

*Seek the Things Above (3:1–4)*¹

Bibliography

Dupont, J. ΣΥΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΩΙ. *L'union avec le Christ suivant saint Paul*. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1952, 39–47. **Grässer, E.** *ZTK* 64 (1967) 139–68. **Lincoln, A. T.** *The Heavenly Dimension. Studies in the Role of Heaven in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology*. University of Cambridge: Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1977, 198–217. **Merk, O.** *Handeln aus Glauben. Die Motivierungen der paulinischen Ethik*. Marburger Theologische Studien 5. Marburg: Elwert, 1968, 201–204. **Moule, C. F. D.** “‘The New Life’ in Colossians 3:1–17.” *RevExp* 70 (1973) 481–93. **Schnackenburg, R.** *Baptism*, 67–73. **Schrage, W.** *Die konkreten Einzelgebote in der paulinischen Paränese*. Gütersloh: Mohn, 1961. **Wulf, F.** “‘Suchet, was droben ist, wo Christus ist, sitzend zur Rechten Gottes!’ (Kol 3, 1).” *GuL* 41 (1968) 161–64, **Zeilinger, F.** *Der Erstgeborene*, 60–63, 147–51.

Translation

¹Since then you were raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at God's right hand. ²Set your minds on the things above, not on earthly things, ³For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is our^a life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Notes

a. Throughout Colossians there is some doubt about the correct reading between the first and second person plurals (cf. 1:7; 2:13 and this text). Here it is possible that ἡμῶν (“our”), which is supported by B D^c H K 326 syr^{p,h} cop^{sa} etc., was altered by scribes to ὑμῶν so as to bring it into

¹Peter T. O'Brien, vol. 44, *Word Biblical Commentary : Colossians-Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 157ff.

ZTK Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche

RevExp Review and Expositor

GuL Geist und Leben

^a a. Throughout Colossians there is some doubt about the correct reading between the first and second person plurals (cf. 1:7; 2:13 and this text). Here it is possible that ἡμῶν (“our”), which is supported by B D^c H K 326 syr^{p,h} cop^{sa} etc., was altered by scribes to ὑμῶν so as to bring it into line with the second person pronouns throughout verses 1–4. However, the reading ὑμῶν (“your”) has considerably stronger manuscript support, including P⁴⁶ and good representatives of both the Alexandrian and Western text types (Ⲛ C D* F G P 31 81 it vg cop^{bo} etc; cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 624). Accordingly, if ὑμῶν (“your”) was the original reading the change to ἡμῶν (“our”) may have been due to faulty hearing or because the copyist wished to maintain the point that Christ is the life of Christians generally and not simply of those at Colossae. On balance it seems more likely that the reading “our life” (ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν) was the original text and was altered very early to conform to the second person style of this section of the letter.

cf. *confer*, compare

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

line with the second person pronouns throughout verses 1–4. However, the reading ὑμῶν (“your”) has considerably stronger manuscript support, including P⁴⁶ and good representatives of both the Alexandrian and Western text types (Ⲙ C D* F G P 31 81 it vg cop^{bo} etc; cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 624). Accordingly, if ὑμῶν (“your”) was the original reading the change to ἡμῶν (“our”) may have been due to faulty hearing or because the copyist wished to maintain the point that Christ is the life of Christians generally and not simply of those at Colossae. On balance it seems more likely that the reading “our life” (ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν) was the original text and was altered very early to conform to the second person style of this section of the letter.

Form/Structure/Setting

The short section of four verses commencing with the words εἰ οὖν συνηγερθητε τῷ Χριστῷ (“since therefore you were raised with Christ”) serves as an important transition piece in the letter (cf. Grässer, *ZTK* 64 [1967] 146, Lähnemann, *Kolosserbrieff*, 30, 31, Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 60–62, Schweizer, 130, 131). On the one hand, it rounds off what has been said previously serving as the conclusion to the author’s polemic against the “philosophy” of the false teachers (2:8–23) and presenting the true alternative to that teaching (Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 61). On the other hand, it marks a new beginning spelling out programmatically the inferences of the preceding for the walk of believers (Lähnemann, *Kolosserbrieff*, 30). So the οὖν (“therefore,” v 1, cf. vv 5, 12) indicates that what follows is connected with the train of thought previously developed (cf. the similar function of the conjunction at Rom 12:1; Eph 4:1). By means of the introductory συνηγέρθητε (“you were raised with,” v 1) the apostle takes up the συνηγέρθητε (“you were raised with”) and the συνεζωοποίησεν (“he made you alive together with”) of chapter 2:12, 13, at the same time preparing for the summons to “put on the new man” of chapter 3:12. With the ἀπεθάνετε (“you died,” v 3) Paul harks back to the ἀπεθάνετε σὺν Χριστῷ ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου (“you died with Christ from the elemental spirits of the universe,” 2:20), and picks up ideas expressed in chapter 2:11–13 (“you were circumcised ... in the circumcision of Christ ... you were buried with him”), at the same time providing the basis for the imperative in the exhortatory section νεκρώσατε (“put to death,” 3:5). The τὰ ἄνω (“the things above,” vv 1, 2) which designates the transcendent heavenly realm at the center of which

D Codex Bezae or Deuteronom(ist)ic

H Holiness Code

K Kethib (the written consonantal Hebrew text of OT)

syri Syriac language or text version of the OT, (as published in the Peshitta Insitute edition, 1980)

C Codex Ephraemi Syri

F Codex Ambrosianus

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.

P Peshet (commentary)

is the exalted Christ is perhaps a summary expression reiterating the points made in chapters 1 and 2 about the lordship of Christ (cf. 1:15–20; 2:6, 10), at the same time providing the point of orientation for the new man (3:10). τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (“earthly things,” v 2), whatever else it involves, clearly refers back to chapter 2:20–23 and designates the instruction and practice of the false teachers. At the same time the phrase is picked up and used generally to describe the catalog of vices (3:5). Like chapter 2:6, 7 these four verses stand at an important pivotal point in the letter.

Structurally the section may be divided into two parts: verses 1, 2, and verses 3, 4 (note Zeilinger’s analysis, *Der Erstgeborene*, 60–62). Verse 1 contains three clauses, an introductory conditional clause εἰ οὖν συνηγέρθητε τῷ Χριστῷ (“if [= since] then you were raised with Christ”), a principal clause with its imperative τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε (“seek the things above”) and an indirect question (in its present form it is an adverbial clause of place), οὗ ὁ Χριστός ἐστιν ἐν δεξιά τοῦ θεοῦ καθημένος (“where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God”). Verse 2 contains two imperatival clauses set in a short antithesis:

τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε
μὴ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς
“Set your mind on things above
not on earthly things.”

