling, *TDNT* 8, 489–503, and Bartels, *NIDNTT* 3, 668–76) is employed by Luke of the OT psalms (Luke 20:42; 24:44; Acts 1:20; 13:33) though it came to be used more generally of a song of praise (1 Cor 14:26; Eph 5:19) of which the OT psalms were probably regarded as spiritual prototypes (on the basis of the original meaning of ψάλλω to “pluck [hair],” “twang” a bow-string, and then “pluck” a harp or any other stringed instrument, some have thought that ψαλμός inevitably meant a song sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument; but this restriction is unnecessary, cf. Bruce, 284, and Delling, *TDNT* 8, 499). At 1 Corinthians 14:26 ψαλμός may be a newly coined “song of praise” prompted by the Spirit and sung with thankful rejoicing by a member of the congregation. Bartels (*NIDNTT* 3, 671, 672) suggests that such songs of praise “will include free compositions as well as repeated liturgical fragments . . . , and also new Christian songs (which may well have been modelled on the Psalms of the OT and of later Judaism . . .), such as we know from the wording of the various songs of Rev.” ὕμνος, a general term in Biblical literature, denotes any “festive hymn of praise” (LXX Isa 42:10; 1 Macc 13:51; cf. Acts 16:25; Heb 2:12) though in its two NT occurrences it refers to an expression of praise to God or Christ (here and Eph 5:19). ᾠδή (“song,” BAG, 895) is used in the NT of the song in which God’s acts are praised and glorified (cf. Rev 5:9; 14:3; 15:3). Although firm distinctions cannot be drawn between the terms nor can an exact classification of NT hymns be made on the basis of the different words (so Delling, *TDNT* 8, 499, and *Worship in the New Testament*. Tr P. Scott [London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1962] 86, 87, and Martin, NCB, 116) taken together these three words “psalms,” “hymns” and “songs” describe “the full range of singing which the Spirit prompts” (Lohse, 151; while the adjective πνευματικαῖς “prompted by the Spirit, consistent with Greek usage, agrees grammatically with the last term ᾠδαῖς, “songs,” it refers to all three nouns). As the word of Christ indwells the members of the community and controls them so they teach and admonish one another in Spirit-inspired psalms, hymns and songs (whatever the precise musical form is, see W. S. Smith, *Musical Aspects of the New Testament* [Amsterdam: Have, 1962]).

ἐν [τῇ] χάριτι ἄδοντες ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν τῷ θεῷ. These words may specify another result of the rich indwelling of the word of Christ (Meyer, 450, prefers this interpretation in which the clause is taken as co-ordinate with the preceding), or they may denote the attitude or disposition which is to accompany the previously mentioned instruction and admonition, that is, as the Colossians teach one another in psalms, hymns and songs inspired by the Spirit, so they

are to sing thankfully to God with their whole being (on this view the participial clause ἐν [τῇ] χάριτι ᾄδοντες, “singing gratefully,” is subordinate to the preceding; note the discussions of von Soden, 64 and Abbott, 292). Although it is difficult to be certain, our preference is for the latter since it links the singing with the teaching through song. If the participial clauses had been coordinated one might have expected a κιά, “and,” to have been inserted. From the context it is clear that both the instruction and the disposition which should accompany it arise from the rich indwelling of the Word. The expression ἐν τῇ χάριτι could mean “gratefully” (i.e. with thanksgiving), “by the grace (of God)” or “in the (realm of God’s) grace,” (cf. Moule, 125, 126), and the presence or absence of the article τῇ (“the”), about which the manuscripts are divided, does not finally settle the issue (so Moule, 125, 126, and RevExp 70 [1973] 493; against Lohse, 152, who contends that the definite article specifies χάρις as “God’s bestowal of grace which gives life to the believers. The phrase ἐν [χάριτι] reminds the readers of sola gratia (by grace alone) which is the sole basis of existence and creates the realm in which the Christian life can exist and develop.” cf. Dibelius-Greeven, 45, and Schmauch, 82). Each of these renderings falls within the range of meanings χάρις (“grace”; cf. BAG, 877, 878, and Schweizer, 158) and perhaps one ought not to distinguish between them too sharply. However, since the note of thanksgiving is an important theme in the section, appearing at verses 15 and 17, it is just possible that thankfulness, our proper response to God’s grace, is in view once again. ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν does not specify an inward disposition as though the apostle is speaking of silent worship in contrast to “with your voices.” As in verse 15 καρδία (“heart”) is employed to refer to the whole of one’s being. “Man should not only praise God with his lips. The entire man should be filled with songs of praise” (Lohse, 151).