Unlike the earlier antitheses of chapter 2:8, 16 and 17, 18 and 19, where the negative statement or injunction occurs first and is followed by its positive contrasting assertion, here the positive exhortation is spelled out first.

The second part of the section, verses 3 and 4, is joined to the preceding (γάρ, “for,” v 3) and provides the basis for the earlier exhortations. In verse 3 the orientation is toward the past, while in verse 4 it is directed to the future (note the verbs used: v 3, ἀπεθάνετε, “you died,” and κέκρυπται, “has been hidden”; v. 4, φανερωθῆ, “is manifested,” i.e. in the future, and φανερωθήσεσθε, “you will be manifested”). Yet the two verses may be paralleled as follows (cf. Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 61, 62):

v. ἀπεθάνετε γὰρ	4a ὅταν ὁ Χριστὸς φανερωθῆ
3a	
b καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν	b —ἡ ζωὴ ἡμῶν—
c κέκρυπται σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ	c τότε καὶ ὑμεῖς σὺν αὐτῷ φανερωθήσεσθε
d ἐν τῷ θεῷ	d ἐν δόξῃ
v. “For you died	4a “When Christ appears
3a	
b and your <i>life</i>	b —our <i>life</i> —
c is hidden <i>with</i> Christ	c then you also will appear <i>with</i> him
d <i>in</i> God.”	d <i>in</i> glory.”

Comment

i.e. *id est*, that is

The major hortatory section of the letter begins with Paul’s reminder that the Colossians not only died with Christ in his death (2:20, cf. vv 11, 12) but they were also raised from the dead with him (2:12, *συνηγέρθητε*). This short paragraph of four verses also concludes the “doctrinal” section of the epistle for it rounds out what has previously been said by the apostle against the “philosophy” of the false teachers (2:8–23) presenting the true alternative to that teaching: since you have shared in Christ’s resurrection your aims, ambitions, in fact your whole outlook, are to be centered in him, in that place of highest honor where God has exalted him. Chapter 3:1–4, like the earlier short section chapter 2:6, 7, serves as an important bridge passage in the epistle, drawing together themes previously mentioned (2:11, 12, 13, 20), at the same time setting forth the theological foundation (the “indicative”) for the exhortation (the “imperative”) that follows.

Although Paul is not dealing directly with the catchwords of the false teachers it is possible that the positive expressions set forth in verses 1–4 show that the controversy is still in view (Grässer’s contention, however, that all the formulations are polemically directed is difficult to prove, *ZTK* 64 [1967] 151; for a more cautious approach see Lähnemann, *Kolosserbrie* 53).

1. εἰ οὖν *συνηγέρθητε τῷ Χριστῷ*. With the assertion, “since, therefore, you were raised with Christ,” the apostle consciously sets forth the positive counterpart to chapter 2:20, “since you died with Christ” (the εἰ οὖν is resumptive of εἰ in 2:20, while the εἰ [= “since”] no more suggests doubt here than it did in the earlier reference, a point which incidentally is confirmed by 3:3 *ἄπεθάνετε γάρ*, “for you died,” cf. Williams, 121, and Delling, *TDNT* 7, 686). He does not finish with the negative statement that Christians have been set free from the rule of the evil powers, but presses on to make the positive assertion about their being raised with Christ together with its implications. What follows then is connected with the train of thought previously developed (cf. Lohse, 132; the οὖν “therefore” [cf. vv 5, 12], functions as in Rom 12:1; Eph 4:1): you have been raised with Christ for new life. *συνηγέρθητε* (“you were raised”) picks up the same word from chapter 2:12 (cf. v 13, “he [God] made you alive together with him [Christ]”) while the definite article τῷ, “the” (before Χριστῷ, “Christ,” an instance of the article of renewed mention), makes plain that it is in union with the same person with whom they died (*ἄπεθάνετε σὺν Χριστῷ*, 2:20) that they have been raised. Again it is noted that the Colossians’ resurrection with Christ is described as a past act (see the discussion at 2:12; the aorist tense, *συνηγέρθητε*, does not indicate that the author is advocating perfectionism, as Grässer, *ZTK* 64 [1967] 161, claims). If their death with him severed the links that bound them to the old order, then their resurrection with him established links with a new and heavenly order (Bruce, 258).

τὰ ἄνω *ζητεῖτε*. Because the readers have been raised with Christ, their lives are to be different: they have no life of their own since their life is the life of Christ. So their interests must be his interests. In Romans 6 the imperatives are based on the past death with Christ (vv 2–4); here the admonition is grounded in their past resurrection with him (cf. Tannehill, *Dying*, 47, and Schweizer, 131). The apostle had previously been at pains to point out that the Colossian readers had been “filled in him [Christ].” (For a discussion of the emphasis on a “realized eschatology” in this letter see 119–121.) This did not mean, however, that all things had been consummated or that the eschaton had already arrived. The future element is mentioned in this paragraph: their new life was currently hidden with Christ in God (v 3) but awaited its manifestation at the

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)

Parousia (v 4); while the exhortation with its ongoing responsibility to “seek the things above” presupposes that they are not yet perfect (Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 149).

ζητέω, a term which has a wide range of meanings like the English word “seek” (see BAG, 339), has particular reference to the orientation of man’s will (Greeven, *TDNT* 2, 893), which can be directed to unprofitable aims (Rom 10:3; 1 Cor 1:22) or to worthwhile ends (Rom 2:7). Here the readers are told to look upward so as to receive clear direction for their conduct. The present imperative shows that a continuous ongoing effort is required, something that would not occur naturally. Paul employs ζητεῖτε as a direct command only here (it turns up as an indirect one at 1 Cor 10:24; cf. 1 Cor 14:12; 10:33; 13:5; Phil 2:21; 1 Thess 2:6), so its force may be to provide a positive counterpart to the false teachers’ energetic activity in “seeking” visionary experiences (cf. Lincoln, *Dimension*, 202; Grässer, *ZTK* 64 [1967] 151, asserts that both imperatives “seek” and “consider” correspond antithetically to the activities of the false teachers who with their asceticism, visions, and so on, sought to be free from the spiritual powers—activities which the author calls ζητεῖν τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, “to seek what is on earth”).