17 The paragraph with its injunctions is summed up (cf. Bujard, *Untersuchungen*, 98) in an exhortation that is universal in scope, covering every aspect of life; it is by no means “colorless” as Lohmeyer, 151, claims. There are few exhortations in the NT which are as comprehensive as this one (cf. 1 Cor 10:31, “So whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God”). Every activity is to be done in obedience to the Lord Jesus and accompanied by the giving of thanks to God through him. If the rich indwelling of the Word of Christ in the readers’ lives should be manifest in mutual teaching and admonition, as the Colossians gratefully sing to God, then it should also (καί) show its dynamic presence in this comprehensive way.

πᾶν ὃ τι ἐὰν ποιῆτε ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ. This first clause, “whatever you do, in word or deed,” is an absolute nominative (cf. Meyer, 452, 453, Abbott, 292, and Lohmeyer, 151) placed at the beginning for rhetorical emphasis and it stands syntactically independent. The expression “whatever” (πᾶν ὃ τι ἐὰν, a Semitic phrase according to K. Beyer, *Semitische Syntax im Neuen Testament* [SUNT 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1962] 169, BDF para. 466[3], and Lohse, 152) introduces this clause and is picked up again with the word “everything” (πάντα), which begins the main clause. In this way the point is strongly driven home that the Christian’s whole life must be lived in obedience to the Lord Jesus. “In word or deed” (ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ) explains the first term “all” (πᾶν) so making plain that the injunction ought not to be limited to the context of worship (there is no intention in this comprehensive injunction to restrict the meaning of “word” and “deed” to the liturgical practices of “preaching” and the Lord’s Supper). In all his activities the believer ought to render “spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1, 2. cf. E.

Käsemann, “Worship in Everyday Life: a note on Romans 12,” *New Testament Questions of Today*, 188–95).

πάντα ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ. “(Do) everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.” The verb in this principal clause has to be supplied, but it is clear from the context that it should be the imperative ποιεῖτε, “Do” (so most commentators who rightly prefer it to the participle ποιοῦντες; the following participle εὐχαριστοῦντες, “giving thanks,” is then dependent on the imperative). “In the name of the Lord Jesus” (ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ) is used elsewhere in the context of baptism (Acts 10:48). The whole content of salvation revealed in Jesus is comprised in his name (Acts 4:12; 1 Cor 6:11). Belief in the name of Jesus, i.e. his messianic mission (John 3:18), is God’s command (1 John 3:23; 5:13), so that anyone who believes in that name receives the forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:43; 1 John 2:12), has eternal life (John 20:21; 1 John 5:13) and escapes the judgment (John 3:18). The formula “in the name of Jesus” is used with reference to God giving the Holy Spirit (John 14:26) and the offering of thanks (Eph 5:20). Jesus’ disciples perform miracles and acts of compassion in his name (Luke 10:17; Mark 8:38, 39), while Paul was able to admonish through the name of the Lord Jesus (2 Thess 3:6; 1 Cor 1:10), and give judgment in that name (1 Cor 5:4) as one commissioned and authorized by him (so Bietenhard, *NIDNTT* 2, 654; for further details see his treatment in *TDNT* 5, 270–81). Here at Colossians 3:17, “The whole life of the Christian stands under the name of Jesus,” as Bietenhard has aptly put it (*TDNT* 5, 274. Lohse, 152, Martin, NCB, 117, and others have drawn attention to the rabbinic parallel, credited to Rabbi Jose [c. A.D. 100]: “Let all thy deeds be done for the sake of Heaven” [lit. “in the name of heaven”; Danby’s translation]). In becoming a Christian the believer calls upon Jesus as Lord (Rom 10:9, 10) and comes under the authority of Christ. He belongs wholly to him; thus everything he says or does ought to be in the light of the fact that Jesus is his Lord. His behavior should be entirely consistent with Jesus’ character (Merk, *Handeln*, 214, following Schrage, *Einzelgebote*, 240, 241, claims that this singular expression, “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” is a reference to the historical Jesus), and this will occur as the word of Christ richly indwells him and other members of the congregation (v 16).

εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ. Thanksgiving is to be the accompaniment of every activity (this clause provides an accompanying definition, “while you at the same time give thanks ...”; cf. Meyer, 453), being offered to the Father through Christ. We have already noted elsewhere in Colossians that thanksgiving is offered to God in his character as Father (see on 1:3, 12; and note W. Marchel, *Abba, Père! La prière du Christ et des chrétiens*. 2nd ed. [AnBib 19A; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1971] 190–97). Once again such praise is to ascend to him though here it is specifically mentioned as “through the Lord Jesus” (δι’ αὐτοῦ, i.e. the one in whose name all things are to be said and done; cf. Eph 5:20, “giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father”). Lohse (153, following Oepke, *TDNT* 2, 68, 69) rejects the notion that Jesus Christ is here thought of as the one who mediates thanks to God (on the ground that the formula “through Christ” is never linked with verbs of asking) and asserts that the phrase “gives pregnant expression to the constitutive significance of Christ for the whole of the Christian life” (Oepke, *TDNT* 2, 69, cited by Lohse, 153; he also makes reference to W. Thüsing, *Per Christum in Deum. Studien zum Verhältnis von Christozentrik und Theozentrik in den*

c. *circa* (about, approximately) or common

AnBib *Analecta biblica* (Rome: PBI)

paulinischen Hauptbriefen. 2nd ed. [NTAbh, NS 1; Münster: Aschendorff, 1969] 164–237, who treats the relevant passages from the major Pauline epistles along similar lines). So Lohse asserts: “Christ is the Lord who provides the basis and sets the goal for the life of believers.”