The imperative that follows from the present possession of Christ’s resurrection life is phrased in spatial terms (cf. Grässer, *ZTK* 64 [1967] 154–59, Steinmetz, *Heils-Zuversicht*, 30, 31, 43, 44, and Lincoln, *Dimension*, 200–206): “Seek *the things above*” (τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε). Paul has already used the term “heaven(s)” (οὐρανός; in the plural at 1:5, 16, 20; note the singular at 1:23; cf. 4:1), and here in verses 1 and 2 the plural expression “the things above” (τὰ ἄνω) replaces it. This phrase (a substantive use, cf. Robertson, *Grammar*, 547, Turner, *Syntax*, 14) does not occur elsewhere in the Pauline letters though reference is made to “the Jerusalem which is above” (ἡ ἄνω Ἰερουσαλήμ, Gal 4:26) and the “upward call” (ἄνω κλήσις, Phil 3:14). The spatial contrast is not a metaphysical one—as though God and Christ belong to the upper realm but have nothing to do with the lower which is evil because it is physical and material. Paul elsewhere uses the term γῆ (“earth”) and ἐπίγειος (“earthly”) without strong negative overtones (cf. 1 Cor 15:47; 2 Cor 5:1, 2; Phil 2:10) but in Colossians 3:2, 5, as in Philippians 3:19 the contrast between heaven and earth is ethically orientated with the earth being regarded as the special theater of sin (in the light of Gen 3:17, “cursed is the ground” [ἐπικατάρατος ἡ γῆ]), it is understandable that the earth should be regarded as the primary setting of fallen creation; cf. Lincoln, *Dimension*, 204–207, who further claims that Paul’s opponents were positively obsessed with “the things above,” and the apostle by using this term outclasses his opponents on their own ground, not completely disparaging their concern with the heavenly realm but rather redirecting it, at the same time exposing its false premises about contacting this realm through legalistic external observances and the like; Paul turns the tables on his opponents “by taking over spatial terminology in order to point to the exclusiveness and completeness of Christ... For Paul there could be no going beyond the one in the supreme position in heaven at God’s right hand” [206]).

The OT itself had already used spatial terminology of heaven and earth, ascending and descending, etc (cf. Gen 11:5; Exod 19:20; 24:9, 10; Ps 14:2; Ezek 1:26; Dan 7:13), while the notion of an upper world was common in apocalyptic and Hellenistic Judaism (cf. Schweizer, 103). In rabbinic Judaism the contrast between the two ages (“the present age” and “the coming

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

age”) is paralleled by the notion of the lower and upper worlds (cf. *b. Hag.* 2.1, “My fathers gathered treasures for below, I gathered treasures for above . . . my fathers gathered treasures in this world, and I gathered treasures for the future world,” Str-B 1, 395, 977; cf. 2, 116, 133, 430, 431), and in the Qumran literature the predominantly ethical contrast between light and darkness had similar spatial connotations between the upper and lower realms (cf. Lincoln, *Dimension*, 201). Paul is thus employing spatial categories in a qualitative manner (Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 149) to describe two spheres which correspond to the eschatological schema of the two ages. Here τὰ ἄνω stands for the heavenly world and the new aeon. It has to do with what is ultimately essential, transcendent and belonging to God (Moule, 111) and although “seeking the things above” has a definite ethical significance (as the apostle makes plain later) τὰ ἄνω is not to be defined solely with reference to ethical categories. The Colossian Christians have already participated in the world to come, the powers of the new age have broken in upon them, they already participate in the resurrection life of Christ. Thus their aims, ambitions, indeed their whole orientation is to be directed to this sphere.

οὗ ὁ Χριστός ἐστὶν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενος. The basic reason for seeking the heavenly realm is that this is “where Christ is.” Grammatically this clause spells out the place and character of ἄνω (“above,” cf. Schweizer, 132), but it also provides the ground and motivation for the Christians seeking the things above (von Soden, 58). Paul is not indicating an interest in some cosmic geography, nor is he encouraging the pursuit of “that which is above” for its own sake. The significance of this realm, closely related to the sphere of resurrection existence, is that the exalted Christ is at its center.

The phrase ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενος (“seated at God’s right hand”; with most commentators ἐστὶν, “is,” should not be connected with καθήμενος “seated,” so making a periphrastic tense, but separated from the participle by a comma; there are two dependent clauses, cf. 2:3 and the similar comment regarding εἰσὶν . . . ἀπόκρυφοί) is an allusion to Psalm 110:1. Paul takes up the Christological interpretation of this psalm, which was common in the early church, to speak of Christ’s session at God’s right hand and so to define further the realm above which is to be the goal of the Colossians’ striving (cf. J. Daniélou, “La Session à la droite du Père,” *Studia Evangelica*. ed. K. Aland and others [TU 73; Berlin: Akademie, 1959] 689–98, D. M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand. Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* [SBLMS 18; Nashville: Abingdon, 1973], M. Gourges. *A la droite de Dieu* [Paris: Gabalda, 1978] 57–63, and W. R. G. Loader, “Christ at the right hand—Ps. cx. 1 in the New Testament,” *NTS* 24 [1977–78] 199–217).

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

ed. edited, edition(s), editor

TU TU Texte und Untersuchungen

SBLMS Society of Biblical Literature [SBL] Monograph Series

NTS *New Testament Studies*

Christ's ascension to the right hand of God was an essential and regular element in the early apostolic preaching, finding echoes throughout the NT (Acts 2:33–35; 5:31; 7:55, 56; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22; Rev. 3:21). This goes back to the messianic interpretation of Psalm 110:1: "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.'" Jesus claimed these words for himself when he was brought before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem (Matt 26:64; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:41–44). After his resurrection and ascension the apostolic announcement was that this enthronement had taken place. Christ ruled from the right hand of God and would continue to do so until all his enemies had submitted to him (1 Cor 15:25).

According to Hay (*Glory*, 15) some thirty-three quotations of or allusions to Psalm 110 (vv 1 and 4) are scattered throughout the NT (seven more may be found in other Christian writings produced before the middle of the second century). These occur in contexts: (a) that point to Jesus or Christians being seated at the right hand of God (Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; 2:6; Col 3:1; Mark 14:62; Matt 26:64; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33–35; 5:31; 1 Pet 3:22; Rev 3:21; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2), (b) where Psalm 110:1 is used in support of Christological titles such as "Lord" (Acts 2:33–36; Mark 16:19), "Son of Man" (Mark 14:62; Matt 26:64; Luke 22:69; Acts 7:56; cf. Barn 12:10, 11), "Son of God" (Heb 1:3, 13; cf. 1 Cor 15:25, 28; 1 Clem 36:4) and "Son of David" (Mark 12:35–37; Matt 22:41–45; Luke 20:41–44; cf. Barn 12:10, 11), (c) where affirmations are made about the subjection of the powers to Christ (1 Cor 15:25; Eph 1:20; Heb 10:12, 13; 1 Peter 3:22; Rev 3:21; cf. 1 Clem 36:5, 6; Pol *Phil* 2:1; Apoc Pet 6), and (d) where statements are made in connection with Jesus' intercession and priestly office (Rom 8:34; cf. Heb 7:25 and possibly 1 Pet 3:22). Colossians 3:1, which is an allusion to Psalm 110:1 rather than a quotation, does not stress the movement of the exalted one (cf. Steinmetz, *Heils-Zuversicht*, 85; in Acts 2:33–36; 5:31 the references in Hebrews, and Rev 3:21 the interest is concentrated on the past moment of exaltation, though each passage assumes the continuance of the exaltation into the present and the future, so Hay, *Glory*, 90). Instead, the accent falls on the present fact of his exaltation (the participle καθήμενος, "seated," as distinct from the imperative or finite verb, describes a state or condition; Christ is, according to Steinmetz, *Heils-Zuversicht*, 85, the "constantly exalted one").

The apostles were aware that they were using figurative language when they spoke of Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God. They no more thought of a literal throne at the literal right hand of God than we do. Ancient Jews and Gentiles alike commonly regarded the right side and a position at the right hand side as symbolic of honor or good fortune (Hay, *Glory*, 90, cf. 52–58). When the psalm was employed by early Christian writers it was to "articulate the supreme glory, the divine transcendence, of Jesus through whom salvation was mediated" (Hay, *Glory*, 155). At Colossians 3:1 the phrase alluded to in the psalm, "seated at the right hand of God" (ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενος) points to the centrality and supremacy of Christ in the heavenly realm. Or to put it another way the apostle alludes to the psalm in order to describe the realm above in terms of the exalted Christ. This heavenly realm centers around the one with whom they have been raised. Since he is in a position of supreme authority no principality or power can prevent their access to this realm and to God's presence. They are thus to keep on aiming at that which is above and him who is at its center.

2. τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε, οὐ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. In the light of Christ's heavenly supremacy Paul repeats his summons: "Consider that which is above, not that which is on earth." Here the verb is different (φρονεῖτε in place of ζητεῖτε, v 1) and the exhortation is heightened by the contrast οὐ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ("not that which is on earth"; so Lincoln, *Dimension*, 203). φρονέω (one of several words derived from the stem φρην-) appears no fewer than twenty-three times in Paul out of a total of twenty-six occurrences in the NT. As a rather neutral term it acquires its proper meaning from its immediate context and covers a range such as to "think," "judge," and "give one's mind to" (cf. Goetzmann, in NIDNTT 2, 616). However, several of the Pauline contexts (e.g. Rom 8:5–8 where the cognate φρόνημα ["way of thinking," "aim"] also occurs) make it plain that the way one thinks is intimately related to the way one lives (whether as a Christian in the Spirit and by faith, or in the flesh, in sin and in spiritual death). "A man's thinking and striving cannot be seen in isolation from the overall direction of his life; the latter will be reflected in the aims which he sets himself" (Goetzmann, in NIDNTT 2, 617). φρονέω thus expresses not simply an activity of the intellect, but also a movement of the will; it has to do with aims and the motives underlying them. So in addition to the range of meanings mentioned above, to "set one's mind on," "be intent on," and "be minded or disposed" (cf. BAG, 866) must also be included (the AV/KJV rendering "set your affection" is misleading today since it gives the impression the verb primarily has to do with a person's emotional state). The apostle exhorts the Roman Christians not to consider themselves too highly but to think with sober judgment and in accordance with the measure of faith God has given them (Rom 12:3, note the fourfold use of φρονέω words: ὑπερφρονέω, "be haughty," "consider oneself too highly," σωφρονέω, "be sensible or reasonable," "keep one's head," and φρονέω twice); elsewhere he admonishes his readers to "be of the same mind" (Rom 12:16; 15:5; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 2:2; 4:2; cf. Gal 5:10; Phil 3:15), an injunction that is not intended to squash independent thinking by Christians or to prevent them from having different opinions on secondary matters, but is to exhort them to be at one in basic aim, direction and orientation of their behavior. If the AV/KJV rendering of Philippians 2:5 expresses the correct interpretation of this disputed passage ("Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"; Martin, *Carmen Christi*, 290, 291, etc, following Käsemann, prefers a "kerygmatic" interpretation to an exemplary one; for a restatement and endorsement of the latter view, that is the "ethical" interpretation, see C. F. D. Moule, "Further Reflexions on Philippians 2:5–11," *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce*, ed. W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin [Exeter: Paternoster, 1970] 264–76, especially 269, 270, American edition [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970]; cf. I. H. Marshall, "The Christ-Hymn in Philippians 2:5–11," *TB* 19 [1968] 104–127, and M. D. Hooker, "Philippians 2:6–11." *Jesus und Paulus. Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70.*

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

e.g. *exempli gratia*, for example

AV Authorized (King James) Version = KJV

KJV King James Version (1611) = AV

TB Theologische Beiträge

Geburtstag. 2nd ed., ed. E. E. Ellis and E. Grässer[Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978] 151–64) then Christ’s self-abasement is the model for a similar attitude by Christians, while Romans 12:2 (cf. v 3) suggests that this considering is accompanied by the “renewal of the mind” (ἀνακαίνωσις τοῦ νοῦς, cf. Lohse, 133). φρονεῖτε at Colossians 3:2 is an admonition to be heavenly minded instead of earthly minded. Like its previous counterpart ζητεῖτε (“seek”; Meyer, 418, 419, has argued with some justification that φρονεῖτε is more comprehensive than ζητεῖτε, expressing not only the striving but also the whole bent of thought and disposition) it is addressed to the whole congregation. Obedience to the injunction requires that great effort be made. The overtones of sober consideration and firm purpose may also be present, perhaps over against visionary experiences of heavenly mysteries.