However, without wishing to deny that the ultimate ground for the giving of thanks in Paul’s letters is the mighty work of God in Christ bringing salvation through the gospel (O’Brien, *Studies*, 50–66, especially 62), here the basis is not spelled out (H. Greeven, *Gebet und Eschatologie im Neuen Testament* [Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1931] 180, considers Paul’s short form of exhortation to thanksgiving, in which the grounds are not expressly stated, is the most profound). If Paul had intended to provide this we would have expected him to have written δι’ αὐτόν (“because of him,” i.e. διὰ with the accusative rather than the genitive). Instead, “through him” (δι’ αὐτοῦ) signifies that Christ is the mediator of the thanksgiving, a notion that is in view at Romans 1:8, 7:25 (and possibly 1 Cor 15:57; on the use of the διὰ phrases, such as “through our Lord Jesus Christ,” in connection with rejoicing in God [Rom 5:11], exhorting the brethren [Rom 15:30], etc, see W. Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God*. Tr B. Hardy [SBT 50; London: SCM, 1966] 84–89; cf. O’Brien. *Introductory Thanksgivings*, 204–206). This is not to be understood to mean that as high priest Christ was presenting or transmitting each prayer to the Father (the view of O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*. Tr S. C. Guthrie and C. A. M. Hall. 2nd ed. [London: SCM, 1963] 107; 1st American edition [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959]. Kramer, *Christ*, 88, rightly notes that exhortation passages such as this prove there is no idea of any “high priestly activity” on the part of the exalted Lord; cf. Deichgräber’s comments, *Gotteshymnus*, 40), but that thanksgiving could now be addressed to God through him, the mediator, who had opened the way to the Father’s presence. This the readers might do with confidence since Christ’s death had torn down the separating curtain which had excluded a direct approach (Harder, *Paulus*, 163–99, has argued that “through Christ” is one of the significant distinguishing marks of Christian prayer, especially thanksgiving).

Explanation

The Colossian Christians are addressed by means of privileged titles: they are the elect of God, holy and beloved. That is, they are his chosen people whom he has set apart for himself and upon whom he has placed his love. These descriptions were employed not only of Israel in the OT but also of Christ himself in the NT. So the point of the readers’ similarity to and identification with him is underscored in a context where they are said already to have put on the new man (v 10) and consequently must don the graces which are characteristic of him. In fact, the five so-called virtues listed here (note the two catalogs of vices in v 5 and 8) are elsewhere predicated of God or Christ: “heartfelt compassion, kindness, lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering.” Each of these graces with which the readers are to be clothed shows how they, as God’s elect, should behave in their dealings with others, particularly with fellow-believers. As a result of their being clothed with “longsuffering” they are to show continual forbearance toward one another. Further, their relationships with each other should be characterized by mutual forgiveness. As the Lord freely forgave them, so when grievances arise they are to forgive each

NTAbh Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen

SBT Studies in Biblical Theology (London/Naperville, IL: SCM/Allenson) or *Studia biblica et theologica*

SCM Student Christian Movement

other. Love is the crowning grace which the new man is to put on as part of his distinctive dress, for love is the bond which produces perfection.

Christ's peace is to hold sway over every aspect of the readers' lives as they relate to one another; in other words, Christ himself, who is the Lord of peace, is to be present and ruling in their midst. And since the Colossians are said to have been called into the peace of Christ (that is, through the gospel), then the latter expression must also designate the realm or sphere in which the new man now lives. The readers are also admonished to let the word of Christ—the gospel message which centers on Christ—have its gracious and glorious way in their midst. If this occurs then the members of the congregation will mutually teach and admonish one another in a thoughtful and tactful way. Such mutual instruction and admonition will take place in Spirit-inspired psalms, hymns and songs as the Colossians sing thankfully to God with their whole being.

The paragraph with its injunctions is summed up in an exhortation that is universal in its scope, covering every aspect of life. Every activity is to be done in obedience to the Lord Jesus and accompanied by the giving of thanks to God through him. If the rich indwelling of the Word of Christ in the readers' lives is to be manifested in mutual teaching and admonition, as the Colossians thankfully sing to God, then it should also show its dynamic presence in this comprehensive way.