The sharp contrast between “that which is above” (τὰ ἄνω) and “that which is on earth” (τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; it has been argued that the latter expression preceded by the negative μὴ, “not,” defines more precisely the former phrase, Lohse, 133) is given a strong ethical content, as the following section (i.e. vv 5–7) makes plain. Schweizer (133; cf. Lincoln, *Dimension*, 203), who argues that the “above” and “on the earth” are not properly topographical definitions but rather signify spheres in which a person may live (note Phil 3:19 where Paul accuses his opponents of having their “minds set on earthly things [οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες]” and of making a god out of their belly, in contrast to those whose citizenship is in heaven [πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς]), rightly claims that this contrast closely resembles that which Paul describes elsewhere as the spheres of the “flesh” and the “Spirit.” At Romans 8:5, 6, using both φρονέω and the cognate φρόνημα (“way of thinking,” “mind[= set],” though here = “aim,” “aspiration,” “striving,” so BAG, 866), a similar sharp antithesis in categories of “flesh” and “Spirit” is presented: “Those who live according to their sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires (τὰ τῆς σαρκὸς φρονοῦσιν); but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires (τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος [φρονοῦσιν]). The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace” (NIV). Paul does not repudiate living “in the flesh” when he means living “in the body,” that is, as a human being on earth. As such, flesh is part of God’s good creation. Rather, he rejects the orientation of life toward the flesh, that old order to which the Christian no longer belongs.

3. ἀπεθάνετε γὰρ καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ὑνῶν κέκρυπται κτλ. The grounds for (γάρ; it does not simply mean “in effect,” so Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 147, following Hagedé 162) Paul’s admonition to consider the things above, not those on earth, are twofold: (1) you died to that old order, and (2) your new life is hidden with Christ in God. ἀπεθάνετε should be rendered “you died” for it points back to the specific occasion of their union with Christ in his death (rather than “you have died,” RSV or “you are dead”); it picks up the statement of chapter 2:20, “you died (ἀπεθάνετε) with Christ from the elemental spirits of the universe” and harks back to the ideas expressed in chapter 2:11, 12, “you were circumcised ... in the circumcision of Christ ... you were buried with him,” at the same time providing the basis for the imperative in the exhortatory section, “put to death” (3:5). This death with Christ involves a dying to the elemental spirits and by implication to what has been designated τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (“the things on earth”), the content of which is spelled out, in part at least, in chapter 2:16–23 with its references to ascetic regulations, visionary experiences and the like.

NIV The New International Version (1978)

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

But the Colossians are exhorted to think on the things of heaven not only because they died with Christ to the old order, but also (καί) because they have been raised with him and participate in his resurrection life. The apostle frequently used the terms “life” (ζωή) and to “live” (ζάω: cf. ζωοποιέω, to “make alive,” “give life to”) to describe the life of the age to come which will be received on the final day and which through the resurrection of Christ from the dead has become for the believer a present reality (ζωή: Rom 6:4, 22, 23; 8:2, 6, 10; 2 Cor 4:10, 11, etc; ζάω: Rom 1:17; 6:11, 13; 8:13; 2 Cor 13:4; Gal 2:19, 20, etc; cf. ζωοποιέω: Rom 8:11). Here at Colossians 3:3, 4 both present and future aspects are linked: at verse 3 the life (described as the believer’s own life, ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν) is already present, bound up with Christ, though in a hidden way (cf. Steinmetz, *Heils-Zuversicht*, 30); at verse 4 the future note is struck when it is asserted that this life (which is so closely related to Christ that he himself can be called the believer’s life, ἡ ζωὴ ἡμῶν [see notes]) will be manifested for what it really is at the Second Coming (Grässer, *ZTK* 64 [1967] 161, 162, considers the reference is exclusively to future life, but apart from the fact that v 3 speaks of its present existence, albeit in a hidden way, the assertion at 2:13 that God had already made the Colossians alive with Christ, together with the statements of their having been raised with him in the past [2:12; 3:1], shows that the apostle has a present aspect in view as well as a future manifestation; cf. Bultmann, *TDNT* 2, 861–75).

κέκρυπται σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐν τῷ θεῷ. The verb κέκρυπται (“hidden”) is a perfect tense, in contrast to the preceding aorist, ἀπεθάνετε (“you died,” drawing attention to the specific occasion of their death with Christ), and stresses the ongoing and permanent effects: your life has been hidden with Christ in God and it remains that way. This is sometimes taken to mean that the new life of Christians in Christ is a secret to the unconverted (and in part even to themselves; note Bengel’s oft-quoted statement: “The world knows neither Christ nor Christians, and Christians do not even fully know themselves,” 2, 467) so that it remains unrevealed until the end. Moule, 112, raises the question as to whether some connection with the ἀπόκρυτοι (“stored up”) of chapter 2:3 is in view. Christ is the storehouse of all God’s secrets including the believer’s new life. He is “above” and since the Christian’s life is hidden with him then it is already in heaven (as Tannehill, *Dying*, 48, rightly comments: “the life of the believer is already a heavenly life”; cf. Mussner, *Christus*, 93, who notes that since this life is inseparable from the person of the Exalted One then it belongs to the transcendent realm). Ephesians 2:6, by asserting explicitly that Christians have been seated with Christ in the heavenlies, simply brings out what has already been implied here in Colossians 3:3, 4 (cf. A. T. Lincoln, “A Re-Examination of ‘The Heavenlies’ in Ephesians,” *NTS* 19 [1972–73] 473, 474). (Regarding the choice of this verb κέκρυπται some have suggested there may be an allusion to the pagan idea that death indicates a man is “hidden” in the earth—dead and gone; Christians claim that they are hidden indeed, but in Christ, cf. Moule, 112, and Schweizer, 133; others have thought the term may have been called forth by a desire on the part of the proponents of the false teaching to refer to the notion of hiddenness, for a secret knowledge belonging only to the initiated, cf. 1:26, 27; 2:2, 3; so Lincoln, *Dimension*, 208, 209.)

The believer’s life is said to be hidden σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐν τῷ θεῷ (“with Christ in God”). The expression “in God,” the very antithesis to what is material and visible, is used rather rarely by Paul and the only precise parallels to the believers being “in God” are 1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 2 Thessalonians 1:1 (at Rom 2:17; 5:11 it is the rejoicing [καυχάομαι] in God which is in view; cf. 1 Thess 2:2 and Eph 3:9). The phrase “in God” modifies both “life” (ζωή) and the immediately preceding words “with Christ” (σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ; elsewhere in the Pauline letters this phrase [using the preposition by itself; it is different with verbs compounded with σύν] occurs only of

future existence, cf. Moule, *RevExp* 70 [1973] 485; on the meaning of this expression see the following note): our life is hidden with Christ because we died with him and have been raised with him to new life; “in God” because Christ himself has his being in God and those who belong to Christ have their being there too (cf. Bruce, 261; Grundmann, *TDNT* 7, 785). Centered in God means that the hidden life is secure, unable to be touched by anyone.

4. Our heavenly life will be fully manifest in all its glory when Christ who embodies it appears at his Parousia. We too who share his life will share his glorious epiphany. What is now secretly present shall be revealed when Christ shall appear.

ὅταν ὁ Χριστὸς φανερωθῆ, ἡ ζωὴ ἡμῶν. Paul’s statement is striking and vivid. He does not insert any conjunction such as καί (“and”) or δέ (“but”), with the result that the very abruptness of the expression helps to underline the assurance of the hope more vividly (Williams, 124; cf. Abbott, 249, Bengel 2, 467, and Meyer, 422). The temporal note is struck (cf. the balancing of the two clauses ὅταν τότε, “when then”) in a context where spatial categories have been employed, and the significance of this chronological assertion is not to be watered down as some have suggested (see below 168, 169; Steinmetz, *Heils-Zuversicht*, 30, wrongly considers that the time note is not strong in ὅταν, but he fails to give the balancing τότε, where there is a stress on future consummation, its due weight).

For the fourth time in as many verses the name “Christ” (ὁ Χριστός) appears (cf. v 2, τῷ Χριστῷ, ὁ Χριστός; v 3 τῷ Χριστῷ). The pronoun “he” (or “him”) would have been more natural but less emphatic (so Lightfoot, 208; cf. Williams, 124) as Paul goes out of his way to emphasize that true Christian existence is found “with Christ” alone. The verb φανερόω (“reveal,” “make known,” “show,” BAG, 852, 853; cf. Bultmann/Lührmann, *TDNT* 9, 3–6) which the apostle often employs synonymously with ἀποκαλύπτω (“reveal”; cf. Rom 1:17 and 3:21 on the revelation of God’s righteousness in Christ, and Eph 3:5 with Col 1:26 on the revelation of the mystery hidden for ages), does not speak of a manifestation that has already taken place as in chapter 1:26 (against Brown, in *NIDNTT* 3, 322), but refers rather to the Parousia when the veil will be drawn back so that what is hidden from our eyes will shine in bright light (Lohse, 134). This term often denotes in Paul the revelation that takes place in the proclamation of the gospel or the mystery (Rom 3:21; 16:26; 2 Cor 2:14; 11:6; Col 1:26; cf. 4:4). Here, however, it has to do with the future manifestation of Christ himself (cf. 1 John 2:28; 3:2) and of believers (φανερωθήσεσθε) on the final day (cf. 1 Cor 4:5 with reference to the future judgment where φανερόω points to the making known of what is currently hidden) in contrast to the present hiddenness (κέκρυπται and φανερωθῆ/φανερωθήσεσθε stand in sharp contrast to each other, as both their meanings, “hide,” “make known,” and tenses indicate).

So closely is the cause of Christ identified with that of his people that he is said to be their life (ὁ Χριστός ... ἡ ζωὴ ἡμῶν). The words mark a twofold development on the previous statement (cf. Lightfoot, 208): first, it is not simply that the life *is* said to be shared with Christ: “the life *is* Christ.” Second, if the reading “our life” (ἡ ζωὴ ἡμῶν) is original (see the note above 157), then the apostle has gone out of his way to include himself and other believers among the recipients of this mighty blessing. When writing to the Philippians he could say, “For to me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21; cf. Rom 8:2, 10; 2 Cor 4:10; Gal 2:19, 20). But he did not regard this as true only of himself. Christ is the life of all who are united to him by faith, who are members of his body. Whoever belongs to him has passed from death to life, to use Johannine language (John 5:24, 25; 11:25, 26; cf. 1 John 5:12).

τότε καὶ ὑμεῖς σὺν αὐτῷ φανερωθήσεσθε ἐν δόξῃ. Christ is now enthroned in heaven at God’s right hand. When he appears at the end of days at the Parousia, it will become plain that

his own are with him. The day of the revelation of the *Son* of God will be the day of the revelation of the *sons* of God (the position of *σὺν αὐτῷ* lays stress on the closeness of the relation of “you” and “him,” as well as keeping *ἐν δόξῃ* in a position of final emphasis, so Williams, 124), as Paul makes plain with his “then” (*τότε* which is emphatic pointing to the same time or occasion specified in the *ὅταν* clause, i.e. when Christ is revealed), the additional words “you also” (*καὶ ὑμεῖς*) and his selection of the same verb “reveal” (*φανερώω*) to apply to the believers themselves as well as to Christ. That manifestation will take place “in glory” (*ἐν δόξῃ*). “Glory” was a characteristic theme in apocalyptic thought where it was closely associated with heavenly existence as it is also in Paul’s writings. The future manifestation in glory predicted here for the believer has particular reference to his sharing Christ’s likeness (cf. 1 John 3:2, “we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”), and to receiving the glorious resurrection body. It was this same hope to which the apostle directed the Philippians’ attention: “Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (*σῶμα τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ*)” (Phil 3:20, 21 NIV; cf. 1 Cor 15:42, 43; 2 Cor 5:1, 2).

It has been argued that this is the only *explicit* futuristic eschatological reference in Colossians (there are hints at and 4:11) and that this use of the “hidden—revealed” motif is without parallel in the earlier Pauline letters. Spatial concepts are said to dominate at chapters 1:26, 27; 3:3, 4, while none of the typically Pauline eschatological ideas—Parousia, resurrection of the dead, judgment of the world—is encountered in Colossians. It is further alleged that in chapter 1:5, 23 and 27 “hope” is no longer chronologically conceived but has become an otherworldly quality of hope (cf. especially Bornkamm, *Geschichte und Glaube* 2, 206–213). Grässer (*ZTK* 64 [1967] 165) considers that Paul’s dialectic of eschatological existence has been replaced by a dialectic of transcendent existence. No longer does the author, like Paul, speak in the language of apocalyptic about a resurrection of the dead but instead refers to “life” as the eschatological gift (*ZTK* 64 [1967] 161). Further, to assert that someone has been raised with Christ, of necessity means there can be no future resurrection. Meanwhile Lohse, while not endorsing all of the above-mentioned arguments, regards the changed eschatology of Colossians as one of the reasons for his decision against Pauline authorship. Eschatology has receded into the background. In Colossians the basis for exhortation is baptism, while eschatological themes provide the motivation in Paul (Lohse, 180).

By way of response we have already noted that there is an emphasis on realized eschatology in Colossians. In terms of the Pauline “already—not yet” tension the accent falls upon the former, called forth no doubt by the particular circumstances of the letter (see xxx–xli, 120). But this is not to suggest that the “not yet” pole in Paul’s tension is absent. There is future eschatology at chapter 3:4 and 6 (a reference to the future eschatological wrath of God), 24 (where the reception of a future inheritance is in view) and in our estimation at chapter 1:22 and 28 where the presentation of every man as perfect at the Parousia is in mind (see above, 68, 69, 89, 90; Steinmetz, *Heils-Zuversicht*, 31, 32, notes traces of future eschatology in 4:11 also). The “hidden—revealed” motif and the concept of glory (note *ἐν δόξῃ* at v 4) are both significant apocalyptic features (cf. 1:26, 27 where the “hidden—revealed” theme is used of the mystery that has now been made known), while spatial concepts (“above,” “on earth”) are used in the service of eschatology. To speak of a heavenly realm was meaningful in a Hellenistic syncretistic environment while categories such as this were already at hand in the thought world of Jewish apocalyptic. Paul had previously employed such motifs in his earlier letters and they are used in

Colossians to draw attention to the two ages: “this age” and “the age to come” (cf. Zeilinger, *Der Erstgeborene*, 149). Grässer’s antithesis (*ZTK* 64 [1967] 165) between eschatological and transcendent perspectives is a false one since both are found together in the undisputed Paulines and at Colossians 3:1–4. Further, the apocalyptic notion of a resurrection from the dead is found at chapter 1:18 in the title ascribed to Christ, “firstborn from the dead” (πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, cf. 1 Cor 15:20), and even if the author is taking over traditional material (for the various arguments see 40–42) it is clear that he is giving the terminology his approval. Verse 18 can only be adequately understood of Christ’s primacy in resurrection (see the detailed exegesis 50, 51). In the undisputed Paulines the notions of the resurrection from the dead and eschatological life are interchangeable (so Rom 4:17; 5:17, 18, 21; 6:22, 23; 8:11; 1 Cor 15:45), and Grässer’s remark (*ZTK* 64 [1967] 161) that whoever has been raised with Christ will not participate in a future resurrection shows he fails to come to grips with the “already—not yet” tension.

Against Lohse it may be argued that there is an eschatological motivation in Colossians; it may not be the dominant one but it is present nevertheless. The exhortation, “put to death, therefore, ...” (νεκρώσατε οὖν, 3:5), is based on verses 1–4 (not simply v 3) and the last of these has an eschatological emphasis (compare 3:6; 2:4; and 4:5). At the same time there are other grounds for exhortation in the generally accepted Pauline letters. The question is simply one of emphasis. There was good reason for Paul stressing what God had done in uniting the readers with his Son (the aspect of realized eschatology or the “already” of the tension) as the basis for ethical exhortation in Colossians. “Against those who were removing the basis of Christian living away from grace and toward legalistic observances, knowledge, visionary experiences, Paul insists that God has *already* done everything necessary in Christ” (Lincoln, *Dimension*, 217; note his careful analysis on 212–17; for a critique of Bornkamm’s understanding of “hope” in Colossians see above xlvi, 11, and regarding the arguments against the Pauline authorship of the letter because of the realized eschatological emphasis see xlvi–xlvii).

A Note on the Expression “With Christ”

The phrase “with Christ” (σὺν Χριστῷ) occurs in the Pauline letters far less frequently than the formula “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ), appearing on only twelve occasions (four of which are in Colossians: 2:13, 20; 3:3, 4). The expression “to be with Christ” (σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι) turns up once at Philippians 1:23, though related statements do appear: “we shall be with the Lord” (σὺν κυρίῳ ἐσόμεθα, 1 Thess 4:17), and “we shall live together with him” (σὺν αὐτῷ ζήσωμεν, 5:10). Apart from the references in Colossians, five further expressions using different verbs are to be found: “he [God] will bring with him [Jesus]” (σὺν αὐτῷ, 1 Thess 4:14), “he will raise us with Jesus” (σὺν Ἰησοῦ, 2 Cor 4:14), “we will live with him” (σὺν αὐτῷ, 13:4), “since we died with Christ” (σὺν Χριστῷ, Rom 6:8), “how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (σὺν αὐτῷ, 8:32). A brief glance at these references shows that no single expression completely agrees with any other, but that the preposition σύν (“with”) was suited to express intimate personal union with Christ, the Lord, Jesus or him in various contexts (rather than μετά, “with,” which was more suited to indicate close association or attendant circumstances, e.g. 1 Thess 3:13; cf. Harris, in *NIDNTT* 3, 1206, 1207). Because of this variety several have argued it is incorrect to speak of “with Christ” (σὺν Χριστῷ) as a *formula*. Rather it is a *motif* or theme which can be expressed in a number of different ways (so Tannehill, *Dying*, 87, 88, Lohse, 104,

105; cf. J. Gnllka, *Der Philipperbrief* [HTKNT 10/3; Freiburg: Herder, 1968] 76, against Grundmann, *TDNT* 7, 782).

In addition to these prepositional phrases Paul employs a number of words compounded with σύν (“with”) which describe the believer’s close union with Christ, the most important of which are: συσταυρόω (“crucify together with,” Rom 6:6; Gal 2:20), συνθάπτω (“bury with,” Rom 6:4; Col 2:12), σύμψυτος (an adjective meaning “grown together,” deriving from συμψύομαι, Rom 6:5), συζάω (“live together with,” Rom 6:8; 2 Tim 2:11), συγαληρονόμος (“co-heir,” Rom 8:17; cf. Heb 11:9; 1 Pet 3:7), συμπάσχω (“suffer with,” Rom 8:17), συνδοξάζω (“glorify with,” Rom 8:17), σύμμορφος (“having the same form as,” Rom 8:29; Phil 3:21) and συμμορφίζω (“confer the same form,” Phil 3:10). For full details see Grundmann, *TDNT* 7, 786, 787.

To be with Christ or with the Lord (Phil 1:23; 1 Thess 4:17) refers to the future and signifies the perfection which is to come (Dupont, ΣΥΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΩΙ, 39–47, etc. has distinguished two phases: “being or living with the Lord” [1 Thess 4:17; 5:10] emphasizes believers’ sharing in the eschatological blessings of the kingdom enjoyed by Christ since his resurrection, while in Phil 1:23 [“being with Christ”] and 2 Cor 5:8 [“dwelling with the Lord”] the emphasis falls on intimate fellowship with the King in his kingdom [cf. Harris, in *NIDNTT* 3, 1207]). However, by means of some of the compound words the apostle points out that this intimate personal union with Christ is already a present reality (on the relationship of the statements [“with Christ,” “with the Lord,” etc] that point to the future and those speaking about the present, particularly in the light of possible backgrounds to the notion, see Schnackenburg, *Baptism*, 170–77, and the literature cited by Lohse, 104, note 76). The believer has already been united with Christ in his death and resurrection. So according to Romans 6 we were “buried with him” (v 4), “united with him in his death” (v 5), and “our old self was crucified with him” (v 6). Verse 8 asserts “we will live with him,” while later in the same letter Paul speaks about a union with Christ that comes to be known through suffering, but which the Christian endures in view of the future glory: “if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (εἴπερ συμπάσχομεν ἵνα καὶ συνδοξασθῶμεν, 8:17).

In Colossians Paul frequently uses the phrase “with Christ.” As we have noted elsewhere, consistent with the emphasis on realized eschatology, this expression “with Christ”—the “already” of salvation speaks of the union with Christ in his death and resurrection which has already occurred. So the readers were buried with Christ in baptism (συνταφέντες αὐτῷ, 2:12), and were made alive together with Christ (συνεζωοποίησεν σύν αὐτῷ, 2:13); they died with him to the elemental spirits of the universe (ἀπεθάνετε σύν Χριστῷ, 2:20), were raised with him (συνηγέρθητε, 3:1) and as a result their life is hidden with him in God (κέκρυπται σύν τῷ Χριστῷ, 3:3). On the other hand, the future note is not completely absent. The “not yet” of salvation is in view at chapter 3:4 where it is stated: “When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with him (σύν αὐτῷ φανερωθήσεσθε) in glory.”

The phrase “with Christ” is not a formula like the expression “in Christ,” but is a motif used in a variety of ways to express the intimate personal union of the believer with Christ. The expression “to be with Christ” (Phil 1:23) or its equivalents (1 Thess 4:17; 2 Cor 4:14; 13:4) looks forward to the future when the destiny of Christians, after death or after the Parousia, is in view. When the preposition σύν (“with”) is compounded with certain verbs it relates to past events and resulting present experiences so that this close union with Christ is already a present

reality. Both the phrase and related verbs are employed in Colossians to describe the death and resurrection with Christ as a past event and the resulting new existence for the Christian: it is his life with Christ. Like Christ's life it is hidden in God. What Christians await is the appearance of Christ, that is, his emergence from concealment and their own manifestation with him (σὺν αὐτῷ, 3:4) in glory. It is not called the resurrection of the dead, but the manifestation of the hidden life (Grundmann, *TDNT* 7, 785, 786).

Explanation

This short paragraph, in which the apostle exhorts the Colossians to pursue those things that belong to the heavenly realm where Christ reigns, occupies an important pivotal position in the letter (cf. the similar function of 2:6, 7). Containing both indicatives and imperatives it concludes the section where Paul attacks the “philosophy” of the false teachers, providing the true alternative to the erroneous teaching. It is possible that the positive expressions set forth in chapter 3:1–4 show the controversy is still in view as Paul draws together themes previously mentioned (2:11–13, 20). At the same time the theological foundations (the “indicative”) for the admonitions (the “imperative”) that follow (3:5–4:6) are set forth.

The grounds for Paul's admonition to aim at the things above, not those on earth, are twofold (v 1, 3): first, the Colossians died to that old order with its elemental spirits (2:20), its ascetic and enslaving regulations, visionary experiences and useless will-worship. Second, as those who have already been raised with Christ they now participate in his resurrection life. So their lives are to be different. Their interests are to be centered on Christ; their minds, aims, ambitions, in fact their whole outlook, are to be centered on that heavenly realm where he reigns and where their lives truly belong. The continuous ongoing effort required for such a cast of mind does not come automatically. That realm above is to be sought diligently (and in contrast to any false seeking of heavenly experiences by the advocates of the Colossian “philosophy”) for this is where Christ is, seated as king in the place of honor.

For the moment their heavenly life remains hidden, secure with Christ in God. Their new life as Christians in Christ is not visible to others and, in some measure, is hidden from themselves. It will only be fully manifest when Christ, who embodies that life, appears at his Parousia. Indeed, the day of the revelation of the *Son* of God will be the day of the revelation of the *sons* of God. That manifestation will take place “in glory” for it will involve the sharing of Christ's likeness and the receiving of the glorious resurrection body.

In Colossians, as we have already noted, there is an emphasis on realized eschatology. Within the “already—not yet” tension the stress falls upon the former, called forth by the circumstances of the letter. The basis for seeking or setting the mind on the heavenly realm, at the center of which is the exalted Christ, is God's mighty action in uniting the readers with Christ in his death and resurrection. The “already” of salvation needed to be asserted repeatedly over against those who were interested in the heavenly realm but who had false notions about it, believing it could be reached by legalistic observances, knowledge, visionary experiences and the like. Ultimately the doctrine of grace was at stake. The readers, therefore, needed to be instructed that they had died with Christ, been raised with him and had been given new life with him. He had done all that was necessary. So they were zealously to pursue the things of that new order, centered on the exalted Christ.

But if the “already” pole received the emphasis, the “not yet” of salvation still needed to be mentioned, and here in verse 4 we find a clear future reference. Christ was currently hidden from sight. So too were their lives, for they were hidden with him. The final day would come when he

would appear; and they would appear with him—they would be like him, clothed with the resurrection body.